

THE MEDIEVAL PARKS OF LEICESTERSHIRE

by

L. M. CANTOR

The *park* was a common feature of the medieval landscape, and was to be found in substantial numbers in every county of England.¹ It was part of the demesne lands of the lord of the manor, and typically consisted of a relatively small area —commonly between 150 and 300 acres — of “unimproved” land, almost invariably well-wooded to provide covert for the deer, and usually containing pasture. The medieval park, therefore, was quite different from its modern successor, the sophisticated, landscaped amenity park though, as we shall see, there are numerous examples of large, modern parks developing directly out of their smaller medieval predecessors.

The primary purpose of the medieval park was to provide a hunting ground for the lord of the manor, and for this purpose it was stocked with deer, of the red, fallow and roe varieties, though it was also put to a variety of other uses. In order to retain the deer the park had to be completely and securely enclosed, usually by a combination of substantial earth bank, topped by a wooden paling fence and with an inside ditch, which together made an impassable barrier. Occasionally, the wooden fence might be replaced by a quickset hedge, or by a stone wall, and where topography made it possible, for example just below the crest of a steep slope, the paling fence alone might serve as an effective barrier. The enclosure was broken by gates and, occasionally, by “deer-leaps”. The latter were special contrivances consisting of a gap in the earth bank matched by a pit or hollow inside the park boundary at that point which was designed to allow deer to enter the park from the open country outside without permitting those within the park to escape.² As the creation of deer-leaps enabled the number of deer within the park to be painlessly increased, they were eagerly sought after. Equally, as the deer at large were royal animals, the Crown was generally reluctant to grant permission for local lords to create deer-leaps, especially where they abutted on the forest, and were often quick to punish any illegalities. In 1348, for example, John Segrave was impeached because the king’s deer from the Forest of Rutland entered his park at Cold Overton, and were unable to get out again “on account of the manner in which the park was enclosed”.³ The enclosure was presumably broken by a deer-leap.

The *park*, therefore, differed from the other medieval hunting-grounds — the *forest*, *chase* and *warren* — in that it was the only one that was completely and securely enclosed. The *forest* was a large tract of country, usually though not necessarily wooded, which belonged to the Crown, had its own

Forest Laws and came under the jurisdiction of forest officials. As the Forest Laws were very restrictive and, in the early Middle Ages at least, strictly enforced, "disafforestation", or the freeing of a tract of country from the Forest Law, was eagerly sought by local lords who almost invariably had to pay the Crown for the privilege. The only forest in the county during the early Middle Ages was Sauvey Forest which was the westward extension of the Forest of Rutland. With the exception of the manor of Withcote, this forest land was disafforested in 1235 so that from this date the county obtained virtually total exemption from the Forest Laws.⁴

The *chase* was a private forest or hunting-ground which a few great nobles and ecclesiastical lords were allowed to create in their estates. The landowners appointed their own officials and introduced their own laws so that for the ordinary people there was often little to choose between living in a *forest* or a *chase*. The matter is further complicated by the fact that the term *forest* was sometimes applied synonymously to a *chase* and is occasionally so used in medieval documents. Leicester Forest comes into this category as it was not a true forest but a chase which belonged first to the de Beaumont earls of Leicester, and later to the earls of Lancaster. It did not become a forest until the end of the fourteenth century when, with the Duchy of Lancaster lands, it came into the hands of the Crown. *Charnwood Forest* was also not a forest as it was never in royal hands. It was really the waste of the adjoining Manors of Whitwick, Groby, Shepshed and Barrow-upon-Soar, and its hunting rights were owned by the earls of Chester, Leicester, Winchester and others and their successors as well as the various religious houses within its bounds, such as Ulverscroft, Garendon and Gracedieu.⁵ The term *chase* has also been applied to Belvoir in modern times⁶ but there seems to be no evidence that it was accorded this status in the Middle Ages nor is this likely, as the manor was not owned by a great landed family.

The right of *free warren* was granted by the Crown to local lords to enable them to hunt the smaller game — the fox and the hare, the rabbit and the wild-cat, and the pheasants and partridges — over their estates. By the middle of the fourteenth century such grants had become so common that the great majority of manorial lords seem to have enjoyed them.

During the Middle Ages, which is here taken to be the period from the Norman Conquest to 1530, the eve of the Dissolution of the monasteries, Leicestershire contained at least 34 parks, though they did not, of course, all co-exist at any one time. They were scattered all over the county, but with a heavy concentration in the western half, especially in and around Leicester and Charnwood Forests (*see fig. I*). This distribution is not to be interpreted as the result of major geographical or geological features but rather as the product of major land-holdings. For the most part, parks were held by great nobles and ecclesiastical lords on their major demesne manors and, in the case of the county, the de Ferrers, the de Beaumonts and the earls of Lancaster, the great territorial lords of Leicestershire, held manors, and thereafter parks, in the western half.

