

HELMINGHAM PARK – A COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT

by STEPHEN PODD

INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY OF deer parks in a national context took on a new momentum in the 1970s and 1980s with the publication of books by Cantor, Williamson and Bellamy, and Rackham. In more recent years, a more detailed knowledge of the general development of parks in Suffolk has emerged, particularly as a result of the work of Dr Rosemary Hoppitt and Professor Tom Williamson.¹ Williamson makes the observation that ‘It is ... virtually impossible to build up an overall picture of the chronology of park-making from an investigation of individual sites because the history of so many is poorly documented’.² Nevertheless, the inevitable gaps should not deter us from researching individual parks as far as the evidence will allow. In fact, Hoppitt stresses that local research is essential in determining the chronology of Suffolk’s medieval parks.³ Dr Robert Liddiard has recently observed (also in relation to medieval parks, but his comment is equally applicable to those from the post-medieval period) that ‘The origins of the English park ... the different regimes of parkland, the regional character of the park and park development all await further explanation and discussion’.⁴ This article attempts to add to that discussion by providing a chronology for the evolution of Helmingham Park and a rationale for the changes which took place in the course of its development.

Today Helmingham Hall sits resplendent in its 400-acre Grade 1 listed deer park, and the casual observers who visit the Hall gardens and park on open days could be forgiven for thinking that the scene has always been so. Indeed, Edmund Farrer, writing about Suffolk deer parks in 1923, concluded that: ‘Today [Helmingham Park] is the finest, as to all appearances it is the most ancient, deer-park in Suffolk, as the timber is so wonderful, and it still has a herd of red deer’.⁵ But the appearances are deceptive, and, in fact, the origins of Helmingham Park are anything but simple.

The story starts (as far as we can tell) with a 16th-century park of about 80 acres, which was later extended; the addition of a new park, also extended later; the apparent (but not actual) disparking of the old park in the mid 17th century; the incorporation in the later 17th and the 18th centuries of various fields and blocks of land; land purchase and exchange; the adoption or rejection of fashion; all woven together by the influences of social status, politics and the economics of farming. In fact, the park evolved over a period of at least 230 – and possibly as many as 400 – years, both growing and, on occasion, temporarily shrinking. The boundaries we see today were first achieved as late as 1815.

THE FIRST PARKS

Helmingham Hall has been in the ownership of the Tollemache family since the end of the 15th century. Since then a substantial archive has accrued. This includes both direct and indirect (but often – as Williamson feared – incomplete) evidence relating to the park. Thus, the writer’s early attempts, in the 1970s, to make sense of the then available information proved futile: there were too many gaps in the archive. However, a new set of maps of the Helmingham estate recently came to light. Surveyed by Richard Tallemach in 1729, they have helped in no small way to piece together the other fragmentary evidence and to unlock a good deal, if not all, of the story of the formation of the park.⁶

From the outset it has to be admitted that the most fundamental question of all remains unanswered: when a park was first established in Helmingham. The field name *Parkmedue* is recorded in Helmingham in 1406, perhaps suggesting the existence of a park at that date, but where this parcel of land was, it is now impossible to say.⁷ However, comparable field names from known Suffolk park sites with ‘park’ as the first element are almost invariably applied to fields abutting the park boundary

