



# ARCHIVAL RESEARCH: FINAL REPORT

ANDREW SARGENT, KEELE UNIVERSITY

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(Women collecting firewood on Cannock Chase, 1896)

# **The Chase Through Time: Archival Research**

## **Final Report**

**Andrew Sargent**

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## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the original brief for the Chase Through Time archival research strand was as follows: 'To develop an understanding of man's influence on the development of the Cannock Chase landscape between 1600 and 1970 to answer the question 'By 1950 why did the Chase look like it did?''<sup>1</sup> This was refined to include the following objectives:

- To investigate the impact of land management for hunting and other amenity purposes (i.e. deer/grouse hunting, walks/rides, picnic sites/viewpoints) upon the Cannock Chase landscape.
- To investigate evidence for the construction/maintenance of wood banks and hollow ways across Cannock Chase.
- To investigate the development of agricultural practices on the fringes of Cannock Chase and consider how and why such activities took place (whether legal or illegal). Allied to this is the development of farm infrastructure (field systems, farm complexes, roads, lanes and hollow ways) and the historical process of enclosure across this landscape.<sup>2</sup>

An analysis of the resources at Staffordshire Record Office was undertaken, and several sets of records were identified as targets for the volunteer-based research sessions, which were held nearly every Wednesday, 10am-12 noon, at the Staffordshire Record Office, from the end of October 2016 to mid-December 2017. These are listed below according to the three separate themes to which they contributed:

- Demographic history: Parish registers and census returns.
- Landscape history: the records of the Paget family, members of which were at times variously styled 'Marquis of Anglesey' and 'Earl of Uxbridge', whose estates included the manors of Cannock, Rugeley, Great Haywood and Longdon, within which the Chase was situated; Tithe maps; Enclosure maps; Ordnance survey maps.
- Social history: Paget records; Newspapers; Magistrates records.

The project aims and objectives were refined as the work progressed, according to the rate of work at any given time and the strengths and weaknesses of the archive as they became more apparent. In the event, the archival research ended up focusing much more closely on the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries. In doing so, it was best placed to offer a view of the Chase that was substantially different from its current character and usage, and to complement other work running alongside, which was more heavily focused on the later history of the Chase, in particular the Great War camps.

Following an introduction, this report is structured according to the themes introduced above. Each section will sift and analyse the evidence gathered by volunteers since October 2016, and will explain its contribution towards answering the initial question: By 1950 why did the Chase look like it did? Each section will end with suggestions for further research.

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<sup>1</sup> Staffordshire County Council, 'Brief for Research into Landscape Change on Cannock Chase 1600-1970' (Unpublished Document, 2016); the brief also included research on the Great War camps, but this was later removed from the project brief I consultation with Stephen Dean.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; further objectives related to the Great War camps (see footnote 1), and to the dissemination of the research.

## INTRODUCTION: DEFINING THE CHASE

An initial problem concerned the referent of the name ‘Cannock Chase’. The Chase Through Time project was very much keyed to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (hereafter AONB), which as an institution represented an important partner on the project team and one of the main beneficiaries of the various strands of research, but as a territory comprised a comparatively recent notion of the extent of the Chase. A cursory view of some of the documentary evidence made clear that the Chase was understood differently in the past, both in terms of its territorial extent and the uses to which that territory was put. The following paragraphs outline some of the permutations through which the Chase has passed over the past millennium, and end with a definition of, and justification for, the area targeted by the archival research.

Cannock Chase has its origins in a territorial institution, Cannock Forest, a large royal hunting territory that had been created by the reign of William the Conqueror but was first mentioned by name in the 1140s; the Forest took in a large area that, by 1166, was bounded by Penk on the west, the Sow and Trent on the north, the Tame on the east, and a line passing through Wolverhampton and Walsall on the south (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> The Forest might have been named after the location of perhaps its principal or earliest royal hunting lodge, which certainly appears to have been at Cannock, although it first appears in the documentary record in 1155–6; at about the same time a new lodge was built to the east at Radmore.<sup>4</sup> By the fourth decade of the thirteenth century eight hays had been established within the Forest, at Alrewas, Bentley, Cheslyn, Gailey, Hopwas, Ogley, Rugeley, and Teddesley, at least some of which had been in existence since the reign of Henry I, perhaps earlier; these were administered by foresters under the authority of a chief forester, whose residence was at Rodbaston by 1195.<sup>5</sup> These officers were charged with protecting the king’s hunting within the Forest, notably deer but also other game animals, and ensuring that offences against these animals or their habitats were identified and tried at the forest courts.

The Forest did not only cover estates of the royal demesne. The pre-Conquest bishops of Lichfield had been based at Lichfield cathedral, located within the Forest, since 669; by 1066 the Lichfield manor encompassed a large area surrounding the city (administered from Longdon by the mid-twelfth century), and the bishop also possessed manors at Haywood and Baswich which would later lie, in whole or in part, within the bounds of the Forest.<sup>6</sup> The bishop might have been assarting land within the Forest in the 1120s, and in 1155 Henry II granted him 1500 acres assarted in the area around Lichfield since 1135; by 1286 he also possessed a park and two deer-leaps in that part of the manor of Haywood lying within the Forest.<sup>7</sup> In 1189 the bishop was granted the royal manors of Cannock and Rugeley by Richard I, along with ill-defined liberties in ‘wood and plain’;<sup>8</sup> this grant was confirmed in 1230, at which time Bishop Alexander Stavensby annexed the ‘covet of the forest of High Cannock’, a tract said to be at least 15 leagues in circumference.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 2, 338.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 341–2. Alternatively the lodge at Radmore (in Cannock township) and the lodge at Cannock might have been one and the same: *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 57

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 338–339.

<sup>6</sup> *DB Staffs.*, 2.2, 2.5, 2.9, 2.16 and 2.22.

<sup>7</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 2, 342–3.

<sup>8</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 58

<sup>9</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 2, 343; *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 58–9

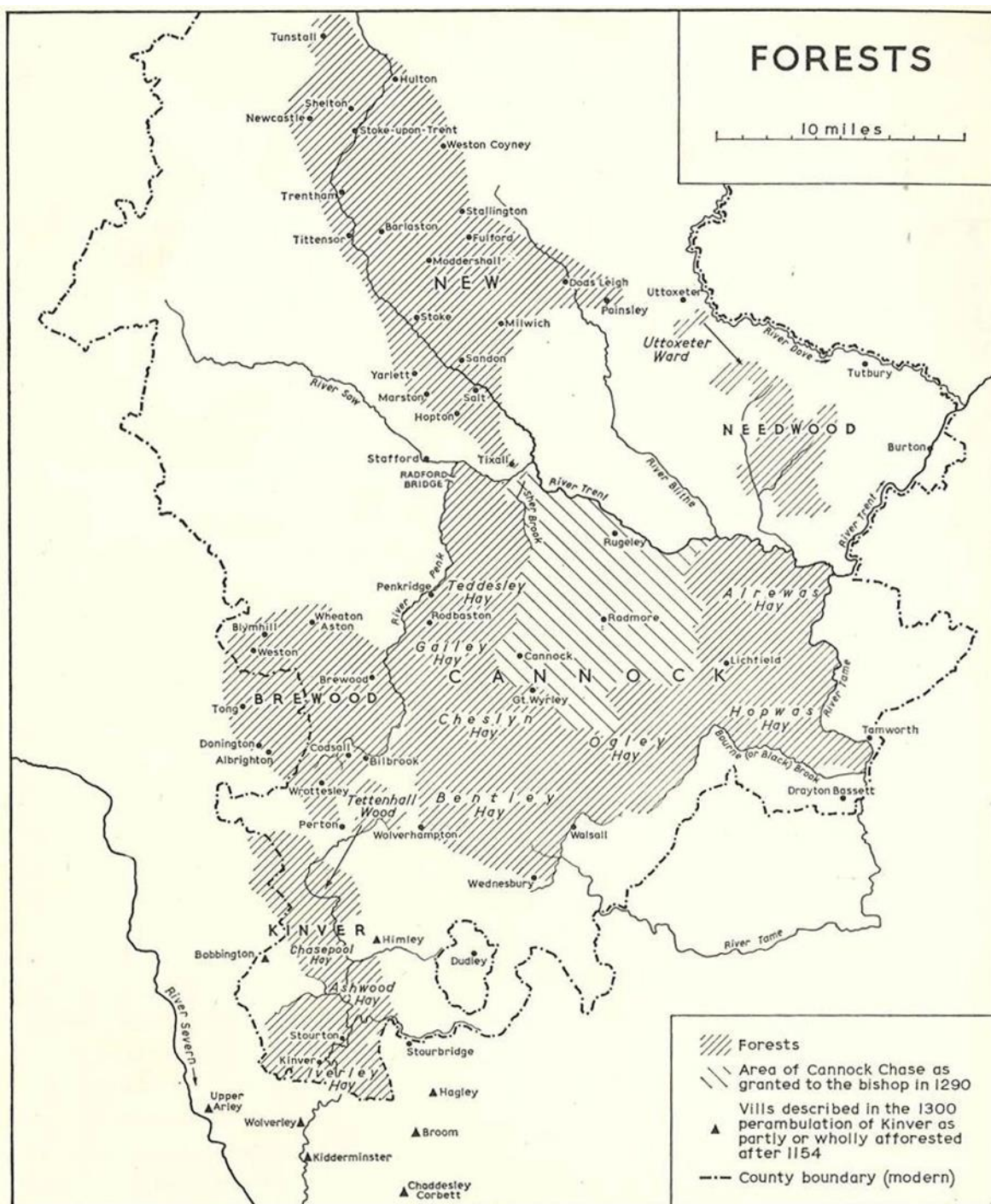


Figure 1: Cannock Forest<sup>10</sup>

The bishop's claim to forest rights here was disputed at various points over the following six decades; by 1274 he had a park at Cannock, and in 1290 the area (here called the 'wood of High Cannock') was formally granted to the bishop as a private chase, in which he might hunt wild animals

<sup>10</sup> Reproduced from *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 2; note that the extent of Cannock Chase depicted here is erroneous, as it also includes the western townships of the manor of Longdon, which were not part of the grant.

and impark or enclose at his pleasure.<sup>11</sup> From this point on (but possibly from 1230), Cannock Chase, which appears from the bounds recorded in 1290 to have been coterminous with the townships of Cannock and Rugeley, must be distinguished from Cannock Forest, the larger territory from which it had been subtracted. In place of the king's chief forester, Bishop Roger de Meuland appointed Roger de Aston of Haywood and Bishton as chief warden over the Chase and also 'the woods belonging to his barony of Haywood and Lichfield and of the parks already made or planned therein'; the office was described in 1496 as 'the mastership of the game and rule of the Cankewodde', and remained with the Aston family until the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Two foresters were appointed under the chief warden, one for Cannock (described by at least 1473 as forester of the bailiwick of Trumwyn) and one for Rugeley, who made their presentments at the joint court of the two manors by at least 1342.<sup>13</sup> The forester of Rugeley bailiwick held land at Hagley within the manor, and his office (with the land) derived directly from that of the keeper of the hay of Rugeley in the king's forest.<sup>14</sup>

In 1546 the bishop was forced to surrender his manors of Cannock, Rugeley, Haywood and Longdon to the king, who granted them to Sir William Paget, created Lord Paget of Beaudesert in 1549; the Chase, with its officers, was transferred with the manors.<sup>15</sup> The manors and Chase remained with the Paget family into the twentieth century, except for a period from 1588 to 1597 when the lands were held in forfeit by the crown.<sup>16</sup> Some elements of the jurisdiction of Cannock Forest, such as the swanimote court, were still being exercised in the sixteenth century, but the institutional distinctiveness of the Forest was fast waning by this time, and the rights enjoyed by the hereditary keepers of the hays and bailiwicks were increasingly treated as normal elements of their landed estates.<sup>17</sup> The same appears to have been true of the Paget's Chase. In subsequent centuries 'Cannock Chase' seems to have become a label used to describe the large area of open common land extending through the manors of Haywood, Rugeley, Cannock, and Longdon, together with the rights of common held within it by both lord and tenants; such terminological usage may go back into the medieval period, when the bishop's chief warden was responsible for both the Chase and the woods of Haywood and Longdon. By the nineteenth century the formal bounds of the Chase as

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<sup>11</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 59; the park at Cannock is perhaps an early reference to the park at Beaudesert, which in later centuries certainly extended into the northeast corner of Cannock township, although it straddled the boundaries with Rugeley and Longdon.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 69. The name Trumwyn should probably be related to the family of William Trumwyn, a hereditary forester in fee who held a virgate in Cannock, who was prevented from presenting forest pleas in the swanimote of Cannock in 1230 by Bishop Alexander Stavensby when the latter claimed forest rights in his manors of Cannock and Rugeley (*VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 58–9). A hereditary forester in fee named Robert Trumwyn, presumably William's successor, held a virgate in Cannock at some point before 1236 by service of keeping the hay of Cheslyn; the overlordship of his land had lain with the king, but had passed to the bishop by 1236, only to return to the king by 1250 with whom it remained into the sixteenth century (*VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 55). If Cannock township had been within the Trumwyns' forestership in the 1230s, it had presumably been removed from it by the 1290s, but their name appears to have remained attached to the bishop's newly created forestership for Cannock; it is not known what, if any, land was attached to this bailiwick, but in 1595 the office was held by a John Osbourne (*VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 60, n.34).

