

# The impact of royal landholdings on the county of Surrey 1509–1649

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*This paper starts by describing the increasing intensity of royal interest in Surrey and its formalization in the reign of Henry VIII. It argues that Surrey became the most popular county for the Tudor and early Stuart monarchs. It goes on to outline the ways in which royal interests may have affected the economy and social structure of the county. It is then asked whether a significant personal presence by the Tudor and early Stuart monarchs was an advantage or a disadvantage to the inhabitants of Surrey. The paper concludes that although it is too early to say whether there was a long-term impact on the development of the county, intensive royal interest between 1509 and 1649 is certainly a factor that should be considered in devising a research framework.*

## An Elizabethan complaint

The mid-Elizabethan inhabitants of Surrey believed that their county was disadvantaged because of the weight of crown interest in it. They claimed that despite it being one of the ‘least and most barren’ of English counties ‘it is the most charged of anie, by reason that her majesty lieth in or about the shire continuallie, and thereby [it] is chardged with contynualle removes and caridge of coles, wood and other provision to the court [...] also by my Lord Treasurer for the reparacions of her Majesty’s housse’.<sup>1</sup> Surrey is, of course, an artificial construct and using a county boundary to explain the history or archaeology of a region is a blunt tool.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, as it is an ancient administrative unit there is value in looking at the Elizabethan claim that the crown imposed a particularly heavy burden on the county. Therefore this paper sets out to provide an introduction to some of the principal impacts of the crown that might be considered as important in explaining the history and archaeology of Surrey.

The Elizabethans were right that Surrey was small. It is in fact the eighth smallest county in England and one of the most compact, being 40 miles wide and 30 deep. In the Middle Ages it was so remote that there was no town with more than 2000 inhabitants and not a single large parish church.<sup>3</sup> During the 15th century, owing to the fact that nowhere in the county is further than 50 miles from Westminster, it became the backyard of the metropolis. It was its proximity to London and the nature of its landscape (which made it excellent hunting country) that meant that by the death of Henry VIII there were no less than eleven royal houses in Surrey. Only Middlesex, with fourteen, had more, and this total included the metropolitan houses such as Whitehall and St James’s. Surrey was thus home to more royal domestic country residences than any other county.<sup>4</sup> They included some ancient royal seats such as Byfleet and Guildford as well as houses acquired

during Henry’s reign such as Beddington and Oatlands; they even included his only completely new house, Nonsuch. Of the eleven, three were really important residences – Richmond, Oatlands and Nonsuch. These were principal houses of Henry VIII and even more frequently used by Elizabeth. Immediately on the borders of Surrey were two other major seats whose impact on the county was as great as any house in it, that is to say Windsor Castle and Hampton Court. There was also a cluster of smaller houses over the river in Middlesex including Syon and Hanworth.

In all, Henry and his court paid 289 visits to these Surrey-based houses totalling 2880 days, that is to say 25% of his reign.<sup>5</sup> Because Elizabeth I made much greater use of Richmond and Nonsuch the proportion of the total number of visits she made to this group of houses was 42% and as we shall see when her visits to courtier houses are added the percentage is even higher.<sup>6</sup> The Stuarts were no less enthusiastic occupants of their Surrey properties. James I spent about a third of his time in Surrey and the neighbouring houses of Hampton Court and Windsor. Both Anne of Denmark and Henrietta Maria were granted Oatlands as their principal country seat and their independent progresses took them via other Surrey houses to Weybridge throughout the early 17th century.

## The growth of crown interest in Surrey

Therefore royal houses in Surrey and its immediate hinterland were a very significant centre of residence during the 16th and 17th centuries. Historians have generally concentrated on interpreting royal houses architecturally or as expressions of dynastic power and have usually failed to consider the significance of their locality. The Tudor and Stuart age was one in which social structure was based on land. Not only was rank most frequently expressed in terms of landed wealth but royal control was exercised

through what can loosely be termed land patronage. In other words by granting land and the offices linked to land the crown could fulfil both the economic and social aspirations of the nobility. The crown itself, at the pinnacle of the social order, was England's greatest landowner.<sup>7</sup> Recent years have seen a number of excellent studies on the crown lands and although there is still much to be learned, scholars have recognized that, although the crown lands were important economically, providing 34% of Elizabeth's revenue and a smaller 14% of Charles I's, their real importance was in their social, recreational and political potential.<sup>8</sup>

There had, of course, always been royal houses in Surrey but Henry VII's construction of Richmond Palace at the turn of the 15th century triggered a chain of events that would see the county dominated by royal palaces (fig 12.1). In order to be close to Richmond, Giles, Lord Daubeney, Henry VII's Lord Chamberlain, began to develop a house at Hampton Court, one that was subsequently massively expanded by Cardinal Wolsey and finally appropriated by Henry VIII. Henry completed Hampton Court in 1538 and instructed his Hampton Court team to design him a new house, Nonsuch in Ewell, and rebuild another, older house, Oatlands, in Weybridge. At this point he passed an act of parliament creating a new hunting ground near Hampton Court called Hampton Court chase and an honor centred on the house.<sup>9</sup> In 1540 another act of parliament added Nonsuch and other lands to the honor.

### **The creation of the honor**

Essentially an honor was a group of manors or landholdings held by one lord with a capital seat as its administrative centre.<sup>10</sup> In the 1520s there was a discernible change in royal land policy which saw the king group many of his disparate landholdings into compact territorial and administrative units as honors.<sup>11</sup> The first two were at New Hall and Hunsdon. Both these houses were potential principal seats. In 1516 Henry VIII bought New Hall in Essex and renamed it Beaulieu. Between its acquisition and its completion in about 1522 £17,000 was spent on transforming the house into a substantial royal manor. Henry decided to create an honor centred on it and an act of parliament was passed to do this in 1523.<sup>12</sup> Hunsdon House, in Hertfordshire, was bought in 1525. This was another major property, probably one of the most important courtier houses built in the 15th century. Henry spent just under £3000 on Hunsdon in about ten years enlarging and improving it. In 1531 an honor was created here too, focused on the royal manor house.<sup>13</sup>

This is, perhaps, what might be expected. Any great courtier or magnate was eager to set his house in a matrix of lands to give it status. At the duke of

Buckingham's house of Thornbury, just outside Bristol, successive dukes had aggrandized their landholdings. The third duke embarked on a major emparkment, in 1508.<sup>14</sup> Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, the first of Henry VIII's parvenu dukes, had the same aim but approached the problem from the opposite direction. He decided to build his great country house Westhorpe near Stowmarket in the centre of his existing great estates and the honor of Eye.<sup>15</sup> So before the great royal building works of the 1530s began Henry, almost certainly on the advice of Thomas Wolsey, erected honors as part of the necessary process of making Hunsdon and New Hall major royal seats.

In 1538 Henry could rightly be proud of Hampton Court. It was his greatest single building to date, a house acquired by him and developed to his precise specifications, a house furnished to a higher standard than any other apart from Whitehall. But what of its surroundings? Hampton Court had two large deer parks, but this was merely part of the immediate estate. So an act of parliament was passed in 1539 that stated 'because the saide manour of Hampton Courte ys thus [...] decored and environed with thinges of highe and princely comodities' an honor would be created centred on it.<sup>16</sup> The king went on to acquire tens of thousands of acres in Surrey and Middlesex to set Hampton Court in the centre of a massive landholding; however the honor was to have a special feature – Hampton Court chase created by the same act of parliament.

