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Butchered Bones, Carved Stones: Hunting and Social Change in Late Saxon England

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Butchered Bones, Carved Stones:

Hunting and Social Change in Late Saxon England

(TITLE)

BY

Shawn Hale

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Abstract

Textual, archaeological, and art historical evidence all point to a significant reorganization of Anglo-Saxon society in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Changes in landownership, the development of proto-urban centers, the growth of merchant and artisan classes, as well as the proliferation of occupations associated with royal and regional administration, collectively altered the Anglo-Saxon social order. This radical reorganization benefitted some groups of individuals and threatened others with decreased social standing. Established elites and the *nouvuae riche* utilized exclusionary measures to counter any degree of social mobility provided by economic and political changes.

Shifting hunting practices and perceptions are particularly emblematic of this sharpening social division. Assessing Late Saxon society through evidence linked to hunting demonstrates that many of the developments typically associated with the Norman Conquest began in the tenth and eleventh century. Late Saxon lords set aside woodland for hunting, built impressive fortified manorial centers, and established parishes where they erected commemorative stone sculpture. These arrangements promoted the growth of a new type of lordship, where landowners intensively managed their estates and expected very specific forms of commendation and service from their dependents.

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Introduction

Harold Harefoot assumed the English throne upon the death of his father, Cnut the Great, in 1035. According to the eleventh century text, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, Archbishop Æthelnoth refused to consecrate the young king, prompting Harold to turn his back on the church. When others “entered church to hear mass,” he “surrounded the glades with dogs for the chase, or occupied himself with any other utterly paltry matters.”¹ The author, who wrote the document under the commission of Harold’s step-mother, most likely mischaracterized Harold and was certainly wrong in describing hunting as a paltry matter. The sort of hunting Harold practiced was a profound social ritual which created and reinforced social boundaries. An analysis of this type of lordly hunting connects with significant Late Saxon economic and political developments. This thesis will argue that the social implications of hunting were radically altered in the Late Saxon period. As tenth and eleventh century economic advancements transformed Late Saxon society, the perceptions and practices of hunting became part of a package of exclusionary rituals utilized by wealthy landowners to display status and restrict access to resources.

An examination of Late Saxon hunting practices also validates trends in more recent scholarship that question the role of the Normans in bringing about so-called feudal institutions to England.² Social relationships surrounding the ownership of land and commendation became a prominent feature of Late Saxon society and hunting increasingly became entangled within these arrangements. The restructuring of

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¹ Alistair Campbell and Simon Keynes, translators, *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41.

² Hugh M. Thomas, *The Norman Conquest: England After William the Conqueror* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 72.

relationships around land management and service, however, was just one important development within a whole series of changes experienced by Late Saxon society. Many of these changes promoted a degree of social mobility. This mobility reflexively triggered a wave of social tension from landed lords, intent on maintaining societal division.

England in the ninth through eleventh centuries experienced the fragmentation of estates into more intensively managed manors. Agricultural surplus assisted the development of urban market centers and the promotion of long-distance trade. These factors encouraged substantial economic gains for those participating in the new economy. Seafaring merchants, agricultural specialists, artisans, and administrative and craft specialists serving the aristocracy all benefited from this environment, as did the growth of royal power. Certain established lords felt threatened by these gains and instituted mechanisms to secure their status. One of the preeminent strategies of securing one's position in Late Saxon society was through hunting. Hunting was used both by lords to demarcate social divisions and by lower ranking individuals attempting to climb the social ladder. While the Norman kings undoubtedly escalated the exclusivity associated with hunting and lordship, the origins for this behavior are firmly rooted in the preceding period.

The methodology employed here involves the discussion of three distinct forms of evidence, each analyzed with concepts borrowed from sociological theoretical lenses. The phenomenon of social closure, developed by Frank Parkin and Raymond Murphy, will be used alongside Pierre Bordieu's ideas regarding distinction. Social closure, referring to a process of domination whereby one group closes off opportunities and resources to outsiders, is a framework designed to understand power imbalances that

cannot be adequately explained through simple market analysis.³ While social closure refers to a broad and nuanced framework used to understand social divisions, the notion of exclusionary closure is of particular relevance here. Exclusionary closure, according to Parkin, “is the attempt by one group to secure for itself a privileged position at the expense of some other group through a process of subordination,” this is necessarily a “form of collective social action,” which results in a category of social ineligible.⁴ Social closure is a sociological framework but utilized by historians to make “particular social hierarchies intelligible.”⁵ Exclusionary closure provides a new way of looking at hunting evidence, revealing an entire package of practices and behaviors which reinforced social hierarchy.

Likewise, Bordieu’s notions of distinction illustrate how aesthetic choices reflect and reinforce social divisions. In other words, the activities, diet, and preferences of individuals can be seen as socially prearranged. While Bordieu’s work was concerned with 1960’s France, it has been employed by medievalists to explore how households transmit status.⁶ Bordieu, and even later medievalists, have access to a range of documentary records unavailable to early medieval historians. What the medieval records confirm, however, is a negotiated social order responding to economic and political change. Therefore issues of distinction presented in this thesis highlight the transmission of elite mores and practices uncovered in the archaeological record; namely, through diet

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³ Raymond Murphy, *Social Closure: The Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 10-11.

⁴ Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 45.

⁵ S. H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 327.

⁶ Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22.

and commemorative sculpture. Diet and sculptural trends, however, changed rapidly through time and carry important regional differences. Therefore ideas regarding distinction and social closure guide, not dominate, the discussion.

While theoretical models are tremendously useful in advancing historical research, empirical methods of inquiry remain essential. A handful of scholars have employed theoretical frameworks to explore Anglo-Saxon society but even fewer have assessed hunting and its social implications.⁷ All of the literature devoted to hunting in early medieval England is generally concerned with the Normans rather than the Anglo-Saxons. For both general and specific works on medieval hunting, such as Robin Oggins's *The Kings and their Hawks* and John Cummins's *The Hound and the Hawk*, the distinctions between Saxon and Norman hunting are not directly addressed. The Norman Conquest is a convenient caesura for Oggins in describing the evolution of falconry customs as materials pertaining to falconry are more abundant after 1066.⁸ Cummins's work operates on a grander scope; anecdotes of Anglo-Saxon hunting function more as a set of examples within a compendium of medieval practices. This work is more concerned with exploring the interconnected archetypes and symbols within the broad spectrum of medieval hunting habits.

A more representative work in emphasizing Norman contributions to English hunting practices is Marvin's *Hunting Law and Ritual in Medieval Literature*. This work describes a linear progression whereby hunting and woodland use transitioned from an egalitarian activity practiced by Germanic tribes in post-Roman England into one where

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⁷ David Hinton, *Gold and Gilt, Pots and Pins: Possessions and People in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

⁸ Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 50.

land and animals themselves became heavily restricted. Marvin emphasizes the Norman, Scandinavian and Carolingian contributions to English hunting. For Marvin, the Norman Conquest represents the real birth of hunting culture in England. In particular, the process of afforestation and the restriction of particular game animals constituted a “newly distinctive” hunting trope unseen in Anglo-Saxon England.⁹ Even those elements in Anglo-Saxon society which appear consistent with these Norman developments, such as Cnut’s hunting law which restricted the practice to landowners, is described as either a Scandinavian or Carolingian precedent. Marvin, without much use of Late Saxon evidence, argues that pre-Conquest hunting was available to men from all strata; animals and woodland were seen as *res nullius*, or the property of no one.

For Marvin, and to a much lesser degree Oggins and Cummins, the Norman invasion embodies a revolution in English hunting customs. The fact that laws, poetry, and treatises concerned with hunting proliferated during this period goes a long way in justifying these views. Fortunately, the works of Naomi Sykes address this question utilizing faunal remains. Her research utilizes zooarchaeological data from a wide range of excavations to determine if Norman hunting practices constituted a break in pre-existing Anglo-Saxon hunting practices. According to this research, the Norman Conquest escalated preexisting arrangements in Anglo-Saxon agriculture, economy, and hunting.¹⁰ The preference for hunting red deer with *par force de chiens*, for instance, was a Norman contribution to hunting. Increased consumption of wild game in the years after the Conquest must also be acknowledged. The state of the surviving bones of deer and waterfowl, however, indicate that the restricted nature of hunting was “already sown by

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⁹ William Perry Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 46.

¹⁰ Naomi Sykes, *The Norman Conquest: A Zooarchaeological Perspective* (Oxford: BAR, 2007), 69.

the Late Saxon period.”¹¹ If the Norman Conquest is inadequate in explaining the heightened relationship between hunting and lordship in the early medieval period, then how can it be explained? Asked differently, do changes in hunting practices indicate larger social changes? Sykes’s “Deer, Land, Knives and Halls” looks at the faunal data of earlier periods of Anglo-Saxon history to arrive at the conclusion that hunting’s associations with elite behavior intensified by the Late Saxon period.¹² Sykes’s research, however, is primarily zooarchaeological. She does not incorporate a great deal of textual and material evidence outside of unearthed bones.

In order to understand how and why hunting became especially entangled with elite identity in the Late Saxon period, the other phenomena which characterize the period must be understood. Of the extant works, none are as succinct or bold as Richard Hodges’s *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*. Hodges’s work is important due to the almost exclusive focus on archaeological evidence. *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement* is concerned with the breadth of Anglo-Saxon history but argues that the developments which occurred prior to the Conquest were on a scale equal to the Industrial Revolution.¹³ According to Hodges, wealth and landownership trumped kinship beginning in the Late Saxon period. Under this view, tenurial advances accommodated lords while still providing a sense of improvement in the lives of those working under them.¹⁴

Hodges’s arguments advance the notion that pre-Conquest English society was, for lack of a better word, feudal. This line of argumentation highlights two contentious

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¹¹ Ibid, 49, 69.

¹² Naomi Sykes, “Deer, Land, Knives and Halls: Social Change in Early Medieval England,” in *The Antiquaries Journal* 90 (Sept 2010), 183-7.

¹³ Richard Hodges *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement: Archaeology and the Beginnings of English Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 184-5.

¹⁴ Ibid, 195.

issues in medieval historiography, one concerned with feudalism and the other more specific to post-Conquest England. The utility of feudalism in understanding medieval society has been questioned by Susan Reynolds and Elizabeth Brown.¹⁵ Their contributions are noteworthy and highlight both the complexity and variety of medieval social relationships. Ganshof broadly defined feudalism as a set of obligatory relationships centered upon land tenure, military service and commendation.¹⁶ This broad arrangement is certainly present in the Late Saxon evidence. Another trend more specific to English medieval history advances the idea that ‘feudal’ elements were only enacted after the Norman Conquest. The notion that Anglo-Saxon society was comprised of “peasant proprietors” who tilled their own soil was advocated by Maitland and this view still has adherents today.¹⁷ The degree to which Late Saxon society was feudal provides an interesting parallel to the above discussion exploring how much Norman influence altered English hunting customs. Attributing social antagonism, either in the form of manorialism or restricted hunting rights, to the Normans is convenient. The idea that the Anglo-Saxons were a nation of free peasants subjected to feudalism by the Normans originated in the nationalistic and romantic histories of the nineteenth centuries.¹⁸

Manorialism did exist in the Late Saxon period and Hodges was not the first person to connect the changed redistribution and increased exploitation of land to rampant sociopolitical change. Both H.R. Loyn and W.G. Runciman argue that landholding changes prompted a remaking of English society, one that grew the economy

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¹⁵ See Susan Reynolds *Fiefs and Vassals* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Francois-Louis Ganshof *Feudalism*, translated by Philip Grierson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), xvi.

¹⁷ F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), 221.

¹⁸ Marjorie Chibnall, *The Debate on the Norman Conquest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 53.

and strengthened administrative institutions, national and regional lordship, as well as the church. Additionally, both authors describe a social reordering due to these landholding changes. For Loyn, changing inheritance customs, the availability of sellable land, and expected renders for landlords “created a new class called thegn.”¹⁹ These thegns were responsible for the creation of defensible manors, the collection of rents, and the maintenance of law and order. According to this view it was thegns who reordered society through the “territorialization” of England which connected “village, hundred, shire, and monarchy” through a line of hierarchy, bonding families to lords and lords to the king.²⁰

Runciman, while emphasizing the same “commendation and incipient manorialism” in the creation of a landed, thegnly class, characterizes this period as one of chaotic social mobility rather than one of social cohesion hinted at in Loyn’s quote.²¹ Pointing to the denigration of certain words denoting particular classes of men over time, such as the *ceorl*, a non-servile peasant who originally signaled a higher station in the Mid Saxon period, Runciman describes alterations to the social order. The key towards this movement was the replacement of the kinship model of land inheritance to one based on meritocracy.²² Rather than land being divided by multiple heirs it could be bought or sold. It was during the Late Saxon period, according to Old English tracts such as *Gepyncðo*, where property and material wealth became the primary indicator of status. Under the right circumstances a thegn could become a slave and a tenant farmer could

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¹⁹ H.R. Loyn, “*Gesiths and Thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the Seventh to the Tenth Century*,” *English Historical Review* 70, no. 277 (Oct. 1955), 542.

²⁰ H.R. Loyn. *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), 325.

²¹ W.G. Runciman, “Accelerating Social Mobility: The Case of Anglo-Saxon England,” *Past and Present* CIV (1984), 13.

²² *Ibid*, 16.

become a thegn. So while Runciman and Loyn disagree on the outcome, they agree that changes in landowning generated significant social changes. Arrangements centered on services in-kind shifted to a monetized economy based on taxation and rents.

The phenomenon of estate fragmentation fueled the economic growth of Late Saxon England. The traditional interpretation of Anglo-Saxon tenurial change was first described by Glanville Jones. Jones argued that Early Saxon tenure models centered upon large estates that were gradually broken down and fragmented beginning in the Late Saxon period. Recent scholarship has questioned this paradigm but nevertheless concedes that the haphazard fragmentation of estates was indeed an important element of Late Saxon society.²³ Estate fragmentation influenced the development of market centers. Market centers encouraged the use of regulated coinage, taxation, and by extension, the rule of law. Anglo-Saxon historians are also concerned with the cause of these developments: was it a gradual, integrated change or implemented top-down? Pauline Stafford's *Unification and Conquest*, which is primarily concerned with the emergence of a unified English kingdom in the tenth century, highlights the role of the aristocracy in bringing about the economic and political changes of Late Saxon England.²⁴ This view champions the role of the monarchy and aristocracy in preventing the Viking depredations of the ninth and tenth centuries through a series of public works campaigns consisting of fortified market centers, or burhs, which acted as defensible units and market centers.

Peasant and tenant farmers also played a role. Historians like David Dyer,

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²³ Dawn Hadley, "Multiple Estates and the Origins of the Manorial Structure of the Northern Danelaw," *Journal of Historical Geography* 22, no. 1 (1996), 3-4, 11-12. See also Tom Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Chester: Windgather, 2002).

²⁴ Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), v.

emphasize the ways peasant farmers vitalized the burhs and helped reshape Late Saxon social organization.²⁵ More recent scholarship, however, is more nuanced in highlighting the shared role that lords and tenants played in transforming Late Saxon society. Specifically, the works of Robin Fleming, Christopher Loveluck and Rosamond Faith have utilized archaeology in conjunction with written sources to illustrate how the actions of elites, tenant farmers, and seafaring merchants all collectively shaped Late Saxon societal developments.²⁶ Loveluck's *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages* thematically approaches the chronological maturation of rural, urban and merchant communities, emphasizing the agency of individuals fulfilling important local and regional roles in addition to the actions of the elite. The promotion of urban markets, for instance, is described as a "result of combined stimuli from both secular and ecclesiastic elites and merchant and artisan communities."²⁷ Robin Fleming's *Britain After Rome* similarly stresses the contributions of individuals from all strata of Saxon society. Fleming argues that the "aggregate of the actions" of individuals over generations was the primary agent in forming the political and social institutions of England in the medieval period.²⁸ The role of lordship, however, is emphasized in the "remarkable resurgence" that took place in the ninth to eleventh centuries.²⁹ After describing the evidence detailing the burgeoning urbanization of the tenth century, Fleming posits the question as to who was responsible. While acknowledging the role of tenant farmer

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²⁵ Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.), 68-70.

²⁶ Robin Fleming, "The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, edited by John Gillingham (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001), 1.

²⁷ Christopher Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages c. AD 600-1150* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25.

²⁸ Robin Fleming, *Britain After Rome: The Rise and Fall* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), xx.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 241.

collectives in spurring agricultural advancements, she ultimately attributes economic improvements and the growth of urban markets to the work of lords and landowners, who are admittedly much more visible in the historical record.³⁰

Tensions between social mobility and social stratification can be discerned in both Fleming and Loveluck's work. The archaeological evidence indicates a variety of new craft and artisan positions associated with emerging market centers, and the growth of "middling ranks" within rural agricultural centers.³¹ This social fluidity was counterbalanced by heightened profiles of consumption and ostentatious display at high status sites, illustrating the scale of control over resources by landed elite.³² This balance is perhaps more apparent in Rosamond Faith's *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, which questions the degree of manorialism present in Late Saxon England by highlighting different spheres of land management. Faith distinguishes between dependent and highly taxed 'inland' estates that were strictly supervised by lords and 'warland' that was maintained by smaller land-holders and free tenants whose level of commendation was less burdensome when compared to inland estates.³³ It must be noted, however, that Faith sees the widespread adoption of manorialism, with dependents providing commendation to landholders, as a fundamentally Norman development. Faith, however, disregards the famous tract on estate management, the *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*, at the expense of other documents and Domesday entries that are just as suspect. Faith utilizes archaeology to a limited extent but arrives at fundamentally

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³⁰ Robin Fleming, "Land Use and People," in *A Social History of England, 900-1200*, ed. Julia Crick and Elisabeth van Houts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

³¹ Loveluck, 274.

³² Ibid, 99.

³³ Rosamond Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 15-16, 89-90.

different conclusions than the other historians discussed thus far.

The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship takes a more complex and nuanced approach to older arguments which characterize the Saxo-Norman period as a slow struggle between the generally free Anglo-Saxon peasantry and the Norman overlords. This narrative maintains that the Saxons progressively lost rights and independence while some areas, particularly those formerly under Anglo-Scandinavian control, were able to retain certain freedoms.³⁴ The strengths of Faith's arguments lie in highlighting the visibility of the free peasantry, particularly in their right to serve in the *fyrð*, or local militia.³⁵ These peasants, however, were still subject to owners of estate centers and legally owed service to a lord. An analysis of these lords highlight their enormous wealth and influence; drawing interesting comparisons to the elite social mores of their Norman counterparts. Ann Williams's *The World Before Domesday* maintains that Late Saxon lords were infinitely closer to Norman aristocrats than to their seventh and eighth century predecessors.³⁶ Williams attempts to detail the English aristocracy "in their prime," within the tenth and eleventh century; the scope of the work describes the dynamics involved in shaping and maintaining aristocratic society from the highest ranking earls to the lower, minor thegns.³⁷ By emphasizing the changes to the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy, Williams demonstrates the dramatic social tensions of Late Saxon society, where the commendation of dependents propped up a class of landowners increasingly concerned with competitively demonstrating their status. It is unsurprising that she ends her work detailing hunting and feasting.

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³⁴ Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England: Third Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 470-1.

³⁵ Faith, 95-8.

³⁶ Ann Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900-1600* (London: Continuum Books, 2008), vii.

³⁷ *Ibid*, ix.

Hunting provides a unique perspective in examining issues of social fluidity and tension that is evident in the wide array of evidence. The first chapter will explore all of the documentary evidence relating to Late-Saxon hunting practices. Documents concerned with ownership rights and commendation reveal how hunting was utilized by elites to create and maintain social divisions even while new occupational roles became available as a result of the increased association with hunting and landownership. Additionally, the blood sport's proximity to warfare and sanctioned violence, in addition to its associations with leisure and feasting, provide insightful discussion regarding the changing social environment for elite men in pre-Conquest England.

Bones of wild game and hunting animals reveal an additional dimension to the textual sources. The second chapter will explore the faunal analyses of excavation reports to ascertain changes in the elite diet. The character of individual sites will be discussed in order to uncover any geographic distinction behind hunting practices and wild resource exploitation. The data also illustrates dietary trends and illuminates the character of different settlements. Comparisons of this data to the food registers of previous and succeeding periods provides valuable insights regarding the degree of stratification present in Late Saxon society. Faunal data also elucidates how hunting was utilized by a particular class to express their power over resources.

Examining the geographic and regional variances in excavated sites leads to the final discussion of this project, the phenomenon of stone sculpture in tenth century northern England. A large number of stone monuments featuring hunting iconography are found in lands most impacted by Scandinavian assimilation. Sculptural depictions of hunting demonstrate the Anglo-Scandinavian impact on Insular art as well as the unique

structure of lordship that thrived in areas where sculpture is present. The frequency and distribution of sculpture also demonstrates the changing nature of lordship in the northern English kingdom of Northumbria, in addition to the unique character of the northern church. Moreover, compared to the nature of the first two sets of evidence, the sculptural corpus provides a unique window into Late Saxon social change within a specific regional context.

Chapter One:

“Hunting in Wood and Field on His Own Land”: The Documentary Sources

Alfred and Cnut both share ‘the Great’ moniker for opposite reasons. Alfred reversed the tide of the Viking invasions in the late ninth century and established the foundations of Wessex hegemony that gradually unified England. Cnut severed this hegemony and placed England at the heart of a North Sea empire. In their enthusiasm for hunting, however, the two rulers were as one. According to his ninth century biographer, the two key pillars of young Alfred’s education were the memorization of Saxon poems and mastering “hunting and all its branches.”³⁸ Cnut is the originator of forest law, prohibiting hunting on royal property in addition to making land ownership a prerequisite to hunt.³⁹ While both of these kings were separated by generations and came from different dynastic lines, they reveal the centrality of hunting in royal circles prior to the Conquest.

Cnut and Alfred’s contributions to hunting culture illuminate two significant social developments in Late Saxon England. Alfred’s hunting education confirms the connections between hunting and elite behavior. This form of hunting was an integral part of elite social custom and required the coordination of people, animals, and commendation renders. Cnut, meanwhile, codified restrictions to hunting based on land ownership. This chapter will provide an exploration of the documentary sources in relation to these two issues. The first portion of this chapter will explore the causes and effects of tenurial change as it is presented within the documentary evidence and

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³⁸ Albert S. Cook, trans., *Asser’s Life of King Alfred* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1904), 14.

³⁹ Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* (London: Methuen, 1979), 467. The debate over the authenticity of this law is explored later in the paper.

articulated in other research. While some background information on landowning customs is required, the bulk of the considered evidence relates how changes in land ownership and inheritance impacted hunting practices. The second portion discusses how these changes encouraged aristocratic social mores and certain commendation customs. Through such an examination hunting can be seen as an exclusionary ritual used by established landowners, lords, and those who benefitted the most from the new economic order. Finally, such a discussion reveals technical aspects of Late Saxon hunting practices and customs.