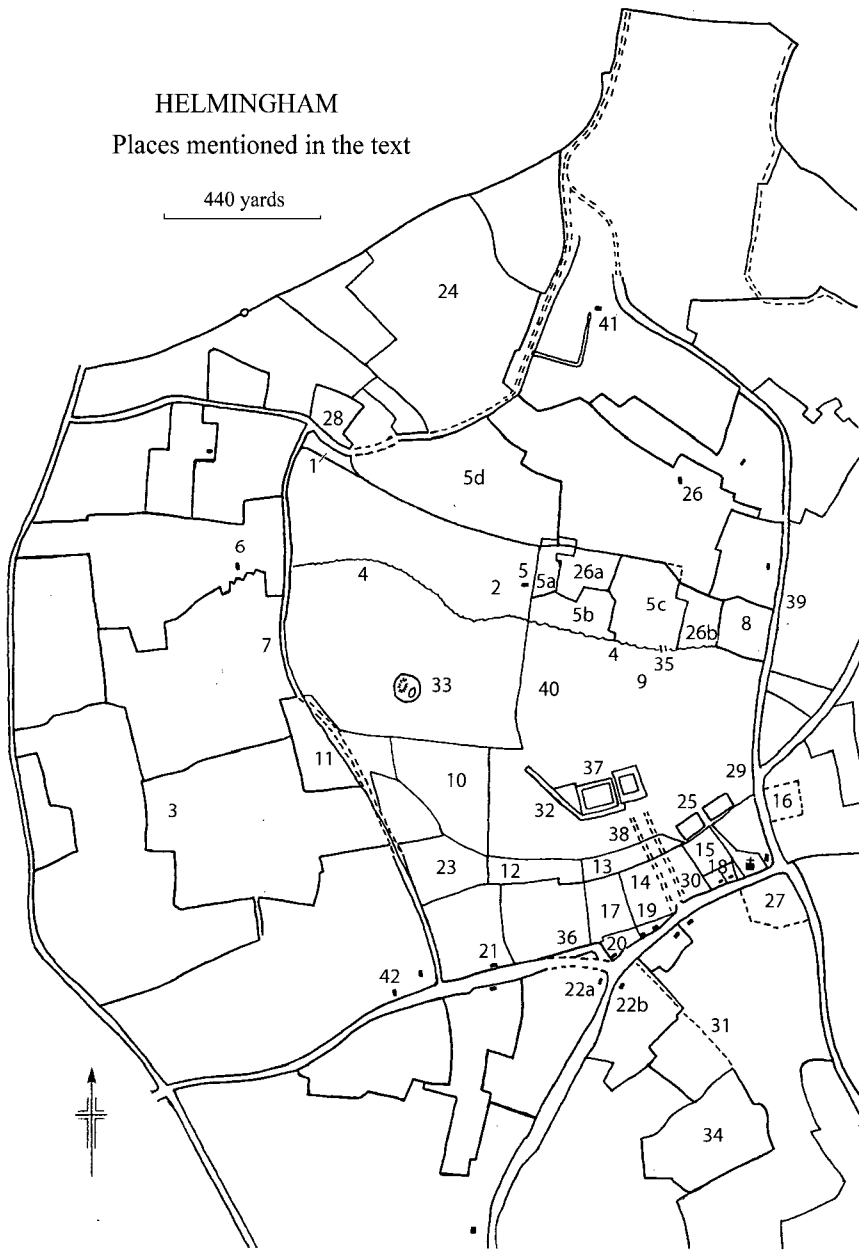


FIG. 3 – Helmingham Park: places mentioned in the text: 1. Tyntall Crofte; 2. ?site of Pettaughe and Deynes' farmsteads; 3. site of Oliver's manor; 4. the Gull; 5a–d. the Lodge Farm; 6. Paris Farm; 7. Olivers under the Parke; 8. Guilding Acre Field; 9. ?Hoxon Bottom; 10. Parke Field; 11. Olivers or Parke Pightles; 12. Caddows Meadow; 13. Pond Meadow; 14. West Close/White Gate Field; 15. Herrings; 16. Helhouse Close; 17. Wytthe's; 18. Churchyard Pightle; 19. two cottages; 20. Blacksmith's shop; 21. William Woods' farm; 22a. Cockrell's farm; 22b. Bulmer's farm; 23. Sleads Meadow; 24. possible site of Derehaugh; 25. The Leys (fish ponds); 26. North Park Farm; 26a, b. fields taken from Garnham's Farm, 1765; 27. field given to the glebe, 1802; 28. old road added to the park in 1815; 29. rear gatehouse, c. 1820; 30. gatehouses, 1841–44; 31. route to Round Wood; 32. The Thorn Walk; 33. The Mount; 34. The Round Wood; 35. Debenham Bridge, 1815; 36. route of Gosbeck road until c. 1732; 37. moated gardens; 38. Oak Avenue; 39. Wash Lane, closed c. 1844; 40. Oak Grove; 41. Bocking Hall; 42. South Park Farm.

or located within its site following disparking.⁸ For the time being, at least, in the absence of further evidence, the significance of *Parkmedwe* at Helmingham must remain unknown.