### **The creation of the chase**

A chase was a private forest.<sup>17</sup> A royal forest was a geographically precisely defined game reserve protected by forest law enforced by royal bailiffs. Forest law took precedence over common law and partly excluded it; its aim, in the words of the act that created Hampton Court chase, was 'for thencease of Venery and Fowle of Warren'. The land within a royal forest did not have to belong to the crown although some or much of it might; the important point for whoever owned land in it was that there were restrictions on its use. Like a modern National Park, the environment and the balance of nature was protected, and any changes in land use, such as tree felling, ploughing or new grazing were only permitted with special permission.

It was in August or early September 1537, with works at Hampton Court rapidly approaching a conclusion, that Henry VIII ordered the start of work on fencing (or paling) the new chase. It was a gigantic undertaking that involved enclosing four whole parishes, East and West Molesey, Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge and parts of Esher and Cobham. In 1537–8 £1473 was spent on fencing, ditching and hedging the boundaries of this new ground which was

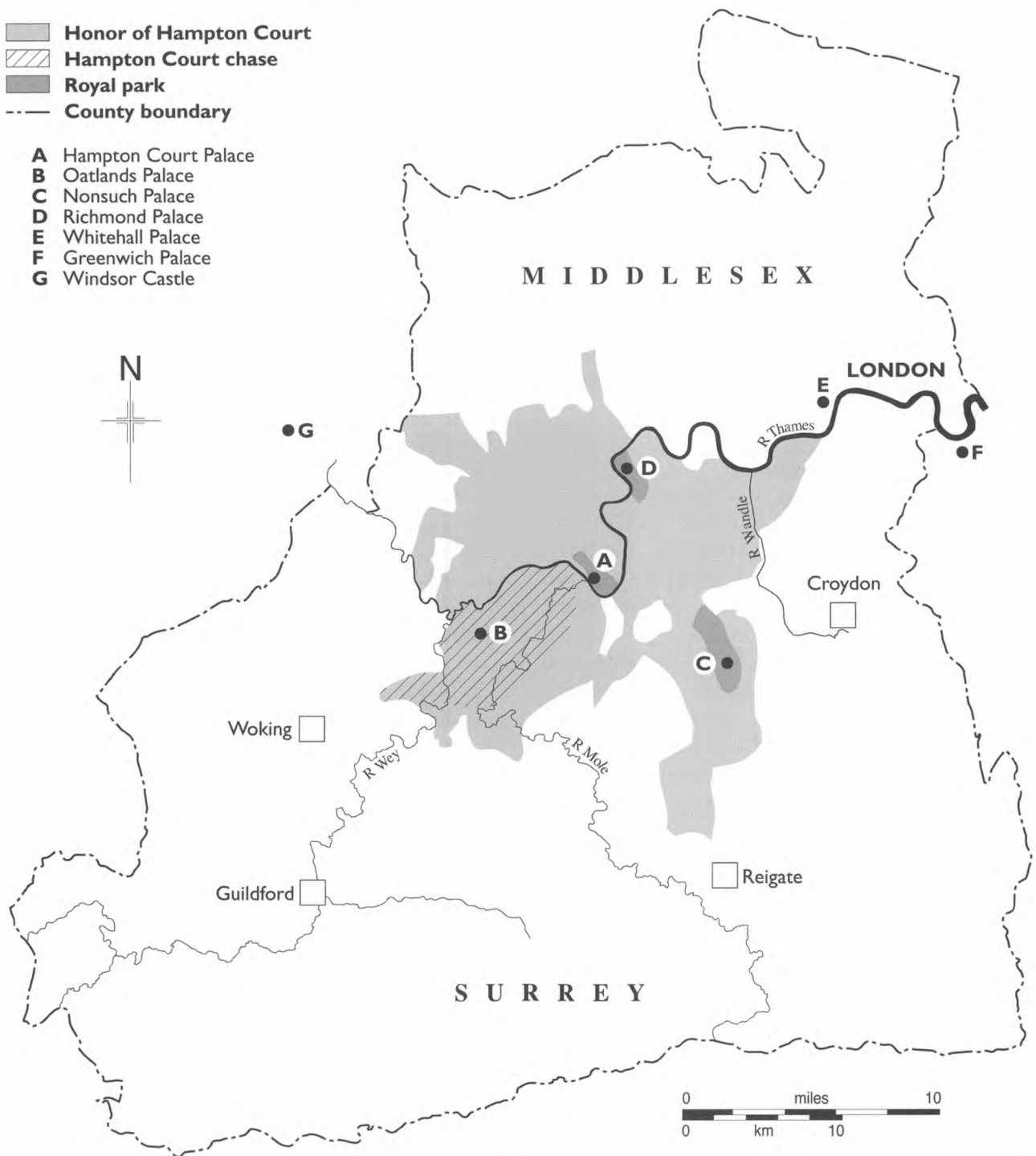


Fig 12.1 Map showing the principal royal houses of Surrey and its borders, Hampton Court chase and the honor of Hampton Court

completely encircled by the time parliament next met in April 1539 and gave the land the status of a chase.<sup>18</sup> Although Hampton Court chase was a forest in its legal sense, forests were not fenced and the deer stayed in the forest through habit rather than confinement. Thus, in being fenced, Hampton Court chase was technically not a forest but an enormous 10,000-acre park under forest law. Within it, owners were entitled to fence their own land to protect it from the deer, but were forced to accept forest law outside it.<sup>19</sup>

There is no doubt of the motivation to create the chase. Henry was a fanatical and bloodthirsty huntsman and this required careful husbandry and

land management to keep herd sizes up. After the creation of the chase the king settled into a round of hunting trips in Surrey using Hampton Court more than ever before. The reason for creating the chase can thus be explained but its precise boundaries (fig.12.1) require more explanation. At first sight it would have made more sense to develop the chase south-east of Hampton Court towards Nonsuch, on the building of which so much money and care was being lavished. Yet it was extended westwards for two reasons. The practical reason was that the western boundaries of the chase could largely be defined by rivers, reducing the quantity of expensive fencing

required. But there was another far more important reason: the chase as defined linked Hampton Court and a much more significant house than Nonsuch – Windsor Castle.

Windsor forest was one of the five great forests listed in Domesday book and had, in the time of Henry II, included parts of Buckinghamshire, Middlesex, Berkshire and most of Surrey. Windsor Forest extended, in Henry VIII's time, as far east as the river Wey and thus joined Hampton Court chase at Weybridge and Byfleet. Therefore by creating the chase, Henry was not merely creating a vast park for Hampton Court; he was in fact enabling hunting to continue uninterrupted south of the Thames from Hampton Court to Windsor.