Hunting and Land Ownership

According to Alfred's preface of St. Augustine's *Soliloquies*, gaining possession of owned land from one's lord to "hawk and hunt," was the hope of "every man."⁴⁰ The relationship between landownership, lordship, and hunting flourished in the Late Saxon period but hunting held significance in elite circles long prior. Bede describes how Early Saxons were required to hunt after Roman departure left the land "destitute," but this was a gross exaggeration.⁴¹ Specific mentions of hunting grounds in Anglo-Saxon charters, however, only become frequent in the tenth century. Across the English Channel, royal hunting preserves in the Frankish kingdom occurred as early as the seventh century.⁴² Indeed, one of the earliest mentions of hunting in an Anglo-Saxon context can be found in the correspondences of an Anglo-Saxon missionary to the Continent. Boniface wrote

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⁴⁰ F.M. Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 62.

⁴¹ Judith McClure and Roger Collins, editors, *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 24.

⁴² Della Hooke, "Pre-Conquest Woodland: Its Distribution and Usage," in *Agricultural History Review* 37, no. 2 (1989), 125.

to Æthelbald of Mercia offering “a hawk and two falcons, two shields and two lances.”⁴³ Shortly afterwards, King Æthelbert of Kent requested Boniface procure two falcons “to capture cranes.”⁴⁴ Eighth century charters from Mercia free specific estates from hunting services. Ceowulf granted land to an Archbishop Wulfred that was “free... from all servitude in secular affairs, from entertainment of... keepers of dogs, horses, or hawks.”⁴⁵ This charter contains the earliest evidence linking hunting and commendation as it is deduced that prior to the charter the estate in question was expected to provide for the king’s hunting retinue.

Some forested regions in the Late Saxon period experienced a degree of reforestation. This is surprising given the overall pressures on land from population growth, urban development and estate fragmentation. Day suggested a tenth century date for the reforestation of Sidlings Copse, Oxfordshire.⁴⁶ Similarly, excavations at Shakenoak Farm, in Oxfordshire, suggest the site reverted to woodland sometime in the eighth or ninth century.⁴⁷ Whittlewood Forest in Northamptonshire is another example of Late Saxon regeneration of woodland. An inquiry into the settlement pattern of the region suggests that woodland “influenced the creation of a complex pattern of territories,” following the “break up of an unknown number,” of large estates into fragmented manors, sometime in the tenth century.⁴⁸ Reforestation is also glimpsed in a tenth century charter granting privileges and restoration of land in Worcestershire. This charter

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⁴³ Ephraim Emerton, trans., *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (Columbia University Press, 2000), 101.

⁴⁴ Oggins, 38.

⁴⁵ Whitelock, 474-5.

⁴⁶ S.P. Day, “Post-Glacial Vegetational History of the Oxford Region,” *New Phytologist* 119 (1991), 445.

⁴⁷ C.C. Brodribb, A.R. Hands and D.R. Walker, *Excavations at Shakenoak Farm, Near Wilcote, Oxfordshire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968-73), 158-9, 161.

⁴⁸ Richard Jones and Mark Page, “Characterizing Rural Settlement and Landscape: Whittlewood Forest in the Middle Ages,” *Medieval Archaeology* 47:1 (June 2003), 69.

references a certain boundary named *ympanleage*, or “the *léah* (forest) of the saplings,” indicating woodland regeneration between two estates.⁴⁹

The use of the Saxon term *haga*, plural *hagan*, within the charter evidence reinforces the notion that woodland often formed boundaries between newly crafted estates. Hooke’s analysis of *hagan* in the charters of Worcestershire and Berkshire has convincingly illustrated the possible meaning behind the word as well as its relationship to hunting. Translated as ‘hedge’ by prior scholars, Hooke, highlighted examples where these hedges served as boundary clauses between manors and parishes in forested regions.⁵⁰ Etymologically, the word appears to have a connection to hawthorn, or hawthorn hedges. While Latin tracts concealed the essence of the term by translating *haga* into *sepes/sepem*, or fence, the most accurate usage is under debate.⁵¹ The use of *haga* in the charters varies but appears more frequently in less developed regions where thick woodland was present. Hooke’s research found that half of the *hagan* of Worcester, for instance, occurred along the boundaries of what would become royal estates associated with the Norman royal forest of Malvern and near a later deer park.⁵²

To complicate matters, the usage of *haga* in the charters at times appears to indicate something more specific than a boundary. The early eleventh century will of a certain Thurstan granted the use of his woodland to his servants except for the “*derhage*” at Ongar.⁵³ This deer-*haga* was translated as ‘deer enclosure’ by Whitelock and in light of Hooke’s analyses on woodland terminologies within the charters and Domesday, this

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⁴⁹ Peter Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1968), 250. See also, Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature, Lore and Landscape* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), 126.

⁵⁰ Hooke, “Pre-Conquest Woodland,” 123.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 126.

⁵³ Dorothy Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 80-83.

translation seems accurate. The Domesday Book contains many illuminating *haga* entries, often written as *haia* or *haiae*. Both Crofton and Lingen in Shropshire contained *haga* for the “taking of roe deer.”⁵⁴ Weaverham, in Cheshire, moreover, recorded two such enclosures.⁵⁵ Liddiard’s examination of the use of *haga* within the Domesday Book maintains that Domesday recorders used different words to signify wooded regions and selectively reported them; the ambiguous nature of these recordings pose questions as to whether the deer park was purely a Norman invention.⁵⁶ Cheshire and Shropshire, for instance, were located in the fifth circuit of the Domesday inquest and recorded an extraordinary number of *hagan*. Cheshire alone held 104 enclosures, recorded as *haia* or *haiae*, and this has been attributed to the first Norman earl of Chester, Hugh D’Avranches, who held a renowned passion for hunting.⁵⁷

A tenth century charter references a “*þone hwitan hagan*,” or a white *haga*, at a site that will be thoroughly explored in the next chapter, Faccombe, Hampshire.⁵⁸ The referenced site clearly refers to an earthen bank, running along the southern boundary of the region, detected by the flint still visible in the surface soil. Hooke’s analysis of the Berkshire charters suggests that many *hagan*, like the white *haga* at Faccombe, refer to a wide earthen bank with accompanying ditches and perhaps even a palisade of branches.⁵⁹ Another mention of *hagan* can be found in a puzzling Domesday entry recording 51

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⁵⁴ Ann Williams and G.M. Grant, *The Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London: Penguin, 1992), 701,714.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 718.

⁵⁶ Robert Liddiard, “The Deer Parks of Domesday,” *Landscapes* 4:1 (April, 2003), 4-5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 14. For information regarding Hugh D’Avranches, see Marjorie Chibnall, trans., *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 262.

⁵⁸ Joseph Stevenson, editor, *Chronicon Monasterii De Abingdon, II* (London: Rolls Series, 1858), 317-21. See also, J.R. Fairbrother, *Faccombe Netherton: Excavations of a Saxon and Medieval Manorial Complex I* (London: British Museum Occasional Papers, 1990), 3.

⁵⁹ Hooke, “Pre-Conquest Woodland,” 128.

hagan in Newbury, Berkshire, assessed at twenty shilling, seven pence.⁶⁰

Haga could also refer to a geographical feature designed to either protect animals from predators or an enclosure which would appeal to prey but ultimately aid the hunter in capturing them. For instance, there was a “wolf *haga*” mentioned in Worcestershire.⁶¹ The 1086 inquest listing for Barland, Herefordshire, records that Hugh l’Asne held “a large wood,” containing *una haia*, where he “keeps what he can catch.”⁶² This Norman use of *hagan* provides yet another association between *haga* enclosures and later royal deer parks, which are often characterized as one of a series of feudal institutions brought over with the Normans in 1066, alongside castles, towns, and monasteries.⁶³

The evidence linking Anglo-Saxon *hagan* to later Norman deer parks is hard to ignore. The most famous example was the *derhage* in the above-mentioned 1045 will of Thurstan, in reference to Ongar in Essex. This site later became Ongar Great Park in the Norman period; the park and the *derhage* were likely one and the same. Ongar, however, is not an isolated example. The *hagan* hedges dividing woodland in Gloucestershire, for instance, became incorporated into a deer park at a later date.⁶⁴ These connections suggest that setting aside woodland for hunting was part of elite culture in Late Saxon society and not altogether different from the customs associated with the Normans. Faccombe Netherton was a royal Late Saxon hunting lodge and became the nucleus of the Forest of Chute in the Norman period.⁶⁵ Further examples include the *hagan* listed in a Worcestershire charter which later became a part of the deer park affiliated with Hanley

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⁶⁰ Williams and Martin, 51.

⁶¹ Della Hooke, “Royal Forests: Hunting and Other Forest Use in Medieval England,” in *New Perspectives on People and Forests*, edited by Eva Ritter and Dainis Dauktsa (New York: Springer, 2011.), 47.

⁶² Williams and Martin, 517.

⁶³ Marvin, 46.

⁶⁴ Della Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands* (Oxford: BAR, 1982), 236,245.

⁶⁵ Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England*, 143.

Castle.⁶⁶ Two additional *hagan* in Berkshire delineating boundaries in Late Saxon charters belonged to the later royal forests of Finkley and Dygherlye.⁶⁷ Baddiley, Cheshire, provides yet another example. In 1066 it was owned by one man and contained one *haga*; twenty years later it was granted to a tenant of Earl l'Avranch, and is recorded as a deer park in the sixteenth century.⁶⁸ Three *hagan* in the eastern county of Wiltshire lie within the Norman royal forest of Savernake, four more lie in the region that would later become the royal forests of Melksham, Chippenham and Selwood.⁶⁹

Connecting the *hagan* mentions of the Domesday Book to later deer parks is not an infallible method, but does illustrate that royal deer parks did not materialize entirely from Norman initiative.⁷⁰ This evidence also demonstrates the complexity of the term. Hooke demonstrated that many of the abraded earthen banks present in Berkshire and Hampshire lie in areas described as *hagan* in the Domesday inquest, reinforcing the manifold connotations of the term as they relate to both hunting and geographic boundaries.⁷¹ Sykes, meanwhile, describes *haga* as an enclosure, specifically for the purpose of obtaining particular animals.⁷² This view is reinforced through contemporary descriptions of hunting which discuss the use of nets in obtaining animals, discussed below.

Whether one is convinced that Anglo-Saxon *hagan* were geographical boundaries, transportable netting enclosures, or precursors to deer parks, they reflect many pertinent

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⁶⁶ Della Hooke, *Worcestershire Anglo-Saxon Charter Bounds* (Woodbridge, Sussex: Boydell Press, 1990), 247.

⁶⁷ Hooke, "Pre-Conquest Woodland," 127.

⁶⁸ Liddiard, 18.

⁶⁹ Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, 154-157.

⁷⁰ For a graphic illustrating the connection between Domesday *hagan* and Norman deer parks, see the map in Hooke, "Royal Forests: Hunting and Other Forest Use in Medieval England," 43.

⁷¹ Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, 157.

⁷² Naomi Sykes, "Origins of the English Deer Park," *Deer: The Journal of the British Deer Society* 15:3 (2009), 26.

issues to land ownership in Late Saxon England. First, the charters demonstrate that forests which had previously belonged to large estates were broken up, with many *hagan* serving as boundaries for woodland manors. Secondly, the heightened concern for woodland territory conveyed in the charters could be used alongside landscape archaeology to lend weight to the idea that a degree of reforestation occurred in the face of increasing pressures on land. Lastly, this concern over controlling woodland, manifested in the ownership of acreage and *hagan* in which to hunt, was linked to a developing social order where elites increasingly engaged in particular behaviors to reflect their status.

The collection of *haga* entries also illuminates the growth of prestige huntsmen experienced in the Late Saxon period. For instance, one *haga* is mentioned as a boundary to an estate called Crux Easton, in Hampshire. The land belonged to a huntsman by the name of Croch.⁷³ Croch's holdings included a large acreage of woodland and meadow. The inquest entry relays that some of the wood was used for fencing but given his occupation and the fact that the *haga* listed at Crux Easton served as a boundary that was later incorporated into a Norman deer park, it is likely the region was used similarly by the Late Saxons.⁷⁴ Additionally, Croch was listed as a chief tenant in the Hampshire records and is one of many *venatores* mentioned in the Domesday inquest.

Huntsmen like Croch are prime examples of the unique relationship between mobility and stratification in the new Late Saxon social order. Just as new roles for craft workers and artisans were needed to satisfy the growing urban market centers, specialized agricultural workers were needed to service smaller and more intensively

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⁷³ Ibid, 119.

⁷⁴ Hooke, "Royal Forests," 47.

managed estates, huntsmen were required to provide hunting service to landed lords. These hunters appear somewhat regularly in the Domesday records of the eleventh century. Hunters were often described as *taini regis*, or minor thegns, within charters and the Domesday. It has been observed that the holdings of these thegns resemble thirteenth century tenurial arrangements where small amounts of land were granted for a specific service.⁷⁵ Indeed, the huntsmen appear in the Domesday entries alongside falconers, goldsmiths, and similar occupations connected with royal administration and the needs of elite households.⁷⁶ These landed positions reflect the growth of new organizational administrative structures. Whereas prior generations of Anglo-Saxons utilized kin-based models of community, Late Saxon tenants were required by law to have a lord.⁷⁷ Early and Middle Saxon farmers may have owed service or a crop portion to a distant lord but Late Saxon communities increasingly owed very specific forms of commendation and service to landowners, who in turn provided military service to more powerful lords higher up the social ladder.

Huntsmen and falconers accounted for some of the ranks of minor thegns but they did not hold the monopoly on hunting. It can be deduced through the documentary evidence that hunting became a large and coordinated event designed for the lord's enjoyment. In many cases estates rendered hunting accoutrements to their lord as a form of service. Several estates in Bedfordshire, for instance, included renders related to dogs. Both Houghton Regis and Luton rendered "customary dues for the dogs," in addition to providing pack horses and cash payments.⁷⁸ Records for Cheltenham, Gloucestershire,

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⁷⁵ Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, 6.

⁷⁶ Ann Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, Essex: The Boydell Press, 1995), 113.

⁷⁷ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 417-9.

⁷⁸ Williams and Martin, 563.

reveal that the feeding of hunting hounds was part of the expected commendation when, “it rendered nine pounds, five shillings and 3,000 loaves for the hounds.”⁷⁹ Tenant farmers in Wiltshire were subjected to canine maintenance as part of their commendation. “Two and two” were responsible for the “feeding of one stag hound,” in addition to their coin-fee and labor.⁸⁰ Wiltshire also owed £10 each year for a hawk for the king, as did Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and the city of Leicester; Worcester additionally had the option of this same render or could substitute a Norway hawk.⁸¹ Northamptonshire, moreover, was required to spend £42 for dogs, £10 for a hawk, as well as £20 for a huntsman’s horse.⁸²

William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* indicates that after Alfred subdued the Northern Welsh they were required to pay Alfred a substantial annual sum, including “as many dogs as he chose,” for hunting as well as “birds which were trained to make a prey of other birds in the air.”⁸³ The city of Norwich was even charged with supplying a bear and six dogs for bear baiting!⁸⁴ Likewise, the Domesday Book records the punishments meted out for not meeting hunting renders. Berkshire men who refused summons to partake in the “heading off game in the hunt,” for instance, were fined fifty shillings.⁸⁵

These instances of hunting service and details surrounding the maintenance of hunting animals imply that aristocratic life was becoming more ostentatious in the ninth and tenth centuries. This trend is also observed in Late Saxon records of death dues, or *heriots*. Many included large numbers of valuable objects. *Heriots* also served as an indicator of status and it is unsurprising that they were linked to two elite male

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⁷⁹ Ibid, 447.

⁸⁰ William Henry Jones, editor, *Domesday for Wiltshire: Extracted from Accurate Copies of the Original* (London: Longman, 1865), ix.

⁸¹ Oggins, 39.

⁸² Williams and Martin, 589.

⁸³ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 281.

⁸⁴ Williams and Martin, 1058.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 137.

preoccupations: hunting and war. The Berkshire Domesday entries included the required *heriots* of Berkshire thegns. Weapons and horses were expected as payment to the crown. If “he possessed hounds or hawks,” they were presented to the king to see if he desired them.⁸⁶ The *heriots* of important individuals frequently reference hunting accoutrements within the surviving wills. Brihtric, a Kentish thegn, granted to the king as his *heriot*, “two hawks and all his staghounds.”⁸⁷

The increasingly conspicuous nature of elite *heriots* occurred contemporaneously alongside the use of hunting service as commendation. The eleventh century estate management tract, *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*, provides the best evidence of this fact. Thegns presiding over royal estates were charged with “maintaining the deer fence at the king’s residence... performing coast-watch, bodyguard duty, and military watch.”⁸⁸ Below thegns, dependent vassals known as *geneat* were required to “to cut deer fences, to maintain hunting-blinds.”⁸⁹ The picture of deer fences and hunting blinds provided by the *Rectitudines* reinforces Sykes’s belief that *hagan* could refer to transportable enclosures. Whereas many of the charters refer to *hagan* or *haiae*, the *Rectitudines* utilizes *deorhege*, or deer-hedge.

One step down the social ladder was the *gebur*, or peasant, who was charged with feeding hunting dogs. Cottagers were also charged with the maintenance of ‘deer hedges’ although the exact meaning of this render is debated. The cottagers were expected to “*werige...cyniges deorhege*.” *Werige*, coming from the word *werian*, has been translated

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⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 27.

⁸⁸ S. Jay Lemanski, “The *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*: Anglo-Saxon Landscapes in Transition,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Akron, 2005), xxxii.

⁸⁹ Lemanski, xxxii.

in a variety of ways and denotes being wary, to grow weary, or to defend. Other translators have taken the meaning ‘to serve,’ while Lemanski has taken *werian* to “be understood as insuring and protecting the lord’s right over his *inland* [or, the lord’s field] by performing the services due from it in his stead.”⁹⁰

The hunting commendations mentioned in the *Rectitudines* reveal that hunting service was just another part of commendation by the Late Saxon period. Thegns were required to maintain *hagan* and hunt with the king. Cottagers and dependents were expected to feed hunting dogs, maintain hedging, and supply deer blinds. The charters, moreover, indicate that the maintenance of hunting enclosures and the provisioning of hunting animals were expected forms of rent. What rounds out this picture is that certain elites, primarily wealthy ecclesiastical houses, were able to buy their way out of these renders.

Archbishop Wulfred’s ninth century charter, exempting him from the entertainment of “keepers of dogs, or horses, or hawks,” has been noted above. Edward the Elder granted immunity from putting up the king’s horses, hounds, falcons and hunting men to Bishop Denewulf and his *familia* in a grant for Taunton in exchange for other lands.⁹¹ This charter stated that the monastery had previously provisioned the king and his hunting retinue, including keepers of hounds and hawks, for a period of eight or nine days.⁹² An additional ninth century bishop of Worcester, Ealhhun, or Ahlwine, was freed “from the feeding and maintenance of all hawks and falcons...all huntsman of the

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⁹⁰ Ibid, xlvii.

⁹¹ This charter has been deemed inauthentic by some, see Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 162; Stevenson, *Asser’s Life of King Alfred*, 192.

⁹² Oggins, 39.

king or ealdorman,” in return for a large amount of silver.⁹³

The beginning of this chapter highlighted Cnut’s forestry laws which stipulated that hunting could only take place on privately owned property and never on royal lands. It should be noted that the authenticity of this law has been questioned by Liebermann, on grounds that the surviving sources of Cnut’s law derived from Norman clerics and included material unseen in the previous law codes of Saxon kings.⁹⁴ Patrick Wormald, however, convincingly illustrates that Cnut’s laws borrowed heavily from the laws of Æthelred, whose ecclesiastical codes survived but secular codes did not. These secular codes most likely, “sunk without a trace,” into the laws of Cnut.⁹⁵

If Cnut’s hunting law is authentic, it demonstrates that Late Saxon hunting was not an endeavor available to all strata of men. A tenth century letter of Bishop Oswald to King Edgar verifies the view that Late Saxon hunting practices were acutely stratified. The charter discloses a condition within Worcester leases that promise certain “riding men” would be available to supply “all the needs of the bishop,” including “deer hedges for the bishop’s hunting,” as well as sending “hunting spears into the chase whenever the lord bishop wishes.”⁹⁶ Bishop Oswald’s letter and Cnut’s law suggest that the only experience lower ranking individuals had with hunting was through hunting service to a higher lord.

Economic and political developments helped some individuals advance their station in life but stratification and hierarchy was still a dominant force in Late Saxon

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⁹³ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 487.

⁹⁴ Felix Liebermann, *Über Pseudo-Cnuts Constitutiones De Foresta* (Halle, Saxony-Anhalt: Max Niemeyer, 1894), 1-2.

⁹⁵ Patrick Wormald, “Æthelred the Lawmaker,” in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, edited by David Hill. (Oxford: BAR Series, 1978), 59.

⁹⁶ Lesley Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, Essex: The Boydell Press, 1996), 303.

society. There is evidence of a wider range of individuals accumulating status objects and acquiring new occupational roles.⁹⁷ Land, however, was the benchmark separating high and low-ranking thegns. An eleventh century document on status, the *Nordeoda laga* reinforces this notion: “and even if he [a *ceorl*, the lowest class of freedman] prospers so that he possesses a helmet and a coat of mail and a gold-plated sword, if he has not the land, he is a *ceorl* all the same.”⁹⁸ Some of these tenant farmers, artisans and merchants who took on administrative roles accrued land, but were distinguished from elite thegns, aristocrats, and nobles who went to great lengths to display their higher social standing.

Malcolm Godden has demonstrated the semantic shift of the word *rice*. The Old English word originally denoted ‘power’ or ‘powerful’ but by the Late Saxon period simply meant ‘rich’.⁹⁹ The wills and *heriots* of the aristocracy contain increasingly large and opulent weapons and finery while the charters bespeak of geographically disparate estates in rural, urban, and industrial contexts owned by single individuals. Individuals such as Morcar of Derbyshire and Godwin of Wessex were able to utilize social alliances, entrepreneurial strategies, and intimidation tactics to accumulate tremendous wealth and large number of estates within a generation. Godwin’s son continued his father’s success and became the wealthiest individual in England before being crowned king himself in 1066.¹⁰⁰

The careers of Godwin and Morcar were linked to the invasions of Svein Forkbeard and the eventual conquest of England by Svein’s son, Cnut. Morcar is thought

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⁹⁷ Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 98-105.

⁹⁸ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 433.

⁹⁹ Malcom Godden, “Money, Power and Morality in Late Saxon England,” *Anglo-Saxon England* XIX (1999), 48-50.

