

SILVICULTURAL INCLOSURE IN THE NEW FOREST TO 1780

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the transition of the New Forest from a medieval hunting forest into an area of managed silvicultural inclosures. While this change is popularly attributed to the need for navy timber, more fundamental reasons would appear to have been the general movement towards the inclosure and 'improvement' of commons and waste lands, and latterly the need to increase the revenues of the crown. Matters given particular attention are the attitudes and involvements of politicians, forest officers, landowners, and commoners.

INTRODUCTION

The name 'forest' was a legal designation for an area of land, set aside for the king's hunting. The New Forest was such an area subjected to special forest laws designed to protect the beasts of the forest and the environment in which they lived. These laws included constraints upon the cutting of wood and undergrowth, and upon any form of inclosure. The administration of the forest and its laws came under the authority of the justices in eyre, and were administered by forest officers, with offences being determined and sentenced by forest justices and in forest courts. The forests were not only a source of recreation to the crown but also of profit, this derived partly from amercements and fines, but perhaps more importantly through patronage, the granting of offices and privileges. Timber and wood was used for domestic building and repairs, for ship building, as gifts to others, and as fuel, but only on a small scale, and well within the production capacity of the forest (Stagg 1979, *passim*).

In the New Forest the last forest eyre was held in 1670, this being the superior forest

court which examined the work of the lesser courts and of the forest officers, passed sentence on outstanding offences, and dealt with administrative matters such as the enrolment of forest rights (Stagg 1983, *passim*). While this must mark the beginning of the end of the effective administration of forest law, this was not immediately apparent as the holding of a forest eyre was an infrequent occurrence, the previous occasion in the New Forest had been in 1635, and there was no sudden collapse of the forest system. The hierarchy of forest officers and justices was to continue into the 19th century, and indeed a remnant of forest law survives to this day in the power of the court of verderers to 'inquire into all unlawful inclosures, encroachments, and trespasses whatsoever within the Forest . . . and to punish all such offences . . .' (Stat.40 & 41 Vict., c.121, s.23).

From 1542, with the creation of the post of surveyor general of crown woods, authority in the forests was divided, this new office being under the direction of the Exchequer, with responsibilities for timber and 'the profit of the king'. This introduced a commercial element into forest management sometimes in direct conflict with the responsibilities of the forest officers, whose duty was, in essence, to maintain the forest unchanged. In 1609, in John Norden's survey of coppices, it is recorded that:

Forasmuche as his Majesty (at my being convented before the same) seemed to have a princelie desire to have manie New Copices raysed in the New Forest I thoughte fitt to make his Majesty said desire knowne to some of the keepers there whome I find neither willing to admitt the raysinge of new

nor the demising or felling of the olde under couller of rastrayninge the raunge of the game by the one and abridginge them of covert by the other – which reasons, if they hold forceible, theis certificats are little avaylable. (Sumner 1931, 152)

Excessive felling resulted in an alleged shortage of timber, and need for silvicultural plantations. The first of these, although authorised by the Treasury, was still an offence under forest law and as such was subject for presentment at the forest eyre:

We present that about 100 acres of land have been recently inclosed at Home [Holm] Hill by order of the Lords Commissioners of his Majesties Treasury, and are intended for the growth of wood. (Stagg 1983, 240, no 1555)

Furthermore such inclosures were an infringement of the forest rights possessed by local inhabitants.

Today nearly one-third of the New Forest is enclosed for the growth and management of commercial timber. While this is popularly explained by the former need for navy timber, it has to be noted that the greater part of this enclosure took place after the navy had ceased to use New Forest timber. This paper examines the background to this change, the decline of the forest system, privilege and patronage, the importance of common rights, and the movement for dis-afforestation, this in particular for the period from about 1660 to 1780. A subsequent paper will deal more specifically with the New Forest in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

LANDOWNERS AND COMMONERS

Common rights over the New Forest, in particular the rights of grazing and fuel, are attached to most of the early landholdings in and around the Forest. While for some of these holdings, as for former monastic lands, the rights are known to originate from later grants

and charters, for the majority of holdings the origin of these rights is unknown. It has been alleged that forest rights were allowed by the crown in compensation for the constraints of forest law, but there are reasons to believe that they date from before the creation of the forest. These are the first article of the Charter of the Forest which preserved 'the common of herbage, and of other things in the same forest, to them which before were accustomed to have the same', this with reference to crown demesne woodland afforested by Henry II (Hawkins 1735, vol i, 11). Also there is the commonsense view that as holdings outside the perambulation were unaffected by forest law, there is no reason why they should have been given compensatory rights.

