

Beyond the Castle Gate: The Role of Royal Landscapes in Constructions of English Medieval Kingship and Queenship

by

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Abstract²

This paper derives from the text of a Powerpoint presentation delivered at Würzburg on 20 February 2010 at the conference “Herrschaft und Burgenland-schaften – Fränkische und internationale Forschung im Vergleich”.³ It mainly concerns the royal deer parks and forests connected with castles, rather than the castles themselves, and aims to explore the role of those landscapes in the construction of kingship and queenship in late-medieval England. The paper employs case studies of English medieval queens – in particular Margaret of France (d. 1318), but also Eleanor of Provence (d. 1291), Eleanor of Castile (d. 1290), Isabella of France (d. 1358) and Margaret of Anjou (d. 1482) – whose properties included many castles, forest and parks. It will begin by briefly explaining the English medieval forest system, and by considering the ways in which Clarendon Forest and park (Wiltshire) functioned in advertising royal power from the late 13th to the mid 14th century. It ends by concluding that relationships between high-status gender and space – both interior and exterior – may not be as straightforward as scholars have sometimes assumed.

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² The first part of this paper derives partly from work published in more detail in the author's chapter in JOHN LANGTON, GRAHAM JONES (ed.), *Forests and Chases of England and Wales to circa 1500*, 2010. In addition, the thoughts expressed here about women, parks and hunting are more fully developed in an article which has been submitted by the author to the *Journal of Medieval History*.

³ 'Lordship and castle landscapes – Franconian and international studies in comparison'.

British castle historiography has rarely strayed ‘beyond the castle gate’ – or indeed beyond a reading of castles and their environs as masculine domains “reeking of sweat, testosterone and horses”.⁴ Thus, two issues that have so far been neglected are (in order of relevance to this paper) the relationship between castles, their related landscapes, and gender identities,⁵ and the connection between castles and medieval forests. As Tadhg O’Keeffe points out, gender has rarely been “the subject of explicit theorising in [castle studies]”. He goes on to demonstrate the disadvantages of such an omission, by noting that a significant number of medieval Irish women castle builders were known for breaking gender stereotypes. O’Keeffe concludes from this that the castle “is not a passive recipient of gender metaphors; on the contrary, if gender is socially-construct-ed ... the ‘castle’ has played a part in its generation”.⁶ In other words the ownership, and particularly the building of, castles may have played a part in the construction of women’s gender identities in the Middle Ages. This will be kept in mind with regard to the medieval queens discussed below, who owned many castles and forests and who in any case were ‘lords’ over their own vast estates. As for landscapes, Oliver Creighton has shown that medieval castles and forests were closely associated.⁷ Yet this relationship has not yet been explored in any significant detail by English historians or archaeologists of either castles or forests. However, taking the two issues together, the possibility has recently been raised that landscapes rather closer to the castles themselves, specifically deer parks, may have been gendered female to some extent in the later Middle Ages.⁸ This question, too, will be addressed below.

⁴ ROBERTA GILCHRIST, *Gender and Archaeology. contesting the past*, 1999, p. 121.

⁵ ‘Gender identity’ is how an individual perceives themselves in regard to gender, as opposed to ‘gender role’, meaning how society expects men or women to behave. (At its most basic ‘gender’ is the cultural construction of sexual difference.)

⁶ TADHG O’KEEFFE, Concepts of ‘Castle’ and the Construction of Identity in Medieval and Post-Medieval Ireland, in: *Irish Geography* 34/1 (2001) p. 79.

⁷ In OLIVER CREIGHTON, *Castles and Landscapes: power, community and fortification in medieval England*, 2005.

⁸ OLIVER CREIGHTON, *Castle Studies and the European Medieval Landscape. Traditions, trends and future research directions*, in: *Landscape History* 30/2 (2009); NAOMI SYKES, *Animals. The bones of medieval society*, in: ROBERTA GILCHRIST, ANDREW REYNOLDS (ed.) *Reflections. 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology 1957–2007* (Society for Medieval Archaeology monograph 30) 2009, p. 358. Sykes does not suggest that parks were associated with all women, but perhaps with younger, unmarried women, who may not have been encouraged to learn to hunt and hawk in more open landscapes.

Royal hunting landscapes and kingship

To explore the ways in which forests communicated aspects of kingship and advertised royal power, I will use as a case study Clarendon in Wiltshire, whose park is discussed in an accompanying paper by Tom Beaumont James, published here. Recent analyses have widened out the study area further, however, highlighting in particular the relationship between Clarendon Forest and the nearby city of Salisbury, which was not always harmonious.⁹ It has also been demonstrated that Clarendon Forest's physical landscape, with the palace and park at its centre, was jealously guarded by the Crown as a hunting preserve and, along with the park and palace, as a backdrop to the display of royal status. Cultivation and building within it were more strictly controlled than in neighbouring forests, at least until the palace went out of use around 1500, and even the forest's settlement pattern was less dispersed, indicating a strong element of lordly control.¹⁰

Clarendon Forest originated as an extension of the New Forest (Hampshire) soon after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Before the palace gained prominence in the 13th century, it was associated with Salisbury Castle, located at Old Sarum,¹¹ and probably on the forest's boundary in the 12th century. At the height of the civil war of 1265–1267 the relationship was rekindled when the forest warden and his officers decamped from the unfortified palace – their usual centre of administration – and moved to the castle, perhaps partly because the prohibition in royal forests of carrying bows and arrows by anyone apart from royal foresters would have complicated military preparations.¹²

It is generally accepted that the English medieval royal forest system was imported into the country by the Normans. Unlike the modern meaning of the word – at least in England, the US and Canada – forests were not necessarily heavily, or even predominantly, wooded, but instead might encompass a

⁹ TOM BEAUMONT JAMES, CHRISTOPHER M. GERRARD, *Clarendon. Landscape of Kings*, 2007; AMANDA RICHARDSON, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon c.1200–c.1650. Reconstructing an actual, conceptual and documented Wiltshire landscape* (British Archaeological Reports, British series 387) 2005.

