

A HISTORY OF DEER MANAGEMENT IN IRELAND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE GLENARM DEER PARKS

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The managed exploitation of deer and its role in the history of the Irish landscape from prehistoric times is examined with particular reference to hunting and deer parks. Being the chief surviving physical manifestation of past deer management, deer parks were first introduced by the Normans, though they became a dominant feature in Ireland only during the 17th and 18th centuries, after which their numbers declined with the ascendance of fox hunting. One of the largest and best recorded of these parks, the 3,000-acre Great Deer Park at Glenarm, Co Antrim, is subject here to special attention.

INTRODUCTION

Chris Lynn's excavation of a mound in Deer Park Farms, Co Antrim, in 1984–87 revealed a long sequence of enclosed Early Christian period settlements, with associated houses and artefacts. It was undoubtedly one of most significant archaeological excavations to have been carried in Ireland out for a generation (Lynn & McDowell 2011). The site's survival owed much to its fortuitous location within the boundary of the 17th-century Great Deer Park of Glenarm. Although dramatically reduced in size to around 800 acres at the start of the 19th century, this deer park originally extended to nearly 3,000 acres, and was one of the largest of over 500 deer parks known to have existed in Ireland.¹

Among the bone assemblage found at Deer Park Farms were red deer, indicating that venison was being consumed by the occupants. Deer hunting was certainly widely practised by the Early Christian period, as indeed it had been for millennia before, and no doubt the universality and centrality of hunting was well established among the social élite at this time. The Normans, who arrived in Ireland in 1169, also regarded hunting, and deer hunting in particular, as integral to aristocratic culture. They brought with them a new cervid species to Ireland together with new methods of pursuit, while introducing laws to protect game and constructing enclosures to better facilitate deer management. Unfortunately, our knowledge of Norman deer parks in Ireland remains quite limited; most recorded examples of deer parks were in fact built during the 17th and early 18th centuries when deer hunting was still very much in the ascendant in Ireland. Its gradual replacement with fox hunting during the second half of the 18th century was accompanied by a corresponding reduction in

the size and number of deer parks throughout the country. By the 19th century deer parks had largely assumed an ornamental function with new examples being invariably located for aesthetic reasons within sight of country house windows.

The hunting and management of deer played a major, but invariably understated role in the history of the Irish landscape. Unfortunately, hunting often has emotive connotations in the modern world and, with some exceptions, the subject tends to be either ignored by researchers or dismissed in a few lines — often relegated to the level of an 'élitist pastime' (Almond 2011, 5–6). Equally, discussion in England of deer parks in more recent years has tended to focus less on hunting and more on park size, boundaries and their supposed contribution to the manorial economy (Rackham 1986, 125; Neave 1991, 8).

In this paper I will look afresh at the subject of deer and their management in Ireland through the centuries, and in doing so will focus on hunting and deer parks, giving particular attention to the Great Deer Park at Glenarm, which in addition to its considerable size was among the best recorded examples in the country.

DEER IN IRELAND BEFORE 1169

The cervid species most often associated with Ireland is the giant Irish deer (*Megaloceros giganteus*), which appears to have become extinct in Ireland just before the appearance of man. Commonly called the 'Irish elk', this genus was neither elk nor exclusively Irish, but was rather an enormous deer with antlers spanning up to twelve feet (3.65m) that once ranged throughout Europe, northern Asia and northern Africa (Gould 1977, 79–90). Their 'Irish' label derives from the large number of remains discovered in Ireland (Mitchell

& Parkes 1950), especially during the 18th and 19th centuries, when their spectacular antlers, dug out of bogs and other places, were much prized ‘trophies’ and often hung in Irish country house entrance halls (Cane 1851, 165; Scharff 1926, 110).

A late context for the survival of the Giant Deer in Ireland was revealed during excavations in the caves at Kesh Corann, Co Sligo, which produced a date of 9.840 \pm 120 BC (Woodman *et al* 1997, 140). Also forming part of the same rich mammalian fauna at Kesh Corann in the same strata was evidence for the closely related red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). Rather strangely, the population of red deer that flourished in Ireland during the Late Glacial, subsequently disappears from the record and is assumed to have become extinct around this time (Woodman 1986, 11; Woodman & McCarthy 2003, 31). Crucially, there were no red deer bones or antlers at either of the two Irish Mesolithic sites that have produced rich faunal remains, namely, Lough Boora, Co Offaly, and Mount Sandel, Co Londonderry. Noting that the faunal assemblages of almost 98% of European Mesolithic sites have been found to contain red deer, Louise van Wijngaarden-Bakker has argued that the absence of red deer at both sites is genuine and not a consequence of taphonomic constraints (1989, 131–32).

As with the giant Irish deer, it would appear that the red deer population in Ireland was not able to adapt to the subarctic conditions of the last glaciation or the transition that occurred after the final retreat of the ice (McCormick 1999, 359). Its re-introduction took place either in the Neolithic or perhaps as late as the Early Bronze Age. Red deer bones have been found in Neolithic megalithic tombs, but unfortunately mostly in disturbed contexts, while the earliest dated example of deer bone is from the base of a peat bog at Stonetown, Co Longford, which produced a date of 2,240 \pm 65 BC (Woodman *et al* 1997, 143). Deer bones were present, though not in any large number, in the Beaker settlement at Newgrange, Co Meath, dating to around 2000 BC (van Wijngaarden-Bakker 1986, 89).

In all probability red deer were a deliberate introduction into Ireland, possibly because of the value of their antlers as a raw material rather than as a source of hides and meat protein (McCormick & Murray 2007, 24). Hunting, however, may have become an important social activity fairly quickly, for being a peripatetic or vagile species living in herds with no fixed territories, red deer can quickly disperse considerable distances and consequently would probably have colonised the country fairly rapidly (Catt & Staines 1987, 682; McDevitt *et al* 2012, 27). Often known as ‘kings of the woods’, being browsers rather than grazers, they would have

thrived in the woody environment of the Bronze Age (Burton 1968, 161; Hingston 1988, 20).

By the Early Christian period deer in Ireland had become a prized high-status hunting quarry; indeed, as elsewhere in Europe this had probably happened a millennium or more earlier (Blüchel 1997, 82–90). Their importance by this time was remarked upon by the Venerable Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, written around 731, when he said that Ireland was ‘noted for the hunting of stags and roe deer’ (Sellar 1907, 9). The ‘roe deer’ in this context is most probably an erroneous reference to the female doe or hind, rather than the cervid species of roe, which is not native to Ireland.

The early written sources in the form of the Old Irish law texts (Kelly 1997, 273) and early tales (O’Grady 1892; Joyce 1903, 128), associate the hunting of deer, *sedguinecht*, with the noble classes. Like fox hunting in more recent centuries, it was clearly not focused upon just producing food for the table, but rather served as an important social and cultural activity, which also had the benefit of enabling the participants to improve their all-important cross-country military skills (Kelly 1997, 273). Venison was certainly eaten, but to date most Early Christian sites have produced only limited numbers of deer bones (McCormick & Murray 2007, 191–271). For example, at Deer Parks Farms the majority of the deer remains were antler pieces with just enough post-cranial bones to indicate that venison was sometimes consumed (McCormick & Murray 2011, 478). A possible contributing factor to the low deer bone percentages may have been the widespread European practice at that time of dismembering the carcass at the kill site and distributing the dressed portions among the hunters (Sykes 2007, 51).

The early Irish texts mention beef or pork more than venison at feasts (Kelly 1997, 273), though Joyce (1903, 128) stated that ‘everywhere in the [old Irish] tales we read of hunters chasing deer and feasting on their flesh’ and noted that venison, which was ‘sometimes called *fiadh-sheoil* or deer-flesh’, was considered ‘food fit for kings’. According to the *Book of Rights (Lebor na Cert)* ‘one of the seven prerogatives of the kings of Ireland was to receive a tribute of *milradh* or venison of Naas’ (Joyce 1903, 128; O’Donovan 1847, 3, 9).

Neither the early law tracts nor the early tales give us any really detailed insight into the techniques of deer hunting that were employed in Ireland during the centuries before the Norman conquest. We can infer that a form of drive hunt was used as it had been in Anglo-Saxon England, where the method was sometimes known as the ‘king’s hunt’ or hunting with ‘bow and stable’ (Cummins 2003, 47–



Fig 1a Red deer caught in trap. Panel from high cross, Banagher, Co Offaly; 9th or 10th century.



Fig 1b Red deer and hounds. Panel from high cross, Bealin, Co Westmeath; 9th or 10th century.

67; Griffin 2007, 7; Wadge 2012, 140). Normally this involved dividing the hunting party into two or three groups and driving the quarry across country into a specific area, often a hedged enclosure or 'hay'. One group would comprise archers, typically positioned at designated 'stands' downwind from the deer and camouflaged in some way, often within trees. A second group comprised mounted riders with hounds who would act as beaters and flush out the deer towards the silently waiting archers. A third group, constituting unarmed servants on foot, known in England as the 'stable', were routinely used to help guide the prey towards the desired direction of movement. Finally, before the hunt began, a skilled huntsman with a brachet, or fast-running scent hound, also known as a limer, would locate or 'harbour' the quarry to be pursued.

Drive hunting can be a very efficient technique, as it is possible for a whole herd to be taken in one bag, though in reality, only one or two deer would probably have been killed on any one occasion. Otherwise the numbers of deer available to hunt would have been quickly depleted. The method of hunting, however, lent itself to many variations; instead of the archers so widely used in England, the pre-Norman Irish huntsman may have more commonly used spears as they did in battle (Plummer 1922, 37). References to a 'deer fence', *osairbe*, in O'Davoren's Glossary (Kelly 1997, 277), might have been a local equivalent to the 'hays' or hedged enclosures of English drive hunts. The Irish legal sources and tales often cite deer snares, pits and nets (Kelly 1997, 278, 277–79), while there are plenty of references to deer traps; the Book of Aicill for example, dwells minutely on the precautions that should be adopted in their

construction (Joyce 1903, 470).

Supporting evidence for deer hunting in Early Christian Ireland can be found on the high crosses, which mostly date from the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries. Twelve of these crosses have representations of stags and eight have scenes depicting deer hunting (Soderberg 2004, 174). One of the crosses has a hunter dispatching a deer with a spear (Harbison 1994, 71), while deer traps are also represented; the high cross from Banagher, Co Offaly (Fig 1a), has a well-known panel representing a stag with two legs in a trap (Kelly 1997, 280). Such hunting scenes undoubtedly had a religious significance, for the stag, an emblem of solitude or purity, was considered a symbol of the Christian soul in the middle ages (Morton 2004, 341).

Five high crosses depict hunters with hounds pursuing stags. Dogs played a central role in the chase, as graphically depicted on the high cross at Bealin, Co Westmeath (Fig 1b), and, while scent hounds had their place, it was the much larger sight hounds that were most valued. These made frequent appearances in the early law tracts and tales where they are referred to as *cú*, variously translated as hound, war dog or wolf dog, the latter referred to as *cú faoil* (Hogan 1897, 14; Kelly 1997, 273–74). Presumably ancestral to the Irish wolfhound, these dogs, which were famed for their enormous size, were bred to hunt by sight rather than scent and to accompany mounted riders across country hunting both the wolf and red deer (Walker 1896, 2; Sykes 2007, 51). They were considered among the most valued gifts that could be bestowed or received and held in such high esteem that the word *cú* was often added as a prefix onto the names of kings and nobles; of these the most famous is *Cú Chulainn*,

whose name translates as ‘hound of Culann’.

While the prestige of Irish hounds in the pre-Norman era bears testimony to the importance of hunting at that time, the many place-names that incorporate the word *fia* (or *fiadh*), ‘deer’, could be considered indicative of the former widespread distribution of red deer. Typical examples include Clonea, *Cluain Fhia*, ‘meadow of the deer’, and Keimaneigh, *Céim an Fhia*, ‘pass of the deer’. Whether one can use onomastic evidence to shed greater light on deer in the early Irish landscape is an open question; it has been claimed, for example, that the word *formaoil* (or *formáel*), which gives rise to townland names such as Fermoy or Foremil, may allude to early deer hunting grounds or preserves (Fitzpatrick 2012). It was certainly the case that the great Anglo-Saxon landowners of the pre-conquest era in England possessed hunting preserves (Griffin 2007, 7), but at present there is no clear evidence for anything equivalent in Ireland at this time (Kelly 1997, 273).

