

J Charles Cox
The Royal Forests of England

p. 98

THE forests of Lancashire, which were at one time very considerable, were chiefly situated in the high region on the east side of the county. In their earlier history they may be divided into two portions, namely, those in the ancient house of Lancaster, which were subject soon after the Conquest to Roger de Poitou ; and those in the great fee of Clitheroe, subject at the same time to the family of Lacy. After the marriage of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, with Alice de Lacy in 1310, all the forests of the county came under the one head of Foresta de Lancaster, and pertained to the earldom, and afterwards to the Duchy of Lancaster. But quite a century before this date all the various forests were frequently described under the common denominator of the county town. The more important forests were within the hundred of Lonsdale; those of Wyersdale, Quernmoor, Bleasdale, Myerscough, and Fulwood were all within the very extensive ancient parish of Lancaster, though the last three were in the hundred jurisdiction of Amounderness. In the hundred of Blackburn was the great forest of Blackburnshire, of which Rossendale, Bowland, Pendle, and Trawden were the subdivisions. In the hundred of West Derby was the forest of that name, often termed Derbyshire, with the parks of Croxteth and Toxteth.

p.99

In the first year of King John, Benedict Gernet held the serjeanty of the forest of the whole county, for which he rendered an annual payment of £26 13s. 4d.

pp. 104-6.

The accounts of Henry de Hoghton, master forester of Blackburnshire, for 1423, are extant. They show under Penhull (Pendle) that no business was transacted that year at the woodmote, held at Clitheroe ; that the court perquisites from the woodmotes held at Ightenhill (otherwise Bromley) amounted to 12s. 2d.; that turf, stone and herbage were farmed at a rental of 26s. 8d.; and that 14s. 10d. was received for escape of beasts. Under Rossendale, 7s. 7d. was received in woodmote perquisites held at Accrington, and 5s. 1d. for per-quisites of halmotes held at the same place. The woodmotes for Trowden were held at Colne, and other woodmotes were held at Totyngton. The total receipts of the master forester were £7 1s. 11d. The expenses, which were chiefly foresters' wages, amounted to £6 2s. 2d., leaving a balance for the Crown of 19s. 9d.

In the same year, the collectors of Blackburnshire accounted for the receipt of £130 15s. 10½ d. from farm rents, herbage, etc., in Pendle; £14 12s. 2d. from Rossendale; £23 13s. 5d. from Trowden; £18 5s. 4d. from Totyngton ; and £7 12s.

from Hodleston. The total receipts amounted to £263 16s. 7¾ d.

Henry de Hoghton made separate returns as master forester of Bowland, entered under Harrop, Daxsholt, and Chipping wards, in each of which woodmotes were held. The receipts were £65 19s. 4½ d. The heaviest charge under wages was £6 13s 4d. to the steward of the master forester. The parker of Laythegryme received 6s. 8d. for cutting deer-browse in the winter, which is said to have been necessary that season. The expenses of repairing the pales of the forest and fencing the bounds amounted to £5 19s. 10d.

Sir John Stanley, father of Thomas, first Lord Stanley, was appointed chief steward of Blackburnshire in 1424. He was also made master forester of Blackburnshire and Salfordshire.

His accounts for the latter office for 1434-5 are extant, but are of a very simple description; they included 21d. perquisites of the woodmotes held at Colne.

The rolls of Quernmore and Wyersdale are the only ones that we have found which make mention of a court held in a chapel. In 1477 two swainmotes for the Wharmore division were held in the chapel of Wyersdale, and another in the following year on the feast of St. Wilfrid.

In 1501 the Crown issued a series of warrants to the Earl of Derby and others, directing that "putre money" or "forester fee" be paid by the tenants to the foresters and keepers of the forests of Penhull, Rossingdale, Acrington, and Trowden, in Lancashire, according to the old custom and use, as set forth in the account books of the duchy. It was stated that the old records also showed that the foresters had committed "divers displeasures and annoyances against the tenants, their wyfes and servants in sundrywise by their coming to their houses for their meate and drink," and that on the tenants' complaint the duchy had agreed that the tenants should pay yearly £12 13s. 4d. towards the foresters' wage, in recompense for the meat and drink which was no longer to be claimed. This composition was paid yearly until 1461, when for certain special causes this payment was put in respite for a certain season. The sum of £119 6s. 8d. had been thus respited. Stringent orders were issued for the future payment of this fee by the tenants.

A like warrant was issued with regard to the foresters of Holland, in Yorkshire, in which case the fee had not been paid since 1484, and the sum respited amounted to £357 14s. 2d.

Rossendale, the largest of the four great divisions of the forest of Blackburnshire, with an area of upwards of thirty square miles, was disafforested, on the petition of the inhabitants, about the beginning of the sixteenth century. A decree of the duchy for the year 1550, whereby the rights of a parish church were conferred upon the chapel of Rossendale, refers to the bill of supplication for the disafforesting as having been performed forty-four years previously, when the Crown came to the conclusion that the land would be used for good purpose if the deer were removed. The deer were accordingly killed, and the land let out to the inhabitants. The decree of 1550

states that whereas before the disafforesting there were only about twenty persons resident in the forest, the population then numbered about one thousand of all ages.

Although there was considerable disafforesting in the county as early as the end of Henry VII.'s reign in Blackburnshire, the Crown deer were preserved with some strictness in other parts of the county palatine long after the Restoration. William III., in 1697, issued his warrant, countersigned by the Earl of Stamford, as chancellor of the duchy, to the master foresters, bow-bearers, or keepers of the forests, chases, and parks of Lancashire, complaining of great destruction of deer, and ordering that precise accounts were to be returned yearly of the number of deer killed, and on what authority, as well as of the stock remaining, etc.