Hoppitt and Williamson both suggest a seventeenth century date for the park, and with apparent good reason. On the face of it, the evidence available to these writers seems reasonably conclusive: no park is mentioned at Helmingham in a list of Suffolk parks made in 1560; neither is it shown on Saxton's 1575 map of Suffolk; nor is it recorded in the *Suffolk Chorography* compiled in 1602.⁹ Thus, Williamson favoured an origin for the park in the first half of the 17th century. Hoppitt, likewise, having undertaken an in-depth study of medieval deer parks in Suffolk, did not include Helmingham in her list of those in existence before 1602.¹⁰ However, it was clearly impossible for her to research every known medieval park down to manorial level – there are over 130 – but where her research was able to make use of manorial documents, it invariably pushed back the date of imparking, or provided evidence of otherwise unrecorded parks.¹¹ Thus, the writer's own research at manorial level for Helmingham did indeed change the picture, and proved the existence of a park there in 1585.¹²

The evidence is meagre, just a solitary passing reference, but it is nevertheless positive. A survey of the lands of Lionel (IV) Tollemache (d. 1612) itemises 'The meadow *lying under the parke*', in the tenure of Pettaughe and Deynes. The survey is of tenanted lands only, and so – frustratingly – this park gets no other mention in the document. A further frustration is that the survey is not easy to relate to the map, as the abutments given in this particular section are minimal. Only one field name is given among sixteen entries describing the partible land in the tenure of Pettaughe and Deynes.¹³ Fortunately that one name (*Tyntall Crofte*) is identifiable, lying at the north western corner of the present park; from this we can conclude that Pettaughe and Deynes' lands lay roughly to the east or north-east of what is now Paris Farm.¹⁴ (See Fig. 3: 1, 2 and 6). Limited as the abutments are, they are nevertheless sufficient to allow for cautious speculation that the 'seat of the messuages' (i.e. Pettaughe and Deynes' farmsteads) in the 1585 survey might just have survived as the farmhouse or park lodge (Lodge Farm) shown on the 1729 map in the north-east corner of the Old Park (Fig. 3: 5).¹⁵ What is beyond doubt is that at least some of the 74 acres in the tenure of Pettaughe and Deynes in 1585 must have been within the area of Lodge Farm as depicted in 1729 (Fig. 3: 5a–5d). In 1729 this farm extended to about 54 acres, all outside the then park. Twenty two of those 54 acres were not bought by Lionel (V) Tollemache (1591–1640) until 1632. So, if the surmised location for Pettaughe and Deynes' land is correct, the simple mathematical conclusion is that 32 acres of their land lay outside the 1729 Old Park and that the remaining 42 acres lay within it.

The 1729 maps show two adjoining parks – the *Old Park* and the *New Park*. The size of the Old Park is given as a fraction under 119 acres in 1729, and just under 122 acres in 1631.¹⁶ This is close enough to surmise that the bounds at those two dates were in fact identical. Therefore, if the above calculations for Pettaughe and Deynes' land are correct, the park of 1585 would have been around 77–80 acres in extent (119 or 122 minus 42) (Fig. 4: a). Obligingly, the northern part of the 1631–1729 Old Park – in other words, the area north of the Gull, the well-defined watercourse which flows from west to east through the northern part of the present park (Fig. 3: 4) – is about 40 acres in extent, a close enough match to support the idea that it was indeed the location of those 42 acres of Pettaughe and Deynes' land in 1585. With this in mind, and looking logically at the terrain, one can reasonably conclude that 'the meadow lying under the parke' in 1585 was situated along the northern side of the Gull, with the park itself lying on the southern side.

If there *was* a park at Helmingham in 1406, its creation would predate Tollemache land ownership there. The family's interest in Helmingham began in 1487, when John Tollemache of Bentley married Elizabeth, widow of the previous owner of the Crekes Hall estate, William Joce or Joyce.¹⁷ In 1509 John's son Lionel (c. 1483–c. 1552 – the first of seven successive Lionels) married William Joyce's niece and heiress, Edith. It is generally agreed that Lionel (I) and Edith demolished the old Crekes Hall and built Helmingham Hall in its place. If it *was* the Tollemaches who were responsible for the initial creation of the first park, between 1487 and 1585, there are two likely periods.¹⁸ The late 15th and the 16th centuries were a time of significant economic expansion when many newly affluent landowners, often from mercantile or legal backgrounds, were rising through the social hierarchy.