The argument that *formaoil* alluded to hunting grounds or preserves is based on a presumption that the word denotes marginal areas usually located in ‘sparsely vegetated rocky pasture, bog and shrubby woodland, generally, but not exclusively, in upland’ (Fitzpatrick 2012, 96). This may be correct, but the association of red deer with upland environments, so memorably depicted in Landseer’s painting ‘Monarch of the Glen’, is largely a feature of the post-medieval landscape, when the pressure of human settlement had driven deer onto marginal areas. Fortunately for the red deer, they were able to adapt to upland environments (Carne 2000, 12), but as has already been observed, they are browsers not grazers and their true habitat is woodland (Burton 1968, 161). The movement onto marginal lands, which probably began following the woodland clearances of the late Tudor and Jacobean eras, was reaching its final stages by the 1830s when it was remarked that red deer ‘once abundant over Ireland’ were now confined ‘to the wilder parts of Connaught, as Erris and Connemara; and to a few localities in the south’ (Thompson 1856, 30).

The process was certainly well advanced by 1698 when an English bookseller John Dunton (1659–1733) visited an O’Flaherty chieftain in the mountains of Connemara above Maam and found ‘hundreds of stately red deer’ on the hillsides. His account is particularly noteworthy because he was asked to join his host on a hunt the following day where he witnessed what may have been a surviving early form of Irish drive hunt. Accompanied by a large retinue and

nine brace of wolfe dogs or the long Irish grey hounds, a paire of which kind had

often been present for a king, as they are said to be a dog that is peculiar to Ireland...

the O’Flaherty chief took Dunton to

a pleasant vale called Glinglass, or the Green Vale, of an English mile breadth encompassed with lovely green mountains which were turfed with pleasant groves and thickets of natures providing ... on the side of these hills I wondere’d to see some hundreds of stately red deer, the stags bigger than a large English yearling calfe, with suitable antlers much bigger than any I ever saw before ... oflaghertie gave the word and immediately the company with the doggs surrounded a large thicket, while he and I with two hunting poles enter’d it to rouse the game. The first we saw was a stately stag who secure of danger skipped forth of bushes; he at first seem’d amazed at the cry which was raised loosing the doggs, but he bravely endeavour’d charge through them and was seized by one of the dogs at the haunch, which threw him on his back. The whole kenel was not suffered to come in for feare of spoyleing the skin which the people most value, and never did I see a spaniell more subject to command than those mighty dogs are (MacLysaght 1982, 51).

DEER IN IRELAND 1169–1350

The arrival of the Normans to Ireland in 1169 was followed by the introduction of a manorialised landscape in which deer management and hunting formed an important, if not indeed integral, part. Probably for the first time in Ireland specially constructed enclosures for keeping deer were built, mostly stocked with the newly introduced fallow deer (*Dama dama*). In addition, new laws were enacted to protect game and new innovations and practices in hunting were introduced.

Research into medieval manorial landscapes has been slow to develop in Ireland, hindered by a paucity of records caused in part by the destruction of the Public Record Office in June 1922. The Discovery Programme’s Medieval Rural Settlement Project has certainly helped to redress this deficiency (O’Conor 1998), followed some years later by the first published attempt at listing Irish medieval deer parks (Murphy & O’Conor 2006). In recent years a much more substantial study has been undertaken of Anglo-Norman parks in Ireland (Beglane 2015a). In addition, focused field research has been undertaken into some identified medieval park landscapes, such as Earls Park, Co Galway (Beglane 2014).

Appreciation of the role of deer in Norman manorial landscapes should begin with an awareness of their aristocratic hunting culture, which placed a very high value on game, especially deer. The Norman élite had an 'irresistible propensity' for the chase and the style and character in which they pursued it (Milesen 2009, 16–29). One medieval author, evidently the 14th-century chronicler Jean Froissart, was quoted by the Rev Richard Warner as observing that

In these days our nobility esteem the sports of hunting and hawking as the most honourable employments, the most exalted virtues; and to their opinion, the summit of human happiness. They prepare for a hunt with more trouble, anxiety and cost, than they would for a battle, and follow the beasts of the forest with more fury they do their enemies (Warner 1793, 130).

The landscape potential for the chase would have been an important attraction for the Norman scions coming into Ireland in the 12th century. Giraldus Cambrensis, the royal clerk and chaplain to King John during his 1185 visit to Ireland, was, however, generally derogatory about the quality of Irish game, though impressed with its quantity. In his *Topographia Hibernica*, written about 1188, he remarked that

This island contains nearly all the species of wild animal which are bred in western countries. It produces stags so fat that they lose their speed and the more slender they are in shape, the more nobly they carry their heads and branching antlers. In no part of the world are such vast herds of boar and wild pigs to be found, but they are a small, ill-shaped and cowardly breed, degenerate in boldness and ferocity' (O'Meara 1951, 47).

Procedures to protect the game and its habitat within designated forests, chases and warrens followed the establishment of new manors. This was done through warrants, mandates or grants issued or proclaimed by the sovereign, a process that probably started fairly soon after the conquest. However, it is not until the 1220s that we have the earliest extant grants of free warren and chase, which gave the new Irish landowners exclusive rights to hunt and preserve wild animals across their own land (warren) and also across common land and property of other people (chase). The basis for these grants lay in the Forests Laws, reformed in 1217 as the *Carta de Foresta*, which effectively gave the Crown ownership of wild animals, a concept that

was utterly alien to pre-Norman Gaelic society, as it had been to Anglo-Saxon England (Marvin 2006, 53).

The most controversial aspect of the Forest Laws in England lay in the designation of large portions of countryside, usually woodland pasture, as royal hunting preserves; known legally as 'forests', these areas were placed off limits by royal decree to ensure the preservation of game. By the reign of Henry II (1154–89) there were sixty-nine such 'forests' covering about one third of England (Young 1979, 149). Each was served by a hierarchy of officials, both to service its own courts and to protect and maintain the 'venison' (deer and wild boar) and the 'vert' (herbage, browse and covert). In Ireland there was evidently an attempt to set up a similar arrangement of 'forests' in the decades following the conquest, but this was ultimately not very successful, no doubt due to the lack of a royal presence in the country. There are, however, occasional references to their existence in the first half of the 13th century, notably in the published volumes of the *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*. These include mention of the 'forest of Dublin, Glendalough and Cuillah (Coillach)'; the 'K's forest of Sleacho' (Co Waterford); the 'K's forest in the vale and mountains of Dublin'; 'the forest of Trym' and the 'forest of Connaught' (Sweetman 1875, 42, 77, 132, 199, 228, 458). In the latter it was stated in 1227 that there was a cantred with 'a good chase to be well kept' out of which nothing was to be given or sold so that 'the K when he goes to those parts, may range through it' (Sweetman 1875, 228).

The only royal forest that seems to have survived for any length of time was one occupying the valley of Glencree in the Wicklow Mountains to the west of Bray and Enniskerry (Le Fanu 1893). It was probably established in the late 12th century, though the term 'forest' is not actually found in documents relating to Glencree until a century later. One notable such record was in 1291 when the abbot with some monks of St Mary's Abbey in Dublin, Ireland's premier Cistercian establishment, were caught by the king's forester poaching deer using nets, greyhounds and 'engines' (Gilbert 1884, 136, section 118a).

St Mary's Abbey had extensive lands adjacent to the Glencree valley at Kiltiernan and Glencullen, so perhaps their presence in the adjacent forest was not too surprising. Attempts by the Crown to designate other church lands in Cos Dublin and Wicklow as a royal forest had been rejected in 1219 by Henry de Loundres, archbishop of Dublin, when he made it clear that the 'forests and beasts' of these areas belonged to him and he would thus not allow his

men to feed the servants of the 'Ks forest of Ireland' (Sweetman 1875, 132). The archbishop, one of King John's loyal curiales (Gwynn 1949), was himself a passionate huntsman, being often granted the right to hunt in various royal forests in England. No sooner was he appointed archbishop in 1213 than the king gifted him thirty fallow deer (*Dama dama*) from his park at Brewood, Staffordshire (Sweetman 1875, 77).

The king's gift to the archbishop in 1213 constitutes the earliest record of fallow deer in Ireland, though it is probable that the archbishop's predecessor, John Comyn, had used fallow to stock his deer park at Kilmasanctan (Kilescopsentan), which he made in 1207 on the hills just above the archbishop's palace at Tallaght, Co Dublin (Sweetman 1875, 47). Fallow deer and parks have a close association; indeed, it is generally acknowledged that the demand for deer parks in medieval England was stimulated by the popularity of fallow deer (Birrell 1992, 112), though there is some dispute as to when this breed, which is native to southern Europe, first arrived in England. Evidence certainly exists to show that the species had been introduced by the Romans (Burton 1968, 160; Sykes 2009, 24), but it appears they did not survive after the 5th century. The general consensus, based upon documentary and archaeological evidence, is that fallow deer were re-introduced in the 1070s and may have been brought directly from Sicily where the Normans had them in enclosed parks (Sykes 2009, 27; Fletcher 2011, 88–93).

Their popularity spread quickly, for as a species they are gregarious and breed rapidly, while unlike red deer, which are twice their size, they have a predilection for grazing in open spaces, often indifferent land, rather than woodland, though they will fatten up well on broadleaved trees and shrubs (Bond 1993, 27; Moore, Hart and Langton 1999, 256). They are also much more easily caught and transported, while they produce excellent venison, which the Normans tended to regard as much superior in flavour to that of the native red deer (Chapman & Chapman 1997; Burton 1968, 160). Interestingly, farm venison in Britain and Ireland today tends to be largely red deer, while in France it is fallow (Carne 2000, 177).

The reign of Henry III (1216–72) witnessed wide-scale distribution of fallow deer in Ireland. Indeed, their remains have often been found in 13th-century archaeological contexts across the country (listed in Beglane 2010, 80). The process was no doubt encouraged by a royal mandate of 1242 to transport from Chester twenty bucks and forty does to stock a park for the king in Ireland, almost certainly in Glencree. Two years later the

'King's park at Glencry [Glencree]' was stocked with a further sixty does and twenty bucks from the royal forest at Chester. This park must have formed part of the royal forest at Glencree; its location has not been established, but it has been suggested that an earthwork identified by Westropp at Curtlestown may have been part of this enclosure (Westropp 1913, 185; Beglane 2015a, 114). By 1251 the king was gifting fallow from Glencree to the archbishop of Dublin (Sweetman 1875, 398) and in 1296 more were granted from the 'forest of Glencree' to Eustace le Poer, possibly for his lands in the Carlow area (see Le Fanu 1893).

The creation of enclosed tracts of land for the stocking of deer was a feature of Norman settlement in Normandy, Sicily and England (Lasdun 1992; Liddiard 2007; Miles 2009; Fletcher 2011). In England the number of deer parks was considerable; at least 1,900 have been estimated to have been in existence at one time or another during the medieval period (Cantor & Hatherly 1979, 71), while Oliver Rackham proposed the much larger figure of 3,200 parks during what he considered their apogee in the early 14th century (Rackham 1980, 191; 1986, 123). These enclosures ranged enormously in size, but 200 acres has been suggested as average (Cantor & Hatherly 1979, 74), while the largest known example extended to an area of 4,447 acres or 1800ha (Beaumont-James & Gerrard 2007).

On the basis of their popularity in other Norman regions, one may have expected sizable numbers of deer parks to have been created in Ireland. This may yet prove to have been the case, but to date there is still disappointingly limited evidence for deer parks during this period. Recently, a detailed study of Irish parks, which focused on the period from 1169 until the Black Death of 1348–50, has produced over sixty references to at least forty-six specific parks (Beglane 2015a, 15). However, even if all these parks are proven as deer parks, this number is comparatively small; furthermore, this number could have been smaller, for some of those listed may not have been deer parks. In truth, the word park, derived from the Old English *pearroc*, simply means a paddock or enclosure and can apply to a range of areas imparked for horses, hares or other animals, rather than just deer.