### **How the honor was created**

Henry VIII created Hampton Court honor and chase through a commission that studied and surveyed lands in Surrey and Middlesex, and made recommendations for purchase. Sadly we have no detailed documentation to record the progress of the work.<sup>20</sup> Yet we do have information regarding the purchase of the site of Nonsuch. A detailed 25-page survey of the manor of Cuddington exists, covering all the manorial lands, woods, arable lands, tenants, leases and common land.<sup>21</sup> Each item is carefully measured and valued. James I followed an identical procedure in 1605 when he decided to extend the size of Nonsuch Park. Commissioners were appointed and they made enquiries into the ownership of lands and their value. This done, a note was prepared of the lands that the commissioners recommended to acquire with an acreage and list of owners.<sup>22</sup> None of the Henrician or Jacobean survey maps survive for the Hampton Court honor but one relating to Charles I's plans to expand Richmond Park does (fig 12.2). Drawn by the land surveyor Nicholas Lane, the map was used by Charles's 1634 Commission to determine the boundaries of the park and the ownership of the land.<sup>23</sup> This survey must be very similar to those Henry VIII commissioned to assemble the honor of Hampton Court in the 1530s.

However, many of the lands that were acquired for Henry VIII's honor were not purchased. The majority were acquired either by exchange, attainder or as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries. Land exchanges were crucial and had formed the basis of the earlier honors at New Hall and Hunsdon. They were cost effective for the king who had a massive and diverse landholding across England and Wales. Exchanges allowed remote and isolated crown lands to be swapped for lands closer to hand to form part of the honor. These swaps were usually highly advantageous for the king. For instance large tracts of the honor came from the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, by exchange. The archbishops of

Canterbury had long been the principal landowners in Kent but had increasingly built up estates around London reflecting their move to become the leader of the national church in the nation's capital. The manors of Wimbledon and East Cheam, Ewell and Morden came to the king this way.<sup>24</sup> Another very large land exchange was effected with Merton Priory in 1536 (in other words before it was dissolved). By this the king gained East Molesey in exchange for the church of Ellastone in Staffordshire.<sup>25</sup>

A rather less happy means of aggrandizing the honor was through the lands of attainted subjects. Both Thomas Cromwell and Sir Nicolas Carew unwittingly contributed significant landholdings in this way.<sup>26</sup> Carew's former lands included Beddington, Walton on the Hill, Sutton and Coulsdon.<sup>27</sup> The dissolution of the monasteries likewise brought lands from reluctant former owners to the honor. Merton Priory contributed the most land but Westminster Abbey contributed Toddington and Wandsworth among six other manors, Barking Abbey contributed Weston and St Mary Spital and Sandon.<sup>28</sup> Oatlands, so important to Henry's scheme, was acquired in perhaps the most underhand way of all. In 1534 when William Reed, the owner of the manor, died his son and heir, John, was a minor who was put under the guardianship of Thomas Cromwell. This made it a fairly straightforward transaction for John and his guardian to exchange the property very much in the king's favour.<sup>29</sup>

Thomas Cromwell was almost certainly the mastermind behind the creation of the honor. It was he who, in 1530–2 organized the acquisition of the lands for Whitehall Palace and surviving correspondence concerning the land transactions bears his name.<sup>30</sup> Given the extent of the honor (fig 12.1) and the fact that we have some transaction records, it should in theory be possible to recreate it on a map. Unfortunately this is not as easy as it seems. Sixteenth century parish boundaries are often difficult to determine and manorial boundaries even harder. In addition many parishes comprised more than one manor. So it would be almost impossible to draw the map of the honor of Hampton Court in 1547. What we can do is identify the parishes in which the major landholdings were royal<sup>31</sup> and doing this produces a startling result. Vast swathes of Surrey and Middlesex were owned by the crown, and almost all the principal manors were royal.

### **The social impact of the honor**

These Surrey lands fell into two classes. The lands that were let as part of the crown estate yielding an income for the crown and those that were non-economic holdings used for sport.<sup>32</sup> There was a double cost to the crown for these latter holdings – the opportunity cost of not using the land for agriculture

and the considerable maintenance and staffing costs. The crown hunting lands were therefore a direct contributor to the local economy and not a drain. The lands that were let were a crucial part of the structure of society and politics. As already indicated the crown estate was not merely a source of income and *in extremis* capital, it was one of the key tools of patronage. Grants of land or leases on favourable terms were one of the principal means in which past services to the monarchy could be rewarded and future services anticipated. A lease of crown land on favourable terms provided a more secure income for a royal official than a salary or fees. Over a long period land was considerably more valuable than a pension.<sup>33</sup> Thus the extensive crown lands of Surrey were frequently let by the crown to royal officials and courtiers colouring the social mix of the county landholders. This in turn attracted more royal attention. Many of the places where Queen Elizabeth stayed were royal lands on lease occupied by leading royal servants or courtiers. West Horsley, for instance, was a crown lease occupied by Lord Clinton, Elizabeth's Lord Admiral. The queen visited him there four times, once for a week. Nearby was East Horsley the home of Sir Thomas Cornwallis, comptroller of the household. While Henry VIII stayed in royal houses 80% of the time Queen Elizabeth on progress liked to stay 80% of the time in courtier houses. As Harrison neatly put it she made 'everie noble mans house [...] hir palace'.<sup>34</sup> The queen stayed in at least 33 private Surrey mansions during her reign making, in all, some 227 visits to the county. Twelve of her 23 summer progresses were conducted largely or wholly in the county too. The queen spent fewer than half that number of days in Middlesex, the next most popular county, and Kent and Essex were only visited on 79 and 86 trips respectively.<sup>35</sup>

Under Elizabeth sales of crown lands became an important source of revenue. In the first decade of the reign they grossed a modest £76,648, but during the period immediately following the Spanish Armada in 1588–92 sales totalled over £120,000 a year and, although the rate of sale slowed towards the end of the reign, it has been calculated that £817,350 worth of land was sold during her reign. Yet certain types of land were not sold: the large manors, the ancient holdings such as Cornwall and Lancaster, strategic defensive sites and crucially land close to the queen's houses. For this reason despite the dispersal of many of the Henrican lands Surrey maintained its particular heavily royal character.<sup>36</sup>

### **The impact of royal lands: recreation**

Surrey was thus a major centre of royal property owning, of royal recreation and home to a large part of the cream of Tudor society. The impact of this on the county now needs to be considered. First in terms

of royal recreation, Hampton Court Chase and the royal forests: we have seen that the hunting grounds provided employment and required consumables as well as providing sinecures for local landowners. Yet for the majority of the population they were very unpopular. Embodied in a plea to the Privy Council from the start of Edward VI's reign the petition of the inhabitants of the parishes in the Hampton Court chase survives 'by reason of the making of the late Chase of Hampton Court forsomeyche as their commons, medowes, and pastures be taken in, and that all the same parishes are overlade with the deere nowe increasing daly upon them, very many householdes of the same parishes be lett fall down, the families decayed, and the Kinges liege people miche diminished; the cuntre therabout in maner made desolate, over and besides that that the Kinges Majeste loseth [...] hys yearly revenues and rentes, to a great summe'.<sup>37</sup> Because of this and the fact that the fence needed expensive repairs it was dechased the same year Henry VIII died. This was not, however, the end of the matter. The rights of the crown over the former chase and the forest of Windsor were asserted well into the 17th century. James I commissioned John Norden to make a survey of the honor and forest of Windsor in 1607 because 'the true limites and boundes beinge also nere worne out of knowledge. And will shortlie be worne out of mind without means of reformation'. Norden's map, for which James I paid £200, is a key document in illustrating the importance laid on crown hunting rights in the early Stuart period (fig 12.3).<sup>38</sup> It led to subsequent royal actions such as James removing local swine that disturbed his progress riding through what was described as 'the district of his forest'.<sup>39</sup> The question of the Surrey boundary of the forest was reopened in an enquiry at Bagshot in 1632 at which the Attorney General claimed that the whole Surrey Baliwick, that is to say the whole county west of the Wey and north of the Hog's Back were part of the forest.<sup>40</sup> In doing so he found old residents of Surrey to swear that this was the case in Queen Elizabeth's time. The court accepted this and the area was re-affirmed as being forest and not merely in its purlieu.<sup>41</sup> The matter was reopened by the Long Parliament that appointed a Commission to look at royal forests in Surrey under the act 'for enquiring into the boundaries of all forests'.<sup>42</sup> They met at Guildford in 1642 and unsurprisingly found that the royal claims for the forest of Windsor were void and the only forest they recognized was Guildford Park; on the basis of this the whole of Surrey was deafforested, including any parts of the honor of Hampton Court that had residual forest rights.<sup>43</sup>