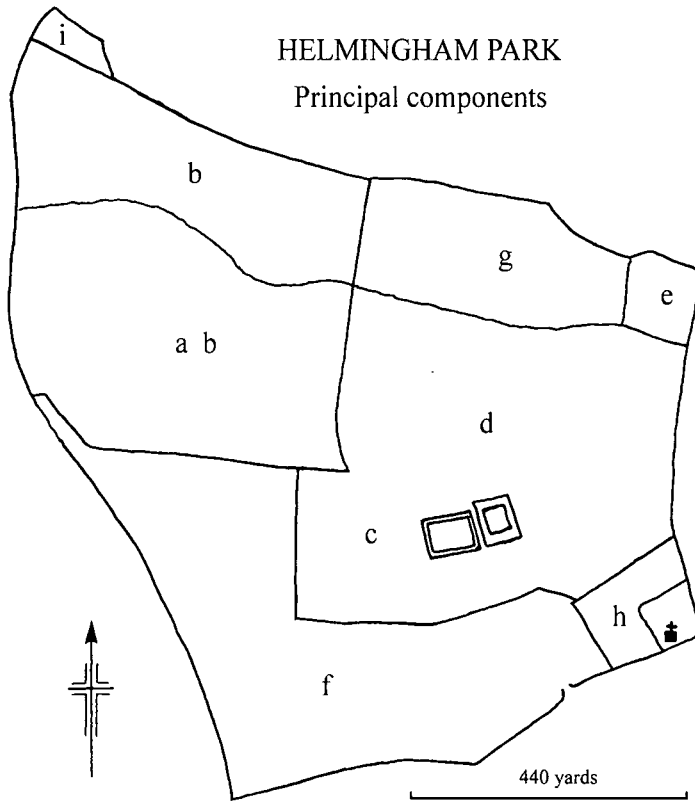


FIG. 4 – Helmingham Park: principal components: a. the Old Park, 1585; b. the enlarged Old Park, 1631; c. the first New Park, 1631; d. the enlarged (second) New Park, 1648; e. Gildenacre, added 1672; f. enlargement 1732; g. enlargement 1765; h. added 1802; i. added 1815.

One way of displaying their wealth was through their houses and estates, and this might include the creation of a park. The parks at Kentwell, Long Melford, Hawstead, Henham, Culford and Seckford were all created at this time.¹⁹ For both Lionel (I) and (II), the creation of a park would have been a clearly recognisable symbol of their rising status. Lionel (I) was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1512 and 1530. So in 1510–12, or 1530, he could have celebrated his elevated social standing by creating a deer park close to his new mansion.

Equally, his son Lionel (II) could have been the creator. Copinger states that Lionel (II), Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to Henry VIII, added greatly to the estate through the purchase of several manors and other properties in the vicinity. In 1561 he may have received a visit from Queen Elizabeth – doubtless a good excuse to create a park – and he, like his father before him, was High Sheriff of Suffolk, in 1567.²⁰

Could the park predate the Tollemaches, as the *Parkmedwe* field name suggests? There are no obvious clues to suggest a medieval origin, apart, perhaps, from one feature: the first park was detached from the Hall, which lay a short distance away to the east. Detached parks are well known from the medieval period, but by the 16th century the fashion was generally to bring the park to the main house (or vice versa).²¹ However, there are just a few 16th-century examples in the county (Kentwell, for instance), where the mansion was not in the park, and, in the absence of other medieval

features, Helmingham appears to fit this model. Other possibly medieval features at Helmingham can be discounted. For example, a lodge was a regular feature of early parks, but the one known lodge in Helmingham was probably a farmhouse in origin, not a park lodge, and, in fact, as we have seen above, was not even in the original park. Many early deer parks – but by no means all – were bounded by a prominent bank and ditch, but today there is no sign of either around the Old Park at Helmingham.²² Early parks were often quite densely wooded and located on manorial ‘waste’ on or close to the parish boundary. Helmingham was a multi-manor parish and the Tollemaches’ first Helmingham manor almost certainly had no land on the parish outskirts.²³ Thus, on balance, the current evidence, although not conclusive, suggests a post-medieval (early or mid 16th century) date for the Old Park, making it a comparatively rare and late example of detachment.²⁴

