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# The Naming of Parks



Charles Shee

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(This is the second of an occasional series of articles based on the archives of the Otford and District Historical Society, ODHS. I would like to thank Susan Pittman for her helpful advice. Her magisterial PhD thesis on the deer parks of Kent is a mine of useful information and references. Any errors in this article are my own.)

## Summary

Medieval Otford had three deer parks. These are usually described as: the Old or Great Park, south-east of the village; the Little Park, south-west of village and adjacent to River Darent; and the New Park, north of the village and bounded by the River Darent to the west. In this article, by reference to estate documents and field names, I suggest that until at least the mid-15th century the park known to us as Little Park was originally called New Park. This is a new finding, and unless researchers are aware of this they may be misled when reading old documents. Prior to the mid-15 century, references to "New Park" are probably referring to what was later called the Little Park. By the mid-16th century the term Little Park was well established, and the name "New Park" was now applied to the separate third park to the north of Otford.

## Introduction

Otford was one of 17 medieval manors owned by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Witney, 2000, p XI). It was unusual in having three deer parks. The boundaries of these are known approximately, and may well have varied over time. The standard history of the village, "Otford in Kent", mentions that there were two major parks to the south of the village, the Great Park and the Little Park, with a smaller one to the north, New Park (Clarke & Stoyel, 1975.) The sites of the two largest parks (the Little Park and the Great Park), as suggested by the authors, are shown in Figure 1. The third, smaller one, New Park, was thought to be situated in the vicinity of "Northfield" (Fig 1). This third park was later the site of New Park Farm, now known as Park Farm.

In this article, based largely on evidence contained in File 21 in the ODHS archives, I suggest that the Otford medieval deer park usually known to us as the "Little Park" (on the right when travelling on the road from Otford to Sevenoaks) was originally called "New Park". This is a new observation and is important because it means that references to New Park in early historical sources are probably referring to the southern Little Park and *not* to the park to the north of the village which was later called New Park. 3

## ODHS archives File 21

When reading the contents of File 21 in the ODHS archives I noted that there were references to "New Park" implying that it actually lay to the south of the village, and not in the vicinity of "Northfield" as commonly accepted. This would make sense if the second park to be enclosed (known to us now as Little Park) was originally called New Park, to distinguish it from the older, larger and original deer park.

File 21 is labelled "Major Hesketh's Transcripts of Lambeth Court Rolls, Ministers Accounts etc". There is a note on the cover mentioning that these notebooks were originally on loan to ODHS from the owner, Mr. E.J. New of Otford, but were subsequently donated to the archives. Hesketh was a local historian, and was chairman of the Otford Parish Council between 1910-16. Otford residents tend to dislike change, and his proposal in 1912 that Otford should change its name to the Saxon original, "Ottanford", was not adopted by the

parish (Clarke & Stoyel, 1975, p239)!

