

The Management of the Crown Lands, 1649–60

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THE Act for the sale of Crown lands (16 July 1649) was one of the first fruits of the Cromwellian army's political mastery of England, and represented the first effective measure taken by Parliament to eliminate military pay arrears.¹ The Act stipulated that the debentures which had been issued to the soldiers in lieu of their arrears would be honoured at their face value for purchases of the late king's estates.² As a result of overvaluation by the Parliamentary surveyors,³ the estates in the end realized almost £1½ million.⁴ After resales have been taken into account, it appears that a quarter of the estates were acquired by civilians, while the other three-quarters remained in military hands. Four hundred and forty-nine soldiers, drawn almost entirely from the officer class, are known to have acquired Crown land.⁵ The purpose of this article is to examine how the new owners looked after the Crown estates during their short period of ownership.

(i) *Civilian Purchasers*

During the Interregnum, little was said about the civilian purchasers, which is a likely indication that they did not introduce many spectacular changes. At the Restoration, when the condition of the Crown estates came under the searching scrutiny of the surveyor-general, Sir Charles Harbord, and the county surveyors under him, the behaviour of the soldiers was the subject of severe recriminations, but most of the civilian purchasers escaped without reproach. Only one instance has been discovered where a civilian purchaser presided over the destruction of a royal manor house. It occurred at Langton Herring, Dorset, where the house was torn down and the materials sold. But Viscount William Monson, the purchaser of the manor, charged that the act of destruction had been performed by William and Alice Biles, who had been in unlawful possession of the house.⁶ In most other cases about which information

¹ I wish to record my gratitude to Professor F. J. Fisher, who read an early draft of this article and offered many helpful criticisms.

² C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, 3 vols., 1911, vol. II, pp. 168 ff.

³ Ian Gentles, 'The Debentures Market and Military Purchases of Crown Land', University of London, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1969, p. 102.

⁴ Pipe Office, Declared Accounts (1662), P.R.O., E351/603/87.

⁵ Gentles, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, 186.

⁶ Chancery Proceedings, P.R.O., C5/411/152.

has been found the civilians showed pride in their record as landholders and drew attention to the improvements they had made and the capital expenses they had incurred. Several of them wrote to Sir Charles Harbord rationalizing their co-operation with the 'late usurpers' as springing from a desire to preserve the royal estates from waste and depredation. In most cases Harbord accepted their claims without cavil, and they were permitted to continue as tenants of the king with generous leases. The six men who had bought the manor of Kennington, Surrey, from the two initial purchasers, John Trenchard and William Scott, had, as Harbord confirmed, "bin at great Charges in erecting Howses, makeing wharfes and other things for the Improuement of the Lands they hould. . ."¹ Peter Rosewell, who had bought the farm of the manor of Englishcombe, Somerset, submitted a claim to have preserved the timber "from all violence and spoyle by parliamentary purchasors and alsoe fully [to have] performed all Covenants on his parte in the same letters pattents." Harbord agreed with Rosewell's claim and recommended to the Lord Treasurer, the earl of Southampton, that he be granted a lease on easy terms.² Andrew Raddon and David Owen had bought the ditches of the castle of Exeter from Captain John Awbrey in 1655, at which time they noted that the land had lain waste for ten years. They subsequently spent £700, and the ground that had been worth £12 per annum was now worth £30, "and when the plantacions are growne may yeild £50 *per annum*." Harbord accepted the accuracy of their claims as well.³ John Tracy, a London merchant who had bought the Kensington division of Hyde Park, petitioned the Crown in September 1660 to be allowed to retain the two houses that he had built on the road at Knightsbridge. He justified his petition with a claim never to have cut down any timber in the park, a claim which could have been checked without difficulty.⁴ The Middle, Banqueting, and Old Lodge divisions of Hyde Park had been similarly well treated. The purchaser, Anthony Deane, had promptly leased most of them out, and the two lessees had allowed them to continue as they were before, a place where fashionable Londoners resorted for picnics and horseback riding. The only change during the 1650's was the introduction of an admission charge for coaches and horses.⁵ The man who had bought part of St John's Wood, Middlesex, a certain John Collins, begged the king at the Restoration to give him a ninety-nine-year lease of the property. In support of his request he pleaded that as a previous lessee of the property he had been compelled to purchase it from the commissioners for sale of Crown lands. He had tried in vain to delay paying the purchase money until he could pay it to his rightful sovereign; nevertheless, he had redeemed himself by spending £6,000 to im-

¹ Crown Estate Office, The Surveyor General's Books of Constats (1660-1), P.R.O., Crest6/2/131.

² Crest6/2/302, 303.

³ Crest6/1/45-6.

⁴ V.C.H., *Middlesex*, II, p. 237.