There is one extant feature which reinforces the idea of a post-medieval origin for the first park. The park today contains a number of ancient oak pollards which probably predate its creation, and which were therefore part of an earlier landscape. Williamson suggests that most 15th and 16th-century parks – unlike many of their medieval predecessors – were established at the expense of enclosed farmland.²⁵ Enclosed ‘block’ demesnes, typical of this part of Suffolk, lent themselves admirably to being imparked.²⁶ The earliest surviving maps, together with evidence from contemporary surveys, show that tree-studded, enclosed pastures, mostly between 25 and 100 acres in size, were very much part of the demesne landscape of Helmingham, Framsdon, Pettaugh and Ashbocking in the 16th century and the first decades of the 17th. Thus, it would be quite logical to surmise that Helmingham Old Park was created out of a convenient area of tree-studded demesne pasture.²⁷ Alignments of trees are evident on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map and one of the early 19th-century maps of the park; these strongly suggest that the western part of the Old Park had once been enclosed in fields. A number of known fields, for instance those incorporated into the park in 1680, 1732 and, particularly, in 1765, are also defined to some degree by tree alignments on the same maps, supporting Williamson’s assertion that the landscape of many of Suffolk’s clayland parks owes more to the indigenous, wood-pasture countryside than to landscape designers.²⁸

After 1585, the next certain reference to a park so far discovered is dated 1617, when James I granted free warren to Sir Lionel Tollemache, baronet, [Lionel (V)] in various manors and also in the ‘Park of Helmingham’.²⁹ The first really indisputable evidence for the location of the park comes in the 1630s. An undated (early 17th-century, but pre-1631) map of the land immediately south of Paris Farm includes a field called *Olivers under the Parke* (Fig. 3: 7).³⁰ Then in 1638, *Helmingham Parke* is named on an estate map as the eastern abuttal of Paris Farm.³¹ Both these pieces of evidence point precisely to where the *Old Park* is shown on the 1729 estate map, but also, more importantly, to the surmised location of the 1585 park.

THE NEW PARKS

By 1631 there were, as mentioned above, two parks in Helmingham. At that date the *Old Parke* was just under 122 acres, and the *New Parke* – its first documentary mention – slightly under 34 acres (Fig. 4: b and c). E.D.H. Tollemache asserts that the Tollemache family chose to live on their estate at Fakenham from 1626 until around 1637. This would perhaps imply that the [first] New Park dates back to a time when Helmingham was the favoured family seat. Therefore, a speculative, but logical, date for its creation would be 1611, when Lionel (IV) was created baronet.³² Lionel’s elevation may also have prompted him to extend the Old Park by taking in the 40–42 acres which had been in the farm of Pettaughe and Deynes in 1585, but that, again, is speculation. All we can say with certainty at the moment is that the Old Park was extended between 1585 and 1631, and that a separate New Park of 34 acres was created prior to 1631. Williamson, writing without the benefit of the recently discovered 1729 estate maps, surmises that the Old Park ‘must have been a long defunct deer enclosure which did not develop directly into the present Helmingham Park, for another rental (of 1651) contrasts the “Old Park lately converted into a farm” with the “new Park lately made about Helmingham Hall”’.³³ Williamson’s logic is not unreasonable, for many ‘old’ parks were disparked by

the 16th century.³⁴ However, it is clear from the documentary evidence that the Old Park at Helmingham continued to exist alongside the New Park first mentioned in 1631. Moreover, it is also evident that the New Park of 1631 was, in fact, the first of three to bear that name; and that Williamson's 1651 reference is not to that *first* New Park of 34 acres, but to a *second*, much larger one, whose origins are described below. It is this second New Park which is depicted on the 1729 maps. It was roughly 114 acres in extent (Fig. 4: d). The original 34 acres almost certainly lay within the area of the second New Park, as they do not seem from the rentals to become part of another farm holding, but there are no obvious clues to their exact location.³⁵