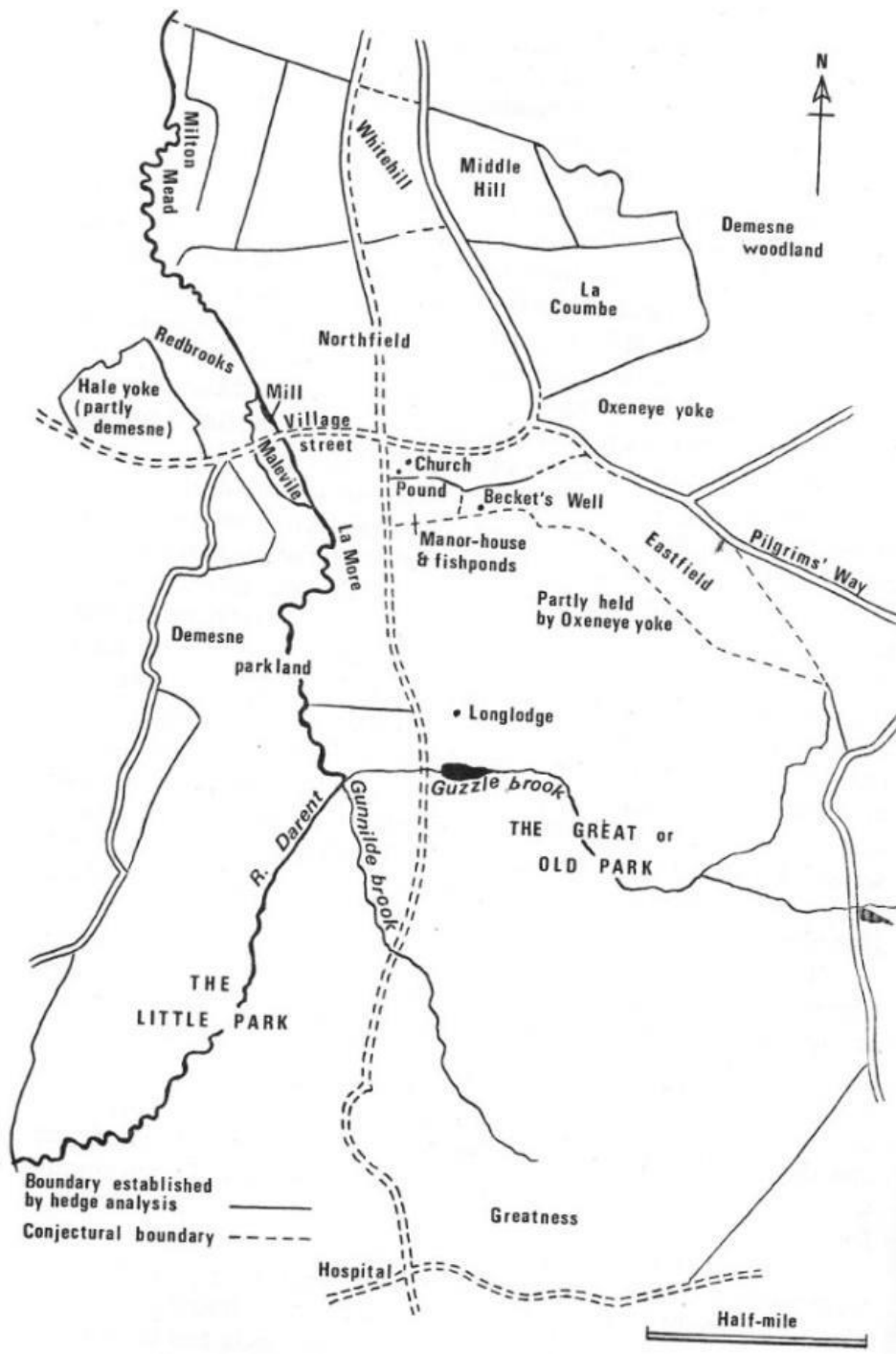


Figure 1. Otford demesne (manorial) lands in the 13th century showing the suggested sites for the Great and Little Parks (south of the village). New park was thought to be in the vicinity of Northfield (north of the village). (Copied from Clarke & Stoyel 1975. "Otford in Kent", p60)

Hesketh published a small pamphlet history of Otford (Hesketh, 1909) and also an article on the Manor and Great Park at Otford in *Archaeologia Cantiana* (Hesketh, 1915). The authors of "Otford in Kent" were rather scathing of the latter, deeming it to have "numerous errors, including a worthless plan" (Clarke & Stoyel, 1975, p122). I do not know whether Hesketh himself translated the Court Rolls in File 21 or whether this was done on his behalf. The transcriptions are hand written in pencil in English in two lined notebooks, and in a few

places comments and suggestions have been added in another hand.

The original Court Rolls were financial accounts of the medieval manor of “Otteford”. These were written in Medieval Latin on parchment and the original “rolls” are stored in the archives at Lambeth Palace (Fig 2). They are filed under the abbreviation ED (Estate Document). The translations in File 21 (ODHS) are of rolls ED 830-876 (1289-1447) (Fig 3). Not all these rolls have been fully translated and some are illegible due to damage and fading. I have inspected some of these rolls at the Lambeth archives, but my knowledge of Medieval Latin, its abbreviations and the calligraphy is such that I am not able to verify the accuracy of Hesketh’s English translations.