<sup>14</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 155–157; the office and land had been held since the reign of Henry II by the de Puys family, who continued in both office and land under the bishop's overlordship.

<sup>15</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 54 & 59.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

<sup>17</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 2, 341 & 343



set down in 1290 were still referred to in some estate records, but were also directly contradicted by the altered usage of the name.

The large common referred to as Cannock Chase encompassed various underlying geologies, but was centred on the high ground lying between the towns of Cannock and Rugeley. Here Triassic strata of interbedded sandstone and conglomerate, including the notably deep Bunter pebble beds, lie close to the surface; to the west of Cannock these strata are overlain by glacial till, whilst an arc of Carboniferous coal measures lie to the east and south of the town, also overlain by till in many places.<sup>18</sup> The very acidic freely draining sandy soils supported by the Triassic strata are particularly averse to agricultural use; this contrasts with the slowly permeable and far less acidic soils supported by the till, particularly to the east of Cannock, which are more amenable to cropping, albeit resistant to easy ploughing. The Triassic plateau between Cannock and Rugeley was therefore not attractive to settlement and farming, and as such is likely to have formed a distinctive locale for millennia. A survey of the woodlands in the manors of Cannock and Rugeley in 1554, which has been plotted onto a map by Christopher Welch (see Figure 2), demonstrates that the acidic soils over the Triassic strata were largely occupied by woodland at this time.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the woodland was strikingly commensurate with these soils, only spilling over onto a different geology south of Beaudesert Park, where the slowly permeable acidic soils overlying exposed coal measures were also unattractive to agriculture. The ecologies supported by the Triassic strata were not entirely dominated by woodland – open heathland was present north of Cannock, aptly named Cannock Heath, whilst north again lay Brindley Heath – but woodland was certainly dominant in the mid-sixteenth century.

It is likely that a similar distribution of woodland had characterized the area for much of the medieval period. The bishop's Chase was often labelled with reference to woodland: it was called the 'covet of the forest of High Cannock' in 1230 when Bishop Alexander Stavensby seized forest rights across the area, the 'wood of High Cannock' in the grant of 1290, and the office of the bishop's chief warden was said to pertain to 'Cankewodde' in the fifteenth century. Moreover, the larger amount of woodland in Rugeley bailiwick when compared to Trumwyn's bailiwick demonstrated by the survey of 1554 is also apparent in a survey of the bishop's lands undertaken in 1297/8, as the following statistics indicate:<sup>20</sup>

| Element of Manorial Income | Cannock                              | Rugeley       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Underwood                  | No Reference                         | 30s per annum |
| Pannage                    | 6s 8d                                | 20s per annum |
| Waste                      | 200 acres, each worth 4d if improved | No reference  |

The charges for pannage allow a direct comparison of woodland resources between the two manors; the absence of a charge for underwood in Cannock perhaps indicates that it was of little significance, whilst the presence of a charge on the waste may represent the relative importance of open heath in that manor. The section for the manor of Rugeley also includes an entry for the 'wood of Cannock' and the perquisites of its warden. A boundary corresponding to the boundary of the manor,

<sup>18</sup> British Geological Survey: Geology of Britain viewer: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

<sup>19</sup> C. Welch, 'Elizabethan Ironmaking and the Woodlands of Cannock Chase and the Churnet Valley, Staffordshire', *Staffordshire Studies*, Vol. 12 (2000), 17–73, map at 32

<sup>20</sup> SRO D(W)1734/J/2268, ff. 20 and 21v

township and parish of Rugeley is given for this wood, indicating that the ‘wood’ here was a reference to the hay or bailiwick of Rugeley inherited from royal forest; the absence of a similar entry in the record of Cannock manor may suggest that the bishop had yet to create a formal bailiwick in the southern part of his newly granted Chase. The length of the boundary given for Rugeley, 10 leagues, corresponds exactly with the circumference of the ‘wood’ (*silva*) recorded for Rugeley in Domesday Book, indicating that the latter was also a reference to the entire township rather than actual woodland within it.<sup>21</sup> It seems likely that the figure given for the circumference of the ‘wood’ in the Domesday manor of Cannock, 20 leagues, is also a reference to the entire manorial territory, and cannot therefore be taken as a description of actual woodland.<sup>22</sup> Both references might instead apply to an early royal interest in the use of these manors as areas of ‘forest’ in the legal sense.<sup>23</sup> In summary, the presence of actual woodland across the Triassic plateau, predominantly in southern and central parts of Rugeley bailiwick, can be suggested from at least the late-thirteenth century, and there is no reason to believe that the form of this distribution need not have applied several centuries earlier as well. From the thirteenth century there is a slippage in the documentary record between ‘Cannock Wood’ as a label for the bishop’s Chase in its entirety, and for the actual wooded area at its heart, which is perhaps partly due to the use of the label to describe the hay of Rugeley in Cannock Forest.

It has been suggested that much of the woodland was felled at the end of the sixteenth century, when the courtier Fulke Greville obtained a lease of the woods from the queen, who then held the Paget manors in forfeit, and essentially ‘asset-stripped’ his new acquisition.<sup>24</sup> The core area of the Chase might thus have come to resemble much of the rest of the large common, which outside the Triassic strata probably owed its character to topography as much as geology: slowly permeable soils formed in till that elsewhere might have been turned with some effort by the heavy plough were rendered more unattractive by their raised elevation and undulating landform. The current AONB follows the general outline of the northern half of the Cannock Chase common, but the southern half, overlying the coal measures, was transformed from the late nineteenth century by coal mining on an industrial scale. Now a post-industrial landscape, with many of the scars of the mines filled in and ‘restored’, the area is no longer as ‘outstandingly beautiful’, and certainly not as ‘natural’, as the Triassic plateau to the north, and parts of the Chase that once lay in Burntwood are now occupied by the Chasetown and Chase Terrace settlements.

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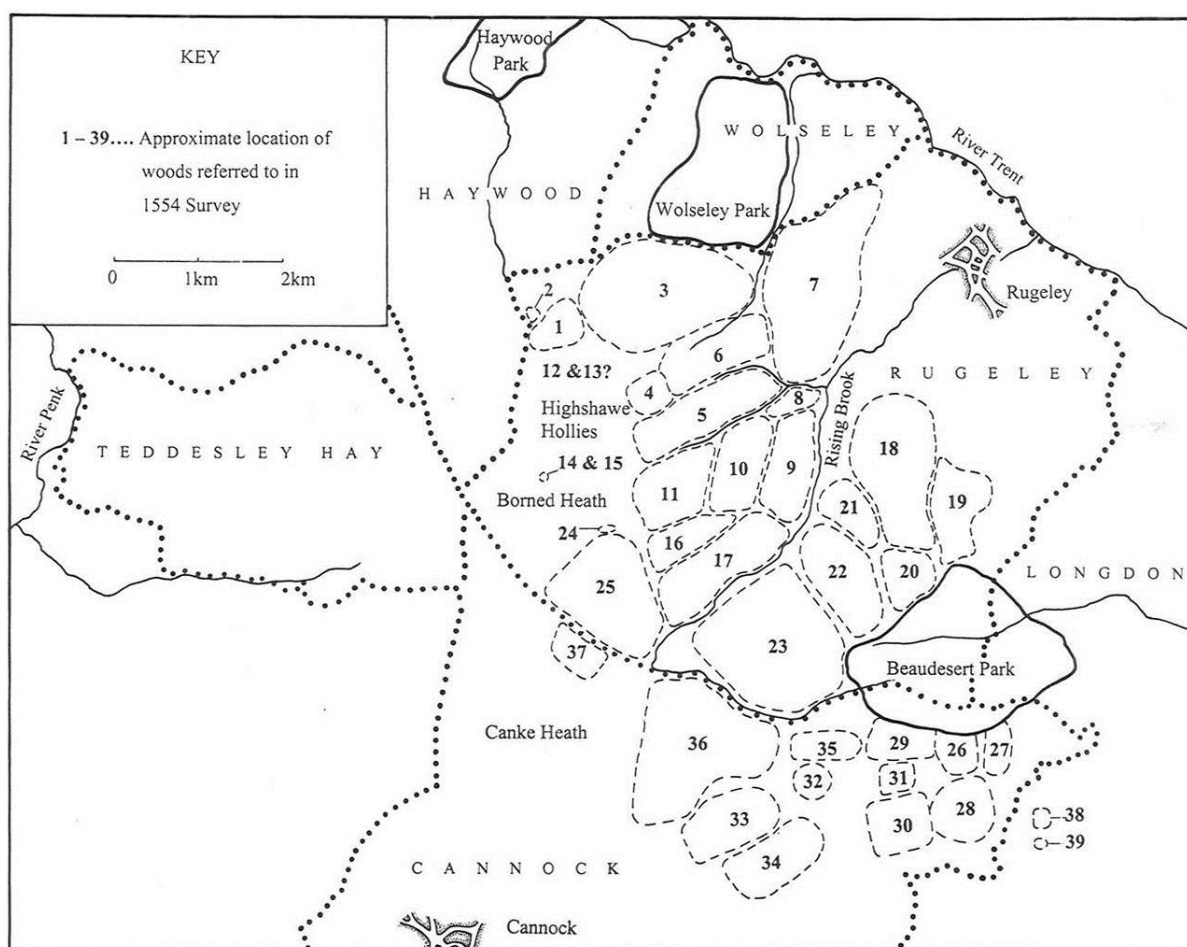
<sup>21</sup> *DB Staffs.*, 1.22; the wood is given as 3 leagues long and 2 leagues wide, giving a notional rectangle with sides 10 leagues long in total.

<sup>22</sup> *DB Staffs.*, 1.25; the wood is given as 6 leagues long and 4 leagues wide, giving a notional rectangle with sides 20 leagues long in total. This might be closer to the dimensions of Cannock parish, including the townships of Huntington and Great Wryley, rather than Cannock township on its own.

<sup>23</sup> This is not an entirely satisfactory suggestion, as elsewhere Domesday Book distinguishes ‘wood’ (*silva*) from ‘forest’ (*foresta*), the latter used in a jurisdictional sense: see J. A. Green, ‘Forest laws in England and Normandy in the twelfth century’, *Historical Research*, 86 (2013), 416–431, at 419. It may instead be significant that neither Cannock nor Rugeley included demesne land in 1086; perhaps the manors were classified entirely as wood pasture.

<sup>24</sup> C. J. Harrison, ‘The Social and Economic History of Cannock and Rugeley 1546–1597’ (Unpublished PhD, Keele University, 1974) 95–101.





