

**Foxhunting and the landscape between 1700 and 1900;  
with particular reference to Norfolk and Shropshire**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the history of foxhunting from 1700 to 1900. It examines how perceptions of an ideal hunting country, and what constituted an elite quarry, altered in tandem with alterations to the English lowland countryside. The relationship between the landscape and changes brought about by the upheaval of enclosure and agricultural development are discussed, in the context of the evolution in practice and geographical spread of foxhunting, at a national, regional and county-wide level. Several long-held beliefs are challenged.

The social history of foxhunting and the increased participation of both 'polite' urban neophytes and prosperous tenant farmers during the two centuries is compared with the declining involvement of women. The impact of hunt clubs and the rise of subscription packs in the two study areas is contrasted.

The influence of changes in the landscape on foxhunting is considered alongside the reciprocal impact of foxhunters manipulating the physical surroundings to enhance their sport. A detailed study of the history of hunting and its most iconic feature, the covert, in Norfolk and Shropshire highlights the importance of landowners control over the countryside. The comparisons between the intensively-researched hunting landscape of the East Midlands and these two peripheral counties highlighted differences and provoked an examination of likely explanations.

The thesis has used a variety of research methods and sources. The exploration of 'place' has involved the use of maps and documentary records to explore the historic and physical context of hunting and the significance of any overlapping distribution patterns. Examination of a range of contemporary hunting diaries, poems and paintings has allowed a vivid insight into the 'practice' of foxhunting and the attitudes of its enthusiasts.

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## Abbreviations

Ag. Hist. Rev.	Agricultural History Review
CRO	County Records Office
Ha	Hectare
MFH	Master of Fox Hounds
Pers. Comm	Personal communication
VCH	Victoria County History
£.S.D.	Pre-decimal Pounds, Shilling, Pence

## Measurements

I have used the original imperial or metric measurements quoted in any reference.

The following table shows some of the most common imperial equivalents/conversions.

<i>Length</i>			<i>Area</i>		
<u>Imperial</u>	<u>(linear)</u>	<u>Metric</u>	<u>Imperial</u>	<u>(area)</u>	<u>Metric</u>
12 inches	= 1 foot	= 0.304 metre (m)	144 sq. inches	= 1 square (sq.) foot	=0.093m <sup>2</sup>
3 feet	= 1 yard	= 0.914m	9 sq. feet	= 1 sq yard	=0.836m <sup>2</sup>
5.5 yards	= 1 rod, pole or perch		484 sq. yards	= 1 sq chain (Gunter's)	
22 yards	= 1 chain (Gunter's)		10 sq. chains	= 1 acre	=4046.9m <sup>2</sup>
10 chains	= 1 furlong		640 acres	= 1 sq mile	=2.59km <sup>2</sup>
8 furlongs	= 1 mile		30.25 sq yards	= 1 sq rod, pole or perch	
	1.0936 yards	= 1 metre	40 sq poles	= 1 rood	
0.62 mile	=10936 yards	= 1 kilometre (km)	4 roods	= 1 acre	
1 Mile		= 1.609 km		2.47 acres	= 1 hectare

Taken from: <http://www.ros.gov.uk/foi/plans/docs/plans13.html> on 4.9.2011

## Money

One shilling (pre-decimal) = 5p

One penny (pre-decimal) = 0.42p

## **In memoriam**

Ann (Munslow) Foster (1923-1999), who loved Shropshire and farming west of the River Severn; and John Foster (1920-2007), who loved Shropshire, farming east of the Severn and foxhunting everywhere.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Sportsmen are apt to look at a country with merely a sportsman's eye, as a friend of mine did on his way to Doncaster. 'What a beautiful country!' said one of his fellow travellers. 'Aye' said he, 'tis a pretty country enough, but how the devil do they ride over it?' This I confess is my own case, having but little taste for the picturesque.<sup>1</sup>

In this anecdote Nimrod (the pen-name of the foxhunting author C. Apperley), writing in 1835, summed up the challenge inherent in defining an attractive landscape for hunting: it cannot be judged just by appearance but by the experience of riding across it. An added twist is the changing perception over time of what constituted a 'good' hunting country. In the sixteenth century Manwood, recommended for hunting that 'a forest must be stored with great woods or coverts for the secret abode of wild beastes and also with fruitful pastures for their continual feed: for the want of either of these two doth cause the exile of wild beastes from the forest to some other place'.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to this enthusiasm for 'great woods' and plenty of cover, by the 1830s the popular foxhunting author John Surtees described the view from a hill in Northamptonshire into 'the heart of Leicestershire' as a perfect hunting country of 'grass, grass, grass ... nothing but grass for miles and miles'.<sup>3</sup>

The following chapters explore how perceptions of an ideal hunting country and what constituted an elite quarry changed in tandem with alterations to the English lowland countryside. The relationship between the landscape, changes brought about by the upheaval of enclosure across much of lowland England and agricultural development are examined in the context of the evolution in practice and geographical spread of foxhunting. The influence of mutations of the landscape on foxhunting is considered alongside the reciprocal impact of foxhunters manipulating their physical surroundings to enhance the sport. Unfortunately there has not been an opportunity

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<sup>1</sup> C. Apperley, *Nimrod's Sporting tours* (London, 1835) p. 161

<sup>2</sup> J. Manwood, 'Treatise of the Forest Laws', quoted in: R. Longrigg, *The History of Fox Hunting* (London, 1975) p. 23

<sup>3</sup> The New Sporting Magazine, 1834, quoted in G. Paget, *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunts* (London, 1937) p. 144

to explore the under-researched landscape features of foxhound kennels and associated buildings.

## Literature

Although Almond asserted in 2003 that ‘almost all recent British historians, with very few notable exceptions, either ignore hunting as if it did not exist or simply dismiss it in a few lines’,<sup>4</sup> it appears that much *has* been written about hunting, especially foxhunting. The links between the rise of foxhunting, changes in the landscape and the growth of features such as fox coverts are extensively covered in Carr’s comprehensive *English Foxhunting - a History* written in the mid 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile Longrigg’s contemporaneous *The English Squire and His Sport* placed foxhunting in the wider context of the growth of field sports and the growing competition between hunting and shooting for access to resources such as game coverts.<sup>6</sup> In the same decade Patten examined in some detail the genesis of the fox covert. Much more recently both Landry<sup>7</sup> and Griffin<sup>8</sup> have devoted chapters to foxhunting within wider contexts. Finch has produced two articles that range widely geographically and usefully examine the impact of foxhunting on ‘the creation of the modern landscape’ and ‘landscape character and the politics of place’.<sup>9</sup> Williamson and Bellamy’s *Property and Landscape* provided a political dimension discussing the recreational use of the countryside, including hunting, in terms of control of access by landowners.<sup>10</sup> Itzkowitz<sup>11</sup> and Bovill<sup>12</sup> have both written accounts of the social context in which hunting developed during the nineteenth century emphasising the transition from an elite aristocratic pursuit to broader based subscription packs. The change is epitomised by Jorrocks, the Cockney grocer, who became a Master of

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<sup>4</sup> R. Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud, 2003) p. 5

<sup>5</sup> R. Carr, *English Foxhunting - a History* (London, 1976)

<sup>6</sup> R. Longrigg, *The English Squire and His Sport* (London, 1977)

<sup>7</sup> D. Landry, *The Invention of the countryside* (Basingstoke, 2001)

<sup>8</sup> E. Griffin, *Blood Sport - hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, 2007)

<sup>9</sup> J. Finch, ‘Grass, Grass, Grass: Foxhunting and the Creation of the Modern Landscape’, *Landscapes*, 5 part 2 (2004) pp. 41-52

J. Finch, ‘What more were the pastures of Leicester to me?’ Hunting, landscape character and the politics of place’, *International Journal of Cultural Property* 14 (2007) pp. 361-383

<sup>10</sup> T. Williamson & L. Bellamy, *Property and Landscape* (London, 1987)

<sup>11</sup> D. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege - a Social History of English Foxhunting* (Sussex, 1977)

<sup>12</sup> E.W. Bovill, *The England of Nimrod and Surtees* (London, 1959).

E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life* (Oxford, 1962)

Foxhounds (MFH) in Surtees' comic novels of the 1840s.<sup>13</sup> By the twenty-first century, the practice and cost of hunting was being explored in detail by Jones<sup>14</sup> and Hoyle<sup>15</sup>. Hoyle has also written extensively about the history of foxhunting and the royal family's involvement in the sport.<sup>16</sup> At the same time sociologists and psychologists were becoming interested in the wider question of foxhunting's threatened future with article titles containing phrases such as 'foxes, green fields and Britishness ...',<sup>17</sup> 'a prohibited practice'<sup>18</sup> and 'the beleaguered other'.<sup>19</sup>

The historians' gaze was focused almost exclusively on hunting in the East Midlands or to foxhunters: 'The Shires' – Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire. This is understandable as it was seen as the birthplace of 'modern' hunting and its pre-eminence was enhanced by WG Hoskins, highly influential on a generation of landscape historians, who wrote about hunting and its impact on the Midland landscape in 1955.<sup>20</sup> The effect lingers on as both de Belin<sup>21</sup> and Partida<sup>22</sup> devote their current researches to 'hunting landscapes' in Northamptonshire.

Hugo Meynell (1735-1808), hunting in Leicestershire, is generally recognized as the 'father of modern foxhunting', although recently Middleton has enjoyably challenged this in the 'Myth of Hugo Meynell and the Quorn'.<sup>23</sup> For the last 45 years historians writing about the landscape and foxhunting have attributed the rise of foxhunting as a

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<sup>13</sup> For example: R.S. Surtees, *Handley Cross*, (London, 1843)

<sup>14</sup> K. Jones, 'Meeting the cost of hunting', *History Today* Vol 53, issue 9, (2003) pp. 36-39

<sup>15</sup> R. Hoyle, 'The fortunes of English foxhunting in the twentieth century: the case of the Oakley Hunt' in *Our Hunting Fathers* (ed.) R. Hoyle (Lancaster, 2007)

<sup>16</sup> R. Hoyle, 'Introduction: field sports as history' pp. 1-41 and 'Royalty and the diversity of field sports c 1840-1981' pp. 41-72 in *Our Hunting Fathers* (ed.) R. Hoyle (2007)

<sup>17</sup> J. Wallwork and JA. Dixon, 'Foxes, green fields and Britishness: on the rhetorical construction of place and national identity', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol 43 (2004) pp 21-39

<sup>18</sup> G. Marvin, 'English foxhunting: prohibited practice', *International Journal of Cultural Property*. Vol 14, part 3 (2007) pp. 339-360

<sup>19</sup> G. Cox and M. Winter, 'The beleaguered "other": hunt followers in the countryside' in *Revealing rural 'others': representation, power and identity in the British countryside* (ed.) P. Milbourne (London, 1997)

<sup>20</sup> W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of English Landscape*, Pelican Books 1970 paperback edition (London, 1955) pp. 196-198

<sup>21</sup> M. de Belin, 'Transitional hunting landscapes: deer hunting and foxhunting in the forests of Whittlewood, Salcey and Rockingham 1600 to 1850' in *Forest and Chases of England and Wales c1500-1850* (ed.) J. Langton & G. Jones (Oxford, 2005)

<sup>22</sup> T. Partida, 'Early hunting landscapes in Northamptonshire' *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Volume 60 (2007) pp. 44-60

<sup>23</sup> I. Middleton, 'The origins of English fox hunting and the myth of Hugo Meynell and the Quorn' *Sport in History*, Vol 25.1 (2005) pp.1-16

fashionable sport in the eighteenth century to the shift from arable use to grassland following enclosure by parliamentary statute.<sup>24</sup> Bovill was the first to note the link, writing in 1962, 'but for enclosure foxhunting would never have become a popular sport'. This view was echoed by Patten in 1971 and repeated by Longrigg and Carr in their respective histories of English foxhunting published in consecutive years in the mid-1970s. Longrigg commented on the '1,539 private enclosure acts ... [resulting in] the improvement of the countryside for foxhunting ... [with] large well-fenced fields of permanent grass'.

Itzkowitz, writing in 1977, echoed the well-rehearsed theme: 'The new speed of Meynell's hounds was perfectly suited to the large expanses of grass which made Leicestershire ... the best hunting-ground in England'. By 1987 Williamson and Bellamy were also attributing 'the rise of foxhunting' at least partly to the 'gradual spread of enclosure'. Twenty years later, Landry, Griffin and Finch have all explored various aspects of the 'hunting landscape' with the latter commenting that 'the emergence of modern foxhunting alongside the newly enclosed landscape of the shires was symbiotic'. Regular repetition has led to an acceptance of the orthodoxy that the early development of modern foxhunting was somehow stimulated by eighteenth-century parliamentary enclosure in the East Midlands and the consequent spread of unified ownership and grassland. This consensus will be tested as the thesis explores the development of foxhunting, and its diffusion both physically and socially, from the viewpoint of a geographer interested in considering the significance of coincidences of patterns in the distribution of soils and land use (especially agricultural activity) in conjunction with tenurial and enclosure history.

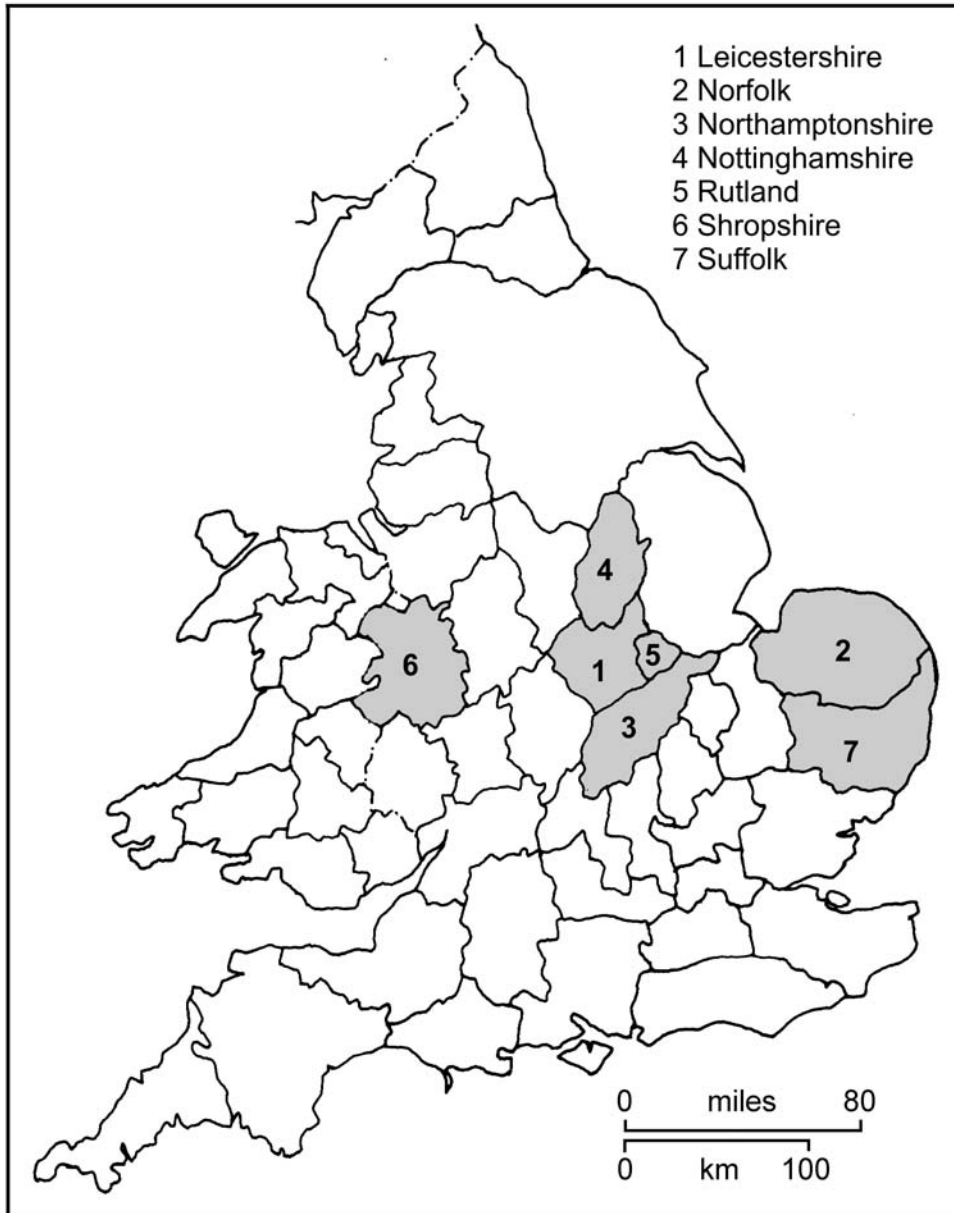
### **Study areas and their literature**

It is important to consider the early origins of hunting in a wider geographical context beyond 'the Shires' in order to examine those factors which encouraged its successful development and those which were inhibitors. Norfolk and Shropshire

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<sup>24</sup> Bovill, *English*, p. 200; J. Patten, 'Fox coverts for the squire', *Country Life* (23 Sept.1971), pp. 736-738; Longrigg, *History*, p. 89; Carr, *English*, p. 68; Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, p. 8; Williamson & Bellamy, *Property*, p. 201, Landy, *Invention*, p. 46, Finch 'Grass...' p. 43, and Griffin, *Blood Sport*, p.130

have been chosen as the two study areas since they exhibit marked contrasts in landscape, enclosure histories and the development of foxhunting; both with each other and with the Shires. The links between landscape and foxhunting in the two counties have not been previously explored. Figure 1.1 shows the location of the main study areas, including those in the East Midlands, referred to in the thesis.



**Figure 1.1** Location map of study areas



Brown has recently written a voluminous account of *The Foxhunters of Norfolk* that usefully provides considerable biographical detail on participants and their hunting activities, via accounts in the local press, but pays scant attention to the landscape.<sup>25</sup> Comparatively little else has been written about the broader context of early hunting in Norfolk apart from an article by Mary-Anne Garry<sup>26</sup> triggered by her researches into the eighteenth-century household accounts at Holkham. Fleeting references to foxhunting in Norfolk are found embedded in biographies of the major landowners including Stirling's *Coke of Norfolk and his friends*<sup>27</sup>, Parker's *Coke of Norfolk*<sup>28</sup>, *Houghton Hall – the Prime Minister, the Empress and the Heritage*<sup>29</sup> edited by Moore, and Rosenheim's *The Townshends of Raynham*.<sup>30</sup> These mainly emphasise the social aspect and lavish expenditure involved.

The history of the West Norfolk Foxhounds (and various predecessor packs) has been sketched in several pamphlets such as the 'West Norfolk Hunt' written by Fawcett in 1934.<sup>31</sup> Visiting sporting journalists wrote a succession of articles in rural magazines during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s with titles such as 'A good day on heavy plough' and 'Twixt Broads and the Sea'. These outlined the history of the featured Norfolk foxhound, harrier or beagle packs (often plagiarising each other verbatim) and described the rigours of a day's hunting in great topographical detail. The most comprehensive account of Norfolk packs, including foxhounds, remains *Deer Hunting in Norfolk from the earliest times* by Lieutenant Colonel Harvey published in 1910 with a wonderful gallery of Edwardian hunting photographs.<sup>32</sup> However, none of these publications considers hunting's relationship with the Norfolk landscape - apart from it acting as a backdrop to the sport.

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<sup>25</sup> V. Brown, *The Foxhunters of Norfolk* (Fakenham, 2006)

<sup>26</sup> M-A. Garry, 'Sport as a Political Mediator: Thomas Cooke and the Layers of Booton', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XLIII, (Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> A.M.W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and His Friends* (London, 1912)

<sup>28</sup> R.A.C. Parker, *Coke of Norfolk: A Financial and Agricultural Study 1707-1842* (Oxford, 1975)

<sup>29</sup> A. Moore, (ed.) *Houghton Hall – the Prime Minister, the Empress and the Heritage* (London, 1996)

<sup>30</sup> J.M. Rosenheim, *The Townshends of Raynham* (Connecticut, 1980)

<sup>31</sup> W. Fawcett, *The West Norfolk Hunt* (London, 1934)

<sup>32</sup> J.R. Harvey, *Deer hunting in Norfolk from the Earliest Times* (Norwich, 1910)

Less has been written specifically about hunting in Shropshire apart from a useful chapter in the Victoria County History (VCH)<sup>33</sup>, a personal account by Miss Pitt, MFH *Hounds, Horses and Hunting*<sup>34</sup> and a series of booklets published in the early twentieth century describing each of the local hunts such as ‘*A short history of the Albrighton Hunt*’ in 1905.<sup>35</sup> There have also been books on two significant eighteenth-century Salopian foxhunters, Squire Forester of Willey<sup>36</sup> and John Mytton of Halston.<sup>37</sup> This thesis aims to use the two study areas to see if, between 1700 and 1900, there was a common view on what made a good landscape for hunting and, if so, what landowners did to achieve it.

### Structure of the thesis

Chapter two explores the early history of hunting as an elite activity and the transition from deer to fox as its favourite prey. Deuchar sums up the potency of hunting for the elite:

‘Hunting as a sport required and proclaimed the availability of land, the freedom and time to exploit it, and, very often, an economic status derived from a dependent class beneath. ...In the highest social circles – where the *need* to hunt was least – the sport’s function as a badge of affluence, a show of leisure, and a symbol of power and property was at its most potent’.<sup>38</sup>

As Thomas had already observed, in a chapter titled ‘Subjugation of the natural world’, originally ‘the rider of the great horse proclaimed both his social superiority and his conquest of the animal creation’.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Victoria County History, *History of Shropshire*, Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1973)

<sup>34</sup> F. Pitt, *Hounds, Horses and Hunting* (London, 1948).

<sup>35</sup> J.E. Auden, *A short history of the Albrighton Hunt* (London 1905)

<sup>36</sup> J. Randall, *Old sports and sportsmen or the Willey Country* (London, 1873)

<sup>37</sup> C. Apperley, ('Nimrod') *Life of Mytton* (London, 1835) and J. Holdsworth, *Mango - the life and times of Squire John Mytton 1796 - 1834* (London, 1972)

<sup>38</sup> S. Deuchar, *Sporting art in eighteenth-century England: a social and political history* (New Haven, 1988) p. 2

<sup>39</sup> K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, reprinted Penguin 1987 edn. (London, 1983) p. 29

The themes of 'access' and control' weave through the history of foxhunting. In chapter three the factors that influenced where foxhunting flourished in England are considered via the distribution of foxhunting between 1750-1800 in relation to (a) physical factors and (b) tenurial issues. The first part of the chapter considers how the physical characteristics of regions, especially relief and soil, and the resultant agricultural use, influence factors crucial to the success of hunting such as ease of access, scent and passage on horseback. The second part of the chapter explores how control of the landscape by the elite was enhanced by enclosure and the extension of private property, which enabled landowners to erect barriers to control indiscriminate access and protect their stock of foxes. This control was both visible and powerful, enforced by invisible tenurial means such as clauses in leases that controlled tenants' activities and manipulated the landscape to enhance the landlords' own sporting activities.

The argument for the need to integrate 'two ways of thinking about landscape: the one comparative, theoretical, interested in process ... the other humanistic, particularistic ...'<sup>40</sup> i.e. interested in individuals' perception and use of the landscape, appears to have rumbled on for a surprisingly long time. Johnson approvingly cited Flannery in 1973 as 'one of many examples' of authors writing about the need for 'framing research in terms of an inquiry into the general characteristics of societies'.<sup>41</sup> Thirty years later Finch, writing about hunting and the landscape, usefully spelled out the 'real need for historic landscape studies to integrate empirical analysis with an awareness of significance based on the use and perceptions of the landscape above and beyond its essential purpose' (primarily agriculture in English hunting countries).<sup>42</sup> Finch adds the suggestion that 'the significance of foxhunting within the landscape has not been recognised due to a continued focus on sites within the landscape, as opposed to an understanding of the process of change and the cultural significance of activities within the historic landscape'.<sup>43</sup> By 2007 Finch, again writing about hunting and the landscape, in the context of Historical Landscape Classification, has distilled the argument for synthesis to 'the link between practice

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<sup>40</sup> M. Johnson, *Ideas of landscape* (Oxford, 2007) p. 193

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, *Ideas*, p. 140

<sup>42</sup> Finch, 'Grass ...' p. 43

<sup>43</sup> Finch, 'Grass ...' p. 43

and place is essential'.<sup>44</sup> This study hopes to avoid the pitfall of just exhaustively listing 'places' or landscapes linked to hunting by discussing, in chapter four, how changes in the countryside influenced the development of the 'practice' of foxhunting and, in the process, how participants' views of what constituted a sporting landscape changed.

Chapter four seeks to explore different ways of examining how foxhunters experienced the landscape. To investigate this I compared the neglected resources of their personal hunting diaries and contemporary paintings to the official records of landscape change: enclosure awards and maps. The stereotypical view of Tory foxhunters as illiterate 'Squire Westerns' was summed up by William Shenstone, the eighteenth-century poet and garden-designer living at the Leasowes, an enclave of Shropshire in Worcestershire, who wrote: 'The world may be divided into people that read, people that write, people that think, and fox-hunters'.<sup>45</sup> Certainly it is not easy to find contemporary eighteenth and nineteenth-century accounts of foxhunting that extend much beyond diary entries such as 'rained all day, didn't find, rode Harkaway'. But some local record offices and family archives do contain hunting diaries which, combined with other resources such as enclosure records or maps and household accounts, provide a much more interesting and nuanced picture of how foxhunters experienced their surroundings. Traditionally the elite have commissioned paintings of their sporting activities and this study provides an opportunity to assess the realism and accuracy of these as sources for considering the hunting landscape, combined with the opportunity to examine the importance of details, such as changing styles of saddlery and jumping fences, on the development of the field sport. 'Topographical' poets such as John Clare, active in Northamptonshire when the countryside was being transformed by enclosure, provide additional vivid images of the changes. As Hoskins noted in the opening sentence of his first chapter on the *Making of the English Landscape*, 'poets make the best topographers'.<sup>46</sup> Chapter four ends by summarising the key physical characteristics of different landscape regions which successfully attracted early foxhunters and buttresses these findings

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<sup>44</sup> Finch, *Pastures of Leicester* ... p. 363

<sup>45</sup> W. Shenstone, *The works, in verse and prose, of William Shenstone, Esq: in two Volumes*. Vol. 2 (London, 1764) p.152

<sup>46</sup> Hoskins, *Landscape*, p.17

with evidence from enclosure records and household accounts alongside contemporary participants' views expressed through their hunting diaries.

Chapter five explores a different facet of 'access': the increase in participation of women, tenant farmers and urban dwellers. A few family packs remained aloof (Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's hounds were run as a private pack with no subscribers until 1944)<sup>47</sup> but the escalating cost of hunting forced the larger landowners, from around 1800, to start widening access by accepting subscriptions from an increasingly prosperous urban mercantile class. As Landry has observed: 'from the beginning there was a contest over meaning and the proper uses of the countryside, in which class differences played themselves out within and sometimes against the urban-rural divide'.<sup>48</sup> Landlords were joined in the hunting field by their more prosperous tenants, whose goodwill they relied on to preserve supplies of foxes. The increasing presence of women in the hunting field subsequently became problematical as social attitudes became more restrictive and enclosure fences posed physical challenges. The role of Hunt Clubs as a refuge for the elite, as in Shropshire, or an alternative access route for the aspirational urban dweller, as in Norfolk, is examined. Chapter five also explores the influence of the contemporary themes of 'improvement' and 'politeness' on the increasing popularity of hunting. By contrast the malign influence of the rise in popularity of game shooting and its impact on foxhunting is noted.

Chapter six examines the conundrum that has troubled foxhunters since the early eighteenth century – the need to encourage fox numbers so that there is then a sustainable population to hunt and kill. The advance of informal and Parliamentary enclosure altered the landscape in much of lowland England often leading to the loss of extensive tracts of woodland and heath land that had previously provided a safe habitat for foxes. Ironically, as a result of enclosure and improvement, many foxhunting landowners, as individuals or via membership of hunts or elite clubs, needed to exert even greater control over the landscape and forfeit agricultural income, the proceeds of improvement, by converting farmland to fox coverts. Muir, writing of 'symbols of authority' in the landscape, argued that 'authority carried with it

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<sup>47</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p. 176

<sup>48</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 2

power to coerce others and to enjoy privileges and resources that were denied to them. It also enabled the favoured few to make bold and symbolic statements in the landscape ... that would instantly be identified as signalling status, privilege and the possession of exclusive powers'.<sup>49</sup> Fox coverts (although hinting at a hidden or covert role) epitomised this expression of overt power. The more truly covert method of enhancing the supply of foxes, the creation of artificial earths hidden in woodland, gained importance during the period under study. By the nineteenth century the cost of creating coverts and earths had become so burdensome to individual landowners that many hunts subsidised the activities.

Chapter six provides a national and regional context for the detailed study of the impact of foxhunting on the landscape. It is noticeable that as many geographers have moved away from analysing the landscape in terms of 'regions' some landscape historians have moved towards this method. Kimble, writing in 1951 in a chapter provocatively titled 'The inadequacy of the regional concept', spelled out his 'suspicions that regional geographers may perhaps be trying to put boundaries that do not exist around areas that do not matter'.<sup>50</sup> The debate led to a move by many geographers away from the traditional style of regional monographs to more specialised case studies focussing systematically on issues such as 'the significance of water in cultural and political landscapes'.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile landscape historians, including Williamson, have chosen 'to examine not the whole country, nor yet some local area, but something in between: a region wide enough to encompass a broad range of landscape types'.<sup>52</sup> Other landscape historians, such as Gregory, have used 'regional studies in which the process of landscape improvement, and the motives of improving landlords, are studied in more detail through case-studies comparing individual estates'.<sup>53</sup> Williamson's influence is acknowledged by Gregory as 'this comparative regional approach provides the opportunity for detailed investigation at local level, and vitally, the means of setting localised developments in

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<sup>49</sup> R. Muir, *New reading the landscape* (Exeter, 2000) p.125

<sup>50</sup> G.H.T. Kimble, 'The Inadequacy of the Regional Concept' in *London Essays in Geography*, (ed.) L.D. Stamp & S.W. Wooldridge, (London, 1951) pp. 492-512

<sup>51</sup> University College London, Geography Department Undergraduate course, 2011

<sup>52</sup> T. Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes* (Macclesfield, 2003) pp. 24-25

<sup>53</sup> J. Gregory, Marginal environments and the idea of improvements: transforming heathland and moorland landscapes c.1650-1850 (PhD thesis, UEA 2008) p. 5

a wider regional and national context'.<sup>54</sup> I have also followed this model in structuring the thesis and locating detailed surveys of landscape features related to foxhunting initially in a broader framework.

Chapters seven and eight narrow the focus onto two contrasting areas, Norfolk and Shropshire, which are peripheral to the 'model' early foxhunting landscape of the Shires. The landscape and development of hunting in both counties is explored to investigate the interaction between the topography and use of the landscape with the perceptions and desires of those who used it for sport. Detailed surveys, through written records and maps, of landscape features related to hunting, enable us to see how these marginal areas compare to the East Midlands 'norm'. Johnson highlighted the concept of 'agency' noting that 'at its heart is the very simple observation that the archaeological record is created by the action of individuals ... (who) have a cultural background ... against which they operate'.<sup>55</sup> The chapters explore whether there was a consensus between individuals about what might 'improve' the landscape for sport and what new or re-worked features were required. Similarities and differences between the counties over two centuries are explored in the context of physical diversity, changing land use and landownership patterns since, as Schama noted, 'the landscape may indeed be a text on which generations write their recurring obsessions'<sup>56</sup> – in this case enhancing their sport.

Chapter nine summarises the findings of the research. The work of the French historian Fernand Braudel (1902-85) provides a useful structure for organising these results by proposing a three-fold temporal division, in descending order of duration. This echoes the previously discussed tripartite physical model of national/regional/local scale studies. Braudel identified three levels of events within the web of interrelated historical processes: long-term trends, underlying rhythms (including economic cycles) and specific occurrences.<sup>57</sup> 'Historicism' had already been criticised by (amongst others) Karl Popper who wrote in 1957 that 'we must reject the possibility of a theoretical history ... there can be no scientific theory of

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<sup>54</sup> Gregory, *Marginal environments* ... p. 5

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *Ideas*, p.142

<sup>56</sup> S. Schama, *Landscape and memory* (London, 1995) p. 12

<sup>57</sup> F. Braudel, *Ecrits sur l'histoire* (Paris, 1969)

historical development serving as a basis for historical prediction'.<sup>58</sup> But Braudel's model still provides a useful framework for considering landscape change and it is easy to resist any impulse towards 'prediction' since the future of foxhunting, and related alterations to the landscape, were rendered unpredictable by the Hunting Act passed in 2004, to take effect in 2005, which banned most forms of hunting with hounds in England and Wales.

The development of foxhunting was a small part of the broad, long-term (in Braudel's model) trend towards improvement by landowners during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries involving greater capital investment, enclosure, improved arable techniques and better livestock husbandry. For many estate owners improvement included an interest in breeding faster hounds and horses as well as enhancing the landscape of their estates to develop sporting use and increase their social standing.

The second tier of Braudel's model - the underlying economic cycle – in this case involves the change in landownership and access to resources stemming from the enclosure of common land and open-fields. Foxhunting is a useful medium for examining whether the increased control of resources by an elite, through privatisation, had an impact on the development and spread of the modern style of foxhunting. This section explores the results of changing relationships between landowners, tenants, small owner-occupiers and a growing class of socially-ambitious urban dwellers. The third level of the model concerns smaller scale changes. In this case, the impact of hunting on the local landscape can be measured by the evolution of individual landowner's involvement in hunting, or its rival shooting, and the uneven spread of new features such as fox coverts and artificial fox earths.

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<sup>58</sup> K. Popper, *The poverty of historicism* (London, 1957) p.vi



## CHAPTER 2 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY HUNTING

### Introduction

This chapter will briefly review the history of hunting and illustrate how its development was linked to changes in the management of the countryside, which protected the habitat of prey species, and shifting perceptions of what constituted an elite quarry. One of the earliest enthusiasts was Alfred the Great (871-899), 'a most expert and active hunter ... to which he applied with incessant labour and amazing success'.<sup>59</sup> It is ironic that subsequently foreign influences were important to what is now seen as a quintessentially English sport. King Canute (1016-1066) loved hunting and commissioned Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, to write game laws that earned a reputation for 'extreme severity but essential justice'.<sup>60</sup> A further wave of invaders, the Normans, imposed a rigid set of forest laws contained in the '*Carta de foresta*' in 1217 and set up a network of royal forests with the right of chase (hunting) granted to certain lords and religious houses.<sup>61</sup>

The foreign contribution to the development of hunting in Britain has been acknowledged by a range of authors; for example Landry who wrote in 2001 that 'the protocol for the royal pursuit of deer had first been elaborated in France and the English continued to look to the French texts for guidance'.<sup>62</sup> She listed as examples the *Masters of Game* (1406-1413) written by Edward of Norwich, second Duke of York, based upon Gaston Phoebus's earlier *Livre de chasse*, *The Boke of St Albans* published in 1486 from mainly French manuscript sources and Gascoigne's *The noble art of venery or hunting* (1575) – largely a translation of Jacques de Fouilloux's *La Venerie*. The French not only provided technical guidance to British hunting but, Longrigg has pointed out, a practical legacy - the strong influence on the development of hounds. The Gascon hound was imported when the Brocas family joined Edward III's court from Gascony in 1363 and became hereditary masters of the Royal Hounds. The Gascon developed into the Old Southern hound of England that

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<sup>59</sup> Asser, 'Life of King Alfred the Great' quoted in R. Longrigg, *The History of Fox Hunting* (London, 1975) p.19

<sup>60</sup> D. Birley, *Sport and the making of Britain* (Manchester, 1993) p.15

<sup>61</sup> D. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar privilege - a social history of English Foxhunting* (Sussex, 1977) p. 13

<sup>62</sup> D. Landry, *The invention of the countryside* (Basingstoke, 2001) p. 36

became the dominant hare hound and was consequently the most prevalent hound in gentlemen's private packs from around 1350-1800.<sup>63</sup>

Traditionally, hunting historians have believed that hunting privileges were harshly protected; Longrigg wrote that the killing of a deer, boar, or even a hare, was punished by blinding the offender, when the killing of a man could be atoned for by paying a moderate fine or compensation.<sup>64</sup> Rackham provided a useful corrective; writing of royal chases or their private equivalents - an unfenced area for deer keeping - he noted that 'forests are a rich source of pseudo-history. Besides the mis-equating of forests with woodland, there are notions that they belonged to the Crown, ... were set aside for the king's hunting, [and] were guarded by terrible laws ...'<sup>65</sup> He expanded on the theme of forest courts noting that 'in popular myth these were blood-thirsty courts, cutting off the limbs etc of even minor offenders against Forest Law'<sup>66</sup> but added that no evidence has been shown for these sanctions and in fact the Courts were quick to accept fines instead of physical punishment. Munsche endorsed this view recording that although the original Norman forest laws were harsh their power was mitigated by the Forest Charter of 1217 and declined further in the later Middle Ages.<sup>67</sup>

### **Early foxhunting**

It is also a traditionally accepted view that prey was ranked in the Middle Ages: 'deer and boar were noble game, and the hare was also worthy of a great man's disport owing to the fascination and difficulty of catching it' while fox and badger were considered vermin and rabbits attracted the humblest 'right of warren' (a commonplace licence to hunt small animals such as hares, rabbits and pheasants over any kind of land in a particular manor).<sup>68</sup> The hierarchy listed above by

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<sup>63</sup> R. Longrigg, *The English Squire and his sport* (London, 1977) p. 28

<sup>64</sup> D. Hume, *History of England* (London 1831) quoted in R. Longrigg *The history of Fox hunting* (London, 1975) p. 22

<sup>65</sup> O. Rackham, *History of the countryside* (London, 1986) p. 130

<sup>66</sup> Rackham, *History*, p. 136

<sup>67</sup> P. Munsche, *Gentlemen and poachers* (Cambridge, 1981) p. 9

<sup>68</sup> Longrigg, *The English Squire*, p. 14

Longrigg, followed Carr<sup>69</sup> and was echoed in the same year by Itzkovitz<sup>70</sup> and recently by Griffin.<sup>71</sup>

It has been argued that for centuries foxes were seen as low status prey or vermin with foxhunting conducted mainly on foot, in woodlands, as a form of pest control.<sup>72</sup> Around 1328 William Twici, Edward II's huntsman, wrote a short book, *L'art de Venerie*, which dealt first with hare hunting and then stag hunting without even mention of the fox as a worthy prey.<sup>73</sup> Eighty years later Edward Plantagenet's *The Master of Game*, written in 1406 to instruct the future Henry V, ranked the fox seventh in the list of prey just above the badger recommending that both are to be killed as quickly as possible, ignominiously dug out rather than hunted 'nobly' across country.<sup>74</sup> The chase is expected to end with the fox dug from its earth by terriers which explains the entry in the Le Strange family of Hunstanton's (in north Norfolk) household accounts for April 7<sup>th</sup> 1533 which show a payment for 2s 4d for 'twyn for yor foxe netts wt the breydyng', which suggests that the foxes were then trapped and knocked on the head.<sup>75</sup>

This utilitarian form of foxhunting could also involve a wider village community protecting their poultry and young stock by surrounding neighbouring woodland on foot and then digging out the fox with terriers. Chaucer described a fourteenth century fox hunt in the Nun's Priest's Tale after a widow 'saw the fox toward the wood is gone and bare upon his back the cock away ... and after him they ran and eke with staves many other man ran Coll our dog, and Talbot and Garland; and Malkin with her distaff in her hand ...'.<sup>76</sup> Breughel's chilly '*Hunters in the snow*' shows a motley pack of doleful dogs trailing a hunter with a sole fox slung from a 'stave' over his shoulder.

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<sup>69</sup> Carr, *English foxhunting*, pp. 21-22

<sup>70</sup> Itzkowitz, *Peculiar*, p. 7

<sup>71</sup> Griffin, *Blood Sport*, p. 4

<sup>72</sup> Finch, 'Grass ...' p. 43

<sup>73</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 29

<sup>74</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 22

<sup>75</sup> J.R. Harvey, *Deer Hunting in Norfolk from the earliest times* (Norwich, 1910) p. 10

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Longrigg, *History*, p. 29



**Figure 2.1** Detail from 'Hunters in the snow' by P. Breughel the Elder, 1565<sup>77</sup>

It appears true that in general the fox remained the prey of last resort for the gentry and was held in low esteem;<sup>78</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot wrote in 1531 'I dispraise nat the huntynge of the foxe with rennyng houndes: but it is nat to be compared to the other hunting in commoditie of exercise'.<sup>79</sup> Thomas Blundeville of Newton Flotman, in south Norfolk, is recorded as hunting fox on foot in his woodland in the mid sixteenth century<sup>80</sup> (although he wrote the first British book on horsemanship, *The Art of Riding*, published in 1560).<sup>81</sup> Woodland hunting was on foot because it was difficult to move on horseback through trees without rides. A.S. Barrow ('Sabretache') recorded that the Lords of the manor of Pytchley in the days of Elizabeth I (from

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<sup>77</sup> W. Siepel (ed.) *Pieter Breughel the Elder at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1997) p. 108

<sup>78</sup> Griffin, *Blood Sport*, p. 124

<sup>79</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 42

<sup>80</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 53

<sup>81</sup> T. Blundeville, *The fower chiefest offices belonging to Horsemanshippe* (London, 1565)

1558) were required to 'furnish dogs at their own cost to destroy wolves, foxes, polecats and other vermin in the counties of Northampton, Rutland, Oxford, Essex and Buckinghamshire'.<sup>82</sup>

But, as so often in the history of foxhunting, the true picture is more nuanced. There were high status foxhunters, often women, well before 'the late sixteenth century' when 'foxhunting gradually emerged from its traditional position of relative obscurity'.<sup>83</sup> Buxton has noted that Henry III (who reigned from 1216-1272) sent instructions to the Chief Forester of Essex to allow the Abbess of Barking (Ladye Mabel de Boxham) to chase hares and foxes.<sup>84</sup> This interpretation has been challenged by Almond who suggests that the Abbess was not 'hunting herself on horseback with hounds ... it is more likely that the male servants of the abbey carried out the necessary control of the park foxes, which had probably been worrying sheep'.<sup>85</sup> There is not enough detail to adjudicate but it is noteworthy that in Shropshire female heads of religious institutions were also hunting: Bishop Northburgh criticised Alice de Harley in 1338 for her financial mismanagement, her extravagant dress, for keeping hounds and hunting. Similarly, in the same century, a visiting Bishop was outraged to discover that the Prioress of White Ladies, near Boscabel, kept 'hunting dogs'.<sup>86</sup> Some elite men also hunted the fox; Cummins recorded that Edward I, allowed a halfpenny a day for feeding both fox and otter hounds.<sup>87</sup> In November 1281 Edward also permitted Edmund, second Baron Mortimer, a powerful Marcher Lord, a licence to hunt the fox and hare with his own hounds in all the forests of Shropshire until Easter – provided that he took none of the King's deer.<sup>88</sup>

Strikingly, one of the earlier recorded examples of foxhunting as a high status activity combining a feast and fun, rather than utilitarian task, involved a foreign woman. The 'inarticulate and truncated pages' of the *Register or Chronicle of Butley Priory*, in

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<sup>82</sup> A.S. Barrow, ('Sabretache') *Shires and Provinces* (London, 1926) p. 35

<sup>83</sup> Griffin, *Blood Sport*, p.125

<sup>84</sup> M. Buxton, *Ladies of the Chase* (London, 1987) p.14

<sup>85</sup> R. Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud, 2003) pp. 149 -150

<sup>86</sup> J. Auden, *A short history of the Albrighton hunt* (London, 1905) p. 1

<sup>87</sup> J. Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk* (London, 1988) p. 27

<sup>88</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol 1 (London, 1908) p. 490

Suffolk, sketch a lively picture of the Dowager Queen Maria of France and Charles, Duke of Suffolk in 1528.<sup>89</sup> It records them '*vulpes apud parcum de Staverton venati sunt*' (hunting foxes in Staverton Park) and then '*Prandium suum sub quercubus sumpsere cum Joco et Ludo*' (eating under the oak trees with jokes and games).<sup>90</sup> A second meet at Scuttegrove Wood is also mentioned and the use of the plural form '*equitabant*' strongly suggests that the Dowager Queen also rode.<sup>91</sup> The likelihood that early elite foxhunters were mounted is strengthened by evidence from the late fourteenth century Middle English poem 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' where after a long hunt the fox is killed and Sir Bertilak 'alights from his horse and lifts the fox ...'<sup>92</sup>

In spite of what has often been assumed by historians, this evidence suggests that the hierarchy of prey was not entirely rigid, with some high status households prepared to hunt on horseback what was locally available in the absence of deer – a situation that became much more widespread amongst the gentry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### **Deer hunting and deer parks**

However, deer hunting remained the elite activity for most major landowners up until the eighteenth century and it is worth exploring its history because it illustrates the twin themes of habitat protection and restricted access to reserves (parks or coverts) by non-participants that thread through the story of all forms of hunting.

Hoppitt has traced the development of roe, and possibly red, deer, hunting as a high status activity in Anglo-Saxon times and through later periods when deer were the preserve of kings and the aristocracy.<sup>93</sup> The Saxons made 'derhagh', enclosures to

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<sup>89</sup> A.G. Dickens, (ed.) *The Register or Chronicle of Butley Priory 1510-1535* (Winchester, 1951) p. 23. I am grateful to Professor T Williamson for this reference.

<sup>90</sup> Dickens, *The Register*, p. 54.

<sup>91</sup> Dickens, *The Register*, p 54

<sup>92</sup> Gawain quoted in Cummins, *The Hound*, p.145

<sup>93</sup> R. Hoppitt, 'The development of Parks in Suffolk from the Eleventh to the Seventeenth Centuries' (PhD thesis, UEA, 1992) p. 6

retain deer, as at Ongar in Essex,<sup>94</sup> and Liddiard has argued that the origins of the English deer park lie before 1066 although he added that uncertainty remains around the context.<sup>95</sup>

While the origins were Saxon, it was the Normans who expanded the scope and infrastructure of hunting by re-introducing fallow deer and creating a network of hunting reserves. Stamper made the interesting point that fallow deer, which will graze alongside cattle, are well suited to park life and may fatten better on poor land than red deer.<sup>96</sup> However, Sykes has suggested that, on the basis of zoo-archaeological analysis, after 1066 only a few fallow deer were imported from Sicily, and subsequently their numbers only became significant in the mid-twelfth century. She argued that there appears to have been a switch from red to roe deer after the conquest which may have been due to the Norman preference for hunting across wider stretches of landscape'.<sup>97</sup> If the suggestion is correct, this was an interesting precursor of the shift in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from hunting hares (which usually ran in circles) to foxes that provided much longer, linear hunts.

The landscape associated with deer hunting became socially stratified as extensive areas were declared Royal forests with exclusive royal hunting rights protected by the Forest Courts.<sup>98</sup> The Church and nobility rapidly gained the Crown's sanction to set up similarly unenclosed but legally defined and protected areas for hunting – the chases – where deer and foxes could be pursued over open country.<sup>99</sup> Harvey noted that the privilege of hunting game at Arminghall and Thorpe, close to Norwich, in the twelfth century was reserved for the needs of the Bishop of Norwich and his monks.<sup>100</sup>

A third category of smaller hunting preserve can be distinguished – the fenced deer park. The Domesday Book recorded thirty-five parks, and there were probably a few

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<sup>94</sup> Hoppitt, 'The development...' p. 7

<sup>95</sup> R. Liddiard, 'The deer parks of Domesday book' *Landscapes* 4. 1. (2003) p. 21

<sup>96</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 43

<sup>97</sup> N. Sykes, 'Animal bones and animal parks', in *The Medieval Park; new perspectives* (ed.) R Liddiard (Macclesfield, 2007) p. 59

<sup>98</sup> Hoppitt, 'The development...' p. 7

<sup>99</sup> D. Dymond, *The Norfolk Landscape*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Suffolk, 1990) p. 113

<sup>100</sup> Harvey, *Deer Hunting* p. 7

more, such as Bramber in Sussex, that went unnoticed.<sup>101</sup> But from the early twelfth century their number began to increase rapidly as the area under forest law was reduced. Lords' incomes were rising and with them their desire to invest and enjoy their new-found wealth in high status displays such as hunting parks. The scale was not insignificant – Mileson suggested that by the late thirteenth century ‘there may have been something like 1,500 parks ... the majority owned by greater gentry ... and religious houses’ and added that the numbers are unlikely to have altered much in the following two centuries.<sup>102</sup> Rackham has proposed that by the early fourteenth century two per cent of the land area of England was emparked.<sup>103</sup>

Emparking was widespread in East Anglia and Hoppitt has identified 135 pre-1600 parks in Suffolk<sup>104</sup> while Dymond referred to over 60 medieval parks in Norfolk.<sup>105</sup> He recorded that the great majority were created between 1100-1350 in areas where ancient woodland existed and were virtually non-existent in the Breckland, ‘Good Sands’, Marshland and Flegg.<sup>106</sup> This is re-inforced by Yaxley’s map of ‘Medieval Deer Parks’ that showed how the distribution flanked the later heartland for foxhunting in the north-west quadrant of the county.<sup>107</sup> Hoppitt noted a similar pattern in Suffolk with a sharp preference for the fertile heavy till soils, largely avoiding the poorer lighter soils of Breckland and the Sandlings.<sup>108</sup>

Turning to the other study area, Rowley noted that Domesday recorded far more deer parks (*haies*) in Shropshire than in any other Midland county<sup>109</sup> while the VCH identified, from the same source, 36 hays - enclosures in or close to woodland where deer would be bred or gathered before their release for hunting.<sup>110</sup> In addition at least 26 new parks were created in Shropshire between 1270 and 1310, most covering 50-

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<sup>101</sup> L. Cantor, *The Changing English Countryside 1400-1700* (London, 1987) p. 76

<sup>102</sup> S.A. Mileson, ‘The sociology of park creation in medieval England’ in Liddiard (ed), *Medieval park*, p. 20

<sup>103</sup> Rackham, *History* p.123

<sup>104</sup> Hoppitt, ‘Development ...’ p. 277

<sup>105</sup> Dymond, *Norfolk Landscape*, p.113

<sup>106</sup> Dymond, *Norfolk Landscape*, p.114

<sup>107</sup> P. Wade Martins (ed.) *A Historical Atlas of Norfolk* 2nd edition (Norwich, 1994) p. 54

<sup>108</sup> Hoppitt, ‘Development ...’ p. 279

<sup>109</sup> T. Rowley, *The Shropshire Landscape* (London, 1972) p. 67

<sup>110</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 43



100 acres.<sup>111</sup> In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many lords kept one or more parks, especially in central and eastern Shropshire, and parks continued to be used both as demesne enclosures for stock and woodland, and for hunting.<sup>112</sup> Rowley added that in Shropshire ‘the fashion for creating deer parks declined rapidly during the late Middle Ages ... in many cases hunting ceased altogether ... in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries some old parks were cleared of their woodland and enclosed ... medieval hunting gave way to a more economic use of land’.<sup>113</sup> Saxton’s 1577 map of the county marked only twenty-three parks and several of these were enclosed for agriculture soon afterwards.<sup>114</sup> Rowley noted an ironic twist; many of the old hunting parks that were being broken up and enclosed for farming were confined to the sourest and driest soils. Meanwhile the contemporaneous, late sixteenth-century growth of small country houses with parks, as in the fertile Corvedale along the foot of Wenlock Edge, meant much of the newly emparked land was on good soil in the lowlands and valleys so for the first time valuable land was being used principally for aesthetic rather than economic purposes.<sup>115</sup>

### *The role of deer parks*

In 1971 Patten described the parks’ role as somewhere that the deer could be harboured, managed and kept under control for breeding, as well as for food in the winter, before being pursued into the surrounding forest areas.<sup>116</sup> During the last two decades there has been considerable research and debate about the relative importance of different functions of deer parks, often involving a discussion of their role in both ‘place’ - a site for rearing and harvesting stock - and ‘practice’ - as a backdrop to recreational hunting. Mileson challenged Rackham’s assertions that parks were ‘a utilitarian enterprise producing meat’<sup>117</sup> by emphasising their status as prestigious hunting sites.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, Birrell summarised her view that ‘deer parks were often efficiently managed units fulfilling a number of purposes’ and warned that

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<sup>111</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 4, p. 45

<sup>112</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 4, p.101

<sup>113</sup> Rowley, *Shropshire*, p. 120

<sup>114</sup> Rowley, *Shropshire*, p. 121

<sup>115</sup> Rowley, *Shropshire* p. 121

<sup>116</sup> J. Patten, ‘How the Deer parks began’, *Country Life* (September sixteenth 1971) p. 661

<sup>117</sup> O. Rackham, *Ancient Woodland* (London, 1980) p. 197

<sup>118</sup> S. Mileson ‘The sociology of park creation in Medieval England’ in Liddiard (ed.) *Medieval* p.16

they should not be dismissed 'as no more than status symbols'.<sup>119</sup> By 2005 Liddiard listed parks' variety of functions as including game reserves, hunting grounds, locations for grazing, timber production, arable farming and industrial activity as well as a place for recreation and contemplation and a pleasurable backdrop to a noble residence.<sup>120</sup> Most recently, Fletcher has written very comprehensively about the history of both deer hunting and deer parks describing the latter as both 'a mark of status and conspicuous consumption' for the elite.<sup>121</sup>

Parks in the fifteenth and sixteenth century became much more closely associated with mansions, and more ornamental in character. However, many were still used in part for hunting. The spread of emparking led to the expansion of opportunities to hunt beyond the clerical and secular grandees and members of their households and is well illustrated by the household accounts of the Le Strange family of Hunstanton, north Norfolk, in 1533-1534. These show the Le Stranges 'huntyng to Mr Wyndham at Shipd'm parke and to Whinbgh' as well as payment for 'when yow did lye at Elsynge ... wt Mr. Shreiff and hunted in Swanton parke and Hokeryng' (all the parks mentioned are in Norfolk).<sup>122</sup>

The deer park prefigured the concept of the parks' eighteenth and nineteenth-century successor – the exclusive and private fox covert. As Moorhouse noted, 'one of the main functions of parks ... was as a reserve in which a variety of game could be bred and hunted for sport'.<sup>123</sup> Hoppitt emphasised the point that 'parks were private places' adding that 'the distinguishing feature of a park was more to do with exclusivity and privacy than a specific form of land use' in a landscape where access to scattered strips in open-fields and common grazing land allowed an early 'right to roam'.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> J. Birrell, 'Deer and deer farming in medieval England' *AHR* 40. II (1992) p.112

<sup>120</sup> Liddiard (ed.) *Medieval*, p.1

<sup>121</sup> J. Fletcher, *Gardens of earthly delight: the history of deer parks* (Oxford, 2011)

<sup>122</sup> Harvey, *Deer hunting*, p. 10

<sup>123</sup> S. Moorhouse, 'The medieval parks of Yorkshire: function, contents and chronology' in Liddiard (ed.) *Medieval*, p. 115

<sup>124</sup> Hoppitt, 'Development...' p. 10

### *Deer hunting*

Fletcher usefully describes the three main forms of deer hunting and pragmatically comments on the likelihood of them taking place within the confines of a deer park. The classic method of hunting deer was *par force de chiens* and involved hunting on horseback with a pack of hounds; this is the most obvious predecessor of mounted foxhunting.<sup>125</sup> Fletcher points out that ‘for the full panoply of a *par force* hunt a park would need to be large ... and [it] was probably only practiced by royalty or nobility in large prestigious parks’.<sup>126</sup> As Liddiard confirmed, this type of hunting would be ‘simply impossible within the bounds of a park’ which suggests that, like foxhunting, it often took place across open countryside.<sup>127</sup> Fletcher noted that ‘there are many allusions to hunting in parks being inferior sport ... and “bow and stable” hunting would be the more obvious method’ in a smaller park. This second method is the ‘more commonly used and less formal system’ where bowmen concealed themselves in the trees while a few mounted men - ‘the stable’ - used hounds or ‘*brachets*’ to locate the deer and ‘drift’ them up to the archers - the ‘bow’.<sup>128</sup> As Fletcher commented: ‘this would be a more feasible way to work in a park and could probably be managed in a quite small enclosure’.<sup>129</sup> A third way of catching deer in parks – coursing with a couple of ‘gaze hounds’ (hunting by sight), such as greyhounds, with mounted followers was also popular’.<sup>130</sup> The choice of method must have depended on the area available and the primary purpose – to enjoy an extended hunt with a pack of hounds or to provide meat in a utilitarian way.

Throughout the Middle Ages *par force* deer hunting took place comparatively slowly until another foreign influence arrived. James I, an enthusiastic but ungainly horseman, brought the drive of French hunting to the English court by introducing faster ‘running’ hounds’<sup>131</sup> and asking Henry IV to send over some ‘*veneurs*’ to introduce French hunting techniques.<sup>132</sup> But a century later deer hunting was in

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<sup>125</sup> By power of hounds

<sup>126</sup> Fletcher, *Gardens*, p. 109

<sup>127</sup> Liddiard, *Medieval park*, p. 4

<sup>128</sup> Fletcher, *Gardens*, pp. 107-8. *Brachet* is ‘old’ French for a ‘hound’

<sup>129</sup> Fletcher, *Gardens*, p. 109

<sup>130</sup> Fletcher, *Gardens*, p. 115

<sup>131</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 19

<sup>132</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 18; *Veneurs* is French for ‘huntsmen’

sharp decline and the aristocracy began to desert the stag for the fox as prime object of the chase.

### *The decline of deer hunting*

Carr attempted to explain why stag hunting eventually declined in favour of foxhunting; 'the answer to our question is obscure and complex, and it turns on the increasing difficulty and expense of hunting the deer as much as on the desirability of hunting the fox'.<sup>133</sup> There appear to be three main reasons: the loss of habitat and poaching caused a fall in deer numbers, changing fashions in sporting activity and the rise of the turnip – the antithesis to venison as a prestigious foodstuff.

Longrigg commented on the early Medieval preoccupation of hunting people with habitat when the uprooting of a covert, 'assart', became a serious crime.<sup>134</sup> As Thirsk observed: enclosure had made such rapid progress in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at least in Midland and South East England, that the waste and woodland over which the deer could roam had been drastically curtailed.<sup>135</sup> Hoppitt, writing of Eastern England, noted that 'a changing economic climate towards the end of the period of study [1700] associated with an improved level of agricultural technology and the desire to maximise incomes put pressures on landowners to change woodland and grazing to arable and so parks were cleared of woodland and broken up for cultivation'.<sup>136</sup>

Poaching threatened deer stocks and 'during the Civil War and Protectorate most parks lost many or all of their deer to cattle and horses, and almost all suffered serious damage to the pales and great loss of timber'.<sup>137</sup> The Duchess of Newcastle lamented 'Of eight parks which my lord had before the wars there was but one left which was not quite destroyed, viz Welbeck Park [in Nottinghamshire] ... the rest of the parks were totally defaced and destroyed, both wood, pales and deer'.<sup>138</sup> After

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<sup>133</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 22

<sup>134</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 23

<sup>135</sup> J. Thirsk (ed) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1640–1750*, V ii (Cambridge, 1985) p. 370

<sup>136</sup> Hoppitt, 'Development...' p. 281

<sup>137</sup> Fletcher, *Gardens*, p. 176

<sup>138</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 23

the Restoration of 1660 Charles II was reduced to buying deer in Germany at high prices and he was prepared to hand out baronetcies to gentlemen ready to help him in restocking his parks.<sup>139</sup>

Patten commented on the second reason - the impact of changing fashions:

Deer hunting made great demands on space and on the pocket. It was essentially royal and noble. The changing social climate with more people with more money wishing to enjoy sport called for some less extensive, more available form of venery. Such needs were met through the eighteenth century by a change of quarry from deer to fox, which made fewer extravagant demands on the purse and – more importantly – on vast areas of land.<sup>140</sup>

Domestic stocks of wild deer fell so much that during the 1720s hunting ‘carted’ deer, the release of captive deer to be hunted and recaptured for future use, was introduced. White looked back, in his *Natural History of Selbourne*, to how regal supplies were maintained in the mid eighteenth century: ‘it is now more than 30 years ago that his highness sent down a huntsman and six yeoman prickers, in scarlet jackets laced with gold, attended by the stag-hounds; ordering them to take every deer in this forest [Wolmer in Hampshire] alive and convey them in carts to Windsor’.<sup>141</sup>

But hunting carted deer was seen as a poor surrogate and its social allure was further reduced in 1793 when the Prince of Wales gave up hunting stags and took to hunting foxes.<sup>142</sup> Hunting wild red deer survived only in the West Country. Meanwhile landscape changes following enclosure and Hugo Meynell’s development of a new style of foxhunting, discussed further in Chapter 3, had already favoured its rise as the elite form of hunting.

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<sup>139</sup> Shirley, ‘English Deer Parks’ (1867) quoted in Carr, *English*, p. 23

<sup>140</sup> Patten, ‘How the Deer parks...’ p. 661

<sup>141</sup> G. White, *The Natural history of Selbourne* (Originally published 1789; Oxford 1993) p. 22

<sup>142</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 25

A third reason for the decline in deer hunting can be proposed: the rise in alternative sources of meat, apart from game, during the winter. Before the seventeenth-century introduction of root crops, to supplement winter-feeding of hay, farmers struggled to keep stock alive. But the rise of root crops such as turnips and other new fodder crops, including clover, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century meant that more farm stock could be carried through the winter and the need for harvesting both 'wild' supplies such as deer and 'domestic' squabs from dovecotes became less pressing.<sup>143</sup> Theobald's research on the clays of 'Woodland High Suffolk' showed that the ability to increase winter feedstocks meant that bought-in bullocks could be fattened and 'finished' more quickly.<sup>144</sup> As a result of these innovations the year round supply of farm-reared meat and its quality improved which reduced the vital role of venison in high status households.

## Hare Hunting

As deer hunting declined hare hunting partly took its place although it is of much less interest to landscape historians because of the lack of any related features, apart from kennels for harriers (followed on horseback) or beagles (foot followers). In early medieval times the hare 'was ... worthy of a great man's disport owing to the fascination and difficulty of catching it',<sup>145</sup> so as 'deer hunting grew more elaborate and expensive in the fourteenth century ... [this] may go far to explain the popularity of informal hare hunting'.<sup>146</sup> During the sixteenth century, hare hunting was described as a 'sport for Noble peeres, a sport for gentle bloods, [although] the pains I leave for servants such, as beate the bushie woods'.<sup>147</sup> James I enjoyed hare hunting as well as deer hunting, although he did not rely on drawing<sup>148</sup> 'bushie woods' and little was left to chance when he hunted at Newmarket since artificial

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<sup>143</sup> M. Overton, *The Agricultural Revolution in England* (Cambridge, 1996) p. 99

<sup>144</sup> J. Theobald, 'Agricultural productivity in Woodland High Suffolk', *AHR* Vol 50.1 (2002) pp. 1-25 (2002)

<sup>145</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 14

<sup>146</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 27

<sup>147</sup> 'Gascoigne or Turberville' quoted in Longrigg, *History*, p. 40

<sup>148</sup> To 'draw' a covert means that hounds search it for signs of a hare or fox

drags were laid and live hares released from baskets onto the Heath<sup>149</sup> – the precursors of ‘bag’ foxes so crucial to much foxhunting in later centuries.<sup>150</sup>

In the sixteenth century the local gentry also began hunting hares on horseback; in 1525 the Le Strange family accounts show a payment of 2d ‘to giffe to Willm Crispe for fyndyng a hare’.<sup>151</sup> By the early seventeenth century Gervase Markham could write that hare hunting was cheap enough to be ‘easlie and equalie distributed, as well to the wealthy farmer as to the great gentleman’.<sup>152</sup> In the seventeenth and for much of the eighteenth century the English country gentleman probably regarded hunting the hare as the supreme test of his skill; ‘of all chases’ wrote Blome in 1709 ‘the hare makes the best diversion and sheweth the most Cunning in Hunting’.<sup>153</sup>

In contrast to the complex and expensive social and spatial demands of deer forests, chases or parks, the hare is an animal that has successfully colonised farmland landscapes and is most abundant on arable areas where cereal growing predominates, although grass fields are preferred feeding areas in summer. Woods, shelterbelts and hedgerows are frequently used as resting areas during the day, particularly during winter.<sup>154</sup> Hares live at a comparatively high density where the habitat is suitable. A survey of numbers of hares per square kilometer, reported in 1991, showed a range of 46-53 over two years on the chalk soils at Six Mile Bottom in Cambridgeshire and 27-33 per square kilometer on sandy soils at West Acre in West Norfolk.<sup>155</sup>

Foxes are described in the *Handbook of British Mammals* as a highly adaptable species whose lack of specific habitat requirements is one of the keys to their success; unsurprisingly they are usually most abundant where there is a wide variety of cover and food.<sup>156</sup> Foxes live in family groups (a breeding pair and one or more

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<sup>149</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p.55

<sup>150</sup> ‘Bag’ foxes were captured from the wild for release or ‘turning out’ (from a bag or sack) on hunting days

<sup>151</sup> Harvey, *Deer hunting*, p. 10

<sup>152</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 52

<sup>153</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 25

<sup>154</sup> G. Corbett & S. Harris (eds.) *Handbook of British Mammals* (Oxford, 1991) p. 155

<sup>155</sup> Corbett & Harris, *Handbook*, p. 159

<sup>156</sup> Corbett & Harris, *Handbook*, p. 357

'surplus' females) that share a territory; while density in agricultural lowland Britain is variable, one family group per square kilometer is typical.<sup>157</sup> It is easy to see that the minor gentry in most areas would have a much higher chance of finding a hare to hunt than a fox. Since hares tended to run in large circles, it also had the advantage that the gentry rarely left their own land while hunting.

Unlike deer hunting, hare hunting has continued in parallel with foxhunting into contemporary times due to its relative cheapness, availability of prey and limited terrain requirements. Before the ban brought in during 2004 there were still twenty-one harrier packs (hunting hares on horseback) in Great Britain including two in Norfolk and two more in Suffolk. Seventy-four packs of beagles, followed on foot, continue in Great Britain with one hunting in the Newmarket area and another in Shropshire. There are even ten packs of the ponderous basset hound remaining, although none in East Anglia or Shropshire.

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<sup>157</sup> Corbett & Harris, *Handbook*, p. 364



## CHAPTER 3 – THE ORIGINS OF FOXHUNTING AS A SPECIALIST ACTIVITY

### Introduction

This chapter explores the steady rise in popularity of foxhunting. The history of foxhunting has concentrated disproportionately on the East Midlands. But hunting occurred elsewhere as well and only by looking at this wider canvas is it possible to understand how the sport developed – in the Shires and the rest of England. The first record of hounds purpose-bred to hunt foxes was made by Thomas Cockaine who inherited an estate at Ashbourne in Derbyshire in 1538 and, as Landy acknowledged, is usually seen as one of the earlier advocates of mounted foxhunting.<sup>158</sup> Cockaine described how two couple (four hounds) are chosen as ‘trailers of an olde foxe and finders of him’ when the rest of the hounds are unleashed to join the hunt. He then enjoys another tradition, the boastful hunt account; ‘And this tast I will giue you of the flying of this chase, that the Author hereof hath killed a Foxe distant from the Couert where hee was found, fourteen miles aloft the ground with hounds’.<sup>159</sup> Beckett noted that during the seventeenth century ‘hunting foxes was associated with country squires and yeoman, indeed the word “foxhunter” was a synonym for hick, West Country, Tory bumpkin’.<sup>160</sup> Although keeping a pack to hunt solely foxes was rare until the eighteenth century Griffin has highlighted a more general move from the Restoration onwards towards hunting the fox on horseback for recreation not just pest control.<sup>161</sup>

The justification for foxhunting continues to oscillate between ‘pest control’ and ‘recreation’ up until the present day – often depending on the current political climate and the needs and attitudes of local farmers. The Holderness Hunt in Yorkshire was started in 1726 by William Draper of Beswick, who hunted the Holderness country for twenty years because sheep farmers were plagued by foxes.<sup>162</sup> On the opposite side of the country the Blencathra, whose origins lie in the Keswick Hounds, started

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<sup>158</sup> D. Landy, *The invention of the countryside* (Basingstoke, 2001) p. 41

<sup>159</sup> T. Cockaine, *A short treatise of hunting* (London, 1591)

<sup>160</sup> J.V. Becket, *The aristocracy in England*, (Oxford, 1986) p 347

<sup>161</sup> E. Griffin, *Blood Sport - hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, 2007) p. 126

<sup>162</sup> R. Longrigg, *The history of foxhunting* (London 1975) p. 114

in the early nineteenth century as a trencher-fed pack maintained by local farmers, continue to hunt foxes on the Cumbrian Fells for the same reason.<sup>163</sup>

Despite the growing interest in mounted foxhunting, in reality, up until the middle of the eighteenth century most packs probably hunted whatever quarry they found and combined hare and foxhunting indiscriminately. Local gentry kept their own small pack of hounds to entertain family and friends, slowly hunting a range of prey over a restricted area. Henry Hastings, 2<sup>nd</sup> son of the Earl of Huntingdon, who lived in Dorset during the reigns of James I and Charles I was probably fairly typical; 'his house was of the old fashion, in the midst of a large park, well stocked with deer, rabbits and fish-ponds ... He kept all sorts of hounds, that ran buck, fox, hare, otter and badger ...'<sup>164</sup> The anonymous painting (Figure 3.1 below) located, according to the National Trust's attribution, 'near Norwich' shows a similarly motley pack with a wide range of different hounds including light framed, spotted hare hounds and heavy, dark mastiff-style dogs. The background is improbably hilly suggesting a 'capriccio'<sup>165</sup> by the unknown artist (or a mistake in locating the work). The painting is noteworthy for the very early representation of a leaping figure on the right hand-side.



**Figure 3.1** 'A Hunt near Norwich', early eighteenth century painting at Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk. Artist and date unknown.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Hounds were kept on farms and not as a pack in one kennel. They were brought together on meet days to hunt as a pack.

<sup>164</sup> The Earl of Shaftesbury quoted in Longrigg, *History*, p. 58

<sup>165</sup> Defined as 'a fabulous, fictitious, Classical back ground' by R. Baird, *Goodwood, art and architecture, sport and family* (London, 2007) p. 77

<sup>166</sup> I am grateful to Ray Sandham, the National Trust Property Manager at Felbrigg, for taking this photo for me

## The influence of improved animal breeding

The growing fashion for foxhunting stimulated more specialist animal breeding. Griffin noted that ‘Stringer writing in 1714 strongly urged his readers to use their fastest hounds for hunting the fox’; she goes on to note that ‘Stringer’s ingredients for good foxhunting – fast horses and fleet dogs – form the backbone of modern hunting’.<sup>167</sup>

Farm stock improvement had earlier roots and this expertise and enthusiasm was often transferred by landowners to their hunting activities. One of the sixteenth century’s leading sheep breeders was John Spencer who founded the famous ram breeding flock at Wormleighton in Warwickshire and was a forerunner of the family that started breeding the Althorp and Pytchley foxhounds two centuries later.<sup>168</sup>

Thomas noted another form of breeding which was important in the development of faster horses to follow improved foxhounds. He observed that the most effective stimulus to careful horse breeding was the rise of organised horse-racing in which the gentry participated with increasing enthusiasm from the late Elizabethan period.<sup>169</sup> A later section will detail the extensive, post 1750, trafficking in foxhounds and importing of Arabian horses revealed in archives at Raynham in Norfolk.

Carr asserted that the breeding of hounds to hunt *only* foxes marked an epoch in the history of hound breeding.<sup>170</sup> Norfolk was in the forefront of this specialisation. Rosenheim recorded that in the early eighteenth century Sir Robert Walpole of Houghton kept two packs of hounds and the fox or hare was hunted six days a week – suggesting that separate packs of harriers and foxhounds were kept at Houghton.<sup>171</sup> Figure 3.2 shows ‘Sir Robert Walpole at the Hunstanton Meet’ painted by John Wootton in the early 1720s but casts little light on the actual hunting landscape. John Wootton was an enthusiastic proponent of *capriccio* to add ‘the

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<sup>167</sup> Griffin, *Blood sport*, p. 126

<sup>168</sup> E. Kerridge, *The farmers of old England* (London, 1973) p.132

<sup>169</sup> K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, Penguin ed. (London, 1984) p. 59

<sup>170</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 36

<sup>171</sup> J.M. Rosenheim, *The Townshends of Raynham* (Connecticut, 1989) p. 9

resonance of a classical scene',<sup>172</sup> and the background bears little relation to the assumed location in the Le Strange's 'Old Hunstanton Park' since the landscape and distant church tower do not reflect the reality of either Old Hunstanton or Ringstead churches.<sup>173</sup>



**Figure 3.2** 'Sir Robert Walpole at the Hunstanton Meet' by John Wooton, early 1720s.<sup>174</sup>

The Holkham Household accounts of the same period show that a wider range of prey was hunted compared to Houghton. The 1718 Household Accounts reveal that 12 couple of harriers were kept for 12 shillings a week and mention is also made in the same entry of 36 couple of 'hare hounds', presumably beagles.<sup>175</sup> William Pickford was paid £102 in June 1718 for 'keeping ye foxhounds 34 weeks at Beck Hall'. This is the earliest primary evidence found of a pack in Norfolk kept specifically to hunt foxes. The 1721 Household accounts also record expenses linked to another

<sup>172</sup> Baird, *Goodwood*, p. 77

<sup>173</sup> These were the 2 church towers that were most visible on a visit to Old Hunstanton Park in March 2011

<sup>174</sup> I am very grateful to Lord Egremont for permission to take this photo in his private quarters at Petworth July, 2010

<sup>175</sup> Holkham Household Accounts, A7 (1718) p. 90

form of hunting: '£1, 1s 0d for Robert Breeze, Otter hunter, 15s for 2 otter poles and 5s for bringing an otter'.<sup>176</sup> As Longrigg noted, most otterhounds were foxhounds or harriers earning their broth in summer – since hare and foxhunting were winter activities.<sup>177</sup>

The link between agricultural improvers and the breeding of foxhounds was epitomised in Norfolk during the later eighteenth century by George Townsend at Raynham (MFH 1752-1772) and Thomas W. Coke, master of the Norfolk Foxhounds from 1775-1797, whose activities will be described in more detail later.

### **The distribution of early foxhunting**

There is a considerable challenge in identifying where early foxhunting took place for two reasons: up until the middle of the eighteenth century most packs of hounds still hunted a range of prey indiscriminately: and those packs that began to specialise often ranged widely over huge areas - until about 1800 when the principles of hunting law began to be formulated and recognisable hunt countries took shape.<sup>178</sup>

However, despite the risk of spurious accuracy, it is possible to map the heartlands of the early packs of foxhounds and establish an approximate date when they began to hunt foxes exclusively.

Figure 3.3 shows the distribution of foxhunts whose existence by 1800 was recorded by *Baily's Hunting Directory* (an encyclopaedic list of hunts) or the hunting historians Carr and Longrigg.<sup>179</sup> The dates for packs established by 1750 are highlighted. The locations of hunts are in part derived from Carr's map of 'English packs of foxhounds' which was based on Hobson's 1850 *Hunting Atlases*.<sup>180</sup> The boundaries of packs which Baily's, Carr or Longrigg record as being in existence before 1800 are shown with imprecise boundaries around their heartlands on Figure 3.3 because, as already

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<sup>176</sup> Holkham Household Accounts, A7 (1721) p. 320

<sup>177</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 79

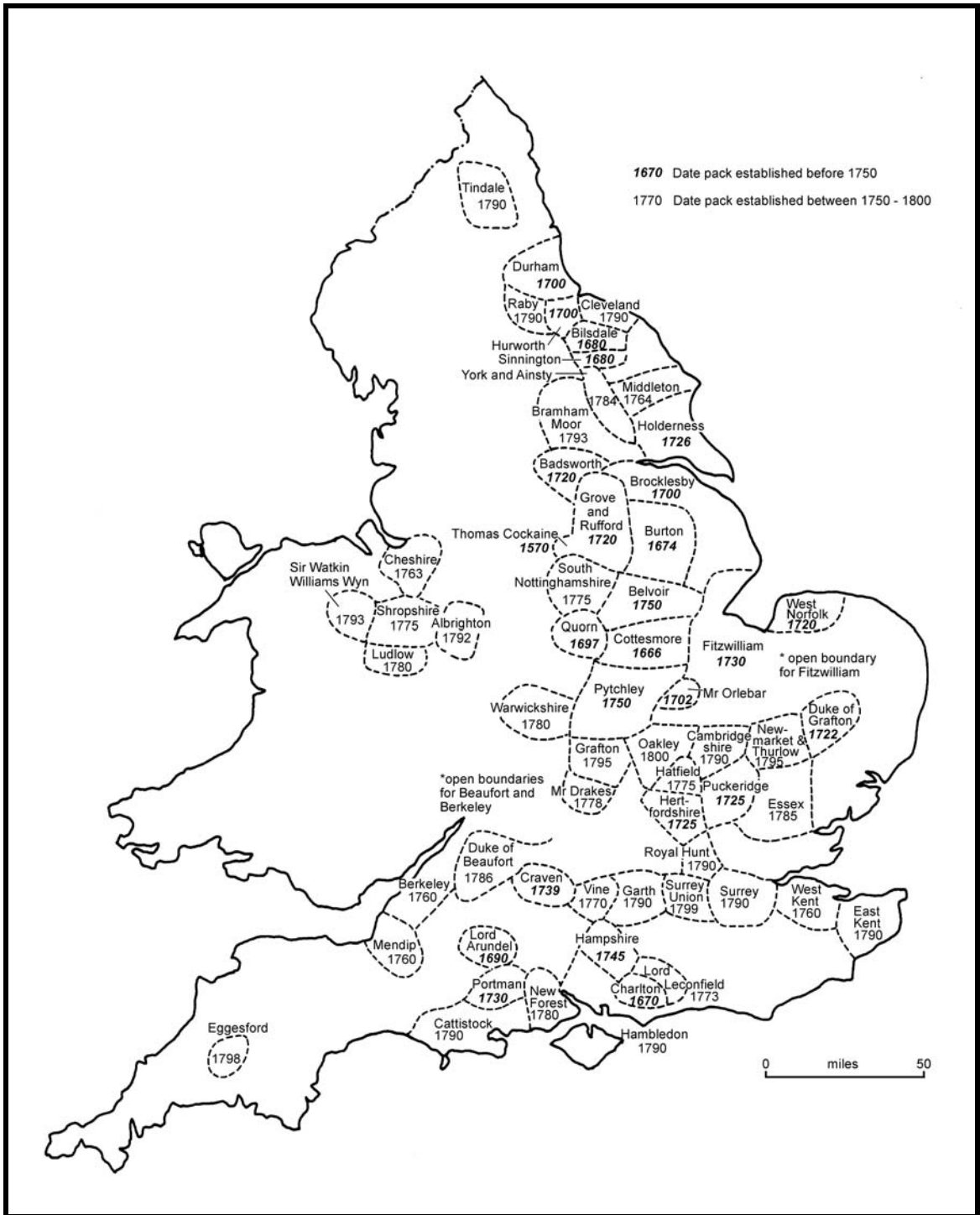
<sup>178</sup> Itzkowitz, *Peculiar*, p. 71

<sup>179</sup> Information taken from: Longrigg, *English*; Carr, *English*; and *Baily's Hunting Directory 1992-1993*, (Windsor, 1993)

<sup>180</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 74; *Hobson's Hunting Atlas* (London, 1850)

described, many early hunts did not have a rigidly fixed 'country'. Hobson, and hence Carr, did not map packs which were not active in 1850, such as the 'West Norfolk' which had started as a private pack in 1720 but was in temporary abeyance; so the location was added to Figure 3.3. Early private packs such as the 'Charlton' or 'Lord Leconfields', both in Sussex, were included to demonstrate the continuity of foxhunting in the area although by 1850 they were mapped by Hobson under different names. It is likely that before 1800 there were also some informal farmers' and early subscription packs as well as hunt clubs whose location is not recorded but, in general it can be assumed that they hunted in similar, or neighbouring, areas to the packs that are mapped. For example the Shrewsbury Hunt Club's November hunt week took place in the Shropshire Hunt Country.

It is immediately noticeable that early packs are mainly clustered in three distinct areas. The forerunners of the elite 'Shire' packs, the Quorn, Pytchley, Cottesmore and Belvoir, are found in the East Midlands. A second group stretched west along the South Downs into Wiltshire while a third band extended the length of the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire Wolds. A few outliers were found in Durham, West Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire.



**Figure 3.3** The location of foxhound packs established before 1800

The dates on the map pose a challenge to the traditional view, expressed by Bovill in 1962, 'but for [parliamentary] enclosure foxhunting would never have become a

popular sport'.<sup>181</sup> Patten subsequently echoed this in 1971; 'the rise of foxhunting to its greatest popularity coincided almost exactly with the acceleration of the enclosure movement of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.<sup>182</sup> The accepted view is an oversimplification; the character and chronology of enclosure was complex with over half of the East Midlands enclosed before Parliamentary acts came into force and it assumes a link that is questionable. Foxhunting, as a specialist activity, was already becoming popular before the surge of Parliamentary enclosure in the second half of the eighteenth century. By 1670 The Duke of Richmond's Charlton Hunt in Sussex attracted elite followers, soon followed by the establishment of Lord Arundel's hunt in Wiltshire. Meanwhile, as already described, in north-west Norfolk, by 1720, household accounts show that Coke kept a separate pack of foxhounds. This is identified as the 'West Norfolk', its subsequent name, on Figure 3.3.

The early distribution of foxhunting was dependent on two broad groups of factors: environmental and social – both important influences on 'access'. Prior to around 1800 the key physical determinants of good hunting country were access to a relatively open hunting terrain preferably free of fences and (non-hunting) disturbance, the amount of cover available to support the fox population, good scenting conditions and soils which were not impassable on horseback in winter. The social and tenurial issues embrace control of resources to allow unimpeded access to land to 'draw' for a fox and then hunt it; and sufficient wealth and leisure to maintain the infrastructure and enjoy the sport.

The next section examines the characteristics that influenced the early distribution of foxhunting by first considering soil types, secondly physical environment and land use and finally tenurial factors. Clearly there is a danger of over-simplification in examining these factors on their own since they are inter-related in complex ways; for example particular soil types may encourage certain types of farming which can lead to distinctive tenure systems and landscapes. But it seems useful to try to analyse how far physical characteristics influenced distribution and what part human factors played.

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<sup>181</sup> E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life* (Oxford, 1962) p. 200

<sup>182</sup> J. Patten, 'Fox coverts for the Squire', *Country Life* (23<sup>rd</sup> September 1971) pp. 736-738



## **The influence of soil types**

Soil types are relevant to the early development of hunting for several reasons – direct and indirect. The direct influences are on the ‘going’ (ground conditions) which affects how easily mounted horsemen can cross the countryside in winter, and on scenting conditions which control how easily foxhounds can hunt their prey. These aspects will be discussed more fully later. Indirectly soils influenced the distribution of early foxhunting because the soil’s properties (along with topography and climatic considerations) affect the type of agriculture that can develop. This in turn, via the area’s enclosure history and landownership structure, influenced access to hunting terrain, the amount of cover available (and hence the availability of foxes) and the type of fences foxhunters must jump or detour.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the heartlands of the early packs of foxhounds and the approximate date when they began to hunt foxes exclusively. Table 3.1 combines information on the hunts, the dominant soils and contemporary agricultural land use. The table is followed firstly by a soil map, Figure 3.4, for comparison with the distribution of early packs; and secondly, commentary on the relevance of the characteristics of the five main soil groups for the development of foxhunting.

**Table 3.1** Fox hunts established by 1750

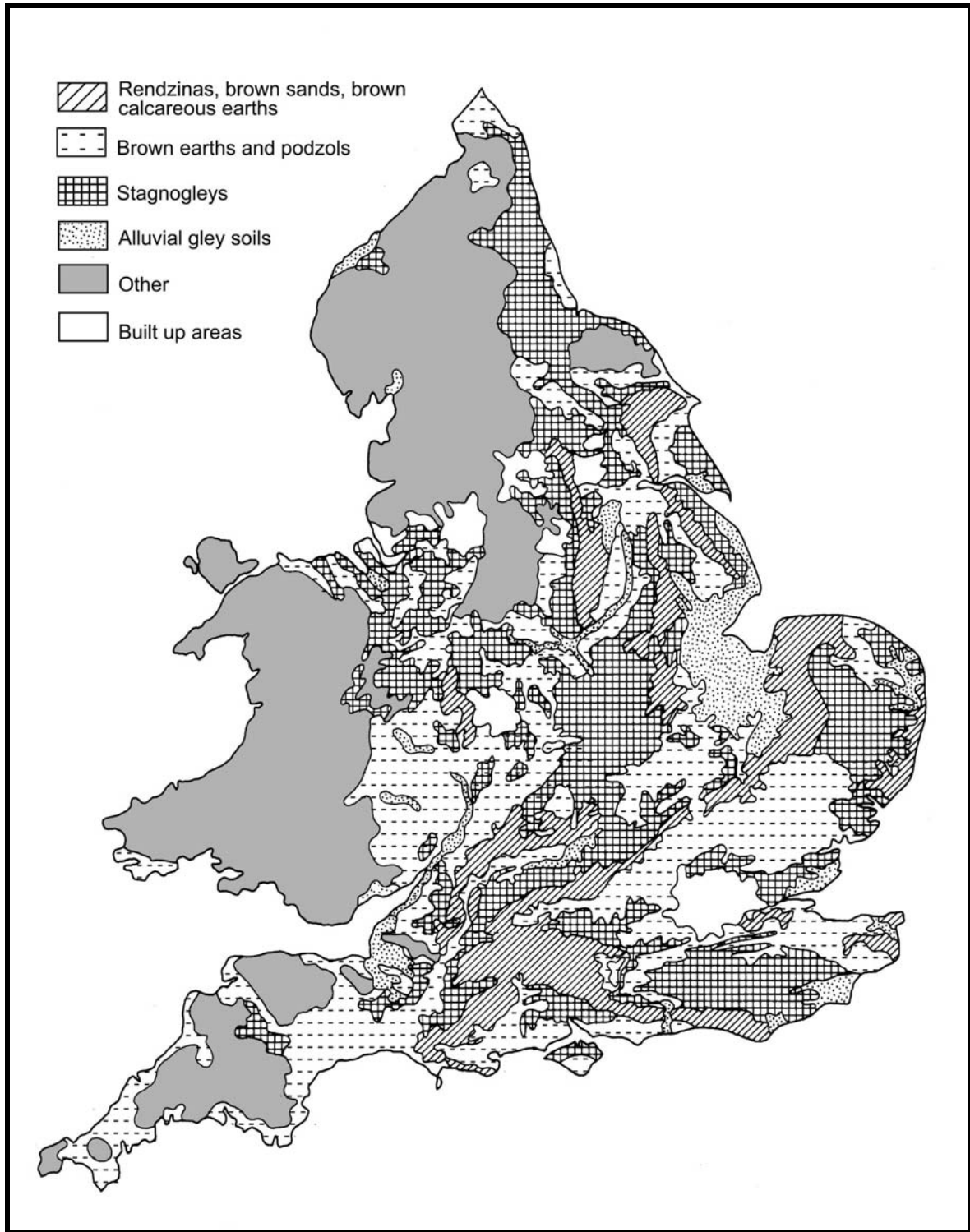
<i>Name of Hunt</i>	<i>Approximate date established</i> <sup>183</sup>	<i>County (where majority of hunt is located)</i>	<i>Dominant soil type(s) In descending order of extent</i> <sup>184</sup>	<i>Dominant farming region(s) 1640 – 1750</i> <sup>185</sup>
Thomas Cockaine's	1570	Derbyshire	Stagnogleys, brown earths, brown sands	Subsistence corn with stock and industries
Cottesmore	1666	Leicestershire	Stagnogleys, brown calcareous earths	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding, corn and livestock w special enterprises
Charlton	1670	Sussex	Rendzinas	Corn and sheep
Burton	1674	Lincolnshire	Brown calcareous earths, stagnogleys and brown sands	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding, corn and livestock w special enterprises, corn and sheep (Wolds)
Duke of Buckingham (Bilsdale & Sinnington)	1680	N. Yorkshire	Stagnohumic gleys, stagnogleys, brown earths	Corn and cattle with substantial rearing, dairying and feeding; subsistence corn with stock
Lord Arundel Wardour (S&W Wilts)	1696	Wiltshire	Rendzinas	Corn and sheep
Quorn (Boothby)	1697	Leicestershire	Stagnogleys, argillic brown earths	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding, corn and livestock w special enterprises, corn and sheep, corn and cattle with substantial rearing (Wolds)
Durham	c1700	Durham	Stagnogleys, brown earths	Corn and cattle with substantial rearing, dairying and feeding

<sup>183</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory 1992-1993*, (Windsor, 1993)

<sup>184</sup> B.W. Avery, D.C. Findley & D. Mackney *Soil Map of England and Wales, Scale: 1:1,000,000*, (Southampton, 1975)

<sup>185</sup> J. Thirsk, (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1640 - 1750*. Vol. Vi. (Cambridge, 1984).

Brocklesby (Yarborough)	1700	Lincolnshire	Stagnogleys, gley podsols, rendzinas, brown sands, brown calcareous soils, alluvial gleys	Corn and sheep (Wolds), Corn and cattle with substantial feeding, corn and livestock.
West Norfolk	1720	Norfolk	Brown calcareous earths, brown sands, stagnogleys	Corn and sheep, corn and cattle with feeding
Rufford	1720	Nottinghamshire	Brown calcareous earths, brown sands, argillic brown earths	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding, corn and livestock w special enterprises; subsistence corn with cattle grazing and sheep (woodland)
Suffolk (Euston)	1722	Suffolk	Stagnogleys, brown sands, calcareous pelosols, rendzinas	Corn and sheep; dairying and subsistence corn with cattle rearing/grazing
Puckeridge	1725	Hertfordshire/ Essex	Calcareous pelosols, paleo- argillic brown earths	Corn and cattle with substantial dairying side; corn and sheep
Hertfordshire	1725	Hertfordshire	Paleo-argillic brown earths, rendzinas, stagnogleys	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding; cattle grazing
Holderness	1726	Lincolnshire	Rendzinas, brown earth stagnogleys, stagnogleys	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding
Fitzwilliam	1730	Lincolnshire/ Cambridgeshire	Calcareous pelosols, stagnogleys, earthy peat	Corn and cattle with substantial rearing and substantial feeding
Craven	1739	Berkshire/ Wiltshire	Rendzinas, paleo-argillic brown earths	Corn and sheep; corn and livestock, some dairying
Hampshire Hunt	1745	Hampshire	Rendzinas	Corn and sheep
Pytchley	1750	Northamptonshire	Stagnogleys, brown calcareous earths, brown earths	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding; corn and livestock with special enterprises; subsistence corn with stock in woodlands
Belvoir	1750	Leicestershire/ Lincolnshire	Stagno-gleys, brown calcareous earths, brown earths, argillic brown earth	Corn and cattle with substantial feeding; corn and livestock with special enterprises; corn & sheep



**Figure 3.4** The major soil groups of England and Wales<sup>186</sup>

<sup>186</sup> B.W. Avery, D.C. Findley & D. Mackney, *Soil Map of England and Wales*, Scale: 1:1,000,000, Soil Survey of England and Wales (Southampton, 1975)

The complex pattern of soils has been simplified on Figure 3.4 into 5 groups each sharing similar characteristics. The first, 'rendzinas, brown sands and brown calcareous earths', are soils of the drier lowlands with a significant summer soil moisture deficit which form calcareous, light land and played an important role in early foxhunting. They are often associated with less permeable, deeper loamy or clayey soils over either chalk or Jurassic limestone. All the packs started before 1750, in areas where the rendzinas soils dominate, were found on the chalk Downs of Sussex, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Dorset and Hampshire. The West Norfolk's early heartland was on the similarly well-drained brown calcareous earths and brown sands that had developed on chalky glacial drift.

Comparing the distribution maps of soils and early foxhound packs it is also noticeable that foxhunting started later on the limestone outcrops of the Cotswolds, where rendzina soils are also predominant. The influence of powerful landowners is significant in explaining the anomaly; the Duke of Beaufort, who controlled hunting over much of the area, did not switch from hunting stag until 1786, and the area was not subdivided until the nineteenth century when the Heythrop (1835) and Cotswold (1858) fox hunts were established.

The second category, in the map key, of 'brown earths and podzols' have a similar summer moisture deficit to the rendzinas but are not underlain by chalk or limestone and play a less significant part in the history of early foxhunting.

The third group shown on Figure 3.4 are the 'stagnogleys' characterised by impeded drainage, and found in poorly drained clay vales. In contrast to the light rendzina soils of the chalk downlands and limestone wolds the heavy stagnogleys are characterised by poorly drained brown earths (loamy, non-calcareous soils) or pelosols (clayey soils) developed on clays or glacial drift. Figure 3.4 shows that stagnogleys are the dominant soil group in much of lowland England. Two important, separate groups of early hunts started on the stagnogleys. The Cottesmore (1666), Quorn (1697), Pytchley (1750) and Belvoir (1750) developed in the heavy clay soils of the vales of the East Midlands while the Durham (1698) was hunting foxes over similar soils in the North East.

The areas with poorly drained alluvial gley soils found on river floodplains and undrained coasts and fenlands were not significant for early hunting. It is noticeable that only the Fitzwilliam and Brocklesby Hunts include these soils which lie on the extreme eastern margins of both packs, in the peat Fens and coastal marsh areas of Lincolnshire respectively, where hunting rarely took place because the terrain was unsuitable for horses. Only one early pack, the Bilsdale in Yorkshire, was started on similar poorly drained stagnogley and stagno-humic gley soils associated with peat in upland areas. This was an atypical area for early hunting; the anomaly is due to the innovations of another powerful landowner, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham, who started foxhunting on his Yorkshire estates after leaving London in disgrace. He quickly became the leading foxhunter in the north and introduced an informal style of hunting, which made him very popular amongst his tenant farmers, until his death in 1687.<sup>187</sup>

A large group of early packs were found where soils are mixed; this is unsurprising given the initial lack of demarcation of hunt boundaries and the resulting huge areas that some packs covered; for example the Fitzwilliam (1730) covered much of Huntingdonshire and southern Lincolnshire. In this 'mixed soils' group Thomas Cockaine's hunt in Derbyshire (1570), the Rufford in Nottinghamshire (1720), the Burton (1674) and Brocklesby (1700) in Lincolnshire, Holderness (1726) in South Yorkshire and the Fitzwilliam (1730) form a contiguous block of packs where a mosaic of soils include heavy stagnogleys on the clay vales; well drained brown earths, rendzinas and brown sands formed on limestones and sandstones; and gley podsols where sandy soils have impeded drainage due to an underlying clay subsoil, high ground water levels or a sub-surface pan (impermeable layer).

A second cluster of early packs in areas with mixed soils included the Puckeridge (1725) in Hertfordshire and Essex and the Hertfordshire (1725). The soils within their territory include stagnogleys on the London Clays and heavier glacial drift (chalky boulder clay), calcareous pelosols on the lighter chalky boulder clay, and palaeo-argillic brown earths where clay with flints overlies chalk or silty loams overlie clay.

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<sup>187</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 58

By contrast, part of their hunt country included light soils, the well-drained rendzinas and brown sands, which are found on the chalks of the East Anglian Heights and sands of Breckland.

This mapping of the distribution of early hunts in England, many on free draining calcareous soils, vividly challenges the widespread shibboleth described earlier, that was held by Bovill, Patten, Longrigg, Carr, Itzkovitz, Williamson and Bellamy, Landy, Finch and Griffin<sup>188</sup> that: ‘the classic, modern form of the “sport” involving a long chase across country only developed in the course of the eighteenth century principally in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland’.<sup>189</sup>

Two key components of a good hunting country are directly linked to soil type – how well hounds can follow the scent of the fox and how easily the horses of mounted followers can cross the country without being exhausted by heavy ‘going’. These are examined in the next sections.

#### *Soil types and scenting conditions*

As Frances Pitt, Master of the Wheatland Hounds in Shropshire, wrote in 1948:

No one who follows hounds ... can help but take the keenest interest in this amazing, elusive, un-understandable phenomenon we term scent; that intangible something which varies from day to day, from hour to hour and even from minute to minute and on which depends not only the ability of hounds to sense where their quarry has gone but the day’s enjoyment for a considerable number of people.<sup>190</sup>

A few pages later she attempted to define ‘a good scent’ by noting that instead of having to keep their noses close to the ground hounds can smell the scent a few

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<sup>188</sup> Bovill, *English*, p. 200; Patten, ‘Fox coverts ...’, pp. 736–38; Longrigg, *History*, p. 89; Carr, *English*, p. 68; Itzkowitz, *Peculiar*, p. 8; Williamson & Bellamy, *Property*, p. 201, Landy, *Invention*, p. 46, Finch ‘Grass...’ p. 43, and Griffin, *Blood sport*, p.130

<sup>189</sup> T. Williamson, *The Transformation of rural England* (Exeter, 2002) p. 45

<sup>190</sup> F. Pitt, *Hounds, Horses and Hunting* (London, 1948) p. 87

inches above the surface and are able to gallop along as hard as they can go but she added the rider that this happens infrequently.<sup>191</sup>

Since scent is so crucial to successful hunting it is unsurprising that it generated considerable interest from the outset. Peter Beckford hunted foxes in South Dorset during the 1780s and wrote his magisterial *Thoughts on Hunting* as a series of letters still much admired by foxhunters for their accuracy and insight. (In the 1870s the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Beaufort named his best hunter 'Beckford' as a tribute and had the horse's skin as a rug on his bedroom floor until his death in 1924).<sup>192</sup>

Beckford admitted:

scent is ... what we sportsmen know least about',<sup>193</sup> but went on to establish several principles 'I believe that it depends chiefly on two things – the condition the ground is in, and the temperature of the air; both of which I apprehend should be moist without being wet. When both are in this condition the scent is then perfect ... when the ground is hard and the air dry, there will seldom be any scent ... it has been often remarked, that scent lies best in the richest soils; and countries which are favourable to horses [i.e. with 'light' soils and going] are seldom so to hounds.'<sup>194</sup>

But he also noted that 'in heathy countries, where the game brushes as it goes along, scent seldom fails' but warned about woodland that 'when leaves begin to fall and before they are rotted, we know that scent lies ill in cover' – a disadvantage of hunting large woods in autumn.

In 1933 Budgett, an MFH in Buckinghamshire, published his detailed findings in *Hunting by Scent* that were the result of increasingly obsessive experiments involving rubber boots, stilts, wooden sandals, an earthenware hot water bottle towed by a

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<sup>191</sup> Pitt, *Hounds*, p. 89

<sup>192</sup> L. Edwards, *Famous Foxhunters* (London, 1932) p. 60

<sup>193</sup> P. Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting 1780* (Reprinted London, 1911) p. 62

<sup>194</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 62



winch and his barefoot son.<sup>195</sup> As a result of these and many other experiments using his bloodhound, Hopeful, Budgett noted that:

A quarry moving over the ground leaves a track of particles on the soil (or grass) over which he has passed or against which he has rubbed some portion of his body. But it is not these particles which are smelt by the pursuing hound but the air which has come in contact with them.<sup>196</sup>

Budgett developed some principles that partly help explain where early foxhunting started:

The most favourable conditions for scent are ... when the earth is warmer than the air ... moist land usually carries a better scent than dry land ... provided that the sun is not shining ... because the odiferous particles forming the track are fatty and they spread over water so that a larger area will be exposed from which scent can radiate (sunshine would evaporate the scent-carrying moisture).<sup>197</sup>

Budgett also recognised that plough land has no insulating cover so it warms up faster than grassland and far more quickly than woodland, but on the other hand plough will get cold more quickly.<sup>198</sup> Since foxhunting is usually carried out in cold, winter weather this suggests that grassland, stubbles or fallow are generally more likely to carry a good scent than plough land which will be colder.

Budgett later added another disadvantage of plough on clay soils claiming that scent will usually be better over grass, root crops, fallow or stubble than plough because grass etc. may come in contact with the brush or body of the fox, whereas on plough the pads alone touch the earth. This is particularly noticeable when the plough is in such a sticky condition that it adheres to the pads, so that the fox is practically shod

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<sup>195</sup> H.M. Budgett, *Hunting by scent* (London, 1933) pp. 26 - 83

<sup>196</sup> Budgett, *Hunting*, p. 6

<sup>197</sup> Budgett, *Hunting*, p.19

<sup>198</sup> Budgett, *Hunting*, p. 12

with sandals of earth, which leave no scent trail.<sup>199</sup> Using Beckford's and Budgett's observations it should be possible to extrapolate from the previous discussion of soils where, theoretically, there would be good scenting conditions and examine if this pattern coincides with the actual distribution of early foxhunting.

### *Soil conditions and the 'going'*

A second determinant of a 'good' hunting country, also linked to soil type and land use, is the 'going' – how easy it is to cross on horseback in winter. A.S. Barrow ('Sabretache') emphasised that ideally heavier soils need to be under grass, fallow or stubble, noting that parts of Leicestershire had some very heavy sticky plough, which was very severe on horses. The fashionable attitude to hunting in arable areas was epitomised in the nineteenth century by a Colonel Greene who, when asked if he had ever hunted in Yorkshire, replied: 'What? Hunt in a ploughed country? Sooner read a book'.<sup>200</sup>

### *Optimum soils for hunting*

Combining the two criteria of good scenting conditions and easy terrain for horses suggests that clay soils under crops, fallow or grassland or large tracts of light soils under grass or heath country would provide the optimum situation. In the first category the early-established East Midlands packs such as the Rufford, Cottesmore, Quorn, Fitzwilliam, Pytchley and Belvoir have already been described as lying on clay soils that were increasingly being enclosed for grazing after 1650 although, as will be shown later, extensive unenclosed areas remained and were actively sought out after 1750 by Meynell and many of his contemporaries. The second category, of light, heathy land, has the benefit already noted by Beckford that 'scent seldom fails'.<sup>201</sup> Although dry soils are seen as carrying less scent Beckford added:

in heathy countries the scent always lies; yet I have remarked that the many roads which cross them, and the many inclosures of poor land that surround render hunting in such countries, at times, very difficult to

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<sup>199</sup> Budgett, *Hunting*, p. 57

<sup>200</sup> C.D.B. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1951) p. 194

<sup>201</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 62

hounds. The sudden change from a good scent to a bad one puzzles their noses and confuses their understanding.<sup>202</sup>

Thus, extensive areas uninterrupted by enclosures or roads, such as the swathes of pre-enclosure sheep walks, were the best light soils for hunting. Sheep however could 'foil' the fox's scent and distract them for, as Beckford noted:

Hounds may be steady in countries where the coverts are fenced [so there are no sheep in them] and sheep are only to be seen in flocks, either in large fields or on open downs; and the same hounds may be unsteady in forests and heathy countries, where the sheep are not less wild than the deer.<sup>203</sup>

This suggests that, in the eighteenth century, better hunting country on light land was likely to be found where sheep were controlled by shepherds and dogs, penned or folded so the dual hazards of foil and sheep worrying were minimized. This links neatly with the pattern already established; the second main area of early foxhunting was where the sheep-corn system dominated. The regime meant that sheep grazed on open areas by day and returned to the common fields at night to fertilise the arable land. Sheep grazing was tightly controlled on the chalk Downs of Sussex, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Dorset and Hampshire, the well-drained, chalky glacial drifts of West Norfolk and sands of Breckland. Therefore, using Beckford's and Budgett's work, it has been possible to establish that foxhunting *did* start where scenting conditions were most favourable.

