



Sandhurst, Berks.

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(Continued from page 25, Vol. 20.)

CHAPTER III.

THE FOREST.

From the Conquest to the year 1813 Sandhurst had the distinction of being within the bounds of the Royal Forest of Windsor, the Broadforde river (the Blackwater), which marks the southern limit of the parish, being also the Forest boundary. Nearly all the Kings and Queens of England since the time of Edward the Confessor must have followed the chase through our parish at one time or another. Edward III. had a hunting box at Easthampstead, which was frequently occupied by members of the Royal Family up to Elizabeth's reign, and in the sixteenth century a keeper's lodge was established at Bigshotte Rayles, the park of which extended into Sandhurst parish and was well stocked with deer. The long straight rides, now many of them overgrown, which radiate from different points in the neighbourhood, bear witness to the royal interest in hunting. It is said that Queen Anne, when too gouty to mount a horse, used to pursue the stag in her chariot at a furious pace along these forest roads. In later years George the Third was frequently hunting round Sandhurst, and there is a local tradition that on one occasion, having been caught in the rain after following hounds beyond the Blackwater, he sought refuge in Yateley mill.* The miller was a surly old man, and, not recognising the King, refused to have anything to do with him. The situation was saved by the tact of the miller's wife, and the King went home

* There is no longer a mill at Yateley. One of the last of the Yateley millers came somewhat prominently before the public when he emptied the contents of his shot gun into a Wellington big-side paper chase which was crossing his fields.

in the miller's clothes. We hear of King George on another occasion, full of kindness, but terribly fussy, over an accident which befell a certain Mr. Parry in Bigshot Park, "who by his horse falling in the rabbit burrows pitched upon his head and the horse rolling over him so bruised and disfigured him as to render him a dreadful spectacle without the least sign of life." Mr. Taplin, surgeon, of Wokingham, had just joined the chase, and the unfortunate gentleman was at once bled with the happiest results. His Majesty witnessed the operation, and before leaving the field "delivered to Mr. Taplin his repeated injunctions that no one circumstance should be omitted which could in the smallest degree contribute to Mr. Parry's safety and recovery."†

The life of an inmate of the forest in early times was no enviable one. The Conqueror, who "loved the tall stags as though he were their father," regarded the poor inhabitants only as a nuisance, and the ferocity of his game laws has become a byword. But with the thirteenth century came a change. Among the abuses corrected by Magna Charta were those connected with the administration of the royal forests, and the reforms forced on King John were confirmed by his successor. We find, therefore, that in later days life in the forest was not without its compensations. From the beginning private individuals either possessed or acquired land in Windsor Forest. The great religious houses also held property there, as in our case the monastery of Chertsey, which had, besides Sandhurst, several other manors. But the right of ownership was considerably curtailed by the special laws for the preservation of vert and venison. It was contrary to the assize of the forest to put up a building of any kind or a fence without the king's permission, or to cut down a tree or fell a copse. In certain cases, however, enough wood might be allowed for actual expenditure on the estate. In the lease by the Crown to William Braconbury of Sandhurst Manor, in the reign of Henry VIII., it was stipulated that the tenant should be allowed "sufficient hedgebote, ploughbote, cartebote, and fyrebote, at the assignment of the surveyor, to be expended in and upon the premises and nowhere else."

Common rights were also affected by the forest laws. The right of the freeholders to pasture their sheep and cattle all over the waste of the forest was recognised by the Crown in the reign of Edward VI. and successfully maintained in that of Charles I., but this privi-

† "Reading Mercury," Oct. 6th, 1787.

lege was always suspended in the fence month, the fortnight before and after Midsummer Day, which was the close season for the deer. The right seems to have been a very ancient one, and without it the small farmer could not have existed. Before the great enclosure of the forest the inhabitants maintained at but little expense to themselves a small ragged breed of sheep which was raised on the heath. Every year these sheep were driven in large flocks into Buckinghamshire to be folded on the fallows, and when fatted at two or three years they produced the little Bagshot mutton which had a considerable reputation.* The right to cut peat, turf, heather and fern was really confined to the Lord of the Manor, but was at a later period claimed and exercised by the tenants generally. Of browse-wood and rootage mention will be made later. As time went on the administration of the forest laws became very lax. All the rights of common were extended and enclosures and encroachments on the waste were made by private individuals with impunity. As regards the game it would appear that after the forest charter of Henry III., poachers were more leniently dealt with in the forest courts than in the court of an ordinary manor. The first two Stuarts made strenuous efforts to revive the forest laws with something of their old severity. We read, for instance, of a neighbouring squire being fined for erecting a windmill on his estate, "because it frightened the deer and drew company to the disquiet of the game."†

