Decline and disparkment: Management trends in English deer parks, 1500–1750*

by Robert Liddiard

Abstract

Deer parks have been the subject of much research in recent years, but the bulk of this work has focused on the place of parks in the medieval countryside, rather than their later histories. This article examines the fate of medieval parks in the two centuries after 1500, a period usually characterized as one of decline as park enclosures were broken up and turned over to agriculture. While the post-medieval period undoubtedly witnessed significant changes to medieval parks, these need to be set in a longer perspective. Disparkment was not confined to the period after 1500 and many of the management trends in deer parks down to the mid-seventeenth century were continuations of those that had originated in the late medieval period. It was the pervasiveness and more permanent character of certain management regimes, rather than their novelty, that distinguishes the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from the earlier period. The real decline of the medieval deer park lay in the century after 1650, not the century before.

Medieval deer parks have been the subject of much academic attention in recent years resulting in a somewhat niche area being brought back into mainstream discussions of English society and landscape. The majority of this research has focused on the origin and role of parks in the medieval countryside, with comparatively little work on their post-medieval histories. A certain unevenness of coverage is perhaps in part connected with the long-standing perception that the later history of the medieval deer park is simply one of decline, with enclosures broken up and turned over to agriculture and so leaving little more to be said.[1] Such a view originated with the pioneering work on parks by Evelyn Shirley in the mid-nineteenth century. It was given greater authority in the 1970s by Cantor and Hatherly who posited two trajectories for medieval deer parks after 1500. The first, 'failure to survive' referred to disparkment, which

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1 The notable exceptions being S. Pittman, 'Disparkment. A case study for Elizabethan and Jacobean parks in Kent', *Southern Hist.* 35 (2013), pp. 44–76 and J. Bond, *Somerset parks and gardens: a landscape history* (1998).

was judged to have chiefly taken place from 1550 to the Civil War, while the second, 'survival by adaptation', saw medieval parks incorporated into the landscaped grounds of post-medieval mansions.[2] Both processes had largely run their course by the mid-seventeenth century, by which point medieval deer enclosures, along with the medieval concept of a park, had largely ceased to exist, and the park – and any deer within it – had become the ornamental adjunct to the house. Either implicitly or explicitly, this explanatory framework is deeply ingrained in writing on parks, and reflected in the most recent work that portrays the period after 1500 as significantly different in character to what had gone before.[3]

Given the length of time since much of this interpretation was laid down, a re-examination of the fate of medieval parks in the post-medieval period is perhaps justified for its own sake, but is also timely because of the clearer picture of park management during the late Middle Ages that has emerged from a range of new studies. Here the emphasis has been on the variety of roles that parks served, the often specialist economic functions that co-existed with the more traditional role as hunting preserve and the identification of regional trends in parkland regimes.[4] If medievalists have successfully underlined the complexity and vitality of parks down to 1500, then it might therefore follow that their 'afterlives' were also varied and not necessarily always as cataclysmic as has often been thought in the past.

This is not to suggest a form of homeostasis, as the period 1450–1750 was a particularly complex one in the history of parks as it witnessed a series of overlapping processes: the decline of existing enclosures and the creation of new ones; changes in hunting practices; shifts in management regimes within the pales, and changes in the perceived aesthetic qualities of parkland. The observation of these trends is frequently difficult; primary source material relating to the break up and extinction of medieval parks is often fragmentary and lacks chronological precision. Much of the existing literature is local in character, meaning that broader patterns are difficult to elucidate.[5] A further complication is the traditional divide between the medieval and early modern periods as well as the subject divisions between history, archaeology and art history, which results in a number of distinctive historiographies all with different agendas. These specialisms frequently serve to obscure, rather than illuminate, continuities and discontinuities.

Before assessing trends in parkland regimes after 1500, it is worth briefly outlining the issues concerned. A park was a contiguous block of demesne that comprised wooded areas and grazing; a private wood-pasture. The additional presence of deer required certain requisites: a secure enclosure; an adequate area of grazing; water; shelter; supplementary fodder for the herd and investment of human resources in management, especially if hunting was envisaged. A lack

[2] E. P. Shirley, *Some account of English deer parks* (1867). L. M. Cantor and J. M. Hatherly, 'The medieval parks of England', *Geography* 64 (1979), pp. 71–85.

[3] S. Lasdun, *The English park. Royal, private and public* (1991); S. Mileson, *Parks in medieval England* (2009), p. 10; J. Fletcher, *Gardens of earthly delight. The history of deer parks* (2011).

[4] A. Richardson, *The forest, park and palace of Clarendon, c.1200–c.1650: reconstructing an actual, conceptual and documented Wiltshire landscape* (British Archaeological Reports, British Ser., 387, 2005); R. Liddiard (ed.), *The medieval park: new perspectives* (2007); O. H. Creighton, *Designs upon the land: elite landscapes of the Middle Ages* (2009); A. Rowe, *Medieval parks of Hertfordshire* (2009).

[5] Mileson's comment on the state of research into medieval parks in 2005. The same observation applies to the study of medieval parks after 1500 at the present time, S. A. Mileson, 'The importance of parks in fifteenth-century society', in L. Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century*, 5 (2005), pp. 19–37.

of expenditure could soon lead to deterioration; the large sums expended to maintain a viable park were in part the reason why ownership was such a marker of social rank. Yet park resources were also of value in themselves and their management could provide materials for upkeep, be exploited directly, or farmed out. It needs to be remembered that while the primary reason for establishment may have been the desire on the part of the owner to create an environment for the keeping of deer, imparkment also had the additional benefit for lords of removing common rights over the area concerned. Thereafter any letting of grazing land had to be paid for as an agistment and was at the lord's discretion. Within the park, number of potential tensions existed. The particularly destructive grazing habits of deer meant they needed to be excluded from areas of young growth such as coppice. If other stock animals were introduced within the pale, then they were in competition with the deer for the available grazing. The answer to both problems was to 'compartmentalise' the park and divide it into closes and so permit alternative uses, rather than leave it 'uncompartmented', where deer and other stock could roam freely.[6] At their extreme, the conflicting demands of deer-keeping and profitability were potentially difficult to reconcile: the more the park was managed for deer, the less it could function as a purely economic resource. Conversely, the more it was used as a purely agricultural landscape, the more the deer had to be excluded and so the less it served as a park. When exactly the balance began to move towards parks as a source of income rather than places of pleasure remains the subject of debate. A long-standing interpretation holds that after 1350 parks were managed more flexibly and with a greater eye on profitability.[7] But more recently the idea that the needs of the deer remained the prime determinant in park management down to 1500 has been forcefully set out which, if the case, by implication means any decisive shift in character must have occurred thereafter.[8]

With these issues in mind, this article discusses the place of medieval parks in the post-medieval landscape, with a focus on the fate of those enclosures that failed to survive and were eventually disparked. But it deliberately does so against a longer chronology, before and after the usual cut off dates of 1500 and 1640, and from a background of medieval management trends. When considered in a longer perspective, it suggests not only that more medieval parks survived into the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, albeit in modified form, than might otherwise be thought, but also that many of the causal factors for disparkment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not necessarily dissimilar to those in earlier centuries. It also suggests that the particular management regimes seen in deer parks in the period after 1500 were not so much new or symptomatic of decline, but rather continuations of practices that had emerged towards the end of the Middle Ages. While Cantor and Hatherly's idea of a two-fold trajectory has a certain unanswerable logic to it; after all, the only possible options for a medieval park was disparkment or incorporation into a successor, the routes to each outcome were frequently complex, aspects of them not necessarily mutually exclusive, and continued to play out into the eighteenth century.

[6] O. Rackham, *Trees and woodland in the British landscape* (revised edn, 1990), p. 157.

[7] Cantor and Hatherly, 'Medieval parks', p. 79; P. Stamper, 'Woods and parks' in G. Astill and A. Grant (eds), *The countryside of medieval England* (1988), pp. 128–48, at pp. 146–7.

[8] Mileson, *Parks*, pp. 63–76.

I

The idea that rates of disparkment were significantly greater in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than hitherto had been the case is so crucial to the idea of decline that it is useful to review the reasons for deer park failure in the Middle Ages as well as estimates of fluctuating numbers. While the nature of park creation and enlargement have tended to loom large in discussions, shrinkage and disparkment were in fact also relatively common before 1500 and were usually a response to shifting economic circumstances, changes in ownership, and the prohibitive cost of maintenance, albeit that these factors frequently worked in combination.

Given that parks established in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were often of considerable size it is unsurprising that those situated on potential agricultural land were prone to contraction during the expansion of settlement and arable cultivation between the Norman Conquest and the Black Death. At some point before 1300 the extensive park at Parc Le Broes in Gower was halved in area under pressure of agricultural expansion, with the modern pattern of field boundaries indicating a phased reduction, with some parkland converted to open field and some into closes.[9] At Rivenhall in Essex, the eleventh-century park was expanded in the twelfth, before two large intakes associated with moated farms were made in the thirteenth century, which reduced the total area of the park by nearly one-quarter.[10] In other cases the irregular shape of boundary pales evidences shrinkage, as at Conisbrough in Yorkshire where the large park to the south of the castle was encroached upon by the fields of adjacent villages at some point after the late eleventh century.[11] A more wholesale re-arrangement occurred at Belton in Leicestershire in the thirteenth century when the park of Grace Dieu priory, which was situated on potentially good arable, was relocated onto poorer soil in order that the site could be given over to cultivation.[12] At Coventry, in what is probably the best documented case of intrusion, successive intakes were made into Cheyslesmore park by the expanding city prior to 1200 with a further expansion of burgage plots anticipated in the 1340s before being abruptly curtailed by the Black Death.[13]

The extreme end of episodes of shrinkage was full disparkment. That this occurred from an early date is seen at Long Crendon and Oakley in Buckinghamshire where parks were recorded

[9] D. K. Leighton, 'A fresh look at Parc Le Breos', *Gower* 50 (1999), pp. 71–9.

[10] W. J. Rodwell and K. A. Rodwell, *Rivenhall: investigations of a villa, church, and village, 1950–1977* (Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 55, 1985), p. 183.

[11] P. Buckland, D. Hey, R. O'Neill and I. Tyers, 'The Conisbrough estate and the southern boundary of Northumbria. Environmental and archaeological evidence from a late sixth/early seventh-century structure and later deer park boundary at Conisbrough, South Yorkshire' (www.researchgate.net/profile/Paul_Buckland/publication/234037890_Conisbrough_with_figures/links/02bfe50e73aa126aaf000000/Conisbrough-with-figures.pdf).

[12] A. Squires, 'Parks and woodland in medieval Leicestershire, 1086–1530', in P. Bowman and P. Liddle (eds), *Leicestershire Landscapes* (Leicestershire Museums and Archaeological Fieldwork Group Monographs, 1, 2004), pp. 141–53, at p. 148.