⁵ J. Larwood, *The Story of the London Parks*, 1872, pp. 38, 41.

prove the property. In view of the fact that Collins had only paid £1,791 18s. od. for St John's Wood in the first place, his claim was doubtless exaggerated, but it is impossible to know by how much.¹

(ii) *Military Purchasers*

With the notable exception of John Lambert, most of the Parliamentary officers have received a bad press for their stewardship of the Crown lands. The historian of Wimbledon speaks of "the evident gratification which . . . General Lambert felt in the improvement of the house and grounds." The story of how he retired to Wimbledon to cultivate his flower gardens after falling out with Cromwell is well known. The result of his care was that he "had the finest tulips and gilliflowers that could be got for love or money. . ." After the Restoration Queen Henrietta Maria sold the estate, not because it had fallen into decay, but because "it smelt so strong of a rebel." The new owner, George Digby, wrote to his son commending it as the noblest seat in England.²

Many of the officers of course did nothing but draw the income from their holdings. The majority of the Crown lands had already been let out on long leases, and frequently the soldiers were content to allow the lessees quiet possession in return for regular payment of rent. Other soldiers, however, were not satisfied to draw a modest income in this fashion, but insisted upon increasing their return. Ready cash could be obtained in several ways. When an estate was rich in woodland the timber could be cut and the deer killed. A park could be 'disparked'—converted to arable or pasture—and let for a higher rent. A large estate could be subdivided into small holdings, whose total yield would be higher than the original unfragmented rent. A large mansion house or lodge could be stripped of its lead, for which there was always a high demand, or it could be completely dismantled and all the materials—stone, glass, and wood in particular—carted off and auctioned. That this was expected to happen was clear from the instructions to the Parliamentary surveyors to assess manor houses, not in terms of their yearly value, but according to the sale value of their materials after the costs of demolition had been deducted.

Before considering the soldiers' motives for engaging in the destruction of royal estates, it must first be established how much destruction they were actually responsible for. It is known that after the Restoration the revenues from Crown lands shrank to a fraction of their former size.³ It has been implied that some of this shrinkage was due to the depredations which had occurred during the 'usurpation'. However, the extent of these depredations was fre-

¹ *Calendar of the State Papers, Domestic, 1660-1* (subsequently referred to as *CSPD*), p. 290.

² W. A. Bartlett, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Wimbledon, Surrey*, 1865, pp. 68, 46, 48.

³ W. A. Shaw, ed., *Calendar of the Treasury Books*, 1, p. xli.

quently exaggerated by men who had good reason for doing so. At the same time soldiers were blamed for destruction which had occurred either before they took over the estates or in 1659-60, when their authority was no longer respected by their tenants.

First, let us deal with the exaggerations and defects in the royalist accusations of the 1660's. The surveyors under Sir Charles Harbord often overestimated the amount of timber or deer that had previously existed on an estate, and misleadingly portrayed the former good condition of manor houses, lodges, and other buildings. This is true, for example, of the seat at Berkhamsted, over which bitter tears were shed in 1660. The surveyors of 1650 had noted in a memorandum that "... the chimneyes and some other parte of the aforesaid house is much ruyned and out of repaire and there is no water belonginge or neare to the same, the pipes being cutt and carryed away in theise troublesome tymes, and the watermill standinge farr of which conveyeth water to the said house is alsoe broken and carryed away." Five tenements which were part of the capital messuage were also said to be out of repair. One of the two watermills was "very much out of Repaire."¹ Regarding Moat Park, Berkshire, where the Parliamentary purchaser was said to have wantonly killed all the deer, it is interesting to read in the survey of 1649, "... in the said parke there is noe deere . . . nor hath not beene for severall yeares past."² In 1660 it was reported that there was no timber in the manors of Theobalds, Crossbrookes, and Perriors "fit for the use of his Majesty;" yet in the Parliamentary surveys for Crossbrookes and Perriors there is no mention or valuation of timber at all, suggesting that there cannot have been very much to begin with.³ In the survey of Theobalds manor timber is occasionally mentioned, but it is not separately valued, indicating that the quantity was negligible.⁴

The second consideration that must modify any conception of soldierly wantonness is that a great deal of destruction occurred before the military purchasers assumed possession of their properties. The surveyors of Berkhamsted, for example, noted that the water pipes had been carried off during the civil wars.⁵ The honor of Kenilworth had been leased by King Charles to the earl of Monmouth for his lifetime, but the earl "hath not laid out anie thing about the repaying of the said Castle since the xxiiiith of July last, and but very litle for many yeares last past."⁶ King James had appointed George Armstrong the keeper of several buildings in Theobalds manor, but he "hath not beene diligent in his place, but hath suffered much harme and ruine to be committed."⁷

It is hardly surprising that a great deal of spoil and waste occurred on the

¹ Augmentation Office: Parliamentary Surveys, P.R.O., E317 Hertfordshire 7, fols. 4, 5, 6.

² E317 Berkshire 39, fol. 3. ³ E317 Hertfordshire 20, 30. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7, fol. 4. ⁶ E317 Warwickshire 22, fol. 9. ⁷ E317 Hertfordshire 24, fol. 4.

royal estates during the seven years leading up to the execution of the king. The grip of royal authority was shattered in the south and east where most royal estates lay. Yet Parliament was too busy with more pressing matters to ensure that the lands which fell to it were prudently administered. In many estates a complete breakdown of authority took place, and conditions of near anarchy must have prevailed. Not till 1649 did Parliament begin forcefully asserting its authority, and it is from this period that one catches a glimpse of the havoc that had been wreaked. Poaching had been rife, and the soldiers were among the principal offenders.¹ Timber was a much more lucrative commodity than game, and it had been the chief object of plunder for people living in or near the royal parks. In October 1649 the Council of State sent an order to the mayor and justices of the peace of Sarum, Wiltshire, regarding the assaults that had been made upon Clarendon Park with its immense store of timber. "We are informed that there is great waste made of the timber in Clarendon Park, by the poor of Salisbury, which is a very great loss, that timber being so proper for shipping, and the want of it so great. You are to take order with the poor not to make those wastes and spoils, and find some means for their present employment; and if they shall persist in such spoils, to proceed against and punish them."²

