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Introduction: Tudor and early Stuart parks of Hertfordshire

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT THE deer parks that existed in Hertfordshire during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[1] As in medieval times, parks in the early modern period were almost always privately owned enclosures containing deer, and evidence of their importance as venues for recreational hunting becomes increasingly abundant during the sixteenth century. Their depiction on the earliest county maps, which appeared in the Elizabethan period, attests to their cultural importance and prominence as features in the landscape. Less than one-third of the parks depicted on those maps were sixteenth-century creations; the remainder were medieval parks, half of which were already over 300 years old and two (at Benington and Ware) that were recorded five centuries earlier in Domesday Book. The Elizabethan county maps were part of national mapping projects that allow us to make direct comparisons with other counties for the first time, confirming that Hertfordshire's reputation for being a particularly 'parky' county was well founded: it had the highest density of parks in south-east England at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2]

Deer parks were previously assumed to have declined in number and significance in the Elizabethan period, partly owing to increasing commercial pressures on land caused by population growth and greater demand for agricultural products, especially in the counties closest to London.[3] Recent research has shown that this assumption is incorrect. In Hertfordshire the number of parks was remarkably stable from the late thirteenth century onwards, increasing to a peak at the end of the sixteenth century that matched the medieval peak three centuries earlier. Many of the new parks were created by Queen Elizabeth's officials and courtiers, who chose to live in Hertfordshire precisely because it was close to London. Levels of disparkment – the cessation of deer park management – remained low in Hertfordshire throughout the sixteenth century

and park losses were generally more than matched by the creation of new parks. Although park numbers started to fall from the late sixteenth century, the total acreage of parkland in the county did not peak until the end of the Jacobean period, reaching *c*.13,400 acres (5,423 hectares) – an increase almost entirely due to the expansion of the royal parks.

A detailed analysis of the evidence for those parks – who created, owned and perhaps disparked them, and how they were used and managed – is presented in the pages that follow in Part 1 of this volume. By the time Henry VII claimed the throne in 1485 – and in contrast to earlier centuries – deer parks were more likely to be located close to the owner's residence and during the sixteenth century their function as an ornamental setting for a country house became firmly established. Evidence for the dawning of design in Hertfordshire's park landscapes is also explored below.

Several monarchs and members of their immediate families spent significant periods of time in Hertfordshire and played a notable part in the history of its parkland; indeed, many of the county's parks were acquired by Henry VIII. A brief account of the presence of the Tudor and early Stuart monarchy in Hertfordshire is presented in Part 2.

Part 3 is a gazetteer of parks for which records dating to the period 1485–1642 have been found. Each entry brings together the documentary, cartographic and occasional field evidence for that park and is accompanied by a map showing its probable extent in the Tudor and early Stuart periods.

The sources

A greater range of sources is available to researchers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century deer parks compared with those of the medieval period, and those that allow direct comparisons with other counties are of particular value. The most important of these are outlined below.

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1 The work presented here forms a continuation of the research published in *Medieval parks of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2009).

2 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', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 132 (2012), p. 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.

County maps

During the sixteenth century cartography began to flourish in Britain, as a few enlightened men – most notably William Cecil Lord Burghley (Plate 6), minister to Queen Elizabeth I – realised its potential value as a tool for both governing the nation and, at a much more local scale, managing one's own estate. The earliest map of Hertfordshire was produced in 1577 by Christopher Saxton, a cartographer selected by Cecil to complete a detailed and consistent survey of all the counties of England and Wales. The atlas – including the Hertfordshire map – was published in 1579. Perhaps the most interesting version of this map is the proof copy sent to Lord Burghley, which was subsequently bound into the 'Burghley–Saxton Atlas' (Plate 1).[4] Burghley added numerous annotations and amendments to his copy of the map, almost entirely confined to the east of the county, which he knew best. He added five places: 'Newgate', at the eastern end of the park called Hatfield Wood, and 'Hodesdo[n]bury p[ar]k (which he owned) north-west of Hoddesdon were given square symbols; while 'Woodhall – butlar' at Watton, 'Danyells – Morisyn' at Sandon and 'Hoo' to the south-east of 'Poules Walden' were located with small circles. To two unnamed parks in the far east of the county he added the names 'Pisho p[ar]k' and 'Shy[n]gle hall', but his most frequent additions were the names of landowners, presumably men he knew personally. These include the earl of Essex at Benington, Lytton at Knebworth, Horsey at Digswell, Mr Capell at Little Hadham, 'Barley now Leve[n]thorp' at Albury, 'Sadlar' at Aspenden and Gill at Wyddial.