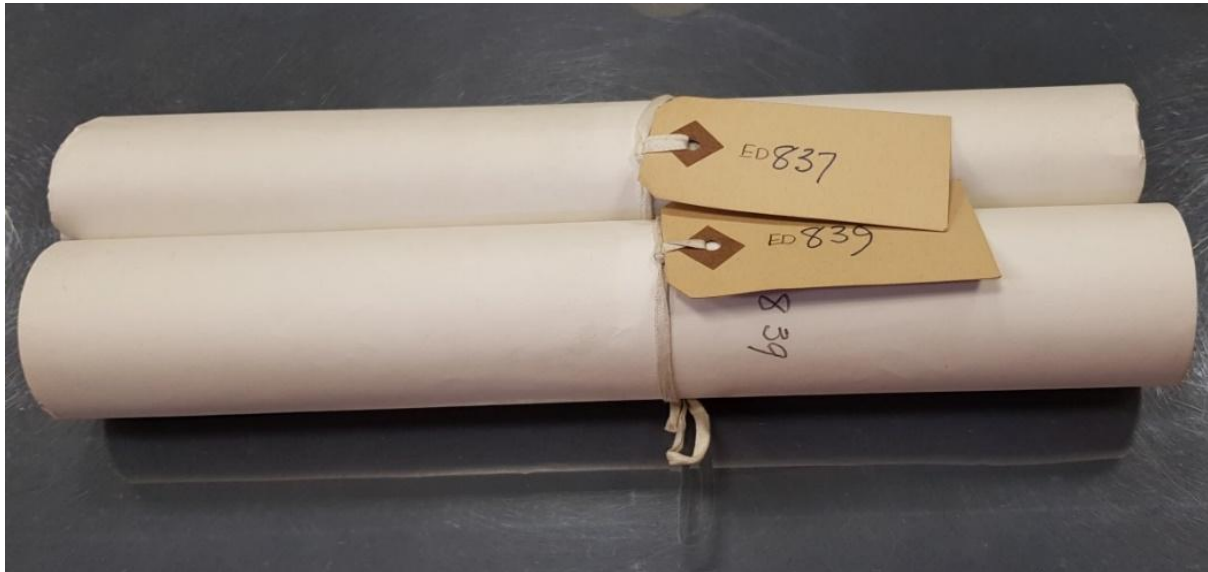


Figure 2 Two of the estate documents for the Archbishop's manor of Otford. They are on parchment rolls in Lambeth Palace archives (photo, the author 2020).

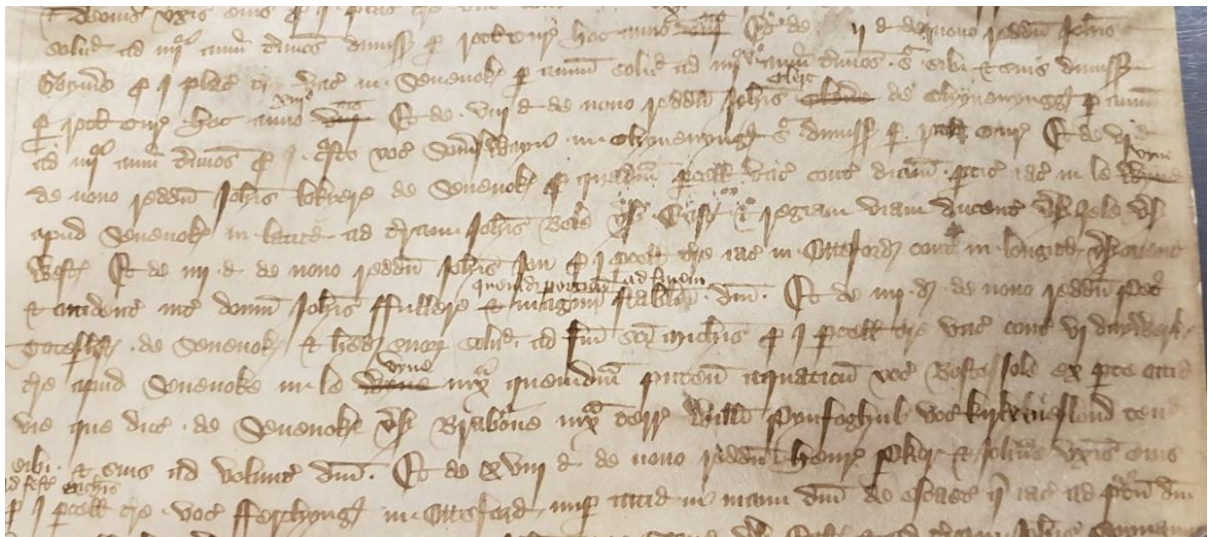


Figure 3. Most of the rolls are legible- if one is familiar with 14th century Latin, abbreviations and handwriting! Note reference to Otteford at the bottom of the photograph (photo, the author 2020)

## The Great or Old Park

The first reference I have found to a park in Otford is an account of poachers breaking in to Otford Park in 1241 (Cal Close, 1241). There is more substantial information in a survey of Archbishop Kilwardby's manors in 1273, the year after he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. This survey has references to the *pannage* (pigs' pasture) and *herbage* (stock pasture) of "*the park in Otford*", as well as to wages of "*the parker*" (Jones, 2015, p158 & 163). That this was the original park is suggested by the mention in a subsequent 1283 survey that in Otford "*There is one park there*" (Witney, 2000, p 369). In later estate documents there are intermittent references to the park, such as in 1289 making "*enclosures and ditches of the park*" (ED 830) and in 1316 wages for "*Solomon the hunter and his 2 boys with the lord's dogs*" and wages of "*a parker*" (ED 832). The parker was responsible for managing and safeguarding the park and its deer.