[13] K. D. Lilley, 'Urban design in medieval Coventry: the planning of Much and Little Park Street within the Earl of Chester's fee', *Midland Hist.* 23 (1998), pp. 1–20; N. W. Alcock, 'Queen Isabella's new suburb in Coventry in 1348' *Midland Hist.* 33 (2008), pp. 240–8; G. Demidowicz, 'From Queen Street to Little Park, Coventry: the failure of the medieval suburb in Cheylesmore Park and its transformation into the Little Park', *Midland Hist.* 37 (2012), pp. 106–15.

in Domesday but disappeared thereafter; in the case of Long Crendon it became the site for Nutley Abbey.[14] At Godmanchester in Huntingdonshire the twelfth-century park of the Prior of Merton disappears from the documentary record at the turn of the thirteenth century, with ridge and furrow over the likely area suggesting that it was subsumed within expanding open fields.[15] Similar cases of medieval cultivation remains post-dating park boundary banks suggest that such unrecorded disparkments were perhaps commonplace.[16] County studies consistently provide cases of parks that appear fleetingly in the documentary record but otherwise lack evidence for their existence. Here the impression is of diminutive parks that came and went in short spaces of time, such as Metham park in Yorkshire that was subject to a trespass in 1312, but never heard of again.[17] It was these smaller parks that were probably more susceptible to the vagaries of economics or tenurial circumstance and so more likely to fail than those larger and well-established enclosures that could draw on the more substantial resource base of a major barony.[18] But in all such cases, and presumably many more, choices were being exercised by park owners over the best use of their demesne assets. At Marshwood park at Dunster in the early fourteenth century, the issue was set out by an unnamed estate official who suggested that the 400 acres of laund should be turned over to arable and the deer restricted to the remainder of the park. This, he argued, would generate more profit than the rest of the demesne.[19] While this, albeit highly unusual, source has been taken as evidence that lords tended to eschew the economic benefits of disparkment in favour of their deer, it does indicate that owners were mindful of alternative uses. The evidence for park shrinkage and removal in the Middle Ages suggests that in many cases income was preferred to deer.

If economic circumstances often provoked changes, parks were also vulnerable to the failure of a family line or changes of ownership, especially in cases where their patrons had overreached themselves. At Barrow in Leicestershire, the park was broken up into quarters following the division of the estate on which it lay among four co-heiresses, and did not survive thereafter.[20] A similar situation occurred at Egremont in Cumbria when partition of the barony of Copeland between three sisters resulted in the splitting of the park into three closes that were subsequently leased as farmland.[21] Elsewhere, the death of the individual responsible for establishment of a park could initiate disparkment, as at Ratbury in Leicestershire, which was abandoned and reverted to woodland on the death in 1310 of its creator, Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham. Where a park failed to hold the interest of the owner, often because it lay away from the main holdings or was geographically removed from the main residence, then the chances of disparkment probably increased. While practically impossible to track with certainty, where at least some quantitative evidence can be brought to bear, it shows that

[14] L. M. Cantor and J. Hatherly, 'The medieval parks of Buckinghamshire', *Records of Buckinghamshire* 20 (1977), pp. 431–50, at pp. 444–5.

[15] T. Way, *A study of the impact of imparkment on the social landscape of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from c1080 to 1760* (British Archaeological Reports, British Series, 258, 1997), p. 248.

[16] Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (England), *Northamptonshire,* III (1981), p. 165.

[17] S. Neave, *Medieval parks of East Yorkshire* (1991), p. 44.

[18] Rowe, *Medieval parks*, p. 27.

[19] H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A history of Dunster and of the families of Mohun and Luttrell* (2 vols, 1909), I, p. 324.

[20] Squires, 'Parks and woodland', p. 148.

[21] A. J. L. Winchester, 'Baronial and manorial parks in medieval Cumbria', in Liddiard (ed.), *Medieval park*, pp. 165–84, at p. 179.

disparkment was certainly not uncommon: in Leicestershire of 56 parks recorded before 1500, 12 out of 17 parks that only appear once in the documentary record before 1350 do not appear thereafter, while of 32 parks known to be in existence after 1350, 16 continued in use up to 1530, with the remaining 16 presumably lost.[22]

Against this somewhat fluid background, it is worth considering the overall number of parks in medieval England. In terms of absolute figures, national estimates are notoriously problematic. Rackham provided no firm evidence to support his oft-quoted figure of 3200 medieval parks in existence *c.*1300, while Cantor produced a more modest total of 1900 based on the records of central government.[23] Whatever the precise figure, in the most recent analysis by Mileson, a case has been made that through to the end of the fifteenth century numbers remained high.[24] Medieval totals can be set against the numbers of parks depicted on county maps by Saxton in 1577 (838 in England and Wales) and Morden in 1695 (819).[25] While superficially indicating decline, these figures do not take into account the fact that not all medieval parks were in existence at the same time, meaning that the number at any given point would have been smaller, and that cartographers such as Saxton are prone to under recording, especially in the case of more minor enclosures, and so numbers on the ground in the later periods are likely to be higher. When these factors are taken into account, the rate of decline does not necessarily appear dramatic.

More reliable statistics are provided by detailed local studies, usually undertaken on a county basis, which suggest a more regionally and chronologically varied picture of dismemberment but also establishment. In places such as Cornwall, the traditional view of the sixteenth century as a period characterized by rapid disparkment appears to hold true, but these appear to be the exception.[26] Elsewhere, overall numbers of parks remained stable or actually increased. In Suffolk, the second half of the sixteenth century saw the heaviest rate of disparkment, but losses were exceeded by new creations by 1602.[27] In Kent by contrast, the rate of disparkment was greatest in the period 1509–1558, largely as a result of ecclesiastical parks changing hands after the Reformation, but then dropped between 1558 and 1625. Newly created parks left the total number of parks in the county largely unchanged.[28] In Sussex, it has been suggested that, of 121 Tudor parks in the county, only six were disparked in the sixteenth century, but the rate accelerated thereafter, with a further 22 lost down to 1700.[29] The most detailed survey to date is that of Hertfordshire. Here the total number of parks in

[22] Squires, 'Parks and woodland', p. 150.

[23] O. Rackham, *The history of the countryside* (1986), p. 123; L. M. Cantor, *The medieval parks of England: a gazetteer* (1983), p. 3.

[24] Mileson, *Parks*, pp. 37–8, where it is suggested that 70% of parks in existence in 1400 were still in place in 1500.

[25] W. Ravenhill, *Christopher Saxton's 16th century maps* (1992); J. B. Harley, *The county maps from William Camden's Britannia 1695 by Robert Morden: a facsimile* (1972).

[26] J. Hatcher, *Rural economy and society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300–1500* (1970), pp. 179–84; P. Herring, 'Cornish medieval deer parks', in R. Wilson-North (ed.), *The lie of the land: aspects of the archaeology and history of the designed landscape in the south-west of England* (2003), pp. 34–50.

[27] R. Hoppitt, 'A study of the development of deer parks in Suffolk from the eleventh to the seventeenth century' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 1992), p. 85.

[28] Pittman, 'Disparkment', pp. 49–58.

[29] R. B. Manning, *Hunters and poachers. A social and cultural history of unlawful hunting in England, 1485–1640* (1993), pp. 125–7.

the county stood at 25–30 in the 1480s, rose to 35–40 in the 1590s before falling back to 25–30 by 1642; that is the same number as at the end of the Middle Ages.[30] In addition, while there is no doubt that some distinct categories of parks, such as those owned by the Crown and leading Royalists, suffered during the Civil War and Interregnum, this should not be taken as evidence of the wholesale extinction of medieval enclosures. Although scholars have been reluctant to extend their studies beyond 1640, where this has been done, the conclusions indicate that the survival of medieval enclosures was more widespread than has often been assumed. In Wiltshire, the total of 22 parks shown by Speed was matched by those of Morden, while in Shropshire, numbers of medieval parks in existence fell slowly; in 1577 some 19 of the county's 30 parks were medieval in origin, falling to 17 in 1611, 14 in 1695 and 8 by 1752: here it was the period after 1700 that was particularly significant for disparkment.[31] In Hertfordshire, a similar picture emerges, but again with perhaps a more significant pre-1660 base for surviving parks than might otherwise be expected: of the 48 paled parks mapped in Hertfordshire in 1766 10 had medieval origins, a further 10 had been established after 1500 but before the Civil War, with 28 created after the Restoration.[32]

When compared against medieval rates for disparkment the figures for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while certainly higher, do not look revolutionary. The calculation of a disparkment rate of two to three parks per decade in Kent for the period between 1558 and 1602 can be compared to just over one per decade in Leicestershire if a mean average is taken over the period from 1350 to 1530. In the case of Charnwood forest in Leicestershire, the rate of disparkment is arguably seen in microcosm: of 11 medieval parks, two were disparked in the fourteenth century, two in the fifteenth, three in the sixteenth, three in the seventeenth, with one remaining intact.[33] Here the slow fall in numbers was not counteracted by new creations, but by showing the drawn-out chronology of 'failure to survive', these figures are instructive. Cumulatively, these local studies are significant, showing as they do that blanket interpretations of this period after 1550 as one of decline should be resisted. They confirm the suggestion made long ago by Kerridge that in the sixteenth century numbers of new creations tended to at least match those of disparkments, but at the same time argue that the same process of creation and abandonment continued at least into the early seventeenth century.[34]

While the broad trends in park numbers seem to be becoming clearer, balancing totals of new creations against failures, while revealing, mask a number of complications, not least that they do not quite compare like with like. The first concerns the nature of the newly created parks of the sixteenth century, most of which were associated with residences and not, like the majority of parks of the eleventh to the thirteenth century, situated some distance from

[30] A. Rowe, *Tudor and early Stuart parks of Hertfordshire* (2019), p. 11.

[31] K. Watts, 'Wiltshire deer parks: an introductory survey', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural Hist. Magazine* 89 (1996), pp. 88–98; id., 'Some Wiltshire deer parks', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural Hist. Magazine* 91 (1998), pp. 90–102; S. Morris, 'Shropshire deer parks, *c.*1500–*c.*1914: recreation, status and husbandry' (unpubl. PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2005), pp. 142–3.

[32] A. Macnair, A. Rowe and T. Williamson, *Drury and Andrews' map of Hertfordshire* (2016), pp. 171–2.

[33] A. E. Squires and W. Humphrey, *The medieval parks of Charnwood Forest* (1986).

[34] E. Kerridge, *Agrarian problems in the sixteenth century and after* (1969), p. 102.

the house. To complicate matters, the idea of placing a park adjacent to a major residence had been current since the twelfth century, but the period following 1350 saw this trend accelerate. Whilst there is a tendency in studies of Tudor parks to emphasize the novelty of newly established parks framing the country seat, the trend was already deep-rooted by the fifteenth century; in Hertfordshire all newly created parks post-1450 were associated with large houses.[35] While the intensity of park creation may have been significant in the sixteenth century, on the ground it represents a continuation of a particular pattern that had been established in an earlier period. Secondly, patterns of disparkment were not necessarily even, with certain kinds of medieval park more vulnerable than others. Those no longer retained as hunting grounds, especially in those areas of forest that were themselves being turned over to agricultural use, had a high probability of being leased out or disparked entirely in the absence of a clear reason for retention, as was the case by 1610 across royal forests in Wales, Cheshire, the forest of Knaresborough and the Duchy of Cornwall.[36] As with the royal residences with which they were often associated, the approach of successive monarchs to their parks was to concentrate on their most favoured places, which continued to see investment, and neglect or sell off others.[37] Those parks situated in an inconvenient location if a new house was envisaged were also more likely to see changes. In such circumstances owners could simply replace one park with another, as did William Lord Cecil, who disparked King's Cliffe, but created Burghley House as a more suitable substitute.[38] Cumulatively, such individual cases could assume a much greater significance as they played out across a wider geography. In Northamptonshire, for example, observers noted that it was the parks some distance from houses – themselves more likely to be on plateau locations on poor soil and so medieval in origin – that tended to be disparked.[39] A similar trend can be observed in Norfolk where by 1660 only a small fraction of the county's parks had medieval origins and the majority of parks were associated with mansions.[40] From at least the fifteenth century, a slow, but decisive, shift in the geography of parks was therefore underway, as new creations reflected the patterns of house building, rather than that of 'waste' or woodland that had governed the majority of medieval imparkments.