From 1631 to 1794 there is a fairly comprehensive run of rentals in the Helmingham archive, from which it is possible to work out a firm date for the creation of the second New Park.³⁶ The 1646 and 1647 rentals show John Mayhiew holding, for £35 per year, 'the dairy at the Hall, the *Conyfergrounds*, the woodyard, stable yard and milking yard, the grounds on both sides of the long wall and the great pasture called *Hoxon Bottom*.' For an additional £29 he held '*Guilding Acre Fielde, Parke Fielde, Oliver's or Parke Pightles, Caddows Meadow*, part of *Pond Meadow* and a ploughed piece lately in the occupation of Leonard Person'.³⁷ (Fig. 3: 8–13). Although there is no conclusive evidence, there is little doubt that the first set of lands and buildings was in the vicinity (and mainly to the north) of the Hall; the second set can all (with the exception of Person's piece) be positively identified from the 1729 maps, adjoining the second New Park. In the following year (1648), the first set of lands disappears from the rentals, and Mayhiew, in an obviously pre-planned move, re-emerges as tenant of other estate lands (later Redhouse Farm) at Framsdon. (At the same time, Mayhiew's other lands were let to an existing tenant farming to the west of the parks). Thus, it is clear that Williamson's reference to the 1651 rental – in fact the 1650 rental has the same wording – is to the *second* New Park, created in 1648 from part of Mayhiew's former holding at the Hall. In keeping with contemporary fashion, any field boundaries within the second New Park appear to have been erased, to create a feeling of openness around the Hall; certainly no internal boundaries are shown on the 1729 maps, although a few possible traces can still be detected on the ground.³⁸

The timing of the creation of the second New Park is not easy to understand. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, England was still in a period of political uncertainty. Nationally, many parks belonging to Royalists had been destroyed by Cromwell's followers, and the deer moved to the parks of his supporters.³⁹ The Tollemaches were royalists (passively rather than actively), and Lionel (VI, c. 1624–69) was about to marry Elizabeth Murray, daughter of a staunch and very active royalist to whom Charles I had recently (1643) granted the title of earl of Dysart. It is hard to imagine that these were the circumstances for royalists to make a show of affluence and enhanced status, and yet the marriage of Lionel and Elizabeth, probably in 1647, would appear to be the catalyst for the creation of the second New Park. How much Elizabeth's close relationship with Oliver Cromwell, which existed despite their political differences, was a material factor in Lionel's being allowed to create the New Park must remain a matter of conjecture; but it seems to be the most logical explanation. Elizabeth certainly had aspirations to grandeur, as her later profligate spending on her father's Surrey property, Ham House, was to prove. The Ham House guidebook, in an unattributed quotation, describes her as 'restless in her ambition, profuse in her expense, and of a most ravenous covetousness'. An enlarged park at Helmingham would seem to be well in keeping with her character. Doreen Cripps maintains that Lionel and Elizabeth chose to live at Fakenham initially, rather than at Helmingham.⁴⁰ If this is true – and the fact that their first son was born at Helmingham in January 1649 suggests that they did not go to Fakenham immediately – the decision to enlarge the New Park is perhaps more difficult to understand: having gone to the trouble and expense of creating it, it might seem strange that they would then choose to ignore it. However, it has to be remembered that by this time the Tollemaches already had a number of estates and residences around the country: as well as Fakenham and Helmingham in Suffolk, they had Harrington in Northamptonshire (inherited *via* Lionel (V)'s wife Elizabeth Stanhope) and now Ham House in Surrey (*via* Elizabeth Murray).⁴¹ The latter became the family's most prestigious seat. Their decision to reside at one seat rather than another at any given time must, to a large extent, have been a matter of personal choice and expediency.

Almost simultaneously with the enlargement of the New Park, the Old Park was let out to farm. As it transpired, this change was destined to be short-lived – just 24 years – and in reality, the landscape and land use of the Old Park probably changed very little in that time. The rental for 1650 shows that the Old Park was leased that year to the existing park-keeper, John Nunn the Elder, at an annual rent of £60, subsequently passing *via* John the Younger to William Nunn, who held it until 1674. The rentals imply that it was then taken back in hand, although William continued to rent the Lodge Farm until his death in 1692.⁴² For an additional rent of £6 6s. a year, John Nunn the Younger was allowed to plough 18 acres of the Old Park. This he did between 1651 and 1656 – or at least the arrangement is recorded in the rentals for those years – but there is no mention of it thereafter. The letting of the Old Park may have been a consequence of the Civil War, for example, a temporary lack of deer; or perhaps the deer were moved from the Old Park to the New, rendering the former temporarily redundant. Or perhaps its apparent disparking was part of the deal which allowed the creation of the second New Park. From a purely pragmatic perspective, it seems more likely that it was let out to farm in order to provide maximum income from the Helmingham estate while Lionel and Elizabeth were living at Fakenham and Ham House.

