

# THE CHASE OF HAMPTON COURT

BY

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UNPUBLISHED fencing accounts among the Loseley MSS.<sup>†</sup> at Guildford Muniment Room have been used in the compilation of the following notes.

A short account of the Chase is in the *Victoria County History of Middlesex*, Vol. II, p. 323. The Chase was entirely in Surrey, but from Marlow in Buckinghamshire and Water Oakley near Bray in Berkshire much fencing timber was taken to Ditton Mead and Weybridge. The Act creating the Honour of Hampton Court (of which the Chase formed a part) has been printed twice. It is convenient to quote it from *The Statutes of the Realm* (1817), Vol. III, p. 721:—

A.D. 1539. 31 Hen. VIII. c. 5. Chapter V. An Acte wherby the Manor of Hampton Courte is made an Honour.

Forasmuche as it hath pleased the Kinge our moste excellent and most dread Sovereigne Lorde of late to erecte buylde and make a goodlie sumptuous beautifull and princelie Mannor, decent and convenient for a Kinge

he has

assigned and lymitted a certain territory or groundes for a chace thereof to be made for norisshinge generacion and feeding of beasts of venery and fowles of Warren, And for furniture and perfection therof, the Kinge's Majestie by Indenture made betwene his Grace on the one parte, and Sir Richard Page Knight, Thomas Hennage Esquier, John Carleton, John Agmondesham, Thomas A Dcwyne Gentilmen, Robert Alcetour, Robert Hamond, and divers other honest and substanciall men named in the said Indenture . . . for and in the name of all the free tenantes havinge anye estate of inheritaunce, and in the name of all custumarie tenantes havinge anye estate of inheritaunce by custome of and in anye landes or tenements within the Lordshippes Mannors Townes and Villages of Estmulsey West Mulsey Walton Essher Weybridge and parte of Cobham, and other parishes villages and hameletts whatsoever they be within the lymitts of the Chace that is named to be called Hampton Courte Chace, of thother parte; Witnesseth, That whereas our saide Sovereigne Lorde the Kinge hath of late erected builded and made within the Countie of Middlesex a goodly sumptuous House beautifull and princely Manour mete and convenient for a Kinge, and the same endowed with Parkes, Orchards Gardeyns and other great commodities and pleasures thereunto adjoynnye and belonginge, and his Grace intending the prosperous contynuaunce and preservacion aswell of his most royale parson as for the furnyshinge of the manoure with the manyfolde things of pleasure for the disporte pastyme comforte and consolacion of his Highnes his heires and successors; His Graces pleasure is to erecte and make a Chace aboute the said manour for thencease of Venery and Fowle of Warren, which Chace shalbe called Hampton Courte Chace, and that the saide Lordshippes Manours Townes and Villages of Est Mulsey West Mulsey Walton Essher Weybridge and parte of the Towne or Village of Cobham in the Countie of Surrie, and all lands tenements meadowes leasues woods and pastures lienge and beinge within the lymitts

<sup>†</sup> Loseley MSS. 718, 719, 721.

metes and bounds hereafter declared, shalbe had reputed and taken within the saide Chace, and to be parcell therof to all intentes and purposes, which metes and boundes are lyमित appoynted and doe extend as followethe, That is to witte; Att and from the Themmys side on the southe side of the Manour of Hampton Courte directlie as the Pale shalbe newlie erected made and sett to Cobham and so forth, as the Pale shall lead and be sett aboute Cobham Parke pale of Byslett Parke and from thence followinge the same pale to the water of Wey, and so forth by the south side of the river of Wey and the river of Themmes unto the firste commensment and beginninge of the saide Pale.

Forest law was to prevail in the Chase. Freeholders might cut down timber without licence, and could

make the hedges and fences aboute their corne growinge upon their owne groundes . . . at their owne will and pleasure, to kepe out the Dere . . . duringe all suche tyme onely as the Corne shall growe upon the same groundes, . . . and after every suche tyme as the Corne shalbe severed and carried away, it shalbe lawfull to the Officers of the said Chace to make Dere lepes and brekes in the said hedges and fences, for and to thentent that the Dere may have course and recourse into the groundes where the Corne was sowed, for their feedinge, duringe all such tyme as the same landes shalbe and remayne unsowed; And in consideracion therof

the officers of the Chase shall at every yearly payment

defalke allowe and deducte the thirde parte of the fre rent that everie freholder ought to pay.

Every copyholder was to pay half the usual fine on inheriting.