¹⁰ RICHARDSON, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon* (as note 9) pp. 91–98.

¹¹ See TOM BEAUMONT JAMES, *Barrows, Beheading and Bankruptcy. Clarendon Park, Wiltshire, England's largest deer park – a castle for deer*, published here.

¹² RICHARDSON, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon* (as note 9) ch. 5.

variety of topography and land use. However many of them, like Clarendon, had wood-land associated with crown estates as their nuclei – indeed the demesne wood at Clarendon seems to have been known as the wood of ‘Penchet’,¹³ and the fact that that the name was often used to refer to the entire forest suggests a strong link between demesne woods (in royal forests, those reserved exclusively for the use of the Crown) and the forests established around them. What in fact set forests apart was that they operated not under common law, but forest law, which was meant to preserve the king’s deer and also the vert (greenery – i.e. trees and other wood-crops) which provided the deer with shelter and sustenance. Thus forests necessarily had defined

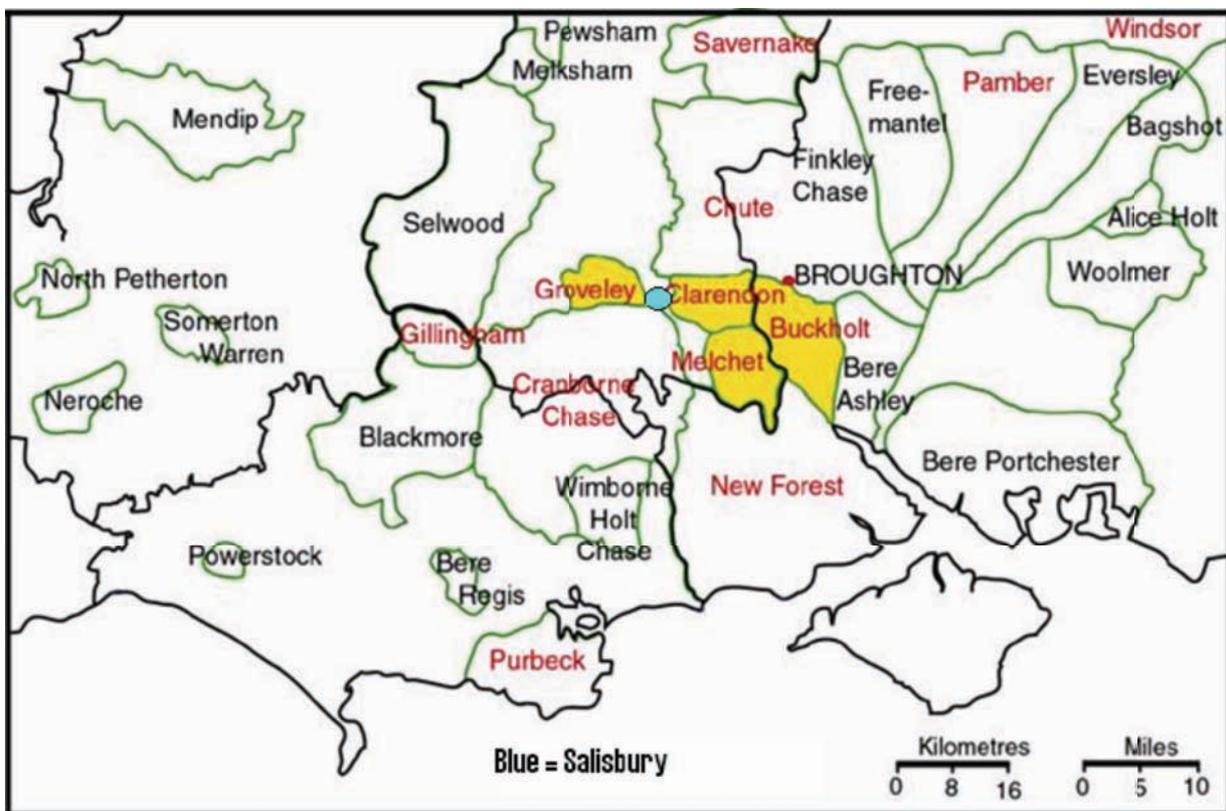


Figure 1: The forests of medieval Wessex.¹⁴ All areas bordered in green containing forest names are royal forests (The names in red refer to forests discussed in the writer’s PhD thesis).

¹³ See TOM BEAUMONT JAMES, *Barrows, Beheading and Bankruptcy*, published here.

¹⁴ Adapted from JAMES BOND, *Forests, Chases, Warrens and Parks in Medieval Wessex*, in: MICK ASTON, CARENZA LEWIS (ed.), *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex*, 1994, fig. 6.1.

boundaries, and their primary role was originally to act as hunting landscapes reserved exclusively to the crown. By the time of the period covered in his paper, however, forests had an equally, if not more, important function in providing the significant amounts of revenue that were raised in the forest courts from those who had broken forest laws.