There were hedges and ditches around at least part of the Great Park, as accounts from 1323 mention, "*In closing 4 furlongs of the hedge of the park*" (4 furlongs = ca. ½ mile) and "*In 58 perches of ditch newly cleansing and planting round the park*" (58 perches = ca. 320 yards) (ED 833). Some medieval deer parks contained internal *compartments* to exclude the deer, or for specialised functions such as growing crops (Rackham, 2000, p125; Liddiard, 2007, p122). An example of this segmentation appears in the Otford estate records of 1323; "*In allowance of rent to John Botyler for a certain rushground enclosed in the Park of Otford*" (ED 833).

## The New Park

None of the estate documents in file 21 use the term "Little Park", which is what we now term the park that was south of the village and to the west of the Otford to Sevenoaks road. The first reference to the "New Park" in the estate documents is in 1356 (ED 834) where there is mention of 15 ½ acres sown with vetch in "*Neweparke*". It is likely this second park had been formally emparked in 1348, as the old park had already been in existence in the 13th century. There is a record in 1348 of the archbishop being allowed to empark 200 acres of his own demesne lands in Otford along with some small parcels of land, meadow, wood and pasture belonging to 6 named individuals (CPR, Edward III, 1348). It is interesting that the approximately 17 acres received from William de Ceppenham and incorporated in the park was in "*Sevenokes and Otford*", suggesting that this new park was to the south of Otford (i.e. abutting on Sevenoaks, and not in the vicinity of Northfield) (CPR, Edward III, 1348).

The next evidence that the first two parks were called Old Park and New Park comes from a translation of a 1398 inquisition, the original of which is held in the British Museum. This translation is in a file in the ODHS archives labelled "Honour of Otford File [21]" and states that "*They say there are two parks called the Old Park and the New Park*". The Parker's accounts for that year are also particularly informative (ED 837, 1398-99). They confirm the existence of two parks and their names, with a reference to "*hedging in the two parks*", and mention of "*stakes in the old park*" and "*palings in the new park*". These palings and stakes "*for the enclosing of the park*" came from cutting down 2 oaks in the "*old park*" and 3 oaks in the "*new park*" (ED 837).

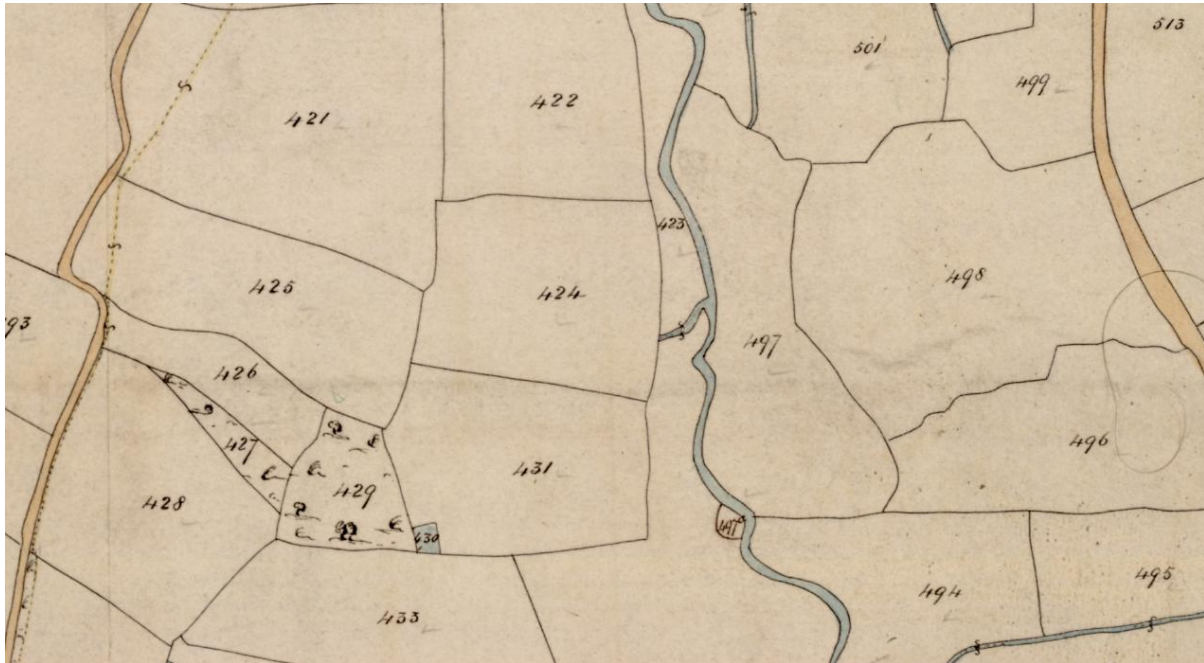
## Land called Farthyng

To continue with the enigma of the naming of parks, we need to digress to examine references to a piece of land called Farthyng. This land had belonged to a William Firmer. He was not a typical Otford resident, in that he had been "outlawed" as a "*felon and fugitive for the death of John Wykherst*" (ED 839, 1404). By what is known as an *escheat* his land then returned "*into the lord's hand*". The Archbishop in turn then leased the "*parcel of land called Farthyng in Otteford*" to Henry Parker and his wife Joan at a new rent of 18d (ED

839).