Conversely, poor scenting areas were scorned by early foxhunters; heavy clay soils under plough were an anathema and the development of foxhunting was consequently later. 'Sabretache' commented of plough on the clay soils of the Old Berkeley Hunt in Buckinghamshire that (it) 'is apt to anchor the best of them and carries none too good a scent'.<sup>204</sup> Bovill describes the great woodlands and plough

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<sup>202</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 138

<sup>203</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 106

<sup>204</sup> A.S. Barrow, ('Sabretache') *Shires and Provinces* (London, 1926) p. 82

on the clays of Hampshire as 'cold scenting',<sup>205</sup> a description amplified by 'a disgruntled sportsman' ... 'I cannot see why you try to hunt this country. It's nothing but flints and forests, full of game and gamekeepers, sheep and sheep dogs, in fact everything inimical to sport'.<sup>206</sup> The rise in popularity of shooting and its impact on hunting will be explored in a later section. Nimrod (Charles Apperley) wrote in his *Hunting Tours* in 1822 that 'Devonshire is certainly the worst hunting country I was ever in',<sup>207</sup> while in the north the York and Ainsty country was described in the early nineteenth century as 'nine-tenths plough and heavy going in winter'.<sup>208</sup>

In summary: most early packs started foxhunting on either the well-drained soils developed on chalk and limestone or the heavy stagnogleys of the East Midlands and north-east England. Conway<sup>209</sup>, using Avery<sup>210</sup> and Rudeforths'<sup>211</sup> work, has calculated the percentage of the area of England and Wales that lies within Avery's 10 broad soil groups. He has calculated that 'brown soils', that include the rendzinas and calcareous brown earths of the first group described above, occupy around 30 per cent of the land area with the stagnogleys of the second group covering around 25 per cent. Since these two soil groups have significantly different physical properties the distribution of early hunting is not related, in any obvious and direct way, to the inherent characteristics of the soils. The contrast in soils suggests that the influence of other factors, such as farming systems, enclosure history and landownership, needs to be examined.

## Landscape Classification

A starting point is to look at how landscapes have been characterised. A simple, broad-brush classification of landscapes has been popularised by Rackham. He

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<sup>205</sup> E.W. Bovill, *The England of Nimrod and Surtees* (London, 1959) p. 12

<sup>206</sup> Edwards, *Famous*, p. 24

<sup>207</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 85

<sup>208</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 83

<sup>209</sup> John Conway, Royal Agricultural College website <http://rac.ac.uk/the-college/academic-staff-profiles/school-of-agriculture/dr-john-conway> viewed 7.10. 2005

<sup>210</sup> B.W. Avery, *Soil classification for England and Wales (higher categories)*. Technical Monograph 14, Soil Survey of England and Wales, (Rothamsted, 1980).

<sup>211</sup> C.C. Rudeforth & al, *Soils and their uses in Wales*, Bulletin 11, Soil Survey of England and Wales, (Rothamsted, 1984)

noted that England's lowland zone is divided between what he called 'Ancient Countryside' and 'Planned Countryside',<sup>212</sup> echoing Tusser's sixteenth-century binary split between 'Severall' and 'Champion'. Rackham used two tables (listing modern and historic differences) to illustrate his division between the early enclosed, 'ancient' landscape described as 'an intricate land of mystery and surprise' contrasted with the 'planned' - 'a predictable land of wide views, sweeping sameness and straight lines ... hurriedly laid out ... under the Enclosure Acts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.<sup>213</sup>

**Table 3.2** Summary of Rackham's two tables showing differences in some landscape features<sup>214</sup>

<i>Ancient Countryside</i>	<i>Planned Countryside</i>
Open-fields either absent or of modest extent and abolished before c 1700	Strong traditions of open-fields beginning early and lasting into Enclosure Acts period
Most hedges ancient, mainly mixed, not straight	Most hedges modern, mainly hawthorn, straight
Many, though often small, woods	Woods absent or few and large

The 'ancient' landscape was distinguished from the 'planned' by more woodland, common land and hedges, often containing trees, which gave it a bosky appearance. The significance of these contrasting features in encouraging or deterring the development of foxhunting will be explored shortly.

Turner, discussing the extent of the 'ancient' countryside, commented that by 1600 Essex, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Surrey and Sussex were almost entirely enclosed,<sup>215</sup> and noted that areas including Kent, Cornwall and Devon were enclosed mainly

<sup>212</sup> O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London, 1986) pp. 4&5

<sup>213</sup> Rackham, *History*, pp. 5 &6

The date of the Enclosure Act is used throughout; the Award was usually in the same or the following year

<sup>214</sup> Rackham, *History*, p. 5

<sup>215</sup> M. Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure* (Folkestone, 1980) p. 38

before the eighteenth century and may in fact in large measure never have been open.<sup>216</sup> He added that Midland counties, listed as having open-fields in the lay subsidy returns of 1334 but enclosed by 1600, include Shropshire and Herefordshire as well as parts of Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. Williamson amplified this point: 'It is often assumed that "ancient countryside" had never much in the way of open-fields but in fact these had once been present in many such areas and often persisted into the post medieval period' but because communal agriculture was less entrenched the 'irregular' common fields were enclosed more easily although areas of common grazing in these districts usually survived up until the time of parliamentary enclosure.<sup>217</sup>

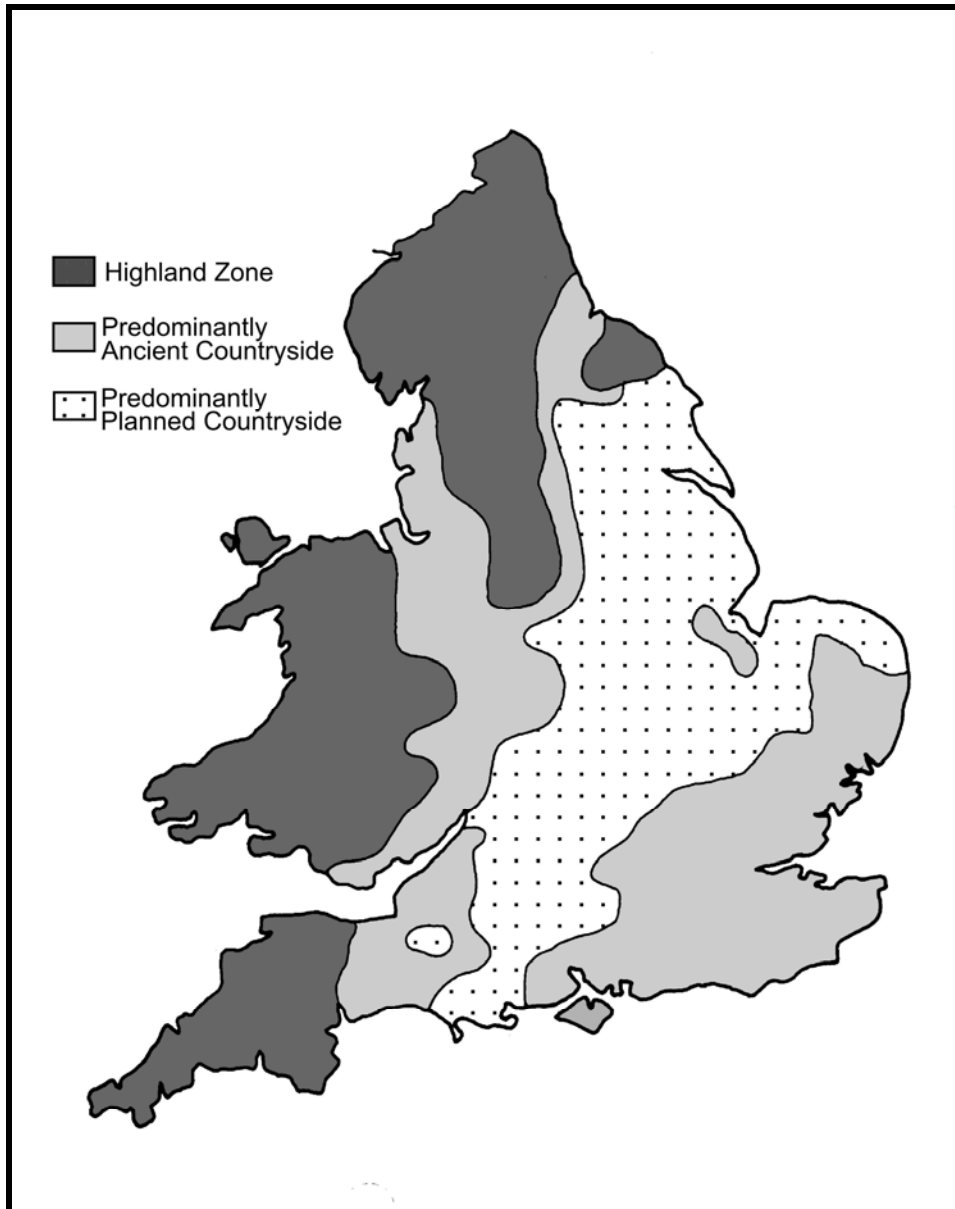
Williamson noted that free tenants were probably more numerous in woodland districts by the thirteenth century, partible inheritance generally more common and the land markets less restrained<sup>218</sup> but he also warned that the extent of the differences between the 'two countrysides' in these respects should not be exaggerated. The influence of tenure and the development of large estates on the rise of foxhunting will be examined later.

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<sup>216</sup> Turner, *English*, p. 34

<sup>217</sup> T. Williamson, *The Transformation of rural England* (Exeter, 2002) p. 12

<sup>218</sup> T. Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes* (Cheshire, 2003) p. 7



**Figure 3.5** Rackham's Simplified Landscape Regions<sup>219</sup>

Rackham's map shows the swathe of predominantly planned countryside stretching from Yorkshire through its heartland of the East Midlands to Hampshire. Prior to the great surge of large-scale enclosures after 1750 most of this area was 'champion or open-field' country. Kerridge named the region of relatively unproductive common fields and backward part-time and family farms 'The Midland Plain'.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>219</sup> O. Rackham *The History of the Countryside*, 1990 edn. (London, 1986) p. 3

<sup>220</sup> E. Kerridge, *The farmers of old England* (London, 1973) p. 84

Baker and Butlin's list of open-field counties includes Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk<sup>221</sup> to which Turner's research can add much of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire.<sup>222</sup> Farmers held small strips of land scattered across several open-fields mixed together with their neighbours in a highly regulated communal system. The impact of the enclosure of the open-fields and subsequent switch from arable to pasture on the early development of foxhunting will be considered in a later section.

Comparison of Rackham's map, Figure 3.5, with the distribution of early hunting on Figure 3.3 is thought provoking. It is striking that early foxhunting did not take place in much of the 'ancient countryside' but mirrored the distribution of the remaining open-fields and sheep walks of the champion landscape. Only the packs in Hertfordshire and Essex lay partly in early-enclosed areas.

However, Williamson sounded a warning against a 'too simple dichotomy' between the ancient/woodland and champion/planned systems since in reality each contained a range of different landscapes with some districts including settlement patterns and field systems which exhibited intermediate characteristics.<sup>223</sup> It is also noteworthy that soils with similar characteristics gave rise to very different enclosure histories and land use; the heavy, intractable clays of the Midlands form the heartland of the open-field system, mainly unenclosed until the eighteenth century, while equally tenacious London Clays in Essex or Boulder Clays in north Suffolk or south Norfolk were enclosed early and form part of Rackham's 'Ancient Countryside'.

Despite these caveats and provided the boundaries are viewed as an elision and not sharply edged this simple model is very useful for demonstrating the significant degree of overlap between the distribution of early foxhunting and the 'champion' landscape. However, Rackham's splitting of lowland England into only two zones, to demonstrate contrasting landscape characteristics, is inadequate as inevitably it

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<sup>221</sup> A.H.R. Butlin & R.A. Butlin (eds.) *Studies of field systems in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1973)

<sup>222</sup> M.E. Turner, *Enclosure in Britain 1750-1830* (Basingstoke, 1984)

<sup>223</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 5



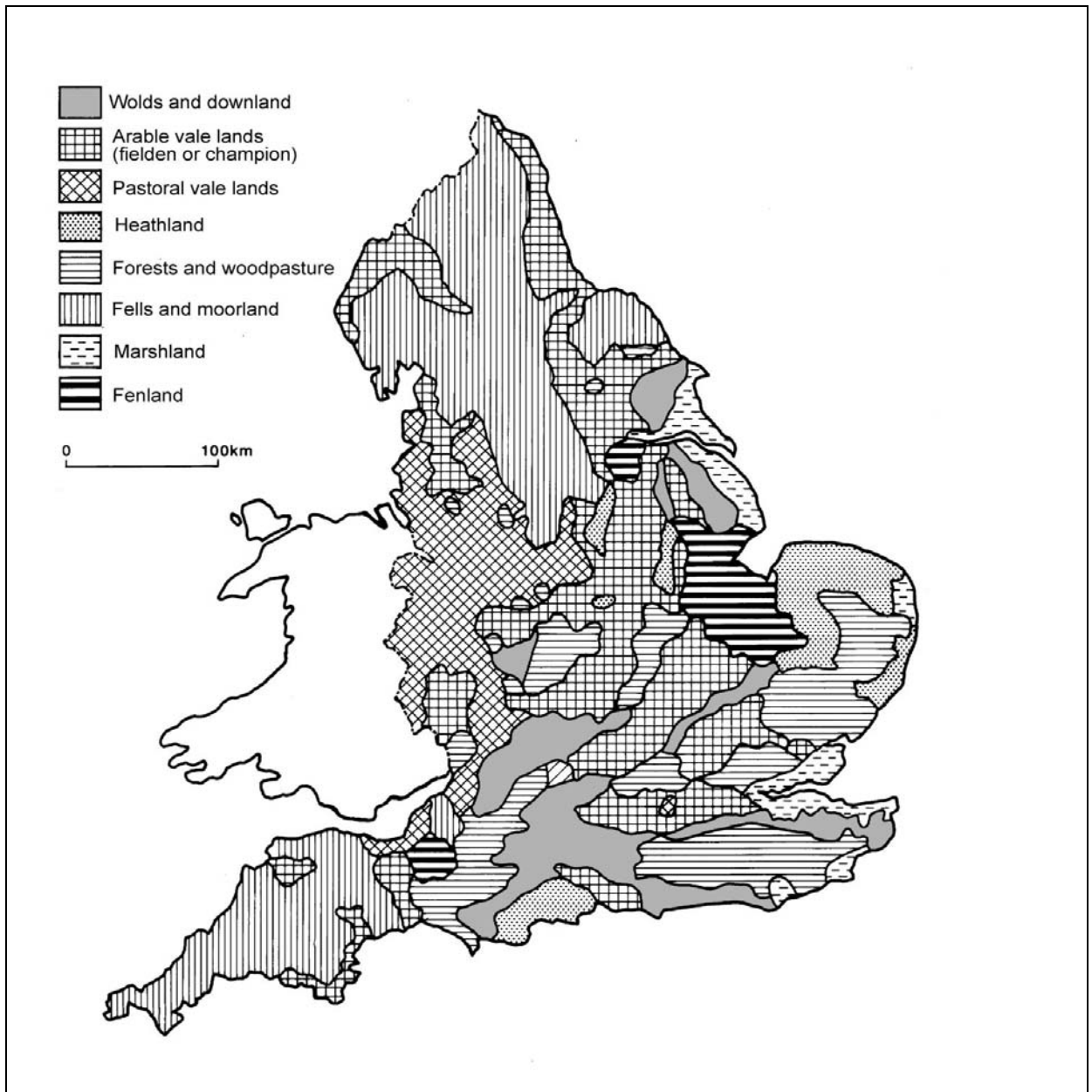
masks considerable internal differences in their early agricultural use. A more detailed analysis, based on a different method of categorising the farming regions that were in existence at the time that early foxhunting was starting, will form a better tool for examining any significant coincidences in patterns of distribution.

### **Classification based on agricultural regions**

A very different system of classification from Rackham's, based primarily on early-modern patterns of agricultural specialisation, has been developed by Thirsk; her 1987 classification of 'Farming Regions 1500-1750' is valuable in scrutinising more closely what aspects of the lowland landscape appear to coincide with early foxhunting and considering whether this is purely coincidental.<sup>224</sup> Thirsk's classification is attractive and utilitarian because the simplified schedule, shown on Figure 3.6, uses an 'eight fold regional division' that describes the appearance of the landscape and enables anyone familiar with the physical structure of England to locate them easily on the map so it usefully combines landscape and agricultural use.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> J. Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History in England 1500-1750* (London, 1987) p. 39  
<sup>225</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*



**Figure 3.6** Thirsk's simplified agricultural regions of England 1500-1750<sup>226</sup>

Thirsk lists the eight categories of post-medieval regions as; '(1) Downland, (2) Wold, (3) Fielden or Champion areas, which we shall call vale lands and divide between arable [fielden or champion] vales and pastoral vales, (4) marshlands, (5) heathlands, (6) forest [sometimes called wood pasture], (7) fell or moorland, and (8) fenland'. There is an inconsistency between this list and the key on the accompanying map where (1) 'downland' and (2) 'wold' are shown as one map unit

<sup>226</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*, p. 38

while (3) 'fielden and champion areas' are split into 'arable vale' and 'pastoral vale' lands. Fortunately this increases the utility of the map since there are significant differences, from a hunting standpoint, between predominantly arable (late enclosed) and pastoral (early enclosed) areas. It is useful to note, because of the significant absence of early packs in these areas, that to Thirsk 'wood pasture' denoted an area of forest or woodland, interspersed with scrub and small patches of cleared grazing, where cattle and sheep were bred, for fattening elsewhere, and pigs scavenged.<sup>227</sup> She mapped examples in south Norfolk and north Suffolk and the Weald. (Rackham's definition of 'wood pasture' differs from Thirsk's - 'tree-land on which farm animals or deer are systematically grazed').<sup>228</sup>

It would be misleading to assume that the regions so crisply mapped as 'arable vale' or 'pastoral vale' were as distinct in reality; in post-medieval times mixed farming was still widespread since arable farmers relied on stock to fertilise their farms and pastoralists needed grain to feed draught beasts and stock that was overwintered. But the attempt to compare three contemporary but different distributions ('ancient' versus 'planned' landscapes, farm regions, and embryonic hunt territories), which are all constructs with indistinct boundaries, requires some acceptance of simplification and mapping conventions.

### **The importance of good access**

One of the primary determinants of where hunting took place was accessibility. Physical access to follow hounds on horseback across country before about 1780 was constrained by hedges, and other fences, since early foxhunters were unskilled and inexperienced in jumping obstacles. Chevenix-Trench gave a compelling reason:

Up until the early eighteenth century men rode in a saddle basically similar to that of a medieval knight. It had a high, stuffed pommel [front] and cantle [back], both carried well down so as to enclose the rider's legs in a sort of groove, almost a vice. This was no use at all for

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<sup>227</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*, p. 39

<sup>228</sup> Rackham, *History*, p. 444

jumping: indeed it was positively dangerous, for if the horse fell the rider could not be thrown clear.<sup>229</sup>

Figure 3.7, painted in 1759, demonstrated the high pommel and cantle.



**Figure 3.7** Detail from 'Henry Fox and the Earl of Albermarle Shooting at Goodwood' by George Stubbs, 1759. The black page is holding the Duke of Richmond's horse.<sup>230</sup>

Carr added that the style of early saddles posed a further risk; male riders misjudging a jump and landing on the margin of the saddle would risk castration on the high pommel.<sup>231</sup> Although during the eighteenth century men took to riding on a saddle with a flattish seat, very similar to a contemporary civilian saddle,<sup>232</sup> illustrated in Figure 3.8, jumping an obstacle at speed was very uncommon until the 1780s.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>229</sup> C. Chevenix-Trench, *A History of Horsemanship* (New York, 1970) pp. 155-156

<sup>230</sup> J. Egerton, *George Stubbs 1724 – 1806* (London, 1984) pp. 54 - 55

<sup>231</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 30

<sup>232</sup> Chevenix-Trench, *History*, p.156

<sup>233</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 30



**Figure 3.8** 'William Anderson with two saddle horses' by George Stubbs, 1793.<sup>234</sup>

The 'flying leap' did not become fashionable until William Childe, 'Flying Childe' from Shropshire, went to hunt in Leicestershire in the 1780s.<sup>235</sup> Even then not all huntsmen took up jumping with great enthusiasm. John Corbet who hunted a pack in Warwickshire from 1781-1811 was said never to have jumped a fence in his whole career as a master of hounds,<sup>236</sup> while W.J. Chute, who hunted the Vine in Hampshire from 1790-1824, would dismount, seize his horse by the tail and make it pull him through or over the fence.<sup>237</sup> Surtees, as late as the 1840s, still maintained that 'real sportsmen take no pleasure in leaping' but were concerned solely with the performance of hounds and the killing of foxes.<sup>238</sup> His comic hero Mr Jorrocks MFH vicariously demonstrated Surtees' distrust of jumping in 'Handley Cross' published in 1841.

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<sup>234</sup> Egerton, *Stubbs*, p. 176

<sup>235</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1973) p. 168

<sup>236</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 70

<sup>237</sup> E.W. Bovill, *The England of Nimrod and Surtees* (London, 1959) p. 35

<sup>238</sup> Quoted in Carr, *English*, p. 70



**Figure 3.9** 'Come hup! I say – you hugly beast!' (Mr Jorrocks and Arterxerxes) by Leech, 1843

Dash my vig, 'ere's an unawoidable leap ... And a werry hawkward place it is too ... a yawnin' blind ditch, a hugly quick fence on the top, and maybe, a plough or 'arrow turned teeth huppermost, on the far side ... give a guinea 'at to be on the far side,' so saying he dismounted.<sup>239</sup>

Consequently early foxhunting was most likely to develop in areas where there were few field boundaries. The next section examines this and other issues that affected foxhunters' access in different farming regions.

Caution is needed because of the fluidity of hunt borders before 1800 but a clear pattern of links to the 'champion' landscape and certain soil types begins to emerge. This is amplified by comparison with Thirsk's 'Map of Farming Regions 1500-1750; a simplified schedule' (Figure 3.6). Tentative conclusions are discussed below, following the threefold division that has already been outlined (calcareous light land, poorly drained clay vales and mixed soils). Within each of the three divisions the

<sup>239</sup> R.S. Surtees, *Handley Cross*, (London, 1843) p. 126

landscape, enclosure history, presence of fences or other barriers to mounted hunt followers, presence of cover for foxes and any other factors relevant to the development of hunting are discussed.

### **Hunting on calcareous light land and sheep-corn areas – group 1**

The packs that began on the rendzinas and brown earths of the chalk Downs and west Norfolk lie squarely within the areas under the 'corn and sheep' system. These were mainly where grain was produced in common fields, often in a three-course rotation. The sheep flocks were fed on open downland or heaths by day and returned to the common fields by night and after harvest to fertilise the arable land.

Comparison of the distribution of packs with Thirsk's map shows how the Charlton, Lord Arundel, Craven and Hampshire Hunts all lie on 'Wolds and Downland' while the West Norfolk and Suffolk started in the eighteenth century on the similar light soils and sheep-corn system of Thirsk's 'Heathland'.

Turning first to the sheep-corn areas on the chalk soils of Thirsk's Wolds and Downlands, what was the landscape like? Kerridge noted the 'billowing downs and sheltered valleys' with often steep hills which separated the nightly fold from the daily pasture'.<sup>240</sup> Williamson described nucleated villages located where regular supplies of water were available with nearby hay meadows providing the principal winter feed for the flocks. The main arable land usually lay on the slopes above the village with the extensive tracts of open downland above this so the distinction between permanent pasture and arable was fairly clear.<sup>241</sup>

A variant was found on the 'Good Sands' of north-west Norfolk and the Breckland further south where soils are predominantly sandy and underlain by chalk. The holdings of individual farmers were either clustered in particular areas of the open-fields or scattered through the territory of the vill; sometimes there were numerous 'fields' rather than two or three, and temporary outfields or 'brecks' were common.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> E. Kerridge, *The Farmers of old England* (London, 1973) p. 79

<sup>241</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, pp. 53-54

<sup>242</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 55

A distinctive feature of the system was the fold course where folding arrangements were tightly controlled by the manorial lord so that sheep grazed across the extensive heaths by day but were folded by night onto the manorial demesne which benefited from the sheep muck.

The sheep-corn areas had important landscape characteristics that favoured early foxhunting – a dearth of fences and a wealth of well-drained grassland. The painting of ‘Mr Delme’s hounds on the Hampshire Downs 1738’<sup>243</sup> (Figure 3.10 overleaf) illustrates the comment in the VCH of Sussex that ‘on the Downs there is practically no fencing and foxes and hounds run very fast’.<sup>244</sup> This lack of fencing is echoed in a description of agriculture between 1500 and 1800 in Wiltshire: ‘In the Chalk Country many situations were too exposed and bleak and many of the soils too thin for the cultivation of quickset hedges’.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 85

<sup>244</sup> *VCH. Sussex Vol. 2 1907* (reprinted London, 1973) p. 446

<sup>245</sup> *VCH. Wiltshire Vol. 4* (London, 1959) p. 46





**Figure 3.10** Mr. Peter Delme's Hounds on the Hampshire Downs, by James Seymour, 1738.<sup>246</sup>

There were exceptions, as Wade Martins noted, since some enclosure, particularly on the chalk downs of southern England during the seventeenth century, was still mainly for sheep. Vast flocks were kept in Dorset in large, irregular fields bounded by quickset hedges on low banks.<sup>247</sup> Taylor has added another Dorset example at Doles Ash, high on the Downs, where there is an extensive tract of land covering some 160 hectares divided into a number of sub-rectangular fields up to 10 hectares in extent with two much larger fields, of up to 20 hectares each, which he tentatively dates to the seventeenth century.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> S. Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth Century England - a Social and Political History* (New Haven, 1988) p. 41

<sup>247</sup> S. Wade Martins, *Farms and fields* (London, 1995) p. 67

<sup>248</sup> C. Taylor, *Fields in the English Landscape* (London, 1975) p. 134

But in the main enclosure took place after 1750; as Thirsk commented 'There was little point in enclosing much of the rolling high Downs which could never be used for more than rough pasture in any case because of limitations in the supply of fertilizing agents prior to 1750. Hence the high Downs remained "open" in the literal sense'.<sup>249</sup> Cobbett (the son of a farmer) wrote about the Hampshire Downs much later on his *Rural Rides* during the 1820s, 'the hedges ... are more for boundary marks than for fences. Fine for hunting and coursing; no impediments; no gates to open; nothing to impede the dogs, the horses or the view'.<sup>250</sup>

It might be thought that foxes would find it hard to survive in these well grazed, open environments but the Sussex VCH author noted that the Down gorses afford natural shelter to strong, wild foxes. Spiny gorse had two great advantages as fox cover – it provided protection from poachers and other human disturbance and it held a good supply of rabbits. The location of early packs at the great houses of Charlton, Goodwood and Uppark on the western end of the South Downs also gave access to woodland that served as hunting grounds for the nobility.

In some areas heathland, rather than chalk down land, formed a significant element of the sheep-corn system. Rackham described heaths as dry lowland areas, products of human activities such as grazing, distinguished by 'undershrubs': heather (ling), broom and gorse (furze or whin) in contrast to acidic or chalk grasslands.<sup>251</sup> Heathland supported significant populations of rabbits and their main predator – foxes. An earlier section on scent reveals a second advantage of heaths – that they hold a fox's scent - so hounds could hunt easily.<sup>252</sup> The Sussex VCH confirmed that, on the whole, the South Downs might be described as a good scenting country.<sup>253</sup>

The presence of sheep grazing on the Downs or heaths in winter, the foxhunting season, potentially caused two problems: the smell of nearby sheep masked the scent of the hunted fox and 'foiled' the hounds and ill-disciplined hounds might chase

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<sup>249</sup> J. Thirsk, *The Agricultural History of England and Wales Vi.* (Cambridge, 1984) p. 333

<sup>250</sup> W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, 1958 ed. (London, 1830) p. 252

<sup>251</sup> Rackham, *History*, p. 282

<sup>252</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 62

<sup>253</sup> *VCH Sussex*, Vol 2, p. 446

and kill sheep which were disturbed and milled about. John Ware, the Charlton Hunt (Sussex) huntsman, was dismissed in 1734 because the hounds ran amok in a fold of sheep and killed 14.<sup>254</sup> Similar problems dogged Norfolk packs; Sir Horatio Pettus wrote in February 1695 to Oliver Le Neve in Witchingham that he 'was bringing Nancy himself but the whelp killed about £4 worth of sheep so the owner happened of her and shot her'.<sup>255</sup> Coke's accounts also record 5s spent on compensation in 1720 'for worrying a sheep by 1 of harriers at Walsingham'.<sup>256</sup>

However the problem was minimised on the South Downs by the traditional housing or penning of sheep in the winter. Page highlighted the importance of sheepcotes in medieval times when farmers invested heavily in them to keep their animals warm, healthy and well fed.<sup>257</sup> Arthur Young writing in 1813 noted:

The practice upon the Downs is to fold [sheep] upon the arable lands in the winter upon such as are intended for pease, oats or turnips. Two folds are thought necessary; one on the Downs where the sheep are penned in rainy nights when the arable lands are too wet. The early part of the summer they fold on such lands as are intended for turnips; after which upon lands which are in rotation for wheat.<sup>258</sup>

Even if a pack came across sheep grazing out on the Downs they would have been in the control and protection of a shepherd and dog under whose watchful eyes sheep could be grazed even close to open cornfields.<sup>259</sup>

The fold-course system was remarkably resilient on the 'Good Sands' of north-west Norfolk since perhaps two-thirds of those recorded before 1570 still survived in the eighteenth century,<sup>260</sup> while Nathaniel Kent estimated 143,000 acres of 'waste'

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<sup>254</sup> S. Rees, *The Charlton Hunt* (Chichester, 1998) p. 83.

<sup>255</sup> F. Rye, (ed.) *Calender of correspondence and documents relating to the family of Oliver le Neve of Witchingham, Norfolk 1675-1743*; letter no.1372 dated 7.1.1695 (Norwich, 1895)

<sup>256</sup> *Holkham Household Accounts*, A7, (1720) p. 138

<sup>257</sup> M. Page, 'The Technology of Medieval Sheep Farming: Some Evidence from Crawley, Hampshire, 1208-1349' *AHR* Vol. 51, part II (2003), p. 139

<sup>258</sup> A. Young, *A General view of Agriculture of Sussex* (London, 1813) p. 347

<sup>259</sup> *VCH Wiltshire*, Vol. 4 (London, 1959) p. 46

<sup>260</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History* V.i, p. 230

remained throughout Norfolk in 1794.<sup>261</sup> It is striking that the early Norfolk masters of foxhounds mentioned in Baily's (the authoritative annual hunting directory) - Sir Nicholas Le Strange of Hunstanton, Richard Mason of Necton, Sir Robert Walpole of Houghton and Thomas Coke of Holkham - all lived in the north-west quadrant of the county.<sup>262</sup> Macnair's reworking of William Faden's county map of 1797 makes it clear that heaths and commons were still widespread in the sheep-corn area providing both open space for hunting and cover for foxes.<sup>263</sup> The obvious paradox of protecting carnivorous foxes to hunt in the winter while lambing ewes in the spring was partially resolved by payments; Holkham household accounts on November 20<sup>th</sup> 1721 record 'to a shepheard for preserving foxes 13s 6d'.<sup>264</sup>

## Hunting on poorly-drained clay vales – Group 2

The two clusters of early packs that developed on the poorly-drained clays of the East Midlands and Durham have already been identified. The dominant farming types are categorised by Thirsk in the Midlands as 'corn and cattle with substantial feeding' or 'corn and livestock with special enterprises'. In Leicestershire the 'special enterprises' included breeding horses, significant in the development of hunting, while to the north 'dairying and feeding' are also highlighted, reflecting the growing markets for butter and cheese in London and even the Netherlands.<sup>265</sup> Both groups lie within 'arable vale lands (fielden or champion)' on Thirsk's map (Figure 3.6)

It seems surprising, because of the challenges inherent in crossing tenacious, wet soils on horseback in winter that, apart from the sheep-corn areas, the other key sites for the genesis of foxhunting should be on the physically-contrasting heavy clay soils of the East Midlands and Durham. Both areas were characterised by significant enclosure during the seventeenth century, associated with the expansion of grassland. Cantor recorded that it is probable that County Durham changed rapidly from being largely an open-field county in 1600 to a great majority of parishes being

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<sup>261</sup> D. Dymond, *Norfolk Landscape* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1990) p. 215

<sup>262</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory 1932-3* (London, 1933) p. 138

<sup>263</sup> A. Macnair & T. Williamson, *William Faden and Norfolk's eighteenth - century landscape* (Oxford, 2010)

<sup>264</sup> Holkham Household accounts, A7 (1721)

<sup>265</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*, p. 40

enclosed by 1699.<sup>266</sup> Wordie has highlighted a parallel surge of activity in Leicestershire noting that around 17 per cent of Leicestershire was enclosed before 1599 but by 1699 another 34 per cent had been added.<sup>267</sup> Although it is important to note that these figures show that around half the land was still farmed in common fields. In enclosed areas some new closes were converted to permanent pasture, while in others a system of convertible husbandry was adopted.<sup>268</sup> Convertible husbandry alternated arable and grazing use; stock fertilised the land and the farmer's income was derived from both grain and animal sales. The move to livestock farming was accelerated in all clay vales after about 1650 by falling grain prices<sup>269</sup> contrasting with the increasingly profitable market for wool, hides, meat and dairy produce.<sup>270</sup> Allen noted that the overwhelming majority of sixteenth and seventeenth-century enclosure was associated with the conversion of arable to grass.<sup>271</sup> Reed, writing of north Buckinghamshire, vividly described one of the reasons: 'no convenient pasture for milch kine ... [and] indispensable draught animals ... save among the corn and grain' with the result that 'many spoils, trespasses and destructions occur daily by reason of the escape of cattle into the corn and grass, causing disputes, actions, quarrels, and troubles'.<sup>272</sup>

### *Hunting in the East Midlands*

The predecessors of the Cottesmore and Quorn, two of the earliest packs started before 1700 primarily to hunt foxes, were established against the background of arable conversion to grass in Leicestershire, described by Butlin as the centre of the seventeenth-century movement for enclosure of common fields.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> L. Cantor, *The Changing English Countryside 1400-1700* (London, 1987) p. 46

<sup>267</sup> J.R. Wordie, 'The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914', *The Economic History Review*, 36 (1983), p. 489

<sup>268</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*, p. 41

<sup>269</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*, p. 42

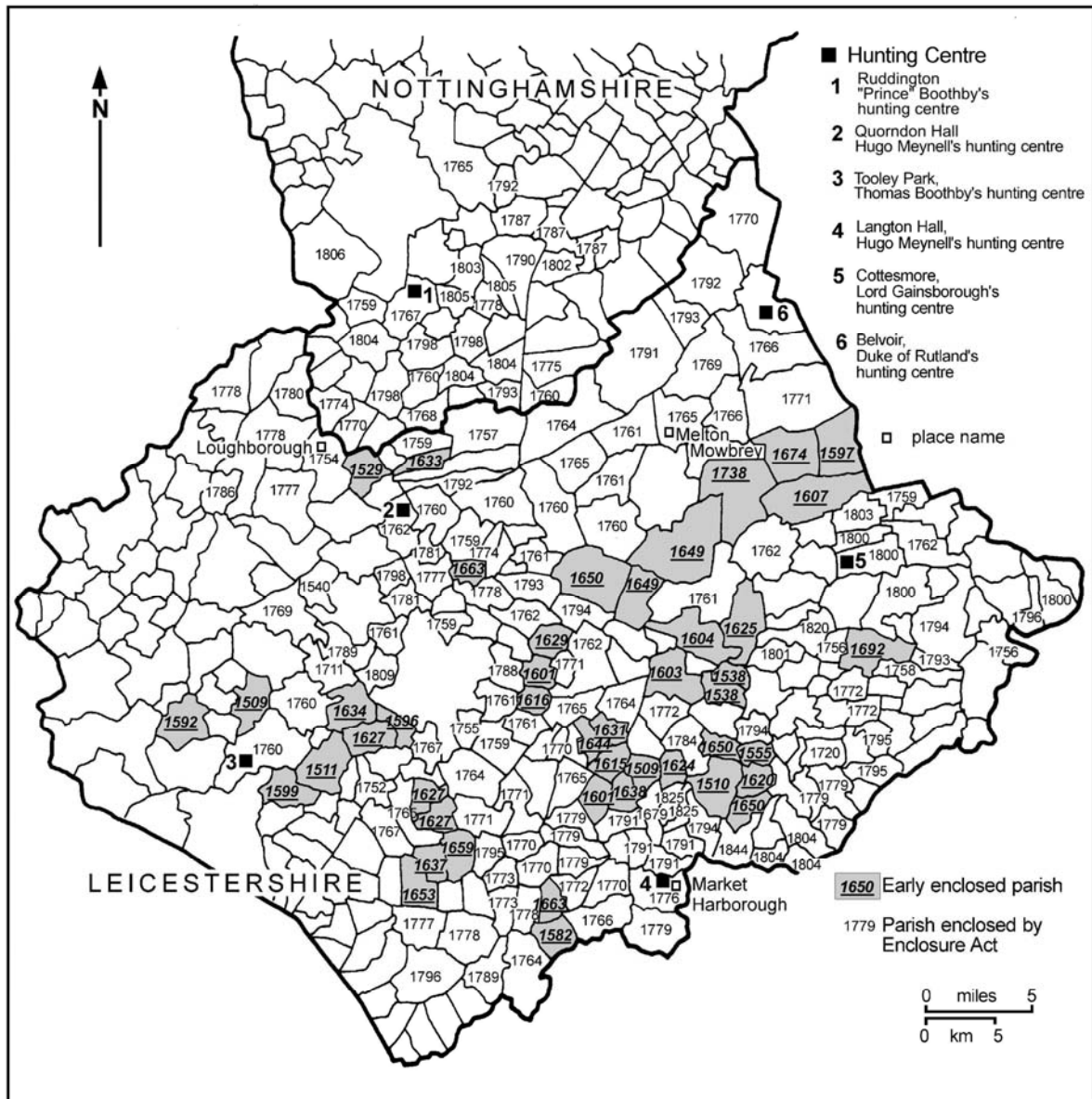
<sup>270</sup> M. Reed, 'Enclosure in North Buckinghamshire 1500-1750', *Agricultural History Review* Vol 32 (1984) p. 138

<sup>271</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p.54

<sup>272</sup> Reed 'Enclosure...' p.138

<sup>273</sup> R.A. Butlin, 'The Enclosure of Open-fields and Extinction of Common Rights in England circa 1660-1750: A Review', in *Changes in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England 1500-1900*. Institute of British Geographers Special Publication Number 10, (ed) H.A.S. Fox & R.A. Butlin (London, 1979), p. 69

Turning to Figure 3.11, showing the enclosure dates of parishes in Leicestershire, it is striking that Thomas Boothby, Hugo Meynell's predecessor, who started foxhunting about 1697 from his base at Tooley Park (in the parish of Peckleton just south west of Leicester) was surrounded by early-enclosed parishes.<sup>274</sup>



**Figure 3.11** Enclosure dates for Leicestershire parishes with main hunting centres.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>274</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p.43

<sup>275</sup> W.E. Tate & M.E. Turner, *A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards* (Reading, 1978) pp. 153-158

In contrast, the Rutland parishes around Cottesmore hunted by Lord Lowther from 1666-1695 were mainly subject to much later Parliamentary enclosure, including Cottesmore itself, which was not enclosed until 1800, so much of the hunting was across the common fields.<sup>276</sup> This binary picture gives an inkling that the presence of grassland was *not* the key factor in the location of early hunting. Neither was the distribution of soil types; within the broad category of the associated soil groups which cover much of the area ('calcareous pelosols and argilic brown earths or brown earths' as seen on Figure 3.4) there is no obvious association of early hunting centres with the better drained Boulder Clay soils of the Hanslope soil series, in fact much of Meynell's country lies on the more poorly drained Ragdale soils.<sup>277</sup>

During the early eighteenth century foxhunting became increasingly fashionable in the region. In 1728 the Confederate Pack was formed in Leicestershire by the 3rd Duke of Rutland, the Earls of Cardigan and Gainsborough and Lords Gower and Howe. They hunted from Croxton (not enclosed until 1794) from mid October, at Exton (enclosed 1800) in December and January, and Clawson (enclosed 1791) until the end of March.<sup>278</sup> Much of their hunting was across common fields although this did not necessarily mean crossing arable or fallow land, because parts of some common fields had already been converted to pasture leys where beasts were tethered or penned to fatten. For example, at Wigston Magna near Leicester grass leys took up on average a fifth of the total area of the common fields in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>279</sup> Much of the unfenced grassland and fallows provided good access, unimpeded by fences, for mounted foxhunters. Hall's map of Brixworth in Northamptonshire in 1688 (Figure 3.12 overleaf) shows vividly the development of a large paddock adjacent to the west of the village and cow pastures – completely new areas of common grazing on the outer edges of the common fields.<sup>280</sup> Hall noted that 'cow pastures were usually permanent and were not converted back to arable; the ownership of each land was forgotten and no longer recorded ... being generally their worst sort of ground ... in

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<sup>276</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory* (Windsor, 1991), p. 32

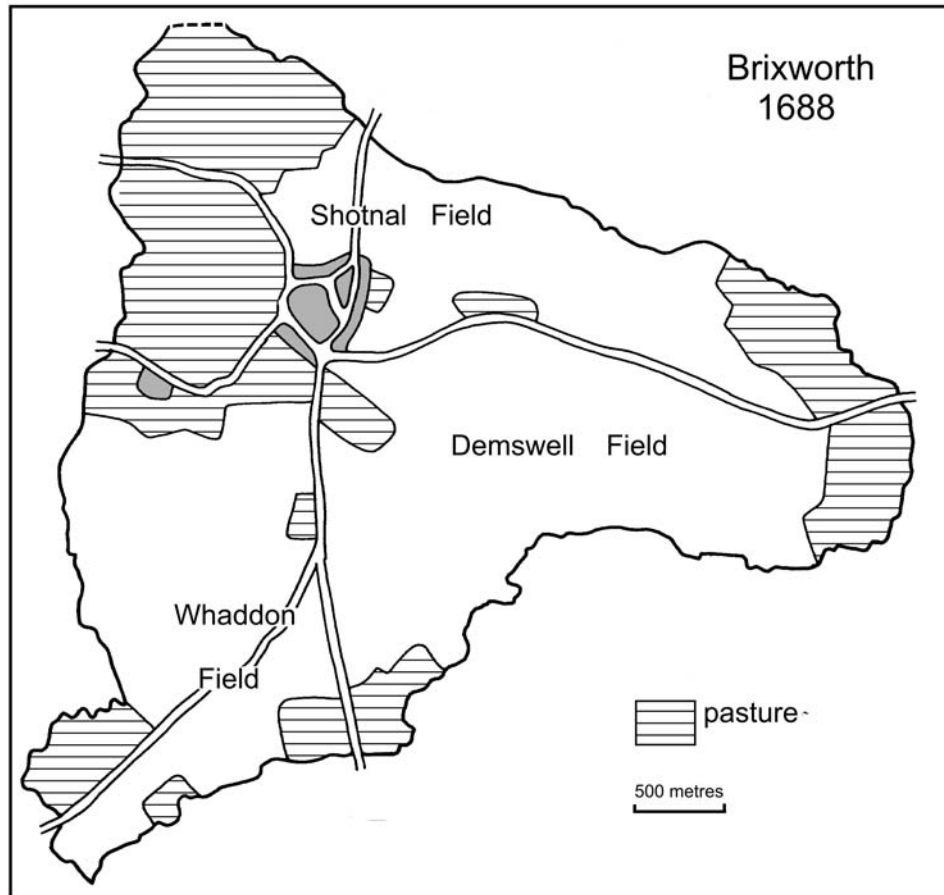
<sup>277</sup> A.J. Thomasson, *Soils of the Melton Mowbray District, Sheet 142*, (Harpenden, 1971).

<sup>278</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 62

<sup>279</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History*, Vol. Vi. p. 95

<sup>280</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p.36

the outskirts of the fields'.<sup>281</sup> The development of many of these remote, poor areas of grassland as fox coverts in the nineteenth century will be described later.



**Figure 3.12** The extent of pasture in Brixworth, Northamptonshire in 1688.<sup>282</sup>

Following the start of Confederate pack, the Fitzwilliam (1730), Pytchley (1750) and Belvoir (1750) packs were established, hunting across a great swathe of central Northamptonshire, much of Leicestershire, eastern Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire west of the 'Cliff and Heath' district. Arable crops were still grown in common fields over much of the area, although enclosure had increased the acreage under various forms of convertible husbandry and permanent pasture, especially around Northampton and to the east and west of Leicester.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>281</sup> D. Hall. *The Open-fields of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1995), p. 22

<sup>282</sup> Hall, *Medieval Fields*, p. 36

<sup>283</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History*, Vol. VII, p. 94



Evidently, and contrary to the accepted view, the persistence of open-fields in arable use was not necessarily a barrier to foxhunting. As Williamson noted of open-fields, there were usually no trees or hedges outside the immediate vicinity of the village in open-field parishes.<sup>284</sup> This meant that there were extensive areas where foxhunting still could take place in the autumn and winter across a relatively open landscape of stubbles or fallow without necessitating jumping. Hunting diaries provide evidence to challenge the orthodox view that early hunting flourished on enclosed grassland. The diaries of Justinian Isham of Lamport in Northamptonshire (west of Pytchley and not enclosed until 1794) are full of references to foxhunting in the open-fields. On September 6<sup>th</sup> 1710 he noted, 'We hunted for the second time this year in the fields' and later, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, he recorded, 'I hunted in Clipson field'. On August 4<sup>th</sup> 1718 he wrote that 'this year being remarkable for an early harvest we were a hunting in ye open-field' - a later section will show conclusively that he was hunting foxes.<sup>285</sup> This provides clear evidence of the value of arable land in the early development of hunting in the East Midlands, a point that has been ignored by previous landscape or hunting historians. Grass 'balks' (narrow lands, or strips, allowed to grass over and used as common rights of way) provided a network of routes with good 'going' for horses.<sup>286</sup> The density of balks could be significant; for example, there were furlongs with a narrow balk between every strip at Helmdon and Naseby in Northamptonshire.<sup>287</sup>

The map of open-fields at Harby (figure 3.13 overleaf) demonstrates very clearly the network of routes across open-fields that provided much easier access for foxhunters than the fenced allotments and new roads that replaced them.

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<sup>284</sup> T. Williamson, 'Understanding Fields', *The Local Historian*, Vol.33. 1 (2003), p. 13

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in J. Stearne, *Northamptonshire Landscape* (London, 1974), p. 244

<sup>286</sup> Hall, *Medieval Fields*, p. 6

<sup>287</sup> Hall, *Medieval Fields*, p. 39



**Figure 3.13** Open-fields at Harby demonstrating access routes, 1790<sup>288</sup>

One of the main potential drawbacks to hunting in the open-fields was the lack of cover for foxes due to the early clearance of woodland from the champion arable lands. Hall recorded that Naseby in Northamptonshire was completely arable by c1290,<sup>289</sup> and quoted a later survey of Crick and Clay Coton, in the same county, which showed that by 1526 there were no woods nearby and the houses were

<sup>288</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/MA/A/136/1 (Harby strip maps 1790)

<sup>289</sup> Hall, *Open-fields*, p. 103

decaying for lack of timber.<sup>290</sup> However, it is a myth that the East Midlands were devoid of any significant woodland. Foxhunting benefited from the extensive remnants of forests on the poorer heavy clays or infertile sands, unsuitable for arable use, which compensated as cover for foxes. Thirsk highlighted the presence of extensive woodland in parts of the Shires hunting country:

The boulder clay gives rise to heavy soils and the upland Wolds of this area have ... extensive areas given over to woodlands on the hilltops. Large cultivated woodlands were also to be found in Rockingham Forest ... between Market Harborough and Stamford, in Leighfield Forest in Rutland ... and in Whittlewood and Salcey Forests ... of Northamptonshire. Charnwood Forest consisting largely of woodlands and waste ... in Leicestershire, while in Nottinghamshire the much larger forest of Sherwood stretched some 25 or 30 miles.<sup>291</sup>

These woodlands provided a good stronghold for foxes. Ellis noted that Boothby (Hugo Meynell's predecessor in the Quorn country of Leicestershire from 1696) benefited after 1722 when the Earl of Stamford ceased to live at Bradgate because it gave him the opportunity to draw Charnwood forest for foxes.<sup>292</sup> When Hugo Meynell took over from 1753 he continued to hunt the forest in spring and autumn; presumably to 'enter' (train) his young hounds by hunting fox cubs in the autumn and to avoid flocks of in-lamb ewes and lambs or in-calf cattle in the spring.<sup>293</sup> An estimated 18,000 acres of the forest remained open until the Enclosure Act of 1808. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Grafton started a pack in 1722 at his new kennel in Euston, Suffolk with 'draft' (transferred) hounds from a hunting squire, Mr Orlebar of Hilnwick Hall in Northamptonshire, and Sir Robert Walpole of Houghton in Norfolk. Grafton's Northampton woodlands were used for cubbing (hunting young foxes in the autumn) and spring hunting which allowed him, and any other MFH with access to the big Midlands woodlands and forests, to extend his hunting season.

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<sup>290</sup> Hall, *Open-fields*, p. 104

<sup>291</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History*, Vol. Vi, p. 92

<sup>292</sup> C.D.B. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1951), p. 7

<sup>293</sup> *VCH Leicestershire*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1955)

The paucity of woodland in much of the rest of the East Midlands meant that hunted foxes had to travel great distances to take refuge, which was an advantage since long, straight runs were valued by foxhunters. As Simpson observed in 1922; ‘the distances covered in Meynell’s day, when the country was less enclosed, were far greater than the present time when foxes frequently run in circles from one covert to another as their [coverts] numbers increased’.<sup>294</sup>

Longrigg outlined a further woodland role, as a reservoir of ‘bag’ foxes for other areas, when he described the hunting regime of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Grafton.<sup>295</sup> As well as hunting in Northamptonshire and East Anglia, Grafton also took his hounds to kennels at Croydon from which he hunted in Surrey, Sussex and Kent. He had Northamptonshire foxes ‘turned down’ (released for hunting) in Surrey when he was there, either because of a shortage or to ensure a fast find without having to draw a range of coverts.<sup>296</sup> As the Leicestershire VCH noted, ‘Evidently hunting bag foxes at this time was a favourite occupation and considered quite orthodox. Justinian Isham of Lamport recorded in his diary on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1711: ‘Mr Andrews turn’d up a bag fox in Brixworth field’ and in April 1712 Mr Isham dined with ‘several of the fox hunters, who in the morning had hunted a bag fox’.<sup>297</sup> The dates suggest that they must have been hunting on open-fields well away from ewes and lambs.

There was another advantage to hunting in arable areas. Although farmers were slow to adopt root crops in the Midland common fields, they were grown in limited quantities from the start of the eighteenth century. Stearne, describing Northamptonshire, noted the use of turnips as early as 1731,<sup>298</sup> while Pitt wrote later that in Leicestershire turnips and coleseed were grown for winter feed for sheep that were penned on the roots with hurdles.<sup>299</sup> Root crops could provide both a good food supply of small rodents and dense cover for foxes. Beach-Thomas, writing two centuries later about East Anglia, recorded that ‘in parts of East Anglia regular fox

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<sup>294</sup> C. Simpson, *Leicestershire and Its Hunts: The Quorn, the Cottesmore and the Belvoir*, (London, 1922), p. 95

<sup>295</sup> ‘Bag’ foxes were caught and then released ‘from a bag or sack on hunting days to provide a ‘find’ for hounds

<sup>296</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 64

<sup>297</sup> *VCH Leicestershire*, Vol. 2 (London, 1969), pp. 355-356

<sup>298</sup> Stearne, *Northamptonshire Landscape*, p. 229

<sup>299</sup> William Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire and Rutland* (London, 1813), p.128

coverts are scarce and many hundreds of foxes are found every year in sheep feed of various sorts – kale, mustard or turnips'.<sup>300</sup>

### *The development of foxhunting in Durham*

An echo of the early developments in the East Midlands is found on the poorly drained stagnogleys, formed mainly on Boulder Clay, in Durham. Baily's noted that the Durham Hunt dated from the seventeenth century but provides no details.<sup>301</sup> The VCH for Durham is more conservative, opening the section describing hunting in Durham by stating that it is fairly certain that the first pack of foxhounds was kept at Streatlam in South Durham between 1730 and 1740 by Mr Bowes (an ancestor of the Earls of Strathmore), only three miles from Raby Castle.<sup>302</sup> However, it is documented that, following these opaque early days, two very famous packs of foxhounds became well established in South Durham during the eighteenth century: the Earl of Darlington's (later Zetland) based at Raby Castle on the East Durham plateau; and Ralph Lambton's (later the Durham) at Sedgefield on the edge of the Tees Basin and East Durham plateau.

Much of the early hunting took place in Thirsk's 'arable vale land' region primarily used for corn and cattle with substantial rearing and dairying activities. Enclosure allowed the development of convertible husbandry (alternating long pasture leys and arable use) and an increase in permanent pasture, mirroring the situation in the East Midlands. Hodgson has studied the enclosure history and noted that the rising demand for food in the growing industrial population led to the enclosure of traditional plough land and common pasture in the lowland townships of the south and east by commercially motivated landlords and their tenants between 1550 and 1750.<sup>303</sup> Whilst physical access may have become more difficult due to enclosure; Lambton's hunting developed due to the increasing control over tenants and the landscape by landlords following engrossment. For example at Hamsterley, north of Raby, there were eleven tenants on the Swinburne's land in 1668 but by 1715 this had declined

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<sup>300</sup> Sir W. Beach-Thomas, *Hunting England* (London, 1936) p. 84

<sup>301</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory*, (London, 1991) p. 48

<sup>302</sup> *VCH Durham*. Vol. 2 (London, 1968), p. 388

<sup>303</sup> R.J. Hodgson, 'The Progress of Enclosure in County Durham 1550-1870', in *Changes in the Countryside*, (ed.) H.A.S. Fox & R.A. Butlin, (London, 1979), p. 83

to four farmers and two small holders.<sup>304</sup> The grandfather of R.S. Surtees, the author of the comic foxhunting novel 'Handley Cross', kept a pack of foxhounds at Hamsterley in the eighteenth century.<sup>305</sup>

### **Hunting on mixed soil types – Group 3**

Table 3.1 (fox hunts established before 1750 and the associated soil types and agricultural regions) shows a number of packs that straddle contrasting areas, partly because of the huge countries that they covered. They have been split into two broad groups – the 'northern' and 'eastern'.

#### *Northern packs on mixed soils*

The 'northern' packs include Thomas Cockaine's hunt in Derbyshire (from 1570), the Rufford in Nottinghamshire (1720), the Burton (1674) and Brocklesby (1700) in Lincolnshire, Holderness (1726) in South Yorkshire and the Fitzwilliam (1730) which ranged across parts of Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. The hunt countries straddle the clay vales and Jurassic and Triassic limestones and sandstones and form a crescent round the quintessential East Midland vale packs of the Belvoir, Cottesmore, Quorn and Pytchley. They lie partly within the 'arable vale lands' but stretch on to Thirsk's 'wold' area of lighter soils in Lincolnshire or the 'forests' of the East Midlands. The main farming activities were corn growing and cattle rearing on the heavier soils, with corn and sheep on the Wolds and 'subsistence' corn with cattle grazing and sheep rearing in the woodland areas.

Thirsk's map of farming regions, Figure 3.6, shows that in the early eighteenth century the Holderness, Burton and Brocklesby packs of South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire spanned the area she labelled 'Wold' and the heavier soils flanking it to east on the arable clay vale and west in the coastal 'marshland' and Fens. The heartland of all three hunts was on the light land of the Chalk Wolds or Limestone 'Heath and Cliff', originally trackless heath and rabbit warrens until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century enclosures led to a landscape of straight roads and

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<sup>304</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History* Vol. Vi, p. 50

<sup>305</sup> G.A. Cowen, *The Braes of Derwent Hunt* (Gateshead on Tyne, 1956), p. 24

hedges.<sup>306</sup> The Wolds and Heath were farmed on the sheep-corn system with large areas given over to sheep walks.<sup>307</sup> At night the sheep were driven down from the hill pastures to be folded on the arable fields in the valleys although the arable area was generally small,<sup>308</sup> until it expanded rapidly as a result of the high prices triggered by the Napoleonic wars.<sup>309</sup>

Once again early foxhunting seems to be linked to the sheep-corn system, the open, unfenced grazing of the sheep walks and the dual function, explored in an earlier section, of providing both sport and vermin control. In fact, as noted earlier, Longrigg attributed the birth of the Holderness, in Yorkshire, to William Draper of Beswick who hunted the Holderness country for twenty years from 1726 because sheep farmers were plagued by foxes.<sup>310</sup>

Beastall wrote that the Lincolnshire Heath was celebrated by travellers in the 1720s as fine, open country for hunting,<sup>311</sup> corroborated by Thirsk's observation that by the mid eighteenth century 63 per cent of the parishes of the Cliff north of Lincoln and 55 per cent of those on the Heath to the south still had land awaiting enclosure.<sup>312</sup> Butlin and Baker listed Lincolnshire in 1750 as an open-field county,<sup>313</sup> while Turner's work showed that 39 per cent of the county was not enclosed until Parliamentary Acts were passed.<sup>314</sup> Thirsk noted that away from the Heath and Wold arable crops were still grown in the common fields of the clay vales but enclosure had increased the extent of land given over to various forms of convertible husbandry and to permanent pasture so that these hunts also partly shared many landscape and farming characteristics with the East Midland packs.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> S. Bennett, and N. Bennett, (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire* (Hull, 1994), p. 8

<sup>307</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History*, Vol. Vi. p. 94

<sup>308</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History*, Vol. Vi. p. 104

<sup>309</sup> Bennett, *Historical Atlas*, p. 92

<sup>310</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 63

<sup>311</sup> T.W. Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire*, (Lincoln, 1978) p. 14

<sup>312</sup> J. Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming* (London, 1957), p.160

<sup>313</sup> R.A. Butlin & A.R.H. Baker, (eds.), *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (London, 1973)

<sup>314</sup> M. Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure, its History, Geography and Economic History* (Folkestone, 1980), p.183

<sup>315</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian History*, Vol. Vi p. 94

It is unlikely that packs deliberately drew the Fens or coastal area, a formidable country of wide, deep cut drains with occasional wide outfalls and rivers impassable for horses.<sup>316</sup> But a 'new foxhunting song' written in 1763 (appropriately in doggerel) described the consequences of the Burton hounds, described as 'Tartars,' hunting a fox, 'Reynard', into the Fens.<sup>317</sup> Interestingly they were still meeting early in the morning and not at mid morning – as made fashionable by Meynell in Leicestershire.

Ten minutes past nine was the time of the day  
When Reynard broke cover and this was his play: ...  
He took to the Fen of old Blankney's rich squire  
And sous'd in the water, thro bog, mud and mire  
But all wet and bedraggled he found it no farce,  
Twelve couple of Tartars being hard on his arse ...  
Poor Reynard, being tir'd at the wall made a push,  
Where Fletcher and Luther laid hold of his brush.  
Thus ended at last a most beautiful chase  
Which lasted four hours and some minutes apace.

One disadvantage for hunting was that Lincolnshire lacked woodland to provide fox cover; Rackham estimated that as early as 1086 only 4 per cent of the county (excluding the Holland division of the Fens) was wooded.<sup>318</sup> However furze ('furzz' or gorse), which was still widespread on the Lincolnshire Heaths and Wolds formed an excellent substitute fox cover because it deterred (non-hunting) disturbance by humans and supported a good population of rabbits. The Monsons were hunting foxes in the Burton country of the southern half of Lincolnshire from 1672 according to a map inscribed 'Parte of Lincolnshire showing the utmost boundaries for hunting ye foxe with our hounds in the year of Grace 1672 [signed John Monson, Upton Magna]'.<sup>319</sup> This shows that Monson hunted an area stretching from Gainsborough in the north, east to Louth and Horncastle, and south as far as Newark in the west and Sleaford in the east; an area of about 34 miles north to south and 40 miles east

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<sup>316</sup> *VCH Lincolnshire*. Vol. 2 (London, 1988), p. 503

<sup>317</sup> R. Fountain, *The Burton Hunt* (Lincolnshire, 1996), p. 112

<sup>318</sup> O. Rackham, *Ancient Woodland: Its History, Vegetation and Uses* (London, 1980), p.114

<sup>319</sup> Fountain, *Burton Hunt*, front flyleaf



to west, as shown on Figure 3.3. Beastall described the Monson estate, on the edge of the Wolds and Ancholme Clay Vale in around 1700, as totalling an estimated 4,835 acres including 3,271 acres of enclosed meadow or pasture, 200 acres of pasture with furrz, 340 acres of arable and 545 acres of lngs and Carr, meadow or moor. He noted that enclosure was not completed until 1820 so that foxhunters could continue to find open country.<sup>320</sup>

#### *Eastern packs on mixed soils*

The second cluster of packs developed on mixed soils was found in the east in Hertfordshire and Essex where the heavy soils of the London Clay and glacial drift (boulder clay) abut the well-drained loams and sands overlying the chalk of the East Anglian Heights, Chilterns and Breckland. It is difficult to untangle the early history of the pack that became the Puckeridge and establish who hunted what and where; as its biographer, Berry, wrote:

The early history of the Puckeridge country emerges very gradually from the deplorably incomplete records of the early eighteenth century ... only two facts seem to be beyond dispute – that it was the Calvert family and their friends who first began to hunt foxes in Hertfordshire and that by 1733 they had a least one [fox] earth stopper to whom they had sent at least one ... card.<sup>321</sup>

Earthstoppers were notified of the dates of meets because, to ensure longer runs, foxes were temporarily ‘stopped’ from re-entering their earths on their return from night-time hunting.

However, Berry has teased out a chronology from a network of eighteenth-century Calvert cousins, apparently all called John or Felix, which vividly illustrates the family’s quest for good hunting country.<sup>322</sup> In the early 1720s the Calvert family started hunting an area of woodlands between Hertford and Cheshunt; but by the late

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<sup>320</sup> Beastall, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 20

<sup>321</sup> M. Berry, *A History of the Puckeridge Hunt* (London, 1950), p. 19.

<sup>322</sup> Berry, *History*, p. 21

1740s this pack had faded out. Berry suggested that its traditions, and possibly its hounds, were embodied in a fresh hunt, which about this time was established in kennels at Redbourn to hunt the area around St Albans under the mastership of John Calvert.<sup>323</sup> The early centres, Cheshunt and Redbourn, lie in two physically distinct parts of Hertfordshire that shared common landscape characteristics. Where open-fields did exist they were 'of complex, "irregular" form and usually intermixed with closes held in severalty ... small fields which had always been enclosed with hedges and cultivated individually ... Most of these open-fields had disappeared before the start of the eighteenth century' and 'the bulk of the county ... is ... characterised by ancient countryside', which would have been difficult to cross on horseback.<sup>324</sup> The Cheshunt area lies in Williamson's 'Southern Uplands of Hertfordshire' where heavy soils, derived from London Clays, are interspersed with the acid, infertile sands and gravels of the Bagshot Beds.<sup>325</sup> The proximity of London encouraged dairying and hay making on the clay soils while extensive commons stretched across the gravels; 1,168 acres of common were listed in the enclosure act for Cheshunt of 1799.<sup>326</sup> The mixture of mainly pastoral farming dominated by enclosed fields farmed in severalty, with extensive heaths and woodland provided challenging hunting country because of the prevalence of hedges.<sup>327</sup> So the predecessors of the Puckeridge are an apparent anomaly, hunting during the first half of the eighteenth century almost exclusively in 'ancient' countryside where early enclosure had produced small fields surrounded by un-jumpable thick, high hedges.

The anomaly may partly be explained by the Calverts' wish to take part in an elite activity despite the difficulties posed by the countryside surrounding their original homes. They were extremely wealthy because of a brewery established in the seventeenth century in London and 'farming the excise' (buying the right collect certain taxes and duties) during the Stuart period.<sup>328</sup> The family appears to have used its wealth in an attempt to share the social status of the majority of early MFHs already mentioned, such as Lord Grafton, the Earl of Yarborough, Sir Robert Walpole

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<sup>323</sup> Berry, *History*, p. 22

<sup>324</sup> T. Williamson, *The Origins of Hertfordshire* (Manchester, 2000), p. 6

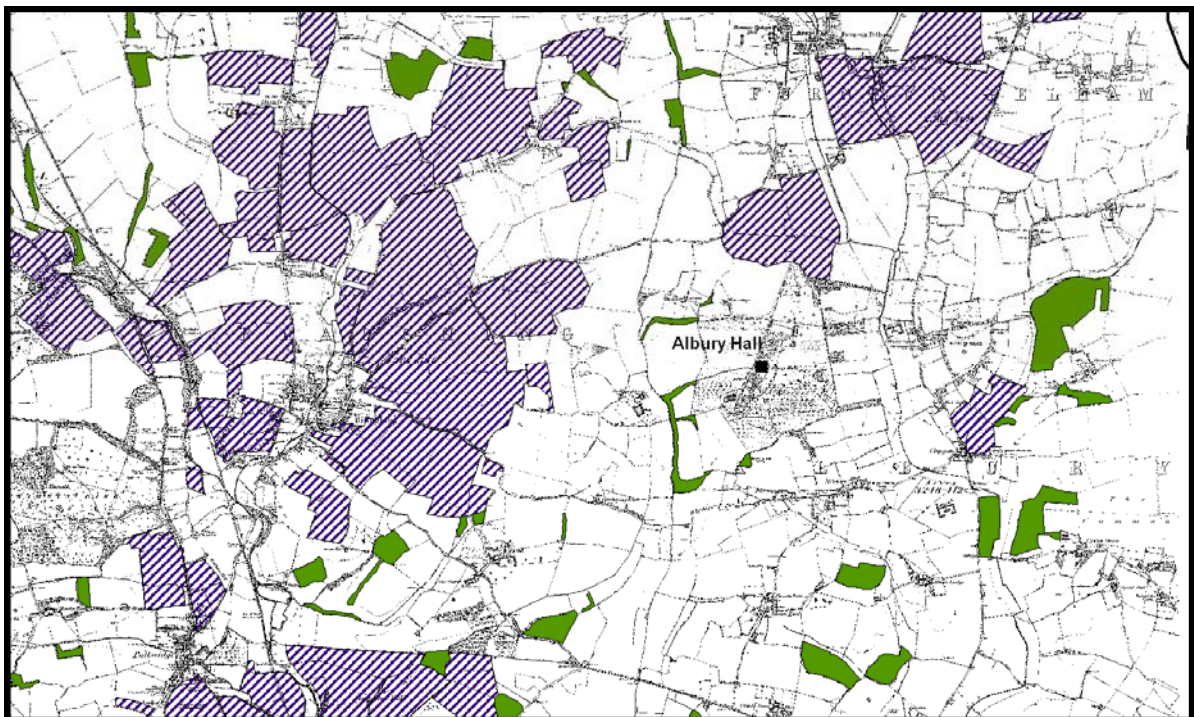
<sup>325</sup> Williamson, *Origins*, p.12

<sup>326</sup> A. Young, *General View of the County of Hertfordshire* (London, 1813), p. 44

<sup>327</sup> Williamson, *Origins*, p. 190

<sup>328</sup> Berry, *History*, p. 21

and Lord Fitzwilliam, who were members of the aristocracy or large landowners. The significance of the Calverts' prosperity and role as brewers will be explored in a subsequent section considering the social and tenorial aspects of control of access to the countryside. However, the apparent anomaly of hunting in an early-enclosed landscape was short lived. The Calverts made another move, in 1756, to Albury Hall on the Boulder Clays in the east of the county; here very heavy clay soils lie on the plateaux with lighter soils on the valley sides where the clay is mixed with underlying chalk. Rackham includes this area in his 'ancient countryside' but Williamson's recent research has demonstrated how the simple 'planned: ancient countryside' model can be misleading.<sup>329</sup> Figure 3.14, based on an examination of seventeenth and eighteenth century maps, is Williamson's preliminary estimate of the extent of open-fields remaining in the mid eighteenth century.



**Figure 3.14** Extent of open-fields in North East Hertfordshire c 1750.<sup>330</sup>

*Key:* The extensive areas of open-fields, predominantly on the valley sides around Puckeridge and Braughing to the west of Albury Hall, are illustrated by purple cross-hatching. Woodland is indicated by green.

<sup>329</sup> T. Williamson pers. com. 3.4.2011

<sup>330</sup> T. Williamson – unpublished (2011)

Clearly the Calverts appear to have chosen to move away from hunting the enclosed landscape to the west into the more open countryside in the east around Albury. The move from Cheshunt also brought the pack closer to the Chalk escarpment in the north-east of the county dominated by the sheep-corn system so favourable to the early establishment of hunting. But it is impossible to tell, due to a dearth of early hunt records, how often this country was hunted in preference to the local open-fields.

### **The 'Ancient' Countryside and early foxhunting**

Good access was a key factor, so areas where hedges or other field boundaries were scarce favoured the early development of foxhunting. Comparing the distribution of early foxhunting, on Figure 3.3, with Rackham's 'ancient countryside' shown on Figure 3.5 suggests that the converse is true. Small, early-enclosed fields were generally inimical to hunting because, as already described, pioneer foxhunters had neither skills nor experience in jumping obstacles. George III (born in 1738 and subsequently the father of fifteen children) summed up the consensus of most early foxhunters, 'I love hunting, but I fear leaping' and added, in justification, 'A king and the father of a family should not ride bold'.<sup>331</sup>

The 'ancient countryside' was described by topographers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as 'woodland' because of the bosky appearance due to numerous hedgerow trees and tall hedges.<sup>332</sup> Early enclosure took place either from previously open-fields or directly from woodland or other forms of waste – 'assarting'. Wade Martins described how, following the population decline after the Black Death of 1348, 'more enterprising tenants took advantage of the situation to expand their holdings in the open-fields ... the strips were often consolidated in their individual holdings, which were then enclosed with hedges ... the lord of the manor tried to prevent all these becoming consolidated in one block of land but failed'.<sup>333</sup> Examples

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<sup>331</sup> Quoted in Charles Chevenix-Trench, *A History of Horsemanship* (New York, 1970), p. 192

<sup>332</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p.5

<sup>333</sup> S. Wade Martins, *Farms and Fields* (London, 1995), p. 57

are listed in the Chilterns - outside the Midlands heartland of the open-field system and strong manorial control and an insignificant area for early foxhunting.

Much early enclosure was directly from woodland; Hooper lists Warwickshire (Forest of Arden), Kent and Sussex as examples of places with a pattern of small, irregular fields where woodland has been cleared.<sup>334</sup> Contemporary descriptions of hedges in the ancient countryside illustrated the daunting barriers they posed to riders. In 1769 Sir John Parnell commented on hedges in Hertfordshire, 'Thru' out the Oak and the Elm hedgerows appear rather the work of Nature than Plantations generally Extending thirty or forty feet Broad growing irregularly in these stripes and giving the fields the air of being Reclaim'd from a general tract of woodland'.<sup>335</sup>

Hoskins described how the medieval planting of hedges in Devon produced similarly impassable fences; 'a trench is dug to mark the limits ... and the soil is thrown up into a mound ... planted with quickset ... no feature is more characteristic than these vast banks crowned with oak, ash, hazel or other coppice wood growing to a height of twenty feet or more and forming an impenetrable screen'.<sup>336</sup> Perhaps it is unsurprising that Nimrod, in his 'Hunting Tours' of the 1820s, called Devon 'certainly the worst hunting country I was ever in'.<sup>337</sup>

Foxhunting was also slow to develop in the ancient enclosed parts of south and east Norfolk, North Suffolk and Essex. Writing about Norfolk in 1787 William Marshall described one of the reasons, 'the inclosures are, in general, small and the hedges high, and full of trees' and added 'This has a singular effect in traveling through the country: the eye seems ever on the verge of a forest, which as it were by enchantment, continually changing into inclosures and hedgerows'.<sup>338</sup> Two forms of hedge management exacerbated the difficulties posed to mounted hunt followers. Both coppicing of hedges, where the timber is cut down to ground level on a ten-twelve year cycle, and pollarding, where trees were regularly cut back to form a

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<sup>334</sup> E. Pollard, M.D Hooper & N.W. Moore, *Hedges* (London, 1974), p. 31

<sup>335</sup> Quoted in T. Williamson, *Hedges and Walls* (London, 2002), p. 53

<sup>336</sup> W.G Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*. 1978 Penguin edn (London, 1955), p. 143

<sup>337</sup> Quoted in Carr, *English*, p. 85

<sup>338</sup> Quoted in Hoskins, *Making*, p. 184

strong screen some eight foot tall with prolific top growth, produced tall, un-jumpable hedges during at least part of the rotation.<sup>339</sup> Theobald recorded that at Badwell Ash Hall (in 'Woodland High Suffolk') in 1762 there were many hundreds of pollards and a wealth of timber in the hedgerows making them impassable.<sup>340</sup> The significance of hedge management in the development of foxhunting is discussed in more detail in a later section.

### **The importance of tenure and 'control' in the development of foxhunting**

I have suggested that easy physical access to land was a vital determinant of where early hunting originated since high fences, small fields and limited views deterred mounted followers. The distinction between champion and anciently-enclosed landscape areas and their apparent correlation with the presence or absence of early foxhunting has already been described. This section will examine the issue of access defined by tenure, considering whether the increasing control by landlords over parts of the countryside played a significant role in the development of hunting. Overton, writing about agricultural regions, noted that:

Historians have tacked more and more onto the basic agricultural division between wood-pasture and sheep-corn. Some ... have argued that nucleated settlement and strong manorial control in sheep-corn areas encouraged conventional and conformist attitudes to both politics and religion while the absence of such social controls in wood-pasture regions meant that people living there were more likely to be radical and unorthodox in their beliefs.<sup>341</sup>

This is partly a reference to Thirsk's 1970 paper where she considered the social aspects of land use and proposed that the inhabitants of wood-pasture areas were

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<sup>339</sup> Cantor, *Changing*, p. 47

<sup>340</sup> J. Theobald, 'Changing Landscapes, Changing Economies: Holdings in Woodland High Suffolk 1600 - 1850' (University of East Anglia PhD, 2002) p. 65

<sup>341</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 50

freer and more independent than those in the arable lowlands.<sup>342</sup> Overton subsequently referred to Underdown's entertaining work on regional cultures,<sup>343</sup> partly based on the geography of sport in Wiltshire, which made a distinction between the co-operative farming regimes of sheep-corn areas favouring team-games while the several farming of the wood-pasture regions encouraged individualistic bat and ball games.<sup>344</sup>

Overton summarised the views of the seventeenth-century antiquarian John Aubrey, Thirsk, Underdown and others in a table to show how the simple regional distinction between sheep-corn and wood-pasture regions has been extended to show spatial variation in many other elements of the rural economy, and society.<sup>345</sup>

**Table 3.3** Characteristics of Sheep-corn and wood-pasture regions<sup>346</sup>

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Sheep-corn</i>	<i>Wood-pasture</i>
Land quality	Light	Heavy
Land availability	Shortage	Plentiful commons and wastes
Cash crops	Corn, wool	Dairy products, meat
Field system	Common, open	Several, enclosed
Settlement	Nucleated	Dispersed
Social control	Strong	Weak
Parish size	Small	Large
Population movements	Out-migration	In-migration
Industry	Little	Much
Social structure	Differentiated	Family farms
Politics	Conformist	Dissenting
Religion	Conformist	Radical
Crime	Order	Disorder
Sport	Team games	Individual games

<sup>342</sup> J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture and Social Change'; Supplement 'Land, church and people' presented to H.P.R. Finberg, *AHR* 18 (1970), p. 167

<sup>343</sup> D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (Oxford, 1985) pp. 73-105

<sup>344</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 50

<sup>345</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 49

<sup>346</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 49

One problem with Overton's précis for the study of early foxhunting is that it omitted the large areas of Midland lowland clay 'champion' country; however these share many of the characteristics shown above under 'sheep-corn' such as strong social control by landlords, nucleated settlements and common, open-field systems. It would be disingenuous to suggest that all the inhabitants of sheep-corn areas shared the social characteristics listed but there were factors that encouraged the growth of foxhunting in sheep-corn and open-field systems and deterred them in wood-pasture areas. The key element was the landlords' control over significant swathes of countryside and its inhabitants to ensure the acquiescence of tenant farmers to disturbance of their stock and trampling of their crops or grassland by the mounted followers. Control was also vital to sustain supplies of foxes, by protecting their habitats and avoiding disturbance, so a reliable source was available on hunting days. Control was expressed in two different but linked ways in the areas where early foxhunting started; the clay vales of the East Midlands where the open-field system was gradually yielding to enclosure and the sheep-corn system of the lighter soils where open-fields coexisted with extensive tracts of open grazing on downs, sheep walks and heaths.<sup>347</sup>

Campbell's theory that 'strong and undivided lordship would have been the most favourable to the functional development of the common field system',<sup>348</sup> chimes with the early distribution of hunting in areas where manorial control was strong. As Williamson noted, "The Midland system" was the most complex and sophisticated form of open-field agriculture ... the hand of lordship was here particularly strong. Manorial lords assisted or enforced settlement nucleation and the reorganization of open-fields to protect their own agrarian interests and rents'.<sup>349</sup> In the period up until 1800, while foxhunting was becoming established, it seems logical to suggest that 'the hand of lordship' and a tradition of obedience to 'regular, inflexible and rigorously enforced field-courses' was an important element in ensuring little resistance to the passage of hounds and mounted followers across the open-fields and fallows.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 22

<sup>348</sup> B. Campbell, 'Common field origins – the regional dimension' in *The origins of open-field agriculture*, T Rowley (ed.) (London, 1981) p. 127

<sup>349</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 21

<sup>350</sup> Kerridge, *Agricultural*, p.108



Wade Martins noted that while estates increased in size from the Restoration (1660) the independent small, yeoman farmers declined in number and were replaced by the expanding tenant class many of whom lacked the security of a lease.<sup>351</sup>

Clemenson calculated that the proportion of land held by the great landowners, and often let to tenants, appears to have remained around 15-20 per cent up until to 1688 but then rose considerably so that by 1799 the figure was around 20-25 per cent.<sup>352</sup> She also commented on the tenacity of owners retaining the great estates, at least until the 1880s, since land gave social, economic and political status and power.<sup>353</sup>

Manorial control evolved, via enclosure, in many areas into a simpler binary relationship between landlord and tenant and the East Midlands provided a useful exemplar. As already discussed, the enclosure of arable open-fields encouraged the development of foxhunting by establishing the 'clear distinction of personal property from the common, the rustic, the public'.<sup>354</sup> The outcome of the loss of common land and 'waste' by enclosure was that 'the landscape of right and custom was replaced by a landscape of private property' that enabled landowners to protect their supply of foxes and hunt across the landscape owned by themselves, or friends and neighbours, with impunity.<sup>355</sup>

In the Midlands late medieval enclosure was easiest where villages were small and all the land lay in a single manor and could be acquired by a single owner with relative ease, in contrast to the major valleys where larger and more tenurially complex vills could be found on better, more flexible soils.<sup>356</sup> These parishes were often dominated by one or two great owners with a few remnant small yeoman whose numbers had been reduced by the gradual buying up of their lands in earlier years.<sup>357</sup> By 1798 Lowe described the extent of control landowners exerted in

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<sup>351</sup> S. Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes* (Cheshire, 2004) p. 6

<sup>352</sup> H. Clemenson, *English Country Houses and Landed Estates* (London, 1982) p. 14

<sup>353</sup> Clemenson, *English*, p. 16

<sup>354</sup> N. Everett, *The Tory view of landscape* (New Haven, 1994) p. 39

<sup>355</sup> T. Williamson & L. Bellamy, *Property and landscape* (London, 1987) p. 102

<sup>356</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 34

<sup>357</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian*, Vol. Vi, p. 120

Nottinghamshire: 'few counties for their size contain more seats of gentlemen and noblemen ... as many gentlemen keep a good deal of land in their own hands ...'<sup>358</sup>

A similar pattern developed in Northamptonshire on the pastures and river meadows. Sir William Fitzwilliam had bought land at Milton in 1502, using money made as an alderman in London, and grazed huge flocks between the Welland and Nene rivers.<sup>359</sup> Later, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the family established the eponymous hunt and, as Baily's recorded, 'the hounds have never since their establishment passed out of the ownership of the Fitzwilliam family'.<sup>360</sup> Stearne described the rise of another powerful family of Tudor graziers in Northamptonshire and the subsequent rise of their family pack based on control of a large acreage. Sir John Spencer bought Althorp in 1508 and by 1577 the family owned 10,000 sheep.<sup>361</sup> A 1662 map of Pytchley showed that enclosure by agreement was well advanced;<sup>362</sup> as Broad wrote 'the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were a time when an increasing proportion of the nation's land area was owned by the greatest landowners and the southern Midlands was particularly well populated with country seats and feudal acres ... the Spencers owned major parts of a block of twenty four parishes'.<sup>363</sup> Subsequently they became founders of the Pytchley Hunt.

The scale of the Duke of Rutland's land holdings was noted by Ellis writing about the hunting career of Hugo Meynell's uncle, Thomas Boothby born in 1681, who had a substantial estate although he was not in the category of the great lords like the Duke of Rutland (of Belvoir Castle) who could almost hunt through a season without drawing any but their own coverts.<sup>364</sup> The coincidence of large estates, where a landlord controlled his tenants' activities, and the continuing existence of open-fields (in some areas, such as around Cottesmore, until the 1800s) may have given a double impetus to the genesis of foxhunting in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

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<sup>358</sup> R. Lowe, *General View of the Agriculture of Nottinghamshire* (London, 1798) p. 9

<sup>359</sup> Stearne, *Northamptonshire*, p. 190

<sup>360</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory* (London, 1915) p. 82

<sup>361</sup> Stearne, *Northamptonshire*, pp. 184 & 187

<sup>362</sup> Stearne, *Northamptonshire*, p. 227

<sup>363</sup> J. Broad 'Alternate Husbandry and Permanent Pasture in the Midlands, 1650-1800', *AHR*. Vol. 28 (1980), p. 82

<sup>364</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 7

### *The role of the fold course*

The early development of foxhunting in sheep-corn areas has already been described and it seems likely that the development of the fold course system had an important role to play, at least in East Anglia; because, as Williamson commented, the fold course was itself a symptom of seigniorial strength.<sup>365</sup> Kerridge describing the fold course in Norfolk illustrated the degree of control exerted over tenants:

Where there was a fold course, the manorial tenants owed fold-suit i.e. they were bound to send their sheep to the lord's fold that he might have their 'tash',<sup>366</sup> and to give precedence to the lord's flock in feeding 'shacks' [common field stubble or fallow] and summerleys.<sup>367</sup>

Thirsk commented that the classic fold course was uniquely East Anglian in structure and influence because landlords exercised their rights of foldage by compelling tenants to receive seigniorial flocks on their common field lands and generally manorial tenants were not permitted to keep sheep on the commons.<sup>368</sup> Allison pointed out an additional imposition in Norfolk - in some townships tenants were obliged to make an annual payment for each acre that benefited from tathing (fertilizing) by the lord's flock,<sup>369</sup> and he noted a further restriction at Holkham where neither heathland nor shack were available for tenants' sheep.<sup>370</sup>

A different, less restrictive model was found in another area of early hunting - on the chalklands of Wiltshire, Berkshire, Dorset and Hampshire, and their extension along the South Downs into Sussex, which were classic sheep-corn areas.<sup>371</sup> Kerridge has described a system where 'most of the tillage was usually close-folded by joint [communal] flocks according to strict regulations'.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 136

<sup>366</sup> Tash (or 'tathe') = faeces ... urine, the trampling, and perhaps of the perspiration, and the warmth, communicated to the soil by the practice of folding'. W. Marshall, *The Rural economy of Norfolk* (London, 1795) pp. 33-34

<sup>367</sup> Kerridge, *Agricultural*, p. 75

<sup>368</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian*, Vol. VI, p. 228

<sup>369</sup> K.J.Allison, 'The sheep-corn husbandry of Norfolk in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *AHR* Vol. V, part 1, (1957) p. 20

<sup>370</sup> Allison, 'The sheep-corn...' p 21

<sup>371</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 53

<sup>372</sup> Kerridge, *Common*, p. 27

The strong control over tenants and peasants exerted by landowners covered significant acreages. The comparatively poor soils and consequent low land prices ensured that by the start of the eighteenth century most sheep-corn districts were dominated by large landed estates.<sup>373</sup> Estates in north-west Norfolk, the Breckland of Norfolk and Suffolk, the chalk lands of the south and in other sheep-corn areas, such as the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire Wolds, were sizeable; by 1800 the Earl of Yarborough (MFH, Brocklesby Hunt) owned 50,000 acres in Lincolnshire with Lord Monson (The Burton Hunt) holding another 20,000 acres, while Sir Tatton Sykes (Holderness Hunt) controlled 34,000 acres of the Yorkshire Wolds.<sup>374</sup> As Fuller observed in her study of the Lindsey landscape in Lincolnshire dominated by the Earl of Yarborough, 'the possession of land brought social prestige and political power and the large landowners were in a strong position to influence the timing and nature of landscape change'.<sup>375</sup>

However Thirsk noted the beginnings of opposition by yeoman who resented both the restrictions upon stock keeping and arable management imposed by the manorial lords; and also the damage done by the roving sheep flocks.<sup>376</sup> As Allinson recorded, often landlords made

no allowance to tenants for the use of unsown land; they lengthened the shack period and they fed their flocks over winter corn sown by tenants ... [this] widespread landlord abuse of the fold course system goes far towards explaining the peasants' antipathy towards its regulations, and their increasing resistance to its maintenance in the seventeenth century.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 57

<sup>374</sup> R.J. Olney, *The history of Lincolnshire; Rural society and County government in nineteenth century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1979) p. 22

<sup>375</sup> H. Fuller, 'Landownership and the Lindsey Landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (1976) p. 14

<sup>376</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian*, Vol. VI, p. 228

<sup>377</sup> Allison, 'The sheep-corn...' p. 22

Although 'the disruption of many fold courses was delayed until they were finally removed by the Parliamentary Enclosure acts in the second half of the eighteenth century'.<sup>378</sup>

Despite the antipathy of some tenants, the rigour and extent of the fold course system provided both a physical and social environment where hunting could thrive. I suggest that this is partly due to a, possibly unconscious, atavistic harking back by landlords to the tradition of manorial 'fold rights' with unfettered access to tenants' land and rigid restrictions on their activities. Successful foxhunting requires tight control over access to the land to protect the quarry from disturbance and the ability to cross wide swathes of the landscape without interference by the occupiers. Williamson has highlighted the fold course as distinguishing East Anglian sheep-corn husbandry from other light land systems by its particularly rigorous control by manorial lords.<sup>379</sup> It is striking that one of the earliest centres for foxhunting, the Holkham estate, developed in the 1720s in north-west Norfolk where manorial fold rights had been particularly restrictive.

### **Tenancies and leases**

The terms on which farmers rented land from its owner varied considerably over time and place; Overton attempted to unravel the complexities and regional variations in the sixteenth century using two diagrams and six pages to distinguish variants including '*pur autre vie*' from 'of grantee freeholds'.<sup>380</sup> Thirsk, writing about 1640 to 1750, devoted almost thirty pages to elucidating 'types of tenancy' with another seven pages devoted to 'beyond the formal agreement'. She summarised the four main forms, in descending order of longevity, as 'customary tenure and life leasehold', 'tenancies at will', 'tenancies from year to year and by lease for years' and 'rack rent leases'.

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<sup>378</sup> Allison, 'The sheep-corn...' p. 28

<sup>379</sup> S. Wade Martins & T. Williamson, *Roots of change* (Exeter, 1990) p. 11

<sup>380</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, pp. 30-36

But Thirsk added:

The formal terms of the tenancy were not necessarily the most important factor in determining the nature of the relationship between landlord and tenant ... in normal circumstances they provided no more than a loose framework within which dealings between landlord and tenant could be conducted ... In fact it must be very doubtful whether in any given district tenants at will, yearly tenants and tenants with leases for years held their land on significantly different terms.<sup>381</sup>

Thirsk also added the rider that the degree of supervision exercised by the owner or his steward over an estate was a far more important factor than the existence or otherwise of leases.<sup>382</sup> As Garry noted at Holkham, 'both Blaikie [the agent from 1816] and Coke were in the habit of riding over the farms from time to time, inspecting them, so that even if fines were never enforced, they remained a possibility and it would be a foolish tenant who did not observe the basic provisions of his lease'.<sup>383</sup> Hunting landlords, crossing their tenants' land regularly, were particularly able to spot evidence of poor farming or the breaking of husbandry clauses so were more likely to control the landscape and police tenants' farming activities for their own sporting ends. Fuller made a linked, rather self-evident, point – that absentee landlords usually had less direct influence on the landscape than residential owners.<sup>384</sup> The impact of hunting landlords on the landscape will be dealt with in detail in a later section.

Landlords were also beginning to add clauses to leases in support of their hunting. As early as 1683 in Norfolk, a lease from the Raynham estate to Philip Tubbings at East Raynham, for 11 years at £70 per year, included the clause: 'that he the said Philip Tubbings shall and will take into his custody one hound and keep and maintain the same for such and so long a time every year during the said eleven years as

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<sup>381</sup> J. Thirsk, *The Agrarian history of England and Wales*, Vol. VII (Cambridge, 1985), p. 229

<sup>382</sup> Thirsk, *Agrarian* Vol. VII, (Cambridge, 1985) p. 229

<sup>383</sup> M-A Garry, *An uncommon tenant, Fitzroy and Holkham 1808-1837* (Dereham, 1996) p. 39

<sup>384</sup> Fuller, 'Landownership...' p. 22

shall be sent to him by the said Viscount Townsend'.<sup>385</sup> This suggests that the Townsends either had a 'trencher fed' pack at this time i.e. tenants fed and maintained the pack which was assembled on hunting days or that tenants were expected to have a bitch to whelp during the summer time (the latter tradition continues up until the present day in many hunts while the former has disappeared). Thomas recorded the protest of a preacher, Edward Bury, as early as 1677 'How oft may we see greedy landlords force their tenants to feed their dogs with what they should feed their own children; a barbarous custom'.<sup>386</sup>

Wade Martins and Williamson recognised that the terms and conditions of leases tell as much about the changing balance of power between landlord and tenant as they do about the development of farming practice.<sup>387</sup> Williamson noted that 'In the first half of the eighteenth century, when prices were low and farms hard to let, the terms set out in leases were generally lax and generous. But as grain prices rose and competition increased landlords could make greater demands. Leases became more prescriptive and detailed'.<sup>388</sup>

In summary, it seems likely that the form of tenancy was less important in influencing the early development of foxhunting than the presence of resident landlords, often owning very large estates, ensuring that favourable clauses were observed. The impact of more restrictive clauses, developed in the nineteenth century when landlords' power and the popularity of hunting were in the ascendant, governing the maintenance of hedges, use of barbed wire and protection of foxes will be examined in a later chapter.

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<sup>385</sup> I am very grateful to Dr Elizabeth Griffiths for both alerting me to this lease and reading it for me. She also told me that Philip Tubbing was a trusted person, a previous bailiff to the Townsends, and farmed close by. Lease in Raynham Hall Archives. Library, Box 99

<sup>386</sup> K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural world* (London, 1987) p. 104

<sup>387</sup> S. Wade Martins & T. Williamson, 'The development of the lease and its role in agricultural improvement in East Anglia', *AHR* Vol. 46, Part 11 (1998)

<sup>388</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 78

## Rent rebates

Landlords had a second method of influencing tenants – the use of rent rebates to compensate tenants for loss of income due to hunting activities. The archives at Holkham provide considerable evidence of Thomas Coke's love of hunting. His guardian Sir Edward Coke, writing in 1711 from Longford, the family home in Derbyshire, described Thomas aged fourteen 'going too often abroad on hunting with the gentlemen about us which I find makes him grow more cool towards his books and less tractable towards his governor'.<sup>389</sup> By 1723 the Holkham Household Accounts show that Thomas Coke was spending £1482. 12s. 9d on the stables and hounds, 18 per cent of that year's total living expenses of £7904. 0s. 3d.<sup>390</sup> To justify such a large hunting establishment Coke needed good control over his tenants to ensure access to a regular supply of foxes. The household accounts are studded with entries relating to hunting and tenants' affairs showing the opportunity costs, in foregone rents, of improving the supply of foxes to the estate. These include a rebate in 1723 'paid Mr Huggins a years rent for Ashyard's Fox cover 6s',<sup>391</sup> in 1727 'a year's rent for Egmere Fox cover £2. 10s',<sup>392</sup> and in 1728 'a year's rent for a fox cover at Quarle £5 and 9s for cutting a riding through the fox cover'.<sup>393</sup> At Holkham in the 1720s there was also an energetic campaign by Coke to establish new fox coverts. This is the earliest reference to the practice in England that I have discovered anywhere and does not appear to have been highlighted previously. The details of the new coverts will be discussed later.

## Wood pasture areas

In contrast to the strong tenurial control expressed by landlords in the champion areas, Overton noted that dispersed settlement, private property rights and a fragmented manorial structure meant that social and economic control by a manorial

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<sup>389</sup> Holkham Archives, Correspondence, F/G2 (2), Letter no. 442 (1711)

<sup>390</sup> R.A.C. Parker, *Coke of Norfolk: a financial and agricultural study, 1707-1842* (Oxford, 1975) p. 21

<sup>391</sup> Holkham Archives, Household Accounts, A 32, p.11 (March sixteenth 1723)

<sup>392</sup> Holkham Archives, Household Accounts, A 11, p. 22 (December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1727)

<sup>393</sup> Holkham Archives, Household Accounts, A 11, p. 28 (January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1728)



lord tended to be weak in wood pasture areas.<sup>394</sup> A comparison of the distribution of early foxhunting and Thirsk's wood pasture areas shows (Figures 3.3 and 3.6) an almost inverse correlation. At a local scale in Norfolk the pattern is very marked; Campbell recorded that in north-east Norfolk fields divided into strips were ubiquitous by the twelfth century but the manorial structures were complex and free tenures were common.<sup>395</sup> Foxhunting did not develop early in this area (in contrast to the sheep-corn areas of neighbouring north-west Norfolk discussed previously). Williamson amplified the east/west pattern identified by Campbell in Norfolk to a regional scale in Eastern England 'both the proportion of sokemen and freemen and the degree of manorial complexity, were high in the east and low in the west ... a distribution which bears absolutely no relation at all to the broad distinction between "woodland" regions and "champion".<sup>396</sup> However, by coincidence or not, it does fit with the later distribution, in areas of low manorial complexity, of the West Norfolk, Suffolk (Euston), Puckeridge and Hertfordshire hunts identified in Table 3.1 as established before 1750. No early foxhound packs were found in the east of the region.

Williamson warned that woodland landscapes or 'ancient countrysides' were highly diverse and it would be misleading to discuss them as a single undifferentiated group.<sup>397</sup> However, there were some common characteristics that militate against hunting and these can be illustrated by looking at two different areas in the west. Kerridge wrote that stockbreeding and dairying favoured family farmers who rarely employed additional labour,<sup>398</sup> and added 'where family farmers had gone over to dairy-grazing, as in the Cheese Country [Wiltshire] and the Vale of Berkeley ... [there was a] high degree of independence from landlords and town governments'.<sup>399</sup>

Similarly on the Welsh Marches Edwards recorded the rise of a class of prosperous, independent farmers.

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<sup>394</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 50

<sup>395</sup> B. Campbell, 'Common field origins – the regional dimension', in *The origins of open-field agriculture*, (ed.), T Rowley (London, 1981) p. 127

<sup>396</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 52

<sup>397</sup> Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 117

<sup>398</sup> Kerridge, *Farmers*, p. 75

<sup>399</sup> Kerridge, *Farmers*, p. 58

In mainly wood-pasture areas like Shropshire, where arable farming was subordinate to livestock farming, the open-fields were less extensive and important than those in open-field mixed farming communities. Much agricultural land had never been organized into open-fields having been inclosed directly from woodland. Normally laid to grass these closes provided the basis of the largely pastoral economy.<sup>400</sup>

The VCH gives more detail on the distribution of the pastoral economy. Large sheep flocks were kept on the uplands of south and north-west Shropshire while mixed farming on the lower ground was based on a system of cattle-corn husbandry. The latter development was led by a class of prosperous yeoman who emerged in the mid seventeenth century and invested much capital in their farms. On the east Shropshire coalfield there were numerous small farms, usually with grazing and dairy enterprises, while dairying dominated in the northern part of the county.<sup>401</sup> In the wood pasture areas of both Wiltshire, as described by Kerridge, and Shropshire there were few large landowners and small owner-occupier farmers were too busy making a living, often milking by hand twice a day, to go hunting.

### *Contested access*

There are few records before 1750 of protests by small owner-occupiers about the damage caused by hounds crossing their land although a 1730's poem described the carnage caused by the Charlton Hunt in West Sussex:

That vilest slave, the huntsman, Ware his name  
Alone and drunk went out and let the pack  
Kill fourteen farmer's sheep, all in one day.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 119

<sup>401</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4, pp. 146-147

<sup>402</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 52

Unlike owner occupiers, tenants were constrained by a combination of traditional deference, tenurial control, rent rebates for land under fox coverts and payments for activities linked to hunting such as earth stopping, providing foxes to hunt and catching loose horses whose riders had tumbled off (all recorded in the Holkham Household Accounts before 1750).

## **Conclusion**

I have demonstrated that the development of early foxhunting in England was closely linked to two contrasting areas; the sheep-corn system developed on light land and the pre-enclosure open-fields in the clay vales of the East Midlands, extending north into Yorkshire and Durham. If foxhunting originated in two areas of such differing soils and agricultural systems, what were the common factors? The comparison of maps illustrating the distribution of early packs of foxhounds, the division between 'ancient' and 'planned' landscapes and the various agricultural regions suggests the vital importance of good access for mounted foxhunters. The second aspect of 'access' that favoured the genesis of hunting was the tight control exerted by manorial lords over both systems forcing the compliance of deferential tenants to allow free passage across their holdings. The absence of early hunting in most anciently enclosed areas farmed by yeoman owner-occupiers reinforces the argument.

Both landscape and hunting historians appear to have failed previously to make the connection between the distribution of early packs and the underlying reason – 'open' landscapes with good access. This may be due to successive generations of landscape historians becoming transfixed by the 'Shires' experience and hunting historians' tendency to focus on either the sporting and social history of hunting and its participants, or the minutiae of the development of individual packs, thereby missing the broader pattern of the sport's relationship with the landscapes of lowland England.

## CHAPTER 4 – THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOXHUNTING AFTER 1750

### The expansion of hunting

By 1800 foxhunting had spread from the heartlands of the Midlands and ‘sheep-corn’ areas described in the preceding chapter to ‘countries physically as unlike ... as can be imagined ... a controversy over whether it was worth keeping hounds in Kent, for example flared briefly’.<sup>403</sup> It is difficult to estimate the total number of packs of foxhounds hunting between 1750 and 1800; some still hunted a mixture of prey (fox, hare and deer) and others were informal and unrecorded. Hunt countries were often unbounded as the elite could have several hunting bases. Stirling illustrated the example of T.W. Coke of Holkham whose hunting country from 1776 extended through a great part of Norfolk with additional kennels in Suffolk, Cambridge and Essex.<sup>404</sup>

Table 4.1 shows a surge in the number of packs of foxhounds in the second half of the eighteenth century (although the exact year when packs started to focus exclusively on hunting foxes is uncertain). Only nine packs began between 1760 and 1780 but the launches of a further twenty-one were recorded in the subsequent twenty years.

**Table 4.1** Packs of foxhounds started 1760-1800<sup>405</sup>

<i>Name of pack</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Start date (approximate)</i>
West Kent	Kent	1760
Mendip	Somerset	1760
Cheshire	Cheshire	1763
Middleton	Yorkshire	1764
Vine	Hampshire/Berkshire	1770

<sup>403</sup> D. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege - a Social History of English Foxhunting* (Sussex, 1977) p. 13

<sup>404</sup> A.M.W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and His Friends* (London, 1912) p. 153

<sup>405</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory* (1992-1993)

Lord Leconfield	Sussex	1773
Shropshire	Shropshire	1775
Hatfield	Hertfordshire	1775
Mr Drake's	Oxfordshire	1778
Ludlow	Shropshire	1780
Warwickshire	Warwickshire	1780
New Forest	Hampshire	1780
York and Ainsty	Yorkshire	1784
Essex	Essex	1785
Duke of Beaufort's	Gloucestershire	1786
Cattistock	Dorset	1790
The Surrey	Surrey	1790
Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire	1790
East Kent	Kent	1790
Royal Hunt	Buckinghamshire	1790
Raby	Yorkshire	1790
Tindale	Northumberland	1790
Cleveland	Yorkshire	1790
Hambledon	Hampshire	1791
Albrighton	Shropshire	1792
Bramham Moor	Yorkshire	1793
Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's	Clwyd, Shropshire	1793
Eggesford	Devon	1798
Surrey Union	Surrey	1799
Oakley	Bedfordshire	1800

Ridley has noted several reasons for the apparent increase in activity post 1780. One was that informal gentry packs tended to merge to form bigger, more formal countries so the number of packs was more visible and public.<sup>406</sup> The second reason was an actual increase in people wishing to hunt foxes; by the 1780s Masters of Foxhounds were frequently complaining about people who hunted for the sake of riding after

<sup>406</sup> J. Ridley, *Fox Hunting* (London, 1990) p. 12

Childe had popularized the 'flying leap'.<sup>407</sup> Hunting was becoming a social event made more accessible after about 1780 because of the move to later, mid-morning meets.<sup>408</sup> By 11am the fox runs faster since it does not have a full belly and a wider range of people had time to travel from further afield to the meet.<sup>409</sup> Deuchar identified two further factors; the growth of subscription packs which expanded the number of people able to hunt and Beckford's publication of his *Thoughts upon Hunting* in 1781 which publicised improved techniques for hound management and hunting.<sup>410</sup>

Figure 3.3, in the previous chapter, illustrated the spread of foxhound packs from 1750-1800 outwards from the heartlands of the East Midlands and sheep-corn areas to most of lowland England, excluding the Fens. For a variety of reasons – social structure, aesthetic preferences and the risk of malaria - few eighteenth-century gentlemen lived in the Fens.<sup>411</sup> Figure 3.3 also shows that the development of packs exclusively hunting foxes did not take place in most of Devon and Cornwall until after 1800.

By about 1800, as foxhunting had become more popular, it became necessary to limit the number of packs of foxhounds hunting in any given area so the principles of hunting law began to evolve and exclusive hunt countries developed.<sup>412</sup> Longrigg noted that between 1800 and 1815 there were more than 50 recognised packs of foxhounds maintained entirely at the expense of the owner.<sup>413</sup> He also commented on another form of expansion;

By 1800 there were several sorts of hunts, differing in origin, scale and the relationship between masters and the field. There were great family packs, maintained by great territorial magnates at their own expense ... Belvoir, Badminton, Brocklesby and Milton ... Differing in degree ... were

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<sup>407</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, p. 9

<sup>408</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting* p 11

<sup>409</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting* p 12

<sup>410</sup> S. Deuchar, *Sporting art in eighteenth century England* (New Haven, 1988) p. 5

<sup>411</sup> T. Williamson, *The Archaeology of the Landscape Park - Garden Design in Norfolk c.1680 -1840* BAR British Series 268, (Oxford, 1998) pp. 11-12

<sup>412</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, pp. 70-71

<sup>413</sup> R. Longrigg, *The English Squire and His Sport* ( London, 1977) p. 221

the private packs of squires, equally independent of subscription. Their owners were able to afford them because they kept them small and unpretentious. Few hunted the fox only ... At the other end of the organisational extreme, there were packs got up as local co-operatives for sport or vermin killing or both.<sup>414</sup>

The rapid expansion of packs after 1780 followed a period of twenty years from 1760, when, as Turner noted, Parliamentary enclosure was hectic, stimulated by a rise in agricultural prices.<sup>415</sup> He added that this wave of enclosure was mainly concentrated on the arable open-fields of the East Midlands, Lincolnshire, Warwickshire and East Yorkshire.<sup>416</sup> Hunt observed that a study of the impact of soil type on the chronology of enclosure in Leicestershire reveals a distinct, unsurprising tendency for land unsuited to arable farming to be enclosed first.<sup>417</sup> The result of this conversion of clays to temporary or permanent grassland was areas of grass country, that carried a good scent, intermingled with remnant areas of open-fields.<sup>418</sup> A further growth took place as hunting moved into more marginal, early enclosed areas such as east Kent (1790), south and west Shropshire (Ludlow, 1780 and Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, 1793) and Devon (Eggesford, 1798) where conditions for hunting were less obviously suitable.