Most of the private land in and around the Forest was in the possession of major landowners, and in consequence they were also the major possessors of common rights, these being exercised by their tenants. There were also numerous small freeholders and cottagers who exercised forest rights, although their entitlement was sometimes challenged, as for instance when a local landowner, Percival Lewis, complained of the injury to the rights of proprietors like himself from 'cattle of every description turned in by a numerous body of individuals, who have not even a pretence, much less a claim to do so' (Lewis 1811, 131).

It has been observed that small commoners were much criticised by those who saw them as an obstacle to progress and improvement, by those who saw their own interests threatened, and by those who resented the small degree of independence which commoners enjoyed.

Moreover, cottagers were mixed up with squatters; and as interests not seldom mask themselves under moral pretences, it was claimed that "instead of schools for virtue" the cottages were "most fruitful seminaries of vice . . . habitations of squalor, famine, and disease." (Hasbach 1908, 99–101).

This applied equally to the forests as to the commons. For example John Norden, employed in the early 17th century as a sur-

veyor of crown woods and an advocate for dis-afforestation, wrote of the:

... infinite poor yet most idle inhabitants [of the forests] living covertly, without law or religion ... among whom are nourished and bred infinite idle frye, that coming ripe grow vagabonds, and infect the Common Wealth with most dangerous leprosy ... (St John 1787, app 2, 3).

The similarity of sentiment suggests that Norden may also have been one of the 'Ministers and Officers' of James I who wrote:

they now dwell in woods and deserts, as abandoned and forlorn men, deprived of the means to learn to know God, or their duties to MAGISTRATES, and live like drones, devoted to thievery, among whom are bred the very spawn of vagabonds and rogues ... The civilizing these unhappy persons, and introducing them in moral and religious duties, is one strong argument in favour of inclosing the wastes and commons. (St John 1787, app 3, 14).

Vancouver described as 'thought to rise above the mere peasant level' the foresters of Woolmer and Alice Holt, who had acquired two or three acres of land and 'what he conceives a sort of independence to himself and family', and was 'found to get on easily, and in some respects independently through life'. Elsewhere Vancouver described the forest dwellers as living in a 'nest and conservatory of sloth, idleness and misery'. In his view, 'the little property in a horse or cow which they may eventually become the owner of' did nothing to ameliorate their condition, and the 'appearance of themselves and families, to say nothing of their morals', when compared with the 'steady day-labourer', made him wish to see the extinguishment of forest rights. A more practical reason for Vancouver's views may have been that the forests, as also did the fisheries, the canals, and the dockyards, provided well paid task work and 'a constant market for all the prime and picked labourers

in the country, leaving little behind but feebleness and debility, to carry forward the common labours of the county'. Also the high wages made them able 'to dispense with the ordinary hours of attendance; and thus an example of idleness is set to the more supine and inactive labourer at home' (Vancouver 1810, 81, 384, 496).

The attitude of the Rev William Gilpin, vicar of Boldre, was equally critical, though more confused. He had found his parish to be in a 'barbarous and immoral state' with the inhabitants 'exposed to every temptation of pillage and robbery, from their proximity to the deer, the game, and the fuel of the New Forest', and his first actions had been to provide 'a healthy and convenient workhouse' and a school (Warner 1830, i, 333, 355). While Gilpin saw the Forest as:

continually preyed on by the incroachments of inferior people. There are multitudes of trespassers ... who build their little huts, and enclose their gardens, and patches of ground, without leave, or ceremony of any kind.

at the same time he saw 'procuring little patches of land for the trouble of inclosing it' as one of the many advantages enjoyed by his parishioners, and he himself incroached on the Forest in order to build his school. Nevertheless, in his opinion:

These advantages procure them not half the enjoyments of common day-labourers. In general they are an indolent race; poor and wretched in the extreme. Instead of having the regular returns of a week's labour to subsist on, too many of them depend on the precarious supply of forest pilfer ... their collateral support is deer-stealing, poaching, or purloining timber. (Gilpin 1791, vol 2, 39-41; *Return*, 1801, 148).