The Parliamentary surveyors later allowed £500 for the timber that had been wasted and spoiled in Clarendon Park.³ Reports of destruction of timber were also received in connection with Bowood Park, Wiltshire; Bewdley Park, Worcestershire; Chertsey, Surrey, and Enfield Park, Middlesex.⁴ There was also extensive cutting in the manor of Eltham, Kent, but it was carried out with official approval. Between 1644 and 1648 173 acres of woodland were sold there in four parcels for a total of £602. Five acres were given away "in lew and respect of divers wasts and spoyles made therein by the poor people in those parts."⁵ The supply of deer at Eltham was also diminished, and in July 1649 Colonel Rich was sent with a troop of horse to put a stop to the poaching. A few months later the Parliamentary surveyors reported that the manor house of Eltham was "much out of repaire and soe not tenentable. . ."⁶ It was hardly a choice piece of real estate that the officers of Rich's regiment inherited in September 1650.

Perhaps the most sensational instance of destruction before 1649 occurred

¹ CSPD, 1649-50, p. 300.

² CSPD, 1649-50, pp. 347-8.

³ E317 Wiltshire 26, fols. 7, 14, 18, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.* 22; CSPD, 1649-50, 188, 526; E317 Middlesex 18.

⁵ John Bently, *A List of Woods, Underwoods, Timber and Trees felled, and sold out of the King and Queen, Their Majesties Forrests, Chaies, Parks, Manors and Lands: Within the Counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire and Middlesex*. . . (1648). The title is misleading. In fact the 6-page pamphlet deals only with the manor of Eltham.

⁶ CSPD, 1649-50, p. 221; E317 Kent 18, fol. 2.

in the fens of Lincolnshire. Long before the Interregnum the fens had been the scene of violent uprisings by inhabitants who were struggling to defend their way of life against the drainage schemes of the Crown and other great interests.¹ The civil war, however, seems to have brought an added stimulus, since the uprisings reached new extremes of destructiveness after 1642, at which time the royal manor of Epworth was singled out for special attention. In June of 1642 John Allen and sixteen others entered the manor in a tumultuous fashion, broke down the fences, put in their own cattle, destroyed 160 acres of corn and other crops, and continued rioting for many days until they had laid waste 4,000 acres of drained lands and pulled down several houses. The violence was renewed in 1647 and 1651, in which year the two Leveller leaders, John Lilburne and John Wildman, joined the struggle on the inhabitants' side.²

One of the provisions of the Act for sale of Crown lands was that timber fit for the use of the navy and standing within fifteen miles of a navigable river was not to be sold. Trees which met this specification were marked out before the Parliamentary surveys were made, and sometimes their number and value were noted in the surveys themselves. The windfall of royal timber came just in time for the rebuilding of the English navy in preparation for Cromwell's expansionist foreign policy. It is important to remember, therefore, that a good proportion of the destruction of Crown timber, about which his Majesty's surveyors were so vocal in 1660, was not the work of soldiers but a consequence of the official policy of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Exact figures for the amount of timber reserved for the navy are not known, but it is known that on some large estates virtually all the good timber was reserved in this way. Such was the case in Ampthill, Beckering, and Brogborough Parks, Bedfordshire.³ It was also true of Windsor Great Park, where 2,664 trees were marked for the use of the navy. The rest of the park's woods consisted "... for the most parte [of] old dotterell and decayed trees good for little save the fire."⁴ In Theobalds Park 15,608 trees were marked for the use of the navy, having an estimated value of £9,845 9s. 5d. This was greater than the value of the timber left to the military purchasers, which amounted to only £7,259 13s. 2d.⁵ It is likely that the Admiralty commissioners caused a good deal of additional waste and spoil on the Crown estates when they came to remove the navy's timber. An example of this spoliation is contained in a complaint to the Admiralty committee from Mr Walter, Major-General Thomas Harrison's agent

¹ See H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, 1940, p. 52 *et passim*; Joan Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme Before Vermuyden', *Agric. Hist. Rev.*, 1, 1953.

² For a full account of the tumults at Epworth during the Interregnum, see *CSPD*, 1652-3, pp. 373-5. This account, which was submitted by the original tenants in 1653, appears to be shot through with hyperbole in several places.

³ *CSPD*, 1655-6, p. 82.

⁴ E317 Berkshire 26, fol. 3.

⁵ E317 Hertfordshire 27, fol. 15.

in Marylebone Park, "that men driving carts laden with timber out of Marylebone Park, go over his grass, break down his pales and hedges, and do other damage."¹ This experience must have been repeated on dozens of other former Crown estates.

A final phase of destruction for which the soldiers cannot be held responsible accompanied the chaos and disorder surrounding the Restoration. Whether motivated by a desire for royalist vengeance or by simple opportunism, many people took the return of Charles II as the signal for an attack upon the property of the hapless soldiers. Thus, in November 1660, John Nelthorp, formerly a captain in Twisleton's regiment and the purchaser of a lodge in Enfield Chase, Middlesex, informed Charles Harbord that "the Inhabitants in and about Endefeild Chace . . . have already committed many trespasses and abuses in breakeing and destroyeing the hedges and fences of his Majesties Lands within the said Chace . . . and doe threaten to committ more trespasses and injuries . . . pretending to be Countenanced therein by persons of Quality."² Similar tales flowed in from other parts of the country. George Glyn, who had bought tenements in the manor of Boyton, Cornwall, wrote that he and his servants had been expelled from their homes and his cattle driven off the land.³ In both cases Harbord ordered the vandalism to be stopped and gave the Parliamentarians permission to continue in possession of their properties for the time being. In Theobalds Park, Hertfordshire, and the manor of Rudfen, Warwickshire, the occupants complained that some of the timber remaining there had been seized "by certaine persons pretending an authority from his Majestie. . ." Again Harbord ordered a stop to the spoil.⁴ In Bagshot Park, Surrey, it was related, ". . . one Thomas Fry, a person of noe credit, hath gotten into possession of his Majesties House . . . and pretends to cutt downe certaine Trees . . . which are not to be fallen or meddled withall without speciall Warrant from his Majestie. . ." He was ordered to be removed from the house, and custody was returned to Thomas Symonds, who had been the tenant under Charles I.⁵