The idea that new always replaced old should not be pushed too far. Just because a park was created after 1500, this did not necessarily guarantee greater longevity and lifespans could be just as short as some of their medieval counterparts. Filwood in Somerset existed for only six years before the pale was removed and the area given over to arable, while at Wedmore in the same county, the 'new' park created *c*.1539 was disparked 14 years later.[41] Moreover, existing medieval deer parks were frequently expanded after 1500 and 'traditional' imparkment of

[35] A. Rowe and T. Williamson, *Hertfordshire: a landscape history* (2013), pp. 228–9.

[36] *A collection of ordinances and regulations for the government of the royal household* (1790), pp. 315–6.

[37] D. L. Thomas, 'The Elizabethan Crown lands: their purposes and problems' in R. W. Hoyle (ed.), *The estates of the English Crown, 1558–1640* (1992), pp. 81–5; P. Gregg, *Charles I* (1984), p. 125.

[38] J. M. Steane, 'The medieval parks of Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 5 (1975), pp. 211–33, at p. 227.

[39] J. Morton, *Natural history of Northamptonshire* (1712), p. 12.

[40] T. Williamson, *The archaeology of the landscape park. Garden design in Norfolk, England, c.1680–1840* (British Archaeological Reports, 256, 1998), pp. 40–6.

[41] J. Bond, *Somerset,* p. 59; H. Hudson and F. Neale, 'Wedmore, Sand Park', *Somerset Arch.* 135 (1992), pp. 159–60.

waste or arable remained a feature of park development down to the Civil War. At Thornbury in Gloucestershire, the Stafford family aggressively expanded their existing parks and created new ones, as did the Percys at Petworth in Sussex, in both cases provoking disputes with commoners.[42] More sustained episodes of imparking, such as that pursued by Henry VIII in southern Northamptonshire, still had the potential to change landscapes as radically in the sixteenth century just as they had in the twelfth.[43] Such schemes of park creation are best seen as part of a much longer tradition of asserting lordly rights via enclosure that had originated in the Middle Ages and continued well into the seventeenth.[44] The activities of John Weld at Willey in Shropshire are a case in point. Despite being already in possession of a park, his personal ambition led him in 1625 to acquire part of newly disafforested Shirlett forest for a second, which exhibited all the characteristics of a medieval enclosure. Six years later, when he believed himself terminally ill, the reality of aggrandizement was laid bare when Weld advised his son to consider 'whether best to dispark my park when I die, for it is a trouble and charge, and gets much envy'.[45] Such sentiments are important reminders that, whether attached to a residence or not, there was still a degree of commonality between new creations and their older medieval counterparts: a deer park was a deer park and the ideals it espoused remained undiminished.

II

Even if overall numbers of parks were relatively static, clearly a proportion of medieval deer enclosures were steadily going out of use after 1500, but when viewed against the medieval background of contraction and extinction, the root causes of park failure in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended to be the long-standing ones. What was undoubtedly important, however, was the unusual rate at which parks, often those long established, changed hands and this helped give the disparkments of the period a particular character. As park ownership was disproportionately concentrated towards the higher reaches of the social scale, any upheaval in landowning at this level of society was always likely to be significant and the combined effects of the Reformation, the Civil War and Interregnum, together with the political or economic misfortune of aristocratic families all made for a period characterized by an unusually high turnover of possession. Enclosures passed to and from the crown, between individuals and from the nobility to the gentry owing to the vagaries of forfeiture, economic misfortune, as a reward for office, for reasons of patronage, or as part of political settlements.[46] As had been the case in the Middle Ages, new ownership was often the catalyst for change.

[42] C. Phillpotts, 'Park Farm, Thornbury, South Gloucestershire. Documentary research report' (Cotswold Archaeology, 2010): available at https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/gf2.ti/aw/249186/16086/PDF/5b5d590c031a5e605f56564c/987381%209%20Documentary%20Research%20Assessment.pdf; A. Wood, '"Some banglyng about the customes". Popular memory and the experience of defeat in a Sussex village, 1549–1640', *Rural Hist.* 25 (2014), pp. 1–14.

[43] D. Hall, 'The woodland landscapes of southern Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 54 (2001), pp. 33–46.

[44] J. P. Cooper, 'The fortune of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford', *EcHR* 11 (1958), pp. 227–48.

[45] P. A. Stamper, 'Willey's parks: attitudes, aspirations, and exploitation', *Trans. Shropshire Arch. and Hist. Soc.* 65 (1987), pp. 70–4.

[46] D. L. Peach, *The history of Hursley Park* (1972); Pittman, 'Disparkment', p. 61.

In the case of well-run, long-established enclosures, new owners were often presented with huge potential for the sale of timber, realizing opportunities from grazing, or converting all or part of their acquisition to agriculture. Parkland assets were well recognized as sources of ready cash; in 1574 when John, Lord Lumley, succeeded to indebted land of the Earl of Arundel it was noted in a survey that the financial situation 'is not fader to be improved other then by disparkinge of parks'.[47] In 1630 when Guildford park in Surrey passed from the crown to John Murray, Viscount Annandale, he immediately sold off 700 acres, leaving 300 acres as the 'Little Park' which was eventually broken up three decades later.[48] In cases where a park slipped down the social scale and ended up in the hands of the gentry, retention may have provided a degree of prestige, but maintenance was frequently beyond the means of the new owner and so provoked contraction. A common strategy was to build a mansion and retain enough parkland to provide a suitable setting while disparking or leasing out the remainder, as at Donington park in Leicestershire, which was granted to the Grey family by the crown in 1535. By the 1550s it had been divided, with an area around a new mansion kept as parkland, but with the larger portion farmland.[49]

While an unfavourable financial situation for some owners may have worked towards disparkment, for others parks represented economic opportunities, the realization of which, in something of a paradox, resulted in similar outcomes. As had been the case in the thirteenth century, in a period of rising population and higher prices, from the late sixteenth century parks were again given over to settlement or put to alternative uses as lords resumed the direct exploitation their demesnes. One of the attractions of parkland was that it represented opportunities to create new tenements held either by tenants at will, or let via short-term leases, strategies that were financially beneficial at a time when inflation was eating into the income from copyholds. At Stock in Essex the 750-acre episcopal park of Crondon, with 600 deer, was acquired by the Petrie family in 1548 and within two years 500 acres had been disparked and replaced by new five farms let at rents far higher than those of the existing tenements.[50] Similar economic motivations no doubt lay behind the planned settlement in 1551 of Flemish weavers on plots within Worrall Park in Somerset by the Duke of Somerset and at Mudgely Park in the same county when the Clifton family planned a new settlement of ten tofts.[51] There were also immediate benefits to be gained on acquisition, especially in the case of larger, well-managed, enclosures with significant quantities of timber and grazing.[52] The denuding of parkland resources is a common theme throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially where parks were acquired by new owners; in the 1550s for example, it was asset stripping that characterized the seven-year tenure by the Duke of Somerset of the parks of the Bishop of Wells.[53] Sir Robert Cecil (later earl of Salisbury) acquired two parks

47 E. Miller (ed.) *The records of the Lumleys of Lumley castle* (1904), p. 71.

48 A. Crocker, 'Disparking the royal park of Guildford', *Surrey Arch. Coll.* 92 (2005), pp. 187–215.

49 P. Liddle, 'A late Medieval enclosure in Donington Park', *Leicestershire Arch. and Hist. Soc. Trans.* 53 (1978), pp. 8–29.

50 A. Robey, 'The village of Stock, Essex, 1550–1610: a social and economic survey' (unpubl. PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1991), pp. 48–65.

51 E. Green, 'On some Flemish weavers settled at Glastonbury, AD 1551', *Proc. Somersetshire Arch. and Natural Hist. Soc.* 26 (1880), pp. 17–24.

52 Rowe and Williamson, *Hertfordshire*, p. 153.

53 Bond, *Somerset*, p. 55.

from the crown at Brigstock in Rockingham Forest in Northamptonshire in 1602. He had the deer expelled and the woodland grubbed up before successfully disafforesting the parks and letting the land out in closes. This provoked widespread protest by those who lost parkland grazing rights.[54] Similar actions characterized cases during the Civil War and Interregnum when Parliamentarians found themselves in receipt of parks or parcels of parkland and took to felling trees and turning them over to agriculture.[55] In such instances reducing numbers of deer or removing them altogether was expedient as they were otherwise an impediment to pasturing stock and their need for woodland cover hindered felling. The conversion of parkland assets into cash certainly took place during the Middle Ages, but these seem to have been comparatively rare events in longer management regimes and given the somewhat serendipitous circumstances in which many new park owners found themselves after 1550 and during the 1640s and 1650s, it is unsurprising that many took advantage in order to obtain short-term financial advantage or clear debts.

The general point worth highlighting here is that, regardless of the exact causes, where a park had significantly contracted in size or been denuded of its assets and the deer removed, the costs of reinstatement became higher and so increased the likelihood of final disparkment. Where the park had effectively become an agricultural landscape anyway, it probably made little difference on the ground; at Leagram in Lancashire, official disparkment took place in 1556 after a royal commission had reported that the park was too decayed to support deer.[56] The costs of restocking or repairing of the surrounding pale, deserve particular emphasis as they was clearly key determinants in whether a park would continue in existence or not. At Haya park in Yorkshire in the fifteenth century, neglect had meant that:

> the payle with continewance of tyme is growne so shorte as it will not hold the deere nor scarce any horses. Teir is not woodd within the parke nor herdlie within the Lordship sufficient to staunche the payle fitt for a parke

while the final abandonment of Erringden park in the same county in 1449 took place after it had earlier been reported that it was already partially dispaled.[57] What was true in the fifteenth was also true in the seventeenth; in 1686 the cost of adequate paling was the key issue for the estate of Harfield Place in Middlesex in deciding whether to retain or abandon the park.[58] Poor fencing caused deer to escape, which meant the additional cost of re-stocking the herd. At Newsome at Wressle in Yorkshire, the decay of the pale meant that in 1570 it was reported that 'the deer lie out of the ground and especially in summer, in the corn fields, and are stolen and spoiled'.[59] The well-known depredations of the Civil War should be seen against this background because they suggest not so much that medieval parks were themselves in terminal decline, but that decayed parks were more likely to be disparked owing to the cost

[54] P. A. J. Pettit, *The royal forests of Northamptonshire. A study in their economy, 1558–1714* (Northampton Rec. Soc., 23, 1968), pp. 171–82.