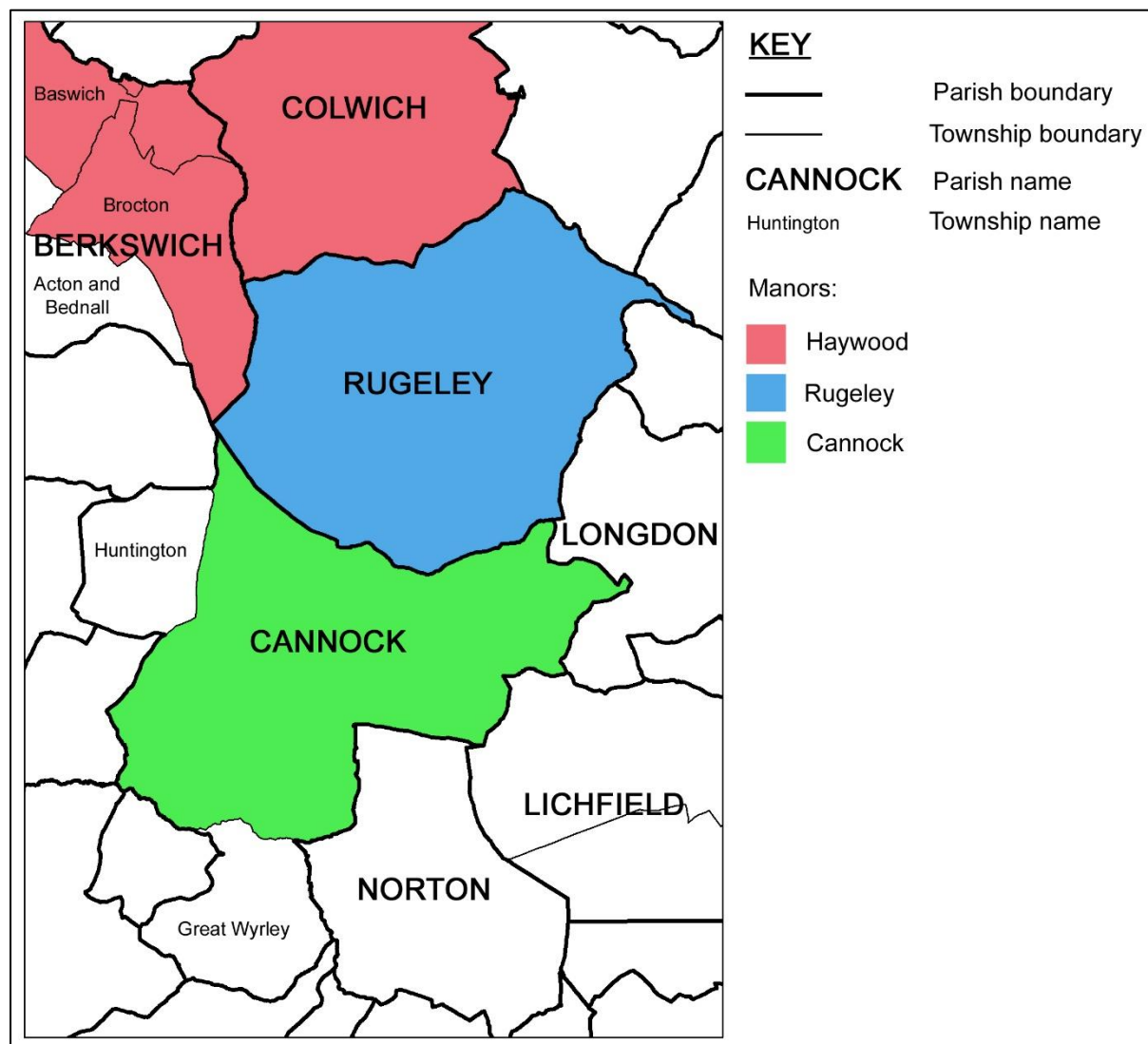
**Figure 2: Managed woodland on the Chase, mapped from survey of 1554<sup>25</sup>**

Given these alterations and transformations in the meaning and nature of Cannock Chase since the thirteenth century, it was decided that the study area for the archival research would have to encompass a larger area than the Area of Outstanding Beauty. Clearly the open common would form the main object of research considering the study's post-medieval focus. However, the full extent of the common would have involved research into all four of the Paget manors, Cannock, Rugeley, Haywood and Longdon, which, given the extent of the Paget archive, was considered too large a data set. The manors of Rugeley and Haywood together occupy most of the AONB (Haywood extends some considerable distance north of it), but Cannock was considered too important a part of both the old hunting Chase and the common to be omitted, so it was decided to use these three manors as the framework for the study, but with the northern and western reaches of Haywood manor deemed less important as they lay outside the Forest and Chase (see Figures 3a and 3b). Of these, Rugeley manor was unproblematically coterminous with the parish and township of Rugeley. The other two manors had slightly more complex relationships with their civil and religious counterparts. Cannock parish encompassed the townships of Cannock, Huntington, and Great Wyrley, a territory that probably conformed with the leet jurisdiction of Cannock's manor court, but the manor only controlled land directly in the township of Cannock, and thus only this township was included within the study area.<sup>26</sup> Haywood manor might once have been coterminous only with the parish of Colwich, but by the end of the medieval period it also included the formerly independent

<sup>25</sup> Reproduced from Welch, 'Elizabethan Ironmaking', 32

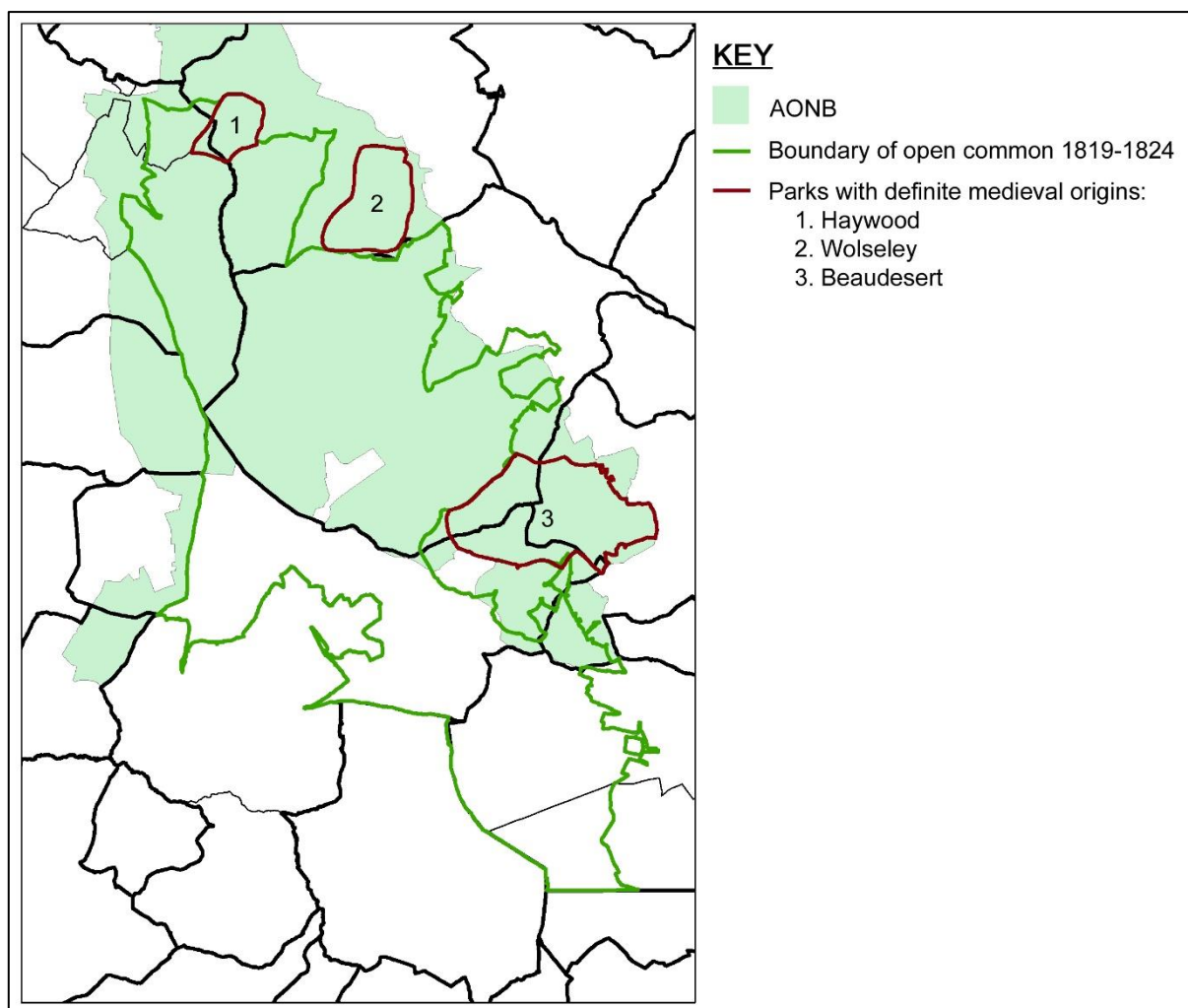
<sup>26</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 54

manor of Baswich; the latter was initially coterminous with the ancient parish of Berkswich, but by the sixteenth century it included only the townships of Baswich and Brocton, the joint township of Acton Trussell and Bednall having passed into other hands, though it remained in the leet of Haywood.<sup>27</sup> Of Berkswich parish, only the township of Brocton was included in the archival research study area, as it contained part of the open common, and part of the area falls within the current AONB. It is worth noting that the study area, so defined, encompassed not only much of the Cannock Chase common, but also many of the settlements around its edges; this was considered vital to forming a proper understanding of the use and management of the Chase, as most of those whose lives regularly took them up onto the Chase lived in these settlements. Occasionally the nature of the evidence required that expand the study area.



**Figure 3: The parishes, townships and manors of the study area**

<sup>27</sup> The vills of Brocton and Bednall were dependent on Haywood by 1297/8 (there is no information in this regard for Acton), whilst Baswich (together with Walton) continued to hold its own courts until at least 1360, but was dependent on Haywood by 1473 (*VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 5, 5).



**Figure 3b: The outline of the open common, as mapped in surveys of 1819 to 1824, overlain on the AONB; parks with medieval origins are also shown**

## DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY

An initial goal of the archival research study was the assemblage of a set of statistical data concerning the populations of the settlements surrounding Cannock Chase, which would enable broad conclusions to be drawn about their conformity or otherwise with the national picture of a steadily expanding population from around 1700, increasing more rapidly from the later nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> The exercise would also introduce volunteers to a standard technique in the study of local history.

Parish registers provide a useful source before 1801, when the first national census inaugurated a decennial series that continues to the present. Usually beginning in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, they cannot be used to provide accurate absolute population statistics, but do offer a detailed picture of the rate of baptisms, marriages and deaths over time; movements in these rates, when combined, correlate with movements in absolute population numbers, and where the latter are unavailable (i.e. before 1801) the former will suffice to indicate trends. Working from printed transcripts of registers where available and from microfiche copies of original registers, the volunteers generated the following sequences of data:

|                  | <b>Cannock</b> | <b>Rugeley</b> | <b>Colwich</b> |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Baptisms</b>  | 1776–1796      | 1722–1849      | 1750–1859      |
| <b>Marriages</b> | –              | 1722–1847      | 1750–1851      |
| <b>Burials</b>   | 1776–1796      | 1721–1841      | 1750–1872      |

Clearly only the data for Colwich and Rugeley parishes are sufficient for further analytical study at this stage. The data for both parishes were plotted on graphs showing rates of baptism, marriage and burial against national averages calculated by Wrigley and Schofield in their national study of parish register data (see Figure 4a). The natural increase, or difference between baptism and burial rates, was also plotted, in order to give a sense of the expansion or decline of the population (Figure 4b). In all cases a 9-year moving average was used to even out yearly fluctuations in the data.

The exercise produced interesting results. The sequences demonstrated a fair amount of conformity with the national upward trends in baptism, marriage and burial, at least until the early decades of the nineteenth century. After this, Colwich in particular displays some significant variations. From the late 1820s to about 1840 the baptism rate declines, against a national average still climbing during this period; the rate picks up again for about a decade before dropping around 1850, a trend that continues to the end of the sequence in the late 1850s. The same two-stage pattern is observable in the burial rate data, though in this case it occurs slightly earlier: the first drop starts around 1820 and continues for about a decade, whilst the second begins in the mid-1840s and continues to the end of the sequence around 1870. A drop is also present in the marriage data, beginning in the mid-1820s, picking up around 1840, and possibly dropping again from the mid-1840s, although the sequence is not long enough to state for sure that the second stage is a decisive trend in this case. The combination of baptism and burial rates in an analysis of natural increase highlights the same set of trends, conforming most closely to the chronology displayed by the trends

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<sup>28</sup> E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981)

in the baptism rate. In contrast, the trends displayed by the Rugeley data largely conform to the national trends, with the exception of a noticeable drop in the late 1830s; it is possible that this was preceded by a drop in the burial rate in the mid-1830s, but the end of the sequence in around 1840 does not allow certainty on this point.

It is not possible to provide decisive explanations of these trends, although comparison with the absolute population figures given by the national censuses highlights a contrast, as between 1821 and 1851 population in all three parishes climbed steadily, if at a modest rate (see below). Clearly the increasing population revealed by the census statistics and the decline in the burial rate indicated by the parish registers both rule out any kind of significant mortality to explain the declines in baptism and marriage rates. Instead, it is more plausible to factor in the possible effects of nonconformist religion on these trends, which relate only to the Anglican baptism, marriages and burials. Nationally, the increasing popularity of Methodism in the early nineteenth century offers a possible explanation for the timing of the decline: essentially, the nonconformist churches drew parishioners away from the services of the Anglican churches. However, this remains speculative, it is quite possible that the trends plotted here cannot be explained by a single cause. More research is needed.