Perhaps the most detailed account of destruction that occurred at the Restoration was left by Captain Adam Baynes. In his correspondence is a paper entitled, 'A Perticular or Estimate of the Losse and Damage which did Accrew to Mr. Baynes . . . in Holdenby . . . 1661'. It itemizes the losses of wood, deer, and fish which were inflicted upon him by his under tenants, to the value of £70. They had also flouted his orders by ploughing up 182 acres of pasture before the last Lady Day. Baynes had lost all the grass that might have grown there at the rate of 2s. an acre, and he had also been "prejudiced in his Stocke for want thereof." In an appended statement Robert Baynes asserted that the

¹ CSPD, 1651, p. 509.

² Crest6/2/123.

³ Crest6/2/177.

⁴ Crest6/1/228, 33-4.

⁵ Crest6/1/38.

under tenants had trampled on the rest of Baynes's pasture when they went every day to plough their 182 acres. The total damage was said to amount to £112. In addition, the under tenants were withholding their rents to the sum of £198 16s. od., "many of them refusinge to pay him upon pretence that they did not enioy theire bargaines."¹ If Baynes's experience is at all typical the Parliamentary purchasers must have had a trying time of it immediately after the overthrow of the Protectorate.

Yet when all these extenuating factors have been taken into account, it remains true that military purchasers wrought great alterations in the Crown estates during their period of tenure. Timber was cut down, deer were killed off, palaces were demolished, and parks enclosed and converted to arable or pasture. During the 1660's Royalists gave horrifying accounts of the sorry decline of certain royal seats from their previous condition of splendour. The surveyor of Hertfordshire, for example, must have wept as he recorded the decay into which the once great honor of Berkhamsted had sunk: "In obedience to your Lordships comand I have bin at Barkhamsted where I finde a noble Seate and Howse left standing but much worse than I have heartofore knowne itt. All the west front thereof under the Gallerie being converted to a barne, and other parts of itt decayed by defects in the tyleing and takeing away the Lead over the gatehowse and other places and much of the Leaden pipes from the walls, and by haveing the Backhowse and Brewhowse [turned in] to a Stable and the Dairy howse to a barne; The great oulde Barne being quite taken away and gone. And the Water that served the howse by a force from the River, all broken up and a new buckett well, made, soe that I thinke to re-paire the Howse, and build a new Barne and a Stable will cost 500 li or more, and then itt will want a good Tenant to keepe it in repaire and releue the poore, wherewith that little markett Towne abownds. And to governe the people much seduced of late by new doctrines preacht unto them by Collonel Axtell and others that haue long prevailed in those partes . . . the Woods are all cutt downe (except about 70 Beech trees and shrubs) to the value of, as I am tould, of [*sic*] aboue 10,000 li and the defaceing of the Seate which was very noble and the Impoverishing of the Land now much worne out with Tyllage. And it is now beleueed that Collonel Axtell hath already Raysed his purchase money by Wood and Corne, and that most of the other purchasers are noe great losers thereby."²

Other accounts of destruction are less vivid. In 1661 Sir Orlando Bridgman, lord chief justice of the Common Pleas, received a lease of Bowood Park, Wiltshire. The yearly value was put at £321 10s. od. and the timber was said to be worth £248. These figures contrast starkly with the 1653 valuation: yearly value £457 11s. od. and timber worth £4,512 10s. 3d. The terse explanation

¹ B.M., Add. MS. 21, 427/291-2.

² Crest6/1/21.

for the disparity was that "most of the timber [was] . . . destroyed by purchasers under the late usurped powers."¹ All timber "worthy to be excepted for his Majesty's use" was also said to have disappeared from the manors of Theobalds, Crossbrookes, and Perriers, Hertfordshire,² from New Park, Yorkshire,³ Bestwood Park, Nottinghamshire,⁴ Moat Park, Berkshire,⁵ the lordship of Kenilworth, Warwickshire,⁶ the manor of Shippon, Berkshire,⁷ Wareham Wood in the manor of Stoke Climsland, Cornwall,⁸ Grafton and Potterspury Park, Northamptonshire,⁹ Clarendon Park, Wiltshire,¹⁰ and Oatlands Park, Surrey.¹¹ Some ambitious soldiers did more than just cut timber. The men of Fairfax's foot regiment killed the deer and sold the woods in Cheshunt Park and also left the lands "plowed and much worne."¹² The deer also disappeared from New Park, Yorkshire. Robert Lilburne evidently took little care of the park, for the gardens and orchards also decayed, and the hedge was allowed to rot, with the result that "swine did sundry times get into the said gardens and orchards, to the prejudice of the said plants and flowers and herbs."¹³ Deer were also killed in Moat Park, Berkshire, where the lands were in part ploughed and subdivided into several enclosures.¹⁴ The purchasers of Old Enfield Park, Middlesex, and the forest of Alice Holt, Hampshire, were also said to have taken the extra step of ploughing the land and wearing it "out of hart."¹⁵