Gilpin's allegations of 'multitudes of trespassers ... who build their little huts' is not supported by a crown survey of 1787. This recorded 426 houses and cottages as

encroachments, but of the 186 buildings for which dates were supplied only eight dated from the preceding 20 years, the other 178 being of more than 20 years standing and perhaps dating back to the last recorded sale of purprestures in 1631. There were two major concentrations of encroachments, 73 at Woodgreen, thought to have originated in the late 17th century, and 102 at East Boldre (Beaulieu Rails), probably associated with the establishment in 1743 of Bucklers Hard shipyard. The remaining encroachments were mainly distributed among the forest villages, 48 at Lyndhurst, 59 at Brockenhurst, 49 at Burley, 39 at Minstead, and 22 at Bramshaw, this suggesting gradual development rather than sudden growth (PRO F20/48 *passim*; McClelland & Hall *c* 1980, 2; Montagu 1909, 12).

By the mid-19th century small commoners were reported in a less hostile manner, and the value of their forest rights are better described. In 1848 at Burley:

there are about seventy families, supported chiefly by labour, these have nearly three hundred children or young people, with a hundred cows and other domestic animals grazing on the Forest, the privilege of turf for fuel, and most of them a little fern and other advantages, not including in these either the ponies or cattle which they cannot winter-feed on their land, nor the equally illegitimate power of deer, timber or land stealing . . . Within these last four years, there have also been built many new cottages . . . chiefly by small owners and labouring people themselves. We have thus at Burley almost no poor, except the aged, infirm, or orphan. (Hill 1848, 5-6)

and in 1868 evidence was given that:

The possession of the privilege of turning out a cow or a pig raises our population above the ordinary population . . . Distress is almost unknown among them, because they are raised above the ordinary labouring man by the possession of this privilege of

turning out. For their land and for their houses they pay a high price or a high rent, but if these men are destroyed . . . you destroy a body of men unique in England – a well-to-do labouring population. (*Report*, 1868, 12, Q.87)

The high rents enjoyed by landowners had been recorded from the early 17th century, but for them there are also less material reasons for maintaining the forest:

The amusements of the chace, which the forests afford, and the beautiful scenes with which they adorn the country, cannot be compensated by an allotment of land to those whose great estates need no addition: the patronage also which many great men possess in the forests, and the power of conferring favours, which they derive from offices, increases their influence in the country; and provincial politics, particularly in respect to elections, may interfere, and induce those, whose interest is at stake, to use every means of frustrating any attempt to inclose the forests. (St John 1787, 163, app 3, 8).

PATRONAGE, PRIVILEGE, AND POLITICS

By the 17th century forestal appointments carried only nominal duties, or could be performed by a deputy, but they were valuable for their emoluments and perquisites, and for the influence which such positions could carry. In the New Forest, three of these appointments, those of lord warden, riding forester, and master keeper of Burley bailiwick, were made by letters patent during the royal pleasure, or for a term of years, or for life. The remaining appointments were made by the lord warden, these including the posts of bowbearer, two rangers, a steward, and the master keeperships of the other eight bailiwicks. Verderers and reguards were elected by the county voters.

The office of lord warden carried considerable emoluments in the form of a house and

land, forest rents (excluding those from Burley bailiwick), privileges such as twelve fee bucks and fifty loads of fuel wood a year, and the right to fill the lesser offices (*5th Report*, 8–13). From 1689 until 1733, with short interruptions, the office was held by the Powlett Dukes of Bolton, who were described as the most important family in Hampshire. During the first half of the 18th century the family filled at least one of the two county seats and controlled one at Winchester, another at St Ives, and, in alliance with the Burrards, the two seats at Lymington. Sometimes they also returned members for Christchurch (*CSPD* 1689–90, i, 20; Sedgwick 1970, i, 248; ii, 365–8).