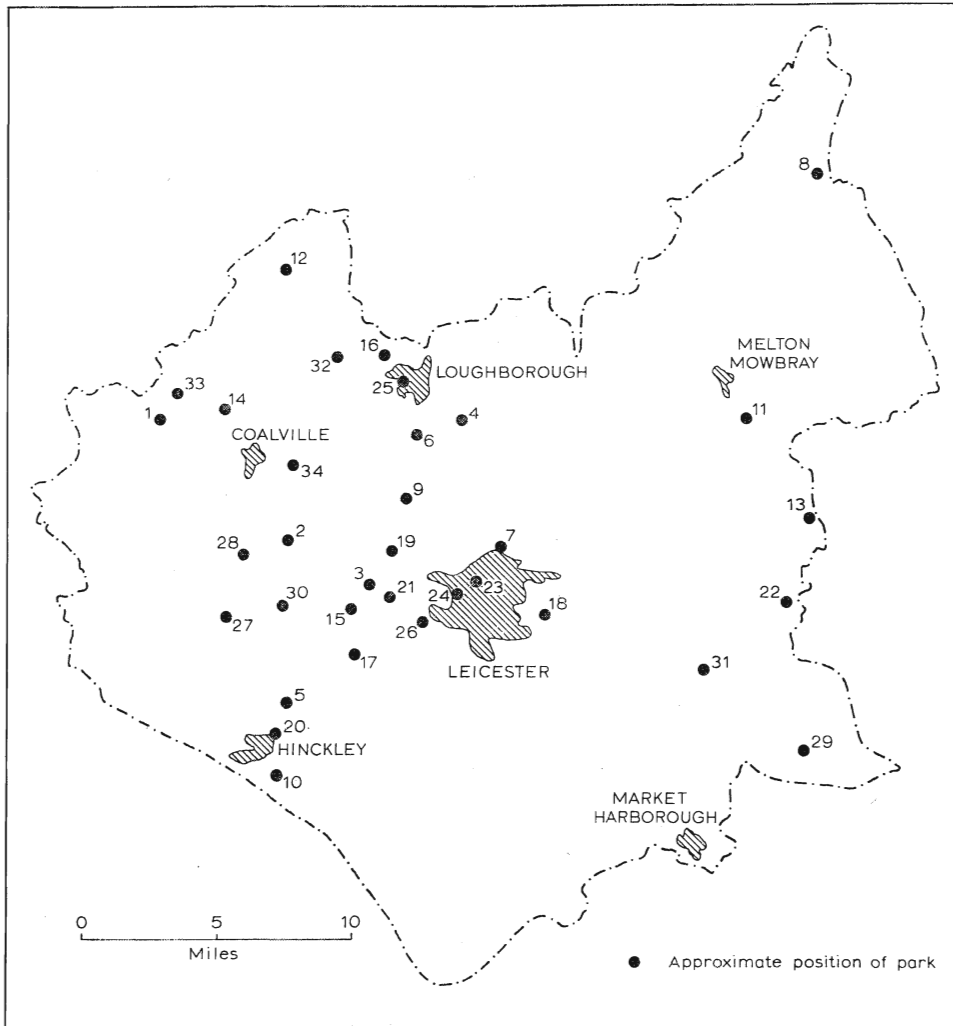


Fig. 1 The Medieval Parks of Leicestershire.

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| 1. Ashby-de-la-Zouch | 13. Cold Overton | 24. Leicester — Frith Park |
| 2. Bagworth | 14. Coleorton | 25. Loughborough |
| 3. Barn Park | 15. Desford | 26. Lubbesthorpe |
| 4. Barrow-upon-Soar | 16. Dishley | 27. Market Bosworth |
| 5. Barwell | 17. Earl Shilton | 28. Nailstone |
| 6. Beaumanor | 18. Evington | 29. Nevill Holt |
| 7. Belgrave | 19. Groby | 30. Newbold Verdon |
| 8. Belvoir | 20. Hinckley | 31. Noseley |
| 9. Bradgate | 21. Kirby Muxloe | 32. Shepshed |
| 10. Burbage | 22. Launde | 33. Staunton Harold |
| 11. Burton Lazars | 23. Leicester — Abbey Park | 34. Whitwick |

Within each manor itself, it is possible to deduce geographical reasons for the position of parks. As they were wooded and uncultivated, they usually lay on the edge of the manor, beyond the open fields and often on poor ground which, as in the case of Cold Overton Park (*see* fig. 2), is sometimes still wooded today. For this reason, its boundary often coincides with that of the modern parish boundary or, as with Cold Overton, the county boundary.

Although a number of parks were in existence in the country as a whole at the time of the Domesday Survey, none was in Leicestershire. The earliest park apparently was that at Barrow-upon-Soar, which certainly existed in the first half of the twelfth century. In the period from 1200 to 1355, parks increased greatly in number and by the end of this period, at least 29 of the 34 parks listed below had been created. Subsequently, the rate of imparking considerably slowed down, largely due no doubt to the effects of the Black Death. Indeed, the middle of the fourteenth century to all intents and purposes marks the end of the medieval hunting park. Thereafter, the shortage of labour which resulted from the plagues made it more and more difficult to maintain the parks, still less to create new ones, and gradually, like demesne farming itself, they fell into disuse and were leased out. This was a very uneven process spread out over a long period and in the case of some of the old Lancastrian manors, such as Desford, Earl Shilton and Hinckley, the parks were still kept in hand even though the demesne arable was leased out.⁷ During the latter part of the fifteenth century, a number of new parks were created, but these differed from the medieval hunting parks in that they were much larger "amenity parks" which were never embanked. Typical of such parks were Bagworth and Kirby Muxloe, each of which, imparked by Lord Hastings in 1475, enclosed 2,000 acres. They were the forerunners of the characteristic nobleman's park of a later age, which after the Dissolution became more numerous, and which reached their height, perhaps, with the landscaping activities of Capability Brown and others in the eighteenth century.

The longevity of the medieval park varied very considerably. Some of the Lancastrian parks, for example, were very long-lived: Earl Shilton and Hinckley were both in existence by the end of the thirteenth century and continued throughout the Middle Ages. Two of the earliest parks in the county were Bradgate and Loughborough. The former was in existence by 1241 and there are frequent references to it throughout the period; the latter was a Despenser park in 1230, which subsequently came to the de Beaumonts and was not finally disparked until 1630. Other parks had almost certainly a much shorter existence, though the absence in many cases of documentary evidence makes it difficult to be absolutely certain. Burbage Park existed in 1266 but had probably been disparked by the middle of the next century. Another short-lived park was probably Burton Lazars, the only reference to which is dated 1322; thereafter inquisitions make no mention of it.