[55] I. Gentles, 'The management of the Crown Lands, 1649–60', *AgHR* 19 (1971), pp. 25–41.

[56] N. Neil and R. Thurnhill, *Deer parks in the forest of Bowland* (2013), p. 44.

[57] B. E. Coates, 'Parklands in transition: medieval deer park to modern landscape park', *Trans. Hunter Archaeological Soc.* 9 (1964–9), pp. 132–50, at p. 138 for Haya and pp. 138–9 for Erringden.

[58] Warwickshire RO, CR136/B1145, fos. 1–4.

[59] Neave, *Medieval Parks*, p. 44.

of reinstatement. A catastrophic event might have furthered the process, but need not in itself always be decisive.

But, even during periods of neglect, disparkment was not an inevitable outcome and re-instatement after deterioration was not uncommon. Here there is virtue in appreciating the medieval background of park decline and restoration as it is probable that many parks underwent periodic periods of decay, only to subsequently recover. The park at Donington was repaired after suffering despoliations at the hands of a royal army in 1322 and at Wicken in Northamptonshire in 1290 John Fitz Alan was licensed to re-enclose the park the pale of which had decayed during the occupancy of his mother.[60] Staverton Park in Suffolk was described as being without deer and 'greatly broken down' in 1382, possibly as a result of the Peasants' Revolt, but it was evidently repaired and remained intact well into the seventeenth century.[61] Good management at Sheriff Hutton park in the late sixteenth century ensured its recovery from a period of asset stripping a few decades earlier and at South Park at Burstwick in Yorkshire decay in the 1520s had been reversed by the 1550s and the head of deer increased.[62] In such cases it was no doubt the condition of the park and financial situation of the owners which determined whether reinstatement would ultimately be successful. In cases where extensive tree felling or ploughing had taken place and the habitat for deer had been effectively removed, the full reinstatement could only be achieved over a long period of time, not least in order to allow the regeneration of vegetation and tree cover needed to furnish a suitable environment for a herd. Where the costs were deemed too great or the retention of a deer herd was no longer required, disparkment was more likely to follow, but this was by no means inevitable. At New Park in Sutton in the Forest in Yorkshire, decay during a period of Parliamentarian occupation in the 1650s meant that, despite Royalist efforts after 1660, the park declined, while in contrast at Wardour in Wiltshire, both pre-Civil War parks were reinstated, despite spoliation during the conflict.[63]

What needs to be emphasized is the often protracted nature of the decline of the majority of medieval parks as well as the range of factors variously working towards final dismemberment or retention. Peripheral location, transfers of ownership, poor management or economies in maintenance leading to ruined pales, depleted deer herds and partial enclosure tended to ultimately result in disparkment, whereas tenurial stability, a favourable resource base and desire to maintain a hunting ground led to continued use. For many parks there was probably a long period where its ultimate fate hung in the balance with some fine margins between failure to survive and survival by adaptation. In the case of the park of the lords of Hallamshire at Sheffield, the medieval park of 2500 acres had been progressively divided and let out over the course of the seventeenth century with the parkland restricted to the area around a residence at Manor Lodge. The trigger for full disparkment was the decision in 1708 by Thomas Duke of Norfolk to abandon this seat in favour of nearby

[60] L. Fox, 'Ministers' accounts of the Honour of Leicester (1322 to 1324)', *Leicestershire Arch. Soc.* 19 (1938), pp. 199–273; *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1281–92*, p. 382.

[61] Hoppitt, 'Study', p. 187.

[62] E. Dennison (ed.), *Within the Pale. The story of Sheriff Hutton Park* (2005), p. 166; Neave, *Medieval Parks*, p. 23.

[63] VCH *Yorkshire North Riding,* II, pp. 196–202; Watts, 'Some Wiltshire deer parks', p. 101.

Worksop Manor, after which the final remnant of the park was converted to farmland.[64] At Thrybergh Park in the same county by contrast, the indebted Royalist Sir John Reresby progressively sold off wood from his park not, as his son was later at pains to point out 'by ill-husbandry' but:

> by reason of the war and the narrowness of his then present fortune' and that 'my father having sold a great deal of timber in the old park and reduced his park to so narrow a compass just before the house that the deer did not live or increase in any number, I added some field-land to it … and compassed it well with a stone wall

decisions that ultimately guaranteed its longevity.[65] But in all such cases, what needs to be stressed is that disparkment nearly always seems to have been a process, rather than an event. Rarely, if ever, did a vibrant medieval hunting ground become completely dismembered overnight; probably more typical was the case at Pendley in Hertfordshire, which progressively contracted from the late sixteenth century and while a local farmer in 1731 recounted that he did not know when it had finally ceased to exist, he believed the park had been 'disparked at severall times by degrees'.[66]

III

If the broad casual factors for imparkment and disparkment were similar down to 1640 then an area of more decisive change would appear to lie in how parks were managed, with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries characterized by increasing sub-division and non-deer related activities within pales. While the extent to which the preference for income started to eclipse deer-keeping after 1350 and beyond has been the subject of debate, differences in interpretation are less pronounced if it is simply accepted that a number of parkland regimes – in which deer did not always have to form part – co-existed throughout the late Middle Ages and continued thereafter.[67]

Clearly parks managed along familiar lines were retained at least down to the Civil War. At Lopham in Norfolk a cartographic depiction of the large park of the Earls of Arundel in 1612 shows a characteristically medieval enclosure with lodge at its centre surrounded by a substantial laund with a scattering of trees and coppice on the periphery; a scene that would have been entirely familiar to earlier generations.[68] The vibrancy of the park as hunting landscape remained undiminished down to 1640 and was reflected in investment in infrastructure such as boundary walls and pales and especially, from the late Middle Ages onwards, in deer courses. Here the demands of hunting dictated the internal form of the park, with deer chased by dogs along rides before being dispatched, often in great numbers, at a final enclosure overlooked by onlooking spectators housed in purpose built viewing stands, such as

[64] D. Hey, *The fiery blades of Hallamshire. Sheffield and its neighbourhood, 1660–1740* (1991).

[65] A. Browning (ed.), *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, 1634–1689* (1875), pp. 21–2, 81.

[66] Rowe, *Tudor*, p.18.

[67] For a cogent summary of the current state of research, see S. Mileson, 'Royal and aristocratic landscapes of pleasure', in C. Gerrard, A. Gutierrez and E. Wells (eds), *The Oxford handbook of later medieval archaeology in Britain* (2018), pp. 386–400.

[68] Arundel Castle Archives, P5/1.

at that built during the 1630s at Lodge Park in Gloucestershire and which echoed a tradition that probably originated in the late fourteenth century.[69]

Elsewhere, as in parts of the north of England, there is little reason to doubt that there was a move to stock-rearing in parks in the later Middle Ages to such an extent that the term 'park' was ceased to be synonymous with deer.[70] In other wood-pasture economies, such as the Forest of Arden, there was also a trend toward giving parkland over to specialized agriculture, either whole or in part, which reflected the both economic priorities of the owner and broader trends in the local and regional economy.[71] That there were strategies at work is well illustrated in the case of the three parks owned by the Staffords at Madeley in Staffordshire. Here the Great Park was retained as a 'traditional' park and hunting ground and survived into the seventeenth century, while that at Leycett (created at some point between 1369 and 1372) had its deer removed in 1386 before being let on a series of long leases. That at Nethersethey was similarly short-lived, being imparked after 1395, and probably serving as a stock enclosure and then disparked in 1401 when it was divided into two farms and leased.[72] In late fifteenth-century Hertfordshire, the gentleman Sir William Say oversaw a similar policy of acquisition and disposal with those at his seat at Bedwell and what was probably a hunting park at Benington retained, in contrast to those at Little and Great Munden and Sayes, which were leased and then disparked.[73]

The point at which a multiplicity of regimes emerged, and their longevity, is unclear. Comparisons across the medieval and post-medieval periods are complicated by the fact that, especially prior to the Black Death, we are largely ignorant of the details of park management.[74] But even before 1348, there must have been parks where, even for short periods, some kind of specialization occurred at the expense of deer; in 1281 at Vastern Old Park in Wiltshire for example some 616 of 789 acres of parkland was arable, while at Pulham in Norfolk in 1251, of the 60-acre park, 29½ acres was under the plough.[75] In the case of royal parks, and probably also those of the greater baronage, horse studs were habitually housed within park pales and at the largest enterprises the needs of the deer must have been reduced in favour of equines.[76] Deer management also took place alongside the

[69] For the political symbolism of hunting, see D. C. Beaver, *Hunting and the politics of violence before the English Civil War* (2008); for medieval deer courses, C. C. Taylor, 'Ravensdale park, Derbyshire and medieval deer coursing', *Landscape Hist.* 26 (2004), pp. 37–57 and for post-medieval courses, J. Musty, 'Deer coursing at Clarendon Palace and Hampton Court', *Antiquaries J.* 66 (1986), pp. 131–4; J. Roberts, *Royal landscape: the gardens and parks of Windsor* (1997), p. 138; Fletcher, *Gardens*, pp. 109–15; J. Haworth, *Lodge Park* (2002).

[70] S. Moorhouse, 'The medieval parks of Yorkshire: function, contents and chronology', in Liddiard, *Medieval park*, pp. 99–127, at p. 125; Winchester, 'Baronial', p. 166.

[71] VCH *Shropshire*, VIII, pp. 101, 298; J. Bond, *Monastic Landscapes* (2004), p. 179; A. Watkins, 'Cattle grazing in the forest of Arden in the later middle ages', *AgHR* 37 (1989), pp. 12–25; *idem*, 'Landowners and their estates in the forest of Arden in the fifteenth century' *AgHR* 45 (1997), pp. 18–33.

[72] L. M. Cantor and J. S. Moore, 'The medieval parks of the earls of Stafford at Madeley', *North Staffordshire J. of Field Studies* 3 (1963), pp. 37–58.

[73] Rowe, *Medieval Parks*, p. 27.

[74] J. Birrell, 'Deer and deer farming in medieval England', *AgHR* 40 (1992), pp. 112–26.

[75] Watts, 'Some Wiltshire', p. 91; Rackham, *Trees*, pp. 155–7.

[76] R. H. C. Davis, *The medieval warhorse* (1989), pp. 91–6; C. Gladitz, *Horse breeding in the medieval world* (1997), pp. 147–54; for a detailed description of the horse stud at Ightenhill see R. C. Shaw, *The royal forest of Lancaster* (1956), pp. 381–96.

FIGURE 1. Detail from map of Tilstock Park, Whitchurch, Shropshire *c.*1600 showing timber felling and clearance within the medieval park. (Shropshire Archives)

husbandry of other elite foodstuffs such as fish and rabbit and so, to some extent, dictated a mixed economy. Sporadic references also exist to what are called 'parks without deer' throughout the medieval period, but it is difficult to tell if these were places where deer were temporarily or more permanently absent.[77] The fact that deer were lacking certainly did not necessarily herald imminent disparkment; in the case of Cawston in Norfolk, which was recorded as being without deer in 1382, the park remained intact until at least the late sixteenth century.[78] Such enclosures obviously retained some degree of integrity and identity as parks, but must have been, in effect, paled agricultural landscapes. This was the case at Staverton in Suffolk, which was described as without deer in the late fourteenth century and which appears to have been chiefly used a stock pasture from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth.[79] The number of such deer-less parks is difficult to determine, but were clearly

[77] *Calendar of Inquisitions Post-Mortem* (hereafter *CIPM*), IV, pp. 24, 291; V, p. 398; X, no. 247; XII, p. 149.

