Estate Landscapes in northern Europe

Edited by Jonathan Finch, Kristine Dyrmann and Mikael Frausing

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ENCOUNTER

UNIVERSITY of York

GAMMEL ESTRUP
HERREGÅRDSMUSEET
THE MANOR MUSEUM

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Preface

This volume is the first publication from the international network ENCOUNTER (European Network for Country House and Estate Research). The chapters in this volume are based on papers presented at five international conferences and workshops held by the network. This book also marks the first publication in a series on northern European country houses and their landscapes.

The ENCOUNTER network was founded on the initiative of Gammel Estrup The Danish Manor Museum in 2015 and established at a meeting at Gammel Estrup, supported by the Aarhus 2017 European Capital of Culture. The network brings together museum curators and academics drawn from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. ENCOUNTER has now grown to include members from fifteen countries across northern Europe, pursuing multidisciplinary approaches to understanding the role of manor houses in the historic landscape, with the aim of developing new research agendas, informing new public engagement initiatives, and raising the profile of the houses, landscapes and their associated communities. In its first four years, the network has organized a series of international conferences across the region, initiated the development of a common, European research project, and facilitated researcher exchanges between its member institutions in different countries. The network furthers the exchange of knowledge and experiences through the organization of meetings and seminars, which are open to academics, curators, policy makers, heritage agencies and charities as well as the general public.

Detail from map of Gammel Estrup manor, Denmark, within its surrounding estate landscape
Based on an 1803 land survey, this map dates from 1816. Count Scheel, whose family had owned Gammel Estrup since the fourteenth century, went bankrupt in 1815. His property was assessed the following year, and this map of the estate landscape might have been drawn up as part of that process. It shows the main moated building with ornamental gardens to the north, the home farm to the west and views out across the river and meadows in the east. Beyond this manorial core are the large fields and forests that made up the estate. The avenue, another indication of an estate landscape in a Danish context, is seen to the north of the manor, leading the visitor past the estate's park, main building, and forest, before continuing towards the local village of Auning.

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The network is comprised of leading research centres at universities and museums, with the purpose of bringing new methods and ideas to bear on central themes and debates about the creation of the modern landscape in northern Europe and how the houses, their collections and their landscapes were embedded within broader European and global relationships. The network seeks to foster an interdisciplinary and cross-sector research community that is engaged with creating new narratives about the role of rural communities, landowners, houses and landscapes in the past and for the future. Traditionally perceived as the legacy of wealthy and privileged elites, manors and country houses were also the focus of rural life and as such important social, cultural and economic institutions across northern Europe until the upheavals wrought during the early-twentieth century.

The present volume could not have been realized without the support of several foundations and grants. I would therefore like to thank the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NOS-HS), the University of York, Aarhus University Research Foundation and Lillian and Dan Fink's Foundation for their generous support for this publication. Special thanks to the ENCOUNTER steering group, Aarhus University Press, the authors, Søren Broberg Knudsen and Signe Boeskov from The Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies. Finally I would like to thank the editors for their vision and endeavours in conceiving this project, drawing together the conferences and authors, and producing such an innovative and handsome volume. On behalf of the network, I thank you for your committed contribution to our understanding of estate landscapes in Northern Europe – without you, this volume would not have been possible.

Britta Andersen
Chair of the ENCOUNTER Steering Group

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1 Estate Landscapes in northern Europe

an introduction

By Jonathan Finch and Kristine Dyrmann

This volume represents the first transnational exploration of the estate landscape in northern Europe. It brings together experts from six countries to explore the character, role and significance of the estate over five hundred years during which the modern landscape took shape. They do so from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, to provide the first critical study of the estate as a distinct cultural landscape. The northern European countries discussed in this volume – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain – have a fascinating and deep shared history of cultural, economic and social exchange and dialogue. Whilst not always a family at peace, they can lay claim to having forged many key aspects of the modern world, including commercial capitalism and industrialization from an overwhelmingly rural base in the early modern period. United around the North Sea, the region was a gateway to the east through the Baltic Sea, and across the Atlantic to the New World in the west. Thus the region holds a strong appeal for scholars in the period after the European reformations, with recent historiography recognizing the benefit of transnational histories, which draw out the similarities and distinctions between the historical trajectories of the various provinces.[1]

The current study takes as its starting point the centrality of the estate landscape – often referred to as the manorial landscape in a continental context – within a nexus of rural relationships and as the agent behind the creation of distinct cultural landscapes throughout northern Europe. One of the many apparent commonalities across the region considered here is the role of the major landowner, and the social significance of the large house and its offices, which served as a home of social distinction, a centre of hospitality, and an economic hub, as well as an arena for local

Harewood House, West Yorkshire, UK *Harewood House was built between 1758 and 1771 for Edwin Lascelles, whose family made their fortune in the West Indies. The parkland was laid out over the same period by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and epitomizes the late-eighteenth century taste for a more informal naturalistic landscape. Small enclosed fields from the seventeenth century were replaced by parkland that could be grazed, just as it is today, although some hedgerow trees were retained to add interest within the park, such as those in the foreground. By the early-nineteenth century all arable cultivation had been removed from the view of the house, which was screened by extensive perimeter plantations. (Photo: Jonathan Finch)*

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government and jurisdiction. The presence of such a social and economic institution can be seen to create a distinct cultural landscape, made up of the demesne or "home" farm, tenanted holdings, forestry or woodland, and settlements which might share a common architectural grammar.

The landscape of northern Europe was structured by patterns of landownership that evolved from medieval roots into the post-medieval period, and both the process of evolution and the resulting landscape character differed dramatically across northern Europe, despite sharing fundamental similarities. One of the most significant agents which determined the character and structure of landholding across the region was the landed estate – a complex of rural property forming an administrative unity and held by one owner who exercised control over resources and rights across that landscape and benefitted from the associated privileges. Much of the research undertaken on the region relates to the agrarian economy of specific countries, which was dominated by agricultural production well into the nineteenth century, despite early commercial and industrial developments during the late-medieval and early-modern periods. The history of rural life has focused on agricultural regimes and their associated social structures, with the transition from a feudal or seigneurial system to modern market economies being a key concern.[2]

The preference for translating national terms – such as *herregård*, Gut or *landgoed* – into the English "manor house" (as opposed to "country house" as used in Britain for the post-medieval period), marks a notable distinction between British and continental experiences, and highlights an important difference. Across the northern German territories, Scandinavia, and into the Baltic region, manorial land was distinguished from around the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries by its exemption from taxes and other associated privileges.[3] The nomenclature of, for instance, *herregård*, was thus used historically in those regions to signify, preserve, and defend the financial and tax privileges that pertained to the landscape and which conferred status upon the owner. In Britain, and more specifically in England, manorial privileges had been steadily eroded since the mid-fourteenth century, and the few that survived were abolished in the 1660s as part of the renegotiation of the relationship between crown and parliament in the wake of the restoration of the monarchy after the civil wars of the 1640s. By the early-eighteenth century, when there was a wave of building and of rebuilding elite residences, the medieval nomenclature of the manor was gradually erased.[4]