Unless 'venison' or 'beasts' are actually mentioned in the context of specific parks, finding documentary evidence for deer parks can be difficult. One source often used in England are the licences required to make such parks, which the Crown normally granted for a fee by grant of royal favour (Thirsk 1985, 366–67; Lasdun 1992, 18; Miles 2009, 141). The only known Irish example from this period was for a park at

Kilmasanctan (Kilescopsentan) in 1207 (Murphy & O'Connor 2006, 69; Beglane 2015a, 139, 200). This application also included a request for a deer leap or salter (*saltatorium*) — a structure designed to allow deer to return back into the park, but without being able to readily leap out again (Cooper 2014, 47). Monarchs tended to be largely indifferent to such applications unless they were located inside or close to a royal forest; it is likely that Kilmasanctan lay near or within the church lands that were originally designated as 'forest' by the Crown (see above). It may be noted that in the early 18th century this locality, now called Glassamucky, was partly incorporated into a large deer park created by Speaker Conolly on Mountpelier Hill.

The *Calendar of Justiciary Rolls* contains around a dozen entries relating to parks in Ireland, though only one has been identified that specifically mentions deer. This is an informative account of a law case in 1305 between the powerful second earl of Ulster, Richard Óg de Burgh (1259–1326) and William Waspayl, probably a relation of Roger Waspayl of Rathkeale, Co Limerick, who had been accused to poaching deer from the earl's park at Ballydonegan (now Oak Park), Co Carlow. Waspayl had broken down a section of the park pale, dug a pit trap just outside the opening, and used greyhounds and spears to drive deer into the trap. In the process he was evidently confronted by the earl's parker and his son, the latter whom he disarmed of his spear (Mills 1914, 136). Such incidences of deer being attacked and park fences broken down were not uncommon in medieval contexts and are often seen as a significant way in which the standing of aristocrats was challenged (Miles 2009, 155).

The park at Ballydonegan was still functioning in 1333 when an inquisition was made into the lands of the earl of Ulster (Murphy & O'Connor 2006, 67; Beglane 2015a, 198). This stated that the park contained deer and was surrounded by a paling, possibly a reference to a cleft wooden fence, which may or may not have had an associated ditch and bank. There is also a reference to a dove-cote 'beneath park ... now ruined', reminding us that Norman and later deer parks, although primarily intended for deer, also had subsidiary economic uses such as the keeping of horses and livestock, rabbit warrens and ponds to stock fish as well as timber, often derived from coppiced or pollarded woodland.

The *post mortem* inquisitions following the 1333 assassination of William de Burgh, third earl of Ulster, also included a reference to another deer park at Loughrea, Co Galway (Beglane 2014). Known as Earls'park, this was described as 'a park there for the earl's beasts containing seven carucates

[approx 840 acres]' and stated to have been 'worth nothing beyond the keep of the beasts'. It may have been established around 1250–51, when the owner Walter de Burgh was gifted by the king four stags and four 'does' (probably hinds) from 'the King's forest of Slefcho' or 'Slefo', Co Waterford. The boundaries of this park bordering Lough Rea, south-east of Loughrea and within sight of the town, survive today as a townland of 913 acres (369ha). A recent archaeological survey has revealed that the townland boundary is coterminous with the original deer park boundary, this being a mortared stone wall which survives in places to a height of 8.5 feet (2.6m) and extends for 4.5 miles (7.2km). It has an extant gateway, while charcoal from the mortar gave a C14 date of AD 1251–97 (Beglane 2014, 309–10).

Loughrea is the largest known deer park of the medieval era in Ireland, though it might be added that our knowledge of park sizes is bedevilled by difficulties as parks invariably enlarged and contracted through time; the deer park at Shankill, Co Dublin, was at least 840 acres, while the park at Maynooth, Co Kildare, has been estimated at 495 acres; that at Dunamase, Co Laois, at 338 acres and that at Carrick, Co Wexford, at 308 acres. These estimations have been based on archaeological field survey of their surviving bank and fosse boundaries (Beglane 2015a, 99–110).

Size mattered when it came to deer park design as many were intended to facilitate hunting in addition to being used to stock deer and other animals. The practicality of recreational hunting in deer parks has long been a subject of debate; Rackham, for example, was doubtful if they 'could be the scene of hunts' because, in his view, a 'confined space full of trees offers little scope for a good hunt'. Consequently, he argued it was a mistake to call deer parks 'hunting preserves' (Rackham 1986, 125). However, the evidence in England is overwhelming that many parks were used for hunting in the medieval era (Miles 2009, 29–37), while their use for hunting in 17th-century Ireland is well established (see below).

It is not a matter of whether recreational deer hunting was undertaken in parks, but rather what form it took. The Normans are most often associated with the technique *par force de chiens* ('by force of dogs' or 'by strength'), which they considered the noblest form of hunting and is supposed erroneously by some to have been introduced from the continent (Griffin 2007, 9). In this process the game, normally a solitary deer, boar or wolf, was run down in a headlong chase and exhausted by mounted riders with a trained pack of sight hounds over miles of terrain before the kill was made. This form of

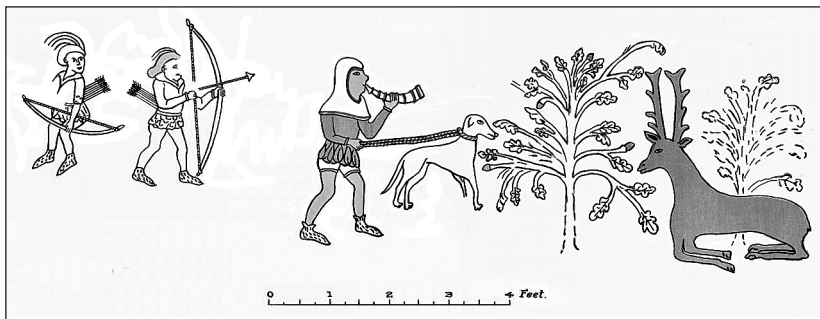


Fig 2 Wall painting of a deer hunt from the west wall, north transept, Holycross Abbey, Co Tipperary; probably 14th century.

hunting was best suited to forests and chases, rather than enclosed parks; besides, the preferred quarry was always red deer, rather than fallow, as they run in a straight line and can do so over 20 miles (Cummins 2003, 32–46; Almond 2011, 73).

The Normans also employed other hunting techniques, all of which could have been employed within parklands. Chasing or ‘coursing’ a single animal with hounds in clearings was one system suited to fallow deer that was adopted within parkland settings (Miles 2009, 30), but the ancient Saxon method of drive hunts, notably bow and stable, is known to have been widely adopted by the Normans in England and also in medieval Scotland; in all probability this was because drive hunts were particularly suitable for the relatively confined spaces of enclosed park settings (Cummins 2003, 47–67; Miles 2009, 31). In the absence of documentary evidence one can only suppose that this was also the case in medieval Ireland, though there is some supporting evidence in the form of a 14th-century wall painting on the north transept of Holycross Abbey, Co Tipperary (Fig 2), which depicts a bow and stable hunt (Crawford 1915; Morton 2004, 340).

DEER IN IRELAND 1350–1600

The calamity of the Black Death in 1348–50, followed over the next century by the diminution of central government authority in Ireland, saw a sharp decline in the keeping of parks for deer. Indeed, there is very little evidence for deer parks during the late 15th and 16th centuries, though there are some indications that the two great aristocratic families of that period, the earls of Ormond and the earls of Kildare, possessed parks near their principal seats. Both these families certainly had large packs of hounds throughout the 16th century and, in addition to wolves, hunted red deer, whose numbers presumably rose following the dramatic rural depopulation of the late 14th century.

Despite the political instability of the era, recreational deer hunting was evidently widely enjoyed by the élite across Ireland during the

16th century. It is apparent from the accounts of Fynes Moryson (1566–1630) that there was also deer hunting without hounds, at least during late Elizabethan times, presumably undertaken for purposes of sustenance rather than recreation.

The Irish used to kill both fallow and red deer by shot with the harquebus; and commonly caught his stags by driving them into nets, shouting with a great noise upon the contrary side from the nets, which made them go forward and go into the nets, or by the way stand gazing till they might be shot. They also had an art to catch stags by singing a certain tune upon all sides about them, by which music they fall down and lay as sleeping. Also they caught both fallow and red deer by springes of arms of trees, or young trees half cut and lightly fastened to the ground, upon which while the deer browsed they were caught by the trees, which being loosened from the ground rose up and many times hoisted and gripped them far from the ground (Falkiner 1904, 323–24).

However, Fynes Moryson, who in 1600 had been appointed personal secretary to Lord Mountjoy, the commander-in-chief of the Crown army in Ireland, only witnessed the country in wartime conditions. He clearly did not see any of the large aristocratic hunts that operated across the country throughout the 16th century and whose presence was often none too popular among the tenant classes due to the widespread practice of imposing a local cess tax to pay for the costs of supporting hunt staff and hounds. In 1589 for example, Sir Warham St Leger reported that on the earl of Desmond lands

The keepers and huntsmen of the Lord’s hounds and greyhounds may take by way of cess sufficient meat and drink for themselves and their hounds, so that they remain but one day and night with every inhabitant (Hamilton 1885, 203; Green 1907, 184).

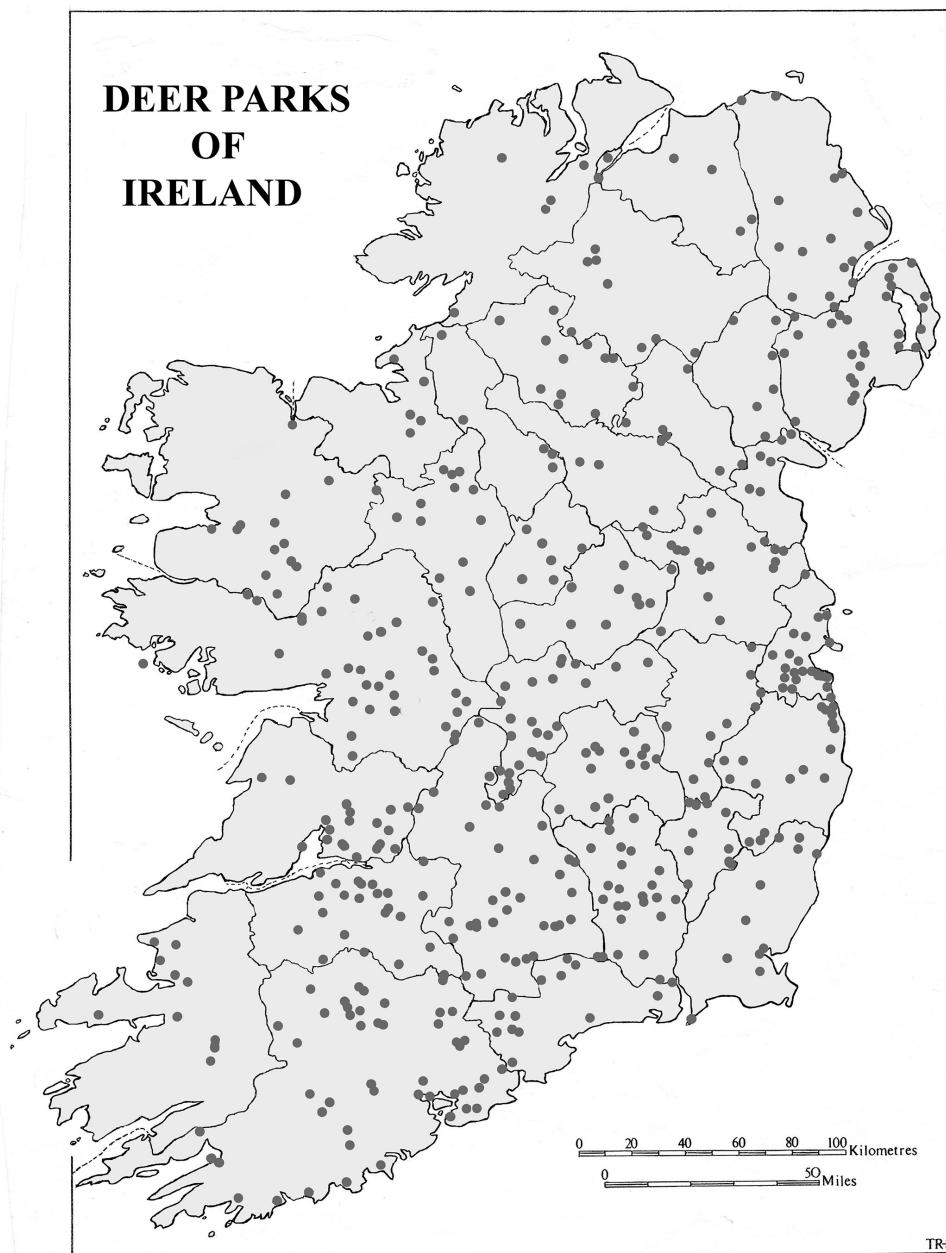


Fig 3a The distribution of all known deer parks in Ireland.

