

**Parks in the Hertfordshire landscape:
the wider implications**

Linda **Anne Rowe** BSc Special Hons, MStud (Cantab)

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University of East Anglia
School of History

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Abstract

The history of the Hertfordshire landscape and, in particular, the history of its deer parks has been a primary interest and focus of my research for the past thirty years, resulting in a significant number and range of publications. This commentary sets the findings of that research into the wider historiographical framework of parks scholarship, demonstrating its contribution to our growing understanding of an important aspect of landscape history. Extensive archival research combined with a multi-disciplinary approach have resulted in the most comprehensive analysis of the deer parks of any county between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries, providing new, empirically based evidence of their continuing significance and purpose over many centuries. The Hertfordshire data provides new insights into the relationship between the distribution of early parks and woodland, the continued importance of parks throughout the Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period, the variations in the extent of imparkment over time, both in terms of numbers and acreage, the social status of the park owners, the influence of London and of the hunting monarchs.

In addition to providing arenas for elite hunting, parks became increasingly important as ornamental landscapes around major houses and the sixteenth century witnesses the dawning of landscape design in Hertfordshire. Parks provided the settings for some historically important gardens and surviving field archaeology for several of these – from Tudor times to the eighteenth century – has been recorded and published. Further aspects of parkland management have also been explored, including the prevalence of rabbit warrens and the management of parkland trees.

Parks in the Hertfordshire landscape: the wider implications

My study of the Hertfordshire landscape over the past three decades has led to a significant number of publications on the history of the county and its countryside including two single-authored monographs, two co-authored books and numerous articles and contributions to edited volumes. These publications have furthered understanding of the development of various aspects of the county's landscape and made a significant contribution to our knowledge of its surviving field archaeology. The research has been interdisciplinary in its nature, utilising an appreciation of the natural landscape gained from a first degree in Natural Environmental Science¹ together with knowledge and field experience gained for a Masters degree in English Local History.² The latter included a project on the history of an Elizabethan house and its park supervised by landscape historian Christopher Taylor who helped with the interpretation of the field archaeology of the pre-park landscape as well as the development of the park and the notable gardens within it.³ At the time of this research in the 1990s almost no recording of the field archaeology of gardens had been undertaken in Hertfordshire but over succeeding decades my work has led to the identification, recording, research and publication of a number of other important sites.⁴ An interest in features of the working countryside in earlier centuries – in particular the management of trees and hedgerows – has resulted in research published in a variety of books but the primary focus of my research over the past twenty years has been the history of Hertfordshire's deer parks leading to the publication of two substantial monographs: *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* (2009) and *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire* (2019).

Research focused upon a single county might be considered a somewhat outdated, even antiquarian, approach but can be justified in the case of Hertfordshire because of

¹ University of Sheffield, BSc Special Honours (2:1) in Natural Environmental Science, 1979.

² University of Cambridge, Master of Studies in English Local History, 1998.

³ A. Rowe, 'Hamels: The evolution of a Hertfordshire house and its landscape', dissertation for the University of Cambridge degree of Master of Studies in English Local History, 1997; A. Rowe, 'Country House Chameleon: the story of Hamels Mansion', *Hertfordshire's Past* 43/44, 1998; A. Rowe (ed.), *Garden Making and the Freman Family: Hamels 1713-33* (Hertfordshire Record Society, 2001).

⁴ Including The Golden Parsonage, Benington Park, Standon Lordship, Theobalds Park, Gobions Wood, Tring Park and Hunsdon's Pond Park. See pp. 28-31.

its particular geographical nature. Although relatively small in size, the county encompasses a range of contrasting regional landscapes reflecting the varied geological and geomorphological histories of its constituent parts – described and analysed in *Hertfordshire: a landscape history* (2013).⁵ In addition, its location a short ride north of London, rendered the county, over many centuries, particularly susceptible to the influence of the capital. It was the ‘gateway’ county for London-bound travellers from much of the UK and its attractive countryside proved irresistible to royal courtiers, government officials, politicians, lawyers, merchants and businessmen who worked in the capital but wanted to live in the country.⁶ As a result, much wealth was invested in the county from medieval times onwards as succeeding generations sought to purchase estates and build or remodel houses, gardens and parks in the latest fashionable styles. Hertfordshire consequently represents a concentrated microcosm of park history which, although unique, provides a valuable and interesting baseline for comparative studies, be they in the Home Counties or more distant from the influence of the capital.

The most innovative aspect of my parkland research has been its extended chronological range, spanning the perceived divide between the medieval and early modern periods. This, combined with a multi-disciplinary background and deep archival research, has resulted in a strongly empirical, ‘bottom up’, approach to my work. The ‘total’ history compiled for every park created in the county between the eleventh and mid-seventeenth centuries provided a database of information which could be systematically analysed to reach sound, evidence-based conclusions that could be compared with and, where appropriate, used to challenge and contradict the theoretical assumptions of earlier scholars.

This approach requires searching a multitude of sources of evidence. As Leonard Cantor wrote in 1983, ‘the mapping of the English medieval park depends upon three major sources of evidence: documentary material; physical remains such as park banks

⁵ A. Rowe and T. Williamson, *Hertfordshire: a landscape history* (Hatfield, 2013).

⁶ ‘Social Geography: Names on the map’ in A. Macnair, A. Rowe and T. Williamson, *Dury and Andrews’ map of Hertfordshire: Society and Landscape in the eighteenth century* (Windgather Press, 2016), pp. 142-166.

and ancient woods; and field-, wood- and farm-names'.⁷ Cantor's county lists, gleaned from the national and county sources available at the time, provide a useful starting point for new research but my work encompasses a far wider range of sources, both national and local, and includes published works as well as a great diversity of primary source material held in a variety of repositories ranging from the archive of a country house estate to The National Archives at Kew and from university libraries to the Royal picture collection at Windsor Castle. The discovery and interpretation of early maps is a significant feature of my work and the integration of both the cartographic and the historical evidence with field-work, drawing upon my knowledge of physical geography and historical ecology, underpins the holistic approach to my work as a landscape historian.

The origins of parks in England

The study of the prevalence and significance of deer parks in earlier centuries has progressed a great deal since Evelyn Shirley's *Some account of English deer parks* was published in 1867.⁸ The pioneering work of Leonard Cantor and John Hatherly, whose nationwide study of medieval parks was published in 1979, provided the foundation and stimulus for much subsequent research. According to Cantor the securely-enclosed park for deer was 'essentially the creation of the Norman kings and barons' and 'the Norman Conquest was the effective beginning of imparkment' in England.⁹ This view was qualified by Oliver Rackham who, based on the evidence of Ongar Great Park in Essex, believed that 'the Norman fashion for parks ... began to penetrate England just before the Conquest'.¹⁰ Della Hooke found that the word 'haga' in Anglo-Saxon charters was frequently associated with enclosures 'directly linked with the reservation of land for the preservation and hunting of game' but concluded there was insufficient evidence to claim they were 'fully-fledged deer parks'.¹¹ The belief that parks were a Norman innovation prevailed until Robert

⁷ L. Cantor, *The medieval parks of England: a gazetteer* (Loughborough, 1983), p. 5.

⁸ E.P. Shirley, *Some account of English deer parks* (London, 1867).

⁹ L.M. Cantor and J. Hatherly, 'The medieval parks of England', *Geography*, 64 (1979), pp. 71-85 at pp. 71 and 78.

¹⁰ O. Rackham, *The history of the countryside* (1986; republished London, 1997), p. 123.

¹¹ D. Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands: the Charter Evidence* (Oxford, 1981); D. Hooke, 'Pre-Conquest Woodland: Its Distribution and Usage', *Agricultural History Review* 37 (1989), pp. 113-29 at pp. 126-7.

Liddiard used evidence in Domesday Book to argue that there were deer parks in England before the battle of Hastings.¹² Highlighting cases, in addition to Ongar, where pre-Conquest deer enclosures appear to have survived as parks into the Anglo-Norman landscape, he proposed a much closer association between Anglo-Saxon and Norman deer enclosures than previously recognised. In Hertfordshire the Domesday park at Benington held by Peter de Valognes, sheriff of Hertfordshire and Essex, may well have had pre-Conquest origins.¹³ Peter made Benington the head of his extensive barony, building a castle there, but his English predecessor was Aelmar of Benington, a thegn of King Edward and one of the chief landowners in the county in 1066, and it is likely that he was also based at Benington. Amanda Richardson has made the case for a pre-Conquest origin for the royal parks at Guildford, Windsor, Woodstock and Clarendon and further evidence has been gleaned from the analysis of zooarchaeological remains at elite sites.¹⁴ The post-Conquest rise in park numbers is mirrored by the appearance in the archaeological record of the bones of fallow deer, an exotic species imported by the Normans to stock their parks. The wild-animal assemblages found at pre-Conquest sites are, however, dominated by the bones of the native roe deer, leading zooarchaeologist Naomi Sykes to suggest that this species may have been hunted in extensive and well-wooded enclosures analogous with the post-Conquest parks.¹⁵

A close association between hunting enclosures and woodland is evident from Hooke's careful analysis of place-name evidence and the words used in Anglo-Saxon charters, and woodland is also the preferred habitat of both roe and fallow deer.¹⁶ Cantor and Hatherly asserted that 'high woodland cover in the Domesday Book ... was almost always the scene of much subsequent imparkment' but research in Hertfordshire has demonstrated a more complex relationship between the relative

¹² R. Liddiard, 'The deer parks of Domesday Book', *Landscapes*, 4 (2003), pp. 4–23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁴ A. Richardson, 'The King's Chief Delights': A Landscape Approach to the Royal Parks of Post-Conquest England' in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The Medieval Park – new perspectives* (Windgather Press, 2008), pp. 27–48 at p. 33.

¹⁵ N. Sykes, 'Animal Bones and Animal Parks' in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The medieval park: new perspectives* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 49–62 at pp. 50, 59–61.