### **Development of foxhunting in the East Midlands ('the Shires')<sup>419</sup>**

One way of exploring the development of foxhunting in the second half of the eighteenth century is to narrow the focus more closely onto a region which was the birthplace of the modern style – the Shires. The middle of the eighteenth century is an important pivot in the changing mode of foxhunting. The preceding chapter has shown that early foxhunters ranged slowly across both grassland and arable

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<sup>414</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 121

<sup>415</sup> M. Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure, Its History, Geography and Economic History*, (Folkestone, 1980) p. 66

<sup>416</sup> Turner, *English*, p. 72

<sup>417</sup> H.G. Hunt, 'The Chronology of Parliamentary Enclosure in Leicestershire', *The Economic History Review*, New series, Volume 10 (1957) p. 266

<sup>418</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, pp. 17-18

<sup>419</sup> Some of the research in the following section has already been published in *Agricultural History Review*, Vol. 58, part 1 (2010) pp. 49-76

farmland on the clay lowlands of the East Midlands. The slowness of the hounds meant that time lost by mounted followers in diverting around fences or zigzagging along balks was not critical. Hugo Meynell, master of the forerunner of the Quorn Hunt in Leicestershire from 1753, is generally acknowledged as the 'father of modern foxhunting' because of the new style that he introduced. He bred faster hounds, started hunting in the middle of the day when foxes ran more swiftly and formed a foxhunting country on the basis of an almost contractual consent from neighbouring landowners.<sup>420</sup> By 1780 he was easily the most celebrated MFH in Britain. As Longrigg noted, a combination of factors explained his pre-eminence: his personal qualities, his scientific approach to hunting, his country, his hounds and his followers.<sup>421</sup>

### *Impact of enclosure on the East Midlands*

A clear picture of the chronology and effects of enclosure are particularly important in understanding the links between the landscape and development of modern foxhunting. The importance of early enclosure by agreement and purchase varied significantly across the regions. For example, Gonner estimated that by 1675 roughly 44 per cent of Northamptonshire had been enclosed,<sup>422</sup> while Wordie has calculated that over 51 per cent of the acreage of Leicestershire was in 'non parliamentary [act] enclosure' by 1699.<sup>423</sup> In contrast Wordie estimated that 75 per cent of Shropshire was already enclosed by the far earlier date of 1600.<sup>424</sup>

As Turner noted, the first period of greatest enclosing activity in the 1760s and 1770s, via Parliamentary Act, was mainly concerned with the enclosure of open-field arable lands, especially those associated with the claylands of the Midland counties.<sup>425</sup> The pace of change quickened during Meynell's mastership with 35.5

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<sup>420</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 118

<sup>421</sup> R. Longrigg, *The History of Foxhunting* (London, 1975), p. 71

<sup>422</sup> R.A. Butlin, 'The enclosure of open fields and extinction of common rights in England circa 1600-1750: a review' in *Changes in the countryside: essays on rural England, 1500 – 1900*, IBG special publication No 10 (ed) HA Fox & R.A. Butlin (London, 1979) p. 73

<sup>423</sup> J.R. Wordie, 'The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914', *The Economic History Review*, 36: (1983) p. 497

<sup>424</sup> Wordie, 'The chronology ...' p. 490

<sup>425</sup> Turner, *English*, p. 72



per cent of the county area of Leicestershire enclosed between 1760 and 1799 compared to under 7 per cent in the preceding 60 years.<sup>426</sup>

**Table 4.2.** Parliamentary enclosure of open-field arable before 1793<sup>427</sup>

<i>County</i>	<i>per cent of parliamentary enclosure enacted before 1793</i>	<i>Of which open-field arable</i>
Leicestershire	78.1	78.0
Lincolnshire	51.0	43.2
Northamptonshire	61.9	61.7
Nottinghamshire	52.3	48.3
Rutland	42.4	42.4

However, it is important not to over emphasise the impact of enclosure. Turner has also shown that a sizeable area of the East Midlands still remained in open-field agriculture up until a second surge of enclosure triggered by the Napoleonic wars. Between 1793 and 1815 a further 12.3 per cent of Northamptonshire's open-field arable was enclosed, with 11.3 per cent of Nottinghamshire's, 18.8 per cent of Rutland's and 5.5 per cent of Leicestershire's.<sup>428</sup>

It is also important to remember that even when land was enclosed this did not automatically mean that it became permanent pasture. By the end of the eighteenth century Pitt estimated that in Leicestershire and Rutland there were 240,000 acres in 'temporary tillage' (as a result of convertible husbandry alternating arable and pastoral use) with a matching acreage of 'permanent grass' and a further 20,000 acres of 'wasteland'.<sup>429</sup> This suggests that Meynell, when he was hunting from October onwards, was often faced with both the remnants of the open-field system and 'temporary tillage' in enclosures; this included autumn-sown winter wheat vulnerable to damage by horses. Hugo Meynell's whipper-in (assistant), Thomas Jones, noted in his diary: January 20<sup>th</sup> 1794 'met at Budden Wood, found by the

<sup>426</sup> Wordie, 'The chronology ...' p. 498

<sup>427</sup> Turner, *English*, p. 72

<sup>428</sup> Turner, *English*, p. 187

<sup>429</sup> W. Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire and Rutland* (London, 1813), pp. 5-6

wood on some wheat', 1799 January 16<sup>th</sup> 'Rempston - found a fox in stubble'.<sup>430</sup> As noted earlier, areas under arable use were not necessarily a disadvantage for foxhunting; hounds could cross crops without damaging them, stubbles left until the spring were often easily crossed on horseback and land remaining fallow as part of the rotation or under root crops provided cover for foxes.

It is clear that the often-repeated idea, discussed in Chapter 2, that the spread of grassland benefited hunting on horseback is oversimplified. In contrast to the ease with which open-fields, and their network of paths, balks and headlands, could be crossed, eighteenth-century grassland provided considerable challenges to mounted hunt followers. Monk noted that on the heavier land, such as that around Melton Mowbray, 'these lands are very wet in winter and the turf so tender as scarcely to be able to bear the treading of sheep at that season without injury'.<sup>431</sup> Other parts of the Leicestershire and south Nottinghamshire country that Meynell hunted from 1753 were notoriously poorly drained; Ellis noted that in those days it was very deep going, particularly at Bunny, Old Dalby and to the north west of Loughborough.<sup>432</sup> These soils were predominantly in the Ragdale series where severe waterlogging is common.<sup>433</sup> Ellis, the true foxhunter, commented 'as far as Meynell was concerned it didn't much matter. The turf would bear a fox and a pack of hounds and it carried a screaming scent'.<sup>434</sup> Artificial drainage was rare: Pitt did not note the advent of 'tiles for hollow drainage' in Leicestershire until 1813 and the Soil Survey observed that much of this tile drainage dated from the early and mid-nineteenth century.<sup>435</sup> Where grassland had been enclosed from arable use, ridge and furrow often remained; on the more impermeable clays the furrows could be 'from one to three feet deep in the hollows', often waterlogged in winter and full of rushes.<sup>436</sup> Paget commented almost 150 years later that it still 'takes a [hunting] season to teach a horse to gallop

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<sup>430</sup> T. Jones, *Diary of the Quorndon Hunt by Thomas Jones, Whipper in to the Late Hugo Meynell*, in the Melton Carnegie Museum, Melton Mowbray (Derby, 1816)

<sup>431</sup> J. Monk, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicestershire*, (London, 1794) p. 9

<sup>432</sup> C.D.B. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1951) p.17

<sup>433</sup> A.J. Thomasson, *Soils of the Melton Mowbray District (Sheet 142)*, Soil Survey of England and Wales, (Harpenden, 1971), p. 23

<sup>434</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 25

<sup>435</sup> Thomasson, *Soils*, p. 78

<sup>436</sup> Pitt, *General View Leicestershire*, p. 89

smoothly over them; until he has learnt one feels as if one is riding a lame camel'.<sup>437</sup> Pitt observed that this dangerous unevenness was exacerbated where 'a number of the pastures are shamefully over-run with anthills, and to so very great a degree, that in many of them the surface of one third of the land is nearly thus covered'.<sup>438</sup> As Broad commented, the anthills were very large and 'grass tended not to grow on such uneven lumps'.<sup>439</sup> This all suggests that the popular image of eighteenth-century hunt followers fluently galloping over level pastures is highly idealised.

### *Hugo Meynell MFH's hunting career*

To examine the relationship between foxhunting and the landscape changes, due to parliamentary enclosure, it is useful to look in more detail at the hunting careers of leading Shires foxhunters and where they chose to hunt in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Despite his fame as an MFH, Hugo Meynell was not an enthusiastic jumper. Ellis, historian of the Quorn Hunt, recorded that his horses were encouraged to 'rear on their hind legs and jump gates and stiles standing in the most sober ... way'.<sup>440</sup> But, as the details from Seymour's painting of hunting in Sussex in 1743 (Figure 4.1 overleaf) and Stubbs' painting of 1760, illustrating hunting in the same county (Figure 4.2), show this would have been both uncomfortable and potentially dangerous because of the lack of momentum.

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<sup>437</sup> G. Paget & L. Irvine, *Leicestershire* (London, 1950) p. 208

<sup>438</sup> Pitt, *General view Leicestershire*, p. 59

<sup>439</sup> J. Broad, 'Alternate Husbandry and Permanent Pasture in the Midlands 1650-1800', *AHR*. 28 (1980) p. 87

<sup>440</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 27



**Figure 4.1** Detail from 'A Kill at Ashdown Park' by James Seymour, 1743<sup>441</sup>



**Figure 4.2.** Detail from 'The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Richmond with the Charlton Hunt', by George Stubbs, c1760<sup>442</sup>

<sup>441</sup> S. Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth Century England - a Social and Political History* (New Haven, 1988) p. 77

<sup>442</sup> I am very grateful to Rosemary Baird, curator of the Goodwood Collection, for providing me with the photograph of this painting at Goodwood House.

So it seems unlikely that Meynell would have deliberately sought out a fenced landscape to hunt over. A contemporary is quoted as saying that Meynell ‘considered horses merely as vehicles to the hounds’,<sup>443</sup> while Ellis added that Meynell ‘would have been quite content ... to go on forever forging through the deep country and taking the fences, very occasionally, as they came’.<sup>444</sup> Peter Beckford, whose highly influential *Thoughts on Hunting* was published in 1781, acknowledged a more general lack of enthusiasm for jumping: advising other huntsmen to ‘dismount at once, when you come to a leap that you do not chose to take’.<sup>445</sup>

Ellis believed that:

Meynell’s chosen country was essentially the long strip of rolling open land running the forty miles from Nottingham to Market Harborough, which he was the first to recognize as the finest in the world ... near enough to the northern end of it was Quorndon Hall [Meynell’s home] ... Near enough to the southern end of it was Langton Hall, which he rented about 1762, living there – presumably for part of each season ... and kennelling the hounds at Bowden Inn.<sup>446</sup>

Meynell’s choice of an optimum hunting landscape can be examined at three stages in his career as a MFH. Initially, from 1753, Meynell hunted from Quorndon on the valley side of the Soar where he owned land and kennels. During his early hunting career, he honed his skills hunting over predominantly open land, and only resorted to woodland in spring and autumn. Finch has partly alluded to Meynell’s unenclosed hunting country: ‘Meynell’s dream of “a fast run” may, in fact, have been developed in the “cow pastures” of former open-fields which were grassed over prior to formal enclosure in the early eighteenth century’.<sup>447</sup> Spooner has highlighted ‘corridors’ of

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<sup>443</sup> D. Radcliffe, *The Noble Science* (London, 1839) quoted in Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 25

<sup>444</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p.27

<sup>445</sup> P. Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting*. (London, 1780; 1911 Reprint edn.) p. 99

<sup>446</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 11

<sup>447</sup> J. Finch, ‘Grass, Grass, Grass: Foxhunting and the Creation of the Modern Landscape’, *Landscapes*, 5 part 2 (2004), p. 45

pasture, often winding along valleys, in medieval Northamptonshire.<sup>448</sup> However, it is unlikely that either the cow pastures or the corridors were sufficiently extensive or inter-connected for a 'fast run' purely on grass, since hounds could hunt for ten - twenty miles, and the valley bottoms would be too poorly drained to provide good going for horses. The open fields remained an essential feature of Meynell's hunting territory.

But, by 1760, enclosure was rapidly taking place in a swathe of parishes around Quorndon culminating in the enclosure act for the parish itself in 1762.<sup>449</sup> The consequent changes in land use from open common fields are clearly described by Pitt; he notes that at Queniborough, south-east of Quorndon, prior to enclosure 'the land had for the greater part been, time immemorial, in the three shift tillage, 1. wheat, 2. beans, 3. fallow ... and was pretty much exhausted'.<sup>450</sup> By contrast 'Quorndon now first rate sheep land and carrying great crops of barley and green sheep food'.<sup>451</sup> The 1801 crop returns record Quorndon as having 124 acres under wheat, 214 acres under barley with 50 acres in oats and 92 acres in 'turnips or rape'.<sup>452</sup> The enclosure act of 1762 awarded 1,480 acres (out of the total parish acreage of 1,990 acres) so after almost 40 years around 32 per cent of the enclosed area remained under arable use, often in a convertible system.<sup>453</sup>

Joyce's study of the enclosure of four contiguous parishes, including Quorndon, is significant because the volume of landowners suggests a landscape around Quorndon divided into many fenced, privately-owned allotments, already a challenge to mounted foxhunters, even before any subdivision into smaller fields took place. Table 4.3 overleaf demonstrates that, despite a turnover of landowners in each parish of 15-20 per cent each decade, the number of landowners did not fall significantly between 1781 and 1800 (apart from Mountsorrel, where enclosure took

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<sup>448</sup> S. Spooner, 'The diversity of designed landscapes: a regional approach c 1660-1830' (PhD thesis, UEA 2010) p. 180

<sup>449</sup> Leicestershire RO, DE113/4 (Quorndon Enclosure Act, 1762).

<sup>450</sup> Pitt, *General view Leicestershire*, p. 71

<sup>451</sup> Pitt, *General view Leicestershire*, p. 76

<sup>452</sup> M. Turner, (ed.) *Home Office acreage returns (HO67): List and analysis*. PRO List and Index Society, Volume 190. (Leicestershire, 1982)

<sup>453</sup> W.E.Tate & M.E.Turner, *A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards* (Reading, 1978).

place later), and that 'small ownership and owner occupancy remained significant throughout the period' in all four parishes.<sup>454</sup>

**Table 4.3** Total number of landowners in the Soar Valley 1781-1790<sup>455</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Barrow upon Soar</u>	<u>Quorndon</u>	<u>Silesby</u>	<u>Mountsorrel</u>
<i>Date of Enclosure Act</i>	1760	1762	1759	1781
1781	109	95	87	150
1790	109	91	89	129
1800	107	90	122	129
<i>Acreage enclosed by Act</i>	2250	1480	2153	279

Enclosure acts required that boundary fences were planted round the initial allotments promptly; for example, the act for Quorndon, where Meynell is listed as an owner, stated that:

It is further enacted and declared that all the hedges, ditches and fences to be made for inclosure and dividing the said open and common fields, meadows and commons ... shall within the space of eighteen months ... [the owner must] set down and place posts and rails, back fence by throwing up earth or make any other fence outside the ditch.<sup>456</sup>

Figure 4.3 overleaf, illustrating hunting in the second decade of the nineteenth century, eleven years after Meynell retired as an MFH, shows the challenges posed to and by foxhunters traversing newly-enclosed grassland where nascent hedges were protected by double ditches and rails.

<sup>454</sup> S. Joyce, 'Enclosure and landholding in the Soar Valley', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*. Vol. 73 (1999)

<sup>455</sup> Joyce, 'Enclosure ...' p. 42

<sup>456</sup> Leicestershire CRO, DE 113/4 (Quorndon Enclosure Act, 1762)



**Figure 4.3** 'Going in and out clear' from a series on 'Indispensable accomplishments' by Sir R. Frankland, 1811<sup>457</sup>

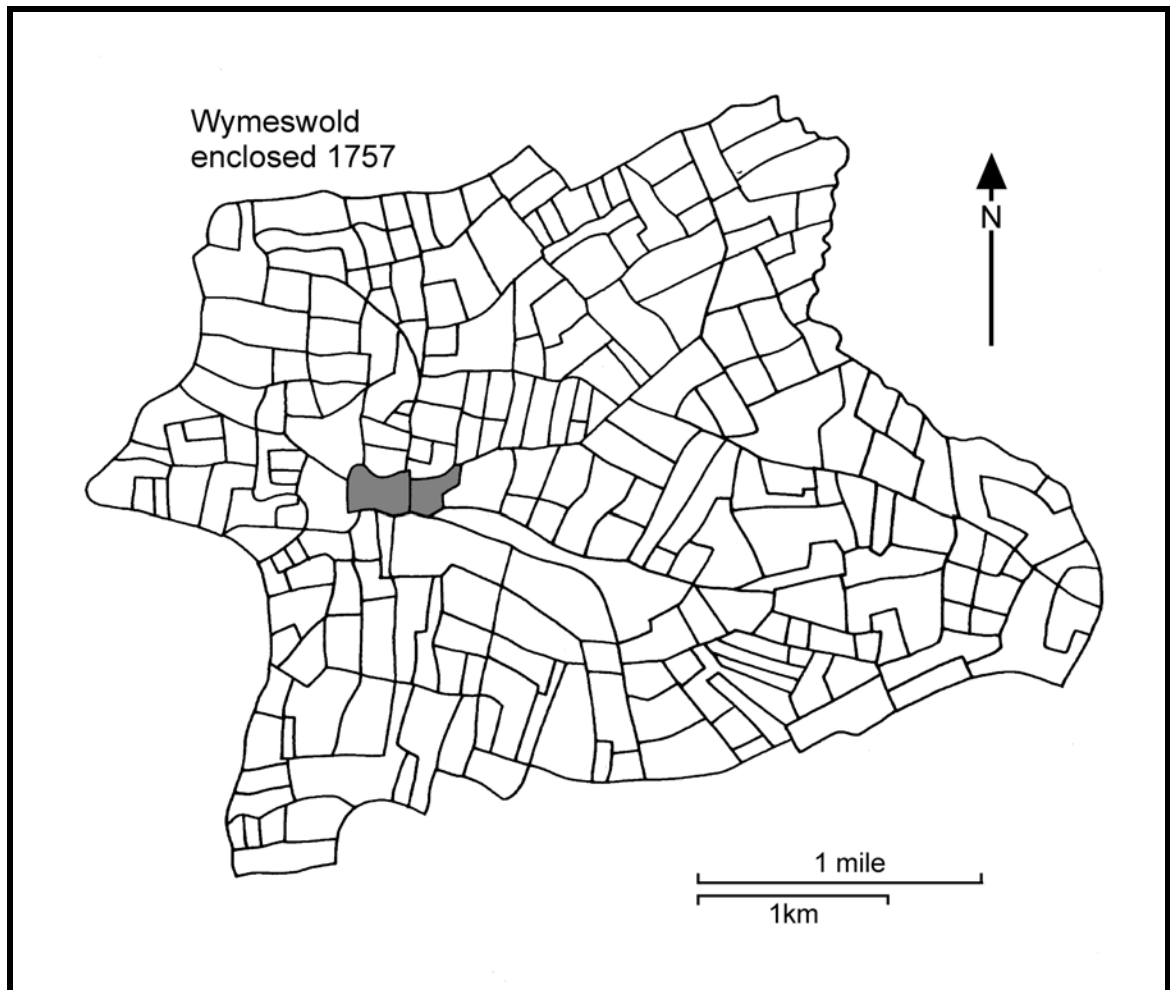
If Meynell and his followers wanted to continue to hunt in the area, they were clearly going to have to either master jumping fences; or take the slow option of using field gates, once the 'convenient gaps and openings ... for the passage of cattle, carts and carriages' left in the new fences had been closed after 'the space of twelve calendar months'; or hunt elsewhere.<sup>458</sup> The map of Wymeswold (Figure 4.4 overleaf), a parish north-east of Quorndon showing the allotments replacing six open-fields in the enclosure act of 1757, illustrates the subdivision of the countryside following enclosure. The heavy soils of the gently undulating plateau are typical of boulder clays overlying Lias clay; 2,891 acres out of the total parish acreage of 3,373 acres were enclosed; but almost 50 years later the 1801 Crop Returns reveal that 23 per cent of the parish was still in arable use.<sup>459</sup>

<sup>457</sup> I am very grateful to Catherine Glover for obtaining permission from James Harvey British Art to use this picture

<sup>458</sup> Leicestershire CRO, DE 113/4 (Quorndon Enclosure Act, 1762)

<sup>459</sup> Turner, *Home Office* Vol.190





**Figure 4.4** Field boundaries taken from the Wymeswold Enclosure Map of 1757<sup>460</sup>

It is striking that, in the same year that the enclosure act for Quorndon was passed (1762), Meynell started the second stage of his hunting career. Ellis touched on a very significant point; writing about Meynell's rental of Langton Hall on the heavy Lias clays just north of Market Harborough from 1762, '[he] lived for some time at Langton Hall ... a most convenient place for the Langton and Harborough countries'.<sup>461</sup> This suggests that Meynell actively chose to start hunting in an area that was still almost entirely unenclosed while, as Figure 3.11 showed, enclosure had already taken place from 1759-1762 in a band of parishes running east-west through Quorndon. The most likely reason, given his antipathy to jumping, is that it gave him excellent access to the Langtons and other adjacent unenclosed parishes to the north-east. Together

<sup>460</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/MA/366/1 (Enclosure Map of Wymeswold, 1757)

<sup>461</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p.11

the Langton parishes totalled 4,409 acres, of which only around 690 acres 'was considered to be old inclosure, chiefly in West Langton' where in 1743 three open fields: Wheat field, Bean field, and Fallow field, each contained at least five closes totaling over half of the parish's enclosed land.<sup>462</sup>

The argument that Meynell actively sought out unenclosed landscapes is buttressed by Hoskins' observation that 'organized foxhunting developed in the 1770s, in time for foxhunters to enjoy the exhilaration of galloping over miles of unfenced country. Enclosure made things more difficult'.<sup>463</sup> This echoes the assertion made four years earlier by Ellis, historian of the Quorn and other Leicestershire packs, that foxhunting tradition is quite definite that Meynell hunted (1753-1800) mainly in unfenced country.<sup>464</sup>

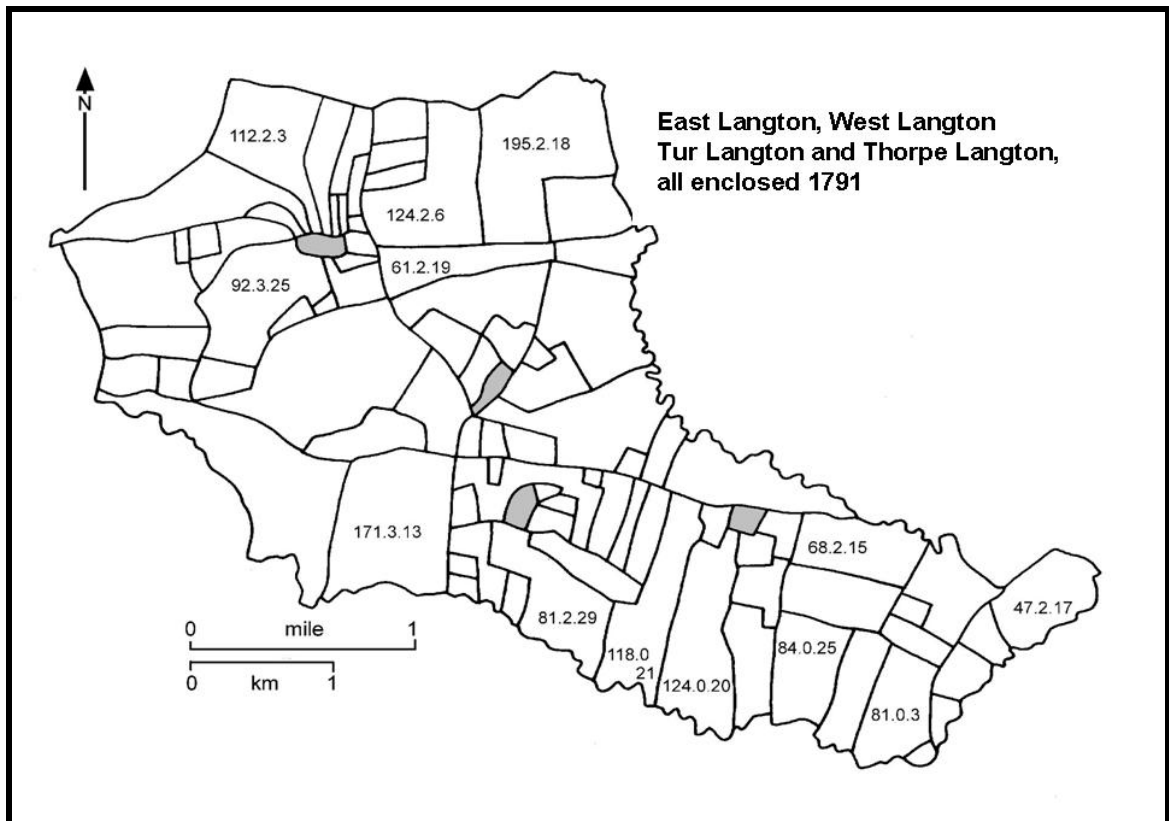
But even the Langton parishes were finally enclosed, in a flurry of activity after acts passed in 1791, and Figure 4.5 overleaf shows the problems faced by foxhunters who disliked jumping, such as Meynell, even before subdivision of the enclosure allotments took place.

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<sup>462</sup> *VCH Leicestershire*. Vol. 5 (London, 1964) p. 195

<sup>463</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 197

<sup>464</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 211



**Figure 4.5** Redrawn from the Langtons Enclosure Map of 1791 to show field boundaries and sizes in acres, roods and perches<sup>465</sup>

As enclosure spread it became increasingly difficult for Meynell to find unenclosed countryside to hunt over. One of the last remaining unenclosed parishes between Meynell's two hunting centres of Quorndon and Langton Hall was South Croxton, north-east of Leicester. The details in the act of 1794 provide a clear picture of the segmentation of the countryside when a total of 893 acres previously mainly in three open-fields, Upper, Middle and Nether, was divided between thirty-seven owners.<sup>466</sup> The smaller allotments tended to cluster around the village and forced foxhunters crossing them to leap even more frequently. Seven years later, 36 per cent of the acreage enclosed in 1794 remained in arable use, including 52 acres of beans and 26 acres of 'turnips or rape', valuable cover for foxes.<sup>467</sup>

<sup>465</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/A/335/1 (Enclosure Map of Langtons, 1791)

<sup>466</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/A/335/1 (Enclosure Act for Langtons, 1791)

<sup>467</sup> Turner, *Home Office* Vol.190

## The use of hunting diaries as a resource

### *Thomas Jones' hunting diary*

The third and last stage of Meynell's career is well illustrated by the laconic diary kept from 1791 to 1800 by Thomas Jones, his whipper-in, recording the location of each day's hunting.<sup>468</sup>



**Figure 4.6** Location of Hugo Meynell's meets in 1791<sup>469</sup>

<sup>468</sup> T. Jones, *Diary of the Quorndon Hunt by Thomas Jones, Whipper in to the Late Hugo Meynell*, 2009 reprint (Derby, 1816)

<sup>469</sup> Enclosure dates: Tate & Turner. *Domesday*, pp. 153-158  
Location of meets: Jones, *Diary*

Figure 4.6 shows all the meets in 1791 listed by Jones and clearly illustrates a marked drift northwards, away from Market Harborough (south-east of the map) and into a triangle bounded by Meynell's home at Quorndon Hall, close to Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, and the hunting seat of his brother-in-law and great friend 'Prince' Boothby at Ruddington in South Nottinghamshire. The map demonstrates the comparative lateness of parliamentary enclosure in south Nottinghamshire, particularly parishes south of Boothby's hunting centre at Ruddington. Table 4.4 shows how Meynell appears to have actively chosen to meet, during the sample year of 1791, in areas that were either mainly still unenclosed or close by. Meets in enclosed areas tended to be either for cubbing in the autumn (which involved hunting in woods) or conveniently close to his base at Quorndon.

**Table 4.4** Location of most popular meets for Hugo Meynell's hounds 1791<sup>470</sup>

<i>Place</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>No of meets</i>	<i>Enclosure date</i>
Bunny	South Nottinghamshire	6	1798
Rempstone	North of Quorndon	6 (3 in Oct <sup>471</sup> )	1768
Widmerpool	South Nottinghamshire	5	1804
Costock	Near Bunny, S Nottinghamshire	4	1760
Walton on the Wolds	East of Quorndon	3	1792
Billesdon	East of Leicester	3	1764
Syston	North east of Leicester	3	1778
Cotes	North of Quorndon	3	16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> C

Ruddington, Bunny and Costock all lie in the area described in 1794 by Lowe as 'Trent Bank Land' where fertile loams developed on Keuper marl fringe the river

<sup>470</sup> T. Jones, *Diary*.

<sup>471</sup> 3 meets were for 'cubbing' where the objective is to contain young foxes in a wood not hunt them across the countryside

valley. Root crops were important on the light land, and incidentally benefited hunting. Lowe noted that 'occupation is mixed of arable and grass ... the arable is generally calculated for the turnip husbandry'.<sup>472</sup> As already noted, Thomas Jones's diaries usefully confirm that hunting took place away from enclosed grassland areas because he mentions a range of arable crops, both cereals and roots. Jones gives a very detailed insight into the importance of turnip fields as fox cover; in 1796 on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 'hit off a fox in J Harrison's turnips' and on October 24<sup>th</sup> 'met at Prestwold ... found in some turnips near the Turnpike road'. Pitt noted in Leicestershire that 'stubble cole [kale] is sown upon the ploughing up of an early stubble ... and is always saved for spring sheep pasture'.<sup>473</sup> Kale because it is tall, dense and stands through the winter provides very good cover for foxes. In 1798 on October 8<sup>th</sup>, Thomas Jones noted 'found another fox in some coleseed'. Although grassland has traditionally been seen as the pre-eminent hunting terrain, arable areas provided considerable advantages for foxhunting in winter if stubbles, often easily crossed on horseback, were left until spring cultivations. Pitt writing about Leicestershire and Rutland regretted that although 'bean stubble should be ploughed before winter for the benefit of the amelioration of frost ... [it] is, I believe, seldom done'.<sup>474</sup> Land remaining fallow, pea and bean haulm, rape, coleseed and root crops all provided both cover and small rodents as prey for foxes during the hunting season. This was particularly important in lightly wooded areas such as much of Leicestershire. During winter it was also possible to follow Nicholas Coxe's advice, from his '*Gentleman's Recreation*' written in 1674, to draw the 'groves, thickets and bushes near villages, for a fox will lurk in these places to prey on young pigs and poultry'.<sup>475</sup>

Meynell's on-going preference for unenclosed areas contradicts the traditional tenet that post-enclosure grassland was vital to the development of modern foxhunting. As 'Meynell's fame grew, sportsmen from other parts of the country traveled to Leicestershire to see for themselves what the excitement was all about ... by the 1780s the local inns were filled to capacity'.<sup>476</sup> But as he grew older Meynell moved

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<sup>472</sup> R. Lowe, *A General view of the County of Nottingham* (London, 1798) p. 28

<sup>473</sup> Pitt, *General View Leicestershire*, p. 128

<sup>474</sup> Pitt, *General View Leicestershire*, p. 79

<sup>475</sup> Quoted in Longrigg, *English*, p. 78

<sup>476</sup> Itzkowitz, *Peculiar*, p. 9

around his former hunt country more infrequently and his pack became less popular. 'The young men who had come down to Leicestershire for the sole purpose of hunting did not find that the system suited them quite so well ... there was nothing to do in Loughborough ... the great area of grass to the south-east of them was going ... to waste'.<sup>477</sup>

Meynell's influence and methods had spread in the East Midlands; 'the Duke of Rutland's Belvoir Hounds and Sir William Lowther's Cottesmore Hounds were by the 1780s and 1790s establishing reputations for showing as good sport as Meynell's own hounds'.<sup>478</sup> However, while Meynell and his generation of older MFHs were trying to dodge the inexorable effects of landscape change, from around the 1780s, some younger, fashionable foxhunters began to favour areas where fences added excitement to the day's hunting.<sup>479</sup> William Childe from Kinlet and Cecil Forester from Willey had both started hunting in the early-enclosed Salopian landscape where jumping was essential to keep up with hounds. They introduced jumping at speed, the 'flying leap', to the East Midlands in the 1780s. Figure 4.7 overleaf illustrates the difference in style compared to that of earlier foxhunters shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. Gradually some fashionable foxhunters begin to favour areas where enclosure fences added excitement to the day's hunting. It was an unpopular innovation amongst many MFHs. 'Mr Meynell said bitterly that he became accustomed to seeing a fox break covert, followed by Mr Forester and then the hounds', and that 'he had not enjoyed a day's happiness since they had developed their racing ideas'.<sup>480</sup> Beckford, an MFH in Dorset, shared his views writing in 1781 'sport is but a secondary consideration with a true foxhunter. The first is the killing of the fox'. He added loftily, 'To such as love the riding part only of hunting would not a trail-scent be more suitable?'.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 18

<sup>478</sup> Itzkowitz, *Peculiar*, p. 9

<sup>479</sup> Itzkowitz, *Peculiar*, p. 9

<sup>479</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 18

<sup>480</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 16

<sup>481</sup> P. Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting*. 1911 reprint edn. (London, 1780) p. 96



**Figure 4.7** 'Topping a flight of rails' from a series on 'Indispensable accomplishments' by Sir R Frankland, illustrating the 'flying leap' in 1811<sup>482</sup>

During Meynell's long mastership from 1753-1800 he hunted across a range of landscapes: forest, enclosed pastures, temporary tillage or leys and open-field arable land. Initially, Meynell appears to have hunted across an almost unenclosed landscape suggesting that unimpeded access, not grassland, was the vital component in developing his faster style of hunting. The fact that he rented a base further south in the county in 1762 to hunt the unenclosed Langton area (after some of the parishes around Quorndon had been enclosed) and then switched to the north in the 1790s in search of more open terrain adds evidence for this hypothesis. As the Leicestershire VCH summarised; 'Meynell had showed how to hunt this country; the next generation learned how to ride it'.<sup>483</sup> From 1753 Meynell developed a new style of hunting with faster hounds but, along with contemporary MFHs, did not jump

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<sup>482</sup> I am very grateful to Catherine Glover for obtaining permission from James Harvey British Art to use this picture

<sup>483</sup> *VCH Leicestershire*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1955), p. 270



fences enthusiastically so the 'next generation', in the 1780-1790s, 'learned how to ride it' by mastering the skills of jumping.

Although it is misleading to suggest that Meynell's initial pre-eminence was due to hunting over grassland, during the 47 years of his mastership an increasing proportion of his own, and his neighbours', hunting country was under pasture, particularly after 1780. By the end of the eighteenth century Pitt wrote that 'tillage land in Leicestershire is much less in proportion than most other counties. In the south, east and middle of the county there are many instances of farms and occupiers without any tillage land whatever';<sup>484</sup> for example in 1801 at Carlton Curlieu, north of Market Harborough, only 30 out of 1,378 acres were under crops,<sup>485</sup> and Turner has estimated that less than 16 per cent of the total area of Leicestershire was in arable use by 1801.<sup>486</sup>

Earlier discussion of a small sample of 1801 crop returns for individual parishes has also emphasized that between 20 and 35 per cent of the enclosed acreage remained in arable use at any time. Finch suggests a lower figure based on a bigger sample: documentary records of cropping rotations before enclosure suggest that between 75 per cent and 89 per cent of the acreage was arable in the open-field districts of Leicestershire whereas the 1801 Crop Returns show that, after the first wave of enclosure acts, only about 17 per cent was still in arable cultivation.<sup>487</sup> By 1809 Pitt, using the slightly different base of total county area, estimated that in Leicestershire and Rutland there were 240,000 acres in 'temporary tillage' (39 per cent) out of a total county acreage of around 608,000.<sup>488</sup> Whichever estimate is most accurate, all challenge the traditional (hunting) picture of uninterrupted Leicestershire grassland.

Although I have shown that previous assertions that foxhunting developed in the East Midlands in the second half of the eighteenth century because of enclosure and

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<sup>484</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 87

<sup>485</sup> *VCH Leicestershire*. Vol. 2, p. 233

<sup>486</sup> Turner, *Home Office Acreage*, Vol. 190

<sup>487</sup> J. Finch, "What more were the pastures of Leicester to me?" Hunting, landscape character and the politics of place'. *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 14 (2007) p. 368

<sup>488</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 5

conversion to grassland are an oversimplification, it *is* true that later, during the first half of the nineteenth century, it reached its fashionable zenith in the large grassland fields of the East Midlands. This is summed up by Figure 4.8 of the 'Smoking Hunt' in which Charles Loraine Smith parodied a meet of fashionable figures, ruining the scenting conditions by smoking, out with the Quorn on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1822 in a landscape of very large, well hedged grass fields at Braunstone due west of Leicester.



**Figure 4.8.** 'The rendezvous of the smoking hunt at Braunstone' by Charles Loraine - Smith, 1822<sup>489</sup>

#### *Diaries of the Cottesmore Hunt*

The diary of Thomas Jones, Meynell's whipper-in, has already demonstrated its value in illustrating hunting preferences. A second hunting diary, which overlapped the middle period of Meynell's hunting career, adds support to the theory that many foxhunters actively sought out the unenclosed landscape. Tom Noel, huntsman of the

<sup>489</sup> F.L. Wilder, *English Sporting Prints* (London, 1974) p. 116

Cottesmore in the south-east of Leicestershire (previously Rutland) kept a hunting diary from 1766 to 1773 described as containing ‘nothing of a personal or descriptive nature – not even a hound is referred to by name – and read consecutively his entries are extremely monotonous’.<sup>490</sup> Nevertheless, when the locations of the meets are linked to information on enclosure dates it gives a good picture of the landscape experienced by contemporary foxhunters. Figure 3.11, showing the enclosure act dates of Leicestershire parishes, illustrates how the home of the Cottesmore was bracketed by parishes which remained unenclosed until 1800, and the diary suggests that these were hunted regularly. Unenclosed heaths, woodland, open-fields and root crops were a vital part of the hunting system and references to all appear regularly. Tom Noel’s diary has numerous records of drawing in ‘turnops’. On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 1767 and Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> December 1768 he recorded ‘found at Tea Turnops’ (Teigh is north of Oakham) although in November 1769 he had less luck: ‘Tried Garlick Hill ... all the turnops & did not find’.<sup>491</sup>

After an interval of seven years the diary was continued in another, anonymous, hand noting an ongoing enthusiasm for the unenclosed landscape. In 1780, the author wrote on 28<sup>th</sup> December:

Found in Empingham Wood. The hounds part for Empingham Heath [enclosed 1794] to Ketton [1768], to Forester’s Bridge. Lost at Luffenham Goss [1878] ... Lost again in Empingham field, found again upon the Heath.<sup>492</sup>

As late as 1813, North and South Luffenham (totalling 3,434 acres) were recorded respectively as being in ‘open-fields except a few old enclosures’ and ‘small enclosures and open-fields’, while Witwell, to the north, was ‘principally open-fields’; so a significant area of south east Rutland, a key part of the Cottesmore hunt country, remained at least partially open.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> C. Simpson, *Leicestershire and Its Hunts: The Quorn, the Cottesmore and the Belvoir* (London, 1922) p.157

<sup>491</sup> Simpson, *Leicestershire*, pp. 157-159

<sup>492</sup> Simpson, *Leicestershire*, p. 162

<sup>493</sup> R. Parkinson, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Rutland* (London, 1813) pp. 5-6

### *The Duke of Rutland's Hunt*

Unfortunately, we do not know of any diary recording the eighteenth-century hunting activities of Leicestershire's third major pack, the Duke of Rutland's, which hunted from Belvoir in the north-east of the county. However there is a good selection of enclosure records and maps in the Leicestershire CRO which show that, although some parishes near the hunt kennels were enclosed in the 1760s and 1770s, the majority in the Vale of Belvoir were not enclosed until the 1790s, as shown on Figure 3.11. Pitt noted in 1809 that the Duke of Rutland had enclosed 10,614 acres in three years and commented on the 'topsy-turvy' change in land use after enclosure:<sup>494</sup> the heavier soils of the clay Vale – which had previously lain in open-fields under a three-shift system of fallow, wheat and beans – were converted to pasture; meanwhile the easier-to-work, lighter land on the scarp and Wolds – which had been sheep walk and heath – was enclosed and cultivated for arable use. Before enclosure, the Belvoir had been able to hunt over an open landscape with particularly good access over heath, sheep-walk and common fields under fallow or bean or wheat stubble but after allotment 'if the fences are well managed they soon grow up and in seven years every appearance of the common field is obliterated'.<sup>495</sup> So foxhunters lost the easy access, via the web of paths and balks, and were forced to detour or jump hedges or gates. Despite the enthusiastic grassing down of the Vale, by 1801, 518 out of the 3,412 acres (15 per cent) enclosed in Long Clawson remained in arable use.<sup>496</sup>

### *The development of hunting in Northamptonshire*

The hunting careers of other prominent eighteenth-century foxhunters in neighbouring Northamptonshire suggest that the landscape preferences of Leicestershire foxhunters were more widely shared. Although both counties demonstrated common 'champion' landscape characteristics with little woodland, Northamptonshire retained remnants of Rockingham, Salcey and Whittlewood forests. Both counties lie mainly within the Midland Plain whose 'early modern' agricultural system was summarized by Thirsk as 'arable vale lands'.<sup>497</sup> The bulk of Northamptonshire's soils are heavy clays developed on glacial boulder clays

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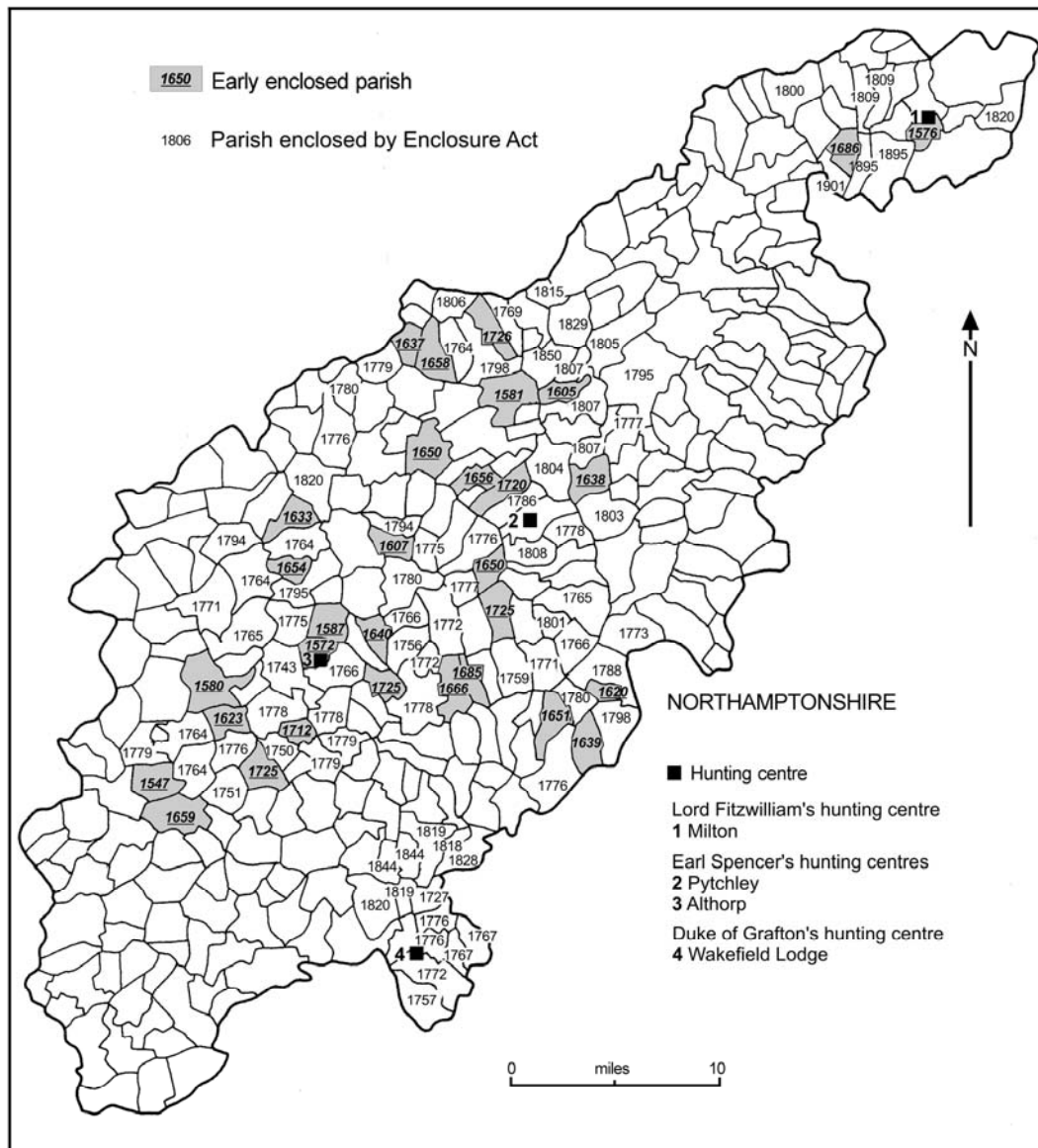
<sup>494</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 14

<sup>495</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 68

<sup>496</sup> Turner, *Home Office Acreage returns* Vol. 190

<sup>497</sup> Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions*.

overlying Lias clay but in the north-east oolitic limestone produces lighter soils in a landscape characterized by Thirsk as 'wolds and downland'. Figure 4.9 shows Enclosure Act dates in Northamptonshire, based on information provided by Hall, with the addition of the hunting centres of three grandes: Lords Spencer and Fitzwilliam, and the Duke of Grafton.



**Figure 4.9** Enclosure dates of parishes in Northamptonshire<sup>498</sup>

<sup>498</sup> Enclosure dates taken from Tate & Turner. *Domesday*, pp.191-199; Hunting centres from Carr, *English* and Longrigg, *History*.

The map reveals a mingling of parishes that were enclosed comparatively early and parishes dealt with by parliamentary enclosure acts in the eighteenth century. Pitt, writing in 1797, noted that ‘a considerable proportion of this county remains unenclosed’ and guessed that a quarter of the county remained open with the bulk of unenclosed land in common fields, with small enclosures generally near villages.<sup>499</sup> Turning first to the Spencer’s two main hunting centres: Althorp and neighbouring Holdenby had already been enclosed in the sixteenth century (due to unity of ownership by the Spencers) and the enclosure of Pytchley was also well advanced by 1662.<sup>500</sup> Wooton’s enormous hunting murals at Althorp, commissioned in 1733, show vivid evidence that the Spencers had a pack of foxhounds by that date. In 1765 Lord Spencer bought forty couple of hounds from Mr Darley of Yorkshire and sent them to kennels adjacent to Pytchley. Paget describes the seasonal movement of the Spencer’s pack: the hounds started the season in the Autumn ‘cubbing’ around Pytchley, returned to Althorp in the beginning of November and remained there until the New Year, when they went back to Pytchley.<sup>501</sup> Spencer shifted north to Rockingham Forest for spring hunting away from ewes in lamb and spring crops, echoing Meynell’s use of Charnwood Forest.<sup>502</sup>

#### *The Althorp ‘Chace book’*

Again a hunting diary provides clear evidence of contemporary attitudes to the landscape. While hounds were at Althorp, a ‘Chace’ book was kept from 1773 until 1793 which gives a useful insight into the countryside Spencer’s pack hunted over (Enclosure dates from Tate and Turner’s work have been added).<sup>503</sup> For example, in October 1773:

Hounds met at Bugbrooke [enclosed in 1779] ... the fox took a circle round the hill and over the open-field ... [and after a long hunt] kill’d in a turnip field’. Tellingly, the day is summarised as ‘a very pleasing chase having a great display of steady running and excellent hunting but the very strong

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<sup>499</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 56

<sup>500</sup> J. Stearne, *Northamptonshire Landscape* (London, 1974) p. 228

<sup>501</sup> G. Paget, *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunt, 1634-1920* (London, 1937) p. 43

<sup>502</sup> *VCH Northamptonshire*. Vol. 2. 2nd edn. (London, 1970) p. 356

<sup>503</sup> Tate & Turner, *Domesday*, pp. 191-199

inclosure at the first setting off prevented parts of the company from viewing the whole of it.<sup>504</sup>

The 'very strong inclosure' had obviously thwarted many of the mounted followers. By contrast in December of the same year, 1773, the pack was hunting over Harpole field (1778), Kislingbury field (1780), Thorpe field and Heavencot field before crossing into Whittlewood forest during a hunt that lasted three and a half hours 'a remarkable pleasant chase, being over fine ground with few difficulties'. In January 1775 hounds ran over Clipston field (1776), Marston field and Gumley field (1773) whose recent enclosure forced followers into unaccustomed jumping so 'Mr Sparks had two falls in the chase at leaps ... Mr Payne likewise had a fall at a leap and his horse struck him on the cheek'.<sup>505</sup> Clearly the Spencers valued an open landscape with 'few difficulties' and followers were frustrated by fences that often led to falls or, at best, delays in following the pack.

The challenges faced by foxhunters after enclosure are well illustrated by part of the enclosure map for Kislingbury, four miles from Althorp, mentioned in the preceding 1773 hunt account (Figure 4.10 overleaf). Individual allotments flanking the road range from five acres to nineteen acres, apart from the ninety acres allocated for tithe. Any subsequent subdivision of the allotments would further increase the 'difficulties'. The Kislingbury enclosure award of 1780 covered 1,741 acres, mainly in open-fields, out of a parish total of 2,170.<sup>506</sup> By 1801, 630 acres were still under crops: 29 per cent of the total parish area.<sup>507</sup> The new hedges would soon pose a challenge to foxhunters; as Arthur Young observed, 'bullocks destroy everything with their horns that is not very strong', suggesting that hedges, which were often known as 'bullfinches', and were designed to contain cattle (many destined for the Northampton leather and shoe industries), would be particularly robust.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> Paget, *History of the Althorp*, p. 47

<sup>505</sup> Paget, *History of the Althorp*, p. 50

<sup>506</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, BSL 18 Vol. G (Enclosure Act, Kislingbury, 1780)

<sup>507</sup> Turner, *Home Office Acreage returns*. Vol.190

<sup>508</sup> Stearne, *Northamptonshire*, p. 233

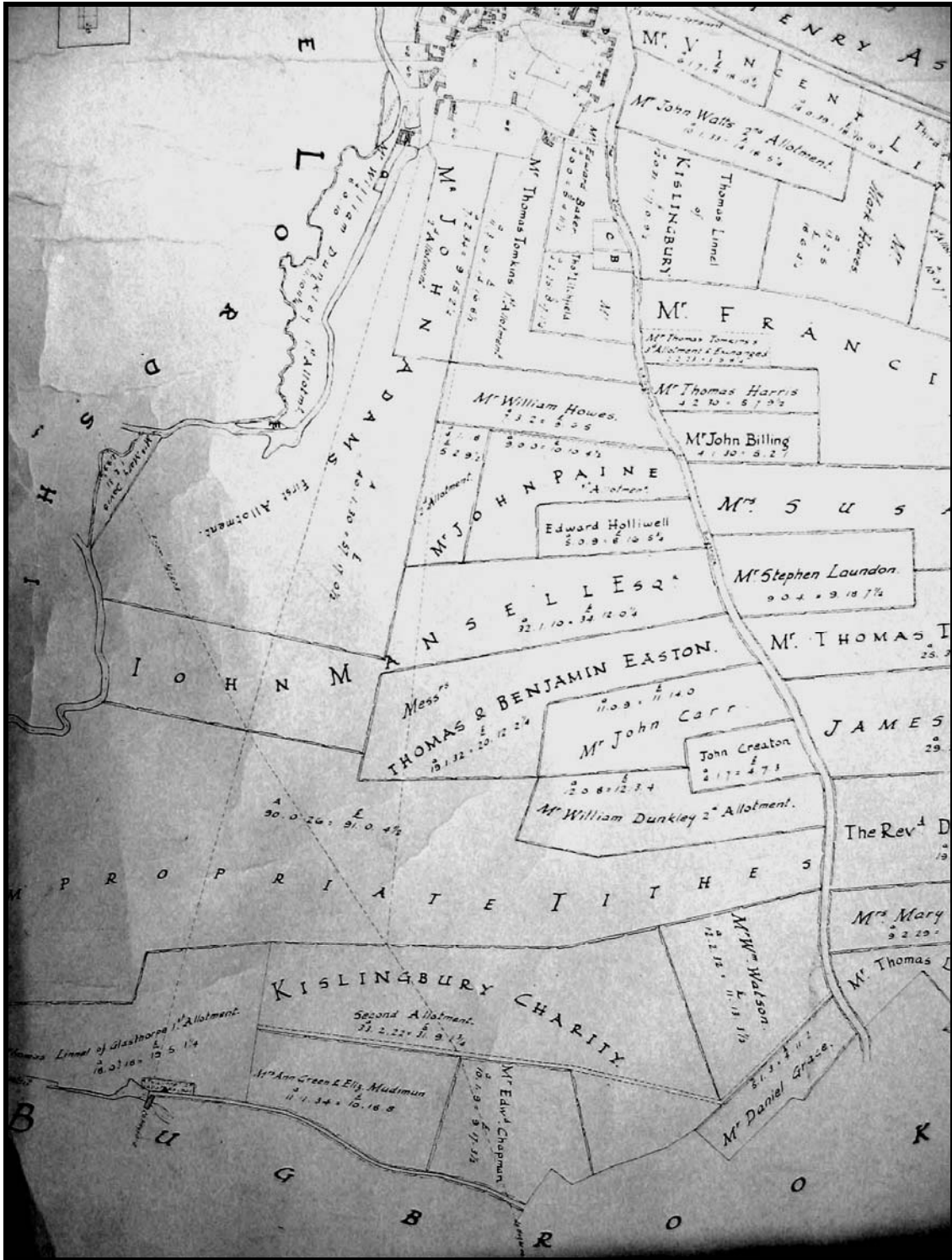


Figure 4.10 Part of Kislingbury Enclosure map<sup>509</sup>

<sup>509</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, Plan 51, (Enclosure Map of Kislingbury, 1780).



Further confirmation of prominent foxhunters' attitudes to hunting in an open landscape is provided by examining the diary recording Fitzwilliam's activities in the north-east of Northamptonshire. Milton, since 1502 the home of the Fitzwilliam family and its eponymous pack, is not fringed by any parishes enclosed during the great eighteenth-century rush. Milton itself was enclosed by 1576, due to unity of ownership but many contiguous parishes such as Helpston, home of John Clare, were not enclosed until the Napoleonic Wars. Strikingly, three parishes south-west of Milton were not fully enclosed until 1895 (Castor and Ailsworth) and 1901 (Sutton). Much of the area under the Fitzwilliams' immediate control was left in open-fields or sheep-walks – preferable for hunting – until irresistible economic pressures triggered enclosure. Once again a hunting diary, when combined with enclosure information, sheds light on foxhunters' experience of the landscape. For example, in November 1789, Lord Fitzwilliam's diary described hunting over both enclosed and unenclosed landscape just east of Oundle, fourteen miles from Milton:

Threw off at Ashton Wold [enclosed 1807], found many foxes ... went off at Polbrook corner [1790] to Kingsthorp Coppice [1766] ... then bore back downwind into the Hemmington inclosures [1657] ... then crossed the inclosures and past the patch of furze in the open-field, and then again into Ashton Wold ... killed in five minutes.<sup>510</sup>

Fitzwilliam had chosen to meet in an unenclosed parish (Ashton), which was well stocked with foxes, but was eventually led by the hunted fox into enclosed areas. In terms of access, the Spencer and Fitzwilliam packs had the advantage of very wealthy owners who had exerted early control over the immediate landscape but as the diaries illustrate, elsewhere they had to contend with hunting the same transitional landscape as Meynell, who did not own a large estate but hunted with the permission of grander landowners. However, it is the diary of the third great landowner's pack in Northamptonshire that provides the most clear-cut evidence of active choice over where to hunt.

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<sup>510</sup> *VCH Northamptonshire*, Vol. 2, p. 373

*The hunting diaries of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Grafton*<sup>511</sup>

The preceding examination of where grandees in the East Midlands hunted challenges the orthodoxy that fox hunters in the second half of the eighteenth century actively sought out enclosed, and therefore grassland, areas. The detailed hunting diaries of Augustus, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Grafton, suggest that Meynell's move away from enclosed countryside was not unique – further evidence that many keen foxhunters of the late eighteenth century (in contrast to fashionable horsemen seeking the thrills of jumping) still had a strong preference for open countryside which allowed easier access to their hounds while they were hunting. The pack had started in 1722 when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Grafton got a draft of fifteen couple of hounds from Mr Orlebar (a neighbour to the Duke's estates in Northamptonshire) that became the foundation of his new kennel at Euston in the Breckland area of west Suffolk.<sup>512</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke's diaries cover the period from 1786-1791 (Meynell's whipper-in's covered 1791-1800). Grafton had a clear choice of where to hunt in this period since he had homes, kennels and stables in two contrasting landscapes. In Suffolk his home at Euston was on the eastern fringe of the sandy Breckland, where, as Dymond noted, the vast majority of enclosure of open-field and sheep walk by Parliamentary Act did not take place until 1790-1840.<sup>513</sup> As Turner explained, much of the Breckland was enclosed in a great rush as the Napoleonic Wars pushed up agricultural prices, justifying the cost.<sup>514</sup> Figure 4.11 overleaf shows that 'late enclosure' in some parishes did not require Acts (indicated by open squares), as at Euston, Barnham, Fakenham and Sapiston, because Grafton gradually acquired and engrossed vast swathes of land. It is noticeable on Figure 4.11 that the horseshoe of engrossed parishes around Euston is flanked by parishes where Enclosure Acts specified open-fields.

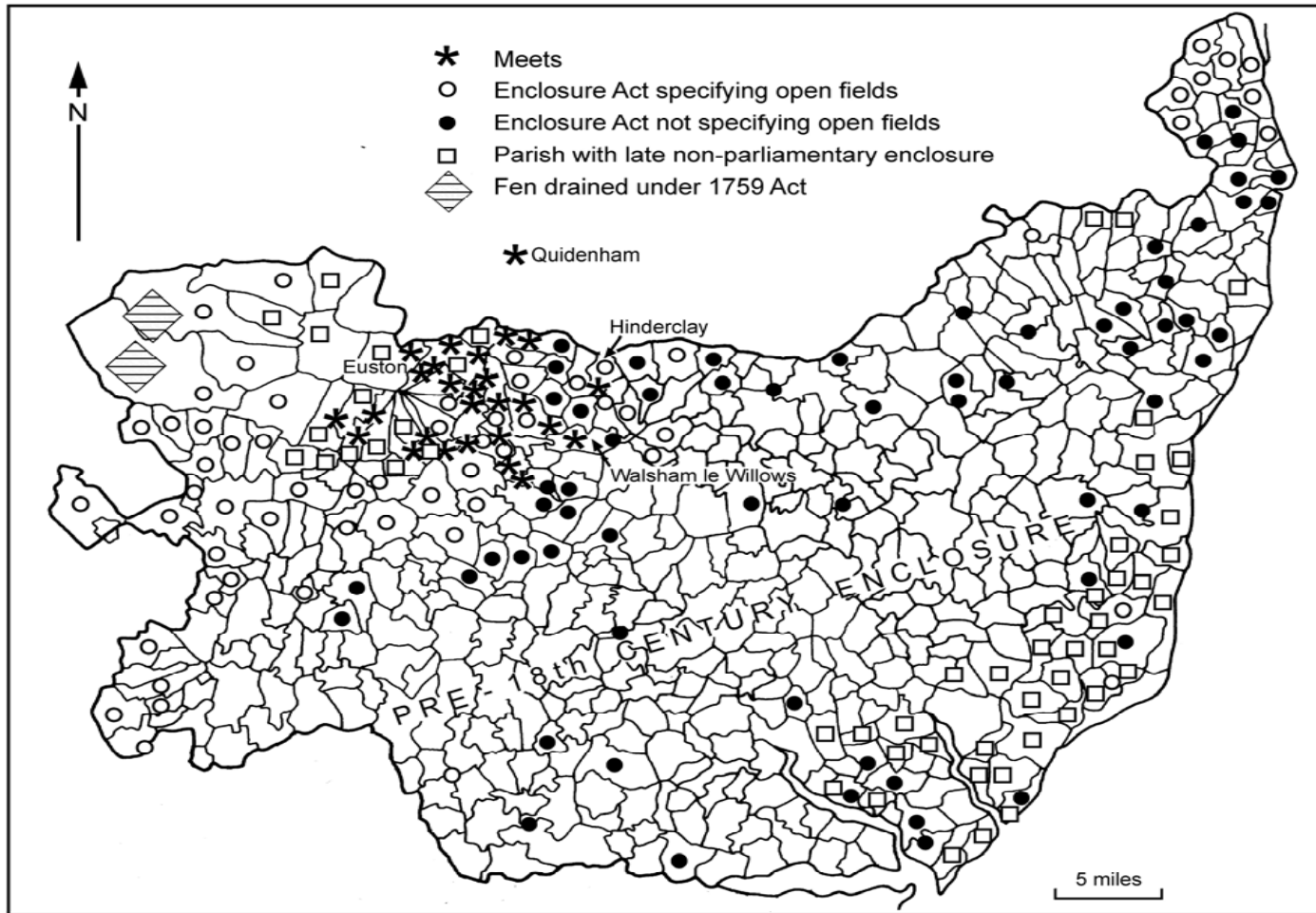
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<sup>511</sup> Suffolk CRO. HA 513/10/1- 6 (Duke of Grafton's Hunting Diaries, 1786-1791)

<sup>512</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 64

<sup>513</sup> D. Dymond & E. Martin, *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (Ipswich, 1999), p.104

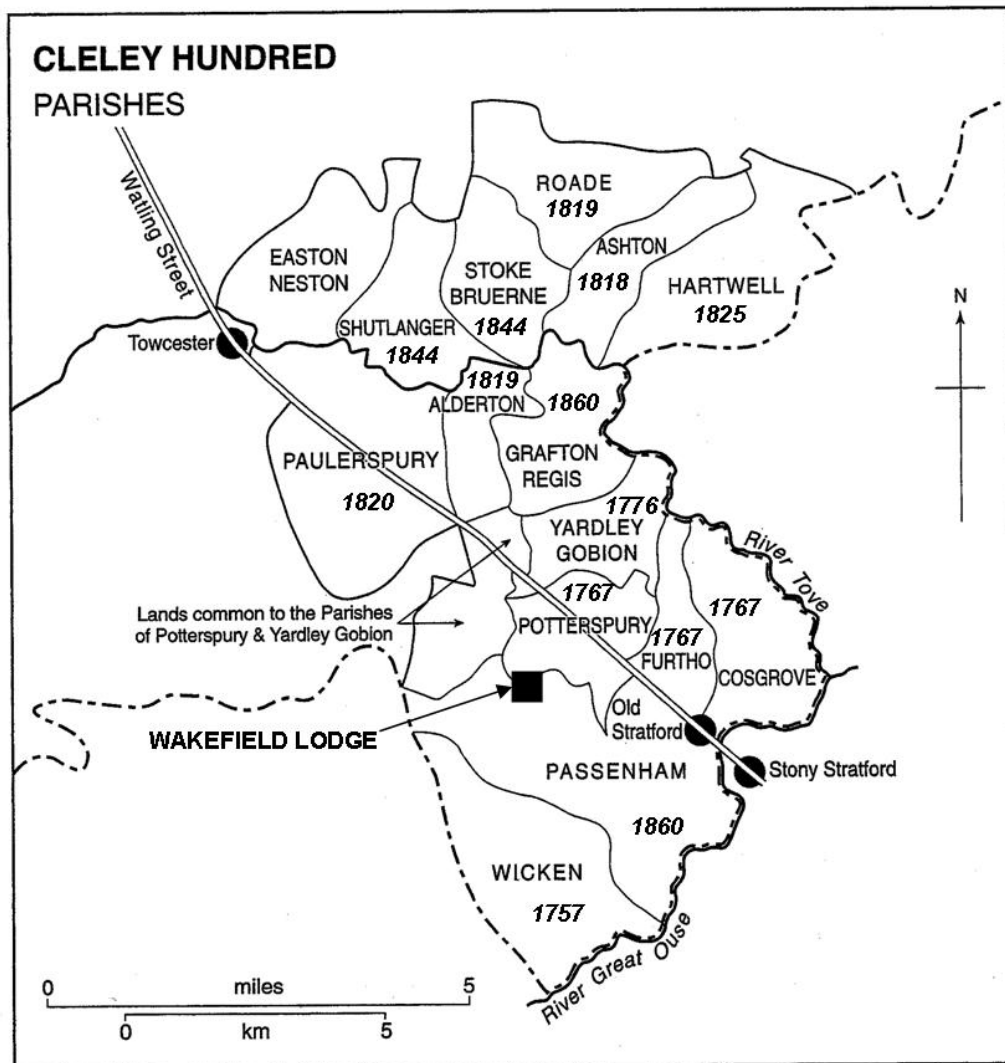
<sup>514</sup> Turner, *English Parliamentary*, p. 49



**Figure 4.11** Meeting places of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Grafton's pack in Suffolk 1786-1787<sup>515</sup>

<sup>515</sup> Map and enclosure information from D. Dymond & E. Martin, *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (Ipswich, 1999), p. 105 and location of meets from Suffolk RO. HA 513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton's Hunting Diaries, 1786-1787)

Grafton also had a 15,000 acre estate in Northamptonshire, based at Wakefield Lodge which, as Figure 4.12 shows, lies on the boundary of Passenham and Potterspury parishes which flank the eastern edge of Whittlewood Forest.<sup>516</sup> At first glance, Tate and Turner's work suggests that most of the parishes running in an arc south, west and north of Grafton's base were only enclosed by Act after 1810 although Wicken in the south was enclosed in 1757 and a cluster of four to the east were enclosed from 1767-1776. However, closer reading of the enclosure history of the apparently 'late enclosed' parishes suggests a more nuanced picture which is described in the table overleaf.



**Figure 4.12** Enclosure dates for parishes around Wakefield Lodge<sup>517</sup>

<sup>516</sup> VCH Northamptonshire, Vol. 5. (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 28

<sup>517</sup> Base map from VCH Northamptonshire, Vol. 5, p. 5; Enclosure dates from Tate and Turner, *Domesday*

**Table 4.5** Enclosure information for parishes flanking Wakefield Lodge<sup>518</sup>

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date of Enclosure Act</i>	<i>Information in Victoria County History of Northamptonshire, Volume 5</i>
Paulerspury	1819-1821	In 1728 bulk of estate divided into 15 farms but not enclosed until 1819-1821
Ashton and Roade	1818-1819	Some common land in NW enclosed by agreement 1727-1768. Roade Act 1819 dealt with 1,035 acres of open-field & 534 acres old inclosures
Hartwell	1825	Hartwell – divided into a number of small farms early eighteenth C. 1825 Act dealt with remaining 587 acres of open-field
Stoke Bruerne	1844	Total parish = 2,600 acres. 1726 survey showed Grafton owned: 835 acres enclosed land and 720 acres of common field
Passenham	1860	Total parish = 3,250 acres; 1772 Act for enclosure of 1,100 acres. 1850 Whittlewood disafforested and Enclosure Act 1860 for remaining area
Grafton Regis	1860	Total parish = 1,300 acres Early sixteenth C large area, c 600 acres N of village enclosed as permanent pasture. 1727 remaining common field arable & pasture enclosed by agreement. 1850 Whittlewood disafforested and Enclosure Act 1860 for remaining area

Although some of the Duke of Grafton's estate and surrounding land in Northamptonshire remained in open-fields until the nineteenth century much had in fact already been enclosed by agreement; some as early as 1726 in Stoke Bruerne and 1727 at Grafton Regis.

<sup>518</sup> VCH Northamptonshire, Vol. 5



**Figure 4.13** The Manor of Grafton showing the land held by the Reverend Rogers in 1789<sup>519</sup>

<sup>519</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, Map 3127 (Plan of the Manor of Grafton, Reverend Rogers' Holdings, 1789)

Figure 4.13, dated 1789, shows part of Grafton Regis and neighbouring parishes illustrating the estate of Reverend John Methuen Rogers, which flanked the Duke's. It demonstrates how enclosed much of the Duke of Grafton's hunting area in Northamptonshire had become.

So the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke had a choice: hunt in the mainly enclosed parishes immediately surrounding his home in Northamptonshire or in the unenclosed open-fields, heaths and sheep walks around Euston Hall in north-west Suffolk. Analysis of the Duke's hunting diary for the season 1786-1787 gives a very clear verdict: although from September 11<sup>th</sup> 1786 the Duke hunted in Northamptonshire, 'entering' (training) young hounds, he brought his hounds to Euston on November 23<sup>rd</sup> for the main part of the season and remained there until February nineteenth 1787.<sup>520</sup> The remaining diaries, up until 1791, show that he kept up a similar pattern of movement, favouring open country for the majority of the season but using the forests of Whittlewood and Salcey for 'cubbing' to train young hounds in the autumn and for spring hunting away from in-lamb ewes and spring crops.

Returning to Figure 4.11, which shows where the Duke's hounds met in Suffolk for the season 1786-1787 superimposed on parish enclosure histories, three points are immediately striking.<sup>521</sup> Only one meet, at Walsham le Willows, took place in a parish where the parliamentary enclosure act did not include an open-field. All the remainder are in parishes enclosed privately, as at Euston, or by an Act which mentioned open-field(s) so the Duke hunted mainly across open fields. It is also significant that the only meet at Hinderclay, found on the heavier boulder clay to the east as the name suggests, took place on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1786 when the Duke was absent, avoiding the heavy going: 'While I was gone to London Jacket [his huntsmen] took the hounds to Hinderclay Wood'. The second obvious point is that although the Duke's hounds traveled significant distances to meets south and east of Euston he only crossed the rivers Little Ouse and Thet once to hold a meet at Quidenham in south Norfolk – the home of a fellow grandee the Earl of Albermarle. Thirdly, he did not meet in the extensive unenclosed parishes west of Barnham and

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<sup>520</sup> Suffolk RO, HA 513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton, Hunting Diary 1786-1787)

<sup>521</sup> Dymond & Martin, *Historical Atlas*, p.105

Wormwell. This may be partly because the neighbouring Elveden estate owned the land but is probably also explained by the distribution of rabbit warrens, mapped by the felicitously named Hoppitt.<sup>522</sup> Although mounted followers would be unlikely to penetrate the boundary fences of the warren it would be dangerous to gallop across the rabbit hole pocked areas surrounding it.<sup>523</sup> On January 13<sup>th</sup> 1787 the Duke wrote of hunting ‘across Thetford courses then over one continuous warren’ emphasising that this was atypical: ‘in the course of my hunting this country I never had run over this same country except once’.

Ryce, writing in 1616, described the ‘pre eighteenth century enclosed’ clay land wood- pasture of central Suffolk, shown on Figure 4.11 as flanking the Euston estate on the east, as ‘deep miry soil ... manifold enclosures, severed with so many deep ditches, hedges and store of wood, bushes and trees’.<sup>524</sup> The Duke’s attitude to hunting this type of enclosed country is made very clear in his hunting diaries for Euston (there are no known Wakefield Lodge records). On January 24<sup>th</sup> 1787 he described ‘the most shocking country that was ever rode over ... fagged from the badness of the country and the perpetual leaps’. In December 1787, he described a fox running into ‘a sad enclosed country’ and a month later another fox took him east into a ‘country with which I was not well acquainted’ ... ‘a horrid inclosed country through Wyverstone ... Gislingham ... Mellis ... Eye’ with the result that ‘the [hunt] servants and many of the company took a hundred great leaps in this day’s work’ and his ‘gray mare who carried me admirably well had got a bad gash on her knee by some stub at a leap early in the day’.

By contrast the Duke hunted enthusiastically over open country such as ‘Barnham heath and Field’ (on November 29<sup>th</sup> 1786), ‘some vast fallows’ (January 11<sup>th</sup> 1787), ‘on a rye stubble’ (January 13<sup>th</sup> 1787), ‘over the great commons and fields’ (February 8<sup>th</sup> 1787) and ‘turnips’ (January 9<sup>th</sup> 1790).<sup>525</sup> Much of his Suffolk hunt country remained open until 1803 (by then Grafton was sixty-eight and, presumably, less preoccupied by hunting) when Arthur Young noted that ‘the Duke has made very

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<sup>522</sup> Dymond & Martin, *Historical Atlas*, p. 69

<sup>523</sup> T. Williamson, *The Archaeology of Rabbit Warrens* (Princes Risborough, 2006), p.11

<sup>524</sup> R. Reyce, *The Breviary of Suffolk*. 1618 (ed.) F. Hervey, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London, 1902)

<sup>525</sup> Suffolk CRO, HA 513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton, Hunting Diary, 1786-1787)



considerable exertions in breaking up sheep walks in Euston, Fakenham, Bardwell, Sapiston etc'.<sup>526</sup> The Duke's enthusiasm for the open-fields, heaths and sheep walks was mainly due to the absence of fences that allowed him to observe his hounds closely. His diaries are full of affectionate detail: on January 9<sup>th</sup> 1790 he recorded that 'three hounds entered [started] this year certainly had the honour of the day – Garland, Graceful and Harbinger... Tickler, Gipsy, Misery ... were as fresh as possible ... the hounds not up were Darter – tired but too high in flesh; Valiant – tired; Truman – lame and rode over ... Captain (Lord Egremont's) left in Fakenham Wood'.

In contrast to West Suffolk's open landscape, Arthur Young writing of Northamptonshire in 1791 noted that 'the Duke of Grafton's considerable farm here is fenced in the utmost perfection. All done with whitethorn hedges, so admirably preserved by posts with double and even treble rails'.<sup>527</sup> Clearly these fences posed considerable barriers and help explain why Grafton only used Northamptonshire for woodland hunting at either end of the season.

The Duke's diaries also suggest a second reason for his enthusiasm for hunting in Suffolk – a much better supply of foxes than in Northamptonshire. The Breckland sheep walks and heaths, described by Arthur Young as 'covered with ling, furze and broom' supported large populations of rabbits, and consequently their predator - foxes.<sup>528</sup> In the 1786-1787 hunting season the Duke often recorded 'four or five' foxes in one place, rising to 'a group', 'six' and even 'as full of them [foxes] as a warren'.

Hunting in the open country around Euston became very popular due to the good supply of foxes and lack of fences with the Duke noting '120 horsemen in the field and a quantity of foot people starting from every village as we passed' on February 19<sup>th</sup> 1787. However the crowds began to irk the Duke as a rather petulant entry in his diary for January 14<sup>th</sup> 1791 showed, 'the numbers in the field at first, and the stile of

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<sup>526</sup> A. Young, *A General View of the Agriculture of Suffolk* 2nd edn. (London, 1813), p.169

<sup>527</sup> A. Young, *Tours in England and Wales 1791*. 2nd edn. (London, 1932), p. 218

<sup>528</sup> Young, *A General View of the Agriculture of Suffolk*, p.185

the company was enough to have driven anyone aloof but we soon got rid of two thirds of the gentry'.<sup>529</sup>

*The reasons for early foxhunters' preference for open-fields*

Examination of diaries and enclosure maps suggest two main reasons for the preference of many eighteenth-century hunting pioneers for open-fields – both linked to access and good visibility. The first is that movement on horseback was easier and safer. As already described, at a parish level access was often relatively simple because a network of tracks and paths crossed the open-fields, one third of the system lay in fallow, and another third was probably under stubble for at least part of the hunting season. Within the open-fields, grass provided a network of routes with good 'going' (ground conditions) for horses. Similarly, the extensive, unfenced areas of pasture for tethered or herded stock developed on the fringes of open-field systems were easy to cross on horseback. John Byng (Viscount Torrington) a keen foxhunter, writing in his diary at the end of the eighteenth century and 'ruminating ... upon former riding and travel' decried the new enclosure roads that will

certainly bear the speedy chaise traveler along at a great rate ... but let us not suppose that the riding is made better – on the contrary it is made much worse, as the roads are hard, stony and dusty, whereas formerly the horse tracks were good riding and the side paths numerous ... depend on it that riding is ruined by the enclosures and *fine* rounding of the roads.<sup>530</sup>

In 1821 John Clare, writing in the Fitzwilliam Hunt country of north-east Northamptonshire, was still noting the loss of traditional routes:

There once were lanes in nature's freedom dropt  
There once were paths that every valley wound –  
Inclosure came and every path was stopt ....<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Suffolk CRO, HA 513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton, Hunting Diary, 1786-1787)

<sup>530</sup> Hon. J. Byng, *Torrington Diaries*, Vol. 4, 1794, (ed.) C. Bruyn Andrews, (London, 1934) p. 39

<sup>531</sup> J. Clare, *The Village Minstrel and other poems*, stanza 107, (London, 1821)

A second powerful advantage of an open landscape was the good visibility, summed up by John Clare:

Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene  
Nor fence of ownership crept in between  
To hide the prospect of the following eye ...<sup>532</sup>

The open landscape enhanced foxhunters' enjoyment and provided a clear view of which hounds were hunting best for the 'following eye'. Paget, writing about Northamptonshire, explained the significance: 'The huntsman sees the bitches that run hardest and hunt most closely and these he marks down for matrons and seeks for suitable alliances of kindred blood'.<sup>533</sup> The open landscapes helped the early hound improvers, such as Meynell, select the best blood lines to enhance their packs' endurance, scenting ability and speed. Hawkes, writing soon after Meynell's death, stressed his close observation of the work of individual hounds.<sup>534</sup> Similarly, Grafton's enthusiasm for the open-fields, heaths and sheep-walks of Suffolk was mainly due to the absence of fences that allowed him to observe his hounds closely. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1786 he wrote 'the ground was such that we could see the place of each hound for an hour and thirty-five minutes together. Jumper and Drummer appeared in power equal to any of the older ones'. On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1787 hunting 'across the middle of Thurston Plain ... and across Barton field ... I saw the fox two fields before the hounds there ... we viewed him into the Link about 200 yards before the hounds'.<sup>535</sup>

In summary, a detailed study of the hunting activities of leading foxhunters of the second half of the eighteenth century in the East Midlands challenges the orthodox view held by Hoskins in the 1950s<sup>536</sup> (and repeated by historians up until Finch in 2004)<sup>537</sup> that enclosure and the subsequent conversion of arable to grassland were

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<sup>532</sup> J. Bate (ed.), *I am, the selected poetry of John Clare* (London, 2003) p. 89

<sup>533</sup> Paget, *Althorp*, p. 188

<sup>534</sup> Quoted in Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 15

<sup>535</sup> Suffolk CRO, HA/513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton's hunting diary 1786-1787)

<sup>536</sup> Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, pp.196-198

<sup>537</sup> Finch, 'What more ...' p.373

triggers for the development of modern foxhunting and its rise in popularity. Research has shown that leading MFHs such as Meynell and the Duke of Grafton (both born in 1735), continued to favour hunting in the dwindling, unenclosed countryside into the 1790s because they could cross it more easily and safely and see their hounds working more clearly. However, it should be acknowledged that after the 1780s there was a growing split between those who continued to hunt with Meynell's hounds, despite or because of his antipathy to jumping, and those who opted for the thrills of galloping and jumping across an increasingly enclosed landscape with other fashionable packs.

### **The use of enclosure maps and records as a resource**

Hunting diaries have proved a very useful method of examining foxhunters' use and perception of the landscape. A second means of exploring (a) how the landscape of the Shires or 'place' was experienced by mounted followers and (b) if the 'practice' of hunting changed as parliamentary enclosure advanced, is through the medium of enclosure maps. Longrigg commented on 'the improvement of the countryside for foxhunting ... [with] large well fenced fields of permanent grass'.<sup>538</sup> While Itzkovitz noted that 'The new speed of Meynell's hounds was perfectly suited to the large expanses of grass which made Leicestershire ... the best hunting-ground in England'.<sup>539</sup> To test these statements, evidence for the existence of large, fenced fields, some of which might be under temporary or permanent grass leys, in the second half of the eighteenth century was examined in four sample sites linked to significant foxhunting areas; (a) the belt between Meynell's two residential centres, from 1753-1790, of Quorndon and Bowden (Market Harborough), (b) the area between the River Wreake and Prestwold, in north-east Leicestershire, hunted by Meynell throughout much of his career, (c) the heartland of the Belvoir hunt in the extreme north east of Leicestershire and (d) the part of Northamptonshire hunted by the Spencers' family pack, the Pytchley.

Hoskins, writing on earlier Tudor enclosure, has recorded very large fields;

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<sup>538</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 89

<sup>539</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 8

Where ... landlords, lay or monastic owned the whole or greater part of the manorial soil, the eviction of the open-field farmers was easy enough ... the two or three arable fields were replaced by a number of large pastures enclosed by a hawthorn hedge and ditch. It seems likely that the enclosed pastures so created were of great size. Indeed for all we know no new hedge may have been made at first.<sup>540</sup>

Hoskins listed examples of vast Tudor fields; one consisting of 600 acres of pasture at Knaptoft, south Leicestershire in 1525 and another of one thousand acres split into 2 closes in south Leicestershire in 1547.<sup>541</sup> But he also noted it was not long before the disadvantages of these enormous fields were revealed, such as lack of shelter for stock in the Midland winters and the impossibility of achieving close grazing over such a large unfenced area. As time went on, new hedges were planted inside the original fences, and smaller fields created. Broad added that market forces overcame the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century tendency to farm large sheep runs for wool because cattle fattening, dairying and mutton rearing became increasingly important and required different management techniques and smaller fields to allow easier stock handling.<sup>542</sup> Taylor described the 'evening up' of field sizes between 1600 and 1750 due to rationalisation of the larger sheep pastures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the tiny medieval assarts of even earlier periods in order to make the fields of a generally more convenient size for the improved methods of tillage and stock raising.<sup>543</sup> Hoskins had earlier hypothesised that probably the largest enclosures were to be found where the landlord owned the entire parish and could do as he liked (i.e. enclosure by unity of possession) and, by contrast, where the lesser freeholders had not been bought out many fields of Tudor or Stuart origin were not large because they represent the allotments to small free-holders.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 151

<sup>541</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 151

<sup>542</sup> J. Broad, 'Alternate Husbandry and Permanent Pasture in the Midlands 1650-1800', *AHR*, 28 (1980), p. 78

<sup>543</sup> C. Taylor, *Fields in the English Landscape* (London, 1975), p.125

<sup>544</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 153

Hoskins noted that many of the large fields were reduced during the late eighteenth century when stock improvers and graziers such as Bakewell found by experience that enclosures as small as ten to twelve acres were the right size for the most economical grazing of pastures.<sup>545</sup> Presumably this is based on Pitt's description of Dishley, close to Quorndon, where Bakewell farmed from 1760, 'the farm is divided into closes of which I believe none exceed 10 acres each ... the fences are generally hawthorn without timber'.<sup>546</sup>

*Field sizes in Meynell's hunt area*

The area hunted by Meynell included early enclosed parishes, such as Belgrave enclosed in 1654, shown on Figure 4.14 overleaf,<sup>547</sup> where the accompanying schedule recorded that field sizes ranged from 92 acres, 3 roods and 7 perches to 3 acres and 10 perches.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 152

<sup>546</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 32

<sup>547</sup> Leicestershire CRO, Map 28/D64/317/1 (Belgrave Enclosure Map, 1654)

<sup>548</sup> 40 perch = 1 rood, 4 roods = 1 acre

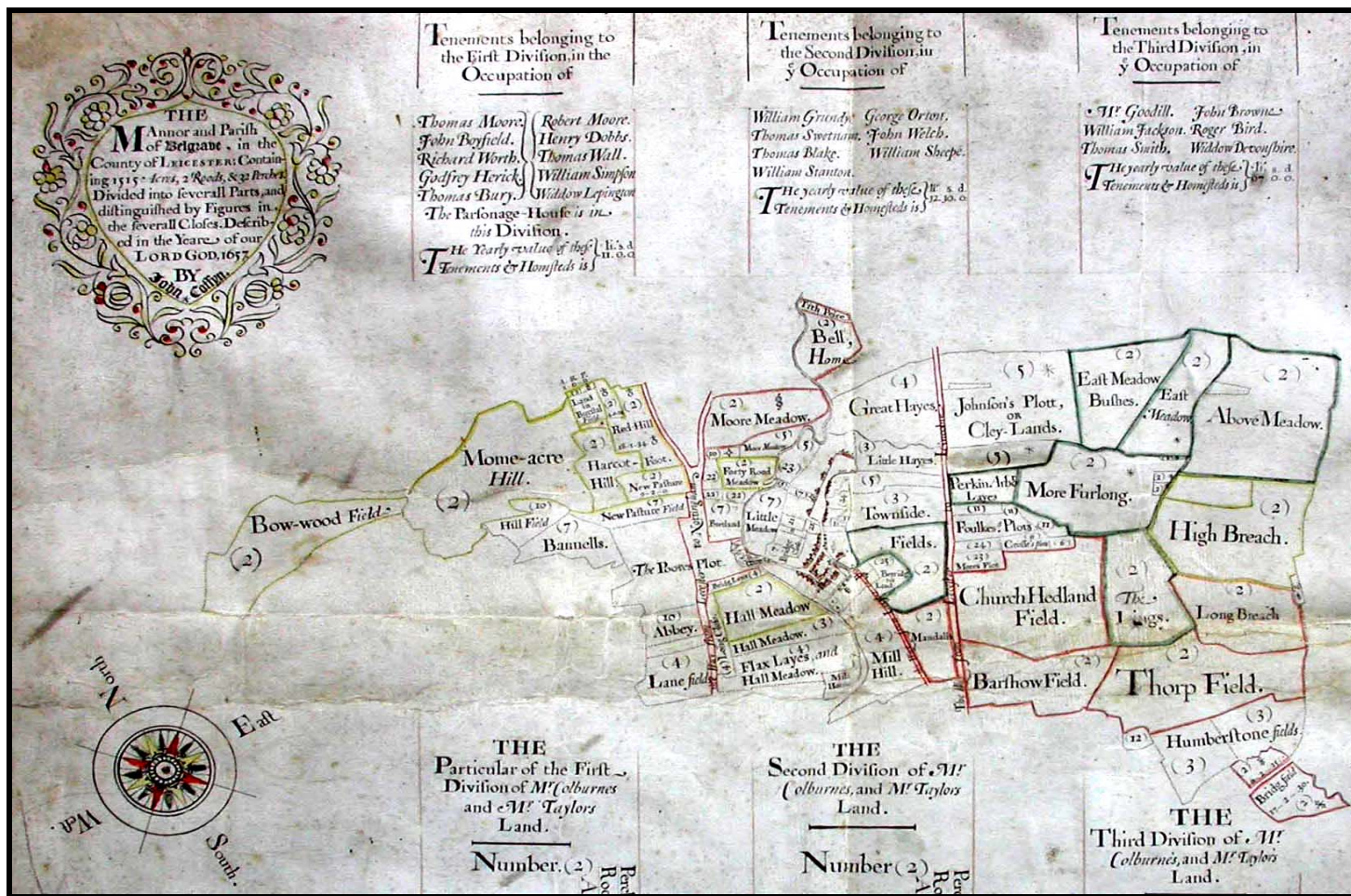
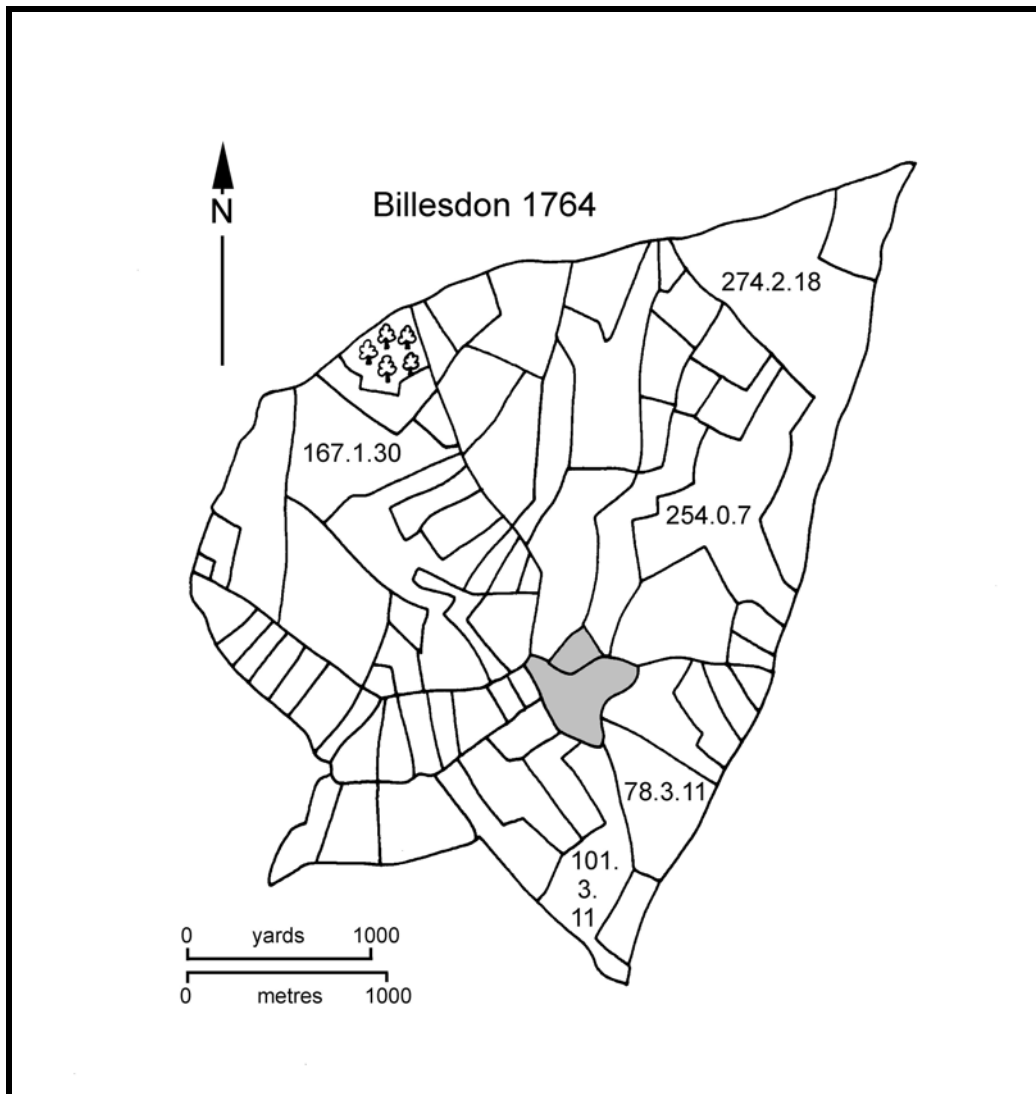


Figure 4.14 Belgrave in Leicestershire enclosed in 1654<sup>549</sup>

<sup>549</sup> Leicestershire CRO 28/D64/317/1 (Enclosure Map of Belgrave, 1654)

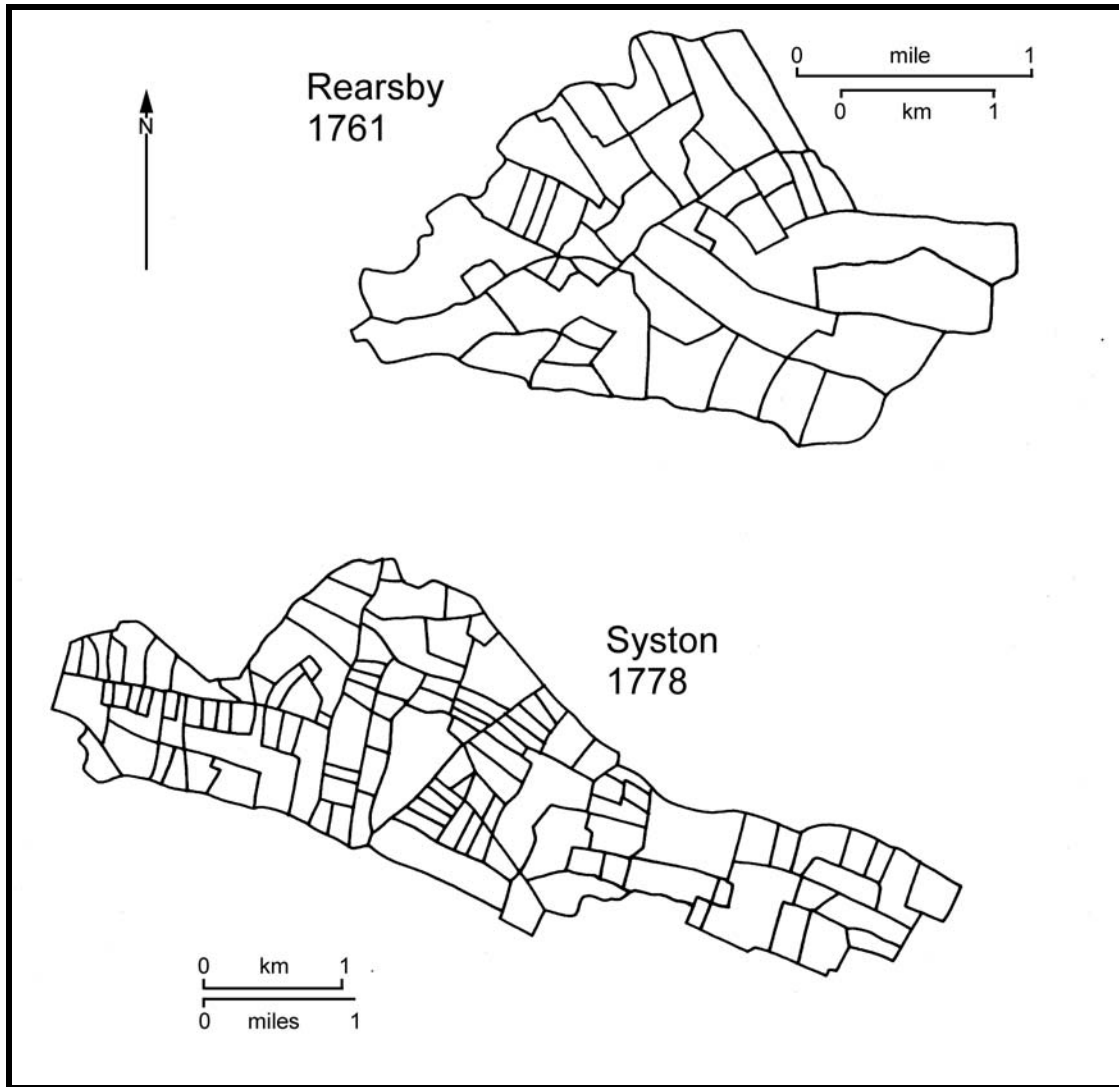
Areas enclosed later, using Acts of Parliament, during Meynell's mastership include Rearsby (1761), Billesdon (1764) and Syston (1778) in the middle of his hunting area. Figures 4.15 and 4.16 demonstrate the range of allotment sizes showing a tendency for smaller fields to lie close to the villages and the bigger holdings of the larger landowners to form a penumbra. Enclosure Acts required that boundary fences were planted round the initial allotments promptly; for example, as previously described, the 1762 Act for Quorndon, Meynell's home parish where he is listed as an owner, allowed eighteen months for the erection of boundary fences.



**Figure 4.15** Field boundaries and acreages taken from Billesdon Enclosure Map of 1764<sup>550</sup>

<sup>550</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/MA/A/33/1 (Enclosure Map of Billesdon, 1764).





**Figure 4.16** Field boundaries copied from Rearsby Enclosure Map of 1761<sup>551</sup> and Syston Enclosure Map of 1778<sup>552</sup>

As already discussed, In 1791 there was another surge of enclosure in the Langtons in the south of Meynell's hunting country; all four parishes were enclosed which may explain the dearth of meets (shown on Figure 4.6, illustrating the distribution of meets in 1791) around his old southern centre of Great Bowden in that year.

<sup>551</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/MA/A1265/1 (Enclosure Map of Rearsby, 1761)  
<sup>552</sup> Leicestershire CRO, DG27/MA/320/1 (Enclosure Map of Syston, 1778).

By 1794 parishes in the middle of Meynell's traditional hunting country were being enclosed; Figure 4.17 of Barsby, and surviving schedules for the parishes of Barsby and South Croxton demonstrate the range of field sizes. The map of Barsby usefully shows the new 'Furlongs' and roads superimposed on the original strips.



**Figure 4.17** Part of Enclosure Map of Barsby, 1794<sup>553</sup>. Scale 3":1 mile

A total of 892 acres was divided between 37 owners in South Croxton in 1794. The table overleaf shows the distribution of the 17 largest allotments, totaling over 680 acres, resulting in an average field size of just over 40 acres. There were also many far smaller allotments.

<sup>553</sup> Leicestershire CRO, MA/EN/A/24/1 (Enclosure Map of Barsby, 1794).

**Table 4.6** Allocation of land in South Croxton at enclosure 1794<sup>554</sup>

<i>Owner</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Roods</i>	<i>Perches</i>
Rector of South Croxton	12	3	10
	18	3	7
	62	0	19
John Kerchevell	41	2	2
Shown as 'for tithe'	51	2	2
John Ayre	58	3	36
	48	1	3
John Peach Hungerford	57	1	33
	14	3	0
	28	2	22
	23	2	0
John Kerchevell	10	1	9
	86	1	5
	12	1	30
Trustees of William Pink	35	0	26
	43	3	30
William Pochin	76	2	16

The initial size of these 17 largest enclosures at Croxton, averaging over 40 acres, suggests that even if no further subdivision took place immediately after enclosure ring fencing individuals' allocations would create a considerable network of fences for horsemen to tackle.

#### *Field sizes in the Wreake-Prestwold area*

Turning to the second study area, between the Wreake River and Prestwold in north-east Leicestershire, reference to Figure 3.11 (Enclosure dates in Leicestershire) shows a range of early enclosed parishes stretching towards Melton Mowbray,

<sup>554</sup> Leicestershire CRO, MA/EN/A/24/1 (South Croxton Enclosure Act, 1794)

including Prestwold itself enclosed in 1633. This suggests that there were fences present here prior to the two major waves of Parliamentary enclosure in the 1750-1760s and the 1790s. Figure 4.18<sup>555</sup> overleaf, part of a 1757 Enclosure map of Wymeswold, a neighbouring parish to Prestwold, shows a clear pattern of smaller fields nearer to the village with larger fields further away.

Hoskins sounded a useful warning about the timing of subdivision of the larger fields after Parliamentary enclosure: an enclosure award does not give the date of the internal fences since a significant landowner might not divide up his allotment into smaller fields until some time later. Hoskins used sporting prints illustrating the area between Prestwold and the Wreake as evidence (and assumed that they were accurate). He cited Henry Alken's *The Death*, dated 1824 and noted that it appeared to show a landscape north-west of Melton Mowbray, enclosed as far back as 1761, where the hedged areas were mostly still very large.<sup>556</sup>

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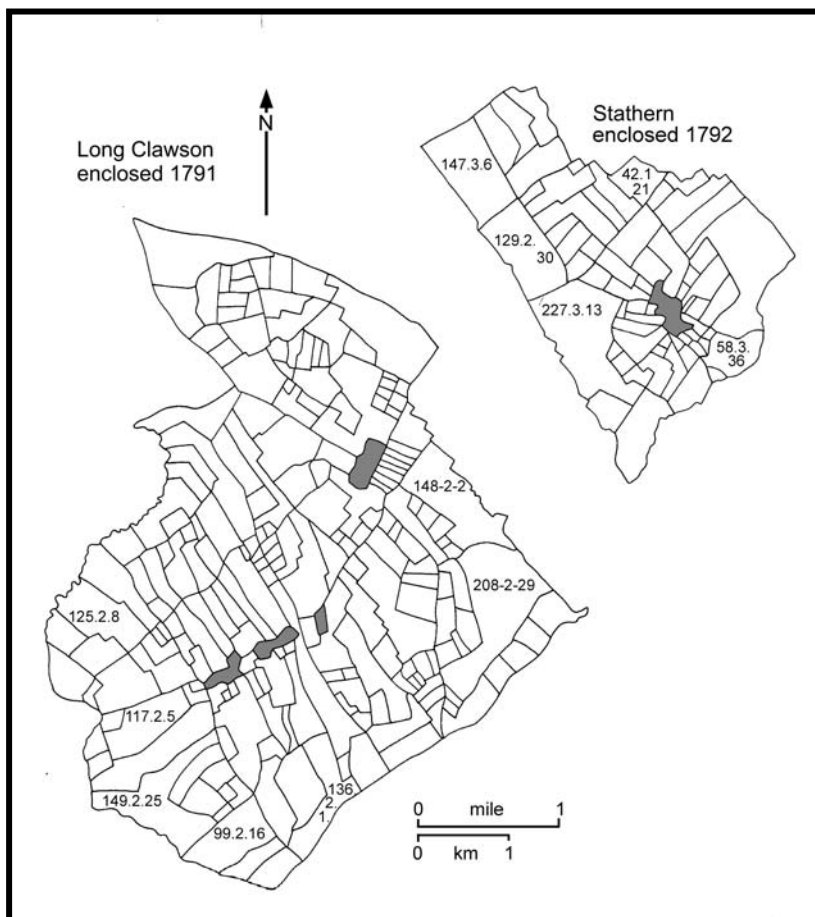
<sup>555</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/MA/366/1 (Enclosure Map of Wymeswold, 1757).

<sup>556</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 199



### *Field sizes in the Belvoir hunt country*

The third area under consideration is the Vale of Belvoir. Figure 4.19, showing boundaries copied from the Enclosure maps of Long Clawson (1791) and Stathern (1792), illustrates the impact of 1790s enclosure in the Vale where, in 1809, Pitt noted that the Duke of Rutland had enclosed 10,614 acres in three years.<sup>558</sup> Pitt added that previously the Vale had been partly an open chase and partly in a three shift system of fallow, wheat and beans. So it has been possible to find, in the third study area, a district that was comparatively free of fences until the early 1790s – probably because it was mainly owned by a hunting magnate, the Duke of Rutland.