Faithful to their reputation for iconoclasm, the Parliamentary soldiers showed themselves no respecters of famous fabrics. Richmond Palace, Surrey, had been in good condition in 1649 but when it was returned to the queen as part of her jointure in 1660 it was "in a dismantled condition, having suffered much dilapidation during the Interregnum." In fact it had been pulled down and the stones sold to the value of £1,000. The palace was never rebuilt.¹⁶ The same fate overtook Oatlands Palace, where the surrounding lands were also disparked.¹⁷ Nonsuch Palace was not razed to the ground, but it was allowed to decay. Before the civil war it had been one of the most magnificent royal palaces, having attracted the special praise of both Camden and Fuller: "Indeed, what Sebastianus Cerlius, most skilful in building, spake of the Pantheon at Rome, may be applied to this pile, that it is *ultimum exemplar architecturae*."¹⁸ But in 1665 Evelyn spoke of the gardens around the palace as "ruined" and remarked upon the destruction of the trees.¹⁹ Nonsuch was never

¹ *Calendar of the Treasury Books*, VII, pt III, p. 1531.

² Crest6/2/100.

³ Crest6/2/110.

⁴ Crest6/2/108-9.

⁵ Crest6/2/114.

⁶ Crest6/2/337.

⁷ Crest6/2/512.

⁸ Crest6/2/185.

⁹ CSPD, 1660-1, p. 295.

¹⁰ V.C.H., Wiltshire, IV, p. 431.

¹¹ V.C.H., Surrey, III, p. 478.

¹² Crest6/2/104-5.

¹³ V.C.H., Yorkshire, North Riding, II, p. 197.

¹⁴ Crest6/2/114.

¹⁵ Crest6/2/106-7.

¹⁶ V.C.H., Surrey, III, p. 534.

¹⁷ *Surrey Archaeolog. Coll.*, XIII, 1897, p. 45.

¹⁸ Quoted in Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, ed. P. A. Nuttall, 1840, III, p. 202.

¹⁹ V.C.H., Surrey, III, p. 270.

restored to its former magnificence and was finally sold in 1687, apparently for immediate demolition.¹

Some of the charges against the military landowners occur before the Restoration. In July 1655 the inhabitants of Stoke Bruern, Northamptonshire, accused John Urlin, who had purchased three coppices there, of depriving them of their common rights. Richard Dobson stated that Urlin had bade him kill deer in the winter, and Benjamin Coldwell charged Urlin with committing offences in nearby Whittlewood Forest against the vert and venison; "as felling timber, encroaching on the forest, blocking up highways, hunting and destroying deer, etc." As a consequence Urlin was ordered to appear before the Council of State "to answer to the said charges of destroying the deer, assembling riotously, and affronting and abusing the keepers of the forest."²

One of the most celebrated acts of destruction occurred in the manor and park of Holdenby, which Adam Baynes had bought in 1650. Even though it was "something out of Repaire," the Parliamentary surveyors referred glowingly to that "Noble Mansion House," with its "ffoure magnificent Towers," its "many costly and rare Chymney peices and many other spacious Chambers and with-drawing rooms to them belonging, itt being alsoe a House of great Receipt." The materials of the house were given a value of £6,000, more than one-quarter of the whole estate. Timber was valued at £1,010 5s. od. The main drawback to Holdenby, as far as Baynes was concerned, was that most of the lands belonging to the manor had been leased in 1647 to Sir Thomas Hatton, and the lease did not expire till 1664.³ Faced with a fourteen-year wait before he could improve the income from his estate, Baynes did what he could to raise immediate cash: "he began at once to pull the house down, sell materials, cut down a great part of the timber (disparked the park): it may be presumed that he killed or sold the deer and wild cattle."⁴ However, Baynes did not benefit as much from these acts as he had hoped. He realized only £3,500 from the materials, instead of the £6,000 that the Parliamentary surveyors had predicted. Timber brought him £500, though it is not clear whether he cut down all the trees on the estate.⁵ At the Restoration a suit was brought against him for his destruction of Holdenby. Besides tearing down the house and cutting the timber, he was charged with having sold the livestock and deer. He denied most of the charges, asserting that the cattle which he slew were wild and that the deer were more numerous at the end than when he first took over the estate. He had, he said, constructed a little park especially for them. Baynes also

¹ J. Dent and M. Biddle, *Nonsuch* 1960, Ewell, Surrey, 1960, p. 17.

² *CSPD*, 1655, pp. 253, 254.

³ E317 Northamptonshire 35, fols. 1-2, 3, 6.

⁴ *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries*, 1, 1886, p. 182.