¹⁶ Hooke, 'Pre-Conquest Woodland', pp. 113–29.

distributions of medieval parks and Domesday woodland.¹⁷ Lionel Munby writing about the Hertfordshire landscape in 1977 noted ‘far more parks, and the larger ones too, in the south and west, than in the north-east of the county’, postulating that ‘this may have been partly because the west had more woodland still available’ but admitting that the relationship was not straightforward because ‘much of the woodland in these parks was clearly planted on land which had earlier been cleared and settled for farming.’¹⁸ Domesday Book does indeed record abundant woodland in the south-western part of the county in the eleventh century but the distribution of parks recorded in *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* does not mirror this; instead the great majority of parks created before 1500 were in the eastern part of the county where Domesday Book records numerous small, intensively managed woodlands. Munby was unaware of some of these parks and based his observations on a map he had compiled which included many parks that were post-medieval in origin.¹⁹ Much of the eleventh-century woodland in the sparsely populated south and west of Hertfordshire had been donated to religious houses – the abbeys at St Albans, Westminster and Ely – in the middle and late Saxon period and these land-holdings remained large and substantially intact after 1066.²⁰ Their monastic owners had an inhibiting effect on park creation over most of their estates, including those held by the Abbey of St Albans in the south-west of the county. In contrast, north and east Hertfordshire was densely populated in the eleventh century and characterised by numerous smaller properties in the hands of lay owners.²¹ Many manorial lords in this area aspired to owning a park.

Woodland was a desirable prerequisite for park-making and the evidence shows that in the eastern part of the county parks were generally only created on those manors where Domesday indicates significant woodland resources. Where woodland was absent, or scarce and intensively managed, there were no parks. Much of the woodland and wood-pasture remaining in the eastern zone by the twelfth century lay on manorial ‘waste’, uncultivated land supporting important resources of pasture, wood and timber

¹⁷ Cantor and Hatherly, ‘Medieval parks of England’, pp. 74-5; A. Rowe, ‘The Distribution of Parks in Hertfordshire: Landscape, Lordship and Woodland’ in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The Medieval Park – new perspectives* (Windgather Press, 2008), pp. 128-145.

¹⁸ L. Munby, *The Hertfordshire Landscape* (London, 1977), pp. 131-2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132, Fig. 20.

²⁰ T. Williamson, *The Origins of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2010), pp. 136, 141, 155-6, 161-2, 173.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

used by the tenants of the manor. This ‘waste’ was usually remote from the primary valley settlement and was increasingly encroached upon as the area of arable cultivation needed to feed the growing population expanded up the valley sides. As a result, much of the manorial waste – and its woodland habitats – survived only in upland areas on the peripheries of the manor or parish, leading to a marked association between medieval parks and high ground in both Hertfordshire and Suffolk. Here, Rosemary Hoppitt’s research established that most medieval parks lay on the till-covered chalk escarpment crossing the county from west to north-east, a region known as High Suffolk. The parks were mainly enclosed from manorial waste located on broad level interfluves with heavy, poorly drained soils.²² Similarly, in Hertfordshire extensive tracts of manorial waste and, consequently, many parks lay on the till-covered interfluves in the east of the county with another cluster in the far south of the eastern zone on high ground covered with poorly draining and infertile soils derived from London Clay.²³ Further investigation of the geography of Hertfordshire’s medieval parks established that about 70 per cent were located on elevated sites – high plateaux and watersheds – with about a third occupying the highest land in their parishes. This affinity with altitude explains why two-thirds of parks lay on or at the boundary of their parish as these boundaries tended to follow the watershed separating neighbouring valley settlements.²⁴

The parks of Hertfordshire are now the most well studied of any county in England and my research has shown that earlier assumptions about the correlation between park numbers and abundance of woodland were too simplistic.²⁵ At the macro level, Hertfordshire is indeed a relatively well-wooded county and this no doubt contributed to the high density of parks in medieval times. But the different regions of Hertfordshire do not show the ‘normal’ correlation between woodland and park creation observed in other counties and there were clearly complicating factors operating, social and economic in character, which can only be identified and explained by detailed research at the local level. Paradoxically, it was the abundance

²² R. Hoppitt, ‘Hunting Suffolk’s parks: towards a reliable chronology of imparkment’, in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The medieval park: new perspectives* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 147,149, 153-4.

²³ Rowe, ‘Distribution of Parks in Hertfordshire’, pp. 138-9.

²⁴ A. Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2009; reprinted 2019), pp. 17-20.

²⁵ Cantor and Hatherly, ‘Medieval parks of England’, p. 75; Liddiard, ‘Deer parks of Domesday Book’, p. 9.

of woodland and the low density of population in the western part of the county that resulted in the large grants of land to monasteries in the Saxon period and the consequent low level of park creation in the centuries after 1066. The abundance of parks in the eastern part of the county is primarily a reflection of the density of settlement and the number of manorial lords aspiring to park-ownership which, in addition to providing venison, hunting opportunities and social status, also enabled them to 'privatise' part of the dwindling woodland resources on the manorial waste. My research has therefore shown that patterns of landownership and the choices made by individual lords are also important factors affecting the abundance and distribution of medieval parks.²⁶

The scale of imparkment

Based upon evidence provided by readily accessible documentary sources, Cantor and Hatherly estimated that at least 1900 parks were created in England in the four centuries from the Domesday survey until 1485 but recognised that many must have gone unrecorded in the official sources.²⁷ Local studies invariably uncover records missed by Cantor and Hatherly and research for *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* revealed there were at least 70 parks created before 1500, compared with the 43 recorded for the county by Cantor three decades earlier. Cantor, however, counted just one park per manor so the equivalent number for Hertfordshire is 64 parks. A proportionate increase over the whole country suggests a national total of 2830 parks, lower than Rackham's estimate of 3200.²⁸ But Hertfordshire is not a typical county and it would be unwise to use the statistics gleaned from the exceptionally detailed research of its parks to inform estimates of national totals.

Thanks largely to Rackham, Hertfordshire is reputed to have been 'the most parky county of all' in the Middle Ages.²⁹ While the earliest series of maps to cover all the counties of England confirm that this was the case by the Elizabethan period (below),

²⁶ Rowe, 'Distribution of Parks in Hertfordshire', pp. 128-145.

²⁷ Cantor and Hatherly, 'Medieval parks of England', p. 71.

²⁸ O. Rackham, *Ancient woodland* (London, 1980; republished Dalbeattie, 2003), p. 191; Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 123. His estimate was based on written records of parks 'in eight well-studied counties'.

²⁹ Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 123.

more research is needed in counties spread across the country before we can be sure that Rackham was correct about earlier centuries. Evidence suggests that there were between 28 and 37 active deer parks in the county by the end of the thirteenth century and the total remained remarkably stable at 25–30 parks for the next two centuries, and indeed into the middle of the sixteenth century, as new parks replaced those that were lost.³⁰ Rackham calculated that parks covered ‘up to 2 per cent of England’ in their ‘heyday’ around 1300, based on an average of 200 acres for each of his estimated 3200 parks.³¹ Lack of accurate data for many parks makes it impossible to be precise, but parkland in Hertfordshire in 1300 is likely to have covered in the region of 11,500 acres, around 2.8 per cent of the county, perhaps rising to over 3 per cent by 1350. The average size of Hertfordshire’s parks during the medieval period, accepting the limitations of the available data, was about 250 acres.³² Towards the end of Henry VIII’s reign over a thousand acres of new parkland was created and the acreage rose again to a peak of about 13,000 acres in the 1570s before falling back to under 12,000 acres for the remainder of Elizabeth’s reign. In contrast to the acreage however, the number of parks rose steadily during the Elizabethan period to a peak of at least 35 active parks in the 1590s.³³

Cartographer Christopher Saxton recorded 27 parks in Hertfordshire in the 1570s.³⁴ The county maps produced by Saxton and his successors were part of national mapping projects which permit direct comparisons with other counties for the first time, confirming that Hertfordshire’s reputation for being particularly ‘parky’ was well founded, as it had the highest density of parks in south-east England at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁵ The acreage of parkland in Hertfordshire

³⁰ Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 9; A. Rowe, *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, (Hatfield, 2019), p. 11.

³¹ Rackham, *Ancient woodland*, p. 191; Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 123.

³² This average does not include the exceptionally large Hatfield great park.

³³ Rowe, *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 11.

³⁴ British Library Royal MS. 18. D.III, f.34 *Hartfordiae Comitatus*, Hertfordshire map by Christopher Saxton, 1577 (accessed at <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery>>); BL Royal MS. 18. D.III, f.24 *Cantii, Southsexiae, Surriae Et Middlesexiae Comitatus*, map of Kent, Sussex, Surrey & Middlesex by Christopher Saxton, 1575.

³⁵ based on a comparison by Susan Pittman of maps by Saxton (1577) and Speed (1610) of 17 counties in south-east England (S. Pittman, ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean deer parks in Kent’ in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 132 (2012), Kent Archaeological Society, pp. 53–81 at 67). After correcting the number of parks shown by Speed (27), Hertfordshire had the highest density of parks – one for every 20 square miles – on both maps.

rose again to a peak in the 1620s at around 13,400 – about 3.3 per cent of the county – but this was due largely to the expansion of the royal parks at Theobalds, Cheshunt and Berkhamsted. In contrast, the *numbers* of parks in the county fell from the end of the sixteenth century. This contradiction between rising park numbers and decreasing acreage in the late Elizabethan period – and decreasing park numbers and increasing acreage in the Jacobean period – highlights another contribution of my research to the general debate around parks: park numbers do not tell the whole story and their acreage should also be taken into account.