The advent of the decennial national census in 1801 allows absolute figures to be put on the populations of the three parishes:<sup>29</sup>

|             | Cannock  |        | Rugeley | Colwich  |        |
|-------------|----------|--------|---------|----------|--------|
|             | Township | Parish |         | Township | Parish |
| <b>1801</b> | 1359     | 1700   | 2030    | 723      | 886    |
| <b>1811</b> | 1143     | 1639   | 2213    | 1442     | 1688   |
| <b>1821</b> | 1563     | 2232   | 2677    | 1646     | 1865   |
| <b>1831</b> | 1771     | 2468   | 3165    | 1719     | 1918   |
| <b>1841</b> | 1932     | 2852   | 3774    | 1707     | 2024   |
| <b>1851</b> | 2099     | 3081   | 4188    | 1828     | 2072   |
| <b>1861</b> | 2913     | 3964   | 4362    | 1608     | 1828   |
| <b>1871</b> | 6650     | 7749   | 4630    | 1625     | 1834   |
| <b>1881</b> | 17125    | 18377  | 7048    | 1541     | 1740   |
| <b>1891</b> | 20613    | 21959  | 6942    | 1395     | 1575   |
| <b>1901</b> | 23974    | 26012  | 7327    | 1449     | 1615   |

These statistics are also presented in graph form in Figures 5a and 5b. The township totals for Cannock and Haywood make clear that the outlying townships in these parishes contribute very modest numbers to the populations of their central townships. All three demonstrate the same pattern up to and including 1851: a steadily if modestly increasing population. However, by 1861 they have taken different trajectories: the rate of expansion in Cannock had begun to increase, whilst it decreased in Rugeley and Colwich, and the latter parish actually had a lower population than ten years previously. It is hard not to assume a connection here, and to suggest that Rugeley and Colwich were losing people to Cannock, although this would need to be demonstrated by more detailed study of the census returns. After 1861 Colwich's population decline largely continued until 1901, when it was a little higher than ten years previously, whilst Rugeley's population continued to

<sup>29</sup> *VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 1, 320 and 325

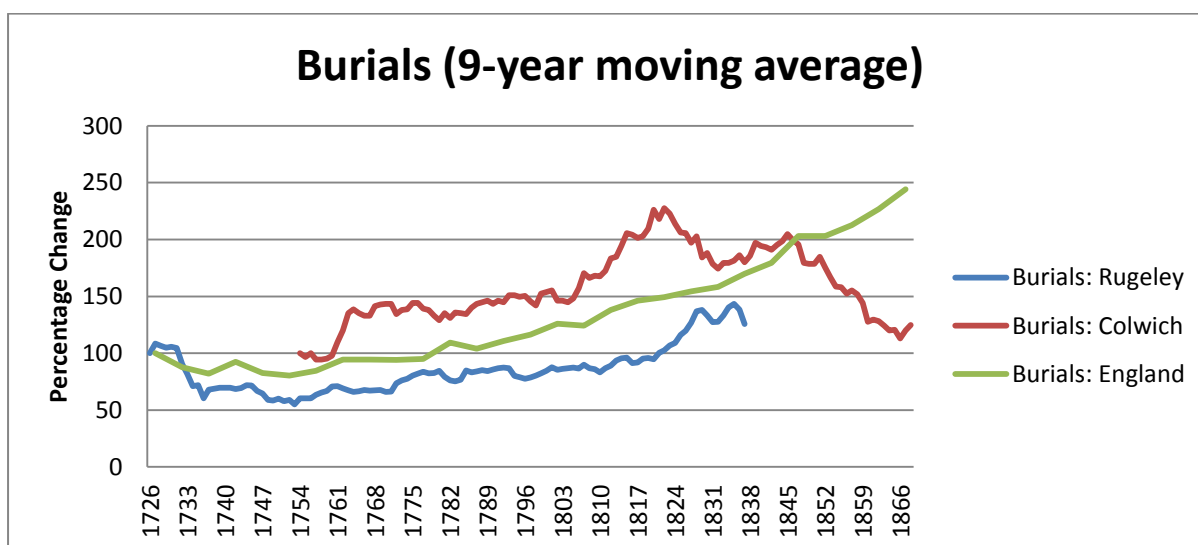
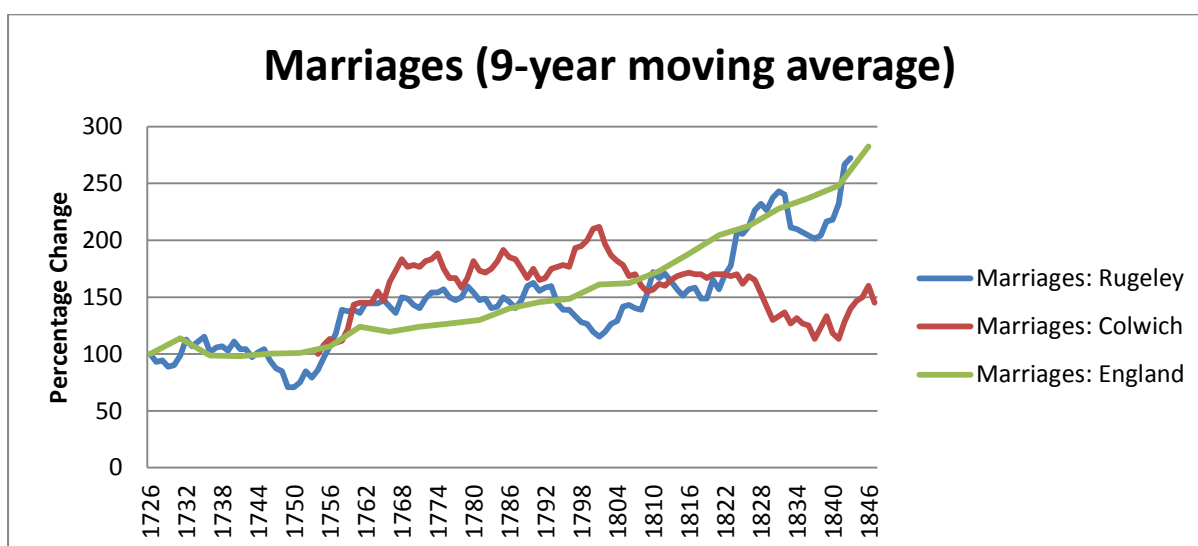
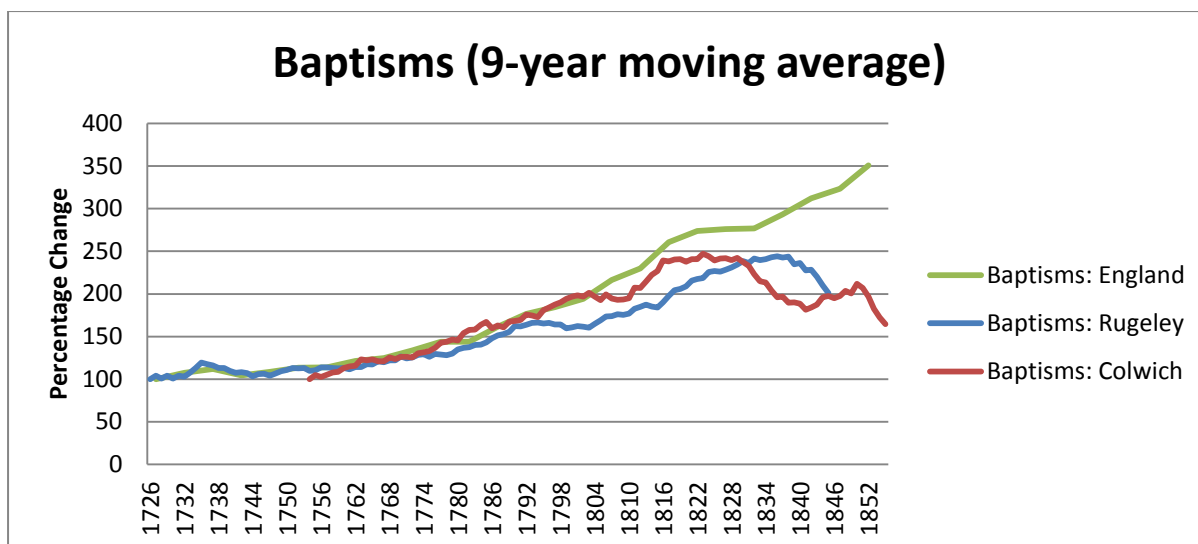
increase at a more modest rate, except for the decade between 1871 and 1881 when it increased more dramatically. Cannock's population continued to increase significantly, most dramatically 1871 and 1881, but continuing at a greater rate than Rugeley thereafter. The obvious explanation for this, at least at a general level, is the establishment and expansion of industrial coal mining operations in Cannock in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The nature of the increase in population expansion during the second half of the nineteenth century can be further explored by study of the census returns. It was intended to explore the potential of these by studying the returns of a whole parish in two census years separated by two or three decades, but in the event only one year was completed: Colwich in 1861. The main question to be investigated was whether different kinds of employment depended on or encouraged migration into the study parishes; to that end, all people given an occupation on the returns were recorded, together with their sex and place of birth. Place of birth indicates whether or not migration had occurred by the year of the census, but not the reasons behind it or whether it had occurred comparatively recently or further in the past. Combining this data with the descriptions of occupations might, it was hoped, suggest when migration was related to specific kinds of employment. Clearly the data might also be analysed in other ways as well; for example, migration catchment areas for common occupational categories such as domestic servants or agricultural labourers might be mapped. Given the completion of only one year, it was decided to defer the analysis of the census data, and to hope that future opportunities would enable the extension of the data set.

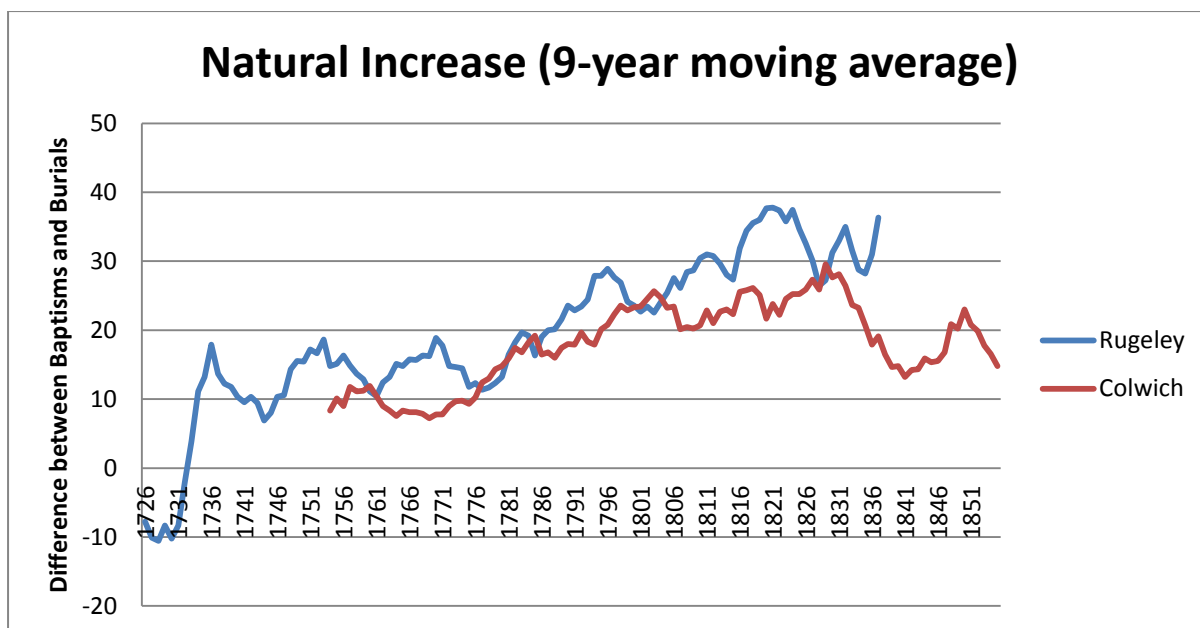
Opportunities for further research:

- The completion of the Cannock parish register data to provide a sequence alongside those from Rugeley and Colwich, and the extension of all three sequences backwards into the seventeenth century.
- Investigation of the possibility that the early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed localized episodes of mortality.
- Investigation of the popularity and influence of nonconformist religion, particularly Methodism in these parishes.
- Extension of the census data set and analysis of migration into the study parishes.