The relevance of “Farthyng” is that the document describes where it lay. “It *lies by the lord’s meadow called ... (illegible) park in the south*” and “*by the land of John Poynaunt towards the Reye on the west*” (ED 839). The situation next to the new park is again made clear by a reference in 1430 to “*a parcel of land called the farthing next the new park*” (ED 859).

On the Otford 1844 Tithe map there is only one field with a name similar to Farthyng/Farthing and that is a meadow called “Farthings”, which is indeed situated south of Otford and with Rye Lane on the west (Fig 4). This clearly suggests that the park called “New Park” as late as 1430, was to the south of the village, and was *not* situated to the north.



*Figure 4. The site of “Farthing” field. Extract from Otford tithe map of 1844. Field numbered 496 on the right, coloured green for clarity, was called Farthings (meadow 6 acres). The road from Otford to Sevenoaks borders the field on the right (east). Rye lane is on the left (west) with the River Darent in between.*

## Tylhost

Further evidence to support that the original New Park was to the south of Otford comes from references in the estate documents to the *Tylhost*. A Tylhost is the medieval term for a tile workshop or kiln. I am grateful to Gerald Cramp, recent president of the KAS (Kent Archaeological Society), for the information that the etymology of the word is from “tile oast” and that he has seen references to “tile oast” in Kent documents as recently as the 19th century (personal communication, 2020).

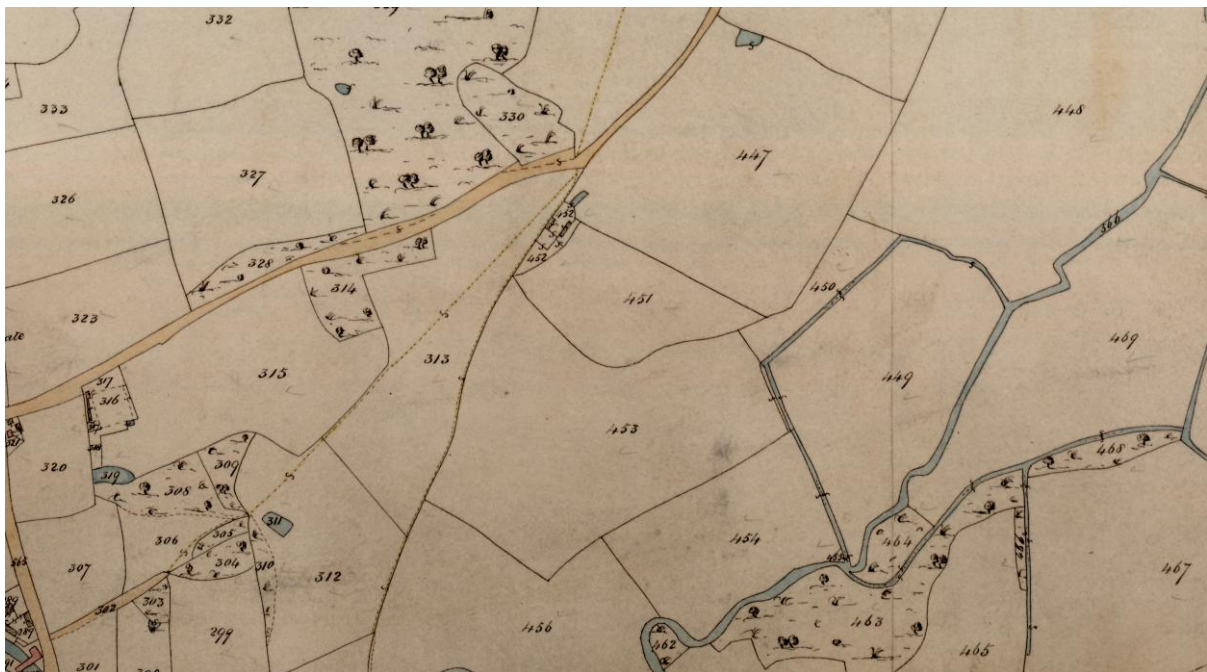
In 1431 after an account of fairly extensive repairs and improvements to the great chamber of the manor and of the chapel, there is a record of an agreement “*for making 8000 flat tiles within the new park and baking as extra, 16s at 2s the thousand*” (ED 860). Four years later the Parker’s accounts show that tiles were still being manufactured in or near the new park. A “*farmer*” was paying the sum of 100s yearly for “*the farm of the new park*” for a term of 7 years (ED 862, 1435). It needs to be pointed out that in the mediaeval period a “*farmer*” was not necessarily an agricultural man but could have been the man responsible for collecting or “*farming*” the rents and proceeds (Du Boulay, 1966, p220-234). Here in Otford he had to