So why were there so many deer parks in Hertfordshire? As has already been noted, the county was endowed with relatively abundant woodland cover – even in the east – and so, notwithstanding the complicating factors discussed above, the essential habitats required for a deer park were available in most areas. The north and east of the county was densely populated by the eleventh century, largely a function of the fertility of the soils in the river valleys on the chalky boulder clays. There were numerous manors and local lords in this part of Hertfordshire and its economic and demographic dominance over the south and west of the county, although decreasing, continued throughout the medieval period.³⁶ Proximity to London had been an important factor in the development of the county during the Middle Ages, but it was in the sixteenth century that it started to have a noticeable effect on the history of its parks. The growth of the centralised state and the dissolution of the monasteries enabled Tudor courtiers, government officials and prosperous merchants to invest in property and establish new estates, many of them close to the capital in south and west Hertfordshire, and the distribution of the county's population and wealth became more evenly spread. Traffic to and from London increased rapidly, much of it passing through Hertfordshire along the Old North Road (connecting with East Anglia and the north-east) and the Great North Road (connecting with the midlands, north and west) along which were convenient staging posts for travellers within a day's ride from London. The relatively prosperous, pleasantly undulating and well-wooded countryside was evidently viewed as an attractive place to live and many of the wealthy men who purchased or built property in Hertfordshire desired, and where

³⁶ Rowe and Williamson, *Hertfordshire*, pp. 18, 20, 21-2, 24, 27.

necessary created, a parkland setting for their home. Hertfordshire's position at the top of the league table of parky counties is unlikely to be overturned by future research, but the reasons underlying its pre-eminence can perhaps only be fully explained when comparable studies have been undertaken in more of the counties surrounding London.

Chronologies of imparking and disparking

The empirical evidence provided by detailed county studies – as exemplified by Hertfordshire – is vitally important for testing the validity of widely accepted historical assumptions, not least the national trends in rates of imparking and disparking during the medieval and post-medieval periods. Most early parks were created between 1200 and 1350, 'the great age of the medieval park with conditions ideally suited to the ambitions of the larger landowners'.³⁷ Much of the literature conforms to the view that deer park numbers reached their peak in 1350 but then declined markedly after the Black Death due to lack of maintenance and a dwindling of new creations.³⁸ The fall in the human population resulting from famine and disease led to a decline in lordly incomes and a weakening of feudal ties: manorial tenants could now demand payment for their labour, park maintenance became more costly and 'much neglect and decay of parks ensued'.³⁹ Some park owners sought to offset their costs by maximising revenues from the production of wood and timber and by leasing grazing within the park, but many parks were said to have been disparked.⁴⁰

This generally accepted scenario was challenged in 2005 by Stephen Miles on based on park studies in the counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Suffolk and Leicestershire which led him to conclude that the decline in park numbers from the mid-fourteenth century was much less significant than previously thought.⁴¹ Making

³⁷ Cantor and Hatherly, 'Medieval parks of England', p. 79.

³⁸ L.M. Cantor, 'The Medieval Parks of Leicestershire', *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, lxvi (1970-1), pp. 9-24, 12; Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 126.

³⁹ Cantor and Hatherly, 'Medieval parks of England', p. 73.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴¹ S.A. Miles on, 'The importance of parks in fifteenth-century society', in L. Clark (ed.), *The fifteenth century V* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 22; R. Hoppitt, 'A Study of the development of deer parks in Suffolk from the eleventh to the seventeenth century' (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 1992), vol. 1, p. 70, fig. 4.2; A.E. Squires and W. Humphrey, *The Medieval Parks of Charnwood Forest* (Wymondham, 1986), p. 17.

the case for greater continuity, he estimated that ‘perhaps 70 per cent of the 3,200 parks existing in 1300 were still present in the mid to later fifteenth century’.⁴² Mileson’s findings are echoed by the Hertfordshire research which revealed a remarkable stability in park numbers between 1300 and 1500. Neither the deterioration in the climate in the decades around 1320, nor the social disaster caused by the Black Death in 1349, had a discernible effect on the number of parks in the county. A core of about 16 manors maintained at least one deer park throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and between 60 and 70 per cent of the parks present in 1300 were still extant in 1450, with losses largely balanced by the creation of new parks. Contrary to the predicted decline in the decades immediately following the Black Death, licences were granted for the creation of three new parks in the county and two royal parks were enlarged. The latter enclosed former arable land but the three new parks were established on manorial waste rather than, as might be expected, abandoned arable land. A further seven parks appeared in the Hertfordshire records for the first time in the second half of the fourteenth century.⁴³

Mileson also found evidence for the creation or extension of at least 250 parks in England during the fifteenth century and noted the advent of ‘a great fashion for building new homes entirely within parkland’.⁴⁴ Many of the new parks and houses were established by newly-rich, socially ambitious men who had made their fortunes working at the royal court or in trade, and Mileson cited as examples two notable Hertfordshire parvenues, Sir Andrew Ogard (chamberlain to the duke of Bedford) and Sir Robert Whittingham (merchant and financier), both of whom established major houses with new parks in the county in the 1440s.⁴⁵ In addition to those created by Ogard and Whittingham, another three Hertfordshire parks were licensed in the first half of the fifteenth century, all associated with a substantial house, as were two others for which no licences were recorded.⁴⁶

⁴² Mileson, ‘Importance of parks in fifteenth-century society’, p. 22.

⁴³ Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Mileson, ‘Importance of parks in fifteenth-century society’, pp. 22-3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

⁴⁶ Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 8.

One of the defining characteristics of my Hertfordshire research is that it continues across the perceived historical boundary between the Medieval and the Early Modern periods, allowing earlier generalisations to be tested. Several park historians, including Cantor and Mileson, chose to end their research at the end of the medieval period, predicting that the nature of parks underwent a fundamental change at that time.⁴⁷ The Hertfordshire evidence shows no indication of a change; instead it shows considerable continuity, with park numbers remaining remarkably stable from the late thirteenth century until the mid-sixteenth century. Although some of the county's ecclesiastical parks lost their deer herds in the decades around 1500, there was no significant fall in park numbers and at least a third of the known medieval parks remained active into the sixteenth century. The size of the park appears to have been critically important for its long-term survival with smaller parks being more vulnerable to disparking. All but three of the 26 medieval deer parks which remained active into the Tudor period were probably over 200 acres in size and half of them contained more than 300 acres. Almost all the parks of 300 acres or more continued in use as deer parks into and indeed beyond the sixteenth century and several were maintained for hundreds of years.⁴⁸

The prevailing view among park scholars in the 1980s however was that park numbers fell during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as rates of disparkment increased and fewer parks were created.⁴⁹ Increased disparking was the anticipated result of a growing population demanding more arable land and this scenario was generally accepted by subsequent historians such as Palliser, Lasdun, Liddiard and Fletcher.⁵⁰ In 2008 Hugh Prince wrote that the parkland history of Hertfordshire during the sixteenth century was dominated by 'contraction and replacement' leading to 'a net loss in the number of parks' but my research has shown that this is entirely wrong: the

⁴⁷ Cantor, in *The medieval parks of England: a gazetteer*, chose 1485 as the end date for his study; Mileson concluded his study in the 'early sixteenth century', S.A. Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England* (Oxford, 2009), p. 10.

⁴⁸ Rowe, *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 126; Cantor and Hatherly, 'Medieval parks of England', p. 79.

⁵⁰ Cantor, *Medieval parks of England: a gazetteer*, p. 3; D.M. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth 1547-1603* (New York, 2nd edition 1992), p. 225; S. Lasdun, *The English Park – Royal, Private and Public* (New York, 1992), pp. 32, 33, 38; R. Liddiard, 'The Disparkment of Medieval Parks', I.D. Rotherham (ed.), *The History, Ecology and Archaeology of Medieval Parks and Parklands* (Sheffield, 2007), p. 82; J. Fletcher, *Gardens of Earthly Delight. The History of Deer Parks* (Oxford, 2011), p. 169.

records reveal a steady increase in park numbers from the middle of the sixteenth century, reaching a peak during the 1590s which may have exceeded the medieval peak at the end of the thirteenth century.⁵¹ Levels of disparkment in the county were very low throughout the middle decades of the century, with only one known example, namely the royal park at Weston which was divided and rented to numerous farmers in the 1530s.⁵²

The accounts of contemporary writers such as William Harrison in the mid-sixteenth century and Fynes Moryson in the early seventeenth century also leave little doubt that deer parks were flourishing. Harrison (1534-93) writing in 1576 described ‘great plentie of parkes’ ‘in everie shire’, stating that Essex and Kent alone contained a hundred, ‘wherein great plentie of fallow deere is cherished and kept’. He was evidently witnessing a period of parkland expansion, of which he was highly critical, as settlements, farmland and commons were being displaced in favour of ‘wild and savage beasts, cherished for pleasure and delight’, stating ‘that the twentieth part of the realme is imploied upon deere and conies alreadie’.⁵³ The Victorian author Evelyn Shirley considered Harrison’s estimate that 5 per cent of the realm was ‘employed upon Deer and Conies’ an exaggeration but he nevertheless admitted there was ‘abundant evidence to prove that there were a vast number of parks in England during the sixteenth century.’⁵⁴ There were numerous rabbit warrens in Hertfordshire at that time, both within and outside parks, and some contained as much as 130 and 150 acres.⁵⁵ If the total acreage of warrens was added to the 3 per cent of the county enclosed in parks, Harrison’s estimate may not in fact be too far off the mark. Moryson’s wide-ranging travels, which appear to have taken in Hertford, Theobalds (Waltham Cross) and St Albans in Hertfordshire, resulted in the observation that ‘England (yea perhaps one County thereof) hath more fallow Deare, then all Europe that I have seene’ and he considered that ‘every gentleman of five hundred or a

⁵¹ H. Prince, *Parks in Hertfordshire since 1500* (Hatfield, 2008), p. 23; Rowe, *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 11; Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 9.

⁵² Rowe, *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 18.

⁵³ W. Harrison, *Description of England*, first published in 1577 as part of *Holinshed's Chronicles*. Accessed at <https://ia902903.us.archive.org/6/items/holinshedchronic44700gut/44700-h/44700-h.htm#page343>.

⁵⁴ Shirley, *English deer parks*, pp. 27-8.