The loss of the forest and chase did not, in any sense, mean that the hunting grounds of the monarchy in the vicinity were reduced. John Speed's

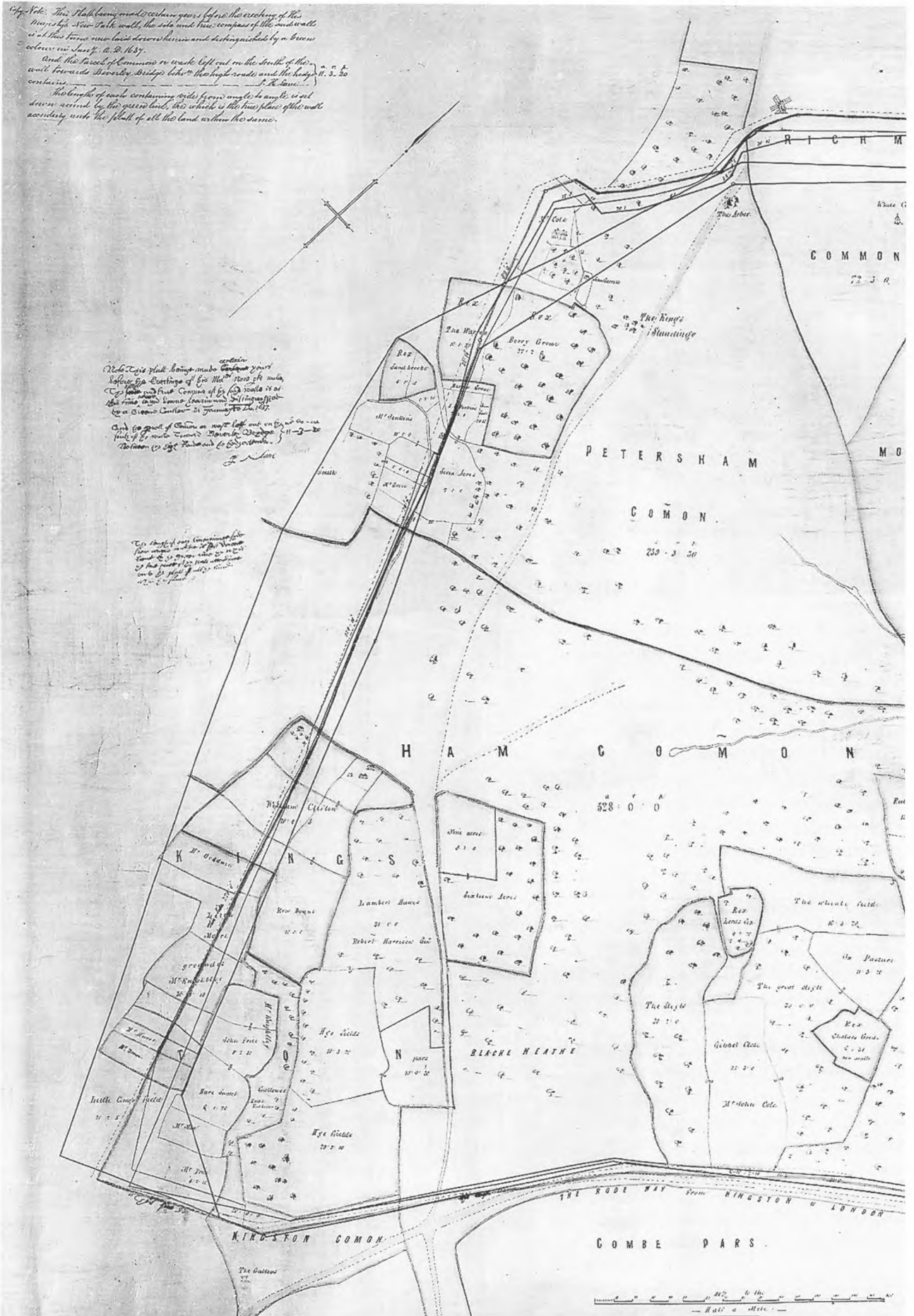


Fig 12.2 Copy of Nicholas Lane's 1634 survey of lands adjacent to Richmond Park. Various proposals for the new park's boundaries are drawn in by his commissioners as are existing crown lands marked REX. The map shows that most of the rest of the land was either common land or in private ownership. The map is reproduced in two overlapping parts with the north-eastern portion on the opposite page.