¹⁰⁰ Robin Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 63-72.

to have been killed for his support of Svein while Godwin became the most influential earl in England due to his relationship with Cnut.¹⁰¹ These wars irrevocably altered the aristocracy and Saxon society. Laws pertaining to widows, for instance, increased during the reign of Cnut.¹⁰² The 1016 entry for the battle at *Assandun* records a large list of elite killed in the battle, stating, “all the nobility of England was there destroyed.”¹⁰³ Lords and thegns were responsible for providing fighting men, so it is unsurprising many elites perished during these wars. Cnut was also eager to rid his kingdom of any potential resistance and so deposed and replaced the aristocracy with those loyal to him. This destruction debilitated the network of powerful families who buttressed the reigns of previous Wessex kings, weakening the English resolve in the face future invasions.¹⁰⁴

These wars fundamentally altered the highest echelons of Saxon society but economic gains continued to be made. Tenth and eleventh century lords built large fortified halls that housed specialized craft and agricultural workers. Many built or refounded proprietary churches, some of monumental size.¹⁰⁵ Charters reveal a slight downturn of ecclesiastical giving by the monarchy and the high aristocracy. Regional elite, however, increased their patronage, building relationships with local parishes to augment their standing and authority.¹⁰⁶

Throughout the process of unification in the tenth century, and the disruption and consolidation of state powers by Cnut in the eleventh, a new administrative apparatus was

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¹⁰¹ Linda Tollerton, *Wills and Will-Making in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, Essex: The Boydell Press, 2011), 103.

¹⁰² Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 429.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 227.

¹⁰⁴ Robin Fleming, *Kings and Lords*, xxiii.

¹⁰⁵ Fleming, “The New Wealth,” 9-13.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Wareham, *Lords and Communities in Early Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, Sussex: The Boydell Press, 2005), 122-3.

needed to collect taxes, administer the king's justice, regulate currency and raise *fyrð* when needed. These duties belonged to reeves, sheriffs, and men who served high ranking earls. Many of these new administrative roles exhibited a significant degree of influence. The Domesday even mentions one Herefordshire reeve who provided "18 orae of pence" on the "arrival of his lady," so that "she would be well disposed."¹⁰⁷ These issues of increased wealth, heightened concern for the display of status, competitive consumption, and the emulation of elite practices by aspiring thegns were all connected to hunting.

Hunting and Elite Behavior in the Documentary Sources

Ælfric's Colloquy provides a technical account of Late Saxon hunting. The document, composed by the tenth century abbot Ælfric of Eynsham, was intended to aid young clerics in their mastery of Latin. The format is question and answer with the narrator fielding questions to individuals of various occupations. The dialogue with the huntsman is particularly revealing and reinforces Sykes's view that *hagan* were movable structures, "I weave myself nets and set them in a suitable place, and urge on my dogs so that they chase the wild animals until they come into the nets unawares and are thus ensnared; and I kill them in the nets."¹⁰⁸ The huntsman mentions deer, boar, bear, goats and hare. A net was not always necessary. Ælfric's huntsman owned hounds that could overcome the animal or drive the quarry towards him whereupon he dispatched the animal himself.¹⁰⁹ The spear is the weapon most often depicted in the sculptural images of hunting, discussed in the third chapter, alongside a long, single-sided knife known as a

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¹⁰⁷ Williams and Martin, 495.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Swanton, trans., *Anglo-Saxon Prose*. (London: Everyman, 1981), 170.

¹⁰⁹ Watkins, 5.

seax. Many seaxes exhibit elaborate blades and are recovered as elite grave goods in seventh and eighth century finds.¹¹⁰ The stylized blades suggest that seaxes may have even served a ceremonial function, possibly for the harvesting of deer.¹¹¹

The methods described by the huntsmen are candid and reveal the sort of violence connected with hunting. Hunting provided certain male thegns access to a particular form of sanctioned violence increasingly limited to a demographic of landowning males. This sort of ritualized violence can even be seen as an effective peace time exercise practiced by the very same folks charged with raising armies and defending borders. These individuals demonstrated their status through the ownership of expensive tools, hawks, hounds and weaponry.

A ninth century charter concerning a monastery at Blockley reiterates the connection between warfare and hunting. The document freed the recipient from the obligation of feeding and maintaining huntsmen, hawks and falcons, as well as “the feeding and maintenance of those men whom we call in Saxon ‘*Walhfaereld*’ ...and all mounted men.”¹¹² Whitelock argued *Walhfaereld* meant ‘Welsh expedition’ and supposed it related to a patrol group or an envoy.¹¹³ Other translators used “military company on Welsh duty,” seeing a resemblance for a later *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reference to a Saxon massacre by the Welsh near Westbury.¹¹⁴ Whether one chooses to think of the *Wahlfaereld* as an envoy or military band, they were linked to huntsmen due to their shared connections with violence and lordship.

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¹¹⁰ Hinton, 70.

¹¹¹ D.A. Gale, “The Seax,” in *Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by Sonia Chadwick Hawkes (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 1989), 71-83.

¹¹² Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 486.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ David Hill, “Mercians: Dwellers on the Boundary,” in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, edited by Michelle Brown and Carol A. Farr (London: Continuum, 2001), 182.

The Old English poem, “The Battle of Maldon,” also describes the relationship between hunting, military violence, and aristocratic behavior. The poem chronicles the defeat of an Essex ealdormen and his *fyrð* at Maldon by an army of Vikings. In the poem, after Ealdorman Byrhtnoth ordered his soldiers to prepare for battle, an unnamed “kinsman of Offa,” readied himself ceremoniously by letting “fly from his hands his favorite hawk off to the woods,” this act signaled “the young warrior would not weaken at battle, when he took up his weapons.”¹¹⁵ The young nobleman was not only releasing a prized status item but setting aside one apparatus of sanctioned violence for another, freeing the hawk and brandishing sword and spear. While both the weapon and the bird represented prestige and access to violence, one represented an item of leisure and the other a military obligation.

John of Worcester described an incident linking hunting and human violence in his *Chronicon ex Chronicis*. According to this source the Mercian ealdorman Eadric *Streona* invited his Northumbrian counterpart, Ælfhelm to a feast at Shrewsbury on the pretext of attending a royal hunt. During this hunt Eadric had someone lie in wait for Ælfhelm and murder him.¹¹⁶ Hunting was dangerous even without conspiratorial plots. There are a few instances where later Norman kings died, such as William’s son Richard, during a hunt.¹¹⁷

The centrality of hunting and warfare in the elite male experience in early medieval England is also apparent in eleventh century diplomacy. Harold Godwineson, for instance, is depicted with a hawk on his arm and hunting dogs underfoot on the

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¹¹⁵ Liuzza, 104.

¹¹⁶ R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, editors, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester: Volume II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 458-9.

¹¹⁷ Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, 127.

Bayeux Tapestry. Oggins's narration of the tapestry demonstrates the significance of hunting animals in royal diplomacy:

“Harold is portrayed riding to Bosham with hounds and bearing a hawk.

The hawk and hounds are carried aboard a ship, and Harold sails across the Channel to France, where he is met by Count Guy of Ponthieu...

Harold and Guy, both carrying hawks...ride to meet Duke William.

Harold, in front but without a hawk, and William, carrying a hawk, then [they] follow the dogs back to the ducal palace at Rouen.”¹¹⁸

The Normans were thought to have brought a hunting culture to England, but the Bayeux Tapestry reveals a mutual appreciation of hunting as it related to lordship. The leaders of both nations understood hunting's exclusionary connotations of status, power, and violence. Regarding falconry and deer hunting, many of the elements associated with the Conquest are also found in Late Saxon sources. Ann Williams, for instance, has stressed the frequency with which dogs and horses are included in references to hunting, suggesting the *chase par force*, so commonly thought of as Norman, was indeed practiced by Late Saxon hunters.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Harold's love of falconry is made evident through a reference to a missing text, “the books of Harold” in a twelfth century hawking treatise, thought to have been collected or composed by the last Saxon king.¹²⁰ Harold and William first met each other in friendship with the diplomatic exchange of hunting animals; their second meeting was the military contest over who would rule England. These meetings mirror the two primary occupations of elite men in early medieval Europe.

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¹¹⁸ Oggins, 47-8.

¹¹⁹ Ann Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, 127.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 130.



Image 1:1

Bayeux Tapestry

Hawks and hounds
being loaded for
transport to
Normandy.

Image by F.R.
Fawke, 1875.

The *Bayeux Tapestry* provides visual evidence linking hunting with royal behavior but this arrangement was forged much earlier. Asser's biography of Alfred relates that he was "a zealous practitioner of hunting in all its branches, and followed the chase with all assiduity and success; for his skill and good fortune in this art...were beyond those of everyone else."¹²¹ Even amidst Alfred's famed defense of Wessex, during the "invasions of the heathen...[he] continued to carry on government, and to practice hunting in all its branches, to teach his...falconers, hawkers and dog-keepers."¹²² Alfred's regard for hunting was passed on to his sons. Rather than being raised and educated at court like Alfred's other progeny, Æthelweard, Alfred's youngest son, was taught Latin and Saxon "before he had strength for the manly pursuit of hunting, and similar occupations suitable for the nobility."¹²³ In the *Vita Edwardi Regis*, an eleventh century work commissioned by the wife of Edward the Confessor, we learn that, "with the kingdom made safe on all sides...kindly King Edward passed his time in the glades and woods in the pleasures of hunting."¹²⁴ After his daily church service, Edward "took

¹²¹ Cook, 14.

¹²² Ibid, 38.

¹²³ Ibid, 38.

¹²⁴ Frank Barlow, trans., *The Life of King Edward* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), 40.

much pleasure in hawks and birds...which were brought before him, and was really delighted by the baying and scrambling of the hounds.”¹²⁵ To many Late Saxon kings and lords, hunting went hand-in-hand with governance. Ealdorman Æthelwine’s lodge in Upwood, Huntingdonshire, contained a hall and receiving area so he could hawk and hunt in nearby woodlands and still hold court.¹²⁶

As the strength of monarchial powers increased in Late Saxon England, an element of ‘divine right’ is detected in sources pertaining to lordly hunting. Alfred was purportedly cured of a malady after stopping to pray during a hunt.¹²⁷ Also, the *Vita Sancti Dunstani* describes how King Edmund nearly fell off a precipice pursuing a stag near Cheddar. This near death experience elicited an epiphany, prompting Edmund to recall Saint Dunstan from exile.¹²⁸ The hunting of Edmund, Alfred, and the other Late Saxon kings represents the pinnacle of male elite social behavior in Late Saxon England. Extravagant hunting retinues and the maintenance of hunting animals required the aid of full-time huntsmen and falconers. Access to elite circles and the ability to participate in blood sport not only elevated the status of these individuals but also benefitted them materially. The Hampshire holdings of Croch the huntsmen have already been mentioned but there are considerably more *venatores* listed as officers of great landholders within Domesday Book. Another Hampshire huntsman named Waleran owned several manors in conjunction with estates in Wiltshire and Dorset in addition to holding lands belonging to the abbey of St. Peter of Winchester.¹²⁹ Cola the huntsman held an unknown manor in

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¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Williams, *World Before Domesday*, 129.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 35-6.

¹²⁸ William Stubbs, editor, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: Longman and Co., 1874), 269-70.

¹²⁹ Williams and Martin, 116-7.

Hampshire named Langley, likely the present-day Colbury.¹³⁰ Cola is also named as the owner of additional manors but the Langley listing records the name of his father, Wulfgeat, who was also a huntsman and owned property in Hampshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire.¹³¹ Two hides of land in the Kingsclere hundred were given to Edwin the huntsman as a gift by King Edward near the Somborne, where another huntsman named Wulfric held a manor.¹³² Alwine the huntsman held an estate of two hides at Pytchley for King Edward and after the Conquest this land came under the demesne of a Norman royal huntsman. By 1166, the owner of this land had to attend court wearing a hunting horn, reinforcing the similarity between Norman and Saxon conceptions of land tenure, hunting, and power.¹³³

Fowlers are also named as landowners in Domesday. Godwin the falconer, for instance, held half of a hide of land for the king in Basingstoke.¹³⁴ Of the other occupations listed in *Ælfric's Colloquy*: shepherds, fisherman, bakers and cooks, none are listed as substantial landowners within Domesday. As hunting was increasingly absorbed into the *habitus* of elite Anglo-Saxons, the role of the huntsman appreciated in status. Earlier charters prove that royal hunting retinues existed in the eighth century, but by the tenth century huntsmen were maintaining woodland acreage as well as game populations for elite use and becoming minor thegns in the process. It truly paid to be a huntsman in the Late Saxon period.

The concern for status and emulation of the elite diet also fostered the growth of hunters and fowlers not affiliated with lordly hunting. For instance, the fowler

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¹³⁰ Ibid, 124.

¹³¹ Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, 116.

¹³² Williams and Martin, 623.

¹³³ Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, 116-7.

¹³⁴ Williams and Martin, 124.

interviewed in *Ælfric's Colloquy* divulged the value of birds rather than any sort of elite protocol in relation to fowling. The fowler of the *Colloquy* specializes in “catching birds,” with nets, snares, decoys or with *hafocas*, hawks.¹³⁵ The narrator asks if he can have a hawk, to which the fowler agrees if the exchange includes “fast hounds.”¹³⁶ The fowler reveals, however, that, “in the winter they feed both themselves and me, but in the spring I set them free, they eat too much.”¹³⁷ This proves the fowler did not practice lordly hunting. Indeed, the narrator, in the voice of the well-to-do *Ælfric* asks him specifically of hawking, not falconry, and questions the fowler’s methods by pointing out, “many men feed their hawks in the summer to have them ready,” illustrating the distinction between elite falconry and hawking as a profession.¹³⁸ The fowler of the *Colloquy*, moreover, uses the birds to feed himself in the winter. Falconry was most commonly practiced in autumn, as evidenced by the eleventh century calendar present in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript.

Each month of the Cotton Tiberius calendar contains an image appropriate for the season. October’s scene consists of waterfowl and a crane on a body of water, with a fowler on either end of the image. Both fowlers dress differently than the farmers and laborers present in the images on other months. One is armed with a sword, the other is mounted on a horse, and both wear fine clothes adorned with tunics. Each man wields a bird of prey mounted on their arm. The standing man lifts his arm in the air, as if in the process of releasing his hawk or falcon.

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¹³⁵ G.N. Garmonsway, editor, *Ælfric's Colloquy* (Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 1978), 32.

¹³⁶ Watkins, 8.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

September's accompanying image depicts either the hunting of boar, or swine foraging in a wooded thicket. Hooke has argued that the image could be taken as a supervised group of swine pasturing in wildwood but acknowledges the ambiguity of the scene.¹³⁹ Sykes, however, identifies a hunting scene and this is the more compelling explanation.¹⁴⁰ A man dressed in attire similar to the falconers referenced in the October scene stands at the forefront of the image holding a spear. A man lacking a tunic stands behind him holding a horn to his lips with several dogs behind him on leashes. This scene could very well display the sort of hunt that is described in *Ælfric's Colloquy*.



Image 1.2

September image
in Cotton Tiberius
Calendar.

Drawing found in
Strutt, 1810.

The hunting evidence considered so far reveals both social mobility and social tension in Late Saxon England. The fowler and the huntsmen in the *Colloquy* represent two different types of hunting and their social implications. After inquiring what was done with his quarry, for instance, the huntsman responds: "Whatever I capture I give to the king, since I am his huntsman." In return, the huntsman receives clothes, food, horse and armor, so that he may "perform...duties as a hunter freely."¹⁴¹ For the *Colloquy* fowler, however, hawking was an occupation. The key difference between occupational

¹³⁹ Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, 164.

¹⁴⁰ Naomi Sykes, "Woods and Wild," in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed by Helena Hamerow, David Hinton and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 338.

¹⁴¹ Watkins, 6.

hunting and lordly hunting is the element of leisure, an important component of Late Saxon hunting. Marrus argued that one of the distinguishing features of the tenth century lifestyle of elite Europeans was “the indulgence of leisure practices.”¹⁴² The leisurely aspect of lordly hunting was, alongside the required service of dependents, part of the exclusionary mechanism of hunting. Financing the care and training of hunting animals and owning the necessary woodland to pursue prey made lordly hunting a sport few could practice. The Old English poem, “The Gifts of Men,” found in the *Exeter Book*, describes how the falconer “feeds in fetters the feather proud bird, with dainty morsels the dauntless soarer/ Until...Belled and tasseled, it obeys its master.”¹⁴³ The craftsmen, tenant farmers, and dependents of Saxon society, while at times responsible for procuring or maintaining hounds and birds, unlikely could afford the time to use such animals.

By the tenth century the wealthiest clerical leaders were, like their secular counterparts, also living a life of conspicuous consumption. New regulations appear, such as the *Northumbrian Priests Law*, which listed punishments for clergy who engaged in conspicuous consumption and drunken behavior.¹⁴⁴ King Edgar echoed this admonishment of the clergy: “Was it for this that the munificence of our kings conferred fields and possessions upon the churches of Christ? ...So that luxurious banquets might be prepared? So that dogs and birds and such toys might be bought?”¹⁴⁵ Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester purportedly forwent the consumption of wild goose after becoming carried away by the smell, deciding the temptation of such fine food did not fit a monastic

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¹⁴² Michael Marrus, *The Emergence of Leisure* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 7.

¹⁴³ J. Duncan Spaeth, ed., *Old English Poetry: Translations into Alliterative Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1921), 161.

¹⁴⁴ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 437.

¹⁴⁵ Oggins, 45.

lifestyle.¹⁴⁶

A discussion of the documentary evidence reveals that the dynamics of hunting changed alongside developments in land tenure and ownership. Domesday entries and charters indicate that landowners sought out wooded boundaries for hawking and hunting throughout the process of estate fragmentation. Moreover, the tenants working the land in these estates were increasingly expected to provide hunting services to lords. The wealthy thegn or high-ranking earl could afford woodland, huntsmen, and hunting animals. These accoutrements slowly became associated with the elite lifestyle. The *heriots* and charters confirm this process, with mentions of elaborate weaponry and hunting animals featured alongside *hagan* and hunting rights.

Landowning thegns and royal and regional aristocracy were also expected to serve militarily in defense of the realm. This access to sanctioned violence was mirrored in their access to hunting. Late Saxon charters providing endowments for churches routinely exempted them from the maintenance of hunting and military retinues. Meanwhile the most prized objects for diplomacy and status were hunting animals and weaponry. There were opportunities for individuals to advance within this reordering of Late Saxon society, however, and a large number of individuals who raised hawks or hounds and maintained hunting grounds enjoyed great success. This fact is corroborated by the number of landowning huntsmen and fowlers in the Domesday inquest.

The growing prestige of hunting in the tenth and eleventh centuries encouraged aspiring thegns and wealthy clergy to take up the practice. Individuals of lower rank turned to the market for wild game to emulate the elite diet. Hunting was just one aspect of conspicuous display but the consumption of wild animals was another avenue to

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¹⁴⁶ Williams, *World Before Domesday*, 132-3.

demonstrate status. To fully understand how diet informed and reflected the growing social changes of Late Saxon England, however, a discussion of faunal remains in Anglo-Saxon archaeological assemblages is required.

Chapter 2:

Wild Game Consumption in Late Saxon Society

In the tenth century poem, *The Wanderer*, the narrator bemoans his state of exile and fondly remembers happier days feasting in his lord's hall. After being excluded from the feasts he previously enjoyed, he laments, "all the joy has died."¹⁴⁷ The hall was an important social institution throughout the Anglo-Saxon period but its nature and function was never static. The previous chapter argued that hunting practices in Late Saxon England experienced profound changes associated with landownership and the transition from kinship models of social organization to one centered on lordship. One effect of these changes was the development of a landowning class who participated in competitive display. These individuals expressed their status through the accumulation of high status items and the consumption of certain foods.¹⁴⁸ Therefore the feasting hall experienced the same intense changes as hunting, transitioning from an institution of redistribution to one of exclusivity.

Gastropolitics has been defined as, "a conflict or competition over specific cultural or economic resources as it emerges in social transactions around food."¹⁴⁹ This concept has been used in more contemporary analyses but it is equally applicable in Late Saxon England. Archaeologists and anthropologists have developed increasingly nuanced methodologies in excavating and interpreting zooarchaeological data as it pertains to detecting the wealth and status of individual sites and their inhabitants.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, these studies illustrate principles first expressed by Bourdieu, that food systems are both

¹⁴⁷ R.M. Liuzza, trans., *The Wanderer*, in Black, 25-27.

¹⁴⁸ Senecal, 258.

¹⁴⁹ Arjun Appadurai, "Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia," *American Ethnologist* 8:3 (1981), 495.

¹⁵⁰ L. Antonio Curet and William J. Pestle, "Identifying High-Status Foods in the Archaeological Record," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 29 (2010), 413-431.

socially structured in addition to reinforcing the social order, or socially structuring.¹⁵¹

Zooarchaeology has also been increasingly used by historians in the last thirty years and a handful of Anglo-Saxonists have successfully employed zooarchaeological data to uncover a plethora of issues.¹⁵²

Anglo-Saxon sites have been excavated differently over time. The Late Saxon coastal trading site of Meols, for instance, yields a preponderance of high status items associated with the Irish Sea Viking communities of the tenth and eleventh centuries but uninteresting finds and bone data were discarded, undocumented, and haphazardly excavated.¹⁵³ Likewise factors such as differential disposal, biological and chemical processes relating to decomposition, as well as mechanical, animal, or weathering destruction, all present challenges in understanding the nature of a given site and its occupants.¹⁵⁴ Despite these reservations, an analysis of diet through faunal analyses corroborates the evidence presented in the first chapter.

Meat Consumption in Anglo-Saxon Society

A substantial body of literature is dedicated to extrapolating the Anglo-Saxon diet from the written sources.¹⁵⁵ Individual sites divulge the diet of their residents but only recently has this data been pooled together for a composite analysis. The research of Matilda Holmes involved the collection of 315 records from 241 sites, utilizing both

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¹⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6-10.

¹⁵² Pam Crabtree, "Animal Bodies as Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: The Zooarchaeological Evidence for Wool Production at Brandon," in *Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies: Animals as Material Culture in the Middle Ages*, edited by A. Pluskowski (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 161-9.

¹⁵³ David Griffiths, Robert A. Philpott and Geoff Egan, *Meols: The Archaeology of the North Wirral Coast* (Oxford: Institute of Archaeology, 2007), 24-5.

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth J. Reitz, "Vertebrate Fauna and Socioeconomic Status," in *Consumer Choice in Historical Archaeology*, edited by Suzanne M. Spencer-Wood (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), 102-3.

¹⁵⁵ Ann Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink* (Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2006).

published and unpublished reports, to uncover the Anglo-Saxon diet.¹⁵⁶ Holmes's site descriptors were either gleaned from the character of the excavated site or provided by the excavators themselves. While it is recognized that these typologies are somewhat limiting and ignore the complexity exhibited in many Late Saxon settlements, the collected faunal data is incredibly useful in observing broad trends in the Late Saxon diet.¹⁵⁷ It also provides glimpses into the consumption patterns of wild game.