*“at his own expenses well and completely repair the enclosure of the said park and the Tylhost during the foresaid term”*. The lord agreed to find the timber for the palings (park enclosure). The farmer in turn had to produce *“tiles sufficient for the repair of the manor house of Otteforde”* (ED 862).

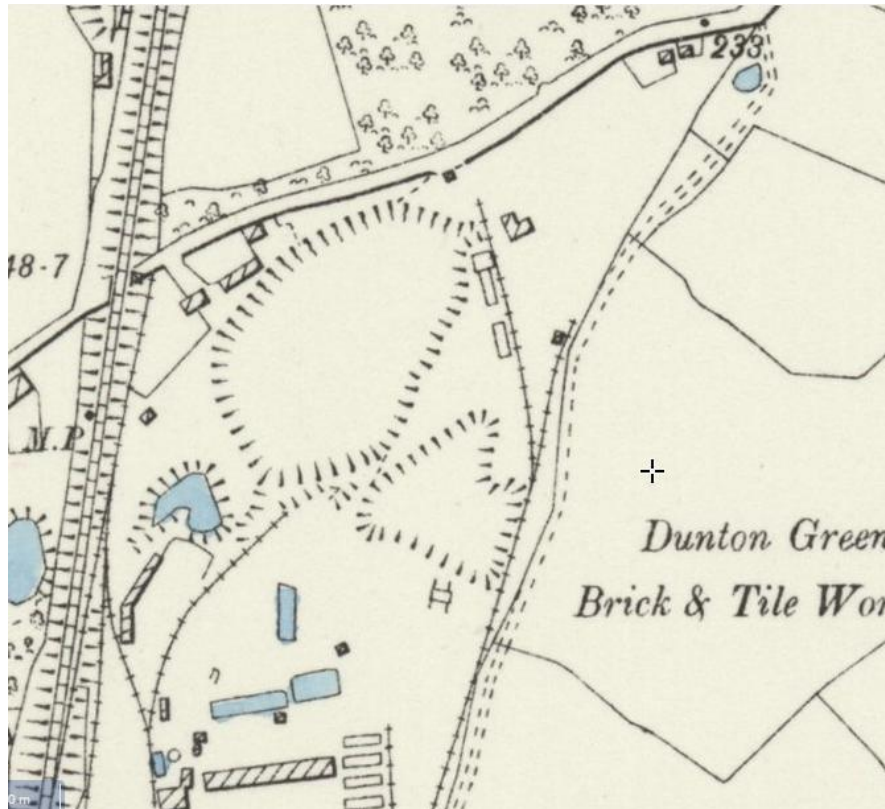
One gets the impression from the estate documents that repairs to the manor and outbuildings were a continuing and expensive business. Shortly after half a dozen carpenters had spent 21 days *“making and working on a bridge on the west side of the lord’s chamber over the mote”*, they were paid for 10 days (at 6d each per day) *“setting up diverse posts and beams in the tylhost within the new park”* (ED 865, 1441).

It is noteworthy that there are two references above to the *tylhost* being *“within the new park”*. Did the deer object you may well ask? The answer is probably no. As mentioned earlier, it was not unusual for parks to contain segmented palisaded enclosures.

The Otford tithe schedule of 1844 lists only one field with the word “tile” in the title. Surprisingly, after all these years, the meadow (8 acres) was still called Tilehouse field. Figure 5 shows the position of this field. It is situated to the south of Otford, just to the south of Rye lane where it veers to the west. To the right of the field is a path which still currently exists. Interestingly, later in the 19th century this field became the site of the Dunton Green Brick and Tile Works (Fig 6). Until 1908 Dunton Green was still part of the parish of Otford. This area is now covered in new housing (Fig 7).