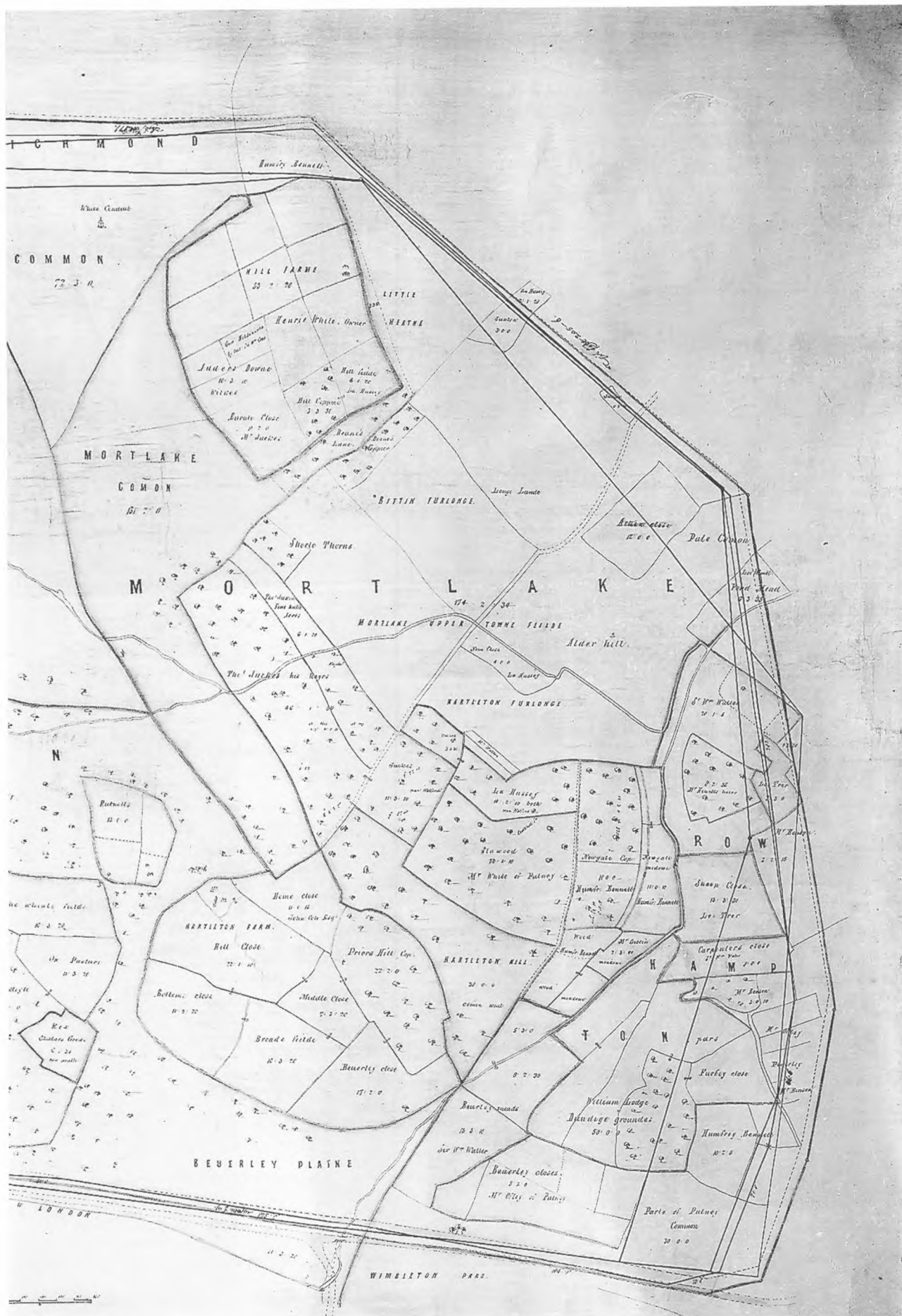
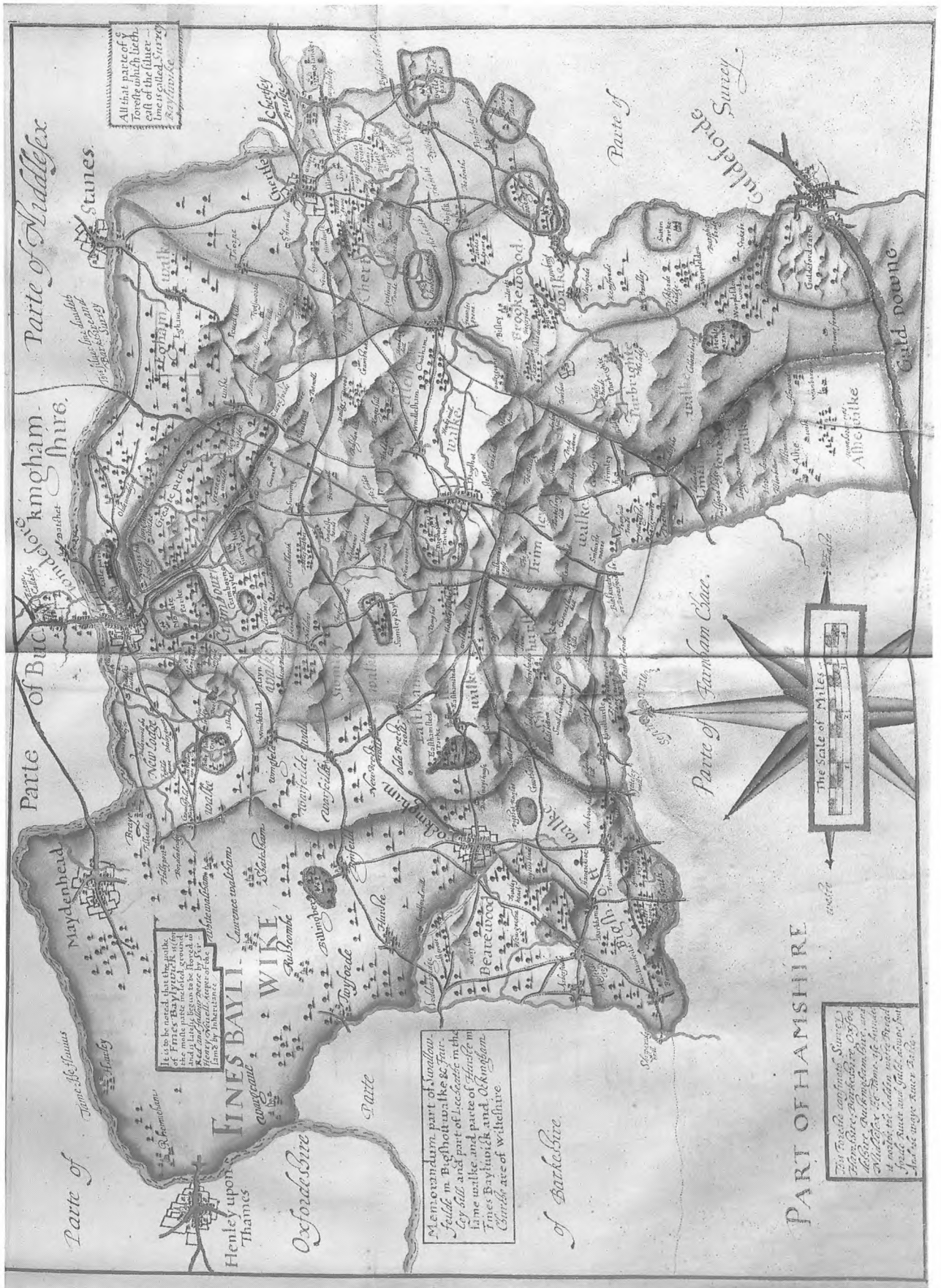


Fig 12.2 continued North-eastern portion of the copy of Nicholas Lane's 1634 survey of lands adjacent to Richmond Park. The south-western portion is shown on the opposite page. The National Archives Image Library MR 1/295





map, drawn up between 1596 and 1610 and published in 1612, makes this point clearly (fig 12.4). Thus although the chase had gone the honor still contained considerable facilities for hunting and at least four major royal houses. As late as the reign of George I the royal family, attended by sometimes as many as 150 riders, would charge through the Surrey countryside in pursuit of deer, causing destruction and chaos as they went. The influence of the parklands of Surrey should not be ignored.

### **The impact of royal lands: the court**

The royal court was peripatetic, it moved around its houses in the Thames valley never staying for more than six weeks at any house and usually for much shorter times than that. In the winter, spring and autumn the court was at its largest, numbering about 800 people. In the summer much of the household returned to their country seats and the court went on progress. So as the court moved between Hampton Court, Nonsuch, Oatlands and Richmond, over land largely owned by the crown and stopping in the royal parks to hunt, it had a considerable impact on the local inhabitants.