[78] *CIPM,* XV, p. 246; Norfolk Record Office [hereafter NRO], MC 341/12, 706X4A.

[79] Hoppitt, 'Study', pp. 182–9.

numerous enough to cause difficulties for contemporaries faced with trying to decide when a park was defunct. Here definitions varied from those enclosures without deer, to those where there had been an irrecoverable change in land use.[80] Ambiguities of definition presuppose that there were at least a certain number of parks where deer were removed in order to prioritize other activities; here the fact that contemporaries often simply elided an absence of deer with disparkment tends to obscure the fact that parks could continue in existence, albeit with a slightly different function. At Wem and Whitchurch in Shropshire, the two parks were without deer for some two decades after 1580 before final disparkment, while in the intervening period they were gradually denuded of woodland and the land let as pasture (Figure 1).[81] This case is unlikely to be unique and that Gervase Markham, one of the few writers to give advice on parkland management, recommended in 1616 that a park should not 'consist of one kind of ground only, as all of wood, all grass, or all coppice, but of divers, as part high wood, part grass or champion, and part coppice or underwood or thick spring', also assumes the existence of enclosures that deviated from this ideal and were specialist agrarian landscapes.[82] Such places were probably similar to that described by Richard Gough, in his famous account of Myddle in Shropshire, where by 1701 the park had clearly not functioned as a game reserve for a considerable time. Gough recalled how the ruined lodge 'was made use of only for housing of catell and bestowing of fodder' and the park's timber had been progressively felled.[83] The presence of deer-less parks could also be played to advantage; in attempting to get round statutes requiring them to keep certain numbers of horses in their parks, owners could claim that their parks were not parks at all as deer had been replaced by cattle.[84] The existence of such places not only draws attention to the fact that contemporaries were aware that a variety of regimes existed on the ground, but that parks not containing deer, or given over to a specific land-use, were sufficient in number to warrant comment (Figure 2). Now, as then, whether we wish to classify them as parks is a matter of definition, but the point is that a trend towards using parks for purposes other than deer which had emerged at the end of the Middle Ages was becoming more pervasive.

Whether deer were present or not, at the level of the individual park, economic concerns encouraged internal sub-division, whether in the fifteenth century in the leasing of parks either in their entirety or as separate parcels, or in the sixteenth when agrarian expansion encouraged lords to more intensively exploit their parks in order to take advantage of higher prices. In a 1602 survey of Oswestry it was recommended by the surveyor that the Upper Park be sub-divided as 'the greatest proffitt will be in letting it by perticulers', rather than leasing it out whole and that if it were 'to be let in parcells I cannot thinke but that they may be better prysed'.[85] The point here is that regardless of when it took place, dividing up a park permitted specialized use that, crucially, would otherwise be difficult given the presence of deer. At Lilleshall in Shropshire, down to the early eighteenth century it was in the separate

[80] Pittman, 'Disparkment', pp. 47–9.

[81] S. Watts, 'The significance of colonisation in two north Shropshire parishes: Wem and Whitchurch, *c.*1560–1660', *Midland Hist.* 25 (2000), pp. 61–77.

[82] G. Markham, *Maison Rustique or the Countrey Farme* (1616), p. 669.

[83] D. Hey (ed.), *Richard Gough. The history of Myddle* (1984), pp. 57–8.

[84] J. Thirsk, *The rural economy of England: collected essays* (1984), p. 387.

[85] W. J. Slack (ed.) *The lordship of Oswestry, 1393–1607* (1951), p. 57.

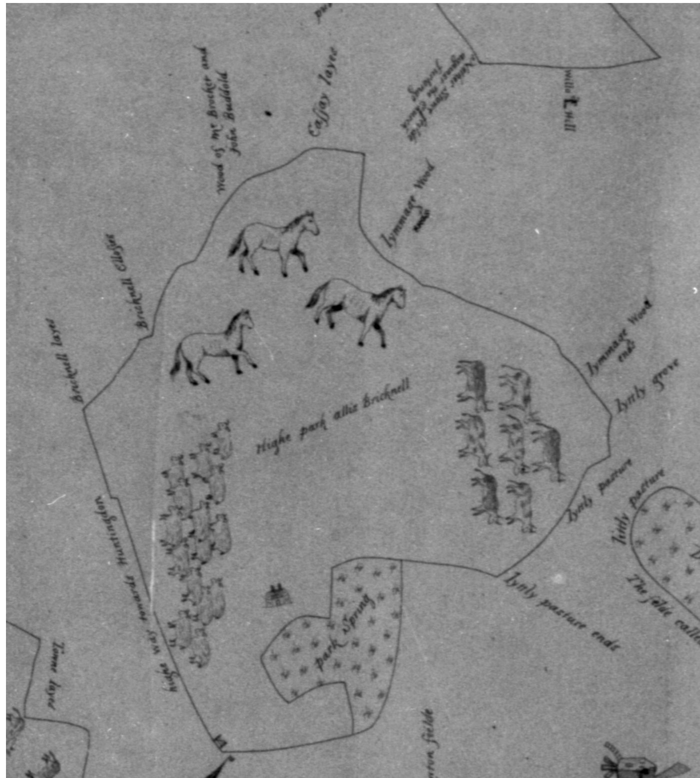

FIGURE 2. Map of Kimbolton Huntingdonshire in 1582 showing the park as a stock ground for cattle, horses and sheep, rather than deer. (Reproduced by kind permission of Mr Patrick Knight)

closes within the park that the most intensive grazing took place.[86] While a lack of evidence precludes a definitive answer to how many parks were compartmented before 1348, what does seem apparent is that after this date – and certainly by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – compartmentation seems to have become the dominant regime.[87] At the same time, there is evidence that internal divisions in parks were assuming a more permanent character.

Consistent references to underwood in inquisitions after 1200 demonstrate the ubiquity of coppice and so some degree of segregation must have existed in order to prevent damage by deer, as must also have been the case when parts of parks were given over to arable. The often careful delineation of grazing rights found in agistment agreements argue, as in later periods, that management of stock alongside deer was judiciously orchestrated in parkland regimes and in cases where pasture was specifically noted as being for the deer it also presupposes that some kind of internal division existed.[88] In some cases, 'hard' internal divisions presumably did exist, as at Cockermouth in Cumbria which was noted in 1276 as being recently divided into closes. Earthwork remains at Clarendon park show that permanent boundaries separated

[86] J. P. Bowen, 'From medieval deer park to an enclosed agricultural and developing industrial landscape: the post-medieval evolution of Lilleshall park, Shropshire', *Midland Hist.* 38 (2013), pp. 194–212.

[87] This is the suggestion, albeit often made implicitly, for instance in Mileson, *Parks*, pp. 66–7, and at p. 73; J. Bond, 'Forests, chases, warrens and parks in Medieval Wessex', in M. Aston and C. Lewis (eds), *The medieval landscape of Wessex* (1994), pp. 115–58 at pp. 142–4.

[88] Rowe, *Medieval parks*, p. 31; Mileson, *Parks*, pp. 64–6

the inner from the outer park and also that areas of coppice were banked, ditched and hedged.[89] But it is worth noting that elsewhere field survey does not furnish many clear-cut archaeological examples of medieval sub-divisions. At Foxley in Norfolk, where the deer park became managed woodland and so chances of earthwork survival are high, the interior reveals no archaeological evidence of internal partitions, which is significant as in 1391 it was noted that the park contained both deer and coppice.[90] At Lamarsh in Essex the surviving low earthworks in the former park suggest that the park's internal compartments were periodically re-organized.[91] While it is perfectly possible that modern hedges in former parkland perpetuate the line of pre-existing sub-divisions, the probability must be that in many cases medieval parks were divided up by more ephemeral fences or dead hedges – a barrier to stock formed out of cut branches – in an *ad hoc* manner, a technique noted at Upper Park in Oswestry in 1602, when it was noted that in the un-compartmented park, which was clearly said to lack internal closes, 'some dead hedges doth sever it, as the fermer findeth occasione when he soweth part'.[92] It is probably also relevant that Gervase Markham recommended that the resources of a park such as grazing, coppice and arable, should ideally be segregated, which in turn suggests that in uncompartmented park the resources would be scattered, something also noted at Oswestry where the arable and pasture were 'here and there dispersed among woodes and coppyces'.[93] All this argues that during the Middle Ages a park's internal divisions were more likely to be semi-permanent or subject to change, something which aligns with the suggestion that medieval regimes were frequently short-term in outlook.

By way of contrast, if the incentive on the part of a park owner was greater profit by direct exploitation or that of a lessee to maximize their return, then this encouraged more impermeable boundaries. At Sheriff Hutton in Yorkshire, in the late sixteenth century deer destroyed a large area of parkland that had been planted with oats. At a later date deer-proof fences had to be made round closes in the park to keep the animals out. In the early seventeenth century part of the west lawn required hedging in order to keep out 'the raskall deere'.[94] Particular difficulties existed if cattle-rearing was envisaged. Contemporary writers stressed that cattle and deer could not be co-grazed, probably because both species competed for forage in a way that deer and sheep did not.[95] Attempts to manage deer alongside other stock or arable within the same park seem to have been a bugbear for many owners, especially in the early decades of the seventeenth century when the market for cattle was strong. In 1604 Humfrey Nurtall, park keeper at Shifnal in Shropshire wrote to the Earl of Shrewsbury to complain of feeding and accommodating the herd of deer that had been forced to share the park with cattle as 'They [the deer] doe gretlie decaye by meanes of converting of the best parte of the parke into tyllage and mowing growndes, being utterlie excluded from the same and wyntour feeding in those parts'.[96]

[89] Winchester, 'Baronial and manorial parks', pp. 173–6; T. Beaumont James and C. Gerrard, *Clarendon: landscape of kings* (2007), p. 55.

[90] *CPR, 1388–92*, p. 486; field survey in G. Barnes and T. Williamson, *Re-thinking ancient woodland: the archaeology and history of woods in Norfolk* (2015), pp. 184–7.

[91] L. Alston, 'Lamarsh park, the origin and management of a medieval deer park', *Colchester Archaeological Group Annual Bulletin* 35 (1993), pp. 3–16.

[92] Slack, *Lordship of Oswestry,* p. 57.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Dennison, *Within the Pale*, pp. 68, 166.

[95] Markham, *Maison Rustique*, p. 699.

[96] Morris, 'Shropshire', p. 108.