⁵⁵ A. Rowe, ‘Rabbit Warrens’ in D. Short (ed.), *An Historical Atlas of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2011), pp. 112-13.

thousand pounds rent by the yeere' had a park of fallow deer 'inclosed with pales of wood for two or three miles compasse'.⁵⁶

It could be argued that Hertfordshire, lying close to London, was particularly well-endowed with high-status residences and is, consequently, atypical. But in recent decades a growing number of local studies have likewise contradicted the view that parks declined during the sixteenth century. Hoppitt noted a rise in imparking in Suffolk, especially during the second half of the century, with over 30 parks recorded for the first time during the century.⁵⁷ Twigs Way found a similar rise in park numbers in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from the mid-sixteenth century, while in Sussex park numbers remained relatively stable during the Tudor period, with new parks compensating for the loss of older parks.⁵⁸ Sue Pittman's research in Kent revealed a significant fall in the number of active parks (by almost half) in the mid-sixteenth century (largely the result of the Dissolution and subsequent political turmoil) but numbers stabilised during the reign of Elizabeth I when a lower level of disparkments was balanced by the creation of new parks.⁵⁹

If park numbers remained buoyant through most of the Tudor period, historians seem to agree that they declined towards the end of the sixteenth century. Shirley cited contemporary accounts by Lambard in his 'Perambulation of Kent' (1576 and 1596) and Carew, 'Survey of Cornwall' (1602) where 'a great number' had been disparked within living memory, many for cattle rearing.⁶⁰ Moryson writing a few years later (1617) observed that 'this prodigall age hath so forced Gentlemen to improve their renews, as many of these grounds are by them disparked, and converted to feede

⁵⁶ F. Moryson, *The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson*, 4 (London, 1617) accessed at <http://www.archive.org/stream/fynesmorysons04moryuoft/fynesmorysons04moryuoft_djvu.txt> on 27.8.17.

⁵⁷ Hoppitt, 'A Study of the development of deer parks in Suffolk', p. 85; Hoppitt, 'Hunting Suffolk's parks', p. 146.

⁵⁸ T. Way, 'A study of the impact of imparkment on the social landscape of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from c. 1080 to 1760', *BAR British Series* 258, (1997); Manning, *Hunters and Poachers*, pp. 126–7.

⁵⁹ S. Pittman, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean deer parks in Kent', pp. 61–64; S. Pittman, 'Disparkment – a case study for Elizabethan and Jacobean parks in Kent' in *Southern History*, 35, 2013, pp. 44–76 at p. 49.

⁶⁰ Shirley, *English deer parks*, p. 28 citing William Lambard, *A Perambulation of Kent* (1576 and 1596) and Richard Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, (1602).

Cattell.’⁶¹ Cantor asserted that improved farming methods in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ‘made it profitable to develop many park sites for agriculture, especially those on heavy clay’.⁶² The Hertfordshire evidence does generally conform to this picture of parkland decline. Surveyor John Norden (c.1547–1625) appears to have witnessed disparking at the end of the sixteenth century, noting that the county ‘is, and *more hath beene heretofore*, much repleat with parkes, woodes, and rivers’ (my italics).⁶³ A number of Hertfordshire parks were indeed disparked towards the end of the century, most notably the large and ancient parks of Benington (disparked c.1580), Pisho (c.1585), Bedwell and Furneux Pelham (c.1600). Hoppitt observed the same trend for the disparking of large, long-lived parks, owned by major land-holders in Suffolk at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and noted a similar pattern in Norfolk.⁶⁴

Despite quoting the descriptions of contemporary topographers, Shirley was nevertheless confident that ‘the royal forests, chases, and parks, as well as the parks belonging to the nobility and gentry generally, were well preserved and in good condition till the era of the Great Rebellion in 1641.’⁶⁵ To some extent the Hertfordshire evidence supports this assertion as, although park *numbers* started to fall from the late sixteenth century, the parkland *acreage* did not peak until the end of the Jacobean period when it reached c.13,400 acres (5,423 hectares). The majority of this increase was the result of the expansion of Theobalds park, started by Sir Robert Cecil c.1600 but continued obsessively from 1607 by King James, augmented by the expansion of the royal parks at Berkhamsted and Cheshunt and by the re-imparkment of land at Ashridge and Gorhambury by royal officials Thomas Egerton (lord chancellor) and Francis Bacon (attorney-general then lord chancellor), respectively. Shirley’s rosy view of elite parks has however been undermined at a national level by recent research which shows that the Stuart kings rationalised the Crown’s collection of parks to increase royal revenues: James I disparked many royal parks and forests distant from London, leasing them out as farmland.⁶⁶ When Charles I ascended the

⁶¹ Shirley, *English deer parks*, p. 29 citing Moryson’s *Itinerary*, part iii. pp. 147, 148.

⁶² Cantor, *Medieval parks of England: a gazetteer*, p. 3.

⁶³ J. Norden, *A description of Hertfordshire* (Ware, 1598, reprinted 1903), p. 2.

⁶⁴ Hoppitt, ‘A Study of the development of deer parks in Suffolk’, p. 92.

⁶⁵ Shirley, *English deer parks*, p. 47.

⁶⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Venetian 1613–1615*, July 1613, no. 25.

throne in 1625 he found the national finances in a parlous state and was forced to re-evaluate the Crown's property portfolio in economic terms. Royal parks were a particular target for economies and many were sold, leased or converted into farmland and rented out.⁶⁷ These measures included almost all of the remaining ancient royal parkland in Hertfordshire and by 1630 just a few hundred acres at Berkhamsted and Cheshunt were all that remained in royal ownership.⁶⁸ But, in place of the numerous ancient parks held by Henry VIII a century earlier, King Charles had the 2,600 acres of new parkland at Theobalds in the south-east corner of the county, close to London.

The continuing decline in park numbers into the mid-seventeenth century described by Cantor and Rackham is generally borne out by the growing body of evidence.⁶⁹ In Hertfordshire the number of parks fell from the turn of the century and about ten had been disparked by 1642.⁷⁰ The largest disparking event in the county during this period was at Hatfield in 1612 when the four hundred year old great park or great wood was enclosed and divided between the Earl of Salisbury and the commoners. In 1627 Charles I disparked most of Berkhamsted park, and four parks appear to have lost their deer herds during the 1630s: Gorhambury (St Albans), Shingle Hall (Sawbridgeworth), Hertingfordbury and Ponsbourne (Hatfield). The outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 probably caused the disparking of the parks of some prominent royalists, including those of the Earl of Dover at Hunsdon and Baron Capel's at King's Langley and Walkern, and the royal parks at Theobalds and Cheshunt followed *c.* 1650 after the execution of Charles I. Baron Capel's parks at Hadham Hall and Cassiobury, however, both survived the Interregnum, as did royalist parks at Ware, Stanstead Bury and Watton Woodhall, and two of the three Hunsdon parks were reinstated as deer parks by 1660.⁷¹ The parkland of Theobalds and Cheshunt was converted to farmland and, although both were returned to the crown at the Restoration, the parks were not reinstated and the land remained in agricultural use. The royal parkland had been lost but many new parks were established in the county following the Restoration to add

⁶⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Venetian 1625–1626*, July 1626, no. 680.

⁶⁸ Charles I disposed of the oldest royal parks at King's Langley and Hertingfordbury in the 1620s and two thirds of Berkhamsted park were disparked in 1627.

⁶⁹ Cantor, *Medieval parks of England: a gazetteer*, p. 3; Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 126.

⁷⁰ Rowe, *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 12.

⁷¹ Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (hereafter HALS) DE/B1630/T4 deeds of Hunsdon estate, 1634–1730, including sale agreement, 1653.

to the substantial number that had survived the Interregnum, and Charles II consoled himself by taking deer from the parks at Tyttenhanger, Cassiobury, Watton Woodhall and Standon to improve his hunting opportunities on Enfield Chase.⁷² The continuing abundance of parks in Hertfordshire was recorded on the 1695 county map by John Oliver, showing 35 parks, of which 14 had been established since 1642.⁷³

A wealth of evidence from a wide range of sources was examined for both *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* and *Tudor and Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire* and the assessment of this evidence has revealed a far richer and more nuanced chronology of the history of imparking and disparking in the county than might be anticipated from previous studies based on more limited sources. My work also shows the value of understanding both the character of the county itself and of the wider area. Within the county, the abundance and distribution of parks, especially in the medieval period, was influenced by the physical geography – topography, soils and the availability of woodland – but the social geography is also important, including the distribution and relative wealth of the population and how this changed over time. As is so patently clear with Hertfordshire, factors external to the county can also have a significant effect on park creation. These include the influence of nearby centres of population, political power and trade and the major routes used by travellers to access those centres. The evidence from my Hertfordshire research indicates that there was no change in the character or use of deer parks at the end of the medieval period and they continued to be managed and enjoyed by their owners into the late seventeenth century in much the same way as they always had.

Parks and social status

Most park historians have agreed that the primary purposes of the medieval park were to enclose and maintain a herd of deer for the supply of venison and to display the power, status and wealth of the owner.⁷⁴ According to Cantor, most parks in the

⁷² J.C. Cox, 'Forestry' in W. Page, *The Victoria history of the county of Middlesex*, 2 (London, 1911), p. 229.

⁷³ J. Oliver, *The actual survey of the county of Hertford*, 1695, republished in D. Hodson, *Four county maps of Hertfordshire* (Stevenage, 1985).

⁷⁴ S.A. Miles, 'The Sociology of Park Creation in Medieval England' in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The Medieval Park – new perspectives* (Windgather Press, 2008), pp. 11-26.