The jury of Tipperary reported that Thomas Butler, the tenth earl of Ormond, did much the same thing (Hogan 1897, 27), while in 1525 his grandfather, Piers Butler, the eighth earl of Ormond, was the subject of complaints as he

exacted coyne and livery throughout Tipperary and Kilkenny for his sundry hunts, that is to say twenty-four persons

with sixty greyhounds and hounds for deer-hunting, another number of men and dogs to hunt the hare and a third number to hunt the martin (Hogan 1897, 26; Cox 1897, 35).

The earls of Kildare were also subject to such criticism; in one such case in 1537 the Grand Juries in Kildare, Kilkenny and Waterford recorded that

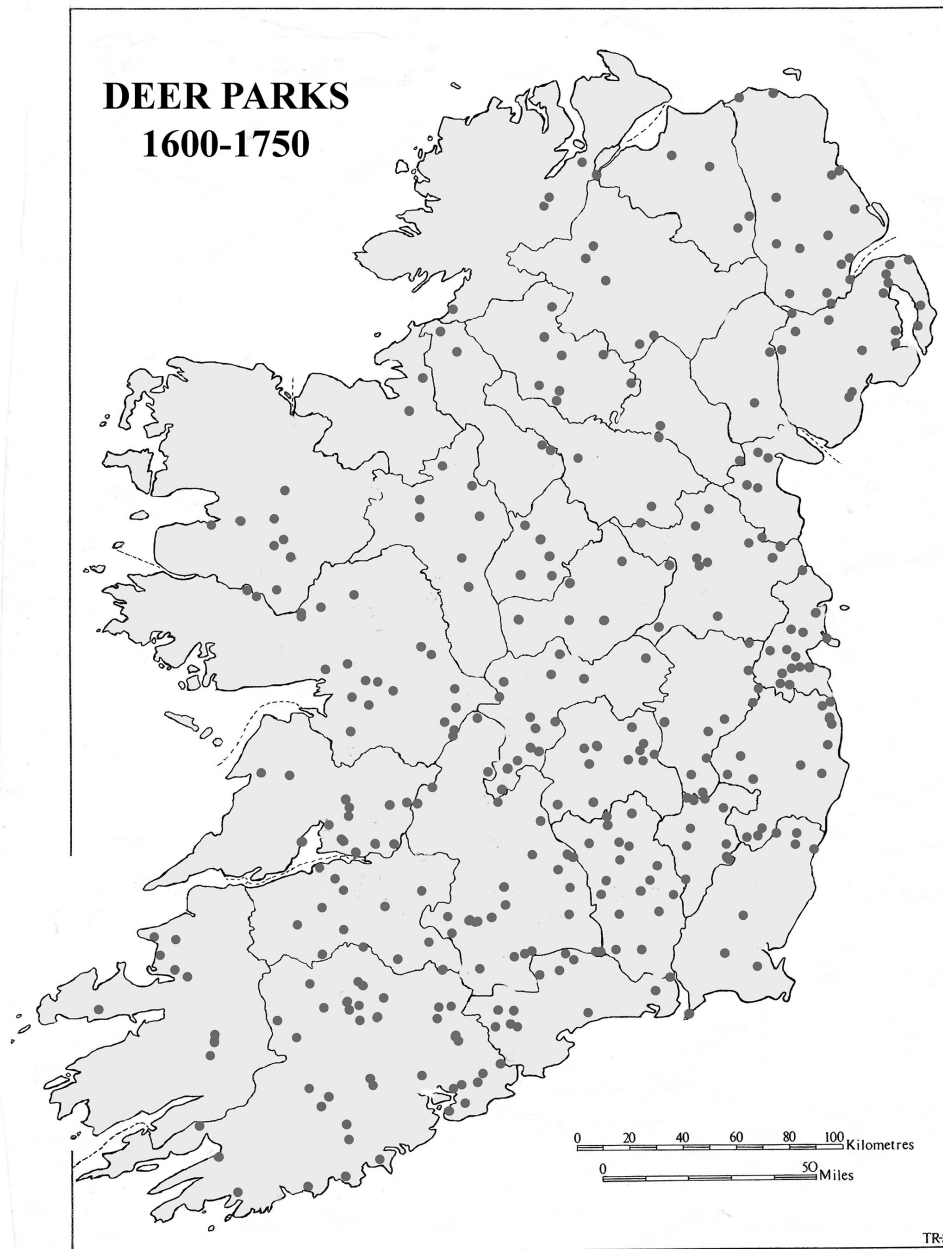


Fig 3b The distribution of deer parks in use during the period 1600–1750.

the earl's 'hounds and huntsmen must have meat [from the tenants] ... to the number of 40 or three score' (Cox 1897, 36).

The high value placed on hounds was another indication of the popularity of deer hunting during the 16th century; for example Philip Roche sent two greyhounds to Cromwell from Kinsale in 1532; Shane O'Neill presented two hounds to the queen in 1562 (Hogan 1897, 26–8) and the primate of

Armagh, Dr Peter Lombard, reported in 1600 that Ireland 'bred the fairest and best hunting dogs of all' (Hogan 1897, 47). However, the nature of Irish hunting was to change dramatically in the succeeding 17th century; wolves were to largely die out, wild red deer would become relatively scarce, while fallow deer and deer parks would make a dramatic re-appearance.

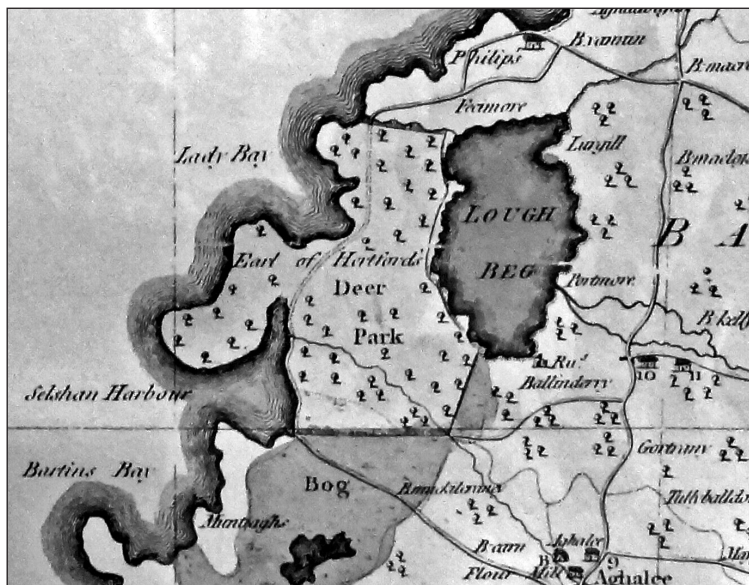


Fig 4 Map of Portmore, Co Antrim. Detail from James Lendrich's *Map of County Antrim*, 1780. The park was reduced in size from 3,000 acres to about 1,400 acres in the 1680s.

DEER IN IRELAND 1600–1750

The rising peace and prosperity that characterised the first four decades of the 17th century was accompanied by a radical transformation of the landscape, propelled by population growth, the spread of a market-based rural economy and by the process of land forfeitures and plantations, notably those in the King's and Queen's Counties from 1556, in Munster from 1589 and in Ulster in the period 1609–13. Among the changes was a renewed interest in hunting among both the 'Old' and 'New' English landed families, as well as the old Gaelic élite.

As in the medieval period, deer hunting remained an important part of the aristocratic lifestyle in the 17th century, encouraged no doubt by the example of King James I and his son Charles I, both of whom had a big passion for hunting. In truth, King James's zeal bordered almost on the obsessive, as was evident from the very outset of his reign in 1603 when his journey from Scotland to claim the English throne was characterised by a long sequence of numerous deer-hunting expeditions (MacGregor 2000, 86).

Royal enthusiasm for hunting was imitated across the realm and in England the right to hunt, once the preserve of the aristocracy, started to spread down the social ranks of the landed classes; in his *Itinerary* of 1617 Fynes Moryson remarked that 'every gentleman of five hundred or a thousand pounds rent by the yeare hath a Parke' (Carr 1976, 19; de Belin 2013, 10). Perhaps not surprisingly, this was having an impact in Ireland, where very few deer parks had survived from the medieval era.

Fynes Moryson, writing in the early 1600s, noted only two remaining 'namely one at Maynooth, belonging to the Earl of Kildare, and another in Munster, then belonging to the Earl of Ormond' (Falkiner 1904, 323); it was certainly true that the park at Maynooth was operating in 1585 as it was still in 1618 (FitzGerald 1899a). By the end of the century, notwithstanding two major destructive wars, many hundreds of new parks had been made across the country. Indeed, of the 500 known deer parks in Ireland, the large majority were created in, or were in existence during the 120-year period of 1620–1740 (Fig 3).

Many of the new land grants and re-grants in Ireland during this period came with a licence to impark, and while some of these parks may not have actually been constructed, this does constitute a useful source of information. Another source are the 112 townlands in Ireland that bear the name 'deerpark', for most of these are relics of creations made during the 1600–1750 period; by the time of the publication of the first-edition Ordnance Survey (OS) maps in the 1830s and 1840s, many of these townlands had been redundant as deer parks for up to a century. Furthermore, it is important to appreciate that many such townlands formed only part the original deer park areas.

Some of the most useful information on the use and management of 17th-century deer parks comes from the Lismore Papers (Grosart 1886; 1887), which include details on two major deer parks, those at Lismore, Co Waterford (1,176 acres), imparked in 1617 by Richard Boyle, later first earl of Cork, and at Youghal Park, Co Cork (920 acres), lying a few

miles north-west of the town and imparked in 1661 by his son, the second earl of Cork. But perhaps the best-documented Irish 17th-century deer park was that at Portmore, on the shores of Lough Neagh in Co Antrim (Fig 4). This was imparked in 1665 for Edward, the third Viscount Conway (1623–83), and is estimated originally to have covered around 3,000 acres (Fairley 1977). Correspondence between Viscount Conway and his agent, Sir George Rawdon, in the state papers is particularly useful, but Portmore Park also featured extensively in the earliest known hunting treatise in Ireland, *The Experienced Huntsman*, which was published in 1714 by Conway's park keeper at Portmore, Arthur Stringer's remarkable book (Fairley 1977), the first reliable work on the wild mammals of the British Isles, gives a very detailed picture of the range of hunted quarry at Portmore with particular focus on both red and fallow deer, giving views on practical management and procurement of venison. There is advice on 'hunting in a park' and hunting 'at large', and among other things, a chapter on 'Instructions for him who takes upon him to be a Keeper of a Deer Park' (Fairley 1977).

Building a deer park was an expensive undertaking, for aside from making the boundary, generically known as the pale, and acquiring deer, keepers needed to be engaged to maintain and protect the stock as well as the enclosure boundary and its interior habitat, usually a mixture of grassland ('launds') and woodland pasture. Finding a balance between cost and function resulted in a variety of different boundary forms being chosen, but all had to take into account that deer are capable of high and long jumps. The modern recommendation for fencing red deer is six feet (1.80m) and for fallow deer five feet (1.50m) on level ground (Mayle 1999, 9), but 17th-century park boundaries were often higher than this; for example in 1621–22 the newly created 'pleasant parke, paled round about three miles compasse' at Tandragee (Ballymore), Co Armagh, was enclosed 'with a pale 8 foote in height' (Treadwell 1964, 140).