Forest law was upheld in individual forests by teams of officials headed by a forest warden. By the 13th century this was usually a member of the nobility who had gained the position through favour with the king. The lucrative office often went hand-in-hand with the keepership of a royal castle,¹⁵ although at Clarendon by the 13th century it was associated with that of the palace. Under the wardens were the foresters, some of whom held their office on a hereditary basis, whose main duty was to preserve the vert and venison. These were the 'front line' forest officers, policing the forest on a day to day basis, catching poachers in the act and directly challenging others breaking forest law. Alongside them were the verderers – always knights, and invariably men with considerable local authority – who were ostensibly charged with further protecting the vert, as their title suggests. Unlike the foresters, verderers were directly responsible to the Crown rather than the forest warden, as their main function was to report any abuses by the foresters of their position. Finally there were the regards, also men of local standing, whose main duty was to make a 'regard' (inspection) of the forest three times yearly, in which they noted anything which might cause harm to the deer. This included structures erected and enclosures made without license, which they had the right to destroy, and for which the perpetrators were fined in the forest courts.¹⁶ Thus the regards in particular had a very visible role in enforcing those aspects of the forest system which forest dwellers found most irksome, and since both they and the verderers were unpaid, there was often resistance to serving in the two offices.¹⁷

¹⁵ BOND, *Forests, Chases, Warrens and Parks* (as note 14) p. 124.

¹⁶ RAYMOND GRANT, *The Royal Forests of England*, 1991, p. 128.

¹⁷ For more detailed information on the medieval English royal forest system see JOHN CHARLES COX, *The Royal Forests of England*, 1905; GRANT, *The Royal Forests of England* (as note 16); OLIVER RACKHAM, *The Last Forest. The Story of Hatfield Forest*, 1993; CHARLES R. YOUNG, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, 1979.



Figure 2: The spire of Salisbury Cathedral seen from Clarendon Park, within Clarendon Forest, looking west towards Cranborne Chase and Groveley Forest, the present Groveley Wood being just visible on high ground to the right (background). Photo: Amanda Richardson, Summer 2008.

From 1236, around the time that Henry III enlarged and embellished the palace, Clarendon Forest was administered alongside Buckholt Forest in Hampshire and Groveley and Melchet forests in Wiltshire (the group is highlighted in yellow in Fig. 1). Together, their management came under the jurisdiction of Clarendon's forest warden, although each forest had its own foresters, verderers and regarders. For the purposes of this paper we are most interested in Groveley, whose addition to the group effectively surrounded the new city of Salisbury with royal forest under one highly organised management, based at Clarendon Palace (see Figs. 1 and 2). This was a supreme example of the Crown's power in the landscape, not only in symbolic, but also in practical terms. In effect, merchants travelling to or from the city would have found it hard to avoid forest taxes like *cheminage* – levied on pack animals and supposedly designed to prevent overuse of forest roads,

which might cause a nuisance to the king's deer. Indeed in 1355 the foresters of Clarendon were accused of taking cheminage unlawfully from merchants travelling on the king's highway to Winchester (Hampshire) and elsewhere, on hay, tiles and wool carried in merchants carts and packhorses *to the great damage ... and ... oppression of the [locality]*.¹⁸