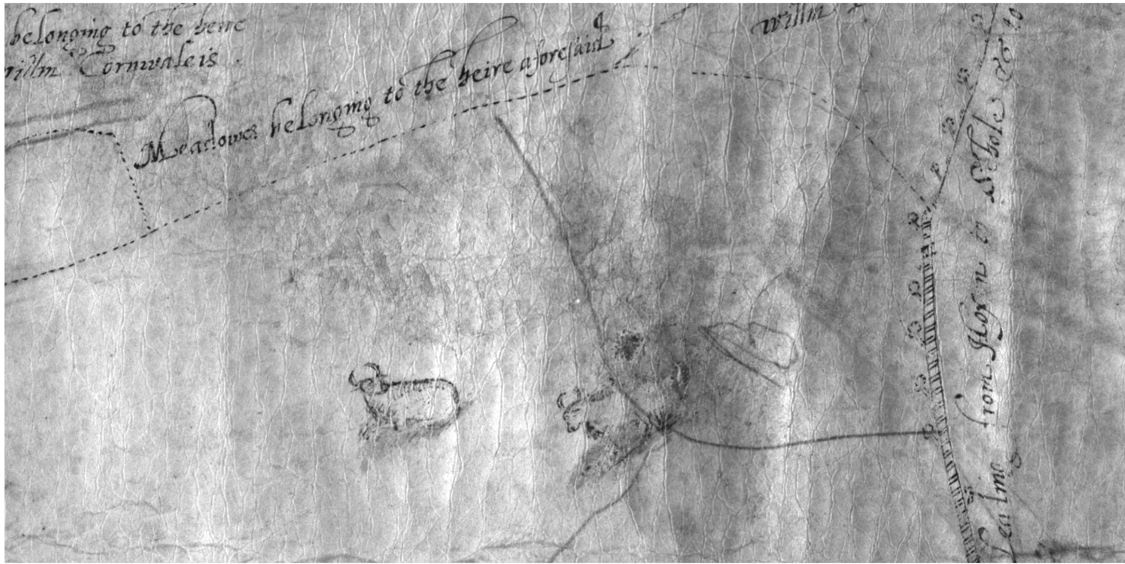

FIGURE 3. Parkland cattle in 1619 as depicted on an estate map of Hoxne, Suffolk. (Reproduced by kind permission of Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich branch. HD40/422)

In such circumstances, owners with an eye for income removed the deer altogether, not least because the cost of maintaining the herd, especially when it came to the provisioning of winter fodder, was prohibitive. It is worth noting in this context that the contemporary observations on parkland regimes that refer to disparkment, such as Richard Carew's statement that lords in Cornwall were 'making the deer leap the pale to give the bullocks place' actually place the emphasis on the changes to stock kept within the pale.[97] This move towards stock is seen elsewhere, such as at Oakley in Shropshire where the owner Sir Charles Foxe was asked to explain in 1617 why he 'keepeth there more sheep and cattle than deer', rather than maintaining deer. It is often shown on contemporary maps, as at Hoxne in Suffolk where a map of 1619 depicts grazing cattle in parkland rather than deer (Figure 3).[98] While such places were still described as parks, they were, in effect, stock grounds and probably could remain as such for considerable periods of time.

The switch towards economic management goes some way to explaining the situation seen commonly in cartographic sources which show parks ar divided into what are effectively fields or where separate closes, usually along the edge of the park and abutting up against the pale, have been made. At Sheffield, for example, by the 1640s a series of enclosures used for various purposes ringed the central lawn which retained the deer. When such closes were granted on long leases and where tenants were obliged to ensure that the boundaries were securely hedged or fenced, it encouraged a move towards more permanent sub-divisions; in 1699 Richard Richmond, lessee of 477 acres in Sheffield park was required to 'plant or sett or cause to be

[97] F. E. Halliday (ed.), *Richard Carew of Anthony. The survey of Cornwall* (1953), p. 106.

[98] *VCH Shropshire,* IV, pp. 119–68; NRO, Accn. Barnes 1.5.1986 Map Tree 4; Suffolk Record Office (hereafter SRO), I HD 40/422.

planted or sett three oakes, ashes or elmes upon every acre length of fences and walls', which does not suggest that divisions were considered temporary.[99] In this sense, compartmentalization was a factor ultimately working towards disparkment in that divisions intended to be more long-lived made reinstatement less likely.

What a discussion of regimes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demonstrates is not so much that the activities within parks were so different from those previously, but that certain practices became more common and, crucially, had a greater degree of permanence. But again, the idea that such changes in management were something of a death knell needs to be treated with caution. While there is a tendency to see the internal enclosure of parks as the inevitable first stage of disparkment, this did not have to be the case. At Castle Hedingham in Essex for example, two of the castle's three deer parks extant in the 1590s and shown as compartmented and leased were maintained until the 1740s when they were finally disparked.[100] Equally, at Castle Rising in Norfolk, the park probably lost its deer in the 1640s, but the park itself survived until the 1725 with its final extinction associated with the enclosure of the surrounding chase.[101] At Henham and Benacre in Suffolk, maps of 1699 and 1778 respectively show parks comprised of a series of hedged and paled enclosures, while that at Loudham of 1739 shows the same, but with an adjacent 'Corn Park' within the overall bounds, with the two divided by a deer-proof fence.[102] While there is the tendency to view such late survivals in teleological terms and as a final stage before disparkment, arguably they are better interpreted on their own terms as post-medieval deer parks that were continuations of a much longer tradition.

Here it should also be borne in mind that a move towards specialization and sub-division was not confined to parks, but to the landscape more generally, which from the late Middle Ages was itself becoming more regionally diverse and increasingly enclosed. From the point of view of land use, parks tended to mirror regional trends. In the north west Winchester has shown that the sub-division of parks into separate closes for grazing was part of larger shift towards the enclosure of uplands for specialized stock-rearing.[103] In such cases final disparkment did not necessarily result in a radical change in land use; rather it tended to follow the dominant land use of the area, in the Weald of Kent for example, former parkland was chiefly used as pasture, albeit for stock other than deer.[104] If one of the indexes of disparkment was irrevocable change in land use, then the decisive break with the past could occur relatively late. At Clarendon, this occurred during the mid-eighteenth century while at Willey in Shropshire the 'emphatic' watershed moment was in the 1750s when part of the park was given over to ironworking and the remainder to farmland; up to this point the eighteenth century landscape was seemingly little different to its thirteenth-century predecessor.[105]

[99] G. Scurfield, 'Seventeenth-century Sheffield and its environs', *Yorkshire Archaeological J.* 58 (1986), pp. 147–71, at pp. 153–4.

[100] Essex Record Office (hereafter ERO), D/DMh M1; D/DMh P1.

[101] For tree felling and deer killing in 1644 see Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1/172, 2 Aug. 1644; for break-up of chase, NRO, HOW 572, 348X1; HOW 609, 348X2.

[102] SRO (I), HA 11 C9/19/2; T 631 (Rolls); HB 10:50/20/41.

[103] A. J. L. Winchester, 'Hill farming landscapes of medieval northern England', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Landscape: The richest historical record* (2000), pp. 75–84.

[104] Pittman, 'Disparkment', pp. 68–9.

[105] Stamper, 'Willey's Parks', p. 73.

IV

If all of this suggests support for the traditional view that post-1500 estate economics were trumping the deer, then at the same time one of the characteristic features of park regimes after this date is the lengths that park owners went to in order to combine the keeping of deer while at the same time maximizing other agrarian activities within their pales – a case of wanting to have your venison and eat it.

Where owners possessed more than one park it allowed the possibility of giving individual enclosures a specific role. In Cumbria in the 1560s the two parks of Lord Wharton appear to have had slightly differently functions, with that at Wharton Hall housing 300 deer and that at Ravenstonedale used for grazing cattle and oxen.[106] At Castle Cary in Somerset, by 1633 the Home Park close to the house retained deer, but the slightly more distant park at Ansford was leased out, probably as a stock pasture.[107] Along similar lines, but superficially a more odd arrangement, was where the boundary pale was kept intact but the deer restricted to a discrete area, with the rest of the park given over to agriculture. Here the area of actual parkland for use by the deer was contracted but continued in attenuated form – in effect a park in miniature – with the remainder effectively an agricultural landscape little different to that beyond the pale. This trend, it is worth emphasizing, had emerged by the fifteenth century at the latest and continued well into the seventeenth. At Wrotham in Kent in 1492 an internal paled pound for deer was created prior to the park being leased, but a particularly clear example of attenuated parkland comes from the episcopal park of Stanhope in Weardale. At the start of the fifteenth century two meadows within the pale were let for grazing. In 1419 the whole park was granted to the Bishop of Durham's master forester. This grant initiated the construction of a series of specialized grazing sheils that in subsequent decades became increasingly administratively distinct as tenancies. A more dramatic change occurred in the 1490s when the area for deer was reduced in size and an inner 'New Park' was carved out of the original bounds, with the remainder largely grazing. This arrangement proved remarkably stable with deer continuing to be kept within the new enclosure until at least the seventeenth century.[108] At Langley Marish in Buckinghamshire a new pale erected in 1626 divided the park in two, with the 'lower grounde reduced to a better use', which was 'for the game, and delightfull to hunte in, by reason of the faire artificial lawns latelie made and leueled with maine conuenient and pleasant standinges'.[109] Similar examples of 'attenuated' parkland are regularly depicted cartographically, such as at Rockingham in Northamptonshire in 1615 and at Wabridge in Cambridgeshire in 1651, as paled areas within the larger park pale.[110]

[106] Winchester, 'Baronial and manorial parks', pp. 178–9; R. W. Hoyle, 'Thomas first lord Wharton's parks at Ravenstonedale and Wharton', *Trans. Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Soc.*, new ser. 95 (1995), pp. 111–18; M. Blackett-Ord, 'Lord Wharton's deer park walls', *Trans. Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Soc.*, new ser. 86 (1986), pp. 133–40.

[107] Bond, *Somerset*, p. 59.

[108] J. Semple, 'The medieval parks of Wrotham', *Arch. Cantiana* 128 (2008), pp. 179–209; J. L. Drury, 'Early settlement in Stanhope Park, Weardale, *c.*1406–79', *Arch. Aeliana*, 5th ser. 4 (1976), pp. 139–49.

[109] G. Lipscomb, *The History and antiquities of the county of Buckinghamshire* (4 vols, 1847), IV, p. 533.

[110] Northamptonshire Record Office, Map 2328; Way, *Study*, p. 284.