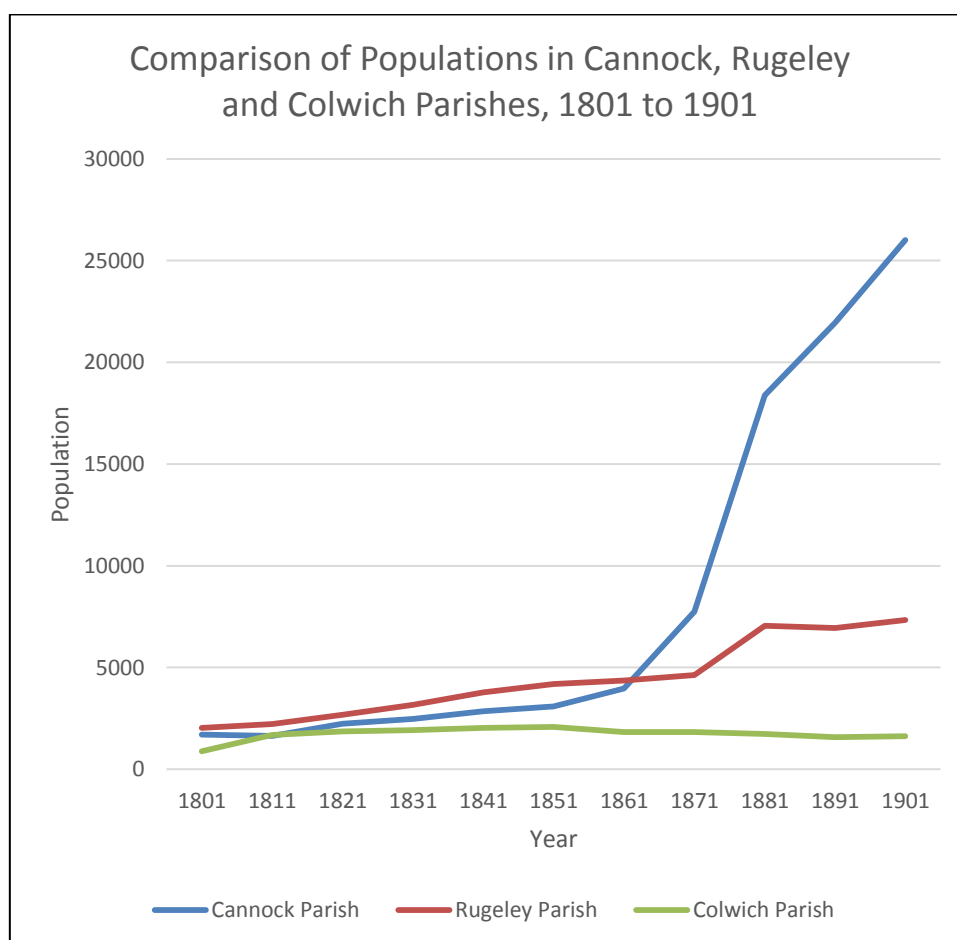




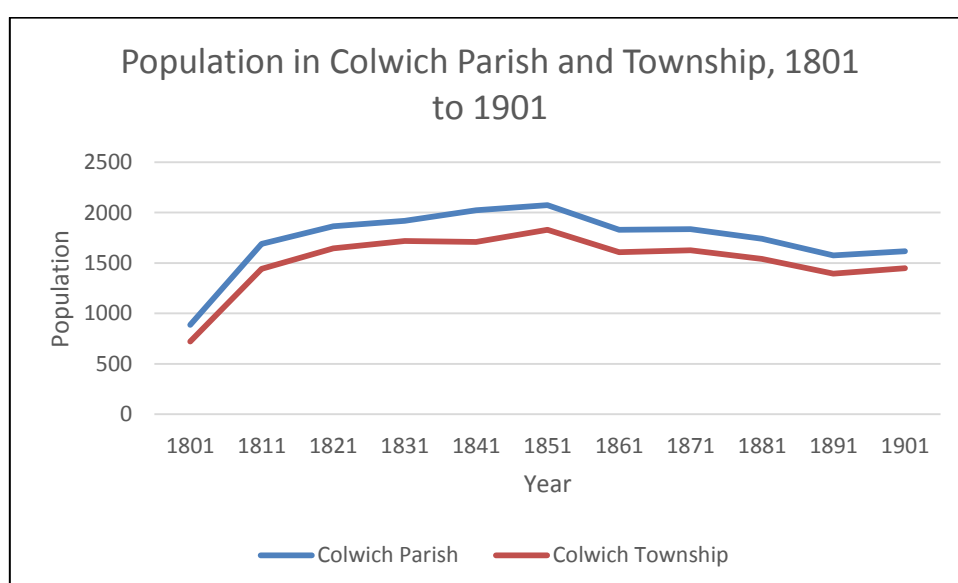
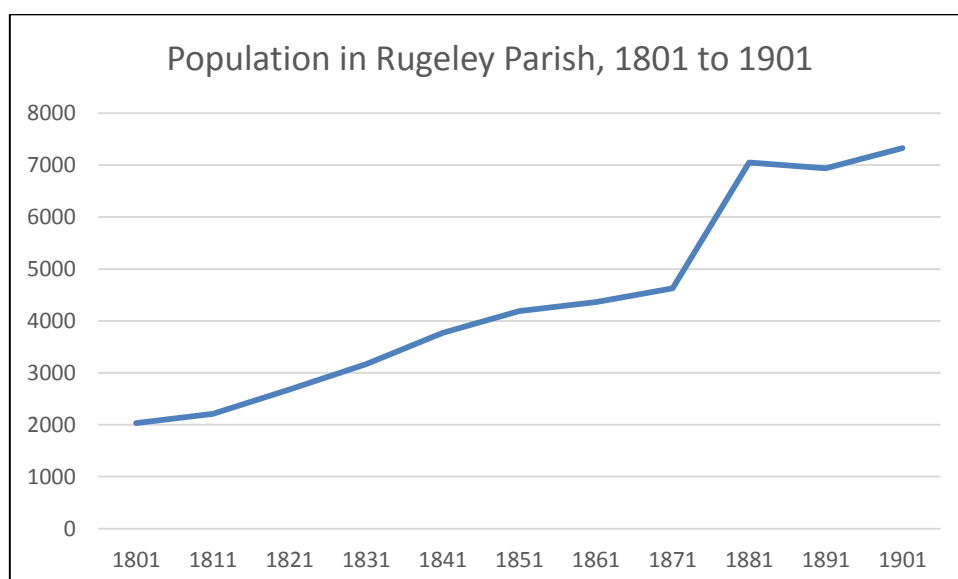
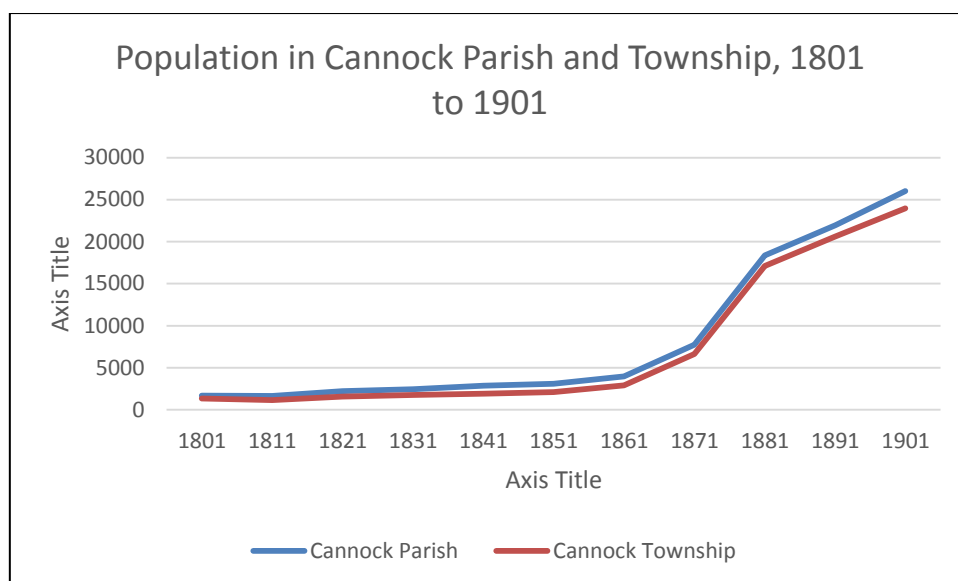
**Figure 4a: The rate of increase in baptism, marriage and burial in the parishes of Rugeley and Colwich, compared with an calculated average for England, over the last three quarters of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century**



**Figure 4b: Natural Increase in the parishes of Rugeley and Colwich over the last three quarters of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century**



**Figure 5a: Comparison of census population statistics for the parishes of Cannock, Rugeley and Colwich over the period 1801 to 1901**



**Figure 5b: Census population statistics for Cannock, Rugeley and Colwich parishes, 1801 to 1901**

## LANDSCAPE HISTORY

Whilst the demographic studies were intended to provide an introduction to the communities who used the Chase, and a foundation for further research of their development over time, the landscape of the Chase itself formed the central element of the study and occupied most of the volunteer's time. This part of the study was guided by two questions:

- What light could be shed on the use and management of the landscape during this period?
- Could documentary sources offer any information on the physical development of the landscape over the course of the study period?

The first of these questions was largely approached through the Paget archive, and in particular through bundles of estate memoranda, but also through estate rentals detailing landholdings within the manors, on both of which more below. Clearly historic maps would play an important part in approaching the second question. The sequence of Ordnance Survey maps gives an accurately surveyed and periodically updated view of the region from the late nineteenth century, but as we were to find, much had changed by that time. Earlier maps included those associated with tithe and enclosure awards, as follows:

| Parish         | Tithe                                                                                                                 | Enclosure                                                                        |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cannock</b> | Award and Map dated 1841 <sup>30</sup> (excluding Great Wyrley and Huntington, which were subject to separate awards) | Award and Map dated 1868 <sup>31</sup> (enclosed in 1861)                        |
| <b>Rugeley</b> | Award and Map dated 1840 <sup>32</sup>                                                                                | Award and Map dated 1885 <sup>33</sup> (enclosed in 1864)                        |
| <b>Colwich</b> | Award and Map dated 1845 <sup>34</sup>                                                                                | Award and Map dated 1791 <sup>35</sup> (applying to areas outside Cannock Chase) |

However, by far the most useful map was an estate map produced in 1863, but on the basis of surveys undertaken from 1819 to 1824 (see Figures 6 to 9); the map is associated with a set of ten books detailing the holders of the landholdings depicted upon it, many of them small 'encroachments' onto the common.<sup>36</sup> When considered together, these maps enable the considerable transformations of the nineteenth century to be charted in some detail. In what follows, these transformations will be considered first, by way of introduction to a detailed consideration of the use and management of the Chase in the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries.

The estate map based in 1820s surveys (hereafter the '1820s map') provides our earliest known accurately surveyed depiction of the bounds of the open common known as Cannock Chase, with one caveat: the map does not depict the edges of the common where it extended into manors not

<sup>30</sup> LRO B/A/15/72, 432; WSL S.MS 417/37, 430/9

<sup>31</sup> SRO Q/RDc/103C (award) and Q/RDc/103A (map)

<sup>32</sup> LRO B/A/15/263, 644; SRO D5694/6/1/1 (award only); WSL S.MS 417/135–138, 430/20

<sup>33</sup> SRO Q/RDc/105 (award and map)

<sup>34</sup> LRO B/A/15/99, 460; SRO D1274/2/1 (map) and D874/9/1 (award)

<sup>35</sup> SRO Q/RDc/7 (award and map)

<sup>36</sup> SRO D1821/5

held by the Pagets; this applies to Acton and Bednall, Huntington, Great Wyrley, Norton Canes and Cheslyn Hay, around the western and southern parts of the Chase. The map is colour coded to show, *inter alia*, open common, freehold land held by Paget (whether in hand or at lease), and 'encroachments'. Two parallel dashed lines are used to depict routeways across the Chase, and some of the system of roads and lanes outside its bounds is also shown. Thin hachured lines across some areas of the common may depict the outlines of enclosures unused and unclaimed at the time of the survey, or perhaps associated with stock management or temporary agricultural use, though this is speculation. Some of these elements are shown in Figure 6. The survey books show that, of his freehold, most of the land Paget held 'in hand' lay in and immediately around his two parks at Great Haywood and Beaudesert (including the Hall there). This might indicate that many of the freehold plots held at lease represent encroachments on the common that had been brought within Paget's manorial ambit, whilst others, explicitly labelled 'encroachments' and often intermixed with Paget's freehold, were those that had yet to be taken within his tenorial grasp. The boundaries of quite a few of these clusters of plots, particularly in the vicinity of Beaudesert Park, have an organic appearance with curving edges, sometimes forming ovals, perhaps having been formed piecemeal or by episodes of informal enclosure and subsequent subdivision. The map therefore represents a snapshot in time, showing both the progress of informal encroachment onto the common and Paget's attempts to deal with it by incorporating it into his manors.