Middle Ages were owned by ‘the Crown and the great magnates, lay and ecclesiastical’.⁷⁵ In Hertfordshire, however, most parks (57 per cent) were held by lay lords of a lower social status, men of the ‘long-established knightly families’ which Cantor had himself identified as the creators of the majority of the parks in counties like Leicestershire and Buckinghamshire.⁷⁶ Only one of Hertfordshire’s medieval parks was established by the Crown – King’s Langley, made for Queen Eleanor in 1276 – but parks associated with the castles at Berkhamsted and Hertford also came to be held by the Crown for much of the period. Of the county’s seventy parks, eleven were created by members of the baronage and sixteen by ecclesiastical institutions. The importance of parks as status symbols perhaps increased during the fifteenth century when, according to Mileson, the majority of park creators were ‘rich and socially ambitious individuals’ rather than powerful lords, frequently men who had acquired wealth working in the royal court, perhaps in the royal household or for members of the nobility.⁷⁷ Hertfordshire examples include Sir John Norbury (Bedwell), Sir Andrew Ogard (Rye) and John Leventhorpe (Shingle). Other social climbers keen to acquire a park as a marker of gentility included those whose wealth was derived from trade like William Flete (The More) and Sir Robert Whittingham (Pendley). Thus five of the seven parks created in Hertfordshire in the fifteenth century were established by men who had risen through their own talents: their administrative, financial or political skills or business acumen. During the reign of Henry VIII another two new parks were created by courtiers and a third by Ralph Rowlett, goldsmith, merchant of the Staple of Calais and master of the mint on land purchased around 1540 from the dissolved estate of St Albans abbey.⁷⁸ Sir Richard Lee, military engineer for the Crown, also purchased lands of the former abbey but did not make his park until later in the century.

The proportions of Hertfordshire parkland held by different social groups (the Crown, aristocracy, ecclesiastical bodies, royal or government officials, professionals and

⁷⁵ L.M. Cantor, ‘Forests, chases, parks and warrens’ in L.M. Cantor (ed.), *The English medieval landscape* (London, 1982), p. 76.

⁷⁶ Cantor and Hatherly, ‘Medieval parks of England’, p. 78.

⁷⁷ Mileson, ‘Importance of parks in fifteenth-century society’, p. 31.

⁷⁸ D.F. Coros, ‘ROWLETT, Sir Ralph (by 1513–71), of Holywell House, St. Albans, Herts.’ in S.T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558*, 3 (London, 1982), pp. 223–4.

gentry) were very fluid and changed markedly during the Tudor and early Stuart periods. At the end of the fifteenth century Henry VII held about 20 per cent of the county's parkland and the remainder was divided fairly evenly between the gentry, ecclesiastical owners and the aristocracy. The royal holdings steadily increased, largely at the expense of the aristocracy, so that for most of the period between 1530 and the end of the Jacobean era the Crown held the greatest share (by acreage) of Hertfordshire's parkland. Parks held by ecclesiastical bodies, primarily the abbots of St Albans and the bishops of Ely, passed to Henry VIII at the Dissolution and over a thousand acres of new parkland was created towards the end of Henry VIII's reign, much of it, but certainly not all, incorporated into the King's parks at Hunsdon and The More at Rickmansworth. The aristocracy played a minor role as park-owners in the county during the Tudor and early Stuart periods, outnumbered by the gentry who, for most of this time, held the largest number of parks, rising from about 35 per cent to over 40 per cent of the total from the mid-sixteenth century. In terms of acreage, however, gentry parks were almost always outstripped: by ecclesiastical parkland up to the 1520s and by royal parks thereafter. Their total acreage peaked in the 1570s at about 36 per cent of the county's parkland and individual gentry parks contained an average of 320 acres in the 1580s.

During the Tudor period London became increasingly important as the base for the royal court and this led to a steady increase in the acreage of parkland held by royal officials from the 1540s, reaching a peak of about 15–20 per cent of the total at the end of the sixteenth century. Many of the new parks established in the Elizabethan era were created by the Queen's ministers and government officials who chose to live in Hertfordshire because it was close to London and, in contrast to the medieval period, there is a clear trend for these new parks to be concentrated in the south of the county, almost all as an adjunct to a grand (mostly new) country house and mostly within 22 miles of the capital. The parks held by royal or government officials decreased markedly during the reign of James I, falling to about 3 per cent of the total parkland acreage by the 1630s.

All park owners, regardless of social rank, required substantial financial resources to pay for the management and maintenance of their deer park and close examination of

the Hertfordshire data from the medieval period – gleaned from numerous manorial records (for 34 parks on 24 manors) – underlines the significance of parks as status symbols of the wealthy. An assessment of the costs of employing a park keeper and maintaining the park boundary against the income derived from sales of timber and wood and fees from agistment and pannage shows that most parks in the county ran at a net loss, even in the later middle ages, clearly demonstrating that parks were for pleasure and a luxury that only the better-off could afford.

Hunting in parks

The importance of parks as venues for recreational hunting during the Medieval period, and into the Early Modern period, has been questioned and debated for many years. One reason for the uncertainty is the scarcity of documentary evidence for aristocratic hunting in parks in medieval times – the few records which exist seem to imply that most hunting was undertaken by servants tasked with providing venison for the lord's table.⁷⁹ Another reason relates to the size of parks, many of which were considered too small to accommodate a satisfactory hunting expedition.⁸⁰ Numerous manorial records survive to record the income the owner could derive from sales of wood and timber and from leasing grazing and pannage rights within his park – but because there was no open market for sales of venison, the monetary value of the deer was never recorded. Similarly, the costs incurred in employing a park keeper, maintaining the pale and providing buildings and structures within the park were often recorded in the manorial accounts but the costs of recreational hunting by the owner and his guests were generally not quantifiable and not recorded.

In consequence scholars, following Oliver Rackham and Jean Birrell, down-played the use of medieval parks for recreational hunting by the social elite especially during the fifteenth century when the purpose and nature of parkland was deemed to have shifted in response to economic and social changes.⁸¹ Reduced revenues forced some park-owners to manage wood production and grazing revenues for income alongside

⁷⁹ J. Birrell, 'Deer and deer farming in medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, 40 (1993), p. 122.

⁸⁰ Rackham, *History of the countryside*, p. 125.

⁸¹ Sykes, 'Animal Bones and Animal Parks', pp. 49-62 at pp. 52, 55; Rowe, *Medieval parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 3.

their deer herds, while in other cases the deer were removed and parks were converted to stock farms.⁸² Changes in late medieval society are thought to include a growing awareness of the aesthetic value of landscape, leading to the closer integration of parks and country houses. In addition, park ownership in the period was descending the social scale as newly-rich professional men and merchants joined the land-owning classes and aspired to emulate the status symbols of their social superiors.⁸³ Cantor and Hatherly considered that these new ‘generally larger’ parks were unlikely to have been ‘managed as intensively or enclosed as securely as their thirteenth-century counterparts’, believing that many were ‘conceived ... as amenity parks rather than hunting parks and were situated close to the manor house’.⁸⁴ This view was countered by Mileson in 2005 who sought to re-establish hunting at the heart of medieval aristocratic life, drawing on a range of evidence to support his assertion that the primary purpose of parks of all sizes and throughout the medieval period was to provide a space for recreational hunting.⁸⁵ The Hertfordshire evidence for this – as elsewhere – is meagre but includes a letter from Queen Margaret of Anjou to the parker of Ware park in the mid-fifteenth century, instructing him to preserve the stocks of deer for her exclusive use during an impending stay at Hertford castle.⁸⁶

The debate around the relative importance of the various roles of parkland continues into the Early Modern period with different scholars describing contrasting scenarios. Rackham believed that the function of parks changed from the medieval ‘utilitarian enterprise producing meat’ ... ‘to the hunting park of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth’ but Cantor and Hatherly considered that those medieval parks which survived, did so only by converting ‘to a more ornamental purpose’ around the new great mansions of the Tudor period and ‘especially within a 100 mile radius of capital’.⁸⁷ Mileson thought the nature of parks changed a little later, from the second quarter of the sixteenth century, as a result of the major social changes during the latter half of Henry VIII’s reign.⁸⁸ Sixteenth-century commentators, however, leave no doubt that the

⁸² Mileson, ‘The importance of parks in fifteenth-century society’, p. 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

⁸⁴ Cantor and Hatherly, ‘Medieval parks of England’, p. 79.

⁸⁵ Mileson, ‘Importance of parks in fifteenth-century society’, pp. 30-31, 33.

⁸⁶ Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 3; C. Monro, *Letters of Queen Margaret of Anjou* (London, 1863), p. 91.

⁸⁷ Rackham, *Ancient woodland*, p. 197; Cantor and Hatherly, ‘Medieval parks of England’, p. 79.

⁸⁸ Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England*, p. 10.

prime purpose of parks was still recreational deer hunting: William Harrison commented upon the expansion of parkland to accommodate ‘wild and savage beasts, cherished for pleasure and delight’;⁸⁹ and Moryson stated: ‘The English are so naturally inclined to pleasure, as there is no Countrie, wherein the Gentlemen and Lords have so many and large Parkes onely reserved for the pleasure of hunting’.⁹⁰ The documentary evidence for hunting becomes increasingly abundant during the sixteenth century, in Hertfordshire as elsewhere, showing that the majority did not become the ‘amenity parks’ described by Cantor.⁹¹ Wealthy landowners enjoyed a range of hunting activities that was essentially unchanged from the medieval period, including pursuing deer on horseback with hounds, ‘bow and stable’ hunting, deer and hare coursing, falconry, wild-fowling and fishing.

Stags were the quarry of choice for most monarchs but in Hertfordshire red deer were confined to just a handful of parks. When Henry VIII wanted to hunt at Knebworth in 1531, he brought his own stag with him from his park at Ampthill.⁹² Few of the county’s parks were large enough to accommodate a *par force* stag hunt and even in those that were, the stag and its pursuers were not necessarily restricted to the confines of the park. The large parks at Bedwell (Essendon) and Theobalds (Cheshunt) lay adjacent to the extensive wooded common land of south-east Hertfordshire, which extended eastwards from North Mymms, through Northaw to Cheshunt and Broxbourne, and continued south across the county boundary onto Enfield Chase in Middlesex, offering a huge area of open countryside over which hounds and huntsmen could pursue their quarry. Fallow deer were hunted in Hertfordshire’s parks by various monarchs and members of the aristocracy, but the methods used are rarely recorded. Privy purse payments to the keepers of the parks at Berkhamsted, Hertingfordbury, Bedwell, Hunsdon, Pisho and The More suggest that Henry VIII hunted in them. With advancing years the sporting activities of Henry VIII and other hunting monarchs had to be tailored to accommodate their increasing corpulence or

⁸⁹ Harrison, *Description of England* accessed at <https://ia902903.us.archive.org/6/items/holinshedchronic44700gut/44700-h/44700-h.htm#page343>.