The term 'pale' or 'impale' is often used in 17th-century Irish documents in relation to deer parks and in many cases may refer to what was sometimes called a 'dead hedge', that is to say it was built of wood and comprised either an open fence of spaced vertical cleft oak pales with horizontal rails or a close-boarded palisade fence. However, large amounts of suitable timber were becoming increasingly difficult to obtain during the course of the century. Indeed, as early as January 1622 Richard Boyle was importing '20,000 pales' for enlarging his park at Lismore (Grosart 1886 i, 66). Timber could be saved by building fences atop

banks, usually made in conjunction with excavated ditches, which in deer parks were nearly always set on the inside. Instead of a 'dead hedge' the banks' slopes were often planted with a live ('quick') hedge, normally hawthorn (quickthorn or quickset), though one presumes other plant species were used (Fletcher 2011, 146). At Kilruddery, Co Wicklow, for example, which was imparked in 1634, its park circuit of 12 miles had a treble ditch planted with 'quickset' so 'that ye deer may not get to ye frut and that ye park may be completed' (Costello 2015, 164; Meath Papers, J3).

Increasing lack of timber and availability of stone through field clearances were no doubt contributing factors that encouraged landowners to invest in building walls around their parks during the first half of the 17th century, for example at Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim, and Boyle, Co Roscommon. After 1660 the use of walls, which were much cheaper to maintain, became the norm, while in some instances existing wood pales were replaced by walls, as appears to have happened at Lismore in the 1670s (Lismore Castle Papers, ms 7177).

Choosing the right topography for the deer park could certainly save money on boundaries. For example, running the pale boundary along the contour of a slope puts the deer at a disadvantage at it has to jump uphill; consequently, a river valley like Glenarm, Co Antrim, was often an ideal location for a park as normally the only substantial boundaries required were those running along the valley floor. Gervase Markham, an authority on country pursuits, whose 1616 edition of *Maison Rustique, or The Countrey Farme* was widely read in his own time, was quite explicit in what was required and recommended that in making a deer park the owner must insure that it has

some little brook of spring-water running along by the place, or for want of spring-water and natural streams, you must prepare ditches and pools walled and daubed in such sort as that they may receive and keep the rain-water. Nor ought the park to consist of one kind of ground only....the park [must not] be situated upon any one entire hill, plain, or else valley, but it must consist of divers hills, divers plains, and divers valleys: the hills which are commonly called the views or discoveries of parks would be all goodly high woods of tall timber, as well for the beauty and gracefulness of the park, as also for the echo and sound which will rebound from the same, when in the times of hunting,

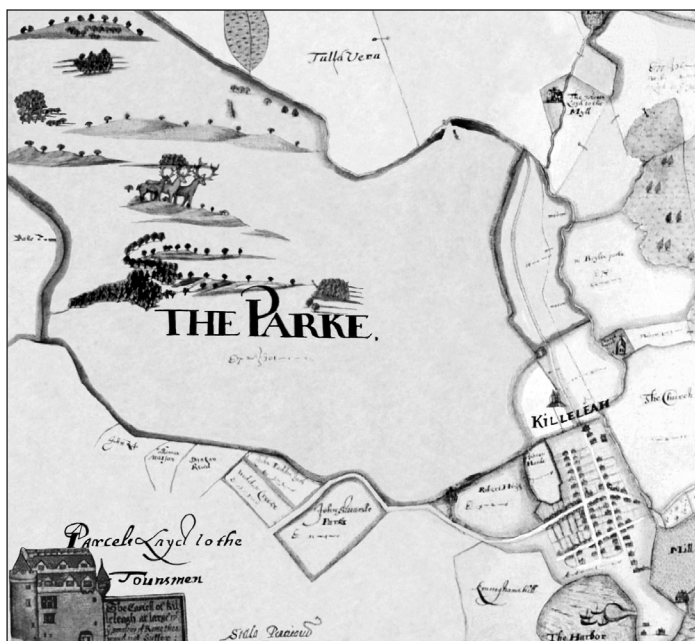


Fig 5 Thomas Raven's map of 1625–26 depicting the deer park associated with Killyleagh castle, Co Down, the home of the first viscount Clandeboy (1560–1644). The park covered about 1,500 statute acres inside a stone wall and appears to have been abandoned after the 1640s rebellion.

either the cries of the hounds, the winding of horns, or the gibbetting of the huntsmen passeth through the same, doubling the music, and making it ten times more delightful (Markham 1616, 668).

It is clear that throughout the 17th and 18th centuries the preference, if at all possible, was to have deer parks located as close to the manor house as possible. Analysis shows that the majority of 17th-century parks were indeed located within a short distance of the house, usually abutting the ornamental gardens; this is the case for example with the substantial early 17th-century parks at Mallow, Doneraile and Castle Lyons in Co Cork, at Killyleagh, Co Down (Fig 5), while the large park at Portumna, Co Galway (over 1,400 acres), created in the mid-1620s by the earl of Clanricarde, bordered on the side of the house itself.²

There were cases where the deer park was located, for one reason or another, some distance from the main residence and in such cases a residential lodge would normally be needed with dining and sleeping accommodation. An early example of such a remotely located park was at Fairwood, lying just south of Tinahely, Co Wicklow. It was created by the lord deputy, Sir Thomas Wentworth, first earl of Strafford (1593–1641), on heavily wooded lands he had purchased in 1637; being two days' journey from Dublin he built himself, at great expense, a timber lodge with a 'handsome bullworke' so he could 'have a place to take my own recreation, for a month or two of the year' (Loeber 1994, 270–73).

Earlier, in 1625, Richard Boyle, by this time the first earl of Cork, had built a hunting lodge with dining and sleeping accommodation in his deer park at Lismore (Grosart 1887 i, 125, 156) and had another rather unusual lodge with triangular plan located five miles north of the town on the southern foothills of the Knockmealdown Mountains at Castle Dodard (Knockaungarriff), Co Waterford (Loeber 2012, 113). The latter still survives though it was subject to modifications in the 20th century.

Some other examples of remote parks with residential lodges included one just north of Belfast owned by Arthur Chichester, first earl of Donegall (1606–75) and Portmore, Co Antrim, where in the 1660s Viscount Conway created his large park 15 miles west of his seat in Lisburn; initially this had a modest lodge, but was later enlarged into a major house with a grandiose stable block. A remote deer park at Donard, Co Wicklow, belonging to the Howards, later earls of Wicklow, also had its own residential lodge, as did the deer park created in the 1720s by Speaker Conolly on Mountpelier (Montpelier) Hill, Co Dublin, 16 miles from his seat at Castletown; later this lodge was used as a meeting place for the 'Hell-fire Club' and now stands as an impressive ruin on the mountain.

Aside from hunting lodges, most parks of this period needed a house for the keeper or ranger, normally placed on high ground (see below). Sometimes these were erected as handsome buildings, for example at Cappoquin, Co Waterford (Smith 1746, 53), and may also have doubled up

as places to entertain hunting guests. This was evidently the case at Tollymore, Co Down, which was imparked on the foothills of the Mourne Mountains in 1710–15 by Viscount Limerick, whose main residence was in Dundalk, Co Louth, thirty-seven miles distant. Here a building called the Huntsman's Lodge in the centre of the park served as the keeper's residence, but must also have been used by the family until the 1750s, when a summer residence was built in the park a little further to the north on the opposite bank of the river; subsequently, in the late 18th century this house was developed as the main seat of the family (Roden 2005).

Despite the fact that Fynes Moryson reported in the early 17th century that Ireland yielded 'some reasonable plenty of fallow deer', which he said were found 'running loose in the woods of the north, of Ophalia, of Leix and of Munster' (Falkiner 1904, 323), it was nevertheless found necessary by some landowners to import fallow for the new parks during the early decades of the 17th century. One of those was Richard Boyle, later earl of Cork, who in July 1617 purchased forty-six breeding fallow to stock his new park at Lismore from his friend Sir George Cary at Cockington, Devonshire. In October, after these bucks had shed their antlers, they were shipped to Ireland and brought to Lismore 'in pannies in a long land carriage' (Grosart 1887, i, 88, 172). The following May he imported an additional eighteen young does and twelve sorrels or young male fallow (Grosart 1887 i, 190); these may be the 'rascal' or lean deer he received from Sir Edward Seymour (1580–1659) of Pomeroy Castle, Devon (ibid, 144). By 1624 he had sufficient stock to be able to help other landowners establish deer parks by sending them deer; in March 1624 for example, he sent Sir Laurence Esmonde (1570–1646) 'ten alive deer' to stock his park at Lymbricke (Limerick) near Gorey, Co Wexford, a distance of about 80 miles from Lismore, and at the same time a further ten deer were sent nearby to Sir Edward Fisher (1587–1654) at Prospect, Courtown (ibid, 151); in November 1625 he delivered twelve live deer to Sir Richard Aldworth (c 1570–1629) at Newmarket Court, Co Cork, 50 miles from Lismore (ibid, 171) and in January 1626 sent Richard Burke, fourth earl of Clanricarde (1572–1635), 'towards the storing of his new park' at Portumna, Co Galway, his 'first six brace of breeding deer', and then in June the same year another 'five brace of young fawns', which according to his diary 'sucked on my goats and the goats along with them to give them milk on the way' on the 70-mile journey from Lismore (ibid, 175, 190).

The gift of live animals and carcasses, such as

gifts from the king from his own parks, had always been a feature of deer parks in England, but there is no evidence of any such royal gifts sent to Ireland during the early 17th century, though later in the 1660s Charles II sent fallow deer to help stock the Phoenix Park in Co Dublin. However, there is a tradition that the breeding stock for the famous all-white fallow herd at Mallow Castle, Co Cork, were the result of a gift from Queen Elizabeth to her god-child Elizabeth Norreys (Walton 2011, 3). While it is possible that the substantial deer park that existed at Mallow during the time of Sir John Jephson (1579–1638), may have already been there when the property was forfeited by the Desmonds in 1584 (White 1916, 81), there is no supporting evidence for the presence of white deer at Mallow during the 17th century. Furthermore, white fallow deer do not figure prominently in early park records in Britain (Brown 2003) and herds of white deer, which are very rare, may be a late development.

There may have been an attempt to introduce roe deer during the early 17th century as Richard Boyle stated in August 1621 that Sir Gerald Lowther (1589–1660), a lawyer and later a chief justice of Ireland, who had a seat on the banks of the River Slaney at St John's Priory, south of Enniscorthy, Co Wexford, was going to send 'some roe deer for my park' (Grosart 1886 ii, 23). Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) were not in fact successfully introduced into Ireland until the end of the 19th century at Lissadell, Co Sligo, and, besides, were for a variety of reasons never considered very suitable for confinement in parks (Fletcher 2011, 97).

Not all deer parks of the 17th century were built exclusively for fallow deer; a few had red deer only. At Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim, for example, Sir Frederick Hamilton (1590–1647) built 'a good stone deer park for red deer four miles in circuit' (Logan 1971, 319). There are some references to both red and fallow deer being in the same park, as was the case at Carnew, Co Wicklow; Sir William Brereton noted in 1635 that the park there was 'about seven miles in compass and wherein are both fallow and red deer in good store' (Hawkins 1844, 146). At Lismore, Co Waterford, there is no mention of red deer in the park until 1673 when a count enumerated '100 brace of fallows and 40 brace red deer in the parke' (Barnard 2004, 234). In all such cases, however, it is highly probable that the different species were kept in separate enclosures, for as Gervase Markham in 1616 remarked

You shall not by any means in one park mix the red deer and the fallow deer together, for the red deer is a masterful beast, and when the time of bellowing commeth, he

grows fierce and outrageous, so that he will be entire Lord of the field, and will kill the fallow deer if they but cross him in his walk: and therefore each must be kept severally in several parks (Markham 1616, 670).

At Portmore Park, Co Antrim, Viscount Conway's park keeper, Arthur Stringer, stated that prior to it being partially disparked following 'the late wars of 1688', the deer park, which was divided into separate sections, covered 'three thousand acres of land, with a thousand brace of red, and fallow therein' (Fairley 1977, 56, 59). Stringer discusses hunting both red and fallow deer within the parks:

I had six couple of hounds with which I continually hunted in my Lord Conway's parks at Portmore ... the ground was so bad for riding, that I could depend on nothing only but the truth of the hounds, and yet by fair hunting with the said six couple of dogs, I killed 54 brace of bucks and four brace of stags in a season, all in the said parks' (Fairley 1977, 59).