The Old Park was taken back in hand in 1674. The timing of this would seem to fit with the death of Lionel (VI), 2nd earl of Dysart, in 1669, and the inheritance of his son, Lionel (VII), Lord Huntingtower (1649–1727), MP for Suffolk from 1673 to 1678, as well as High Steward of Ipswich. Lionel (VII)'s mother, now the countess of Dysart in her own right, remarried soon after her first husband's death, and, with her new husband, John Maitland, duke of Lauderdale, focused her attentions on Ham House. It may be that Lionel (VII), with a reputation for prudence in financial matters to the point of 'downright stingynesse', chose to watch his own expenditure carefully, to counterbalance his mother's profligacy; certainly there is a hint that Helmingham Hall was reduced in size at this time (or at least had some of the superfluous hearths blocked up), its 33 hearths in 1666 seemingly cut back to 20 by 1674.⁴³ The mansion at Fakenham had probably been sold by Lionel (VII)'s father around 1665, but even so, he inherited an encumbered estate at Helmingham. It seems that he spent most of his time at Harrington (his will describes him as 'of Harrington'), but he was able to clear the Helmingham debts by 1696.⁴⁴ The move to take the Old Park back in hand happens to coincide with the new post-Restoration fashion for park creation – Williamson cites Euston as one of the first post-Restoration parks in the county, created in 1677.⁴⁵ However, given the difficult financial situation that Lionel (VII) inherited, the fact that the two Helmingham parks were to retain their separate physical identities for a few more decades after 1674 may indicate a much more practical motive than mere fashion: a general desire to consolidate lands around the Hall as 'in hand' land, perhaps to create a more viable home farm. This process was begun in 1672, when, to the north-east, the field called *Gildenacre*, until then let to a tenant, seems to have become permanently attached to the park (Fig. 4: e). To the south-west, *Olivers Pightles* and *Cow Close alias Parke Fielde*, having been part of John Mayhiew's Hall Farm in 1646 and 1647, were also let until 1672. *Caddows* and *Pond Medowe* had been in hand in 1631 and 1638, but these too were then let until 1672. For the next three decades the Old Park and these fields, together with the New Park, formed a 'home farm' of in hand land around the Hall. The fact that their boundaries were not thrown down at this time to create a much enlarged single park also points to a practical motive, rather than a fashionable one. Because they remained separate parcels, all these lands (with the exception of the Old Park) were able to be re-let again from 1706 (Fig. 3: 9–13).⁴⁶ Thus, it seems clear that the taking in hand of the Old Park and these other lands in the period 1672–1706 was simply an economic expedient. It would be interesting to discover whether any other parks in the county experienced the same sort of contraction and expansion in or around those decades, or whether these events were peculiar to Helmingham because of its parlous financial situation at the time.

The acquisition, but immediate letting, of two other fields which lay in full view of the Hall underlines the notion of prudent financial management of the estate at this time. *West Close*, an eight-acre parcel of glebe through which the current principal entrance to the Hall, the oak-lined avenue, was driven, was exchanged by the rector in 1680 for *Herrings* (on the park side of the church), and

the nearby *Helhouse Close*, (to the east of the Helmingham–Framsden road) (Fig. 3: 14, 15, 16).⁴⁷ This exchange was clearly advantageous for the setting of the Hall. But instead of being taken in hand, as might logically be expected given the policy from 1672 relating to other land in the vicinity of the Hall, West Close was let until 1732 to a small farm to the south of Park Gate Farm. The second field, immediately to the west of West Close, had belonged to the Wythe family: It was purchased between 1670 and 1700, but most likely in 1695 when Thomas Wythe died. It, too, was let upon purchase to the same farm (Fig. 3: 17). This appears to be a practical move to make the farm more viable. But there was also another aspect involved.