**Figure 4.19** Field boundaries and acreages taken from the Enclosure maps of Long Clawson (1791)<sup>559</sup> and Stathern (1792)<sup>560</sup>

<sup>558</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p.14

<sup>559</sup> Leicestershire CRO, EN/A/205/1 (Enclosure Map of Long Clawson, 1791)

<sup>560</sup> Leicestershire CRO, QS47/2/17 (Enclosure Map of Stathern, 1792)

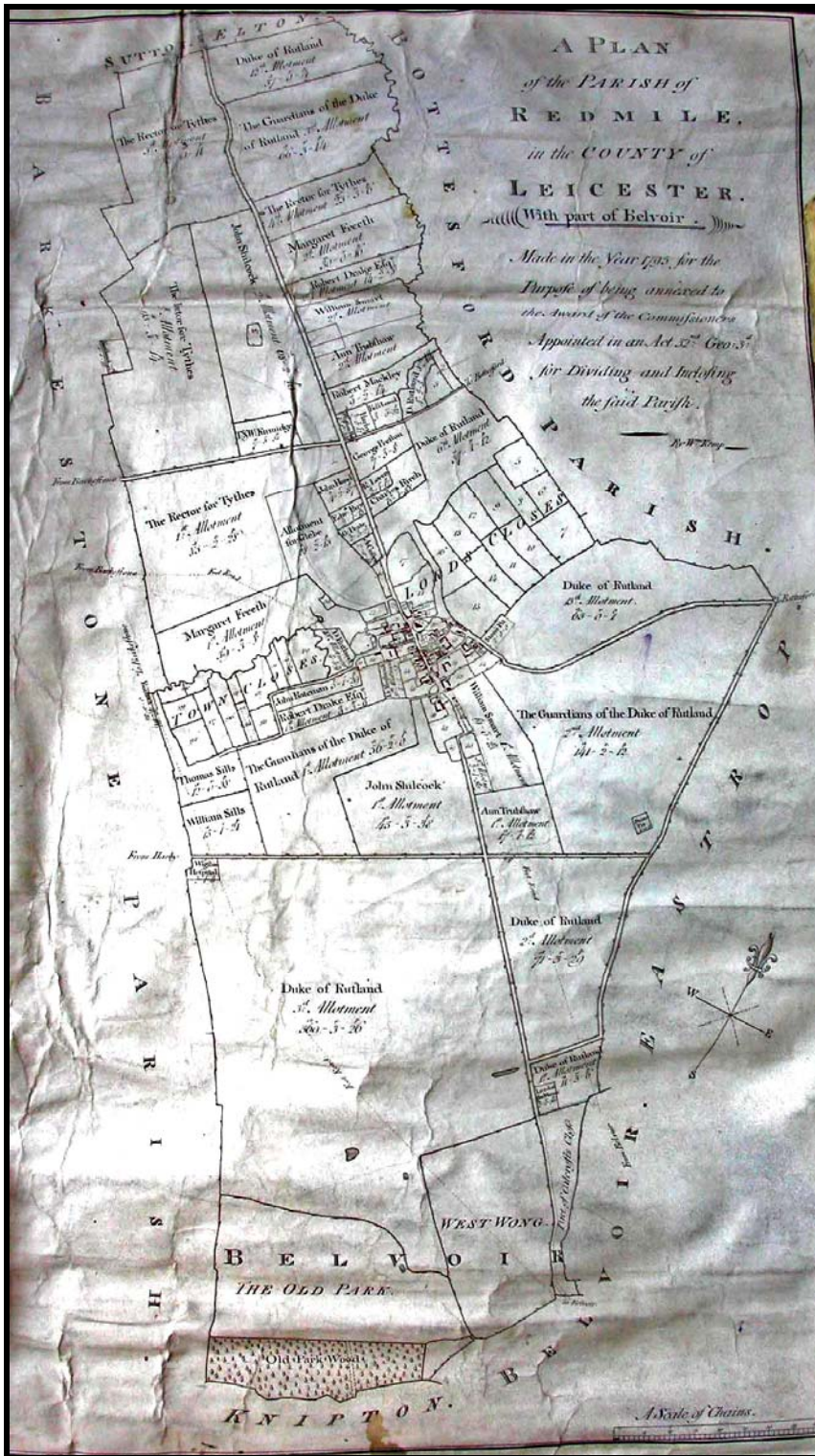


Figure 4.20 Enclosure Map of Redmile in the Vale of Belvoir, 1793<sup>561</sup>

<sup>561</sup> Leicestershire CRO, DE1008/19 (Enclosure Map of Redmile, 1793)

Figure 4.20 of Redmile, not enclosed until 1793, shows the fenced, post enclosure landscape that soon faced followers of the Duke's Belvoir hounds. Belvoir Old Park is shown at the south (bottom) of the map and much of the land in Redmile is allotted to the Duke of Rutland. This map shows a particularly clear example of the gradation of field sizes away from the settlement; field sizes range from 369 acres, at the extreme southern edge of the parish, to under 2 acres fringing the village and road running north.

*Field sizes in the Spencers' hunting country in Northamptonshire*

The fourth study area is the Spencer's hunting territory that, from the 1760s onwards, ranged across a wide span of countryside from their two kennels at Althorp and Pytchley. Figure 4.9 illustrates parishes in Northamptonshire with a mixture of early and Parliamentary enclosure. Butlin noted the impact of the Tudor enclosers by quoting Gonner's estimate that roughly 44 per cent of Northamptonshire was enclosed by 1675.<sup>562</sup> Hall observed that early enclosures typically had large fields of 50 acres or more, suitable for sheep grazing, and gave examples in Northamptonshire from 1565-1671.<sup>563</sup> The timing of further subdivisions varied. Taylor's research on Papley in Northamptonshire showed that in 1499 200 acres of land were enclosed, with a further enclosure in 1539 into large sheep-pasture fields but it was soon realized that such fields were too big resulting in hedges being put in to subdivide them after 1632.<sup>564</sup>

Overleaf, Figure 4.21 of Newnham, west of the Spencers' home and kennels at Althorp, shows the layout of the common fields prior to enclosure in 1765 and Figure 4.22 illustrates the subsequent division of the 1,580 acres into 77 allotments ranging in size from 178 acres and 21 perch to 2 roods and 10 perch.

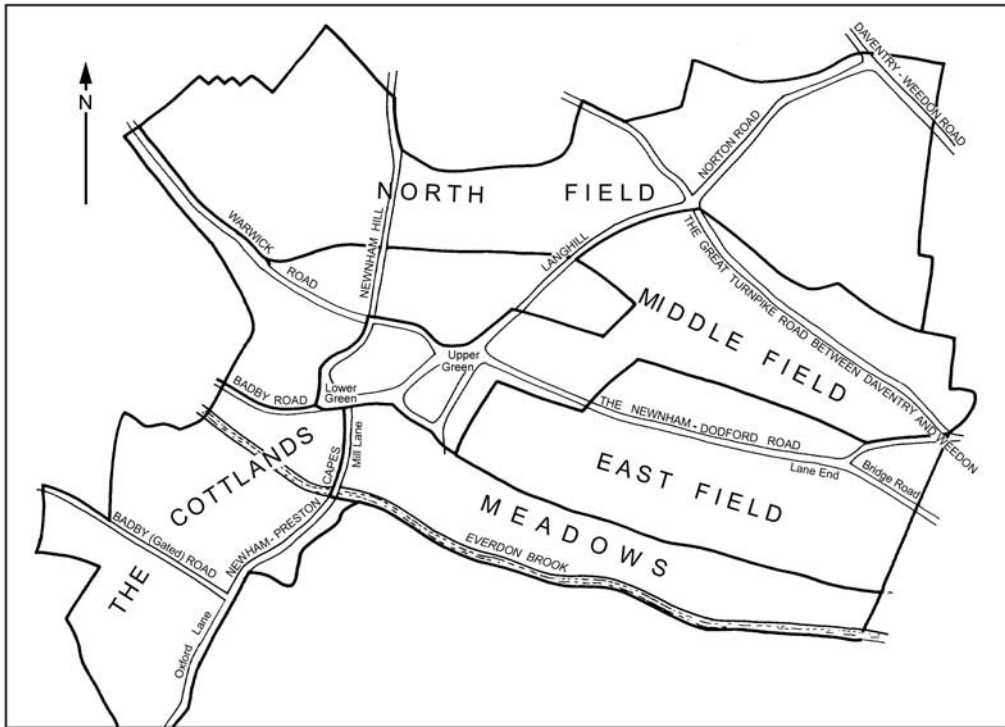
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<sup>562</sup> R.A. Butlin, 'The Enclosure of Open-fields and Extinction of Common Rights in England Circa 1660-1750: A Review', in *Changes in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England 1500-1900. Institute of British Geographers Special Publication Number 10*, (eds.) H.A.S. Fox & R.A. Butlin (1979), p. 69

<sup>563</sup> D. Hall, 'Enclosure in Northamptonshire' in *Northamptonshire Past and Present* Vol. 9 Pt. IV, (1998), p. 352

<sup>564</sup> Taylor, *Fields*, pp. 115 & 116





**Figure 4.21** Copy of map of open-fields of Newnham before enclosure in 1765<sup>565</sup>



**Figure 4.22** Copy of Enclosure Map of Newnham 1765<sup>566</sup>

<sup>565</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, Map ZA 4668 (Map of Newnham, 1765 Showing Open-fields Prior to Enclosure; undated modern copy)

<sup>566</sup> Northamptonshire CRO Map 574 (Newnham Inclosure Award, 1765; undated modern copy)

**Table 4.7** Allotment sizes at Newnham on Enclosure in 1765<sup>567</sup>

<i>Size of allotments in acres</i>	<i>Number</i>
180 – 100	3
100 - 60	1
60 - 40	1
40 - 20	10
20 – 10	20
10 – 1 acre	38
Under 1 acre	2
<i>Total allotments</i>	<i>77</i>

Although on first viewing of the 1765 Newnham enclosure map (Figure 4.22) the few large fields are striking, much of the parish was allotted into medium sized fields whose hedges would pose a challenge to foxhunters (60 out of the 77 allotments were 20 acres or less). The tall, unladen ‘bullfinch’ hedges, planted to contain cattle used in the Northampton leather and shoe industries, would be particularly difficult to jump once fully grown.

In contrast to the Tudor delays in post-enclosure subdivision into smaller fields, and Hoskin’s warning about delays in subdividing enclosure allotments noted earlier; Hall wrote of Parliamentary enclosure in Northamptonshire that: ‘private subdivision of allotments were usually made very soon after the main enclosure, as proved by near contemporary maps made of large allotments at Braybrooke 1778, Raunds 1798 and Newton Bromswold 1802’.<sup>568</sup> Hall’s description of Northamptonshire suggested a trend to further subdivision contemporaneous with the rise of foxhunting. He noted that the hedge patterns of townships with large fields were frequently modified during 1750-1850 when smaller fields were more suited for mixed farming; he gave the example of Strixton which had straight hedges planted around 1750 to subdivide large fields dating from about 1620.<sup>569</sup>

<sup>567</sup> Northamptonshire CRO Map 574 (Newnham Inclosure Award, 1765)

<sup>568</sup> Hall, ‘Enclosure ...’ p. 354

<sup>569</sup> Hall, ‘Enclosure ...’ p. 354

The 1778 Enclosure Hedging Account book for Floore just south east of Althorp, the Spencer's home, gives an interesting insight into the costs of fencing with quickthorn:<sup>570</sup> 'quicking 253 perch [1,400 yards] in Flower fields cost £10 0s. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d [the equivalent of approximately £470 in 2011], 16 score [320] of rails cost 12 shillings and 307 posts a further 16s and 11 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d; Dott was paid 3s 6d for 3 days 'wedding the quick' and Thomas Wilson 'for 2 days and a half hanging gates in the tythe 3s 9d'.<sup>571</sup> These significant costs explain a comment by Hollowell that partly contradicts Hall's view on prompt subdivision. Hollowell noted that, in contrast to Enclosure allotment ring fencing, for 'private fencing ... [i.e.] field boundaries within each farm ... the landowner was under no legal compulsion to erect them within a particular timescale ... and could even elect to do nothing (and some did!)'.<sup>572</sup>

The 1942 copy of an enclosure map of 1778 for Isham, (Figure 4.23 overleaf) the neighbouring parish to Pytchley, which contained one of the Spencer family's hunting kennels, shows a range of field sizes. The largest field is 'Dunbelly' with 22 acres, with 'Haypits' the second largest covering 20 acres. However, the average allotment is around 10 acres which would have meant a considerable challenge to mounted fox hunters following hounds across the parish. The papers relating to the enclosure of part of Grafton parish in Northamptonshire illustrate one stratagem adopted by hunting landowners to avoid jumping from field to field; on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1809 seven shillings and sixpence were paid out for '3 bridle gates' [small gates easily opened from horseback] as well as '2 six bar gates' more usually found as field gates.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Northamptonshire CRO V898 (Inclosure Hedging Account book, John Hughes his account. June 1778)

<sup>571</sup> For comparison a week's wages for the head groom at Holkham in 1801 was 10 shillings

<sup>572</sup> S. Hollowell, *Enclosure Records for Historians* (Chichester, 2000), p.137

<sup>573</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, G4245 (Grafton Papers G4245, Invoice dated 21.6.1809).

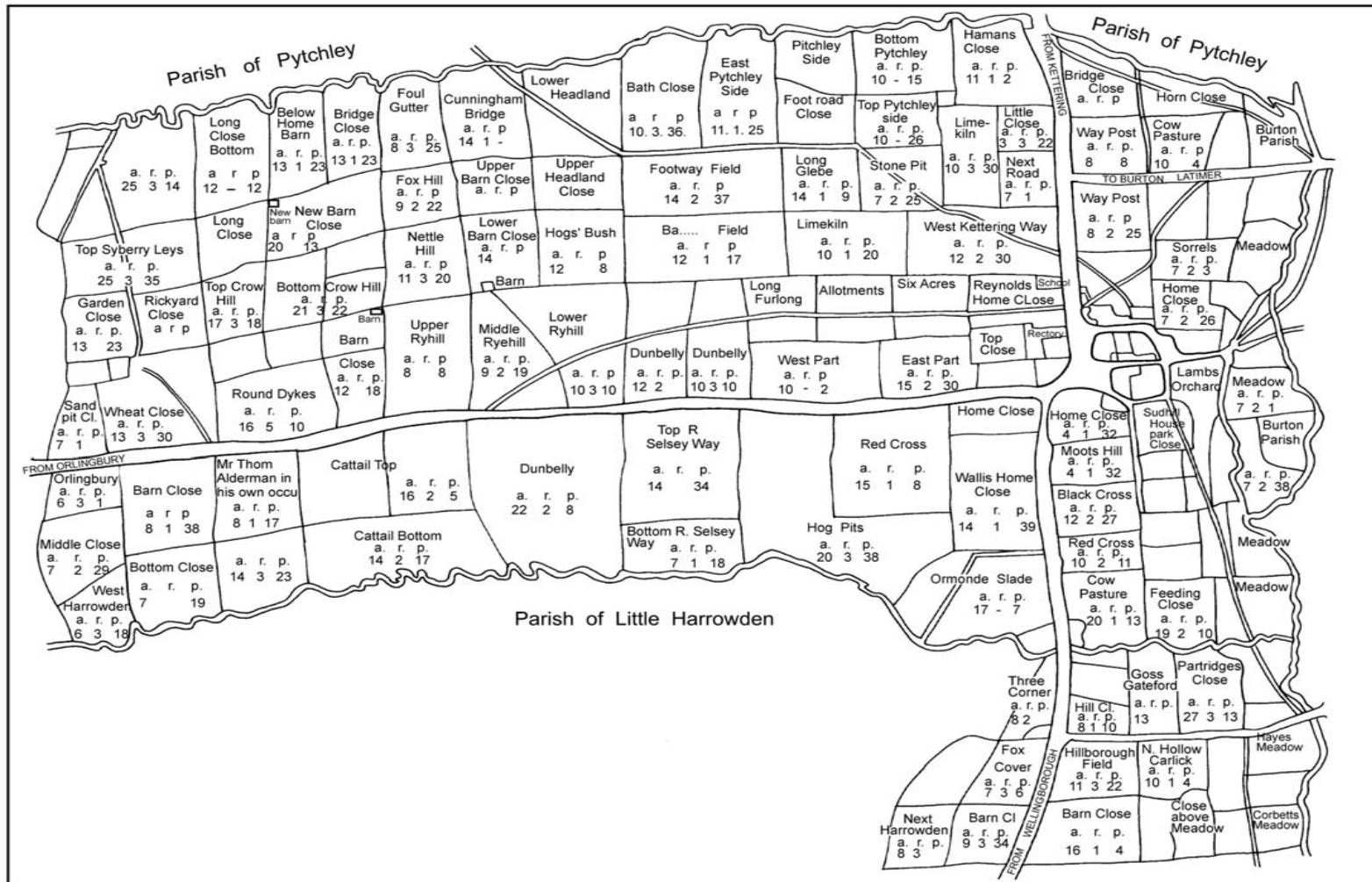


Figure 4.23 1942 copy of the Enclosure Map of Isham 1779<sup>574</sup>

<sup>574</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, Map 28 (Isham Enclosure Map 1778, Modern Copy dated 1942).

By 1803 even parishes fringing Rockingham Forest, the Spencer's spring hunting refuge, were being enclosed. Figure 4.24 shows the post enclosure landscape around Brigstock, north-east of Pytchley, with a range of field sizes.



Figure 4.24 Part of Brigstock Enclosure Map 1803<sup>575</sup>, Scale 6":1 mile

<sup>575</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, Map 2859 (Enclosure Map of Brigstock, 1803)

Around Althorp, the Spencers' main home, there was a flurry of enclosure during the 1770s. Figure 4.25 of Bugbroke (south of Althorp), showing the central part of a parish enclosed in 1779, illustrates the range in field sizes.



**Figure 4.25** Enclosure map of Bugbroke 1779<sup>576</sup>, Scale 6":1 Mile

<sup>576</sup> Northamptonshire CRO Map 53P/331 (Enclosure Map of Bugbrooke, 1779)

Ravensthorpe due north of Althorp was enclosed later in 1795, and Figure 4.26, combined with details in a minute book, gives a good picture of the size of allotments and the costs incurred by the main landowners (apparent anomalies in the costs are probably due to differential costs in fencing).

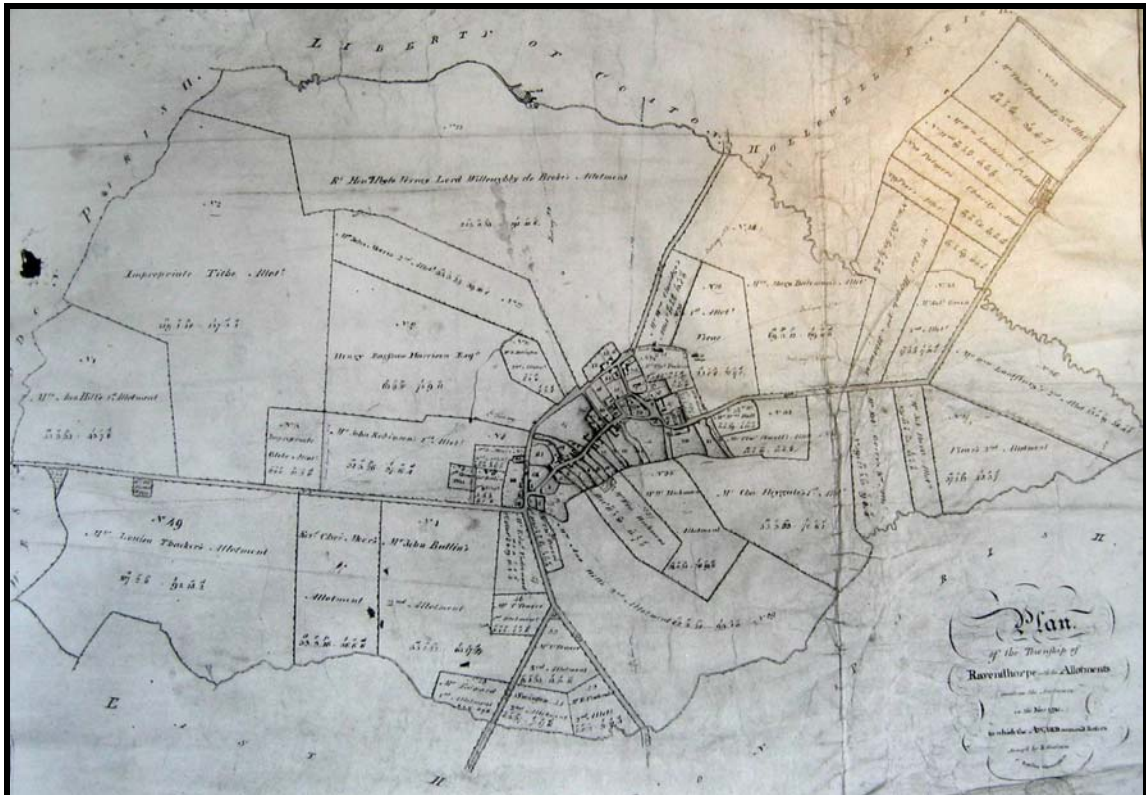


Figure 4.26 Part of Enclosure map of Ravensthorpe 1795<sup>577</sup>, Scale 10":1 Mile

<sup>577</sup> Northamptonshire CRO Map 5637 (Enclosure Map of Ravensthorpe, 1795)

**Table 4.8** Enclosure in Ravensthorpe – land allocation and costs<sup>578</sup>

<i>Major proprietors</i>	<i>Land allotted in acres, roods and perches</i>	<i>General expenses of enclosure in £.s.d</i>
Lord Willoughby	203-0-33	454-2-7
Louisa Thacker	107-2-0	222-0-8
Ann Hill	82-3-20	338-9-1
Mary Bateman	69-3-12	163-7-4
Henry Harrison	61-3-10	170-12-7
John Butlin	55-1-22	165-8-6
William Lantsbury	53-0-19	169-9-6
Charles Heygate	31-0-32	231-13-3

In summary, examination of the details of enclosure allotments in a range of parishes proves the value of exploring enclosure maps and records in the study of the development of foxhunting. There was a patchwork of different enclosure dates in each of the four study areas and within these areas parishes enclosed under parliamentary acts reveal a wide variation in field sizes. But it is clear that enclosed parishes would cause considerable challenges to tyro foxhunters struggling to master the ‘flying leap’ and this exploration enhances our understanding of how eighteenth-century riders experienced the new landscape. Two consistent patterns emerge; it is likely that the larger fields (requiring fewer hedges) were owned by the bigger landlords – reflecting the pattern in part of the Vale of Belvoir – since allotments were made *pro rata* based on pre-enclosure ownership. Secondly, smaller fields owned by ‘lesser freeholders’ were more likely to be clustered near the villages and these would be prone to greater disturbance so were both less likely to harbour foxes and more difficult to cross on horseback. The enclosure maps also demonstrate the loss of ‘informal’ routes, via balks, headlands and footpaths, across the open-fields that would have enabled mounted followers to cross the landscape far more easily prior to enclosure.

<sup>578</sup> Northamptonshire CRO, 2877A and B (Enclosure of Ravensthorpe, Land Allocation and Costs, 1795).



Several factors linked to these observations help explain the development of hunting in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire in the second half of the eighteenth century. Martin's study of the comparative costs of fencing different sizes of fields after Parliamentary enclosure in Warwickshire demonstrated one reason why small owners tended to sell out to the larger landowners (who could afford the investment and were often foxhunters) and consequently consolidated their grip on the landscape. Martin established that 'for five allotments of under 50 acres the average fencing cost was about 55 shillings an acre, for six allotments of between 50 and 200 acres it was about 37 shillings an acre and for seven over 200 acres it was only 22 shillings an acre'.<sup>579</sup> Neeson's work in Northamptonshire showed that, on average, two-thirds of the peasantry lost 20 per cent of their land within five years of an enclosure act.<sup>580</sup> However, this was not always under duress; sometimes, small landowners, particularly those who were not primarily farmers or who were widows, enthusiastically seized a chance to realise an asset. Neeson discovered a widening of the gap between small and large operators in Northamptonshire with an increase in larger tenants and landowners and a decline in small owner-occupiers.<sup>581</sup> Wade Martins has also recorded the decline of small yeoman farmers and estimated that as late as 1688 one-third of England was still owned by small-scale freeholders. She added that by 1800 this had dropped to 10 per cent and argued that, from the end of the seventeenth century, small landowners were dispossessed gradually as the large estates embarked upon a long-term policy of acquisition of land.<sup>582</sup>

Writing about Northamptonshire Pitt noted that 'this county is principally occupied by tenants at will ... and landlords being often influenced by the idea that leases render their tenants independent and lessen that respect which they would otherwise command are upon consideration prejudiced against granting them'.<sup>583</sup> The landlord's tightening grip on tenants ensured protection of a supply of foxes and free passage across their farms. Many of the pioneering foxhunters, such as the Fitzwilliams and Spencers, held sizeable estates, which they could hunt across with

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<sup>579</sup> E. Pollard, M.D. Hooper & N.W. Moore, *Hedges* (London, 1974), p.45

<sup>580</sup> J.M. Neeson, 'Parliamentary Enclosure and the Disappearance of the English Peasantry Revisited', *Research in Economic History*, 5 (1989) p. 122

<sup>581</sup> Neeson, 'Parliamentary Enclosure ...' p. 89,

<sup>582</sup> S. Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes* (Cheshire, 2004), p.18

<sup>583</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire*, p. 45

impunity. Meynell was unusual in only holding land in the parish of Quorndon so he had to negotiate agreements over access across the wider landscape with the local grandees; the Manners, Noel and Lowther families to the east and Earl Spencer in the south.<sup>584</sup>

### **The use of hunting pictures as a resource**

A third method of exploring the contemporary hunted landscape (following the previously-described use of hunting diaries and enclosure act maps and records) is the study of contemporary hunting pictures. As already noted, early eighteenth-century hunting paintings, such as figure 3.2 by Wootton, often featured an unrealistic background 'set in a fabulous, fictitious, classical landscape' due to an affection for *capriccio* by painters such as Wootton and the expectations of patrons influenced by the study of paintings during their Grand Tours.<sup>585</sup> Deuchar has observed that later during the 'second quarter of the eighteenth century [there was a] ... steadily increasing popularity of overtly "realistic", "documentary" pictures'.<sup>586</sup> Consequently, from this date onwards, paintings might be assumed to yield a more accurate idea of the hunted landscape. But, as in so much related to foxhunting, the actual picture is more subtle.

Paul Sandby (1731-1809) 'has been called the father of the topographical tradition in English landscape painting' and was praised by Gainsborough 'with respect to real Views from Nature in this Country ... Paul Sandby is the only Man of Genius'.<sup>587</sup> In 1767 he painted the 'North-east view of Wakefield Lodge' for the 3rd Duke of Grafton (a detail with the Lodge in the top right hand corner is shown overleaf in Figure 4.27) and we could assume that the hunting lodge's immediate landscape of the lake, park and its contents give an accurate idea of the contemporary scene.

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<sup>584</sup> VCH *Leicestershire*. Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1955), p. 270

<sup>585</sup> R. Baird, *Goodwood - art and architecture, sport and family* (London, 2007) p.77

<sup>586</sup> S. Deuchar, *Sporting art in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 1988) p. 66

<sup>587</sup> Quoted in R. Dormant 'Review of 'Picturing Britain: Paul Sandby'. Exhibition at Nottingham Castle' *Daily Telegraph* (27.7.2009)



**Figure 4.27** Detail from the 'North-east view of Wakefield Lodge' by P. Sandby, 1767<sup>588</sup>



**Figure 4.28** Detail from 'Mares and foals on the riverbank at Euston' by G. Stubbs, early 1760s<sup>589</sup>

<sup>588</sup> A. Meyers & others, *Paul Mellon's Legacy – A passion for British Art* (New Haven, 2007) plate 33  
<sup>589</sup> Private collection of the Duchess of Grafton at Euston Hall

But a closer look at the horses in the foreground shows that Sandby has copied them, rather poorly, entirely from the Stubb's painting 'Mares and foals on the riverbank at Euston' (Figure 4.28) also owned by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke. A point that apparently has not been made previously, but which suggests that caution is still required in the use of 'realistic' and 'topographical' paintings in the study of hunting landscapes. Despite this caveat, most later eighteenth and nineteenth-century sporting pictures appear to be more accurate in their portrayal of landscape than earlier works and provide a useful adjunct to enclosure records and diaries for studying the hunting landscape. Unfortunately there is only one known contemporary print of Meynell's hounds to study for clues about the countryside he hunted. Jukes's 1802 aquatint commemorated one of Meynell's last days out hunting: the 'Billesdon Coplow' day on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1800 when hounds ran twenty-eight miles in just over two hours.



**Figure 4.29.** The Billesdon Coplow Day, by F Jukes, after Charles Lorraine Smith, 1802<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> F.L. Wilder, *English Sporting Prints* (London, 1974), Plate 35, p. 94

The print, Figure 4.29, shows a rolling, wooded countryside apparently under grass - unsurprising since by this time Meynell would have found it hard to find extensive areas still in arable use and Billesdon had been enclosed in 1764.

Also in the East Midlands, Boulton's 1793 painting of 'Goadby Bulmer in the Vale of Belvoir', Figure 4.30 shows a similar pastoral scene with large fields in the background.



**Figure 4.30.** 'The kill. Mr Deverell and his favourite hunter Gay Lass at Goadby Bulmer in the Vale of Belvoir' by Boulton, 1793<sup>591</sup>

Successors to Wootton tended to show hunts meeting in parkland or crossing grassland; for example Egerton's exhaustive *Catalogue Raisonne* of George Stubbs' work has over 300 plates, none of which show hunts or hounds in an arable

<sup>591</sup> S. Mitchell, *The Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists* (Woodbridge, 1985), p. 27

setting.<sup>592</sup> Pastoral landscapes had a higher status than the more utilitarian arable fields and landowners commissioning painters such as Stubbs clearly wished to emphasise the recreational rather than the practical use of their extensive acres. As the sporting art historian Deuchar commented, 'sporting artists ... were highly selective in their choice ... of subject matter ... demands or convention of taste and the artist's own conditioning ... ensured that many aspects of the reality of a day's sport were not presented'.<sup>593</sup> In contrast, the patrons of Thomas Gainsborough, painting portraits in the mid-eighteenth century, wanted to send a different message: both 'Mr and Mrs Robert Andrews' and 'The Grosvenor family' are shown seated outdoors, flanked by ripe cereal crops, so that 'the notably fertile acres [give] ... an implication of potential economic prosperity',<sup>594</sup> as well as emphasising their landed status and hinting at their personal fecundity.

An interesting, rare exception to the preponderance of hunting pictures in pastoral settings is Ben Marshall's portrait of 'George, Marquess of Huntly (later 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Gordon)', Figure 4.31 overleaf, which Egerton suggested was painted in 1806-1807. Although his title is Scottish, the Marquess lived partly at Orton Longueville (near Huntingdon) from 1799 and was MP for Suffolk from 1806-1807, the proposed date of the painting. Egerton noted 'a muddy foreground; the background is open country stretching away over ploughed fields to a village on the horizon on the right'. She added 'it gains from being set in open country'.<sup>595</sup> The exact location is unknown but it provides valuable evidence of hunting in an arable landscape in the East Midlands or, perhaps, East Anglia in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>592</sup> J. Egerton, *George Stubbs, Painter. Catalogue raisonne.* (New Haven, 2007)

<sup>593</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, p. 12

<sup>594</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, pp. 83 & 84

<sup>595</sup> J. Egerton, *British Sporting and Animal Paintings 1655 - 1867: A Catalogue* (London, 1978), p. 199



**Figure 4.31** George Marquess of Huntly on Tiny, with Hunt servants and Hounds by Ben Marshall, 1806-1807<sup>596</sup>



**Figure 4.32** Full Cry, by Charles Hunt, 1838<sup>597</sup>

<sup>596</sup> Egerton, *British Sporting*, Plate 26, p. 198

<sup>597</sup> D. Snelgrove, *British Sporting and Animal Prints 1658 - 1874* (London, 1981), p.234

Figure 4.32 on the previous page, painted by Charles Hunt in 1838, shows hounds hunting across a rolling landscape with extensive ploughed fields in both the foreground and background. Although no location is recorded, Hunt produced a set of eight paintings under the general title 'The Novice in Leicestershire'.

John Herring Junior (1820-1907), who spent the latter part of his life in Cambridgeshire, painted 'Breaking Cover', Figure 4.33, showing two fox hunters leaping out of a wood into an arable field watched by a plough team.



**Figure 4.33** Breaking Cover by John Herring Junior, date unknown<sup>598</sup>

It is significant that it is so difficult to find examples of hunting pictures set in an arable landscape in the East Midlands; hunting across ploughed land in the Shires had become unusual by the early nineteenth century as grassland began to dominate. As Ellis observed, 'all through Meynell's time then [MFH 1753-1800], and particularly towards the end of it, Leicestershire was changing. It was changing for reasons that were nothing to do with foxhunting but in ways that were welcomed by foxhunters – particularly by the new kind of foxhunters'.<sup>599</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> Mitchell, *Dictionary*, p. 267  
<sup>599</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 29



Hunting diaries, Parliamentary enclosure records and maps, and to a lesser extent, paintings provide useful evidence for changes in both the 'place' that foxhunters used for their sport and the ways in which they altered their 'practice' as the landscape altered.

### **Invisible control of the landscape**

It has been suggested in Chapter 1 that the key medium-term change, in Braudel's three-part division, that influenced the development of foxhunting was the increase in control of the landscape following Parliamentary enclosure. This chimes with Williamson and Bellamy's view that foxhunting developed as a result of 'the progressive privatisation of the landscape, the gradual spread of enclosure, the disappearance of the small owner occupier and the increasing dominance of the landholding system by a small elite group of people' who, I suggest, were increasingly armed with more coercive leases.<sup>600</sup> Foxhunting failed to develop where small owner-occupiers both resisted acknowledging Overton's 'explicit or implicit contract' to allow fox hunters to cross their land and had neither the time nor resources to follow hounds themselves. Despite the gradual spread of foxhunting geographically, elite foxhunters still preferred Rackham's 'planned' landscapes of the East Midlands and chalk and limestone uplands where large landowners controlled both access to their coverts and the activities of their tenants.

As already discussed, Wade Martins and Williamson have noted that these tenurial controls tightened as leases became more demanding on tenants during the latter half of the eighteenth century. This change in the power of leases after about 1750 coincided with the expansion of foxhunting and owners often included clauses in the tenancies that deliberately or incidentally favoured hunting. Pitt noted in his *General View of Agriculture in Leicestershire* written in the late eighteenth century: 'Breaking up grasslands – this is not often done ... at least not old grasslands; the farmer is generally too fond of turf to do this if he had permission and the covenants and customs of occupation forbid it. It could therefore only be done by special agreement

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<sup>600</sup> T. Williamson & L. Bellamy, *Property and landscape* (London, 1987) p. 201

between owner and occupier'.<sup>601</sup> Theobald echoed this point writing about Suffolk 'the landlord's chief concern was to protect the old permanent pastures on their estates. There are numerous examples of leases that prohibited the tenant from breaking up any new land ... these became more prevalent after 1750'.<sup>602</sup>

Francis Blaikie, the Holkham agent from 1816-1832, introduced a detailed 21 year tenancy with several clauses relating to hunting to formalise both access and the supply of prey.

It is hereby mutually agreed that the said Thomas William Coke ... shall take ... any parts of the land ... for the purpose of making a plantation, ... [be] entitled ... to enter ... upon said farmlands to hawk, hunt ... [and tenants] will preserve and protect the game upon the said farm (except rabbits)<sup>603</sup>. In addition normally tenants were obliged to 'keep and maintain at all times gratis one couple of hounds, one greyhound, pointer or spaniel and one game cock for use by Coke'.<sup>604</sup>

But Pitt also recorded a contrasting method by which some landowners exerted control over their tenants in Leicestershire; the withholding of leases leaving tenants reliant on short-term agreements and more vulnerable to eviction. He quoted from Donaldson's report: 'Granting leases has a tendency to obliterate that principle of due subordination which ought to be preserved between landlord and tenant'.<sup>605</sup> This echoes the recognition by Carr of an 'alliance of sporting landlord and tenant farmer, an alliance of deference and interest, that underpinned foxhunting'.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>601</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Leicestershire*, p. 157

<sup>602</sup> J. Theobald, 'Changing Landscapes, Changing Economies: Holdings in Woodland High Suffolk 1600 - 1850' (University of East Anglia PhD, 2002) p. 109

<sup>603</sup> Holkham Archives, File E/G 19, pp. 4, 27, 31,

<sup>604</sup> M-A. Garry *An uncommon tenant, Fitzroy and Holkham 1808-1837* (Dereham, 1996) p. 56

<sup>605</sup> Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 45. Quoting J. Donaldson *General View of Agriculture of Northamptonshire* 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Edinburgh, 1794)

<sup>606</sup> Carr, *English*, p 49

## Disadvantages of early- enclosed areas

The previous chapter described how dispersed settlement, private property rights and a fragmented manorial structure meant that social and economic control by a manorial lord tended to be weak in wood pasture areas and this hindered the development of hunting before 1750.<sup>607</sup> Areas with a preponderance of small-scale owner-occupier farmers continued to be a problem. Inevitably they suffered if large numbers of horses crossed their holdings and records of protests in the nineteenth century are common. North of London, the Harrow Vale farmers were notorious because they chased hunters with pitchforks, trapped them in small fields and locked hounds in barns;<sup>608</sup> understandable in the light of Lord Alvanley's description of the going on a day's hunting over market gardens in the area in the 1820s; 'Devilish good run but the asparagus beds went awfully heavy and the glass all through up to one's [horse's] hocks'.<sup>609</sup>

In Norfolk, almost a century later, some avid hunters continued to remain immune to small farmers' protests; Harvey wrote sorrowfully in 1910:

The damage of riding over the wheat is more than counterbalanced by the advantages of a pack of hounds for the benefit is felt by many to the extent of several miles. It is scarcely to be believed in these enlightened times that farmers should be so blind to their own interests that to discountenance such a glorious and national amusement.<sup>610</sup>

So I would argue that the independent owner-occupiers of the wood-pasture areas were less likely to tolerate the incursion and damage resulting from foxhunting, probably lacked the leisure time and money to spare for sport and were unlikely to jeopardise their lambs, piglets and hens by protecting a supply of foxes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, economic historians rarely mention foxhunting; but Sir John Clapham

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<sup>607</sup> M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England* (Cambridge, 1996) p. 50

<sup>608</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 218

<sup>609</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 24

<sup>610</sup> J.R. Harvey, *Deer Hunting in Norfolk* (Norwich, 1910) pp. 29 & 31

did notice in the 1930s that 'where there were small landowners the hunting was bad'.<sup>611</sup> This view appears to be endorsed by the historian Carr:

Hunting would have been a physical, legal and moral impossibility in a community of peasant farmers who owned their land; thus foxhunting could never develop in France where hunting – of deer - was confined to the large privately owned forests and to a minority of the aristocracy.<sup>612</sup>

*The importance of hedge management to the development of hunting*

The deterrent effect of hedges on early foxhunters has been described in a preceding chapter. High hedges punctuated by trees were a continuing disadvantage of the early-enclosed landscape in many areas after 1750. Williamson noted that as reserves of woodland dwindled in the Middle Ages an increasing proportion of trees lay within hedges, often managed as pollards, where the branches were cut back to the trunk every ten to fifteen years. He added that a 1742 survey of an estate in Suffolk revealed that 82 per cent of the trees were pollarded;<sup>613</sup> these hedgerow trees continued to create a hazard for nineteenth-century foxhunters, as illustrated overleaf by Giberne.

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<sup>611</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 49 & J. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain* (London, 1930) p. 262

<sup>612</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 49

<sup>613</sup> T. Williamson, *Hedges and Walls* (London, 2002), p. 35



**Figure 4.34** ‘An indiscreet friend on a rash horse who spoils a good hat and utters an evil execration’ by Edgar Giberne, 1878<sup>614</sup>

Arthur Young, published in 1813, describes parts of the Sussex Weald as ‘enclosed from earliest antiquity’ and then condemns the ‘pernicious influence’ and ‘barbarity’ of the ‘shaws ... hedge-rows, two, three or even four rodswide [which] abound ... [as] tall screens of under wood and forest around every field’.<sup>615,616</sup>

However, there were considerable regional differences in the management of hedges in the ancient countryside and some methods positively enhanced foxhunters’ experience by the nineteenth century. Rackham highlighted the regional variations in distribution of pollarded hedgerow trees, noting that Essex and Suffolk had thousands while in Herefordshire, lying to the south of Shropshire and sharing many landscape characteristics, there were hardly any.<sup>617</sup> Plymley, writing in 1803, gave a very vivid picture of hedge management in Shropshire, partly based on his own

<sup>614</sup> G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections* (London, 1878), p. 138

<sup>615</sup> A rod/pole/perch was about 5 meters or 5.5 yards

<sup>616</sup> A. Young, *A General View of Agriculture of Sussex*. 2nd edn (London, 1813), p. 62

<sup>617</sup> O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*. 1990 edn (London, 1986), p. 228

practical experience as a local landowner.<sup>618</sup> He recommended planting young hawthorns in a double row at 6 to 8 inches distance apart. He advised that a double row 'means one half may be plashed [laid] at a proper age and the other half cut off at stake high, saving the expense of cloven stakes, and giving permanent ones'. He added that:

I am no friend to trees in hedgerows. They hurt the fence; the fall of the leaf injure the late grass ... they are of little value as timber from the difficulty of preserving them from the axe or pruning hook; and they prevent a lofty hedge which is better shelter and which is some protection from trespass by hunting; an evil of little consequence where the country is slightly cultivated but a very serious one in districts of improved farming.<sup>619</sup>

The practice of hedge 'plashing' or laying in Shropshire would enable bold foxhunters to jump fences far more easily than their equivalents facing pollarded or coppiced hedges in many other parts of the ancient countryside. In Figure 4.35 overleaf Surtees' hero, Mr Facey Romford MFH, illustrates the comparative ease with which a laid hedge could be jumped – in comparison to a 'bullfinch'.

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<sup>618</sup> J. Plymley, *General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire*. 2nd edn (London, 1813)

<sup>619</sup> Plymley, *General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire*, pp. 146-147



**Figure 4.35** 'Romford [on the left] disturbs the dignity of his Huntsman' by John Leech, 1864<sup>620</sup>

This may partly explain why Shropshire was the cradle of the 'flying leap'. The catalyst for change was William Childe from Kinlet in Shropshire who had started hunting in the early-enclosed Ludlow country and gained the nickname 'Flying Childe' when he moved to Leicestershire and started hunting with Meynell in the 1780s. 'Childe on the fine half bred[s] for which his county became famous, did in fact what had hardly been attempted before, riding up to the hounds and flying the fences as they came'.<sup>621</sup> As has already been described, this was unpopular with Meynell whose whipper-in recorded tersely in his diary on December 10<sup>th</sup> 1792 'they [the followers] over-rode the hounds'.<sup>622</sup> Plymley suggested that, by the early 1800s, foxhunters in Shropshire had followed the example of 'Flying Childe' with enthusiasm. He commented on the ensuing damage, including 'galloping over young

<sup>620</sup> Illustration by John Leech for R.S. Surtees, *Mr Facey Romford's hounds* (London, 1864) p. 47

<sup>621</sup> Quoted in Chevenix-Trench, *A History of Horsemanship*, p. 72

<sup>622</sup> Jones, *Diary*, p. 30

clover or tender turf ... the number of fields laid open to each other and the hedges that are to be repaired after every day's diversion'.<sup>623</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the expansion of foxhunting both geographically and in the number of participants. The model area of the East Midlands has been explored in detail enabling a challenge to the long-held belief that foxhunting developed there in the second-half of the eighteenth century due to the surge in enclosure and spread of grassland. Contemporary evidence suggests that the proportion of grassland has been over-estimated and mounted transit was hindered by hedges, poor drainage, remnant ridge and furrow and sizeable ant-hills. By contrast the remaining open-fields system provided good access across fallows, stubbles and a network of paths and balks. Three sources have proved very effective in the more detailed study of foxhunters' experience of the landscape: hunting diaries, Enclosure Act records and maps, and contemporary hunting pictures. These have given a new, clearer idea of leading foxhunters' attitudes to the enclosed landscape and the challenges that faced them as they tackled the recently planted fences. The advantages to foxhunters of a landscape farmed by tenants, whose activities were controlled by landlords, is compared to the challenges posed by the anciently-enclosed countryside where small, hedged fields are farmed by independent owner-occupiers. The elite continued to favour lowland areas with tight tenurial control by landlords and good physical access. Deuchar usefully summarised hunting's requirements as 'the availability of land, the freedom and time to exploit it and, very often, an economic status derived from a dependent class below'.<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Plymley, *General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire*, p. 148

<sup>624</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, p. 2



## CHAPTER 5 - THE EXPANSION OF ACCESS TO FOXHUNTING AFTER 1750

The previous two chapters explored how physical control of access to the landscape influenced the origins and development of foxhunting. This chapter discusses how changes within society enabled a broadening of access to the hunting field including the increasing participation of farmers, urban dwellers and, temporarily, women. Examples of the impact of changes in society on foxhunting are drawn primarily from the two study areas of Shropshire and Norfolk. After exploring the increased popularity of hunting, the impact of another field sport that was becoming increasingly fashionable - shooting - is examined. The physical impact of foxhunting on the landscape in these two counties is dealt with in subsequent chapters.

### Diffusion

Although the theory of diffusion of innovations has been criticised by Renfrew and Bahn as 'sometimes overplayed and nearly always oversimplified',<sup>625</sup> so that a 'processual framework of explanation has generally replaced the diffusionist model',<sup>626</sup> it does usefully highlight two relevant factors in the geographical spread of foxhunting. During the 1960s Hagerstrand noted that in rural South Sweden innovations spread fastest via personal contact which itself depended on distance and social structure – 'the neighbourhood effect'.<sup>627</sup> Subsequently both Rogers, writing in 1962,<sup>628</sup> and the evolutionary biologist Diamond, discussing diffusion in 1997,<sup>629</sup> have emphasised the importance of 'observability' or the ease with which the 'relative advantage' of an innovation can be seen.<sup>630</sup>

Itkovitz's work shows the importance of both 'personal contact' and 'observability' in the spread of the new style of foxhunting since, as Meynell's fame grew, sportsmen from other parts of the country travelled to Leicestershire to experience the

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<sup>625</sup> C. Renfrew & P. Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories and Practice*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 2004) p. 471

<sup>626</sup> Renfrew & Bahn, *Archaeology*, p. 472

<sup>627</sup> T. Hagerstrand, *Innovation: Diffusion as a Spatial Process*, (Chicago, 1967) p. 163

<sup>628</sup> E. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, (New York, 1962) pp. 15-16

<sup>629</sup> J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, (London, 1997) pp. 247-248

<sup>630</sup> 'Relative advantage' is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes.

excitement for themselves and subsequently spread the fashion.<sup>631</sup> Ardent visiting foxhunters such as William 'Flying' Childe of Kinlet and George Forester of Willey, both in Shropshire, took their enthusiasm home and started more formal foxhunting. 'The exploits of the Shropshire men in the Shires presumably quickened a desire to see Shropshire hunted in a regular fashion and during the 1790s a number of men who had distinguished themselves in Leicestershire were presidents of the Shrewsbury Hunt'.<sup>632</sup> The development of hunting in a 'regular' fashion in Shropshire (a more formal calendar of meets, a focus on hunting only foxes in a defined 'country' and a structure for funding the activity) will be dealt with in more detail later.

Longrigg described another way in which foxhunting spread through personal contact, listing mobile or itinerant pack owners and highlighting the roles of John Corbet of Sundorne Castle in Shropshire and John Warde of Squerryes Court in Kent.<sup>633</sup> Although Corbet started hunting in Shropshire, he moved to the more open landscape of Warwickshire from 1791 until 1811. Corbet, described by Longrigg as 'one of the best loved Masters of Hounds in history', also spread his influence via his daughter's marriage to Sir Richard Puleston who introduced foxhunting to North Wales.<sup>634</sup> Meanwhile John Warde had begun hunting the fox from his home in West Kent but in about 1776 he went looking for a better country and found it in Berkshire. Still not satisfied, in 1780 he moved to Bicester followed by the New Forest from 1808 to 1814, finishing up in Berkshire again with the Craven Hunt from 1814 to 1825.<sup>635</sup>

Gradually foxhunting spread into areas, such as Shropshire, that previously had been considered less favourable while, conversely, changes triggered by agricultural improvement in some 'heartland' areas diminished their appeal to fox hunters. As already described, the enclosure of arable open-fields in the East Midlands often led to temporary or permanent grassland that, after about 1780, attracted some fox hunters avid to gallop and jump (although conversely it also drove Hugo Meynell and

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<sup>631</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 9

<sup>632</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 168

<sup>633</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 127

<sup>634</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 75

<sup>635</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 85

some other MFHs to seek out areas that remained unenclosed). This antipathy to enclosure was also true on much of the chalk and limestone uplands since it resulted in the loss of fox cover and the challenge of jumping stone walls. Celia Fiennes in 1682 observed that the Wiltshire Downs were 'pleasant for all sports – rideing, hunting, courseing ...'.<sup>636</sup> By 1851 Caird wrote of the same area; 'it is a thin dry soil ... the greater proportion of this extensive tract has been brought under tillage ... tenants ... became desirous to plough up the downlands and obtained permission to do so'.<sup>637</sup> John Byng complained in 1781 that the neighbourhood of the town (Burford in Oxfordshire) 'formerly so noted for hunting is now spoilt by enclosure' and he added that 'as a sportsman I hate enclosures' since new stone walls were a hazard to riders.<sup>638</sup> By 1803 Thomas Rudge recorded the loss of open hunting country with vital gorse for fox cover in upland Gloucestershire; 'furze and some dry and scanty blades of grass were all their produce, but now with few exceptions the downs are converted into arable enclosed fields'.<sup>639</sup>

Hunting spread directly through the physical movement of enthusiasts but also along 'virtual' networks. Rogers writes vividly of 'innovators' that:

He or she desires the hazardous, the rash, the daring and the risky [inherent in foxhunting] ... this interest may lead them ... into more cosmopolite [sic] social relationships. Communication patterns and friendships among a clique of innovators are common, even though the geographical distance between the innovators may be considerable ... the innovator plays an important role in the diffusion process: that of launching the new idea in the social system by importing the innovation from outside the system's boundaries.<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 65

<sup>637</sup> J. Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-1851*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1968 (London, 1853) p. 80

<sup>638</sup> Byng, Hon. J. *Torrington Diaries*, Vol. 4, 1794, (ed.) C. Bruyn Andrews, (London, 1934) p. 7 (I am grateful to Dr. Sarah Spooner for this reference).

<sup>639</sup> R. Porter, *English society in the eighteenth century*, 1990 revised ed. (London, 1982) p 205

<sup>640</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion*, p. 248

The routes for the spread of foxhunting included existing networks, such as Parliament or social events and new links including Hunt clubs or via readership of the embryonic sporting press such as '*The Sporting Magazine*' started in 1792.<sup>641</sup>

Meynell was not a 'backwoods Squire Western' since his political and social connections in London helped to give him and his hunt prestige.<sup>642</sup> Many keen foxhunters although geographically separated were linked by powerful networks at a national level such as membership of Parliament; Meynell was a Member of Parliament (MP) intermittently between 1761 and 1778. The iconic hunting author Peter Beckford, who had traveled widely and followed many interests apart from hunting,<sup>643</sup> was an MP from 1767 at the same time as the passionate foxhunter the 3rd Duke of Grafton was Prime Minister (1767-1770). T.W. Coke of Holkham became both an MP and an MFH in 1776 and built kennels at Mark Hall in Essex, for when he was on parliamentary duty, and hunted the country around Epping about four times a week. On one occasion he killed a fox with his own hounds in Russell Square.<sup>644</sup> These two MFH/MPs overlapped with two from Shropshire; John Corbet of Sundorne Castle, described earlier, who was MP for Shrewsbury from 1775-1778 and George Forester of Willey, who established a private pack, the precursor of the Wheatland Hounds, in about 1770 and sat as an MP from 1757-1790.

## **Politeness**

The spread of foxhunting in the second half of the eighteenth century was linked to two contemporary concepts – politeness and improvement. Langford wrote that:

Politeness conveyed upper-class gentility, enlightenment and sociability to a much wider elite whose only qualification was money, but who were glad to spend it on acquiring the status of gentlemen ...

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<sup>641</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 14

<sup>642</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 8

<sup>643</sup> Beckford (reproduced in the introduction to the 1911 edition of his 1781 work *Thoughts on hunting*)

<sup>644</sup> Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk*, p. 153

though it involved much emulation and admiration of aristocrats, it did not imply an essentially aristocratic society.<sup>645</sup>

Significantly, in the light of the study areas, Norwich appears second in his league table of polite towns and Shrewsbury fourteenth.<sup>646</sup>

Girouard noted that the polite man was essentially social,<sup>647</sup> which increased the opportunities for innovations to spread through what Estabrook has described as 'personal culture (direct and deliberate face to face interaction)'.<sup>648</sup> Porter writing on 'the Enlightenment' commented on the range of pleasurable social occasions both in rural settings, such as racing, shooting and coursing; and in the Georgian city which was designed for spending time and money on enjoyments including shops, pleasure gardens, the theatre, a wide range of concerts and other musical events.<sup>649</sup> These activities all provided opportunities for the diffusion of ideas amongst the gentry at a local, county level. A map in Dain's lively account of Assemblies in Norfolk showed fifteen towns with assemblies advertised in local papers before 1750 with a further eighteen by 1790 – including small centres such as Docking and Brooke. Dain quoted from a contemporary letter recording the gentry, including foxhunters, who were present at an assize ball at Chapel Field House in 1726: 'Sir John Hobart ... Lady M. Coke, Sir T. Coke and Lady Hobart, Mrs Harbord ... Mr Kelsey ... Sir J. Wodehouse, Mr Harbord, Mrs Baily and Mrs Ann Bedingfield'.<sup>650</sup>

Trinder described two arenas for the exchange of ideas between landowners in Shropshire. He noted, setting the scene, that:

Eighteenth-century Shropshire was a community in which power was shared and sometimes contested between the squirearchy, who were the resident owners of estates of modest size, and the major gentry who held a

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<sup>645</sup> P. Langford, *A polite and commercial people, England 1727-1783*, 1999 ed. (Oxford 1989) pp. 4-5

<sup>646</sup> Langford, *Polite*, p. 402

<sup>647</sup> M. Girouard, *The English Town: A History of Urban Life* (New Haven, 1990), p. 76

<sup>648</sup> C. Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England. Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces, 1660-1780*, (Stanford, 1998) p. 7

<sup>649</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, pp. 268, 269 & 270

<sup>650</sup> A. Dain, 'Assemblies and politeness, 1660-1840' (University of East Anglia PhD, 2000) p. 397

higher proportion of the land in Shropshire than any other county. By 1700 Shrewsbury was one of the major provincial cities, a social centre for the gentry of the county and for many from North Wales.<sup>651</sup>

The first setting for the spread of ideas was the magnificent Assembly room built in Shrewsbury during 1775-1780 by a lawyer, John Ashby, who was a link between many elite families as land agent to the Clives and political agent to the Foresters of Willey (ardent fox hunters) as well as being Shrewsbury town clerk, three times deputy sheriff and a leading lobbyist for turnpike roads.<sup>652</sup> Trinder also recorded a second, influential group noting that for a few years at the end of the eighteenth century a score or so of men of unusual ability were active in Shropshire as shared intellectual interests brought together Anglican landowners including Thomas Eyton, Rowland Hunt and Arch Deacon Joseph Plymley (author of a *General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire* and active in the anti-slavery movement) with Shrewsbury's dissenting elite which included Robert Darwin, father of Charles. Landowners and foxhunters were exposed to a wide spectrum of influences through this network.

Dain, writing of Norfolk, noted that balls and assemblies were an important part of the social activities linked to foxhunting, hare coursing, archery and cricket but polite sociability was most closely associated with racing.<sup>653</sup> Buxton commented that 'Charles II adored racing ... the character and conditions of the sport ... began to be established during the reign ... Newmarket was a favourite place' by the late 1660s for flat racing.<sup>654</sup> Huggins noted that originally most race meetings took place on unenclosed land near market towns with close links to upper class landowners and were the focus for a series of entertainments.<sup>655</sup> This is confirmed for Norfolk by Rix's account of Swaffham Racecourse, which was first mentioned in 1628. The races took place annually in the eighteenth century on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> November and were attended by the nobility of the county and race followers from Newmarket and Rix added that in the evenings of the race days brilliant functions were held in the

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<sup>651</sup> B. Trinder, *A History of Shropshire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1998 (Chichester, 1983) p. 73

<sup>652</sup> Trinder, *History*, p. 78

<sup>653</sup> A. Dain, 'Assemblies and politeness ...' p. 41

<sup>654</sup> C. Buxton, 'Eighteenth and early nineteenth Century Race Grounds in Norfolk and Suffolk', (University of East Anglia MA, 2005)

<sup>655</sup> M. Huggins, *Flat racing and English Society*, (London, 2000) p. 29

Assembly Rooms which were built by subscription on the Lord's Waste.<sup>656</sup> In addition Buxton records that Faden's 1797 map of Norfolk showed four race-grounds including Emneth (near Wisbech) on the edge of Fenland, Holt and Blickling in north Norfolk and Beeston-next-Mileham in the middle of the county.<sup>657</sup> In the nineteenth century racecourses were also found at Dereham and on the common land at Mousehold Heath, north of Norwich;<sup>658</sup> and flat racing started at Great Yarmouth in 1810 when the first race meeting was recorded in the Racing Calendar.<sup>659</sup>

By 1728 there were 5 racecourses in Shropshire at Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Whitchurch.<sup>660</sup> Prizes were significant and must have encouraged the breeding and training of suitable horses. In September 1729 a three day meeting took place at Shrewsbury with a single race each day; on the first day a purse of 40 guineas was open to any horse carrying 11 stone while on the third day a Town Plate of 20 guineas was open only to *bona fide* hunters.<sup>661</sup> Shrewsbury Races quickly became one of the great social occasions of the year with balls, assemblies, theatre performances and concerts during race week.<sup>662</sup> Trinder added that, for the convenience of its patrons, the Salop Infirmary founded in 1745, held its annual meetings on the Friday of race week.<sup>663</sup> Evidence of racing's growing value to the elite is clearly demonstrated: 'During its early history the Shrewsbury meeting received some support from the Guilds ... but [after] 1745 the races were financed for the most part by the county nobility and gentry'.<sup>664</sup>

Hunt clubs formed another important social network that enhanced the prestige of foxhunting by keeping membership exclusive. In Norfolk a notice was sent out by 'the gentlemen of the Sportsmen's Society' on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1758 who 'are desired to meet their brethren at dinner at the Blue Bell in St John Maddermarket ... at four o'clock precisely ... NB the hounds will meet them at Lakenham [just south-east of

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<sup>656</sup> W.B. Rix, *Swaffham – Bygone gleanings and the present*, (Norwich, 1931) p. 64

<sup>657</sup> Buxton, 'Eighteenth and early nineteenth...' p. 1

<sup>658</sup> S. Wade Martins, *History of Norfolk* (London, 1997) p. 93

<sup>659</sup> Buxton, 'Eighteenth and early nineteenth...' p. 46

<sup>660</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 177

<sup>661</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 178

<sup>662</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 178

<sup>663</sup> Trinder, *History*, p. 78

<sup>664</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, p. 178

Norwich] at nine o'clock that morning'. It is impossible to gauge how exclusive the club was, but the notice was signed by 'Peter Le Neve, Secretary'.<sup>665</sup> He was a grandson of Sir Oliver Le Neve of Great Witchingham (1661-1711)<sup>666</sup> who left a voluminous correspondence about hunting and hounds;<sup>667</sup> Sir Oliver's hound breeding activities are described in a later section.

The Shrewsbury Hunt Club was established nine years later, on November 1769, with Noel Hill (later Lord Berwick) as President and a membership limited to 50.<sup>668</sup> The Club held a 'hunt week' in November combining hunting with a pack owned by one of the members, a dinner and ball. Figure 5.1 shows prominent members of the Shrewsbury Hunt in 1779.



**Figure 5.1** 'Mr John Corbet, Robert Leighton and John Kynaston, members of the Shrewsbury Hunt' by Francis Sartorius, 1779<sup>669</sup>

<sup>665</sup> Harvey, *History*, pp. 20 - 21

<sup>666</sup> P. Le Neve-Forster, *The Le Neves of Norfolk* (London, 1969) p. 14

<sup>667</sup> Rye, *Calendar* (Norwich, 1895)

<sup>668</sup> I am very grateful to Mr J. Scarratt, Hon. Clerk, for giving me access to the private Minutes of the Shrewsbury Hunt Club

<sup>669</sup> J. Egerton, *British Sporting and Animal Paintings 1655 - 1867: A Catalogue* (London, 1978). Plate 46, p. 124



Egerton noted that the Shrewsbury Hunt was initially exclusively limited to Shropshire gentry living near the town and that the three men came from old established Salopian families; John Corbet was married to Robert Leighton's half sister.<sup>670</sup> By 1814 the management of the Hunt Club was dominated by grandees; Lord Bradford was president, Lord Clive vice president and Lord Hill the honorary secretary.

Writers on diffusion have emphasised that an innovation demonstrating a visible, 'relative advantage' over the idea it supersedes will spread most effectively. During the second half of the eighteenth century foxhunting increasingly provided two clear advantages over its competitors - hare and deer hunting. It was more exciting than hare hunting because Hugo Meynell had started the breeding of faster hounds that stimulated the use of speedier horses and foxes ran further and straighter across the landscape instead of circling like hares. Many harrier packs converted to foxhunting including General Barnett of the Cambridgeshire Hounds who turned his pack into foxhounds around 1787 and The Hurworth in Yorkshire that switched from hare to fox in 1791, as did the Vine in Hampshire.<sup>671</sup>

Deer hunting was disadvantaged by the decline in supply due to poaching, the improvement in firearms and a reduction in habitat. As Longrigg noted, wild deer were hunted in a few areas until about the middle of the eighteenth century: notably the Dukeries (North Nottinghamshire) and Gloucestershire but by 1800 wild red deer were hunted only by the Devon and Somerset staghounds. Squires no longer had wild deer to hunt and the tame ones in their parks were no longer hunted or coursed but culled for the pot with guns.<sup>672</sup> Meanwhile the remaining aristocratic or royal aficionados of stag hunting were also switching allegiance; from 1770 the Duke of Beaufort, short of deer, found that the fox provided an enjoyable chase for his staghounds and in 1793 the Prince of Wales gave up hunting stags in Hampshire and switched to hunting foxes.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> Egerton, *British sporting*, p. 124

<sup>671</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 11

<sup>672</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 30

<sup>673</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 24

As already noted, Meynell's other innovations also enhanced the comparative attractions of foxhunting. 'He did not hunt full-bellied foxes at crack of dawn but in mid morning when they could be expected to run'<sup>674</sup> so 'he galloped instead of walking his fox to death ... he gave foxhunting the essential ingredient of pace'.<sup>675</sup> Later meets were also 'instrumental in spreading the appeal of foxhunting to fashionable young men who could not be bothered to rise before dawn to go hunting'.<sup>676</sup>

In summary, the Sudbury (Lord's Vernon's pack in Derbyshire) hunting song illustrates the attitude to foxhunting and its 'relative advantage' by the start of the nineteenth century:

'Tis hunting alone can all pastimes command  
There's the otter by water, the deer by dry land  
Hare hunting is pleasant, the stag's a fine chase  
But to hunting the fox all the rest should give place.<sup>677</sup>

## Improvement

The second movement that influenced the spread of foxhunting in the latter half of the eighteenth century (in addition to politeness) was improvement. Langford commented that 'Improvement was a favourite word of the 1760s and 1770s carrying with it a great mass of material aspirations and moral assumptions'.<sup>678</sup> Arthur Young was a particularly keen and influential early exponent of improvement in his voluminous writings on the economic value and moral duty of increasing agricultural output by enclosure; since he saw 'the capitalist farm and the common fields as parables of industry and idleness respectively'.<sup>679</sup> Much more recently Tarlow has also emphasised 'that the ideological significance of Improvement needs to be considered alongside economic rationality in order to make sense of the dramatic

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<sup>674</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 39

<sup>675</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 38

<sup>676</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 8

<sup>677</sup> J. Randall, *History of the Meynell Hounds and Country 1780-1901*. Vol.1. (London, 1901) p. 6

<sup>678</sup> Langford, *Polite*, p. 432

<sup>679</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 309

changes of the period'.<sup>680</sup> Williamson noted that contemporaries 'used the term indiscriminately to cover reclamation of wastes, afforestation and the laying out of parks and pleasure grounds'.<sup>681</sup> Porter highlighted the paradox that enclosure, improved drainage, liming, marling and the introduction of new crops for winter forage made previously wild nature 'both profitable and pleasing' while there was an opposite move to improve and refashion the English garden 'to follow Nature shedding its overt artifice and manicured paraphernalia'.<sup>682</sup>

A previous chapter has explored the impact of agricultural improvement on the landscape but foxhunters' interest in breeding faster hounds and horses was often rooted in a broader knowledge and interest in improved stockbreeding. As Girouard noted, in a chapter on 1770-1830, 'the upper class as a whole became increasingly enthusiastic about the country and country pursuits ... they had always hunted and shot and even occasionally farmed but these activities were now upgraded in their hierarchy of values ... they became virtuous and prestigious'.<sup>683</sup> Thomas highlighted two contemporary issues – the mastery of nature and the morality of hunting:

In the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, man's dominion over nature was the self consciously proclaimed ideal of early modern scientists ... in the equestrian manuals, horse riding was not just a convenient mode of transport ... it symbolised the human triumph; it was reason mastering the animal passion [and it was also] morally innocent ... the husbandman, sang the seventeenth-century poet Abraham Cowley, confined his craft to 'innocent wars on beasts and birds alone'.

William Somerville (1675-1742, author of the hunting poem 'The Chace') agreed: 'though bloody in deed, hunting was yet without guilt'.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> S.Tarlow, *The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge, 2007) p. 32

<sup>681</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 19

<sup>682</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 312

<sup>683</sup> Girouard, *English*, p. 215

<sup>684</sup> K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 1987 Reprinted Penguin edn (London, 1983) p. 29

Dain commented that science had become an increasingly important part of elite, polite leisure by the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>685</sup> However not everyone was interested; Lady Hester Astley, (wife of Sir Jacob Astley, a Norfolk MFH 1823-1825) was clearly bored by discussions of T.W. Coke's improvements, complaining in 1805 that 'Norfolk is at this time very dull and stupid and nothing talked of but sheep clipping'.<sup>686</sup> Finch has made the link between Hugo Meynell's foxhunting 'innovations and the ethos of scientific endeavour that propelled the wider process of improvement and commented on the title of *The Meynellian Science or hunting upon a system*'.<sup>687</sup> Although the author was not Meynell but John Hawkes who, according to Longrigg,<sup>688</sup> published it privately around 1810 - two years after Meynell's death. As Tarlow commented, 'it is hard to overstate the frequency and ardour with which eighteenth-century Improvers repudiated tradition, custom and common practice'.<sup>689</sup>

One of Meynell's neighbours was Robert Bakewell of Dishley, who was keenly interested scientific stockbreeding. Riches described how almost as soon as Thomas William Coke came into his estate in 1776 he asked Bakewell to spend a week at Holkham.<sup>690</sup> Shropshire landowners demonstrated a similar enthusiasm for hunting and improvement. William Childe of Kinlet became Secretary of the Shrewsbury Hunt Club in 1778 and went to hunt in Leicestershire in the 1780s; he soon became notorious as 'Flying Childe' for introducing the skill of jumping at speed.<sup>691</sup> The *General View of Agriculture in Shropshire*, written in 1801, commented on his other interest describing the succession of improved farm machinery and breeds, found at Kinlet Hall and noted the arrival of some Devonshire cattle.<sup>692</sup> The VCH for Shropshire added 'William Childe extended his demesnes and drained his large home farm ... applying some 15,000 cartloads of burnt clay to cold fallows ... and to meadow and pasture; the effects were very good and well publicised by the Kinlet

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<sup>685</sup> Dain, 'Assemblies ...', p. 408

<sup>686</sup> Norfolk CRO, HMN 5/26 (Hamond of Westacre collection, 1805)

<sup>687</sup> Finch, 'Grass, grass ...', p. 43

<sup>688</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 259

<sup>689</sup> Tarlow, *Archaeology*, p. 26

<sup>690</sup> N. Riches, *The Agricultural Revolution in Norfolk*. 2nd edn (London, 1967) p. 102

<sup>691</sup> Minutes of the Shrewsbury Hunt Club

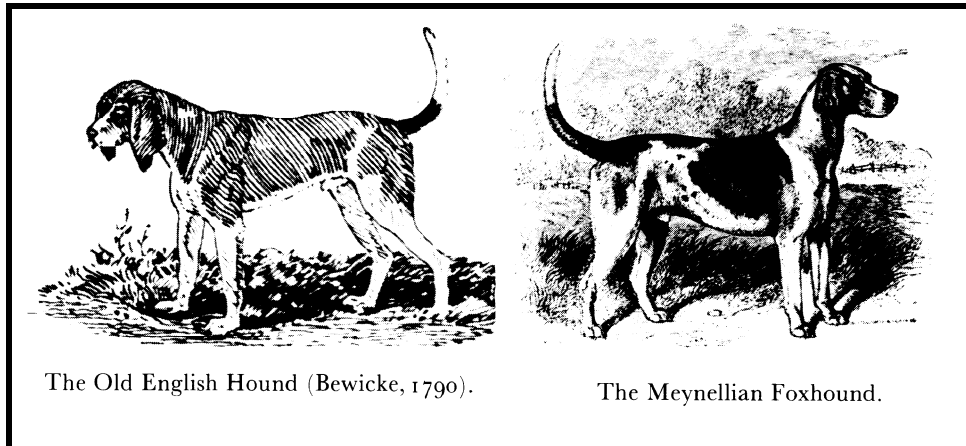
<sup>692</sup> Plymley, *General view ... Agriculture Shropshire*, pp. 124 & 241

annual sale and agricultural meeting'.<sup>693</sup> As Girouard summarised, 'foxhunting and improvement tended to go together'.<sup>694</sup>

As we have seen, the development of the new style of foxhunting was led by two very rich squires: Hugo Meynell who hunted in Leicestershire from 1752 and Peter Beckford who published his highly influential *Thoughts on Hunting* in 1781, as a result of his experiences hunting in Dorset from 1766. Previously:

The basic strains of the English foxhound had been traditionally divided into northern and southern hounds. The northern ... smaller, sharp nosed and "fleet", hunting more by eye than the nose...the southern ... [probably from Gascony] was renowned for its steadiness...[and] its capacity to work on a scent with patience; but it was heavy and slow.<sup>695</sup>

So careful cross breeding could produce a faster, lighter hound with a good nose, as shown on the right of Figure 5.2



**Figure 5.2** 'The Old English Hound' by Bewicke, 1790, and 'The Meynellian Foxhound' – artist and date unknown<sup>696</sup>

<sup>693</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4, p. 184

<sup>694</sup> Girouard, *Life*, p. 218

<sup>695</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 36

<sup>696</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 118

Beckford combined practical experience as an MFH and hound breeder with a wide acquaintance amongst contemporary pack owners so his book was influential both in his own time and ever since.<sup>697</sup> Longrigg commented on eighteenth-century hound breeding:

It was fortunate for the development of the hound that the owners of the most influential packs operated in two quite different ways. One the one hand the family packs were line-bred over a long period, creating type and prepotency [consistency because they were in-bred] on which other breeders could rely. On the other hand, individuals built up new packs by purchase and breeding ... of the former, the most important was the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Yarborough [developing the Brocklesby pack in Lincolnshire] and of the latter Hugo Meynell.<sup>698</sup>

Or, to a lesser extent, Lord Townsend at Raynham whose activities are described in a subsequent section. Longrigg added a comment on diffusion noting that communication between breeders grew continuously in geographical range.

#### *Early foxhunting and hound breeding in Norfolk and Suffolk*

Norfolk was at the forefront of hound breeding from the late seventeenth century, initially favouring beagles (small hare hounds). A series of letters reveals the social network involved covered a limited, county-wide range. Oliver Le Neve lived at Mannington Hall and started a pack of beagles in 1695 despite a warning from John Millecent of Barham who 'wonders Le Neve wishes to set up a pack as he can hunt at so many other men's charge'.<sup>699</sup> However, Le Neve ignored this frugal advice and his correspondence shows that he was soon at the centre of a hectic Norfolk network trading beagles with Captain Mason of Necton, A. Halcott of Litcham Hall, R. Hare of Stow, Thomas Pigge of Great Dunham and Mr Fountaine of Narford.<sup>700</sup> A prospective purchase of 'Nancy' from Sir Robert Pettus of Rackheath in 1695 failed because 'the whelp killed about £4 worth of sheep so the owner happened on her

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<sup>697</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 120

<sup>698</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 87

<sup>699</sup> Rye, *Calendar*, letter no. 1372 (7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1695)

<sup>700</sup> Rye, *Calendar*, letter 2012 dated 28 February 1707, letter 2215 undated, letter 1408 dated 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 1695

and shot her'.<sup>701</sup> Despite these set backs Garry noted 'by 1707 Le Neve's pack was considered to be the finest in England'.<sup>702</sup>

Ridley noted that aristocratic hound breeders were often obsessed by pedigree and that the earliest surviving hound books were kept by Mr Orlebar of Hinwick Hall (Northamptonshire) in the 1700s. Most kennels today contain descendents of two of Mr Orlebar's hounds: Tippler, born in 1717, and Shifter, 1719. In 1722 Mr Orlebar gave 15 couple of hounds to the Duke of Grafton who was a cousin of the Duke of Richmond (hound breeding closely mirrored aristocratic family alliances) and the genes of Shifter and Tippler entered Richmond's Charlton kennel.<sup>703</sup>

On the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1757 the Norwich Mercury gave a good description of the appearance of contemporary hounds in Lord Townsend's pack:

Lost within this fortnight near Watton, Dereham or Litcham a hardle (trio) of foxhounds ... two of which are black pyed bitches ... and answer to the names of Blossom and Charmer. The other, a large, grey pyed dog hound.<sup>704</sup>

On November 10<sup>th</sup> 1764 another advertisement illustrated the drive to increase the size of hounds:

Lost: a couple of large, boney Foxhounds near 23" high, the one tick'd with white spots with a great deal of black and a red head and answers to the name of Captain: the other more white with black spots, a red head and answers to the name of Forester.

Diffusion via the wider hound breeding networks and an obsession with pedigree are vividly illustrated by a wonderful cache of letters and records in the attics at Raynham detailing Lord Townsend's enthusiasm for building up his pack of foxhounds during

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<sup>701</sup> Rye, *Calendar*, letter 1424 dated 27 February 1696

<sup>702</sup> M-A. Garry, 'Sport as a Political Mediator: Thomas Cooke and the Layers of Booton', *Norfolk Archaeology, Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society*, XLIII (2000) p. 497

<sup>703</sup> Ridley, *Foxhunting*, p. 10

<sup>704</sup> Garry, 'Sport ...' p. 19

the 1760s. In 1760 he received a letter from Colonel Philip Jennings in Hampshire that included comments on scenting conditions and a jibe at 'Cockney Hunters' that predates Surtees' comic creation of Mr Jorrocks by 80 years:

My Lord

Your desire of having a hound from my pack gives me the pleasure of hearing from you and at the same time indulges my vanity as a sportsman. You may command any of them and the dog you mention shall be sent to your house in London the day you give and my servant shall bring back that which you send ... In this year we have had very little blood. I never killed so few foxes but I know the hounds are not to blame. These cold north- east winds don't suit our dry country. When there comes a change they will pay their arrears ... I should be glad to wait on your lordship at Raynham this Xmas but have engaged myself to Hacharrd where we shall have a party of Cockney hunters who like nothing but galloping so I hope that the wind will change and restore my credit.<sup>705</sup>

There were links to more fashionable packs via locals too; H.C. Henley wrote to Lord Townsend from Sandringham:

My dearest Lord

The bearer has my instructions to drop at your kennel any of the hounds that follow him which you think proper to point out to him (except Boxer) ... The grey pyed bitch Maiden came from Lord Spencer's kennel well recommended and in my opinion has merit in many respects ... Rachel seems amorously inclined and the lame bitch Venus came from Lord Spencer also and is in whelp to a promising son of the Duke of Richmond's Madcap.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Raynham Hall, Attic Shelf H2/3: Box: 'Hounds and Hunting 1760s', letter (1760)

<sup>706</sup> Raynham Attic Shelf H2/3: Box: 'Hounds and Hunting 1760s', letter (1760)



The Raynham kennel register for 1765 is indexed alphabetically and Lord Townsend goes into dotting detail about each hound:

Charmer; my own Charmer got by my Captain out of old Doxey. Captain was got by our Rattler (a son of Lord Granby's Ranter out of Mr Askham's Stateley) and out of my Cloudey and old Doxey by Mr Drax's Singer out of Mr Askham's Marvel who was got by Lord Granby's old Thruster out of Mr Askham's old Marvel.<sup>707</sup>

By 1767 Lord Townsend was drawing hounds' family trees in his own hand with notes of the date when bitches have been 'warded' (sent to a stallion hound) and reminders to himself about breeding plans: e.g. use 'the son of Brusher if he arrives in time, if not Cherry to Viper'. He confirmed the need to retain particular lines 'Slasher, Sweetlips and Snowball ... these three are of a sort never to be dropt in a Pack and are very good hounds'.<sup>708</sup>

An analysis of the Raynham hound registers and correspondence of the 1760s show the widespread network of foxhound breeding links (compared to the beagles discussed earlier) including Sir Rowland Winn, Mr Askham, Mr Henry Brewster Darley (all in Yorkshire), Duke of Grafton (Suffolk), Mr Pelham (Brocklesby, Lincolnshire), Colonel Jennings (Hampshire), Mr Tom Noel (Cottesmore, Rutland), Mr Selby (Northamptonshire), the Duke of Richmond (Sussex), Lord Eglinton (Scotland) as well as Sir Humphrey Monmouth, Sir Simeon Steward, Sir John Elwell, Sir George Saville, Lord Granby, Colonel Wilson and Mr Drake. Nearer to home in Norfolk collaborators included Mr Hoste, Mr Henley (Sandringham) and Colonel Windham (Felbrigg).<sup>709</sup>

Over the border in Suffolk, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Grafton's hunting diary, kept from 1786-1789, shows great affection for his hounds. On November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1786 after a good days hunting from Euston, his home in Suffolk, he wrote 'I did not see a single thing

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<sup>707</sup> Raynham Attic Shelf H2/3: Box: 'Hounds and Hunting 1760s', Kennel register (1765)

<sup>708</sup> Raynham Attic Shelf H2/3: Box: 'Hounds and Hunting 1760s', Foxhound breeding records (1767)

<sup>709</sup> Raynham Attic Shelf H2/3: Box: 'Hounds and Hunting 1760s'

done wrong by any hound ... Juniper and Drummer (young entry) appeared equal in power to any of the older ones'.<sup>710</sup> On January 24<sup>th</sup> 1787 he recorded 'The first dog tired was Tanner, a puppy from Lord Egremont: our Finder, Flourish and Bluecap were quite weak and off. Lord Egremont's Blister of whom we thought so favourably likewise quite off for the last hour; so was Guilty. I saw nothing but was right from the old sort and the business was done perfectly well by the hounds throughout'.<sup>711</sup> The Duke wrote sadly on January 26<sup>th</sup> 1788 'A bad scenting, unsatisfactory day ... I every day feel the want of poor old Trouncer who is dying'. Trouncer and another favourite, Garland (mentioned in the hunt account in Chapter 4), are buried next to a wall in Euston Park; the places marked with tablets.



**Figure 5.3** Memorial tablets at Euston, Suffolk for (left) Trouncer, 1788, 'Foxes, rejoice! Here buried lies your foe' and (right) Garland, 1799 'The spotless rival of her Grandsire's fame'<sup>712</sup>

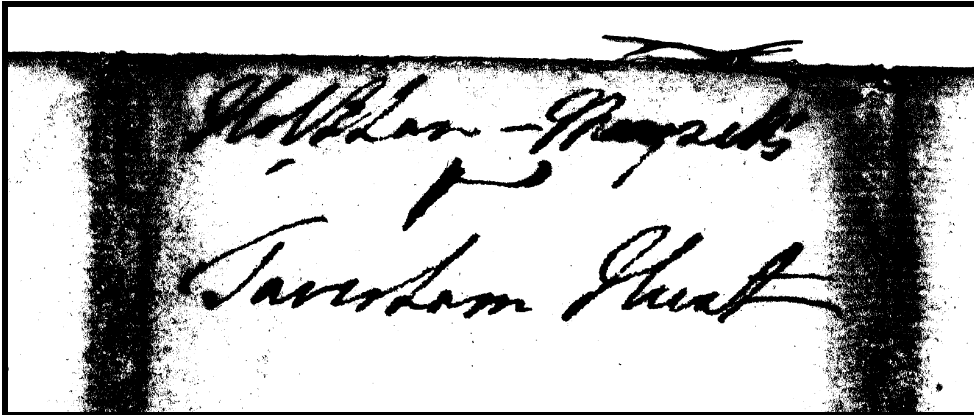
An intriguing document in Norfolk CRO suggests that there may be a previously undiscovered connection between T.W. Coke (MFH 1775-1797) and Hugo Meynell (MFH 1753-1800). The manuscript of 'the Taverham Foxhunt 1791' by an unknown author which is part of the records for Aylsham (Norfolk), has '*Holkham – Meynell's* -

<sup>710</sup> R. Greaves, *A Short History of the Grafton hunt, 1750 – 1949* (London, 1951) p. 6

<sup>711</sup> Greaves, *Short History of the Grafton hunt*, p. 6

<sup>712</sup> Photographs taken July 2009

*Taverham Hunt*' handwritten on the outside.<sup>713</sup> The hand-writing and ink spattering, appears similar to that of the poet whose work is enclosed.



**Figure 5.4** Detail on stitched cover of *Taverham Hunt* poem

Miles Branthwaite, the owner of the Taverham Hall, west of Norwich, at this time, had close links with Thomas William Coke, appears to have acted as his agent on occasion and helped organise the funeral for Coke's first wife when she died in Bath in 1800.<sup>714</sup> While it has not been possible to link Meynell to Taverham, the poem was written by someone with a considerable knowledge of hunting in Leicestershire who wrote:

now the dogs were laid on and no merrier sounds  
ever came from the Holkham or Leicestershire hounds  
Nor sweeter the cry that our ears could assail  
In Pytchley's thick covers or Belvoir's stiff vale

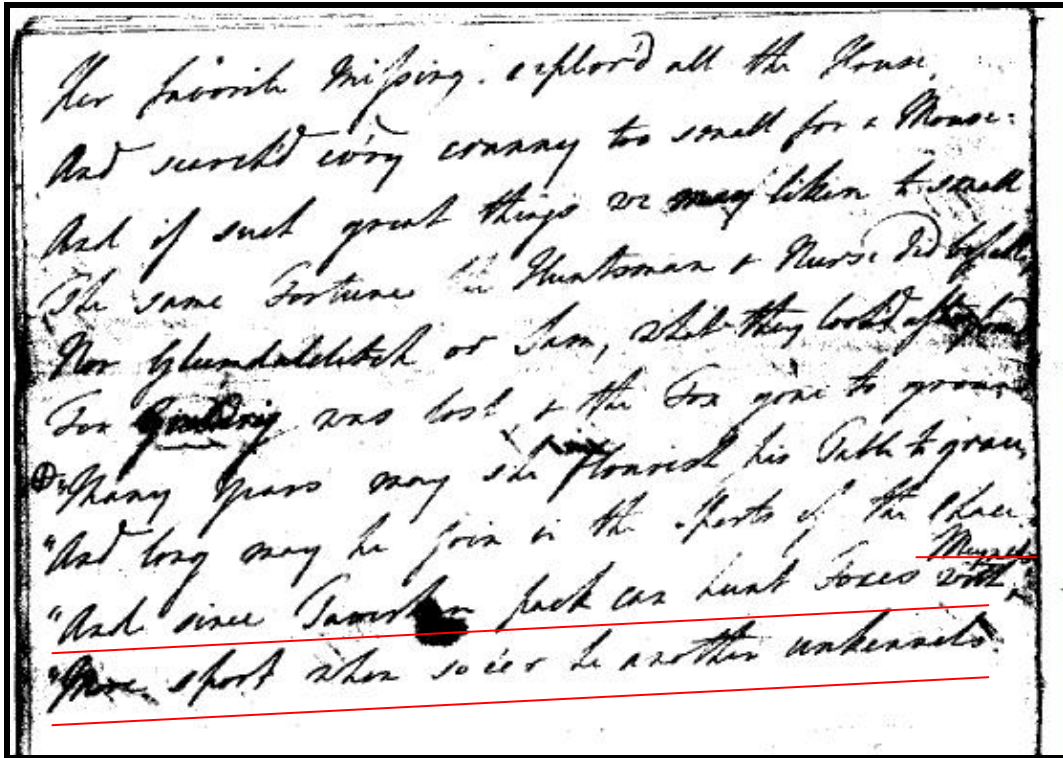
while the final couplet (underlined in red overleaf) reads

And since Taverham pack can hunt foxes with Meynells  
More sport when so e'er he another unkennels.

<sup>713</sup> Norfolk CRO, Aylsham 41 (Poem on Taverham Fox Hunt, 1791)

<sup>714</sup> Pers. comm. Mary-Ann Garry, 11.3.2002.

Dain in 'Assemblies...' p. 206 noted that 'Jane Dutton married T.W. Cooke in 1775 and her death at Bath was announced in the Norfolk Chronicle 7<sup>th</sup> June 1800'.



**Figure 5.6** Final lines of Taverham Fox Hunt poem 1791

As Carr pointed out 'it is not without significance that one of Meynell's neighbours was Bakewell, the prophet of scientific sheep breeding, and Meynell practiced the "in and in" breeding which was the secret of Bakewell's success'.<sup>715</sup> As has already been noted, almost as soon as Thomas William Coke came into his estate in 1776, he asked Robert Bakewell to spend a week at Holkham,<sup>716</sup> and then proceeded to put into practice Bakewell's advice to 'extirpate the Norfolk breed' of sheep.<sup>717</sup> By this time Coke had been master of the Norfolk Foxhounds for four years and it is tempting to think that Bakewell could have passed on to Coke Meynell's theories about foxhound breeding along with his own thoughts on sheep. The Duke of Grafton may have been a link: on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1789 he recorded that 'Mr Coke of Norfolk was out this day' and a year later he recorded on December 4<sup>th</sup> that 'Mr Meynell's Rafter was about the middle' of the pack and three weeks later noted 'Thunder was out this day, the first after his return from Mr Meynell's'.

<sup>715</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 38

<sup>716</sup> Riches, *Agricultural*, p. 102

<sup>717</sup> Parker, *Coke*, p. 71

There is no evidence that Meynell visited Holkham, or even Norfolk, to hunt; but if Meynell and Coke didn't meet in Norfolk could they have met in Derbyshire? The Coke's family home in Derbyshire, Longford, is about 11 miles from Meynell's Hoar Cross estate and both families hunted passionately. Randall's *History of the Meynell Hounds and Country* recorded that on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1816 Meynell's grandson's hounds met at Longford,<sup>718</sup> and comments later that 'Longford is so thoroughly Meynellian that it fairly claims some slight mention'.<sup>719</sup> Although no record of T.W. Coke and Hugo Meynell meeting has been found at Holkham or the Leicestershire and Norfolk CROs, Randall wrote that Edward Coke, T.W. Coke's son, was 'well known with the Hoar Cross [predecessor of the Meynell Hunt] and Meynell hounds for so many years'.<sup>720</sup> It is tempting to speculate on whether the earlier generation ever met and discussed hound breeding.

#### *Hound improvement in Shropshire*

In Shropshire John Corbet of Sundorne (east of Shrewsbury) bred from a large number of packs during 1780-1784, and sent his bitches as far afield as Mr Meynell's, Lord Fitzwilliam's, Lord Spencer's and Lord Gainsborough's kennels.<sup>721</sup> His neighbour George Forester not only used hounds from John Corbet but also from his childhood friend the Duke of Grafton, Tom Noel of Cottesmore and Mr Pelham of Brocklesby.<sup>722</sup> In the next century Charles Morris (master of the Shropshire Hunt) listed the packs which had breeding links to his hounds in 1857-1858: Wheatland, Mr Corbett, Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's (all Salopian), Duke of Cleveland's, Duke of Rutland's, Mr Meynell's, Duke of Beaufort's, Mr Eyton's. He maintained his pack's quality by a ruthless regime of drafting (transfers to other, unsuspecting packs) as shown in an excerpt from his 1855-1856 hunt records: 'Charmer, by Mr Eyton's Bluecap out of Mr Corbett's Countess, drafted April 16<sup>th</sup> for being silly and noisy. Rockwood, by Wheatland Gamester out of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's Ringlet, drafted for doing no work'.<sup>723</sup> Longrigg commented on 'the trouble people took with

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<sup>718</sup> Randall, *History*, p. 66

<sup>719</sup> Randall, *History*, p. 235

<sup>720</sup> Randall, *History*, p. 236

<sup>721</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p. 167

<sup>722</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 125

<sup>723</sup> Shropshire CRO 2014/1 (Charles Morris Hunting records)

hound breeding, the continual correspondence between them, the money they spent, and the sophistication they bought to what they were doing'.<sup>724</sup>

### *Horse breeding and improvement*

A linked development in animal breeding – faster horses to keep up with the new, fleeter foxhound – provided greater excitement and danger creating Diamond's 'relative advantage' over slower hunting on foot with beagles or circling on horseback behind a pack of harriers.<sup>725</sup> An MFH wrote in 1780 'most of those who ride a-hunting consider hard running as the criterion of goodness so mad flying spurt has gain'd my pack ten times more credit than the finest steady hunting chase ... I expect a monstrous rush tomorrow and to have several hounds rode over'.<sup>726</sup>

Longrigg listed the six functions of horses in the eighteenth century - racing, hunting, the saddle, pack, harness and draught. He added that a minority of country gentlemen made an immense contribution as breeders and importers while the rest contributed indirectly as purchasers.<sup>727</sup> He amplified the role of landowners in breeding hunters; 'a great many landed gentlemen, as far apart as Mr Pelham at Brocklesby Park, in Lincolnshire and Sir William Morgan, of Tredegar, in South Wales ... were improving the horses of their district by encouraging their tenants and neighbours to cross the horses of the district with sires of racing blood'.<sup>728</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the pastoral farmers of Shropshire were successfully breeding hunters. Carr commented that Shropshire was one of the great centres for breeding hunters and the 'Shropshire head' was much valued in horses so the possibilities of profitable deals in the hunting field encouraged a breed of sporting farmers – highlighting a commercial stimulus to the social diffusion of hunting which will be examined in more detail later.<sup>729</sup> The Shropshire VCH noted the landowners' influence in the early nineteenth century when 'the Shropshire type' of fine quality

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<sup>724</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 117

<sup>725</sup> Diamond, *Guns*, p. 247

<sup>726</sup> Bedfordshire CRO L30/11/151/57 (Alex Hume Campbell MFH to Countess de Grey, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1780)

<sup>727</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 138

<sup>728</sup> J. Lawrence, 'The horse in all his varieties and uses', Section 34 (London, 1829) in Longrigg, *History*, p. 88

<sup>729</sup> Carr, *History*, p. 78

hunter was bred to meet the demand from the abundant country seats around Shrewsbury and in the south, and for export to other counties. Plymley, writing about Shropshire in 1813, recorded of Clive's estate that 'there was at Walcot, a few years ago, two or three stallions of Arabian blood, a carthorse of the Dishley breed [i.e. bred by Robert Bakewell], a Scotch Galloway and a Welsh poney horse, all of which were for the improvement of the breed of that district'.<sup>730</sup> By the 1880s Shropshire's reputation had declined, because it was argued, landowners no longer provided suitable stallions to cover for their tenants at low fees as the Agricultural Depression began to bite.<sup>731</sup>

In Norfolk the combination of farmers raising draught horses and aristocrats breeding and importing racehorses provided ideal conditions for developing cross-bred hunters. By the seventeenth century the Fens were a major breeding centre for large, often black, cart, wagon and plough horses; the mares were grazed on the fens in the summer and fed marsh hay on drier land in the winter. In the 1680s it was not unusual for probate inventories to show that farmers had forty mares.<sup>732</sup> Edwards quoted Sir Roger Pratt, who farmed on the edge of the Fens at Ryston Hall, priding himself in 1682 on being self sufficient in saddle and cart horses and selling the surplus at three years old before they cost him more than they were worth.<sup>733</sup> The Pratt family was later closely linked to foxhunting in Norfolk; Edward Pratt was one of the promoters of an annual hunt week linked to the Holt Jubilee in 1783. The other main Norfolk heavy horse breeding areas were the 'wood pasture' area in the south and the Fleggs where Suffolk Punches were reared on farms and commons. In the eighteenth century the Norfolk Trotter, a supreme light harness and pack horse, was bred throughout the county and was much sought after by the gentry.<sup>734</sup>

Meanwhile Lord Townsend at Raynham was importing thoroughbreds for racing at the same time as hunting foxes and keeping his meticulous hound breeding records

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<sup>730</sup> Plymley, *General View Agriculture of Shropshire*, p. 263

<sup>731</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4, p. 246

<sup>732</sup> J. Thirsk, *Rural Economy of England* (London, 1984) p. 396

<sup>733</sup> P. Edwards, *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1988) p. 44

<sup>734</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 148

– a clear example of cross-fertilization between the sports. Thomas has observed that:

The most effective stimulus to horse breeding proved to be the rise of organised horse racing which the gentry participated in with increasing enthusiasm ... by the late seventeenth century the thoroughbred racehorse had become an aristocratic obsession. Its strength, speed and courage symbolized the superior status of its owner and a noble family's studbooks were maintained with a precision which would have done credit to the College of Arms and probably exceeded that bestowed upon many parish registers.<sup>735</sup>

Mingay emphasised the aristocracy's role in creating an infrastructure by drafting the rules, establishing racing stables, retaining trainers and jockeys and supporting the sport by offering prizes and placing big bets.<sup>736</sup>

Buxton noted that the Norfolk landowner William Windham of Felbrigg recorded around forty horses that he bought and sold in the decade from 1742. Included in his careful notes were separate entries for horses of particular note, illustrating just how important it was considered - in terms of future sales or stud fee income - to hold records of their ancestry.<sup>737</sup> She added that the horses' pedigrees show a wide range of aristocratic breeders echoing the intricate social webs formed by hound breeders noted earlier and highlighting the importance of diffusion for the improved breeding of horses as well as hounds.<sup>738</sup>

The development of the English thoroughbred was consolidated by importing three great sires: The Byerley Turk (1689), The Darley Arabian (1704) and the Godolphin Arab (1730). The fastest of their progeny established the outstanding bloodlines of the English thoroughbred.<sup>739</sup> As noted earlier, the Townsends at Raynham soon

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<sup>735</sup> Thomas, *Man*, p. 59

<sup>736</sup> G.E. Mingay, *The Gentry - the rise and fall of a ruling class* (London, 1976) pp. 147-8

<sup>737</sup> Buxton, 'Race grounds ...' p. 27

<sup>738</sup> Buxton, 'Race grounds ...' p. 28

<sup>739</sup> Buxton, 'Race grounds ...' p. 10



also became active in importing horses; papers in the attic at Raynham dated 1756 illustrate the costs and risks attached in shipping a horse from North Africa:

Expense of maintaining and shipping of an iron grey Barb horse for the Right Honourable Lord Townsend.

To so much paid for the horse's maintenance and a man to attend him from 21<sup>st</sup> April -twentieth October 1756

being 182 days @ 4 reals a day = 91 dollars

To so much paid for shoeing = 2 dollars, 6 reals

To so much for provender, slings, stall, boat hire and embarking him  
= 41 dollars, 6 reals

Total = 135 dollars, 4 real (which equals £22, 11s, 11d)

1 Barbary horse lost in the Bay of Biscay in a storm belonging to Mr John Cricket merchant in Gibraltar.

Lord Townsend's horse was named on his arrival at Gibraltar "*Muley Mustady*" – as he was purchased from a Prince of Arzilla 'of that name'.<sup>740,741</sup>

Other documents at Raynham justify the cost and difficulty of importing horses; A race card from Newmarket Races on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1755 recorded that a prize of 100 guineas was available for the match between Lord Orford's filly and Colonel Townsend's colt each carrying 8 stone over 4 miles.

A list of horses sold by Lord Townsend in 1756 demonstrated the potential profit:

4 mares:

Daphne	450 guineas
Whittington	150 guineas
Chestnut cross	100 guineas
Chestnut mare – Barforth	150 guineas

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<sup>740</sup> Arzilla = Asilah in Morocco).

<sup>741</sup> Raynham Hall Archive; Box labelled 'Misc. re horses, eighteenth century mostly' (Expense of maintaining and shipping an iron grey Barb horse, 1756)

Filly Anna	300 guineas
Chestnut colt	150 guineas
Chestnut filly	120 guineas

It is not surprising that Lord Townsend warned in a letter to Mr Adams at Newmarket, dated April 8<sup>th</sup> 1757, 'I do hereby order and direct that you do not part with any one of the mares out of your custody before the money be paid into your hands'.<sup>742</sup>

The role of racing thoroughbreds in the development of foxhunting was vital. As Ridley noted, after about 1750 fox hunters rode cross-bred horses, the off-spring of English draught mares and thoroughbred sires,<sup>743</sup> described by Carr as 'the standard horse for hunting ... the perfect hunting instrument'.<sup>744</sup>

This chapter deals with the geographical and social spread of foxhunting. So far two key elements in extending its physical distribution have been discussed – politeness (especially the growth of social networks amongst landowners and foxhunters) and improvement, particularly of horses and foxhounds, which elevated the appeal of foxhunting over chasing the slower hare. The enhanced status of foxhunting encouraged its diffusion, often by foxhunters who returned home from more fashionable hunts, such as the Shire packs, into early-enclosed areas that had previously been considered physically unsuitable. During the second half of the eighteenth century the rapid enclosure of open-fields and sheep walks in the original heartlands of early foxhunting lessened the contrast with the hunting terrain in early-enclosed areas such as Shropshire and Kent.

### **Social diffusion of foxhunting**

The second part of the chapter deals with the diffusion of foxhunting into a wider social world beyond the mainly male elite. This expansion of the opportunity to hunt mirrors the changes in access to urban cultural activities described by Dain; 'The century following the Restoration marked a period of economic expansion, the

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<sup>742</sup> Raynham Hall Archive; Box labelled 'Misc. re horses, eighteenth century mostly' (letter 8.4.1757)

<sup>743</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, p. 9

<sup>744</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 35

benefits of which were shared by an ever increasing proportion of the population who sought social mobility through their participation in polite cultural pursuits'. Dain added a description of entry to Assemblies that evokes an interesting parallel with becoming a subscriber to one of the new packs of foxhounds:

While many of these pastimes were not new in themselves, they differed from their precursors in that they were commercial enterprises open to persons who could afford the ticket of admission, who conformed to the rules and regulations of the assembly and who possessed the requisite degree of accoutrements, taste and savoir faire to negotiate the minefields of precedence which dominated polite social discourse in a formal and hierarchical society.<sup>745</sup>

The discussion has been split into three parts: (a) the increased involvement of people who did not derive their principal income from land owning or farming (b) the influx of farmers into the hunting field and (c) the participation of women.

*Broader access to the hunting field by the non-landowning population*

Originally, most foxhound packs were started by the aristocracy, confirming Rogers' observation that 'early adopters' have a higher social status than later adopters.<sup>746</sup>

The five grandees who formed the 1730 Confederate Pack in the East Midlands have already been described.<sup>747</sup> After 1750, changes in the practice of foxhunting fuelled the beginning of diffusion to a broader social spectrum because Meynell's personality, skill and the reputation of his pack bought sporting pilgrims.<sup>748</sup> It meant that Meynell put foxhunting firmly in the world of fashion and his pack, and others in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, attracted the smart set.<sup>749</sup> As Carr wrote 'the new excitements ... took foxhunting in the Shires out of its local context and made it attractive to sportsmen and men of fashion who lived far from Melton or Market

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<sup>745</sup> Dain 'Assemblies ...', p. 46

<sup>746</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion*, p. 248

<sup>747</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 62

<sup>748</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 119

<sup>749</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 40

Harborough'.<sup>750</sup> This encouraged diffusion since sportsmen who had only heard of Meynell and the Quorn, and others, who had experienced the exhilaration at first hand but could not remain in Leicestershire, wished to enjoy the new excitement closer to home.<sup>751</sup> Although initially foxhunters came predominantly from the landowning class, Langford noted the post 1760 growth of provincial cities and expansion of leisure.<sup>752</sup> Consequently the fashion for hunting spread to town dwellers, who did not derive their primary income from rural estates, and followed a far broader range of occupations.

Langford added that the most vigorous and growing element of society was a commercial middle class, involved in both production and consumption, since economic expansion had the effect of expanding the middle and upper echelons of society.<sup>753</sup> The effects were not only felt in the spas, assemblies and theatres but also on the hunting field as more prosperous urban dwellers wished to engage in the rural pursuits of the landed elite. Hunting became more attractive to prosperous city men with a taste for sport; by 1792 *The Sporting Magazine* listed four packs of foxhounds within a twenty-mile radius from the centre of London.<sup>754</sup> Deuchar has noted that the purchase of country estates by 'city men' and the development of subscription packs post 1760 meant that foxhunting could no longer remain the preserve of traditional rural landowners.<sup>755</sup>

Some commentators have sought to emphasise hunting's social inclusivity without noting four limitations: the elite packs in the main still excluded anyone unacceptable to the masters; the limited integration that took place was mainly within subscription packs, often on the urban perimeter; a range of classes attended the meets on foot but were not expected to join in on horseback or attend social activities such as hunt balls; and the exceptions, such as the chimney sweep, solicitor's clerk or coachman described below, were so rare that they have entered hunting legend.

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<sup>750</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 65

<sup>751</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 10

<sup>752</sup> Langford, *Polite*, pp. 417 & 419

<sup>753</sup> Langford, *Polite*, pp. 4 & 68

<sup>754</sup> Quoted in Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 39

<sup>755</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting*, p. 78

There were certainly examples of wishful myth making. John Hawkes, a friend of Meynell's, was able to write of hunting in 1808 (when the events of the French Revolution were still vivid), 'It links all classes together, from the peer to the peasant'.<sup>756</sup> This view was echoed in *The Sporting Magazine* in 1821 'it is a social sport – it brings men in various situations in life together, and unites them in the pursuit of the same object'.<sup>757</sup> Itzkovitz wrote, of the nineteenth century, that 'people of all types above the rank of agricultural labourer were to be found at the meeting places of hounds, mounted on every description of horse'. He goes on to list horse dealers, inn keepers, wealthy local men who did not qualify as gentry and 'a random collection of lawyers, doctors and prosperous tradesmen together with a few oddities like the retired coachman who hunted in Hampshire ... and the chimney sweep who hunted with the Duke of Beaufort'.<sup>758</sup> Carr described a London pack kept frugally: 'teaching himself to ride by reading "Gambado's manual", a solicitor's clerk fed his hounds on offal from a butcher whose books he kept'.<sup>759</sup> His horses were stabled in a cellar and he managed to hunt twice a week (on £60 a year from the City of London).<sup>760</sup>

The long-term attempts to enhance the egalitarian image of hunting continued; Trollope (who hunted with the Essex Hunt from Waltham Cross) was still helping promote it in the 1860s; although this was based on his experience of mainly hunting with a subscription pack near London, not with a grand Shires pack in the fashionable East Midlands. He wrote in 1865:

The non-hunting world is apt to think that hunting is confined to country gentlemen, farmers and rich strangers; but anyone ... will find that there are in the crowd attorneys, country bankers, doctors, apothecaries ... maltsters, millers, butchers, bakers, innkeepers, auctioneers, graziers, builders ... stockbrokers, newspaper editors, artists and sailors ...

