



A view in Needwood Forest from the Holly Falls

NEEDWOOD FOREST
Two pictures of
Needwood Forest
From around 1795 –1800

The first set of information below is from files within Wikipedia.

Later information has been gathered from delving through books within local libraries & church records.

We hope you enjoy this little read into the fascinating past of what was
NEEDWOOD FOREST



The Fall Of Needwood Forest

The forest was on extensive lands owned by the [Berkeley family](#) of [Berkeley Castle](#) in [Gloucestershire](#), home to extensive stocks of [wolf](#), [wild boar](#) and [fallow deer](#).^[2]

In the 13th century Thomas de Berkeley was assigned to be the keeper of the Tutbury ward, and while resident at [Tutbury Castle](#) liked to hunt the forest, and had a hunting lodge built, [Byrkley Lodge](#). In 1267, Thomas married the daughter of William de Ferrers, the [Earl of Derby](#).^[2]

During the rebellion of [Simon de Montford](#) against [King Henry III](#), the de Ferrers family allied themselves with the rebellion. After the rebellion was put down, the de Ferrers were forced to forfeit their estates to the crown. Henry III gave the forest to his son [Edmund Crouchback, 1st Earl of Lancaster](#), in 1266.^[2] Renamed Needwood [Chase](#) or [royal forest](#), it was subsequently owned by the [Duchy of Lancaster](#) until it passed into the possession of [Henry IV](#) in 1399.^[2]

By this time the lodge had become the residence of the local keeper (judge). The lodge was redeveloped by [King Edward IV](#), and used extensively for hunting by both him and [King James I](#).^[2] It was during this period that the forest became commonly associated with [Sir Gawain's Green Knight](#).

In 1776, [Francis Noel Clarke Mundy](#) privately published a book of poetry called "*Needwood Forest*" which contained his own poem of the same name and supportive contributions from [Sir Brooke Boothby Bt.](#), [Erasmus Darwin](#) and [Anna Seward](#). The purpose of Mundy's poems was to resist calls for the enclosure of the forest. Seward wrote a poem called "The fall of Needwood Forest"^[2] which she regarded as "*one of the most beautiful local poems*".^[2] Seward's parents adopted Hannah Sneyd, who was probably related to the engraver, [Mary Emma Sneyd](#).^[2] By the early 1790s, Thomas Gisborne held the perpetual curacy of [Barton-under-Needwood](#). Gisborne regarded Needwood much as [Gilbert White](#) did Selborne, and wrote of his walks in the forest to resist enclosure.

However, in 1803 an [Act of Parliament](#) was passed, allowing th forestry commissioners to enclose the lands and deforest it. By 1811 the land had been divided amongst a number of claimants. By 1851 Needwood Forest was described as forming "one of the most beautiful and highly cultivated territories in the honour of [Tutbury](#), which contains 9,437 acres (38.19 km²) of land, in the five parishes of [Hanbury](#), Tutbury, [Tatenhill](#), [Yoxall](#), and [Rolleston](#), and subdivided into the four wards of Tutbury, [Barton](#), [Marchington](#) and [Yoxall](#), which together form a district of over seven miles (11 km) in length and three in breadth, extending northwards from [Wichnor](#) to Marchington Woodlands."

The former forest area now encloses some twenty farms, on which [dairy farming](#) is the principal enterprise. Byrkely Lodge was demolished in 1953, and today its former grounds are today the site of the English [National Football Centre](#), [St George's Park](#).

490 acres (2.0 km²) of woodland remain,^[2] with some parts still open to the public. [Jackson Bank](#) located at [Hoar Cross](#) is a mature, mixed 80-acre (320,000 m²) woodland still owned by the [Duchy of Lancaster](#), which is open to the public.^[2] [Bagot's Wood](#) near [Abbots Bromley](#) claims to be the largest remaining part of the forest.

The [National Forest](#) is an environmental project planned to link the ancient forests of Needwood and [Charnwood](#). Portions of [Leicestershire](#), [Derbyshire](#) and [Staffordshire](#) are being planted, in an attempt to create a 200 square miles (520 km²) area of blend ancient woodland with new plantings to create a new national forest.

NEEDWOOD FOREST AND THE NEW INN (MOSLEY ARMS) FROM DAYS OF YORE

Information from local sources



Cottage in Needwood Forest
Circa 1790
Joseph Wright

Shaw, writing in 1799. says that by the early days of Queen Elizabeth the forest consisted of 9,229 acres, divided into four wards; Tutbury Ward, which was 9 1/2 miles round; Barton Ward, six miles round; Yoxall Ward, 8 1/2 miles round: and Marchington Ward, 10 miles round.