Charles Powlett was dismissed from his various offices for voting against the Excise Bill in 1733, and was replaced by his kinsman John Wallop, Lord Lymington, member of another leading Hampshire family. He held a county seat until 1720 and controlled others at Andover and Whitchurch (Sedgwick 1970, ii, 507–8). He was related in marriage to the Powlett family in that his sister-in-law, Annabella Bennet, was married to William Powlett, cousin to the 3rd Duke of Bolton (Burke PBK, 2305). It is not clear whether John Wallop retained his appointment after the fall of Walpole in 1742, but in 1746 John Russell, 4th Duke of Bedford, was appointed Lord Warden (DNB), and retained the post until his death in 1771. However, for much of this time Russell did not visit the Forest (Cross 1930, 113), and it may be that Sir Harry Burrard acted as his deputy. In 1771 the appointment went to William Henry, 1st Duke of Gloucester and a brother of George III, who in turn was followed by his nephew Prince Frederick, Duke of York, from 1805 to 1827 (Lewis 1811, 27).

The duty of the riding forester was to ride before the king on his visits to the Forest, and for this he received an annual salary of £500, a fee buck and a fee doe (*5th Report*, 10). John Burrard was appointed riding forester in 1689 at the request of Charles Powlett and only eight days after his own appointment as lord warden (*CSPD* 1689–90, 32). The Burrards had considerable political influence in Lymington and had decided to:

place the Borough under the protection of the Earl of Wiltshire (afterwards second Duke of Bolton) and his family, upon the mutual understanding that the two families should honourably support one another.

This alliance lasted until 1774 and involved sharing control of Lymington, where a Powlett held at least one of the two seats from 1705–61. While not always harmonious, the relationship brought obvious advantages to the Burrard family, members of whom were appointed riding forester in 1721, 1742, and 1791. The last of these, Lt Gen Sir Harry Burrard, was still in office in 1811 and probably continued until his death in 1813. The later history of the office is obscure, but it was abolished on the death of Sir Benjamin Stephenson in 1839 (Burrard 1874, 16–18, 25–7, 35, 119, 125; Lewis 1811, 93; *Report* 1848, 302, app D, footnote).

The office of bailiff or master keeper of Burley bailiwick carried considerable benefits in the form of the lodge and land, forest rights, fee rents, windfall wood, and the profit of court. In the late 17th century it was held by the Coventry family. Charles Powlett, later 2nd Duke of Bolton, married Margaret Coventry in 1679, and by 1695 was himself the bailiff. The family held the office until the death in 1809 of Catherine, widow of the 6th Duke, when the remainder of the lease was purchased back by the crown, and the lodge was demolished (*Abstract*, 1853, 66; *CSPD* Feb–Dec 1685, i, 196; *CTB* 1686–9, viii pt ii, 758; *CTB* 1693–6, x pt ii, 962; Lewis 1811, 67–8; *2nd Report*).

The lord warden appointed the master keepers of the other eight bailiwicks. The perquisites were fewer than those of Burley bailiwick but were still substantial in the form of lodge, land, and forest rights:

these lodges being built on a large scale had become objects to gentlemen of consideration who for the purpose of enjoying them and the privileges annexed to them were desirous of being appointed Keepers, they nominating persons under them who had also inferior lodges etc.

By 1789 the cost of repairing these lodges was a matter of concern, and from 1806 steps were taken to end the privileges of the master keepers, none of whom held lodges in 1833. Surviving returns of master keepers from 1660-9, 1789, and 1811 and other evidence show most keepers to have had local connections through politics or kinship (HRO 11M74,122; *5th Report*, 8, 95-6, app 26-7; *Report*, 1833, 243, 251; Stagg 1983, 197; Lewis 1811, 67).

The political value of these posts to the officers has already been treated with reference to the control of Lymington by the Burrards. Christchurch was controlled by the Hooper family until 1790, the family being linked to the Harris family through the Ashley Coopers, Earls of Shaftesbury. In 1700 Edward Hooper's father had married Dorothy Ashley Cooper, whose sister Elizabeth married Malmesbury's grandfather in 1707. This relationship resulted in members of the Harris family being returned for Christchurch between 1761 and 1788. At various times Hoopers and Harrises were appointed master keepers, just as had been an Ashley in 1663-4. On his death in 1795, Edward Hooper left his estate at Hurn Court to James Harris, Earl of Malmesbury (Sedgwick 1970, ii, 147; *VCH* v, 97; Dyson 1954, 174; Stagg 1983, 149, 157).