In 1607 Mr. John Norden was ordered to make a survey of the whole forest for James I., and a beautifully executed document, now among the Harleian MSS. at the British Museum, is the result of his labours. Of the fourteen walks into which the forest was divided, Sandhurst walk is one. It is found to correspond roughly to old Sandhurst parish, except that on the west it is bounded by a road leading from Yateley mill to Crowthorne, and passing between Edgbarro and Ambarro hills. The remainder of the parish forms part of Bigshotte Walk. "Crowthorne" is the name of a solitary tree at the junction of Sandhurst, Bigshotte, and Easthampstead Walks. This spot is now called Brooker's Corner. Sir Charles Howard, the keeper of the two Walks, had a lodge which is the present Ravenswood, and a park surrounded by a fence extending over the ground now occupied by the East Berks Golf

* Penny Cyclopædia, "Berkshire."

† Hughes' "History of Sunninghill."

Club. This inclosure was called Bigshotte Rayles. Adjoining the lodge was the residence of the under-keeper, a man named Hankyn.*

There were then in Sandhurst Walk 70 red deer, 32 of antler, and 12 stags. The roads shown are the present road leading out of the great western road near Blackwater through the village and branching at the bottom of the Rectory hill, northwards to the Church, and southwards over the river to Yateley. The road already mentioned from Yateley mill to Crowthorne. A third road from the Church north-east over Long Down and Rush Hills just south of Windmill Stem to join one connecting Easthampstead and Frimley and crossing the north-east corner of the parish. The following places are shown either in or on the boundary of the parish:—Amboro Hill, Beech Hills (the Ridges), Blackwater, Crowthorne, East Mill Forde, Edgeboro Hill, Gravell Hill, Hurt Hedges, Kit Holes Bottom, Lodg Hills (Broadmoor), Long Down, Perry Moor Cops (near East Mill Ford), Queenstanding Hill (near the present site of the R.M.C.), Rush Hills, Shelbred Hills, Smallbrook Moore, Vylemoor, Whitemoore Wood, Windmill Stem, Wishmore Stream, Woodley Corner (where the last joins the Blackwater), Yateley Mill. "Other places of note and name there are," he writes, "within euerie walke no doubte, whereof of meere igronance or wilful negligence the keepers coulde not informe me more than in this table is observed. There is contention betwene euerie neighbour keeper for the most parte for usurpation and intruding one into another's walkes, for not one of them trulie knoweth his owne boundes."

There is a large collection of Swainmote Court Rolls about this period in the Public Record Office, including several for Finchampstead bailiwick. Offences against the forest laws were dealt with at a special Assize held by the Justices in Eyre for the forest, or at Inquisitions held by the local officers under their direction. The Swainmote was an inferior Court held three or four times in the year in different bailiwicks in turn, to which all the freeholders owed service. Two forest officials called the Verderers presided, and received,

* From this name the house no doubt acquired the name of Hannican's Lodge, by which it was known in later years. The post of under-keeper remained long in the family. In the Treasury Accounts for 1736-7, on March 23rd Robert Hannington, formerly under-keeper of Bigshotte Rayles, Augustine Hannington, sen., same of Sandhurst Walk, and Augustine Hannington, jun., same of Easthampstead Walk and vermin-killer, were allowed £44 19s. 9½d. arrears of salary from 1713, Dec. 17th to Aug. 1st, on salaries as such under Queen Anne. A Robert Hannington, described as the "antient keeper of Bigshotte Lodge," had been buried at Finchampstead in 1727.

