

A Leap in the Park





A DAYS HUNTING

IN THE DEER PARKS
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Leagram and Radholme Parks were large parks with *salters* or deer leaps which allowed wild deer to leap into the park but not to escape.

The parks were sited on land which gave a good variation of both wood and grassland.

Hills were required to enable the hunters to survey the area and for improved use of cries and horns used to direct the hunt.

Natural streams were necessary to water the park and good cover to offer shelter to the animals in breeding times and during hard weather.

Portions of woodland were enclosed with a ***fosse, vallum and pale*** (ditch, earth bank and fence) to restrict the movement of deer. This improved their quality and allowed easier hunting.

These enclosures were also used to breed horses and to graze cattle.

Bolland (later written as Bowland) offered all these natural attributes and the first park to be created in the area was at Radholme on the west bank of the River Hodder near Lees and Browsholme.



This park was in existence in the latter part of the 13th century and appears in the 1340 accounts of the constable of Clitheroe Castle.

The Park keeper is mentioned as being paid the usual wage of 1½d a day or 45s. 6d a year.

Leagram Park was created a little later.



The actual park enclosure fence was known as the *Pale*. It was a formidable enclosure comprising of a *fosse* (a ditch) excavated some 8 feet wide and some 4½ feet deep. The spoil from this excavation formed a *vallum* (an earth bank) on its outer side. Split oak *pales* were erected on top of this to form a fence. Three rows of white thorns were then planted on the inner side of this pale.

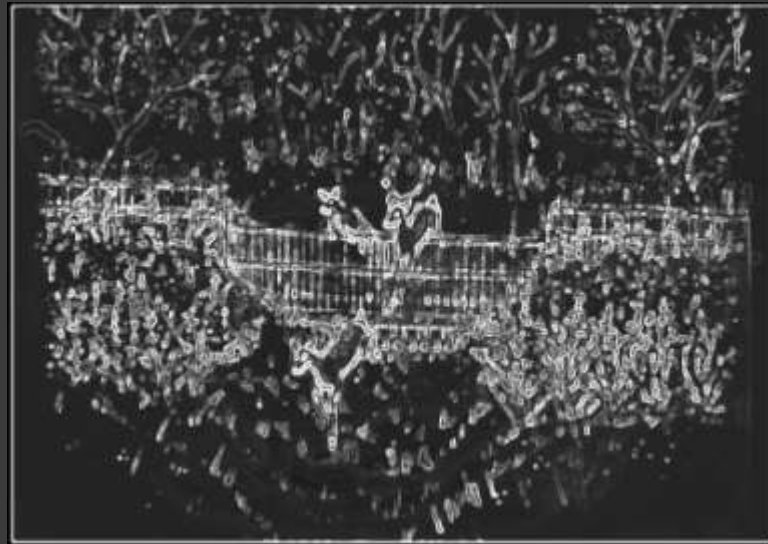
This construction with the thorns beyond the ditch would have prevented any deer or animal from attempting or indeed being able to jump over the pale itself.



Deer "leaps" were arranged so that deer could leap into the park but not out again.

There was a means of entry into the park for hunting parties and for the transfer of cattle and timber. This we think took the form of a large timber gate although its exact nature is not certain.

It is still possible to see some small traces of the remains of the *fosse* or ditch and thorns today many centuries later.

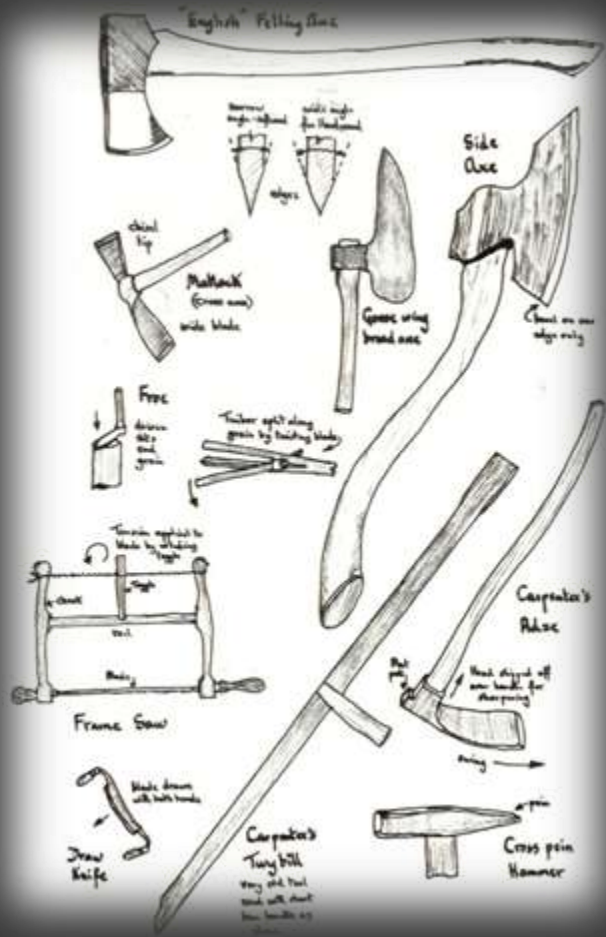


The *fosse* (*deer leap*) is recorded as having been dug out about 8 feet wide and 4½ feet deep. It had sloping sides as the earth dug out found its own angle of rest. .