⁹⁰ Moryson, *Itinerary of Fynes Moryson*, 4 accessed at http://www.archive.org/stream/fynesmorysons04moryuoft/fynesmorysons04moryuoft_djvu.txt on 27.8.17.

⁹¹ Cantor, *Medieval parks of England: a gazetteer*, p. 3.

⁹² N. Harris, *King Henry VIIIth’s Household Book, being an Account of the Privy Purse expenses of Henry VIII from November, 1529, to December 1532* (London, 1827), p. 163.

infirmity. When King Henry gave up following his hounds on horseback in the late 1530s, he took up bow and stable hunting and created four courses, two with standings, in Moor Park. Henry VIII had always enjoyed the sport of falconry but its importance as a pastime perhaps increased as he became less mobile and he had mews built for his hawks at Hunsdon in 1537 and at The More in 1542.⁹³ Similarly, James I in his later years enjoyed ‘river hawking’ and hawking the partridges and pheasants in Theobalds park.⁹⁴

In Hertfordshire there were about 25 active deer parks during the early Tudor period, covering approaching 11,000 acres of the county, of which about two thirds had been created in the medieval period. The depiction of parks on Elizabethan county maps attests to their cultural importance and prominence as features in the landscape and, as previously noted, these maps suggest that the density of parks in Hertfordshire was higher than in other south-eastern counties at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹⁵ Although the number of parks declined in the early seventeenth century, hunting in parks remained an important pastime for the social elite and venison retained its prestige on the dinner tables of the wealthy. The detailed records compiled by the second earl of Salisbury demonstrate the importance he attached to maintaining the deer herds in the parks he owned at Hatfield and managed on behalf of the Crown at Cheshunt and Enfield. His annual lists record how each deer was killed and to whom the venison was given. Between 1627 and 1637 he gave away each year an average of 105 bucks, killed in his two parks at Hatfield, as gifts to family, friends and neighbours.⁹⁶

Despite the lack of evidence for much of the medieval period and again in the later seventeenth century, the long durée of my research has shown that the hunting of deer was the recreation of choice for the social elite from the eleventh century (if not before) until the final quarter of the seventeenth century. The hunting preferences of one Hertfordshire landowner, Lord Aston at Standon Lordship, between 1660 and 1678

⁹³ S. Thurley, *The royal palaces of Tudor England: architecture and court life, 1460–1547* (New Haven, 1993), p. 193.

⁹⁴ A. Bellany, T. Cogswell, *The Murder of King James I* (Yale & London, 2015), p. 22.

⁹⁵ Based on S. Pittman, ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean deer parks in Kent’, pp. 53–81 at 67.

⁹⁶ Hatfield House Archives (hereafter HHA), General 1/13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28.

were recorded by his grandson who wrote that ‘My Lord would never suffer any but hunted venison, to come to his own table: for all the season there was one buck killed every day but Sunday, and most commonly a brace’, but he adds fuel to the debate over quite how much of the deer hunting took place within parks by adding, ‘though my lord never appeared on horseback a-buckhunting, unless when one was taken on purpose in a toil and turned out of the park’.⁹⁷ This is perhaps evidence of a decline in the importance of parks as hunting landscapes in the late seventeenth century; by the early eighteenth the fox was beginning to replace the deer as the quarry of choice.⁹⁸ Deer nevertheless remained status animals in parks during the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, kept for their ornamental value rather than for sport.

Creating parks as landscape settings

As in other counties, in Hertfordshire there was a close spatial relationship between the highest status medieval sites (Berkhamsted castle and the royal palace at King’s Langley) and their parks, but the great majority of lordly parks were located some distance from the manorial centre.⁹⁹ This relationship between park and residence changed dramatically in the fifteenth century when at least eight of the nine new parks recorded in Hertfordshire were established as an adjunct to a grand, usually new, house.¹⁰⁰ The new fifteenth-century parks were relatively large and three (Bedwell, The More and Shingle Hall) were among the eight largest medieval parks in the county. About half of the medieval parks surviving at the start of the sixteenth century contained or lay immediately adjacent to a significant residence and during the Tudor period the spatial relationship between residence and park became much closer as the concept of parkland as the desired setting for a country house became firmly established, providing the owner with attractive views of and from the residence, together with a readily accessible recreational area. Some ancient parks, such as Ware, Benington and Standon in Hertfordshire, had grand houses built within them during

⁹⁷ J. Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic forefathers*, (London, 1872), pp. 403–4 quoting Sir Edward Southcote, grandson of Lord Aston.

⁹⁸ M. de Belin, *From the deer to the fox: The hunting transition and the landscape 1600–1850* (Hatfield, 2013), p. 57.

⁹⁹ Mileson, ‘Sociology of Park Creation in Medieval England’, p. 24; Richardson, ‘King’s Chief Delights’, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, pp. 13–14.

the sixteenth century; in other cases a new park was laid out around the site of an established house or, more frequently, a new house and its park were created together. As a result, the character, location and topography of land imparked in the sixteenth century differed from that of its medieval predecessors, as noted by Hoppitt who found that in Suffolk the majority of later sixteenth century parks were located at or close to the manorial complex and at lower altitudes than the earlier parks which had tended to be at higher locations than the manorial complex.¹⁰¹

In contrast to the manorial waste at the margin of the parish that was frequently imparked in the thirteenth century, sixteenth and early seventeenth-century parks contained land with a variety of former uses. In Hertfordshire this often included arable land, sometimes part of the demesne farm but, in several cases, common arable fields – still farmed in strips by numerous tenants – were imparked. In laying out his new estate at Hatfield from 1607, Robert Cecil Earl of Salisbury imparked at least 700 acres of farmland and was scrupulous in ensuring that the owners and tenants of the closes and strips of common arable land were fairly compensated, either financially or by exchange, creating new common arable land on at least one former demesne field for that purpose.¹⁰² The archives for the Hatfield estate contain exceptional records of the imparking process but the fragments of evidence surviving for other estates shows that Lord Salisbury's scruples were not shared by all park-makers. Common pasture was also imparked but its enclosure often met with stiff opposition from the dispossessed commoners resulting in riots at Northaw in 1579 and Berkhamsted in 1619 and protests and general lawlessness around 1620 in response to King James's enclosure into Theobalds park of over eight hundred acres of wood-pasture on Enfield Chase and on Cheshunt and Northaw commons.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Hoppitt, 'Hunting Suffolk's parks', pp. 146, 162.

¹⁰² HHA Hatfield Manor Papers 3, pp. 1351–2.

¹⁰³ A. Jones, 'Commotion Time: the English Risings of 1549', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2003, p. 334 citing Cockburn, *Herts. Indictments*, nos. 175–76; H. Falvey, 'Crown policy and local economic context in the Berkhamsted Common enclosure dispute, 1618–42', *Rural History*, 12 (2001), pp. 131–42; The National Archives (hereafter TNA) STAC 8/32/16 Attorney General v Barnes, Destruction of enclosures of the park of Berkhamstead manor, 1620; A. Rowe, 'Pollards: living archaeology' in K. Lockyear (ed.), *Archaeology in Hertfordshire. Recent Research* (Hatfield, 2015), pp. 302–25 at p. 310.

As parkland increasingly became the desired setting for a country house during the sixteenth century, evidence for the design of features intended to enhance and ornament the park landscape starts to emerge. The earliest potential example found so far in Hertfordshire is a string of fishponds created in the 1530s by Henry VIII in the valley of the Hunsdon Brook in the Pond Park adjacent to his palace at Hunsdon. Royal accounts record the construction, at great expense, of four ‘pond heads’ which survive today as huge earthwork dams across the valley and which in the mid-sixteenth century retained twelve acres of water.¹⁰⁴ As well as a source of fish for the royal table, these ponds were used for recreational fishing by the king and perhaps also had an aesthetic purpose, emulating Renaissance water gardens on the continent.¹⁰⁵ As a result of my research, Historic England granted the pond earthworks Scheduled Monument status in 2018.¹⁰⁶

Firmer evidence for deliberate landscape enhancement emerges during the last quarter of the century in Lord Burghley’s new park around his grand new house at Theobalds near Waltham Cross. Notes and map annotations in Burghley’s own hand record the creation of tree-lined walks to link his magnificent walled gardens with features in the adjacent parkland, including a pond with an island and, after his death, his son Robert Cecil went on to create an artificial river and geometrical water features in the park including a square pond enclosed by banks 100m long.¹⁰⁷ Innovative design on a landscape scale was seen at Hatfield about 1610 as Cecil, now Lord Salisbury, laid out a new park landscape with avenues extending to both north and south on axis with his new mansion.¹⁰⁸ An unusual and interesting contrast to the ornamental park landscapes created by the Cecils is provided by Sir Nicholas Bacon’s park at Gorhambury near St Albans which from the 1560s and into the early seventeenth century was divided into a number of fields, the hedges between which incorporated

¹⁰⁴ TNA E 101/465/20 declaration of expenditure on works at Hunsdon 22 April 1525 – 21 April 1534, p. 7; TNA E 315/391 survey of royal Hertfordshire manors, lands and possessions, 1556.

¹⁰⁵ Rowe, *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, pp. 19, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Hunsdon Brook Fishponds, List Entry Number: 1457907. ‘A group of four Tudor fishponds, created for Henry VIII between 1525 and 1534. Defined by four large earthwork dams, with quarries, building platform and hollow way, ... approximately 490m south-west of Hunsdon House.’