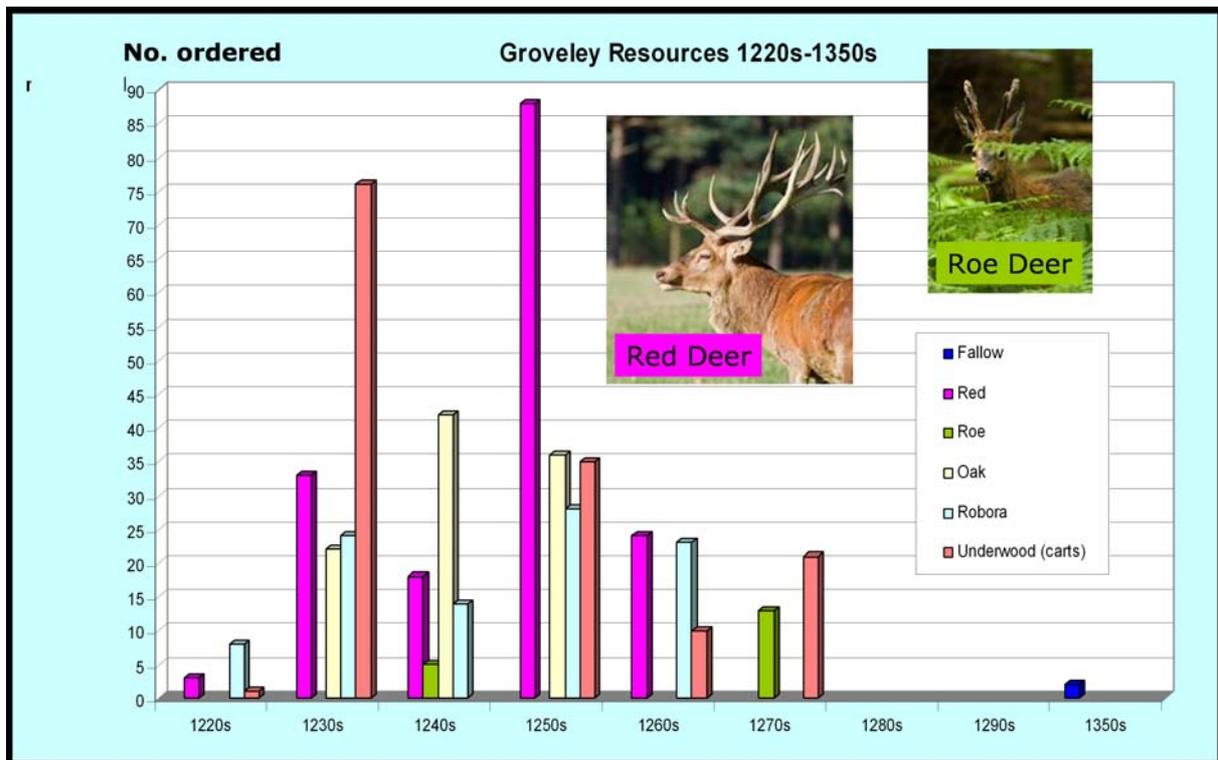


Figure 3: Chart of forest resources mentioned in royal orders 1220s–1350s for Groveley Forest, mostly from the Calendar of Close Rolls. The fallow deer mentioned in the 1355 forest court records (see below) are not shown.

Aside from Clarendon Forest itself, Groveley was the forest in the Clarendon group most used in the 13th century to provide gifts from the king to his most favoured lords. This was mostly because of its large population of red deer, the highest-status of the deer species in medieval England. Fig. 2, drawn up from royal orders, shows only red deer and a few roe deer being given as gifts by the king in the 13th century. The absence of red deer, however, is obvious from the 1260s – almost certainly a result of Henry III's over-generosity and his concern to demonstrate his largesse.¹⁹ He took or gave away from

¹⁸ The National Archives, Kew, London (TNA) PRO E32/267 m. 11.

¹⁹ Red deer declined in England generally in this period, RICHARD ALMOND, personal communication, probably due in part to over-hunting.

Groveley a total of 45 stags (male red deer) and 111 hinds (female) between 1229 and 1263 according to the documents, mostly eaten by the royal court. The king ordered 10 red deer for Christmas in 1256, 20 for the Feast of Edward the Confessor in 1258, and another 10 for Christmas in 1263.²⁰ The dates are significant because during the power struggle which erupted in the civil war of 1265–1267, Henry was no doubt keen to bolster his right to rule by displaying his royal magnificence.

Henry III's gift giving, and his rich table in the 1250s and early 1260s, illustrate very well the ways in which royal forests and their resources reinforced concepts of late-medieval kingship and power. Equally the requirements of kingship had their effect on the landscape and its ecology. The impact of Henry's largesse on Groveley's red deer population appears to have been calamitous, and in 1273, the year after his death, it was reported that *there are many roe deer [in Groveley Forest] but other types of deer are scarce*.²¹ In 1331, Edward III restocked Groveley with fallow deer from Clarendon Park,²² demonstrating what has been called the lordly power to alter the 'ecological signature' of a landscape through the mass introduction of species,²³ and in fact from the 14th century, fallow deer were prioritised above everything else in the Clarendon Forests. By 1355, forest court records show 58 fallow deer, 13 roe deer and not one red deer being taken from the forest.²⁴ These figures, which record only poachers caught in the act, represent the extension of the ecological footprint of Clarendon Park into the wider forest landscape. Indeed there are echoes here of the decline of royal forests as a political and economic issue in England, and it can be argued that the mid-14th century saw deer parks supplant royal forests as the main expression, aside from buildings, of royal status in the landscape. This premise is perhaps supported by the proliferation, in this century of unrest, of episodes of parkbreak (organised 'gang' poaching within parks); an issue that will be discussed below.

²⁰ Calendar of Close Rolls (CCR) Henry III. 1256–1259, pp 5, 344; 1261–1264, p. 318.

²¹ TNA PRO C143/31/B.

²² TNA PRO E32/214.

²³ CREIGHTON, *Castle Studies* (as note 8) p. 12.

²⁴ TNA PRO E32/207 m. 4.

Castles, forests and queenship

Medieval queens, who were among the greatest lords in England, of course also owned deer parks and forests – and they, too, altered the ‘ecological signature’ of their landscapes. For example the park of Kings Langley (Hertfordshire), which was made for Eleanor of Castile in 1276, was stocked with 30 fallow does from her Hampshire estate at Odiham, as well as five white roe-bucks and one white doe from the king’s forest of Cannock (Staffordshire),²⁵ some 170 km away. Aside from their purely aesthetic appeal, this importing of fauna associated with the primary signifiers of the nobility – hunting and heraldic display – is in line with Eleanor’s obvious concern to alter the external appearance of her castles and palaces more generally, for example through ornate gardening schemes which reflected the status of their occupant.²⁶

Surviving evidence shows that many late-medieval English queens went to great lengths to preserve the deer and other resources in their parklands, in that way linking parks directly with the question of lordly authority. Indeed the ways in which queens actually *used* their landscapes, including building work on their castles and palaces, is an aspect that deserves further study. This is particularly the case because high-status women have traditionally been discussed in historiography firmly behind closed doors in the ‘private sphere’. In view of O’Keeffe’s observations (see above) it is worth pointing out that among queens’ traditional dower properties were many castles, some of which were the preferred residences of particular queens. Leeds Castle (Kent) was a favourite of Eleanor of Castile (d. 1290); Marlborough Castle (Wiltshire) was beloved by Margaret of France, who died there in 1318; Isabella of France (d. 1358) chose to spend her widowhood – and confinement, after the death in suspicious circumstances of her husband, Edward II – at Castle Rising (Norfolk), and Joan of Navarre (d. 1437) favoured Devizes Castle (Wiltshire), as had many of her predecessors.²⁷

²⁵ ANNE ROWE, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, 2009, pp. 9, 21.