In the country as a whole, the king owned the largest number of parks but until the end of the fourteenth century, when the Duchy of Lancaster lands came to the Crown, he owned no Leicestershire parks other than those that temporarily came into his hands as the result of the minority of an heir or some such reason. The earls of Lancaster owned the largest number of parks in the county including, at various times, Castle Donington, Desford, Earl Shilton, Hinckley and Leicester Frith. Other parks were held at various periods by great landowning families like the Beaumonts who held Beaumanor, Loughborough, Shepshed and Whitwick, and Hastings who held Barwell, Burbage and Nailstone. Other prominent medieval Leicestershire families who held parks were the Zouches of Ashby and Lubbesthorpe, the Ross family of Belvoir, the Maurewards of Coleorton and the Stauntons of Staunton Harold. Indeed, most of the wealthier lords aspired to a park which, as we have seen, was not adjacent to the manor house but some distance from it on the edge of the manor. It was not until much later that the big house was built in seclusion in its landscaped park, often on the same, if enlarged, site of the medieval predecessor. Staunton Harold and Bagworth are both examples of this particular process and there are many more in other parts of the country.⁸ The only building which the medieval park itself was likely to contain was a wooden lodge which housed the park-keeper.

There are a few examples of royal licences to enclose parks in the county, including Belvoir Park in 1340⁹ and Nevill Holt in 1448.¹⁰ Generally speaking it would seem that such licences were unnecessary unless imparking might interfere with the king's forest rights.¹¹ It was for this reason that William Ross had to seek a licence to impark 100 acres of spinney at Belvoir and was not granted one until the king was satisfied that no damage would result to his lands.¹²

The main use to which the park was put was probably hunting, deer being very important both for sport and as a source of meat. It is difficult to estimate the size of the herds contained within the park banks but they were probably considerable; certainly, the records of the period are full of examples of trespass, of deer being killed and removed from parks.¹³ Towards the end of the period, in 1523, a survey showed Leicester Frith Park to have contained about 90 deer.¹⁴ The size of the parks themselves varied considerably; as we have seen, those imparked towards the end of the period were often considerably larger than those imparked early on. Moreover, a long-lived park was likely to have increased in size through accretion over the centuries. Thus the medieval hunting park of Bradgate had by Leland's time become 6 miles in compass and, by the late fifteenth century, Ashby Great Park was apparently 10 miles in circumference.¹⁵ Not infrequently, the parks were sub-divided into sections which themselves were somewhat confusingly called *parks*. These were not, however, separate enclosures and were thus not contained by earth banks. One reason for this sub-division seems to have been the provision of separate enclosures for different types of deer, and it was quite customary to keep apart fallow deer

and red deer. The enclosures were named separately as at Market Bosworth, where they were called "Old" and "Southwood" parks, and they are often commemorated in modern field-names.

The land within the park bank was put to a great many uses, none of which precluded the presence of deer and the consequent continuity of hunting. In addition to deer, the parks might be stocked with pheasants, partridges and small game, and they frequently contained fishponds. They were a valuable source of timber, cattle were pastured, horses were raised, for a few months a year pigs were fed on the pannage from the trees, and turbary (peat) was often important. They thus formed an integral and not unimportant part of the manorial economy. Manorial and, in the case of the Lancastrian and Crown Lands, Ministers' Accounts give a clear picture of the many uses to which the park was put. For example, a Minister's Account of 1322 for Hinckley includes the following entries among Revenues: "15s. from the sale of herbage of one plot called Priorslawn in the park of Shydey, 5s. from the sale of herbage of Maryhurst and Middlemoor in the same park, £1 4s. *od.* from the sale of herbage of the great meadow and of three plots of meadow, about 17½ acres in Shydey Park, the sale of underwood (branches) £1 3s. *od.* and of old hedges 3s. 4d."¹⁶ Another interesting reference to the park as a source of timber is one for Castle Donington park in 1330, "from the undergrowth are yearly supplied faggots and hurdles for preserving lands and meadows of Donington being submerged by the water of Trent"¹⁷.

On the other hand, in their heyday the parks must have been quite expensive to maintain. A keeper was needed to look after the park, the park pale had to be maintained, and winter feed might have to be provided for the deer. An account of 1322 for Castle Donington includes the following expenses, "Remaking 97 perches of hedge round the park at 1¼d. a perch, because the old hedge was carried off and burnt by the men of the king's army in the time of the disturbance, 10s. 1¼d." and "food and wages of 1 park keeper keeping the said park 4s."¹⁸ In 1389, in the same park 3s. 6d. was spent on providing hay as winter food for the deer and 4s. 10d. on repairing the lodge.¹⁹ Towards the end of the period when most parks had ceased to be used for hunting, they were leased out for pasture, often for considerable sums. In about 1482, for example, the sale of pannage and herbage of Castle Donington Park brought in over £5 yearly.²⁰ By this time, too, the office of parker to the king or a great landowner had become a much sought-after sinecure, and in 1507, George Hastings was made keeper of Earl Shilton and Hinckley parks²¹ from which doubtless he obtained not insubstantial revenues.

The imprint which the medieval park has made on the contemporary landscape varies considerably. In some places, for example, parts of the original earthworks remain, as on the south-eastern side of Cold Overton Park. The same is almost certainly true of a number of other parks in the county and, as they have yet to be explored, they offer to the local historian a great deal of worthwhile investigation. In many instances, the park has

determined subsequent field patterns and the shape and direction of existing field boundaries. Many contemporary field-names and place names derive from medieval parks, as even a cursory glance at the map will show; for example, Market Bosworth and Belvoir Parks are commemorated in "Old Park Spinney" and "Old Park Wood" respectively, marked on the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey map.²² Modern parks also have given their names to present-day features, and it is not to be supposed that every contemporary "Park Wood" necessarily betokens the existence of a medieval park.

A perambulation of Cold Overton Park provides an instructive example of the detailed traces which a medieval park has left on the contemporary landscape.