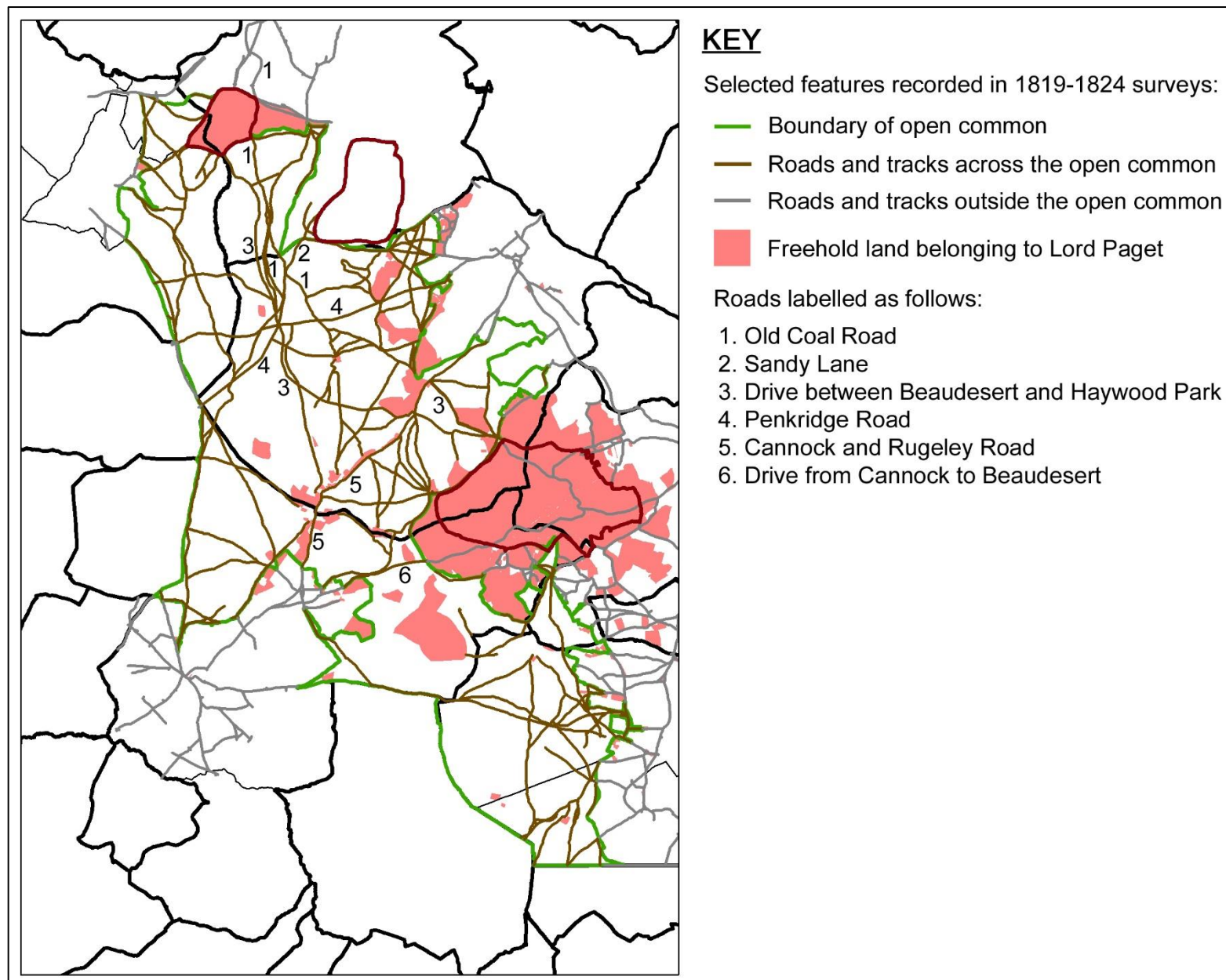


Figure 6: Map of the open common showing elements from the surveys of 1819 to 1824



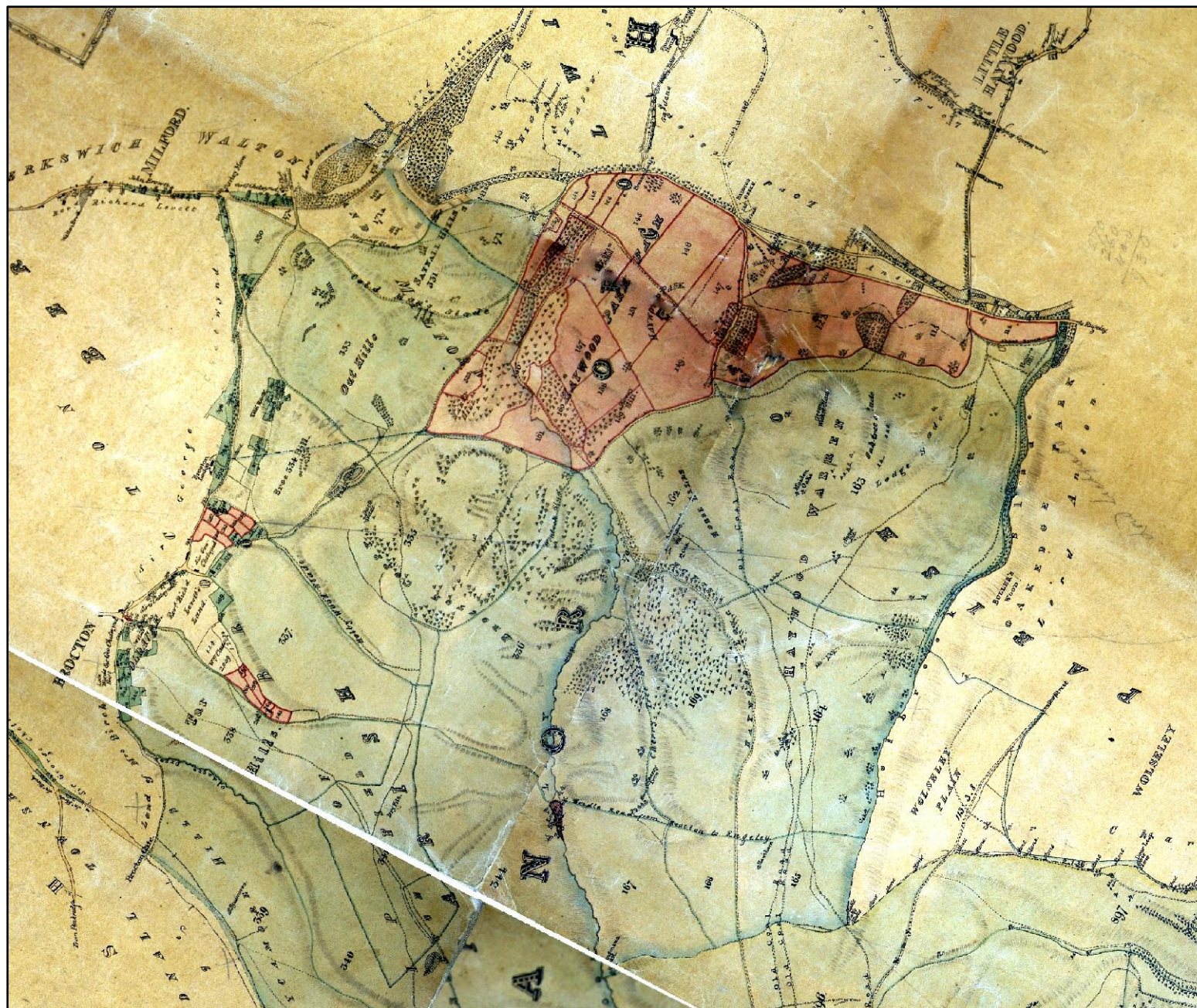


Figure 7: Map of  
1820s surveys:  
northern portion  
(note Haywood  
Park)





Figure 8: Map of 1820s surveys: west of Rugeley (note New Coppice)





Figure 9: Map of  
1820s surveys:  
Beaudesert



The context for this can be further explored. The establishment of cottages and enclosure of small plots of land on open commons by so-called 'squatters' was a widespread phenomenon of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Cannock Chase was no exception.<sup>37</sup> Many lords of these 'wastes' initially accepted the situation, or at least did little to interfere with it, taking only nominal fines or 'acknowledgments' from the squatters; after twenty years of undisturbed occupation a squatter's holding became a freehold within the manor.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, through the nineteenth century squatters were of increasing concern not only to the lords of the wastes but also to existing freeholders and copyholders, who were concerned that their own rights in the commons were being infringed by people often characterised as idle and of base morality, whose liberty on the common encouraged them to remain poor and thus put increasing pressure on parochial poor relief. Such concerns sometimes encouraged lords and freeholders to collaborate in enclosure, a process which forced the explicit definition and assignation to individuals of heretofore shared customary rights, and regularised or ejected those squatters who could claim no formal right on the waste. There were, however, other ways of dealing with squatters, and the surveys of the 1820s probably represent Lord Paget's approach at that time. An undated document in a bundle of estate memoranda, in which other documents are dated to the earlier nineteenth century up to 1828, is entitled 'Reasons for putting cottages and encroachments upon a fait rent', and lists various advantages to be had from converting squatter settlements into rent-paying holdings.<sup>39</sup> Among these are:

- 'That the encroachments are become so numerous that the expense of collecting them is more than the amount of rent paid [freehold rents being very small] – the difficulty also increased, and the loss of property [i.e. belonging to the lord] more liable to be of serious amount.'
- 'That by rents the practice of paying fines upon cottages and thereby establishing freeholds will become impracticable [i.e. to the squatters].'
- 'That by rents the right of the lord of the manor is established as it proves his legality to the waste above any claim of a freeholder.'
- 'That by rents the inducement to poor men to gain settlements upon the common by the erection of a house and inclosure [*sic*] of the waste is prevented.'
- 'By rents the cottagers will be obliged to place their sons and daughters in reputable situations in life instead of keeping them at home in idleness and depravity, waiting and quarrelling for their supposed freeholds.'
- 'By rents the lord of the manor establishes every right, prevents the numerous evils complained of and instead of £50 will receive £1500 a year.'
- 'By rents the increase of parochial rates [i.e. to support the poor] which are now become serious will be prevented in as much as the temptation to inclosure [*sic*] is done away with.'

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<sup>37</sup> D. Brown, 'The variety of motives for parliamentary enclosure: the example of the Cannock Chase area, 1773–1887', *Midland History*, 19 (1994), 105–127, at 114–116

<sup>38</sup> A good example from Cannock Chase is provided by a document, probably of the later eighteenth century, entitled 'An Account of the leasehold cottages in the Manor of Cannock bordering upon Cannock Wood', which lists the cottages, their holders, and the rent taken from each: SRO D603/N/16/7

<sup>39</sup> SRO D603/N/3/9

The implementation of this strategy on Cannock Chase, the imposition of 'fair rents', appears to have transformed squatters into tenants at will, a comparatively insecure form of tenure not subject to the custom of the manor, which might be terminated, or its conditions revised, with relative ease. Comparison of the survey books of the 1820s with the tithe awards of the 1840s and with manorial rentals from the intervening period indicates that Paget's tenants at will formed a distinctive group, its membership overlapping only slightly with the freeholders and copyholders of the manor. The tithe awards recorded freeholders and copyholders as land owners, but tenants at will as occupiers of Lord Paget's lands. The distribution of these lands was very much as it had been two decades earlier: on the Chase or around its edges. In contrast, the lands of freeholders and copyholders were largely situated closer to the historic cores of the settlements at Cannock, Rugeley, and Great and Little Haywood.