⁵ Sir Gyles Isham, 'Adam Baynes of Leeds and Holdenby', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 11, no. 3, 1956, p. 140.

asserted that he had built "one Barne, two brewing houses, and other out-houses, and diuers Chimneys, a garden Wall, Court Walls, Barne Doores, partitions and other things."¹ The result of the action against Baynes is not known, but he was allowed to continue receiving the rents from Holdenby. Eventually the queen, whose property it had become, let it to Lord Crofts, and he in turn let it to Baynes for one year for £300. After that Baynes was required to surrender possession to Thomas Temple and quit the estate.²

At Theobalds in Hertfordshire, not only was the face of the property changed but a small community of republicans was established there, whose unity of social and religious ideas brought them some notoriety. In the sixteenth century the property had been owned by William Cecil who began the construction of a splendid palace. He was spurred on in this enterprise by Elizabeth, who visited him often at Theobalds. A contemporary biographer of Cecil reports that "He greatlie delighted in making gardens, fountaines and walkes; which at Theobalds were perfected most costly, bewtyfully, and pleasantly. Where one might walk twoe myle[s] in the walks, before he came to their ends."³ But, like Hampton Court, Theobalds had become too magnificent for anyone below the degree of royalty, and so, in 1607, it was surrendered to the Crown.⁴

It was maintained in excellent condition until 1649, in which year the Parliamentary surveyors outdid themselves in fulsome praise of the royal estate. The timber in the park was valued at £7,259 13s. 2d., in addition to £9,845 9s. 5d. worth which had been marked for the use of the navy. The park was surrounded by a brick wall 2,745 poles long, and valued at £1,098.⁵ The palace itself was in first-class shape, and the surveyors paid tribute to the many opulent features—the large marble fountain in the courtyard, the lead-covered turrets, the chimney pieces, some of exquisite blue marble, the large collection of paintings, and the "curious workmanship" of the carved timber on every side. Unlike most of the Parliamentary surveys, which are neutral in their language, the survey of Theobalds Palace breathes enthusiastic admiration. The surveyors were reluctant to set a value upon the materials of the palace, and pointedly drew attention to its yearly value of £200, which had been estimated so high "in consideracion that we finde the scite thereof, verrie pleasant, the roomes richlie adorned, and verrie commodious and fitt for present use, the ayre sweete and open: the marketts neere, and the conveniencies and neerenesse of London of noe small advantage, the gardens and orchard richlie planted, and compleatelie ordered, the pleasure of the parke of noe meane delight, beinge a seate of a large prospect, everie wayes usefull to the purchaser." Credit for the

¹ B.M., Add. MS. 21, 427/137-8.

² B.M., Add. MS. 21, 427/293.

³ Francis Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, I, p. 26, quoted in *V.C.H., Hertfordshire*, III, p. 448.

⁴ *V.C.H., Hertfordshire*, III, p. 448.

⁵ E317 Hertfordshire 27, fols. 15, 5.

excellent condition of the palace was due to the earl of Salisbury, who had been its keeper since the time of King James.¹

The park and palace were acquired by the officers of Thomas Fairfax's horse regiment, and several of them took up residence there under the leadership of Major William Packer.² The result was that Theobalds, "from [being] the seat of a monarch . . . [became] a little commonwealth; so many entire tenements, like splinters, [having] flown out of the materials thereof."³ The thirty acres belonging to the palace were divided into many small plots, and the palace itself was then demolished and the materials used to build tenement houses upon the plots. The park was similarly subdivided, enclosed, and built upon.⁴ Of the occupants, six were army officers, but at least two dozen more were civilians. The community found its focus in a radical Baptist chapel which scandalized some of the local inhabitants, and proved to be a thorn in the side of the government. Packer and five others attended a stormy meeting of the council of officers and heckled Cromwell as he delivered a tirade against the radical republican officers. Cromwell retaliated by dismissing the six officers from their posts.⁵ Packer and his friends also created trouble for the Quakers, and threatened to apprehend George Fox if he ever ventured near Theobalds. Fox, however, regarded the threat as an invitation: "I was moved of the Lord God to go down to Theobalds, and appoint a meeting hard by them." But his efforts at evangelization seem to have met with indifferent success.⁶

Thus, great changes were wrought upon the face of Theobalds during the soldiers' period of tenure there. Apart from the division of the land for small holdings, the great brick wall of the park was also completely dismantled and its materials sold. When Anne, countess of Bristol, petitioned in 1660 for a lease of the park she urged that the walls and tenements were so much out of repair that it was not likely to be used again for pleasure.⁷ The countess of Bristol was to be disappointed, however, for it was finally decided to give the property to the duke of Albemarle as part of the £7,000 per annum that Charles had promised him. The park was valued by the royal surveyors at £1,749 10s. od. per annum, which was almost the same as the annual value set upon it by the surveyors of 1649. However, nothing extra was assessed for materials, woods, and deer, for as Harbord's agent remarked, "The said Parke was in the time of his late Majesties Raigne replenished with Wood and Deer,

¹ E317 Hertfordshire 26, fols. 3, 6, 49, 51.

² King's Remembrancer, Crown Lands: Certificates as to the Sale of, P.R.O., E121/5/7/14.

³ Fuller, *Worthies*, II, p. 38.

⁴ Crest6/2/102-3. For an analysis of how the park was subdivided, see Ian Gentles, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-9.

⁵ The Correspondence of Colonel Robert Bennett, Folger Shakespeare Library, Add. MS. 494, I, fol. 461; C. H. Firth and G. Davies, *The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1940, I, p. 73.

⁶ V.C.H., *Hertfordshire*, III, p. 449.

⁷ CSPD, 1660-1, p. 289.

which have been shamefully destroyed by the late Usurped Authority, and much of the Land plowed and sown out of hart. . . And I find not any Tymber Trees now left upon the premisses worthy to be excepted for his Majesties use."¹

That the soldiers caused drastic alterations in the appearance and use of the Crown lands is not to be doubted; that this fact demonstrates reckless or wanton exploitation on their part is a different question. It is important to remember that the soldiers' needs were not the same as the king's, and that therefore it was reasonable for them to dismantle and sell things for which they had no use. Only occasionally would there be a soldier like John Lambert, who desired a royal palace. There were few others who could afford to maintain such immense edifices. Accordingly, at Richmond, Oatlands, Berkhamsted, Holdenby, and Theobalds, they tore them down and either sold the materials or used them to build more practical structures. The fate of these fabrics paralleled that of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. In both cases the old buildings disappeared because they did not suit the needs of the new purchasers.