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<sup>756</sup> Quoted in Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 24

<sup>757</sup> Quoted in Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 24

<sup>758</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 38

<sup>759</sup> Geoffrey Gambado was the pen name of William Bunbury who wrote 'An Academy for Grown Horsemen Containing the Completest Instructions for Walking, Trotting, Cantering, Galloping, Stumbling and Tumbling' in 1787

<sup>760</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 60

Beneath [the master] there is freedom and equality for all, with special honour only for the man who is known to be specially good at some portion of the day's work ... And this feeling out of out of door equality has, we think, spread from the hunting-field ... that riding together on terms of equality of the lord and his tenant and his tradesmen has produced in English countries a community of interests and a freedom of feeling which exists no where else.<sup>761</sup>

While Trollope's view was, at least partially, true for many subscription packs; Ellis, the Quorn's historian, makes the significant point that the gentlemen farmers, smaller squires and professional men who met the Meltonians (landowners and gentlemen who belonged to the Melton set) on equal terms in the field went their own way in the evening.<sup>762</sup> Itzkovitz who highlighted hunting's 'devotion to traditional, deferential values' on the first page of his book;<sup>763</sup> also noted that any contacts between the classes out hunting were 'limited to definite recognised forms ... [and] the relative differences in social station were never forgotten'.<sup>764</sup> He argued that:

The ideal of the hunting field as a meeting place for all classes dates ... from the pre-railway age, when with the exception of the Shires and the packs in the immediate vicinity of large towns, the hunting field was made up entirely of local men. Every member of the local community had his known and accepted place ... and the unquestioned acceptance of that local social order made social intercourse between members of different classes simple, for no threat to the order could be seen in it.<sup>765</sup>

Ridley made a similar point by commenting on the Tory Surtees 'for him the point about hunting was that it underpinned the class structure, rather than dissolving it'.<sup>766</sup> She added his observation that 'the hunting field is a place where deference is

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<sup>761</sup> Quoted in E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life* (Oxford, 1962) p. 230

<sup>762</sup> Ellis, *Quorn*, pp. 54-55

<sup>763</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 1

<sup>764</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 26

<sup>765</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 26

<sup>766</sup> Ridley, *Fox hunting*, p. 33

voluntarily paid to station, because it is in the hunting field that station never demands it'.<sup>767</sup>

While farmers, and other rural locals 'who knew their place', were welcome in the hunting field the attitude amongst established packs to new foxhunters from an urban background was far more ambivalent. Rubinstein wrote of the century after 1780, 'the British landed aristocracy was increasingly becoming a caste like and socially isolated group, distanced from the newer business magnates'.<sup>768</sup> The transfusion of 'new' money into hunting was sometimes welcome; the impact of wealthy brewers, the Calverts, moving out of London into Hertfordshire and aspiring to hunt alongside local landowners has been described in an earlier section. The elite were performing a balancing act; too ready acceptance of the new rich would reduce prestige but too ready rejection would stimulate class antagonism and cut off a valuable new source of finance. The answer appears to be the development of a hierarchy of hunts during the second half of the eighteenth century, mimicking the wider pattern in society. 'Genteel [or polite] society was sliced and sliced again into extremely thin status layers, subtly separated from each other by the delicate but infinitely resistant lines of snobbery'.<sup>769</sup>

One way of exploring this social stratification of hunting is by examining in more detail the two study areas of Norfolk and Shropshire during the second half of the eighteenth century. In both counties there is clear evidence of social exclusivity in access to hunting. In Shropshire there were few references to foxhunting until the later eighteenth century although there still exists a constable's summons in 1734 to Francis Lloyd of Leaton Knolls, in the north of the county, which requires him to 'personally appear in your parlour ... in order to give your true and perfect account of ... a desperate fox chase'.<sup>770</sup> Apart from this, much of the early history of Shropshire foxhunting involved poor records and a complex maze of inter-weaving Masterships

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<sup>767</sup> R.S. Surtees, *Analysis of the Hunting Field* (London, 1846) p. 227

<sup>768</sup> W.D. Rubinstein, *Men of property; the very wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (Rutgers, 1981) p. 219

<sup>769</sup> L.Stone & J. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? 1540 - 1880* (Oxford, 1984) p. 423

<sup>770</sup> Shropshire CRO, 103/5/72, Lloyd of Leaton Knolls collection, (summons of 30<sup>th</sup> January 1734)

that are difficult to unravel.<sup>771</sup> But Greaves lists pre-1800 Salopian MFHs as George Forester of Willey, William ‘Flying’ Childe of Kinlet and John Corbet of Sundorne Castle, as well as Sir Richard Puleston and Mr Dansey, a crony of Squire Forester, – all significant landowners who hunted with their friends across their own and each others’ estates. Forester also entertained distinguished guests who came to stay in large numbers including Hugo Meynell of Quorndon.<sup>772</sup>

During the eighteenth century hunt clubs were established in a range of counties including Shropshire; the membership was restricted to the county social elite and ‘hunt weeks’ provided an opportunity for hunting – often with a member’s pack. They stretched across Britain from the Hampshire Hunt Club to the Sedgefield Club in Durham; and membership was controlled by sizeable subscriptions and expensive rules such as the Tarporley Hunt Club’s custom that any member getting married gave the other members a pair of buckskin breeches, or two pairs if married for a second time.<sup>773</sup>

Ridley commented hunt ‘clubs were pretty socially exclusive ... you couldn’t buy your way in. Members were elected, and undesirables were blackballed’.<sup>774</sup> As has already been described, in Shropshire the Shrewsbury Hunt Club was established in November 1769 with Noel Hill (later Lord Berwick) as President and a membership limited to 50.<sup>775</sup> The Club restricted membership to landowners, their eldest sons and MFHs of packs in Shropshire. The Hunt week in November combined hunting, with a member’s pack, dinner and ball at which men wore a blue coat with red collar and women scarlet riding habits. Juggling subscription levels and Club expenses was a continuous preoccupation. In November 1801 the minutes record that:

On account of the want of punctuality in paying the subscriptions, the great loss sustained by the wine, the defalcations in the dinner collections, the additional expense of the hunt ball and the great

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<sup>771</sup> R. Greaves, *Foxhunting in Shropshire* (London, 1962) p. 15

<sup>772</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 126

<sup>773</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, pp. 36-37

<sup>774</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, p. 37

<sup>775</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club Minutes book, November 1769 (I am grateful to Mr J. Scarratt, Hon. Clerk, for access)



advance in every article of life since the establishment of this society it appears indispensably requisite to increase the subscriptions in future from two to three guineas each.<sup>776</sup>

The management of the Hunt Club was vigilant in maintaining its exclusivity; in 1824 the minutes record the reminder that 'no attorneys' clerks ... be invited to the ball'. In March 1827 membership was refined from 40 down to 30<sup>777</sup> and a rule revision in 1912 meant that candidates for membership needed to own at least 1,000 acres in the county.

By contrast no high-status foxhunting club was established in Norfolk. Although Brown has noted a pack known as the Swaffham Harriers (hare hounds) or 'Friendly Hunt', described as 'a club of diners with mutual connections in the local Lodge of Freemasons' that existed from 1756-1798 with members including the Earl of Orford.<sup>778</sup> Elite foxhunting was confined mainly to the north-west quadrant of Norfolk where the great estates sprawled across the light land. Foxhunting in Norfolk was well established by 1718 when household accounts at Holkham show that Coke kept a distinct pack of foxhounds; by the 1730s Sir Robert Walpole's foxhound pack at Houghton was hunting three days a week. A particularly good day around West Acre and Massingham was commemorated in a poem 'The Norfolk Garland, 1730' by Sir William Younge, Walpole's Secretary of War. It includes a very unusual early reference to a jumping enthusiast:

They picked through the Closes  
As to the Town they went,  
While Richard Parsons now had leaps  
Unto his Heart's Content ...<sup>779</sup>

During the second half of the eighteenth century elite fox hunters continued to entertain their friends at their own expense. William Mason of Necton and Cornish

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<sup>776</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club Minutes book, November 1801

<sup>777</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club Minutes book, March 1827

<sup>778</sup> V. Brown, *The Foxhunters of Norfolk* (Fakenham, 2006) p. 35

<sup>779</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 295

Henley of Sandringham jointly hunted across their own and friends' estates while Lord Townsend of Raynham roamed further east. Brown quoted Articles drawn up in 1756 that divided the respective countries along the Common Road from Houghton through Docking to Burnham.<sup>780</sup> Subsequently T.W. Coke took over Lord Townsend's country from 1775 and hunted until 1797 over the 42,000 acres of his estates in north-west Norfolk as well as further afield in Suffolk and Essex.<sup>781</sup>

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hunting in Shropshire was supported, almost entirely by people who made their primary income from the land. Apart from the private landowners' packs and Hunt Club the only other opportunity for foxhunting appears to be via the annual hunts that flourished in the county during the later eighteenth century.<sup>782</sup> The officers of annual town hunts were leading tradesmen and the gentry of the surrounding districts. For example in Oswestry (in North Shropshire) mercers, drapers, victuallers, graziers, ironmongers and attorneys all held office during the period 1773-1787.<sup>783</sup> Gradually foxhunting took place more regularly and a subscription pack called the Ludlow Hounds was formed in the south of the county under the management of Mr Adams, a Ludlow attorney, perhaps as early as 1797.<sup>784</sup> So far there has been little other evidence of polite foxhunters without a land owning or farming background hunting in Shropshire before 1800.

Norfolk sustained at least two subscription packs well before the Salopian pack formed in 1797. This difference may be due to the greater size of Norwich and its contemporary mercantile importance; Norfolk and Norwich's worsted manufacture made it England's second or third most important city until the 1770s with a far higher number of prosperous merchants than Shrewsbury.<sup>785</sup> By 1801 Norwich's population was 35,635 in comparison to Shrewsbury's total of 14,739. Or it may be a result of the greater exclusiveness of Norfolk landowners who controlled access to the local packs in contrast to Shropshire where, as already noted, there was a longer tradition of mingling at annual hunts.

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<sup>780</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 33

<sup>781</sup> D. Dymond, *The Norfolk Landscape* (Bury St Edmunds, 1990) p. 222

<sup>782</sup> *Shropshire VCH*, Vol. 2, p. 166

<sup>783</sup> *Shropshire VCH*, Vol. 2, p. 167

<sup>784</sup> *Shropshire VCH*, Vol. 2, p. 173

<sup>785</sup> Langford, *Polite*, p. 418

In Norfolk the two subscription packs operated outside the landowner dominated pack of the core 'fold course' area and spread the cost of their sport via subscriptions and daily 'caps' (payment collected at the meet). An advertisement placed in the Norwich Mercury in 1766 by 'the subscribers to the hounds' is linked by Harvey to the Norwich Hunt ('sometimes called the Carrow Abbey Hunt') and he added that evidence from contemporaneous diaries shows that 'they hunted at irregular intervals the deer, fox and hare, over the St Faith's and Spixworth country [north of Norwich] and on the other side of the city over the Bixley, Arminghall, Poringland and Brooke district' [south-east of Norwich].<sup>786</sup>

A 1780 painting of the leading members of the Carrow Abbey Hunt (Figure 5.6 overleaf) provides vivid evidence that foxhunting was not just the preserve of landed gentry but was also becoming popular with polite Norwich society. It obviously had a more open membership than the contemporaneous Shrewsbury Hunt club discussed earlier. Of the seven men painted: both John and South Morse and Timothy and Jeremiah Thompson were members of brewing families, Robert Harvey was a banker, Jeremiah Ives a prominent Norwich merchant,<sup>787</sup> while the seventh, entering the room, was their employee - the huntsman, James Mead.<sup>788</sup> Dain's thesis recorded Ann [Nancy] Ives winning 15 guineas playing cards and a footnote adds that she was a daughter of Jeremiah Ives who married Robert Harvey in 1781 – linking 2 members of the hunt.<sup>789</sup> The presence of brewers and a banker echoes the Stones' findings that these were the two groups that continued to practise their business without any noticeable loss of status and were well represented in the hunting fraternity.<sup>790</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> J.R. Harvey, *Deer Hunting in Norfolk from the earliest times* (Norwich, 1910) p. 22

<sup>787</sup> T. Williamson, *The Archaeology of the landscape park*, BAR British series 268 (Oxford, 1998)

<sup>788</sup> Harvey *Deer Hunting*, p. 22

<sup>789</sup> Dain, 'Assemblies ...' p. 397

<sup>790</sup> Stones, *Open*, p. 52



**Figure 5.6** 'Members of the Carrow Abbey Hunt' by Philip Reinagle c. 1790<sup>791</sup>

The men in Figure 5.6 (apart from Mead) were members of the Norwich commercial elite; both Robert Harvey and John Morse had been mayors of Norwich, as was Ives's father. Jeremiah Ives clearly had social aspirations reflected in his membership of the hunt and his decision to employ Humphry Repton from 1788 to landscape a small park at Catton, just north of Norwich, around his 'villa'. Williamson added that 'Ives did not possess a landed estate in the usual sense ... and Repton's design appears to have been intended to make his possessions appear more extensive than they were'.<sup>792</sup> A parallel could be drawn with his membership of a subscription pack as a surrogate for hunting with the grander, private Norfolk Foxhounds.

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<sup>791</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting*, p. 91

<sup>792</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology of the Landscape Park*, p. 196

An epic poem found in Norfolk Record Office described another pack's hunt in 1791 across an arc west of Norwich from the meet at Taverham Hall to Costessey.<sup>793</sup> The Carrow Abbey huntsman Mead (pictured in figure 5.6) is also mentioned:

The squire in deep conversation with Mead  
A jolly old soul who many years back  
Had hunted the Norwich confederate pack.<sup>794</sup>

The poem illustrates the wide-ranging invitation to hunt;

Jane on her mule with a good many ridings  
To the neighbours around her proclaimed the glad tidings  
That our squire, as a treat for keen sportsmen to feast on,  
Would turn off the foxes on Wednesday at Easton.<sup>795</sup>

Some of the neighbours are listed as 'Saunders from Tudenham' and 'Squire Beevor from Great Melton' and the poem goes on to provide an interesting example of the range of people welcomed (or at least tolerated) by this pack in 1791:

Here the butcher as keen as the first of them all  
As just with his cart had arrived at the hall  
Unharnessed his horse for the sport of the chase  
And boldly came galloping up to the place.<sup>796</sup>

The accuracy of the poem in describing the spontaneous participation of a butcher is hard to establish but the detailed listing of the neighbours' names and recording of Mead's presence lends weight to its veracity. The poem also describes another method, in addition to subscriptions, of covering the costs of hunting:

When the cap had been borne in due order by Brown  
and each sportsman with pleasure had dropped his half-crown.<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> Norfolk CRO, Minor Collections, Aylsham 41, (The Taverham fox hunt, 1791)

<sup>794</sup> Norfolk CRO, Minor Collections, Aylsham 41, (The Taverham fox hunt, 1791) p. 11

<sup>795</sup> Norfolk CRO, Minor Collections, Aylsham 41, (The Taverham fox hunt, 1791) p. 2

<sup>796</sup> Norfolk CRO, Minor Collections, Aylsham 41, (The Taverham fox hunt, 1791) p. 11

The range of participants in the two packs, in addition to the early-established, landowner-led Norfolk Foxhounds in the north-west, suggests that foxhunting spread both socially and geographically in Norfolk during the second half of the eighteenth century.

There was at least one annual occasion in Norfolk where all classes would mingle in a way similar to the annual hunts in Shropshire described previously. An advertisement for the Holt Jubilee in the *Norwich Mercury* of January 18<sup>th</sup> 1783 promised deer hunting, hare hunting and foxhunting on consecutive days. It added 'on Thursday evening there will be a ball and on Friday morning on the [race] course will be various amusements such as ass racing, sack races, grinning matches etc'.

This section has demonstrated that eighteenth-century foxhunting was socially stratified. The land owning elite, such as the Townsends and Cokes in Norfolk and Foresters in Shropshire maintained their high status activities with an invited guest list hunting over the estates of friends and neighbours. The rise of hunt clubs was also fuelled by the urge to exclude *arrivistes*. New entrants to polite society such as the brewers and bankers of the Carrow Abbey Hunt or the attorney initiator of the Ludlow hounds funded their sport by accepting subscriptions and taking a daily 'cap' from all those who could afford to join them on horseback. They hunted in less fashionable areas; in Norfolk outside the large estates of the north-west and in Shropshire in the hillier country to the west. Annual Town Hunts, such as those described at Holt or Oswestry, were open to all and probably bore some similarities to the raucous village foxhunt described by Chaucer when 'with staves many other man ran' after the pack.<sup>798</sup> The spread of regular foxhunting was due to its perceived high social status but the irregular events, involving all sectors of rural society, stemmed from a different impulse and were rooted in a long tradition of vermin control and rural merry-making.

By the mid nineteenth century opinions over subscription packs, which had become wide-spread, were sharply divided along class lines. Robert Vyner, an MFH in

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<sup>797</sup> Norfolk CRO, Minor Collections, Aylsham 41, (The Taverham fox hunt, 1791) p. 9

<sup>798</sup> Quoted in Longrigg, *History*, p. 29

Warwickshire during the 1840s, complained of 'the ignorance and conceit of many committee men who are too often elected on account of their purses, from the vulgar and rich *parvenus* of the neighbourhood'.<sup>799</sup> Bovill noted that once foxhunting had passed from private into public, or subscribers' ownership, and become fashionable, there was a surge in the number of townsmen entering the sport that had been previously virtually closed to them.<sup>800</sup> He quoted Surtees writing in 1846; 'nothing can be more annoying to the true sportsman than to see wanton or un-necessary mischief; crushing young quicksets for the sake of a leap, letting young cattle escape for want of shutting a gate or any of the other acts of omission or commission that all go to swell the catalogue of damage'.<sup>801</sup> In 1866 H.R. Corbet, a Master of the Shropshire Hounds, received a letter from R.E. Warburton raising his objections to industrialists from the Black Country or booming cities of the north-west, 'I must honestly tell you that I have always entertained strong objections to allowing any persons unconnected with the county to become subscribers and thus have a share of ownership of the management or arrangements of the Shropshire Hounds'.<sup>802</sup> By contrast Trollope represented the urban fox hunter and wrote in the 1860s 'men now prefer to hunt with subscription packs ... and feel that they follow their amusement without other debt to the Master of their hunt than that which is always due to zeal and success in high position'.<sup>803</sup>

### *Farmers' involvement in hunting*

The comparatively early development of foxhunting in districts where landlords had strong control over their tenants has already been highlighted. Hunting started as the prerogative of the landowners in areas such as the Midland clay lands and sheep-corn districts of the Lincolnshire Wolds, west Norfolk and South Downs. By contrast, areas that had been early-enclosed and were mainly farmed by owner-occupiers were inimical to early foxhunting and few packs were found in Wealden Kent and Sussex or North Suffolk and South Norfolk. This section examines the post 1750 involvement in hunting of farmers under the two contrasting tenurial systems.

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<sup>799</sup> Ridley, *Fox hunting*, p.37

<sup>800</sup> Bovill, *England*, p. 38

<sup>801</sup> Surtees, *Analysis*, p. 172

<sup>802</sup> Shropshire CRO, 327/5/12/6/5/3, (Corbet of Adderley Collection, 1866)

<sup>803</sup> Ridley, *Fox hunting*, p. 37

A previous chapter has recorded the decline of small yeoman farmers including Wade Martin's estimate that as late as 1688 one-third of England was still owned by small-scale freeholders.<sup>804</sup> Porter described how better prices, after about 1760, prompted a surge of magnate-led enclosure and cemented the partnership between great landowner and the go-ahead farmer to whom he rented out his lands.<sup>805</sup> The development of the capitalist landlord: tenant system was most evident in the East Midlands and sheep-corn areas and least significant in the early-enclosed, wood-pasture zones. Williamson observed that increasingly land on the Midland clays came to be owned by large landowners as yeoman farmers gave way to aristocrats, such as the Duke of Rutland or Earl Spencer, or more modest landowners, who were members of the local gentry with estates extending over no more than two or three parishes. He noted that 'this was a region of moderately expensive land, especially when enclosed and put to grass. It was hard for anyone to accumulate a really extensive estate here'.<sup>806</sup> By contrast, very large estates had developed on poorer, cheaper soils such as the sands of north-west Norfolk or the thin limestone soils of the Lincolnshire or Yorkshire Wolds.

By 1790 about three quarters of England's soil was cultivated by tenants<sup>807</sup> and, as Overton noted, the increased polarisation of landholding and the reduction in small farms is a significant theme in English rural history.<sup>808</sup> Small owner-occupiers hung on in the early-enclosed areas where there is little evidence of foxhunting before 1800. Overton shows that as late as 1870 in Lancashire only 8 per cent of farms were over 100 acres, with figures only rising to 12 per cent in Cornwall and West Yorkshire and 13 per cent in Derbyshire and Cheshire.<sup>809</sup> Although these figures combine both tenanted and owner-occupied farms, they show a clear contrast with 35 per cent of farms over 100 acres in Northumberland, 28 per cent in Northamptonshire and 24 per cent in Durham, Dorset and Wiltshire - all counties where hunting started early.

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<sup>804</sup> S. Wade Martins, *Farmers, landlords and landscapes* (Cheshire, 2004) p. 18

<sup>805</sup> Porter, *English*, p. 57

<sup>806</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 45

<sup>807</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 69

<sup>808</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 171

<sup>809</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 175



### *Tenant farmers hunting*

It is important to distinguish between the different types of tenant farmers; Williamson noted that small proprietors such as petty traders or aspiring professionals still existed in some numbers, especially in areas with good soils, and often leased out their small farms to ensure a regular income.<sup>810</sup> Their tenants were unlikely to afford or aspire to a 'polite lifestyle'. Elsewhere larger landowners enthusiastically 'engrossed' or amalgamated farms letting them to a second, large group of tenants who could afford to invest in improvements. A third, small group of rich men epitomised in Norfolk by Curtis of Docking (described in more detail shortly) and Lt. General William Fitzroy, deftly summarised by Garry as an 'uncommon tenant' of Holkham, led lives almost indistinguishable from their landlords when the latter were at home on their country estates.<sup>811</sup> The distribution of the larger estates with affluent, 'gentlemen farmer' tenants was crucial to the development of foxhunting.

Williamson explained that one of the consequences of this increased prosperity was that great landowners and local gentry began to share a single lifestyle in the countryside, mixing in a less formal, more affable way as members of a single, polite society.<sup>812</sup> A new breed of tenant farmer was increasingly the most visible power in rural society and now expected (and could afford) to join the packs that crossed his land.<sup>813</sup> 'High agricultural prices had the double effect of ... enabling more farmers to afford the sport and of giving many a taste of luxury and a hunger for social advancement at precisely the time when hunting was beginning to acquire more social prestige'.<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 16

<sup>811</sup> M-A. Garry, *An Uncommon Tenant, Fitzroy and Holkham 1808 -1837* (Dereham, 1996)

<sup>812</sup> Williamson, *Polite*, p. 110

<sup>813</sup> Langford, *Polite*, pp. 437-8

<sup>814</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 33

The social pretensions of farmers were widely lampooned and Porter quoted a pair of rhymes:

1722

Man to the plough  
Wife to the cow  
Girl to the sow  
Boy to the mow  
And your rents will be netted

1822

Man tally-ho  
Miss piano  
Wife silk and satin  
Boy Greek and Latin  
And you'll be gazetted<sup>815</sup>  
(bankrupted)

John Clare, who lived in the Fitzwilliam hunt country, noted the effect of farmers' upward social mobility in 'The Parish', which he wrote between 1822 and 1828 (at the same time as the anonymous rhyme above):

Those whose clownish taste aspires  
to hate their farms and ape the country squires.<sup>816</sup>

Several factors, apart from social aspiration, encouraged farmers to hunt; because of the restrictions of the game laws (discussed later), hunting was the only field sport that many tenant farmers could conveniently enjoy and the winter hunting season fell at the time of year when most farmers had leisure time.<sup>817</sup> Farmers were not expected to subscribe (unlike non-farming followers)<sup>818</sup> and the cost of the upkeep of their hunters could be submerged in the farm accounts.<sup>819</sup> According to Nimrod (C.J.Apperley - the sporting journalist) an average field, in the vicinity of Oxford around 1790, consisted of about fifty gentlemen and half a dozen farmers.<sup>820</sup>

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<sup>815</sup> R. Porter, *English society in the eighteenth century*, 1990 revised ed. (London, 1982) p. 70  
Bankruptcies were publicised in the London Gazette

<sup>816</sup> John Clare, *The Parish*, lines 105 – 108, in P.M.S. Dawson, E. Robinson & D. Powell (eds.) *John Clare: a champion for the poor; political verse and prose*. (Manchester, 2000)

<sup>817</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 32

<sup>818</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 31

<sup>819</sup> T.W. Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1978) p. 183

<sup>820</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 32

As already noted by Carr, the alliance between hunting landlords and tenants underpinned foxhunting.<sup>821</sup> The landlords relied on their tenants to maintain the fox population despite raids on poultry and lambs, bear the damage to crops and fences caused by mounted followers and 'walk' (rear) hound puppies on their farms during the summer. Meynell used to send his puppies as far as Sussex, while a condition of the leases of Lord Berkeley's tenants was that they walked puppies for him. The Duke of Rutland sent puppies he could not place with his Belvoir tenants to his Derbyshire estates.<sup>822</sup> In exchange tenants gained social kudos by hunting with the landlord and his friends, made a profit by selling home bred hunters to the gentry and found a ready market for produce; 'well-got hay and well-harvested oats will always command a higher price in a popular hunting country than elsewhere'.<sup>823</sup> The two counties particularly famous for hunting tenant farmers in the eighteenth century were Lincolnshire and Leicestershire (neatly providing an example from both the sheep-corn and open-field systems).

Beastall summarised the situation in Lincolnshire and explained landlords' acquiescence to the involvement of their tenants:

The county supported many reputable packs of hounds which, though founded by old families, depended upon the help of their tenant farmers for their success. They walked the puppies and ... hunted with their landlords ... it was said that 70 or 80 tenant farmers could turn out in scarlet with the Brocklesby.<sup>824</sup>

A list of puppy walkers dated 1754 still exists for Lord Yarborough's pack, the Brocklesby.<sup>825</sup>

In the early eighteenth century Defoe commented that in Leicestershire 'even most of the gentlemen are graziers and in some places the graziers are so rich that they

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<sup>821</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 49

<sup>822</sup> Bovill, *English*, p. 206

<sup>823</sup> C. Tongue ['Cecil'], *Record of the chase* (London, 1854) p. 433

<sup>824</sup> Beastall, *Agricultural*, p. 88

<sup>825</sup> Beastall, *Agricultural*, p. 153

grow gentlemen'.<sup>826</sup> By Meynell's time there was a regular group of Leicestershire graziers in the Quorn field who could be distinguished by their blue coats.<sup>827</sup> But Pitt, writing about agriculture in Leicestershire at the end of the eighteenth century, provided a useful reminder of the relative power of landlords and tenants. He described the common situation of 'the tenant who is only allowed to have his estate from year to year. This I look upon as a public misfortune'.<sup>828</sup> As noted earlier, this tight control by landlords often benefited hunting - writing of 'the breaking up of grass' Pitt noted 'the covenants or customs of all occupiers forbid it, it could only be done by special agreement between owner and occupier'.<sup>829</sup>

A side effect was that landowners could not hunt without being aware of the conditions of the farms and villages through which they rode. Comparisons were made, improvements noted and awareness increased. The number of farmers turning out provided a barometer of agricultural fortune when linked with the other semi-social event, the rent-day dinner, and served to keep landlords in touch with their own and neighbours' estates.<sup>830</sup> As Girouard commented, 'the upper classes had always hunted but it was now upgraded in their hierarchy of values' and bought them into closer contact with their tenants.<sup>831</sup> Williamson observed that this concern continued into the early nineteenth century - a period in which some members of landed society became increasingly anxious to display a paternal concern for the local population, presumably at least partly in response to the events of 1789 across the Channel.<sup>832</sup>

Farmers who 'knew their place' were welcome in the hunting field because hunting relied on farmers' acquiescence. Farmers brought up in the traditional landlord: tenant relationship did not expect to be invited to elite social events. They rarely

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<sup>826</sup> D. Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain*, P Rogers (ed). (Harmondsworth, 1992) p. 43

<sup>827</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 48

<sup>828</sup> Pitt, *General view ... of Leicestershire*, p. 341

<sup>829</sup> Pitt, *General view ... of Leicestershire*, p. 157

<sup>830</sup> Beastall, *Agricultural*, p. 88

<sup>831</sup> M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, Penguin edn. 1980 (New Haven 1978) p. 215

<sup>832</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... Landscape*, p. 211

belonged to hunt clubs, were often segregated at hunt breakfasts and lawn meets, and usually were not invited to hunt balls.<sup>833</sup>

The exclusion of farmers from the management and social aspects of hunting mirrors Wade Martin's description of the early agricultural societies:

The 1790s saw the first hesitant beginnings of farmers' clubs and associations. National societies such as the Royal Society of Arts, founded in 1756 with an early concern for farming matters, drew members from the landed owning class ... the hope was that ideas discussed at the meetings would then be passed down from landowner to tenant.<sup>834</sup>

The Stones came to an opposite conclusion in their fascinating investigation into whether there was an 'open elite' in England up until 1880;

The elite maintained a highly stable social and political system, the result of a most delicate and precarious balancing act ... in their behaviour to other classes they had to steer between too generous paternalism to tenants which would erode revenues and too ruthless profiteering which would undermine deference.<sup>835</sup>

The acceptance of the involvement of tenant farmers hunting with the great landowners is in stark contrast to the exclusion of most urban dwellers. This can be explored in greater detail by examining the two study areas: Shropshire and Norfolk.

Turning to the first of the two counties, as already noted, before 1800 in Shropshire MFHs were the significant landowners who hunted with their friends.<sup>836</sup> However, Longrigg has suggested that the Forester's pack, based at Willey, was also followed

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<sup>833</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 35

<sup>834</sup> Wade Martins, *Farmers*, p. 131

<sup>835</sup> Stones, *Open*, pp. 421-422

<sup>836</sup> Greaves, *Foxhunting in Shropshire*, p. 15

by country neighbours and tenant farmers.<sup>837</sup> Tenants were expected to support their landlords' sport; Plymley, writing about Shropshire in 1813, noted that 'the rack tenants of sporting landlords are frequently subject to the inconvenience of keeping dogs', i.e. foxhound puppies, in the summer.<sup>838</sup> He also commented on the damage to pastures and hedges tolerated by tenants who 'are fond of the sport or look upon it as a means of selling a horse at a high price'.<sup>839</sup>

The Shropshire VCH describing the annual hunts (which have already been discussed) recorded another, irregular, occasion when farmers were involved: 'the rapport between gentry and farmers and the latter's enthusiasm for hunting may have been nurtured by the annual hunts which flourished in the county during the later eighteenth century'.<sup>840</sup> Contemporary newspapers suggest that the more prosperous tenants and the gentry of the neighbouring villages held office side by side.<sup>841</sup> The social diffusion of hunting was rapid; by the 1820s 'Nimrod' (CJ. Apperley) noted 'with pleasure the good feeling which existed in the county between tenant and landlord and, until the agricultural depression following the end of the Napoleonic wars, almost all Shropshire farmers were said to be hunting men'.<sup>842</sup>

Although the eighteenth-century landlords' accounts for both the Holkham and Raynham estates in Norfolk are full of references to payments to tenants for fox coverts and protecting litters of cubs (discussed in a later chapter) there are no direct references to farmers out hunting alongside the landlords and their guests. Although other participants are recorded, such as in the 1730s poem 'The Norfolk Garland' describing a day out with the Walpoles' pack:

At Massingham the Mayor stood  
With cheeks both blue and big,  
With half his Arse upon his horse  
And drinking ale with Pigg ...

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<sup>837</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 126

<sup>838</sup> Plymley, *General view ... Shropshire*, p. 127

<sup>839</sup> Plymley, *General view ... Shropshire*, p. 148

<sup>840</sup> *Shropshire VCH*, Vol. 2. p. 166

<sup>841</sup> *Shropshire VCH*, Vol. 2. p. 166

<sup>842</sup> *Shropshire VCH*, Vol. 2. p. 166

The Walpoles must have regretted the presence of the Mayor because a couple of verses later a major *faux pas* is recorded:

Then down the Wind old Reynard  
Was creeping out in vain  
For headed by the mayor<sup>843</sup>  
He must return again.  
And to cover we will go ...<sup>844</sup>

The lack of references to farmers hunting may be due to the dearth of contemporary eighteenth-century hunting accounts rather than any lack of activity. Brown, writing about T.W. Coke's mastership from 1775-1797 in his voluminous history of foxhunting in Norfolk, noted that 'Many of Coke's tenants enjoyed hunting with their landlord, dressed in scarlet by request'.<sup>845</sup> But this is misleading in two ways: firstly, the names that Brown lists: Hudson of Castle Acre, The Overmans of Burnham and Weasenham, Bloomfields of Warham, Kendel of Weasenham and the Hastings family of Longham, are not recorded as tenants by the Holkham agent Blaikie until 1815 onwards - after T.W. Coke had stopped hunting.<sup>846</sup> Secondly, these were not typical 'tenant farmers' but were well-capitalised men farming significant acreages with the means to share sporting enthusiasms with their landlords.

Brown's list might suggest that prosperous tenants did not hunt alongside their landlords in Norfolk until after 1800. However, Francois de La Rochefoucauld, a Frenchman who left a wonderfully wide-eyed account of his tour around Suffolk and Norfolk in 1784, did note one particularly affluent eighteenth-century tenant foxhunter. He wrote admiringly of 'the magnificent farm [Summerfield] occupied by Mr Curtis' at Docking (north-west Norfolk) which he rented from Mrs Henley of Sandringham (wife of the MFH mentioned earlier) and added 'he has an extremely large private income and is one of the best fox hunters in the entire county. He keeps two or three hunters, among them one which cost him a hundred guineas and whose

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<sup>843</sup> 'Heading' a hunted fox means turning it away from its intended route and spoiling the hunt

<sup>844</sup> Brown, *History*, p. 295

<sup>845</sup> Brown, *History*, p. 39

<sup>846</sup> S. Wade Martins, *A great estate at work* (Cambridge, 1980) p. 66

portrait he had painted for twenty guineas'.<sup>847</sup> De La Rochefoucauld's traveling companion and tutor, Lazowski, added the significant note that the picture was 'by favour of Stubbs, a London painter of horses'. Egerton, in her recent '*Catologue Raisonne*' of all Stubbs works, recorded that this work has not been traced and added that 'by favour of Mr Stubbs' may mean that Stubbs found another painter for Mr Curtis.<sup>848</sup>

Eighteen years after de La Rochefoucauld's visit, Arthur Young recorded that Mr Curtis has been replaced by 'Mr Dursgate on his fine farm at Summerfield'; the 'course of crops' recorded for 1797-1802 suggests that either Mr Dursgate or his landlady/lord didn't hunt since 'Field No 3' is described as 'Fox Close, new broken up fox cover'.<sup>849</sup> Alternatively, perhaps Mr Dursgate was too busy improving his farm to hunt or wanted extra ground. Young noted approvingly his commitment to innovative farming; 'Mr Dursgate is such a steady friend to feeding turnips on the land by [to?] sheep, that he would not have a bullock on his farm except for the purpose of treading his straw into muck ... in drawing a crop for beans he takes all and manures with rape-cake, to supply the loss [of nutrient] to the barley'.<sup>850</sup>

Over the county border into Suffolk, de La Rochefoucauld noted the involvement by prosperous tenant farmers in hunting: 'even the farmers take part in this national pastime, and when they are rich (as many of them are), they keep two or three hunters solely for riding to hounds. They are always the best mounted. I've seen two of them out regularly with the Duke of Grafton's pack'<sup>851</sup> (based at Euston). This is confirmed by the Duke of Grafton's diary entry for February 10<sup>th</sup> 1787 when he acknowledged that at the end of a long hunt 'most of the holiday sportsmen were gone home before this burst ... Mr Stone, Mr Thurston and many of the sporting farmers remained to the end'.<sup>852</sup>

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<sup>847</sup> F. De la Rochefoucauld, *A Frenchman's year in Suffolk, 1784* (ed.) N. Scarfe (Woodbridge, 1988) p. 179

<sup>848</sup> J. Egerton, *George Stubbs, Painter. Catalogue raisonne*. (New Haven, 2007) p. 61

<sup>849</sup> Young, *General view ... Norfolk*, p. 203

<sup>850</sup> Young, *General view ... Norfolk*, p. 231

<sup>851</sup> De La Rochefoucauld, *Frenchman's*, p. 40

<sup>852</sup> Suffolk CRO, HA 513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton's Hunting Diaries 1786-1787)



### *Hunting farmers outside the great estates*

Foxhunting was slower to develop in areas where there were no great landlords to take the lead or bear the cost. Often, as in south Norfolk or north Suffolk, these were areas of early-enclosed, wood-pasture landscapes farmed by small owner-occupiers. However, during the late eighteenth century farmers' packs began to appear across the country, especially in less fashionable hunting countries. Farmers hunted in a far more utilitarian, less fashion-conscious manner, often housing and feeding their own hounds to reduce costs.<sup>853</sup> (These hounds were called 'trencher fed'). Surtees described in his novel '*Handley Cross*', how 'upon any particular morning which was fixed on for a hunt each man might be seen wending his way to the meet followed by his dog, or bringing him along on a string'.<sup>854</sup> Packs that started this way included the Sinnington in Yorkshire where the yearly expenses in 1794 were £32 10s 3d<sup>855</sup> (compared to an entry in the Holkham Household accounts for 1787 showing annual 'summary foxhunting expenses of £460' for a landlord-financed pack).<sup>856</sup> Other farmers' packs that started in the late eighteenth century included packs in Cumberland, Durham, Essex and Kent.

In the study areas of Shropshire and Norfolk there are few references before 1800 to foxhunting outside the great landlords' control. In Shropshire a record remains of a squire hunting a range of prey across his own land from the 1750s; in 1808 the death of Thomas Wall of Neen Sollers was noted. He 'regularly hunted his own hounds upwards of fifty nine years and within ten years had been in at the death of fox, hare and otter'.<sup>857</sup> He may have been the inspiration for the 'old Shropshire squire', described by Auden, who:

Kept a pack of foxhounds  
Of pure old English breed.  
Most musical and staunch they were  
But not much famed for speed.

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<sup>853</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 58

<sup>854</sup> Surtees, *Handley Cross*, p.1

<sup>855</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 58

<sup>856</sup> Holkham Archives, Household Accounts, A46 (Household accounts relating to hunting expenses 1786-1796) p. 188

<sup>857</sup> Auden, *history of Albrighton*, p. 2

His horses were enduring,  
Could run a decent pace;  
To suit his hounds he bred them,  
Not to run a steeplechase.  
'Twas a pleasure for to see him  
Through a bullfinch make a gap  
With his pigtail like a drumstick  
Hanging out behind his back.<sup>858</sup>

The Shropshire VCH noted also a 'subscription pack, known as the Wrickton Hounds which was managed by Mr Aston of Aston Botterell "yeoman" in the 1790s' (west of the River Severn and outside the great landowners' estates).<sup>859</sup> A closer look at Aston's status changes the picture slightly since the Shropshire CRO holds a document of 1790 describing George Aston of Wrickton (in the parish of Aston Botterell) as a 'gentleman'.<sup>860</sup> The first record of a farmers' pack does not appear until 1818 when tenants of the Aldenham estate, west of Bridgnorth, kept a mixed pack of hounds (to hunt both fox and deer which had escaped from the park). However, this was not a spontaneous move by the farmers; the pack was started with the encouragement of their landlord (Sir Richard Acton) who gave them some of his hounds when he retired.<sup>861</sup> The sporting journalist C. Tongue ('Cecil') hunted with them in 1822 and listed 12 'well-bred' foxhounds, 4 blood hounds and 6 to 8 'hybrids' in the pack.<sup>862</sup> The trencher-fed hounds were kept at home by individual farmers and the pack continued until 1843.

In Norfolk the presence of a pack hunting west of Norwich, outside the landlord dominated north-west quadrant of the county has already been noted. The Taverham foxhunt poem of 1791 describes the enthusiastic involvement of 'farmers from each little neighbouring village [who] for the joys of a foxhunt deserted their tillage'.<sup>863</sup>

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<sup>858</sup> J.E. Auden, *A short history of the Albrighton Hunt* (London, 1905) p. 2

<sup>859</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2 p. 173

<sup>860</sup> Shropshire CRO, 1045/352, 1st June 1790

<sup>861</sup> F. Pitt, *Hounds, Horses and Hunting Country* (London, 1948) p. 22

<sup>862</sup> C. Tongue ('Cecil') *Records of the chase* (London, 1854) pp. 248-249

<sup>863</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC. Aylsham 41 (Poem on Taverham Fox Hunt, 1791) p. 9

The collection of 'a cap' of half a crown from each sportsman, described earlier, suggests that this is more likely to be an early subscription pack than a local squire entertaining his tenants or a 'trencher fed' farmers' pack. Egerton has reproduced a curious painting of a pack of hounds in Suffolk dated 1765. Figure 5.7, shows John Sidey, a farmer of Pudeneys, Bures Hamlet with his pack of hounds chasing a fox over the roof of a farmhouse near Hadleigh in Suffolk; the left foreground and background appear to show high hedges. The scene is summarised by the sporting art historian Deuchar as 'a disorganised pack of foxhounds' with a group of 'jocular sportsmen' and is an unusual early record of hunting in an anciently enclosed landscape.<sup>864</sup>



**Figure 5.7** 'John Sidey with his pack of hounds near Hadleigh in Suffolk' by James Dunthorne, 1765<sup>865</sup>

The growth of informal local farmers' packs with shared costs and minimal etiquette was less the result of geographical or social diffusion or a quest for social prestige

<sup>864</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting*, p. 127  
<sup>865</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting*, p. 128

but more the expression of an enthusiasm for the sport and its excitement and the need for vermin control. The packs developed in areas outside the ‘heartlands’ of the Midlands and sheep–corn areas, where foxhunting had originated with large landlords dominating the infrastructures, protocols and access. A later chapter explores why, during the nineteenth century, Shropshire saw a surge in the number of farmers’ subscription packs while they failed to flourish in Norfolk.

### *Women’s involvement in hunting*

The extent of women’s involvement in hunting has been examined by a range of authors, including Buxton, Ridley and Griffin.<sup>866</sup> Landry, in her fascinating chapter on ‘Sportswomen’, noted that although sporting culture was highly masculinised during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women hunted without opprobrium.<sup>867</sup> She also highlighted the exclusion of women from field sports that began late in the eighteenth century when women’s participation began to be actively discouraged.<sup>868</sup> Carr endorsed this view confirming that the early nineteenth-century prejudice against women in the hunting field did not exist in or before the eighteenth century.<sup>869</sup> The growing exclusion of women from the 1800s is in marked contrast to the increasing inclusion of men from different classes described earlier. There were two prime causes for this marginalisation of women – a change in social attitudes to women’s involvement and the alteration in the style of foxhunting with its increased emphasis on speed and jumping.

The growing banishment of high-class women from hunting by the end of the century lagged slightly behind the exclusion of women in other commercial or urban settings – an interesting reversal of the more common situation where social trends flow from the elite. Langford noted the diminishing role of women in practical enterprises during the eighteenth century,<sup>870</sup> while Moir wrote in 1785 that ‘The middling order of women are deprived of those stations which properly belong to them’,<sup>871</sup> echoed by Porter who wrote that many men moved into traditional female vocations such as

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<sup>866</sup> M. Buxton, *Ladies of the Chase*, J. Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, E. Griffin, *Blood sport*

<sup>867</sup> D. Landry, *The invention of the countryside* (Basingstoke, 2001) p. 145.

<sup>868</sup> Landry, *Invention* p 14

<sup>869</sup> Carr, *English*, p.172

<sup>870</sup> Langford, *Polite*, p. 111

<sup>871</sup> Quoted in Langford, *Polite*, p. 111

midwifery and hairdressing reducing opportunities for women.<sup>872</sup> Vickery has challenged 'the saga of progressive female incarceration ... as inconsistent with the social history of the eighteenth century...'<sup>873</sup> But she does acknowledge that 'ambivalence about the propriety of female hunting was long-standing' and that 'no less a radical than Mary Wollstonecraft' (writing in 1792) was prepared to endorse the 'exclamations against masculine women' when directed against 'their ardour in hunting'.<sup>874</sup>

Buxton has noted that at the start of the eighteenth century, in Queen Anne's time, whilst considerably fewer women than men hunted, no social stigma was attached to female participation.<sup>875</sup> Pope wrote in 1717 about meeting the Prince of Wales with all his maids of honour on horseback coming from hunting.<sup>876</sup> The royal connection continued with George II's daughter Amelia becoming an ardent stag hunter in the 1740s. Vickery has highlighted the enthusiasm of elite women for hunting: quoting Lady Mary Wortley Montague writing in 1711 in Nottinghamshire 'I had a general hunting day on Tuesday where we had 20 ladys well dressed and mounted, and more men'. Two decades later the grand-daughter of a Lord Mayor of London, Mary Warde of Squerries Court, Kent, 'spent every autumn in the 1730s and 1740s out riding and hunting in Norfolk ... I was seven hours a hunting this morning & rode hard enough to be extreamly tired'.<sup>877</sup>

Lower down the social scale in Yorkshire, William Draper 'got a pack together in 1726 ... he was very poor, very generous ... on £700 a year he dressed and mounted beautifully his eleven sons and three daughters'<sup>878</sup> and 'his daughter whipped into [assisted] him'.<sup>879</sup> She is the only example found of a woman in an active foxhunting role in the eighteenth century (apart from Lady Salisbury described

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<sup>872</sup> Porter, *English*, p. 32

<sup>873</sup> A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's daughter* (New Haven, 1998) p. 10

<sup>874</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's*, p. 274

<sup>875</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 28

<sup>876</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 30

<sup>877</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's*, p. 273

<sup>878</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 63

<sup>879</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 57

below). Miss Draper was renowned for her holloa and her reckless riding;<sup>880</sup> appropriately her name was Diana.<sup>881</sup>

In the early eighteenth century it was not unusual for the wives and daughters of the gentry to hunt and some high status women continued to hunt during the middle and later decades of the eighteenth century. Lady Salisbury, who started the Hatfield Hounds in 1775 and remained master for forty-four seasons, rode side-saddle in a sky-blue habit,<sup>882</sup> and was described in 1795 'as throughout the chase to be nearest to the [fox's] brush'.<sup>883</sup> In Norfolk Stirling recorded that, after their marriage in 1775, T.W. Coke and his wife 'with the approach of the hunting season ... went to live at Tittleshall ... Mrs Coke like her husband was a fine rider and loved to spend long days in the saddle'.<sup>884</sup> The 1791 'Taverham Foxhunt' poem includes a reference to at least one woman, possibly Elizabeth Branthwaite the daughter of the owner of Taverham Hall;

then hark forward! Huzza! A long stride and a bounce  
The approach of our petticoat Nimrod<sup>885</sup> announce ...<sup>886</sup>

Over the county border in Suffolk, De La Rochefoucauld noted in 1784, with questionable accuracy, that 'many women ... hunt assiduously ... they jump just like the men, indeed are always the first'.<sup>887</sup> If this is true, it is surprising that there is no record of women hunting in the Duke of Grafton's hunting diaries for the 1786-1787 season when he spent from November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1786 to February 19<sup>th</sup> 1787 hunting from Euston in Suffolk. The only mention, on February 10<sup>th</sup>, is that 'the Duchess came to look at us in the Thicks' with an approving comment added - that she 'gave us a halloo at a proper moment' (having seen the hunted fox).<sup>888</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 33

<sup>881</sup> Ridley, *Fox hunting*, p. 6

<sup>882</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 88

<sup>883</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 40

<sup>884</sup> A.M.W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and his friends* (London, 1912) p. 91

<sup>885</sup> Nimrod was a 'mighty hunter' in the Old Testament

<sup>886</sup> Norfolk CRO MC Aylsham 41, (Poem: The Taverham fox hunt, 1791)

<sup>887</sup> De la Rochefoucauld, *Frenchman's*, p. 39

<sup>888</sup> Suffolk CRO, HA513/10/1 (Duke of Grafton's hunting diaries 1786-1787)

In east Shropshire Randall recorded a meet in 1770 at a gorse cover near Boscobel where there were forty horsemen in the field and two women – Mrs Giffard (wife of the local landowner) and Miss Parry; he noted that the ladies rode remarkably hard for many miles.<sup>889</sup> Nearby in Warwickshire Juliana Ludford of Ansley Hall hunted regularly in the 1770s and 1780s with Lord Donegall's, Mr Kinnersley's and Lord Belfast's hounds.<sup>890</sup> Meanwhile in Yorkshire Lord Darlington of Raby (1766-1842) kept sixty hunters for himself and his family (his wife and daughters hunted) and Lady Craven also hunted, with her husband's hounds.<sup>891</sup> A contemporary recorded of her that 'as I recollect, Lady Craven upon Pastime, never shrank from either fence or timber'.<sup>892</sup>

But, as Landry noted about the other end of the social spectrum, towards the end of the eighteenth century for 'sporting females with doubtful origins ... there were avenues to upward social mobility for women in the hunting field. Horsemastery could lead to concubinage and sometimes marriage'.<sup>893</sup> This was one reason for the eventual decline in participation by 'respectable' women - elite women were very aware of the risk to their reputation. Lady Salisbury's hunt always had a reputation for extreme exclusiveness, perhaps because as a lady she had to be protected from meeting riffraff.<sup>894</sup> A parallel can be drawn with Dain's observation that 'public assemblies, where social exclusivity was compromised by commercial or socially inclusive considerations, tended to be boycotted by the female members of genteel families'.<sup>895</sup> She cited the lack of elite women at an Assembly in Bury St Edmunds in 1796 'where all Descriptions came, even the footmen of the Town in Livery set down at Table' as an example of the boycott.<sup>896</sup>

In Shropshire, Carr recorded that George Forester, who was an MFH from 1776, 'kept his mistresses (to his credit they were chosen for their horsemanship) openly in

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<sup>889</sup> J.L. Randall, *History of the Meynell Hounds and Country 1780-1901*. Vol. 1 (London, 1901) p. 2

<sup>890</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 35

<sup>891</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 83

<sup>892</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 36

<sup>893</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 163

<sup>894</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 49

<sup>895</sup> Dain, 'Assemblies ...' p. 295

<sup>896</sup> Dain, 'Assemblies ...' p. 295

his village ... the most celebrated was Miss Phoebe Higgs',<sup>897</sup> who 'regularly rode to hounds, taking vast leaps and often giving the master a lead'.<sup>898</sup> Laetitia Lade became famous in the 1790s as a female rider of great courage and skill out hunting; she was reputed to have been a servant in a brothel, met the Prince of Wales at a masquerade in 1781 and married his friend and equestrian adviser Sir John Lade in 1787. Subsequently 'to swear like Lady Lade' passed into common usage. She appears to be an exception to Dain's generalisation that 'women's social role increased to foster not their own social and intellectual needs, but those of men for whom the company of women was required to civilise and polish their polite performance and behaviour'.<sup>899</sup>



**Figure 5.8** 'Lady Lade' by George Stubbs, 1793<sup>900</sup>

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<sup>897</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 96

<sup>898</sup> Lonrigg, *History*, p. 74

<sup>899</sup> Dain, 'Assemblies ...' p. 176

<sup>900</sup> C. Chevenix-Trench, *A History of Horsemanship* (New York, 1970) p. 271



Hunting provided opportunities for upward mobility for some skilled horse-women who became mistresses and even wives of grandees. Where once the wives and daughters of country gentlemen could hunt without comment, in the nineteenth century there was constant debate about whether respectable women did or should hunt.<sup>901</sup>

It can be proposed that the rise of subscription packs encouraged this exclusion of 'respectable' women. The masters of private packs hunted with invited friends and could control access to the hunting field that might include their wives and daughters. For example, Sir Edward Littleton who hunted in Staffordshire in the 1770s only sent cards announcing meets to seven neighbours.<sup>902</sup> With the growth of subscription packs from around 1800, anyone able to afford a subscription could hunt; by 1845 only fourteen out of over one hundred packs were supported entirely by the master.<sup>903</sup> Increasingly polite women became exposed to the risk of contact with unsuitable men, or women, in the hunting field.

The debate about respectability linked with concerns about the perceived loss of femininity involved in the exertions of hunting. In 1711, Addison was ridiculing the stock social type of the horsy Englishwoman in the influential *Spectator* magazine;

I have very frequently the Opportunity of seeing, a rural  
Andromache,<sup>904</sup> who came up to Town last Winter, and is one of the  
greatest Fox Hunters in the Country. She talks of Horses and Hounds,  
and makes nothing of leaping over a Six bar Gate. If a Man tells her a  
waggish Story, she gives him a Push with her Hand in jest.<sup>905</sup>

The poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) showed a similar early example of metropolitan social prejudice against women hunting. He wrote of Queen Anne's maids of honour hunting over:

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<sup>901</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 163

<sup>902</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 74

<sup>903</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 75

<sup>904</sup> In Greek legend, the bold wife of Hector of Troy

<sup>905</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 153

Hedges and ditches on borrowed hacks and coming home in the heat of the day with a fever, and what is a hundred times worse a red mark on the forehead from an uneasy hat. All of this may qualify them to make excellent wives for fox hunters and bear abundance of ruddy-complexioned children but is highly disagreeable to many.<sup>906</sup>

The decline in women's participation in hunting was not only due to the social attitudes of the time but also the increasing dominance of the side-saddle. Buxton has suggested that on the rare occasions when women jumped that it was slowly using one hand to grasp the back of the [side] saddle to steady themselves.<sup>907</sup> Longrigg recorded that 'about 1750 two young Suffolk ladies rode astride in smart doeskins [breeches], great coats and flapped beaver hats. They were the last ladies to ride astride in England; they had been educated abroad'<sup>908</sup>. Frustratingly he does not give his source but Landry raised the possibility of an Italian influence: Lady Mary Wortley Montague switched from riding side-saddle to astride when she moved to Italy in the 1740s 'having compli'd with the custom of this country [i.e. Italy], which is every way better than ours'.<sup>909</sup> Landry added that it was possible for a duchess to get away with riding astride in England in the first half of the eighteenth century, though she was clearly an exception, referring to Anne, the 'eccentric' second wife of the second Duke of Cleveland (1663-1746), who had been brought up in the hunting county of Leicestershire.<sup>910</sup>

The introduction of the side-saddle, designed to protect women from damaging themselves on the cross-saddle, was incompatible with the increasing need to gallop and jump out hunting.<sup>911</sup> As long as the pace was fairly slow and jumps small and infrequent it served well enough. But by the end of the eighteenth century it was plainly inadequate for hunting over an enclosed country,<sup>912</sup> and the presence of

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<sup>906</sup> Quoted in Chevenix Trench, *History*, p. 276

<sup>907</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 43

<sup>908</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 88

<sup>909</sup> Quoted in Landry, *History*, p. 166

<sup>910</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 166

<sup>911</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 163

<sup>912</sup> Chevenix Trench, *History*, p. 277

women in the hunting field became increasingly exceptional for technical as well as social reasons.<sup>913</sup> A further deterrent for many hunting women was also linked to changes in the landscape; as the eighteenth century wore on, enclosure led to the planting of quickthorn hedges which became tall and prickly 'bull finches' that scratched the faces of anyone jumping through them. A century later, in the 1870s, Empress Elizabeth of Austria hunting in Northamptonshire told her mounted 'pilot' (who guided her across country) 'remember, I do not mind the falls but I will not scratch my face'.<sup>914</sup> Buxton summarised the impact of the new style: the developments were most exciting for hunting men but for women they were disastrous.<sup>915</sup>

The decline in women hunting was not at a steady rate during the eighteenth century but appears to have increased sharply in the last decades. The reasons were probably related to perceptions of risk. The changes in hunt funding and management were widening access to the hunting field that threatened its social exclusivity; and changes in the landscape due to enclosure increased the danger for women riding side-saddle. By the start of the nineteenth century ladies of the court no longer rode out with hounds socially. The few women who continued to hunt were either the wives or daughters of MFHs, and were therefore under their protection; or had no reputation to lose.<sup>916</sup> Buxton has suggested that significant numbers of women did not start hunting again until the 1850s when the addition of the 'leaping head' to side-saddles increased riders' stability and safety.<sup>917</sup> Royal approval lent renewed respectability when Queen Victoria was seen on horseback at a meet of the Belvoir hounds in the 1850s.<sup>918</sup>

### **The increasing seclusion of landowners**

Landry has highlighted an ambiguity in the concept of 'access' and the development of foxhunting; while enclosure was altering the landscape:

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<sup>913</sup> Landry, *Invention*, p. 163

<sup>914</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 80

<sup>915</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 43

<sup>916</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 36

<sup>917</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 67

<sup>918</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 71

most profoundly and paradoxically, the hunted landscape remained one in which private property boundaries were blurred and overridden ... members of the sporting culture often literally rode over other people's interests and livelihoods. But the blurring of private property boundaries in hunting could mean that the characteristic English landscape had to appear both open and closed, both champion for sporting and enclosed for agriculture, both open to the freeborn, liberty-loving Englishman exercising his rights of way and common and closed by a park pale against threats to social order.<sup>919</sup>

Three years later Finch extended the theme; 'foxhunting held a unique and ambiguous position: it was an elite sport conducted in the wider landscape, and one that preserved the idea of social inclusivity at a time when larger landowners sought to distance themselves, and their rural sports, from the public gaze'.<sup>920</sup>

The rapid geographical and social expansion of hunting from around 1780, reflected in the surge in the number and distribution of packs and involvement of a wider spectrum of people overlapped with a period when:

The rural great felt ambivalent about being too conspicuous in the countryside and many embarked upon a disappearing act, secluding themselves from the neighbouring commonality. Mansions were increasingly built back off the road, miles away from the gaze of the vulgar ... plantations, walls and gates raised a *cordon sanitaire*, as in their own ways did traveling in coaches (rather than on horseback) ...<sup>921</sup>

The *cordon sanitaire* of fences surrounding parks and plantations mentioned by Porter posed an added hazard to fox hunters even if it was not specifically designed

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<sup>919</sup> Landry, *Invention*, pp. 64-65

<sup>920</sup> Finch, 'Grass, grass ...' p. 49

<sup>921</sup> Porter, *English*, p. 45

to exclude them. The 'Taverham Fox Hunt of 1791' poem describes the effect of a park pale in Norfolk on mounted hunt followers and how the park owner could exert at least partial control:

Arrived at the pales they all came to a check  
Then one readily dar'd to endanger his neck  
But prudent, tho' keen, thought it wiser to wait  
'Til the squire bought a key that would open the gate.<sup>922</sup>

Foxhunters in the west of the country were also seen as threats to estate fencing. On the Shropshire-Welsh border at Chirk, an estate land agent wrote in December 1793 to his employer that 'Sir Watkins William-Wynn and a party of gentlemen had gone to draw a cover ... found a fox immediately ... [and I] saw several horsemen in the plantation. I thought it right to go up as soon as possible to open gates in order to prevent as little damage as possible to the fences'.<sup>923</sup>

Williamson noted a key element of 'the landscape of polite exclusion'— parks;<sup>924</sup> 'they were expanded in such a way that the house lay isolated within it, quite separate from the dwellings of tenant farmers and labourers and the fields of their labour ... such segregation might ... involve not merely the closure of roads but the demolition of entire settlements'.<sup>925</sup> Way summarised 'parks, as private enclosed areas, that could act both to exclude certain elements or sectors of society, and to seclude others'.<sup>926</sup> In particular the park, especially if it was used for rearing pheasants, required protection. As Williamson noted, in seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Norfolk it had been customary for qualified sportsmen to shoot freely across their neighbours' land because it was an accepted part of polite life.<sup>927</sup> But by 1784 de La Rochefoucauld recorded that 'general custom ... has established a mutual understanding between all those entitled to shoot that a man leaving his

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<sup>922</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC, Aylsham 41, (Poem: The Taverham fox hunt, 1791)

<sup>923</sup> T.H.G. Puleston, *A history of foxhunting – Wynstay* (Brighton, 1893) p. 9

<sup>924</sup> T. Williamson, *Polite landscapes; Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1995) p. 107

<sup>925</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... landscape*, p. 90

<sup>926</sup> T. Way, *A Study of the impact of emparkment*, BAR British series 258, (Oxford, 1997) p. 40

<sup>927</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... landscape*, p. 192

own property can go right ahead and shoot anywhere without getting into trouble with the owner provided that he doesn't enter the owner's parkland. The rule of polite behaviour forbids this positively'.<sup>928</sup>

For much of the eighteenth century, as Porter noted, polite society became increasingly fastidious and withdrew from village activities distancing itself from the dirty and sometimes threatening world of the *hoi polloi*.<sup>929</sup> Everett has commented on the 'party political' aspect of landscape design 'the great Whig mansions' ... setting in vast parks distant from any activity that could be interpreted as their economic base, whether in agriculture, trade or political speculation' contrasted with 'a more traditional (and Tory) pattern in which the mansion was clearly seen as part of the community, with adjacent village and church'.<sup>930</sup>

But a change in attitudes began on the cusp of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Repton particularly disapproved of the fact that the country house often stood 'solitary and unconnected' in 'Capability' Brown's parks, since he believed that the landscape park ought to demonstrate a landowner's connection to the rural community in addition to displaying his status.<sup>931</sup> Gradually Repton's designs began to break down some of the barriers that Brown had established between the park and the outside world, for example the continuous belt of trees was abolished to reconnect the park with its agricultural hinterland.<sup>932</sup> Similarly at a number of places alterations now meant that the principal drive led out of the village street instead of winding through the park,<sup>933</sup> in Norfolk this included the shifting of park entrances at Houghton and Holkham to reconnect elite houses to their local communities.

A tentative parallel can be drawn between the reduced physical isolation of great estates and the increased access of non-elite foxhunters to the landscape by the end of the eighteenth century. Controlled access for visitors to estates had begun before Repton's changes and the surge in country house visiting meant that by the 1760s

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<sup>928</sup> De la Rochefoucauld, *Frenchman's*, p. 41

<sup>929</sup> Porter, *English*, p. 51

<sup>930</sup> N. Everett, *The Tory View of Landscape* (New Haven, 1994) p. 38

<sup>931</sup> Williamson, *Property*, p. 151

<sup>932</sup> Williamson, *Property*, p. 151

<sup>933</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... landscape*, p. 210

and 1770s structured opening had replaced earlier, more informal access<sup>934</sup> although, as Williamson noted, the country elite's landscape parks were generally open, on some basis, to all who appeared respectable.<sup>935</sup> The expansion of hunting, both geographically and socially, conferred 'respectability' more widely through hunt membership thereby enabling access to an estate by a broader range of polite society. 'Differences of rank between the great landowners on one hand and the broad mass of the local gentry and the wealthier professionals on the other were now consciously played down ... emphasis was placed instead on easy social contact between members of these groups'.<sup>936</sup>

#### *Legal efforts to exclude foxhunters*

During much of the eighteenth century foxhunters tended to assume a right of access to the countryside, partly because of the difficulty in steering or stopping a pack of hounds in full cry. The only restriction was on where hounds initially met and then 'drew' which would be by landowners' invitation or agreement. Despite the increasing seclusion of the rural elite in their parks and the exclusion of interlopers by fences fox hunters continued to roam across the countryside. A century later Trollope vividly summarised the paradox: 'anyone ... on horseback, let him be a lord or a tinker, should have permission to ride where he will, over enclosed fields, across growing crops, crushing down cherished fences, and treating the land as though it were his own, - as long as hounds are running'.<sup>937</sup>

The few efforts in the eighteenth century to invoke the law to control foxhunters' access often seem to have been futile. As already described, in 1734 Francis Lloyd of north Shropshire was summoned to give an account of himself for 'a desperate fox chase' although we don't know the outcome.<sup>938</sup> During the 1750s William Windham of Felbrigg in north Norfolk corresponded regularly with his attorney, George Hunt Holley of Aylsham, about sporting boundaries and encroachments by neighbours'

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<sup>934</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... landscape*, p. 182

<sup>935</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... landscape*, p. 182

<sup>936</sup> Williamson, *Archaeology ... landscape*, p. 168

<sup>937</sup> A. Trollope (ed.) *British Sports and Pastimes* (London, 1868) p. 74

<sup>938</sup> Shropshire CRO, 103/5/72 (letter of 30<sup>th</sup> January 1734)

packs of hounds.<sup>939</sup> In 1788 in a key case, *Gundry v Feltham* at the King's Bench, Mr Justice Buller found that a man had a right to follow a fox on to the land of another but added 'This case does not determine that a person may unnecessarily trample down another person's hedges, or maliciously ride over his grounds: if he do more than is absolutely necessary, he cannot justify it'.<sup>940</sup> The legal stance on this freedom changed sharply twenty years later in 1808 as a result of the case of *Essex v Chapel*. Bovill summarised the meaning: instead of foxhunters having an unassailable right to ride over other peoples' land, the landowner and the farmer now had an unarguable right to prevent them.

But Bovill noted that, in general, during the nineteenth century very little changed although a few opponents of foxhunting, who had hitherto remained silent because they thought that protests would be futile, took courage and declared that they would not have hounds on their land. Bovill added that although everyone now had the right to warn hounds off their land, hardly a soul wanted to exercise it.<sup>941</sup> An exception, involving a private pack in Shropshire, is recorded in a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 1833 from a Shrewsbury solicitor to the Reverend Bright of Bishops Castle alerting him that 'I was requested ...to proceed against your son and several other gentlemen regardless of expense and with the utmost rigour of the law for ... a most serious and violent assault ... upon the life of James George and his man Cheese ... by setting on and encouraging a pack of foxhounds to worry them'.<sup>942</sup>

It is ironic that the growth of another field sport, the shooting of 'reared' pheasants and landowners' consequent desire to protect their stocks from both predation by foxes and disturbance by hunting led to far greater restrictions on access than any legal action.

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<sup>939</sup> R.W. Ketton-Cremer, *Felbrigg*, (Ipswich, 1976) p. 144

<sup>940</sup> Quoted in Bovill, *English*, p. 223

<sup>941</sup> Bovill, *English*, pp. 229 & 230

<sup>942</sup> Shropshire CRO, 807/442 (letter of 5<sup>th</sup> December 1833)



## The impact of shooting on foxhunting

While (male) access to foxhunting widened during the latter part of the eighteenth century legal access to shooting was narrowing. Everett made an important link – ‘emparkment seems to have had some of the same emotional appeal as the game laws in distinguishing the elite who could enjoy the privileges from those who could not’.<sup>943</sup> Munsche described the game laws as imposing a property qualification on sportsmen that, in effect, gave landowners and their guests the exclusive right to legally shoot game in England. He added that the gentry enforced this monopoly in their capacity as justices of the peace by means of summary trials and severe punishments.<sup>944</sup> Thompson, more pungently, described a ‘political oligarchy inventing callous and oppressive laws to serve its own interests’.<sup>945</sup> The result of the laws, starting with the Game Act of 1671 (which restricted ‘field sports to a minority of the population’,<sup>946</sup> or those to whom they gave permission or ‘indulgence’), ‘signalled the transfer of the game prerogative from the king to the landed gentry ... [and] the gentry assumed responsibility for preserving the game’.<sup>947</sup> During the eighteenth century an Act of 1707 raised the fines for poaching and subsequent Acts in 1723, 1755 and 1770 prohibited ‘appearing in the vicinity of a game reserve, armed and with face blackened’, the buying or selling of game and introduced imprisonment for a first offence.<sup>948</sup>

Longrigg made an interesting point inelegantly: ‘shooting developed towards modernity more slowly than hunting or racing. Hunting depended on the foxhound, racing on the thoroughbred, with both the gentry successfully busied themselves; both made earlier and larger advances than the gun, in regard to which the user was at the mercy of his tradesmen’.<sup>949</sup> He added that there was no significant improvement in gun design until the 1780s but a great leap forward took place in

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<sup>943</sup> Everett, *Tory*, p. 39

<sup>944</sup> P.B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers* (Cambridge, 1981) p.1

<sup>945</sup> E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters* (London, 1975) p. 265

<sup>946</sup> Munsche, *Gentlemen*, p. 9

<sup>947</sup> Munsche, *Gentlemen*, p. 13

<sup>948</sup> Williamson, *Polite*, p. 132

<sup>949</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 149

1782 when William Watts discovered how to make dropshot.<sup>950</sup> A decade later, *The Sportsmen's Directory of 1792* could report that 'the art of shooting flying is arrived at tolerable perfection'.<sup>951</sup> Shooting birds on the wing driven over the guns in vast numbers by beaters replaced firing at 'sitting ducks'. Norfolk was at the forefront and at the turn of the eighteenth century the most celebrated exponent of 'shooting flying' was Coke of Norfolk.<sup>952</sup> The bags became enormous; a meticulous record at Raynham of 'Game given away from September 17<sup>th</sup> to December 27<sup>th</sup> 1796' by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess lists gifts of 302 pheasants, 299 partridges and 157 hares. The gifts range from 10 partridges for the King and 6 pheasants for the Prince of Wales on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, to 1 hare each for 'Wheelwright and Taylor [at] Gunton, Gay - basket maker and Platton of Helhoughton' on Boxing Day.<sup>953</sup> (This does not include any additional domestic consumption). By the 1820s the fashion was widespread; the owner of an estate in east Shropshire, Thomas Whitmore, who was out shooting nearly every day in the season (September-January) on the Apley estate in the east of the county, personally killed an average of 1056 head of game annually including 427 pheasants, 326 partridge and 160 hares.<sup>954</sup>

The privatisation of the countryside, increasing consolidation of estates and greater protection of game birds from poaching also initially benefited foxhunting. Reserves of foxes in coverts or earths could be protected from casual disturbance by passers-by or poachers and as Carr noted 'the surest method for a prosperous hunt to keep a good supply of foxes and to ensure a good run was to plant coverts or to rent them from farmers so that they were maintained as fox-holding coverts'.<sup>955</sup>

Many landowners in the eighteenth century continued both to shoot game birds and hunt foxes despite the obvious tensions between protecting pheasant poults and sustaining a supply of foxes to hunt. The answer was to separate the two reserves: 'for reasons of security – but also for the convenience of owners and guests – it

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<sup>950</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 152

<sup>951</sup> Quoted in Longrigg, *English*, p. 153

<sup>952</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 154

<sup>953</sup> Raynham Hall archives, Boxes labelled 'George 1st Marquess Townsend - family game preservation papers'. List: Game given away 1796

<sup>954</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p. 189

<sup>955</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 113

made more sense to concentrate the [game] coverts relatively close to the mansion ... the park was a particularly private space in which game could be preserved for the owner's use'.<sup>956</sup> By contrast, fox coverts needed to be secluded, small and well spaced so it was easy to find the fox and ensure a long hunt by preventing it from taking refuge nearby. They were within the protective ownership of the landlord but usually distant from settlement or pheasant rearing sites and outside parkland; 'Some of these covers were actually odd pieces of old common land, old cow pastures that had been allowed to get out of hand ... these "gorses" filled up odd corners of parishes' and were often on the parish boundaries.<sup>957</sup> (The large scale planting of artificial fox coverts will be described in a subsequent section).

The Townsends at Raynham continued to both shoot and hunt during the eighteenth century (the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquis had a pack from 1756-1772) in common with many English landowners – greater separation between shooting and hunting estates generally took place in the nineteenth century.<sup>958</sup> Late eighteenth-century accounts for Blickling, in the intermediate zone between the 'Good Sands' to the west and the rich loams of east Norfolk, reveal another estate where shooting and foxhunting appear to have co-existed, as at Raynham.<sup>959</sup> Lady Caroline Harbord succeeded her father to Blickling in 1793, a year after marrying Colonel William Harbord, Lord Suffield's oldest son, who inherited the title and the nearby Gunton estate in 1810. The accounts describe payments made to and by Colonel Harbord in the last five years of the century.<sup>960</sup> In 1798 he employed both James Gray, a huntsman, and Thomas Jolson, a whipper-in, – the latter costing £45.14s and 10d for a year's wages and board.<sup>961</sup> A range of payments linked to hunting expenses included £3.13s. 6d in April 1797 (the end of the hunting season) to John Howard for 'earth stopping [foxes]'. On January 13<sup>th</sup> 1798 £2.13s. was spent on 'horseflesh for the hounds', followed the next day by an enigmatic payment of 5 guineas to James Cusson for 'injury done him by foxes', presumably loss of stock.<sup>962</sup> In 1799 both sports were

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<sup>956</sup> Williamson, *Polite*, pp. 139-140

<sup>957</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 197

<sup>958</sup> *Baily's Hunting Directory* (Windsor, 1991)

<sup>959</sup> I am grateful to Professor T. Williamson for bringing these records to my attention.

<sup>960</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC3/340 (Blickling Estate Accounts 1796-1801)

<sup>961</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC3/340 (Blickling Estate Accounts, 11.4.1798)

<sup>962</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC3/340 (Blickling Estate Accounts, 14.1. 1798)

represented: James Gray the huntsman was still receiving payments 'on account' including £46. 2s. 7 1/2d on July 29<sup>th</sup>; while on August 7<sup>th</sup> £4.6s was spent on a game licence and 2 gamekeepers, Robert Collins and Richard Mitchell, were paid on September 14<sup>th</sup>.

There were advantages for estates that combined shooting and hunting. A series of documents stored in the attics at Raynham show how the estate's obsession with poachers protected both pheasant and fox stocks. A letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> February 1767 from Ephraim Smith of Blakeney reads:

My Lord, I understand that you have Binn very ill used at Morston in regard to the foxes you planted. I know and was an eyewitness to several brace at one time last summer. As far as any person can judge from surcumstance you hit on the right person he is I belive a relation of old Palmers that dyed of late years at Holkham and I know one of his Trayning and I belive is full of bad principals ... I have a good deel of time upon my hands at times. And with your lordships permission will have an eye upon their moations ...<sup>963</sup>

(The Raynham household accounts for the same month and year record payments for 'Onions with the hounds at Wells and Spooner with the hounds at Stiffkey' – both close to Morston where the foxes had been 'planted' previously).<sup>964</sup>

By 1784, the 4th Marquis had a list at Raynham of 'Poachers named' including 'The landlord of the Black Lion inn at Walsingham – a smuggler of bad complexion', 'John Skotto, chimney sweeper North Walsham low man marked with the smallpox sallow complexion' and 'John Cubit breeches maker usually worked at Holt was at Saxthorpe about the time the poachers were in Lord Orford's plantations. He left Saxthorpe that morning after the scuffle between the poachers and Lord Walpoles

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<sup>963</sup> Raynham Archives, Box labeled 'Townsend Corres 1620s – 1840s (part)' (bundle 'Lord Townshend's Correspondence re hunting and hounds')

<sup>964</sup> Raynham Archives, Attic Shelf H2/33, (Kennel Register, 1767)

people'.<sup>965</sup> However, individual landowners failed to stifle poaching as the establishment of the 'Norfolk Association for the Preservation of the Game' in May 5<sup>th</sup> 1787 acknowledged; 'several idle and evil minded Persons have deserted their lawful occupations and have employed themselves in the Destruction of game ... [but] the laudable Exertions hitherto made by individuals have proved ineffectual to put a Stop to such evil practices...' Members of the Association agreed to 'annually subscribe a Sum of Money in Proportion to the Number of our respective Manors and the Extent of our Property in the said County'; an appended list of subscribers included all the main Norfolk landowners and foxhunters.<sup>966</sup>

Game protection had already also become widespread in less fashionable shooting counties such as Shropshire. The Shropshire VCH recorded that by 1760-1765 (paid) gamekeepers were appointed on fifteen out of the seventy estates for which deputations (registrations) are recorded.<sup>967</sup>

However, increasingly there was not just conflict between landowners and poachers but also the growth of dissension within the elite. The clash between the needs of foxhunters and shooting aficionados was beginning to become more apparent: big bags depended on the preservation of pheasant stocks, which meant the elimination of vermin and, above all, foxes.

An interesting early example of the tensions between hunting and shooting landowners dates from 1759 in north-west Norfolk. Ketton Cremer provided a detailed explanation, quoting at length from a vitriolic exchange of correspondence between neighbours and fellow Whigs Thomas Coke of Holkham and George Townsend of Raynham. Ostensibly the quarrel was about Townsend's enthusiasm for raising a local militia and Coke's opposition since 'he regarded the militia as an ineffective institution, unlikely to be of much real service in an emergency... which

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<sup>965</sup> Raynham Archives, Attic shelves H2/3, Shelf H 2<sup>nd</sup> section, Boxes labelled 'George 1st Marquess Townsend - game preservation papers', (List 'poachers named', 1784)

<sup>966</sup> Raynham Archives, Attic shelves H2/3, Shelf H 2<sup>nd</sup> section, Boxes labelled 'George 1st Marquess Townsend - game preservation papers' (Pamphlet, Norfolk Association for the preservation of game May 5, 1788)

<sup>967</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 189

might fall into the hands of Tory country gentlemen with alarming consequences'.<sup>968</sup> But it soon extended to insults about Coke's predilection for encouraging his gamekeepers to shoot foxes to protect his pheasant stocks. Townsend wrote on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1759 about Coke's 'ill usage of me as a neighbour and ... your private transactions about foxes'. Coke replied 'as for private abetting killing foxes that I solemnly deny and defy anyone to prove ... [apart from] the foxes just about me you know I kill and you even told me you did not take it ill'.<sup>969</sup> Coke added that he had asked his tenants in Townsend's vicinity to maintain coverts and not disturb foxes. Townsend's riposte included the comment that Coke's keeper, Palmer, 'continues destroying every fox in my best hunting country'.<sup>970</sup> The correspondence ended when Townsend left for Canada with Wolfe's expedition in February 1759 and Coke died two months later.

As so often in early foxhunting history, Norfolk was ahead of the times. Twenty years later, Beckford acknowledged that the culling of foxes as vermin was 'beginning ... to the furious despair of foxhunters', though not in his own Dorset country.<sup>971</sup> The destruction of litters by gamekeepers was becoming a severe problem in Hampshire by 1800 and in Essex when Colonel John Cook was Master (1808-1813).<sup>972</sup>

For the foxhunting elite the death of a fox by alternative methods, such as shooting or trapping by a gamekeeper to protect pheasant stocks, was a solecism. Carr commented that 'the establishment of the sin of vulpicide in rural communities is one of the most astonishing triumphs of nineteenth-century foxhunters or ... yet another example of the imposition by a powerful rural establishment of the conveniences of its pleasure as a social norm'.<sup>973</sup> Paget, writing about Northamptonshire, recorded a severe punishment for fox stealing – presumably imposed by a foxhunting magistrate; in November 1816 'Young F. is gibbeted for having dug out a fox and

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<sup>968</sup> R.W. Ketton Cremer, *Norfolk Assembly* (London, 1957) p. 155

<sup>969</sup> Ketton Cremer, *Norfolk Assembly*, p. 162

<sup>970</sup> Ketton Cremer, *Norfolk Assembly*, p. 165

<sup>971</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p.147

<sup>972</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 155

<sup>973</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 113

sold it in Kettering market'.<sup>974</sup> Longrigg noted that a division began between shooting and hunting country gentlemen that sometimes became quite as bitter as the political or sectarian feuds of the early eighteenth century.<sup>975</sup> The growth of this split became far more significant in the nineteenth century and its geographical expression will be examined in a later section.

In summary, this chapter has explored two aspects of a wider access to foxhunting. It has examined some of the reasons for the diffusion of foxhunting spread during the latter half of the eighteenth century from the heartland areas, such as north-west Norfolk and the East Midlands, into more peripheral hunt countries such as Shropshire. The expansion was encouraged by fashionable hunting pilgrims to the Shires returning home to hunt in the new, 'Meynellian' style, improvements in the breeding of hounds and horses and the tightening of control by landlords over tenants. This led to the apparent paradox that hunting expanded across an increasingly privatised and enclosed landscape. The second part of the chapter has confirmed that a wider range of polite society began to hunt, with the very significant exception of women who were increasingly excluded from the hunting field. However, the evidence also supports the Stones' observation about the finely divided layers in society held rigidly apart by snobbery.<sup>976</sup> Although more members of the new commercial class and farmers started to hunt regularly between 1750-1800 they were either segregated into separate subscription packs or were tolerated by smarter packs while on horseback but socially excluded once dismounted. As Itzkovitz writing on the social history of English foxhunting summarised: hunting people never quite resolved the conflict between the image of hunting as a sport of gentlemen and as a sport open to all the people.

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<sup>974</sup> Paget, *History*, p. 117 (The dead bodies of executed criminals were hung on public display in a gibbet to deter potential imitators).

<sup>975</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 155

<sup>976</sup> Stones, *Open*, p. 423

## CHAPTER 6 – THE IMPACT OF FOXHUNTING ON THE LANDSCAPE 1700 - 1900

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methods used by foxhunters to protect and increase supplies of their prey. The first section concentrates on the issue of defining and protecting their exclusive hunting territory. The remainder explores the impact that their activities had on the landscape in England and, more specifically, the region of the East Midlands. Subsequent chapters explore in more detail the impact on Norfolk and Shropshire.

Ironically, one of the greatest problems that dogged foxhunting in some areas during this period was a shortage of foxes to hunt and kill; Carr summarised the paradox ‘the hunter is perforce a preservationist in order to have a beast to hunt’.<sup>977</sup> Previous chapters have highlighted the main reasons for the decline in fox numbers; firstly, loss of habitat and increased disturbance on remnants of common land following widespread enclosure and secondly, culling as vermin. This was summed up by Beckford in 1781: ‘farmers for their lambs; gentlemen for their game; and old women for their poultry – are their [foxes] inveterate enemies’.<sup>978</sup> The shortage of foxes was most obvious where areas of woodland, heath and rough pasture had been cleared during the drive to increase arable production. In the East Midlands for example, by the thirteenth century most villages were already almost unrelieved arable with no intervening woodland or waste;<sup>979</sup> by the early seventeenth century only 6 per cent of Leicestershire was classified as ‘waste’.<sup>980</sup> When Meynell’s father-in-law Boothby started hunting in Leicestershire in 1697 the foxes were ‘truly wild ... scarce in places and widely scattered’.<sup>981</sup> Later, habitat was also lost on the light lands where heaths and downs were ploughed ‘in the early years of the eighteenth century when grain prices were low ... as light land farmers expanded production in the face of falling

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<sup>977</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 111

<sup>978</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 146

<sup>979</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 31

<sup>980</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 92

<sup>981</sup> C. Simpson, *The Harboro' Country*, (London, 1927) p.13



prices'.<sup>982</sup> Williamson noted that north-west Norfolk and the South Downs had been particularly affected by this trend.<sup>983</sup> As has already been discussed, the East Midlands and sheep–corn areas were early centres for the development of foxhunting so the reduction in cover for foxes was particularly significant.

### **Defining hunt territories or 'countries'**

In the early days of specialised foxhunting, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the need for a steady supply of foxes within a particular neighbourhood was less pressing. Masters hunted across great swathes of countryside and could focus on the most promising areas; Lord Berkeley had four kennels (Cranford, Middlesex; Gerrard's Cross, Buckinghamshire; Nettlebed, Oxfordshire and Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire) and moved his pack of hounds and retinue of servants between them.<sup>984</sup> As the demand for foxes began to outstrip supply several different stratagems were employed to protect supplies and tackle the shortages – two are well illustrated in Norfolk. Shortages of foxes required a clearer definition both of who could hunt them and where: much of west Norfolk was divided in 1756 by a 'very sportsmanlike agreement ... for the purpose of arranging the geography and other details' between two packs. Henry Cornish Henley, of Sandringham, and William Mason of Necton's Confederate Pack was divided from George Townsend's, of Raynham, by 'the ... line of separation ... The Common Road from Houghton thro Docking to Burnham ... the Road from Lynn to Norwich to be the other boundary'. The agreement also outlined various protocols including whether they could draw each other's coverts and who had access to which earths.<sup>985</sup>

This is the earliest, detailed written agreement to divide hunting countries that I have found anywhere during this research. In contrast, T.W. Coke used a different method of ensuring a good supply of foxes; he did not confine his hunting geographically so he had access to a wider pool of prey. During the 1780s he was said to hunt from

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<sup>982</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p. 71

<sup>983</sup> Williamson, *Transformation*, p 71

<sup>984</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 76

<sup>985</sup> Swaffham Museum, Box 73 'Sport', (*Hunting in West Norfolk* by R. Harvey Mason. 49 page manuscript, undated but last entry 1908) pp. 26-27

home at Holkham and North Elmham, and also kept kennels at both Castle Hedingham in Suffolk and at Mark Hall in Essex so he could hunt in Epping Forest while sitting as an MP during the hunting season.<sup>986</sup>

In the main, disputes over hunting territory during the first half of the eighteenth century would be settled informally between landowners although some, as already described, were provoked into resorting to the law. However, tensions began to arise as more landowners turned to foxhunting; in November 1769 Lord Jersey wrote to Lady Spencer 'yesterday we went to Clipston, [south Nottinghamshire] where was the old story, Meynell had been there before us and we did not find'.<sup>987</sup> By March 1784 Jersey was writing to advise the young 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Spencer;

I am afraid that you have omitted to write to the Duke of Grafton or to speak to him about your continuing to hunt the particular covers on this side, which indeed were hunted by the hounds from Althorp, but which, being his Grace's private property and keeping foxhounds himself, I have reason to believe that he will expect some civility or attention from you upon the subject to ask the continuance of that extent of country, which he has hitherto consented to.<sup>988</sup>

At the start of the nineteenth century, as foxhunting had become more popular, the need to define who had the right to the limited supply of a valuable commodity became pressing; it became necessary to limit the number of packs of foxhounds hunting in any given area so the principles of hunting law began to evolve and exclusive hunt countries developed.<sup>989</sup> In 1806 the principles for claiming the right to hunt a 'country' were summed up by Beckford, the contemporary authority on foxhunting. In a memorandum on hunt law he summarised three categories: 'Original, Acquired and by Sufferance'.<sup>990</sup> The 'original' rights belonged to the landowners who owned coverts; but once a pack was established then the right to hunt across the

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<sup>986</sup> Stirling, *Coke*, p. 91

<sup>987</sup> Paget, *History*, p. 43

<sup>988</sup> Paget, *History*, pp. 59-60

<sup>989</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, pp. 70-71

<sup>990</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 71

country, with the consent of owners, was 'acquired' unless there was serious misconduct. The third right, by sufferance, allowed packs to draw temporarily coverts in a neighbouring country. The division of countries led to many disputes, often settled informally by neutral MFHs whose only sanction was the disapproval of the hunting community. In 1844 the master of the Old Berkshire suggested to a landowner, Lord Giffard, that he should allow the Old Berkshire hounds to draw his coverts although they lay in another pack's country. He received a lordly snub, implying that he was not a gentleman, 'you would ... make me consent to the greatest mischief that could be aimed at foxhunting generally ... no master would know ... what did or did not belong to his country'.<sup>991</sup> Increasing boundary disputes during the 1830s and 1840s led to the formation in 1856 of an MFH committee based in Boodles' Club to formalise the process of settling disputes and avoid expensive litigation and embarrassing publicity; this developed into the MFH Association, still the current arbiter in disputes, in 1881.<sup>992</sup>

Restricting the area that a hunt could 'draw' limited the potential natural supply of foxes to hunt. A second pressure on MFHs to find foxes promptly and show sport developed as some masters took subscriptions to defray expenses and new packs sprang up entirely funded by subscribers. Although Longrigg noted that by 1815 there were still more than 50 recognised packs of foxhounds maintained entirely at the expense of the owner,<sup>993</sup> Ridley estimated that the number of subscription packs rose from twenty-four in 1810 to one hundred in 1854.<sup>994</sup> Meynell had accepted subscriptions as early as 1761 although he never had more than four subscribers, and other MFHs were forced by rising costs to follow suit.<sup>995</sup> The earliest record of the formation of a subscription pack that Itzkovitz has established was for the Quarley Hounds created near Andover in 1788. However, there may have been an earlier pack in Norfolk, indicated by an advertisement placed in the Norwich Mercury in 1766 by 'the subscribers to the hounds', which is linked by Harvey to the Norwich

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<sup>991</sup> F.C. Loder- Symonds & E .P. Crowdy, *A History of the Old Berks Hunt* (London, 1905) p. 151

<sup>992</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 73

<sup>993</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 221

<sup>994</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, p. 37

<sup>995</sup> Itzkovitz, *Peculiar*, p. 75

Hunt (sometimes called the Carrow Abbey Hunt).<sup>996</sup> Ridley has noted that subscription packs often evolved out of hunt clubs as the social and financial roles of the clubs were divorced and a hunt committee formed to raise subscriptions and negotiate with a Master.<sup>997</sup> Whether members were paying fees to a hunt club or to a subscription pack, as ‘customers’ they expected the hounds to find a fox and provide an exciting chase. Increasingly MFHs needed a reliable supply of foxes in predictable locations.

### **Indicators of a shortage of foxes – ‘bag foxes’**

Traditionally foxhunting historians have dated the onset of fox shortages to the last quarter of the eighteenth century,<sup>998</sup> unsurprisingly this overlaps with the surge in participation in hunting and the growth of subscription packs. But the evidence is not as clear-cut as has been suggested and close examination of contemporary records shows that fox numbers could vary significantly within a hunt country – depending principally on the attitudes of the local landowners and extent of suitable habitat. Bovill wrote that a shortage of foxes forced Meynell to temporarily stop hunting and ‘move his whole establishment out of Leicestershire to the borders of Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire’ to allow stocks to build up.<sup>999</sup> Carr dates this to 1794;<sup>1000</sup> but examination of Meynell’s whipper-in’s diary, which lists the outcome of each day’s hunting between 1791 and 1800, suggests a more nuanced situation. It reveals that the longest period with no hunting lay between December 18<sup>th</sup> 1794 and February 12<sup>th</sup> 1795, although a solitary entry in January 1795 notes ‘been twice in the snow to Billesdon Coplow to disturb the foxes’ which might suggest that the hiatus was due to harsh weather and not shortages of foxes. No ‘blank’ days (when no fox is found) are recorded for the rest of the season and a total of 53 were killed. The previous year Jones noted that he ‘rested at Bowden Inn’, in the south of Meynell’s hunt country, from December 31<sup>st</sup> 1793 until January 11<sup>th</sup> when he returned to Quorndon and resumed hunting on January 20<sup>th</sup>. That season’s total of 93 foxes

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<sup>996</sup> Harvey, *Deer*, p. 22

<sup>997</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, p. 37

<sup>998</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 110, Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 45, Griffin, *Blood*, p. 135

<sup>999</sup> Bovill, *English*, p. 214

<sup>1000</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 110

killed does not suggest a dire shortage and exceeds the tally of 69 in the 1795-1796 season.<sup>1001</sup>

Meynell's attitude to bag foxes, and his need for them, is unclear from Jones's diaries, possibly because supplies varied in different areas. During the 1791-1792 season he killed 68 foxes and did not record any 'blank' days; but on February 13<sup>th</sup> 1792 Jones recorded: 'Found at Barkby Holt ...run him into Mr Palmer's house, and bagged him; I turned him up coming home ...'. A couple of years later on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1795 '6 or 7 foxes afoot' are noted at Billesdon Coplow, in the heart of his hunt country, due east of Leicester, suggesting that supplies are still good locally. But two months later in January 1796, hunting in a different area further north, Jones recorded 'met at Cotes ... found at Mr Goodere's cover, went away ... over the Field to Wysall town, a man caught the fox in Town, bagged him, sent him to Rempston to be turned out at night' to augment the local supply. (Both Cotes and Rempstone are near Quorndon).

There had been indicators of a shortage in some areas throughout the eighteenth century. A classic sign can be the use of 'bag foxes' that were 'turned down' or released from a bag (although it is important to note that sometimes they were used to ensure a quick, failsafe 'find' even where numbers were adequate). However, two early examples, already noted, illustrate shortages in both the Midland clay vales and eastern sheep-corn systems where fox cover was scarce. In Northamptonshire Justinian Isham of Lamport recorded in his diary on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1711, 'Mr Andrews turn'd up a bag fox in Brixworth field' and in April 1712, 'Mr Isham dined with 'several of the fox hunters, who in the morning had hunted a bag fox'<sup>1002</sup>. A decade later the 1721 Holkham Household accounts show a payment for 'bringing 5 braces of foxes from Marsham'.<sup>1003</sup>

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<sup>1001</sup> Jones, *Diary 1791-1800*

<sup>1002</sup> *VCH Leicestershire*, Vol. 2 (London, 1969), pp. 355-356

<sup>1003</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A7 (Household accounts relating to hunting expenses, 1721) p. 176

Fifty years later the practice was apparently widespread; by 1770 the 'Gentlemen of Sunderland' had a subscription pack hunting bag foxes<sup>1004</sup> and nearby in Durham the Earl of Darlington's meticulous hunting records demonstrate the point of his conversion to artificially inflating his fox supply. In the 1787-1788 hunting season his pack only caught 28 foxes; the following year they killed 43, of which 12 were 'turned down', and in 1789-1790 his hounds killed 45 foxes including 6 bag foxes.<sup>1005</sup>

But there was a considerable stigma in being seen to buy foxes from outside one's own hunt country. In his 1781 book Beckford decried the practice of importing foxes, suggesting that it was widely prevalent, 'I dislike bag foxes' on the grounds that their scent is 'too good and makes hounds idle' and 'it makes hounds very wild; and, if often used to hunt bag-foxes will become riotous enough to hunt anything'.<sup>1006</sup> But he also devoted Letter XXIII to methods of building up local supplies of foxes including planting fox coverts, buying foxes and rearing cubs in captivity in elaborate 'fox courts'. He implies that all are accepted methods to overcome shortages by this date.<sup>1007</sup> There appears to be a distinction, at least amongst elite fox hunters, between buying-in foxes from other areas (not the action of a gentleman) in contrast to improving the supply and moving foxes within their own hunting 'country'.

During the eighteenth century, despite the stigma, buying and hunting bag foxes became common where shortages existed. By the beginning of the next century several dealers in London, mainly based in Leadenhall market, were openly selling foxes at 12s 6d to 16s a head. In another example of foreign influence on a quintessentially British sport, they claimed their stock came predominantly from France, but also Germany, Netherlands and Scotland.<sup>1008</sup> 'Foxes were caught in the sand dunes south of Boulogne and shipped to England in small boats, ten or so in a box with some plucks [chickens] for provender'.<sup>1009</sup> Bovill noted that Surtees, hunting in County Durham, was surprised to be quoted 10s a head per fox on sale in Boulogne; Colonel Joliffe, master of the Merstham Hounds in Surrey, sent a man to

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<sup>1004</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p. 80

<sup>1005</sup> Earl of Darlington, *Operations of the Raby Pack, 1787-1790* (H. Reynell, London, 1804)

<sup>1006</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 141

<sup>1007</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, pp. 141-147

<sup>1008</sup> Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 45

<sup>1009</sup> H.H. Dixon, ('The Druid'), *Silk and Scarlet* (London, 1859) p. 391

France with a couple of hounds to find and then dig out foxes but didn't save much money as he only obtained twelve.<sup>1010</sup> The French connection initially appears puzzling but, because no gentleman could be seen denuding a fellow fox hunter's country, dealers emphasised their stock's French provenance although, as Bovill pointed out, 'they seldom were foreigners'.<sup>1011</sup> The trade that did exist may have been encouraged by contacts within a considerable colony of English settled in Boulogne to dodge their creditors; these included fox hunters such as John Mytton, an MFH from Shropshire, who ran up an unpaid hotel bill in Boulogne and was taken to the debtors' prison, known locally as the '*Hotel d'Angleterre*'.<sup>1012</sup> Earlier, while still an MFH, Mytton had foxes sent to him on the London-Shrewsbury coach and two were even included in his bankruptcy sale.<sup>1013</sup>

However it is striking that during, and after, the Napoleonic wars the language changes: imported foxes were condemned as 'damned French dunghills' by Osbaldeston who was master of the Quorn (1817-1821 and 1823-1827) and the Pytchley (1827-1834).<sup>1014</sup> The hunting author 'Scrutator', master of the Craven in Yorkshire from 1825, blamed French blood for 'the present mixed and degenerate race' of foxes while Vyner, writing in 1841 complained of 'mongrel-bred vermin ... stained as they are by the introduction of French blood'.<sup>1015</sup> By 1859 'The Druid' asserted that over 1,000 foxes had been sold in Leadenhall market the previous year including many allegedly from Holland although 'it does not do to inquire where they all come from but it is certain that Essex is fearfully stripped and Norfolk as well'.<sup>1016</sup> The counties close to the dealers of London suffered most, especially where shooting landowners were keen to see the local fox population reduced or small owner-occupiers in non-hunting areas, such as south Norfolk, saw an opportunity for profit. Osbaldeston gave up hunting the Thurlow hounds in 1834; summarising his reasons as: 'there is not a fox or a gentleman left in Suffolk'.<sup>1017</sup>

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<sup>1010</sup> Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 45

<sup>1011</sup> Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 50

<sup>1012</sup> Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 19, J. Holdsworth, *Mango: the life and times of Squire John Mytton of Halston*, (London, 1972) p. 175

<sup>1013</sup> Bovill *Nimrod*, p. 48

<sup>1014</sup> Bovill, *English*, p. 216

<sup>1015</sup> Quoted in Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 46

<sup>1016</sup> Quoted in Bovill, *Nimrod*, p. 50

<sup>1017</sup> *VCH Suffolk*, Vol. 2 (London, 1907) p. 358

## Methods of encouraging fox numbers

Apart from the use of 'bag foxes', foxhunters manipulated the landscape to provide better habitat for their prey. This only became possible following enclosure and the consequent privatisation of the landscape allowing landowners to control access to sites where foxes were vulnerable as 'a landscape of right and custom' was replaced by 'a landscape of private property'.<sup>1018</sup>

### *Artificial fox coverts*

Enclosure and associated improvements sweeping away 'wastes' led to a striking fall in safe refuges for foxes to breed in. Hunting landowners were driven to sowing patches of gorse, planting new coverts and protecting existing woodland by compensating tenants. Their goal was to ensure 'more foxes, the foxes must be evenly distributed over the country ... and ... they must be induced to lie up in definite places where they could be found when wanted'.<sup>1019</sup> Cecil explained: 'it was found more agreeable to hunt them [foxes] over the open plains than through woodlands, especially by those who were ambitious to exhibit their equestrian prowess ... for this purpose artificial gorse coverts were formed, independently of coppices and plantations'.<sup>1020</sup>

Ellis noted that there were various ways of starting a fox covert but the two most popular were fencing an existing rough area and paying rent to the owner to ensure that it was not disturbed or poached, or by establishing an artificial covert. Gorse or 'whin' or 'furze' was particularly valued because it provided good cover for foxes, (and their foodstuff – rabbits), while its prickles protected them from disturbance by poachers or people seeking foxes for sale to other packs. Coverts were started by either allowing existing gorse to take hold within a fenced area or by sowing gorse seed. Beckford, hunting in Dorset during the 1780s, encouraged their planting, 'furze coverts cannot be too much encouraged' reasoning that they are safe for foxes to lie

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<sup>1018</sup> Williamson & Bellamy, *Property*, p. 102

<sup>1019</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 61

<sup>1020</sup> C. Tongue ('Cecil'), *Record of the Chase* (London, 1854) p. 109



up in but conversely, as an advantage, 'a fox when pressed by hounds will seldom go into a furze brake' – thereby escaping or shortening the hunt.<sup>1021</sup>

William Lambton, writing in Durham to a friend in 1793 recognised the impact of new plantings, 'From the banks of the river to the seaside we might surely improve the country by inclosing some patches of whin or making other coverts'.<sup>1022</sup> Elsewhere in Durham the Earl of Darlington, who kept a pack for over 50 years from 1787 rapidly started improving his hunting landscape, in 1788 he notes drawing 'Applegarth's new whin'.<sup>1023</sup> By 1826 he was reportedly paying his tenants a total of £340 p.a. as rent (or rent rebate) for fox coverts.<sup>1024</sup>

### *Artificial fox coverts in the East Midlands*

The goal of increasing fox numbers was tackled by altering the landscape to improve the habitat and stimulating fox numbers naturally (by protecting them and providing safe havens). The most striking visual impact on the Shires' landscape was the flurry of fox covert development, either by enclosing existing rough ground or by planting a virgin site, which started prior to 1800. Hoskins sketched a description of the classic East Midlands landscape in 1955: 'gorse covers [sic] and spinneys were started by hunting landlords in well-chosen spots. These were not less than two acres in size and rarely more than twenty acres. Some of these covers were actually odd bits of common land, old cow pastures that had been allowed to get out of hand'.<sup>1025</sup> He noted three more characteristics; the coverts were a regular shape, they often filled up 'odd corners of parishes' and most were made in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This was often signalled by their names; for example, the 'Botany Bay' covert planted in a remote part of east Leicestershire, furthest from the kennels, during the 1790s when the distant penal colony was in the news. By the 1830s in Leicestershire the Quorn Hunt was paying £35 p.a. in rent for a gorse covert established twenty years previously on former common land.

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<sup>1021</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 144

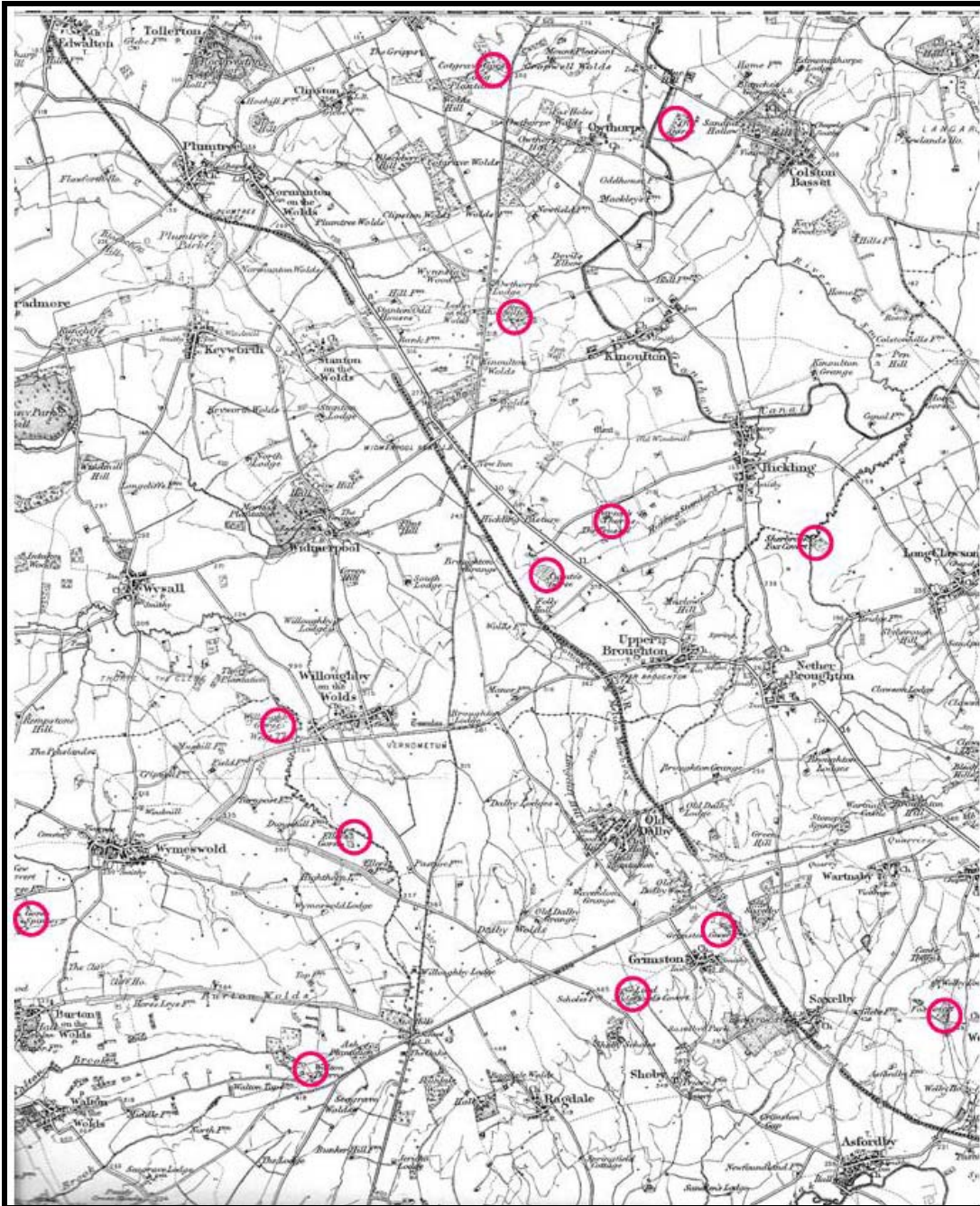
<sup>1022</sup> *VCH Durham*, Vol. 2 (London, 1968) p. 393

<sup>1023</sup> Earl of Darlington, *Foxhounds*, Vol. 1878-88, Oct 5<sup>th</sup> 1788

<sup>1024</sup> *VCH Durham*, Vol. 2 p. 390

<sup>1025</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, p. 197

Figure 6.1 shows details of an area in Leicestershire, east of Quorndon and west of Melton Mowbray, in 1912; the area on the map stretches about 10 miles west to east and 11 ½ miles north to south. The red circles show the characteristic distribution of ‘fox coverts’, ‘gorses’ and ‘thorns’.