In addition there were ten parks, Castle Park, Rolleston Park, Stockley Park, Castle Hay Park, Barton Park, Shireholt Park, Highlands Park, Agardesley Park. Hanbury Park and Rowley Park. The Forest was watered by four streams called Ealand Brook, Marebrook, Linbrook, and the Swarbourne. In each of the Wards there was a Lodge. Byrkley Lodge in Tutbury Ward was written Brickley Lodge, and had formerly been written Berkeley Lodge, taken the name from Thomas de Berkeley, Baron of Berkeley. Glos.,

who married Joan, daughter of William de Ferrers. Thomas de Berkeley was Keeper of Tutbury Ward in the time of King Henry III. Sherholt Lodge in Barton Ward was formerly the property of Lord Vernon of Sudbury, Ranger of Needwood Forest in 1670. Yoxall Lodge, on the Linbrook, was formerly held by the family of Hart, and sold by the family to John Gisborne, Esq.



**The Magestic
SWILCAR LAWN OAK
WHICH STOOD IN
MARCHINGTON WARD
Ealand lodge
Within the
'KINGS WOODS'
Needwood Forest**

in Marchington Ward was the Ealand Lodge. In this ward was the famous Swilcar Lawn Oak. Shaw, in 1798, quoting Marshall's. " Rural Economy of the Midland Counties," gave the oak a girth of 21 feet at a height of five feet. J.E. Nowers in 1908 gave a measurement of 25 feet at the same height. All agree that this magnificent oak contained about a thousand cubic feet of timber, and was about sixty feet high. The famous oak is now no more.

Another famous oak. the Beggars' Oak, in Bagots Park in 1905 was 26 1/2 feet in girth four feet from the ground, and was about sixty feet in height The massive arms were formerly supported, but during the last two years these supports have been removed, and the arms breaking off, the former forest giant is but a tragic figure.

In 1658 the Needwood Forest was surveyed, and but for the Restoration of King Charles 11 would probably have been disafforested. There was evidently a further agitation for disafforestation and enclosure in 1684, for a warrant was issued to Willam Harbord, Surveyor General, to make an exact Survey and Valuation of the Manor of Tutbury belonging to the Duchy, with the Forest or Chase of Needwood. The Survey was made in June, 1685, estimating the value at £32.912 and the value of the wood at £30,699, making a total value of £63,611 11s. 9d. The Surveyor General commented that the Honor, the Manor of Tutbury and the Forest of Needwood were so valuable that they should be preserved in the Crown, and in-no way alienated from it. .

When finally Needwood Forest was disafforested and enclosed in 1801, it appears that there were 9.400 acres of woodland and common.

The division was made as follows:-" To the King 3,225 acres. To the freeholders and copyholders, 4,967. To the tithe owners in discharge of the tithes of the new enclosures ...952

These 952 acres were disposed of as follows: 212 acres to the lay Rector and 93 acres to the Vicar of Hanbury. 180 acres to the lay Rector and 76 acres to the Vicar of Tutbury. 175 acres to the Vicar of Yoxall. 215 acres to the Rector of Tatenhill.

The old enclosures and Lodge lands composed about 500 acres and were to be subject to yearly rent charges in lieu of tithe. The division of the lands was some-what unfair, in that the smaller freeholders and copy-holders had small sections of land in various parts of the forest, in many cases so far away as to render their allotments of little use. The grubbing up of the trees and the subsequent draining and cultivating of the land has been of incalculable value.

The trees of the Needwood Forest were chiefly oaks, limes, thorns, hazels, and maples, and Shaw in 1796 stated that there were no elms or beeches in the Forest, " though the former tree flourishes extremely in the neighboring enclosures." There were many hollies, formerly encouraged as winter feed for the deer, and at Six Lanes Ends are some examples. At the time of the disafforestation there were some three thousand deer, and about the same number of horned cattle and horses. The cattle and horses were the property of freeholders in the surrounding villages, who had the right to put them on the forest at an agreed annual sum. Each village having its own brand, changed yearly, there must have been stirring scenes at " round up," as exciting as any Wild West rodeo.

With enclosures and disafforestation, the deer were largely hunted out, and the forest spoiled. although it was originally decreed that no trees over six inches in diameter should be felled. Only the less accessible parts, and the steep slopes on the Marchington side, which precluded the use of the plough were saved. But in some of the parks, notably, Yoxall, one may still gain an idea of the grandeur of the old Needwood Forest, and there are still deer, badger, hare. rabbit. and the lesser vermin. The fox is preserved and the Meynell Hunt, with kennels at Sudbury, includes the Forest in their country.

