

Woodland, Park and Warren in relation to Lighthorne

by Peter Hinman (2000)

1. The Domesday book lists “una Graua” (a grove) 2 furlongs long by 20 perches wide. Further references include 1316 “i graua que continet vi acras” (containing six acres), 1390-1 “groua”, 1400-1 “groua” produced rods for “le Watellyngs”, 1301 “paruum Spinetum”, probably “the grove”, 1316 “unum Spinetum clausum”, 1398-9 “de forinceco bosco” 1401-2 ? “in Bosco”.
2. The term “graua” is the root of the modern word “grove”, but is generally thought to actually mean a coppice, where the trees would be cut on a five to seven year cycle to provide poles, thatch sticks, faggots and firewood. A grove also usually contained a number of “standrels” or “spires”, adult trees, usually twelve per acre, which were grown for building timber.
3. The location of this “graua” is not certain and no proof of its position has yet been found. It is very likely to have been close to where the small wood is located at right angles to Moreton Morrell Lane near the old quarry. This lane was called Coppice Lane in 1697 and the neighbouring fields bore the names Coppice Meadow, Lower Coppice and Coppice Hill.
4. These fields adjoined an area known then as the Warren, and may have formed part of that warren land granted to the de Mundevilles in the 13th century.
5. The definition of woodland in medieval times is complex and relates often to the rights over the land as well as to the land itself. Woodland law is primarily concerned with grazing and timber rights, and forest law is primarily concerned with game and hunting but also timber for various uses, following from the inclusion of woodland and coppice within forest areas.
 - 5.1 Forest. This was the highest level of land, normally in the ownership of the King and only hunted by his servants or by royal license. The forest was subject to a separate and specific code of law. The four animals of the forest law were the red deer, fallow deer, roe deer and the wild boar. These animals could be hunted outside the forest by others but not pursued through the King’s lands. The word “forest” did not necessarily mean a woodland but represented an area for hunting, probably from the Latin “foris” meaning out of doors. With the autocratic power possessed following the conquest, William was able to afforest large tracts of land which had been in the common usage, including large areas of woodland and farmland within the forest law with resultant hardship on the population, which had used hunting as a means of support during the winter months. Disafforestation began by the reign of Henry II, but major disafforestation was forced on King John as part of Magna Carta. In Elizabethan times there were an estimated 69 royal forests.
 - 5.2 Chase. A chase was similar to a forest but the right of hunting was also granted to some nobleman in addition to the King. Transgressions, principally poaching, were punishable by common law rather than forest law. In Elizabethan times there were 13 designated chases.
 - 5.3 Park. A park was an area enclosed by a fence or pale, used to contain the beasts of the forest, as above. A forest could contain several parks, all subject to the forest law. Parks were also found adjacent to many major estates, such as Richmond and Charlecote. The principle function was to provide meat for the table either as a rent or for the use of the owner. Transgressions were treated under common law outside the forest. Over 700 parks are recorded and there were probably more, varying considerably in size and deer population. There is some secondary reference of a four acre

or 400 acre park in Lighthorne in 1278. The smaller is more likely. The field OS171 has the residual name of "The Park" and is close to 4 acres in size.

5.4 Warren. The public had the right to hunt any beast over common land unless such right had been restricted by some special royal grant. It was generally a "right of free warren" over a specific area, giving the holder exclusive rights to hunt animals within the area rather than an enclosure like a park. The animals of the warren were principally the hare, coney (rabbits), pheasant, partridge, woodcock, etc, plus beasts of vermin and the chase (in the sense of pursuit rather than hunting rights) such as fox, badger, martin and otter. Although the public could not legally take such beasts within the area of the warren, they could pursue and kill deer and boar there quite legally providing that they started the hunt from common land and not from forest or chase. They could not legally pursue beasts of the warren into the area except by risking the considerable penalty of £10. Lords of the warrens had powers to impound dogs, snares or nets if found in warren land.

5.5 Woodland. Woodland was classified to produce three types of wood, housebote, for building materials, haybote, for fences and hedges and firebote, for fuel. The laws concerning timber were known as the vert laws. Classifications included underwood, which was too small for timber.