²⁶ JOHN CARMICHAEL PARSONS, *Eleanor of Castile. Queen and society in thirteenth-century England*, 1998, p. 52.

²⁷ ANNE CRAWFORD, *Letters of the Queens of England 1100–1547*, 1994, p. 111.

Moreover queens could be highly active regarding castles. In 1257 the patent rolls record that Eleanor of Provence (d. 1291) had ordered the constable of Windsor Castle to hand over crossbows for the munition of Corfe Castle (Dorset),²⁸ and she also arranged the delivery of weapons for Dover Castle while staying there, later in her consortship. On her widowhood in 1272, Windsor Castle and its forest were committed to her *so that she answer at the Exchequer [for it] in the same manner as Nicholas de Yatingdene, late constable of that castle, deceased, used to answer.*²⁹ Her daughter in law, Margaret of France, who will appear frequently in this paper, apparently fought hard c. 1305 to be assigned, as was traditional, the Forest of Savernake in Wiltshire (see Fig. 1) alongside her castle of Marlborough, as her husband, Edward I, eventually granted it to her, saying that he had *had no intention ... that the forest, which is necessary for the frequent repairs of the castle ... should be omitted.*³⁰ Indeed one of Edward's last acts in 1307 was an acceptance *as though it had been of the king's will, of takings by Margaret, the queen consort, of timber in the forests ... and parks belonging to the castles, etc., granted to her for life, for the repair of the same, and of gifts by her of oaks [from them] to divers persons.*³¹ Later, she was given license to *grant oaks to whomsoever she will.*³² Clearly Margaret was aware of the symbiotic nature of the castle/forest relationship, and used gifts of forest resources to enhance her royal reputation through largesse, just as did kings.

Many royal forests were held by queens as part of their dower properties, over which they invariably exercised full seigneurial jurisdiction – Isabella of France's right to appoint her own justices of the forest for the Forest of Essex, to hold forest courts there whenever she thought fit, and to receive all fines raised in them, for example, was confirmed in 1324.³³ In the 13th century the queen's forests included Savernake Forest in Wiltshire (along with Marlborough Castle), Gillingham Forest in Dorset, Bere Porchester (with Portchester Castle) in Hampshire, Feckenham Forest in Worcestershire, the Forest of Rockingham in Northamptonshire and the New Forest in Hampshire

²⁸ Calendar of Patent Rolls (CPR), Henry III, 4. 1247–1258, p. 544. All patent roll citations have been accessed from the searchable database produced by Professor G. R. Boynton and the University of Iowa libraries (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/patentrolls/>).

²⁹ CPR Henry III, 6. 1266–1272, pp. 345, 547, 684.

³⁰ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–1307, p. 362.

³¹ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–1307, p. 499.

³² CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–1307, p. 508.

³³ CPR Edward II, 4. 1321–1324, p. 389.

(see Fig. 1 for some of these).³⁴ The forests were, of course, central to a queen's revenues; before Edward I's intervention resulted in a pardon, Margaret of France had been due a 2,000-mark fine *for trespasses in the forest* from John Lovel of Tichmarsh (Northamptonshire).³⁵ Margaret's grant of Rockingham Forest, including timber for repair of the manors of King's Cliffe and Brigstock, is another illustrative example. It allowed her *at all her visits there firewood for the expenses of her household, as much and as often as she likes, and also to have her game, as well in the said forests and woods as in the ... parks [of] ... the said manors, and take venison and have it taken by her people* (implying that she was expected to hunt in person on occasion).³⁶

Queens are most often observed in the documents using forests to exercise their patronage through the granting of forest offices – although it is not always easy to do more than assume their direct influence behind the decisions made.³⁷ For example in 1272 a servant of Eleanor of Provence, Richard Dyve, was given the wardenship of the Forest of Weybridge in Huntingdonshire *with mandate to foresters, verderers, and other ministers of that forest to be intendant to him*.³⁸ This was presumably a reward for good service, which Eleanor must at least have approved. Similarly queens could protect favoured servants by engineering their exemption from serving as foresters, regards and verderers against their will, as was probably the case regarding Eleanor's cook, Master Henry Lovel, in 1248.³⁹ Eleanor of Provence's hand is possibly more clearly observable in 1290, when pardons were issued by her son, Edward I, to the prioress of Westwood and others for trespasses of vert and venison in the Forest of Feckenham, over which Eleanor had had lordship while queen consort, but which was by this time in the hands of her daughter-in-law, Eleanor of Castile. The pardons were issued while the king was staying at Amesbury (Wiltshire), in the abbey of which his

³⁴ CPR Henry III, 6. 1266–1272, p. 737; CPR Edward I, 1, 1272–1281, pp. 27, 270.

³⁵ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–1307, p. 238.

³⁶ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–1307, p. 369.

³⁷ For example Eleanor of Provence's 1272 petition to the king's council to grant her yeoman, Richard Dyve, part of the forest of Weybridge (Huntingdon), with control over the forest staff, CPR Henry III, 6. 1266–1272, p. 673.