Zooarchaeological data discredits Bede's assertion that hunting became a necessity after the Roman withdrawal of Britain. The vast majority of excavated bones belonged to domesticated animals. Wild taxa of mammals and birds represent a much smaller portion of the diet of Anglo-Saxons throughout the period.¹⁵⁸

Recent isotope studies illustrate that meat consumption was not only a regular part of the Anglo-Saxon diet but a significant source of protein.¹⁵⁹ Rural sites generally consumed sheep in larger quantities than less isolated regions, although beef appears to be the most commonly available domesticate throughout all site types.¹⁶⁰ Both cattle and caprines were valued not only for their meat but also their secondary products of milk, cheese, manure, and in the case of sheep, wool. Pigs were prized for their hardiness but did not provide the secondary products associated with other domesticates and are found more regularly at high status sites.¹⁶¹ The ages of harvested animals also illuminate the relative wealth of a given site. High status sites generally consumed younger animals

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¹⁵⁶ Matilda Holmes, *Animals in Saxon and Scandinavian England: Backbones of Economy and Society* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2014), 24.

¹⁵⁷ Loveluck, 361.

¹⁵⁸ Holmes, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Karen L. Privat, Tamsin O'Connell, and Michael Richards, "Stable Isotope Analysis of Human and Faunal Remains from the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Berinsfield, Oxfordshire: Dietary and Social Implications," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 29:7 (2002), 785. See also Holmes, 39-60.

¹⁶⁰ Holmes, 59-60.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 60.

while less wealthy sites typically harvested older animals once dairy production waned.¹⁶²

Social distinction is comparatively difficult to discern in the Early Saxon period. Sites displayed less wealth and variation in provisioning strategies and mortality profiles.¹⁶³ Exceptions include old Roman settlements, such as Wroxeter and Birdoswald, which were occupied by incoming Saxons in the late fifth and early sixth centuries and produced large amounts of pig and wild species remains.¹⁶⁴ Cattle bones outnumber the bones of all other animals in the Early Saxon period; reinforcing the notion that herd-size reflected the status of individuals.¹⁶⁵ Rank was demonstrated through the holding of extravagant feasts.¹⁶⁶ Feast remains comingle with general meal refuse at these sites and the recovery of wild animal bones reveals no recognizable pattern in distribution frequency. This arrangement perhaps reflects the fact that meals and hunting may have eased social distinctions at this time.¹⁶⁷

Evidence for social disparity among faunal remains becomes more evident in the Mid Saxon period. The use of collective feasts to relieve social tension was replaced by a system where status was discerned through species diversity and portion allotment. High-status secular and ecclesiastical sites display a wider range of species consumed than the previous era, including both fowl and freshwater fish. Red and roe deer remains in Mid Saxon contexts display inter-site variations not present in earlier periods, hinting that the

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¹⁶² Ibid, 67.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 83-99

¹⁶⁴ Fleming, *Britain After Rome*, 43, 45. Holmes, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Karl Brunner, "Continuity and Discontinuity of Roman Agricultural Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages," in *Agriculture in the Early Middle Ages*, edited by Del Sweeney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 28-9.

¹⁶⁶ Keith Dobney, Deborah Jaques, James Barrett and Cluny Johnstone, "Zooarchaeological Evidence for the Nature and Character of the Settlement," in *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats: The Environmental Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Flixborough* edited by Dobney, et al (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 237.

¹⁶⁷ Sykes, "Deer Land, Knives and Halls," 178, 185.

cutting up and distributing of hunted animals was based upon social standing. A wide range of wild species are found in what are perceived to be high status sites, and the faunal analyses indicate that deer portions were distributed according to rank, as evidenced by the distinctive number of humerii, radii, and ulnae of roe deer found in the Mid Saxon levels of St. Alban's Abbey, Hertfordshire.¹⁶⁸ An abundance of meat-bearing bones at ecclesiastical sites, combined with the recovery of heads and mandibles from high status sites, reveals an altogether unexplained system of meat distribution, perhaps comparable to other pastoral societies which distributed meat portions by rank.¹⁶⁹ Although the precise system remains unexplained, the data suggests hunting functioned as an exclusionary mechanism by the eighth century. It was not until the tenth century, however, that the social implications of hunting and diet demonstrated radical evolution.

The inter-site variation for deer bone finds disappears in Late Saxon deposits. High status tenth and eleventh century sites doubled their consumption of wild animals while rural game consumption was halved.¹⁷⁰ Aside from industrial sites utilizing antler for bone combs and other goods, large numbers of deer bones were only found in a limited number of locations.¹⁷¹ Wild animal remains recovered in meal refuse deposits, while taking up a small overall percentage of recovered animal bones at Late Saxon levels, are only found in large numbers at elaborate feasting halls associated with regional and royal aristocracy.¹⁷² Interestingly, consumption of domestic and wild birds became

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¹⁶⁸ Pam Crabtree, "Report on the Animal Bones from the Chapter House at St. Albans Abbey (Hertfordshire)" *Unpublished Report*, 2011, 26-7.

¹⁶⁹ Sykes, "Deer, Land, Knives and Halls," 179-80.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 184.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 185.

¹⁷² Certain industrial sites, such as Thetford, Norfolk, contain exceptional numbers of deer remains but these were undoubtedly used for industrial purposes such as bone-comb making. Craft-related bone fragments are not included in the table on pg. 47. See Andrew Rogerson and Carolyn Dallas, *Excavations in Thetford: 1948-59 and 1973-80* (Dereham, Norfolk: East Anglian Archaeology, 1984), 190, 199.

more commonplace at all site types during this period. This trend in fowl consumption either represents the pursuit of the aristocratic diet by lower ranking individuals or changed commodity perceptions of fowl.¹⁷³ As more individuals were able to consume domesticated birds, aristocrats required newer exclusionary dietary mechanisms to delineate status. Late Saxon high status sites exhibited tremendous species diversity regarding wild birds, and the individuals who inhabited these sites also consumed larger amounts of venison.

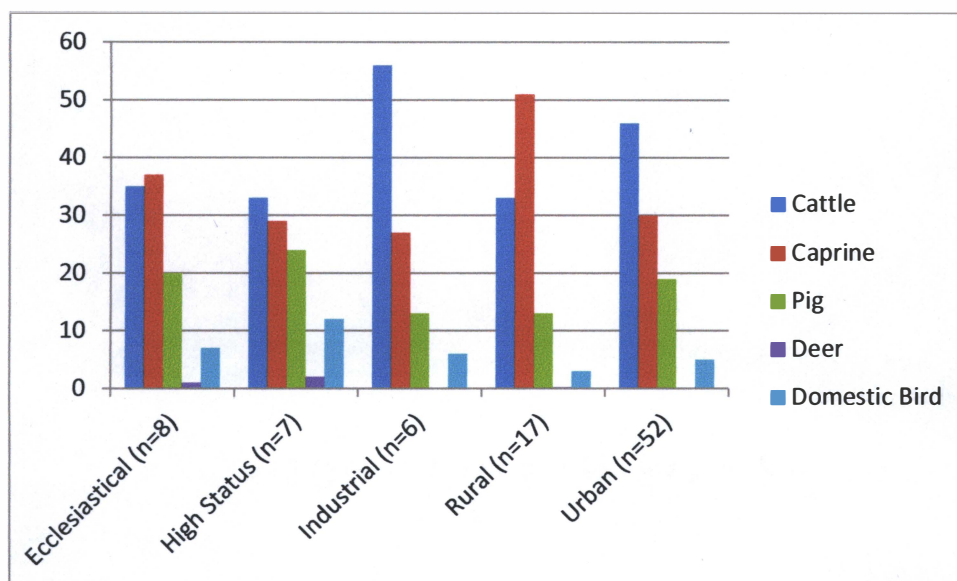


Table 2.1:
Percentage of
NISP in faunal
data at Late
Saxon sites.

N=number of
sites (total =90).

Table by author
utilizing data
from Holmes,
2014.

Faunal analyses record bone numbers in species ratios either based on the minimum number of individuals (MNI) or the number of identified species per taxon (NISP). Neither method is perfect. NISP counts can overlook bones that may have belonged to the same animal while MNI recordings have been criticized for producing overly conservative estimates, which exaggerate finds in smaller samples.¹⁷⁴ Different

¹⁷³ Holmes, 61-2. See also, Marijke van der Veen, "When is Food a Luxury?" *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2003), 43.

¹⁷⁴ Pam Crabtree, "Zooarchaeology and Complex Societies," *Archaeological Method and Theory* Vol. 2 (1990), 159-160.

methods and terminologies have been used by excavators, making inter-site comparison problematic. Holmes utilized NISP data, providing a broad view of dietary trends in Late Saxon settlements.

Urban and industrial sites provide a certain degree of validation for excavators who have criticized traditional descriptors. Their food registers are quite similar, the fundamental distinction being a pronounced degree of cattle consumption on industrial sites. This distinction is less apparent when the data from two outlier industrial sites, Coppergate, York, and Flaxengate, Lincoln, are excluded as both yielded a tremendous amount of faunal data, particularly for cattle.¹⁷⁵ Urban sites consumed fewer domesticated birds, deer, and pigs than elite and ecclesiastical centers but more than industrial and rural sites. The complex redistribution of body parts in the assemblages reflects the market-oriented environment shared by urban centers at this time.¹⁷⁶ Urban levels of fowl consumption, while less than ecclesiastical or elite status sites, illustrate a marked increase compared to earlier Mid Saxon levels.¹⁷⁷ Industrial faunal registers also hint at the redistribution of animal parts, suggesting that particular types of butchers or craftsmen received specialized raw materials, cuts of meat, bones, or antlers, pertinent to their trade.¹⁷⁸ Animals from urban and industrial sites were harvested at a prime meat age, although occasionally older individuals are also present.¹⁷⁹

The first chapter demonstrated the disdainful attitude many Late Saxons held for wealthy clergy. Emulation of the aristocratic lifestyle is indeed present in ninth through

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¹⁷⁵ Holmes, 165.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 93.

¹⁷⁷ Holmes, 104.

¹⁷⁸ Julian D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2007), 146-7.

¹⁷⁹ Holmes, 67.

eleventh century faunal data at ecclesiastical centers. Cattle and caprine consumption is nearly identical, but many of the bones at ecclesiastical sites belonged to very young animals. This could imply that ecclesiastics consumed younger, tenderer cuts of meat, or hint at the production of vellum manuscripts.¹⁸⁰ Pig, deer, and hare are found more frequently at ecclesiastic sites than in rural, urban or industrial settings. Domestic fowl numbers, however, are lower. An ancillary glance at the faunal data of ecclesiastical sites is suggestive, revealing the wealth and economic aspects of such centers. Ecclesiastical meat consumption, however, is rather more revealing when compared to elite or high-status sites.

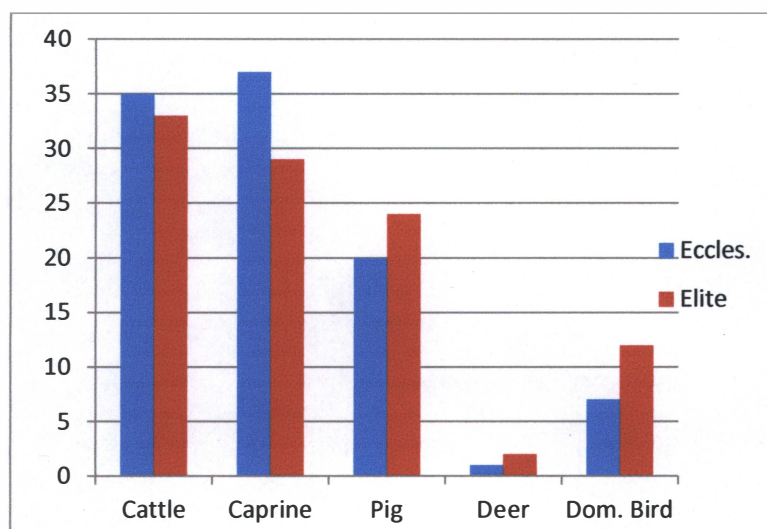


Table 2.2: Ecclesiastic and high status site comparison (Percentage of total NISP)
Table by author utilizing data from Holmes, 2014.

Blue/Ecclesiastic: Data averaged from six sites, two contained two Late Saxon habitation sequences.

Red/Elite: Data averaged from nine sites, two demonstrated two Late Saxon habitation sequences.

High status sites consumed more domestic birds, deer, and pig than all other site types. The bones of wild fowl are often indistinguishable from domestic birds and the reliability of published data is subject to the experience and bias of the excavator.¹⁸¹

While numbers of wildfowl in Holmes's dataset were quite small in all site types, they

¹⁸⁰ Dobney, *et al*, "Evidence for Trade and Contact," in *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats*, 234-5. See also, Holmes, 93.

¹⁸¹ Dale Serjeantson, *Birds: Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 63-5.

are more numerous and varied in Late Saxon and Saxo-Norman contexts.¹⁸² The driving argument that hunting and status was tied to landownership in the Late Saxon period is corroborated in the data. Numbers of red and roe deer, conflated in the figures above, are found in unparalleled numbers at high status sites in the Late Saxon period. While deer remains were a small percentage of all site types, they constituted around 2% of the faunal remains at high status sites with 379 fragments found from eleven high status excavations, far surpassing the remains of industrial, urban and rural contexts.¹⁸³ Meanwhile the domestic animals at these sites were often harvested at very young ages, culled for taste without any consideration of their secondary production of milk and manure. Swine, the least helpful domesticate in terms of secondary products, were also consumed in the highest numbers at elite sites. Swine consumption also became increasingly linked to status in the later Saxo-Norman and Norman periods, suggesting a shared perception of hogs by Late Saxons and Normans.¹⁸⁴

Wild Game: A Luxury Food

Arjun Appadurai has argued that the consumption of certain foods, or the ownership of certain commodities, can be seen as a “register” of consumption, a form of social language used in particular settings.¹⁸⁵ The signs of these registers either relate to the exclusivity of the item, the complexity involved in acquiring it, its semiotic ability, the specialized knowledge needed to obtain the product, or the degree of linkage between the consumed item and the individual. It will be argued here that the consumption of

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¹⁸² Holmes, 62.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 165.

¹⁸⁴ Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*, 49.

¹⁸⁵ Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 38.

hunted animals, notably deer and wild fowl, constituted a luxury food that signaled the status of those who consumed them.

Many of the topics addressed in the previous chapter satisfy the requirements of Appadurai's registers of consumption framework. According to Cnut's hunting law, the acquisition of game was limited to individuals who owned property. Furthermore, the use of hawks, falcons or packs of hounds could only be successfully employed by an individual of means. Additionally, the training of a fowling bird or pack of hounds, the maintenance of deer hedges, and the organization of a hunting party signaled the complexity of the acquisition, in addition to the specialized knowledge needed to employ hunting animals. Utilizing the concept of luxury foods in assessing the faunal remains of both deer and wild fowl accentuates the exclusionary nature of Late Saxon hunting.

Birds

A great deal of literature explores the relationship between wild bird consumption and elite status in later medieval contexts but the practice likely began in the Mid Saxon period, becoming more refined in the decades prior to the Conquest.¹⁸⁶ The link between status and bird consumption in general is evident in the mean proportion of domestic bird finds. Whereas the bones for domestic birds are scarce in Early Saxon sites, by the Middle Saxon period the vast majority occur on ecclesiastical and high status excavations, and become more evenly mixed by the Late Saxon period.¹⁸⁷ This phenomenon corresponds with the burgeoning urbanization, improved agricultural

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¹⁸⁶ See Naomi Sykes, "The Dynamics of Status Symbols: Wildfowl Exploitation in England AD 410-1550," *Archaeological Journal* 161 (2004), 82-105, or Umberto Albarella and Richard Thomas, "They Dined on Crane: Bird Consumption, Wild Fowling, and Status in Medieval England," *Acta Zoologica Cracoviensia* 45: Special Issue (2002): 23-38, and Annia Kristina Cherryson, "The Identification of Archaeological Evidence for Hawking in Medieval England," *Zoologica Cracoviensia* 45: Special Issue (2002): 307-314.

¹⁸⁷ Holmes, 42-3.

techniques, and intensified management of land associated with smaller manors which occurred as early as the eighth and ninth century. This increased consumption of domestic fowl across all strata of site types in the Late Saxon period could have been the result of an improved economic or agricultural situation, the emulation of the elite diet, or more likely, both.¹⁸⁸ This very phenomenon was discovered in English wild fowl assemblages in the later medieval period.¹⁸⁹ As consumption of fowl increased alongside the wealth of individual landowners, new means were needed to differentiate status and new dietary exclusions were cultivated by the elite.

Wild fowl consumption satisfies many of the registers mentioned previously, most notably the difficulty in acquiring, raising and training a hawk or falcon. This can be validated zooarchaeologically. While wild birds appear infrequently in English excavations throughout the medieval period, ecclesiastical and high status sites display more species diversity than other site types.¹⁹⁰ Not only did these wealthy manors exhibit a more complex wild ornithological register in their faunal remains but they also featured deposits of fowling birds. Indeed, falcon or hawk remains are routinely utilized to denote a site as high status.¹⁹¹ Hawking literally refers to the use of short-winged accipiter species to capture other birds or small mammals, while falconry denotes the use of longer winged birds of the *falco* genus. Here the two terms are used interchangeably, as they are in other sources.¹⁹² The three key components of falconry are the following: first, the bird must be acquainted to humans and learn to perch on the owner's fist. Secondly, it must hunt prey in the direction it is launched and to return to the lure after either a failed or

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¹⁸⁸ Van der Veen, 407-8.

¹⁸⁹ Albarella and Thomas, 36.

¹⁹⁰ Hagen, 46-7.

¹⁹¹ Albarella and Thomas, 35.

¹⁹² Serjeantson, 316.

successful hunt. Finally, these birds were used to pursue species they would not naturally hunt.¹⁹³

Ælfric's Colloquy illustrates that one did not have to be a noble to practice falconry in Late Saxon England, but the time requirements needed to train the bird would have been formidable. The remains of a goshawk from the Late Saxon manor at Faccombe, for instance, showed evidence of sustaining an injury resulting in a false joint forming on the dorsal end of its shoulder, a common injury in hunting birds. Remarkably, this break was well-healed, demonstrating that the owner took good care of this bird while it was handicapped and recovering.¹⁹⁴ The poem referencing falconry in the *Exeter Book* implies taming a bird required food, patience, and a good deal of time in acquainting the bird to life around humans, resources only available to thegns.¹⁹⁵

No reliable Anglo-Saxon manuals pertaining to falconry exist. Many of the birds unearthed from early medieval English sites could have been fowling birds or scavengers. A nearly complete skeleton of a sparrow hawk was found in Mid Saxon levels at the Anglo-Saxon minster in Hartlepool.¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, mid eighth and early ninth century levels at the high status site of Flixborough, Lincolnshire, illustrated that wild fowl constituted a “significant input” of the diet for inhabitants at this time, displaying a great deal of wild geese and duck remains.¹⁹⁷ The only raptor bones present for this level, however, were tentatively identified as buzzard and red kite. Both buzzards and red kite

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¹⁹³ Weistke Prummel, “Evidence of Hawking (Falconry) from Bird and Mammal Bones,” *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 7 (1997), 333.

¹⁹⁴ Sadler, “The Faunal Remains,” in *Faccombe Netherton: Excavations of a Saxon and Medieval Manorial Complex, Vol. II*, edited by J.R. Fairbrother (London: British Museum Occasional Paper, No. 74, 1990), 505.

¹⁹⁵ Spaeth, 161.

¹⁹⁶ Naomi Sykes, “Wood and the Wild,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, edited by Helena Hamerow, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 333.

¹⁹⁷ Dobney et al., 49.

have been used for falconry. Fowling enthusiasts have described buzzard as “a tough bird,” and “blessed with a relatively even temperament,” and able to hunt rabbit, moorhen, hare and squirrel with “with much perseverance.”¹⁹⁸

Buzzard remains were found in Mid Saxon levels at Eynsham Abbey and sparrow hawk remains were found in tenth century contexts, alongside crane, partridge and woodcock, all popular fowling birds.¹⁹⁹ Additionally, the ecclesiastical *curia* of Bishopstone, Sussex, contained sparrow hawk remains.²⁰⁰ Many excavators are reluctant to describe the bones of these birds as evidence for falconry.²⁰¹ It is possible, however, to train these birds to hunt prey and return to the lure. Buzzard, for instance, was found at Lurk Lane, Beverly, an ecclesiastical site exhibiting a stunning diversity of wild fowl remains in addition to the bones of peregrine falcons, found in both Late Saxon and Saxo-Norman deposits.²⁰²

Although the number and diversity of wild fowl assemblages remained greater in high status estate centers, by the Late Saxon period evidence for falconry is also observed in urban, industrial, and ecclesiastical contexts.²⁰³ At first glance it seems counterintuitive to argue that the Late Saxon period saw an increase in exclusionary social practices when falconry evidence is seen throughout a variety of site types, but this phenomenon is undoubtedly caused by elite Late Saxons owning manors in a variety of geographic

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¹⁹⁸ Emma Ford, *Birds of Prey* (London: Batsford, 1982), 39.

¹⁹⁹ Kathryn Ayres, *et al.*, “Mammal, Bird and Fish Remains and Oysters,” in *Ælfric’s Abbey: Excavations at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire, 1989-1992* ed. by Alan Hardy, Anne Dodd and Graham D. Keevill (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003), 356.

²⁰⁰ Gabor Thomas, *The Later Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Bishopstone* (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2010), 153.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁰² Sally Scott, “The Animal Bones,” in *Excavations at Lurk Lane Beverley, 1979-82*, edited by Peter Armstrong, David Tomlinson and D.H. Evans (Beverley: Humberside Archaeology Unit, 1991), 222-3.

²⁰³ Holmes, 42, 165. See also, S.D. Jacques and K. Dobney, “Avian Signatures for Identity and Status in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Acta Zoologica Cracoviensia* 45(2002): 11.

settings. It will be remembered from the previous chapter that the Late Saxon charters describe wealthy individuals owning dozens of manors in geographically disparate regions. The falconry evidence reinforces this fact. At ninth and tenth century levels at Ramsbury, Wiltshire, for instance, the remains of a peregrine falcon and red kite were found. Ramsbury has been defined as an industrial site; from the ninth century iron smelting was the most defining characteristic of the site.²⁰⁴ Urban centers such as Coppergate, York, and Castle Mall, Norwich, both contained birds of prey. The goshawk at eleventh century levels in Castle Mall was found alongside parrot bones, likely an exotic pet, in addition to a substantial amount of pig remains, reinforcing the wealth of the individuals who lived there.²⁰⁵

Deer

Deer bone assemblages can be used to reveal dietary patterns, butchery techniques, and species preference but cannot confirm specific hunting methods or address the average yield size of Late Saxon deer hunts. Textual sources such as the *Rectitudines*, *Ælfric's Colloquy*, and the *hagan* entries mentioned in the charters and Domesday inquest recount how hunting parties utilized horse and hound to drive prey into netting or an enclosure before taking the animal. This sort of drive-hunting is also seen in twelfth century Gaelic hero poetry. In one instance a hunting party featuring over one thousand hounds drove deer toward the desired location where the huntsmen

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²⁰⁴ Jennie Coy, "The Animal Bones," in "A Middle Saxon Iron Smelting Site at Ramsbury, Wiltshire," edited by Jeremy Haslam. *Medieval Archaeology* XXIV (1980), 49.