In 1790 Edward Hooper lost Christchurch to George Rose, an astute politician who enjoyed the goodwill of George III and the intimate friendship of William Pitt, for whom he handled political patronage as secretary of the Treasury. In this post he had been a pupil of John Robinson, from 1787-1802 surveyor general of woods. Rose had bought Cuffnells in Lyndhurst c 1784, and later was elected verderer and appointed deputy warden, and his son William Stewart Rose was bowbearer. He was returned by Sir Harry Burrard to Lymington in 1788, and subsequently bought property in Christchurch, where: 'Reports of his *great* influence in the disposal of *little* places were diligently circulated . . . and several personal favours actually conferred on some of the voters'. From 1802-12 Rose's co-member for Christchurch was William Sturges Bourne, who in 1817 attained the offices of first com-

missioner of woods and lord warden. Rose's election did not only benefit himself, but materially strengthened the interest of the government and the crown in the New Forest (Burrard 1874, 118; Warner 1793, i, 66; *DNB*; Watson 1960, 270 footnote).

SILVICULTURE AND NAVY TIMBER IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

A survey of the New Forest made in 1609 gave the number of 'Tymber Treces' as 123,927 of which 23,927 could be spared, also 118,072 loads of 'Fyerwood and decayed Trees' of which 58,072 loads could be spared. In addition there were 1,304 acres of 'Coppice Woods', and 96 acres of 'Aldermoores'. This 'immense quantity' of timber was seen as evidence of the efficacy of the former system of forest management:

far better calculated for the Protection of the Forests than that which has succeeded it; for at that Time every Offence committed in a Forest, every Injury done to the Timber or other Property of the Crown, was presented at and tried in the Courts of the Forests: The Officers by meeting and acting together in those Courts, were Checks on the Conduct of each other; and by keeping Records of their Proceedings, some Uniformity was preserved in the Plan of Management:

It was further stated that:

the same Care appears to have been continued, until the Contests began between Charles the 1st and his Parliament; during the Continuance of which, the Trees in almost every one of the Royal Forests were, by the one Party or the other, disposed of or destroyed. Soon after the Restoration, the Attention of Government was again drawn to the Forests, by the Writings of Mr Evelyn . . . (*5th Report*, 24, 100-1)

While one can only concur with such deserved praise of the former forest system,

there is much evidence to reject the opinion that damage to the forests should entirely be attributed to the Commonwealth period. From 1542 the authority of the forest officers had been lessened through the creation of the post of surveyor general of crown woods with responsibilities for timber and 'the profit of the king', this office being under the direction of the Exchequer. From the late 16th century warrants for the felling of timber were issued by the Treasury, for instance a warrant for 20 tons of timber for Guernsey in 1571, for 40 oaks and 20 tons of elm in 1573, a further 100 oaks for the repair of Guernsey Castle in 1590, 30 tons of timber for Guernsey in 1597, 100 tons of timber for Guernsey Castle in 1604, 50 decayed trees for Portsmouth's fortifications in 1608, 100 timber trees for repairs of the house at Blandford Forum and also 50 for repairs at Hurst Castle in 1609 (*CSPD*, *passim*).

The survey of 1609, while supplying evidence that the New Forest was still amply stocked with timber, does add that the trees recommended for sale were very old and in decay, in fact exactly as one would anticipate after centuries of protective management. Following the survey there appears to have been an increase in demands for timber. A warrant was issued in 1612 for the felling of 1000 oaks for the Woolwich and Deptford dockyards (Whithed, 91), and a warrant in 1631 for 2000 trees for the navy (*CSPD*, 12 Dec 1631). Also the large scale felling of timber, as recorded at the 1635 forest eyre, would appear to have been possible only through the divided authority within the Forest. Robert and Andrew Treswell were fined £2000 for felling 1500 oak and beech, Stephen Dancey, shipwright, was fined £3000 for felling 1000 oaks, and Thomas Williams, shipwright, fined £1000 for felling 2000 oaks (Stagg 1983, 76–7). An ordinance of April 1649 refers to 'the great spoil, waste, and destruction of timber made of late years throughout the whole Kingdom' (Hart 1966, 135).

Likewise the record of the post-restoration forest courts show the continued destruction of wood and timber (Stagg 1983, *passim*), and commissions of inquiry into the destruction

and waste of timber were held in 1672, 1673, 1679, 1692, and 1693 (*CTB*, vol iii pt ii, 1204; *ibid* vol iv, 124; *ibid* vol vi, 199; *ibid* vol ix pt iv, 1550; *ibid* vol x pt i, 140), and a House of Lords committee in 1698 considered what abuses had been committed in the New Forest (*HL MSS*, ns vol iii, 174–191).