³⁸ CPR Henry III, 6. 1266–1272, p. 673.

³⁹ CPR Henry III, 4. 1247–1258, p. 34.

widowed mother had been living “as a humble nun of the order of Fontevrault” since 1286.⁴⁰

The involvement of queens regarding forests was in any case certainly not all passive, and their personal concern, and their own agency, can sometimes be observed more directly. A dispute over tenure in Gillingham Forest runs, in the Close Rolls, for around two years from June 1311. The complainants asserted that they had a right to the lands as tenants in chief, by service of keeping the forest and park. However Margaret of France argued that the lands were ancient demesne, held of her according to the custom of the manor, and that she *ought to do ... right according to the said custom*.⁴¹ By December 1312 her stepson, Edward II, was complaining that *... the queen would not execute [his orders regarding the matter], alleging a reason for not doing so that the king deems insufficient*.⁴² Margaret was obviously attempting to exercise close control over her estate, and to exercise good lordship, the judgement of the king notwithstanding. She almost certainly wished to use the office(s) of forester and park-keeper to reward her own favoured servants, and her involvement, and the frequency with which she appears in this paper actively guarding her rights and asserting her agency, is noteworthy since studies of queens have found it hard to locate her voice by interrogating more traditional sources.⁴³ Clearly a focus on landscape has the potential to uncover a different side of queenship.

Eleanor of Provence’s agency in regard to castles, discussed above, is illustrative of O’Keeffe’s premise regarding the interrelationship between castles and women’s gender identities. Eleanor was used to playing a key role in the running of the kingdom, and was even named as sole regent from 1253–1254 when Henry III was in France.⁴⁴ No doubt the ownership and munitioning of castles had a role to play in her self-conception. Although few queens of England were actually castle builders, among them, significantly, was Margaret of Anjou (d. 1482), who was certainly known for breaking

⁴⁰ MARGARET HOWELL, *Eleanor of Provence. Queenship in thirteenth-century England*, 1998, pp. 300, 303.

⁴¹ CCR Edward II. 1307–1313. December 19, 1311 (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=97372&strquery=queen> Date accessed: 25 August 2009).

⁴² CCR Edward II. 1307–1313. December 23, 1312 (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=97409&strquery=queen> Date accessed: 25 August 2009).

⁴³ LISA BENZ, personal communication.

⁴⁴ See HOWELL, *Eleanor of Provence* (as note 40) pp. 114–126.

gender stereotypes, leading the Lancastrian faction, and even its army, in the decades after 1455 during the civil wars known as the Wars of the Roses. (As one contemporary commented, “Queen Margaret ... hath ever meant to govern all England with might and power”.⁴⁵) Of course, Margaret’s castle-building programmes were influenced by military need, but many of the castles in question, notably Tutbury (Fig. 4), were in any case at the centre of her own lands and power base,⁴⁶ and were thus already key elements in the dissemination of her lordship.



Figure 4: South Tower, Tutbury Castle (Staffordshire), built c. 1460 by Margaret of Anjou. Photo: Amanda Richardson, 1997.

Despite these fruitful research avenues, most studies of medieval English high-status women have considered them in the private sphere, wielding behind-the-scenes power rather than public authority. It is not this writer’s purpose to criticise such analyses, as it has been decisively demonstrated that noble and royal high status women were indeed symbolically segregated from the outside world. This is especially the case in terms of the location of their

⁴⁵ Quoted in HELEN E. MAURER, *Margaret of Anjou: queenship and power in late-medieval England*, 2003, p. 135.

⁴⁶ MAURER, *Margaret of Anjou* (as note 45) p. 135.

apartments in castles and palaces, away from the most public routes.⁴⁷ This symbolic segregation, and the conceptual positioning of women within the private sphere, is echoed by the almost complete absence of female imagery from the 12th to the 16th century in English castles and palaces in those most public of spaces – great halls.⁴⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that in queens' chambers, where they would have met with their (male) estate officials and important household members, the imagery was not predominantly 'female' but largely gender-neutral, hinting at more complicated projections of gender linked to royal authority rather than to biological sex.

Queenship, lordship and deer parks

Concepts of gender and space have been most enthusiastically embraced by theoretically-inspired archaeologists, and it is no surprise that they have also led the way in applying similar ideas to castle landscapes. That is, it has recently been suggested that the connection between noblewomen and the most private areas of domestic buildings may have applied also to the landscape, incorporating the more enclosed hunting spaces (that is, parks), further signifying women's segregation from the outside world. As Sykes puts it, since "courtly society placed great emphasis on the seclusion and enclosure of ... women it seems unlikely they would have been encouraged to hunt ... in the open landscape".⁴⁹ Sykes points out also that the few medieval illustrations of women hunting invariably depict them alongside fallow deer – the species most linked with parks in late-medieval England. Indeed it is the contention here that deer parks – and hunting – formed a fundamental element of the gender identities of late-medieval English queens.

In late-medieval Romance literature the open, possibly dangerous forest was often contrasted with the enclosed garden or park,⁵⁰ and this may have had

⁴⁷ See GILCHRIST, *Gender and Archaeology* (as note 4) ch. 6 The Contested Garden. *Gender, space and metaphor in the medieval English castle* pp. 109–145.

