

## The Chase

The Chase was the ancient hunting area extending from King's Lynn in the south to Babingley and West Newton in the north. It was used initially by the Normans and later by the Plantagenet Kings. Edward the third and the Black Prince were frequent users. It was widely used for hunting Fallow Deer, but was also used for falconry. It fell out of use in the Tudor period and was dis-parked afterwards. After that time warreners used to harvest the huge numbers of Rabbits (Coneys) which lived in the sandy soils of the area. Within the ancient Chase was a more restricted area, called the Deer Park, whose boundaries are still detectable on present-day maps. Captive deer were kept there, as it was surrounded by "pales" i.e. a fence of high stakes. They were used for food at the castle. The boundaries of the Chase were walked by the local residents, who recorded the route they took. These were recorded and there are many versions, some of which are recorded below. They stretch from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century.

Bradfer-Lawrence in the book about Castle Rising has a chapter on the Chase, which he calls the Chace, documenting its importance from early in the Norman period in the history of the area. He quotes a deed in the British Museum (Harleian MS. 380, p.7) from the time of Henry 111(1216 -1272). It defines the Metes and Bounds of the Chace as follows (translated). " and free Chace and Warren from Gaywood bridge unto Woodbridge and from Woodbridge unto the Sea. And from Bawsey Bridge unto the water-course of Babingley Mill."

This defines it approximately as the land lying between the Gaywood and Babingley Rivers, from the coast to around 7 miles inland, and the parish of Castle Rising is entirely within its boundaries. Thus, the accounts of the perambulations of the Chase are also valuable documents for understanding the landscape of the parish. I have been able to find 5 accounts, two of which are documented in full by Bradfer-Lawrence, but which I repeat to allow for comparisons. These are for the years 1588, 1656, 1679, 1697 and 1816.

1588(from Bradfer-Lawrence p98)

" the Bounde and Lymitte of the Chace of Castle Rising doe begin at the Northwest end of Rising Haven at the Sea at a place there where the steeple of St. Margaret in Kinge Lynne and the steeple of St. Nicholas in the same towne toward the South doe fall in one right lyne; and at the same place toward the East the South end of Stone and Dasingham steple doe likewise appeer in one right lyne: then going on directlie South and East by Rising Haven to Owlea hill, and then unto a place where sometyme Babingley Myll did stand being West from the Stone bridge of Rysing a furlong and a half, then North through the bounde of Babingley to a little lane called Ratlemans lane to the North end thereof, thence Eastward by Hall lane and Butlers greene unto Butlers Crosse and then directly to a way leading to Newton North from the Hallow that goeth

to a lane called Burst lane, through wch lane doth crosse a beck or water-course falling from Sandringham, from thence by Hallgrene and North grene in Newton to Wademoore brigg, then turning South by the highe way of Edmund Chatteris at the East end of Newton grene, and so falling South between the house of the said Edmund and his barne. Then along by Denton beck unto Gatton water, from Gatton Water to Hillington bridge unto Homeston by Rustinge lane and Bulles lane to Ares at the South side of Lynne waie, from thence by Brodegate lane unto a bownder between the parishes of Congham, Roydon and Grimston at Brodegate lane end, from thence to Reades corner and so along under Blowdon hill to Boones bridge, from thence by a little water-course to Weveling corner (*presumably now Waveland Farm*), then crossing the Fenns to the Ryver to a place called Chalderhouse corner then following the course of the Ryver lieing underneath Bawsey church (*still there today*), and so by the course of the same river to the South East corner of Rifley fenn, and then by the same ryver unto Gaywood bridge from thence by Whiting Ea unto Lynne haven, and from thence in a right lyne by the sea unto the place first named. All wch Bounde are plainlie set forth in a platt form (*the 1588 map*) made by John Hexhm of the Chace of Rising aforesaid.

The 1656 perambulation (NRO),

Castle Risinge Chase and Purlewe.

The ancient purlewe of the said chase as it have beene formerly ridden and gone was the 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> day of September Ann Dom 1656 ridden and gone by the persons underwritten and followeth.

*The parish names in bold face are at the margin of the page, and I have written them as close to the right place as possible.*

**Risinge.** From the Castle down Millwood Lane to Risinge Comon so over some foot bridge(s) to Stone Bridge and to Babingley Mill (now wast) then crossing Nether Marshe into Rattledens

**Babingley.** also(?) Rattleden's lane, which lyeth (not fenced) between pt of Millcroft and Rattledens also Rattleden's acre, the north end thereof leadeth into Hall Lane which lyeth between Hall Close and Butler's Wood and turneth east upon Buttlers Greene and so east to Buttlers Crosse (which crosse and lanes are nowe enclosed to the severalls from being wast) from thence crossing Lynn Road along a greene way that leadeth over the warren to Burst Becke under Sandringham