The principal accounts are in six monthly books and a summary roll. Anticipating the Act, they extend from Sunday 17 September 1537 to 10 March 1538. Control was by the Court of Augmentations through Thomas Carden, later to become Master of the Revels and recipient of a knighthood.<sup>2</sup>

The timber for the pale appears to have been already royal property, with payments for felling and quartering but none to sellers of trees. Up-river sources of supply were the King's Wood at Great Marlow, suppressed lands at Mynchyng Marlow and hedgerows there, suppressed lands at Medmenham, the Queen's Wood called Altwood and hedgerows there, Bray Wood, Bray Yath or Aytthe, and Hasell and Hadnest (perhaps Great Hazes at Binfield). Carriers to the waterside included Thomas Ball of Warfield, John Noke of Tothend (Touchen-end), Thomas Noke of Shottesbrook, and Thomas Palmer of Wokingham. Transport down the Thames started at Water Ottley (Water Oakley), near Bray, and at Marlow. The wharfage charge at Marlow was a halfpenny a load, and the charge of the bargemen from there was 23s.4d. the 'fare' 'to ditton mede ayent Hampton Courte there begynnyng to pale.'

In Surrey timber appears to have been cut and carried, all at 2d. a mile, from Ashted Common; Barwell at Chessington; Chessington Park (to Fairmile and Cobham); Bisley; Bookham Common (to Cobham Park and Common, Chargate Hill, Sandown, and Wintersdown); the Nockett, at Eastwick Park, Bookham (to Sandown); Brownsdown otherwise Homesbush (to Cobham Fold); Cannon Court at Fetcham (to Chargate); Claygate Common (to

<sup>2</sup> *Sy.A.C.*, XXVIII (1915), 7-28.

Westoh, Fairmile, and Wintersdown); Cobham Park and Common (to Fairmile, Chargate, Sandown, and Esher); Ditton and Ditton Hall (to Weston Common); Dorking (to Hamsgate); Durrans, probably Durdans at Epsom (to Homesbush, Cobham, and Bookham); Epsom Park and Common (to Fairmile and Chargate); Effingham, the Princes Hold (to Wisley); Fairmile Common; Ganghill, near Guildford (to Pyrford); Horsley Common; the Bishop of London's wood called Kingswood, probably at Stoke-by-Guildford (to Wintersdown); Leatherhead Common (to Chargate); Mickleham (to Wintersdown); Northwood within the Chase; Southwood within the Chase, in Walton-on-Thames (to Sandown); Court Ockham (to Ockham Park); Stokesheath, near Oxshott (to Fairmile and Cobham Fold and Heath); Stoke Woods; Weston; Wormsten, perhaps Worplesdon.

Chargate Hill was probably near Clarendon, but the site of Hamsgate appears to be as yet unknown. Brownsdown, otherwise Homesbush, seems to have been Birdshill at Oxshott, since 'Homesbush' and a little representation of a tree appear on 'Birdshill' in Nicholas Lane's plan of Oxdownes made in 1618, and now at Croydon Library. Since hollies are long-lived the tree could just possibly be the one the Ordnance Surveyors used as a landmark in 1800.<sup>3</sup> Cobham Fold is probably the 'fauldagium' mentioned in Ralph Agas's survey of Cobham, dated 1598, now in Guildford Muniment Room. It then belonged to Francis Gavell who 'habet in manibus unum le Shepescourse super le Heathe,' i.e. on Fairmile Common.

At Ganghill, Horsley, Bisley, Wormsten, and Effingham 622 loads of timber were 'spoiled' into post, pale, rail, and shore, at 2d. the load. In another part of the accounts we read of cleaving and auger holing the posts, and double mortising them for double rails to rest in. The rails were bored with auger holes ready for palers to fasten and pin with the pale. There was double shoring (outside and inside), and earth was set against the posts to strengthen them. This was after furze and brushwood had been cut down, and the ground had been 'planed' where the pale was to stand. On the front or outside of the pale was a dry ditch, some of it 5½ feet broad and 4 feet deep, and other parts 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep. From Wintersdown (on the Esher-Cobham parish boundary) to Fairmile Gate the space between the fence and the ditch was planted with 932 quicksets, and acorns and haws were put in. There was felling and laying of bushes to safeguard the quicksets. There were six 'sawtres' or deerleaps in the fence, three between Esher and Redhill, and three between the south-west corner of Byfleet Park pale and the south-east corner of Woking Park pale. They were made with poles, posts, pale, rail, and shore, and were filled with earth and sand. Presumably deer might jump from outside the pale over a low length of fence into a sunk area of soft ground, the same arrangement preventing deer from escaping out of the Chase. There

<sup>3</sup> *Sv.A.C.*, LVIII (1961), 77.

were also gates for horses and carts to pass through, 29 being made by task at various prices at a total cost of £3 8s.8d. Seven old gates were repaired with three loads of posts, and pales were also made to fasten to gates. A postern gate was made in Cobham Fold, and another at Black Hill into Byfleet Park. There were also stiles in the pale for passage of men through the Chase.

Special problems arose where water met the pale. Opposite Hampton Court some pale 'floty'd awaye' by a 'flud' was brought back again, and John Webster conveyed two loads of short pale from Stoke Wood to Ditton Mead for water to void under. There was new posting and railing with three rails beneath. The pale must have crossed the Mole below Downside Mill, first the river proper, and then the millstream. Richard Sutton carried six loads of timber from Cobham Common to the waterwork at Cobham Park at 5d. a load. Water workers were paid £7 11s.6d. for driving piles at Christmas time into Cobham River for keeping the deer out of the same, and also for making two foot bridges upon the same. Repairing a boat that was broken in the water work cost 3s. 4d., and a rope broken there cost 8d. There is also mention of 30 rods of pole, post, rail, and shore waterwork in the mead from against Wisley, no doubt Townslow Meadow opposite Wisley Gardens.