COLD OVERTON PARK

The parish of Cold Overton lies on the extreme eastern edge of the county — indeed the parish boundary follows the line of the county boundary — about three miles west of Oakham. The park itself lies in the south-east corner of the parish, typically some distance from the village, at a height of about 600 feet. Its location is interesting for another reason, namely that to the south-east, immediately across the county boundary in Rutland, lay another medieval park, Flitteris Park, a royal park in the manor of Oakham which has also left not insubstantial traces.

Of the exact location of the park, there can be no doubt: not only does the modern map give the place name "Cold Overton Park Wood", but the Victorian Tithe Map of about 1840 shows within the park the following field names, "Park", "Park Close", "Park Mead" and "Cornpark" (*see* fig. 2). Just outside the probable park boundary to the west are shown the fields "Bucks Pasture" and "Bucks Meadow". For the visitor to the park, the easiest method of approach is by the road from Knossington to Oakham along its northern edge, and then south along the county boundary to enter the eastern side of Cold Overton Park Wood. We may start our perambulation at point A, (*see* fig. 2) where along the southern edge of the wood runs a low bank, the remains of the original park bank. Although of no great height now, it is of considerable width, in places over 25 feet. It is also marked by an inside ditch, that is, just to the north of the park-bank which must have combined with it to make a most formidable obstacle. Today, only traces of this ditch remain, and it is nowhere more than about 2 feet deep. The bank continues with roughly the same dimensions to point B at the edge of the wood. Beyond this it is at first ploughed out for a short distance until it reappears as a most striking feature. Here it is a wide bank, some 30 feet in width and two feet high, made the more striking because it runs along the grassy edge of the field and is topped by a line of old trees.

This combination of bank and trees is one we have observed not infrequently in parks in other counties and it makes for a most distinctive feature. It continues until C where it becomes much eroded in a narrow valley floor. It then re-emerges quite substantially on the far side of the

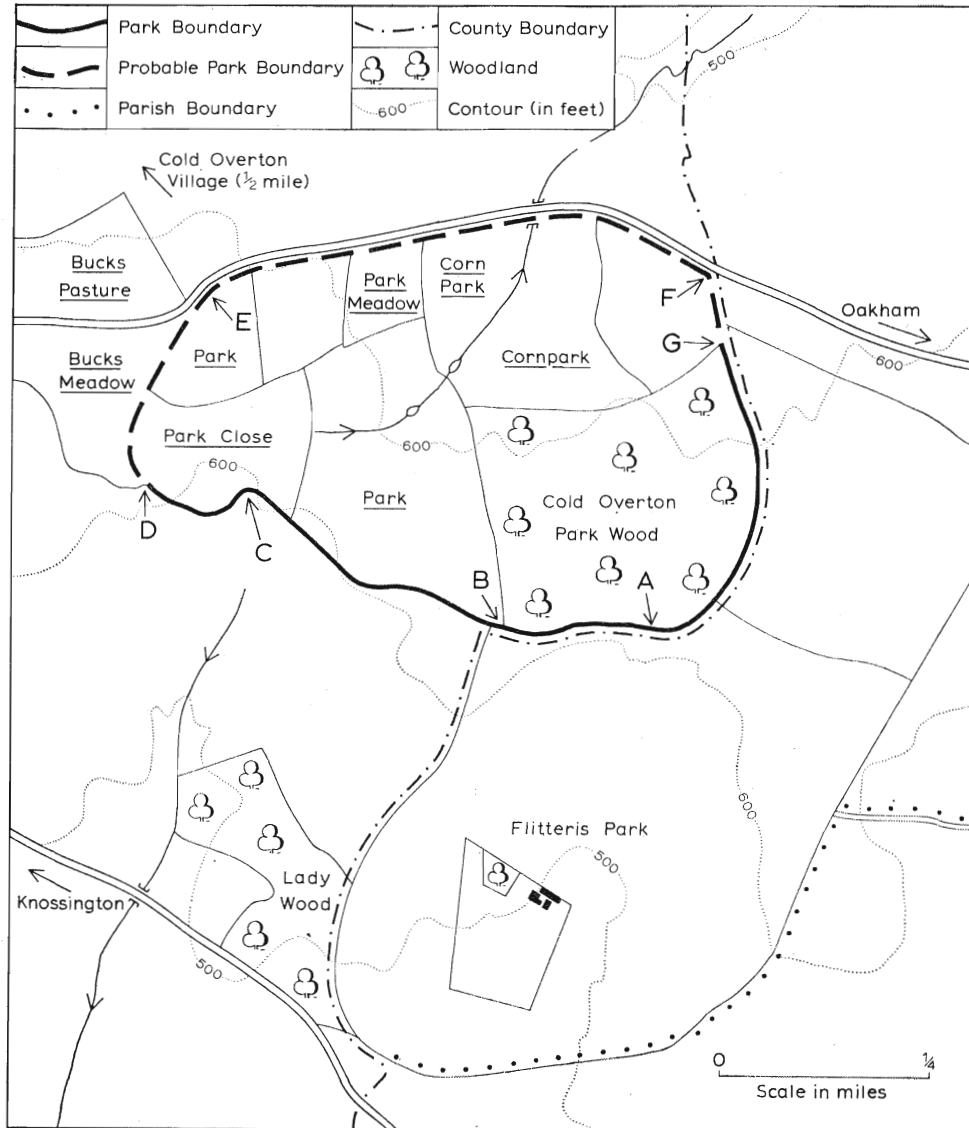


Fig. 2 Cold Overton Park.

valley and continues as far as D. Beyond this it has been very largely ploughed out, though there are traces of a bank and ditch along the field edge as far as E. Beyond that it has vanished without trace. Between F and the county boundary, the line of the park bank almost certainly follows that of the road from Knossington to Cold Overton. There is no reason to suppose that it crossed this road; indeed the western curve of the park bank,

a very characteristic one, inevitably leads one to suppose that the bank was continued along the southern edge of the road. This supposition is perhaps strengthened by the fact that all along the southern edge of the road where it parallels the park boundary there is a wide grassy verge. Although there is no sign of a bank on this verge the very fact of its existence, and its disappearance beyond the county boundary, may be taken as a sign of the former existence of a park bank.