While hunting red deer was undertaken in large parks like Portmore during the 17th century, it is clear that most hunting of stags took place 'at large' or in the open country. This was because stags (red deer), would be hunted for considerable distances in a straight line, normally *par force*, until the deer was exhausted and would stand 'at bay' to face its pursuers. The buck (male fallow deer), on the other hand, is much more devious when hunted, will rarely run in a straight line and unlike stags will commonly make use of cover for concealment.

It was consequently fallow rather than red deer that were hunted in parks during the 17th century, normally with horse and hounds using variations of the drive method. Stringer, who discusses the subject at length in his 1714 book, recommended that 'the chief matter of a keeper or huntsman to observe in hunting in a park' was to ensure 'not many hounds run' (Fairley 1977, 60). He repeatedly emphasised the importance of using well-trained dogs that could keep their focus on the selected quarry; this indeed had also been a matter of concern expressed by George Rawdon in his Portmore correspondence to Viscount Conway in the 1660s (Mahaffy 1908, 531). Stringer himself regularly seems to have used six couple of 'good staunch [reliable] park hounds', with 'several men both on horseback and foot, with good whips, and each a pair of couples at his belt', adding that 'parks are generally so as a man may ride to see his hounds hunt, and likewise to see which way the buck heads when he herds and breaks herd'

(Fairley 1977, 61). By comparison with fox hunting in the 19th century, this form of hunting was slow-paced and the hours spent out hunting sometimes lasted from dawn to dusk (Griffin 2007, 128).

When Francis Seymour, Baron Conway (1679–1732), hunted at Portmore he evidently used rather more than twelve hounds, for Stringer recorded that in 1700 he brought from England 'twenty couple of hounds in order to hunt in the parks ... and did generally hunt every second or third day' from 3 June until 18 August (Fairley 1977, 57). It is not known if other aristocrats in Ireland had such large packs of hounds for hunting in their parks. The Lismore Papers provide plenty of references to deer hunting in the Lismore and Youghal parks during the course of the 17th century, but provide little detail beyond that. The hounds and their kennels were often at this time located in or close to the park, as was the case with the earl of Kildare's park at Moone, Co Kildare (FitzGerald 1899b, 21), and aristocrats who had a number of parks seem to also have maintained different kennels for each park. James Butler, the first duke of Ormonde (1610–88), had at least six deer parks, namely at Kilkenny Castle and Dunmore, both in Co Kilkenny; Carrick in Co Tipperary, Tullow and Sherwood, both in Co Carlow, while his family also owned Garryhondon deer park in Co Carlow (Fig 6); for a time he also had a deer park in England at Moor Park in Surrey, some of the stock for which came from the king himself (Fenlon 2000, 143). All of these parks had their own keepers and appear also to have had their own packs of hounds; at Sherwood, Co Carlow, for example, the duke's ranger and former private secretary, William Robinson, who undertook to take a lease upon the park in 1688, had responsibility there for 'a pack of ten couple of dogs' (Ball 1920, 5). No doubt the duke, who had a passion for deer hunting, also brought with him some of his favourite hounds from park to park.

It was the first duke of Ormond, when lord lieutenant of Ireland (1662–68) who undertook the creation of the Phoenix Park, originally 2,000 acres in extent, after the Irish privy council in 1662 declared that lord lieutenant office holders should have sufficient game at their disposal 'within seven miles from the city of Dublin' (Kelly & Lyons 2014, no 80; McCullen 2009). Kennels were also attached to the Phoenix Park, though officially the hounds here belonged to the king rather than Ormonde. There appears to be no known description of deer hunting in the park, though there is a pre-park record of hawking at blackbirds there, with the comment that there 'being sometimes two hundred horse on the field looking at us' (Falkiner 1902, 427). While the Phoenix Park was open to the public, other deer

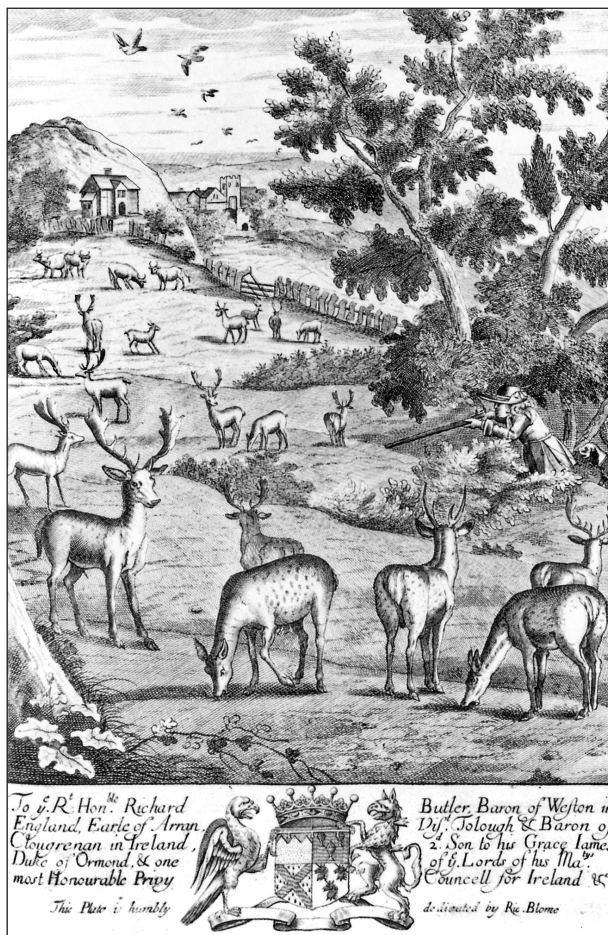


Fig 6 Fallow deer with man shooting in a park, possibly Tullow, Co Carlow. Copper plate engraving from Richard Blome's *The Gentleman's Recreation* (1686) dedicated to Richard Butler, earl of Arran (1639–86), second son of the first duke of Ormonde.

parks were private spaces so it was never really possible for deer hunting to attract fashionable followers like fox hunting was to do in the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is important to appreciate that deer parks of the 1600–1750 era in Ireland also hosted other sporting activities; indeed during this time they could very well be described as nurseries of sport. In particular, hawking and falconry was widely enjoyed in parks, mainly using goshawks, peregrines or the smaller merlins. The popularity of falconry declined during the 17th century as the increasing availability of fowling pieces allowed wildfowl, rabbits and most kinds of game to be more easily captured (Mitchell 1900, 3). However, falconry remained very fashionable among the Irish ascendancy at least until the Williamite war of 1688–91. One notable enthusiast was the duke of Ormonde, who remarked in August 1667 that when he was 'gotten hither' to his park at Kilkenny Castle, he was 'in the happiest calm you can imagine' with the availability of 'great store of partridge, a cast of merlins, and no business;

and this may hold for a week' (Bagwell 1916, 311).

In the park at Portmore, Co Antrim, Arthur Stringer noted that in addition to 'a good stock of partridges, pheasants and hawks', there was also a glen specially planted for woodcock, while a decoy had been constructed at great expense as well as an aviary, an apiary, fisheries and a rabbit warren (Fairley 1977, 4). Many other Irish deer parks boasted a similar range of attractions, while in addition they were often subdivided to facilitate the grazing of horses and livestock, the latter usually only limited to a few months to ensure sufficient grazing for the deer.

Both falconry and deer hunting with hounds entailed a real need to control nature. This did not just embody a close human-animal relationship, but inevitably also a need to manipulate the landscape itself to better facilitate the enjoyment of these sports. This was not just a matter of having the right topography for the deer park, but having a suitable distribution of habitat. Thus these parks were undoubtedly 'designed', not so much for aesthetic

appreciation like the later 18th-century landscape parks, but principally to provide a suitable environment for hunting, especially deer hunting (Creighton 2009, 147–53).

There is some evidence, albeit rather limited, for the vegetation cover in deer parks during the 1600–1750 era. In the case of the park at Mallow Castle in the 1630s we know it was ‘equally composed of launds (lawns), sheerewood, coppices, brakes and shelter’ (White 1916, 84). This balance roughly corresponds with the advice given by Gervase Markham (1616, 668) that the ‘hill, valley and plain’ of a deer park should be ‘part high wood, part grasse or champion, and part coppise, or under-wood, or thicke spring’.

The ‘very thicke-spring or underwood’ Markham explained would serve as coverts ‘or places of lair for wild beasts’ both to conceal them from ‘potchers and purloyners’, but also to ‘save them from the cunning sents or noses of hounds when they pursue them’ during hunting (Markham 1616, 669). The woods, he wrote, should include fruit-bearing trees such as ‘acornes, wilde apples, wilde pearces, straweberrie trees, and other such like, for the feeding of these wilde beasts’ (ibid, 670), while the ‘great store’ of grassy areas, which he correctly observed ‘are called in parkes the launds [lawns]’ should be very ‘champion and fruitfull, as well for the breeding of great store of grasse and hay for the feeding and nourishing of his deere, or other wild beasts’ (ibid, 668). The surface of the grassy areas or lawns was also considered important, as is made clear in a letter from Lord Burlington to his agent William Congreve in 1698 when he stated that in the park at Lismore, Co Waterford, he wanted ‘the grass made as good as possible can be for the deere’, and in the process he wanted ‘the ground laid as smooth as you can, for the conveniency of hunting’ (Lismore Castle Papers, MS 13227/2).

The deer park lawns were also used for deer

coursing with dogs, usually greyhounds ‘when at any time the owner shall be disposed to hunt in that manner’ should the hounds have ‘hunted the game from the thicks unto the launds’ (Markham 1616, 669). In England areas of about a mile long and about 350 yards wide were sometimes set aside for deer coursing (Fretwell 1995), but as yet no evidence has emerged for this in Ireland.

The grassy area or lawns of the park that ‘hath the greatest prospect’ and ‘where the deere take greatest delight to feed’ was where, in the view of Markham (1616, 669) ‘you shall build the lodge or house for the Keeper to dwell in’. He argued that the keeper needed to be able to view the park ‘every way round’ so that in the event of disturbance or trouble ‘offered unto the deere, a man may from that lodge take notice of the same’. For security reasons, the house he thought should be ‘a little forcellet or fort strong’ and that ‘the kennell for the Keepers hounds and the cocke-house’ should be close to it. As no keeper’s house has survived from the 1600–1750 period in Ireland we cannot be sure this advice was generally followed, but the limited evidence would suggest it was. For example, at Fairwood, Co Wicklow, the fortified timber lodge that Sir Thomas Wentworth built in 1637 allowed him views in the evenings of ‘as many as 500 deer feeding’ (Knowler 1739, 209). At the northern end of the same county Jacob Nevill’s map of 1760 shows ‘Ld Powerscourt game house’ perched on a high hilltop (Knocknafoila) in Powerscourt Mountain townland, to the west of the deer park (Nevill 1760).

A feature of deer park design widely adopted on the continent during the 17th century was the use of grassy axial rides cutting straight through the woodland and underwood. These had a variety of functions; they helped followers to keep in touch with the hunt and not get lost; they allowed ladies to progress the hunt, usually from a central *rond-point*; they facilitated the hunt itself by helping to

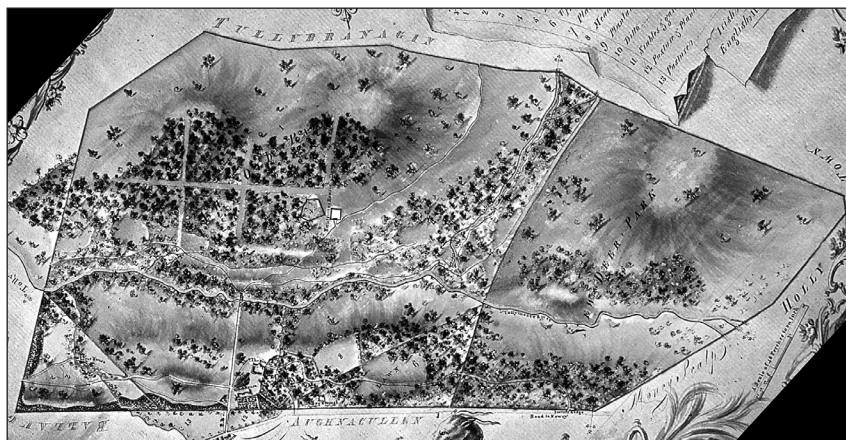


Fig 7 Tollymore, Co Down. Scale’s map of 1777 showing the deer park rides.