David Brown has shown that, from the mid-1840s, Lord Paget became more concerned with protecting his claim to minerals rights on the Chase, primarily concerned to ensure that he could control and profit from the mining of coal at a time when demand for it was increasing rapidly.<sup>40</sup> Subsequent enclosure in the 1860s extinguished common rights across much of the Chase, a significant transformation that had long-reaching effects on the management and use of the area. However, previous research has not so far focused on the exercise of those rights before they were extinguished, a topic which the study has indicated could be illuminated considerably by analysis of the Paget archive. Surviving estate memoranda largely relate to the period between the 1820s and 1840s, perhaps indicate a greater interest in the management of the Chase on the part of Lord Paget's agents during this period. The manorial regime after the 1820s, having incorporated existing squatters' activities into its tenurial structure, was perhaps more restrictive to further encroachment than it had been in the past, and it is noticeable that the tithe maps of the early- to mid-1840s show little difference to the map produced from the surveys of two decades earlier; as the document quoted above shows, the discouragement of squatting and encroachment was one of the goals of imposing 'fair rents'. Nevertheless, the nature of the use of the Chase after the 1820s by those who had already exerted some claim upon it was probably very similar to that which was practised in earlier decades, perhaps centuries. It is to this that we now turn.

In 1605 the copyholders of the manors of Cannock, Rugeley, Longdon and Haywood negotiated with Lord Paget to have a written record of their rights drawn up, for which they paid him £1500; it was confirmed in the Court of Chancery in 1606.<sup>41</sup> Amongst other things, this custumal defined the rights copyholders enjoyed on the manorial 'waste', the common. Chris Harrison summarises these as follows:

Copyholders seized of a messuage, or ancient cottage, and their farmers or tenants, had the right of free commons for their "cattells" [meaning horses, bovines and sheep] within all wastelands, including Cannock Heath and Cannock good. This was a concession, for until this time copyholders had paid a small licence to common their animals on the Chase. There was only one situation in which the area they could common was restricted, when the lord enclosed a coppice for the preservation of young trees. Such enclosures were not to exceed

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<sup>40</sup> Brown, 'Motives for parliamentary enclosure', 116–121

<sup>41</sup> Harrison, 'Cannock and Rugeley', 16–19

a period of nine years. Copyholders had the right to take heath, "ridgeing" turf, fern, peat, clay, sand, earth, marl, and gravel from the lord's waste.<sup>42</sup>

This custumal subsequently became a point of reference for those exercising common rights on Cannock Chase. For example, in 1785 the landlord of the Cross Keys in Hednesford, a copyholder, ploughed up some earth for use on his estate; he was tried for trespass, and in his defence explained that he believed the copyholders of the Chase had paid Lord Paget £1500 'for the for the privilege of getting soil within the manor of Cannock for the improvement of their estates.'<sup>43</sup> After 1605 the copyholders of the Paget manors had a well-defined sense of their rights on the Chase, and appear to have exercised them up to the enclosure of much of the Chase in the 1850s and 60s.

One of the key goals of the archival study was the illumination of agricultural management practices on the Chase. Several bundles of estate memoranda were studied by the volunteers, revealing various elements of the usage of the Chase, albeit very much from the perspective of Lord Paget's agents. One particularly interesting bundle appears to have come from the office of George Smith, bailiff of Lord Paget's manors, and comprises paperwork relating the mid- to late-1840s.<sup>44</sup> Some of this paperwork relates to commoners exercising their common rights: for example, there are lists recording commoners taking fern and heath (presumably heather turf, perhaps for thatching), measured by the 'load' (presumably cartload, as the occasional wagonload is explicitly described thus); there is no sense that the commoners were paying for this, and the record might instead attest to checks made on the right of those claiming it. The same goes for records relating to the grazing of sheep on the Chase. One list is headed thus: 'The undermentioned persons keep or depasture sheep upon Cannock Chase, within Haywood manor, having no legal right'; names and residences are given along with the number of sheep and the marks used to identify them. Such checks would result in the distraint of the illegally sheep in the local pinfold, along with those sheep grazed in excess of the allowed number by those who did possess legal right, and there are many examples in the bundle of notes sent to the owners of these animals advising them of such distraint and the fine that needed to be paid if the owners wanted to regain possession of their sheep; this was apparently such a common occurrence that Smith had a proforma note printed for the purpose. There is also record in the bundle of an occasion on which Smith was summoned to the County Court to answer the charge that he had unjustly distrained a commoner's sheep; a risk, perhaps, in cases where commoners were also of the wealthier, well-connected sort.

Finally, there are also lists of those grazing sheep on the Chase who were legally entitled to do so.<sup>45</sup> The most complete of these lists, entitled 'An account of Sheep, Stocks, Cattle etc, depasturing upon Cannock Chase, and other waste and commonable Lands, within the Manors of Haywood, Cannock and Rugeley and Longdon in Staffordshire, as taken in the month of August 1850', records 5,536 sheep on the Chase, together with a small number of horses, asses and cows, alongside about 750 head of deer dispersed across the Chase owned by Lord Paget. This is of the same order of

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–29

<sup>43</sup> SRO D(W)1511/34/19/9

<sup>44</sup> SRO D603/N/18/22

<sup>45</sup> There is one in the bundle discussed above, but this might be a partial list: it has not front cover and does not appear to include anyone living in Cannock and Rugeley, although smaller settlements within these townships are listed. It is also shorter than the two better representatives of this kind of document, both of which are contained in SRO D603/N/18/23.



magnitude as the near-7,000 sheep recorded overwintering on the Chase in the late sixteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The record also includes details of where the graziers lived and where on the Chase their sheep walked; the graziers' residences are shown on the map in Figure 7. This map displays the geography of a distinctive, if dispersed, community, the members of which shared a common sense of their rights on the Chase, were united in their connection to the Paget's manorial administration, and would perhaps have come together on a semi-regular basis at local sheep fairs.<sup>47</sup> Whilst some of these graziers lived in the older centres of population, such as Cannock, Rugeley, Little Haywood and Longdon, many more lived in smaller settlements scattered around the edges of the open common, sometimes on it, and might well have combined the raising of sheep with other occupations, such as coal mining. Only further research will reveal such details.

Whilst the grazing of sheep was clearly one of the main uses of the Chase up to the 1860s, the only income it produced for Lord Paget came from the fines of those who overstocked the common or grazed it illegally. There is, however, evidence that the production of timber became a profitable business in the later eighteenth century, and had perhaps been so for some considerable time before that.<sup>48</sup> The devastation wrought by Fulke Greville in the late sixteenth century is thought to have removed many of the former woodlands permanently, but perhaps not entirely, and by the later eighteenth century there were several stands of trees being managed for timber. A survey undertaken in 1763 identified timber woods around Beaudesert Hall and in the adjacent Park, the woodland called 'Broad Hazles', woods in the rough ground called 'New Hays', in 'Starkley Bank' and 'Arblaster Hays', both in Beaudesert Park, and in 'Furnace Copy'; this was valued in total at £10,100. The same document also mentions trees in 'Brocton Copy' and other places in Cannock Wood, in Haywood Park, and in 'Cotchets Nook' and the 'new planted wood', both near Rugeley, that were not valued in the survey.<sup>49</sup> Some of these woodlands continued to be managed through subsequent decades; there was a considerable market for their timber: for example, one sale of 1771 evidenced in the Paget archives went to John Hutchinson, a timber merchant in Rotherhithe, Surrey, who paid £3,141 14s 6d for it, perhaps knowing he could sell it on to the London shipyards.<sup>50</sup>

Other documents in the archive attest to a more local trade in the products of the woodlands, and hint at the methods by which it was managed. For example, a note book records the amounts paid out over the period 1775–1779 to a small number of men who appear to have been managing the woods at Brocton Copy, New Copy and Furnace Copy; a related invoice from one of these men, Thomas Hopkins is addressed to a Mr Priest, possibly the owner of the notebook, and presumably Lord Paget's agent where woodland was concerned.<sup>51</sup> It appears likely that the woods were leased to these men, who sold wood back to Lord Paget annually (minus costs for collecting the timber

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<sup>46</sup> Harrison, 'Cannock and Rugeley', 104.

<sup>47</sup> It is notable that the grazing list is concerned with graziers living in manors in the hands of both Paget and others, but all within the leets of Paget's manorial courts; for example, Huntington and Great Wyrley were in other hands, but in the leet of Cannock, whilst Bednall, also in other hands, was in the leet of Haywood. The only exception, Norton, appears to apply only to a piece of the common called No Man's Bank which was in dispute between the manors of Longdon and Norton at this time.

<sup>48</sup> Several bundles are archived under SRO D603/N/5. Most of these documents are dated to the eighteenth century or later, but there is one indenture dated to 1613 by which Lord Paget bought 1,200 cords of wood from Lawrence Wright of Snelston, the woods apparently located within Paget's manors: D603/N/5/3.

<sup>49</sup> SRO D603/N/5/2

<sup>50</sup> SRO D603/N/5/3.

<sup>51</sup> SRO D603/N/5/5 and D603/N/5/6.

from the woods), but who might also sell small quantities to various of Paget's agents (and perhaps others) for various purposes (such as basket wood, stakes and rails) throughout the year; the wood was measured in cords, the amount of cut wood stacked in a pile 4' wide by 4' deep by 8' long. By way of example, Thomas Hopkins' invoice for 1779 recorded the sale to Mr Priest of 58 cords and 6 feet of wood from Furnace and New Copies at 11s a cord, and 90 cords from Brocton coppice at 10s a cord, charging £77 for the whole once costs for carriage had been deducted. This cordwood was clearly of a different quality to the timber sold by Lord Paget to timber merchants further afield. Both timber and cordwood continued to be produced and sold by the Beaudesert estate; there was not time to consider a detailed sales ledger for the years 1835 to 1841, which forms part of the Paget archive, but it would doubtless repay further study, as would the many advertisements for auctions of wood bundled with it. Such analysis as has so far been possible indicates that the woods at Brocton, New and Furnace Copies were managed at least into the 1840s.

Management of the Chase's resources also included early industrial exploitation. The Lords Paget had been producing iron in the valley of the Rising Brook since the sixteenth century, and this appears to have continued into the nineteenth century. This industry did not appear in any of the documents considered by this study, and in any case it forms the subject of a recent study by H. Thornton, so will not be considered any further.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, whilst the LiDAR survey picked up copious signs of early coalmining around the southern and western edges of Beaudesert Park, the earlier centuries of this industry hardly appeared in the documents considered by this study, although there were occasional references. For example, a letter from one of Paget's agents, written in 1757, discussed the author's ignorance of the worth of the coal works at Beaudesert, which were being offered for sale, explaining that nobody living knew the extent of the underground works, which were so very uncertain and precarious.<sup>53</sup> Given the size of the Paget archive, and the small scale of this initial excavation, it is quite possible that future research will uncover further references. The use and management of the Chase landscape was transformed by the parliamentary enclosure of Cannock, in 1861, and Rugeley, in 1864, which largely extinguished common rights. The following passage from an edition of the *Mining Journal*, written in 1863 between the granting of these two awards, gives one viewpoint on the nature of this transformation at the time:

'[Cannock] is now one of the few forests of England of which any considerable range may be seen in its normal condition; but its long and characteristic history will soon terminate. The Commissioners of England and Wales, have already enclosed and are now enclosing, several thousand acres, and in the course of a few years the 60 miles of road constructed under the past and present year, at a cost of about £24,000, will run their straight lengths through a busy and populous centre of mining enterprise and agricultural production, instead of, as now, a wild moory waste, covered with heather gorse and bracken, amongst which deer, grouse, blackcock, snipe and coneys multiply exceedingly for the delectation of the sportsman.'<sup>54</sup>

Opportunities for further research:

<sup>52</sup> H. Thornton, *Ironworks of the Rising Brook Valley at "Cannock Wood" and Rugeley* (The Landor Society, 2016); see also Welch, 'Elizabethan Ironmaking'.

<sup>53</sup> SRO D603/K/7/2, letter from Henry Hayne to Francis Parry, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1857.

<sup>54</sup> WSL pbox C/1/5, 'Cannock Chase and its Coal Mines from the *Mining Journal* 1863 CB Cannock 36' (No. 1457 Vol. XXXIII London, Saturday July 25, 1863).