At the county boundary, the park bank must have turned south along the edge of the stream. There may never have been a bank here as the stream and the narrow cleft which it occupies provide a sufficiently formidable obstacle for a paling-fence alone to have sufficed. Finally, once the edge of the wood at G is reached the bank reappears and may be followed, with some difficulty through the tangled thickets of the wood, to our starting point at A.

The total area which the park bank thus enclosed was about 200 acres. It provides an excellent example of a medieval park, in size, shape and appearance, and there is the added attraction of becoming intimately acquainted with a delightful and unspoilt piece of Leicestershire countryside.

APPENDIX

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Cal. Chart R.</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i> (Public Record Office)
<i>Cal. Close R.</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i> (Public Record Office)
<i>Cal. I.P.M.</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitiones Post Mortem</i> (Public Record Office)
<i>Cal. Pat. R.</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> (Public Record Office)
Curtis	J. Curtis, <i>A Topographical History of the County of Leicester</i> (1831)
Farnham	G. F. Farnham, <i>Quorndon Records</i> (1912)
Fox and Russell	L. Fox and P. Russell, <i>Leicester Forest</i> (1948)
<i>Hastings MSS.</i>	<i>Hastings Manuscripts</i> (Historical Manuscripts Collection; 1928)
Hoskins	W. G. Hoskins, <i>Leicestershire</i> (Hodder and Stoughton, 1957)
<i>T.L.A.S.</i>	<i>Transactions, Leicestershire Archæological and Historical Society</i>
Nichols	J. Nichols, <i>History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester</i> (1795)
<i>PRO Lists and Indexes</i>	<i>Public Record Office Lists and Indexes</i>
<i>Rot. Pat.</i>	<i>Rotuli Patentes</i> (Patent Rolls)
SHC	<i>Collections for a History of Staffordshire</i> (ed. W. Salt Arch. Soc., 1880 -)
Shirley	E. P. Shirley, <i>English Deer Parks</i> (John Murray, 1867)
VCH	<i>Victoria County History of Leicestershire</i>

For each of the parks listed below there is definite and reliable documentary evidence. This may not be an exhaustive list and the author of this paper would be very grateful to learn of any evidence establishing the existence of other Leicestershire parks during the Middle Ages.

THE MEDIEVAL PARKS OF LEICESTERSHIRE

1. *Ashby-de-la-Zouch* is first mentioned in 1337 when the agistment was worth 13s. 4d. (*T.L.A.S.* 15 (1927-8) 89); it was 60 acres in extent in 1368 when the herbage was worth 20s. (*Cal. I.P.M.* XII, 238). At this time it belonged to the de la Zouch lords of the manor. It probably fell into disuse thereafter and re-emerged in a greatly enlarged form in 1474 when Lord Hastings was licensed to impark 3,000 acres of land and wood (Nichols III, 568). By the late fifteenth century there were 3 parks in existence in the manor: Great Park, Prestop Park which according to Nichols (III, 568) was for fallow deer, and Little Park, for red deer. Leland observed 3 parks in 1530 and they were still in existence in 1589 (Nichols III, 586). Burton in his 1641 list of parks (Nichols IV, 782) described them as "now in use". Throughout this period they remained in the hands of the Hastings. By the end of the eighteenth century they had been disparked (Nichols III, 561).
2. *Bagworth* was in existence in 1279 when it belonged to the bishop of Durham (Nichols IV, 989); almost a century later it had passed to Robert Holland (*Cal. I.P.M.* XIII, 239) and by 1411 to Matilda Lovel (*T.L.A.S.* XV (1927-8), 259). It was probably disparked between this date and 1474, when Lord Hastings was licenced to impark 2,000 acres of demesne land and wood (*Cal. Chart R.* (1427-1516), 242). This latter park, a large amenity park quite unlike its small medieval predecessor, was observed by Leland, is shown on Saxton's map of 1576 and is listed by Burton in 1641 as being "now in use". The house in the park was demolished during the Civil War and it seems likely that the park was never in use thereafter.
3. *Barn Park* may have existed in the twelfth century when according to Fox and Russell (*p.* 26), it was enclosed out of Leicester Chase; they produce no documentary evidence to substantiate this statement. It certainly existed in the 1530s when it was visited by Leland. It was at this time in the hands of the Crown who appointed and paid the keeper (Nichols IV, 781). Saxton shows it on his 1576 map and according to Burton it was in use in 1641. According to Fox and Russell it was located to the north eastern edge of Desford Manor.
4. *Barrow-upon-Soar* was in existence as early as 1139 when it belonged to the earl of Chester (*Hastings MSS.* I, 66). By 1240, it was 360 acres in extent and its pasture was worth 40s. Subsequent references to the park occur in 1343 (*Cal. I.P.M.* VIII, 326) and 1379 (Farnham, 109), when it belonged to Ralph Basset. A century later, the park had ceased to exist as a very detailed 1481 Minister's Account for the manor (Farnham, 161 *et seq.*) makes no reference to it. The park was located