⁴⁸ AMANDA RICHARDSON, *Gender and Space in English Royal Palaces c. 1160–c. 1547. A study in access analysis and imagery*, in: *Medieval Archaeology* 47 (2003) pp. 157, 161. Although see the observations made at the conclusion of this paper.

⁴⁹ SYKES, *Animals* (as note 8) p. 358.

⁵⁰ ALECKS PLUSKOWSKI, *The Social Construction of Medieval Park Ecosystems: An interdisciplinary perspective*, in: ROBERT LIDDIARD (ed.) *The Medieval Park. New perspectives*, 2007, p. 71.

gendered consequences regarding who hunted where – or at least, who was *encouraged* to hunt where. English medieval deer parks, however, were not literally private space – and were probably not intended to be, in the way that the country parks of the English gentry in the 18th century and later were. Medieval documentary evidence is full of reports of groups with access to parks, such as paupers entitled to gather firewood, hunting staff, villagers whose customary duty was the repair of park fencing, and labourers and carters going back and forth during the frequent times when castles, hunting lodges and palaces were built or repaired. Further, many parks were far from confined – Clarendon Park, at 1800 ha and 16 km in circumference, being a prime example. Nevertheless, at a symbolic level parks must have affected “that feeling of aspiring quest and unpredictable outcome ... In whatever direction [the hunters and their] quarry might run ... [they] would be brought up short by the park pale in a couple of miles”.⁵¹

The evidence for designed ornamental landscapes in the later Middle Ages is increasingly criticised in England, although it is generally agreed that the surroundings of castles and other residences were frequently manipulated in order to enhance the display of the symbols of lordly status.⁵² All in all, it is hard to argue with Creighton’s premise that a close relationship existed between lordly domestic planning in castles and palaces and the ‘design’ of surrounding landscapes, based on a common seigneurial spatial ideology,⁵³ a ‘design’ which may have incorporated a gendered element. Such reinforcement in the landscape of aristocratic ideologies, made doubly potent by concepts of gender as well as status, may illuminate episodes of parkbreak, a phenomenon that was more about social discontent than subsistence and which “targeted the physical manifestations of the very identity of aristocratic culture”.⁵⁴ Again, instances of parkbreak against medieval queens, of which there are many from the later 13th century, would repay further study. Margaret of France, for example, suffered several attacks, and one wonders whether this was in part a consequence of her assertion of her lordly rights over her landscape, which we have already seen. The patent rolls are full of complaints from Margaret regarding parkbreak,

⁵¹ JOHN CUMMINS, *The Hound and the Hawk. The art of medieval hunting*, 1988, p. 62.

⁵² ROBERT LIDDIARD, TOM WILLIAMSON, *There by Design? Some reflections on medieval elite landscapes*, in: *The Archaeological Journal* 165 (2008) pp. 520–535.

⁵³ CREIGHTON, *Castle Studies* (as note 8) pp. 12, 7.

⁵⁴ PLUSKOWSKI, *The Social Construction of Medieval Park Ecosystems* (as note 50) p. 76.

running throughout her life as queen and queen dowager (1300–1318). To give a few typical examples, in 1303, her parks in Essex of Havering, Rayleigh and Stoke Neuland were listed, as well as her chace at Ashdown, Sussex;⁵⁵ in 1305 the same parks were involved, and also Berkhamstead (Hertford), Devizes (Wiltshire), Guildford and Banstead (Surrey), Writtle and Maresfeld (Sussex), Queen Camel (Somerset), Leeds (Kent), and Riseborough (Buckingham).⁵⁶ In 1307 Odiham (Hampshire) and Gillingham (Dorset) were added to the list,⁵⁷ and in 1314 a full 30 parks are cited, stretching across southern England and into the Midlands.⁵⁸ Sometimes more detail is given. For example, in 1314 Margaret herself complained about persons who forcibly entered her parks, broke her houses, walls and fences, felled trees growing in her gardens, and took away deer, as well as hares from her warrens.⁵⁹ In November 1315, she protested again about those who had broken her park at Odiham, Hampshire, *hunted therein and took hares, rabbits, pheasants, and partridges ... and deer in the park, and felled and carried away ... trees growing there.*⁶⁰ The following year the queen's park of Berkhamstead in Hertfordshire was reported as a target. There, Margaret's hedges and walls had been broken, trees from her woods and gardens felled, deer had been taken from the park and fish carried away from her fishponds.⁶¹

It seems clear that Margaret of France was the victim of sustained campaigns against her parks, striking at the very essence of her lordship. But of course such evidence, standing alone, is skewed, and it will be necessary in the future to calibrate it by analysing episodes of parkbreak against kings and the nobility in general. It will be illuminating also to adopt a wider view of gender – do instances of parkbreak increase, for example, during the widowhood of queens, when they were no longer perceived to be under the protection of their royal husbands? The wider picture must also be taken into account. Breaking into parks from 1315 onwards must be considered against a backdrop of Europe-wide famine and unrest. Moreover from the 1290s tensions were rising between England and France – and of course Margaret

⁵⁵ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–7, p. 194.

⁵⁶ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–7, p. 355.

⁵⁷ CPR Edward I, 4. 1301–7, p. 544.

⁵⁸ CPR Edward II, 2. 1313–17, p. 135.

⁵⁹ CPR Edward II, 2. 1313–17, p. 228.

⁶⁰ CPR Edward II, 2. 1313–17, p. 420.