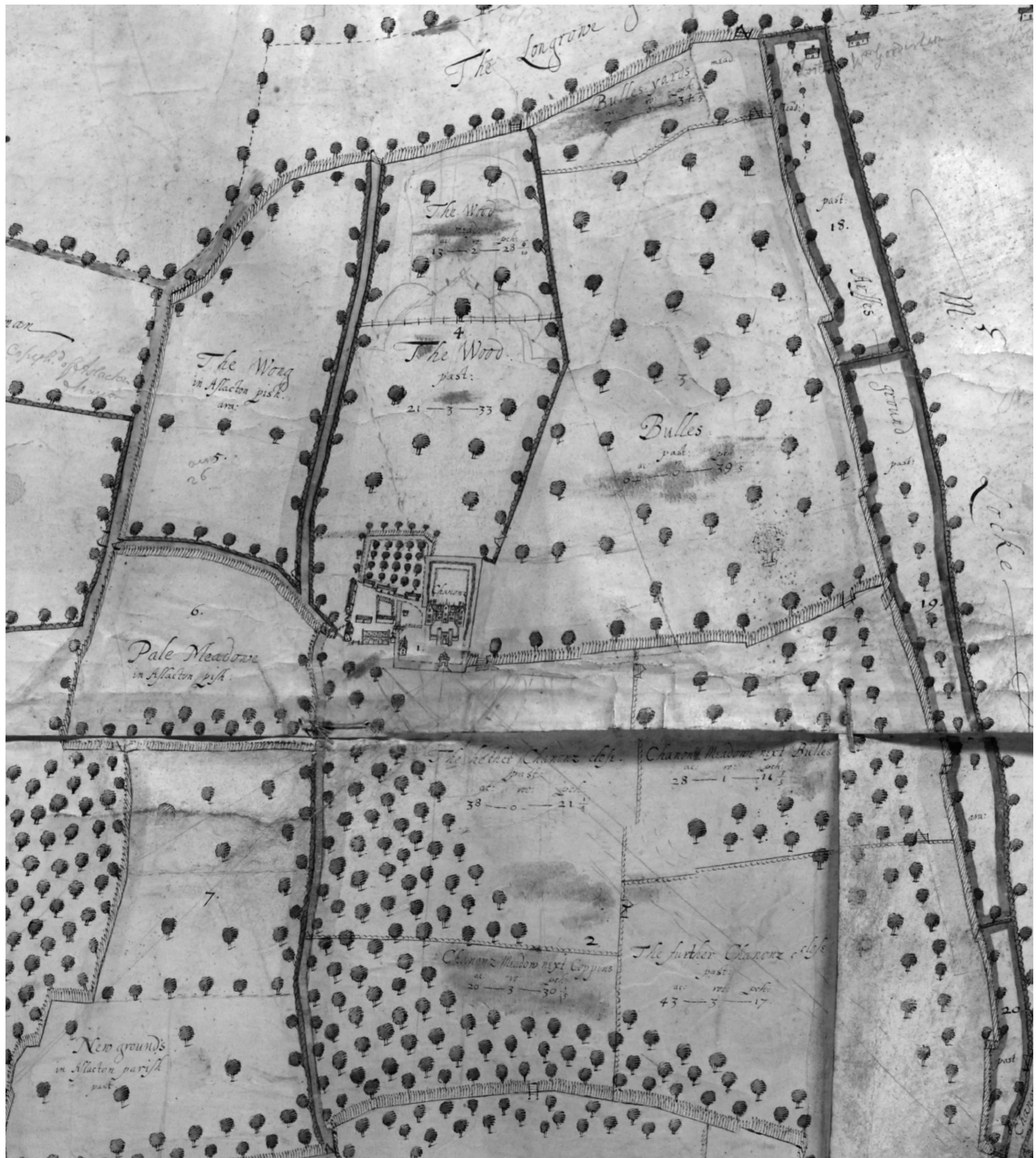

FIGURE 4. Mixed parkland economies as shown on a map of Channonz Hall, Tibenham, Norfolk in 1640. The park has external and internal pales and to judge from the named closes the northern portion of the park was reserved for cattle while the deer were kept in the area to the south.
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Norfolk Record Office)

At Crondon in Essex, the park carved out by the Petrie family in the 1550s had by the 1670s shrunk to a small area around the hall, with the remainder divided into fields, albeit still with a pale.[111] In a particularly clear case at Tibenham in Norfolk, a map of 1640 shows an inner pale cutting the park in two, named areas suggesting specialized cattle rearing in one part, with deer presumably in the second (Figure 4).[112]

In cases where parks were leased either entirely or in closes, owners were keen either to give their deer herds a degree of protection from tenants or ensure a degree of future proofing in the event that they decided to take them back into direct management. At Haverah Park in Yorkshire, the crown leased the park for a term of seven years, but ensured that the lessee reserved sufficient pasture for the keeping of game, while at Haya park in 1581 a similar lease restricted the amount of arable permitted within the pale and stated that a minimum number of deer be retained.[113] This was analogous to the arrangement seen as late as 1702 at Everingham in Yorkshire where the deer park was leased, but the owner reserved pasture and agistment for 50 deer and five horses. The lessee was to provide winter hay for the herd.[114] Elsewhere, the park at Huish Episcopi in Somerset was leased for pasture in the fifteenth century, but retained its fences and gates, while at New Park in Thornbury, work on the park fence continued in the 1550s, even though the grazing was farmed out and deer probably removed.[115] Grants or leases of portions of parks frequently stipulated that the recipient maintain the pale, a neat method of keeping future use as a game reserve in mind, while at the same time pushing the cost of fencing onto the tenant.[116] Such arrangements also go some way to explaining the otherwise contradictory statements that a park had been divided into fields, but still contained deer, as at Currypool in Somerset or where contemporaries deemed disparkment to have taken place, when other evidence points to the park's continued existence.[117] What also needs to be noted is the longevity and persistence of this kind of regime, which probably helps to explain the survival of medieval enclosures as late as the eighteenth century and cases where otherwise agricultural landscapes were still referred to as parks well into the post-medieval period. At Earsham in Norfolk the medieval park is depicted on an estate map of *c.*1700 with its pale intact, but with the interior divided into closes and farmed; one detail shows ploughing and another cattle being fed turnips from a cart (Figure 5).[118] A similarly late date for final termination is suggested at the former archiepiscopal park at Hexgrave in Nottinghamshire. Here the clauses for retaining provision for deer for the lessees of its constituent closes were only removed in 1761; arguably this was the moment, when deer-keeping was no longer considered even as an outside possibility, that really marked the end of the park's existence.[119]

The evidence from management regimes post-1500 demonstrates that while park owners may have had one eye on economic exploitation, they continued to prize their deer enclosures,

[111] ERO, D/DP P13.

[112] NRO, Accn. Barnes 1.5.1986 Map Tree 4.

[113] Coates, 'Parklands', p. 139.

[114] Neave, *Medieval Parks*, p. 36.

[115] Bond, *Somerset*, p. 59; Phillpotts, 'Park Farm', p. 21.

[116] Pittman, 'Disparkment', pp. 66–7.

[117] Bond, *Somerset*, p. 59.

[118] Map of Earsham Park, *c.*1700, in private ownership.

[119] P. Lyth, 'The deer parks of the Archbishops of York at Southwell', *Trans. Thoroton Soc.* 90 (1986), pp. 14–29.

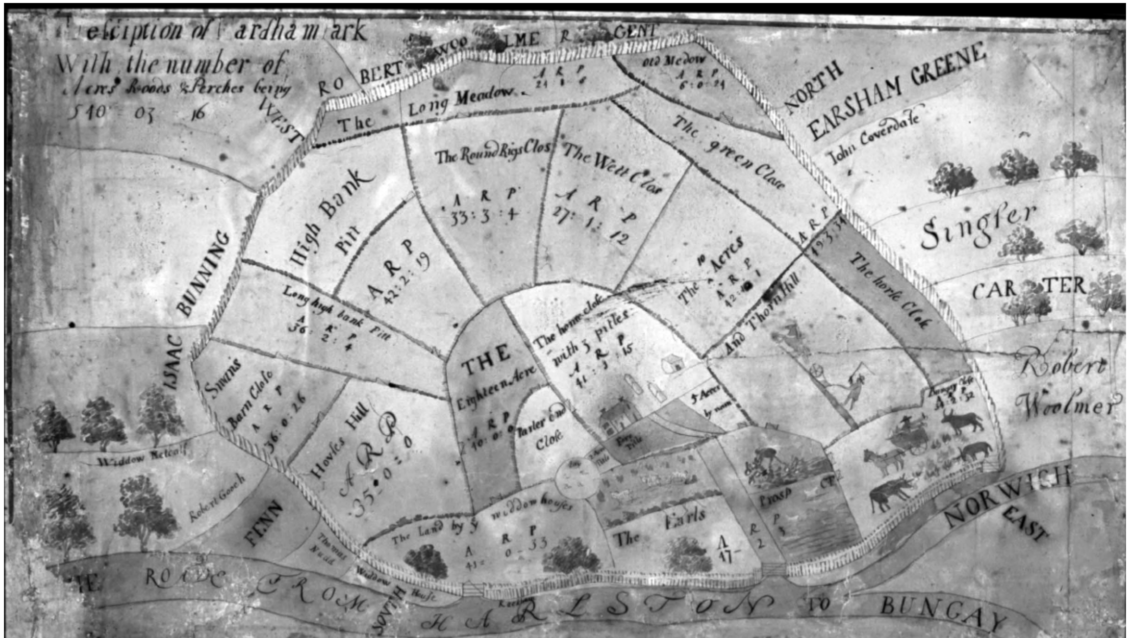

FIGURE 5. Map of Earsham park, Norfolk *c*.1700.
While still depicted as a paled park and retaining its integrity as an enclosure, the interior is given over to agriculture and its former role long since extinguished. Such as the 'afterlife' of many medieval parks.
(Reproduced by kind permission of Mr Nicholas Meade)

regardless of how many deer were actually present or even if they were temporarily excluded. But this was not new. As has been seen above in the case of Dunster, this was an issue that existed as far back as the fourteenth century.[120] When placed against the medieval background of reconciling competing interests within the pale, the changes taking place in the post-medieval period do not therefore look terribly unusual, but perhaps more pervasive; if Mileson is correct in the observation that down to the end of the Middle Ages the economic needs of tenants still had to 'fit round' the game, then the same was true for many parks of the post-medieval period.[121] As late as 1759 these concerns were expressed by the estate manager responsible for Capplebank park in Yorkshire:

> I am apt to think that neither your Lordships or any of your family will ever live at Bolton so that it answers no end in keeping so many Deer in the Park where they eat up the most of the Grass. If they were all or most of them destroyed the Land might be let, which would turn to advantage, but keeping the Deer never will.[122]

In a similar vein, the correspondence in 1736 from the estate manager of Everingham park in Yorkshire to the absentee landowner Marmaduke Constable, over the suggestion that horses

[120] Maxwell Lyte, *Dunster,* I, p. 324.
[121] Mileson, *Parks*, p. 73.
[122] I. Dormor, 'Woodland management in two Yorkshire dales since the fifteenth century' (unpubl. PhD thesis, York St John College, University of Leeds, 2002), p. 206.

