



Scots Pine

In 1813 the Windsor Forest Enclosure Act was passed. This allowed the Crown to retain 6,500 acres of the old forest with 1,500 acres of mature woodland in the Cranbourne area where many earlier Keepers of the Forest made their home. About 3,000 acres were set aside for deer and cattle and could not be cultivated. This area today covers Windsor Great Park and after the death of Prince Albert large areas were opened to the public.

The entire Windsor Estate goes beyond the 1813 enclosed area and includes the vast pine woods to the south of Nine Mile Ride within the Borough of Bracknell Forest. This area, known as Swinley Forest, extends the Estate's total area to 15,500 acres. The Duke of Edinburgh is the Ranger of the Estate and its management is vested with the Crown Estate Commissioners, who are the owners of the land.

The pine Forest at Swinley was created after World War 1 when a great timber cull helped the war effort. Pines were planted because of their suitability to infertile sandy soils and to provide quick growing timber to cover timber shortages. The Forest is managed on a sustainable commercial basis for its timber but also includes mature pine woodland, which is regenerating naturally and managed heathland and ponds. Heathland wildlife, including rare bird species, is now being protected on an impressive scale.

Large areas of Swinley Forest to the south of Nine Mile Ride were opened to public access by the Crown Estate in 1991 and are now extensively used for walking and organised leisure pursuits. This includes the Caesar's Camp site where archaeology and heathland are the main concerns.

Other leaflets available on local history, include the histories of Sandhurst, Crowthorne and Easthampstead Conservation Area, The Coming of the Railways, The Ancient Highways, and The Making of Bracknell New Town. Leaflets are also available on local churches and countryside parks and country walks.

For a full list ring 01344 354124 or visit our Website at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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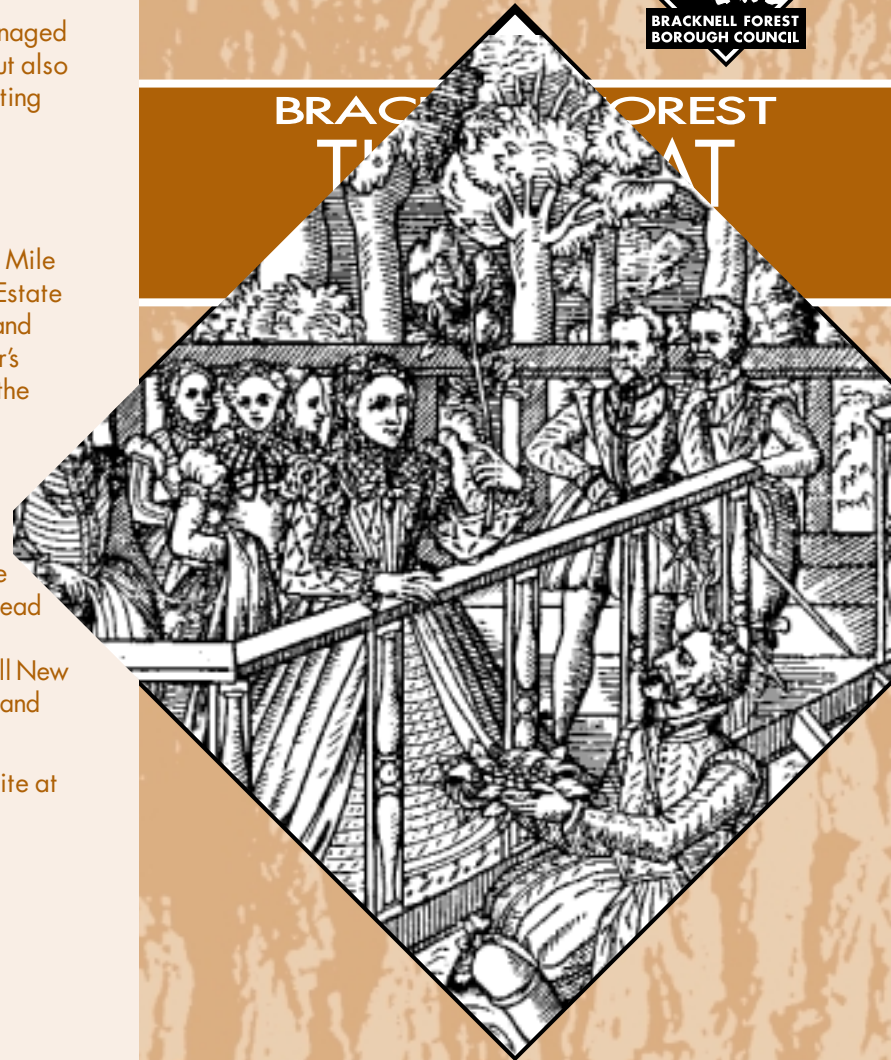
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COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE



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THE GREAT FOREST

A thousand years ago the Bracknell area was all forest. William I created the vast deer preserve of Windsor Forest, land outside the Great Park fence or pale, that the Saxons called 'The Great Frith'. We know that all Berkshire east of the Loddon River was permanent forest.



English Oak

The Great Forest was subject to Forest Law devised to protect 'venison', or deer for hunting, and 'vert', the vegetation that deer depend upon. Whoever slew a deer without permission ran the risk of being maimed. Even the Abbot of Chertsey did time in the Coal Hole (jail) at Windsor Castle in Edward III's reign for an unauthorised hunting expedition. The Keeper of Windsor Forest was the Constable of Windsor Castle and under him was an army of Rangers, Foresters, Verderers and Regarders with justice administered through special courts.

The Forest was rich in resources. Sarsen stones were collected from the heathy areas for building Windsor Castle, and the Crown claimed rights to deer pasture and browsewood as well as timber growing

naturally. The Lords of the Manors claimed rights over shooting licences, underwood, pasturage for cattle and so on. Vast numbers of pigs (swine), hence the name Swinley Lodge, were kept by commoners and turned out to fatten on acorns or beech mast. In the reign of Elizabeth I thousands of trees were cut for shipbuilding to combat the Spanish Armada.

Hunting was the pastime of Kings and Queens. By the 1300s the most knightly form of hunting was chasing male Fallow deer. In time these were replaced by Red deer, still seen in the Forest today. Henry VIII was a very keen huntsman as was Elizabeth I. She coursed with greyhounds and killed her own stags with a crossbow. Queen Anne drove herself in a one-horse chaise when hunting. The sport of chasing with horses, the Royal Buckhounds and a horn continued until 1901. Stags who gave good sport might be rewarded by being saved and well-known stags had pet names such as Moonshine, Starlight or Highflyer



Red Deer Stag

Tight Forest Laws caused friction between Kings and their subjects. When Charles I tightened up Forest Laws the numbers of deer increased hugely and crops were ruined, causing destitution. Thus, at the outbreak of the

Civil War the Forest inhabitants supported the rebels. The Parliamentary forces destroyed the deer herds and much of the land was sold off to pay the Army. After the Restoration of the Monarchy, Charles II was left with the Forest as nine widely separated great woods.

The Forest provided cover for outlaws living by poaching or stealing taxes and dues being delivered to Windsor. Around 1722 the Forest was terrorized by 'The Blacks' forty of whom were eventually arrested and publicly executed. In 1723 the notorious 'Black Act' was passed, bringing in 50 new capital crimes for deer poaching, leading again to over-population by deer, destitution and crime. In 1730 the situation was so bad that fear was expressed for the safety of the Royal Family at Windsor.

Fears of a French invasion in the late 1700s caused the Army to use the heathland around Caesar's Camp for exercises, including constructing redoubts (earthwork refuges) that can still be seen today.



One of the 1792 redoubts, today