Fig 8 The earl of Meath's foxhounds at Killruddery, Co Wicklow, looking west from Bray Head, c 1740. The house and 1680s formal gardens can be seen in the middle ground, while in the background is the deer park, traversed by rides, on the slopes of the Little Sugarloaf. The figures are cut-outs pasted onto the picture; the fox is on the left.

track the quarry and they may have been used in deer coursing.

One deer park that evidently had such rides was Tollymore, Co Down. Walter Harris, who visited the park in the early 1740s, remarked not only upon the 'excellent venison', but how the 'fine woods' had been 'cut into ridings and vistles'; these rides are shown on Scale's 1777 map of Tollymore (Fig 7) (Roden 2005). A similar feature also existed in the Phoenix Park, imparked in the 1660s by the duke of Ormonde; here a large block of woodland in the centre of the park was dissected like a garden 'wilderness' by a geometrical arrangement of rides with a central *rond-point* (McCullen 2009, 47, 51).

Another park that appears have been crossed by an arrangement of axial rides was the early 17th century park at Killruddery, Co Wicklow. The evidence for this comes from a remarkable painting of about 1740 depicting the Earl of Meath's foxhounds traversing the landscape (Fig 8). The late 17th century formal gardens are in the middle ground of the picture, while in the background, the deer park on the slopes of the Little Sugarloaf is shown dissected by a series of rides. This picture, possibly the earliest depiction of a fox hunt in Ireland (Lewis 1975, 44), reflects a time of change in Ireland when hunting deer parks were being eclipsed by the emergence of modern fox hunting.

THE GLENARM DEER PARKS, CO ANTRIM

The largest known deer park in Ireland during the 17th and 18th centuries was the Great Deer Park at Glenarm, which covered 2,996 statute acres or 1,850 acres plantation measure. There may well have been other even larger examples such as the one at Portmore, but their original boundaries cannot yet be verified. The Great Deer Park, which was reduced to 823 acres in the late 18th century, occupies much of the Glenarm Valley south of the castle. Surprisingly, it was not the only deer park at Glenarm, for to the east of the town and lying on high land above the bay was the Little Deer Park, which had an area of 217 acres (Fig 9).

There is no surviving documentary evidence for the original imparkment of either of the Glenarm deer parks, but a petition dating to February 1609 mentions the castle at Glenarm and the 'Tuogh of the Parke' (Hill 1873, 226), the reference to 'tuogh' being an Irish population district equivalent to a barony. The use of the term 'parke' was evidently a reference to the Little Deer Park, which is subsequently shown on William Petty's Down Survey map of the 'Baronie of Glenarne [sic]' of 1656–58 where it is labelled 'Parke'. Nearly ten years later in 1669 it was specifically mentioned as the 'Deare Parke of Glenarne, 153 acres' in a survey of the lands of Alexander McDonnell, later the third earl of Antrim (Lodge 1825, 169).

As the Great Deer Park was not shown on the Down Survey map or mentioned in the 1669 survey, it may be assumed that this park, formerly part of

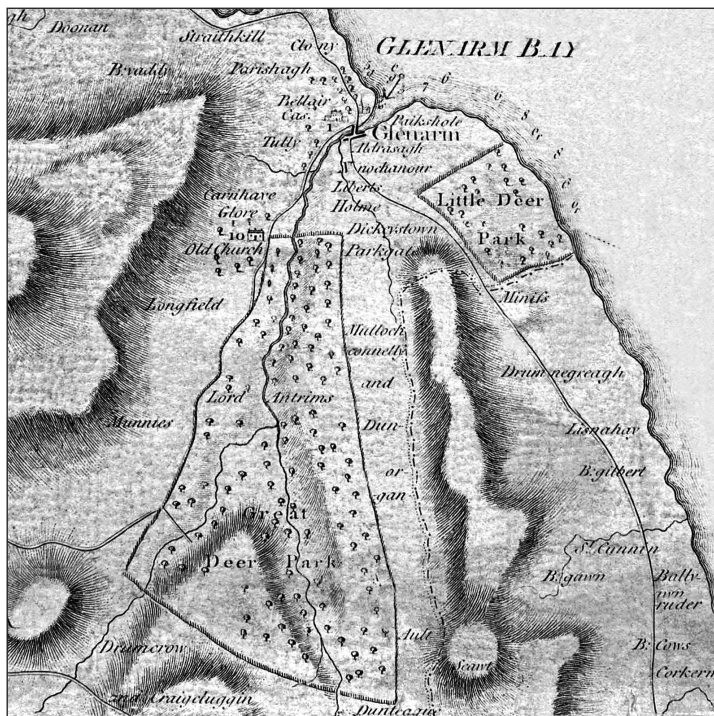


Fig 9 The Great Deer Park and the Little Deer Park at Glenarm, Co Antrim. Detail from James Lendrick's 1780 Map of County Antrim.

the townland of Tully, was created post 1670. It must have been in place by May 1683, one year after the death of Randal MacDonnell, the second earl of Antrim (1609–82), when Glenarm was visited by Richard Dobbs (1634–1701) of Castle Dobbs and was included in his well-known *Brief Description of County Antrim* (Hill 1873, 282–84; Molyneux Papers MS 883/1(I.1.2)). Dobbs wrote that

above the town and in the Glen through which the river runs, and is clad with underwoods, is the pleasantest hunting for buck that I ever saw, for you may ride on either side [of the glen], and have the dogs or bucks, or both continually in view, and stand in a manner still in one place for two hours together (Hill 1873, 282).

The large size of the Great Deer Park indicates that it was created as a hunting reserve, while the Little Deer Park was evidently quite unsuited for this purpose. As Dobbs observed, this smaller park was ‘dangerous for horses by reason of the rocks and other steep places’ and except for some ‘pretty coverts of Hasle and Ash’, had limited game cover. The reference to ‘underwood’ in the Great Park might suggest young wood, rather than the mature wood and wood pasture that was present in the valley in the 18th century. Mention of buck suggests that the Great Deer Park was then stocked with fallow rather than red deer, though we know

that Randal MacDonnell, the fourth earl of Antrim (1680–1721), was particularly fond of hunting red deer. In 1714 Arthur Stringer in his book *The Experienced Huntsman* dedicated a chapter to the earl, praising his ‘exalted passion ... for hunting the stag’ and noting that he had

the noblest herd stags now in this kingdom ... methinks I see your lordship in all the heroicke pleasant airs of that diversion standing erect in your saddle, hallowing to your hounds, your wig wafted by the winds, your eyes sparkling with gladsome joy and your whole mein expanded, as it were opened out, thrown abroad to the exalting extasy (Fairley 1977, 40).

The earliest map depicting the Great Deer Park was undertaken as part of a general survey of the Antrim estates in 1734 by Archibald Stewart, surveyor for the Irish Society, to celebrate the coming of age of the Alexander MacDonnell, the fifth earl of Antrim (1713–75). It shows the park to have been roughly divided by the river into three major topographical sections, namely the west side of the valley, the east side of the valley and the head of the valley where the river forks, the latter forming part of the townland of Deer Park Farms (Fig 10). Each of these three areas had a residence, presumably all keepers’ cottages, located on high ground in the grasslands with commanding views over the woods of the

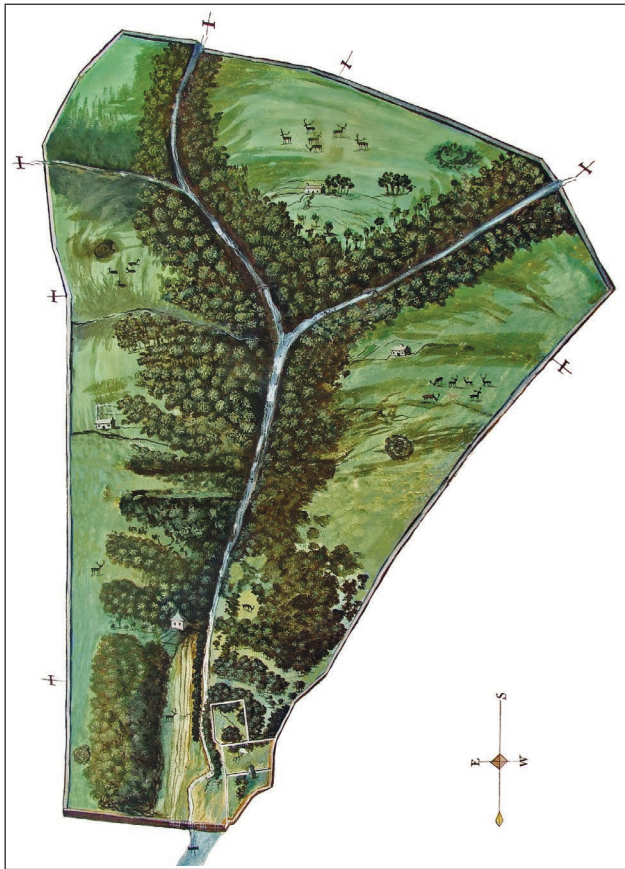


Fig 10 Map of the Great Deer Park at Glenarm by James Stewart, 1732.

valley floor. The park's perimeter was enclosed by a drystone wall, much of which survives today to a height of only three to five feet, having been robbed over the years to make other field boundaries. Rides are shown on the map running downslope through the woods and, close to the river in the north-eastern part of the park, roughly where the present residence known as the Cottage now stands, there stood a square single storey pavilion with sprocketed room, known as the Banqueting House (Fig 11).

In 1752 Glenarm was visited by the Rev (later Bishop) Richard Pococke (1704–65) during his travels in the north of Ireland. The local minister rode with him to the 'curious and beautiful' Great Deer Park, where he observed:

two rivers rise in the hills meet below & make the river of Glenarm which flows in the narrow valley; the park wall runs along the top of the hills & almost encloses these three rivers, being about nine miles in circumference: the entrance to the park is about half a mile to the west of Glenarme, & on both sides of the river both below & on the sides of the hills, is an agreeable

variety of Lawn & Wood for a mile; further on it is all woody on both sides, & just at the entrance of this wood on an eminence, is a banqueting house in a very romantick situation.

He also admired the 'perpendicular rocks on each side [of the river] from twenty to forty feet high' and the 'many beautiful cascades' along its course before eventually returning 'down the hill to the gate of the park we came in at' (McVeigh 1995, 26).

The picturesque quality of the Great Deer Park (Fig 12) ensured that it was incorporated into the ornamental 'naturalistic' landscape park when it was created around the house in the 1770s. In this way we see the deer park transformed from a hunting reserve to an ornamental landscape, where the primary function of the deer is to ornament the landscape rather than serve as the quarry for a day's hunting. To enjoy the aesthetic qualities of the landscape a carriage drive was laid out along the east side of the valley leading to the banqueting house, and on the opposite side of the river a thatched *cottage orné* (Fig 13) was built for Letitia, wife of Randal, the sixth earl (later marquess) of



Fig 11 Detail of map of the Great Deer Park at Glenarm by James Stewart, 1732, showing the north end of the park with the banqueting house.

Antrim (1749–91). This cottage features in one of two fine sepia wash drawings of the deer park made by John James Barralet (1747–1815) in the period 1787–89 (Anglesea 1991). Ten or fifteen years earlier the Great Deer Park was also the subject of two oil paintings by an unknown artist, but possibly Jonathan Fisher, presumably commissioned by the fifth earl of Antrim and part of a set of four of Glenarm (Fig 14). Both these deer park paintings depict the balance between open lawns and woodland pasture that was so characteristic of deer park landscapes and was in turn to provide inspiration for the design of landscape parks in the later 18th century (Black 1979, 29). One of these paintings (Fig 15) was to be copied as a background scene for Francis Wheatley's well-known painting 'The earl of Antrim and his wife Letitia', dated 1782, which depicts the couple driving their elegant yellow phaeton in the deer park and enjoying its scenic beauties (Webster 1984, 42).