### **CART TAKING**

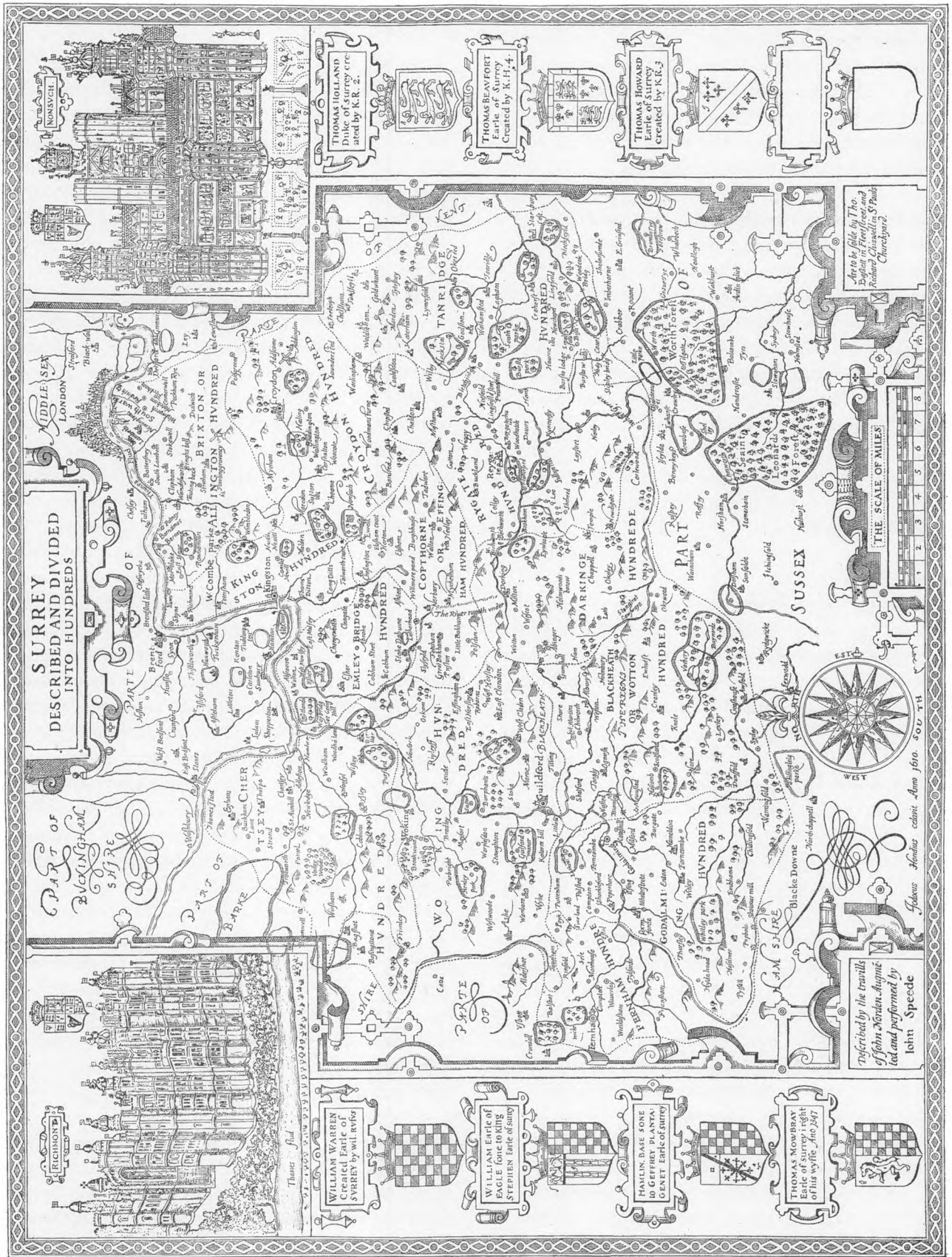
Law obliged local justices of the peace to supply a certain number of horses and carts that could be used by the court as it moved from palace to palace. Additionally an act for 'the increase of horses' compelled private owners of parks of more than a mile in circumference to keep brood mares in them. Speed's map (fig 12.4) shows 36 such parks in Surrey alone. The county assessment laid down that when the court left Richmond the people of Surrey were obliged to provide 80 carriages, when it left Oatlands 100 and for Nonsuch 110. The carts were paid for by the household but at a lesser rate, only 2d a mile rather than the market rate of 10d or 12d. Carts had to be supplied when demanded, even in the middle of harvest. Carts were also needed by the various household offices for transporting food and supplies and by the Office of Works for building materials. These were requisitioned separately by each department, some like the woodyard and coal house requiring sometimes hundreds of carts. Carters were obliged to travel as far as 25 miles at the request of a royal cart-taker. Cart taking was a source of major grievance in Surrey as the royal family travelled there every year. This received recognition in a small number of towns next to major royal houses. For instance in 1604 Windsor was relieved of all cart taking as the town only had three carriages and Weybridge, which only

had one cart, was given exemption from carrying victuals. Yet such exemptions were rare and cart taking remained an issue until it was abolished in 1688.<sup>44</sup>

### **PURVEYANCE**

Perhaps the most contentious royal prerogative that affected the people of Surrey was that of purveyance. This was an ancient right that allowed the monarch to purchase food and supplies at a rate cheaper than the market rate for the goods. Therefore the royal purveyors would travel, for example, to Guildford market and buy food for cash at the discounted 'king's price'. This was modified during Elizabeth's reign to a practice known as compounding. This essentially meant that a local tax known as the composition was levied and with it the compounders (a group of local JPs) would buy a specified list of goods at the market price and sell them to the household at the king's price. This resulted in each county compounding with the household, in other words agreeing a level of payment for supplies. In 1578 Surrey had to provide finance for 60 geese, 190 capons, 130 coarse hens, 350 coarse pullets, 1300 coarse chickens and 600 lambs. They also had to finance fuel for cooking and this totalled 400 loads of coal, 300 loads of logs and 900 loads of kindling. In one sense, by compounding Surrey limited the impact of a continual royal presence in the county as the inhabitants now knew their yearly obligation. It also spread the burden of the royal household more equally across England, and was thus popular in Surrey. However supplies for the queen's own table were exempt and her privy bakehouse and kitchen could buy at the queen's rate in local markets. Moreover the crown reserved a right to purvey additional supplies while the court was on progress. Surrey was thus at a considerable disadvantage, having compounded and still having to sell at a discount for the queen's table and for progress.<sup>45</sup> Just as towns close to major houses might obtain an exemption from cart taking so, on occasion, an exemption from purveyance could be granted. Queen Elizabeth, for instance, exempted a group of bailiwicks in Surrey in compensation for losses suffered by the local people from grazing royal deer.<sup>46</sup> Such privileges were, however, rare.

The case of Kingston market might suggest that purveyance was perhaps not so devastating as was made out. In about 1540 Leland in his *Itinerary* described Kingston as the best market town in Surrey and in receipt of great privileges from the crown.<sup>47</sup> These privileges were a source of envy among the surrounding towns, particularly its right to a market.