The same argument applies to the cutting of timber and killing of deer. A deer park represented an unproductive use of land. While kings might be expected to set aside thousands of acres to indulge an expensive taste, most private landowners required a more tangible return on their investments. It happened that the 1650's were a propitious time for selling timber and converting parks to arable or pasture. With 207 new vessels being added to the English navy in the space of eleven years, the demand for timber was brisk.² At the same time agricultural prices seem to have been higher around 1650 than they had ever been.³ In a situation like this the disparking of parks and the turning of manor houses into barns and stables became a sound business proposition. What looked like waste and spoil to shocked cavaliers struck the new purchasers simply as a more rational use of the land.

These alterations in land use sometimes entailed sizeable capital investments. Such investments were frequently mentioned in the petitions of soldiers who sought permission at the Restoration to continue in possession of their estates. They nearly always claimed to have introduced many improvements at great personal cost. Elizabeth, the widow of Captain Thomas Malyn, begged to become a tenant of 190 acres in Theobalds Park which her husband had purchased, and upon which, she asserted, he had constructed buildings at a cost of £1,000.⁴ In 1661 Captain Godfrey Ellis asked for a lease of the castle garden of Gloucester, for which he had originally paid £380.⁵ In support of his

¹ Crest6/2/102.

² M. Oppenheim, *A History of the Administration of the Royal Navy, 1509-1660*, 1896, p. 338.

³ Joan Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV, 1967, p. 862.

⁴ CSPD, 1660-1, p. 292. ⁵ E121/2/6/42.

plea he referred to his expenditure of over £1,200 on several tenements that he had built upon the property. Charles Harbord accepted Ellis's claim without qualification, and recommended a lease carrying a rent of £12 10s. od., which was only half the improved value of the property, as well as a very modest entry fine, "in respect of your Petitioners charges which seeme to have bin much more than the premisses are Worth. . ."¹ John Barry pleaded for royal consideration regarding Bagshot Park, which he had purchased from his brother, Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Barry, and Captain John Peck. Both these men were Presbyterians who had quit the army when Cornet Joyce seized the king, but they argued that they had been "obliged" to purchase Bagshot for £4,000 in lieu of their arrears of pay. John claimed that he had sunk £2,000 into improvements in the park. He also had a stake in part of Windsor Great Park, which had belonged to Captain Byfield. Barry had married Byfield's widow and spent over £5,000 on improvements in his portion of the park. He declared that he would be ruined if he were allowed neither the lands nor recompense.²

Windsor Great Park was the subject of another petition in 1660 from Captain Edward Scotton, Captain Robert Aldridge, Richard Southwood, and John Scotton, who were in possession of part of the park. They declared that they had expended "great somes of mony in improveing the same;" yet that autumn their corn and hay had been seized for his Majesty's use. Accompanying the petition was a "supplicacion . . . of the purchasers and possessors," outlining the improvements they had undertaken. They had paid fifteen years' purchase for the park, and had then subdivided it into about 100 parcels which they had enclosed with hedges and ditches "att the great charge of the said purchasers and possessors." They also demanded consideration for the fact "that the said Parke being of a wett and cold soyle and for the most parte cumbred with bushes, thornes, ferne, rushes, and old trees, (the tymber generally reserved and taken off for the navyes use), for the first fower or five yeares was rather a charge then profit to the said purchasers. That the said parke hath bene for the most parte grubbed, ploughed, and manured with chalke lyme and other husbandry att a very greate charge, which together with ten or twelve newe howses with barnes, stables, and other necessaryes for husbandry built there-uppon, some of them of considerable value, hath stood divers of the present purchasers and possessors in more then the said lands first cost them. That the said purchasers and possessors being necessitated to take the premisses for satisfaccion of publique debts, have managed the same in husbandlike manner, and converted it into farmes, which affordeth a great supply of corne to Wind-sore markett; and partes adjacent, The pale and covert being taken away rendes it utterly unserviceable for the keeping of deere, nere twenty families settled

¹ Crest6/2/509-10.

² CSPD, 1660-1, p. 286.

upon it, and many of their whole estates involved therein." The supplication ended with a plea to be allowed to become his Majesty's tenants at a reasonable rent and to enjoy the present year's rent without molestation.¹

The purchasers of Windsor Little Park made similar claims to have effected improvements during their period of tenure. In 1654, when the Council of State entered into negotiations to buy back the park from Captain Henry Cannon and Francis Thomson, these two men declared that "[we] have been at much charge in fencing, grubbing, molehill cutting, and tilling the ground; also we had to sell other estates at under value to complete our purchase, so that our damages amount to £400."²

There were many other estates where the soldiers pursued the same policy of enclosing parks and commons and "improving" their rents. John Dove, John Ireton, and George Cooper helped to ruin a great deer park at Clarendon, Wiltshire, but as the royal commissioners pointed out in 1660, the new uses to which the land was being put had improved the revenue by £1,200 a year, all of which would be lost if Clarendon were re-imparked as Charles desired.³ The officers of Harrison's regiment ploughed up the roots of the trees they had cut down in Marylebone Park and let out the land in small holdings to tenants who used it for dairy farming. The rents were racked to produce £40 more than had been reckoned possible by the surveyors in 1649.⁴ It is likely that Richard Deane, who "unmercifully demolished" Havering Park, Essex,⁵ and Richard Watson and William Peverell, who disparked Oatlands Park,⁶ had the like object of increasing their revenue by converting parks to farmland.