Apart from towns and villages and the topography (rivers, hills and wooded areas), the most obvious features recorded on the map by Saxton were the deer parks, ringed 'with miniature palings to suggest their importance and flatter his noble customers'.[5] Twenty-six parks were portrayed (see Table 1) and, while their scale is often exaggerated, their locations, relative sizes and varying shapes do reflect an approximation of their sixteenth-century geography. Saxton omitted the far south-west corner of the county from the map and consequently the park at The More was not depicted, but it is shown on his map of Middlesex (on the Hertfordshire side of the county boundary), bringing the Hertfordshire total to 27.[6] We can assume that the parks recorded on these maps contained deer at the time they were surveyed. In a study of parks in Kent, Susan Pittman was able to compare those depicted on the earliest county maps, including one by Saxton, with a 1576 list recording whether the parks were with or without deer, and she concluded that 'the cartographers were attempting to record only existing deer parks'.[7]

The second map of Hertfordshire was produced by John Norden in 1598 and was also the result of an original survey

(Plate 2). It was the first map of the county to show roads, but in other respects the features he chose to portray were very similar to those depicted by Saxton. Norden's map shows 32 deer parks (Table 1), including one that appears to have arisen from a mistaken interpretation of Saxton's map. Saxton placed (and named) Walkern park east of the village of Ardeley and consequently within his boundary of the hundred of Odsey; a short distance to the south-east – and separated by the hundred boundary – he showed Benington park. In reality, Walkern and Benington parks shared a common boundary, which was accurately depicted by Norden, but he also illustrated the park shown by Saxton east of Ardeley, where there is in fact no evidence for a park in the sixteenth century.[8] As a source of evidence for active deer parks, Norden's map is open to question. He depicted several parks for which there is no known evidence of deer at the end of the sixteenth century, including Digswell, Stortford, Sopwell and Cashiobury. Particular doubt exists over Benington, which had been disparked by 1580, and Pendley, which was at least partially disparked during the 1590s. At least a quarter of Bedwell Park had been ploughed by 1597 but Norden depicted its full medieval extent. Conversely, two parks for which there *is* evidence of deer in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century are not included on the map: at Northaw poachers took a buck in 1597 and at Knebworth a doe was shot in 1607. Knebworth was also recorded on a county list of parks drawn up in 1583 – as were Weld (Aldenham) and Wyddial – yet none appear on Norden's map; however, without further evidence it is not possible to judge whether there were deer in the parks when he undertook his survey.

The next map of the county, made by William Smith in 1602, was closely based on Norden's map and adds nothing new to the record of the county's parks. John Speed's map, produced in 1610, is of more interest, however.[9] In addition to his county maps Speed also published a map of England and, in a table bordering this map, he recorded that Hertfordshire had 23 parks but no chases or forests. In fact, his map of Hertfordshire portrayed 28 parks, one of which was probably fictitious (Table 1). Speed, who freely admitted that most of his maps were based on the work of earlier cartographers, relied in the case of Hertfordshire almost exclusively on John Norden's map of 1598. As a result, he repeated Norden's mistake regarding the extra park to the east of Ardeley, but, perhaps aware that Norden had shown too many parks in the area, he merged Walkern and Benington parks into one elongated park. Speed also introduced other inaccuracies: his rendering of the three Hunsdon parks placed the south-western park too far from the other two, and he erroneously applied the name

3 H. Prince, *Parks in Hertfordshire since 1500* (Hatfield, 2008), p. 23.

4 BL Royal MS. 18. D.III, f.34 *Hartfordiae Comitatus*, Hertfordshire map by Christopher Saxton, 1577 (the map can be seen at <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery>); A. Macnair, A. Rowe and T. Williamson, *Dury & Andrews' map of Hertfordshire. Society and landscape in the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 2016), p. 5.

5 N. Nicolson, 'Introduction', in *The counties of Britain. A Tudor atlas by John Speed* (London, 1995), p. 16.

6 BL Royal MS. 18. D.III, f.24 *Cantii, Southsexiae, Surriae Et Middlesexiae Comitat*, map of Kent, Sussex, Surrey & Middlesex by Christopher Saxton, 1575.

7 Pittman, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean deer parks in Kent', p. 57.

8 Prince ascribed this park to Ardeley Bury, but that lay west of Ardeley and no evidence of an active deer park has been found in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. (Prince, *Parks*, p. 11).

9 BL Maps C.2.cc.2.(3.) map of Hertfordshire by William Smith, *c*.1603; J. Speed, *The counties of Britain. A Tudor atlas by John Speed* (London, 1995 edn), pp. 98–9.