



fragmented holdings were no longer viable, and as the rural and agricultural population began to decline in the early nineteenth century the process was reversed. Thus in 1845 what had been Sykes vaccary, and then became nine separate holdings, had been reduced to just five farms and today there is only one. Similarly Battris (Beatrix) vaccary, which in 1442 was a single farm, had, by 1498, been divided into two farms, by 1527 five, by 1539 seven and by 1664 eleven farms. Today, once more, there is just one Beatrix Farm.

There is evidence that in the medieval period some pre-Norman settlements in the Hodder valley were abandoned, either because of the impact of the forest or because of changing social and economic circumstances. For instance, east of Newton the township of Easington (SD 710508) appears in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as a small village. Today, however, there is only a single farm there, called Robinson's after the man who built it during the seventeenth century. Easington (the 'town at the edge of the wood') seems to have been populated until about 1379 but was then deserted, with its site marked now in the grassy fields by the outlines of buildings and old field boundaries from that time. Another abandoned settlement may lie by the Hodder close to Bashall Eaves (at SD 683426), where terrace-like lynchets, some ridge-and-furrow strips and old field boundaries can be picked out. The rest is long gone.

Five hundred years ago Sykes Farm on the road up to the Trough of Bowland, was a vaccary, or dairy farm, within the deer forest. By 1527 the vaccary had been split up into nine small farms; today there is only the one farm.



In the fourteenth century Easington seems to have been a thriving village, but it was abandoned in about 1379. Today there is a farm and a few cottages.

Henry VII ordered a survey to be made of his estates in Bowland, as a consequence of which, in 1507, he repealed several forest laws, thus making life easier for those trying to eke out a living in the forest. For instance, they could now freely gather timber for fuel or for building, and they could scare away deer that were eating their crops. Another survey was carried out in January 1556 by Sir Thomas Talbot, Thomas Catterall and John Braddyll, on command of Queen Mary I, 'to view the state of the woods and underwoods there and of the game and "deare", what kind of wood and underwood there is, the state of the "pale" [fence] about the said park, what store of trees and timber there is in the park for the continual maintenance of the "pale," etc., etc.'

<sup>10</sup> During his brief reign (1547–53) Mary's predecessor Edward VI had already 'disparked' Leagram. The 1548 Duchy Court records relate how Sir Arthur Darcy, let the herbage, or grazing, in Bowland to Richard Grenakers, and in the following year Rauf Grenacres and Thomas Cattrall were summoned to attend the court over the occupation and profits they had made from eight Bowland farms.<sup>11</sup> The duchy records tell us that the three investigators in 1556 found Leagram to be almost devoid of trees (there were about 30 old oaks near Leagram Lodge and 30 more scattered about the park), and the fences in a state of 'underfull and greate decay'. As for the deer, 'there ys non at

all' in Leagram Park. There was insufficient wood in Bowland to provide new fences for Leagram and, if any were used to repair the deer park, then those who had built farms and corn mills, and the queen's manors and lodges in and around the forest would not have enough reserves of timber for their repairs to be carried out. The survey also revealed that, whilst there were parcels of arable and pasture, much was overgrown by carr or wet scrub ('carrishe ground'), bog ('evill mossyd grownde'), a mixture of carr and bog ('carre and marraysshe') or wet heather moor ('heth and mossyd ground'). In Leagram Park there was a 'deppe and wete carre', overgrown with scrub including holly ('hollins') and hazel ('hassilles').



The Hark to Bounty Inn, Slaidburn, was a court as long ago as the thirteenth century. The curious name comes from a foxhound called Bounty that was barking outside the inn. 'Hark to Bounty!' said someone, and the name stuck.

The Crown began to sell off small parcels of land. Yet much of Bowland was still 'waste' of bog, woodland, scrub and open moorland and it was not until Elizabeth I and James I positively encouraged the conversion of this waste into productive farmland that Bowland began to look something like the landscape we see today.<sup>12</sup> For instance, in 1621 James set up a committee to divide up 3,100 hectares of land to be cleared in the years 1622–30. Besides increasing the area of farmland, this marked the beginning of extensive enclosure in Bowland as hedgerows were planted and stone walls built to keep livestock in and predators out. Altogether in the period 1560–1630 approximately one-third of Bowland was reclaimed from forest into farmland, and in the period 1527–1662 the population of western Bowland (that is, the area which was always within Lancashire) more than doubled as people settled the land as farmers.

Some 'new' land was awarded to villages. Slaidburn is one of the oldest villages in the valley. The name was originally that of the stream which is now called Croasdale Beck, and from its early forms (such as *Slateborne* and *Slaytburn*, both recorded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) it is clear that it means 'stream by the sheep-pasture'. It has had a parish church since at least the eleventh century and, from the middle of the thirteenth century, what is now the Hark to Bounty Inn was the ward court (the last courtroom can still be seen in the inn). In 1507 the parish of Slaidburn had only 56 households, but by 1664 this had increased to 98. By contrast the nearby village of Newton (the 'new settlement') was founded by nonconformist farmers in an area of enclosure of former forest lands. Following the Act of Toleration of 1689, the dissenting community opened their independent chapel there in 1696.

Other land was granted to individuals. In the fourteenth century Peter de Alancotes was a park-keeper in Bowland but on promotion to the post of 'bowbearer' he changed the family name to Parker. When Henry VII began to relax the forest law in 1507 the family built the first Browsholme Hall from timber and wattle-and-daub. In 1604 Thomas Parker, who had purchased the Browsholme vaccary from James I, began the construction of the present magnificent Browsholme Hall (the grand gateway was completed in 1682). As well as some stained glass which, it is claimed, was taken from Whalley Abbey after the Dissolution, the Hall has some items recalling the days of the old forest. The most interesting, perhaps, is a gauge. When Bowland was a deer forest it was illegal for people living there to have a dog large enough to hunt deer. So a suspect dog was stood in the gauge and, if it was too tall it was either killed or its legs broken so that it could not chase the deer.

The farms called Lees, a mile south-west of Browsholme, are particularly interesting. In 1464 there was a Legh or Leghes Farm within the duchy forest and by 1567 it was known as Lees Farm. It became Higher Lees (SD 664448)