investigated, and recorded the presentments made by the foresters, woodwards, and tithingmen of the different villages for the information of the Justices at the next Eyre.† The Courts for Finchampstead bailiwick were held at Wokingham, and from the court rolls the names of a large number of officials and inhabitants of the neighbourhood can be obtained. On September 29th, 1586, for example, those present were the Verderers, Richard Lovelace and Thomas Bullocke, Esqrs., Sir Henry Nevile, the Riding Forester of the whole forest, a representative of the Earl of Leicester as Constable of Windsor and Chief Forester of the bailiwick, John Atrith, Thomas Cheslake and Francis Broughton, Sub-Foresters in Bigshotte, Sandhurst and Easthampstead Walks respectively, Humphrey Staverton and Thomas Bullocke, the Keepers of Easthampstead and Bearwood Walks, the Woodwards of Bearwood, Farley Moor and Finchampstead Woods, the Regarders, fourteen in number, selected from the neighbouring gentry, representatives of Wokingham with Yenyndon, Finchampstead, Easthampstead, Sandhurst, Barkham, Newland, and Swallowfield with Farley Hill, and sixteen jurors, who testified on oath to the truth of the presentments made. The proceedings of the Court included, besides the registration of vert offences against the assize of the forest, a kind of inquest on any deer found dead since the last Court, and on the mode of disposal of the bodies; heath or timber burnt; and dilapidations in the various walks in the bailiwick. The following are a few extracts from the original presentments attached to the Court Rolls:—

1586. "We do psent Est Mill bridge both for carte and horse and that Grene Mill bridge is a bridge for horse and are bothe in defaulte all within the Queen's Majestie's payle as fare as we can fynde. All thyngs else is well to owre knowledge within our charge. Sept. the sixth 1586."

WILLIAM COXE, Tithyngman of Sandhurst.	
RAFE BULLOCK,	
THOS. ALEXANDER,	} Sydemen.
WILL. GIBLET,	

The Regarder's presentment.

"Item one hynd calf recorded by Francis Broughton Keeper of Byg-

† The minor forest courts were properly the swainmote court held three times a year, and the attachment court held every 40 days. Though of a different origin, the swainmote of these times was practically the same as the attachment court, and the two terms were used interchangeably. In the matter of venison trespass the lesser courts had originally no jurisdiction, though in later times pledges were often taken for the appearance of the trespassers at the next eyre. They were mainly concerned with "vert" offences. (See Cox: "The Royal Forests of England." Turner: "Select Pleas of the Forest.")

shot Walk in the Bayliwick of Finchampstead the 23rd of June and had his shoulder broken. How it was bestowed we know not.

"Item one hynd found dead in Sandhurst in Thomas Cheslake's Walke in August last without any wound that could be seen and the flesh stank that no body could abyde it." ("Rare putrida erat," as the clerk described it).

1589. Do.

Item a pcell. of heath contayning c acres betwene Wickham Bushes in the parish of Easthampstead and Hurt Hegges Sandhurst burned in April last, by whom we knowe not.

1607. Do.

Item we present iij coppes in Sandhurst felled by Richard Geale and John Geale called Hall Grove, Perry Moor, and HARRISSE MOOR by estimation xxx acres by what warrant we knowe not.

1608. The presentment of William Smith, under-keeper in Sandhurst Walk.

Item one stagge which died the xxiiith of June and found by the keeper and viewed by Humphrey Taylor one of the Regarders and others but noe hurt that could be founde upon him.

Item that on Saturday the xvith of this instant September there was one stag killed in Sandhurst Walke by vertue of the Justices in Oyer's warrant.

Item I doe present Martin Shonke for driving and fetching his cattell dwelling in Hampshire to the great disturbance of his Ma^{tie}'s game there within the Forest.

Item I present Thos. Gye for taking in one peece of his Ma^{tie}'s waste making a brick* clamme there within the same to the annoyance of his Ma^{tie}'s game there, by what authority I know not.

by me WILLIAM SMITH.

1627. The Tithyngman and Sideman's presentment at the Swainmote Court held at Oakingham the xixth day of Sept. 1627.

"In primis" we present a barne newe erected by John Deane of Sandhurst upon the waste, by what authority we know not.

Item we present that there is no pound within our parish to put any waifs and straies in or to put any cattell which should do trespass to any neighbours, and for any other thinge concerninge our charge all is well for ought we know.

JOHN Y. CLARKE tithyngman.

JOHN A ATRITHE sideman.

1654. The Regarder's presentment.

"Item we present Steven Heathe for cuttinge of turves after the feast of S. Jeames' daie in the parish of Sandhurst who hath been forbid bi the keeper and took awaie his iorn, yet notwithstanding he procured other iorns and wolde not give over cuttinge."

[In this year the neighbouring parishes of Wokingham and Finchampstead built poor houses on the waste.]