- Further clarify the nature of the evolving groups of tenants at will (largely former squatters) and freeholders and copyholders, and establish whether these groups were as distinct as initial analysis suggests.
- Build a more detailed picture of encroachment onto the Chase by more in-depth study of rentals in the Paget archive, connected where possible to the plots located in the 1820s surveys and map.
- Attempt to locate the people grazing sheep on the Chase in other records of the period in order to build up a picture of their roles and stations in local society. Are there any patterns? Can distinct groups amongst the users of the common be identified? Did the graziers combine their pastoral activities with other occupations?
- Undertake a more detailed analysis of the evidence for the wood and timber industries on the Chase. Attempt to place it within the wider local and regional economy.
- Search for references to earlier stages of the coalmining industry on the Chase.

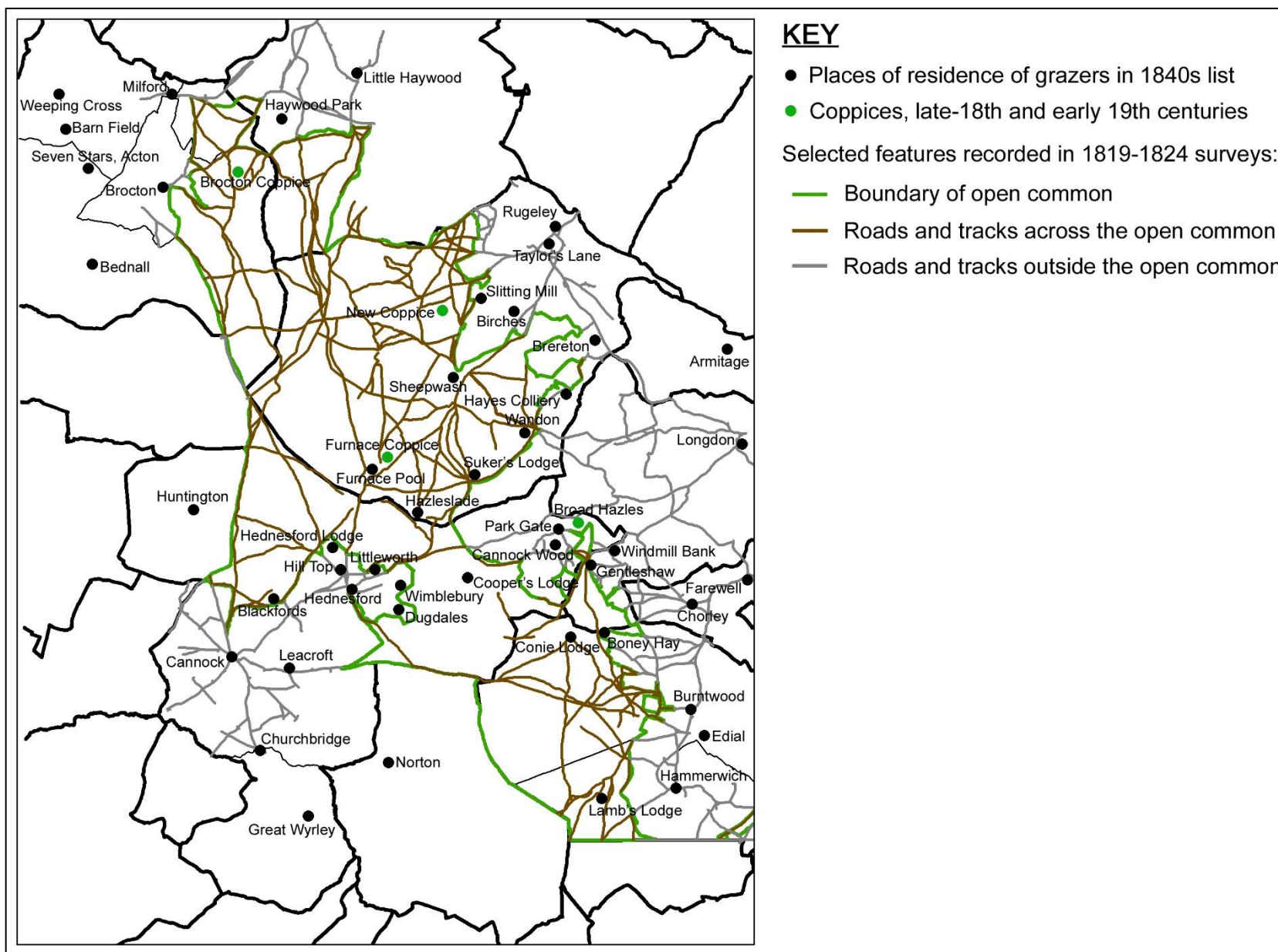


Figure 7: Map showing the residences of graziers grazing sheep on the Chase in the 1840s; timber coppices are also shown

## SOCIAL HISTORY

The final section of this report builds on the framework of settlement, management and resource use set out above for the Chase during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. It would be possible to view the customs of common right as elements of 'social history', in the sense that they emerged from the interactions of different social groups. However, here the term is meant to imply the kinds of practice that characterised life amongst the communities of the Chase alongside or on top of its more directly economic exploitation. These can be grouped into two fairly broad categories: those that attempted to encourage integration and avoid conflict, and those that exacerbated conflict; really two sides of the same coin. As with elements of the study discussed above, the archival research only really scratched the surface of possibilities offered by the holdings of the Record Office, particularly the Paget archive, and so what follows can no doubt be expanded by future research.

A number of references were found to communal customs of different kinds which formed part of the social world of some of those who used the Chase. A letter of 1776 to one of Lord Paget's agents describes a 'foolish, idle and unwarrantable custom' in Rugeley 'of falling Birch trees to the number of a dozen or more for May Day';<sup>55</sup> the reference is tantalizing, as it does not explain what the trees were used for, or which segment of Rugeley's population enjoyed them. Given the fact that the writer of the letter attempted to put a stop to it, the practice is also a good example of how something intended to encourage enjoyment and sociality among one group might cause conflict with another. A less contentious example of such convivial practices is provided by the account of Thomas Wootton of Cannock (though produced in the context of a boundary dispute!) recalling how, as an adolescent servant to local farmers c.1800, he went hare coursing on Cannock Chase with his masters and other farmers under the auspices of their landlord, Phineas Fowke Hussey Esq. of Wyrley Grove, every year on Wake Monday, which was kept as a holiday; if enough hares were killed each farmer would get one each.<sup>56</sup> This practice is a reminder that the Chase was in many ways an elite landscape, thoroughly entangled with various ways in which the social elite reproduced its privilege, as the presence of several parks on the Chase indicates. The Lords Paget maintained a stock of deer on the Chase into the 1850s; the hunting of these animals might have served as an event on the social calendar, but the use of venison as an aristocratic gift is also attested by the archive: Lord Paget's keepers kept a record of the condition of the deer on the Chase, and were instructed on the correct way to dress and present game.<sup>57</sup> A letter between estate managers in 1751 references the taking of venison to London via the 'Flying Coach' from Lichfield.<sup>58</sup>

Against these practices, there is much evidence for conflict between Lord Paget and various sections of local society over the use of resources on the Chase. The commoners objected to the deleterious effects of deer and, in particular, rabbits, which were kept on the Chase solely for the lord's pleasure and profit. The expansion of warrens on the Chase was a particularly incendiary phenomenon, leading to the trespasses of the early 1750s studied by Douglas Hay, sometimes known as the 'rabbit

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<sup>55</sup> SRO D603/K/12/9, letter from Mr Weston to Mr Harrison, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1776

<sup>56</sup> SRO D(W)1511/34/19/7

<sup>57</sup> SRO D603/N/17/7 and D603/N/17/1

<sup>58</sup> SRO D603/K/7/2, letter from Henry Hayne to Francis Parry, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1751.

riots'.<sup>59</sup> A calculation undertaken shortly afterwards on Lord Paget's behalf attempted to prove the commoner's 'sufficiency of common', by referring to the fact that during the riots the commoners had enclosed some of the best grazing land on the Chase for agriculture.<sup>60</sup> Such practices were another bone of contention, and might also work the other way: an undated letter from several freeholders in Rugeley complained to Lord Paget that his enclosure of their sheep walks was contravened past custom and was unfair given the extent of unenclosed Chase available to him elsewhere.<sup>61</sup> All these occurrences were to some extent wrangles over uses of the Chase that both sides were willing to accept as legitimate if undertaken with due care and diligence. They contrast with illegal activities on the Chase, such as the burning of the heath, the taking of turf and earth, and, most notably, poaching.<sup>62</sup> Investigations into the shooting of deer in 1760 and the setting of nets to poach them in 1789 both produced detailed records, which doubtless stand for others during this period.<sup>63</sup> Lord Paget employed people to police the Chase, and the quarter sessions records for the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries demonstrate that many were brought to trial for having taken deer or rabbits.<sup>64</sup> Evidently unwilling to allow the poor to feed themselves at the expense of his game, a record listing 'the poor that used to have Pottage' at Beaudesert demonstrates that Lord Paget was willing to be charitable only on his own terms.<sup>65</sup>

Opportunities for further research:

- All the subject matter of this section would benefit from further research among the Paget archives. With more data, a more comprehensive history of cooperation and conflict on the Chase could be constructed.

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<sup>59</sup> D. Hay, 'Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase', in D. Hay, P. Linebaugh, J. G. Rule, E. P. Thompson and C. Winslow (eds), *Albion's Fatal Tree; Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Allen Lane, 1975), 189–253. The riots were also the subject of several documents considered by this study: D603/N/3/10; D603/N/17/5; D603/N/18/1-21; D603/K/7/3.

<sup>60</sup> SRO D(W)1511(34)/19/10

<sup>61</sup> SRO D603/N/3/12

<sup>62</sup> A letter of 1774 refers to an investigation into the setting of fire on the heath: D603/K/12/3.

<sup>63</sup> SRO D603/N/3/10.

<sup>64</sup> SRO D603/N/17/10; see also letters in SRO D603/K/12/9.

<sup>65</sup> D603/N/16/17/11



## CONCLUSION

The beginnings of an answer to the primary research question – why did the Chase look like it did by 1950? – can be attempted by reference to the research detailed above. If the Chase is understood as a large area of open common land, then the primary elements of its evolution over time concern practices of encroachment, which gradually nibbled away at its edges, and practices of land management, which, through grazing and other common rights, maintained its distinctive ecology for centuries. Perhaps ironically, the major changes to this situation occurred after the period that forms the focus of this report: enclosure of much of the common in the 1860s and the expansion of coalmining on an industrial scale changed both the shape of the Chase and the nature of its management, which included military training and manoeuvres, culminating in the construction and use of camps during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These developments have formed the focus of other studies, and so were not given priority here.<sup>66</sup> Instead, this study has stressed the importance of an earlier incarnation of the Chase, which had its origins in the medieval period, and defined life on and around the Chase into the mid-nineteenth century.

There is great scope for further research. This study has only scratched the surface of the information contained in the Paget archive, and a future project might choose any one or more of the themes and topics discussed in this report to expand upon its conclusions, which can only be very tentative at this stage. Indeed, such work is necessary if a comprehensive picture of the Chase is to be drawn. Such work could also be expanded into new areas. For example, the history of Beaudesert Hall and Park was not considered here, except as elements within the wider Chase landscape, but deserves its own study.<sup>67</sup> This study focused on those parts of the Paget archive explicitly catalogued as estate memoranda, but even this forms a very large collection of documents, and there are hundreds of letters, legal papers and miscellaneous memoranda left untouched by it.<sup>68</sup>

Cannock Chase is a very distinctive natural landscape, and its cultural history is therefore equally distinctive. It is to be hoped that the Chase Through Time project acts as a pilot study to broader and more comprehensive research in the future.

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<sup>66</sup> The publications of the Cannock Chase Mining Historical Society offer a good introduction to the topic, and provide some detailed studies; a complete list can be found here: [http://www.ccmhs.co.uk/ccmhs\\_publications.htm](http://www.ccmhs.co.uk/ccmhs_publications.htm). The Great War camps are the subject of continuing research, including the Chase Through Time LiDAR project.

<sup>67</sup> One section of the Paget archive in particular is given over to Beaudesert (SRO D603/N/8), although there are further references in other parts of the archive.

<sup>68</sup> The estate memoranda are archived at the SRO under D603/N. This study focused on D603/N/3, 5, 15, 16, 17 and 18, but did not exhaust them. The project archive is kept at the SRO.

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## Abbreviations:

- DB Staffs.*: The Domesday survey of Staffordshire, references are to the Phillimore edition: J. Morris (ed.), *Staffordshire, Domesday Book Vol. 24* (Chichester, 1976)
- VCH Staffs.*, Vol. 1: W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Stafford*, Volume I (London, 1908)
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