From the records there was a team of men carrying out this work at the going rate of 8d per rod including planting the thorns. (If there had been a total of four men and good conditions, a rod would have taken between 2 to 2½ days).

Thorns would have been grown specially, as there would have been a large number needed.



The tools used at the time of construction would have been reasonably crude with probably the *grubbing mattock* a descendant of the Roman soldier/carpenter's axe being used to loosen the earth and cut through roots.

The loose soil could then have been thrown out of the growing ditch with a shovel which would have been made of solid wood.

Spades for digging were shod with iron which would have cost about four times as much as the spade itself !! Simple boning rods may have been used to keep the bottom uniform and to avoid costly over excavation.



During the medieval period the Royal hunting forests were established - the title 'forest' refers to hunting rights, and not to a large expanse of woodland, as we interpret it today. The forests made during these times had a big impact on the landscape of Bowland.

The King used his rights to prevent landowners from clearing and cultivating the land, restricting development and prohibiting change. This controlling influence continued after the Forest laws were revoked in 1507, as deer parks and smaller estates replaced the hunting forests.



The Chase – this would be a very noisy activity

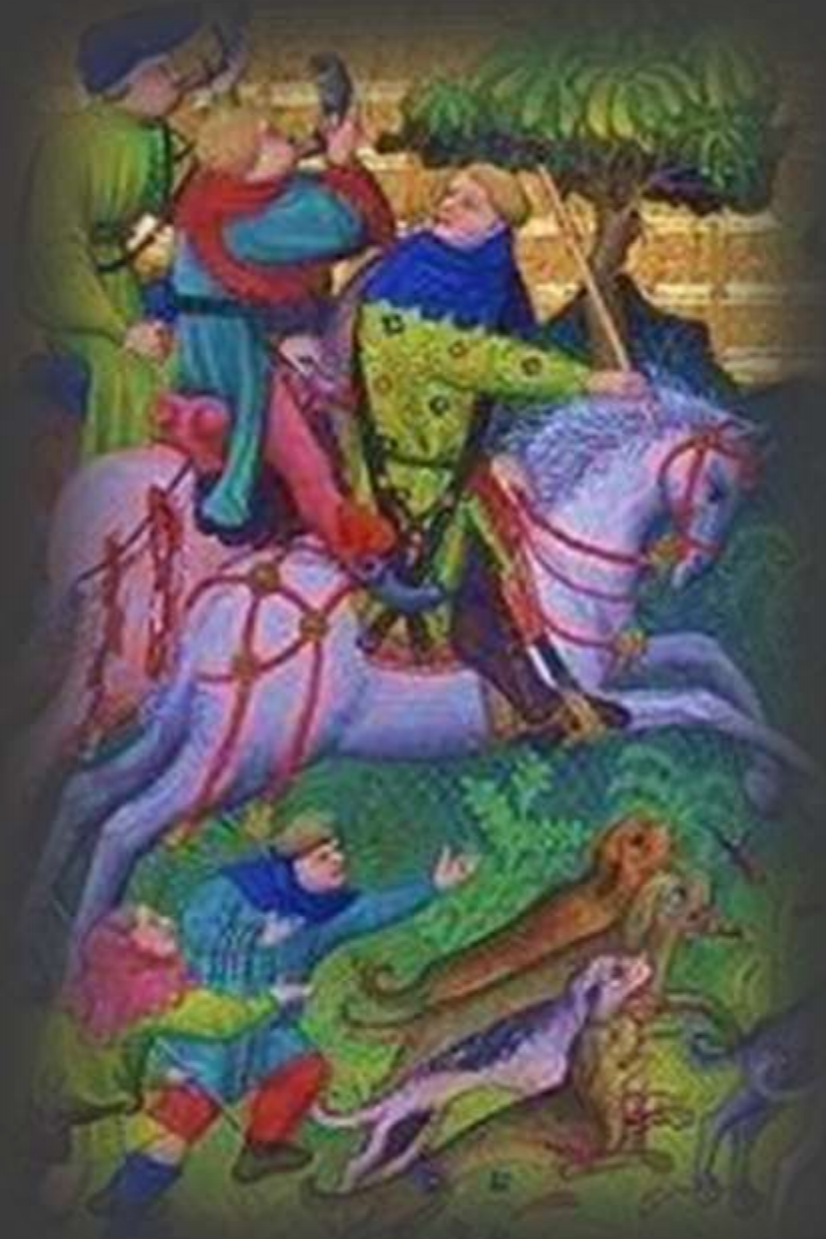


Beaters on foot
running with the
dogs



Catching up with the tiring deer

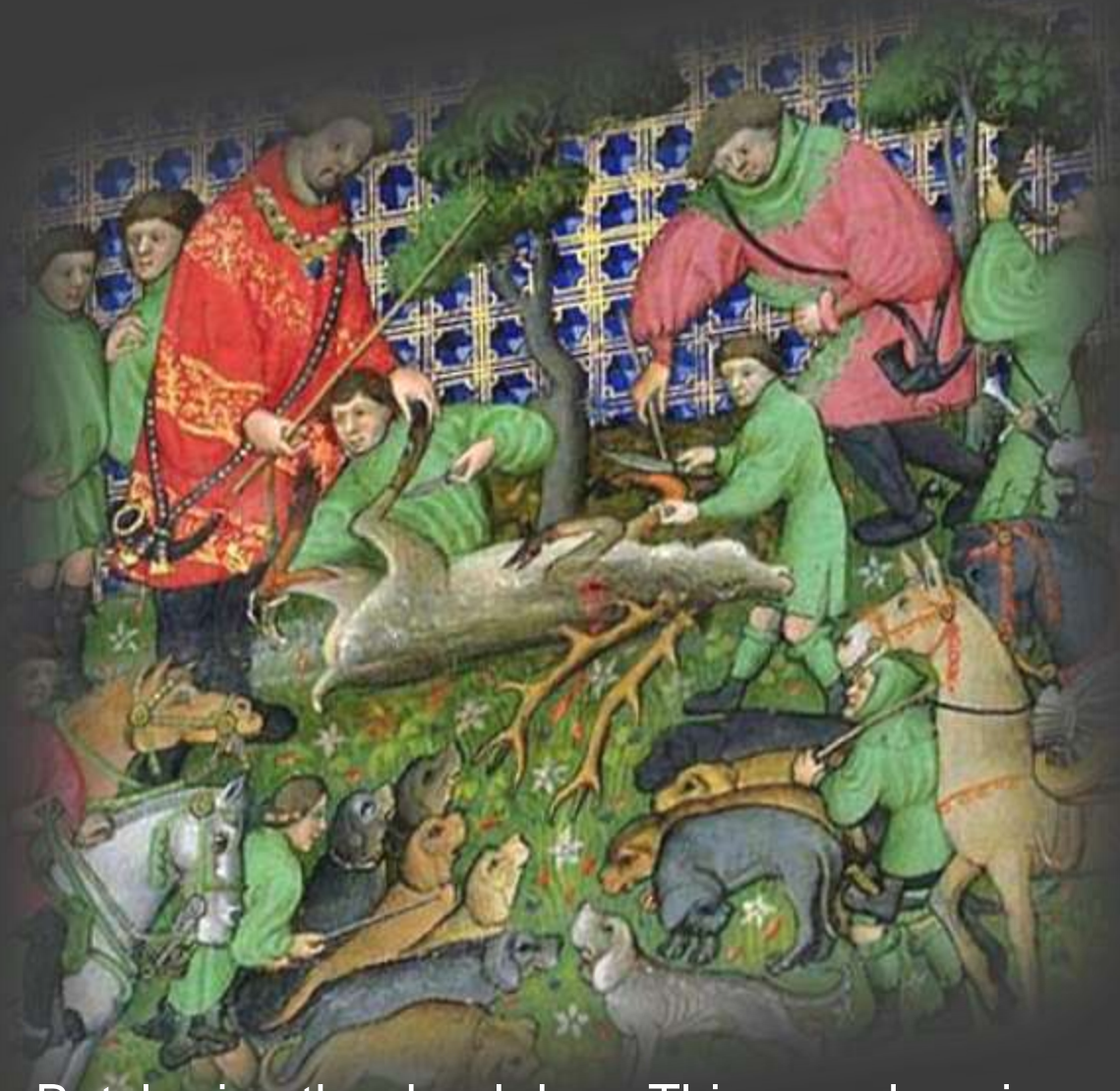






Bows and arrows used to kill the hunted deer





Butchering the dead deer. This was done in a prescribed way and there were rules as to how the animal was shared out.



Venison would be just one of many meats served in Medieval and Tudor times.

HUNTING IMAGES FROM:

GASTON PHOEBUS, *LA LIVRE DE LA CHASSE*, C1387