²⁰⁵ U. Albarella, M. Beech, and J. Mulville, *The Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval Mammal and Bird Bones Excavated 1989-1991 from Castle Mall, Norwich, Norfolk* (London: Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report, 72/97, 1997), 51,55.

waited.²⁰⁶ These specific examples are poetic and grandiose but perhaps reflect hunting customs utilized throughout the British Isles in the early medieval period. They also raise the possibility that these hunting parties were able to pursue large numbers of game. Many Late Saxon subjects, it is remembered, were legally obliged to participate as drivers on royal hunts.²⁰⁷ The consumption of large quantities of venison, wild game, and young domestic animals are corroborated in the faunal data of high status sites but cannot confirm how widely drive hunting was practiced in pre-Conquest England.

Deer assemblages reveal some continuity regarding Saxon and Norman hunting customs but certain fundamental differences are observed in both zooarchaeological and textual contexts. For instance, *par force* hunting, where a single animal was singled out and chased until it was cornered, killed, and ‘unmade’, with parts being harvested ritualistically and disseminated according to rank, may represent a distinctly Norman practice.²⁰⁸ Additionally, numbers of roe deer decline while red and fallow deer remains dramatically increase at Norman levels.²⁰⁹ It is notable that *hagan* refer to wooded enclosures and roe deer are a woodland species that are more suited to thick undergrowth compared to other European deer species.²¹⁰ Furthermore, *hagan* mentions throughout Domesday frequently refer to *haiae capreolis*, or the *haga* for taking roe deer.²¹¹

Butchery techniques change at approximately the same time red and fallow deer

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²⁰⁶ John Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Ltd., 1979), 52.

²⁰⁷ John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity, and Political Values* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), 174. See also, Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*, 71.

²⁰⁸ Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*, 75.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 174.

²¹⁰ A.J.M. Hewison, J.P. Vincent and D. Reby, “Social Organisation of European Roe Deer,” in *The European Roe Deer: The Biology of Success*, edited by Reidar Andersen, Patrick Duncan and John D.C. Linnell (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998), 187.

²¹¹ Williams and Martin, 714.

numbers increase, intimating another change to hunting associated with the Normans.²¹² For example, Norman castle sites report unusually high levels of foot elements, which may reflect the Norman practice of unmaking.²¹³ In contrast, high status sites in pre-Conquest England reveal a “good representation of most body parts,” showcasing the Late Saxon practice of harvesting whole deer rather than rationing parts according to rank.²¹⁴ The thirteenth century German author Gottfried von Strassburg, and his Anglo-Norman predecessor Thomas of Britain, also called attention to the distinction between Saxon and Norman deer harvesting in their editions of *Prose Tristan*, emphasizing the superiority of the Norman unmaking techniques over the Saxon methods which harvested venison in the same manner as swine or caprine animals.²¹⁵

Normans certainly altered English hunting customs but Saxon society already displayed an exclusionary hunting culture prior to the Conquest. Moreover, Continental data suggests that hunting exclusivity was linked more to colonialism than Norman exceptionalism. For instance, game animal assemblages in Norman France indicate less status-based inequality than those from Norman England. Consumption levels are so pronounced in high status sites in Norman England that they are only rivaled in Norman Sicily, suggesting that the heightened game restrictions represent a Norman colonial package used to reinforce cultural superiority.²¹⁶ These findings call into question the degree to which Norman customs revolutionized Saxon hunting. It is perhaps more logical to see these developments as an extension of existing practices. Ann Williams has even questioned the accuracy of labeling *par force* hunting as specifically Norman,

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²¹² Sykes, 73.

²¹³ Ibid, 95-6.

²¹⁴ Sykes, “Deer, Land, Knives and Halls,” 185.

²¹⁵ Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, translated by A.T. Hatto (London: Penguin, 1960), 78.

²¹⁶ Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*, 96.

arguing instead that elements of the practice were present in England prior to the Conquest and evolved over a longer period of time.²¹⁷ For example, the *Colloquy's* huntsman indicates that he did not always use nets and that hounds and horses were often involved.²¹⁸ Monies for “huntmen’s horses” were due from certain shires, according to the Domesday, and King Edmund’s near death at Cheddar Gorge occurred during a mounted pursuit of a red deer.²¹⁹

Deer finds also vary by site type. Urban, industrial, and ecclesiastical centers exhibiting large numbers of deer bones share a fundamental similarity to high status sites: the remains of impressive structures unrelated to agricultural processes.²²⁰ To fully understand the relationship between game animals and status in Late Saxon England, these sites require examination.

Wild Game as Indicators of Status

Among nearly one hundred Late Saxon excavations, only a handful of sites exhibit wild animal remains that constitute two percent or higher of their total faunal assemblage.²²¹ A few of these sites are outliers. The Late Saxon deer remains at Stafford Castle, for instance, constitute almost sixteen percent of the total NISP count.²²² The overall number of bones recovered at Saxo-Norman levels, however, is meager. The sampling is not conducive to making general assessments about the wealth and

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²¹⁷ Williams, 126-7.

²¹⁸ Watkins, 6.

²¹⁹ Williams and Martin, 589. See also, Williams, 126.

²²⁰ Sykes, “Deer, Land, Knives and Halls,” 187.

²²¹ Matilda Holmes, “Food, Status and Complexity in Saxon and Scandinavian England: An Archaeozoological Approach,” (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2011), 200-7.

²²² Iain Soden, *Stafford Castle: Survey, Excavation and Research, 1978-1998, Volume II* (Stafford, Staffordshire: Stafford Borough Council, 2007), 164.

stratification of the site and therefore will not be included in this discussion.²²³

Knocker's site in Thetford, Norfolk, meanwhile, produced deer remains constituting almost four percent of the total NISP but the majority of these remains were industrial in nature and only a few deer bones were found among food deposits.²²⁴ Another excavation site in Norfolk, referred to as Chalkpit Field North in Sedgewick, contains a faunal register with wild game, combining deer and wild bird species, at just over two percent. These excavations are still ongoing, however, and research has yet to be published sufficiently; the character of the site itself is still in question.²²⁵

Seven Late Saxon sites meet the two percent threshold. These sites contain adequate NISP counts and are published sufficiently. All of these sites display appurtenances indicative of a manorial or thegnly residence according to contemporary textual references. Archbishop Wulfstan's early eleventh century tract, *Gehýncðu*, relates that a thegn should possess a church and kitchen in addition to a bell-house and a "burhgeat."²²⁶ *Burhgeat* has been inconsistently translated, but probably refers to an enclosure gate.²²⁷ *Garefa*, another eleventh century text, suggests larger estates contained separate buildings for processes such as storage, cooking, brewing and baking.²²⁸ Many of these characteristics are found in all seven sites meeting the two percent threshold. In fact, the argument that the Normans built upon Saxon precedents in the use of hunting as an exclusionary social mechanism is equally applicable to settlement studies. Ringwork

²²³ Pam Crabtree, "Zooarchaeology and Complex Societies, 184-5.

²²⁴ Andrew Rogerson and Carolyn Dallas, *Excavations at Thetford 1948-59 and 1973-80* (Norfolk: East Anglian Archaeology, 1984), 190.

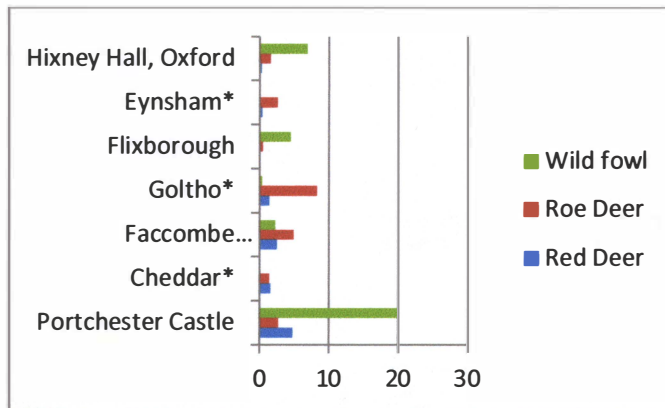
²²⁵ "Chalkpit Field North," Sedgewick Historical and Archaeological Research Project. Last modified July 25, 2015, accessed September 15, 2015. <http://www.sharp.org.uk/research-areas/Chalkpit-Field-North.pdf>

²²⁶ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 468.

²²⁷ Ann Williams, "A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England Before the Norman Conquest," in *Anglo-Norman Castles* edited by Robert Liddiard (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), 28.

²²⁸ Mark Gardiner, "Late Saxon Settlements," in Hamerow, et al., 199.

castles and mottes, like forest law and unmaking rituals, represent more continuity than contrast between Normans and Saxons.²²⁹ All of the seven sites will be broadly described before assessing their manorial appurtenances, common features, and faunal registers. While the quantity of wild animal remains unearthed from these sites makes them exceptional, mapping their corresponding features provides yet more evidence that Late Saxon society was acutely stratified.



Left: Table 2.3: % of wild game among total NISP of considered sites. Table by author, utilizing data from Holmes, 2014.

Below: Map 1. Locations of sites considered.

*Indicates multiple Late Saxon phases, phase with larger dataset used.

²²⁹ Ibid, 213.



Three tenth century charters attest to the meeting of the king and his *witan*, or counsel, at Cheddar in 941, 956, and 968. Each meeting took place during the reign of a different king, suggesting that Cheddar was part of the royal circuit.²³⁰ The list of royal witnesses for these grants reveals that many of the most important individuals in Wessex and Anglo-Saxon society visited Cheddar. The closest manor in character to Cheddar is found in Late Saxon levels at Faccombe Netherton. Faccombe was listed as a “wedding gift” to a certain Wynflaed, a member of the royal family whose daughter married King Edmund and produced the future kings Edgar and Edwig.²³¹ The status of Wynflaed is corroborated in the charters. She held substantial holdings in Hampshire, Somerset,

²³⁰ Philip Rahtz, *The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar: Excavations 1960-62* (Oxford: BAR 65, 1979), 13.

²³¹ The exact identity of King Edmund’s wife is impossible to determine but there is good reason to believe it was Wynflaed’s daughter, see Fairbrother, 513.

Dorset, and Wiltshire.²³² Like Cheddar and Facombe, the manor house at Goltho was an elite manor. Goltho's origins are comparably obscure but the structures and features of the site bear striking similarities to the royal manors.

Facombe and Cheddar are located in southern England in the Wessex heartland. Goltho, however, is situated within the traditional early medieval region known as the Danelaw, the area most impacted by Scandinavian assimilation. Therefore it is unsurprising Goltho's fortifications are more impressive than either Facombe or Cheddar. Attached agricultural plots and smaller house structures lay well outside the fortified manor, perhaps reflecting the hegemony the family inhabiting the Goltho estate center. Meanwhile the zooarchaeological assemblage at Goltho reveals a proclivity for hunting, suggesting the owners of the Goltho estate held dominion over local woodland. Etymologically, Goltho relates to the Saxon *Golthag*, or gold-*haga*, referring to either an enclosure of marigolds or perhaps even an early reference to hunting.²³³

Excavations at Portchester Castle in Hampshire, and Hinkey Hall, Queen Street, Oxford, both reveal aspects of tenth century urbanization. While Portchester Castle was a reoccupied Roman fortification, deposited layers of rubbish in the ninth century illustrate that the site was unoccupied at this time.²³⁴ Hinkey Hall, Queen Street was a bustling *insula* in the center of Late Saxon Oxford. Like Portchester, Hinkey Hall showed no evidence for occupation in the Mid Saxon period.²³⁵ A surge of activity is detected in the

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²³² Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 431.

²³³ Guy Beresford, *Goltho: The Development of an Early Medieval Manor, c. 850-1150* (London: Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, 1978), 1.

²³⁴ Barry Cunliffe, editor, *Excavations at Portchester Castle, Volume II: Saxon* (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1975), 123.

²³⁵ Claire Halpin, editor, "Late Saxon Evidence and Excavation of Hinkey Hall, Queen Street, Oxford," *Oxoniensia* XLVIII (1983), 47-8.

tenth and eleventh centuries at both sites.²³⁶ Portchester remained an important strategic defensible location throughout the succeeding Norman period whereas at Queen Street habitation declined in the years after the Conquest.²³⁷

Eynsham was a center of Saxon activity from the sixth century and a minster since the eighth. In the eleventh century, a charter records the acquisition of the abbey by Æthelmaer, an ealdorman of Wessex. Æthelmaer reformed the abbey under Benedictine rules and made Ælfric, the author of the *Colloquy* discussed in the first chapter, the house's first abbot. Prior to the Benedictine reform, tenth century Eynsham was a thriving secular religious community that was strategically located between the Windrush and Cherwell valleys on the banks of the Thames.²³⁸ The founders of the minster likely utilized Eynsham's location to control river traffic as the region was a prosperous abbey and minster for much of the early and later medieval period.²³⁹

Flixborough was a rural settlement with a significant material register. The site underwent several periods of wholesale re-planning between the seventh to eleventh centuries. What Flixborough lacks in terms of exotic trade goods it makes up for in the scale and diversity of local materials. Deposits associated with textile production, iron-working, and conspicuous consumption are strongly represented at Late Saxon levels at Flixborough. The site was formerly known as North Conesby, roughly derived from Old East Norse, *Konungrs-by*, or king's settlement.²⁴⁰ The largest buildings in Flixborough's

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²³⁶ Ibid, 48-9, 69.

²³⁷ Ibid, 50-1.

²³⁸ Alan Hardy, "The Medieval and Post-Medieval Sequence," in *Ælfric's Abbey: Excavations at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire 1989-92* edited by Alan Hardy, Anne Dodd and Graham D. Keevill (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology, 2003), 517.

²³⁹ Anne Dodd and Alan Hardy, "The Anglo-Saxon Sequence," in Hardy et al, 477.

²⁴⁰ Christopher Loveluck and David Atkinson, editors, *The Early Medieval Settlement Remains from Flixborough, Lincolnshire* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 106.

settlement history are found in tenth century levels, by the early eleventh century it was described in the Domesday as a productive and prosperous manor belonging to the thegn, Fulcric.²⁴¹

Table 2.4: Manorial features, table by the author.

	Planned Settlement	Fortifications	Chapel/Church	Outbuildings	Hall	Coinage
Cheddar	Major rearrangement: 10 th century	Ditch enclosures	Stone chapel c. 941	Kitchen, smithy, mills	Long hall, two-story	8 coins: 9-11th centuries
Facombe Netherton	Use of pre-existing structures	Ditch enclosures		Kitchens, bake-houses, smithy	Aisled hall, 10C	6 coins: 9-11th centuries
Flixborough	Wholesale re-planning, 9 th and 10 th centuries.		Possible church	Mills, textile production		
Eynsham	Substantial growth, 10 th century	Ditch enclosures	Minster site	Kitchens, smithy	Hall structure	
Goltho	Use of pre-existing structures	Fortified enclosure		Kitchens, weaving sheds, bowers	Aisled hall, 10C	9 th to 11 th century coinage
Portchester Castle	Substantial growth: 9 th and 10 th century	Roman walls/gate	Possible church	Multiple; masonry tower	Aisled hall, 10C	3 coins: 9 th century
Queen Street	Substantial growth, 10 th century					1 coin: 11 th century

The above table illustrates the features observed on the seven considered sites. Significant re-planning is evident in a number of these excavations at Late Saxon levels. The growth of high status manorial centers is a characteristic of the tenth century, intimately linked to the phenomenon of estate fragmentation discussed in the previous chapter.²⁴² Even Goltho, which displayed a degree of continuity throughout Late Saxon levels, began a sequence of imposing structures in the late ninth century. These developments included the rebuilding of the Goltho great hall in the early tenth

²⁴¹ Williams and Martin, 937.

²⁴² Mark Gardiner, "The Origins and Persistence of Manor Houses in England," in *Medieval Landscapes: Landscape History after Hoskins, Volume II*, edited by Mark Gardiner and Stephen Rippon (Chester: Windgather Press, 2007), 170-1, 174-5.

century.²⁴³ Tenth century Eynsham, meanwhile, contained a system of ditches delineating large enclosures. One room “of some pretension” even exhibited internal plaster.²⁴⁴ Tenth century levels at Faccombe correspond with Wynflaed’s ownership of the estate and display an extension and realignment of certain buildings, including a smithy and kitchen.²⁴⁵

The remaining sites all display profound re-planning. Queen Street is the most elusive, it is comparably less recorded and the most disturbed. The excavation project began as a series of experimental trenches on Queen Street. A single large trench, at New Inn Court, revealed a tremendous amount of Late Saxon material. The excavation suggests pronounced activity beginning in the tenth century, peaking in the eleventh, followed by an abrupt decline in the late eleventh and early twelfth century.²⁴⁶ The dearth of finds in both Roman and Norman levels reflect the rapid rise and fall of the *insula*, which was perhaps the largest such building in the Oxford burh, considering the substantial amount of material and post hole configurations found there.²⁴⁷ Flixborough exhibited similarly pronounced changes. The entire settlement shifted eastwards in the tenth century. At approximately the same time the inhabitants destroyed small granary structures to make room for the largest buildings unearthed in the Saxon sequence.²⁴⁸

Flixborough’s excavators are hesitant to characterize the site as high-status, instead preferring to highlight the dramatic change evident throughout the Saxon

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²⁴³ Guy Beresford, *Goltho: The Development of an Early Medieval Manor* (London: Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, 1987), 29, 42.

²⁴⁴ Anne Dodd and Alan Hardy, “The Anglo-Saxon Sequence,” in Hardy, Dodd and Keevill, 479-486.

²⁴⁵ Fairbrother, 59-62.

²⁴⁶ Halpin, 50.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 48.

²⁴⁸ Loveluck and Atkinson, 97.

occupation of the site.²⁴⁹ They argue that it perhaps belonged to an ecclesiastical community in the ninth century, shifting to secular ownership in the tenth. Blair, meanwhile, has stressed the prevalence of ‘secularized’ ecclesiastical communities.²⁵⁰ This notion is corroborated by the faunal data at Eynsham. Prior to the Benedictine reformation of the eleventh century, Eynsham was a secular minster and wild game consumption at Eynsham was on par with elite secular sites.²⁵¹

Great halls are also present on many of the sites considered. Such buildings are rarely observed in Early or Mid Saxon periods. At the center of the Goltho, Cheddar and Faccombe estates, post-holes reveal the existence of large timbered halls. One such hall at Faccombe, noted by its aisled columns, replaced an earlier structure in the late tenth century. It was of substantial size, 18.3 x 7.3 meters, with aisles lengthening the width of the building to a limited degree.²⁵² Goltho similarly contained a large aisled hall that was updated and restructured throughout the tenth and eleventh century. The postholes belonging to the structure preceding the aisled hall curiously resemble the dimensions of Anglo-Scandinavian recumbent stone monuments called hogbacks, which will be discussed in the following chapter.²⁵³ Cheddar also boasted a great hall. It was over 24 meters long with a width over six meters in the center that narrowed at the ends.²⁵⁴ Portchester’s hall, a building “of some pretension,” experienced multiple phases of development. A domestic outbuilding, a courtyard, a latrine and store house surrounded

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²⁴⁹ Helena Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 101.

²⁵⁰ Blair, 186-7, 279-90, 323-9.

²⁵¹ Kathryn Ayres, *et al.*, 355.

²⁵² Fairbrother, 115-6.

²⁵³ Beresford, 52-3.

²⁵⁴ Rahtz, 103-4.

the structure.²⁵⁵ Halls served a central role in Anglo-Saxon society. As explained by one scholar, “all public business such as the reception and feasting of visitors takes place” in the hall.²⁵⁶ By the tenth century, however, there are slight changes detected in the nature of these halls. Not only do more ostentatious buildings appear, such as the long halls or narrow-aisled halls found in Goltho or Cheddar, but they served a more limited function. Both Cheddar and Faccombe, rather than serving as a focal point for the local community, belonged exclusively to royal aristocrats who utilized the halls infrequently.

Fortifications are also present at many of the sites, although their precise function varied. The ditched enclosure at Faccombe, for instance, impressed more than it defended.²⁵⁷ Like Faccombe, Cheddar was in close proximity to nearby fortified burhs and functioned more as a manor house than a truly defensible estate. Goltho, however, offered a large egg-shaped enclosure, surrounded by a rampart and ditch, that represented the remains of fortifications surrounding a Late Saxon hall and courtyard.²⁵⁸ The ditch depths were substantial, on par with those of later Norman enclosures. Only ‘man-jacking’ techniques could have shaped these enclosures, whereby men were placed at a series of levels with individuals shoveling soil to the man above him.²⁵⁹

According to Wulfstan’s tract on status, the other component of a thegnly residence is a chapel.²⁶⁰ Eynsham and Flixborough are unique in this discussion in that Flixborough may have been an undocumented minster for at least part of its history while Eynsham was a large and important minster. Observed burial patterns, the presence of

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²⁵⁵ Cunliffe, 124-6.

²⁵⁶ Rosemary Cramp, “*Beowulf* and Archaeology,” *Medieval Archaeology* 1 (1957), 71.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁵⁸ Beresford, 71-2.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁶⁰ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents: 2nd Edition*, 468-9.

styli, and stained glass hint at a chapel or ecclesiastical community at Flixborough in the ninth century, while the tenth features the remains of iron-working and conspicuous consumption.²⁶¹ Therefore the question of whether Late Saxon Flixborough was a secular religious community or even a rural secular manor with a chapel is currently debated. Eynsham, meanwhile, exhibited internal partitions among those buildings located outside of the minster site. This prompted the excavators to presume the existence an alternative structure, distinct from the religious site, perhaps the dwelling of the secular owner of Eynsham, who would have been entertained by the clerical community when visiting.²⁶² Cheddar's estate housed a chapel since the early to mid-tenth century. The chapel was closely aligned with the aisled hall and the ditched enclosures.²⁶³ Portchester, meanwhile, featured a stone-built tower which may have served as a chapel but given the military role of Portchester it is more tempting to view the tower as a defensive structure.

Most of the sites contain impressive outbuildings, each associated with metal work, textile production, or specific crafts. These buildings either processed available or imported materials or provisioned their aristocratic inhabitants. This arrangement is seen at Portchester, Cheddar, Goltho and Faccombe. All of these same sites, aside from Portchester, contained kitchen structures throughout Late Saxon habitation levels. An early tenth century outbuilding placed perpendicular to Cheddar's long hall contained a series of large hearths exhibiting animal bone fragments and oyster shells.²⁶⁴ A 5.8m x 8.5m structure excavated at ninth and tenth century levels at Portchester revealed a rectangular oven made of re-used Roman tiles. This oven served as a kitchen or bake

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²⁶¹ Loveluck and Atkinson, 106.