¹⁰⁷ A. Rowe, ‘Hertfordshire’s Lost Water Gardens’ in D. Spring (ed.) *Hertfordshire Garden History Volume II: Gardens pleasant, groves delicious* (Hatfield, 2012), pp. 38-45; Rowe, *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, pp. 20-21. The square pond, one bank of which survives, was the home of a royal barge and became known as the King’s Pond.

¹⁰⁸ Rowe, *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, pp. 21-22.

‘gappes for the deare’.¹⁰⁹ Parts of Gorhambury park must consequently have retained a pastoral appearance although the main views from the mansion (to the south and south-east) may have been open and park-like. Sir Nicholas laid out a notable 15-acre walled garden called The Desert and perhaps the ‘watering pond inclosed & terraced about with brick’ in Brickkiln Close in the park.¹¹⁰ Alternatively, the terraced pond may have been the work of his son, Francis Bacon, who also created a magnificent terraced walk along the northern boundary of the park, bordered by avenues comprising six tree species planted in a repeating pattern which framed a vista of Verulam House at the north-east corner of the deer park.¹¹¹ From the roof-top terrace of Verulam House visitors could view the water garden created by Sir Francis Bacon in his father’s Pond Yard.¹¹²

Field archaeology surviving within parks becomes more important for gardens laid out during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The earthwork remains of the gardens created by the Bacons can still be seen at Gorhambury, as can the evidence for important historic gardens on other Hertfordshire estates revealed during my parks research. A series of earthworks and parchmarks, mostly aligned with the house, indicate the extent of what must have been very large and magnificent gardens laid out around Standon Lordship, built in the park *c.*1546, but for which there is no recorded evidence before the county map of 1766, when the house was in decline.¹¹³ The remarkable archaeological remains of a 100 metre-square, terraced garden in the medieval deer park at Benington were spotted in the 1990s, surveyed in 2007 with the help of Christopher Taylor, Tom Williamson, Robert Liddiard and members of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, and published in 2011. The evidence provided by estate maps of 1628 and 1743 and historical research led to the conclusion that the garden was most likely to date from the early seventeenth century.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ HALS I.A.83/7 early seventeenth-century survey of the Gorhambury estate, perhaps *c.*1626.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ J. Aubrey, 'Brief Lives', chiefly of Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between 1669 & 1696 edited from the author's MSS by A. Clark, 1 (Oxford, 1898), pp. 79–80.

¹¹² J. Aubrey, 'Brief Lives', pp. 79–80.

¹¹³ A. Rowe, unpublished report on the history of the park and gardens at Standon Lordship for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, 2006.

¹¹⁴ A. Rowe, C. Taylor and T. Williamson, 'The earthworks at Benington Park, Hertfordshire: an exercise in dating an 'archaeological garden'', *Landscape History* vol. 32, 2011, issue 2, 2011, pp. 37-55.

The role of parks as designed landscapes and settings for great houses intensified during the eighteenth century and the archaeological remains of some important Hertfordshire schemes have been identified in recent years. Field work in Tring Park and archival research in the Bodleian Library led to two major discoveries in 2011 relating to landscapes designed in the early eighteenth century by Charles Bridgeman. Very little was thought to survive of Bridgeman's spectacular landscape created along the Chiltern escarpment in Tring Park and many considered the bird's-eye view of the park by Thomas Badeslade to be at least partly fictional. The identification of the earthwork remains of two *round-points* hidden beneath scrub high up on the escarpment alongside the King Charles Ride led to the discovery of field evidence for almost all of Bridgeman's parkland design and the eastern *round-point* was restored and replanted with a ring of trees in 2014, grant-aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund.¹¹⁵ A map in the Bodleian Library catalogued as 'North Mimms Park', turned out to be an unidentified plan drawn by Charles Bridgeman for the gardens and park he designed for the Gubbins or Gobions estate in North Mymms parish. The plan – which includes elevations of some of the garden buildings – has led to the discovery of the earthwork remains of several previously unknown or poorly understood features described in eighteenth-century sources.¹¹⁶

Early research on the history of the park and gardens at The Golden Parsonage, Great Gaddesden, led to the discovery of earthworks that included an ornamental canal and a mount.¹¹⁷ Far more impressive parkland earthworks came to light in the former Popes Park at Hatfield after seeing a map of 1785 in the Hatfield House Archives in 2012. Hidden in woodland and similar in scale to the sixteenth-century dams in the valley of the Hunsdon Brook, these earthworks match the series of water features depicted on the map – geometric basins, canals, cascade, lakes, island and boathouse – created along the valley of a small stream crossing the park.¹¹⁸ More recent research

¹¹⁵ A. Rowe, K. Harwood and J. Milledge, unpublished report for the Woodland Trust, 2011, revised and updated for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, 2019; A. Rowe, article for the Association of Gardens Trusts Yearbook, 2015.

¹¹⁶ A. Rowe and T. Williamson 'New light on Gobions', *Garden History*, vol. 40, No. 1, 2012, pp. 82-97.

¹¹⁷ The HGT and T. Williamson, *The Parks and Gardens of West Hertfordshire* (2000).

¹¹⁸ A. Rowe, 'Hertfordshire's Lost Water Gardens', pp. 48-53.

on the work of Humphry Repton at Panshanger Park, Tewin Water and Digswell House contributed significant information to our knowledge of his working practices, showing that Repton was present on-site in Panshanger Park to supervise the creation of the Broadwater.¹¹⁹

Further aspects of parkland history

As the above has shown, my interest in parks extends into the eighteenth century when an ever-growing range of online sources makes it possible to obtain detailed information about the owners of the county's parks and their antecedents. My research into the proprietors recorded on the county map by Dury and Andrews in 1766 provided some new and surprising insights into the composition of the upper levels of Hertfordshire's society and also confirmed and illuminated the remarkable fluidity in the property market.¹²⁰ The majority (62-70 per cent) of the 169 properties with proprietors named on the map had been acquired by the families that owned them in 1766 since the Restoration of 1660. Half of those properties had been purchased earlier in the eighteenth century: a quarter by the proprietor themselves and another quarter by a family member. A further quarter of the 169 properties with named proprietors had been purchased during the seventeenth century, 11 per cent during the sixteenth century and just 2 per cent (four houses) had been passed down through the same family since the medieval period.¹²¹ In 1766 just 16 per cent (27) of land-owners had deep roots in the county with ancestors extending back for six or more generations.

As well as revealing the high turnover of property ownership, Dury and Andrew's map also provides abundant evidence of the influence of London on the history of the county's parks. Four of the families recorded on the map could trace their roots back to men who had been active in the royal court and government in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, men who owned the parks at Standon, Tyttenhanger, Theobalds and Ashridge. Another six had ancestors who had derived their wealth from trade and commerce in the capital and who, in the sixteenth century, owned the

¹¹⁹ S. Flood & T. Williamson (eds), *Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2018).

¹²⁰ 'Social Geography: Names on the map' in Macnair, Rowe and Williamson, *Dury and Andrews' map of Hertfordshire: Society and Landscape in the eighteenth century*, pp. 142-166.

¹²¹ The remaining 12 per cent are unknowns.

parks at Hadham Hall, Gorhambury and Pendley and whose descendants in the seventeenth century owned the parks at Lamer, Hatfield and King's Walden. The increasing proportion of landowners whose wealth was derived from trade and finance mirrored the growth in trade in the capital in the early modern period. At least 40 per cent of the 86 properties purchased since 1700 had been bought by businessmen – city merchants, overseas traders, brewers and bankers – and another 14 per cent by members of the legal profession. Such owners created, for example, the parks at Cokenach (Barkway), Hitchin Priory and Tewin Water and were responsible for commissioning Charles Bridgeman to lay out the remarkable park landscapes at Tring, Moor Park, Briggens and Gobions.

Proximity to the capital meant that Hertfordshire also attracted a large number of men who entered parliament: in 1766 they comprised more than a fifth of the proprietors named on the map and almost all of them owned a park in the county. Among them were the 3rd Earl Cowper whose grandfather, the 1st Earl and lord chancellor from 1707, had created Cole Green Park at the beginning of the century, Sir William Baker, 'one of the foremost merchants trading with America', who laid out the notable park at Bayfordbury from 1758, Lord Hyde, privy counsellor, who purchased Grove Park in 1753, lawyer Sir Matthew Lamb who purchased Brocket Park in 1746 and London brewer Samuel Whitbread who purchased Bedwell Park in 1765. The history of Hertfordshire's parks undoubtedly reflects the number of men of wealth and power who chose to live there from the medieval period onwards. No other county has had its parkland history examined to the same degree as that in Hertfordshire, but the county is probably unusual and the rate at which its properties – and parks – changed hands seems extraordinary.