This was described by Camden in his *Britannia* of 1607 as ‘considerable’.<sup>48</sup> In 1618 Hounslow attempted to get permission for a market on Saturdays and the aldermen of Kingston moved to prevent it. Similarly in 1624 when Hampton attempted to hold a market Kingston opposed it. Kingston’s charter was re-granted in 1628 and established the town’s right to hold the only market within seven miles. The vexed question of Hounslow’s claim to a market arose again in 1653 and was again seen off. At the Restoration Kingston successfully re-secured its charter for a Wednesday market. The reason that the corporation of Kingston fought so long and hard for its market was largely because it supplied Hampton Court with so much. All the straw and hay for the horses and stables came from Kingston, as well as meat, vegetables, eggs and beer. After 1660 the value of this was much increased as all purveyance was abolished, but even under the compounding system Kingston profited enormously from the proximity of so many royal houses.<sup>49</sup>

#### IMPRESSMENT

Finally there was the matter of impressment, another unpopular royal prerogative. Since the 13th century the officers of the King’s works had enjoyed sweeping powers over those in the building trade. The purveyors of works could, under royal commission, impress men, materials and carts, arrest those who deserted, gaol those who misbehaved and recover materials that had been purloined. During Henry VIII’s building works of the 1530s thousands of craftsmen were impressed. In 1532, 900 at Whitehall alone. Hampton Court was built using impressed labour largely from Surrey but some from as far afield as Norfolk. The problem with impressment was not that the craftsmen were not paid (they received compensation for working away from home) rather that their removal from the county prevented private work from progressing. At the same time the county was scoured for materials, for good brickearth, for lime, for timber and other building materials. When a major royal building project was in hand a private owner suffered a chronic shortage of craftsmen and often materials too. For instance, during the major royal works of the 1530s and 40s the building industry in Surrey must have been boosted for tradesmen but highly constricted for patrons.<sup>50</sup>

#### **The impact of royal lands: the benefits**

While impressment and requisitioning of materials was a problem for some it was also a great benefit for the economies of the towns of Surrey. For instance the growth of Reigate must have owed much to the stone

quarries so essential to the construction of the royal houses.<sup>51</sup> Almost as important to Kingston as its market was the local building industry. Building materials were key to Kingston’s economy as they were to a wide band of villages and hamlets along the Thames. At Kingston brick and tile was made throughout the 16th century and men and materials made trips throughout the day to the adjacent royal palaces.<sup>52</sup>

Other benefits accrued to local towns. It has recently been estimated that household expenditure in progress time increased by about £1000, much of which went into the locality. The market and the inns of Kingston were virtually an outpost of Hampton Court continually used by everyone from the most important ambassador to the children of the chapel. Indeed inns and taverns throughout Surrey were rarely empty and when the court was near could charge a hefty premium to the royal harbingers who attempted to find beds for courtiers. Even when the court was just passing through towns and villages would have the chance to sell refreshment to hundreds of members of the royal household. A town like Guildford, a royal centre and a staging post to Portsmouth, benefited enormously from the frequent passage of the court.

On a wider scale too the passage of the court brought benefits to Surrey. In the 1550s a number of well-travelled aristocrats and diplomats began to import a new type of passenger road vehicle from Germany and the Low Countries. The coach, although not used at Queen Elizabeth’s coronation, soon found a patron in the queen and the first royal model was delivered in 1564. This was the start of a royal revolution in transport that had an enormous impact on the royal houses, their locality and the whole of the south-east of England. First Elizabeth, and then the Stuart monarchs, gradually moved away from the use of Thames barges and horses towards coach travel, although on ceremonial occasions the river was still used.<sup>53</sup> The church bells of towns and villages were rung each time the monarch passed through. From 1570 the Kingston churchwardens’ accounts show that Queen Elizabeth increasingly moved by road. In 1571 the bells were rung eight times, but on only one of these occasions was it the royal barge that carried the queen. Carriages required a much higher standard of road maintenance than previously. Under an act of parliament of 1555 this work fell to local inhabitants. In 1598, for instance, the chamberlain of Kingston paid 21d to mend the road to smooth the elderly queen’s passage from Sir Thomas Cecil’s house at Wimbledon to Nonsuch.<sup>54</sup> An act of parliament passed in 1606 stated in its preamble that as the road

*Opposite:* Fig 12.4 Speed’s Map of Surrey, 1612 is unique among the county maps in his atlas in showing vignettes of two royal palaces rather than views of towns. Surrey, for Speed, was a royal county. © Museum of London

between Kingston and Nonsuch was the 'waye the chief parte of the cariages to his majesties houses of nonsuche richmond oatlands and hampton Courte of necessity passeth as also greate store of ship tymber and other provisions for his majesties houses at london' the burden for the repair rested on the locality.<sup>55</sup> Local justices were appointed to levy tax and organize overseers to maintain the road for the king's use. In this way the key royal routes around Middlesex and Surrey were more developed and better maintained than anywhere else in the country.

Finally it must be noted that although Surrey had cause to be considered as a special case other counties suffered at royal hands too. Kent, for instance had few royal houses, but military installations imposed an equivalently large burden. The people of Kent had to watch the coastal beacons and coastal landing points, feed stationed troops, supply the navy, supply labour for the storehouses at Chatham, Deptford, Woolwich and Rochester, provide carriage for visiting dignitaries and for military and building materials while also servicing four royal palaces (Greenwich, Eltham, Dartford and Canterbury).<sup>56</sup>

### Conclusions and possible future directions for research

In conclusion, there was clearly intense royal activity in Surrey in the 16th and early 17th centuries. Eleven Royal palaces and their parks were regularly used for a hundred years. Surrounding them vast parts of the county were royal property, much of it let out to rich and influential courtiers, the rest maintained as hunting park. Special rights of access and passage were reserved to the monarch. Roads had to be specially maintained, food was requisitioned at

preferential prices, horses and carts were commandeered, masons, bricklayers, plumbers, tilers and carpenters were ordered to work on royal building projects. It was all this activity that caused the inhabitants of mid-Elizabethan Surrey to complain about the effect of the continual presence of the court on their doorstep. Yet the intensity of royal activity certainly had a beneficial economic effect too, particularly in the development of prosperous towns and good transport infrastructure.

This paper has focused on my own area of interest, that is to say the mechanisms of court life and their physical impact. How significant these impacts were in the development of the county I am unable to say, but the identification of the issue raises a number of questions. It would be good to know, for instance, how strong the case is for the positive economic influence of the court in the development of key towns in Surrey. Did the growth of Surrey building industries, stimulated by crown programmes, have a significant impact on the wealth of towns too? Conversely was the pattern of non-royal building affected by the intensive development of royal houses in the 1530s and 40s? How much did the development of the road network south of the Thames owe to royal usage as opposed to the development of roads in parts seldom used by the court? Can the relatively intense settlement by courtiers and the economic activity triggered by their estates be said to characterize Surrey in any way? For instance did the number of hunting parks impact on the county's topographical or economic development? These questions and others may help to advance our understanding of the archaeology of Surrey.

## NOTES

### Abbreviations

PRO: The National Archives, Kew, Public Record Office  
SHC: Surrey History Centre, Woking

- 1 *VCH*, 1, 367–8.
- 2 I mean historic Surrey that included, before 1888, all London south of the Thames.
- 3 Nairn *et al* 1982, 17; Clark & Thompson 1934, 99.
- 4 The Surrey houses are Bagshot, Beddington, Byfleet, Chobham, Guildford, Mortlake, Nonsuch, Oatlands, Richmond, West Horsley and Woking (known in the 16th century as Oking). Other counties: Kent 8; Berkshire, 4; Oxfordshire, 4; Essex 3; Bedfordshire, 2; Buckinghamshire, 2; Northamptonshire, 2; Sussex, 2; Northumberland, Wiltshire and Worcestershire 1. See Colvin 1982.
- 5 Thurley 1988, fig 123.
- 6 Chambers 1923, Appendix A.
- 7 Wyndham 1980, 18–19.
- 8 Wolffe 1970 & 1971; Hoyle 1992; Madge 1968.
- 9 *Statutes of the Realm*, 3, 721–4. It is not clear why the king needed an act of parliament to create an honor. Perhaps statute was used to give the process greater weight and dignity.
- 10 For honors see Maddox 1736, 2, 5, 7–9, 261, 262.