²⁶² Dodd and Hardy, 484.

²⁶³ Rahtz, 194.

²⁶⁴ Rahtz, 95.

house for the inhabitants of the aisled hall.²⁶⁵ A series of five kitchens were found in various Saxon levels at Goltho over a 250 year period.²⁶⁶ Outbuildings solely devoted to food preparation are incredibly rare in Anglo-Saxon sites. A few Mid-Saxon sites contain kitchens but they are found more frequently in high status centers of the tenth and eleventh century. These kitchens represent a new level of wealth and social inequity in Anglo-Saxon history.²⁶⁷

Other outbuildings served more specific functions. Ash and iron deposits illustrate a smith was present at Faccombe. This smith likely supplied the inhabitants with tools, weaponry and trinkets. Indeed, small metal objects, personal items, horse bridles, and weapons, all found in large numbers, reveal the smith's purpose was to serve Faccombe's owners.²⁶⁸ The infrequent presence of a smith at Cheddar corresponds with the irregular use of the manor by Wessex monarchs and their *witan*.²⁶⁹ Like huntsmen, wealth and heightened concern over status meant smiths could serve a wide spectrum of social niches, allowing some smiths to attain the rank of thegn through their service to lords.²⁷⁰

The presence of chapels, stone structures, and impressive outbuildings tasked with provisioning thegnly families all point to the growing social tension in tenth and eleventh century England. Faunal remains corroborate this tension. Late Saxon inhabitants of high status sites ate extraordinary amounts of roe deer. At Cheddar, roe deer remains constitute the largest percentage of consumed species outside of domesticates in late

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²⁶⁵ Cunliffe, 29-32.

²⁶⁶ Beresford, 59.

²⁶⁷ Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, 143-44.

²⁶⁸ Fairbrother, 425-36.

²⁶⁹ Rahtz, 94-5.

²⁷⁰ Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, 415.

ninth and early tenth century levels.²⁷¹ By way of comparison, roe deer remains make up 4.9% of the total Faccombe assemblage, 7.8% at Eynsham, and 2.3% at Cheddar; while the roe deer consumption of a typical Late Saxon site was a paltry 0.5%.²⁷²

Wildfowl diversity is another facet of tenth century conspicuous consumption profiles at these sites. Portchester offers the largest wildfowl consumption of the sites considered. There the greatest diversity of wild fowl species was limited to one pit and trench on the site.²⁷³ The presence of a variety of waders is thought to represent the exploitation of nearby mudflats; one pit containing the remains of 11 curlew may even represent a single feast.²⁷⁴ The pit and trench reserved for elite disposal contained 226 bone fragments from a variety of species, such as mallard, curlew and redshank, as well as woodpigeons.²⁷⁵ Additionally, these same layers revealed a substantial number of domestic goose bones and roughly 22 different bird species. Both of these deposits additionally yielded the largest range of fish bones as well as a plethora of discarded high status items, including a bone comb, knives, and bronze belt-fittings.²⁷⁶ Early and Mid Saxon Portchester contained a paltry 69 bird bones in the total of their assemblage, Late Saxon levels constitute 949 bones, with many too fragmentary to identify correctly.²⁷⁷

Late Saxon Hixney Hall, Queen Street's consumption levels increased in the tenth century and peaked in the early eleventh. The nature of the site suggests that the inhabitants of the *insula* purchased wild animals for consumption. Like other sites, roe deer bones outnumber red deer and a range of wild bird species are present in tenth and

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²⁷¹ Fairbrother, 484-5.

²⁷² Holmes, *Animals in Saxon and Scandinavian England*, 44-5.

²⁷³ Anne Eastham, "The Bird Bones," in Cunliffe, 290.

²⁷⁴ Richards, 135.

²⁷⁵ Dobney, et al,

²⁷⁶ Cunliffe, 114-5.

²⁷⁷ Eastham, 287-8.

eleventh century levels. The Late Saxon trench at New Inn Court contained roe deer remains and the bone fragments of 55 wild birds. Quantities of pig and beef bones with minimal connection to butchery demonstrate that Queen Street was a consumer site housing a wealthy population.²⁷⁸ A bone thread-picker and an ice skate made from the limb of a red deer illustrate either a bone-working industry or the means to buy such objects. In fact, the overall pottery evidence in Queen Street indicates possible competition between pottery producers, reinforcing the market-oriented nature of Late Saxon towns.²⁷⁹

Faunal remains recovered from tenth century levels at Eynsham most closely resemble high status sites like Faccombe and Portchester Castle.²⁸⁰ Again, roe deer were better represented at Eynsham than red deer, constituting three percent of the total NISP and over six percent of the total assemblage by MNI calculations.²⁸¹ The bones of roe deer dated to the late tenth century outnumber the sum total of roe deer bones found in all Mid Saxon phases.²⁸² Butchery is evident in a large proportion of the bones, and the assemblages include a range of parts, suggesting the entire animal was brought to the site. Moreover, the deer at Eynsham were aged between one and two years old, suggesting that younger, inexperienced animals were more frequently the victims of hunting tactics.²⁸³ This tenth century phase also witnessed the harvesting of younger animals, particularly hogs, which is observed at both Faccombe and Portchester.²⁸⁴ Indeed, pre-

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²⁷⁸ Bob Wilson, Enid Allison, and Andrew Jones, "Animal Bones and Shell," in Halpin, 69.

²⁷⁹ Maureen Mellor, "Pottery," in Halpin, 61. Note the excavator also wonders if the presence of two pottery types indicates a disturbance in the site.

²⁸⁰ Kathryn Ayres, et al., "Mammal, Bird and Fish Remains," in Hardy et al., 343.

²⁸¹ Ibid, 354.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid, 360

²⁸⁴ Holmes, *Animals in Saxon and Scandinavian England*, 62-3.

Benedictine Eynsham's wild game profile is analogous to the consumption profiles of royal residences like Cheddar and Faccombe.

After the imposition of the Benedictine reform in the eleventh century, roe deer consumption decreased. This 'reformation' may signal the disdain of many Late Saxons for clergy who took part in the competitive social displays of secular lords. The late tenth century Saxon poem, *The Season for Fasting*, criticizes a priest who breaks a holy fast to consume wine and seafood.²⁸⁵ William of Malmsebury records that Saxon monks "mocked the rule of their order," by eating every kind of food in the years before the Norman Conquest.²⁸⁶ This monastic excess is witnessed at tenth century Eynsham.

Interestingly, the only other ecclesiastic site exhibiting wild game consumption at this scale is Lurk Lane Beverley in East Yorkshire. Lurk Lane Beverley housed a college of secular canons founded by Æthelstan in the tenth century.²⁸⁷ Lurk Lane, like tenth century Eynsham, was privately owned. At Lurk Lane they harvested young pigs, ate comparably large amounts of roe deer and displayed a tremendous diversity of wildfowl in the faunal assemblage. Some recovered bones even suggested to the excavators that the inhabitants of Lurk Lane Beverley hunted boar.²⁸⁸

Evidence of conspicuous consumption and the presence of wild animal remains is the primary indicator of Flixborough's wealthy status. Consumption of roe and red deer totals over one percent of the total NISP assemblage of consumed animals. The quantity of animals and indications of butchery reveal Flixborough both raised and imported

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²⁸⁵ Hugh Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites: Food and Drink and their Consumption in Old English and Related Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 90.

²⁸⁶ James Harvey Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History, I: From the Breaking up of the Roman Empire to the Protestant Revolt* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1904-06) 224-229.

²⁸⁷ Æthelstan may have been posthumously credited for establishing Lurk Lane, see Dawn Hadley, *Northern Danelaw: It's Social Structure, c. 800-1100* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 240.

²⁸⁸ Scott, 220-3.

livestock. Interestingly, a large percentage of the total pig remains reflect that Flixborough residents harvested more mature pigs than other sites. Older, leaner animals provide a more “gamey” flavor similar to wild boar, hinting at a dietary trend which emulated high status diets.²⁸⁹ Elite sites like Cheddar, Goltho and Faccombe do not share this trend, perhaps reflecting a specific form of distinction which developed at rural Flixborough.

Tenth century inhabitants of Flixborough also consumed fowl regularly. Wild fowl constitute four and a half percent of the total NISP assemblage and seventeen percent of the identified bird assemblage.²⁹⁰ Like many of the other sites discussed so far, the species diversity at Flixborough is impressive, including, grouse, cranes and waders. Wild geese constituted 32% of the total NISP of wild birds found at the tenth century phase.²⁹¹ Direct evidence for falconry in Flixborough, however, is limited. No goshawk or falcon bones were unearthed at Late Saxon levels, suggesting that fowlers at Flixborough utilized nets and traps.²⁹² This fact is corroborated in DNA analyses of the bird bones. These tests suggest that most wild goose bones at Late Saxon Flixborough belonged to barnacle geese. Barnacle geese are considered pests due to the fact that in winter they frequent farms and consume crops, particularly winter wheat. Brent geese, meanwhile, thrive in salt marsh habitats where eel grass is plentiful. Brent geese remains are strangely absent at Flixborough, which is odd considering Flixborough’s proximity to the Humber estuary. The disparity between barnacle and brent geese intimates that Flixborough’s fowlers utilized nets to trap barnacle geese who frequented their

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²⁸⁹ Ibid., 239.

²⁹⁰ Keith Dobney et al., “The Nature of the Bioarchaeological Assemblages,” in Dobney et al, 51.

²⁹¹ Ibid, 38-9.

²⁹² Keith Dobney et al., “Exploitation of Resources and Procurement Strategies,” in Dobney et al, 199.

agricultural plots.²⁹³

The seven considered sites demonstrate that hunting exclusivity and social tension were linked phenomena. Wild game consumption dramatically increased at a handful of high status settlements in the tenth century. These same sites exhibited impressive halls, formidable defenses and outbuildings designed to service elite inhabitants. The development of elite manors did not occur within a vacuum. Indeed, many of the transformations of Late Saxon society detailed in the introduction of this thesis are present in the archaeology of the seven considered sites. The growth of urban settlements is demonstrated in the Queen Street excavation, where inhabitants of an impressive *insula* purchased wild game and commodities. The impressive outbuildings of sites like Portchester and Flixborough intimate the proliferation of artisans, craft workers, and specialized agricultural laborers who participated in this new economy. The importance of lordship and the expanding power of the monarchy are also characteristics of Late Saxon England. The enclosed manor house at Goltho provides an exceptional example of a thegnly residence, where the landowner's principal holding overlooked agricultural plots and housing structures. The presence of kitchens, goldsmiths and considerable wild animal remains at sites like Cheddar and Faccombe, speak to the growing stature of the Wessex monarchs. The presence of a goldsmith, like the huntsmen mentioned in the Domesday, reflect the opportunities available to those who served a powerful lord.

This shaking-off of old economic models rattled the existing social order. Archbishop Wulfstan's tract on status, the *Gepyncðo*, intimates that certain elite were unnerved by this new arrangement. The tone of the document is one of clarification, laying out the necessary achievements or wealth an individual needed to acquire thegnly

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²⁹³ Ibid, 198.

status. *Gehyncðo* suggests that social divisions and status were somewhat more difficult to discern. Wealthy tenth and eleventh century Saxons, therefore, engaged in increasingly competitive social displays to articulate their place in society. Any degree of social fluidity present in this system, therefore, was followed by an acute wave of social tension. Goltho was a thriving Late Saxon medieval village, but only the thegn, his family, and their attendants, lived in the fortified enclosure.

Cnut's eleventh century hunting law, the commendation practices and *hagan* mentions detailed in the charters, and Late Saxon zooarchaeological data reveal hunting's exclusionary effectiveness. On the one hand, successful hunts required hand-raised falcons, hunting dogs, manicured landscapes, and a hunting party. The faunal evidence, meanwhile, demonstrates that wild game was limited to manorial lords. Some well-off urban residents, like those who inhabited the *insula* at Queen Street, Oxford, could utilize their wealth to eat like aristocrats and buy cuts of venison. More often than not, however, those partaking of wild fowl and roe deer slept in aisled halls, where they ate meals prepared for them in ancillary kitchens.

Chapter Three

Hunting Iconography in Northern English Stone Sculpture

In 1981, members of All Saints Church in Harewood, West Yorkshire, orchestrated a small-scale conservation project concerning six medieval alabaster tombs inside the church. A large cross fragment was found, mortared into a recess of one of the tombs. Stylistically, this slab is dated to the tenth century and contains a unique free-style carving depicting two large beasts. The carving is crude and lacks the realism and modeling typical of Anglian monastic sculptures. Nevertheless, the image is captivating. One large beast appears to be biting the antler of the animal below it. Almost floating at the top of the scene, a man grabs the collar of the top animal. In his other hand he holds a knife.²⁹⁴

Tenth century hunting scenes, like the one discovered at Harewood, occur with some frequency throughout northern England. Sculptural production increased exponentially in the Late Saxon period in those areas most impacted by Scandinavian assimilation.²⁹⁵ In the Mid Saxon period sculpture was a strictly monastic art and only religious iconography was employed. Late Saxon patrons of stone sculpture, however, routinely utilized secular imagery, particularly hunting scenes, to make social statements. This chapter will argue that these carvings represent the growth of a particular type of lordship particular to northern England. The “extraordinary transformations” of the Late Saxon period, tenurial change, urbanization, and the proliferation of ‘feudal’ institutions, did not occur uniformly.²⁹⁶ Stone monuments, both in their frequency and iconography,

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²⁹⁴ See pages 87-8 for more discussion on the Harewood stone.

²⁹⁵ Richard N. Bailey, “The Chronology of Viking Age Sculpture in Northumbria,” in *Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age Art in its Context*, edited by James Lang. (Oxford: BAR, 1979), 174.

²⁹⁶ Fleming, “The New Wealth,” 1.

intimate a landowning structure centered on villages administered by a local lord. While this system is unique to Northumbria and northern England, it is not altogether dissimilar from models in southern England. Whether Late Saxon shires were governed by a village lord or a reeve serving a powerful thegn, both developments represent the reorientation of landownership around local lords. These landowners used the visual language of hunting to express their distinction.

The regionally specific nature of the sculpture contrasts with the broader scope observed in the first two chapters, but illuminates the distinctive sociopolitical character of a region that was often ignored by Late Saxon chroniclers. This chapter will briefly survey the contextual factors which encouraged the production of monumental sculpture in the tenth century. Each hunting scene will then be addressed. This discussion is organized geographically, beginning with those stones found in North Yorkshire and ending with the sculptures present on the Irish Sea coast in the west. Such a discussion reveals how contemporary Late Saxons interpreted and understood such scenes. Hunting scene sculptures, when analyzed alongside similar monuments without such iconography, reveal the commemorative function of the carvings. Like the manor houses discussed in the previous chapter, these carvings honored certain individuals, who erected monumental sculpture to make social statements. It is natural, therefore, that these statements frequently utilized images of hunting.

Political Context and Impetus for Stone Carving

Scandinavian involvement in Late Saxon England can be summarized by three major episodes: the subjugation of all but one of the major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms by the ‘great heathen army’ of the 860s, the expulsion of the Dublin Vikings in the first years of

the tenth century, and Cnut's conquest of the united English kingdom in 1016. While all three events impacted the political landscape, the second event is most closely associated with monumental carvings and elite burials. Indeed, Irish sculptural elements are a distinguishing feature in dating Viking Age sculpture and the people behind this impetus have often been described as Hiberno-Norse due to these Irish affiliations.²⁹⁷ More recent scholarship, however, highlights the anachronism of such a reference, emphasizing instead the fact that lordship trumped matters of ethnicity in early medieval constructions of identity at this time.²⁹⁸

Nevertheless the western orientation of northern England in the tenth century is observed in several major criteria. Place-names along the northwest coast of England indicate the presence of Irish settlers. Irby in Wirral stems from the Old Norse *Irabyr*, or 'settlement of the Irish.'²⁹⁹ Many place names throughout northern England also exhibit the *-aergi* compound, such as Grimsargh in Lancashire and Mansergh in Westmorland, which is a Scandinavian influenced form of the Celtic word for shieling.³⁰⁰ Place-name scholars have characterized the entire northwest region of England as rich in West Norse, or Norwegian, place-names.³⁰¹ A similar West Norse flavor is also discerned along the coastal areas of North Yorkshire; both regions contain large quantities of sculpture.³⁰² Many churches that house such sculpture similarly reveal an Irish-Norse presence. St.

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²⁹⁷ A major influence in this interpretation is Alfred Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin: The History and Archaeology of Two Related Viking Kingdoms* (Dublin: Templekieran Press, 1975), 80.

²⁹⁸ Clare Downham, "'Hiberno-Norwegians' and 'Anglo-Danes': Anachronistic Ethnicities in Viking Age England," in *Medieval Scandinavia* 19 (2009):140-1.

²⁹⁹ Paul Cavill, "Major Place-Names of the Wirral: A Gazetteer," in *Wirral and its Viking Heritage*, edited by Paul Cavill, Stephen E. Harding and Judith Jesch (Nottingham: English Place Name Society, 2000), 137.

³⁰⁰ Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Place-Names of the Irish Sea Province," in *Viking Treasure from the North West: Cuerdale Hoard in its Context*, edited by James Graham-Campbell (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), 38-9.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 34-6.

³⁰² Gillian Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* (Copenhagen: Commission of Academic Publishing, 1972), 193.

Brigid's Church and St. Olaf's Church in Merseyside commemorate an Irish and a Norwegian saint. A medieval quay at York, *Divelinstaynes*, now Dublin Stones, reinforces the relationship between Dublin, York and the Northumbria.³⁰³ Moreover, several tenth century coin hoards have been discovered in the northwest. The most notable of them, in Cuerdale, is the largest Viking silver hoard in the British Isles. The hoard displayed silver ingots and arm rings associated with the Hiberno-Norse. The prevailing view is that this hoard represents the payment to an army associated with either the maintaining or taking of York.³⁰⁴

Stone sculpture proliferated when York and Dublin were ruled by kings who belonged to the same "dynastic" family.³⁰⁵ While northern English sculptures contain certain Irish influences, namely, the use of hunting imagery and the presence of ring-headed crosses, the political and social fluidity present in much of the material culture in northern England prompts reservation in assigning too much influence to one specific sociopolitical group.³⁰⁶ Regardless, a key feature of tenth century Northumbrian political history is the importance of the York-Dublin axis. The last Viking king of York, for instance, was killed on Stainmore Road, fleeing York and heading west towards Ireland.³⁰⁷ It is unknown how foreign these Viking kings and lords were to tenth century Northumbrians. The first wave of Scandinavian immigration began in the mid-ninth century and the documentary evidence relays several instances where Northumbrians and

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³⁰³ D.M. Palliser, *Medieval York, 600-1540* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 56. See also Richard Hall, *The Viking Dig* (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), 91, 104.

³⁰⁴ James Graham-Campbell, "The Cuerdale Hoard: Comparisons and Context," in *Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuerdale in its Context* (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), 113-4.

³⁰⁵ Clare Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ivarr to AD 1014* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2008).

³⁰⁶ Downham, 139-41.

³⁰⁷ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 284.

the bishops of York sided with Dublin Viking rulers over Wessex kings.³⁰⁸

Sculptural production, therefore, occurred during a particularly turbulent period. Lands changed hands with some frequency as kings conquered, lost, and regained territory throughout the tenth century. The *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* confirms this phenomenon. After King Ragnald of Dublin raided Durham, “the whole land was conquered,” and divided among his supporters.³⁰⁹ Ragnald’s hegemony over the area was short lived. An act of divine intervention allegedly brought the land back to the St. Cuthbert community. This act probably represented an arrangement between the new lords and the St. Cuthbert clerics.³¹⁰ The mixing of secular and ecclesiastical authority is also present on the sculptures themselves.

Hunting, Stone Sculpture, and Lordship

Historians use Late Saxon sculpture to make several interesting claims. Some view the monuments as articles of conversion due to the fact that these monuments were erected during a period when York kings were described as pagan by contemporary chroniclers.³¹¹ Additional scholars use the stones as evidence for the survival of parishes that disappeared in the documentary record of the Viking period.³¹² Additionally, the presence of sculpture in churchyards without any pre-Viking parish suggests that large numbers of parishes were established during this same tenth century period.³¹³ The most

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³⁰⁸ A good synopsis can be found in Stafford, 33-4.

³⁰⁹ Ted Johnson South, trans., *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of His Patrimony* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 60-2.

³¹⁰ William M. Aird, *St. Cuthbert and the Normans: The Church of Durham, 1071-1153* (Woodbridge, Sussex: The Boydell Press, 1998), 39-40.

³¹¹ Thomas H. Ohlgren, “The Pagan Iconography of Christian Ideas: Tree-Lore in Anglo-Viking England,” *Mediaevistik* 1 (1998), 145-6

³¹² Rosemary Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, Volume I: County Durham and Northumberland*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 208-14, 53-9.

³¹³ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 313.

prominent monument type was the cross and the additional presence of Christian iconography confirms the religious orientation of the stones. While many scenes depict warfare, hunting, or secular iconography, Insular stone carving was a product of early medieval Christian art and any argument advancing the notion that these sculptures were anything other than Christian monuments is difficult to sustain.

The religiosity present in the carvings, however, does not preclude secular significance. The inscribed shaft at Crowle, for instance, honored the burial of a certain lord, whose name is now missing.³¹⁴ Additionally, a sundial engraved in the early medieval church at Kirkdale, Yorkshire, features an Old English inscription honoring a certain “Orm, son of Gamal,” for rebuilding the church sometime in the early eleventh century.³¹⁵ Orm and Gamal are Scandinavian names. The *-kirkja* element, meaning church, present in Kirkdale is a common Scandinavian element found in place-names throughout Northumbria. Given the dearth of documentary evidence pertaining to Northumbrian parishes, sculptures and *-kirkja* place-names reveal the “skeleton of the medieval parochial system” in Northumbria.³¹⁶

The construction of lordship, the character of the church, and the social organization of northern England is distinct from that of southern England, particularly Wessex and Mercia. These differences could reflect either Viking assimilation or indigenous Northumbrian developments. Documentary evidence provides certain instances where Northumbrian ecclesiastics preferred the autonomy associated with Anglo-Scandinavian kings to Wessex hegemony. According to the *Historia de Sancto*

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³¹⁴ Ibid, 147-52.

³¹⁵ Lang, *Corpus*, III, 163-66..

³¹⁶ Aleksandra McClain, “Local Churches and the Conquest of the North: Elite Patronage and Identity in Saxo-Norman Northumbria,” in *Early Medieval Northumbria: Kingdoms and Communities, 450-1100*, edited by S. Turner and D. Petts (Turnout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), 174.