The Clerk Maker of the Works, or Clerk Keeper of all the reckoning and maker of the books for his wages, was William Johnson who received 6d. a day. The purveyors were Edmond Jaques at 6d. a day, and Thomas Spenser (later Thomas Spong) who got 2d. extra for his horse. They had to provide carts for bringing in pale timber, and had to see them laden. They also had to provide workmen when need required. There were tailors of carriage at 4d. a day for taling the loads of timber coming in, and for overseeing the palers at work. The usual rate was 5d. a day for ditchers and fellers, and 4d. a day for quicksetters and diggers and borers of holes. There is mention of carriage of 16 loads of heath and furze for making a way for carts to pass on with pale timber. Various payments of 1s. a day are for carts following the palers out of Ditton Mead, and one is to 'Robert A Downes for carriage of pale tymber with his cartt xxij dayes from the water syd alongst after where palers shall work redy for them.' This is probably the Robert Adown of Cobham who supplied timber for Nonsuch.<sup>4</sup> Cobham Park (Downside Common), Bookham Common, Epsom Common, Ashtead, Chessington, Ditton, and Southwood all supplied timber for Nonsuch as well as the Chase.

The total cost was £644 18s.10½d. Surplus pale board was sent to Otlands, 140 loads, and to Esher, 48 loads.

The exact route of this ephemeral fence is difficult to determine. From its beginning opposite Hampton Court it probably passed near the site of Claremont, then across Fairmile Common to the Mole below Ashford near Cobham station. It would have touched the original Cobham Park and have crossed the Wey above Wisley church to join up with the south-west corner of Byfleet Park. Then

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<sup>4</sup> J. Dent, *The Quest for Nonsuch*, 1962, p. 275.

connection was made with the south-east corner of Woking Park. On the other side of Byfleet were Oatlands and the Thames.

Another set of accounts (Loseley MS. 707), from Midsummer 1537 to Michelmas 1539, deals with the half-dozen or so keepers and pale-walkers who were under the control of Thomas Carden at Oatlands. The keepers received 4d. a day, and the palewalkers, who had to knock up pales, got only 1d. In the first year they received 18 yards of green 'fryesado' at 2s. 6d. a yard for their summer livery, and in addition William Rygbe was rewarded with 3s. 4d. towards making him a 'Fryes Coett.' Another reward was paid to two poor men of Shepperton who returned a 'broket', a hart of the third year, 'whych bracke owet of the chaes'. Two red deer were brought to Oatlands from Charterhouse in London at a cost of 6s. 8d. Six quarters of acorns were bought for the deer, and sowings of great and small oats, peas, and tares were made at spots such as Cobham Park, Redhill, Hersham, and Norwood, at which latter place was made a gated enclosure with 94 rods of ditch five feet in breadth.

The above is something of what the Loseley MSS. tell us, to which may be added the following notes.

On 14 December 1538 Sir Francis Bryan was paid £33 6s. 8d. 'for taking of 120 quick deer, and 80 quick deer of antelere, within his Highness' chase of Alice Holt, and for conveying them to his park of Asshere towards the replenishing of the same, after the rate of 3s. 4d. a piece.'<sup>5</sup>

On 13 April 1545 the following proclamation was issued:

Whereas our most dread Sovereigne Lord the Kinges Majesty is readily informed that a good number of his Redd Deere, bredd in his Chase of Hampton Court, and alsoe certaine Fallow deere of his parkes thereabout be strayed abroad and lye at this present in his graces Woods and bushes, betweene London and Chobham, and specially at or about a place called Combe parke, between London and Kingston upon Thames; his majestie much desiring to have the same Deere preserved and kept for his owne disport and pastime, doth straightlie charge and Comaund all and singular his subjects of what state or degree soever they be, that they nor any of them do in any wise chase hunt or kill any deere lying abroad in any place betweene London and Chobham aforesaid, but suffer the same deere either to remayne for his graces owne pastime, or to returne to his said Chase and parkes againe, at their liberteis, upon paine of ymprisonment of their bodies and further to be punished at his graces will and pleasure.<sup>6</sup>

A successful petition for removal of the fence was made after the death of Henry VIII,<sup>7</sup> but the *Victoria County History* warns us that the area formerly enclosed is 'still technically a royal chase, and the paramount authority over all game within its limits is vested in the Crown.'

<sup>5</sup> B.M. Arundel MS., No. 97, f. 48d.

<sup>6</sup> B.M. Harl. MS., No. 442, f. 217d; *Soc. of Ants., Procl.* II, 149. The latter has *Cobham* for *Chobham*.

<sup>7</sup> *Sy.A.C.*, LVIII (1961), 69-70.