The Woodmote Courts, which had dealt with poaching, trespass and other Forest offences fell into disuse after the enclosure of 1801. and for some years the Forest was the common hunting ground for the freeholders and villagers who, prior to the enclosure had enjoyed rapidly increasing privileges. This did not suit the local landowners, and others who had gained large tracts of Forest land, and they determined to suppress what they felt was a threat to their privileges.

The Forest Association for the Preservation of Game came into being on 21st September. 1811, when the following agreement was signed at the Mosley Arms Inn, on the verge of the Forest. It is now the New Inn.

"We, the undersigned. agree to form ourselves into an Association for the protection of game within our respective manors and estates and from this day to be at a joint expense to prosecuting to conviction any person or persons detected in destroying the game and to give notice in the Stafford and Derby newspapers that an Association is formed for protecting the game in the Forest of Needwood and the adjoining manors and estates and that for this purpose there shall be held meetings every month as long as considered necessary for receiving information and deciding as to persons proper to be proceeded against by the majority then present and that Mr. Fowler of Burton-upon-Trent be appointed solicitor and desired to proceed upon the opinion of such majority and that any person being desirous of becoming a member of the association be admitted only by a majority of the members present."

Given under our hand the 21st September. 1811, R. J. Harper on behalf of the Duchy of Lancaster and or himself (New Lodge).

Fran. Calvert on behalf of lord Vernon and himself (Houndhill).

R. Harvey on behalf of the Earl of Dartmouth and Lord Bagot and for himself.

Oswald Mosley (Rolleston). John Spencer (Needwood). Robert Stone (Needwood). Jno. Peploe Mosley (Rolleston). Edward Green. Thomas K. Hall (Holly Bush).

At the first meeting it was agreed to appoint keepers, and to pay rewards to keepers and their informants.; Proceedings took place, and notices not to trespass sent to noted offenders. On 28th January, 1812 notices not to trespass were issued to Thomas Copestake. William Johnson, Henry Tollay, Edward Stokes and Edward Heath, Local gentry, not in the association, who had formed the habit of hunting and " sporting " in the Forest were warned, and members who took action against them were to be supported,

At first the rewards were fairly high, as befitted the danger accruing to such a step, and on 30th December, 1816, £10 was paid to John Walls, one of the Duchy keepers for the apprehension of John Twigg, with an additional 10/- in expenses keeping him till he was sent to Stafford. £2 10s. was paid to John Bannister for his trouble in discovering Adam Grimley setting a snare on the Crown Lands.

The severity with which the Association pursued the prosecution of poachers, many of whom were men who had formerly held Forest rights, and could not appreciate why these should be taken away, did not endear the members to the general public. As will be seen the local clergy were members, in right of their gifts at Enclosure, and such action by the shepherds could not be calculated to increase the affection of the flock. One cannot resist a sneaking sympathy with the man who stole the hare from the Forest rather than with he who stole the Forest from the hare!

[Continued](#)

This was generally so, and resulted in poaching and hunting on a fairly large scale, at first with desperate men on both sides of the fence. So much so that at the meeting of the Association held on 20th August, 1816, it was recorded that " The very aggravated assault and daring outrage committed in the night of 6th January last, in the cover at Swilcar Lawn by James Upton of Marchington Cliff and divers other persons of Joseph Vernon and John Meakin, servants to Mr. Hollis, principal keeper of His Majesty's woods having been fully discussed and the examination of Vernon and Meakin taken before Sir Oswald Mosley " it was agreed to divide the reward between the two keepers, £10 in all, although the offenders had not been convicted, since they had absconded.

It seems that the poachers who had been surprised by the keepers in a lonely spot, held them up at the point of the gun, and then so beat up Vernon that " he became senseless and that when he recovered he vomited blood very much and was unable to attend his work for eight days, during which time he was under the cane of Mr. Allen, surgeon of Tutbury."

Each monthly meeting brought more names for prosecution, and rewards being made to keepers and informers; by 14th November, 1820. the tariff being reduced to the following:—

Rewards paid on the conviction of an offender:— £5 for apprehension for one poacher in the night. ,£2 10s. for a second or third at the same time. £3, 10s. for every poacher apprehended in the daytime.

It was under this tariff that on 5th March. 1821. " Two pounds ten shillings be paid to Mr. William Hollis for informing against William Deaville for poaching in the King's Woods, having a gun screwing into three parts which he concealed in the hedge bottom after he had fired which gun was taken from him, of which offence he was afterwards convicted."