Nevertheless, in the early 18th century there would appear to have been no shortage of navy timber. In 1707 the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich were 'better stocked with timber than ever they were heretofore', although only a small proportion of the timber used in the dockyards was supplied from the royal forests. In the three years 1703–5 the dockyards received a total of 76,319 loads of timber (a load was 50 cubic feet), while in the five years up to 1707 only 8,683 loads were supplied from the royal forests. The value of the forest supply was 'for keeping the prices down' (*HL MSS*, ns vii, 353–6). Eighty years later, in 1789, the situation was virtually unchanged the then annual consumption of the dockyards being given as 25,000 loads of which 2,000 loads were supplied by the royal forests (*5th Report*, 124), with the supply from the New Forest being of particular importance as 'it is in the vicinity of Portsmouth Dockyard and would in a great measure regulate the Price of all the Timber brought to that Yard' (*PRO F20/48*, 301).

Further surveys of navy timber were made in 1707, 1764, and 1783. The first of these gave 12,476 trees, and the second 19,836 trees averaging 92 cubic feet in size (*5th Report*, 23). The 1783 survey was made by Thomas Nichols, the purveyor for the Portsmouth Dockyard, but the results are confused. Nichols' report said that there were 41,792 trees averaging 63 cubic feet (*HRO 2M30/669*), while the Land Revenue Commissioners variously gave a figure of 12,447 trees averaging 80 cubic feet (thus implying a decrease in available timber) (*5th Report*), but elsewhere the Commissioners give a figure of 32,611 trees averaging 50 cubic feet (Flower 1980, 316–7). None of these surveys can usefully be compared with that of 1609, in that the criteria were not necessarily the same.

From the 1707 survey was determined an annual felling rate for the navy of 300 timber trees, 100 large beech trees, and 50 old oaks for the next 40 years,

there being so many young trees which are not of sufficient Bigness to be useful in her Majesty's Navy now, but will be grown up to proper Dimensions by the End of the Time proposed for felling the before-mentioned number, that the Forest will be then at least as well stocked with useful Timber as it is now . . . (*5th Report*, 103)

This felling rate appears to have continued unchanged at least until 1786. Figures for the years 1761 to 1786 inclusive indicate that during this period 21,000 loads of oak and beech were supplied to the navy (*5th Report*, 110), the equivalent of an annual supply of 450 trees each of 90 cubic feet.

Further evidence of the quantity of young stock is available for 1771 when John Pitt, the surveyor general of woods, described the New Forest as being in an improved state, 'the young Timber now growing there is innumerable' (*Report*, 1771). Similarly in 1791 Thomas Nichols reported 'a vast number of trees in succession' (HRO 2M30/669).

In the New Forest in 1670-1 some 300 acres were inclosed as nurseries for timber (*CTB*, vol iii pt ii, 874). Further inclosures were approved in 1690 (*CTB*, vol ix pt ii, 757), but no action was taken, and it may be that objections had been raised that such inclosure infringed both forest law and common rights and required statutory authority. Certainly in 1693 a Bill for the Increase and Preservation of Timber in the New Forest was presented by Sir Edward Seymour, one of the lords of the treasury, but this was defeated at the second reading (*JHC*, vol 10, 272). A similar Bill was introduced in 1697 by John Smith, also a lord of the treasury, and despite petitions signed by more than 1000 freeholders and commoners of the New Forest that the Bill was prejudicial to their rights and privileges, this time received the royal assent in 1698 (*Report*, 1875, app 1).

The ensuing Act (Stat. 9 & 10 Will.3, c.36)

provided for the progressive inclosure of 6,000 acres for the growth of timber, and, perhaps as a sop to the Bill's opponents, gave statutory recognition to the common rights of pasture, pannage, and fuel, and other unspecified privileges, these probably including the cutting of turf and bracken. Nevertheless there was resistance to the inclosure which followed, and in 1702 repairs were necessary to all seven inclosures which had been broken down by 'disorderly persons' (*CTB*, vol xvii pt i, 169), and Philip Ryley, the surveyor-general of woods, was unable to find two justices of peace willing to serve on a commission for further inclosure (*CTP*, vol iii, 134). As a result only 1,000 acres was inclosed at this time (Table 1; *CTB*, vol xv, 278; *ibid* vol xviii, 279; PRO MPB45/1). It was not until 1743 that a commission was agreed for making further inclosures (*CTBP*, vol 5, 335), and not until 1751 that a further 300 acres were inclosed (*5th Report*, 25).