Cuthberto, St. Cuthbert appeared to a Northumbrian abbot in a dream, informing him to enter the camp of the Vikings and take a “Dane” as king.³¹⁷ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records an instance where King Edward pursued the Archbishop of York, Wulfstan, for siding with the Viking king of York and Dublin, Olaf Sigtryggson, in the 941.³¹⁸ In 947, Wulfstan caused further controversy by electing Eric Bloodaxe as king, provoking the ire of Eadred of Wessex, who imprisoned Wulfstan when he conquered York in 952.³¹⁹ The sculptures themselves demonstrate the engagement of the Northumbrian clergy. Many Yorkshire sculptures were fashioned from reused Roman ashlar from York, suggesting that the archbishop condoned or approved of the practice.³²⁰ Some of these stones are found in far removed locations, further implicating the involvement of the York bishopric in propagating this unique facet of Northumbrian lordship.

A few sculptural production centers reiterate the complex relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authority in northern England. The sculptures present at Sockburn, Durham, a pre-Viking minster, suggest Durham played an important ecclesiastical role in the Viking period. Both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Symeon of Durham relate the existence of a monastery there in the late eighth century.³²¹ No Anglian sculpture survives on the site but twenty-three ninth and tenth century fragments are located at All Saints church. For a known ecclesiastical site the sculptures have a surprisingly secular bent. Several Sockburn shafts feature single panel depictions of

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³¹⁷ J. Stevenson, trans., *The Church Historians of England, Volume III, Part II: The Historical Works of Simeon of Durham* (London: Seeley's, 1855), 478.

³¹⁸ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 221.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 223.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, 198.

³²¹ Quoted in Dave Went and Marcus Jecock, *Sockburn Hall, Darlington: An Archaeological Investigation of the Medieval and Post-Medieval Manors and the Settings of the Pre-Conquest Church* (Swindon, Wiltshire: English Heritage, 2007), 7.

representational animals and individuals. This arrangement is also seen in Ireland. Eighth and ninth century crosses in Bealin and Banagher in County Offaly, for instance, contain the same single panel arrangements and also depict hounds and deer.

The most complete fragment of this type exhibits four such panels. On one side the silhouette of a side-facing warrior wielding a spear and a sheathed knife or sword is displayed in the upper panel. The lower panel depicts a stag facing the same direction. On the other side of the cross, a backward facing hound or canine is situated below a panel exhibiting two median-incised closed circuit loops. This cross only hints at hunting but another cross at Sockburn is more suggestive. It displays a mounted rider wielding a falcon. Carved above the rider is a large pretzeled serpent and below him are two figures sharing a horn. The most common interpretation is that of a female figure on the left handing a drinking horn to the man on the right.³²² Perhaps these scenes depict two activities that the man commemorated by the stone most enjoyed.



Figure 3.1 and 3.2

Sockburn 7 (left) and Sockburn 3 (right).

Images by W.H. Knowles, 1905.

The presence of secular imagery on stone sculpture at a known ecclesiastical

³²² Ibid, 136-7. *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* designations will be utilized.

center is noteworthy, and most of the sculpture at Sockburn contains similar iconography. Indeed, the only stone with religious iconography at Sockburn is found on a hogback, a distinctively Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural form, featuring a confused scene with men and animals. The most commonly accepted interpretation of this hogback is that it represents Daniel in the lion's den.³²³ This confused arrangement is not dissimilar to images of mounted warriors and hunters on the other Sockburn stones and may also highlight the status of a deceased lord. Although the secular orientation of these carvings may at first seem perplexing, Sockburn has been described as a part of a larger school, or workshop, servicing the Northern Yorkshire area of Allertonshire, in what must have been a very wealthy tenth century enclave.³²⁴

In close proximity to Sockburn is Brompton. Like Sockburn, Brompton produced large numbers of tenth century stone sculpture. Many of these stones feature secular iconography, including both portraits and hunting scenes. Brompton contains twenty-six fragments of cross slabs, shafts, and hogbacks, all dating to the first half of the tenth century.³²⁵ Like Sockburn, Brompton was a member of the Allertonshire workshop of sculpture. The innovation present in Brompton sculptures, particularly the diversity and quality of hogback stones, suggest that Brompton held particular prestige in the area. Lang, for instance, argued that Brompton was the likely place of origin for the monument type.³²⁶ The documentary evidence for Brompton in this period is slight, but the Domesday recording indicates Brompton residents were paying a large amount of tax

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³²³ Ibid, 143-4.

³²⁴ Lang, *Corpus*, VI, 44-5.

³²⁵ Lang, *Corpus*, VI, 65-79.

³²⁶ Ibid, 47.

compared to other local settlements at the time of the inquest.³²⁷ The sculptures hint at a culture of competitive display among the wealthy. Like Sockburn, one Brompton cross shaft features single-panel representational animals similar to the Irish examples in Bealin and Banagher.

Nearby Kirklevington also contains sculpture exhibiting hunting scenes. Kirklevington has approximately twenty-four fragments of tenth century stone sculpture. One fragment built into the interior north wall of the vestry contains a 'hart and hound' image, a motif found prominently throughout Viking dominated regions of Yorkshire and Cumbria. Only the front torso and legs of a jumping hound atop a running antlered stag, however, remains of the original iconography.



Image 3.3

Kirklevington 11

Drawing by W.G.
Collingwood, 1907.

The potential meaning and significance of the hart and hound iconographical program is discussed below, but Kirklevington sculptures reveal aspects of the art-style transmission of this motif. Lang notes the inherent similarities of the Kirklevington, Brompton, and Sockburn sculptures, but emphasized particular affinities between the Kirklevington stones and monuments in County Kildare, Ireland.³²⁸ This link in art-style transmission, combined with the similar single-panel hunting motifs found in sculptures in North Yorkshire and County Offaly, demonstrate that stone-working craftsmen were

³²⁷ Williams and Martin, 82.

³²⁸ Lang, *Corpus VI*, 48-9.

drawing on Irish sculptural traditions for their Anglo-Scandinavian patrons.

Three other sculptures in North Yorkshire feature hunting. All contain hart and hound iconography. A shaft in Forcett may contain hunting imagery on both faces of the shaft. Both Forcett and Stanwick are within close proximity to Allertonshire, but many of the characteristics of the school are absent in both locations.³²⁹ Nineteen tenth century fragments were found at St. John the Baptist church in Stanwick. Most of these stones are heavily fragmented and built into the church walls. Two stones are thought to depict hounds or stags but the most convincing is the heavily fragmented face of a running stag. No hound is present but it is thought that the original carving was indeed a hart and hound.³³⁰ Moreover, the split-strand of molding present on the remaining border was a common device used by Manx sculptors, in addition to being present on a hogback found at Gosforth, Cumbria. Nearby Forcett contains five fragments, but the shaft in the best condition bears both a clear example of the hart and hound in addition to another scene that might display hunting. The hart and hound present on Forcett also contains a coiled snake, an element found in other hart and hound examples. The reverse side of Forcett depicts boars or a boar hunt. Scholars have been quick to note the associations of boars to the Norse god Freyr, but the iconography is not particularly revealing.³³¹ Moreover much of the sculpture at Forcett has been termed “a rustic response,” to the more stylish carvings found in Allertonshire.³³²

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³²⁹ Ibid, 49.

³³⁰ Ibid, 206.

³³¹ Ibid, 110.

³³² Ibid, 111.



Image 3.4

Forcett 1, depicting
a possible boar
hunt.

Drawn by W.G.
Collingwood, 1907.

Staying within North Yorkshire, St. Mary's in Wath wielded a handful of fragments of considerably poor quality. The hunting scene in question is another example of the hart and hound motif and survives in two fragments. While not particularly illuminating, the small number of fragments found there reveals a critical distinction within Northumbrian sculpture. Stocker argued that sites with Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture were either 'normal' sites with one to three fragments on average, or 'exceptional' and contained a great deal more.³³³ These exceptional sites, such as Sockburn and Brompton, represented wealthy enclaves of merchants, traders, or Viking lords. Wath may not have housed a wealthy population of merchants or aristocrats like Brompton but the presence of sculpture suggests a landowner there wanted to be commemorated in a similar fashion.

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³³³ Stocker, 201.



Image 3.5

Wath 1

Drawing by W.G. Collingwood,
1907

Harewood, in Western Yorkshire, is another example of the more typical arrangement of one to three fragments found per sculptural site. Only one incomplete tenth century slab was recovered at All Saints church in Harewood, possibly signaling the foundation of the parish at that approximate date.³³⁴ Butler suggested that the shaft's distinctive lack of Christian symbolism caused its concealment during the restoration of the church in the mid-nineteenth century.³³⁵ The Harewood sculpture's crude free-style depictions of animals are shared by many tenth century Northumbrian sculptures while remaining singular due to the nature of the carving. The arrangement of stacked animals is a feature of hart and hound iconography but the hatching, decorative elements, and rustic freestyle presentation of the beasts is unique. Moreover, the lower animal is, like Forcett 1A, more boar-like. Harewood could depict a hart and hound or simply illustrate a hunting scene. Above the top quadruped a man is carved with a bag draped over his back, holding the collar of the top animal while wielding a knife. Below the scene is a confused arrangement. A head and neck is discerned, along with some unknown details, perhaps grass or even a serpent. The shape of the knife itself has been identified as a late pre-

³³⁴ L.A.S. Butler, "All Saints Church, Harewood," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 58 (1986), 87.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 97.

Conquest model by Bailey and can be seen in sculptures at Middleton and Bilton.³³⁶



Image 3.6

Harewood 1A

Photo by Harewood
House Trust, used with
permission.

Harewood's hunting scene is unique but there are two analogues for such an arrangement. Unsurprisingly, one of these examples is at All Saints Church in Staveley, not far from Harewood. The second is observed in Prestbury, Cheshire. Prestbury houses three examples of tenth century sculpture but there are some indications that Prestbury's tenth and eleventh century church was an impressive one. First, there is the name itself which signifies it was the 'priests-*burgh*' even though no church or priests are listed in Domesday for this region.³³⁷ In fact, based on Domesday inquiries the region was rather poor, administered by a few large and comparatively wealthy estates in Adlington and

³³⁶ Ibid, 99.

³³⁷ N.J. Higham, *The Origins of Cheshire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 172-3.

Macclesfield, owned by Earl Edwin of Mercia. Although not named specifically in the Domesday survey, Prestbury was the parish site for Adlington and Macclesfield in the Norman period and this arrangement was surely pre-Conquest.³³⁸ Furthermore, in the later Middle Ages Prestbury served thirty-three townships in the south and center of the region and this situation probably reflects earlier developments.³³⁹ This region of Cheshire was known for its hunting in the Domesday inquest and an equal number of *hagan* are named in Adlington and Macclesfield and both contained eyries.³⁴⁰ Therefore Adlington, Macclesfield and Prestbury were likely the administrative and ecclesiastical foci of a comparatively poor region made up of dependents working the land for the Earl of Mercia, who utilized the surrounding woodlands for hunting and falconry.

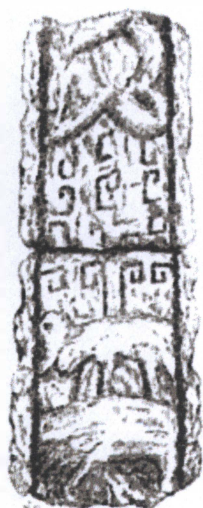


Image 3.7

Narrow face of cross shaft in Prestbury, Cheshire.

Illustration by Croston, 1907.

One of the Prestbury fragments is missing and the other two were incorrectly adjoined during the nineteenth century restoration of the church.³⁴¹ The narrow, north side of the first fragmented cross contains an arrangement not dissimilar to a hart and

³³⁸ Clarice Stella Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), 300.

³³⁹ Higham, 172.

³⁴⁰ Williams and Martin, 720

³⁴¹ James Croston, "On an Anglo-Saxon Cross at Prestbury," *The Reliquary*, XXV (July, 1884), 2.

hound, except the top beast in the vertical arrangement is larger than typical hounds and the torso appears to have a decorative arrangement similar to the example at Harewood. Its gaping jaws grab at the antlers of the beast below it, although this is not discerned in Croston's illustration. Bailey, furthermore, identifies a horseman immediately below this arrangement.³⁴² This horseman is thought to be holding a spear or bird and his steed is very thin and in a crouched position. This horseman is admittedly difficult to see and also not mentioned by Croston. The arrangement could be part of the spiral-scroll decoration that occupies much of the upper part of the cross face. The other faces of this shaft contain spiral scrolls, a *triquetra*, and free-style figures reminiscent of Cumbrian and Manx sculpture, illustrating Prestbury's connection to the larger Northumbrian political milieu and the Irish Sea zone.³⁴³

Another analogue to the unusual Harewood scene can be found at Staveley. This site produced just one piece of tenth century sculpture. The entire cross shaft survives except for the upper part of the cross head. It stands in a battered rectangular base so close to the wall that it can only be viewed using a photograph and mirror. This face is extremely worn and may have been placed in its current state in the early twentieth century, like the Harewood example, to obscure the hunting depiction. While this scene is almost invisible, what can be discerned is suggestive of a hunting scene.³⁴⁴ A narrow side of this same shaft, however, provides a more visible hunting arrangement. This scene features two individuals, one on top of the other, both wielding tools of the hunt: the top figure holds a horn and the lower one handles a spear. A hunting party with a spear-

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³⁴² Bailey, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, Volume IX: Cheshire and Lancashire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁴⁴ The best view can be found in Coatsworth, ill. 715.

wielding huntsman and a horn-carrier, it is remembered, graces the Cotton Tiberius calendar described in the first chapter. The legs and torso of a falcon or bird can be seen above the man holding a horn. Next to the lower figure is a thin-bodied quadruped placed awkwardly with its legs touching the right-edge of the panel. Coatsworth describes another figure above the quadruped but it is weathered and difficult to see.

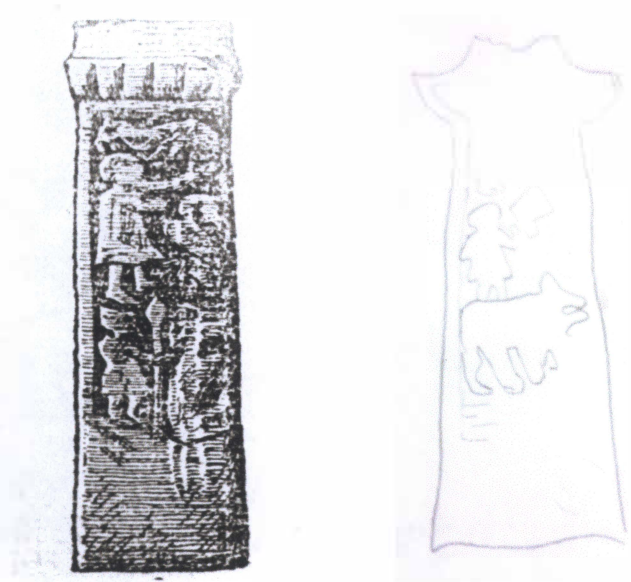


Image 3.8 and 3.9

Left: Staveley 1 B, illustration by Collingwood, 1907. Right: Staveley 1 C, illustration by the author, utilizing a mirrored photograph in Coatsworth, 2008.

While the large creature on the weathered side of Staveley most resembles the beasts at Harewood, the narrow hunting arrangement is paralleled at a cross in Middleton, Ryedale. The Middleton scene is arranged on the broad front face of the shaft but the hounds are placed vertically like the Staveley example. Below the two hounds is a large antlered stag. Opposite the stag is a huntsman with a sheathed knife, similar to the example of the knife-wielding hunter at Harewood. The Middleton cross is distinctive for a number of reasons. The elaborate hunt scene is better preserved than those depicted in the West Yorkshire examples. Additionally, the carvers of the Middleton cross specialized in secular portraiture, reiterating the commemorative role of Northumbrian stones. Perhaps the most famous Middleton cross, referred to as Middleton 2 in the

Corpus, features a man and his lordly accoutrements: a knife, axe, spear and shield.

Binns, operating under the assumption the figure was lying down, described the scene as commemorating a pagan with his grave goods.³⁴⁵ Lang, however, emphasized the shapes just over the figure's shoulder to advocate the interpretation that the scene portrayed a lord sitting on his *gifstol*.³⁴⁶



Image 3.10

Middleton 1A

Photo by Cathy McBurney
and used with permission.

While Middleton produced secular portraiture, it must be noted that this sculptural milieu also commemorated clergy. Such a cross is found in near Middleton, catalogued as

³⁴⁵ Alan Binns, "Tenth Century Carvings from Yorkshire and the Jellinge Style," *Årbok for Universitet i Bergen: Historisk-Antikvarisk Rekke* 2 (1956), 16-22.

³⁴⁶ Lang, *Corpus*, III, 181.

Stonegrave 1. Like other sites discussed so far, Stonegrave held a monastic community in the eighth century. Pre-Viking sculpture at the site shares stylistic affinities with Viking period carvings, suggesting a degree of ecclesiastical continuity.³⁴⁷ Stonegrave 1 is a large cross but the top of the crosshead is missing. The carving features a priest and another figure superimposed over weaving strands of knot-work and interlace. One figure is placed near the top of the cross, which is somewhat fragmented and weathered, while the lower figure is carved in *orans* position. Stonegrave 1 is included in this discussion because other Stonegrave sculptures employ hunting imagery. These examples, however, are less potent than Stonegrave 1. One stone, for instance, is unusual for its depiction of an archer. The recumbent slab is broken and worn but reveals an archer and stag facing each other in close proximity.³⁴⁸ An additional fragment at Stonegrave may share another connection to hunting. This recumbent slab merely exhibits a hound-like quadruped with a bird perched on its back. The incomplete nature of the iconography makes interpretation difficult on both of these stones. Stonegrave 1, however, is a powerful example of how clergy were also commemorated in this Anglo-Scandinavian milieu. If one accepts the fact that hunting scene sculptures commemorated local lords, and some of these stones are found at Stonegrave, then Stonegrave 1 certainly commemorated a cleric. Clerical acquiescence or involvement in this milieu was already demonstrated, but Stonegrave 1 reveals that clergy actively participated in this culture.

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³⁴⁷ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, 261

³⁴⁸ The archer present on the Stonegrave recumbent slab is weathered and difficult to replicate, a photograph can be seen in Lang, *Corpus*, III, 219-220, ill. 861.



Figure 3.11

Right: Stonegrave 1, illustrated by W.G. Collingwood, 1907.

There are other carvings of priests present on stones in this corpus, but not far from Stonegrave is another recumbent slab featuring a possible hunting scene. This slab, at Kirkdale, exhibits a hart and hound, although the stone is fragmented and the hound is no longer present. Interestingly the stopped-plait patterns found in some Kirkdale sculptures are most commonly found in the Cumbria, further reinforcing the notion that the art-style transmission of these sculptures emanated from the Irish Sea. Yet another example of a hart and hound is found at Saint Hilda's church in Ellerburn, which shares a common North Yorkshire moor border with Kirkdale. The hart and hound scene is, again, fragmented and weathered but the shape of the shaft shares contours with another example in Cumbria, the famous Gosforth Cross.



Image 3.12

Ellerburn 5 at St. Hilda's,
Ellerburn.

Photograph by Project
Woruldthord, used with
permission.

A common theme uniting tenth century Northumbrian carvings is the impact of artistic developments from Man and Ireland. Therefore it is unsurprising that carvings on England's western shores also exhibited these characteristics. Four such sculptures on the northwest coast feature hunt scenes. A brief discussion of these sculptures provides valuable insights into the regional character of lordship in the northwest. Neston in the Wirral peninsula is bordered by Wales to the South, the Irish Sea to the west, and Lancashire to the north. Irish annals reveal that Hiberno-Norse settlers moved into Wirral shortly after their expulsion from Dublin in 902.³⁴⁹ Neston is unusual in that, unlike most of the other Wirral sculpture sites, it lies outside a mile of the coast. There are no indications that a parish existed in Neston prior to the tenth century but the Domesday indicates a priest resided there in 1066.³⁵⁰ Furthermore, Higham argues that the Neston parish held 'mother church' status and was thought to have been a wealthier site for the

³⁴⁹ I.L. Foster, trans., "The Story of Ingimund from the *Fragmenta Trium Annalium Hiberniae*," in "Ingimund's Invasion," by F.T. Wainwright. *The English Historical Review* CCXLVII (April, 1948), 167-8.

³⁵⁰ Williams and Martin, 727.

area.³⁵¹ The five tenth century sculptures at St. Mary and St. Helen church in Neston reinforce this notion.



Image 3.13

Neston cross shaft fragment depicting a priest in *orans* position.

Photo by the author.

Evidence for an ecclesiastical community present at Neston is confirmed additionally on a cross slab fragment. Like Stonegrave, this sculpture features a priest wearing liturgical vestments and in the *orans* position. Furthermore, fragments of a circle-head depict both an angel and a wrestling scene. The pair of wrestlers could be Biblical and provide an example of Jacob wrestling the angel, but given the secular portraiture common to this milieu, it could also represent a valorous or martial act. For instance, until recently it was believed that this cross-head fragment belonged to another shaft fragment at Neston displaying a stunning hunt scene.³⁵² This shaft contains an antlered stag being attacked on two fronts. A hound bites at the stag's neck while a hunter plunges a spear into its torso above him. Immediately above this scene stand two figures

³⁵¹ Higham, 132.

³⁵² Bailey, *Corpus*, 86-7.

only visible from the waist down. The opposite face of the shaft portrays two hounds, or perhaps a hound and another backward facing deer or quadruped, overlooking a bottom panel where two mounted horsemen face each other in a duel-like arrangement. Their spears cross to form a saltire just below the panel border separating the top scene.



Image 3.14

A modern reconstruction of Neston 3 found in St. Mary and St. Helen's church in Neston, Wirral. Photo by the author.

Documentary evidence for the northwest is slight, but the sculpture at Neston connects this region to the rest of Northumbria, highlighting the role sculpture played in conveying lordship. The secular flavor on the Neston shaft is evident but other hunting scenes contain a blend of religious and secular symbolism. Heysham and Lancaster are both located in close proximity to Morecambe Bay in Lancashire and contain interesting examples of the hart and hound motif, albeit in radically different displays. Lancaster Priory is home to ten Saxon fragments, many of which pre-date the Viking period, illustrating the ecclesiastical character of the site. This shaft provides a rare depiction of a serpent carved into the mouth of the stag. The stag is standing or running stoically while a hound attacks him from above. Below this scene is a complex ring-knot with three concentric circles interwoven with four median-incised strands. The character of the

carving, specifically the lobed turns and spiral offshoots present in the knot-work are a common in Manx sculpture.³⁵³



Image 3.15 and 3.16

Left: Lancaster St. Mary 4, illustrated by Collingwood, 1911. Below: Heysham 5, illustrated by Collingwood, 1927.