So determined a stand on behalf of the members of the Association did not always meet with sympathy. and it is clear from a note in the records, dated 16th January, 1821, where the game went. for it says " and that the sum of £3 4s be paid to the said Thomas Hulse for the magistrate's clerk upon the above occasions and upon several informations, etc.. against several persons for buying game at Burton and which information alone failed from the corrupt bribery and removal of one of the witnesses."

The costs to be borne by the members of the Association varied according to the work of their informers, For instance in 1821 the total cost was £349 12s , which was shared by 22 members, the Marquess of Anglesey paying a double share, while in 1822 the total cost had decrease to £40 7s. 9d., which meant that 17 members paid £2 8s. Od. each, the Marquess again paying double.

The Association persisted until 1829, when their work appeared to be completed, the countryside being sufficiently cowed, or careful, to avoid prosecution, and it was wound up.

Besides the severe side of the Association, the members had their lighter side, and quite early in their proceedings they agreed to take a dinner at each monthly meeting, and that Mr. Weston, the worthy host of the " Mosley Anns " (now the " New Inn) be allowed to provide a dinner for 3/6 per head. whether present or not. " and one shilling for each bottle of wine." This modicum of wine was evidently insufficient for the hard drinking squires and parsons of the early nineteenth century, and on 22nd September, 1820, it was" Resolved that Mr. J. Hall and Mr. Harper be requested to provide this society with four dozen of Maderia, four dozen of sherry and twelve dozen of port wine."

It was explained to this meeting that it had been adjourned to the 5th inst. and again to that date in consequence of Mr. Weston representing " that he could not satisfactorily entertain the gentlemen on account of his house being filled with Irish labourers." These Irish labourers had been imported to make the roads over the Forest.

The names of the old Forest Gates are most interesting. Starting with Callingwood Gate, on the east, and proceeding in a clockwise direction round the map, they were Tatenhill Gate, Dunstall Gate, Barton Gate, Blakenhall Gate. Wood Lane Gate, Wood Mill Gate, Hadley End Gate, Mustard Makers' Lane Gate, Ravens' Nest Gate. Dole Foot Gate. Moat Lane Gate, Duffy Lane Gate, Tomlinson's Gate. Buttermilk Hill Gate, Stubby Lane Gate. Draycott Gate, Hanbury Wood End Gate, Blackbrook Gate, and Anslow Gate.

By 1824 the convivial aspect of the meetings was placed on a firm footing and on 21st August, 1824. it was resolved:—

" That as the members of this Association have each found their proportion of wine for the use of this Association, that all members hereafter coming into this Association shall provide, two dozen of wine or contribute the sum of £5."

As the years rolled by the repressive aspect of the Association decreased, but it is evident that the members regretted the passing of an Association, which, however vilified by the country people, had resulted in considerable entertainment to themselves. The members met at the Mosley Arms, Needwood Forest, on 20th March, 1829, and agreed that the accounts be made up to date and delivered to each member, and no more rewards were to be paid. nor demands made upon the members.

They also resolved:

" That members be hereafter denominated the members of the Needwood Forest Club and that the sum at three sovereigns be annually paid by each, and an additional sum of two sovereigns be contributed as a Wine Fund by every member who continue or enters into the said Club. That the following gentlemen whose names have been proposed at a former meeting be elected members of the Needwood Forest Club by ballot:—

John Webb. Esq. Rev. J. Leigh; Rev. F. Spilsbury;

Jos. Pycroft. Esq.; The Hon. Robert Kennedy;

A.N. E. Mosley.

Proposed members of the Needwood Forest Club: Rev. J. P. Mosley (Rector of Rolleston); F. Bradshaw, Esq.;

Rev. Hugh Bailye (Vicar of Hanbury): John F. Calvert, Esq.; Sir J. D. Fowler.

That such members of the Association as continue members of the Needwood Forest Club be appointed a committee of Management for the year ensuing, and that they have full powers to fix

the days of meeting and make all arrangements as may be necessary for such meetings.

That three of such committee be a quorum, and that they do meet at this house at one of the clock on the tenth day of April next."

And this is the last we hear of this collection of wining, dining protectors of the game of Needwood Forest, whose Association's demise would be unmoored.

unless perhaps by Gaffer Weston, who in mellow mood might

" Relate the Justice's late meeting there How many bottles drank, and what their cheer, What Lords had been his guests in days of yore. And praised their wisdom much, their drinking more."



An ordinance survey map of 1786, The New Inn is clearly marked on the junction

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