*Figure 5. Extract from Otford tithe map of 1844. Field numbered 313 called Tilehouse field (meadow 8 acres) is shown (coloured green for clarity). It lies to the south of Rye Lane (the brown road) with the northern apex of the field at a place where the lane veers to the left. The right hand (eastern) boundary is a footpath.*



Above. Figure 6. Site of Tilehouse field as shown on OS (Ordnance Survey) 6 inch 1888-1913 series. This had become the site of the Dunton Green Brick and Tile Works. (Photo from National Library of Scotland map images Side by Side)

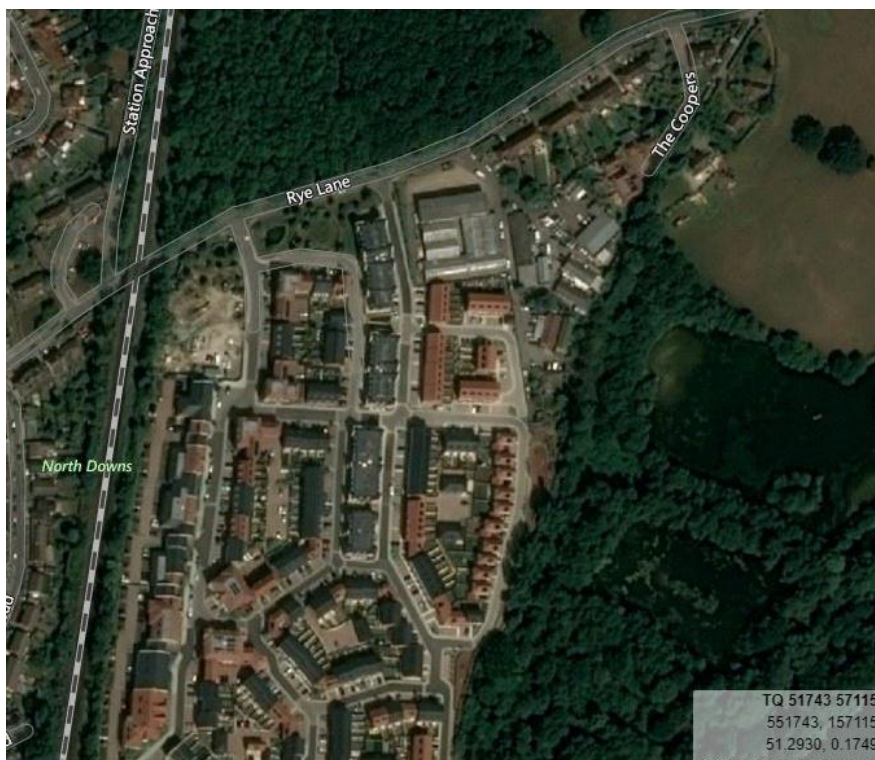


Figure 7. Site of Tilehouse field 2020. This is now an extensive housing development. (Photo, Bing Hybrid from National Library of Scotland map images Side by Side)



The position of Tilehouse field, originally “within the new park”, is yet further evidence that what we now call the Little Park was originally called New Park.

### **The manor changes hands**

In the early 16th century Archbishop Warham built his enormous palace in Otford (Clarke and Stoyel 1975, Chapter 5; Shelton, 2002; Ward, 2017; otfordpalace.org, 2020). His successor Thomas Cranmer enjoyed walking and hunting in the parks. Unfortunately for him, at the time of the Reformation he was compelled in 1537 to surrender Otford manor and lands to Henry VIII (Clarke and Stoyel, p111). In 1539 Henry VIII imported deer into his Otford parks and in 1541 he spent money on maintenance of parks at Otford and Knole (L & P, Henry VIII, Vol 14 part 2, 1539; Vol 16, 1540-1541). Henry died in 1547, having never spent much time at Otford (when in the vicinity he preferred to stay at Knole).

A survey of the manor was commissioned in the 1540s but the whereabouts of the original survey manuscript are unknown, “in private hands” (Clarke and Stoyel, p122). A full transcript is said to be in Vol 5 of Dr Gordon Ward’s notebooks in Sevenoaks library (Clarke and Stoyel, p122) but I have been unable to find this in any of Ward’s papers held at the Sevenoaks Library, KAS library or the Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone. The survey is only partially printed in Elder (1950, p3-6), who dates it to 1547. There are some excerpts in Clarke and Stoyel (p114-117), who date the survey to 1541. There were 240 acres of former parkland, “enclosed with pale, sometyme parcell of the said Parke and lately divided” (*ibid*, p115). This was probably the most southern part of the Great Park. In the printed excerpts there is no mention of a park to the north of the village. The account mentions a park lying to the south of the manor and containing 140 deer. This park (unnamed, but presumably the Great Park) was said to be 212 acres with two lodges (Elder, p9), but a conflicting acreage of 222 is given by Clarke and Stoyel (p115). Conversely, a history of the Sackville family gives an area of 264 acres to the Old/Great park in 1544 (Phillips, 1930, vol ii, p395). An even higher figure of 430 acres in 1552 is quoted by Pittman (2011, p231) in her thesis on the Tudor parks of Kent. The area of parks could change over time, and in studying the history of the Otford parks things are rarely straightforward!