**Sandringham.** Park Pale, and so under the said Pale to a place where Wades Mill formerly stood (now decayed and not to be seene), and so to Wade's Moore. And from

**West Newton.** there turn South in a way leading straight one(*sic*) to Gapp

**Apleton.** Mill in Apleton And straight along Pedders Lane to Gatton Water(s)  
 from there in a greene way to Hillington bridge then turning  
**Hillington.** south by the side of the moore, (leaving the moore east) to  
**Congham.** Homeston, and so into Rustins lane whose south head brancheth into  
 a common lane, crossing over Eires lane into Broadgate Lane.  
**Roydon.** And from thence in a greene waie which divide Roydon and Grimston  
 Comon, forth one(*sic*) Bones Bridge (nowe nothing but a  
**Grimston.** broad water called Glenen Howe). So along from thence by the  
**Wiveling.** river to Wiveling river and so along Wiveling river West to Bawsey  
 Ditch, and from thence along the river Pide(?) to Bawsey  
**Bawsey.** water. So along the river to Gaywood Bridge, from thence along  
**Gaywood.** by the old river to Saltcoate(?) Marsh hill, which ioneth to the  
 sea **South Wotton.** banke, and turne North along the bank to  
 Southwotton Marsh, so along the sea banke to Northwotton marsh,  
 turning East at Mar(s?)ham Point, along by Rising River  
**North Wotton.**, to Ston Bridge first named.

William Cobb Esq. Baylif of the manor  
 George Sutton, Keeper of the Chase  
 John Wildon(?), late warriner there  
 James Browne  
 John Clarke  
 Samuel Lawrence  
 William Lacey, late keeper of Rising Chase  
 Ambrose Powlington (*these last 4 seem to be from N. Wootton*)  
 Jeffery Chesse(?) of Roydon  
 Jo. Hunt of Wolverton  
 Tho. Kinge of Congham.

*Next is from 1679 and is printed out rather than written in longhand.*

“A perambulation and view of the Bounds and Purlwe *crossed out and replaced with* Liberties of the Possessions of the Right Honourable Henry Lord Mowbray, Earl of Arrundel, Son and Heir apparent of the most Noble Henry Duke of Norfolk, as it was taken and subscribed by John Benner Senior, Mayor of Ryseing, Matthew Bolton, Rector of Ryseing, Edmund Hammond Vicar of North-Wootton, Francis Negus Steward, Matthew Cuffaude Bayliff, Edmund Brown, Richard Hamond, Robert Bulwer, Thomas Haton, John Coftin, John Bennet junior, William Cage, Richard Bennet, Edmund Clarke, Thomas Jackson, Simon Wastney, Richard Heath, John Bloomfield, and Hugh Docking, the twenty fourth day of September, in the One and Thirtieth year of the Reign, of King Charles the Second, Annoq: Dom. 1679

From Babingley Bridge, on the south side that fresh River to Marham Point, thence on the Shoare to Mr. Thursby's Salt Coat Stowe near Lyn, thence upon Lyn old Bank to Gawood-Bridge, thence by the River to Bausey-Bridge, thence by the River which comes from Leziat by Childer-House-Carr to Leydon Thornes, thence the direct way by Mill-Hill to Read's Corner, thence to Broad-Gate Lane, thence to the two Lanes between Congham Wood and Bushy Close, thence to Homstone, thence to Hillington Foot-Bridge, thence to Gatton Water, thence through the Pack-way cross Fletcham Drove and cross Appleton Drove, the direct way to Wademoore Pit under the South-East corner of Sandringham-Park *Pales: thence the South side of Burss-Beck, through the Park\**, to the way leading from the lower part of West-Newton to Wolverton; thence by the way to Butlers-Cross; thence by the North side of Butlers-Close to the Green-Rush-Drove on the west side of Butlers Wood; thence through the said Drove to Babingley-Cross; thence cross Gil's three Acres to the Footway leading from Babingley Church towards Ryseing; thence through the said Foot-way to Babingley Bridge.”

\*Line omitted in the 1697 version.

The description of 1697 perambulation is identical to that of the 1679 one, with the omission of one line which seems to have been a result of mis-copying. Also some of the spelling is slightly different. This suggests that it was becoming something of a formality.

Accompanying the 1697 description is this introduction:-

“A perambulation and view of the Boundes and Purlwe of Ryseing Chase, in the County of Norfolk, parcel of the possessions of the Honourable Thomas Howard Esq.: as it was taken and subscribed by William Dodding, Mayor of Ryseing Mathew Bolton – Rector of Ryseing John Thorne Vicar of North Wootton Mathew Cufaude Bayliff Edmond Hamond Clerke Richard Hamond gent Edmund Browne gent John Miles John Robinson Joseph Dixon Thomas Sockett John Jackson Thomas Bone Charles Bayton gent John Baly William Dodding the younger Thomas Dodding Thomas Miles John Sockett Thomas Lewis John Pigion the younger - Jeremy Jones James Wiseman Charles Walddgrave William Goodale and John Burk, the fourteenth day of June in the Ninth year of the Reign of our Sovereign lord William the Third over England Annoq Dom 1697”

The final one is also recorded in Bradfer Lawrence as an appendix in his book.