The serpent-like heads seen in the interlace terminals in Collingwood's drawing of the Lancaster stone cannot be corroborated presently due to fragmentation. Even without them, the presence of a serpent in the hart's mouth is unique among examples of this motif. Very close to Lancaster is St. Patrick's in Heysham, which is also home to a tenth century carving with a unique hunting arrangement. This stone, a hogback with end-beasts, contains a narrative scene on each side. On the front side, two figures on the north and south end appear to be holding up the panel. Strange quadrupeds and hounds are carved throughout the remainder of the piece with the hart and hound arrangement

³⁵³ Ibid, 222-3.

present near the center of one of the broad faces. The roof of the hogback, normally used for tegulation or non-narrative decoration, depicts a figure, either lying down or standing, at the head of an additional hound. The opposite side hosts an image of a man, either holding up the panel or in *orans* position, with more beasts and a tree to the immediate right of the individual. Interpretations for this carving vary wildly. Some view the Heysham hogback as a sculpture commemorating a Viking lord through pagan imagery.³⁵⁴ Margeson alternatively advocates a secular reading, interpreting both faces of the sculpture as examples of hunt scenes.³⁵⁵ Rosemary Cramp advocates a mixed reading, believing the monument to represent a “contrast between the traditional myths of the Germanic world and the Christian message.”³⁵⁶ Heysham, like Lancaster, hosts pre-Viking sculpture. Archaeological evidence at St. Patrick’s chapel reveals ecclesiastic activity at the site as early as the eighth century.³⁵⁷ Very early accounts of the Heysham hogback indicate weaponry was found underneath the stone, possibly grave goods, but this is impossible to confirm.³⁵⁸

The hart and hound motifs present at Lancaster St. Mary and Heysham are both found near the Irish Sea in the western English territory of Cumbria, a rural region that was alternately ruled by Northumbrian and Scottish kings. Another Cumbrian stone with a unique hart and hound display is found in Dacre. Like Heysham and Lancaster, Dacre

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³⁵⁴ Thor Ewing, “Understanding the Heysham Hogback: A Tenth Century Sculpted Stone and its Context,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 152(2004), 17.

³⁵⁵ Sue Margeson, “The Volsung Legend in Medieval Art,” in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative*, edited by Flemming Gotthelf Andersen (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1980), 191.

³⁵⁶ Rosemary Cramp, “The Sculpture,” in “Excavation and Survey at St. Patrick’s Chapel and St. Peter’s Church, Heysham, Lancashire, 1977-8,” by T.W. Potter and R.D. Andrews. *The Antiquaries Journal* 74 (1994), 61.

³⁵⁷ Potter and Andrews, 67.

³⁵⁸ Young, *CASSS IX*, 201.

held a pre-Viking monastery, mentioned by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*.³⁵⁹ In this stone, however, the hunting image is just one iconographical fixture within a series. At the top of what is presumed to be a cross slab, a backward looking quadruped glances at an S shaped object which is carved just above the smaller of two figures holding hands. A square is incised in-between the two figures just under their held hands. Immediately below the pair is the hart and hound, rather crudely carved. An uneven and meandering two-strand panel separates these images from the bottom depiction of what is surely Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.³⁶⁰



Image 3.17

The cross shaft at Dacre.

Image by W.G.
Collingwood, 1927.

Bailey's discussion of the cross shaft at Dacre relies on the corresponding scenes to articulate the notion that hart and hound iconography embodied a fundamentally Christian message. The hart and hound, when placed alongside the 'fall of man' and, what Bailey views as Abraham and Isaac on the top portion of the shaft, combine to

³⁵⁹ Judith McClure and Roger Collins, editors, *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 232.

³⁶⁰ Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*, 92.

convey a “Christological” message revealing Christ’s passion.³⁶¹ The etymologies of early patristic writers connecting Christ and Christians to stags and deer, in addition to various Biblical psalms, have been described above. Bailey also references a twelfth century manuscript, the *Hortus Deliciarum*, which dictates that “the hunt of the Christian is the conversion of sinners,” to support his argument. Dacre’s pre-Viking church status and iconographical arrangement reveals that the hart and hound *could* be used for religious symbolism. The application of this motif as a religious metaphor was not uniform, however. Many of the hunt scenes described above exhibit religious sentiment in form rather than iconography.

Not all hunting scenes contain a ‘hart and hound’ image. This prompts the question as to whether all hunt scenes convey a Christian message or just stones featuring a hart and hound motif. Either scenario seems unlikely. The use of hunting imagery in Anglo-Saxon sculpture occurred alongside increased production of commemorative sculpture for local lords and wealthy merchants, decorated with secular imagery. Why would hunting scenes be altogether different than the secular portraits found in Middleton and elsewhere? Even if Neston was a parish site in pre-Conquest Wirral, the image of a hunted stag alongside secular portraits suggests these depictions were commemorative rather than Christological. It is more likely that the carvings carried layered meaning honoring both secular and religious ideas. Their purpose as high status burial markers during a brief period coinciding with the domination of Anglo-Scandinavian leaders reinforces their commemorative nature. It is unwise to assume that the Northumbrian secular elite were as “well-versed in the intricacies of early Christian exegesis” as learned clerics in the reformed minsters in southern England, or for that matter, modern

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³⁶¹ Bailey, “The Meaning of the Viking-Age Shaft at Dacre,” 69.

academics.³⁶²

This survey of hunting scene sculptures suggests that Northumbrian churches were of a different character than their southern counterparts; these southern churches did not utilize monumental sculpture, were endowed by regional aristocracy, practiced Episcopal succession and were deeply influenced by the Benedictine reforms of the tenth century. This does not mean that hunting symbolism carried different connotations in north and south. Ultimately, no evidence survives articulating different social reactions to hunting in northern and southern England. Goltho and Flixborough were both influenced by Anglo-Scandinavian assimilation in pre-Conquest England and share wild game consumption patterns of southern English manors like Cheddar and Facombe.

Context and Distribution

Many sculptures, particularly in Yorkshire and the North and East Riding, reveal a parochial network whereby local lords erected monuments in owned churchyards. Secondly, hunting scene sculptures are also present at ecclesiastical houses that contained pre-Viking sculpture. While this arrangement is often obscured without corroborating documentary evidence, figural portraiture present on many of the carvings reveal clerical participation in sculptural commemoration. Finally, many stones with hunting scenes are found at isolated coastal locations, representing the burial monuments of wealthy merchants who connected York to the Irish Sea trading milieu.³⁶³

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³⁶² Jane Hawkes, "Reading Stone," in *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, edited by Catherine Karkov and Fred Orton (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2003), 24.

³⁶³ Stocker, 200-207.

**Map 2**

Location of tenth century monuments in North Yorkshire.

Image by the author.

The distribution of sculptures in North Yorkshire reveals the frequency of carvings in neighboring parishes. Geographic and economic particularities informed the ability for a given community to support a parish, let alone erect monumental sculpture, but the propensity for nearby villages to house sculpture is revealing. Certain stones carved with runic inscriptions in Sweden, for instance, operated as guarantors of inheritance.³⁶⁴ It has been suggested that this usage was shared by the tenth century Northumbrian stones in order to cement ownership, authority, or inheritance.³⁶⁵ Lang discerned a similar pattern in the East Riding where sculptural distribution highlighted tenth century landholding structures. Sculpture was present in neighboring parishes throughout a long linear boundary, present on a line of sites through a 300 foot contour facing the North Yorkshire moors.³⁶⁶

The remarkable number of North Yorkshire place-names featuring a Scandinavian personal name has been used to advance the notion that tenth century elite utilized the political fluidity of the region to both fragment estates and exert fuller control over

³⁶⁴ Klav Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 29.

³⁶⁵ Richards, 128.

³⁶⁶ Lang, *Corpus*, III, 26-7.

them.³⁶⁷ This interpretation is tenuous as there is little in the way of archaeology or documentary evidence to confirm it. Sculptural distribution however, hints at this very process. The widespread secularization of Northumbrian churches in the tenth century also lends credence to the view that village leaders erected both parish and sculpture on owned land. Given the connection between hunting and elite behavior, it is unsurprising that depictions of armed riders, falcons, and hunted stags are featured on these grave markers of local lords.

A great many monuments lie in churchyards that were known pre-Viking parishes or minsters. Though they might not have fulfilled the same role in expressing inheritance, they did denote distinction. Sculptures depicting priests in *orans* position are found in Masham, Neston, Lythe, Coverham, Aspatria, Sockburn, and Stonegrave. If elite ecclesiastics emulated their secular counterparts in utilizing hunting and conspicuous consumption in drawing social boundaries and enjoying an elite lifestyle, then it is logical to assume that they also borrowed the practice of erecting monumental sculpture.

A cross-head fragment at Winston-on-Tees in Durham is perhaps the strongest piece of evidence intimating clerical participation in monumental sculpture. Animals associated with hunting appear on the cross-head without deliberately displaying a hunting scene. The obverse broad side of the head contains a roundel that may have contained a pelleted cross. A stag stands on either side, facing the roundel. Below the pair of stags is a wolf or hound. The cross-head is badly damaged and the scene incomplete. No other hunt scene in the Late Saxon corpus depicts this arrangement. Additionally the ears and tail of the creature are modeled differently than other depictions of hounds, the

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³⁶⁷ Fellows-Jensen, 80-1. See also Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, AD 700-1100* (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), 102-7.

ears are less erect and the tail straight and large. This scene instead might present imagery from Psalms. On the front side of the cross-head, sitting immediately next to a similar roundel is a seated figure in clerical garb. On either side of him is a horizontally-placed bust of a figure in prayer. One figure has a tonsure, the other a cowl, suggesting that this cross commemorated a priest.³⁶⁸

The *orans* figure also appears in rather unusual arrangements which question the validity of Bailey's arguments that all hunting scenes were essentially Christian messages. A figure in *orans* is also present on two hogback fragments, one in Lythe and the other in Sockburn. In both cases the figure is modeled in an arrangement featuring serpents and beasts. Opinion is divided as to whether this iconography symbolizes Daniel in the lions' den, a depiction of Scandinavian mythology, or even a fusion of the two traditions.³⁶⁹ This syncretism is routinely found in medieval material culture marked by periods of conversion and assimilation to Christianity. Many Northumbrian sculptures contain what has been called the "the pagan iconography of Christian ideas," or "do-it yourself Christianity," where Christian, pagan and secular images occurred side by side.³⁷⁰ These scenes could have outwardly embraced Christian ideas and themes while additionally drawing upon pagan or secular significance, all in honoring the deceased lord. Another sculpture featuring hunting animals, without necessarily depicting a hunt, solidifies this point. The celebrated Gosforth Cross, perhaps the most well-known of example of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, contains a carving of a stag and a wolf-like animal amidst a panoply of nine separate vignettes carved along all four sides of the

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³⁶⁸ Cramp, *Corpus*, 145-6.

³⁶⁹ Lang, *Corpus*, VI, 161.

³⁷⁰ Ohlgren, 145-6. See also, Bailey K. Young, "The Imagery of Personal Objects: Hints of 'Do-It Yourself' Christian Culture in Merovingian Gaul?" in *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, edited by Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 342.

cross. The Gosforth cross is famous among Insular stone crosses, due to both its height and ornate decoration. The presence of Christian iconography alongside Norse mythological scenes elevates its allure, although it is debatable as to whether Gosforth contains a hunting scene. Below the profile stag is a vertically placed quadruped next to a series of tangled interlace. Below this scene is a rider armed with a spear. It is tempting to interpret this arrangement as a depiction of hunting. Others, however, have pointed out that a legendary hart and squirrel are referenced in the Norse Eddas. These two animals, according to the Eddas and the writings of the medieval Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson, receive their sustenance from the world tree, Yggdrasil. Therefore, according to some, this arrangement may depict a mythological scene.³⁷¹ The presence of iconography relating to Ragnarök, a cataclysmic event discussed in Eddaic poetry and Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, validate this view. The quadruped is not a convincing squirrel, but the stacked arrangement of stag, quadruped and rider prompts questions as whether the three figures were meant to be a part of a single hunting scene.

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³⁷¹ Amy R. Miller, "The Stones of Cumbria," (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2012), 189-90.

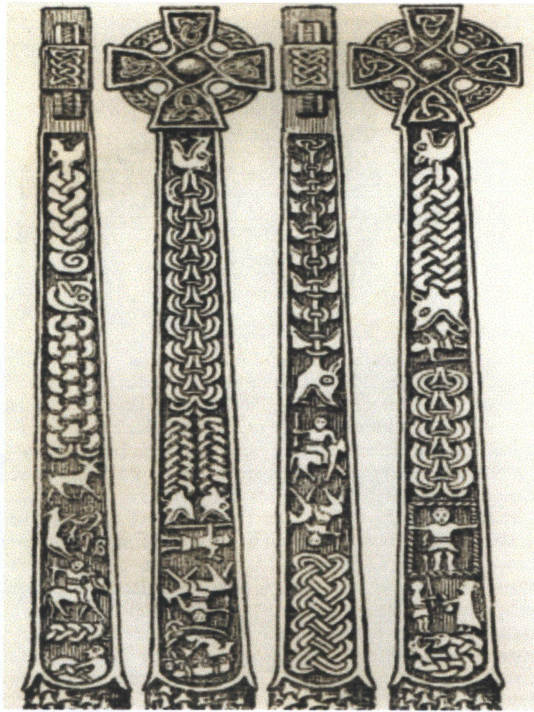
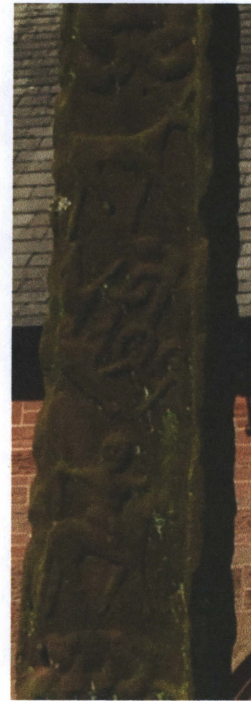


Image 3.18 and 3.19

Left: All four sides of the Gosforth cross.

Illustration by Collingwood, 1927.

Right: Close-up picture of possible hunting scene on face A.

Photograph by the author.

While the Gosforth cross exhibits a crucifixion scene on its east face, the lower cylindrical portion of the shaft is covered in a Borre-style ring-chain associated with Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian art of the ninth and tenth century. Furthermore, scenes from Norse pagan traditions outnumber Christian scenes.³⁷² The cobbled nature of the iconography questions the notion that hunting iconography relayed Christian messages associated with learned monks and ecclesiastics. The distinctive character of the Northumbrian church at this time reinforces a mixed reading and the secular portraiture present on many of the carvings hint at secular significance.

The York Minster contained nearly thirty fragments while nearby St. Mary's held fifteen. This quantity reflects the transition towards urban markets predicated by landowning changes and overseas trade which enabled merchants to participate in competitive displays of lordship through burial markers. The hart and hound fragment in

³⁷² Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, 125-131.

Kirklevington, for instance, is thought to have commemorated a merchant operating in the Yarm strand.³⁷³ An aristocratic presence is also detected in the Ryedale area. This workshop is responsible for the Middleton hunting scene discussed above, in addition to Lythe, where some fifty sculpture fragments were recovered, reflecting both the wealth of the area in addition to the particular culture of competitive burial display. These Ryedale examples are not far from the North Sea and most likely commemorated coastal merchants.

This pattern is also discerned in areas bordering the Irish Sea, where many sculptures are found in coastal contexts. Wirral sculptures, such as the Neston shaft, reveal the participation of merchants in this culture of commemorative display. An unusual miniature hogback at nearby Bidston typifies this sort of arrangement. The diminutive hogback's decorative organization and three-dimensional end beasts are similar to Brompton hogbacks. Only one sculpture is found there and the church is dated to the later medieval period.³⁷⁴ The small size of the hogback suggests the carving acted as a headstone rather than as a grave cover. All hogback examples in Lancashire, Merseyside and Cheshire are geographically isolated from workshops specializing in hogback production, such as Cumbria and Allertonshire, but are found in coastal locations. This arrangement represents the presence of coastal merchants and seafaring lords who connected northern England to the Irish Sea.

Sculptural commemoration was a unique facet of Anglo-Scandinavian lordship in the tenth century. In some instances sculpture represents the activity of local lords who

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³⁷³ Stocker, 202-3.

³⁷⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner and Edward Hubbard, *The Buildings of England: Cheshire* (London: Penguin, 1971), 95.

owned their own churches and utilized sculpture to both highlight their distinction in addition to staking claims of landownership and inheritance. It was observed in the first chapter that new economic developments in Late Saxon society bolstered the status of those participating in the commerce at market sites. The presence of commemorative sculpture at coastal locations likewise signifies the participation of seafaring merchants and Viking lords in competitive burial display. Additionally, the sculptures confirm the participation of clergy in this same commemorative culture. Just as elite clerics in Beverley and Eynsham participated in lordly hunting, carvings of priests at parish sites allude to the distinction of Northumbrian clerics through monumental sculpture. While estate fragmentation and the rise of secular lords at the village level was a defining characteristic of tenth century Northumbria, the combination of religious and secular imagery on the churchyard monuments highlight the legitimating authority of religion in Late Saxon England. If hunting maintained boundaries between owner and tenant, commemorative sculpture proved that these lines were carved in stone.

Conclusion

The fragmentation of large estates into intensively managed manors engendered a new class of landlord intent on generating surplus to engage in burgeoning market centers. Specialized artisan and craft communities prospered in this environment, which in turn increased accessibility to status items and stimulated commerce. Economic growth prompted the regulation of coinage and commerce, establishing a legal framework for taxation and arbitration emanating from regional and royal administrative centers. This new social landscape challenged older organizational models where wealth and lands were transferred via succession and larger estates were managed by a distant landowner. All of these factors combined to prompt a certain degree of social anxiety which in turn fostered a culture of competitive and conspicuous display.

Elites increasingly utilized exclusionary social rituals to close off access to opportunities, resources and prestige. Of these rituals, hunting was perhaps the most effective. Through forced hunting service renders, the carving up of forested regions by aristocrats, and laws which prevented the landless from participation, hunting maintained and highlighted the social order. Meanwhile tenants were increasingly expected to rear hunting animals, maintain hunting enclosures, and provide hunting service. Commendation practices, wild game consumption patterns, and sculptural production all indicate a social arrangement of pronounced stratification, one more commonly associated with the Normans.

Hunting evidence also questions traditional historical interpretations that hold the Normans responsible for creating an elite hunting culture in England. The large quantity and diversity of wild game remains on elite sites in the tenth and eleventh centuries

points to an intensifying relationship between hunting and aristocratic social mores in the centuries leading up to the Conquest. An examination of these elite sites additionally reveals more continuity than contrast between Late Saxon and Norman levels. Sites like Goltho experienced frequent renovations throughout the medieval period. The building of increasingly formidable defensive features continued after the Conquest. A defensive ringwork was unearthed at Saxo-Norman levels, which gave way to a motte and bailey castle, and finally, a moat.³⁷⁵ Portchester and Faccombe shared similar experiences. Norman lords added considerable defensive improvements onto both sites and these upgrades should be seen as gradational improvements rather than radical new developments.

Williams's observation that Late Saxon lords were closer to Norman aristocrats than their Early Saxon counterparts is confirmed through the occupational history of manorial estate centers in addition to being corroborated zooarchaeologically. Intensified wild game consumption began in the Late Saxon period and continued enthusiastically in later medieval periods. It is therefore unsurprising that many of the *hagan* mentioned in Domesday entries and Late Saxon charters became Norman deer parks. While hunting and wild game consumption trends intensified under Norman occupation, a comparison of early medieval hunting data suggests that Norman rule represented more continuity than contrast to existing arrangements.

The presence of stone sculpture, abundance of Scandinavian settlement names and the Norman interaction with Northumbria all highlight the unique character of northern England. Rosamond Faith, echoing sentiments from previous generations of historians, looked at the tenurial organization and place name evidence of Northumbria to

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³⁷⁵ Beresford, 94-111.

argue that the persistence of a “comparatively free peasantry” existed in the Danelaw in ways that it did not in southern England.³⁷⁶ Sculptural frequency likewise intimates that while patterns of lordship changed in both north and south, there were indeed differences. Northumbria, like other English kingdoms, witnessed burgeoning market centers and the development of a new thegnly class. The disruption caused by Scandinavian and Wessex incursions, however, altered the character of lordship and limited ecclesiastical landholding which may have undermined the capacity of landowners to “burden the local peasantry.”³⁷⁷ This distinction between northern and southern England is perhaps why William the Conqueror launched a series of brutal campaigns against Northumbria to ensure its subjugation.³⁷⁸

Textual sources, zooarchaeological remains, and stone sculpture all hint at the insecurity felt by elites in Late Saxon England as a result of economic change. Likewise, these same sources reveal how aristocrats solidified their position through exclusionary practices which served to preserve the social order. Wulfstan’s compilation on status, the *Gepyncðo*, or ‘Dignities’, preserves the concern felt by elites at the changing social order. “Once it used to be that people and rights went by dignities...each according to his rank,” the author laments, before outlining the necessary material requirements for each class of freeman.³⁷⁹ Zooarchaeologically, this mobility and countervailing tension is discerned in the increased consumption of domestic fowl in most Saxon site types across the later period in addition to the presence of wild game and falconry remains in urban sites.

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³⁷⁶ Faith, 122.

³⁷⁷ Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, 89.

³⁷⁸ Paul Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship: Yorkshire, 1066-1154* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 23.

³⁷⁹ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 468.

These trends intimate the desirability of certain ‘luxury foods’ associated with elite culture and point to the presence of wealthy individuals and merchants consuming wild game at urban centers. Meanwhile the diversity and consumption of wild game increased at high status sites at the same time legal restrictions were placed on hunting, and hunting service became associated with commendation.

Stone sculpture in northern England likewise expressed the distinction of the elite. These carvings also reveal the political and cultural challenges the region faced in the ninth through eleventh centuries as a result of Viking activity. As to whether Anglo-Scandinavian and Hiberno-Norse lords significantly altered institutions of lordship or built upon existing patterns is a topic too large to be handled here. Place-name evidence, sculptural frequency, and iconographical trends, however, indicate sculpture expressed authority and lordship at a particularly volatile time in Northumbrian history. The monuments themselves were built on churchyards belonging to a secular patron while others were erected in churchyards in more populous trading centers frequented by wealthy merchants. In both contexts the sculptures expressed hegemony over lands whose ownership was contested.

Admittedly, wild game consumption increased on Norman sites. Likewise, Norman forest laws represent an escalation of the Saxon legal code. The zooarchaeological data for Norman England, however, bears remarkable similarity to the preceding period. The major differences lie in the number of wild game consumed in addition to the increasing popularity of fallow and red deer. Cnut’s hunting law similarly represented an important precedent to Norman afforestation laws restricting hunting to the aristocracy. Most importantly, Late Saxon developments linked tenant and free

farmers to landowning lords, and shires to regional and royal aristocrats. This vassalage system was established in the tenth and eleventh centuries and represents a beginning to the feudal arrangements so often associated with the Normans. The restrictions and practices promulgated by William after the Conquest differed from the laws of Cnut by degree but not in substance.

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