- at Buddon in Quorndon which at that time was part of the manor of Barrow. For this reason it is occasionally referred to as Quorndon or Buddon Park. According to Farnham (35*n.*), the park ford is now the filter beds of the Swithland Reservoir, a statement which is supported by the 1801 first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey map which names "Park Ford" here.
5. *Barwell* is mentioned in 1312 when it belonged to John Hastings (*Cal. I.P.M.* V, 231). No subsequent reference to it has been found.
 6. *Beaumanor* is first mentioned in 1316 when it belonged to Hugh le Despenser (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1313-17), 530). By 1339 it had come into the hands of the Beaumonts when the agistment was worth 10*s.* (Farnham, 88). In 1406, when John Godwin was bailiff of the manor, the pannage was worth nothing "because none happened" (*ibid.* 126), and in 1427, the park contained 12 acres of pasture and wood. There must have been deer in the park at this time, as the pasture of the park was "worth noting beyond the salary of the park keeper and the fence repairs for keeping the deer" (Farnham, 137). By 1530 when Leland saw it, the park contained "a pretty lodge", and was enclosed by a stone wall which according to Nichols (III, 138*n.*) still remained for about three parts round the park in his day. Nichols further states that Beaumanor was disparked by Sir William Herrick, presumably between 1594 when he bought the manor and in 1641 when it occurs in Burton's list of disparked parks, but that a small part remained until about 1690 (III, 146-7).
 7. *Belgrave*. The only reference to this park is in 1517 when Richard, abbot of Leicester, added 20 acres of land in Belgrave to his park called Old Park (*T.L.A.S.* 8 (1893-98), 310).
 8. *Belvoir* was imparked in 1306 when William Ross was given licence to enclose 100 acres of spinney (*PRO Lists and Indexes XVII*, 86). It remained with the Ross family throughout the fourteenth century; in 1352, for example, the pannage was worth 3*s.* 4*d.* besides the feeding of the deer (Nichols II, 34). The park fell into the hands of the Crown in 1463 when Thomas Lord Ross was attainted for high treason; at this time the park was 200 acres in size (Nichols II, 38). In the next year the king granted it to William Hastings and others who almost certainly disparked it as there are no subsequent references to it. As the park was situated in the parish of Redmile it is occasionally referred to in records as Redmile Park. Its position is probably that of the present-day "Old Park Wood" (O.S. 122/810330).
 9. *Bradgate* was in existence as early as 1241 (*Hastings MSS.* I, 23). Six years later the park together with its deer-leaps were granted to the earl of Winchester by Robert de Somery. By 1288 it belonged to William de Ferrers (*Cal. I.P.M.* II, 415) in whose family it remained until at least 1371 (*Cal. Close R.* (1369-74), 350). By 1512, when Robert Vincent was the parker, it had come into the hands of the

Crown (*T.L.A.S.* XV (1927-8), 219). Some twenty years later, Leland writes of "a fair park and a lodge lately built there by Lord Thomas Gray, marquis of Dorset . . . (The park is) six miles in compass". This was clearly another example of a relatively small medieval hunting park being greatly enlarged by a Tudor Lord into an amenity park. By 1641, when according to Burton the park was still in use, it had come into the possession of the earl of Stamford.

10. *Burbage* is first mentioned in 1266 when it belonged to Henry de Hastings (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1258-66), 540). It was still in the possession of the Hastings family in 1312 when there were two parks (*Cal. I.P.M.* V, 231). This park was probably disparked soon after this date as subsequent inquisitions, such as those in 1335 and 1368 (Nichols IV, 454-5), make no mention of it.
11. *Burton Lazars*. The only reference to this park occurs in 1322 when it belonged to John Hamelyn (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1321-4), 160). There is an oblique reference to it, however, in 1350 when one of the common fields, North Field, is mentioned in connection with "Park End" (Nichols II, 266-7).
12. *Castle Donington* was created when John de Lacy was granted deer by the Crown to stock his park (*Cal. Close R.* (1227-31), 222). By 1322, the park had passed from the de Lacy earls of Lincoln to the earls of Lancaster, and at this time the cost of food and wages of the park keeper for one year was 4s. (*T.L.A.S.* XIX (1936 - 37), 245). There are frequent references to the park throughout the fourteenth century (*T.L.A.S.* XIV (1925-26), 50-54) and in 1399, for example, when 3s. 6d. was spent on hay for the deer in the park, and 4s. 10d. on repairing the lodge. In 1482, Edward IV enlarged the park which remained Crown land as part of the Duchy of Lancaster until Henry VIII's time when it was given to the marquis of Dorset. At the end of the sixteenth century it was purchased by Sir George Hastings, and it soon thereafter became the residence of the earls of Huntingdon. In 1604, on the death of Lord Huntingdon, it contained 300 acres of pasture worth £13 6s. 8d. and in 1641 Burton described it as being still in use.
13. *Cold Overton* is first mentioned in 1269 (VCH I, 253) and in 1301 belonged to John de Segrave (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1292-1301), 626). In 1341, the Segrave Lord was granted a licence to have a deer-leap in his park (Curtis, 139), in 1372 it belonged to Walter de Mauny, and in 1433 it belonged to the duke of Norfolk (Nichols II, 138).
14. *Coleorton* was held by John de Maureward about 1300 (Shirley, 145 and Nichols IV, 782). There is a 1622 reference to it in Nichols (III, 736) and by 1641 it had been disparked (Nichols IV, 782).
15. *Desford* belonged to the earl of Lancaster in 1297 (*Cal. I.P.M.* III, 289) with whom it remained throughout the fourteenth century. By 1419 it had passed with the Duchy of Lancaster lands into the hands of the Crown (SHC XVII, 67). By the beginning of the seventeenth