In 1756, as a result of renewed concern over the general shortage of timber, an Act was passed enabling the crown and other owners of wastes, woods, and pastures, to inclose these for the planting of trees, but only with the consent of 'the major Part in Number and Value' of the commoners (Stat.29 Geo.2 c.36). No such consent was given in the New Forest. A further commission for the inclosure of 400 acres is said to have been issued in 1766, but not acted upon (HRO 11M74, 6). This may have been due to opposition from the Duke of Bedford, the lord warden, who considered that the earlier inclosures had been 'shamefully executed' (Cross 1930, 112-7). In 1770 a warrant was issued to inclose a further 1,000 acres in the New Forest, but its execution was suspended upon some general objections by the Duke of Bedford (*5th Report*, 25-6) and the inclosures were not completed until after the duke's death in 1771 (PRO MPB45/2-6). A further 1,000 acres were inclosed in 1776 (PRO MPB45/7).

CONCLUSION

While in 1771 the New Forest could be described as being in an 'improved state',

Table 1. New Forest: Silvicultural Inclosures made in the 18th century under the Statute 9 & 10 Will. 3 c.36 (1698).

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Location</i>
<i>c</i> 1700	Priors Acre	136	SU2513
	Salisbury Trench	100	SU2514
	Puckpits	77	SU2509
	Rhinefield Old	177	SU2605
	Burley Old	122	SU2404
	Woodfidley	295	SU3404
	Roe Old	93	SU2008
		<hr/> 1000	
<i>c</i> 1751	Etherise	102	SU3205
	Black Bush	34	SU3304
	Pignal	94	SU3103
		<hr/> 230	
<i>c</i> 1768	Aldridge Hill	132	SU2703
	Ocknell	248	SU2411
	Pitts	121	SU1914
	Sloden	250	SU2112
	Coppice of Linwood	289	SU2414
		<hr/> 1040	
<i>c</i> 1775	Furzy Lawn	79	SU2910
	Long Beech	146	SU2512
	Wilverley	480	SU2401
	Raven's Nest	74	SU2514
	Rhinefield Sandys	225	SU2504
		<hr/> 1004	
	Grand Total	3274 acres	

nevertheless there had been no increase in the supply of navy timber from the royal forests, this remaining at only about 10% of that used in the dockyards. In the New Forest only 3,300 acres had been inclosed of the 6,000 acres permitted under the 1698 Act, and no further inclosures were made until 1808.

Such limited planting does not suggest that Evelyn's views were generally held, or more

importantly taken sufficiently seriously in official circles. Other factors may have been the local opposition to inclosure, and that the forecast shortage of navy timber took a long time to materialise. Contrary to public belief, there does not seem to have been any real shortage until late in the 18th century, but by 1787 William King was of the opinion that 'a want of Timber is approaching quickly, that

the demand has over run the supply many years last past', and Nichols in 1791 reported 'That there is a great decrease of Timber within these few years in the Kingdom is certain', the principal problem being 'that there is a great scarcity of Oak Timber of a size fit for the largest Ships' (PRO F20/48, 299; HRO 2M30/669, Nichols to Fordyce, 16 Apr 1791; BL Add MSS 38,760, f.188).

However, over and above any silvicultural considerations, there were political and financial reasons for change in the forest system. Upon the accession of George III in 1760, the hereditary revenues of the crown had been surrendered in exchange for a civil list or fixed income of £800,000 a year, and in consequence the income derived from the crown estates became a matter of direct concern to the administration. During the first 25 years of the reign the average net income of the crown estates was little in excess of £6,000 a year, in 1780 this resulting in Edmund Burke's exposure of the mismanagement of the crown estates and plan of economical reform:

As to the forest lands . . . I propose to have those rights of the crown valued as manerial rights are valued on an inclosure; and a defined portion of land to be given for them . . .

The management of the forests was now a matter both of governmental and public concern, and considerable changes were to follow (Stat. 1 Geo.3 c.1; May 1875, i, 253-4; *PH*, 21, col 27-8).

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