Scale: 0.66 inches to 1 mile

**Figure 6.1** part of OS 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1 inch to 1 mile, Map 142 (Melton Mowbray) 1912

Small coverts dotted across an open countryside ensured a regular supply of foxes and the heightened chance of a long, straight run instead of circling within large woodlands. Jones's diary of Meynell's hunts is full of references to 'Gorses' named for their owners; for example on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1795 hounds 'met at Thornley's Gorse, did not find, found at Gerrard's Gorse ...'.<sup>1026</sup> However, without regular management thorns soon took over and trees grew up and shaded out the gorse producing the more familiar wooded fox coverts of Leicestershire – 'compact, geometrical intrusions' into the Midlands landscape.<sup>1027</sup>

The initial decision over whether to plant gorse, thorn or other trees to start a fox covert seems to have been dependent on the individual landowner's preference. Ellis's description of the Quorn 'Monday' country (named because it was usually hunted on that day of the week) lists 41 coverts/woods in the triangle bounded by the Rivers Wreake and Soar stretching from Melton Mowbray to Quorndon in the south and Widmerpool to the north. Of the forty-one, eleven are 'gorses', four 'thorns' and four 'spinneys' (thorny copses planted to shelter game). In addition Welby Osiers (willows) were planted in the 1870s as fox cover. The remainder is mixed woodland. Ellis explained the drawback of thorn coverts, 'if the land is strong the thorns will be soon almost hidden by grass and weeds and the foxes will make their runs and kennels under them ... [which made them] difficult to draw'.<sup>1028</sup> The genesis of coverts varied: some, such as Charlton's Gorse, were 'several acres of self sown gorse' subsequently enclosed while others were deliberately sown including 'Prince of Wales Cover' made in 1871 but replanted in 1884 with thorn and privet.<sup>1029</sup> Nimrod, writing in 1842, emphasised the need for good preparation 'the ground is all the better for being trenched to the depth of from a foot to a foot and a half; and it should be as clean and in as good condition as if it were to be the seedbed of turnips. The seed ... should be drilled in the ground and hoed, after the manner of a turnip crop'.<sup>1030</sup> The following illustrations demonstrate the differences between the two most popular forms of coverts.

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<sup>1026</sup> Jones, *Diary*

<sup>1027</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 114

<sup>1028</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 63

<sup>1029</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 204

<sup>1030</sup> C. Apperley ('Nimrod'), *The life of a sportsman* (London, 1842) p. 396



**Figure 6.2** 'Sir Mark Masterman Sykes with his hounds breaking [gorse] cover' by William Ward, 1821<sup>1031</sup>



**Figure 6.3** 'The Quorn drawing Walton Thorns' by Major G.D. Giles, 1895<sup>1032</sup>

<sup>1031</sup> F.L. Wilder, *English Sporting Prints* (London, 1974) p. 114

<sup>1032</sup> Longrigg, *History*, p.153

Figure 6.2 shows a low, gorse covert, planted in Yorkshire, with the hounds visible above the furze. In contrast, Figure 6.3 illustrates a thorn covert in Leicestershire, with taller shrubs providing less continuous ground cover for foxes.

The costs of planting gorse covers appeared frequently in estate accounts; for example in Nottinghamshire the Willoughby family papers record that in May 1800 gorse seeds costing £1. 5s 8d were bought from Withers and Speechly, Nursery and Seedsmen in Newark,<sup>1033</sup> and in June Samuel Keetley was paid £37. 18s. on behalf of H. Willoughby for wages and materials for planting gorse covers at Caunton and Muskham.<sup>1034</sup>

The maintenance of a fox covert was a significant continuing commitment by a landowner. Gorse produced 'a nice warm cover of uniform thickness' but soon grew straggly and impossible to draw and subsequently failed as trees grew up and shaded out the gorse.<sup>1035</sup> Longer lasting gorse coverts were managed by periodic burning or cutting that put them out of use for a season or two. Fredericks suggested that fox coverts should be planted with blackthorn or gorse, sometimes with the bottom thickened with privet. He recommended that thorn coverts should be cutback hard every ten years to about three foot from the ground to ensure that they remain thick. Meanwhile gorse coverts need cutting short every six or seven years and the new re-growth weeded and kept safe from rabbits by fencing.

Ellis, writing of Leicestershire, also included another category of land use which is significant as fox habitat – the 'rough'; areas of uncultivated land which had a two-fold importance for foxhunters. Initially they provided cover for foxes but also, as uncultivated sites - often on the fringes of estates or parishes - could be converted into more formal coverts. In the first category, Ellis mentioned that within Charnwood Forest 'there are several woods and roughs', he also noted the importance of 'the nameless bit of thorny rough behind the Durham Ox' and maps and named three

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<sup>1033</sup> Nottingham University Library, Dept. Manuscripts and Special collections, GB 159Mi E 23/29

<sup>1034</sup> Nottingham University Library, Dept. Manuscripts and Special collections, GB 159Mi E 23/30

<sup>1035</sup> Sir Charles Fredericks, *Foxhunting*, Lonsdale Library Vol. 7 (London, 1930) p. 119

Roughs in the Quorn Tuesday country west of the River Soar.<sup>1036</sup> Ellis also commented on the scope for improving roughs' value for hunting recording the transformation of 'Dalby Rough Field' into a covert renamed 'Bridget's Gorse'.

Paget wrote that in Northamptonshire the earliest artificial fox covert was planted by Earl Spencer in 1780 at Elkington (almost 60 years after the first records in Norfolk) and the rent paid by hunts for covers soon became a significant income for some entrepreneurial tenants. By 1789, J. Cradock was writing from Gumley Hall to Earl Spencer:

On Sunday last Lord R. Spencer and Mr Meynell sent their agent over to me to inform me that they could not comply with the exorbitant demands of the farmers etc on the Walton side of the country, and therefore would give up those covers. When this was communicated the farmers became outrageous ... to say the truth to you my Lord, some bills were paid at Langton some years ago without examination and the farmers have been made in consequence more ravenous than the foxes they pursue.<sup>1037</sup>

The rents paid to landowners in 1798 by Lord Spencer's agent for nineteen fox coverts totalled £124. 7s. 6d. Individual payments range from sixteen guineas for 'Peter's Furze' to two guineas. Hunt subscribers paid ten guineas a year at this time.<sup>1038</sup>

### *Artificial fox earths*

The second significant alteration to the landscape made by foxhunters to improve their sport was the building of artificial earths within new fox coverts or existing woods. Where natural earths are scarce, artificial or 'false' earths provide a breeding site to increase the supply of foxes, and also a location where foxes can be reliably found and 'bolted' (flushed out with terriers) on an otherwise 'blank' day. Alternatively the entrances could be blocked so that the fox was forced to lie up outside in open

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<sup>1036</sup> Ellis, *Leicestershire*, p. 204

<sup>1037</sup> Paget, *History*, p. 62

<sup>1038</sup> Paget, *History*, p. 72

country and provide sport for the following day.<sup>1039</sup> Wroughton maintained that the actual shape was not important but suggested that the 'dens' should be three feet by one foot six inches wide and nine inches high, built in brick three courses in depth, each den covered by two or three stone slabs. Several dens could be linked by pipework or 'dry drains' – the optimum length should be around 50 yards. The entrance tunnels should be sealed with a removable grating.<sup>1040</sup> Descriptions of actual earths are rare but Wilcox gives details, including a plan (Figure 6.4), of an earth 'quarried into Oolitic limestone in the midst of a wood' at Stanton Park in Wiltshire and suggests that it dates from the early nineteenth century.<sup>1041</sup>



**Figure 6.4** Artificial fox earth, Stanton Park (OS ST 895795), early nineteenth century<sup>1042</sup>

<sup>1039</sup> K.A. MacMahon, 'An early artificial fox earth at Bishop Burton, East Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, No 38, 1952 -1955 p. 278

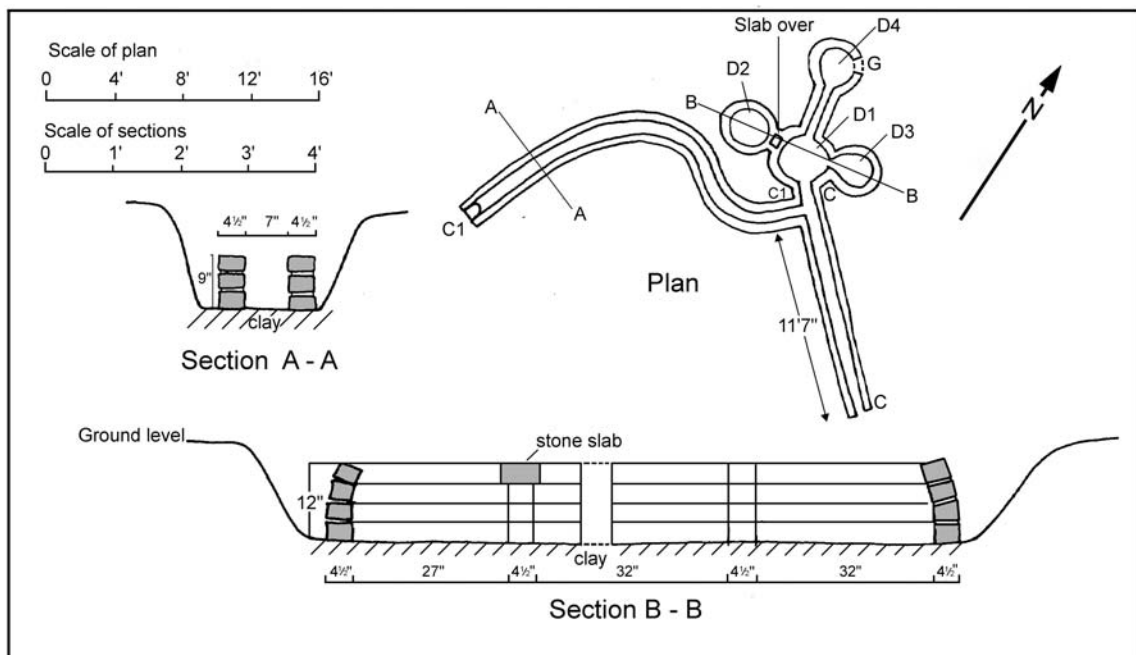
<sup>1040</sup> W. Wroughton, *Management of fox coverts*, (London, 1920)

<sup>1041</sup> R. Wilcox, 'An artificial fox-earth, Stanton Park, near Chippenham', *Post Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 11 (1977) pp.105-106

<sup>1042</sup> Wilcox, 'An artificial fox-earth ...', p.105

Figure 6.4 shows that there were two tunnel entrances and a tunnel across the interior that led through a fox den 0.80m wide by 1.60m long by approximately 1m high. The tunnels were roofed with rubble limestone slabs and the whole structure was covered with a low mound of soil about 0.2m high.

MacMahon provided both a description and plan of a second artificial earth with four dens in East Yorkshire on a chalk Wold (Figure 6.5). By comparing the bricks used with those in local walling of known age and the history of local foxhunting MacMahon suggests the earth dates from the second half of the eighteenth century or early in the nineteenth.<sup>1043</sup>



**Figure 6.5** Artificial fox earth near Bishop Burton, East Yorkshire (OS SE 963384)<sup>1044</sup>

Key. The figure shows four dens (marked D1-D4) connected to two channels (C-C and C1-C1) made of bricks. The largest den was around 1m across and all were made of bricks roofed with limestone slabs.

<sup>1043</sup> MacMahon, 'An early artificial fox earth at Bishop Burton ...' pp. 275-278. I am grateful to Dr Jon Finch for this reference.

<sup>1044</sup> MacMahon, 'An early artificial fox earth ...' pp. 275-278.



The early history of artificial earths is opaque; of necessity their presence was often kept secret to avoid disturbance but there are several references to them in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Earl of Darlington's diaries for the Raby Hounds in Durham give a clear picture of his reasons for establishing artificial earths. In the 1788-1789 season he hunted 77 times and killed 43 foxes, of which 12 were 'turned out' ie bag foxes. Despite the bag foxes and a range of whin coverts he had 11 blank days. On November 8<sup>th</sup> he recorded 'threw off [met] at nine o'clock ... tried the old whin, then all Wolworth plantations, Fleetham's whin, Dobson's whin and the cover next to the beck at the back of Winston's farm where we found ... earthed him in the new earth'. By October in the following year he mentions 'the new whin with the earth' where he 'found very handsomely ... a very pretty run and some hard running'.<sup>1045</sup> In 1838 a summary of the number of foxes killed, how many were 'wild' and how many days were blank was published.<sup>1046</sup> While twelve bag foxes were used in 1788 and six in both 1787 and 1789 the numbers soon tailed off so that only one or two were acknowledged from 1792 onwards, with none beyond 1804. It is not possible to know if the artificial coverts and earths were producing enough foxes by then, or if the social stigma of hunting 'bagmen' prevented the Duke from acknowledging them, but 'blank' days fell from 16 in the season in 1789 to an average of 2 or 3 from 1803. Longrigg noted that during the same period a few artificial earths were made in countries like the Roodings in Essex where most foxes were 'stump bred' (born above ground in tree stumps or undergrowth).<sup>1047</sup>

#### *Artificial fox earths in the East Midlands*

The importance of artificial earths in the Shires was highlighted in 1792 by Henry Otway writing from Stanford, in west Northamptonshire, to Lord Spencer about a dispute over hunting territory; he refers to both bag foxes and artificial earths. 'I have not, however, any intention to hunt fox at present, though I turned out seven brace and half of foxes in the summer with that view ... I shall immediately destroy some artificial earths I have made here'.<sup>1048</sup> John Musters, MFH in South Nottinghamshire

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<sup>1045</sup> Durham CRO, XL7.99.2 RAB (Earl of Darlington's Diaries, Foxhounds of Raby 1788-1788)

<sup>1046</sup> *Duke of Cleveland's foxhounds, operations of the Raby pack in the season 1837-38*, (Richmond, 1838)

<sup>1047</sup> Longrigg, *English* p. 123

<sup>1048</sup> Paget, *History*, p. 63

from 1805-1813, lived at Wiverton in the Vale of Belvoir and made some false earths in 'the nice coverts all round it'.<sup>1049</sup> While the traditional method of construction was to lay pipes and chambers underground, Paget recorded another method; in 1818 a badger was transplanted from Northamptonshire to the Brocklesby country in Lincolnshire 'to act as an architect of earths'.<sup>1050</sup>

### *Fox courts or paddocks*

During the eighteenth century there was also a vogue for building fox courts or paddocks, confined spaces designed to hold foxes until they were released (as bag foxes) for hunting. Beckford, writing in Dorset in the early 1780s advised

If you breed up [fox] cubs you will find a fox court necessary: they should be kept there until they are large enough to take care of themselves. It ought to be open at the top and walled in. I need not to tell you that it must be every way well secured, and particularly the floor of it must be bricked or paved. A few boards fitted to the corners will also be of use for shelter and to hide them. Foxes ought to be kept very clean and have plenty of fresh water: birds and rabbits are their best food.<sup>1051</sup>

George Templar, an MFH in Devon until 1826, insured against any loss of his fox population by keeping a score in two yards, each with a separate coop and attached to a long chain and swivel so it could take exercise.<sup>1052</sup> Carr recorded that these foxes were rarely killed out hunting but retrieved and taken back to the kennels, adding that the unfortunate 'Bold Dragoon' had been hunted thirty-six times.<sup>1053</sup>

In conclusion, from around 1800 foxhunters became increasingly concerned with establishing and defending their hunt 'countries' and stock of foxes. The importance of 'artificial' landscape features to improve fox numbers in areas where agricultural

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<sup>1049</sup> G. Osbaldeston, *Squire Osbaldeston: his autobiography* (ed.) E.D. Cuming (London, 1926) p. 32

<sup>1050</sup> Paget, *History*, p.118

<sup>1051</sup> Beckford, *Thoughts*, p. 14

<sup>1052</sup> L. Edwards, *Famous Foxhunters* (London, 1932) p. 28

<sup>1053</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 85

improvements and enclosure had swept away original habitats has been demonstrated. Following on from this chapter's national overview and regional-scale exploration of the East Midlands, the following two chapters explore the development of hunting and its impact on the landscape in two contrasting areas – Norfolk and Shropshire.

## CHAPTER 7 – FOXHUNTING IN NORFOLK

### Introduction

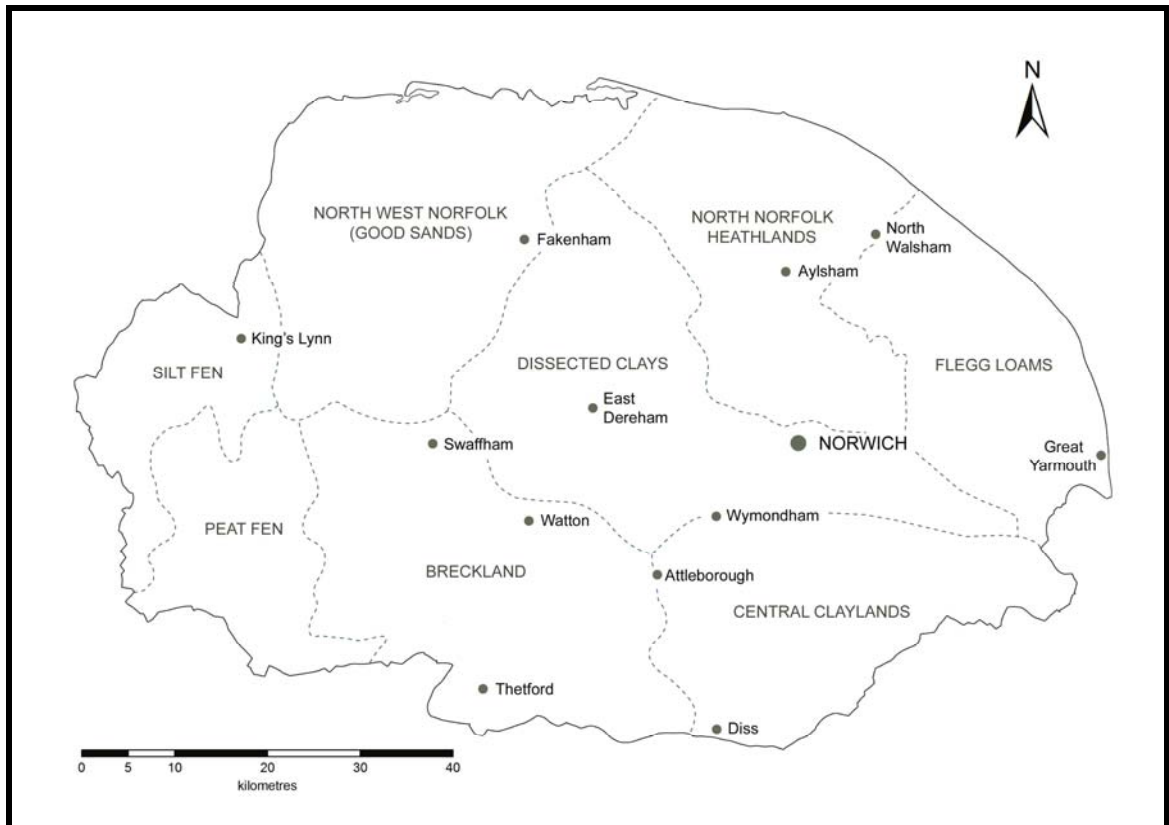
Previous chapters have already explored some aspects of foxhunting in Norfolk. The history of the sport's development in the county has been used to explore questions around both 'place' – where early hunting started in the county and why; and 'practice' – how early foxhunters used some of the principles of agricultural improvement to enhance their sport and how diffusion spread an elite activity outwards to more inclusive subscription packs. This chapter explores the impact of foxhunting on the landscape of Norfolk, and *vice versa*, in the context of contemporaneous changes to the environment and the rise in popularity of shooting. The landscape features related to hunting, described in the next two chapters, reflect Braudel's third tier of smaller scale, specific activity described in Chapter 1. The latter sections of the chapters, describing the results of a detailed survey of the impact of fox coverts on the Norfolk and Shropshire landscapes, also provides an opportunity to test Hoskins' discoveries in the East Midlands about the genesis, size and location of fox coverts in two contrasting counties.

Norfolk differs from the second research area, Shropshire, in many ways. Two of the most obvious are location and relief; Shropshire is a land-locked county covering 3,487 square km in the west of England with a highest point of 546m (the Brown Clee). Norfolk, flanking the North Sea in the east, is one-third larger covering 5,371 square km and ranges in height from 1m below sea level in Stow Bardolph Fen to a height of 113m at West Runton on the east coast. However, Dymond wrote of Norfolk that 'despite the lack of dramatic relief it is noted for its rich variety of soils and land use'.<sup>1054</sup> The resultant range of agricultural use and patterns of landownership had an important impact on the development of foxhunting in Norfolk, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Equally significant was the county's enclosure history. As will be described, although much of the county was gradually enclosed piecemeal

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<sup>1054</sup> D. Dymond, *The Norfolk Landscape* (Bury St Edmunds, 1990) p. 24

prior to 1700, about 31 per cent of the county area was affected by over 300 parliamentary acts starting with Stokesby, nine miles west of Yarmouth, in 1720.<sup>1055</sup>



**Figure 7.1** The physical regions of Norfolk<sup>1056</sup>

Figure 7.1 illustrates the main physical divisions in Norfolk. In the west of the county 'vast works of drainage and reclamation were undertaken in the fens during the seventeenth century, and much of the peats and silts lay under permanent grass, with arable crops confined to the Fen edge areas where artificial drainage had taken place'.<sup>1057</sup> But as the peat was drained it shrank and by the end of the eighteenth century most of the peat fens were once more 'waste' – only reclaimed anew when steam engines were introduced from 1820 onwards.<sup>1058</sup> Few great estates developed in this area of piecemeal enclosure and drainage apart from the Stow

<sup>1055</sup> M. Turner, Parliamentary enclosure in Wade Martins, P. (ed.), *A Historical Atlas of Norfolk*. 2nd edn. (Norfolk, 1994) p.124

<sup>1056</sup> Adapted from S. Wade Martins & T. Williamson. *Roots of Change* (Exeter, 1990) p. x

<sup>1057</sup> Dymond, *Norfolk*, p. 209

<sup>1058</sup> Dymond, *Norfolk*, p. 229

Bardolph estate on the extreme eastern edge, bought by Sir Nicholas Hare, in 1553. Le Neve's correspondence shows that in 1707 Richard Hare spent 30 guineas on a horse and hounds (appropriately probably for hare hunting)<sup>1059</sup> but by 1826 Bryant had mapped an outlier of fox coverts on the estate.

By contrast, the Breckland of south west Norfolk lies on droughty glacial sands and gravels where, before enclosure, 'irregular cropping in the heath was practiced beside a system of "every year" lands in which crops were grown each season thanks largely to careful fertilisation' by sheep folded on these 'infields'.<sup>1060</sup> Large estates, such as the Bedingfield's at Oxborough, were built up on the comparatively cheap sandy loams and many similar parishes did not require Acts as the landowners bought out small holders, reclaimed the heaths and enclosed the arable.<sup>1061</sup> In other parishes the open-fields survived alongside heaths and warrens because the low value of the land precluded the cost of enclosure, until the Napoleonic Wars forced up food prices.

The population was higher on the 'Good Sands' of the North West and North Norfolk Heathlands where open-field systems of co-operatively managed, individually held strips developed around the nucleated villages. As already described, a distinctive system persisted alongside the complex communal open-fields and commons where lords of the manor retained 'fold rights' which allowed them to run flocks across the open-fields once crops had been harvested. 'This made it difficult for open-fields to be removed by gradual, piecemeal methods so various forms of large-scale, formal enclosures were often adopted in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.<sup>1062</sup> Turner's work shows that most of the Parliamentary enclosure in the north-west took place in the earlier wave during the 1760s and 1770s, mainly enclosing open-field arable, heaths and commons often involving over 60 per cent of

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<sup>1059</sup> F. Rye (ed.) *Calendar of correspondence and documents relating to the family of Oliver le Neve of Witchingham, Norfolk 1675-1743*, letter no 2012, dated 28.2.1707 (Norwich, 1895)

<sup>1060</sup> J. Holderness, Farming regions 1500-1750, in P. Wade Martins (ed.) *Historical Atlas of Norfolk 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Norfolk, 1994) p. 102

<sup>1061</sup> A. Macnair & T. Williamson, *William Faden and Norfolk's eighteenth-century Landscape* (Oxford, 2010) p. 148

<sup>1062</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden* p. 145

the parish area.<sup>1063</sup> Turning to the north-east, Turner noted that the rich loams of the Flegg were often enclosed comparatively late – in the second great wave of parliamentary enclosures from 1793-1815. This has been explained by the very fertile soils farmed under a local system which ‘allowed local farmers almost complete freedom in cropping ... thus there was very little incentive for the principal landowners ... to undertake enclosure for it was not hard to find tenants’.<sup>1064</sup>

In contrast to the formal enclosure of the co-operatively organised open-field areas, much of the Central Claylands, mapped as ‘Wood-pasture’ by Thirsk, on the boulder clays of south-east Norfolk were enclosed piecemeal comparatively early. This led by 1500 to a distinctive landscape of small hamlets and dispersed farms where independent family farmers concentrated on stock rearing and dairying. There were strikingly few large estates in this area of good soils and high land values. The difference in distribution between the ‘early’ and ‘late’ enclosed areas and forms of landholding in Norfolk had considerable significance for the development of foxhunting.

### **Loss of ‘wastes’ and woodland**

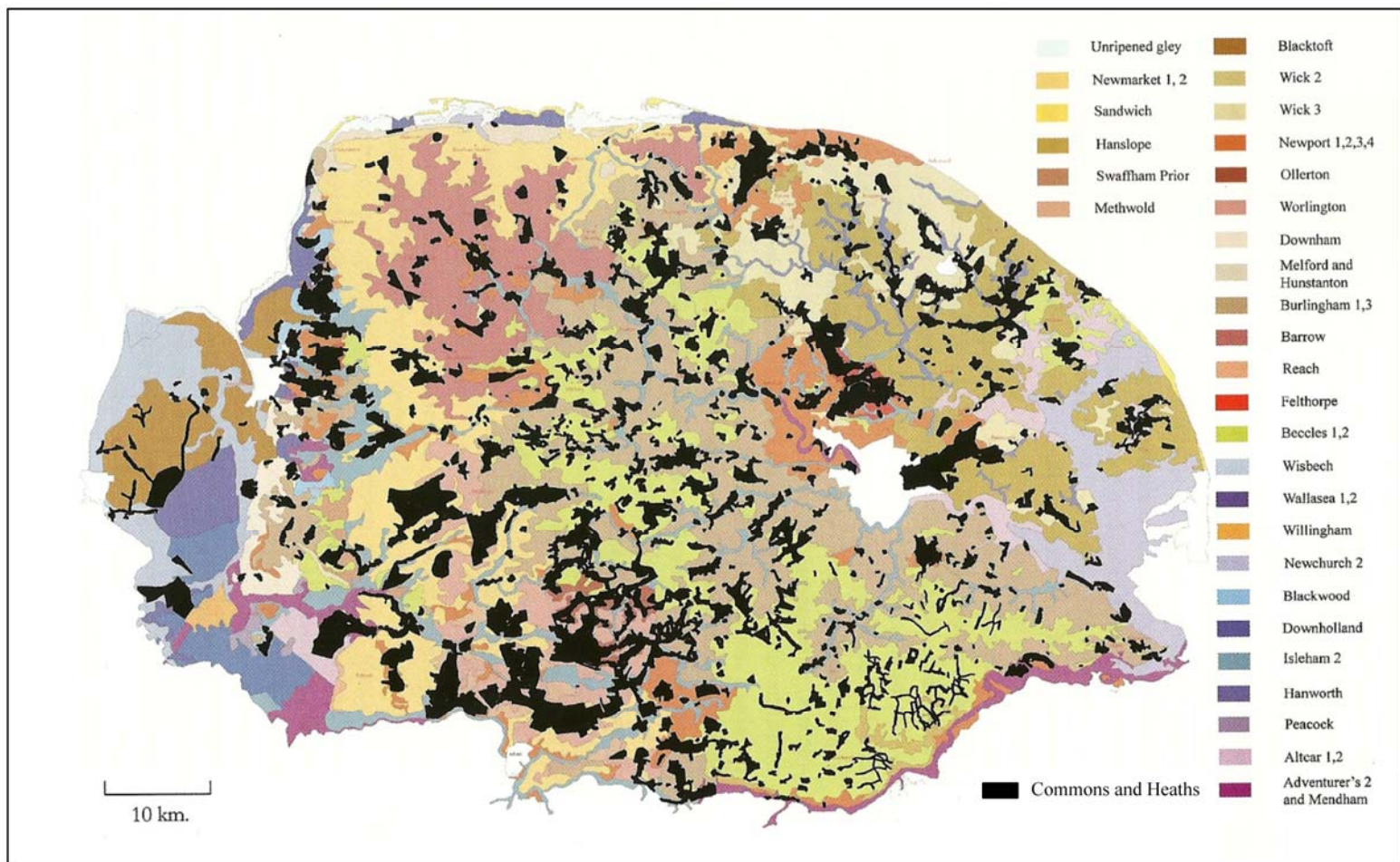
McNair has digitally redrawn William Faden’s 1797 map of Norfolk and calculated the areas of different forms of ‘waste’ in hectares. This gives a very useful picture of the extent of commons and other unimproved areas, which totaled 64,756 hectares, at the end of the eighteenth century. Within the county total Faden recorded 38,794 ha of ‘common’, 16,620 ha as ‘heath’ and 6,042 ha as ‘warrens’ with the remainder comprising ‘greens’ and ‘moors’. Macnair notes, as reassurance, that Faden’s total area is not too far removed from Kent’s estimate of 58,617 hectares of ‘waste’ in 1794.<sup>1065</sup>

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<sup>1063</sup> Turner in Wade Martins, *Historical Atlas* p. 124

<sup>1064</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p. 147

<sup>1065</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, pp. 102-103



**Figure 7.2** - Commons and heaths mapped by Faden in 1797<sup>1066</sup> - overprinted in black onto a map of soil associations

<sup>1066</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p. 104



Macnair made a highly significant point, for the development of foxhunting, about loss of habitat; 'the overwhelming majority of these areas [commons] were to disappear over the next three decades [i.e. from 1797] or so'.<sup>1067</sup> Turning to the disappearance of heath land, Macnair noted that 'in earlier times there had been extensive areas of heath land ... in the Good Sands region of north west Norfolk ... but most of this had been reclaimed in the previous century or so by large estates keen to embrace the principles of the "agricultural revolution"'.<sup>1068</sup>

Figure 7.2 illustrates the extent of 'wastes' remaining in 1797, as mapped by Faden; apart from a belt of commons and heaths in the west, it is clear that by this date there is little natural habitat remaining for foxes in the north-west quadrant of the county which was the focus of eighteenth and nineteenth-century foxhunting.

Enclosure and associated improvements led to a change in the distribution and type of woodland in Norfolk; Overton has suggested that 75 per cent of Norfolk's medieval woodland was lost between 1600 and 1790.<sup>1069</sup> However, Barnes has noted that this clearance contrasted with an increase in new plantations, mainly a feature of large estates or on poor marginal land following the enclosure of common and heaths that resulted in major changes in woodland distribution.<sup>1070</sup> Using Faden's 1797 map of Norfolk, McNair and Williamson have identified and calculated the areas of a range of woodland types, distinguishing ancient from recent woodland and further subdividing both categories.<sup>1071</sup> They estimated that around 2.6 per cent (13,500 ha) of Norfolk was under woodland, of which almost 54 per cent was 'recent woodland' (6,977 ha planted in the previous century) with 28 per cent 'ancient woodland' (3,674 ha) and the remainder made up of wetland carr, ancient wood pasture or woodland of uncertain age.<sup>1072</sup> Although Faden's 1797 mapping of contemporary woodland is not considered very accurate,<sup>1073</sup> the expansion he recorded is supported by the Tithe

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<sup>1067</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p. 100

<sup>1068</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p. 109

<sup>1069</sup> M. Overton *Agricultural* p. 90

<sup>1070</sup> G. Barnes, 'Woodlands in Norfolk: a landscape history' (University of East Anglia PhD, 2003) pp. 267, 273, 278

<sup>1071</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*

<sup>1072</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden* pp. 122-124

<sup>1073</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden* p. 86

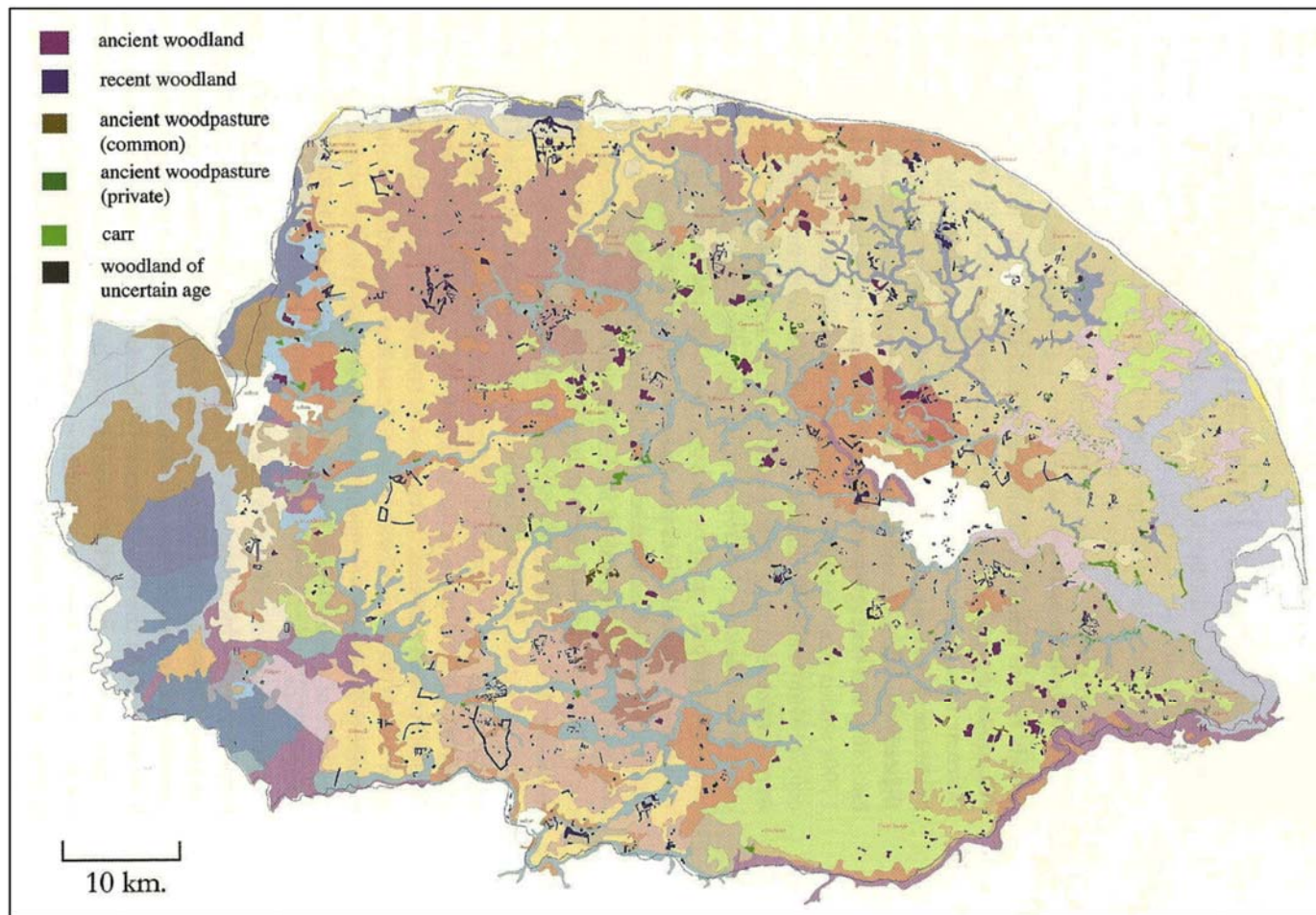
Files of 1830 that show a minimum of 3,844 hectares of 'plantations' in Norfolk, a narrower definition of 'recent woodland' than Faden's.<sup>1074</sup>

Figure 7.3 overleaf shows the distribution of all woodland mapped by Faden in 1797. The rapid loss of ancient woodland, recorded by Overton, combined with the clearance of heaths and commons to significantly reduce safe refuges for foxes – ironically often in the areas, such as north-west Norfolk where, as already noted, the great estates and elite foxhunters predominated. The loss was partially compensated for by 60 per cent of the 'recent planting' mapped by Faden being 'closely associated with elite residences, forming belts and clumps in and around parks' as at at Holkham and Houghton.<sup>1075</sup> But this parkland planting was prone to human disturbance; most successful fox coverts were in secluded areas such as parish edges, as discussed earlier in the context of the East Midlands. The history of fox covert planting in Norfolk will be described in a subsequent section.

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<sup>1074</sup> Barnes 'Woodlands ...' p. 270

<sup>1075</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p.124



**Figure 7.3** - Woodland mapped by Faden in 1797<sup>1076</sup> overprinted onto a map of soil associations

<sup>1076</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p.120

## **Eighteenth-century foxhunting in Norfolk**

A brief summary of the history of early hunting in Norfolk provides a context for an exploration of its environmental impact. It has already been noted that Norfolk was at the forefront of hunting foxes, with records of specialist packs of foxhounds kept at Holkham from the 1720s and Houghton in the 1730s – much earlier than in predominantly early-enclosed Shropshire. Access to the landlord-dominated packs in the open landscape of north-west Norfolk was restricted mainly to the elite and their tenants. By the 1760s new entrants to polite society such as the brewers and bankers of the Carrow Abbey Hunt set up their own subscription pack and the Taverham Hunt poem of 1791 describes the activities of a second subscription pack, with a range of followers, outside the north-west. Hunting in Shropshire was slower to develop; the Shrewsbury Hunt Club members were all drawn from the landowning elite and the first subscription pack did not form until 1797. Clearly, eighteenth-century foxhunting was socially stratified. The land owning elite, such as the Townsends and Cokes in Norfolk and Foresters in Shropshire maintained their high status activities with an invited guest list hunting over the estates of friends and neighbours. They excluded *arrivistes* so that new entrants to polite society such as the brewers and bankers of the Carrow Abbey Hunt or the attorney initiator of the Ludlow hounds funded their sport by accepting subscriptions and taking a daily ‘cap’ from all those who could afford to join them on horseback.

### *Shortage of foxes and remedies*

Almost as soon as foxhunting as a specialist activity started in Norfolk efforts were made to both increase the supply of foxes and ensure a quick ‘find’ to entertain participants. The 1721 Holkham Household accounts show that 2 guineas were paid on March 2<sup>nd</sup> (in the hunting season) for ‘bringing 5 braces of foxes from Marsham’ followed by a second entry on the same day for 15s.6d for ‘a man bringing 5 foxes’.<sup>1077</sup> Further entries in the accounts for October 1721 suggest that the foxes were well fed prior to the hunting season; ‘Jn Kemp for killing rabbits for foxes 10s.6d’ and ‘Mr Gaisley butcher for offles for foxes 16s’. In addition payments to a

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<sup>1077</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A7 (Household accounts relating to hunting expenses, 1721) p. 176

large range of rural workers were made to protect the fox population. In 1718 the 'burrow stoppers' were paid £6 for 'preserving foxes' while stopping up rabbit burrows. In 1721 'a shepherd' was paid 13s.6d for preserving foxes<sup>1078</sup> and five years later Thomas Mallet, a tenant farmer, was paid £6.7s.0d for the same purpose. The need to collect foxes continued in Norfolk as shooting became more popular. By May and June 1765 the kennel accounts of George, 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount Townsend at Raynham recorded payments of 17s.6d to Richard Jarvis for 'foxes' and 5s to Joseph Rogers for 'cubs'.<sup>1079</sup>

Later in the century, 'The Taverham Foxhunt of 1791', describing the host's preparations for a meet near Norwich, is guilelessly open about the process of maintaining and releasing bag foxes:<sup>1080</sup>

The day was appointed, the hunt had been set  
When grievous to mention the morning was wet  
And as single misfortune comes seldom alone  
The last of our foxes escap'd and was flown.  
For some envious daemon to spoil our design  
Had bid him the walls of his cell undermine  
And, resolved to preserve him and whisper'd his fate  
And taught him t'escape, lest the time was too late  
So tho' some long months he had pass't them in picking  
Such delicate morsels as rabbits and chicken  
[illegible].....fearing what might befall  
He took off, in the night, through a hole in the wall.

Subsequently the loss is remedied with a fox in a sack or 'poke':

Master Mathew descended down the hill edge  
And unkennelled the fox at the back of the hedge

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<sup>1078</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A7 (Household accounts relating to hunting expenses, 1721) p. 90  
<sup>1079</sup> Raynham Archives, Attic Shelf H2/3: Box: Hounds and Hunting 1760s, (Kennel account and hound register, 1765)  
<sup>1080</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC, Aylsham 41, (Poem: The Taverham Fox Hunt, 1791) p. 1

He emerged from the poke to the light of the day  
Stood a minute or two to consider the way  
Then slowly proceeded up hill in the rain...

Thirty five years earlier, in 1756 two neighbouring packs in west Norfolk had established a protocol as a way of protecting fox supplies; Mason and Henley hunted the western side of the north of the county and Lord Townsend the east. They agreed that 'they will purchase no cubbs without endeavouring to find out what part of the Country they come from; and, if they are taken out of the other's hunt, they will send the persons who bring them with the foxes to the owner of the Hunt whence they were taken from'.<sup>1081</sup> A second clause in the agreement aimed to protect their own supplies 'they agree not to dig [for foxes that have gone to earth] in each other's Country and in the Months of February and March to spare (for the mutual Benefit of their Hunts) all the Bitch Foxes they can prevent their hounds from destroying'.

Despite a wealth of evidence for the extensive planting of fox coverts in Norfolk in the eighteenth century by landowners keen on foxhunting there is no documentary evidence, in account books, letters or maps, of the construction of artificial earths. This is despite the fact that, as has been described in Chapter 6, in other areas sometimes the planting of fox coverts was accompanied by a record of the construction of artificial earths to ensure foxes bred there. The reasons in Norfolk may be that the payment for establishing coverts included building earths, without this being specified separately and the locations of new earths were kept highly secret to avoid 'bagmen' stealing the cubs. An alternative may be that the supply was kept up by the continuing use of foxes and cubs released into woods and coverts and expected to create their own earths. As early as 1756, in the agreement between Henley, Mason and Townsend over hunting territories and protocols, the use and management of earths is recognised as a potential flashpoint but there is no indication whether they are natural or artificial. Mention of either pack being able to

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<sup>1081</sup> Swaffham Museum, Box 73 'Sport', *Hunting in West Norfolk* by R. Harvey Mason (49 pp. manuscript, undated but last entry 1908) p. 27

'dig [in an earth when a fox has gone to ground] to retrieve it dead or alive as they think proper' is linked to Houghton plantations while neither party is to dig in Elmham Wood.<sup>1082</sup> A separate clause covers 'stopping' earths, the practice of blocking earth's entrances when foxes are absent to ensure a longer hunt to a more distant earth. Earths are listed at Newton, Lexham, Congham, Massingham, Pigg's (the four coverts Pigg made in the 1720s at Holkham and another one at Dunton have already been mentioned), 'in Mr Case's cover' (he was the land agent to George Townsend), Cobbe Hill and Grimstone Bottom. The mention of earths in new coverts made by Pigg suggests that they are artificial but the status of the remainder listed is unclear.

Just before the start of the hunting season in 1756, Henley and Mason came to an agreement about how to split the expenses for improving fox supplies for their Confederate Pack; summarised as 'whatever money from this junction may be necessary to be added for the Preservation of Foxes by raising covers or other incidental expenses to be equally advanced by each party'. They agreed to pay a 'regular burrow stopper' ten pounds per annum wages plus board, horse and coat. In addition to the earths listed earlier, others at Sedgeford, Barton at Rising and Downham are mentioned.<sup>1083</sup> But the most significant method of increasing the supply of prey was to improve the extent and quality of fox habitats. Hunting landowners were driven to planting new coverts and protecting existing woodland, by compensating tenants. The latter part of this chapter describes the results of a survey of the impact of these activities on Norfolk's landscape and looks in detail, via contemporary documents at the creation of fox coverts in the north-west of the county.

### **Nineteenth-century foxhunting in Norfolk**

The increasing gulf between Norfolk landowners who shot and those who hunted, which began to become apparent in the late eighteenth century, has been discussed in chapter 5. During the nineteenth century the gulf widened and by 1834 Norfolk was

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<sup>1082</sup> Harvey Mason, *Hunting*, Swaffham Museum, p. 27

<sup>1083</sup> Harvey Mason, *Hunting*, Swaffham Museum, p. 28

recognised as a pre-eminently shooting county and featured unfavourably in a poem supporting hunting:

Now may each vulpicide  
 Who shall my song deride,  
 In Norfolk ever bide  
 Or die like a dog of the yellows.<sup>1084</sup>

Examining the home location of MFHs illustrates the increasing dominance of landowners in the north-west during the nineteenth century and also emphasises the two periods when formal hunting was suspended due to the shortage of foxes and supporters.

**Table 7.1** Masters of West Norfolk Foxhounds 1773 -1902<sup>1085</sup>

<i>Date</i>	<i>Masters</i>	<i>Master's home</i>
1773 - 1807 (part)	Mr William Mason	Necton (E of Swaffham)
1775 - 1797 (part)	Mr T.W. Coke	Holkham
1810 - 1822	Major R. Wilson	Didlington (NW of Thetford)
1823 – 1825	Sir Jacob Astley	Melton Constable
Suspended		
1830 – 1843	<i>A Committee:</i> Earl Sondes Sir Jacob Astley Mr A. Hamond Mr A. Coldham Lt Col Fitzroy	Elmham Hall (N of E Dereham) Melton Constable West Acre (W of Castle Acre) Rougham (N of Castle Acre) Kempstone (NE of Swaffham)
Suspended		
1856-59	Lord Suffield	Gunton (NE of Aylsham)
1858-62	Mr Villebois	Marham
1865-83	Mr A. Hamond	West Acre

<sup>1084</sup> The Sportsman's Vocal Cabinet, (London, 1834) quoted in V. Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 60

'Yellows' = jaundice

<sup>1085</sup> *Bailys Hunting Directory* and Brown, *Foxhunters*



1862 -1871 (part)	Lord Hastings	Melton Constable
1862 -1875 (part)	Mr Villebois	Marham
1883-1895	Mr Fountaine	Narford Hall (N of Swaffham)
1889- 1892 (part)	Mr C.D. Seymour	Barwick (S of Burnhams)
1895 -1902	Mr C.D. Seymour	Barwick (S of Burnhams)

After a brief gap when Major Wilson gave up keeping hounds, Sir Jacob Astley (later the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Hastings) formed a pack in 1823 and kept them at Burgh Hall, near Melton Constable.<sup>1086</sup> However even this traditional hunting area was affected by shortages and 2 years later in February 1825 the hounds were advertised for sale at Tattersalls. The Norfolk Mercury reported on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1825 that ‘Sir Jacob Astley offered to hunt the country again if foxes were preserved for 2 years but foxhunting and battue shooting (the present rage) do not consist with each other’.<sup>1087</sup>

After a five year lull, in 1830 a group of landowners met in Dereham, formed the Norfolk Foxhounds Committee and sent out a circular letter to gentlemen in the country asking them to both preserve foxes and subscribe two sovereigns a year to the new club.<sup>1088</sup> Although three hundred mounted followers, fifty in scarlet, came to the opening meet the shortage of foxes and rise in shooting soon depressed hunt subscriptions and by April 1835 Miller was writing from Elmham Hall to Coldham, one of the MFHs, about money owed to Mr Gould who provided the horses and kenneled the hounds:

Will you meet me at the kennels on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> at 11 o'clock to pay accounts? Gould wants his money... his book is £790. There is about £60 in the bank but there appears to me to be very few subscriptions paid for the last year except Astley and Scott. This part of the business I always dread as we never come to any settlements and it puzzles me how we are ever to get clear.<sup>1089</sup>

<sup>1086</sup> R. Greaves *Hunting in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London, 1958) p. 17

<sup>1087</sup> Harvey, *Deer Hunting*, p. 27. ‘Battue’ shooting involved large numbers of artificially reared pheasants being driven over the guns by beaters

<sup>1088</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p. 54

<sup>1089</sup> Norfolk CRO MC 40/303/9 (Coldham, Anmer Hall collection)

An undated document of a similar date shows that subscriptions ‘nearly certain’ totaled £885 pa significantly below the hunt’s expenses of £1000.<sup>1090</sup> Perhaps it is unsurprising that there is a hiatus between 1843 and 1856 when organised foxhunting appears to have been suspended.

Lord Suffield recorded in 1909, ‘The Norfolk hunting people, farmers and others, begged of me [in 1856] to start a pack of foxhounds which I did and kept part of my pack at Gunton and part at East Dereham where kennels were built’.<sup>1091</sup> He continued for 3 years despite persistent loss of foxes such as that recorded in 1858 by Mr Coldham of Anmer writing to Mr Hamond of West Acre about a ‘splendid fox ... he broke away from a trap and left a very large pad in it’.<sup>1092</sup>

By 1862 the country was divided again (an earlier date than that recorded by Baily’s but more reliable since it is derived from a primary source in the Norfolk CRO). A letter dated March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1862 sent by F. Hay Gurney from his bank in Norwich to potential subscribers listed 27 gentlemen invited to form a committee and announced that ‘Lord Hastings having consented to Hunt a certain portion of the country 2 days in the week with a subscription of £500 per annum and Mr Villebois having consented to Hunt another portion of the County 5 days a fortnight with a subscription of £700 per annum’.<sup>1093</sup> Although hunting was constrained by the strictures of pheasant-shooting landowners, a period of stability followed with only two further masters up until 1902.

### **The activities of landowners – the clash of pheasant shooting versus hunting**

The previous section has demonstrated that during the nineteenth century foxhunting in Norfolk appears to have struggled in the face of growing enthusiasm for pheasant shooting which meant that gamekeepers shot and trapped the foxes which preyed on both pheasants and rabbits (keepers’ perks). Lord Walsingham, who owned the 12,000 acre Merton estate in the Breckland, ‘quoted the game book of a typical

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<sup>1090</sup> Norfolk CRO MC 40/303/8

<sup>1091</sup> Harvey, *Deer Hunting*, p. 40

<sup>1092</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC40/303/18

<sup>1093</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/303/15 (Coldham, Anmer Hall collection)

Norfolk estate: in 1821 they shot 39 pheasants, in 1845 1,011, in 1865 2,887 and in 1875 5,069'.<sup>1094</sup> Clearly all predators, including foxes, had to be culled by gamekeepers to maintain these stocks. As Longrigg noted 'the greatest single enemy of hunting was ... the hand reared pheasant'.<sup>1095</sup>

How this tension was resolved can be explored briefly by reference to three great estates, Holkham, Houghton and Raynham – all were important hunting centres with their own packs of hounds in the early eighteenth century. By the end of that century all three estates favoured shooting over foxhunting as a winter sport. But they dealt differently with the complexities of balancing the need to offer occasional sport to foxhunting neighbours and avoiding the social stigma of being a 'vulpicide' against the desire to protect expensive pheasant stocks and entertain shooting guests. The two main approaches both relied on separation – geographical or temporal; the third favoured exclusion. T.W. Coke favoured geographical separation; at Holkham he redesigned his parkland to enhance the shooting after giving up his hounds at the end of the 1796-1797 season when he was only forty-three.<sup>1096</sup> Wade Martins describes how the coast road had been re-routed out of the park 'so that by 1800 the park covered 3,500 acres ... once the park was enclosed more tree planting could take place, as much as anything to provide cover for pheasants'.<sup>1097</sup>

While Coke shot over his park foxhunting continued over much of the rest of his estate; notably his 'uncommon tenant' William Fitzroy of Kempstone became one of five original members of the Norfolk Foxhounds Committee set up in 1830 to re-establish regular hunting in Norfolk. Although Coke no longer hunted, he supported the activity by subscribing to the new Committee at its outset; four years later in 1834 'Mr Coke was considered a committee member ... and gave permission for his vast estates to be hunted and was kept involved with all major decisions in the years ahead'.<sup>1098</sup> By 1836 Coke was paying £50 pa towards the upkeep of the hunt; in comparison his tenant Fitzroy subscribed £10. In 1858 the second Lord Leicester

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<sup>1094</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 250

<sup>1095</sup> Longrigg, *English*, p. 220

<sup>1096</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 39

<sup>1097</sup> S. Wade Martins, *Coke*, p. 49

<sup>1098</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 59

(Coke's title) was publicly praised at a hunt dinner in Dereham Corn Hall for preserving foxes on his (tenanted) lands at Fulmodeston and Mileham.<sup>1099</sup> In the same year one of his tenants, John Overman of Warham, was prominent, at a public hunt meeting in Docking, in undertaking to improve hunting by rearing foxes and improving coverts,<sup>1100</sup> and a second, Mr Savory of Billingford, was praised by Lord Hastings MFH for 'keeping the Thorns covert quiet and undisturbed'.<sup>1101</sup> The Coke/Leicester tradition of encouraging hunting outside the immediate Holkham area persisted and at dinner in Norwich in 1868 in honour of Lord Hastings, attended by 138 gentlemen 'praise was heaped on those preserving foxes for sport, especially the Earl of Leicester (except in Holkham Park itself where shooting dominated)'.<sup>1102</sup>

Sir Robert Walpole, who lived at Houghton until 1745, had been a keen foxhunter but subsequent members of the family had been less enthusiastic and by the late 1790s Lord Cholmondeley had started to concentrate on rebuilding the family castle in Cheshire.<sup>1103</sup> As mainly absentee landlords, there are no records of active Cholmondeley involvement in hunting during the first six decades of the succeeding century. In 1830 Coldham wrote on behalf of the new Committee to Lord Cholmondeley at Houghton: 'we are desirous ... to ask your lordship's permission to draw the coverts at Houghton next season and also to request you to give directions to your keeper ... not to destroy foxes should any be found in your woods. We are aware that keepers in general from the great profit that they make of rabbits are not often disposed to follow such directions in as much as the fox will destroy rabbits in preference to any game'.<sup>1104</sup> No reply is recorded. However, the arrival of the foxhunting Prince of Wales in Norfolk, following his purchase of Sandringham in 1863, seems to have encouraged the Cholmondeleys to take a closer interest in hunting. They appear to have adopted a strategy of separating their shooting and hunting activities temporally.

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<sup>1099</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 67

<sup>1100</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 72

<sup>1101</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 67

<sup>1102</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 87

<sup>1103</sup> J. Cornforth, *Houghton, Norfolk* (Derby, 2007) p. 7

<sup>1104</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/303/1 (Coldham, Anmer Hall Collection)

The Game Act of 1831 bought in a restricted pheasant shooting season which ran from October 1<sup>st</sup> to January 31<sup>st</sup>. Shooting estates such as Houghton might be willing to sacrifice the final weeks of the shooting season, and allow some foxes to survive, to provide hunting for elite participants such as the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). No records of nineteenth-century meets at Houghton exist until January 21<sup>st</sup> 1863 when the Prince of Wales and his brother-in-law Prince Louis of Hesse enjoyed a meet at Houghton followed by a five mile hunt from Anmer to Sandringham.<sup>1105</sup> In 1865 hounds met again at Houghton, on January 6<sup>th</sup> and a brace of foxes were found in an oak in the park.<sup>1106</sup> But increasingly the Prince of Wales favoured shooting when he visited Norfolk; for example in January 1867 he shot both pheasants and partridge with Henry Villebois at Marham and as he grew fatter he stopped hunting on horseback. Hoyle has described the huge bags of game that was shot at Sandringham and ‘the increased sophistication of the keeping’ that would have included the shooting of foxes.<sup>1107</sup> In 1870 Blyth wrote to Coldham that it was doubtful that there would be any litters at Houghton.<sup>1108</sup> A year later Hamond MFH was writing to Lord Cholmondeley about ‘earths that have been destroyed at the earnest request of your [illegible] at Houghton’.<sup>1109</sup> Lord Cholmondeley replied equivocally in May 1871 ‘orders have been given that no foxes young or old should be destroyed on the estates at present. I trust to be in Norfolk early in the Autumn and I will then give directions for the future ... I trust they will be sufficient to allow you to have fair sport at Houghton’.<sup>1110</sup> With the declining royal interest in hunting, prestige earned by participation was reduced and Houghton once again became a purely shooting estate.

During the nineteenth century the Townsends of Raynham became increasingly obdurate in their antipathy to hunting. When the Norfolk Foxhounds Committee was formed in 1830, to re-establish hunting, both Lord Charles and Lord James Townsend were subscribers and a meet at Raynham in November attracted a large

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<sup>1105</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 76

<sup>1106</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 79

<sup>1107</sup> Hoyle, *Hunting*, pp. 54-55

<sup>1108</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC40/303/16 (Coldham, Anmer Hall Collection)

<sup>1109</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC40/303/23

<sup>1110</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC40/303/18

field.<sup>1111</sup> But soon shooting began to take precedence and the family opted for a third method of dealing with the tension between hunting and shooting – excluding foxhunters from their estate. An irate letter dated February 20<sup>th</sup> 1840 from Lord Charles Townsend at Raynham to Lord Sondes MFH at Elmham Hall complained that ‘Three perch of my park paling pulled down on Saturday when the best, I judge, might easily have taken over the fence ... the paling not above four foot and a half from the ground ... You will not feel surprised or take umbrage I hope at my requesting as a favour that my coverts may not be drawn again’.<sup>1112</sup> By 1841 it was noted that ‘problems with the Raynham estate still existed and many a time hounds had to be whipped off their fox’ (to stop them running onto Raynham land).<sup>1113</sup> The Townsends remained resolute and by 1877 an emergency meeting of subscribers was held in Fakenham because of the scale of fox destruction; recently seven dead foxes had been seen by foxhunters – five poisoned, one shot and one on a trap; all in gorses on the Raynham estate.<sup>1114</sup>

The attitude of the owners of these three estates, and others, strongly influenced the viability of hunting in Norfolk. Table 7.1, listing the MFHs, indicates when hunting was suspended because of fox shortages and the consequent drop in support and subscription income. The history and distribution of foxhunting in Norfolk up to the current day reflects the continuing tension between the demands of the two field sports.

### **Methods of increasing fox numbers in the nineteenth century**

A range of ploys were tried to protect foxes; some were a continuation from the eighteenth-century efforts to increase numbers, by visible means, such as planting coverts, bringing in bag foxes or creating artificial earths. Others were ‘invisible’ in the landscape, such as appeals to shooting landowners, clauses in leases and payments to gamekeepers per litter of cubs, which were used as a way of mitigating the impact of shooting.

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<sup>1111</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 57

<sup>1112</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/303/10

<sup>1113</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 62

<sup>1114</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 100

### *Leases*

The impact of leases on tenants' activities, including Norfolk, has been considered in detail in chapter 3. Hunting landlords often inserted increasingly restrictive clauses; for example Holkham tenants in the early nineteenth century had a duty to protect and preserve all game (except rabbits) and to prosecute poachers; the expenses for this to be paid by Coke. The landlord also had the right to sow furze seed (for fox coverts) and hunt over the land and tenants could be obliged to keep and maintain at all times gratis one couple of hounds for use by Coke.<sup>1115</sup>

### *Payments to gamekeepers*

A second method was to pay gamekeepers to protect litters of cubs. In 1870 Blyth, a member of the hunt committee, drew up a list of 40 keepers, their employers and the coverts involved, who received sums derived from cap money ranging from 15s where one fox was found to 5 guineas where 5 were found during the season.<sup>1116</sup>

The keepers and estates mentioned all lie in the north-west quadrant of the county encircling the Kennels at Massingham. The pattern unsurprisingly mimics the location of meets recorded in the hunting diary for 1867-1868 kept by Coldham of Anmer.<sup>1117</sup>

Although in 1870 Blyth wrote to Coldham 'no cubs were claimed for as held in any of the coverts belonging to the principle landed proprietors in the county – Sandringham, Hunstanton, Snettisham, Raynham, Castle Rising, Hillingham, Necton and Marham',<sup>1118</sup> (a stark reflection of the impact of shooting) the payment system appears to have improved the supply elsewhere. A meticulous record in the Norfolk CRO spelled out the costs of paying keepers for litters, treating them to an 'end of season' dinner and the resultant increase in supplies.<sup>1119</sup>

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<sup>1115</sup> M-A. Garry, *Uncommon*, p. 56

<sup>1116</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/303/16 (Coldham, Anmer Hall collection)

<sup>1117</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/239

<sup>1118</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/303/16

<sup>1119</sup> Norfolk CRO MC 40/303/22 (Coldham, Anmer Hall Collection)

**Table 7.2** Payments to gamekeepers to encourage preservation of foxes

<i>Year</i>	<i>Foxes found</i>	<i>Litters</i>	<i>Cost of dinner</i>	<i>Total paid</i>
1870	69	18	£9.8s.6d	£80.12s.0d
1871	81	27	£16.10s.0d	£92.2s.6d
1872	90	34	£23.6s.6d	£135.5s.6d
1873	113	43	£25.16s .0d	£154.12s.4d
1874	123	38	£24.16s.6d	£145.19s.0d

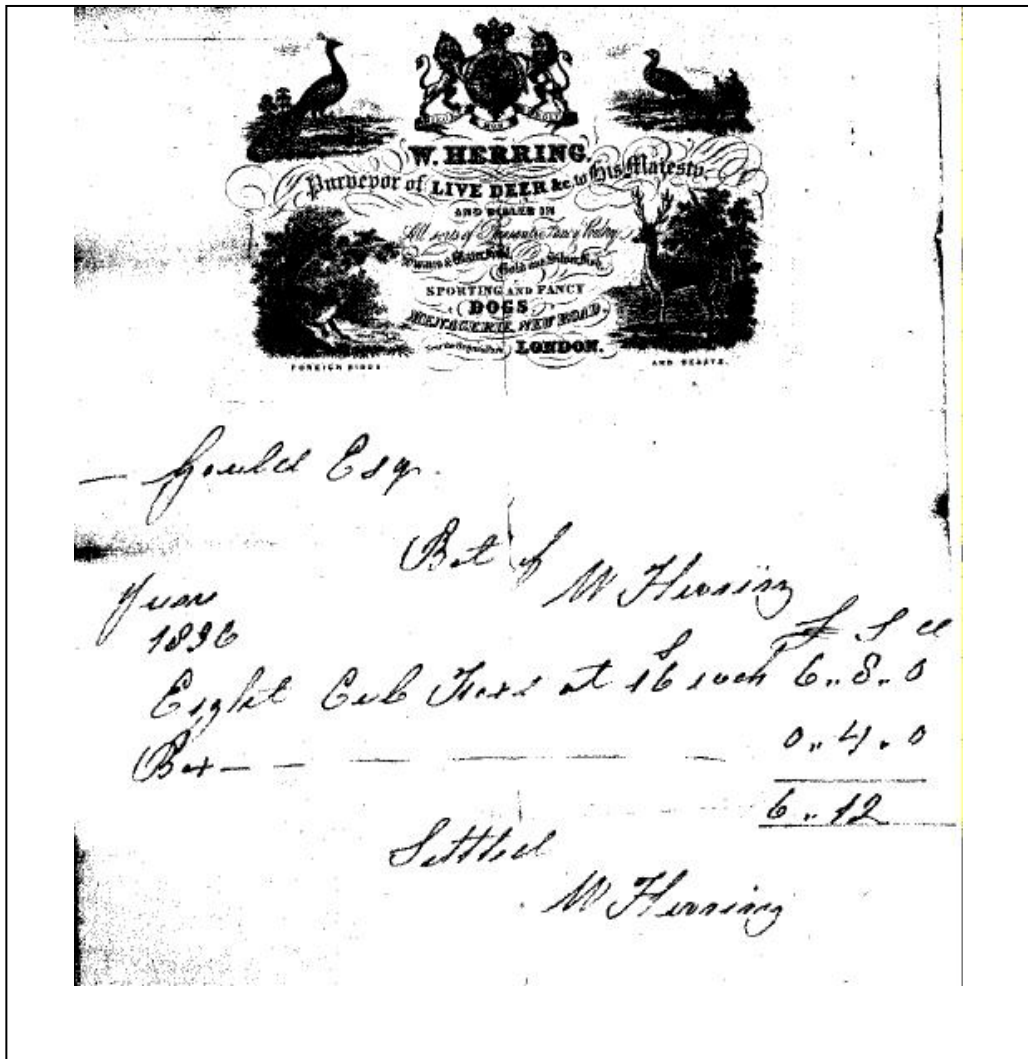
*Bag foxes*

Foxes were still acquired from outside Norfolk for hunting. The practice of buying bag foxes continued throughout the nineteenth century as evidenced by a receipt, dated 1836, indiscreetly preserved in the Coldham family's papers in the Norfolk CRO (Figure 7.4 overleaf) showing that 'bag' foxes at 16s a head were bought from Leadenhall Market by 'Gould Esq' (probably Tom Gould of Swaffham who 'horsed the hunt and kenneled the hounds for £900 p.a.' in the 1830s).<sup>1120</sup>

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<sup>1120</sup> W. Fawcett, *The West Norfolk Hunt* (London, 1934) p. 18





**Figure 7.4** Receipt for 8 cub foxes at 16 shillings each and a box for 4 shillings bought in 1836<sup>1121</sup>

By 1856 hunt accounts show that £28 was spent in December on buying foxes – compared to £25 spent the following June in payments to preserve litters.<sup>1122</sup> In a further example of a foreign influence, Brown recorded that in 1865 Anthony Hamond MFH of Westacre imported some foxes from America which ‘were said to be larger than the British fox ... [and] took an instant liking to the lime trees in the park with their bushy sideshoots providing thick cover from the wind and rain’ instead of living in earths.<sup>1123</sup>

<sup>1121</sup> Norfolk CRO MC 40/303/25

<sup>1122</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p. 67

<sup>1123</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p. 93

### *Fox paddocks*

Beckford's eighteenth-century advice on the creation of fox courts or paddocks has already been discussed. Sir Jacob Astley took over the Norfolk foxhounds in 1823 and was hit by a shortage of foxes but, as Greaves explained: 'Sir Jacob had previously kept staghounds' so 'confronted by a scarcity of foxes' he 'established a fox paddock in the stag hunting fashion at Burgh Hall'.<sup>1124</sup> (Stags were kept in enclosures and then take by horse drawn carts to meets, hunted, recaptured and hunted again on another occasion). Harvey added '150 foxes were collected in paddocks ... and kept there for 4 months'.<sup>1125</sup> Davidson-Houston described the inevitable, perverse outcome: as foxes were 'loosed out as required ... most were shot by neighbouring keepers'.<sup>1126</sup> Figure 7.5 shows a walled enclosure at Burgh Hall, currently surrounding a tennis court, which may be the remnant of the paddock.



**Figure 7.5** - Remains of possible fox paddock at Burgh Hall<sup>1127</sup>

<sup>1124</sup> Greaves, *Hunting in Norfolk and Suffolk*, p. 17

<sup>1125</sup> Harvey, *Deerhunting*, p. 27

<sup>1126</sup> J.V. Davidson-Houston, 'Four hundred years of foxhunting - the West Norfolk' in *Country Life* (March 18th, 1965) pp. 600-601

<sup>1127</sup> I am grateful to Mrs Judy Heal of Burgh Parva Hall for helping me find this site in July 2007.

Brown recorded how 80 years later, Charles Seymour (MFH 1889-1892 and 1895-1902) kept 'cubs and foxes that would have otherwise been destroyed by keepers and others' in a large enclosed pit on the western edge of his park at Barwick in north Norfolk. 'In due course they were released into safe hunting areas and given a chance of life'.<sup>1128</sup>

### *Artificial fox earths*

Very little appears to have been written about the construction or role of artificial earths in encouraging fox numbers in Norfolk in the nineteenth century. There is one reference in the Norfolk CRO but it is unclear if the earths were ever constructed. Coldham wrote to Blyth in the 1870s 'I have also obtained permission to create artificial earths at Rougham and Elmham parish – where the money is to come from I don't know but these improvements are so essential that to the hunt that we must manage to raise the cost somehow'.<sup>1129</sup> In 1889 a brick fox earth had been built at Anmer, at that time part of the Sandringham estate,<sup>1130</sup> an artificial earth at Colkirk Gorse is mentioned in 1906<sup>1131</sup> and one at Pottrow in 1907.<sup>1132</sup>

### **A survey of fox coverts and their impact on the landscape**

The distribution and characteristics of fox coverts in Norfolk during the eighteenth century and nineteenth century was explored using a sample of 100 taken from estate records and a series of maps produced in 1797 (Faden),<sup>1133</sup> 1826 (Bryant),<sup>1134</sup> the Old Series of Ordnance Survey (OS) 1 inch to 1 mile published in 1838, (partly based on the 2 inches to 1 mile survey completed between 1816-c.1821), and the 1st edition OS 6 inches to 1 mile maps published in the 1880s and 1890s. The goal was to identify sites created for foxhunting excluding existing woodlands that were periodically drawn by packs. However, where written records are absent, there is some difficulty in distinguishing between coverts that were deliberately planted to

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<sup>1128</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p. 114

<sup>1129</sup> Norfolk CRO MC40/303/21

<sup>1130</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p 107

<sup>1131</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p 141

<sup>1132</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p 129

<sup>1133</sup> J.C. Barringer (ed.), *Faden's Map of Norfolk* (Dereham, 1989), Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*

<sup>1134</sup> J.C. Barringer (ed.), *Bryant's Map of Norfolk* (Dereham, 1998)

enhance foxhunting and those small woodlands which had grown up naturally and were subsequently used as fox coverts. A decision was made on the basis of the wood's shape (see the later discussion), location and any knowledge of owners and their involvement in hunting at the time of mapping.

*Results of the survey*

Appendix 1 records the full results of the survey of 100 coverts. The sample was divided into 5 categories:

**Table 7.3** Classification of fox coverts

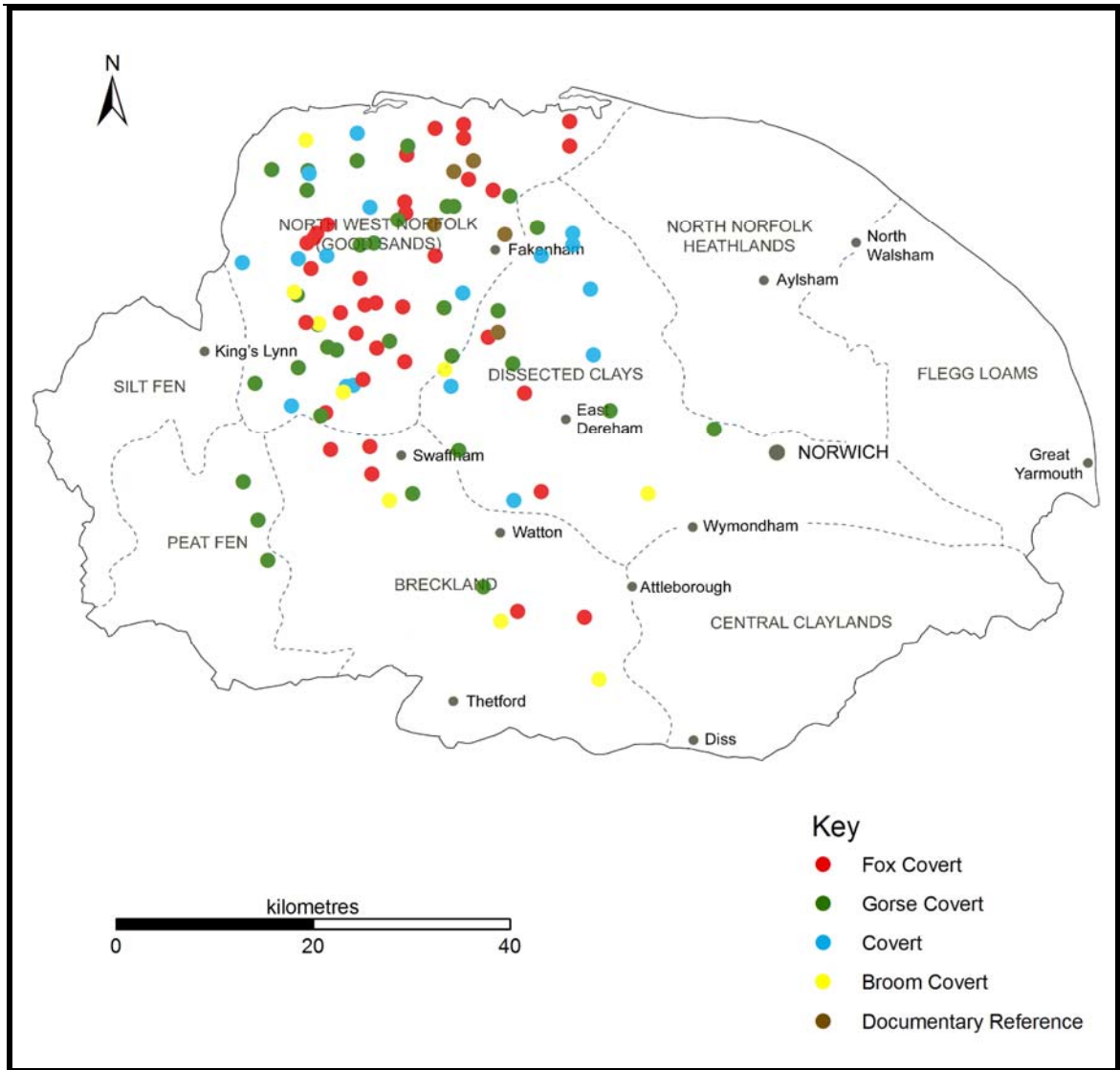
<i>Category of fox covert</i>	<i>No (sample size = 100)</i>
Named fox covert	36
Named whin/gorse covert	32
Probable fox covert (location/size/appearance)	17
Named broom covert	9
Recorded fox covert; exact post enclosure location unknown	6

*Distribution of fox coverts*

Figure 7.6 overleaf shows the results of the survey illustrating the distribution of different categories of fox covert (and the probability that hunting was their primary purpose). The majority of fox coverts identified lie in the landscape region defined as 'the Good Sands' of the north-west by Arthur Young in 1804;<sup>1135</sup> there are also a few small woods which are 'probable' fox coverts on the 'Dissected Clays' region fringing the eastern boundary and another scattering to the south in 'Breckland'.

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<sup>1135</sup> A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of Norfolk* (London, 1804)



**Figure 7.6** Distribution of fox coverts in relation to the physical regions of Norfolk

The spread of fox coverts is well illustrated by the increase in numbers recorded at different periods although allowances should be made for some discrepancies due to problems in identification.

**Table 7.4** Increase in the number of fox coverts

<i>Map</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Total number of fox coverts identified</i>
Faden	1797	13
Bryant	1826	52
1":1 mile OS	1838	62
6":1 Mile OS	1880s and 1890s	87
1":1 mile OS	2010	24

### **Sources of information on coverts**

#### *Faden's 1797 map of Norfolk*

Although Faden distinguished some 'fox coverts' and illustrated 3 small triangular examples in the key, probably because of their 'interest to subscribing gentry', he only identified five by name so the map is not useful for identifying coverts mentioned in written records.<sup>1136</sup> McNair and Williamson have calculated that the coverts shown total 15.2 ha; all five were found in the north-west quadrant of Norfolk, the area dominated by large estates. Two small coverts lay adjacent to each other, and close to 'Whin Hill' and 'Jessops Cover' due south of Burnham Sutton, west of Holkham in the Coke hunting territory. Three further coverts were close to West Acre Hall, south of Rougham Hall and north east of Longham Hall – all reflecting the enthusiasms of contemporary owners. Close study of the map identified eight other coverts, marked but not named, concentrated in two clusters in the north-west: Burnham Market to Langham and Anmer to Rougham.

#### *Bryant's 1826 map of Norfolk*

Bryant's map at a scale of 1 inch to 51,742, compared to Faden's at 1 inch to 63,360, shows more detail and is considered more accurate in its depiction of the extent of woodland. The rise in numbers of fox coverts identified in Table 7.4, from 13 to 52, reflects both this more accurate mapping and a steady increase in landowner's investment in their sport – especially in the north-west quadrant of the county.

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<sup>1136</sup> Barringer, *Bryant's*, p. ii

### *1 inch to 1 mile OS map*

The location of coverts on this series of maps for Norfolk were cross-checked with the 2 inches to 1 mile maps produced during 1816-c1821. By 1838 there had been a small increase in fox coverts to 62, mainly on the periphery of the core eighteenth-century hunting areas on the great estates, in areas such as Gayton, Saham and Guist.

### *Six inches to 1 mile OS maps of the 1880s and 1890s*

The 403 Norfolk maps were produced between 1879 and 1886 and provide a very clear picture of the extent of fox coverts at this time, reaching a peak of 87. The expansion since 1838 is supported by contemporary references discussed previously. The larger scale of the maps helped identification of coverts; for example, details such as the presence of 'pheasantries', on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS 83NE showing Langford in the Breckland, helped confirm the distinction of pheasant coverts from fox coverts. The larger scale meant that it was also possible to distinguish clearly gorse coverts in some areas; for example around Swaffham fox coverts are shown as 'gorse' on Swaffham Heath, Narborough Field and North Pickenham Warren.

### *Identifying fox coverts*

Many small woodlands on the maps were named as '*place name*' covert so it was vital to distinguish coverts enclosed or planted for foxhunting purposes from those planted by shooting landowners as cover for pheasants (partridges live mainly on arable land). Hoskins described the classic fox cover as 'gorse coverts and spinneys ... not less than 2 acres in size and rarely more than 20 acres ... distinguishable from true ancient woodland by their small size and their regular shape'.<sup>1137</sup> Since the goal was to hunt foxes over a considerable distance then coverts needed to be well spaced apart. To avoid non-hunting disturbance coverts were usually sited well away from settlements, often on parish margins. 'Nimrod', writing in 1842, stated that 'all artificially made covers [sic] should not be nearer than half a mile at the least, to any house or village; and if on a gently sloping bank, facing the south, or south-west foxes will like them the better'.<sup>1138</sup>

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<sup>1137</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, pp. 197-198

<sup>1138</sup> C. Apperley (Nimrod), *The Life of a sportsman*, p. 396

'Nimrod' also noted that 'a brother master of hounds recommends sowing broom with gorse, but he is wrong, it being decidedly inimical to scent'.<sup>1139</sup> Since gorse smells strongly of coconut when in flower this seems an odd distinction. The survey of Norfolk fox coverts, suggests that broom was favoured by some landlords and these nine coverts were included in the survey for two reasons. Firstly they would hold a rabbit, and consequently fox, population and secondly, because of their low growing habit, up to 1.5m, they were unlikely to have been planted for pheasants which need to roost higher in trees at night to avoid predators.

Pheasant coverts are usually clustered together far more closely than fox coverts because landowners do not want their pheasants to fly off their estates when disturbed, since they would become vulnerable to neighbouring shooting enthusiasts or poachers. Shooting coverts, as described by Williamson, are 'for reasons of security - but also of course for the convenience of owners and guests ... relatively close to the mansion'. Pheasants are 'a creature of the woodland edge ... and a large number of small woods would also allow the maximum number of pheasants to gain territories at breeding time ... The only large woods suitable for intensive pheasant rearing are, therefore ones planted in the form of a long thin strip, especially if provided with sinuous or scalloped edges'.<sup>1140</sup>

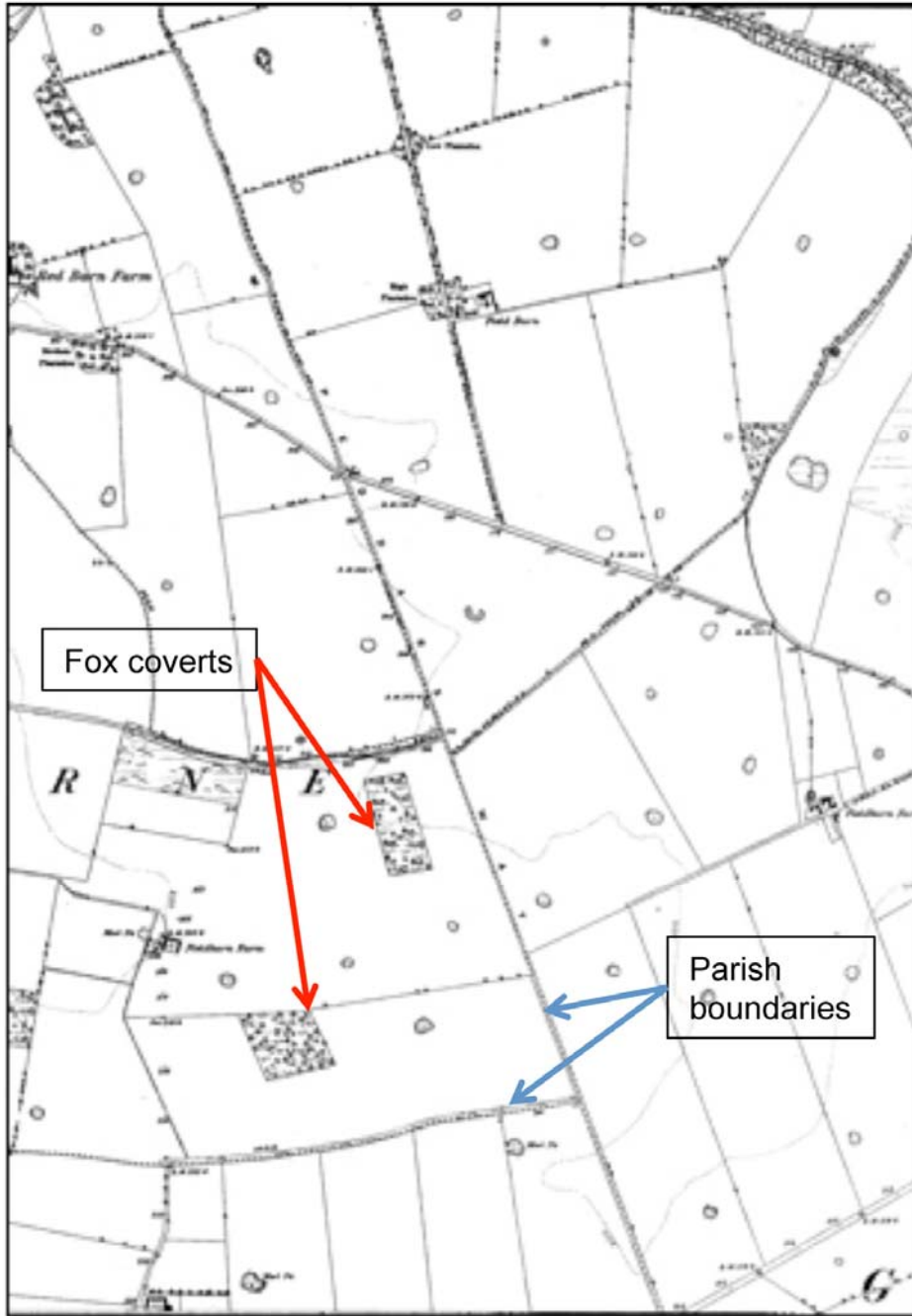
A comparison of Figures 7.7 and 7.8 overleaf clearly demonstrates the differences. On the southern half of Figure 7.7 two small, regularly shaped fox coverts have been planted near to parish boundaries and an area of heath in an open landscape at Sherborne, north of Dersingham in north-west of Norfolk. On Figure 7.8 linear pheasant coverts lie close to Didlington Park, north of Mundford in the Breckland of south Norfolk.

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<sup>1139</sup> Nimrod, *The Life*, p. 396

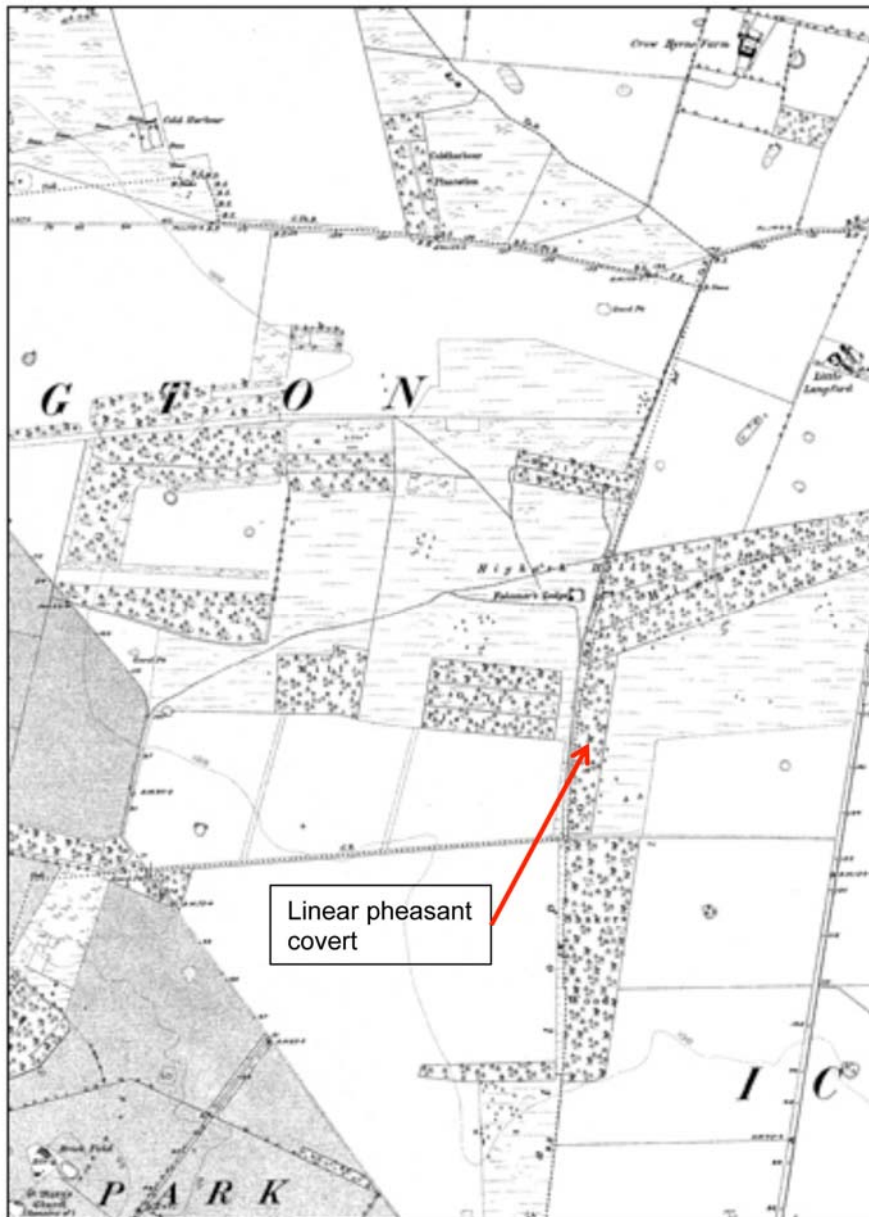
<sup>1140</sup> Williamson, *Polite*, p. 139





**Figure 7.7** Fox coverts OS 6 inches : 1 Mile Norfolk 4 SE (pub 1891) <sup>1141</sup>

<sup>1141</sup> Ordnance Survey 6":1 mile 1st Edition Norfolk 14SE (published 1891)

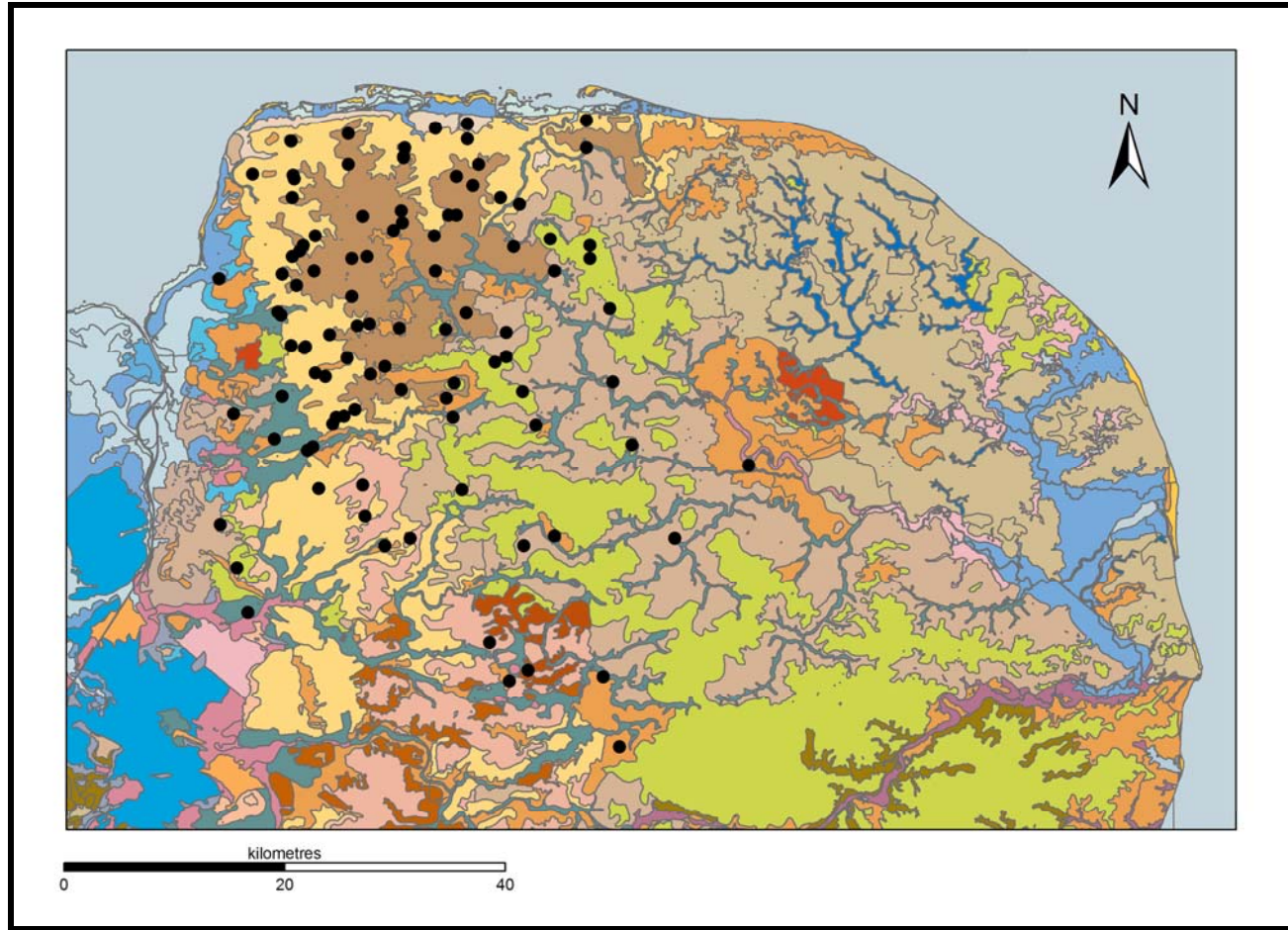


**Figure 7.8** Pheasant covers OS 6 inches : 1 Mile Norfolk 83NW (pub.1891) <sup>1142</sup>

### **Fox covers and soil associations**

There is a strong correlation between the distribution of fox covers and a narrow range of soils as illustrated in Figure 7.9 overleaf

<sup>1142</sup> Ordnance Survey 6":1 mile 1st Edition Norfolk 83NW (published 1891)



**Figure 7.9** Fox coverts and soil associations in Norfolk<sup>1143</sup>

<sup>1143</sup> Map produced by Professor T Williamson using Mapinfo IT programme. Based on Soils of England and Wales: Sheet 4, Eastern England, scale 1:250,000



The distribution of 100 fox coverts mapped on the soil map of Norfolk, Figure 7.9, suggests a close link with a small group of Soil Associations: Barrow, Newmarket and Burlingham. Barrow Association soils are described as ‘deep well drained, non calcareous soils ... formed mainly in chalky till’ where windblown sand has been mixed into the upper layers or in glaciofluvial (material washed out of ice sheets) sands and gravels.<sup>1144</sup> Arthur Young summed up this area of north-west Norfolk as the ‘Good Sands’ which contain ‘large tracts of excellent land intermixed with a good

<sup>1144</sup> C.A. Hodge, R.G. Burton, W.M. Corbett, R. Evans & R.S. Seale, *Soils and their use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales, Bulletin No 13 (Harpenden, 1984)

deal of inferior quality' where the acid soils can be droughty.<sup>1145</sup> Newmarket soils are deep, well-drained, coarse loams formed in chalky drift that can also suffer from a moisture deficit in the dry East Anglian summers. In contrast, Burlingham soils are found where chalky glacial deposits on crests or valley sides are relatively impermeable and prone to some degree of waterlogging.<sup>1146</sup>

**Table 7.5** Fox coverts and soil types in Norfolk

<i>Soil type</i>	<i>No of fox coverts on soil type Sample size: 100</i>	<i>Area of soil type in Norfolk (hectares)<sup>1147</sup></i>	<i>Area of soil type as per cent of total non-urban Norfolk area</i>
Barrow	33	28,578	5.5
Newmarket	23	56,613	10.8
Burlingham	15	78,001	14.9
Beccles	8	78,711	15.0
Newport	7	33,911	6.5
Isleham	7	33,847	6.4
Worlington	3	18,436	3.6
Melford	2	2,926	0.6
Downham	1	4,541	0.8
Ollerton	1	3,049	0.6

Table 7.5 illustrates the association of fox coverts with particular soil types; the number of coverts on Barrow and Newmarket soils is strikingly disproportionate to their extent in Norfolk.

McNair and Williamson have analysed the association of 'recent woodlands' on Faden's map and 'corrected' the areas for the frequency of soil types within the county.<sup>1148</sup> This shows that for 'more common soils' there is a strong association

<sup>1145</sup> Quoted in Hodge, *Soils*, p. 111

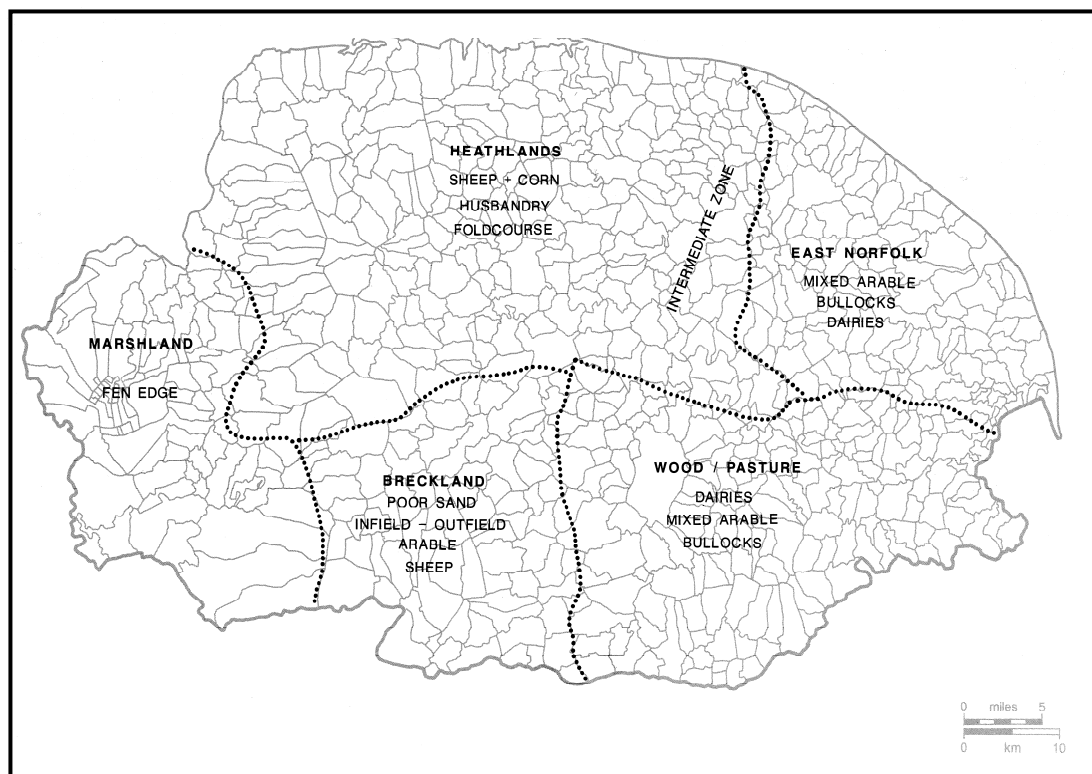
<sup>1146</sup> Hodge, *Soils*, pp. 136-137

<sup>1147</sup> Areas of soil type in Norfolk are taken from Macnair pers. comm. 4.9.2009

<sup>1148</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p.124 and details in pers. comm. 4.9.2009

between recent woodland and Newport and Newmarket soils, a less strong link with Isleham and Barrow and a fairly weak association with Burlingham and Beccles. The differences between these findings and the predominance of Barrow soils in Table 7.5 may be due to (a) Faden's survey covering 'recent woodland' across all Norfolk while the fox coverts were a sample of only one type of 'recent woodland' and (b) some inaccuracies in Faden's mapping of woodlands acknowledged by Macnair to be 'poorly shown'.<sup>1149</sup>

### Fox coverts and tenure



**Figure 7.10** Early farming regions in Norfolk 1500-1750<sup>1150</sup>

Comparison of Figure 7.6 showing the location of fox coverts in Norfolk with Figure 7.10 of early farming regions shows that most of the coverts lie within the 'Heathlands' foldcourse area – a broader area than the 'Good Sands' of north-west

<sup>1149</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*, p. 89

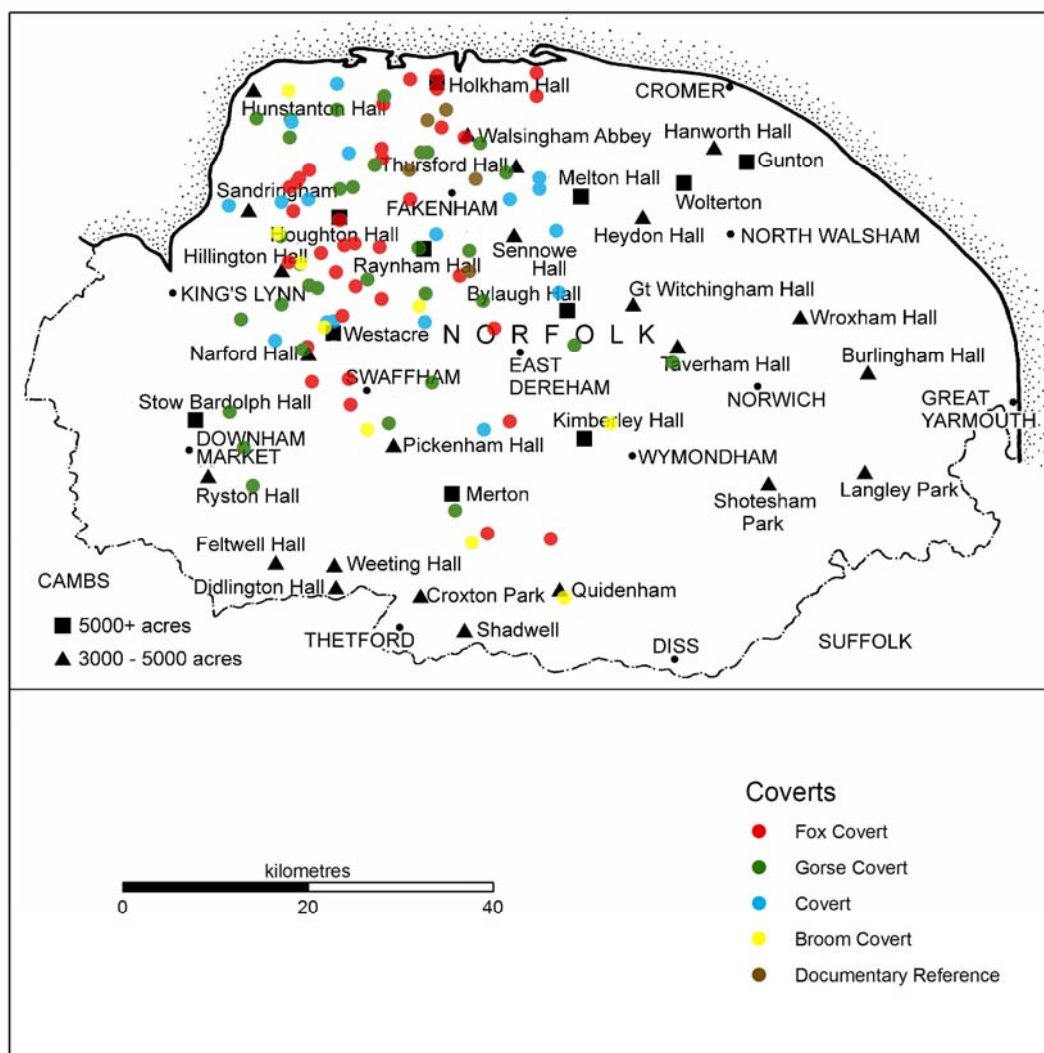
<sup>1150</sup> J. Holderness, Farming Regions, 1500-1750, in P Wade Martins (ed.) *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, p. 103

Norfolk. Earlier sections have explored the influence of tenure on the distribution of early foxhunting in Norfolk. Hunting started early in the north-west where large scale, open-field 'fold course' systems lay under the control of big estates. I have already suggested that this reflected an atavistic harking back by hunting landowners to the tradition of manorial 'fold rights' with unfettered access to tenants' land. The comparable early development of hunting in the East Midlands in open-fields has been discussed and contrasts with the later origins of Salopian foxhunting in an early-enclosed landscape.

The presence of 'outliers' on Figure 7.6 showing the distribution of fox coverts can be explained by comparison with Figure 7.11 overleaf, which shows the distribution of estates of 3,000 acres or more in 1883 using information produced by Bateman.<sup>1151</sup> Gorse coverts in the western Marshland/Fen edge zone flank the east of the Stow Bardolph estate of the Hares and the Ryston land of the Pratts, both keen hunting families. In the south, coverts illustrate the influence of the Albermarles of Quidenham, the Angersteins at Weeting and the Wodehouses of Kimberley, north-west of Wymondham.