- 11 Miller 1986, 218–9, 229, 248–9.
- 12 'Forasmuch as the Kyng our Sovereign Lord hath lately caused a Palesse Roiall to be byelled and edified at his manour of Newhall in his countie of Essex at his great costes and charges to the which place his Highness hath great pleasure to resorte for the helth comfote and preservacion of his moost roiall person' he intends to annex certain lands which came into his hands from the attainder of the Duke of Buckingham 'and to make his said manour and Palais of Newhall' and the lands annexed to it 'to be an Honour Royal' and he intends that it should be 'hensforth nambed accepted and takyn the kynges Honour of Beaulieu'. *Statutes of the Realm*, 3, 245 (14 & 15 Henry VIII c.18).
- 13 The wording is precisely the same as that for New Hall, excepting the part about changing the name of the house. *Statutes of the Realm*, 3, 410–11 (23 Henry VIII c.30).
- 14 Rawcliffe 1978, ch 3.
- 15 Gunn & Lindley 1988, 273–4.
- 16 *Statutes of the Realm*, 3, 721–4 (31 Henry VIII c.5).
- 17 Madge 1968, 26–7.
- 18 *Statutes of the Realm*, 3, 721–4 (31 Henry VIII c.5). Accounts for erecting the chase are in SHC: LM 717, 718, 720, 721, 722. Also see Walker 1965, 83–7.



- 19 For forests and forest law see Rackham 1986, 130–9. A list of the woodland enclosed in the chase is in SHC: LM 723.
- 20 A list of lands purchased among the augmentation accounts is in PRO: E323/1 Part 1 (m.11). A summary of lands in the honor and wages and perquisites of the High Steward is in SHC: LM710.
- 21 Dent 1962, 35.
- 22 Titford 1967, 78–9.
- 23 Cloake 1995, 1, 197–206.
- 24 Letters and Papers XIII (I) pp 569, 571; *Statutes of the Realm*, 3, 585.
- 25 Letters and Papers X no 243 (26); Letters and Papers XV no 498; Letters and Papers XIII (i) no 779.
- 26 Letters and Papers XIV (I) P29 no 71; Letters and Papers XV, no 498 (36) (p 214).
- 27 Letters and Papers XV No 498 (36) (p 214).
- 28 Letters and Papers XV no 498 (36) (p 214).
- 29 Colvin 1982, 205–6.
- 30 For instance see Cromwell's letter to the Prior of Merton Priory, Letters and Papers, VIII no 345 (p 139).
- 31 Ash Lees (*VCH*, 3, 473); Balham (*VCH*, 4, 98); Banstead (*VCH*, 3, 255); Battersea (*VCH*, 4, 11, 112); Beddington (*VCH*, 4, 170–2); Brooklands (*VCH*, 3, 476); Byfleet (*VCH*, 3, 401); East and West Cheam (*VCH*, 4, 196); Cuddington (*VCH*, 3, 267); Ewell (*VCH*, 3, 279); Imworth (*VCH*, 3, 465); Kingston (*VCH*, 3, 495); Kingswood (*VCH*, 3, 281); East and West Molesey (*VCH*, 3, 453); Mortlake (*VCH*, 4, 70); Oatlands (*VCH*, 3, 476); Talworth (*VCH*, 3, 521); Wandsworth (*VCH*, 4, 112–3); Walton-on-the-Hill (*VCH*, 3, 317); Walton Leigh (*VCH*, 3, 471); Walton-on-Thames (*VCH*, 3, 468); Weston (Thames Ditton) (*VCH*, 3, 464); Weybridge (*VCH*, 3, 476); Wimbledon (*VCH*, 4, 122).
- 32 It is worth noting that the crown estates were not homogeneous. They were managed by different arms of the state, most by the Exchequer, some by the duchy of Lancaster and then the lands of the royal family, including the duchy of Cornwall and the queen's lands, by their own officers.
- 33 Wyndham 1980, 21–2.
- 34 Furnivall 1877, 270.
- 35 On twelve years her progresses were mainly or completely in Surrey, on eleven in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Next came Bedfordshire, Berkshire and Essex with eight years and then Kent with three. The houses in Surrey stayed in by Elizabeth I were: Bagshot, Barn Elms, Beddington, Byfleet, Chessington, Chertsey, Chobham, Clandon, Croydon, Egham, Farnham, Guildford Manor, Ham House, Horsley, Katherine Hall, Lambeth, Leatherhead, Loseley, Merton Abbey, Mitcham, Mortlake, Nonsuch, Putney, Pyrford, Seale, Stoke d'Abernon, Streatham, Sutton Place, Tooting, Thorpe, West Molesey, Wimbledon, Woking. Source: Chambers 1923, app A; Cole 1999, 24–5, app 2.
- 36 Madge 1968, 40–2; Hoyle 1992, 12, 17.
- 37 Acts of the Privy Council, n.s. 2 (1547–1550), 190–2.
- 38 The survey exists in two versions. The King's presentation copy, British Library, Harleian MS 3749, and another for the Prince of Wales now in the Royal Library. Tighe & Davis 1863, 2, 1, 27–30; Lawrence 1985, 54–6.
- 39 *VCH*, 1, 403.
- 40 *Cal SPD*, Sept 19 1632.
- 41 Purlieu, in other words land that had once been part of the forest but that still, in some respects, remained subject to forest law.
- 42 *Statutes of the Realm*, 16 Chas I c.16.
- 43 British Library: Harleian MS 546.
- 44 Woodworth 1945, 71–4; PRO: LS 13/168 ff 86v, 124v.
- 45 Woodworth 1945; Aylmer 1957–8.
- 46 *Cal SPD*, Jas I (1603–10), 17, nos 58–9; Cole 1999, 49–50.
- 47 Toulmin Smith 1964, 4, 86.
- 48 Copley 1977, 13.
- 49 Woodworth 1945, *passim*; Roots 1797, 215.
- 50 Colvin 1975, 5, 18, 61, 113; Airs 1995, 74–5, 201; Salzman 1952, 37–8.
- 51 Tatton-Brown 2001.
- 52 Musty 1990, 411–15.
- 53 Mumby forthcoming. I am most grateful to Mr Mumby for allowing me to see his draft manuscript.
- 54 Kingston Borough Archives KG2/3 (1567–1681), p 18; KD5/1/1 (1567–1637) p 195, see also pp 185, 196.
- 55 *Statutes of the Realm*, 4(ii), 1094–5. Two earlier Elizabethan acts had required the JPs of Surrey to repair their roads, but in order to preserve the smooth transport of minerals and aggregates: *Statutes of the Realm*, 4(i), 726–7; 4(ii), 919–2.
- 56 *Cal SPD*, Elizabeth I (1591–4), 245, no 69.

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