- century it is described as having been "long since disparked" (Nichols IV, 587).
16. *Dishley* is mentioned only once, in 1282, when it belonged to the abbot of Garendon (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1281-92), 48). This may be the site of the later Garendon Park which is shown by Saxton in 1576 and a 1754 map of Charnwood Forest (Nichols III, 131).
 17. *Earl Shilton*. This park, known as "Tooley Park" belonged to the earl of Leicester in 1279 (Nichols IV, 774) and soon after to the earls of Lancaster. In 1507, when it was in the hands of the Crown, George Hastings was given the keepership of "Tolee Park" as a sinecure (Nichols III, 575). The park is shown by Saxton, and Burton says that it was still in use in 1641. According to Fox and Russell (*p.* 26), it comprised about 450 acres and stretched north-east from the upper Soar to the central plateau of the forest.
 18. Evington is mentioned only once, in 1317, when it belonged to Richard de Grey (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1313-17), 691).
 19. *Groby* was in the hands of the de Ferrers in 1288 when the pasture and pannage were worth 66s. 8d., and the underwood 6s. 8d. (*T.L.A.S.* XV (1927-28), 207). By 1325 there were two parks (*Cal. I.P.M.* VI, 377) which in 1445, were still owned by the de Ferrers, and were worth 6s. "beside the keep of the beasts" (*T.L.A.S.* XV (1927-28), 214). By 1512, the park had come to the Crown and in this year William Skevington was parker and Ralph Fox pale maker (*ibid.* 219). By Leland's time, when it was 6 miles in compass, the park belonged to the marquis of Dorset (Nichols IV, 781). A century later Burton described it as disparked.
 20. *Hinckley* was another park in the county which belonged to the earls of Lancaster. In 1297, it was called 'Scydleye Park' and was worth £1 (*T.L.A.S.* XX (1937-38), 306). In 1323, 'Shydey' Park realised 30s. from the sale of herbage while 5s. 6d. was spent on fencing 63 perches of hedge in places round the park (*ibid.* 112). In 1507, when "Stredey Park" belonged to the Crown, George Hastings was made keeper (Nichols III, 575). By 1588, the park was being leased (Nichols IV, 672) and soon after it must have been disparked (*T.L.A.S.* II (19 -) 320).
 21. *Kirby Muxloe* began life as a large amenity park when, in 1474, Lord Hastings was given licence to impark 2,000 acres (*Cal. Chart. R.* (1427-1516), 242). Leland described the park as being "4 miles from Leicester by Leicester Forest", and Saxton shows it on his map of 1576. In 1641 it was owned by Sir Robert Banaster and still in use (Nichols IV, 782).
 22. *Launde* was established in 1248 when the prior of Launde was granted a licence to impark (*Rot. Pat.*, 326). It is shown on Saxton's map of 1576 and on Morden's map in Camden's *Britannia*".
 23. *Leicester - Abbey Park*. According to Fox and Russell (*p.* 31), this park was created in 1352 when the duke of Lancaster authorised the abbot

- of Leicester to enclose his wood and stock it with deer from Leicester Forest. They do not quote any documentary source on which this statement is based. Certainly, the park existed in 1530 when, according to Leland, it was stocked with deer. It belonged to the Crown in 1553 (Nichols IV, 781) and by 1641 had been disparked, according to Burton.
24. *Leicester - Frith Park* is first mentioned in 1297 when it belonged to the earl of Lancaster (Nichols IV, 783) as it did in 1303 (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1301-7), 270). By 1419 it had passed into royal hands (SHC XVII, 67-8, 70). In 1499, Lord Hastings obtained from the Crown a grant of all the profits from "tops and crops" of trees, from fallen trees for repairing the park pale and from "browsings" for the sustenance of the king's deer in the park (Nichols III, 574). In 1523, the park contained about 90 deer and in 1526 the New Park (or Birdsnest Park) was made out of Frith Park by the king (Fox and Russell, 31, 77). The park was described by Leland a few years later as "sometime a mighty large thing, now partly disparked and partly bearing the name New Park, well paled". By 1571, the park was in the hands of Lord Cobham and, in 1606, it contained 702 acres, 2 lodges, a freestone quarry and a fish-pond (Nichols IV, 783-4). By 1795, when Nichols was writing, it had been disparked.
 25. *Loughborough*. In 1230, Hugh le Despenser was made a gift of deer to stock his park here (*Cal. Close R.* (1227-31), 341). A century later, it had come to Henry de Beaumont who complained that malefactors had hunted in his park, cut down trees and carried them and the deer away (*T.L.A.S.* XV, 236). In 1530, it belonged to the marquis of Dorset (Nichols IV, 181) and in 1577 to Lord Hastings, when it still contained deer (Nichols III, 579). According to Nichols (IV, 782) it was disparked in 1630. The position of what had become known as "Loughborough Old Park" is shown in a map of Charnwood Forest dated 1754 (Nichols III, 131); its western boundary ran with Beaumanor Park, from which it extended east-south-east to "Loughborough Common Field" and north-east to "Burley and Garendon Enclosures". Also within the manor of Loughborough lay *Burley Park*. However, there is no reason to suppose that it was a medieval park as the first reference to it is by Leland in 1530 when it belonged to the marquis of Dorset. It subsequently came to the earls of Huntingdon, contained deer in 1577 (Nichols III, 579), is shown on Saxton's map of 1576, and, according to Burton was still in use in 1641.
 26. *Lubbesthorpe* belonged to the archbishop of York in 1354 (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1354-8), 127). In 1361, William la Zouche granted to the canons of St. Peter, York, his two parks of Lubbesthorpe, the New Park and the Old Park, adjoining the chase of Leicester (*Hastings MSS.* I, 60).
 27. *Market Bosworth*. In 1232, Robert de Harcourt held two parks here, the "Old Park" and "Southwood Park", (*Cal. Close R.* (1231-4), 48)