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<sup>1151</sup> J. Bateman, *The Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1883)



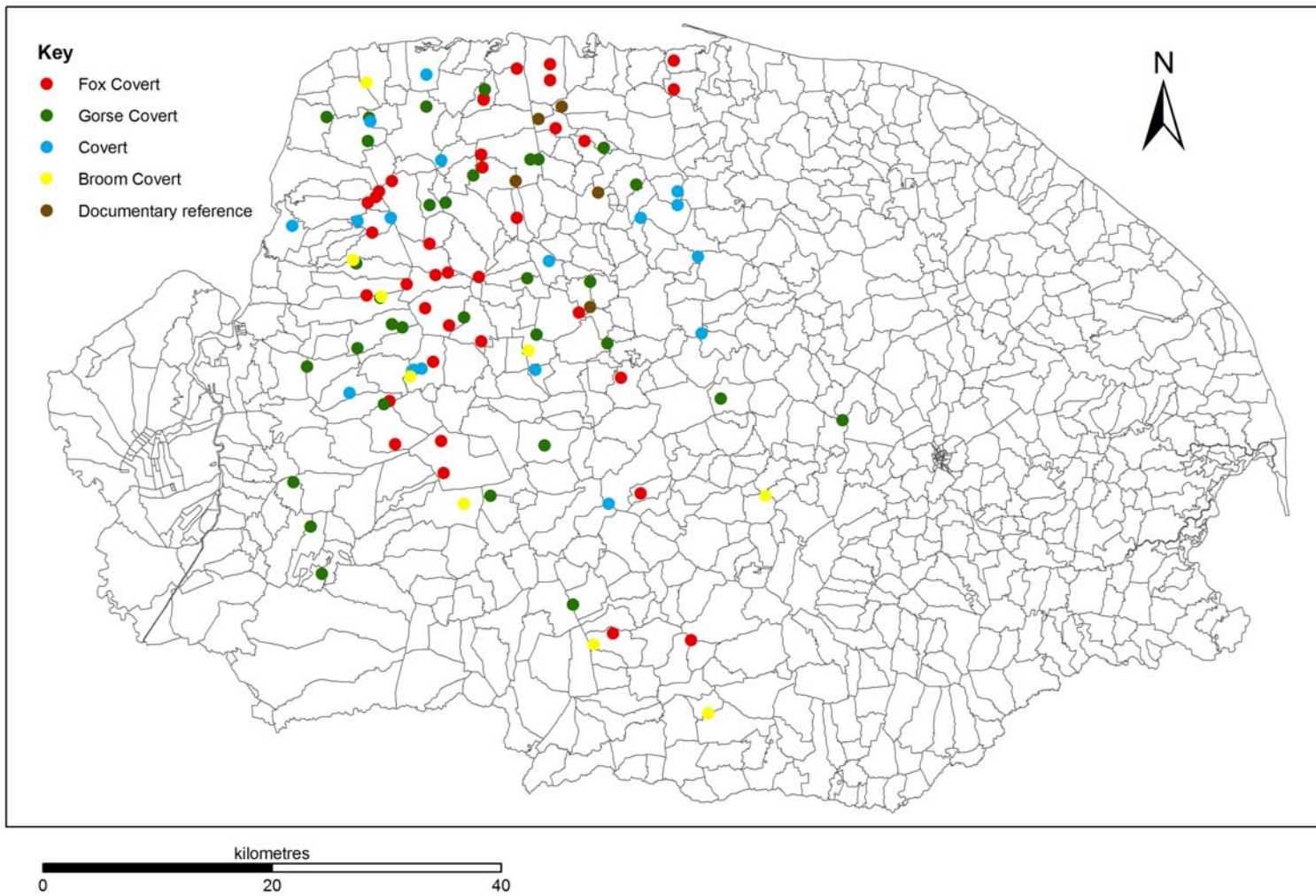
**Figure 7.11** Distribution of fox coverts in relation to estates over 3000 acres in 1883

*Location of coverts within parishes*

The survey enabled the testing in Norfolk of Hoskins' observation that fox coverts in Leicestershire tended to be on the margins of parishes.<sup>1152</sup> Ninety-four coverts were classified into three categories: 'on the parish boundary', 'close' (within 200 metres) or further away. A striking 34 per cent were found to lie on parish boundaries with another 31 per cent within 200 metres – so that almost 2/3 of the sample was on the outer fringes of their parish (the exact whereabouts of 6 coverts mentioned in eighteenth-century estate records could not be established precisely enough for this exercise).

<sup>1152</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, pp. 197-198





**Figure 7.12** The distribution of fox coverts in relation to parish boundaries

### *Size of coverts*

The size of 94 coverts was estimated; 54 (57 per cent) were between 1-3 ha, with a further 14 per cent covering 1 ha or less, 13 per cent extending 4 or 5 ha and 12 per cent ranging from 6-10 ha. Only 5 exceeded 10 ha in area. The preponderance of small coverts is not surprising; as Lord Hastings MFH had noted in 1858 while praising Lord Leicester's tenant, Mr Savory, of Billingford, for 'keeping the Thorns covert quiet and undisturbed ... six acres (2.4 ha) were sufficient, not two hundred (81 ha), as long as they were quiet for foxes'.<sup>1153</sup> Four out of the eleven largest coverts are named 'furze' (2) 'gorse', or 'whin hill'. This may be because some foxhunters took entire fields out of production to plant gorses. In 1859 Lord Hastings told a hunt dinner that he would be converting 'much tillage to gorse' around Melton Constable although the outcome is unknown.<sup>1154</sup>

The following section explores contemporary records of the development of fox coverts in Norfolk, which was significantly earlier than in the remainder of the country, including the rest of East Anglia.

### **The creation of fox coverts**

The use of contemporary documents has proved a very useful adjunct to the survey by providing detailed evidence of the location, and cost, of making new coverts. The quickest way of creating fox coverts was to enclose existing rough grazing or woodland. Records at Holkham in north Norfolk show that as early as 1720 Thomas Pigge of Waterden was being paid £26.1s for 'enclosing 4 fox coverts about Holkham' and 'enclosing 1 at Dunton for £15'.<sup>1155</sup> A further £4.8s was paid out to John Creed to clear his bill to Mr Layer for 4 fox coverts (presumably because Layer couldn't pay the bill; he had been forced to sell his pack of hounds to Coke in 1718 for £80 and was housed by Coke at Beck Hall, one of his kennels). The total spent on enclosing fox coverts in 1720 was £53.18s.<sup>1156</sup> In 1723 Mr Donne was paid £18.6s.6d for 'taking in a fox cover and other disbursements' while George Gardiner earned £11.3s.6d for 'ditching 120

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<sup>1153</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 67

<sup>1154</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 67

<sup>1155</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A7 (expenses relating to hunting, 1720) p. 141

<sup>1156</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A7 (expenses relating to hunting, 1720) p. 141

rods at ye fox covert and sorcing winns'.<sup>1157</sup> By 1727 tenants are being compensated for the presence of fox coverts so Thomas Pigge had £2.10s offset against his account 'as a years rental for Egmore fox covert' and Mr Powditch of Quarle benefited by £5 for 'a years rent of a fox cover'.<sup>1158</sup> In the same year Thomas Moscroft used 26 dozen hurdles while enclosing the new fox cover at Dunton.<sup>1159</sup> Subsequent entries refer to the costs of ditching, cutting rides and making gates into fox coverts; a new road was cut through Coney Hall fox covert (in Holkham park) and Edward Clark was paid 8 shillings for 'cutting whins to make a road through the fox covert near Mr Wells's brick kiln' on the north west boundary of the park.<sup>1160</sup> In January 1728 Thomas Mallet was paid 14s and 9d for making gates for the fox cover'.<sup>1161</sup>

**Table 7.6** Rents paid for fox coverts on Holkham Estate under Thomas Coke

<i>Name</i>	<i>Cover</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Rental payment</i>
Mr Huggins	Ash Yards	1723	6s
Thomas Pigg	Egmore	1727	£2.10s
Mr Powditch	Quarle	1727	£5

These references to creating fox coverts are the earliest discovered anywhere; for example Carr reflects conventional opinion that 'the planting of artificial gorse or blackthorn coverts became a necessity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.<sup>1162</sup>

By 1756 there are references at Raynham to the 'coverts planted by Mr Dewing for Mr Townsend's hunt in Norfolk'<sup>1163</sup> and 3 guineas were paid to Edward Walker for enclosing Harpley Cover.<sup>1164</sup> The Raynham Kennel accounts for 1766-1771 list a series of rental payments for fox covers as shown in Table 7.7.

In addition Elizabeth Batter was paid 14 shillings in 1769 for repairing the fence of a fox cover at Morston. Townsend used Stiffkey as a second hunting base;

<sup>1157</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A32 (expenses relating to hunting, 1723)

<sup>1158</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A11 (expenses relating to hunting, 1727) pp. 22 & 28

<sup>1159</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A11 (expenses relating to hunting, 1727) p. 35

<sup>1160</sup> Holkham Household accounts A11 (expenses relating to hunting, 1727) pp. 6 & 12

<sup>1161</sup> Holkham Household accounts A11 (expenses relating to hunting 1728) p. 34

<sup>1162</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 114

<sup>1163</sup> Harvey-Mason, *Hunting In W Norfolk*, Swaffham Museum, Box 73, p. 27

<sup>1164</sup> Raynham Attic shelves H2/3, (Kennel Account book 1765)

spending over £35 on repairs to the stables and kennels in 1768 after the hounds were sent there for February and March.

**Table 7.7** Rents paid for fox coverts on Raynham Estate 1766 - 1771<sup>1165</sup>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Cover</i>	<i>Rental payment</i>
E Pigg	Massingham	£6
Etheridge	Thorpland (Runcton Holme)	£2.2s
Buscall	Gates End (Tattersett)	£1.3s
Thomas Dugdale	Shackney	£18.18s (including poor rate)
Isaac Loose	Langham	£12
Thomas Chambers	Stiffkey	£1.12s
James Favours	Snoring	£3.8s
Elizabeth Brott	Tofts	£1.5s
William Glover	Creake	£4

The third great eighteenth-century hunting estate in north-west Norfolk was Houghton where Sir Robert Walpole kept a pack from 1702, later hunted by his son and a grandson who died in 1791. When Walpole died in 1745 he left debts of £40,000 so little investment in planting took place over the next half century. When the Earl of Cholmondeley inherited the estate in 1797 he commissioned a *Survey of the Houghton Hall estate* that took place in 1800 and gives a useful snapshot of the size and distribution of the remaining fox coverts.<sup>1166</sup> The vestiges of lost coverts are also visible in some field names, illustrated in the lower half of Table 7.8 overleaf.

The first three coverts listed in Table 7.8 are all distant from the village and farm centre; Harpley fox cover is only one field's width from the farm boundary,<sup>1167</sup> while both the coverts in Great Massingham are only separated from the parish boundary by common land.<sup>1168</sup> The remaining four entries in the table, and study of Yaxley's redrawing of Hill's maps, suggest that fox or furze coverts had been

<sup>1165</sup> Raynham Attic shelves H2/3, (Kennel Register 1766-1771)

<sup>1166</sup> D. Yaxley (ed.), *The Houghton Hall Estate Survey by Joseph Hill*, 1800 (Norwich, 1984)

<sup>1167</sup> Yaxley, *Houghton*, p. 73

<sup>1168</sup> Yaxley, *Houghton*, pp. 78&82

lost and reabsorbed into ‘brakes’ or fields since the decline in the Walpole’s family fortunes and interest in hunting.

**Table 7.8** Fox coverts on the Houghton Hall estate, 1800

<i>Tenant</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Covert name</i>	<i>Size (acre, rood, perch)</i>
Edmund Walker	Harpley	Fox cover	7. 0. 0
Anthony Beck	Great Massingham	Guyton Fox cover	11. 2. 12
William Banks jnr	Great Massingham	Fox cover	12. 3. 33
Nicholas Savory	Syderstone	Great Furze cover piece	29.1. 38
John Mitchell	Houghton	Fox cover brake	25. 0. 13
Thomas Herring	Harpley	Long Fox cover brake	48. 2. 7
Thomas Herring	Harpley	Fox cover brake	46. 2. 28

Many landowners continued to create coverts by enclosing existing scrub or rough grazing. T.W. Coke, MFH from 1775-1797, continued the tradition of creating coverts on the Holkham estate by using a second method - sowing gorse (‘whin’ or ‘furze’). Gorse was popular because it attracted rabbits, a good food source for foxes and it deterred poachers or ‘bagmen’ looking for foxes to sell. Stirling recorded that in the 1770s as a result of the shortage of foxes experienced by T.W. Coke when he started hunting in Norfolk ‘Mr Rolfe of Heacham [south of Hunstanton] made some gorse coverts on his estate in that parish and set the first example of rearing them’ (foxes).<sup>1169</sup> The Cokes themselves also established whin coverts; in October 1789 150 lbs of whin seed were purchased from Paul Gimwood and Co in London.<sup>1170</sup> The Holkham household accounts of the 1790s have references to ‘whin coverts’ at Sunderland Farm (Docking), Burnham Sutton,

<sup>1169</sup> Stirling, *Coke*, p. 91

<sup>1170</sup> Brown, *Fox hunters*, p. 38

Horningtoft and Stanfield (south of Fakenham).<sup>1171</sup> The expenses were considerable, with an entry in December 1795 for Henry Blyth owed £13.0s.6d for ‘rent, tithe and poor rate for land in Burnham sown with whins’ (for comparison a year’s wages for the head groom in 1801 was £26. 5s).<sup>1172</sup>

Parker explained that the cost of improvements that T.W. Coke undertook, which included growing whins on many farms to create coverts, appeared under ‘repairs’ in the form of annual payments compensating tenants for the consequent loss of land until the rent itself was adjusted when a new lease was drawn up.<sup>1173</sup>

**Table 7.9** Payments to tenants on Holkham estate

<i>Tenant</i>	<i>Cover</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Rental / 'repairs'</i>
Ambrose Sayer	Stanfield Whin	1793	£12
Mr Sharpe	Sunderland Whin	1794	£6
John Thurton	Burnham Sutton Whin	1795	£3.3s
Rev. Hoste (repaid for Mr Raven)	Horningtoft Whin	1795	£9.14s.2d (4 years rent and ditching)

Other, lesser landowners were keen to improve their hunting also; in 1786 Sir Martin Browne Folkes of Hillington in west Norfolk was corresponding with J.W. Allen of Kings Lynn about ‘whin seed for a fox cover’.<sup>1174</sup>

The value of sowing gorse coverts was confirmed in the nineteenth century as the countryside polarised between those areas where hunting was still popular and those where shooting had supplanted it. By 1823 General Fitzroy, a Holkham tenant and later joint master of the Norfolk Hounds, was writing to the agent, Mr Blaikie, about the cost of furze seed (17s.11d) which suggests he was planning a covert at Kempston.<sup>1175</sup> In 1835 Henry Cholmondley wrote from Houghton about a gorse cover on Harpley Common; ‘my brother ... is perfectly willing to allow its

<sup>1171</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A47, pp. 28,67,74, 86 & 90

<sup>1172</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A48 p. 5

<sup>1173</sup> Parker, *Coke*, p. 94

<sup>1174</sup> Norfolk CRO MC50/38/503 (Folkes of Hillington collection, letter)

<sup>1175</sup> Holkham Archives, E/C 10 (Letters book, 1823) p. 10

inclosure provided the tenant Mr Beck ... do not object to it'.<sup>1176</sup> Lord Hasting's intention in 1859 for the conversion of 'much tillage to gorse'<sup>1177</sup> around Melton Constable has already been mentioned and in the same year there is reference to Mr Thomas Francis's 'New Gorse' at Kipton Heath.<sup>1178</sup> In 1870 an appeal went out from the hunt committee to 'ask if you will kindly subscribe to a fund for the repair of the coverts now in existence and also for the making of new ones ... Without further coverts a certain find can never be calculated on and the making of more gorse coverts ... will be the cause of much more sport'.<sup>1179</sup> The success of this appeal is unclear although Table 7.4, analysing the results of the survey of 100 coverts, shows a considerable increase from 62 coverts in 1838 to 87 by the time of the 6 inches: 1 mile OS survey of the 1880s-1890s. This helped off-set the impact of the loss of habitat; such as that recorded in 1887 by Augustus Jessop, the vicar of Scarning, just west of Dereham: 'the tall hedges, the high banks, the scrub or the bottoms where a fox or weasel might hope to find a night's lodgings ... all these things have vanished'.<sup>1180</sup>

It is unlikely that any new coverts were created between 1880 and the end of the period under study (1900). The onset of the agricultural depression in the mid 1870s had mixed effects for foxhunting in Norfolk; it encouraged landlords to let their estates to shooting tenants, to the detriment of hunting, and many tenant farmers and landowners could no longer afford to hunt, subscribe or establish fox coverts. But there were some advantages: Wade Martins and Williamson have shown that in Norfolk the area under grass, often easier to cross on horseback than plough, expanded steadily during the last years of the nineteenth century. There was also a 'retreat of cultivation from marginal land ... especially in Breckland ... but also to a lesser extent in the heathy district to the north of Norwich'.<sup>1181</sup> Rew noted that between 1881 and 1894 the area under the plough in Norfolk had decreased by 35,843 acres of which 86 per cent had become grassland with the remainder falling out of cultivation.<sup>1182</sup> Pennel-Elmhirst, writing of Norfolk in his descriptions of *The Hunting Countries of England* in 1882,

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<sup>1176</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC40/303/19 (Coldham, Anmer Hall collection)

<sup>1177</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p. 67

<sup>1178</sup> Brown, *Foxhunting*, p. 73

<sup>1179</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC40/303/3

<sup>1180</sup> S. Wade Martins & T. Williamson, *The Countryside of East Anglia: Changing Landscapes* (Woodbridge, 2008) p. 122

<sup>1181</sup> Wade Martins & Williamson, *The Countryside*, pp. 38 - 39

<sup>1182</sup> Wade Martins & Williamson, *The Countryside*, p. 119

described the 'light country of the west ... [as] wild and open with many acres of waste heath and gorse upon which rabbits flourish by the hundreds'.<sup>1183</sup> Habitat change with the increase in derelict arable land in some areas and the advance of scrub on many commons encouraged the proliferation of rabbits - an important prey for foxes - where they had not been killed by gamekeepers. In some ways the changes may have compensated in creating new habitats as landlords' ability and willingness to fund fox coverts declined.

In summary, the Norfolk landscape, particularly in the north-west, was affected significantly by foxhunters' efforts to secure a sustainable fox population in the face of an increasing enthusiasm for pheasant shooting. The visible methods, such as planting, were augmented by landowners' efforts to tighten control over the activities of their own tenants and the gamekeeper employees of others. The results of a survey of fox coverts, the most visible hunting-related landscape feature, provides clear evidence of their important, but often transient, impact on the countryside. The survey's use of a series of maps was complemented by details taken from contemporary documents. The next chapter explores the impact of foxhunting on Shropshire's contrasting landscape.

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<sup>1183</sup> E. Pennel-Elmhirst, *The hunting countries of England*, Vol.2 (London, 1883) p. 116

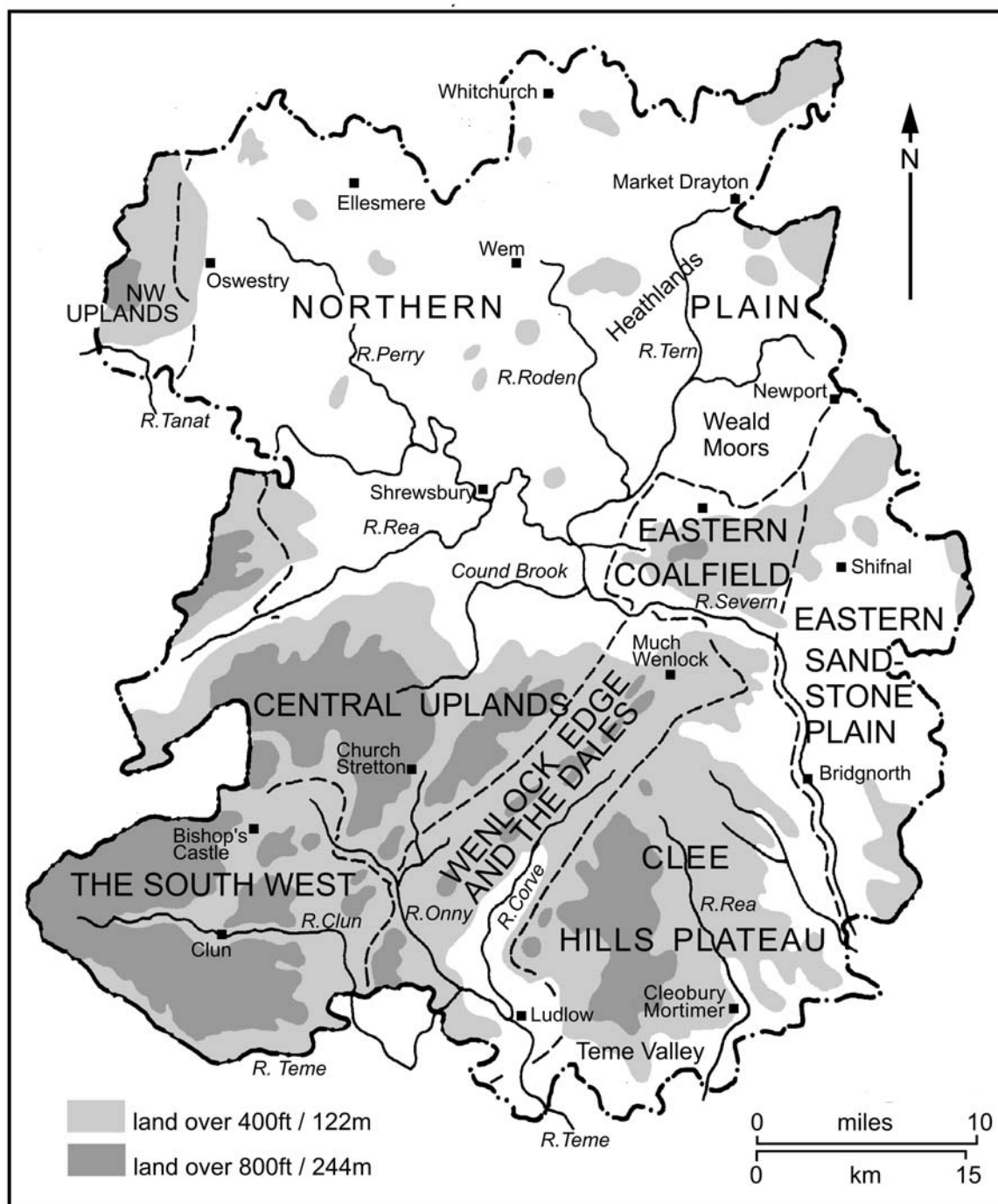


## CHAPTER 8 - FOXHUNTING IN SHROPSHIRE

### Introduction

Shropshire was chosen as the second study area to provide a contrast to both the model foxhunting landscape of the Shires and to Norfolk. The differences in the early foxhunting history of the two peripheral English counties has already been explored and attributed, at least in part, to differences in enclosure history, agricultural use and social structure which influenced both 'control' of and 'access' to the landscape for foxhunters. This chapter allows a closer examination of some of the factors, both 'visible' and 'invisible', linked to the environment, land ownership and hunting to explore whether foxhunters in contrasting areas shared a consensus on how to enhance their sport. The second part of the chapter records the findings of a survey of coverts and the eighteenth and nineteenth-century activities that explain their location.

Shropshire differs from Norfolk in many respects; most strikingly in its topography, with significant areas in the south and west, which form the eastern edge of the Welsh plateau, lying at over 244 metres. The river Severn, flowing south-east through the county, forms a natural boundary between this upland and the rolling plains of the north and east which merge into the Cheshire and Midland lowlands. Figure 8.1 overleaf illustrates the principal physical divisions.



**Figure 8.1** The physical regions of Shropshire<sup>1184</sup>

The two counties also have very different enclosure histories; Wordie estimated that 75 per cent of Shropshire was enclosed by 1600 and defined it as 'heavily enclosed';<sup>1185</sup> by 1675 less than one fifth of Shropshire was still in open-field

<sup>1184</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 4

<sup>1185</sup> J.R. Wordie, 'The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914', *The Economic History Review*, 36: (1983) p. 490

compared to sixty or seventy percent in other Midland counties.<sup>1186</sup> Partly as a result of this early activity, only sixty-eight parliamentary enclosure acts were passed from 1763 covering 7.4 per cent of the county area (63,775 acres), almost all involving commons and waste rather than open-fields, and over half during the Napoleonic Wars. This contrasts with Norfolk which had the third largest acreage of any county in England (420,363 acres or 31 per cent of its area) enclosed by act, of which over three-quarters included open-field arable land.<sup>1187</sup> In addition, there were fifteen private agreements recorded in Shropshire between 1787 and 1835, although they only dealt with a total of 4,874 acres. Eleven were during the war years of 1806-1815 mirroring the surge in Parliamentary activity.<sup>1188</sup> As well as these more formal activities, the VCH suggested also that there were arrangements that 'did not find their way to the clerk of peace's office' for formal recording such as the enclosure of a 160 acre common at Aston on Clun and 58 acres of Farley Common near Much Wenlock plus innumerable acts of piecemeal enclosure.<sup>1189</sup>

### **Loss of 'wastes' and woodland**

Almost all the enclosure during the period from 1763-1820 was of common waste and the distribution was sharply differentiated; almost four times as much land was enclosed in north Shropshire than the south. The northern heavier clays and peat 'mosses' were potentially more fertile than the acid heaths or moorland of the south; in 1777 1,283 acres of Baggy Moor, which flooded each winter, were drained and improved and other landlords in the north soon followed this lead enclosing 24,000 acres by 1820.<sup>1190</sup> In the subsequent 70 years almost all the parliamentary enclosure was confined to the extensive hills of the south and south west, for example 8,208 acres of Clun Forest in 1847, and a further 3,580 acres in 1854 where earlier enclosure had seemed unprofitable.

John Roque's map of Shropshire in 1750, redrawn in amended form by the Land Use Survey (LUS) - Figure 8.2 - illustrated the distribution of woodland and 'heath, moor and unenclosed land'. The accuracy of these early maps is questionable but

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<sup>1186</sup> T. Rowley, *The Shropshire Landscape* (London, 1972) p. 143

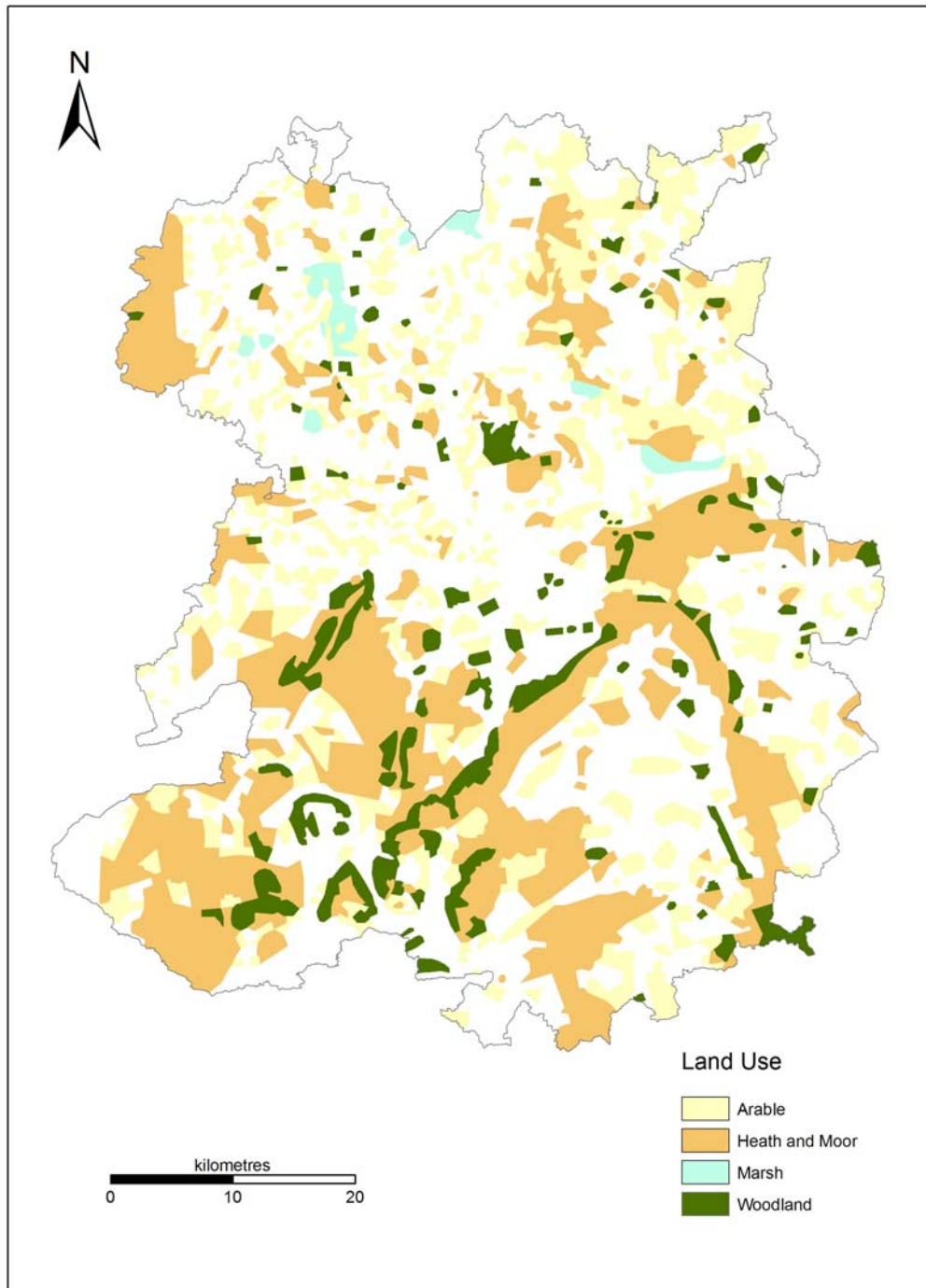
<sup>1187</sup> Turner, *English*, pp. 180-181

<sup>1188</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 171

<sup>1189</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 172

<sup>1190</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 174

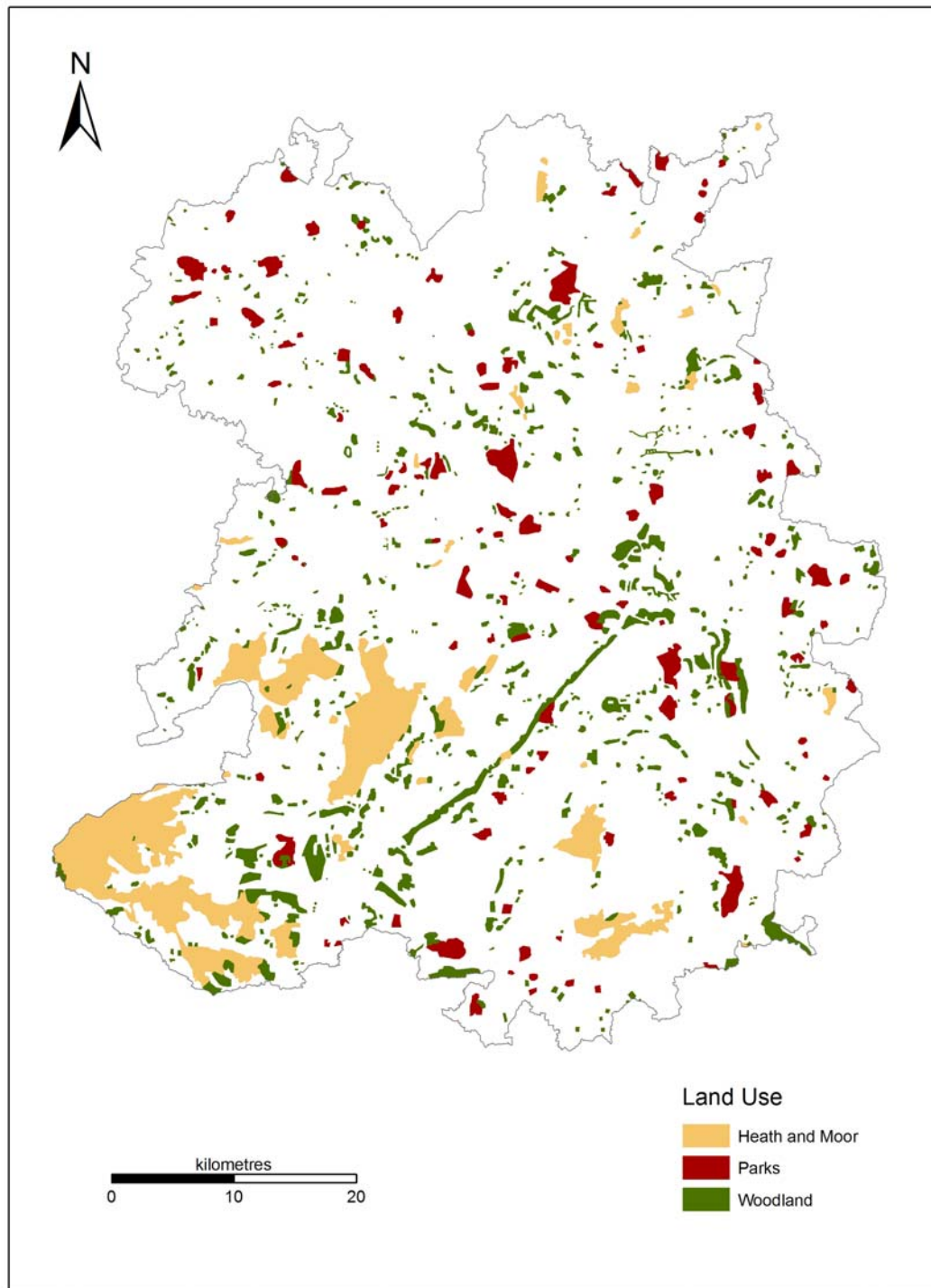
they give a useful idea of the extent of the different categories of land use and are valuable for comparison with distributions on later maps - as will be demonstrated.



**Figure 8.2** Roque's map of Shropshire in 1750<sup>1191</sup>

<sup>1191</sup> L.D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain. Part 66 - Shropshire* (London, 1941) p. 281

Helpfully the LUS also produced a map based on the Greenwoods' map of 1827, Figure 8.3, which clearly illustrated the marked change in the landscape.



**Figure 8.3** Greenwood's map of Shropshire in 1827<sup>1192</sup>

<sup>1192</sup> L.D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain. Part 66 - Shropshire* (London, 1941) p. 283

### *Reduction in heath, moor and marsh*

Comparison of the two maps (Figures 8.2 and 8.3) illustrates the striking reduction in heath, moor and marsh especially in the north of the county where, by 1827, only a few small remnants of heath remain in a predominantly pastoral landscape used primarily for dairying. A Tithe Commissioner wrote in the late 1830s of Hodnet 'everything appears sacrificed to the maintenance of the dairy which is the staple production of the parish'.<sup>1193</sup> The large number of sizeable parks hints at the existence of a cohort of enthusiastic foxhunting landowners who recognised the need for planting fox coverts and gorses to substitute for the loss of habitat.

The south-east quadrant of the county saw a considerable loss of lowland heaths on the droughty Bunter sandstone pebble beds; for example, three adjoining areas north east of Bridgnorth: Cranmere Heath (enclosed in 1807), Rudge Heath (1809) and 3,600 acres of Morfe Forest (1812).<sup>1194</sup> On the upland of the Clee Plateau enclosure in the parishes of Abdon and Stoke St Milborough (1809), the common at Netchwood (1813) and Ditton Priors (1841) reduced the extent of upland moor and led to improved pasture up to 1,300ft.<sup>1195</sup> The enclosures had a significant effect on fox habitat with the loss of the commons and heaths in their 'unimproved state ... [of] chiefly gorse bushes and fern'.<sup>1196</sup> As will be shown, fox coverts were subsequently established in both these areas.

### *Reduction in woodland*

Comparison of the 1750 and 1827 maps reveals the retreat of woodland into parks, agriculturally peripheral areas, such as the south-west uplands and steep scarps including Wenlock Edge, and the Ironbridge Gorge. Plymley writing in 1803 remarked on some of the reasons, in addition to clearance for agricultural use: the high demand for pit props and charcoal made by the rapid development of coal-fields and iron works in the Coalbrookdale/Ironbridge area and the great supplies of oak for ship-building sent to Bristol.<sup>1197</sup> Rackham has estimated that the area of Shropshire covered by woodland fell from 8 per cent in 1086 to 5.9 per cent by 1895;<sup>1198</sup> allowing for some nineteenth century planting, including fox

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<sup>1193</sup> R.J. Kain & H.C. Prince, *The Tithe surveys of England and Wales* [Cambridge, 2006] p. 298

<sup>1194</sup> L.D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain. Part 66 - Shropshire* (London, 1941) p 290

<sup>1195</sup> Rowley, *Shropshire*, pp. 160-161

<sup>1196</sup> Bishton 1794 quoted in Rowley, *Shropshire*, p. 153

<sup>1197</sup> J. Plymley, *General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn* (London, 1813) p. 219

<sup>1198</sup> Rackham, *Ancient*, pp. 124-126

coverts, this fits with Kain and Prince's estimate of 5.6 per cent in 1836. (Rackham calculated that 4.1 per cent of Norfolk was under woodland by 1895).

#### *Land use information from the Tithe Surveys*

Kain and Prince, using the tithe surveys, have provided estimates of land use for both Shropshire and Norfolk;<sup>1199</sup> unfortunately the sample sizes for tithe district returns for both Leicestershire and Northamptonshire were too small to justify compiling county-wide figures. Rutland has been used as a proxy for the east Midlands counties. Table 8.1 shows a comparison of land use of the total land area 'enumerated in the reports' i.e. not the total county area.

**Table 8.1** Land use shown as per cent of area in Tithe Surveys of 1830s<sup>1200</sup>

<i>County</i>	<i>per cent grassland</i>	<i>per cent commons</i>	<i>per cent woodland</i>	<i>per cent arable</i>	<i>per cent of arable in fallow</i>	<i>per cent of arable in turnips</i>
Shropshire	39	8	6	47	14	10
Norfolk	21	11	4	64	2	25
Rutland	54	3	4	39	8	13

By the 1830s, Rutland demonstrates the wider east Midlands advantage due to a greater extent of grassland available to contemporary foxhunters keen to gallop and jump. Shropshire's combination of grassland and fallows almost totals 46% and may partly explain the surge in enthusiasm for hunting during the early nineteenth century. In Norfolk the intensification of arable farming and the rise in the popularity of shooting underlies the difficulties in sustaining formal foxhunting that, as Table 7.1 has illustrated, was suspended for two periods during the nineteenth century.

#### **Eighteenth-century foxhunting**

As has already been highlighted in the chapter on the development of hunting, foxhunting in Shropshire did not become fully organised until a comparatively late

<sup>1199</sup> R.J. Kain & H.C. Prince, *An Atlas and Index of Tithe files of mid nineteenth-century England and Wales* (Cambridge, 1986) pp. 72 & 300

<sup>1200</sup> Kain & Prince, *Atlas*, p. 378

date, in contrast to Norfolk, although individual landowners, such as the Foresters maintained private packs. Shropshire was not divided into recognisable hunting countries until the early nineteenth century and had a poor reputation as a hunting country.<sup>1201</sup> Packs supported by people who did not draw their primary income from the countryside were almost entirely absent in Shropshire during the eighteenth and first third of the nineteenth century. As already noted, the only opportunity for foxhunting available to anyone appears to be via the informal annual hunts that flourished in the county during the later eighteenth century.<sup>1202</sup> Gradually foxhunting took place more regularly and a subscription pack called the Ludlow Hounds was formed in the south of the county under the management of Mr Adams, a Ludlow attorney, perhaps as early as 1797.<sup>1203</sup> So far, there has been little other evidence of polite foxhunters without a land owning or farming background hunting regularly in Shropshire before 1800.

### *Shortage of foxes*

There is evidence that towards the end of the eighteenth century a shortage of foxes meant that some Salopian foxhunters had come to rely on bag foxes or even moved to hunt elsewhere. Pulestone noted that 'Forester of Willey, John Hill of Prees and Owen Roberts of Wem [the latter two in north Shropshire] rarely hunted anything but fox – generally a bagman' between 1792-1802. Pulestone also recorded that John Corbet, who kept 60 couple of hounds at Sundorne near Shrewsbury, left for Warwickshire in 1792 because of 'the scarcity of foxes'.<sup>1204</sup>

The VCH suggests that the fall in fox population resulted in part from 'woodland clearance which seems to have reached its peak in Shropshire at the end of the eighteenth century, and in part from the irregular fashion in which the country was then hunted. If hunting was to continue the preservation of foxes was essential'.<sup>1205</sup> The 'irregularity' suggests that few organised efforts were made to protect or increase the supply of foxes during the eighteenth century, apart from the Shrewsbury Hunt Club and on the large estate of Attingham, south of Shrewsbury. Other pressures on the fox population resulted from the loss of habitat due to the enclosure of heaths, moors, meres and mosses and the

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<sup>1201</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol 2. pp. 165 & 166

<sup>1202</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 166

<sup>1203</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, p. 173

<sup>1204</sup> T.H.G. Pulestone, *History of foxhunting - Wynstay* (Brighton, 1893) p. 12

<sup>1205</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol 2. p. 167



intensification of agriculture. The development of pheasant shooting from the 1790s encouraged gamekeepers to cull foxes to protect valuable game stocks; by 1795 £122 p.a. was being spent on game on the Clives' Walcot estate in south-west Shropshire while pheasant eggs were reared there under bantams from 1803.<sup>1206</sup>

### **Nineteenth-century foxhunting**

As we have seen in Chapter 5, by the late eighteenth century foxhunting had become a fashionable sport in Shropshire and the plethora of small packs previously hunted by landowners across their own and neighbours' land (shown on Figure 8.4 overleaf as 'private packs' with locations identified by numbers 1-18 inclusive) began to be replaced by larger, more formally organised subscription packs (shown by numbers 19-37).

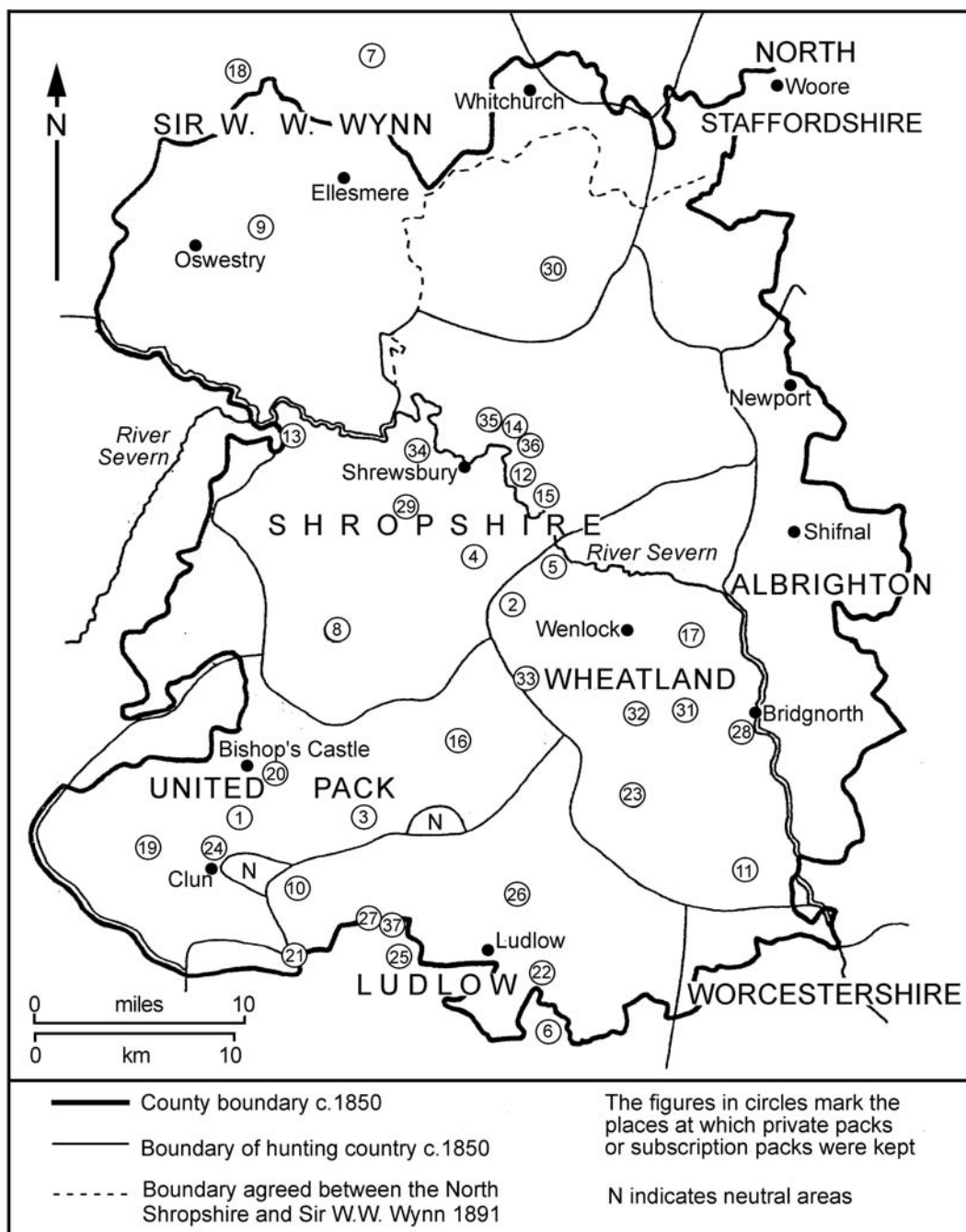
The change to more formal hunting was stimulated by the return of foxhunters such as William 'Flying' Childe, Cecil Forester and Smythe-Owen of Condover from hunting in Leicestershire, the decline of the informal annual hunts and the rising cost of keeping a pack which necessitated encouraging subscriptions from followers. In 1837 Colonel Vincent Corbet wrote to Sir Rowland Hill of Hawkstone Park to 'congratulate you on having given up the hounds ... hunting to excess is apt to bring on complaints in the chest in more ways than one'.<sup>1207</sup> Gradually hunt 'countries' became formalised so that by 1850 *Hobson's Hunting Atlas* shows six packs, the Shropshire, Sir Watkin Williams- Wynn's, Wheatland, Albrighton, United and Ludlow<sup>1208</sup> (as illustrated on Figure 8.4 overleaf).

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<sup>1206</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol 2. p. 189

<sup>1207</sup> Shropshire CRO, 731/11/104 (Hill of Hawkstone collection, letter 27<sup>th</sup> December 1837)

<sup>1208</sup> *Hobson's Hunting Atlas* (London, 1850)



**Figure 8.4** Boundaries of Shropshire hunting countries c. 1850 with the addition of the locations of earlier private or subscription packs<sup>1209</sup>

*Key: Locations of private packs and subscription packs in Shropshire*<sup>1210</sup>

*Private packs – various dates*

No	Location	Owner	No	Location	Owner
1	Acton	Luther	2	Acton Burnell	Smythe
3	Cheney Longville	Beddoes	4	Condover	Smythe Owen

<sup>1209</sup> VCH Shropshire, Vol. 2 p. 171

<sup>1210</sup> VCH Shropshire, Vol. 2 p. 171

5	Cound	Cressett Pelham	6	Easton	Dansey
7	Emral	Puleston	8	Gatten Lodge	Hulton Harrup
9	Halston	Mytton	10	Hopton Castle	Pardoe
11	Kinlet	Childe	12	Longner	Burton
13	Loton	Leighton	14	Sundorne	Corbet
15	Tern	Hill	16	Tickleton	Pinches
17	Willey	Forester	18	Wynnstay	Williams-Wynn

*Subscription packs – various dates*

No	Location of kennels	Pack	No	Location of kennels	Pack
19	Anchor Inn, Newcastle on Clun	United	20	Bishop's Castle	United
21	Bucknell	Ludlow	22	Caynham	Ludlow
23	Cleobury North	Wheatland	24	Clun	United
25	Downton Castle	Ludlow	26	Downton Hall	N Ludlow
27	Ferney Hall	Ludlow	28	Halfway House, Eardington	Wheatland
29	Little Hanwood	S Shropshire	30	Lee Bridge	N Shropshire
31	Lye Mill, Morville	Wheatland	32	Monkhopton	Wheatland
33	Plaish	S Shropshire & Wheatland	34	Shepherd's Lane, Bicton Heath	Shropshire
35	Shrewsbury	Shropshire	36	Uffington	Shrewsbury
37	The Wetmore	Ludlow			

The process was not entirely smooth; a dispute broke out in the 1860s between landowners in the north and a new MFH in the Shropshire Hunt country over drawing coverts; a proposal to refer the matter to Boodles club failed when 'the northern gentry refused to put their case' and the MFH retreated south; the hunt country was eventually reunited amicably in 1880.<sup>1211</sup> By 1902 when a dispute arose between the Wheatland and South Shropshire packs over access to certain coverts the MFH Association had been formed and adjudicated over their use.<sup>1212</sup>

Chapter 5 has already described how hunting in Shropshire during the eighteenth century was stratified socially; as more formally defined packs developed during the nineteenth century they also developed a distinctive social profile – often dependent on how easy the countryside was to cross on horseback and proximity

<sup>1211</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p. 172

<sup>1212</sup> Greaves, *Foxhunting in Shropshire*, p. 30

to large estates. In the north Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's hounds were run as a private pack until 1944.<sup>1213</sup> The remainder required a broader base of funders. By 1825 the Shropshire Hunt, hunting the lower, flatter land north and south of Shrewsbury, was established with a committee of subscribers, mainly landowners many of whom had family links with the elite Hunt Club. The north of the county became a fashionable hunting country. As early as the 1720s Defoe commented that 'Whitchurch ... [had] a great many gentry near it'.<sup>1214</sup> The rail station opened in 1863 linking the town to Chester and thence Liverpool and Manchester; by 1883 the town is described as 'rapidly establishing itself as a high class hunting centre – having of late years launched out freely in the erection of hunting boxes and stabling, and meeting with a proportionate response' often from prosperous urban foxhunters from the north-west.<sup>1215</sup> Figure 8.5 shows foxhunters crossing the large, grass fields at Shavington near Whitchurch in 1829; it is an illustration from a biography of the famously dissolute Salopian foxhunter John Mytton written by 'Nimrod' (Charles Apperley) while the author was hiding from his British creditors in Calais in 1835 (a stratagem possibly copied from his subject).



**Figure 8.5** 'Now for the honour of Shropshire - the Shavington Day' (7<sup>th</sup> April 1829) by H. Alken in 1835<sup>1216</sup>

<sup>1213</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p 176

<sup>1214</sup> D. Defoe, *A Tour through the whole island of Great Britain 1724-1726*, P Rogers (ed.) (Harmondsworth, 1992) p. 143

<sup>1215</sup> E. Pennell-Elmhirst, *The Hunting Countries of England*, (London, 1883) p. 198

<sup>1216</sup> C. Apperley, ('Nimrod') *Life of Mytton*, (London, 1835) p. 174

In the south, on the rolling hills, the Ludlow Hunt 'was regarded as a farmers' hunt. Most of the farmers coming from the east as those to the west were more wedded to their white-faced cattle [Hereford breed] than to hounds and horses'.<sup>1217</sup> The United hunting the hills in the west was also a farmers' pack; during the 1830s and 1840s 'the United still followed the older methods of hunting ... hounds were unruly and did not hunt as a pack, but rather each devoted its attention to different objects ... there was no whipper-in and the hounds were bought to meets by dog-boys' from local farms.<sup>1218</sup> The Wheatland, hunting the centre of the county, was also primarily a farmers' pack reliant on subscriptions with hounds initially also trencher-fed by local farmers. The first advertised meet was in 1840,<sup>1219</sup> but a country described as 'heavy land with strong fences and many dingles which were to be crossed at only a few places. There were also deep brooks with steep sides' was unlikely to attract a fashionable following.<sup>1220</sup>

By contrast, on the opposite (eastern) side of the River Severn the Albrighton Hunt benefited from 'the frequency of country places and gentlemen's residences [which] is quite a feature ... In some of the best preserved and most closely hunted parts of the country you are often scarcely out of one park before you are in another'.<sup>1221</sup> In addition to support from significant local landowners, such as the Earl of Dartmouth and the Earl of Bradford, increasingly the hunt was aided by people who had made their money in the industrial West Midlands as 'the wealth of the towns finds one of its outlets at the covert side'.<sup>1222</sup> 'The Albrighton Hunt' poem, written in 1836, ranked the followers in order: after listing landowners such as 'Enville's honour'd peer' (The Earl of Stamford), 'now comes the second rank, a motley group composed in chief of Stourbridge yeoman bold' and finished the description of the field where 'lots of riders rush, lawyers, doctors, tailors, farmers, nailers'.<sup>1223</sup> Whilst foxhunting industrialists appear to have been accepted where they contributed subscriptions and conformed to hunting protocols those who took shooting tenancies were unpopular in hunting circles, as will be described in a later section.

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<sup>1217</sup> VCH Shropshire Vol. 2 p. 174

<sup>1218</sup> VCH Shropshire Vol. 2 p. 175

<sup>1219</sup> VCH Shropshire Vol. 2 p. 175

<sup>1220</sup> C. Tongue ('Cecil') *Records of the Chase* (London, 1854) p. 253

<sup>1221</sup> Pennel-Elmhirst, *Hunting*, p. 291

<sup>1222</sup> Pennel-Elmhirst, *Hunting*, p. 291

<sup>1223</sup> J.E. Auden, *A short history of the Albrighton hunt* (London, 1905) p. 129

### *Shortages of foxes*

During the nineteenth century the supply and distribution of foxes in Shropshire appears to have varied considerably both geographically and temporally; a shifting pattern of habitat clearance and covert planting, the rise in popularity of shooting and the fluctuating fortunes of landowners and tenant farmers all had an influence. The disease 'mange' had also become a problem in some areas; in 1820 Sir John Hill (of Hawkstone in the north of the Shropshire Hunt country) recorded in his hunting diary that 'Sir E Smith, [at] Shawbury [near Shrewsbury] found a mangy fox – no sport'.<sup>1224</sup> The use of bag foxes can be a useful surrogate for fox shortages, since it implies the need to substitute for reduced natural stocks. But it has at least two drawbacks: the stigma may result in an under-recording and some foxhunters preferred the certainty of releasing a bag fox to the time-consuming and skilful exercise of drawing a range of coverts, especially if they were accepting subscriptions from people who expected reliable sport. The pressure to entertain could be significant; in 1820 during Shrewsbury Hunt week Sir John Hill wrote in his diary on November 14<sup>th</sup> about Sir E. Smith's invited pack 'bad scent, bad huntsman consequently no sport' then 'ditto ditto ditto during the hunt week till Saturday on which day Sir E. Smith had very good sport from Attingham. No Blood'.<sup>1225</sup> By December 1821 Hill is celebrating the value of bag foxes for prompt entertainment; 'an excellent run of one hour twenty minutes without a check with a bag fox ... he darted out of the bag'.<sup>1226</sup>

In 1823 Sir John Hill gave a good picture of Corbet's reliance on bag foxes but also revealed that there was an adequate local supply; Hill estimated that there were 'probably more than 100 foxes within 4 miles of Hawkstone' (Hill's home); often these native prey seem to have been hunted only once the bag fox(es) had been killed. Hill's diary notes: 'September [no date] Corbet turned out a bag-man, lost after a run of five minutes ... October 11<sup>th</sup> Corbet turned out a bag fox at Whixhall [north west Shropshire] a very fine fox but a dunghill which was killed immediately'.<sup>1227</sup> Afterwards drew the Light Carr Coppice where another fox was found ... this was a very pretty thing and very quick, the hounds behaved remarkably well'. On October 22<sup>nd</sup> Corbet turned out three bag foxes: 'an old dog

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<sup>1224</sup> Shropshire CRO, 731/5/15/1 (Hunting diary, Hill family of Hawkstone)

<sup>1225</sup> Shropshire CRO, 731/5/15/1 (Hunting diary, Hill family, November 1821)

<sup>1226</sup> Shropshire CRO, 731/5/15/1 (Hunting diary, Hill family, December 11<sup>th</sup> 1821)

<sup>1227</sup> A bag fox allegedly imported from France

fox caught the day before and killed after 20 minutes', 'a bitch fox' which was killed and then a second bitch fox 'killed her after a run of half an hour very quick'. But on November 8<sup>th</sup> after turning out a bag fox and 'killing him in style' in Twemloes Gorse Corbet moved on to draw the Lower Heath and 'found and went away pretty quick'.<sup>1228</sup>

Mytton, who kept a pack at Halston in north-east Shropshire in the 1820s was notorious for the numbers of bag foxes he bought. Sir Bellingham Graham who hunted the Shropshire hounds from 1823-1827 once saw ten foxes in the Halston kennels,<sup>1229</sup> and at one stage he owed a London dealer £1,500 for bag foxes and pheasant poults.<sup>1230</sup> In 1820 Hill noted cuttingly in his diary after a day with Mytton's pack on Hodnet Heath 'too many hounds, too many foxes. Bad sport'. But a day later he recorded 'Mytton's hounds killed a brace in covert a pretty thing'.<sup>1231</sup>

After the 1820s there are few records of bag foxes being hunted in Shropshire although Bovill wrote that nationally the 'trade continued to flourish' until after the 1850s.<sup>1232</sup> The apparent reduction in their use in Shropshire can be linked to several reasons: a growing realisation that bag foxes often introduced mange to the local population, the inadvertent encouragement of 'the destruction of foxes by farmers and gamekeepers who argued that if people wanted to hunt they could well afford to buy bagmen' that, being confined, were much less of a risk to pheasants and poultry than the free population, and the development of more formal, subscription packs which had the means to encourage the native supply.<sup>1233</sup> A variety of methods, both visible and invisible were used to increase fox numbers. The vital role of fox coverts will be discussed in the latter part of the chapter where the results of a survey, using a series of maps, are outlined and amplified by information from contemporary documents and commentaries.

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<sup>1228</sup> Shropshire CRO, 731/5/15/1 (Hunting diary, Sir John Hill)

<sup>1229</sup> Bovill, *England Nimrod*, p. 49

<sup>1230</sup> J. Holdsworth, *Mango - the life and times of Squire John Mytton 1796 - 1834* (London, 1972) p. 57. (Mytton's nickname was 'Mango' because he was a 'pickle').

<sup>1231</sup> Shropshire CRO, 731/5/15/1 (Hunting diary, Sir John Hill)

<sup>1232</sup> Bovill, *England Nimrod*, p. 50

<sup>1233</sup> Bovill, *England Nimrod*, p. 50

## Methods of increasing fox numbers

### *Leases*

Leases form an 'invisible' control over tenants' activities and the landscape by landowners; Chapter 3 dealt with leases and tenancies in some detail. There is a long tradition of tenancy agreements drawn up by Salopian landlords to protect their hunting rights. In 1548 the owners retained the 'hunting rights in the manor of the Priory of Great Bromfield' near Ludlow.<sup>1234</sup> A century later Francis Smythe of Acton Burnell, south of Shrewsbury, kept the 'liberty to go fishing, hawking and hunting' over a tenant's land,<sup>1235</sup> while a more equitable agreement in 1699 meant that Francis Charlton of Ludford Park, adjacent to Ludlow, held onto the landlord's 'liberty of access, use and hunting' but also required 'making satisfaction for damage done' to his tenant Richard Griffiths.<sup>1236</sup> By 1725 the Wolryche family of Dudmaston, south of Bridgnorth, not only retained hunting rights over tenants' land but also expected them each to keep 'one cock and one dog'—presumably a fighting game-cock and a hound.<sup>1237</sup>

In the nineteenth century a more detailed agreement of 1827 between a tenant, Edward Price, and the Plowdens of Lydbury North in the south-west of the county reserved 'all timber, trees ... quicksets, thorns etc' to the landlord, access for hunting and 'a walk at the farmhouse for a hound, pointer or spaniel'. Price was also expected to alert his landlord if 'any persons ... should trespass on the lands' so that Plowden could 'bring an action of law for which he would meet the costs'.<sup>1238</sup> This was an attempt to ensure that fox and other game coverts ('thorns') were protected and remained undisturbed by poachers or 'bagmen'. Some tenants were required to take a more active part in supporting the hunt; a notice from the 1860s in H.R. Corbet of Adderley's collection (north-east Shropshire) requires that 'when a hunt is advertised, tenants should ensure that earths are well-stopped'.<sup>1239</sup>

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<sup>1234</sup> Shropshire CRO, 20/23/21 (Oakley Park estate records, 1548)

<sup>1235</sup> Shropshire CRO, 1515/253 (Smythe family deeds, 1659)

<sup>1236</sup> Shropshire CRO, 11/690-1 (Ludford Park collection)

<sup>1237</sup> Shropshire CRO, 2922/5/38 (Dudmaston estate collection)

<sup>1238</sup> Shropshire CRO, 1037/21/111 (The More collection, draft agreement 28.3.1827)

<sup>1239</sup> Shropshire CRO, 327/5/12/6/5/42 (Corbet of Adderley records)



### *Payments to farmers and gamekeepers*

H.R. Corbet's papers also reveal other methods hunts employed during the nineteenth century to reduce the numbers of foxes culled by farmers to protect their poultry and crops. An undated schedule for the 1860s recorded annual compensation payments to farmers of £175 from the 'poultry losses' fund and £90 for 'probable damage to crops' (by mounted hunt followers).<sup>1240</sup> To encourage locals to support hunting rather than destroy fox litters the 'earth stoppers' were given an annual dinner costing a further £20. (For comparison, the huntsman's annual wage was £120 pa).<sup>1241</sup> Gamekeepers were also entertained generously in the hopes of persuading them not to trap, shoot or poison foxes to protect pheasant stocks. Hoyle's commentary on Thompson's work on the distribution of gamekeepers notes that by 1911 'the most densely kept country after Suffolk was Norfolk' with Shropshire lying tenth, which suggests that local hunts had to work hard to persuade landowners and their gamekeepers to spare sufficient cubs for hunting.<sup>1242</sup> Charles Morris MFH, hunting around Shrewsbury in the 1860s, recorded gloomily that on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1861 at the 'keepers and earth stoppers' dinner at the Britannia in Shrewsbury 'paid away £113 and 17 shillings between 11 am and half past 2'.<sup>1243</sup> As funds allowed, the Shropshire Hunt Club made periodic grants to the Shropshire Hunt, divided into north and south divisions from 1883; in 1887 the North Shropshire received £50 for the poultry fund but in 1888 the minutes record 'the income of the Club being only about equal to the expenditure no grant was made to the poultry fund';<sup>1244</sup> the situation improved sufficiently by 1897 for both districts of the Shropshire hunt to receive £25 for their poultry funds.<sup>1245</sup>

Heywood-Lonsdale, who wrote about hunting in Shropshire during the 1880s, identified another problem and expense for hunts: 'Borderer [his pen name] found himself entrapped in some of the most dangerous wire carefully entwined in the fences to be totally invisible until we were close upon it ... the malefactor is a Mr Kynaston, a farmer who came out and leaned on the gate probably in the happy

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<sup>1240</sup> Shropshire CRO, 327/5/12/6/5/14 (Corbet of Adderley records)

<sup>1241</sup> Shropshire CRO, 327/5/12/6/5/15 (Corbet of Adderley records)

<sup>1242</sup> R. Hoyle, *Our Hunting Fathers* (Lancaster, 2007) p. 12

<sup>1243</sup> Shropshire CRO, 20141/1 (Charles Morris hunting records) April 24<sup>th</sup> 1861

<sup>1244</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club, Minutes book.

<sup>1245</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club, Minutes book.

expectation of having to pick up the bits'.<sup>1246</sup> The use of barbed wire by farmers had spread rapidly after it was first patented in the USA in 1873; stock farmers adopted it as a cheap alternative to planting or repairing hedges or post and rail fencing. By 1876 the Quorn huntsman Tom Firr had a fall over wire in Leicestershire and soon 'wire became an obsession of the hunting world'.<sup>1247</sup> Hunts established 'wire funds', a direct payment to farmers for either taking down the wire during the hunting season or allowing the construction of safe 'hunt jumps' or hunt wickets. In 1930 Sir E. Rouse-Boughton, a large local landowner who became Master of the Ludlow hounds in 1932, had 'divided the hunt territory into eleven districts with a leader for each one to encourage the taking down of barbed wire'.<sup>1248</sup> In the same year, at the beginning of the hunting season, G.H. Coldwell wrote to him 'I am doing what I can to get barbed wire taken down round here and have already had several miles removed and now the hunting wickets have arrived they will be put into difficult places as far as they will go'.<sup>1249</sup>

In addition to these 'invisible' ways of encouraging hunting more overt measures influenced the landscape. The significant impact of artificial coverts will be explored later, in the context of the survey of their distribution.

### *Artificial earths*

There are no records of artificial earths being constructed in Shropshire in the eighteenth century; there was an extensive network of natural earths in the woodlands and scrub. As previously noted, the nineteenth century saw a great expansion in the construction of artificial earths as a way of increasing the fox population, especially in the Shires. In 1846 R.S. Surtees ('Jorrocks'), commenting on the changes in hunting, highlighted 'particularly the lodging, we might almost say domestication, of foxes. We have now all sorts of artificial contrivances from the faggot cover down to Mr Smith's Masonic drain'<sup>1250</sup> (presumably a reference to Freemasons' secrecy and ritual links to stonemasons' tools).

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<sup>1246</sup> A.P. Heywood-Lonsdale (Borderer) *Hunting and Sporting notes in Shropshire and Cheshire 1884-1885*, (London, 1887) p. 101

<sup>1247</sup> Carr, *English*, p. 222

<sup>1248</sup> Shropshire CRO, 6683/3/354/1 (Correspondence re control of barbed wire, Ludlow Hunt, July 1930)

<sup>1249</sup> Shropshire CRO, 6683/3/354//7 (Rouse Boughton collection, letter dated 19.9.1930)

<sup>1250</sup> R.S. Surtees, *The Analysis of the Hunting Field*, (London, 1846) p. 99

Sir Charles Frederick pointed out, 'foxes will not make their home in a covert permanently unless there is an earth in it where they can take shelter from poaching dogs and other enemies'.<sup>1251</sup> Miss Frances Pitt, MFH of the Wheatland 1929-1952, summed up the value of artificial earths: 'it is a great convenience, when there has been a long draw without finding, to be able to go to a "drain", put in a terrier, bolt a fox and get a good gallop'.<sup>1252</sup> She added that 'opinions differ widely as the best type of artificial earth; some persons say that it should be a well-built, deep elaborate affair; other affirm that a comparatively short shallow pipe will suffice'.<sup>1253</sup> Miss Pitt commented that she has seen both types regularly used and perversely foxes often ignore 'carefully constructed' earths. The earliest recorded earth in Shropshire is one created in 1836 by Valentine Vickers near Cranmere, north of Bridgnorth in the 'arable east' region of the county, in his gorse planted following the enclosure of Cranmere Heath in 1807.<sup>1254</sup> Secrecy, to avoid disturbance, is essential for the success of an artificial earth so it is not surprising that written references are rare. However, in 1935, Miss Pitt, a keen naturalist, wrote an article on badger earths which included reference to the location of four artificial earths in the Wheatland hunt country, dug for foxes but colonised by badgers.<sup>1255</sup> All four are in woodlands; one north-east of Much Wenlock is in limestone soil, the remaining three which lie north and north-west of Bridgnorth and south-west of Much Wenlock are excavated in clay soils. Although it is a tiny sample the range of soil types is interesting. Miss Pitt only gives the construction date for one, dug on her own land at the Allbynes in the early years of the twentieth century; the others are probably nineteenth-century constructions.

### **The activities of landowners – the clash of pheasant shooting versus hunting**

Although Shropshire has never been as fashionable a shooting county as Norfolk, pheasant shooting became increasingly popular during the nineteenth century and was a significant threat to fox supplies. One example from the 1870s demonstrates the scale of local employment and expense involved: 'Hawkstone

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<sup>1251</sup> Sir Charles Fredericks, *Foxhunting*, Lonsdale Library Vol. 7 (London, 1930)

<sup>1252</sup> F. Pitt, *Hounds, Horses and Hunting* (London, 1948) p. 179

<sup>1253</sup> Pitt, *Hounds*, p. 179

<sup>1254</sup> J.E. Auden, *Short History of the Albrighton Hunt* (London, 1905) p. 63

<sup>1255</sup> F. Pitt, 'The increase of the badger (*Meles meles*) in Great Britain 1900-1934', *Journal of Animal ecology* Vol. 4, No 1, (May, 1935) pp. 1- 6

[north-east of Shrewsbury] is not prime shooting country but the Hills kept nine keepers and the bills for their wages, the beaters, shot etc amounted to around £2000 p.a. Bags of up to 2,000 [pheasants] a day were recorded'.<sup>1256</sup>

Unsurprisingly, gamekeepers saw foxes as predators and attempted to kill them by a variety of means. In 1856 The Rev. J.C. Hill recorded 'Adams [keeper] has been at the foxes again – one of the gardener's men bought a dead one here this morning found in the Lower Heath covert ... verdict died from strychnine'.<sup>1257</sup>

Trapping was also common; in the east of the county Mrs Bridgeman was writing to her son William in 1882 with family news 'hunting at Tong Castle Wood - 3 legged fox', in the same letter she added, apparently without irony, 'Father shot with Uncle Newport and others and killed about 105 head' of pheasants.<sup>1258</sup>

Hunt committees spent considerable sums on trying to encourage gamekeepers not to kill fox litters but there is a consistent theme of complaint by some foxhunters during the nineteenth century that pheasant shooters and their staff were vulpicides and therefore beyond the social pale. 'Cecil' (C. Tongue) writing of the Albrighton country in 1854 deftly notes that:

Without asserting that any of the landed proprietors are at all hostile to foxhunting, some are very fond of their game. There is a great abundance of rabbits, for which steel traps are constantly set and many a fox is sacrificed by that means. I know that at one period the annual destruction was so extensive as to render it imperative to procure many brace of cubs to turn down.<sup>1259</sup>

However, Cecil is careful not to name any powerful individuals: 'I do not intend to stigmatise any of the landed proprietors in the Albrighton Hunt with the unsportsmanlike, un-neighbourly practice of wilfully killing the foxes'. Other authors were far less cautious: Heywood-Lonsdale was an old Etonian who inherited over a million pounds from an uncle in 1877 and used it to buy the Shavington estate in north Shropshire (location of figure 8.5). In 1885 he queried:

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<sup>1256</sup> J. Hill, *The Hills of Hawkstone and Attingham* (Andover, 2005) p. 120

<sup>1257</sup> Shropshire CRO, 821/144 (Rev.JC. Hill letter, 1856)

<sup>1258</sup> Shropshire CRO, 4629/1/1882/66 (Records of Bridgeman family, letter 14.11.1882)

<sup>1259</sup> Tongue, *Records*, p. 14

What must that excellent ex MFH, sportsman and politician Colonel Corbett think of his tenant at Longnor, Mr Chamberlain, when he knows that he not only himself shot a fox last week but allowed his keepers and beaters to knock another's brains out when entangled in a net. Let us pray that Birmingham may soon receive him into its bosom again, never to return to Shropshire.<sup>1260</sup>

Herbert and Walter Chamberlain jointly signed a lease for Longnor Hall in 1883; they were brothers of Joseph Chamberlain MP and their interest in shooting may be explained partly by their roles as, respectively, chairman and vice chairman of the British Small Arms company in Birmingham.<sup>1261</sup> But Heywood-Lonsdale was also capable of flattering local aristocrats; 'Lord Berwick has been a thorough friend to the hunting men of Shropshire. He has shown conclusively that foxes and pheasants can live together at Attingham'.<sup>1262</sup> But later he lists other, nearby estates where fox hunters are barred: 'The Bomere and Conover coverts being now solely devoted to pheasants were of course a sealed book to us'.<sup>1263</sup> In the east 'Lilleshall and Woodcote totally devoted to pheasants and Weston partially so'.<sup>1264</sup> Weston was owned by Lord Bradford, whose predecessor had been President of the Shropshire Hunt Club.

### **A survey of fox coverts and their impact on the landscape**

The distribution of fox coverts in Shropshire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was explored using a sample of 144 taken from a succession of maps produced in 1808 (Baugh); the first Series of Ordnance Survey (OS) 1 inch to 1 mile maps in an edition based on 1830's survey work; the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the 6 inches to 1 mile OS maps of the 1880s and 1890s; and contemporary maps.

A similar method to that outlined in the previous chapter describing the survey of Norfolk fox coverts was adopted; and analogous challenges in separating coverts planted for foxhunting and pheasant shooting were experienced. The coverts identified were subdivided into four categories: (a) named 'fox coverts', (b) named

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<sup>1260</sup> Heywood-Lonsdale, *Hunting*, p 18

<sup>1261</sup> Shropshire CRO, D3651/B/6/5/6 (lease from Corbett to Messrs. Chamberlain, 1883)

<sup>1262</sup> Heywood Lonsdale, *Hunting*, p. xiii

<sup>1263</sup> Heywood Lonsdale, *Hunting*, p. 18

<sup>1264</sup> Heywood Lonsdale, *Hunting*, p. 38

'gorses', (c) 'roughs', whose importance as fox habitat in the East Midlands was discussed in a previous chapter, and (d) woodland identified as a 'covert'. Foxall has added some detail about the location of Shropshire roughs; 'uncultivated pieces of land, especially steep slopes going down to a stream, are often called "roughs".<sup>1265</sup> While 'roughs' have been mapped because they provide an important hunting habitat it is probable that not all were deliberately developed as coverts by landowners.

### *Results of the survey*

The survey identified 7 named fox coverts with a further 28 'gorses' so 35 coverts can be confidently identified as having been planted for the sole purpose of providing suitable fox habitat. In addition 42 roughs and 68 coverts were mapped. Appendix 2 contains details of each covert. Their location is shown on Figure 8.6.

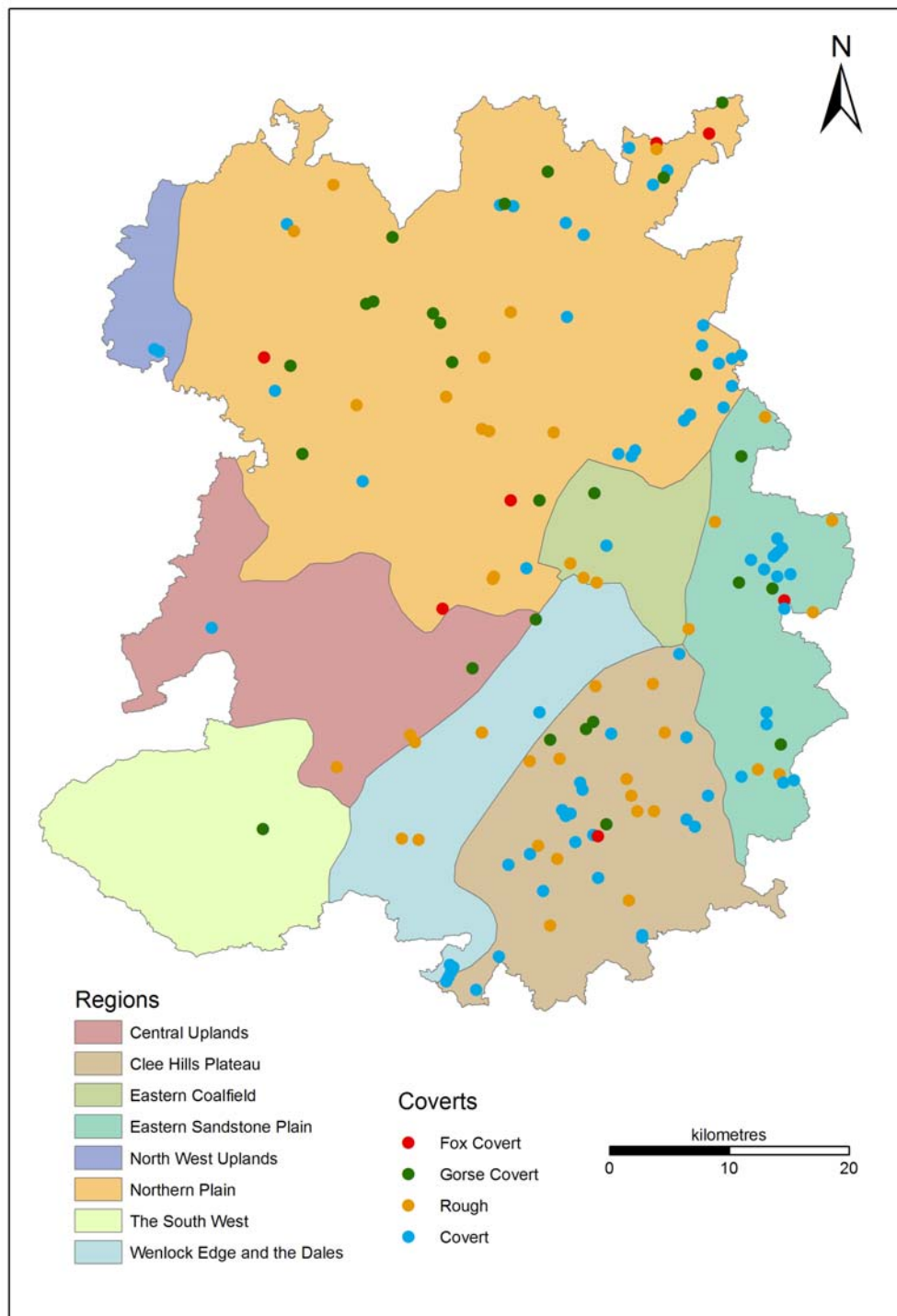
**Table 8.2** The increase in numbers of fox coverts

<i>Map</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Fox covert</i>	<i>Gorse</i>	<i>Rough</i>	<i>Covert</i>
Baugh	1808	1	2	11	7
1" : 1 mile OS	1830s	6	7	30	29
6" : 1 mile OS 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	1880s, 1890s	6	26	40	64
3.5" : 1 mile OS	2010	7	28	41	68

Figure 8.6 shows the distribution of all coverts identified in relation to the main physical regions in Shropshire. It is noticeable that the distribution of coverts is more widespread than that in Norfolk. It is clear that the majority of Salopian coverts are found on the Northern Plain, Eastern Sandstone plain and Cleve Hills plateau; if the focus is narrowed down to the fox coverts and gorses an even simpler pattern emerges: five out of seven of the fox coverts and a majority of the gorses are found on the Northern Plain. In addition, the Eastern Sandstone Plain and the Cleve Hills Plateau each account for one fox covert and four gorses; comparison with the 1827 land use map suggests that these areas have least woodland and other natural cover. The areas which are unsuitable for hunting on horseback, such as the hilly North West and Central Uplands and South-West; and the Eastern coalfield are, unsurprisingly, poorly represented. In the 1820s the

<sup>1265</sup> H.D.G. Foxall, *Shropshire Field-names*, (Shrewsbury, 1980) p. 10

hunting author 'Nimrod' (C.J. Apperley) described the south Shropshire hills as 'perfect antidotes to hunting'.<sup>1266</sup>



**Figure 8.6** Distribution of fox coverts in relation to physical regions<sup>1267</sup>

<sup>1266</sup> C.H. Apperley, *Nimrod's hunting reminiscences*, Vol 8. 1843 (Reprinted ed. London, 1926) p. 10

<sup>1267</sup> Physical regions derived from *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1989) p. 4

## Sources of information on coverts

### *Fox coverts on Baugh's map of 1808*

A total of twenty-one coverts were identified on Baugh's 1808 map of Shropshire at a scale of one inch: one mile.<sup>1268</sup> Baugh's map 'seems to have been intended as a practical traveller's map' which may explain why the key distinguishes 'by-roads', 'turnpike roads' and 'roads over commons' but fails to illustrate any forms of woodland.<sup>1269</sup> Roughs, coverts and woodlands are drawn as undifferentiated wooded areas so roughs were distinguished by reference to the later 1830s OS maps. Only one out of the total of twenty-one coverts is marked as a 'fox covert' – on the fringe of Lord Berwick's park at Attingham, south-east of Shrewsbury. A further two 'gorses' are identified; firstly Old Gorse, west of Wem, near Petton a home of one of the branches of the Corbet family who, as described earlier, were leading members of the Shrewsbury Hunt Club.<sup>1270</sup> The second is Park Gorse on the southern fringes of Walcot Park, north east of Clun, which was owned from 1763 by Robert Clive ('of India'). The remaining sites consist of eleven 'roughs' which may have been used for foxhunting opportunistically, and seven 'coverts' which are predominantly linked to the great eighteenth-century families and estates in the south and east of the county where there was least woodland; Lilleshall, Patshull, Kinlet and Moor Park, with an outlier in the west near Blodwell Hall. Blodwell Hall was owned until 1747 by the Bridgeman family who later gained the titles of Viscount Newport and Earl Bradford and settled in the east of the county at Weston Park. By 1814 the first Earl was President of Shrewsbury Hunt Club.

### *Fox coverts on 1<sup>st</sup> edition of 1 inch to 1 mile OS maps*

The 1830s editions of the 'Old Series' of Ordnance Survey 1 inch to 1 mile maps were used to explore the location of fox coverts. These maps were chosen because of (a) their complete coverage of Shropshire and (b) the coincidence of the scale with those of Baugh in 1808. Eighteen out of the twenty-eight gorses (scattered across the county) and two of the seven fox coverts (both in the extreme north east) identified on contemporary (2010) maps are not shown; suggesting a further flurry of nineteenth century planting which will be examined in

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<sup>1268</sup> B. Trinder (ed.), *Robert Baugh's Map of Shropshire 1808*, (Shrewsbury, 1983)

<sup>1269</sup> Trinder, *Baugh's Map of Shropshire*, p. 2

<sup>1270</sup> P. Stamper, *Historic parks and gardens of Shropshire* (Shrewsbury, 1996), p.54



a later section. Conversely, both the two gorse coverts discussed in the previous section on the 1808 distribution are missing by the 1830s suggesting that either the landowning families had moved, switched their sporting interests from hunting to shooting or had ploughed up the gorses to expand their agricultural holdings.

*1<sup>st</sup> edition of 6 inches to 1 mile OS maps*

The two categories of ‘fox coverts’ and ‘gorses’ were explored in more detail using the larger scale maps, 6 inches to 1 mile, produced in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century<sup>1271</sup>.

**Table 8.3** Land use of Shropshire fox coverts 1870s-1900s

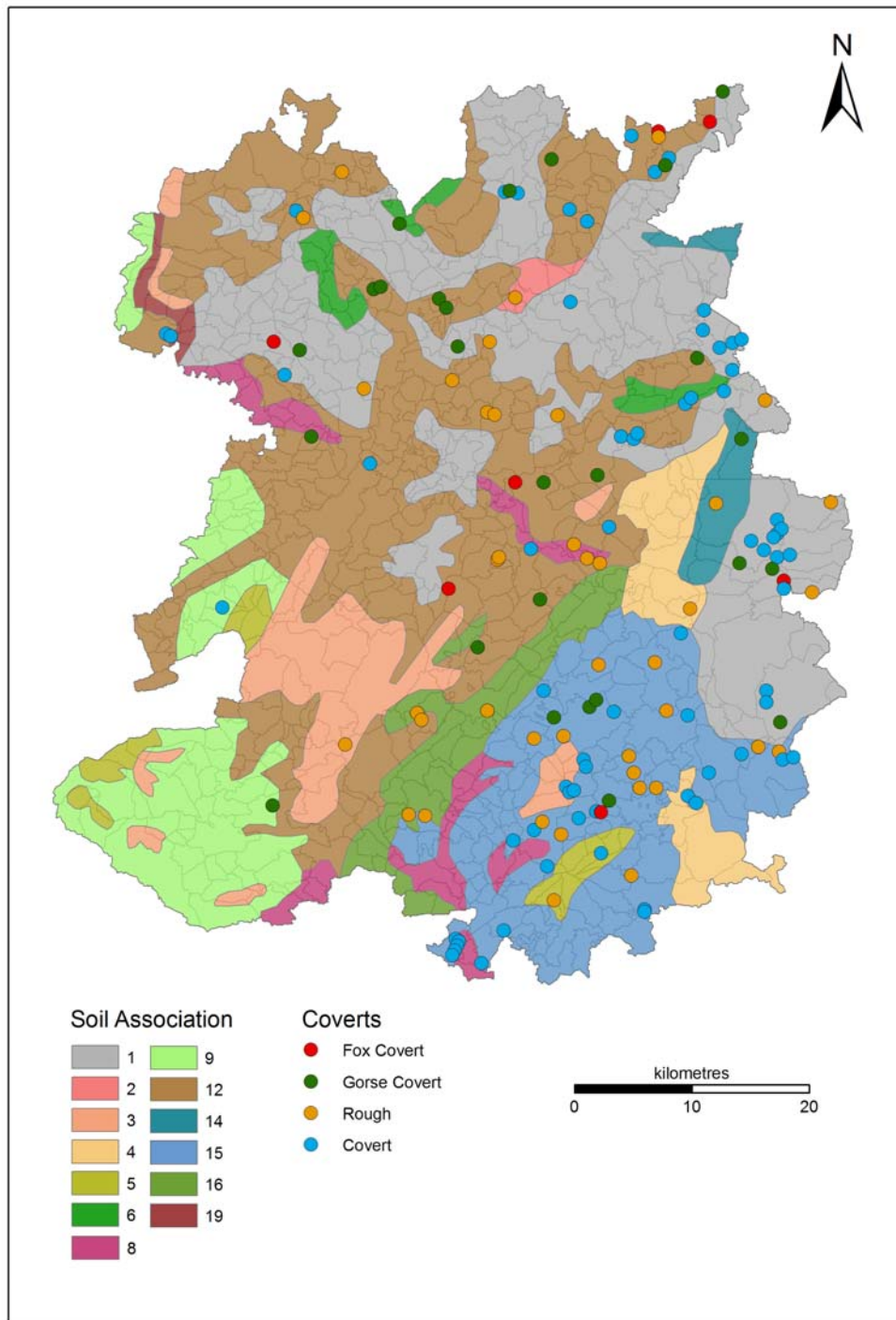
<i>Name</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>	<i>1890s</i>	<i>1900s</i>
Fox covert (Adderley, NE Salop)	Mixed gorse/woodland		Mainly woodland, small area gorse	Mixed woodland
Fox covert (Dorrington, NE Salop)	Mixed gorse/woodland	Mixed woodland	Mixed woodland	Mixed woodland
Lord Bradford's Fox Covert	Mixed woodland 'Gamester's covert'		Mixed woodland 'Gamester's covert'	Mixed woodland; 'Lord Bradford's Covert'
Attingham Fox Covert		Mixed woodland; adj deer park	Mixed woodland	Mixed woodland
Patshull Fox Covert		Mixed woodland	Mixed woodland in N; gorse in S	Mixed woodland
Longnor Fox Covert		Mixed woodland	Mixed woodland	Mixed woodland
Wheathill Fox Covert		Field	Field	Gorse/rough grazing

<sup>1271</sup> [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk); accessed June – September 2010

The presence of gorse in fox coverts in the north-east, near the town of Whitchurch, in the 1870s suggests that (a) local landowners may have had a preference for initially planting coverts, in the fashionable East Midlands style, with gorse not trees and (b) more money was available from subscriptions from non-farming fox hunters, unaffected by the agricultural depression, to maintain them and avoid the inexorable encroachments of scrub than in the rest of the county. The growth of taller scrub shaded out the gorse and by thinning the understorey reduced its value as fox habitat

An analysis of fourteen 'gorses' mapped in the 1880s revealed that none were purely areas of gorse; eight consisted partly of woodland and partly of gorse (or rough grazing since the two are not distinguished in the map key). Four were deciduous woodlands and two are shown as fields. One, Plaish Gorse, east of Church Stretton remained in agricultural use until it was mapped in 1953 as gorse/rough grazing with a scatter of trees. Aston Gorse, east of the Brown Clee hill, also remained in agricultural use until the twentieth century; it is shown as mixed woodland by 1954. Tracking the eight 'gorses' where gorse/rough grazing was present in various proportions to woodland in the 1880s reveals that by the first decade of the twentieth century all had mutated into woodland. The 'tumbledown' years of agricultural depression from the 1870s meant that few resources were available to maintain sporting habitats and gorse was succeeded by scrub and then woodland.

Figure 8.7 overleaf shows the distribution of the sample of 144 fox coverts superimposed on a soil map.



**Figure 8.7** Distribution of fox coverts in relation to soil associations<sup>1272</sup>

The Key to the soil associations is shown in Table 8.4 overleaf

<sup>1272</sup> J.M. Ragg et al. *Soils and their uses in Midland and Western England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales Bulletin 12 (Harpden, 1984)

**Table 8.4** The distribution of coverts in comparison with the prevalence of the soil associations (which are shown as a per cent of the Shropshire land area)

<i>Soil association</i>	<i>% Land area</i>	<i>% of Fox coverts</i>	<i>% of Gorses</i>	<i>% of Roughs</i>	<i>% of Coverts</i>
1. Acid brown soils/podzols/gley podzols/surface water gley soils	25	27	31	12	33
2. Acid brown soils, podzols and podzolised acid brown soils	0.5			2	
3. Acid brown soils, podzolised acid brown soils, peaty gleyed podzols	6			2	4
4. Acid brown soils, surface water gley soils	4			2	3
5. Surface water gley soils, surface water peaty gley soils, peaty gleyed podzols	2			2	1
6. Peat soils, raised moss, fen peat, peaty soils, peaty loam	1				1
8. Ground water gley soils, brown warp soils	3			4	8
9. Acid brown soils	8		4		1
12. Surface water gley soils, leached brown soils with gleying, acid brown soils	30	59	46	31	17
14. Leached brown soils sometimes with gleying, acid brown soils sometimes with subsoil gleying	2		4	2	
15. Leached brown soils sometimes with gleying, acid brown soils	14	14	15	36	31
16. Acid brown soils, leached brown soils often with gleying	4			7	
19. Leached brown soils	0.5				1
Sample size		7	28	41	68

Total non-urban area of Shropshire = 348,462 hectares (1 per cent of area = 348.4 ha)

With small sample sizes there is always a risk of spurious accuracy and lack of statistical significance but a clear pattern showing a dominance of three soil associations emerges. Soil Association 12, developed in glacial Till (material deposited by ice sheets) derived from Triassic rocks, is the most important for three of the categories of covert. The soils which range from loam over clay with imperfect–poor drainage to free-draining loamy sands are found on the flat or gently undulating north Shropshire Plain and in the valley systems of South-West Shropshire. Association 1 soils are very closely linked with 12, by both distribution and origin of the parent material; they have been separated by soil texture: 1 is primarily coarse textured and 12 is fine textured.<sup>1273</sup> Most ‘coverts’ are found on the lighter Association 1 soils which are sandy loams and loamy sands, generally well drained, developed on glacial sands and gravels on the northern and eastern plains.

A third soil association (15) is the most important for ‘roughs’; in the south-east the Clee Hills dissected plateau is formed from Devonian marls. Here fine sandy loams, which are generally free draining, are found on the slopes, with patches of imperfect drainage on flatter land where silt loams overlie silty clay loams.<sup>1274</sup> The roughs tend to lie on the steeper slopes which have been unsuitable for cultivation. The small number of remaining coverts are scattered across a range of soil associations.

#### *Location of coverts within parishes*

The surveys of Norfolk and Shropshire have enabled the testing of Hoskins’ observation that fox coverts in Leicestershire tended to be on the margins of parishes.<sup>1275</sup> The location of 144 Salopian coverts was divided into three categories; adjacent to the boundary, close (within 200 metres) or further away. A striking 26 per cent lay on parish boundaries (34 per cent in Norfolk) with a further 12 per cent ‘close’ (31 per cent in Norfolk); the remaining 62 per cent of coverts lay further afield (35 per cent in Norfolk). Although the correlation was not as strong as in Norfolk, it is still notable that 38 per cent of coverts were on the outer margins of parishes confirming Hoskins’ view in two widely differing counties. The

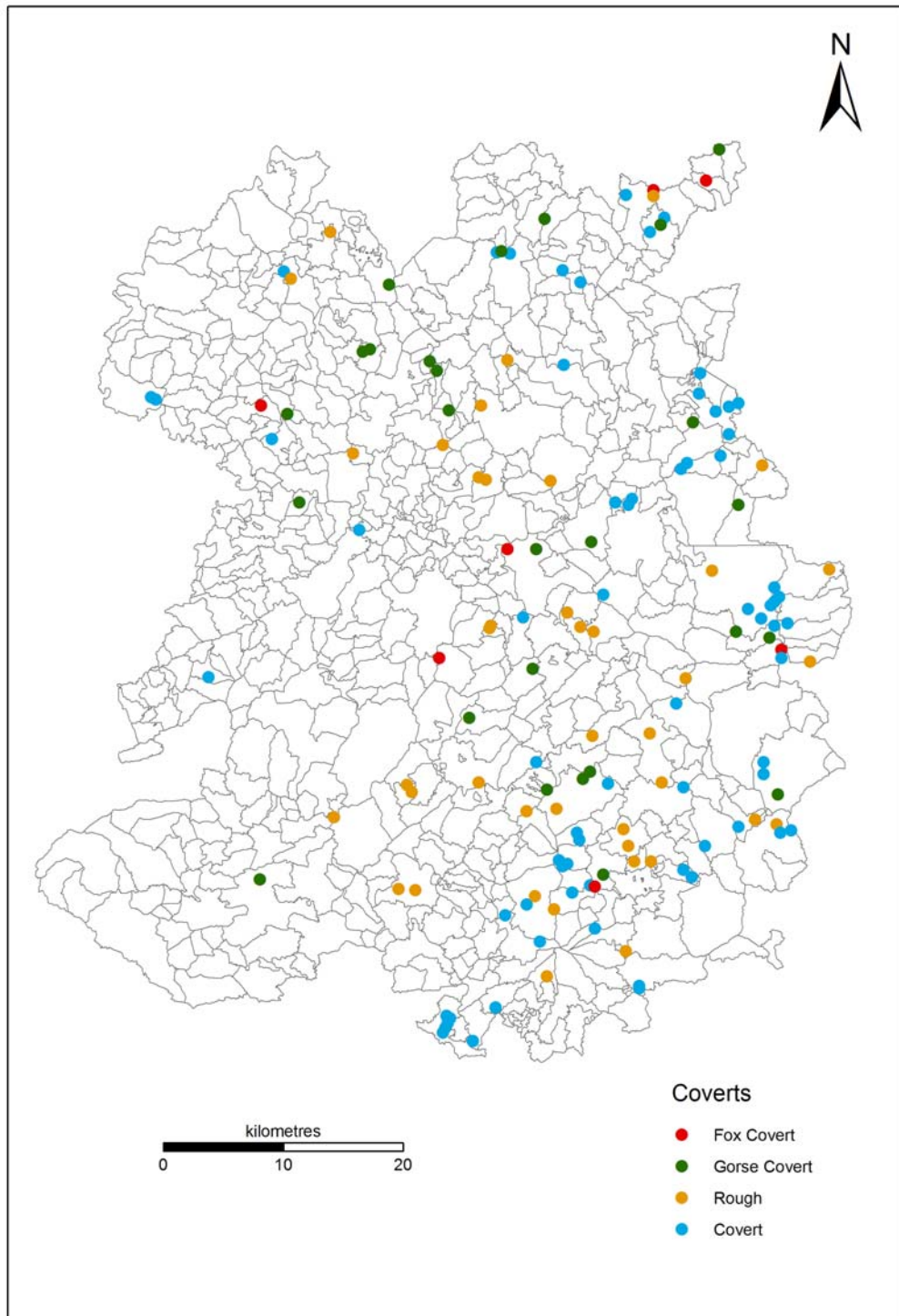
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<sup>1273</sup> D. Mackney & C.P. Burnham, *The Soils of the West Midlands*, Soil Survey of Great Britain Bulletin 2, (Harpenden, 1964) p. 72

<sup>1274</sup> D. Mackney & C.P. Burnham, *The Soils of the West Midlands*, Soil Survey of Great Britain Bulletin 2, (Harpenden, 1964) p. 79

<sup>1275</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, pp. 197 - 198

difference may be due to the different enclosure histories and relief of the counties with earlier, piecemeal enclosure in Shropshire leaving more small, rough or hilly areas, suitable for planting, scattered across parishes not just on the periphery.



**Figure 8.8** Location of coverts in relation to parish boundaries

### *Size of coverts*

The size of 144 coverts was estimated; 44.5 per cent were 1 ha or less (compared to 14 per cent in Norfolk). A further 48 per cent covered between 1 and 3 ha (57 per cent in Norfolk). Only 7 per cent extended over 4 or 5 ha (13 per cent in Norfolk) with a single covert totalling 6 ha. In Norfolk a further 17 per cent exceeded 6 ha. A closer analysis of the seven Salopian fox coverts shows that the average size is 1.5 ha, with the average size of gorses slightly larger at 1.7 ha. This means that the average size of artificial plantings to enhance foxhunting in Shropshire is significantly smaller than in Norfolk. One reason may be the greater extent of pre-existing woodland in Shropshire and another may be the greater prevalence of smaller landowners who were unwilling to sacrifice larger sites for non-agricultural use.

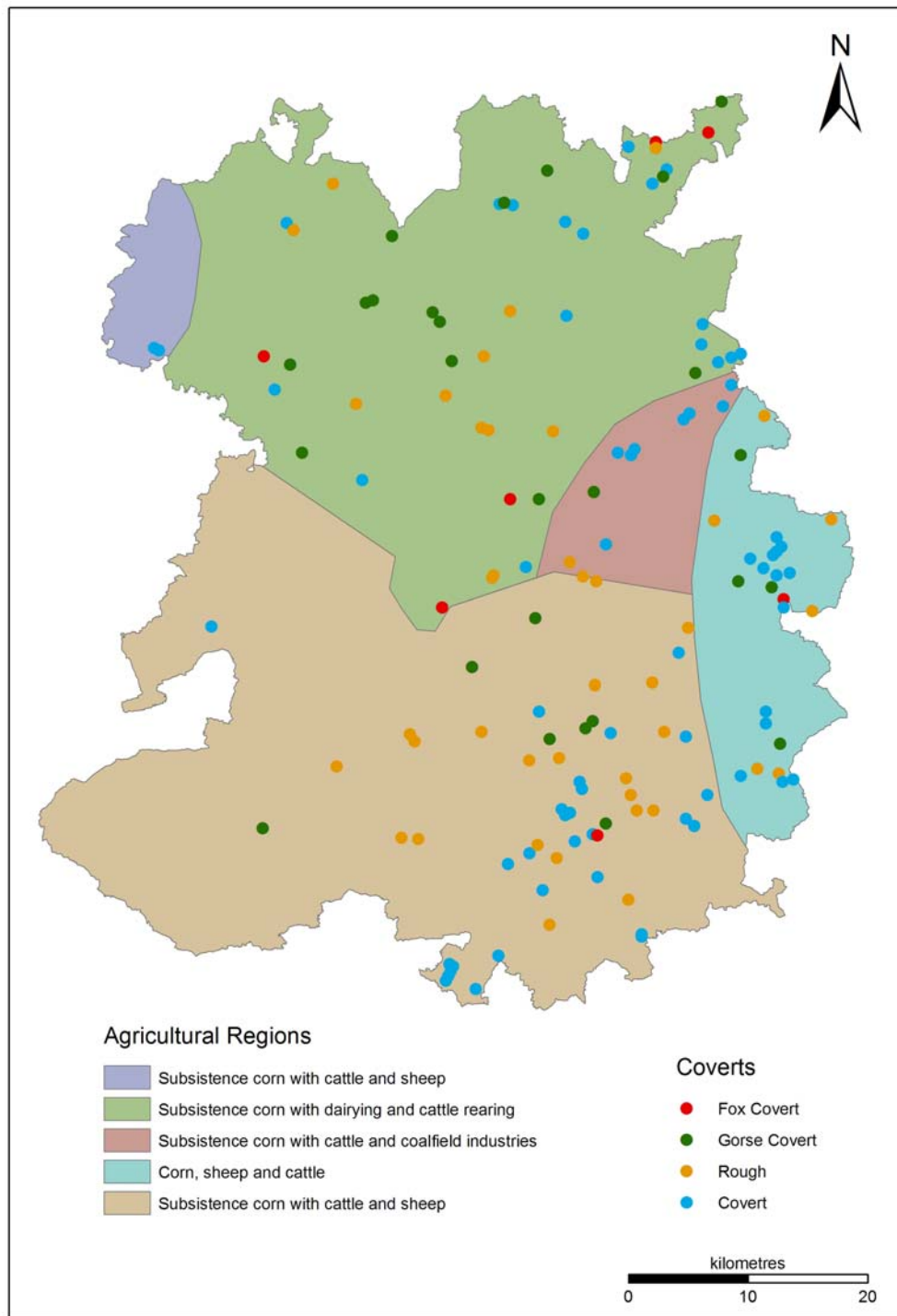
### **Distribution of coverts**

Figure 8.9 overleaf illustrates the distribution of coverts overlain on Thirsk's map (the two regions whose land use is summarised as 'subsistence corn with cattle and sheep' are differentiated by the additional activity of 'cattle grazing' on the 'South Shropshire uplands' in the south-west). Although the map shows agricultural regions in 1640-1750 it is still relevant for the later eighteenth and nineteenth century because distinctions persisted between pastoral farming to the west of the river Severn and a greater emphasis on arable to the east. Stock rearing was more important in the south and west of the country and dairying on the northern plain. Writing in 1936 Dennis, in his contribution to 'Regional types of British agriculture' identified a similar three-fold division; 'north-west Shropshire, a milk-producing plain; the Southern Uplands, mainly store raising; and east Shropshire, an arable region'.<sup>1276</sup> The Land Use Survey report on Shropshire noted the county's main land use regions in the early 1940s, shown on Figure 8.10, and commented that the main spatial divisions between predominantly dairying, stock raising and arable farming had hardly changed from the eighteenth century.<sup>1277</sup>

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<sup>1276</sup> F.S. Dennis quoted in L.D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain. Part 66 - Shropshire* (London, 1941) p. 245

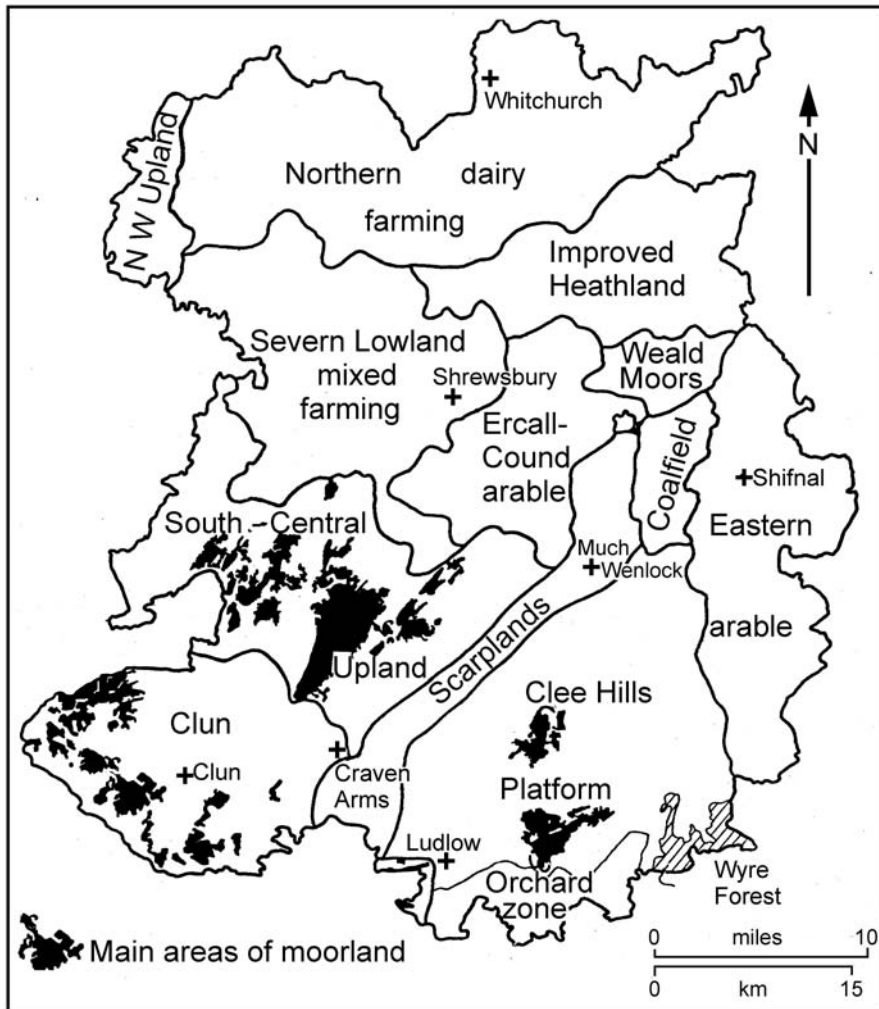
<sup>1277</sup> L.D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain. Part 66 - Shropshire* (London, 1941) p. 245



**Figure 8.9** Distribution of fox coverts in relation to early agricultural regions<sup>1278</sup>

<sup>1278</sup> Agricultural regions taken from J. Thirsk, (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1640 - 1750*. Vol. Vi (Cambridge, 1984) p. 131





**Figure 8.10** Land Use Survey map of Shropshire, 1941<sup>1279</sup>

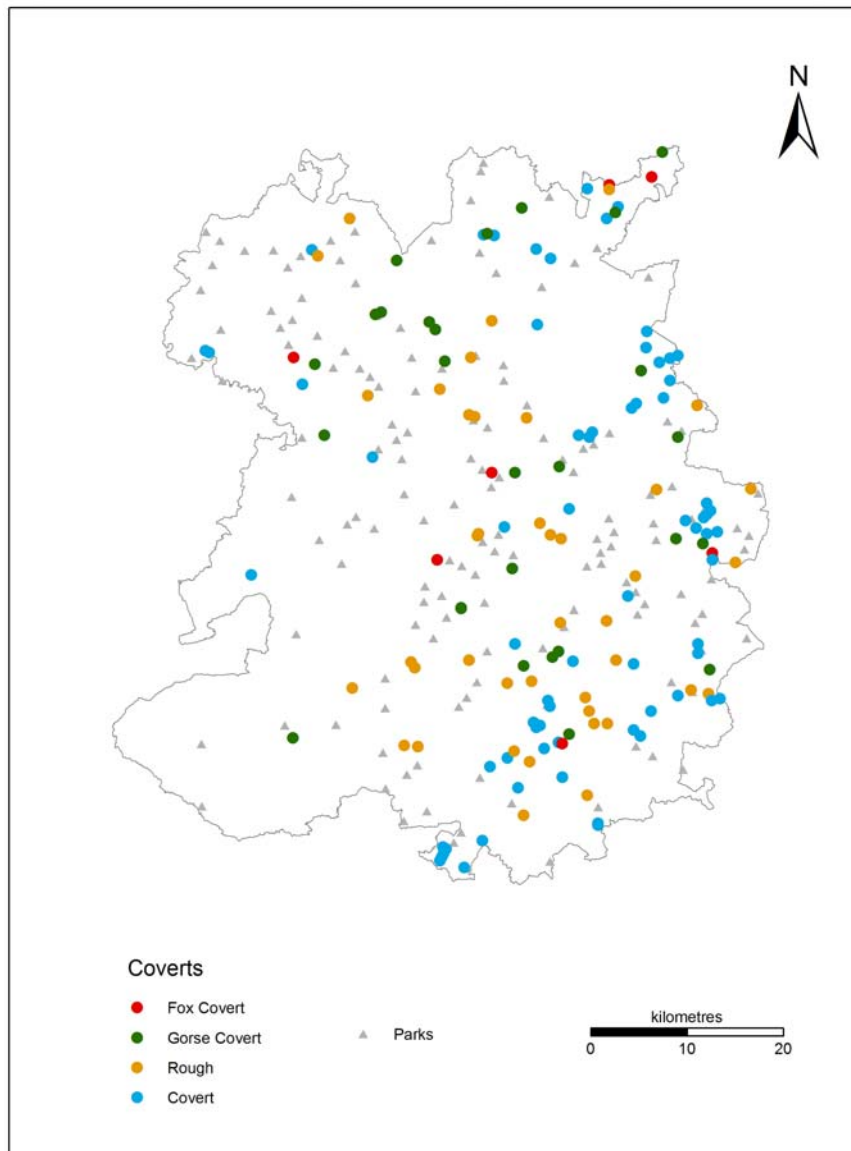
A comparison of the distribution of coverts on Baugh's 1808 map with agricultural regions shows a preponderance in the more arable east, where soils are lighter and easier to work with 'more sheep and corn and fewer cattle than any other part of Shropshire'.<sup>1280</sup> The dominance can be explained by the earlier conversion of woodland to farmland, the presence of large estates and the comparative ease of crossing the landscape whilst hunting. The other significant area at this time is the northern plain where dairying and cheese making was important in the enclosed areas while sheep 'flocks were reared on two out of every three north Shropshire farms, particularly on the sandy heaths'.<sup>1281</sup> Here again the combination of level land, large estates such as Hawkstone and Halston and open heathland with

<sup>1279</sup> L.D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain. Part 66 - Shropshire* (London, 1941) p. 246

<sup>1280</sup> J. Thirsk, (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1640 - 1750*. Vol. Vi (Cambridge, 1984) p 156

<sup>1281</sup> J. Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History in England 1500-1750* (London, 1987) p. 155

sheep courses (as shown on Roque's 1750 land use map - figure 8.2) encouraged the development of foxhunting whilst later enclosure necessitated the planting of gorses and fox coverts. The 1827 land use map (Figure 8.3) provides useful information on the location of fox coverts and gorses in relation to contemporary woodland and parks. This can be explored further by using Stamper's map of Salopian landscape parks and significant gardens.