⁶¹ CPR Edward II, 2. 1313–17, p. 586.

was French. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that future findings will reveal a gendered element to parkbreak – that is, that attacks on king’s parks were fewer than those of queens. Returning again to the king’s park of Clarendon (which one would presume to have been a prime target given its great size, and the fact that it had a major royal palace at its centre), studies have shown that it seems to have attracted few acts of vandalism or gang-poaching through the 14th century.⁶²

Like castles, hunting in the Middle Ages has been gendered male both by historians and contemporaries, primarily because of its acknowledged link with training for warfare. However most (perhaps all) late-medieval queens seem actively to have hunted – not surprisingly given that hunting “[sets] up a performance space in which aristocracy mimes its own myth of itself” – bringing us back to the ideas about parks as gendered landscapes already discussed.⁶³ Of the queens who feature most in this paper Eleanor of Provence certainly hawked, although whether she hunted deer is unknown;⁶⁴ Eleanor of Castile preferred hunting with hounds, and seems to have had herself depicted as a huntress (alongside a herd of fallow deer) in the Alphonso Psalter (c. 1284);⁶⁵ Margaret of France is actually supposed to have gone into labour with her first child while hunting;⁶⁶ Isabella of France took a pack of 15 greyhounds with her in 1314 when she visited France, and often hunted during her widowhood at Castle Rising and elsewhere,⁶⁷ and a full eight of fourteen surviving letters written in Margaret of Anjou’s personal interest concern the preservation of her game, or other hunt-related matters, in one of which a park-keeper was ordered to make sure that nobody else should *hunt or have shot, course or other disport* which might harm the deer before her visit.⁶⁸ We have seen that these queens actively pursued their lordly rights and that some of them flouted contemporary gender ideologies in other ways, so that it is possible that their relationship with hunting functioned to form their

⁶² RICHARDSON, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon* (as note 9) pp. 122–127.

⁶³ SUSAN CRANE, *Ritual Aspects of the Hunt a Force*, in: BARBARA A. HANAWALT, LISA J. KISER (ed.), *Engaging with Nature. Essays on the natural world in medieval and early modern Europe*, 2008, p. 69.

⁶⁴ HOWELL, *Eleanor of Provence* (as note 40) p. 81.

⁶⁵ PARSONS, *Eleanor of Castile* (as note 26) p. 54.

⁶⁶ LISA HILTON, *Queens Consort: England’s medieval queens*, 2008, p. 206; CRAWFORD, *Letters* (as note 27) p. 76.

⁶⁷ RICHARD ALMOND, *Daughters of Artemis. the huntress in the middle ages and renaissance*. Woodbridge 2009. p. 86; CRAWFORD, *Letters* (as note 27) pp. 83, 86.

⁶⁸ MAURER, *Margaret of Anjou* (as note 45) p. 54.

own, personal gender identities in the same way as did, arguably, their association with castles. Either way, the English hunting treatise the *Master of the Game*, written c. 1406–1413 by Edward, Duke of York, shows that a queen might be present at all stages of a royal hunt, and participate actively in the kill. After the highest-status cuts of venison had been distributed at the end of the hunt, according to rank and gender, the master could distribute the remainder *save what the King slayeth with his bow, or the Queen...*⁶⁹ Significantly, perhaps, the type of hunting Edward of York was describing usually took place in parks.

Observations

Undeniably castles and their associated hunting landscapes, whether far-flung forests or more proximal parkland, were closely intertwined, as were underlying ideas about gender, status and space. But there may be more to such ideological and physical relationships than we have as yet uncovered. As O’Keeffe has shown, inside the castles of the British Isles women’s apartments were “located not at the peripheries ... as the male view might dictate, but in the innermost spaces”,⁷⁰ and if a gendered link with deer parks can be sustained, the same could be said of the hunting landscapes that surrounded them. This is an alternative way of viewing the late-medieval public/private divide, which has been conceptualised largely as having functioned to confine noble and royal women to the domestic sphere – a reading that has rendered them at best marginalised and at worst invisible. At least in regard to queens this could not have been entirely the case. They were an “integral part of the king’s public body”, and were thus expected to play a highly visible role in the public ceremonies, celebrations, and pageants in which royal power was displayed,⁷¹ including, it seems, the hunt. Moreover, kingship and queenship shared a reliance on the requirements of good lordship, for which castle and palace land-scapes were at once theatres of display and repositories for royal largesse, as this paper has demonstrated.

⁶⁹ WILLIAM A. and FLORENCE BAILLIE-GROHMAN (ed.), *The master of game. The oldest English book on hunting*, 1909, p. 196.

⁷⁰ O’KEEFFE, *Concepts of ‘Castle’* (as note 6) p. 77.

⁷¹ ANNE MCLAREN, *Queenship in early modern England and Scotland*, in: *The Historical Journal*, 49/3 (2006) p. 941; JOANNA L. LAYNESMITH, *The Last Medieval Queens. English queenship 1445–1503*, 2004, pp. 26, 74, 95, 265.

But although the queens of England acted as great 'lords', this of course does not mean that their gender identity was masculine. Rather their public personas reflected the "plasticity of gender" inherent in their office.⁷² Such plasticity is observable not only in the gender-neutral imagery employed in queens' chambers and their ownership and embellishment of castles – but also in their exercise of lordship beyond the castle gate.

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⁷² LOUISE FRADENBURG, quoted in LAYNESMITH, *The Last Medieval Queens* (as note 70) p. 8.