Parks were of course primarily created to enclose a herd of deer but rabbit warrens were frequently created inside parks in the medieval period and this continued to be the case into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with documentary evidence for the creation of rabbit burrows in Benington Park in the 1560s, in the New Park at Hatfield in 1614 and in Miller's Park at Hatfield in 1689.¹²² This, too, is a subject

¹²² TNA C 78/38/28 decree in *Butler v Bourghchier*, 1567; HHA Hatfield Manor Papers, Summaries 1, pp. 175, 256, 261.

which I have researched extensively. Warrens were recorded in about 30 per cent of the manors which had deer parks before 1500 but it is often not clear whether the warren was located within the park or elsewhere. Significant revenues from rabbit warrens start to appear in manorial accounts from the middle of the fifteenth century, owing perhaps to proximity to a lucrative fur trade in the capital. A London poulterer, for example, paid £11 18s 11d in 1451/2 for 1,100 rabbits from the Knebworth warren. Later records show that this warren covered about 150 acres, the largest found so far in the county, and in 1722 it was stocked with 'silverhaired rabbits' and was leased for £50 plus ten dozen rabbits per annum.¹²³ The c.130-acre warren at Hertingfordbury, in contrast, was specialising in black rabbits in the early seventeenth century. Evidence suggests that these two warrens were established on land which had been parkland since the early medieval period although the deer had probably been relocated by the sixteenth century. It seems likely, however, that some parks were primarily enclosed for rabbits rather than deer, such as the 'Park or Warren called Holwelbury Park' in the sixteenth-century, the 30-acre 'Park or Rabbit Warren' recorded at Redbourn the seventeenth-century and the warren at Tewin Water in the eighteenth century.¹²⁴ Rabbits continued to be regarded as status animals into the eighteenth century and a Swiss visitor to the county in 1728 stated that most country houses had parks and rabbit warrens which were 'very lucrative to proprietors, if not too far from London', noting that the skins were more profitable than the meat, being made into fine furs and exported to Poland.¹²⁵ Hertfordshire's warrens tended to occur on poor, gravelly soils, many located in a broad belt running across the middle of the county corresponding with extensive deposits of glaciofluvial gravels left in the main valleys during the Anglian glaciation. Field-name evidence suggests that at least 2,500 acres (c.1,000 ha) of the county were used for raising rabbits at one time or another.¹²⁶

Another prestigious source of meat that was sometimes enclosed within a park for greater security was a dovecote or pigeon-house. Until the seventeenth century a

¹²³ Rowe, 'Rabbit Warrens', pp. 112-13.

¹²⁴ Rowe, *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire*, pp. 25, 28; Macnair, Rowe and Williamson, *Dury and Andrews' Map*, p. 170; HALS DE/P/T719 Statement regarding wood ground near Holwellbury Park, c.1639; X/C/7/A survey of the manor of Redbourn, 1609; A. Rowe, 'Tewin Water' in Flood and Williamson (eds), *Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire*, p. 159.

¹²⁵ C. de Saussure, *A foreign view of England in the reigns of George I and George II* (London, 1902), pp. 305-8.

¹²⁶ Rowe, 'Rabbit Warrens', pp. 112-13.

dovecote was, like a park or warren, a badge of lordly status and a record of a dovecote in the deer park at Albury in Hertfordshire in 1386 provided the springboard for another line of research.¹²⁷ Dovecotes were frequently substantial buildings, accommodating hundreds of birds and located in prominent positions close to the manor house but, as I was to discover, few were located in parks.¹²⁸ By the early eighteenth century, however, dovecotes sometimes doubled as ornamental features in park landscapes including, for example, the one built at the end of the ornamental canal in the warren at Tewin Water and another, designed by James Gibbs, was an important feature in the vista from Bridgeman's woodland garden at Gubbins.¹²⁹

A far more significant aspect of parkland history relates to the trees that grew in them, providing not only essential habitat and browse for the deer but also, if carefully managed, a constantly renewable source of wood and timber not only for the use of the park owner but also as a potential source of revenue. This became another major interest, fuelled (excuse the pun) by the discovery of evidence suggesting that hornbeam was deliberately introduced to some Hertfordshire parks in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This accords with Rackham's view that hornbeam had become established in its Essex–Hertfordshire heartland by A.D. 1500 at the latest. Although probably native, it seems likely that hornbeam was favoured over other tree species, either deliberately or accidentally, by coppicing and wood-pasture management. It is relatively resistant to browsing and was used as fodder for deer (as recorded at Little Hadham in 1435/6) but its most important use was probably as fuel.¹³⁰ By the middle of the seventeenth century there appears to have been a step change in the number of pollards growing in some parks. In 1650 the 670-acre Cheshunt Park contained 8,693 'lopt Pollards of horne beame and oake' (thirteen per acre) valued at £663 17s 10d (just over 1s 6d each).¹³¹ A further 613 'old Dotrills and Hallow trees good for little save for the fieringe' were valued at 10s per tree, £306 10s in total, which suggests

¹²⁷ Rowe, *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, p. 44.

¹²⁸ A. Rowe, 'Dovecotes' in D. Short (ed.), *An Historical Atlas of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2011), pp. 30-31.

¹²⁹ Rowe and Williamson, *Hertfordshire*, p. 217; Rowe and Williamson, 'New light on Gobions', p. 84; James Gibbs, untitled drawings of a temple and a dovecote, annotated 'For Mr Sambrooke of Gubbins', Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Gibbs Collection: III, ff.87b.

¹³⁰ Rackham, *Ancient woodland*, pp. 221, 223, 224, 235; HHA Court Rolls 9/25 manorial account for Little Hadham, 1435/6.

¹³¹ TNA E317/Herts/16 Parliamentary survey of Cheshunt Park, 1650.

that these old pollards were considerably larger than the trees which were still being lopped. Large numbers of trees were also recorded in the nearby Theobalds Park in 1650 but the pollards were largely confined to those parts of the park enclosed from the neighbouring commons of Cheshunt, Northaw and Enfield Chase by James I c.1612–22.¹³² At Hatfield records for the disparked Great Park in 1626 indicate that the oak and beech pollards had been partly replaced by thousands of small hornbeam pollards valued at just 9½d each and figures recorded in a survey of 1669 suggest there were over 8,000 hornbeam pollards in the 350-acre Middle Park – ‘about 24 trees per acre’ – in addition to 810 beech pollards and 539 oak pollards.¹³³ These pollards were growing in twenty named areas of the park and the average value of the hornbeams was about 2s, with significantly higher values for the beech and oak pollards.

Pollards were characteristic of wood-pasture, a system of land-use found not only in parks but also in the wider countryside. Eighteenth-century Hertfordshire contained thousands of acres of wood-pasture on commons, almost all of which has now disappeared. In the south-east of the county the dominant tree planted on the commons was hornbeam but, in the Chilterns, in the north-west of the county, ancient beech pollards predominate on the common known as Berkhamsted Frith. Most pollards were, however, grown in hedgerows around fields, providing a renewable source of fuel for local inhabitants for whom wood, in a county with no reserves of coal or peat, was a vital resource. Farmland trees were carefully portrayed on estate maps from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries; some surveyors even used colour-coding to indicate the different species of timber tree – oak, elm or ash – or to indicate that a tree was a pollard.¹³⁴ Analysis of these estate maps from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shows that in north-east Hertfordshire over 60 per cent of farmland trees were pollards, a figure which would no doubt have been higher in earlier centuries.¹³⁵

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Austin, P., ‘Pollards in early-modern South East Hertfordshire’, *The Local Historian* vol. 43 No. 2, May 2013, pp. 138-58 at pp. 143, 146.

¹³⁴ Most notably in Hertfordshire a series of estate maps by Hollingworth including HALS A/2832 and A/2833 Plan of The Manor of Great Barwick with Little Barwick, Cooks, Standon Green and Shepherd's Hill Farm, Standon, 1778 and DE/H/P16 Plan of Stockers & Pearces Farms in Thorley and Sawbridgeworth, 1807.

¹³⁵ Rowe and Williamson, *Hertfordshire*, p. 171.

In addition to the parks mentioned above, there is also evidence for high densities of pollards on commons in the south of the county, for example, there were said to be 24,000 hornbeam pollards growing on 1,186 acres of Cheshunt common (an average density of approximately 20 per acre) at the end of the seventeenth century, similar to the density recorded in the parks at Hatfield.¹³⁶ Up to 6,400 pollard heads were lopped and sold at Cheshunt each year in the later seventeenth century, purchased almost entirely by the local inhabitants, frequently in quantities of 100 heads per year and presumably for their own consumption.¹³⁷ The evidence suggests that these hornbeams were deliberately planted in dense stands on parts of the extensive commons in south-east Hertfordshire to increase wood production while, both on the commons and in the parks, maintaining the pasture for grazing animals. Forestry experts assert that the main reason for growing hornbeam was as a source of fuel but whether the increased wood production in south-east Hertfordshire was primarily to supply local fuel needs, or to increase the production of charcoal for sale further afield is not clear. Many hornbeam woods were managed to produce charcoal and records from 1368 onwards show that it was regularly taken to the city by pack-horse and cart from both Cheshunt and Hatfield.¹³⁸ There is no doubt that trees grown and managed in some of Hertfordshire's parks contributed to the market for fuel, both locally and in the capital, providing a significant source of revenue for some park-owners from medieval times onwards.

Conclusion

My work as a landscape historian has drawn upon an interest in a wide range of disciplines and has sought to explore the complex relationship between the natural environment, landscape and society. Parks are a fascinating and important manifestation of this relationship and my research into Hertfordshire's parklands has provided the impetus to undertake further research relating to the management of trees

¹³⁶ HALS 10996 A/B Notes in case concerning cutting down of trees on Cheshunt common, n.d..

¹³⁷ TNA E179/248/23 Hearth tax returns Cheshunt 1662-3; E179/375/33 Hearth tax returns Cheshunt 1664-5; HALS D/EB1767M1 survey of the manor of Cheshunt, 1669; TNA E317/Herts/15 rental of the manor of Beaumont Hall, 1649.

¹³⁸ Galloway, J.A., D. Keene and M. Murphy, 'Fuelling the city: production and distribution of firewood and fuel in London's region, 1290-1400', *Economic History Review*, XLIX, 3 (1996), pp. 447-72 at p. 454.

and hedgerows and the history of rabbit warrens and dovecotes. The county's proximity to London has been a predominant theme underlying most of my research and writing about the history of its landscape, an over-arching and all-pervading factor which, since medieval times, has been responsible for not only the remarkable wealth and fluidity of its land-owning classes, their grand houses, gardens and parks, but has also had a profound effect on the county's land-use, as farmers and land-owners sought to maximise revenues by supplying the products demanded by the ever-growing populace of the capital city. My publications have illuminated significant aspects of the history of Hertfordshire and my work has important implications for the study of parks and gardens and the wider landscape elsewhere, not least the value of a multi-disciplinary approach and of working across perceived historical boundaries. It demonstrates the merits of focusing on a single county and provides a benchmark against which other counties, both close to London and further away, can compare their own histories.

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