* Brick burning in open clamps frequently gives rise to a nuisance. The green bricks are mixed with a small proportion of ashes or other débris, such as household refuse, and arranged in layers alternating with breeze so as to form a pile. The breeze is then set alight by small coal or wood fires, and the products of combustion are extremely noxious.

1633. " Wee do present William Chambers dwelling in Sandhurst for cutting of trees and selling them to the town of Wokingham contrary to the assize of the forest."

[At the same Court a number of inhabitants of Wokingham were presented for keeping mastiffs. This was forbidden by the forest law unless they were "lawed," that is, deprived of the three claws of the fore feet, in order to prevent them chasing game.]

The wild nature of our forest country not unnaturally had its influence on the character of its inhabitants, and Sandhurst Common formed a convenient refuge for highwaymen and outlaws of every description. During the seventeenth century the names of Duval, Old Mobb, Captain Stafford, Whitney the Butcher, the Golden Farmer, and many others now forgotten were familiar in the neighbourhood.* Close to our borders, near Wishmore Cross, a little mound now marks the site of a gibbett where some unfortunate person doubtless hung in chains in past days.† Perhaps it was one of the Wokingham Blacks, four of whom were executed in various parts of the forest in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. This band, at first a local society for poaching the King's deer, resorted later to outrages of a more serious description, including housebreaking and even murder. By the year 1722 they had become a dangerous gang of criminals, terrorizing the neighbourhood and levying blackmail on the farmers, apparently with complete immunity. When, however, emboldened by their success, they started reprisals on the Earl of Arran and Sir John Cope, two of the magistrates who had annoyed them, even the forest officials began to think that something ought to be done.

The Keeper of Bigshot and Sandhurst Walks at this time was Colonel Negus, a soldier who had done good service under Marlborough and had retired to take up several Court appointments and become a Member of Parliament. He was, however, best known to posterity as the inventor of a once popular beverage. The lodge at Bigshot Rails being in a bad state of repair he had taken up his residence in London, and from this strategical position he issued his orders. It seems, however, to have been chiefly due to a subordinate official called Baptist Nunn that the final capture and conviction of the gang was effected. When the latter rendered his account of expenses extending over a period of eighteen months it

* For an account of their exploits see Alexander Smith, "A History of the Most Noted Highwaymen." Also Berks Arch. Journal, vol. 15, p. 116. But the old histories are vague and not very reliable. There is a good account of Duval in the Dict. of Nat. Biog.

† The place is marked "Upper Star Post" in the 6in. O.M.

was in the form of a diary of some fourteen pages containing a detailed account of the dangers and difficulties he experienced, the first at the hands of the Blacks, the second from the dilatoriness of the authorities at headquarters.†

† Treasury Papers, v. ccxlv., No. 63. P.R.O.

(*To be continued.*)

Early Berkshire Wills, from the P.C.C., ante 1558.

(*Continued from Vol. 7, page 30.*)

Transcribed by Mr. Tudor Sherwood.

171.

The Will of WILLIAM COLLEY thelder of Burwescotte.—17 Oct., 1552. I bequeathe to every of my sonnes and doughters by my first wief (except John and Robert) ten shepe, and to eyther of the said John and Robert I give thirtie shepe. I give unto George my sonne one hundreth pounds. Unto Annes and Joane my doughters by Katheryn my wief to every of them fyftie poundes at 21 or marriage. Unto Robert Hardyng my shepperde of lynte and to Willym Sturte sundry bequests. I bequeath unto Katheryn my wief my lease of the Manor of Burwescotte held of Thomas Bekyngham Esquire, deceased. Wife Katheryn sole executrix. Alexander Phetiplace, John Yate, Thobye Pleydell and Thomas Stephyns, gent., overseers. To John Haywarde my sonne-in-lawe two kyne.

Witnesses, Henry Wynman, John Rodlay, curat ther, Willyam Brodnam, Symon Blagrove, William Elys, Thomas Gerynge, John Colley, Robert Colley, Willyam Davis, John Davis, John Grene, John Clifton, Thomas Edmunds, Willyam Sturte, John Yate, Thobye Pleydell, Edward Snodman, John Heywarde.

Proved 9 July, 1553, by Edward Snodnam, attorney, for the executrix. (15, Tashe.)

172.

The Will of WILLIAM COLYN of Newbury, fuller.—14 March, 1459. To Katherine my wife my house in Newbury, &c. To