- and, in 1293 his descendant Richard de Harcourt held the same parks (*Cal. I.P.M.* III, 75).
28. *Nailstone*. The only reference to this park occurs in 1266 when it belonged to Henry de Hastings (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1258-66), 540).
 29. *Nevill Holt* is a late medieval park, being formed in 1448 when Thomas Palmer was licensed to impark 300 acres (*Cal. Chart. R.* (1427-1516), 100). In 1564, it belonged to Sir Thomas Nevill (*T.L.A.S.* XIII, 223) and by 1641 it had, according to Burton, been disparked.
 30. *Newbold Verdon* was in existence in 1360 when it belonged to Elizabeth de Burgo (*Cal. I.P.M.* X, 509).
 31. *Noseley* is mentioned in 1278 when it belonged to Anketin de Martivall (Nichols II, 739). Its position is almost certainly commemorated by "Old Park" which is shown on the 7th Edition of the Ordnance Survey map (133/705983).
 32. *Shepshed*. This park existed in 1339 when it belonged to Henry de Beaumont and contained underwood worth 2s. (*T.L.A.S.* XV, 237). It may well have pre-dated the fourteenth century, however, as Shirley (p. 144) refers to the earl of Leicester's "Acle" (Oakley?) Park. In 1480, Robert Chamberlain granted the custody of Oakley Park to various people (*Hastings MSS.* I, 40). There are no further references to the park though a document of about 1675 does mention "Okeley" woods in Shepshed containing 172 acres which may well represent the area of the former park (*T.L.A.S.* XV, 281).
 33. *Staunton Harold* was held by Robert de Staunton in 1368 (*Cal. Pat. R.* (1367-70, 204). In 1517, Sir Ralph Shirley "imparked" here and evicted 24 persons in the process (*T.L.A.S.* VIII, 310); it is not clear whether this represents a new imparking or the extension of an existing park. In 1584, George Shirley granted Joseph Crisp a park-keeper's licence to kill deer in the park (Nichols IV, 782) and, in 1641, Burton included it in his list of parks "now in use". Finally Nichols, writing in 1795, states, "There is now the Little Park . . . nearly to its former extent, The Great Park is still so called, though in farms, one of which is called the Lodge; and the vestige of the boundary of pale-banks is to be traced at a distance. It was disparked by Sir Henry Shirley in 1623" (II, 703).
 34. *Whitwick* was in existence in 1270 (VCH 2, 269) and in 1289 it belonged to the earl of Buchan (*ibid.*). The Buchans still held it in 1325 when the underwood was worth 20s. and the herbage £5 (*T.L.A.S.* XV, 31). Six years later it was held by the de Beaumonts (*T.L.A.S.* XV, 31) who still held it in 1427 by which time it contained 100 acres and was known as "Bardon Park" (Nichols III, 1114). In 1527, the marquis of Dorset obtained Bardon Park from the king (Nichols III, 664) who in 1612, granted it to Sir Henry Hastings and Henry Cutler (Nichols III, 1117). In 1641, Burton described it as having been disparked. A map of 1754 shows Bardon Park to have included Bardon Hill and Bardon Hall (Nichols III, 131).

A park which may have existed in the Middle Ages is *Breedon*. Nichols (III, 729) refers to a visitation of 1619 which describes a "certain parcel of ground commonly called . . . Bredon Park, now severed and divided into 6 or 7 parcels . . . with a dwelling house therein built, called the Lodge". Clearly, by this time it had been disparked.

Another possible park is that of *Beaumont Leys* a few miles north-east of Leicester, which Hoskins (*p.* 49) describes as having been taken out of Leicester Forest by the Beaumont earls of Leicester in the twelfth century, Leland in 1530 writes that here was "sometime a great park by Leicester, now converted to pasture". Burton, in 1641, describes it as "disparked, anciently belonging to the earls of Leicester". There is no definite documentary reference to a park here, and Fox and Russell (*p.* 26) write merely of an "outlying forest district" given by the earl of Leicester to the Knights Templar in the twelfth century, which then passed to the Hospitallers and reverted to the Crown towards the end of the fifteenth century.

NOTES

1. For lists and descriptions of medieval parks in Dorset and Staffordshire, for example, see L. M. Cantor and J. D. Wilson, "The Medieval Deer-Parks of Dorset, I - IX", *Proceedings Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 83-91, (1961-70); L. M. Cantor, "The Medieval Deer-Parks of North Staffordshire I and II", *N. Staff. Journal of Field Studies* 2 (1962), pp. 72-77 and 4 (1964), pp. 61-66; L. M. Cantor and J. S. Moore, "The Medieval Parks of the Earls of Stafford at Madeley", *N. Staffs. Journal of Field Studies*, 3 (1963), pp. 37-58; and L. M. Cantor, "The Medieval Parks of South Staffordshire", *Transactions Birmingham Arch. Soc.* 80, (1965) pp. 1-9
2. A sketch of the 'deer-leap fence' at Wolseley Park, Staffordshire, which still existed in the nineteenth century, is to be found in *SHC*, 5, (1884), facing *p.* xviii
3. *Cal. Pat. R.* (1348-50), 122
4. M. L. Bazeley, "The Extent of the English Forest in the Thirteenth Century", *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, Fourth Series, IV (1921), pp. 140n., 151 and 161
5. John Rodgers, *The English Woodland* (Batsford, 1942), *p.* 98
6. Nichols II, *p.* 19
7. *V.C.H.* 2 (1954), *p.* 182
8. Compare for example, Sherborne Park, Dorset. *see* fn. 1: Cantor and Wilson, *op. cit.*, 87 (1966,) pp. 225-7
9. Nichols II, *p.* 31
10. *Cal. Chart. R.* (1427-1516), 100
11. For a full discussion of this matter see D. M. Stenton, *English Society in the Early Middle Ages* (Pelican, 1959) *p.* 104 and *Select Pleas of the Forest*, Selden Society, 13 (1899), *p.* cxiv *et seq.*
12. Nichols II, *p.* 31
13. In 1331, for example, Henry de Beaumont complained that malefactors had hunted in his park of Loughborough, cut down trees, killed deer and carried them away, *T.L.A.S.* 15 (1927-8), *p.* 236)
14. Fox and Russell, *p.* 77
15. Nichols III, 666, and III, 568.
16. L. Fox, "Ministers' Accounts of the Honour of Leicester (1322-1324)", *T.L.A.S.* 19 (1936-7), 232
17. G. F. Farnham and A. Hamilton Thompson, "The Castle and Manor of Castle Donington", *T.L.A.S.* 14 (1925-6), 50
18. Fox, *op. cit.*, *T.L.A.S.* 19 (1936-7), 245
19. Farnham and Thompson, *op. cit.*, *T.L.A.S.* 14 (1925-6), 54
20. *Ibid.*, 65
21. Nichols III, 575

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