It is worth noting that such measures enjoyed the enthusiastic support of many writers on agriculture in the seventeenth century. With scant regard for social consequences, these writers, like their predecessors in the sixteenth century, advocated such measures as enclosure, fen drainage, ley farming, and the use of a wide range of fertilizers to improve agricultural efficiency.⁷ They were hostile to the common lands because in their view they encouraged idleness and lawlessness, allowed thousands of acres to go to waste, and produced a degenerate breed of livestock.⁸ Walter Blith, a Cromwellian captain (and a "Lover of Ingenuity"), who bought Crown land in Grafton and Potterspury, Northamptonshire,⁹ was the author of *The English Improver Improved* (1652), probably the best book on husbandry published during the Interregnum.¹⁰ In the preface he addressed a special message to his fellow soldiers, "... because

¹ State Papers Domestic: Charles II, P.R.O., SP29/22/263-4.

² CSPD, 1654, p. 129.

³ CSPD, 1660-1, pp. 285-6.

⁴ Ann Saunders, 'The Manor of Tyburn and the Regent's Park, 1086-1965', Leicester University, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1965, chap. 3.

⁵ *The Mystery of the Good Old Cause* (1660), p. 22.

⁶ V.C.H., Surrey, II, p. 478.

⁷ G. E. Fussell, *The Old English Farming Books*, 1947, *passim*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹ E121/4/1/62, 48.

¹⁰ Fussell, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

yourselves are interested and possessed of many lands, and those such as will admit of great Improvement by wise mannagement." Blith was imbued with a very puritan contempt for ignorance and laziness, as well as a restless puritan desire to improve the human condition. He mocked traditional agricultural practices which, he said, had encouraged sloth and drunkenness and had resulted in "streets filled with Idle Persons, the Countrey with Drones, the Roades with Hackers and Cutthroats, all Townes with Barrettors, Pamphlet-tors, Ballad Singers, Students of Mischief." In addition to those improvements advocated by other writers, Blith devoted much space to recommending a variety of new or unusual crops like clover, woad, saffron, 'liquorish', parsnips, artichokes, turnips, etc., and made the point that some of them could be grown in very indifferent soil.

Andrew Yarranton, the Worcestershire worthy, was another Parliamentary soldier who wrote on agricultural improvements. A lieutenant in Major-General Mitton's regiment, he bought Crown land in Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire, for which he paid over £3,000.¹ In 1677 he published *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*. Like other writers he supported enclosure for the expansion of sheep farming, pointed out that while it made husbandmen jobless it vastly increased employment in the woollen industry.² He also advocated the cultivation of flax, on the grounds that the resulting linen industry would put the poor to work.³ Ironworks, constructed in various parts of the country, would perform the same function, without posing any threat to the nation's timber supply.⁴ Two of Yarranton's favourite improvements were windmills and granaries. On the benefits of granaries he was insistent, alleging that through lack of them vermin were devouring 25 per cent of England's corn harvest every year. There were financial benefits too: the farmer would no longer have to sell his crop as soon as he harvested it; moreover, in a safe dry granary the crop would be as negotiable as cash.⁵

The fact that two of the most important works on agriculture in the seventeenth century were written by Parliamentary officers who bought Crown land contributes to the general argument that in their management of the Crown lands the soldiers were in accord with the mainstream of progressive agricultural thinking of the previous century and a half. To be sure, not all the soldiers were improvers; nor did those who were attempt to implement the more grandiose schemes of the theorists. But it is still fair to say that by and large they were rational and often progressive land managers.

At the same time their policies exhibited little concern for the people whose

¹ E121/5/4/11; E121/5/7/7.

² *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-1, 193. Yarranton asserted that he had himself managed an ironworks during the 1650's.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 130, 167.

lives were radically affected by them. It is no surprise therefore that the soldiers were often hated by their tenants when they tried to effect such improvements as the enclosure of common land. This particular 'improvement' had provoked riots since the fifteenth century, and so the people of north Middlesex were only continuing a venerable tradition when they fought the soldiers enclosing their common in Enfield Chase.¹ The inhabitants of the Lincolnshire fens who caused so much trouble to the purchasers of the manor of Epworth had been resisting the destruction of their way of life for many years before the new owners arrived on the scene.² In Huntingdonshire, Colonel Valentine Walton provoked riots when he decided to 'improve' the manor of Somersham.³

In conclusion, it may be observed how the soldiers' conduct paralleled that of the purchasers of the monastic lands a century earlier. In both instances the unsentimental attitude of the new purchasers aroused consternation among adherents of the old order, just as their determination to enclose common land and rack rents enraged local inhabitants. But the soldiers' behaviour makes good economic sense when it is remembered that the prices they had paid for their estates were reasonable only on the assumption that the lands would be used for purposes different from those which the king had favoured. One can therefore dismiss the traditional view of Cromwell's soldiers as the wanton destroyers of the Crown estates and judge them instead as energetic, if often ruthless, agrarian developers.

¹ *A Relation of the Cruelties and Barbarous Murthers, and Other Misdemeanours, done and committed by some Foot-Souldiers, and others, without Command, upon some of the Inhabitants of Enfield, Edmonton, Southmymys, and Hadley* (1659).

² Darby, *op. cit.*, p. 52 *et passim*.

³ *The Mystery of the Good Old Cause*, p. 36.

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