**Figure 8.11** Distribution of fox coverts in relation to the location of parks (including significant gardens) from P. Stamper<sup>1282</sup>

<sup>1282</sup> Parks and garden locations taken from: P. Stamper, *Historic parks and gardens of Shropshire* (Shrewsbury, 1996) p. viii

It is noticeable on Figure 8.11 that there is only a weak association between the location of coverts with the parks and houses of the gentry mapped by Stamper. This suggests that artificial coverts were planted mainly at a distance from the, often well wooded, parks. Pennell-Elmhirst noted in 1883, of two estates in the east of the county, that 'the Earl of Bradford has several small woods about the deer park ...while at Aqualate Sir Thomas Boughey has recently added some promising gorses to offer shelter for foxes beyond what is already found in the great deer park'.<sup>1283</sup> This suggests, unsurprisingly, that coverts are associated with the holdings of the landed gentry but are planted on the periphery of holdings away from disturbance (a finding that chimes with their position in relation to parish boundaries). A second, predictable conclusion drawn from the 1827 map (figure 8.3) is that fox coverts, gorses and coverts are rarely established in existing wooded areas; their role is to compensate for the absence of suitable fox habitat due to earlier clearance. A good example is the relative paucity of coverts in the gently rolling, agricultural area flanking the heavily wooded Wenlock Edge which slashes south west/north east through the middle of the county. In Norfolk coverts are more closely associated with the great estates of the north-west but they share the characteristics that they were planted to compensate for habitat removal and are also often located on the periphery of parishes. Figure 7.11 shows that coverts in Norfolk were also located away from the immediate vicinity of large landowners' houses and parks.

By contrast, Salopian roughs appear to be more closely linked with wooded areas, which are themselves often on marginal land unsuited to arable use, confirming Foxall's definition of roughs as 'uncultivated pieces of land, especially on steep slopes'.<sup>1284</sup> Although generally roughs were not deliberately planted to enhance foxhunting their locations, fringing areas where fox coverts or gorses were planted, suggests that they were protected from close grazing or clearance. It appears that these landscape features were manipulated by landowners to provide additional shelter for foxes. The 1833 OS 1 inch to 1 mile sheet 61 covering mid/east Shropshire was used for a more detailed examination of the eighteen 'roughs' identified on the map. Their land use varied widely; six (33 per cent) were wooded with a further two comprising part woodland and part scrub,

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<sup>1283</sup> E. Pennell-Elmhirst, *The hunting countries of England* (London, 1883) pp. 295-6

<sup>1284</sup> Foxall, *Shropshire*, p. 10

five were under grass with the remaining five mapped as part grassland and part scrub. A poem 'Albrighton Hunt' written in 1836 describes a sunny rough in east Shropshire where

On some furze-clad common's close-fed side,  
A shelving bank slopes gently to the ray  
Of Orient Sol, the eager sportsmen bide.<sup>1285</sup>

### **The creation of fox coverts**

Despite the loss of habitat and shortage of foxes in the north and east of the county, where woodland was scarcest, landowners did less than their counterparts in Norfolk to provide 'substitute' habitats, in the form of fox coverts or gorses during the eighteenth century. Early hunting records or household accounts for hunting expenses are rare; there appears to be only one possible record of a landowner buying gorse seed to establish a new covert (and none of earths) on a private estate in the eighteenth century – unlike the hectic activity in north-west Norfolk. A 1727 letter to Thomas Hill of Attingham, south of Shrewsbury, sent to him by his son while Hill Senior was in London requested: 'I hope that you will be kind to send me back ... one pound of French furze seed which may be had I suppose of any of the seed shops ...'<sup>1286</sup> This is a very early date for a fox covert in Shropshire and the modern recommendation for sowing gorse seed is 400-600 gms (14 ounces) per square meter 'assuming some debris in the mix'.<sup>1287</sup> In the last chapter it was noted that the Cokes bought 150 lbs of whin seed in 1789 so this comparatively small-scale purchase may well have been for some other use.<sup>1288</sup>

However, the minutes of the Shrewsbury Hunt Club reveal that members funded some new coverts later in the century in a collective action. The minutes record on October 25<sup>th</sup> 1781 that to improve their hunting the members 'ordered that Mr Oliver pay to Mr Corbet one hundred pounds out of the stock purse for the

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<sup>1285</sup> Auden, *History of the Albrighton*, p. 124

<sup>1286</sup> Shropshire CRO, 112/12/Box18/48 (Attingham collection; letter Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1727)

<sup>1287</sup> I.D. Rotherham, Wild Gorse: history, conservation, and management. *FWAG Scotland*, Vol. 7, (2007) pp.17-21

<sup>1288</sup> Brown, *Foxhunters*, p. 38

purpose of planting and preserving gorse covers within the limit of the hunt'.<sup>1289</sup> Frustratingly no record remains of where the gorse covers were to be planted – or even if they ever were. The hunt week took place each November but the minutes do not specify which members' hounds were used during the week (the membership included several, such as George Forester and Thomas Jelf Powys, who had their own packs). John Corbet lived at Sundorne close to Shrewsbury so it seems likely that coverts would be planted in that area and Baugh's 1808 map of Shropshire shows some small woods although none are identified specifically as fox coverts. By 1823 Sir Richard Puleston was requested 'to hunt two days during Hunt week in the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury'. A subsequent entry in the Minute book a fortnight later added that 'the clerk to be directed to write to Mr Corbet of Sundorne, Mr Powys of Berwick, Lord Berwick of Attingham, Mr Burton of Longnor and Mr Pelham of Cound requesting permission for Sir Bellingham Graham's hounds to draw their coverts'. At the time Sir Bellingham was master of the Quorn Hunt. All these sites lie within twelve miles of Shrewsbury which might suggest that some of the coverts had been funded by the Hunt Club.

The simplest method of protecting woodland was to rent it from farmers (if it was not already held in hand by a landlord) and landowners. Although the Shrewsbury Hunt Club abandoned its 'annual hunts' by 1820 and the Hunt Week in November was cut back to two days hunting after 1840; it used its subscriptions to support packs hunting around Shrewsbury. In 1825 it set aside 200 guineas a year to lease existing coverts and plant new ones,<sup>1290</sup> with the result that fifteen coverts had been acquired by 1829 when the fund was transferred to the master of the Shropshire Hunt.<sup>1291</sup> By 1834 the annual sum 'applied towards the rents of different covers' had fallen to 50 guineas a year but an additional 100 guineas was allocated for 'defraying the expenses of earth stoppers'. However, club income continued to fall; by 1839 the payment for coverts was further reduced to 25 guineas and two years later the Club's clerk's salary was cut from £30 to £20 p.a. Private benefactors continued to help; Auden recorded that 'during the Albrighton mastership of Orlando Stubbs [1856-1866] the great mainstay of the

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<sup>1289</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club, minutes book.

<sup>1290</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club minutes (AGM 17.11.1825) p. 111

<sup>1291</sup> *VCH. Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p. 167

hunt was Thomas Thorneycroft, the largest subscriber [and a very prosperous Black Country ironmaster] who rented several coverts for the use of the hunt'.<sup>1292</sup>

As the survey results illustrate, there was also a flurry of activity in planting new 'gorses' and 'coverts' in Shropshire in the nineteenth century; the survey, described earlier, shows that between the 1830s and 1880s the number of 'gorses' grew from 7 to 26 and 'coverts' from 29 to 64. The nature and frequency of successful fox coverts was well understood. Pennell-Elmhirst writing in 1883 of the Wheatland country in central Shropshire commented on 'great coverts and many, in some parts too many, of them' around the Childe's land at Kinlet, the Forester's estate at Willey and along Wenlock Edge.<sup>1293</sup> He also noted that coverts tended to be 'almost entirely oak with a sprinkling of larch and the undercover being grass and brambles ... which take a great deal of drawing'. Large woods, close together, which are difficult to draw due to their density of their understoreys and size are unsuitable as fox coverts because it is time consuming to find and drive a fox out of the covert and there is then a risk that it will go to ground in a neighbouring wood instead of providing a long hunt.

However, too few coverts meant a dearth of foxes; despite the planting activities of the Shrewsbury Hunt club, in 1883 Pennell-Elmhirst criticised the 'capital piece of ground from Shrewsbury to Wellington [for being] unfortunately short of coverts. Could a few gorses be set down?'.<sup>1294</sup> Similarly he notes that in the east of the Albrighton country 'coverts are rather scarce and the gorses planted in recent years have had no chance against the severe winters'. A year later Heywood-Lonsdale has taken up the theme:

What is undoubtedly wanted in Shropshire is a gorse covert planted here and there which at this time of year [March] and indeed always after Christmas would be invaluable as a holding place for foxes ... It should not be forgotten that now is the time to sow a gorse covert and that it is a matter of no difficulty if rabbits are kept off it in the first year... Sir Vincent Corbet has set a very good example in this matter but I regret to say except on the Duke of Cleveland's land at High Ercall

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<sup>1292</sup> Auden, *History Albrighton*, p. 93

<sup>1293</sup> Pennell-Elmhirst, *Hunting*, p. 328

<sup>1294</sup> Pennell-Elmhirst, *Hunting*, p. 199

[north-east of Shrewsbury] there is not another thriving young gorse in the country.<sup>1295</sup>

As described in an earlier chapter, the planting and maintenance of a fox covert was a significant continuing commitment by a landowner. Despite this expense and effort, hunting accounts in Shropshire are noticeable for the number of gorse or coverts mentioned by their owner's name, one of her/his tenants or that of her/his estate. This suggests that as well as a topographical purpose, describing the location of the planting, the name and its inclusion on contemporary OS maps gave kudos to its progenitor. Auden describes a flurry of planting in the east of the county during Sir Thomas Boughey's management of the Albrighton hounds (1866-1887) although by this time in Norfolk the emphasis had switched to improving shooting coverts.

During his mastership the Hunt Committee, Boughey himself and several landowners provided a number of gorse coverts after the fashion of those so well known in the Shires for the purpose of holding foxes, which had previously with few exceptions been sought only in the natural woodlands of the county ... amongst these were Willoughby Gorse on the land of Lord Willoughby de Brooke, ... Hawkshutt Gorse on Mr Giffard's land at Chillington, Hartley's Gorse and Winsor's Gorse on the estate of Mr Hartley ... Kemberton Gorse on Colonel Kenyon-Slaney's property at Hatton; Grindle and Higford Gorses on the Apley estate, Offley Gorse planted by Mr Valentine Vickers, Decker Hill Gorse by the Rev. W.B. Garnett-Botfield and Brockton and Hem Gorses near Shifnal.<sup>1296</sup>

This appears to have been the final surge of planting coverts for hunting purposes as the agricultural depression reduced landowners' incomes. Only three fox covert were established after the 1880s; Wheathill covert was planted close to Aston Gorse, one of the last two 'gorses' to be planted in the county. Both lie on the Burwarton estate, owned by the Hon. C.E. Hamilton-Russell - who was MFH of the Wheatland Hunt from 1898-1902. The second gorse covert planted after the

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<sup>1295</sup> Heywood-Lonsdale, *Hunting*, p. 16

<sup>1296</sup> Auden, *History Albrighton*, p. 97-98

1880s was Plaish Gorse, east of Church Stretton, on the estate bought in 1902 by J.C. Dunwaters, an ex MFH of the Wheatland.<sup>1297</sup>

### **Differences between Norfolk and Shropshire**

In his introduction to *Hunting in Shropshire and Cheshire* in the mid 1880s Heywood-Lonsdale accepts that 'perhaps no greater anomaly, no more palpable anachronism exists in England than foxhunting' and he summarises his view of the threats:

the march of improved high farming, the intersection of the country by roads and railways, the straightening of fences, the multiplication of dwellings, the democratisation of the world, the over preservation of game, the spleen of over burdened intellectuals and last, though not least, the hard times through which we are passing.<sup>1298</sup>

Despite all these challenges, foxhunting in Shropshire remained widespread and relatively popular well into the twentieth century. By contrast, hunting in Norfolk retreated further during the nineteenth century into the north-west quadrant of the county and, as described in a previous chapter, for two periods, 1825-1830 and 1843-1856, there was no 'official' hunting by the (West) Norfolk pack. A snapshot of the difference in the fortunes of hunting in the two counties can be pictured using the first *Hobson's Hunting Atlas* published in 1850 (with the boundaries of hunts and meeting places over-printed on J&C Walkers' 1837 lithographic plates).<sup>1299</sup> Six hunts are shown with all or part of their territory in Shropshire; subsequently a seventh emerged when the Shropshire hunt was subdivided in 1898. The 1850 date of mapping coincided with a lull in hunting in Norfolk so no pack boundaries or meets are shown. However, once hunting resumed again in Norfolk twenty-seven different meeting places are listed in 1867-1868 - all in the north-west quarter of the county.<sup>1300</sup> The comparative popularity of foxhunting amongst a significant number of Salopian landowners and farmers is shown by the total of meets marked on the Shropshire atlas. Excluding any outside the

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<sup>1297</sup> Greaves, *Foxhunting in Shropshire*, p. 30

<sup>1298</sup> Heywood-Lonsdale, *Hunting*, Introduction

<sup>1299</sup> *Hobson's Hunting atlas*, (London, 1850)

<sup>1300</sup> Norfolk CRO, MC 40/239 (Coldham, Anmer Hall collection, W. Norfolk Foxhounds diary)



county boundary, 141 meeting places are identified, scattered widely across the county with the exception of the lightly populated, steep western and southern hills. The reason for the differences in the distribution of foxhunting and its impact on the landscape between Norfolk and Shropshire will be explored in more detail in the next section.

#### *Differences between Norfolk and Shropshire in the eighteenth century*

Earlier sections have explored the factors that affected the distribution of foxhunting and the consequent manipulation of the landscape to enhance its success. Two main influences have been identified: environmental and tenurial; the latter including social factors such as who has the opportunity and means to hunt. The difference in geography between the counties was significant and was further distinguished by their enclosure history. It is noticeable that foxhunting started and became well-organised much earlier in the eighteenth century in Norfolk than Shropshire. The owners of the great estates in the north-west of Norfolk controlled large acreages of unenclosed land primarily still used as sheep courses. Early foxhunters were loath to jump fences; in eighteenth-century Norfolk they benefited from good access on the comparatively open, unenclosed countryside in the north-west and this echoes the development of foxhunting by Meynell and others in the open-fields of the East Midlands. By contrast, the early-enclosed, fenced wood pastures of south Norfolk posed significant physical challenges and hunting failed to flourish. The enclosure history of Shropshire is significantly different to that of north Norfolk or the east Midlands; it was primarily enclosed early into hedged fields in predominantly pastoral use which hampered earlier foxhunters. There was little organised foxhunting during the first half of the eighteenth century – in contrast to north Norfolk. It only began when landowners such as Childe, Forester and Smyth-Owen went to hunt in Leicestershire in the 1780s and then returned keen to develop Meynell-style packs and new skills crossing fenced country in an enclosed landscape. It is striking that the early settlement pattern of south-east Norfolk leading to predominantly small, owner-occupied family farms did not produce a similar foxhunting elite.

The distribution of woodland and other potential natural fox cover differs between the two counties. Comparison of the extensive woodland, heath and unenclosed land in Shropshire in 1750 (Figure 8.2) with Faden's later 1797 map of Norfolk

(Figures 7.2 and 7.3) suggests a broader distribution in Shropshire compared to a greater concentration in the Heathlands and Brecklands of Norfolk (excluding marshes unsuitable for mounted foxhunting).<sup>1301</sup> This might suggest a better supply of fox cover supporting a larger population of foxes in eighteenth-century Shropshire and this was probably true while landowners could rove across wide tracts before hunt boundaries were formalised.

As discussed, McNair and Williamson's work on Faden's 1797 map suggests that woodland covered only 2.6 per cent of Norfolk at this time. In addition Kent estimated in 1796 that a further 15 per cent of Norfolk's area (143,000 acres or 57,872 hectares) lay in unimproved commons, marshland, warrens or sheepwalk.<sup>1302</sup> McNair's calculations from Faden's map suggests a slightly higher total 160,618 acres (or 65,820 hectares) of warrens, greens, heaths and commons<sup>1303</sup> - whichever is correct, both figures suggest a significant additional area of potential fox cover although much would be inaccessible on horseback (marshes, fen and pockmarked warrens) or subject to disturbance and poaching (commons and greens). Kain and Prince have estimated that forty years later, in 1836, 7.9 per cent of the total land area in Shropshire was still common land with another 5.6 per cent in woodland.<sup>1304</sup> During the eighteenth century Norfolk foxhunters were already needing to plant artificial fox coverts in the north-west; the necessity only occurred in Shropshire during the nineteenth century when rapid agricultural improvement in the north and east of the country swept away much of the heaths, mosses and remnants of woodland.

In the eighteenth century hedges were not a significant barrier to fox hunters in north-west Norfolk as they hunted across a mainly open landscape. They created far greater barriers to mounted Salopians and, it can be argued, delayed the introduction of organised foxhunting until after the 1790s. Plymley, writing in the early nineteenth century, recognised that Salopian foxhunters had still not mastered the art commenting on 'the hedges that are to be repaired after every

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<sup>1301</sup> McNair & Williamson, *Faden*, p.120

<sup>1302</sup> P. Wade Martins,(ed.), *A Historical Atlas of Norfolk*. 2nd edn. (Norfolk, 1994) p. 80

<sup>1303</sup> A. Macair, pers. comm. 4.9.2009 (included a warning about some opaqueness in definitions and mapping by Faden).

<sup>1304</sup> R.J. Kain & H.C. Prince, *An Atlas and Index of tithe files of mid nineteenth-century England and Wales* (Cambridge, 1986) p. 298

day's diversion, where the sportsmen are numerous, or inconsiderate'.<sup>1305</sup> On the other hand, the thick hedges could provide additional cover for foxes so there was not the pressing need to plant artificial coverts as had happened in Norfolk from the 1720s.

Norfolk and Shropshire landowners also controlled their tenants' activities, and hence the landscape, in similar 'invisible' ways by the use of clauses in leases imposing the maintenance of hounds 'at walk' on farms and the requirement to report disturbance of fox coverts by poaching to the landlord.

#### *Differences between Norfolk and Shropshire in the nineteenth century*

From the early decades of the eighteenth century foxhunting was very fashionable amongst the major landowners of Norfolk who devoted considerable resources to its success; in Shropshire the Shrewsbury hunt club was the focus of the elite's activities from the 1770s but the remainder of the county was hunted in a much more haphazard way by the squirearchy. During the nineteenth century a significant reversal took place; in Norfolk, as has been described, only the north-west of the county was hunted regularly and there were significant periods when organised hunting lapsed due to lack of funding and foxes. In contrast, by the 1850s 'the county of Shropshire was divided into six well-defined hunting countries',<sup>1306</sup> and, following the sub-division of the Shropshire Hunt into 'north' and 'south' in 1898 and the genesis of the Albrighton Woodland in 1908, eight packs flourished in Shropshire although it has only 65 per cent of the total acreage of Norfolk. Table 8.2 illustrates the remarkable stability of the distribution of coverts in Shropshire between the decades of the 1880s-1890s to 2010. Only one new fox covert and two gorse coverts were mapped. An additional 'rough' and four coverts were the only other changes noted over the same period. In contrast, Table 7.2 shows that of the eighty-seven coverts identified in Norfolk in the 1880s-1890s only twenty-four remained by 2010.

What drove the differences between Shropshire and Norfolk? Since the success of hunting depends on the control of access to resources - finance, land and a steady supply of prey - the influence of those landowners who had the means and

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<sup>1305</sup> Joseph Plymley (ed.), *General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire*, 2nd edn. (London, 1813), p.148

<sup>1306</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 2, p. 168

enthusiasm to hunt might appear to be the key factor. The number of large estates was similar: in Shropshire there were eight landholders with more than 10,000 acres in 1872<sup>1307</sup> compared to eleven estates of this size in Norfolk in 1880<sup>1308</sup>. Bateman's work demonstrates that, pro rata to size, Shropshire had a roughly similar proportion of the total area under the control of peers, 'great landowners' and squires. This suggests that any assumption that access and control of land enables the success of foxhunting is an over-simplification.

**Table 8.5** Landowners divided into 8 classes according to acreage 1883<sup>1309</sup>

<i>Norfolk</i>			<i>Shropshire</i>		
<i>No of owners</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>No of owners</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Acres</i>
15	Peers	194,331	8	Peers	195,276
55	Great landowners	322,939	31	Great landowners	223,429
113	Squires	192,100	65	Squires	113,900
341	Greater yeoman	170,500	222	Greater yeoman	111,000
824	Lesser yeoman	140,080	447	Lesser yeoman	75,990
7,936	Small proprietors	152,446	3,841	Small proprietors	57,738
16,552	Cottagers	2,468	7,281	Cottagers	4,544
812	Public bodies	60,020	211	Public bodies	13,464
	Waste	12,869		Waste	19,674
<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>
26,648		1,247,753	12,119		811,615

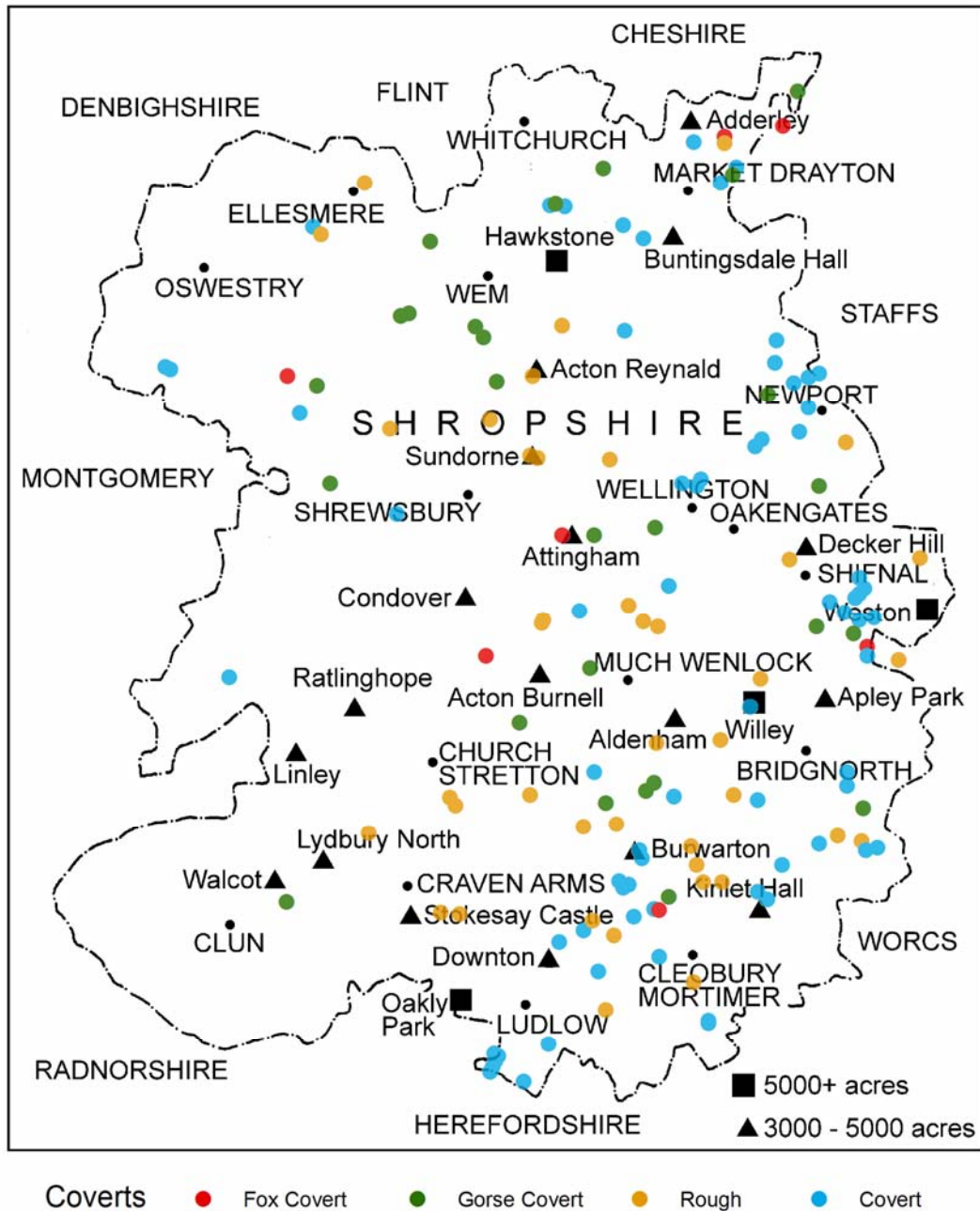
Key: Great landowners = commoners owning over 3,000 acres; Squires = own between 1,000 - 3000 acres; Greater yeoman own 300 – 1,000 acres; Lesser yeoman own 100 – 300 acres; Small proprietors own between 1 – 100 acres; cottagers own less than 1 acre.

<sup>1307</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol. 4, p. 202

<sup>1308</sup> P. Barnes, *P. Norfolk Landowners since 1800* (Norwich, 1993) p. 29

<sup>1309</sup> J Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition reprinted (London, 1971) pp. 507-508. Care should be taken in relying on these figures due to the difficulties in obtaining full disclosure from owners and the extensive estimation of holdings' acreages. Becket, amongst others, warns that 'the accuracy of many of Bateman's figures must be questionable ... the distortion of Bateman's findings is considerable' JV. Beckett, *The aristocracy in England 1660-1914*, (Oxford, 1986) p. 290

Mapping the distribution of landowners in both counties with holdings (a) over 5,000 acres and (b) over 3,000 acres usefully reveals that there is a broad distribution across both Shropshire (excluding the Welsh margins and north west) - illustrated on Figure 8.12; and Norfolk (excluding the Fens, the Flegg district in the east and a band in the south-east, north of Diss) as shown in Figure 7.11.



**Figure 8.12** The distribution of fox coverts in relation to estates over 3,000 and 5,000 acres in Shropshire 1880, according to Bateman<sup>1310</sup>

<sup>1310</sup> J. Bateman, *The Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London, 1971) pp. 506, 507 & 508

It is clear that the distribution of fox coverts in both counties is not very closely correlated to the location of the main centres/houses of the large estates. This suggests that fox coverts are often on the fringes of estates, echoing the findings that coverts tend towards the edge of parishes. The comparison of the two counties shows clearly that the difference in the distribution of nineteenth century foxhunting is not due solely to the variation in the location of large landowners. It was governed far more by the contrasting sporting enthusiasms of the landlords and their tenants. The greatest difference between the two counties during the nineteenth century was the rise in the importance of game shooting in Norfolk, compared to the continuing enthusiasm for foxhunting in Shropshire. The open landscape of north-west Norfolk, with expansive arable fields, encouraged a large partridge and hare population while huge sums were spent on planting and stocking pheasant coverts on many of the great estates. The enthusiastic involvement of fashionable figures such as the Prince of Wales, whose mother bought him the Sandringham Estate in 1862, and Maharajah Duleep Singh, ruler of the Punjab, who purchased the 17,000 acre Elveden Estate (on the Suffolk border with Norfolk) in 1863, stimulated the popularity of shooting. A broad swathe of estates in Breckland was bought up by people from outside Norfolk – particularly after 1875 as agricultural rental income plummeted. It was far easier and safer to learn to shoot than ride a horse across country so in-comers, keen to gain social acceptance, took up shooting with enthusiasm. Gamekeepers' enthusiasm for culling foxes to protect the game bird stocks hastened the decline of foxhunting in Norfolk. Meanwhile in Shropshire:

The social forces uniting the ranks of landed and farming society were stronger and more varied than the causes of dissension. Sport was a powerful bond and "Nimrod" asserted that no other county in England showed more respect for the "noble science" [i.e. foxhunting] or had more well wishers among the higher orders and the yeoman, the result being an excellent feeling between tenant and landlord.<sup>1311</sup>

Even allowing for some exaggeration, this provides a valid explanation for why hunting flourished in Shropshire. It has already been noted that small owner-occupiers in early-enclosed areas, such as south-east Norfolk, are unlikely to have the time, money or inclination to go hunting whereas tenants farming larger acreages may have a greater opportunity and incentive to hunt with their

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<sup>1311</sup> *VCH Shropshire, Vol. 2, p. 217*

landlord's packs. Writing in the 1820s C.J. Apperley ('Nimrod') noted that 'almost all Shropshire farmers were said to be hunting men'.<sup>1312</sup> By 1911 only 10 per cent of Shropshire farms were owner-occupied - covering 8 per cent of the acreage.<sup>1313</sup> Mansfield noted 'sport had the effect of reinforcing paternalism. Shared enthusiasm for foxhunting was a contributory factor in the lack of ideological tension between gentry and farmers in the Marches'.<sup>1314</sup> Where grander institutions such as the Shrewsbury Hunt Club, or its successor the Shropshire Hunt, discouraged farmer membership they instigated their own packs. Shropshire farmers were enthusiastic horse breeders and welcomed the chance to market their horses in the hunting field – particularly as the number of non-farming participants from the industrial Black Country and cities of the north-west joining the hunting field increased. Mansfield has also noted the role of the Shropshire Yeomanry in encouraging farmers' support of foxhunting, although ironically not many 'yeoman' farmers remained to be recruited: 'the aristocracy and gentry supplying the officers, substantial farmers providing the NCOs and the sons of tenant farmers making up most of the rank and file'.<sup>1315</sup> In Shropshire 'until 1914 the majority of the yeomanry were members of hunts',<sup>1316</sup> whereas in Norfolk the link between landlords, tenants and foxhunting had disappeared over much of the county long before the end of the nineteenth century.

In summary, a close examination of two contrasting counties has revealed a significant difference in the geographical distribution of foxhunting which is related to their topography, soils, the lingering influence of their relative enclosure histories and agricultural use – all combining in the recurrent theme of 'access' to the countryside by foxhunters. An exploration of the history of participation in foxhunting in the two study areas has highlighted the over-riding importance of landowners' evolving enthusiasm for different field sports in influencing the landscape by both 'visible' and 'invisible' means. The focus on Braudel's third, detailed level of activity, examining fox coverts, has highlighted the persistent need for substitute habitats following woodland clearance and the impact of landowners' 'control' – over resources and tenants' activities.

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<sup>1312</sup> *VCH Shropshire, Vol. 2, p. 166*

<sup>1313</sup> *VCH Shropshire, Vol 4, p. 256*

<sup>1314</sup> N. Mansfield, *English farm workers and local patriotism 1900-1930*, (Aldershot, 2001) p. 43

<sup>1315</sup> Mansfield, *English*, p. 84

<sup>1316</sup> Mansfield, *English*, p. 85

## CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS

The history of foxhunting has proved a powerful lens through which to view the changes to the English landscape up until 1900; it is also a useful proxy for exploring the grip that successive generations of landowners have exerted on both their estates and their tenants. The idea of using ‘the link between practice and place’ to explore the development of foxhunting and its impact on the lowland landscape of England has allowed a reasoned challenge to some beliefs, long-held and regularly repeated by historians, and confirmed other assumptions.<sup>1317</sup>

### Long-term trends

As discussed in the introductory chapter, Braudel’s three-tier model allows a structured analysis of the thesis’s findings; this concluding chapter will look at the influence of long-term trends first. Chapter 2 explores, via the early history of hunting, the shifting definitions of what constituted an elite prey and who was entitled to hunt. It also introduces hunting people’s ongoing preoccupation with the protection of habitat to maintain a sustainable population to pursue. There is evidence to support the ‘received view’ that before the eighteenth century the elite primarily hunted deer whilst foxhunting was an inferior, pedestrian activity carried out as a form of vermin control. But a closer look also provides evidence of early foxhunting by some high-status households, such as that of Edmund, second Baron Mortimer, a powerful thirteenth-century Marcher Lord in Shropshire and women heading religious orders.<sup>1318</sup> However, the majority of the elite did continue primarily to hunt deer until a rapid fall in population, due to loss of habitat through enclosure and poaching, led to a gradual transition to the primacy of hare and foxhunting by the early eighteenth century. Norfolk was at the forefront of this change since major landowners, such as the Cokes at Holkham and Townsends at Raynham, developed their own specialist foxhound packs during the 1720s and 1730s. Meanwhile minor gentry in most areas tended to hunt hares for two reasons: they were found at a much higher density than foxes, especially on arable land, providing a better chance of a find and, because hares tend to run in large circles when hunted, the gentry rarely needed to leave their own land.

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<sup>1317</sup> J. Finch, ‘What more were the pastures of Leicester to me? Hunting, landscape character and the politics of place’, *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 14 (2007) p. 363

<sup>1318</sup> *VCH Shropshire*, Vol 1. p. 490



Chapter 2 also provides the first examples of an intermittent foreign influence on the development of hunting, usually thought of as a quintessentially British activity, which runs as a thread through the thesis. The Normans not only provided an early theoretical basis for British hunting, through translations of their hunting manuals, but also left a practical legacy with forest reserves and imported Gascon hounds.<sup>1319</sup> Much later, by the turn of the eighteenth century, northern France was seen as the last resort for both buying bag foxes or ‘damned French dunghills’ and providing a safe refuge for indebted foxhunters.<sup>1320</sup>

The twin concepts of ‘access to’ and ‘control of’ the landscape over the long-term recur through the chapters; and the impact of landowners’ ‘improving’ activities reflects Braudel’s first-tier of activity. Mapping and contrasting the patterns of early hunting activity with a variety of potentially significant factors such as the distribution of soil associations; the basic division between ‘anciently-enclosed’ and ‘champion’ landscapes; landownership patterns; and variations in agricultural use highlights a marked dichotomy. In summary: most early packs started foxhunting concurrently in two markedly different landscape types. One group started on well-drained soils developed on the chalk and limestone of the South Downs, Wiltshire and the Wolds of Lincolnshire; or on the ‘Good Sands’ of north-west Norfolk. The second cluster was found on the contrastingly poorly-drained heavy clays, under mainly arable use, in the East Midlands, with outliers on clay vales in lowland parts of Yorkshire and Durham. Inevitably, exceptions existed but closer examination suggests that the anomalies were due to quirks; for example, the seventeenth-century Duke of Buckinghamshire initiating hunting on his Yorkshire estates after fleeing London.

The detailed mapping exercise raised a query - if foxhunting originated in two areas of such contrasting soils, what was the common factor? Various physical influences were explored; for example, scent conditions are obviously crucial for hunting with hounds but evidence suggests that there is no critical difference between the two soil types. The long-term enclosure histories of the pioneer areas provided a clue; all the significant early packs developed outside the ‘early-enclosed’ regions with their small fields and intimidating hedges. The detailed

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<sup>1319</sup> Longrigg, *English Squire*, p. 28

<sup>1320</sup> Bovill, *English*, p. 216

comparison of where pre-1750 foxhound packs originated, and the characteristics of those areas, broadens discourse away from the traditional view that tended to focus only on the model heartland of the east Midlands. This analysis highlights 'access' as the key determinant of where early foxhunting developed and it is evident that tenure and land use had an important influence. The open-fields of Roberts and Wrathmell's 'Central Province',<sup>1321</sup> and the sheep-corn areas of the Downs and Wolds, and the 'Good Sands' of Norfolk share the characteristics of an open landscape, without physical barriers to mounted followers. Foxhunters were deterred by hedges in ancient-enclosed areas; the highly respected hunting author Peter Beckford, writing as late as 1781, advised huntsmen to dismount at once when arriving at a daunting leap. A second factor was that the open countryside provided an uninterrupted view of the hunting pack enhancing the participants' pleasure and providing vital information, for breeding, on the hounds' comparative hunting qualities and stamina.

The advantage of easy access to the open-fields and sheep grazing was enhanced further by the powerful control of landlords or lords of the manor; their strong grip on the countryside meant that their sporting activities took precedence over other uses. To test these long-term effects on a smaller scale I have used examples from Norfolk to illustrate the impact of access – in both physical and tenurial senses. The 'fold course' system of north-west Norfolk, with its tradition of manorial 'fold rights' with unfettered access to tenants' land, encouraged landowners to hunt freely across the countryside. Conversely, foxhunting failed to develop in the southern, early-enclosed 'wood-pasture' district where Overton has suggested that dispersed settlement, private property rights and a fragmented manorial structure weakened the manorial lords' social and economic control over the landscape and land use.<sup>1322</sup>

### **Changes in control and access**

The second tier of Braudel's model is used to consider the impact of two broad, medium-term trends, improvement and diffusion, on the development and subsequent geographical and social extension of hunting. The first process, the

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<sup>1321</sup> B.K Roberts & S. Wrathmell, *Atlas of Rural Settlement* (London, 2000)

<sup>1322</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, pp. 49-50

move towards agricultural improvement by landowners during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, involved, amongst many other factors, investment in enclosure and better livestock breeding and husbandry. Some of these changes influenced the development of the 'modern' style of foxhunting as estate owners used leases in tenancy agreements to take greater control over their tenants' activities, vied to breed faster hounds and horses and enhanced the landscape of their estates to develop sporting use and increase their social standing. As Girouard summarised, 'foxhunting and improvement tended to go together'.<sup>1323</sup>

After the opening review of hunting's national origins, the thesis narrows its focus, geographically and temporally, to the East Midlands region; to explore where leading MFHs chose to hunt during the second half of the eighteenth century – and why. The goal was to examine the orthodox view held by Hoskins in the 1950s,<sup>1324</sup> and repeated regularly over the next half century, that parliamentary enclosure and the subsequent conversion of the Shires arable open-fields to grassland were triggers for the development of 'modern' foxhunting and its rise in popularity. The pattern of hunting activities, represented by the distribution of meets extracted from fox-hunters' diaries, was compared with the incidence of a range of factors, explored on maps at a parish-scale, such as the date of parliamentary enclosures, the size of allotments to individuals post-enclosure and the loss of the network of balks and paths. This information was augmented by comments in hunting accounts, which allow an insight into the perceptions of foxhunters, and suggests that they valued highly good access across fallows and stubbles. The approach of combining 'place', examining the details of the landscape, and 'practice', how MFHs organised their activities, to analyse where leading foxhunters chose to hunt and why, appears not to have been tried previously at a parish level. The outcome of this synthesis is significant.

The evidence shows that leading MFHs in the East Midlands such as Meynell and Grafton (both born in 1735), as well as Fitzwilliam, Spencer, Rutland and Lowther continued to favour hunting in the dwindling, unenclosed countryside well into the 1790s because of better access. It is clear that they preferred the 'champion' landscape of open-fields and sheep courses to the enclosed countryside because

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<sup>1323</sup> Girouard, *Life*, p. 218

<sup>1324</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, pp. 196-198

of easier transit on horseback and better visibility. Grafton, with the opportunity to hunt on his mainly enclosed estate in Northamptonshire or across the open fields, sheep walks and heaths in Suffolk, provides a compelling illustration of a more general preference for the latter. This detailed study effectively challenges the conventional view that Meynell and his contemporaries developed the 'modern' style of foxhunting in enclosed areas primarily used for grazing. Instead it makes clear that only a minority of foxhunters in the latter decades of the eighteenth century sought out enclosed areas in the Shires. It took a new generation, from the 1800s, to start to enjoy the risks of jumping.

A closer look at the contemporary accounts of land use, examined through the prism of foxhunting provides a further factual challenge to the commonly-held view that eighteenth-century Shires foxhunters galloped smoothly over extensive grassland. The Crop Returns of 1801 for Leicestershire suggest that about 16 per cent of the agricultural land recorded was still in arable use. Pitt estimated that by 1809, stimulated by wartime high prices, this had soared to around 39 per cent of Leicestershire and Rutland lying under temporary tillage.<sup>1325</sup> Land in arable use, fallow or stubbles during the winter provided both cover and small rodents as prey for foxes during the hunting season which was particularly important in lightly wooded areas such as much of Leicestershire. Contemporary accounts also illustrate the difficulties faced in crossing eighteenth-century grassland fast on horseback – a point ignored by the majority of landscape historians. Monk noted that the heavier pasture land, such as that around Melton Mowbrey, was very wet in winter, and thus slow, tiring going for horses. Artificial drainage was rare: Pitt did not note the advent of 'tiles for hollow drainage' in Leicestershire until 1813. Where grassland had been enclosed from arable use, deep, water logged ridges and furrows often remained and Pitt observed that the dangerous unevenness was exacerbated by the presence of sizeable ant-hills. These challenges to foxhunters contrast sharply with the ease of crossing the fallows and stubbles of open-fields with their network of lanes, paths, balks and headlands. This evidence suggests that the great enthusiasm for hunting across the Shires grassland on heavy clays only followed the advent of artificial drainage in the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>1325</sup> Pitt, *General view ... Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 89

The thesis narrows its focus further to compare the model of the Shires with two very different counties. The very early development of foxhunting as a specialist activity in Norfolk, from the 1720s, has been overlooked by the standard histories of hunting, up until Brown's recent *magnum opus* on hunting in the county. Development was much later in Shropshire; individual landowners such as the Foresters both kept private packs and followed visiting packs with the elite Shrewsbury Hunt Club from the 1770s but the county was not divided into recognisable hunting countries until the early nineteenth century and 'had a bad reputation as a hunting country' because of its mainly hilly, dissected terrain.<sup>1326</sup> One reason for the difference between the counties is that the great estates in the north-west of Norfolk controlled large acreages of unenclosed land primarily still used as sheep walks. Early foxhunters benefited from good access to the comparatively open unenclosed countryside in the north-west and this echoes the development of foxhunting by Meynell and others in the open-fields of the east Midlands. By contrast, the early-enclosed, fenced wood-pastures of south Norfolk posed significant challenges and hunting failed to flourish. The enclosure history of Shropshire is markedly different to north Norfolk and the East Midlands; it was primarily enclosed early into hedged fields in predominantly pastoral use that hampered earlier foxhunters nonplussed by the fences. There was little organised foxhunting during the first half of the eighteenth century - in contrast to north Norfolk. It is striking that the early settlement pattern of south-east Norfolk leading to predominantly small, owner-occupied family farms did not produce a similar foxhunting cadre or enthusiasm amongst farmers. The reasons are explored later.

Following on from improvement, the second medium-term trend that was significant in the development of foxhunting was diffusion – widening access to the hunting field both geographically and socially. From the 1780s a surge of new packs spread outwards from the heartlands of the east Midlands and sheep-corn areas to most of lowland England, excluding the Fens. The instigators in Shropshire were landowners such as Childe and Forester who went to hunt in Leicestershire in the 1780s and 1790s and then returned keen to demonstrate their new skills. Once foxhunters had mastered jumping fences safely, those parts of the ancient-enclosed countryside where generally hedges were laid, such as Shropshire, became an exciting sporting terrain. The development of

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<sup>1326</sup> *VCH Shropshire* Vol. 2, pp. 165&166

foxhunting led to a wider geographical distribution but the elite still favoured lowland areas preferably with tight tenurial control by landlords. The division is seen clearly in nineteenth-century Shropshire where the smart Shropshire Hunt dominated the rich lowlands around Shrewsbury and the northern plain while farmers' packs, such as the Wheatland and United, hunted across hillier terrain.

Plenty has been written in the standard works on hunting history about the spread of foxhunting and its, often arcane, social history, as noted in chapter one. A range of opportunities to hunt developed in a hierarchy from exclusive hunt clubs to a range of subscription packs which mimicked the wider patterns in polite society; which, as the Stones noted, was 'sliced and sliced again into extremely thin status layers'.<sup>1327</sup> This thesis has benefited from access to two sets of private papers which provide new evidence for the first time about elite hunting activities. An analysis of Lord Townsend's hound registers and correspondence of the 1760s, stored in the attics at Raynham, illustrate the growth of social links between polite landowners and foxhunters. The widespread network of letters about hunting and exchanges of hounds for breeding stretched from Lord Eglinton in Scotland to Colonel Jennings in Hampshire. In Shropshire the private minutes of the Shrewsbury Hunt Club, established in 1769, illustrate the elite's enthusiasm for maintaining their rarified status in contrast to the wider access granted by subscription packs. Initially the membership was limited to 50,<sup>1328</sup> restricted to landowners, their eldest sons and MFHs of Salopian packs but by 1827 membership was refined down to 30.<sup>1329</sup>

In contrast to the elite's private activities, three aspects of hunting's social diffusion are explored - the increasing involvement of urban dwellers, women and tenant farmers. Although initially foxhunters came predominantly from the landowning classes Langford noted that in the second half of the eighteenth century the growth of provincial cities meant that a prosperous commercial class was beginning to seek new leisure opportunities. The attitude of the elite was ambivalent - the transfusion of 'new' money into hunting was often welcome but few of the old guard relished sharing their prestige or power. The role of Hunt clubs in the study areas of Norfolk and Shropshire varied widely; in Shropshire the

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<sup>1327</sup> Stone & Stone, *Open*, p. 423

<sup>1328</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club Minutes

<sup>1329</sup> Shrewsbury Hunt Club Minutes

Shrewsbury Hunt club was a bastion of the landed elite whereas in Norwich the membership consisted of the rising commercial class. As the nineteenth century developed, most hunt clubs became purely social organisations, few packs remained in private ownership and subscription packs inevitably allowed a wider range of people to hunt and manage the packs' affairs.

Women's access to the hunting field has fluctuated – unlike the steadily increasing involvement of a wider social spectrum of men during the period under study. The assumption that only men hunted in the Middle Ages, is overturned by the discovery that at least a couple of women who held powerful positions in the church, the thirteenth-century Abbess of Barking in Essex,<sup>1330</sup> and the fourteenth-century Prioress of White Ladies in east Shropshire, kept 'hunting dogs' for their own use.<sup>1331</sup> Later, in the sixteenth century, the Dowager Queen Maria of France was recorded as enjoying hunting foxes in Suffolk with Charles, Duke of Suffolk. Women's involvement continued during the eighteenth century when it was not unusual for the wives and daughters of the gentry to hunt. But the rise of subscription packs, as owners of private packs needed to spread the cost of hunting, encouraged the exclusion of 'respectable' women as they became exposed to the risk of contact with unsuitable people in the hunting field. Changes in the landscape due to enclosure affected women disproportionately and they were increasingly excluded for technical as well as social reasons. The introduction of the side-saddle, which gave women less 'grip,' was incompatible with the increasing need to gallop and jump enclosure fences out hunting. A second deterrent was the planting of quick-thorn hedges that grew into tall and prickly 'bull-finches' that scratched the faces of anyone jumping through them. Women faded from the hunting field until the mid nineteenth century when developments in the design of side-saddles made jumping safer and Queen Victoria sanctioned the sport for respectable women once more by being seen out at a meet of the Belvoir in the 1850s.

The reduction in the number of women in the hunting field during the second half of the eighteenth century was compensated for by the increasing involvement of farmers, especially the more prosperous tenants of the large estates. Porter

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<sup>1330</sup> Buxton, *Ladies*, p. 14

<sup>1331</sup> Auden, *History Albrighton*, p.1

described how better prices, after about 1760, prompted a surge of magnate-led enclosure and cemented the partnership between great landowner and the go-ahead farmer to whom he rented out his lands.<sup>1332</sup> By 1790 about three-quarters of England's soil was cultivated by tenants.<sup>1333</sup> The development of the landlord-tenant system was most evident in the 'planned landscape', including sheep-corn areas, and least significant in the early-enclosed, wood-pasture zones, mirroring the distribution of the most prestigious packs. The more prosperous tenants were often keen to imitate the lifestyle and cement alliances with their landlords, while landlords needed their tenants' acquiescence in tolerating damage, protecting fox coverts, and keeping hound puppies in the summer. Hunting thrived where landowners had a strong grip over a broad swathe of countryside but struggled in areas such as south Norfolk where small owner-occupiers resisted any social pressures to allow foxhunters to cross their land and had neither the time nor resources to follow hounds themselves. Salopians appear to have been keener to leave their farms, often the scene of small-scale horse breeding, in the winter to market their hunters, oats and hay and to enjoy themselves. Mansfield has noted hunting as a strong bond between gentry and farmers in the Marches.<sup>1334</sup> A difference in attitudes to field sports, rooted in religious affinities, may be a further reason for the contrast in enthusiasm. By 1672 there was already a strong presence of Non-conformists in rural south Norfolk, as well as the north-east,<sup>1335</sup> - two areas where hunting subsequently failed to flourish. In contrast the Shropshire VCH recorded that 'in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodism was resisted by the farmers' many of whom embraced the sport enthusiastically.<sup>1336</sup>

Although there has been much written, often in a self-serving way by foxhunters, about the social inclusiveness of the hunting field; a more accurate story of access to the hunting field is one of both diffusion and differentiation. Although more members of the new polite commercial class and farmers started to hunt regularly in the latter decades of the eighteenth century they were often segregated in subscription packs or were tolerated by smarter packs while on horseback but socially excluded once dismounted. By the second half of the

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<sup>1332</sup> Porter, *English*, p. 57

<sup>1333</sup> Porter, *English*, p. 69

<sup>1334</sup> Mansfield, *English*, p. 43

<sup>1335</sup> P. Wade Martins, (ed.) *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*. 2nd edn. (Norfolk, 1994) p. 141

<sup>1336</sup> Victoria County History, *History of Shropshire*. Vol. 11 (Oxford, 1985) p.91



nineteenth century the high costs of maintaining packs encouraged both Norfolk and Shropshire hunts to embrace prosperous 'in-comers'.

### **Foxhunting's impact on the landscape**

Braudel's third tier focused on specific, smaller scale activities. One of the main themes of the research is the reciprocal influence of landscape change on the location and practice of foxhunting and the impact that enthusiastic foxhunters had on the landscape to improve their sport. Enclosure via parliamentary acts triggered changes in the landscape that reduced the area of natural fox habitat resulting in a dearth of prey for many lowland packs. However, enclosure also brought with it a solution as landlords tightened their grip on a 'privatised' countryside. Overton noted that 'the dominance of leasehold farms meant that the relationship between individuals was increasingly characterised by explicit or implicit contracts' so hunting thrived where landowners controlled a broad swathe of countryside – involving both tenants' activities and landscape improvement.<sup>1337</sup>

The latter part of the thesis highlights the paradox of landowners' individual efforts, and hunt clubs' and packs' collective exertions, to maintain a sustainable fox population to hunt and kill. Ways of protecting the fox population fell into two broad categories divided by their visual impact on the landscape: the first includes 'visible' features, including coverts and earths, while the second is 'invisible', embracing clauses in farming tenancies, payments to gamekeepers and the purchase of bag foxes. Within the 'visible' features, it is striking that the covert is contrarily highly visible in the countryside while artificial earths are truly secret and covert, with few written references to their cost or secluded locations within woodland. The reasons may be that the payment for establishing coverts included building earths, without this being specified separately, and the locations of new earths were kept highly secret to avoid disturbance and 'bagmen' stealing the cubs. It is noticeable that, by contrast, documentary records of the use of bag foxes are more widespread despite the supposed stigma attached to their use.

This concluding chapter uses fox coverts as a useful proxy for the impact of enclosure, via clearance of woodland, heaths and other 'wastes', and the resultant

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<sup>1337</sup> Overton, *Agricultural*, p. 182

changes in the hunting landscape. Much has been written about both the genesis and maintenance of fox coverts but most authors have focused on the East Midlands.<sup>1338</sup> The thesis has explored in detail, for the first time, the distribution and history of coverts in Norfolk and Shropshire and the influence of both physical and tenorial factors. This has allowed comparison with the well-known model of the Shires landscape and the testing of a range of previous observations about coverts.

Carr reflected conventional opinion that 'the planting of artificial gorse or blackthorn coverts became a necessity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.<sup>1339</sup> But this research in private papers has unearthed evidence of much earlier activity in Norfolk. The quickest way of creating fox coverts was to enclose existing rough grazing or woodland; household accounts held at Holkham show that as early as 1720 Thomas Pigge was being paid for enclosing five fox coverts on the estate.<sup>1340</sup> By 1756 there are references to the establishment of new coverts planted for Mr Townsend's hunt in Norfolk'.<sup>1341</sup> Although hunting developed much later in Shropshire, the Shrewsbury Hunt club minutes for 1781 record that one hundred pounds was paid for planting and preserving gorse covers.

An exploration of the distribution of coverts in both counties reveals a clear pattern linked to physical factors; in Norfolk the majority of fox coverts lie in the north-west region of 'the Good Sands'; there are also a few small woods that are probably fox coverts fringing this area on the eastern boundary and another scattering to the south in Breckland. A similarly distinct clustering of coverts is found in Shropshire; the majority lies on the Northern Plain, the Eastern Sandstone lowlands or the Clee Hills plateau. If the focus is narrowed down to purely fox coverts and gorses an even simpler pattern emerges with the majority of fox coverts and gorses are found on the Northern Plain. One physical factor that seems to link these areas is the distribution of soils; in Shropshire most coverts are found on the generally well-drained, sandy loams and loamy sands developed on the glacial sands and gravels on the northern and eastern plains or Devonian marls of the Clee Hill

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<sup>1338</sup> Paget, *History of Althorp*; Ellis, *Leicestershire*; Hoskins, *Making*; Patten, 'Fox coverts ...'; Finch, 'Grass ...'.

<sup>1339</sup> Carr. *English*, p. 114

<sup>1340</sup> Holkham Household Accounts A7 (expenses relating to hunting, 1720) p. 141

<sup>1341</sup> Harvey-Mason, Swaffham Museum Box 73 (*Hunting in W. Norfolk*, undated) p. 27

Plateau. In Norfolk the majority of coverts are found in the north-west on similar well drained, soils formed mainly in chalky till or drift. But this contrasts markedly with the Shires where coverts are scattered across both the heavy Lias clays of the vales and poorly drained boulder clays of the upland plateau. Clearly the distribution of coverts nationally is not primarily influenced by soil type.

Instead, logic would suggest that coverts might be established to compensate for an absence of other suitable fox habitat. In the East Midlands by the eighteenth century many parishes were almost devoid of woodland and waste; for example, as discussed in chapter three, Naseby in Northamptonshire was completely arable by c1290.<sup>1342</sup> Although there were extensive areas of forest, these were often distant from the main hunting centres so a hectic programme of covert planting started on the clays in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The goal was a network of well spaced, thorn or gorse plantations to support a breeding fox population and ensure both a certain 'find' and a good-length run between refuges.

Although the percentages do not diverge greatly, the distribution of woodland and other potential natural fox cover differs significantly between the two survey counties. McNair and Williamson's work on Faden's 1797 map suggests that woodland covered only 2.6 per cent of Norfolk at this time with another 12.5 per cent of the total area mapped consisting of warrens, greens, heaths and commons.<sup>1343</sup> Forty years later in 1836 7.9 per cent of the total land area in Shropshire was still common land with another 5.6 per cent in woodland.<sup>1344</sup> Comparison of the extensive woodland, heath and unenclosed land in Shropshire in 1750 with Faden's later 1797 map of Norfolk suggests a broader distribution in Shropshire compared to a greater concentration in the Heathlands and Brecklands of Norfolk (wetlands unsuitable for mounted foxhunting are excluded from the calculations).<sup>1345</sup> Although the maps are not directly comparable in date, this might suggest a better supply of fox cover supporting a larger population of foxes in eighteenth-century Shropshire and this was probably true while landowners could rove across wide tracts before hunt boundaries were

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<sup>1342</sup> D. Hall, 'Open Fields of Northamptonshire' (Northampton, 1995) p. 103

<sup>1343</sup> A. Macair, pers. comm. 4.9.2009. (included a warning about some opaqueness in definitions and mapping by Faden).

<sup>1344</sup> Kain & Prince, *Tithe surveys*, p. 298

<sup>1345</sup> Macnair & Williamson, *Faden*

formalised. During the eighteenth century Norfolk foxhunters were already needing to plant artificial fox coverts in the north-west; the necessity only occurred in Shropshire during the nineteenth century when rapid agricultural improvement in the north and east of the country swept away much of the heaths, mosses and remnants of woodland.

This exploration of the enclosure history of the two counties provides a rationale for the distribution of artificial coverts; they are substitutes. Fox coverts, gorses and coverts are rarely established in existing wooded areas; their role is to compensate for the absence of suitable fox habitat due to earlier clearance for agriculture. A good example in Shropshire is the relative paucity of coverts in the gently rolling, agricultural area flanking the heavily wooded Wenlock Edge. The role of dense hedges as auxiliary, temporary fox habitats has not been previously explored; although they delayed the introduction of organised foxhunting in Shropshire until after the 1790s they also provided additional cover for foxes in early-enclosed areas obviating the need to plant artificial coverts.

A closer examination of the apparent timing of the increase in numbers of coverts also supplies evidence for the different dates when hunting flourished. In Norfolk a flurry of planting must have taken place before the publication of the 1830s 1 inch to 1 mile OS maps when 62 fox coverts were identified; by contrast in Shropshire only 13 gorses and fox coverts were identified from these maps. But by the first edition of the 6 inches to 1 mile maps of the 1880s and 1890s there was a significant increase in Shropshire to 32 gorses or fox coverts with an additional 45 roughs and (non-specific) coverts noted. However, in Norfolk between the 1830s and 1890s only an additional 25 coverts were mapped; this is due to the surge in many landowners' enthusiasm for shooting which also led to a hiatus in any formal hunting during 1843-1856 and a dearth of subscriptions to fund new planting. The utility of coverts as a surrogate indicator for the relative continuing importance and resilience of foxhunting is clearly illustrated by the evidence that in 2010 only 24 per cent of all the coverts identified remained in Norfolk while in the same year, in Shropshire, the maximum number in each category was still in situ. This echoes the contemporary picture of one pack of foxhounds in Norfolk whereas in 2011 Shropshire still maintains eight, despite the hunting ban in 2005.

A simple typology for the coverts was devised which revealed some striking differences between the study areas. In the east Midlands Hoskins noted both gorse and thorn coverts; while Ellis, writing of Leicestershire, introduced another category of land use which is significant as fox habitat – the ‘rough’. In Shropshire ‘roughs’ dominated, comprising 28 per cent of the fox coverts identified, while only 19 per cent of the total number of coverts were mapped as ‘gorses’ and only 5 per cent named as ‘fox covert’ on the maps. However, in Norfolk, in a sample of 94 coverts, over one third were named ‘fox covert’ with a further third shown as ‘gorses’. Broom coverts constituted another 10 per cent of coverts, while the generic ‘covert’ accounted for the remainder without any mention of roughs. This suggests that ‘true’ fox or gorse coverts planted *de novo* as habitat may be rarer in Shropshire where opportunistic use of existing rough land as coverts appears more common.

The detailed survey also enabled the testing in Norfolk and Shropshire of Hoskins’ observation that fox coverts in Leicestershire tended to be on the margins of parishes.<sup>1346</sup> In Norfolk ninety-four coverts were examined, via maps, and a striking 34 per cent were found to lie on parish boundaries with another 31 per cent within 200 meters – so that almost two-thirds of the sample was on the outer fringes of their parish (the exact whereabouts of six coverts mentioned in eighteenth century estate records could not be established). In Shropshire, although the correlation was not as strong as in Norfolk, it is still notable that 38 per cent of the 144 coverts were on the outer margins of parishes confirming Hoskins’ view in two widely differing counties. The difference may be due to the contrasting enclosure histories and relief of the counties with earlier, piecemeal enclosure in Shropshire leaving more small, rough or hilly areas, suitable for planting, scattered across parishes not just on the periphery. Hoskins also noted that commonly Shires coverts varied between 2-20 acres (0.8-8 ha) in size. In the current survey almost half of the Salopian coverts were 1 ha or less (compared to 14 per cent in Norfolk) while a further 48 per cent covered between 1 and 3 ha (56 per cent in Norfolk). Few Salopian coverts extended over 4 ha compared to 30 per cent of Norfolk’s sample. The average size of artificial plantings to enhance foxhunting in Shropshire is significantly smaller than in Norfolk. One reason may be the greater extent of pre-existing woodland in Shropshire and another may be

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<sup>1346</sup> Hoskins, *Making*, pp. 197-198

the wider prevalence of smaller landowners who were unwilling to sacrifice larger sites for non-agricultural use.

If the broader picture of where hunting took place in the east Midlands, Norfolk and Shropshire revolved around the concept of 'access' the more precise task of siting features to enhance its practice highlights the importance of 'control' by landowners - over finance, land and the activities of tenants. Control over the landscape, especially the costly planting and maintenance of coverts, was enforced by landlords primarily using 'invisible means'. These included payments to tenants, generally rent rebates to compensate for land converted from agricultural to sporting use, but also direct employment in slack seasons on tasks such as fencing covert boundaries and cutting internal access rides. Once committed to the expense of establishing a covert, landlords often exerted further controls to ensure that the fox population remained safe by inserting clauses in leases requiring tenants to report poachers or 'bag men'. Foxhunting landowners also acted collectively, via their hunt committees or hunt clubs, to entertain and make payments to gamekeepers who protected litters of cubs and to complain to owners of shooting estates about gamekeepers culling foxes as vermin.

The thesis has demonstrated that the eighteenth and nineteenth-century distribution and development of foxhunting, and its most iconic feature - the covert, was dependent on the twin factors of access and control. As already noted, Deuchar has summarised hunting's requirements as 'the availability of land, the freedom and time to exploit it and, very often, an economic status derived from a dependent class below'.<sup>1347</sup> The sustainability of hunting as a sporting practice, and the longevity of its attendant landscape features, was ultimately dependent on the sporting enthusiasms of landowners. Powerful Norfolk landowners were very early proponents of hunting and made a clear mark on the landscape of north-west Norfolk before switching their sport, and woodlands, to shooting while Salopians took up the sport later but with greater duration and a wider impact on the landscape. The comparisons between the intensively-researched hunting landscape of the Shires and two peripheral counties have proved their value by highlighting discrepancies, such as the distribution of fox coverts, and provoking an examination of likely explanations.

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<sup>1347</sup> Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, p. 2

## Place and practice

The first paragraph of Chapter 1 highlights the attraction of exploring the history of landscapes and their sporting use – the need to understand both ‘place’ and ‘practice’. This thesis has attempted to synthesise both by a variety of methods and sources. The exploration of ‘place’ has involved the use of a range of maps and records to explore the historic and physical context of hunting, the significance of any overlapping patterns and the location of landscape features related to hunting. This two dimensional study of ‘place’ has been enlivened and enriched by the use of a range of contemporary hunting diaries, poems and paintings which have allowed a vivid insight into the ‘practice’ of foxhunting and the attitudes of its enthusiasts.

The use of foxhunting as a medium for studying the interaction between agricultural change, landowners and the landscape has proved effective. A geographer’s enthusiasm for mapping and comparing coincidences and discrepancies in patterns of features and activities has raised useful challenges to some landscape historians’ shibboleths. The approach of locating a detailed study of two differing counties within both regional and national contexts has allowed a productive analysis of reasons for similarities and differences and prevented too parochial an approach.



**Figure 9.1** 'The End: The kill on the "Cat and Custard pot" day' by Leech, 1843<sup>1348</sup>

<sup>1348</sup> Surtees, *Handley*, p. 320



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Appendix 1 Norfolk fox coverts.xls

Appendix 1 Norfolk Fox Coverts																	
Number	Name	Parish	Location	Grid ref	Grid ref	Size in ha	Classification	parish bound	Source	Soil type	Faden	Bryant	1": 1 mile	6":1 mile	Comments	current	Comments
1	Anmer FC	Anmer	SW Anmer Hall	5735	3285	5	1 close	Norf Gaz	Barrow	Y	Y	Y	23 NE 1885/1904	1885 heath/some wood	Y		
2	Anmer Field Covert	Anmer	N of Anmer Hall	5722	3295	1.5	3 close	6" OS	Newmarket		N	N	23 NW 1883/1904	1883 heath/woodland mix			
3	Hurn Cover	Anmer	NE of Anmer Hall	5751	3298	12	3 on	6" OS	Newmarket		N	N	23 NE 1885/1904	1885 scrub N 1/3, furze s 2/3			
4	Hillington FC	Hillington	S Harpley Dams Hs	5765	3240	2	1 on	Norf Gaz	Barrow		N	Y	23 SE 1889/1904	1904 3X larger + more furze: more heath due	Y		
5	Hillington Whin C	Hillington	S of Hill'ton Pk	5721	3258	1	2 not	6" OS	Isleham		N	N	23 SW 1888/1904	1889 plantation; close 3 small woods/gorse	Y		
6	Hillington Broom C	Hillington	N of Whin C	5718	3261	2	4 on	6" OS	Isleham		N	N	23 SW 1888/1904	1904 nearby woods inc rough pas and scrub			
7	Cranworth FC	Cranworth	SW of Letton Hall	5969	3057	2	1 not	Norf Gaz	Newport		Y	Y	72 NE 1881/1907	1888 mix rough grass/shrubs/fir			
8	Hockham FC	Hockham	N Frost Common	5945	2935	8	1 close	Norf Gaz	Ollereton		Y	Y	84 SE	1904 mix plantat, 'pheasantries' nearby			
9	Morston FC	Morston	W Morston Hall	5998	3435	1	1 not	Norf Gaz	Newmarket		Y	Y	9 NW 1891/1904	1888 & 1904 mixed trees			
10	Broom Covert	Hockham		5928	2925	4	4 close	Norf Gaz	Worlington		Y	Y	94 NW	1881 no FC			
11	Narborough FC 1	Narborough	NE Narb'gh Hall	5750	3138	2	1 on	Norf Gaz	Isleham		Y	Y	46 SE 1891	1907 gorse/whin; close to 'Ridley Cover' mix wood	Y		
12	Narborough FC 2	Narborough	On 'Narb'gh Field	5755	3100	2	1 close	Norf Gaz	Newmarket		Y	Y	58 NE 1887/1906	Heath/gorse/pingoes;	Y		
13	Pentney Whin Close	Pentney	N Marham parish	5745	3135	6	2 on	6" OS	Isleham		N	N	46 SE 1892	close Stow Bedon C & adj 'furze allotment'			
14	Pentney Poor's C	Pentney	NW of village	5715	3145	1	3 not	6" OS	Isleham		N	N	46 SW 1892	1891 gorse; 1904 gorse	Y		
15	West Acre 'Old C'	W Acre		5778	3166	1.5	3 not	6" OS	Newmarket		Y	Y	46 NE 1892	1887 gorse, 1904 mixed woodland			
16	W. Acre 'Old Bush C'	W Acre		5771	3165	1	3 not	6" OS	Newmarket		Y	Y	46 NE 1892	1891 rough pas, near 'whin close'			N cut by A4
17	W Acre 'Broom C'	W Acre		5768	3159	2.5	4 close	6" OS	Newmarket		Y	Y	46 NE 1892	1887 rough pasture on 'N'gh Field			Between 2 branches R. Nar
18	Mr Case's Thorn Covert	Ryburgh		5969	3298	1	3 on	VB 1863	Burlingham		N	N	25 NE 1889	1906 gorse surround by lge area rough pas w'			Broom C to E
19	King Row Covert	Saham		5941	3048	2	3 on	VB 1875	Burlingham		N	Y	72 NE 1891	1892 mixed wood			
20	Overman's Gorse	Rougham	now Rougham Woo	5815	3211	1.5	2 on	VB 1870	Barrow		Y	Y	35 NW 1891	1892 mixed wood			
21	Lady Romney's Gorse	Gayton	? Winch Gorse 1891	5722	3184	1.5	2 not	VB 1870	Isleham		N	Y	34 SW	1889 wood adj rough g and common	?	Foxhills Wood	
22	Gibbet Gorse	Necton	1906 Hangman's Pl	5885	3099	0.5	2 not	VB 1870	Burlingham		Y	Y	60 NW	1891 sparse wood, 1904 decid wood			
23	Sherborne FC	Sherborne	SE Fieldbarn Fm/Ar	5738	3316	2	1 close	Norf Gaz	Barrow		N	N	14 SE 1891/1906	gorse			? Winch Gorse
24	Great Bircham FC	Gt Bircham	NW of village	5752	3330	1.5	1 close	6" OS	Barrow		N	N	14 SE 1891	1892 mixed wood			? Lower Covert
25	Swaffham FC	Swaffham		5797	3075	2	1 close	Norf Gaz	Worlington		N	Y	59 SW 1883/1906	1891 mixed woodland			
26	Swaffham FC	Swaffham	E Gt Friars' Thorns	5795	3103	1.5	1 on	Norf Gaz	Newmarket		N	Y	59 NW 1883	1906 area inc w mixed wood; & extends area			furze & rough graz SE along Peddars Way
27	Gorse Cover	N Pickenham	W of NP warren	5838	3055	3	2 on	6" OS	Newport		Y	N	59 SE 1891	1891 rough grass and furze			
28	Tittleshall FC	Tittleshall	E of village	5915	3215	12	1 on	Norf Gaz	Beccles		Y	Y	36 SW 1891/1907	1883 decid wood and rough graz on Swaffham	Y		pt remove Square - 1906;
29	Weasenham St Peter Fox Cover	W St P	Edge Rudham Com	5828	3246	2	1 on	Norf Gaz	Barrow		N	N	35NW	1906 extension w furze SW from cover	Y		small square
30	Docking Cover	Docking	E BN Training C	5795	3348	10	3 on	Norf Gaz	Barrow		Y	Y	15 NW 1904	1885 Docking Common			
31	Congham Ffurez	Congham		5742	3228	10	2 not	VB p4	Newmarket		Y	Y	23 SW 1888	1888 gorse			Y Congham Heath & Broom Cover
32	Brancaster Covert	Brancaster	N Field House	5782	3423	2	3 not	Norf Gaz	Barrow		Y	Y	7 NW 1891	1891 'The Covert' mixed wood, adj common			'5 Corner Piece'
33	Broom Cover	Quidenham		6028	2865	5	4 on	Norf Gaz	Newport		Y	Y	104 NW	1891 'The Covert' mixed wood, adj common			
34	Fox Hound Grove	Houghton		5785	3275	1	1 on	VB p 15	Barrow		Y	Y	24 SW	1891 FC covering 2 fields			1738 planted Walpole
35	Box Iron Plantation	W Acre	SW High House	5788	3172	1.5	1 not	Fad/Mac	Newmarket		Y	Y	47 NW 1892	1907 more densely wooded			
36	Folly Plantation	Rougham	S Rougham	5830	3190	3	1 close	Fad/Mac	Barrow		Y	Y	35 SE 1891	1892 Mixed deciduous	Y		

## Appendix 1 Norfolk fox coverts.xls

37	Covert	Burnham Market	S of village	5832	3402	1	1	not	Fad/Mac	Newmarket	Y	Y	Y	7 SE 1891	Not visible - small gravel pit close to road	N small gravel pit	
38	Covert	Burnham Market	S of village; adj to 3	5832	3401	1	1	not	Fad/Mac	Barrow	Y	Y	Y	7 SE 1891	Not visible - small gravel pit close to road		
39	Covert	Gressenhall	Adj Longham Comm	5952	3158	2	1	close	Fad/Mac	Burlingham	Y	Y	Y	48 NE 1891	Not visible		
40	Mr Huggins Ash Yards	Wighton	E of Quarles	5900	3395		5		Holkham H	Barrow	N	N	N	8 SW 1891	Not visible	X Info C Hiskey, Holkham	
41	Mr T Pigg	Egmere	W Egmere church	5895	3376	1	1	close	Holkham H	Barrow	McN no 5	Y	Y	16 NW or 8 SW 1891	Not visible	X	
42	Mr Powditch	Quarles	? S of Quarles Farm	5880	3384		5		Holkham H	Barrow	N	N	N	8 SW 1891	Not visible		
43	New FC at Dunton	Dunton	W of Fakenham	5860	3330		5		Holkham H	Barrow	N	N	N	25 NW or 24 NE 1891	Not visible		
44	Coney Hall Cover	Holkham	Park	5890	3418	12	1	not	Holkham H	Newmarket	Y	Y	Y	8 NW 1906	1906 'Broom Cover' N of Gt Barn [mix wood]	Y Broom Covert	
45	Mr Well's brick wks	Holkham	NW bound of park	5861	3428	1.5	1	on	Holkham H	Melford	Y	Y	Y	7 NE 1891	1891 mixed furze/trees/rough grass		
46	Stanfield Whin	Stanfield	S of Fakenham	5925	3220		5		Holkham H	Beccles	N	N	N	36 SE 1891	1891 Not visible. E Bilney whin cover nearby	N	
47	Sunderland Whin	Docking		5782	3395	0.3	2	close	Holkham H	Barrow	N	N	N	7 SW 1891	1891 not visible except small area nr wood	Holk HA 1794 inclosing 'New whin'	
48	Burnham Sutton Whin [Hill]	Burnham Mkt	S edge of BM	5833	3410	2	2	not	Holkham H	Barrow	Y	Y	Y	7 SE 1891	1891 not visible		
49	Horningtoft Whin	Horningtoft		5925	3242	2	2	close	Holkham H	Burlingham	N	Y	Y	36 NE	several woods & whin/rough grass nr Manor Hse		
50	Edmund Walker FC	Harpley		5801	3250	2	1	close	Houghton	Barrow		Y	Y	24 SW			
51	Anthony Beck, Guyton FC	Gt Massingham		5781	3219	3	1	close	Houghton	Barrow		Y	N	35 NW			
52	Wm Banks Jnr FC	Gt Massingham		5802	3204	10	1	close	Houghton	Barrow	Y	N	N	35 SW	1800 furze adj to common		
53	Nicholas Savory 17 acres Cover	Syderstone		5831	3342	4	1	close	Houghton	Barrow	N	N	N	15 SE	1800 not arable - pasture/common/heath	Field Barn plantation?	
54	John Brown's Cover	Fulmodeston		6001	3309	12	3	close	VB p 61	Beccles	N	Y		26 NW		1840 'new covert'	
55	Billingford Covert	Billingford	S Beck Hall	6022	3197	2	3	on	VB p 67	Burlingham	N	Y		37 SW & SE	1892 mixed woodland	Savory [Holkham tenant] praised for	
56	Thomas Francis's New Gorse	Raynham		5870	3245	12	2	on	VB p 73	Beccles	N	N		35NE		drawn 1859	
57	Old Gorse	Middleton		5678	3168	2.5	2	on	VB p 154	Burlingham	N	N		45 NE 1891	1891 wood/rough grazing, 1906 gorse	Y 'fox cover' drawn 1868 - artificial earth	
58	Fox cover on 1906 6"	Litcham		5878	3196	3	2	on	VB p 96	Beccles	N	N		36 SW 1891	1891 wood/rough grazing	drawn 1868	
59	Wellingham current	Wellingham		5910	2960	10	2	on	VB p 73 and 1860	Worlington	N	Y		84 SW 1906	1906 wood/rough grazing	drawn 1860	
60	Shakers Furze	Thompson		5910	2960	10	2	on	VB p 73 and 1860	Worlington	N	Y		84 SW 1906	1906 wood/rough grazing	drawn 1860	
60	Shernborne Covert [1]	Shernborne		5731	3311	4	1	close	6" OS	Barrow	N	N		14 SE 1904	1904 mix wood /rough grazing		
61	Shernborne Covert [2]	Shernborne		5741	3321	2	1	close	6" OS	Barrow	Y	Y		14 SE 1904	1904 mix wood /rough grazing		
62	E Pigg Covert Wood	Massingham		5790	3248	1.5	1	close	Raynham K	Newmarket	N	N	N	24 SW / 35NW	Covert wood' N of bound w L. Massingham	Norf Gaz	
63	Mr Etheridge Thorpland	Sculthorpe	N Fakenham	5932	3320		5		Raynham K	Downham	N	N	Y	45 NE	1906 not visible	X	
64	Mr Buscall Gate's End [now T Gorse]	Tattersett		5861	3298	2	1	on	Raynham K	Barrow	N	Y	Y	24 NE	1891 small furze/rough grass & gravel pit 'Gates End Hill'		
65	Thomas Dugdale Shackney/Shakeney	Syderstone ?				5			Raynham K	Barrow ?	N	N			Not in gazeteer	1767 VB p29 covert drawn	
66	Isaac Loose	Langham	VB p 29 1767	5998	3410		3	1	on	Raynham K	Barrow	Y	Y	Y	9 SW	Not visible	
67	Thomas Chambers Old fox covert	Stiffkey	NE Stiffkey Hall	5890	3432	1.5	1	close	Raynham K	Melford	Y	Y	Y	9 NW 1891/1904	??1891 gorse; 1904 gorse	X airfield Norf Gaz	
68	James Favours Old Gorse	Snoring		5965	3327	6	2	on	Raynham K	Beccles	Y	Y		16 SE 1891	1891 New Covert, Jex's Covert, Crane Pit Covert, Old Gorse in parish	Current 'old gorse'	
69	Elizabeth Brott Tofts Newton	Gt Bircham		5785	3309	5	2	on	Raynham K	Barrow	Y	N	N	15 SW	1885 whin; un-named adj Poilney's plantation		
70	Wm Glover	Creake		5830	3353	1.5	1	close	Raynham K	Barrow		N	N	15 NE 1891	mixed wood SW S Creake	X	
71	Whin Covert	Heacham	E Heacham Hall	5732	3385	2	2	close	6" OS	Newmarket	Y	Y		6 SE 1929	1929 woodland		
72	Broom Covert	Grimston	adj Congham comm	5743	3229	2	4	on	Norf Gaz	Newmarket	N	N		34 NE	Mixed wood/rough grazing	Y Broom Covert	
73	The Cover	Sedgeford	Docking/Sedgeford close Summerfield Farm	5733	3382	2	3	on	6" OS	Newmarket	Y	Y		6 SE 1907	1907 fir trees w rough grass 1927 rough grass cleared		

## Appendix 1 Norfolk fox coverts.xls

74	Broom Covert	Thornham	N Ringstead Comm	5730	3416	1	4	close	6" OS	Newmarket	Y	Furze	Y	Ling	6 NE 1906	1906 mixed woodland; Ringstead common gorse/rough G		
75	Whin Covert	Bagthorpe	S Bagthorpe Hall bound w E Rudham	5799	3311	4	2	on	6" OS	Barrow	Y		Y		15 SW 1891	1891 Trees and gorse		
76	Whin Close	Fring	NE Fring Hall	5731	3365	1.5	2	close	6" OS	Newmarket	Y		Y		14 NE 1904	1904 Trees		
77	Whin Covert	East Bilney	SW E Bilney Hall	5940	3188	2	2	on	6" OS & No	Burlingham	Y		Y		36 SE 1891			
78	Barney Hills Covert	Barney		6001	3321	10	3	on	6" OS	Beccles	N		Y		17 SW			
79	Whin Covert	Gayton		5752	3205	1.5	2	not	Norf Gaz	Newmarket	X		X		34 SE			
80	Whin Covert	Heacham		5695	3386	3	2	not	Norf Gaz	Newmarket	Y		Y		6 SW 1929	1929 mixed wood		
81	Broom Cover	Lexham		5871	3182	3	4	not	6" OS	Barrow	N		N		47 NE			
82	Whin Covert	Lt Walsingham		5937	3359	2	2	close	Norf Gaz	Burlingham	Y		Y		16 NE 1906			
83	Manor Whin/ Ling	Bagthorpe		5823	3335	4	2	on	Norf Gaz	Barrow	Y		Y		15 SE 1891	1891 rough grazing		
84	Whin Covert	Stoke Ferry		5691	2987	4	2	not	Norf Gaz	Isleham	Y		Y		70 SW			
85	Whin Covert	Stradsett		5666	3067	0.5	2	close	Norf Gaz	Burlingham	Y		Y		57 SE 1906	1906 mixed woodland		
86	Dodd's Gorse	Gayton		5761	3202	2	2	close	6" OS	Newmarket	N		N		34SE			
87	Lady Ferrers Wood	Ravnham		5889	3260	8	3	on	VB	Burlingham	N		N		25 SW			
88	Racknell's Covert	Guist		6019	3264	2	3	on	6"OS	Burlingham	N		Y		26 SW 1888	1888 wood		
89	Fox covert	Grimston	on Grimston Heath	5730	3230	3	1	on	6" OS	Newmarket	N		N		34 NE 1891	1891 gorse		
90	Whin covert	N Tuddenham	X roads S N Tudd c	6039	3140	3	2	not	6" OS	Burlingham	N		N		49 SE 1891	1891 gorse, 1926 woodland		
91	Melton's Covert	Kempstone		5877	3165	2	3	close	Norf Gaz	Burlingham	N		N		47 NE	possibly planted by Fitzroy 1823? [gorse seed]		
92	Furze Cover	Bawburgh	E Easton Hall	6145	3121	4	2	on	6" OS	Newport	N		N		62 NE 1891	1891 rough grazing		
93	Whin Covert later Gibbet Lane Wood	Wereham	N of Wereham	5681	3028	4	2	on	6" OS	Beccles	Y		Y		69 NE 1892	1892 & 1929 rough grazing/mixed woodland		
94	Broom Covert	Cockley Cley	E of CC	5815	3048	9	4	not	6" OS	Newport	N		N		71 NW 1889	1889 mixed wood		
95	Broom Covert now Forehoe Big Wood	Carleton Forehoe	N Kimb Pk	6078	3055	4	4	on	6" OS	Burlingham	Y		Y		74 NW 1891	1891 sparse woodland		
96	Whinhill Covert	Sandringham		5665	3291	10	3	on	OS	Newport	N		N		22 NE			
97	Fox covert	Hargham	NW Hargh Hall	6013	2929	2	1	on	6" OS	Newport	N		N		95 NW 1887	1887 whin/rq/wood		
98	Old Covert	Walsingham	w Little Wals	5920	3365	2	1	on	6" OS	Newmarket	Y		Y		16 NE 1891			
99	Short Whins	S Creake	SW Waterden	5873	3349	2	2	on	6" OS	Barrow	Y		Y		16 NW	1891 gorse		Y wood
100	The Gorse	S Creake	adj 99	5880	3349	2.5	2	on	6" OS	Barrow	Y		Y		16 NW	1891 gorse		Y wood

## Appendix 2 - Shropshire Fox coverts

Name	location	Atlas p	OS ref	OS ref	size ha	Category	Parish boundary	present Baugh 1808	present on 1st Ed OS 1"	1":1 mile no and date	6":1mile date	land use	notes 6": 1 mile
The Gorse	N of Woore	5	373200	344000	3	2	1	N	Y scrub/gorse?	73 1833		1881	gorse r grazing
New Gorse Covert	NE Penley	11	342400	355200	1.5	2	1	N	N			1888	wood mix
Black Covert	N Adderley Park	18	365400	340200	1	4	3	Y	N			1891	wood decid
Fox covert	E Adderley	19	367700	340600	0.5	1	3	N	N			1891	scrub r grazing
Golling's Rough	E Adderley	19	367700	340100	4	3	2	N	Y			1892	wood mix
Twin Covert	E Ridgwardine	19	368600	338300	0.5	4	3	N	N			1890	scrub r grazing
Fox covert	NW Dorrington	21	372100	341400	0.5	1	3	N	N			1892	wood mix
Gamebuck Rough	W Coptivney	27	340700	337100	2	3	3	N	N			1875	wood mix r grazing
Round Covert	W Prees Higher Heath	32	355700	335300	0.5	4	3	near Twemlows/ Matson	N			1888	r grazing trees
Moss Covert	W Prees Higher Heath	32	354600	335400	0.5	4	3	N	Y			1888	r grazing trees
Green's Gorse	W Prees Higher Heath	32	355000	335500	0.5	2	3	N	Y woodland	73 1833		1888	wood mix r grazing
Garden Covert	N Mkt Drayton	36	367400	337100	0.5	4	3	N	N			1890	wood mix r grazing
The Gorse	N Mkt Drayton	36	368300	337700	2	2	3	N	N			1880	gorse r grazing
Pool Covert	NE Welsh Frankton	43	336800	333800	2	4	3	N	Y			1874	wood mix
Sherwoods Rough	NE Welsh Frankton	43	337400	333200	1.5	3	3	Y	Y			1890	r grazing trees
Lyneal Gorse	E Lyneal	46	345600	332700	1	2	3	N	N			1890	gorse wood decid
Ashford Covert	E Ashford Grange Farm	50	360100	333900	1.5	4	3	N	Y			1881	wood decid
Sheephill Covert	N Mickley	51	361600	332900	1	4	3	N	Y			1880	r grazing wood decid
Lea Gorse	NW Petton	63	343400	327100	1	2	1	N	N			1881	gorse trees conifer
Old Gorse	N Petton	63	344000	327300	1.5	2	1	Y	N			1889	wood mix
Slean Gorse	E Slean	65	344900	326300	1.5	2	2	N	N			1881	gorse wood mix
Castle Rough	W Moston	67	355500	328400	2	3	1	N	N			1881	wood decid r grazing
Llandu Covert	S Porth-y-Waen	75	325700	323300	0.5	4	3	N	N			1874	wood mix
Cefn Covert	SE Porth-y-Waen	75	326100	323100	1	4	3	Y	N			1875	wood mix
Lord Bradford's Fox Cov	NE Knookin	78	334900	322600	3	1	3	N	Y woodland, little open	74 1837 Gamester's Co		1875	wood mix
Broughton Gorse	NE Bilmars	83	349600	325500	1.5	2	1	N	Y woodland	73 1833		1880	gorse scrub
Birches Gorse	S Yorton Heath	83	350600	322200	1	2	1	N	N			1881	gorse wood mix
Boarpit Rough	S Acton Reynald	84	353300	322600	3	3	3	N	N			1881	wood mix
Hineheath Covert	W Hodnet	87	360200	326000	4	4	2	N	Y			1882	wood mix open
Slades Covert	S Ellerton	90	371600	325300	3	4	1	shooting? Valley	N			1891	wood mix open
Despdate Covert	E Stansford Bridge	90	371500	323600	3	4	1	shooting? valley	N			1891	wood mix open
Moss covert	SW Puleston	91	372900	322100	0.5	4	2	N	N			1891	wood mix open
Puleston Hill Covert	E Puleston	91	374000	322500	2	4	3	N	N			1891	open trees
Whitley Moss Covert	NE Puleston	91	374800	322800	1	4	1	N	N			1891	wood mix
New Covert	SE Kynaston	97	335800	319800	3	4	2	N	N			1889	open trees conifer
Cranmoor Gorse	NW Lower Hopton	97	337100	321900	1.5	2	2	N	N			1881	gorse r grazing
The Rough	SW Grafton	99	342600	318600	1	3	3	N	N			1888	wood conifer open
Pigeon's Rough	SE Preston Gubbals	101	350100	319300	3	3	1	Y	Y			1888	wood mix scrub
Cayton Gorse	N Egmund	108	371000	321200	2.5	2	2	N	N			1891	gorse wood mix
Pool Covert	N Newport	109	373300	318400	1	4	1	N	Y			1891	wood decid
Alder Covert	N Newport	109	374000	320200	1	4	3	N	Y			1891	wood decid
Kendricks Rough	NE Harlescot	114	353100	316600	2	3	1	close Sundorne	Y			1888	scrub
Colin's Rough	E Harlescot	114	353700	316400	3	3	3	close Sundorne	Y			1888	r grazing scrub
Rough Marl	S High Ercall	116	359100	316300	6	3	2	Y	Y			1889	wood mix
Wheelwright Covert	N Telford	118	364500	314500	0.5	4	2	close Apley Castle	N			1890	wood decid
Park Covert	N Telford	118	365600	314300	0.5	4	3	close Apley Castle	N			1890	wood decid
Mantle Covert	N Telford	118	365900	314800	0.5	4	1	close Apley Castle	N			1890	wood decid open
Osierbed Covert	N Donnington	120	370000	317300	0.5	4	3	N	N			1890	scrub wood decid
Strine Covert	N Donnington	120	370500	317800	1	4	1	N	N			1890	wood decid
Gorse Covert	Llleshall Abbey	121	374800	314300	2	2	3	N	N			1890	wood mix
Stockton Roughs	E Chetwynd Aston	122	375800	317600	1	3	2	N	Y			1891	wood decid
Fox covert	Attingham Park	127	355500	310600	1	1	3	adj deer park	Y	Y woodland	61 1833	1881	wood mix
Ravenshaw's Gorse	E Attingham	128	357900	310600	1.5	2	3	close Attingham	Y	Y woodland	61 1833	1881	wood decid
Burcot Gorse	S Wrockwardine	129	362500	311200	2	2	3	N	Y rough grazing	61 1833		1881	wood mix gorse
Charlton Hill Gorse	E Donnington	140	358600	338200	2	2	2	N	N			1889	wood decid
Marmers Covert	W Little Wenlock	142	363500	306800	1	4	3	close Wrekin	N			1889	wood decid
Taggs Rough	E Stafford Park	144	372600	308800	1	3	3	close Telford	N			1889	wood decid
Timlet Covert	E Shifnal	146	377800	307400	2	4	1	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	r grazing wood decid
Staney's Covert	SE Shifnal	146	377800	306200	2	4	1	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	wood mix
Orchard Covert	SE Shifnal	147	378200	306600	1	4	2	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	wood mix
Tong Rough	SE Weston Park	148	382400	308900	4	4	3	close Weston [Bradford]	Y			1889	wood mix r grazing
Ridings Rough	W Leighton	150	360500	305300	1	3	3	Leighton	N			1889	wood mix
Cockshut Rough	E Sheinton	150	361600	304100	3	3	3	close Leighton	Y			1884	wood decid
Oak Rough	SW Buildwas Park Farm	150	362700	303700	3	3	3	close Buildwas Park	Y			1884	r grazing scrub
Kemberton Gorse	SE Kemberton	154	374600	303700	1	2	2	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1887	gorse wood decid
Bresting's Covert	N Hatton Grange	155	375600	305600	1	4	3	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	wood mix
Thick Covert	N Hatton Grange	155	376700	304800	2	4	3	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	wood mix
Railway Covert	NE Hatton Grange	155	377500	305900	1	4	1	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	wood mix
King Edward's Covert	E Hatton Grange	155	377800	304200	4	4	1	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N			1890	wood mix open
Ryton Gorse	SE Hatton Grange	155	377400	303200	2	2	3	close Hatton Grange [Ke	N	Y woodland/rough grazing	61 1833	1890	wood mix r grazing
Fox covert	NW Patshull Hall	156	378400	302200	3	1	1	close Patshull Hall	N	Y woodland	61 1833	1890	wood mix
Pool covert	SE Cosford Grange	156	378900	304400	2	4	3	close Albrington Hunt ke	N			1890	wood decid
Kentley Gorse	SW Harley	158	357600	300600	2	2	3	close Wenlock Edge	N			1884	gorse wood decid
Bagley's Rough	SE Caughley Farm	162	370400	299800	2	3	2	Y	Y			1887	wood mix open
Rous's Covert	NW Patshull Hall	165	378400	301500	4	4	3	close Patshull Hall	Y			1882	wood mix open
Bickley's Rough	NE Patshull Hall	165	380800	301200	3	3	2	close Patshull Hall	Y			1890	wood mix
Eyton Gorse	W Shrawardine	168	338100	314500	0.5	2	3	close Alberbury castle/de	N	Y wood/scrub	60 1836	1889	gorse wood decid
Home Covert	SE Ford	169	343100	312200	1	4	1	N	N			1887	wood mix
Rorrington Hill Covert	SE Rorrington	175	330500	299900	2	4	3	N	N			1887	open land r grazing
Fox covert	NE Longnor	178	349800	301500	2	1	1	close Longnor Deer Park	N	Y woodland	61 1833	1888	wood decid
Bull Rough	E Pitchford	179	354000	304000	2	3	3	close Pitchford Hall	N	Y		1902	wood mix

Appendix 2 Shropshire fox coverts.xls

Golding Rough	E Pitchford	179	354100	304200	3	3	3	close Pitchford Hall	N	Y		1882	wood mix		
Harnage Covert	NE Harnage	179	356800	304900	2	4	2	close Pitchford Hall	N	N		1882	wood mix r grazing		
Churchmoor Rough	NW Woolston	183	341000	288200	4	3	1		N	N		1884	wood decid scrub r grazing		
Roger's Rough	SW Soudley	184	347100	290900	1	3	1		N	Y		1884	wood decid r grazing		
Pitts Rough	S Soudley	184	347500	290300	0.5	3	1		N	N		1884	wood decid r grazing		
Plaiash Gorse	W Plaiash	185	353200	296500	1	2	3	close Plaiash Hall	N	N		1883	field	1927 field; 1953 r grazing trees	
Green's Rough	E Stanway Manor	185	353100	291100	2	3	3	close Wilderhope Manor	N	Y		1883	wood mix r grazing		
Broadstone Rough	SE Stanway Manor	185	353100	291100	0.5	3	3	close Wilderhope Manor	N	Y		1883	r grazing scrub wood decid		
Morehouse Covert	S Brockton	186	357900	292800	1	4	1		N	Y		1883	wood mix open		
Coates Rough (Gorse)	E Stanton Long	186	358800	290500	1.5	2	1		N	Y grassland [enc]	61 1833 Coates Rough	1883	r grazing scrub trees		
Middleton Gorse	N Middleton Priors	186	361800	291400	3	2	3		N	Y wood/rough grazing/s	61 1833 Middleton Cop	1883	wood mix		
Netchwood Gorse	N Lower Netchwood	186	362400	292000	3	2	2		N	N		1883	r grazing wood mix		
Spoon Hill Rough	N Monkhopton	186	362600	295000	0.5	3	3		Y	Y		1883	r grazing trees		
Lightwood Covert	E Middleton Priors	187	363900	291000	4	4	3		N	Y		1883	wood mix		
Oxleasow Rough	N Morville	187	367400	295200	1	3	3	close Aldenham Hall	N	N		1883	wood mix	adj r grazing	
Harswood Rough	N The Down	187	368400	291100	2	3	1		N	N		1883	wood mix		
Westwood Covert	W Eardington	188	370200	290700	3	4	1	close Wheatland Hunt ke	N	Y		1883	r grazing wood mix		
Frogmill Covert	N Nordley	188	369600	297700	3	4	1	close Albynes Frances F	N	Y		1883	wood mix		
Morfe Covert	W Farmcote	189	376900	292800	2	4	3		N	N		1883	wood mix		
Morfe Valley Covert	SW Farmcote	189	376900	291800	1	4	3		N	Y		1883	wood mix		
Spring Gorse	S Farmcote	189	378100	290100	2	2	3		N	N		1883	wood mix		
Park Gorse	W Kempton	194	334800	283000	3	2	3		Y	N		1884	wood mix r grazing		
Bache Rough	S Upper Dinchope	196	346400	282200	1	3	3		N	N		1884	wood mix r grazing		
Park Rough	W Cullingington	196	347800	282100	1	3	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix r grazing	1903 mix wood	
Milton's Rough	N Earnstrey Hall	198	357100	286700	1	3	1		N	Y		1883	wood decid r grazing		
Vear's Rough	W Dilton Priors	198	359600	286900	2	3	3	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1891	r grazing scrub		
Broom Covert	W Cleobury North	198	361300	286900	1	4	3	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1884	wood mix		
Home Covert	SW Cleobury North	198	361500	286300	1.5	4	3	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1884	wood mix		
Castle Covert	SW Burwarton	198	359800	284600	3	4	3	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1884	wood mix		
Banbury Covert	SW Burwarton	198	360100	284100	1	4	1	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1884	wood mix	adj r grazing	
Upper Wallemoore Cove	SW Burwarton	198	360500	284300	3	4	3	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1884	wood mix	adj r grazing	
Wheathill Covert	E Wheathill	198	362400	282500	0.5	4	1	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	Y		1884	wood decid		
Fox covert	E Wheathill	198	362800	282400	0.5	1	1	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	Y wood/rough grazing	61 1833	1884	field	1903 r grazing,	
Aston Gorse	S Aston Botterell	199	363500	283400	2	2	3	close Burwarton - Boyne	N	N		1884	field	1954 wood mixed; 1973 wood conifer	
Dairy Rough	SE Neenton	199	365200	287200	4	3	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix		
Walkerlow Rough	SE Wrickton	199	365600	285800	3	3	3		N	N		1884	wood mix		
Wall Furlong Rough	NW Stottesdon	199	366100	284500	2	3	3		N	Y		1884	wood decid r grazing		
Highlands Rough	SW Sidbury	199	367500	284500	2	3	2		N	N		1884	field	1903 r grazing; 1954 wood decid	
Chorley Covert	NE Chorley	200	370200	283800	3	4	3		N	N		1884	wood decid r grazing		
Upper Cowslow covert	E Chorley	200	370900	283200	1	4	3		N	N		1884	field	1954 wood decid	
Radner's Covert	S Sutton	200	372000	285800	0.5	4	3		N	N		1884	r grazing wood mix		
Long Covert	S Dudmaston Hall	200	374800	287400	3	4	3	Dudmaston	Y	Y		1884	wood decid		
Witheridge's Rough	E Quatt	201	376200	288000	1	3	1	Dudmaston	N	Y		1883	wood mix		
The Rough	S Tuck Hill	201	378000	287600	4	3	3	Dudmaston	N	N		1883	wood decid r grazing		
Keeper's Covert	SE Quatt	201	378300	286900	2	4	3	Dudmaston	N	N		1884	wood decid	adj 'pheasantry'	
Thomas Covert	SE Tuckhill	201	379200	287100	1	4	1	Dudmaston	N	N		1884	field	1903 fox covert wood mix	
Jubilee Covert	E Hopton Cangford	207	355300	280000	4	4	3	Downham Rouse Bough	N	N		1884	field	1903 wood conifer	
Square Covert	N Cleestanton	208	357100	280900	1	4	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix		
Newton Rough	N Cleestanton	208	357800	281600	0.5	3	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix		
Bromdon Rough	W Bromdon	208	359400	280500	1	3	3		N	N		1884	wood mix		
Green Covert	N Bromdon	208	360900	281900	0.5	4	2		N	N		1884	wood mix		
Little Ashbed Covert	E Bitterley	208	358200	277800	0.5	4	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix		
Gorstley Rough	E Knowbury	208	358800	274900	2	3	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix		
Rabbithouse Covert	E Cleeton St Mary	208	362800	278900	2	4	3		N	Y		1884	wood mix		
Major's Rough	NE Hopton Wafers	209	365400	277000	0.5	3	1		N	N		1884	wood mix	surrounded by r grazing	
Southwood Covert	S Cleobury Mortimer	209	366500	274100	2	4	3		Y	N		1884	scrub wood decid r grazing		
Home Covert	E Batchcott	212	350400	271800	1	4	3	Moor Park - Salwey fami	N	N		1884	wood mix		
Lodge Covert	E Batchcott	212	350700	271400	0.5	4	3	Moor Park - Salwey fami	N	N		1884	wood mix		
Wheatcommon Covert	E Batchcott	212	350500	271000	0.5	4	3	Moor Park - Salwey fami	Y	N		1884	wood mix		
Burnhouse Covert	E Batchcott	212	350300	270600	2	4	3	Moor Park - Salwey fami	N	N		1884	wood mix		
Mitnell Covert	E Batchcott	212	350100	270200	1.5	4	3	Moor Park - Salwey fami	N	N		1884	field	1904 wood conifer	
Oak Covert	S Ashford Carbonell	213	352600	269500	0.5	4	3		N	Y		1883	wood mix		
Home Covert	SW Caynham	213	354500	272300	0.5	4	3	Ludlow Hunt Kennels	N	N		1885	wood mix		
Dirtybridge Covert	N Neen Sollars	215	366500	273900	1	4	3		N	N		1884	wood mix		