### **The name Little Park appears**

The estate documents translated in File 21 end in the middle 15th century. They mention the Old and New Parks but with no mention of “Little Park”. There is then a gap in the records until the 16th century Tudor period when what was previously called the New Park becomes referred to as the Little Park.

In 1548 during the reign of Edward VI there was another survey of the manor (cited by Clarke and Stoyel as TNA E101/497/4; partially reproduced by Hesketh, 1915, p16-17). Here is our first reference to the Little Park. The “pale” (surrounding wooden fence) of the Little Park was “rotten and almost fallen down” (Clarke and Stoyel, p117). From the description of the park and its watercourses there is little doubt that this Little Park was synonymous with the earlier New park, i.e. lying to the south of Otford and to the west of the Otford to Sevenoaks road. There was a complaint that failure to scour the ditches had resulted in flooding (*ibid*, p117), and to this day extensive flooding can sometimes be observed in these fields opposite the Otford Parade.

The Little Park was disparked in 1553 (CPR 2&3 Philip and Mary I), and leased to Sir Henry Sydney of Penshurst. Despite the name, this park at that stage had a substantial area of 438 acres (De L’isle papers KHLC U1475/E21/1&2). The lease was renewed in 1568 where the land was described as “*a park called Le Litle Perke of Otforde now disparked*” (CPR 26 March 1568). That one of the parks was disparked is corroborated by Lambard in his “A Perambulation of Kent” written in 1570 but published six years later. In his list of the parks of

Kent he mentions "Otforde, two; whereof one disparked" (Lambard, 1576, p51).

### **Farewell to the deer parks**

Although she rarely visited, Elizabeth I was for some time reluctant to relinquish the Manor of Otford. However, in 1601 she finally agreed to sell the estate to Sir Robert Sydney, son of Sir Henry. He soon disparked the Great Park, which he then leased off in parcels (Pittman, 2011, p241). In 1622 the Sydneys sold all their remaining land in Otford, including the Great Park (Pittman, 2011, p243).

Meanwhile, the Little Park had come in to the possession of Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset, who in his will of 1607 bequeathed it to his wife, Lady Cicily (Phillips, 1930, vol 1, p232). By 1621 the Little Park was bringing in an annual income of £241, with the Manor of Knole by comparison bringing in £339 (Phillips, 1930, vol 1, p271). Later in the 17th century the Little Park was purchased by the Farnaby family of Kippington, Sevenoaks (Clarke and Stoyel, p 163; Hasted 1797, vol 3, p19-31).

In the Kent History and Library Centre there is a detailed map (which I was not permitted to photograph or photocopy) entitled "A map of a certain parcel of land bearing the appellation The Little Park of Otford", 1712, Charles Farnaby esq. (KHLC U1867.P.1). The area of the estate is given as 470 acres, and the named fields stretch southward from Otford village either side of the River Darent down to what is now the A25, with Rye Lane to the west and the Otford-Sevenoaks road to the east. This "Little Park" is in the area that up until the middle 15C was termed the New Park.

The discussion above has largely centred on the Little Park to the south of Otford, which I suggest was originally termed New Park until at least mid-15th century. Inevitably, that invites the question as to when the unrelated northern New Park was formed and disparked? The date of emparkment is not known. The disparkment must have occurred prior to 1518 as in that year fields in this area called "Newparke" and "Litle New Parke" were being leased out by the Archbishop (DuBoulay, 1964, p276 & 291).

### **Conclusion**

The history of the Otford medieval deer parks and of their exact boundaries is confusing. The Great Park in the south was already in existence by at least 1241. It is likely that the Little Park in the south was formally emparked in 1348. By a careful study of estate documents and field names I have shown that the Little Park was originally called the New Park. Sometime between the mid 15th century and the mid 16th century, nomenclature changed, so that the original New Park (situated to the south west of Otford) became known as the Little Park. The name New Park became applied to the third and smaller park to the north of Otford village.

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#### *Abbreviations*

Cal Close = Calendar of Close Rolls (Republished by His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1911)

CPR = Calendar of Patent Rolls

ED = Estate documents of the Archbishop of Canterbury (held in Lambeth Palace Archives)

KAS = Kent Archaeological Society

KHLC = Kent History and Library Centre (Maidstone)

L and P = Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII (eds Gairdner, A and Brodie, RH, London, 1900).

TNA = The National archives

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