Following the death of the sixth earl in 1791 his title and property passed to his daughter Anne Catherine (1775–1834), who became the countess

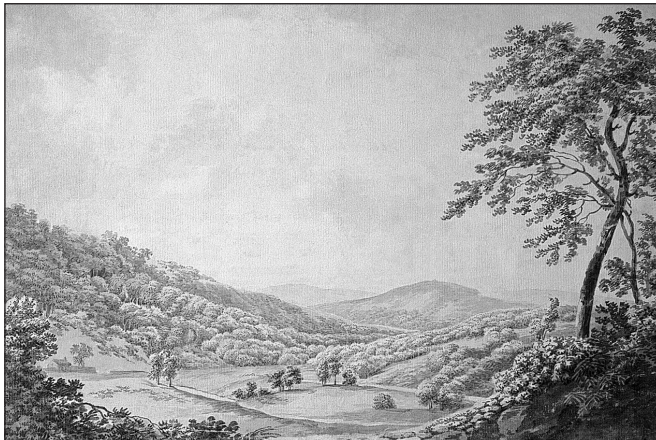


Fig 12 Sepia wash over pencil drawing of the Great Deer Park at Glenarm by John James Barralet, 1787–89.



Fig 13 Sepia wash drawing titled 'Marchioness of Antrim's cottage, Glenarm Deer Park' by John James Barralet. The picturesque gothic-style *cottage orné* fell into decay after the death of the marchioness in 1801 and was demolished in 1844.



Fig 14 Oil painting by unknown artist, possibly Jonathan Fisher, c 1770, of the Great Deer Park at Glenarm, showing woods, lawns, deer and a man with hound shooting what appears to be a flintlock muzzle-loading sporting rifle.

Fig 15 Oil painting by unknown artist, possibly Jonathan Fisher, c1770, of the Great Deer Park at Glenarm looking north down the valley towards the house.





Fig 16 Map of the Great Deer Park at Glenarm based on the 1850s OS six-inch sheets. The coloured area shows the original extent of the deer park, while the inner area enclosed by the red line shows the park boundary after it was reduced in size during the 1790s.

of Antrim in her own right. She took the decision in the mid-1790s to fell the trees, mostly oak, in the Great Deer Park and to considerably reduce it in area. As a result the deer park was contracted to 832 acres, roughly the original extent of the park's woodland, with the remaining 2,164 acres, mostly grassland, leased out to tenants and subdivided into a network of small fields (Fig 16). The impetus to fell trees was no doubt encouraged by the needs to the Napoleonic war effort and seemed to involve the removal of most of the park's trees, leaving only the understory. The OS memoirs, however, dated September 1830, stated that after the felling 'most of the wood now remaining is on the eastern side of

the valley of Glenarm' (Day & McWilliams 1992, 126), but this is not borne out by the 1830s OS map which shows the whole deer park covered with scrub with very few trees.

With the publication of the second edition of the six-inch OS map in the 1850s, it is evident that the oak woodland, or be precise the oak woodland pasture, had returned to the deer park, especially on the east side of the river. This was possibly the result of natural regeneration, though grazing would have had to be controlled to achieve this. The park was evidently still considered an ornamental extension of the main landscape park after this felling, for the old banqueting house was rebuilt as

a thatched *cottage orné* about 1820, though the old cottage, which fell into ruin during the 1790s, was demolished in 1847. Deer were still kept in the park, and when a German traveller came to Glenarm in the early 1840s he reported that there were 'four hundred deer and stags' in the park (Kohl 1844, 362). As this book was poorly translated, the word 'stags' in this case may not refer to red deer.

The park hosted deer until around 1912 when the last deer were slaughtered, apparently after complaints from smallholders (all former tenants), that escaping deer were grazing on their lands. Controlled cattle grazing continued in the traditional way, but in the 1950s a large strip along the upper slopes of the east side of the park was leased to the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, for conifer planting. The remaining area has been managed by the Ulster Wildlife Trust since the 1980s, but unfortunately the woodland pasture, now officially called Glenarm Forest, is no longer grazed in the traditional way.

DEER IN IRELAND AFTER 1750

Around 1750 it was recorded that almost all the larger gentry of Co Limerick owned a pack of hounds 'with which they could hunt either stag, fox or hare' and that in the foothills of the Galtee Mountains 'within a space of 34 miles' not less than '20 packs of buck hounds were to be found, each pack being kept by the owner of a deerpark' (Wyndham-Quin 1919, 20; Lewis 1975, 56). By this time the dominance of deer hunting in Ireland had already started to change and within a few decades the sport had been largely superseded by fox and hare hunting. The number and size of deer parks correspondingly declined, so that during the 19th century the principal reason for maintaining such parks was for ornament and food rather than sport.

A major contributory factor towards this change lay in the rapid growth of the landed gentry in the second half of the century, characterised by a proliferation in the number of new country houses, all of which were embellished with landscape parks. For many of these landowners the old aristocratic pursuit of deer hunting, which involved maintaining private packs of hounds and deer parks, was beyond their resources. There was consequently a demand for alternatives, which in turn led to innovations with hounds for fox hunting. Foxes had been hunted since Norman times, but had never been a popular quarry, as they could easily out-run the strong and heavy hounds used for deer hunting; besides, they were considered vermin and inferior game to deer. Almost alone in his own time, Arthur Stringer in his book *The Experienced Huntsman* (1714) recognised that fox hunting had great potential

as a sport providing that 'fleet hounds' were used (Fairley 1977, 89). This ambition only started to be realised during the mid-18th century, when, more or less simultaneously in both England and Ireland, hounds were successfully bred for stamina and speed, thus transforming the fox hunt from a slow-moving sport into a fast-moving chase that could involve a large number of mounted riders (de Belin 2013, 63). The popularity of fox hunting, which was to have considerable landscape implications of its own (Finch 2004, 41), led to the creation of hunt clubs (Kelly 2014, 145) and the advent of subscription packs, which enabled anyone to participate in the sport providing they paid their member's subscription (Lewis 1975, 57).

The vogue for fox hunting did not entirely eradicate deer hunting in Ireland, which continued throughout both the 19th and 20th centuries, often in areas where there was a shortage of foxes (Lewis 1975, 114). However, compared to the deer hunting of previous centuries these hunts were rather docile events involving tame animals, nearly always red deer (stags), which were transported to the meet in a cart, released and then recaptured after they had been 'hunted'. The chase was 'at large' or across open country, not within enclosures, though parks were still needed to hold stock, as for example at Slane Castle, Co Meath, where the old 17th-century park was remodelled in the 19th century and used to hold deer for the Ward Hunt.

From the mid- and late 18th century many deer parks started to be abandoned, the majority being subdivided into tenant holdings and ceasing to be distinctive features of the landscape. Some became the setting for new country houses, a development that was perhaps hardly surprising considering that deer parks were a major inspiration in the development of 'naturalised' landscape parks of the 18th century; Tollymore, Co Down, or Moore Abbey, Co Kildare, were examples of this, while later instances included Gilford, Co Down, and Portumna, Co Galway. In other cases redundant deer parks were simply absorbed into newly designed landscape parks, as for example at Castle Forbes, Co Longford.

Those deer parks that survived into the 19th century tended to diminish in size, a change not always easy to detect, but sometimes indicated by the nearby presence of an 'old deer park'. Some reductions were quite dramatic, as at Shane's Castle (Edenduffcarrick), Co Antrim, where the 17th-century hunting deer park of about 2,000 acres was reduced down to 410 acres at the end of the 18th century. The continued need for deer parks, albeit of smaller size, reflected their role as suppliers of venison; at Neale Park, Co Mayo, for example,

the deer park in the 19th century was apparently supplying ‘a dish of venison every day’ (Wilde 1871, 238). No doubt it was demand for venison that prompted the conversion of the 141-acre island of Croaghnaakeela in Bertraghboy Bay, Co Galway, into a deer park by the Martins of Ballynahinch in 1845. Presumably some country house deer parks of the 19th century were also supplying commercial markets in addition to domestic needs.

Keeping deer for ornament was another important consideration in the retention, remodelling or creation of new deer parks during the later 18th and 19th centuries. Many parks were now being designed so that they could be seen below the windows of country houses (Fig 17), for example at Crom Castle, Co Fermanagh (1850s), Lough Fea, Co Monaghan (1870s), Aughrane or Castle Kelly, Co Galway (1860s), and Creagh, Co Mayo (1870s), while artists who were commissioned to paint country houses were encouraged to include deer in their pictures, as for example William Ashford’s pictures of Mount Merrion, Co Dublin (O’Kane 2012).

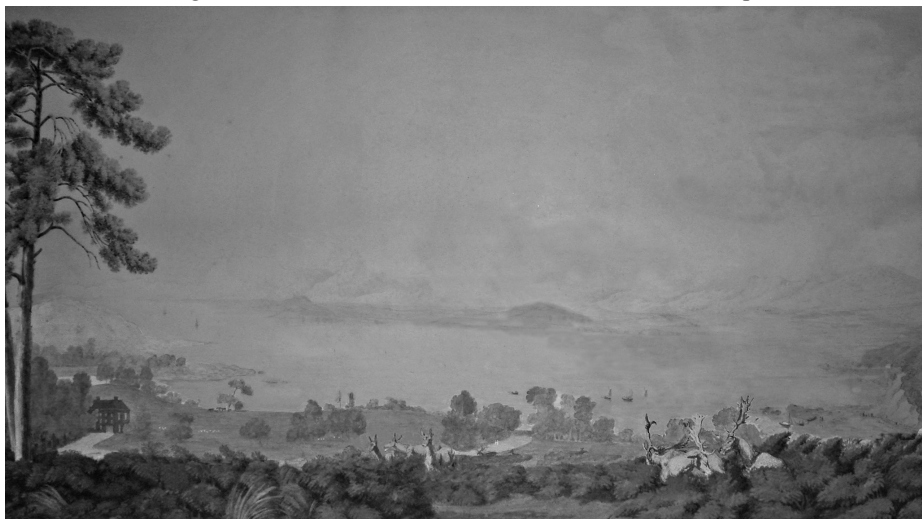
A number of 19th-century Irish landowners started to take an interest in new breeds of deer as they became available, foremost among these being Mervyn E Wingfield, the seventh Viscount Powerscourt (1836–1904), who in 1860 introduced sika from Japan into his park at Powerscourt, Co Wicklow (Whitehead 1964). Later he introduced sambar, wapiti and eland (antelope) and had ‘a fancy to try to acclimatise various kinds of deer and other animals’ (Scharff 1918; Delap 1936, 82). Some of this stock were later dispersed to other

parks; for example, in 1870 sika deer were sent from Powerscourt to Colebrooke, Co Fermanagh, where they mixed with red deer and sambar. Subsequently a wapiti hind from Canada was introduced into the park at Caledon, Co Tyrone, where it mated with a stag from a herd of red deer established there about 1868. At Lissadell, Co Sligo, in 1870 roe deer were introduced into Ireland, an experiment which after several failed attempts proved ultimately so successful that the deer’s rising numbers, which were not enclosed with a park, became such a local nuisance that the entire herd had to be put down in 1900.

A decline in the numbers of red deer during the 19th century led some landowners, notably Viscount Powerscourt, to re-introduce stock into Co Wicklow from Britain and Germany during the 1860s (Scharff 1918, 133). Numbers of red deer received a boost in the last decade of the 19th century due to the popularity of deer stalking on the Scottish model (Grimble 1896). Examples included ‘Deer Forests’ on the slopes of Bessy Bell Mountain at Baronscourt, Co Tyrone, and at Glenveagh, Co Donegal, the latter enclosing 23,000 acres for the purpose (Whitehead 1960, 194). While red deer were imported for these new parks, the deer forests around Lough Leane in Killarney, Co Kerry, were stocked with red deer from local herds that had been protected by the local families to facilitate old-style stag hunting *par force de chiens*, which had been practised continuously here from the 18th century until the 1880s (Ryan 1998, 2).

Red deer from both Killarney and Glenveagh survive today, protected within the national parks.

Fig 17 Watercolour of the deer park at Bantry House, Co Cork, showing the fallow deer in centre and house on the left of the picture.



A few old herds of fallow deer also survive, notably those in the Phoenix Park and at Mallow Castle, Co Cork, while the remainder were dispersed following the abandonment of most Irish country house deer parks in the decade before and after the first world war (Mooney 1952). Deer enclosures can still be found today, but it is unlikely they will ever again achieve the dominance they once enjoyed in the Irish landscape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTE

- 1 A gazetteer of all deer parks known to have been created in Ireland before 1921 will be published in 2019/20. It will include known historic details of park usage and other relevant details with sources.

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