Castle Rising Chase 1816

The following notice was stuck on the Church doors of the undermentioned Parishes on Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> Oct and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1816 by Thomas Lander and Henry Webster

“ Notice is hereby given, that the Boundaries of the Ancient Purlue of Castle Rising Chase, belonging to Richard Howard Esqr. Will be perambulated by his Gamekeepers and others, on Thursday and Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> days of Nov. next Castle Rising 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 1816.

Jas Bellamy Steward.

On the doors of the Churches of Castle Rising, Babingley, North Wootton, South Wootton, Gaywood, Lynn, Bawsey, Leziatt, Grimstone, Congham, Roydon, Hillington, Appleton, Fritcham, Sandringham, West Newton, Woolferton.

On Thursday the 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1816, the following persons proceeded to perambulate the Boundaries of the said Ancient Purlue of Castle Rising Chase, viz. – Thomas Lander Gamekeeper to Richard Howard Esq. – Henry Webster, Assistant Gamekeeper to Richard Howard Esq. – Frederic Taylor, Clerk to Messrs Girdlestone, Bellamy and Wing of Wisbech – Robert Greene Schoolmaster of Castle Rising – Henry Johnson of Castle rising – Burgess Clarke of North Wootton – and four youths – John Rackey of Castle Rising – Robert Johnson of Castle Rising – Robert Bennington of Castle Rising – and Callow Crake of North Wootton.

And they sett off from Babingley Bridge on the south side of Castle Rising River to Marsham alias Marsham Point – and thence by the shore to Thornsby Salt coat stow next Lynn – thence upon Lynn old Bank to Gaywood Bridge – thence by the River to Bawsey Bridge – thence by the River running from Leziatt by Childerhouse car to Leyden Thorns – thence the direct way to Mill Hill – thence to Read’s Corner – thence to Brodgate Lane – thence to the two Lanes twixt Congham Wood and Rushy Close – thence to Hanestone alias Blue Stone – and thence to Hillington Foot Bridge.

And on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1816 the said several persons continued the perambulation of the said Boundaries from Hillington Foot Bridge to Gatton Water –thence through the Packway cross Fritcham Drove, and cross Appleton Drove the direct way to Wademoor Pitt – thence round the South East corner of Sandringham Park, to the way leading to the lower part of West Newton to Woolferton – thence by the way to Butlers Cross – thence by the North side of Butlers Close to Green Rush Drove on the West Side of Butlers Wood – thence through the said Drove to Babingley Cross – thence cross Giles’s three acres to the footway leading from Babingley Church towards Rising – thence through the said Foot Path to Babingley Bridge.”

A note on the original written in another hand states. “Copied by Joseph Plowright about 1860 from the original in the possession of Robert Greene of Castle Rising.

The wording on this document is uncommonly similar to that of 1697, almost 120 years later. There were two cases where the new and old names were both mentioned “Marsham alias Marsham Point” and “Hanestone alias Blue Stone (*actually it was Homstone on the earlier one*), but it seems that the actual route description was a formality. Indeed the presence of the Clerk for what looks like a legal firm in Wisbech further encourages this view.

The route of the perambulation can mostly be followed by the clues provided from these various documents and are presented on Fig xx. I have indicated those bounds where I am certain of the route in continuous colour, and those parts where there is some ambiguity in dashed colour.

Several of the locations are identifiable to the present day. Some are unchanged (e.g. Babingley, Mill Hill, Congham Wood, West Newton and Butler’s Cross), others are changed but recognisable (e.g. Waveland Farm as **Weveling**, Chilver House as **Childerhouse**), yet others whose location can be confidently deduced even if the names are no longer on the present OS maps (Bawsey Bridge, Broadgate Lane, Mar(s)ham Point, Read’s Corner, Thornsby Salt Coat Stow and Appleton Drove) and finally some whose location is still a puzzle (Homstone, Boon’s Bridge, Babingley Cross, Wadmore Pit, Leydon Thorns and Green Rush Drove), but hopefully may be resolved by more research.

In summary, the Chase is broadly defined as that land between the Babingley and Bawsey Rivers, and stretching east about 7 miles from the sea coast, but the reality is somewhat more complex, notably with a major extension into Babingley, Sandringham and West Newton parishes to the north of the Babingley River. It is also not clear what determined the eastern boundary of the Chase. It does not follow any obvious parish boundary or physical feature.