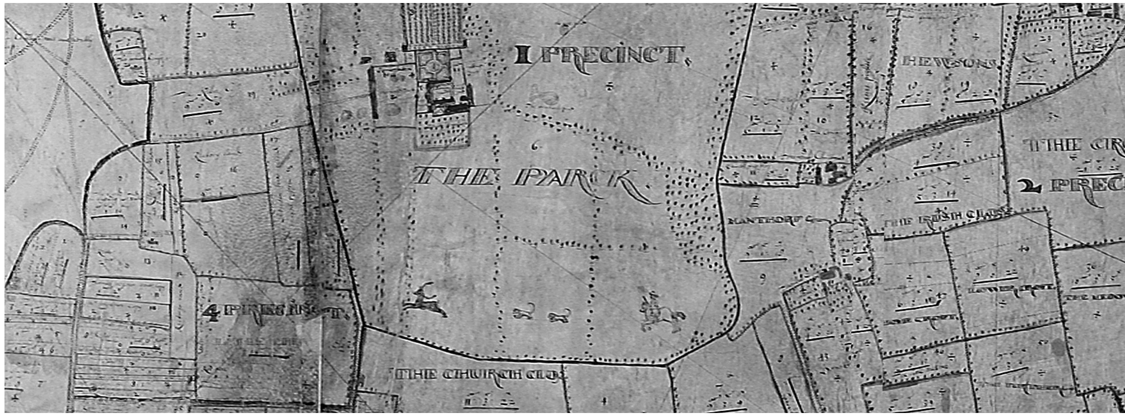

FIGURE 6. Hunting scene on a 1652 map of Somerleyton park in Suffolk.
(Reproduced by kind permission of Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich branch. Map No. 295)

should be over wintered in the park (which had provoked a reaction from the keeper) is also of interest in showing how reconciling deer-keeping and profit remained a source of tension:

> John cries out the Park is too little for the Deer alone; but he ought to consider your profit and not altogether his own. Be pleased to decide the contest; and doubtless you will pass sentence in favour of that creature you have most value for. I am often put to the necessity of making use of that sentence. *Omne regnum in divisum desolabitur*.[123]

Many owners, it seems, eschewed the 'all or nothing' approach to the economics of their parks. The distinguishing characteristics of deer parks post-1500 therefore seems to lie in the intensification of long-standing trends, rather than their novelty.

V

If the management trends in deer parks down to the Civil War were not symptomatic of decline, then the widespread restocking and reinstatement of parks after 1660, often with deer from Parliamentarian estates, is unsurprising. It also suggests not only that the familiar picture of despoiled parks in the 1640s and 1650s was not universally applicable, but that the ideals of deer enclosures remained intact. Even though feudal tenure had been abolished in 1660, petitions for licenses to impark following the Restoration suggest a concern for the reassertion of the traditional status associated with park ownership.[124] To judge from cartographic depictions, such as that of Somerlyton in Suffolk from 1652 which shows a gentleman chasing a deer with dogs, the park had lost none of its association with hunting (Figure 6).[125] The real

[123] 'Every kingdom divided will be laid waste'. P. Roebuck (ed.), *Constable of Everingham Estate Correspondence, 1726–43* (Yorkshire Archaeological Soc. Rec. Ser. 136, 1974), p. 92.

[124] J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy: Public debate and legislation', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V, *1640–1750* (2 vols, 1985), II, pp. 366–71.

[125] SRO, Map 295 (Map of Somerleyton, 1652)

questions are not therefore so much why some parks went out of use in the period down to 1640; rather, we should ask when and why the traditional forms of management ceased to the extent that by 1740 a gentleman's park need not necessarily contain deer at all.[126] The answer probably lies in a number of factors that worked in combination in the century after 1700 to gradually, but decisively, shift the status of deer and, by extension, the character of the park.

Clearly a major influence was the steady replacement of deer hunting by fox hunting as the elite pastime. Chasing deer in traditional form clearly continued beyond the Civil War; on one such occasion at Helmsley in Yorkshire in 1664, Marmaduke Rawdon and his cousin 'had very good sport' in taking a 'fat bucke' in the park.[127] The last major hunting treatise to place emphasis on pursuing deer was Richard Blome's *The Gentleman's Recreation* of 1686, which indicates that the traditional quarry remained king, albeit that sections on game shooting and foxhunting signposted a different direction.[128] The rise of fox hunting as an aristocratic pastime emerged in the late seventeenth century and in the Midlands the crucial period of crossover was 1720–50, by which time it was pre-eminent.[129] Here the older idea that deer hunting was curtailed due to a lack of suitable beasts can be dismissed, as studies of forests have shown that wild deer continued to exist, and in some cases thrive, well into the eighteenth century. While the hunting of 'carted' deer continued, this was arguably an inferior form of foxhunting rather than the continuation of a medieval tradition.[130] After 1660 the last monarch to hunt in anything like medieval style in a park was George I and thereafter the chief sport became shooting, something associated with the improvement in gun technology and which itself probably made deer hunting in parks unrewarding. This is not to say that deer were not valued or still seen as a prized animals, but their changing status is clearly reflected in statute law. In 1671 deer ceased to be judged 'game' and instead became classed as the private property of the owner; the harsh penalties for illegally taking them was not for the crime of poaching, but theft.[131] As a result, the status of venison also changed from 1700 and gradually lost its place as an elite meat. By 1800 John Bull and the Prince Regent gorged on English beef, not venison haunch. To judge from the ease and rate at which Samuel Pepys consumed venison pasties, the meat was no longer something only obtained by direct farming or as a gift, but was already becoming more of a commodity. By the end of the eighteenth century, deer were being publicly advertised for sale.[132]

While on large estates venison continued to be exchanged as part of patronage networks, more generally it seems to have been more valued for its historic connotations, rather than any association with hunting. The Society of Tempers founded in Hereford in 1752, for example, held an annual venison dinner to commemorate historical events such as Elizabeth I's birthday and the Gunpowder Plot and here the choice of meat was deliberately backward looking.[133] Archaeological evidence confirms the fall in deer consumption on high-status

[126] T. Williamson, *Polite landscapes: gardens and society in eighteenth-century England* (1995), pp. 75–6.

[127] R. Davies (ed.), *The life of Marmaduke Rawdon of York* (Camden Soc., Old Ser. 85, 1863), p. 123.

[128] R. Blome, *The gentleman's recreation* (1686).

[129] M. de Belin, *From the deer to the fox. The hunting transition and the landscape, 1600–1850* (2013), pp. 60–2.

[130] Ibid., pp. 101–4.

[131] P. B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and poachers: the English game laws, 1671–1831* (1981), pp. 3–7.

[132] *Hereford J.*, 24 June 1789.

[133] D. Whitehead, *The Castle Green at Hereford* (2007), p. 60.

sites; at Dudley Castle the bone assemblage suggests a decline in venison after 1640 and thereafter became residual. More generally, excavated bone evidence indicates that individual animals were kept alive for longer than their medieval counterparts, which not only suggests that they were no longer being hunted, but that they were more valued as living animals, most likely as ornaments for the park.[134] At Everingham in Yorkshire male deer were deliberately retained and female fawns killed at birth in order both to restrict the size of the herd, but also probably because bucks were favoured for their decorative antlers.[135] Where established deer herds existed in parks, they were more likely to be retained for their connection with the past and in giving a sense of lineage to an ancient family seat. At Knole in Kent John Sackville 3rd Duke of Dorset on his death in 1799 stated in his will that the deer 'shall be regarded as heirlooms and shall be in possession of the person in possession of Knole park', indicating the shift from enclosures that existed to rear and hunt deer to those where the animals were primarily ornamental.[136] If deer were increasingly ornamental, then the same was true of the environment in which they were kept. A clear example of the changing character of the park comes from Rivenhall in Essex where the rump of the medieval park was incorporated in the sixteenth century into the grounds of the Tudor mansion. While this would appear to be a straightforward example of 'survival by adaption', the real break with the past was in the late seventeenth century when the park was expanded, but in order to accord with the symmetry of the main facade of the house, not to provide for deer or as a hunting ground.[137] As the purpose and the meaning of the park changed, so did the place of the beasts within it; the more the park became an environment governed by aesthetics, the less that environment became suitable for keeping deer.[138]

If the status of the deer park as a hunting ground was waning, then from the point of view of land use, it was often agricultural investment, at whatever point it came, that was the final death knell of a medieval park. Those parks that had undergone 'improvement' were not, it seems, ever reinstated. That husbandry had been developed was used to argue against reinstatement of royal parks post-1660.[139] While sub-dividing a park did not mean an end to its existence, permanent enclosures and new farms on parkland emphatically did and as the 'marginal' land upon which many medieval parks were situated became more amenable to farming, so land use could decisively change. At Stansted in Essex, in the early to mid-seventeenth century, the parkland lodge was demolished and replaced with a brick farmhouse. The ditches for funnelling deer during the hunt were backfilled; here the break with the past was intended to be irrecoverable.[140] So too at the former episcopal park of Marwell in Hampshire, where the profits of a legal career allowed Henry Mildmay to improve his estate from the mid-1650s. The former parkland (already probably subdivided) was subject

[134] N. Sykes *et al.*, 'Wild to domestic and back again: the dynamics of fallow deer management in medieval England (*c.*11th–16th century AD)', *STAR: Science & Technology of Archaeological Research* (2016), pp. 113–26.

[135] Roebuck, *Constable estate correspondence*, p. 54.

[136] K. Taylor, 'The development of the park and gardens at Knole', *Arch. Cantiana* 123 (2003), pp. 153–84.

[137] Rodwell, *Rivenhall*, p. 183.

[138] D. Brown and T. Williamson, *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men: Landscape revolution in eighteenth-century England* (2016), pp. 158–9.

[139] Gentles, 'Management', p. 38.

[140] N. Cooke, F. Brown and C. Phillpotts, *From hunter gathers to huntsmen. A history of the Stansted landscape* (2008), pp. 260–2, 275–7.

to farm consolidation and programme of estate building works undertaken that had a sense of finality about them.[141]

That improvement and traditional forms of park management were seemingly irreconcilable indicates that the key difference was ideological. Deer parks formed part of a medieval suite of management practices that defied easy categorization, dubbed 'intermediate exploitation' by some modern scholars.[142] Parks were in part hunting grounds, partly agricultural landscapes, uneconomic to run and often maintained by labour services. They were a poor fit when it came to the rationality of the age of reason. It is instructive that much of the evidence presented here points towards the period 1700–50 as the one where the last traces of medieval management persisted. It was at this time that agricultural 'improvement', building on a seventeenth-century base, became decisive.[143] The medieval idea of a park was reinvented in the nineteenth century with the Gothic revival. That the publication of Shirley's classic text in 1865 effectively established a new subject of historical enquiry, is the surest indication that the older concept of the deer park had long since become redundant.

VI

Since the work of Shirley in the 1860s, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been seen as a watershed in the history of the English deer park. This article suggests that, while the period 1500–1650 is certainly characterized by considerable complexity, too sharp a contrast between the medieval and early modern periods has been drawn in the past. Failure to survive was not confined to the period from 1550 onwards as deer parks were always to some extent in decline, as enclosures fell out of use as a response to changing economic and familial circumstances. Incidents of disparkment and trends in deer park management in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were, to a large extent, a predictable outcome of broader social and economic conditions. Rather than interpreting the late sixteenth century as a watershed, this article has argued for structural continuities in the history of deer parks from the end of the Middle Ages to the middle of the seventeenth century that arose from the specific requirements of keeping deer and the social significance that the possession of a deer park bestowed. The real death knell for the deer park in its medieval form was when deer, the enclosures in which they were kept, the mechanisms for the upkeep of those enclosures, and the forms of management that defined them in the first place no longer carried with them the connotations of lordship that they had in earlier centuries. Here it was the century after 1640, not the century before, that was ultimately more decisive.

[141] E. Roberts and M. Gale, 'Henry Mildmay's new farms, 1656–1704', *Proc. Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Soc.* 50 (1994), pp. 169–92.

[142] T. Williamson, 'Fish, fur and feather: man and nature in the post-medieval landscape', in K. Barker and T. Darvill (ed.), *Making English landscapes* (1997), pp. 92–117.

[143] R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman* (1992); P. Slack, *The invention of improvement: information and material progress in seventeenth-century England* (2014).