THE OAK AVENUE

The Helmingham Hall website suggests that the main avenue approaching the Hall was established about 1680, a date determined by dendro-dating; although the English Heritage listing for the park states that it was only extended to its present length in 1730, in other words, taking the view that the avenue shown on the 1729 Richard Tallemach maps was a proposal rather than a reality. If the 1680 date is the correct one, it would seem that the planting of the oaks for the avenue took place immediately following the exchange of land noted above, and some 52 years before West Close (by 1729 known as *White Gate Close*) was taken into the park. Thus, the tenant of West Close would have had to farm around this fledgling avenue (Fig. 3: 38).

The creation of the new avenue, made possible by the land exchange with the church, begs the question of the location of an earlier access to the Hall. The English Heritage listing states that the



FIG. 5 – Isaac Johnson's map of 'Helmingham Hall with its divisions', 1801. (By permission of the Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, ref. HD11:475/1912)

current back entrance to the Hall, on the eastern boundary of the park, was created c. 1820, but in fact it is clearly marked on the 1801 (Fig. 5) and 1802/3 maps of the park. In the absence of any other information, it seems reasonable to surmise that this now secondary approach was the main access prior to 1680.⁴⁸

The early planting date for the oak avenue is supported by two letters written in 1720/1 by Thomas Brereton, the Tollemaches' steward at Helmingham, to Lionel (VII). They relate to a proposed vista at the rear of the Hall – a project which was apparently never realised. More significant is the following comment: 'Two of the Red Lines [on the sketch map accompanying the letter] shew that if the [proposed] walk were made to Answer or Range with the Moat bank towards the Stable it would go into the thick[et] and would be nearest to answer the Walk that now is to the white gait by the Road side' [author's italics]. This clearly confirms the existence of an avenue through the White Gate Field to the road at that date.⁴⁹ A sketch of Helmingham Park, drawn from the top of the church tower around 1730–40 (Fig. 6),⁵⁰ shows a well-established avenue of trees. In planting this avenue, the earl of Dysart was most certainly following contemporary fashion. An avenue – usually of lime trees – had become one of the desirable features of any self-respecting mansion. Such avenues usually focused on the front of the building, and often (as with the Helmingham example, albeit in a very modest way) thrust into the countryside beyond the grounds of the house. By extending right through to the road in this way, the Helmingham avenue created a new, impressive and up-to-date approach to the Hall.⁵¹ The Tollemaches were not total slaves to fashion, however. Although there was a single fishpond in the park by 1729 (between the Hall and the church), there is no indication that the other fashionable water feature of the time, a canal, was ever planned, even though the gentle valley in front of the Hall, if dammed, would have made an eminently suitable location for such a feature. Perhaps, along with the proposed rear vista, the earl's parsimonious character deemed it a step too far.

THE 1732 ENLARGEMENT

The next major change to the parks, as already noted, took place in 1732, five years after Lionel (VII)'s death (Fig. 4: f).⁵² This change may have been in response to a difficult economic period in farming, a desire by Lionel (VII)'s grandson and heir, the 4th earl of Dysart, to enlarge and enhance the park, or, more likely, a combination of both. Jonathan Theobald puts the blame for a sharp decline in the number of farms in Helmingham on the period of economic austerity in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, particularly the 1730s and 1740s.⁵³ In fact, many farmers on the Helmingham estate were in trouble somewhat earlier, with at least thirteen having their goods seized in lieu of rent between 1708 and 1720.⁵⁴ A rental for 1733 shows that arrears at that date were still high in many cases.⁵⁵ For whatever reason, by 1732 the earl of Dysart had clearly taken a decision to rationalise some of the holdings on his estate by amalgamating smaller farms with each other or with larger neighbours. By this means he would have hoped to stabilise the rental situation by attracting tenants of means to his larger than average farms, and, as Theobald points out, reduce his own disproportionate overheads on the smaller farms, particularly in respect of the upkeep of the buildings.⁵⁶ But it also gave him the opportunity to add land to the park, just (as it happens) at the time when a number of new parks were being created or enlarged around the county from existing farmland.⁵⁷ Three small farms and one larger one had land directly abutting on the New Park, and some of this land, amounting to about 90 acres, was taken in hand in 1732 (Fig. 3: 10–14, 17, 21, 22, and 23 and Fig. 4: f).⁵⁸ The post-script note on the 1729 map says this land was added to the Old Park, implying that the Old and New Parks were still distinct in 1732.

At much the same time, at least four cottages close to the park disappeared from the rentals, presumably demolished. The site of two of them was incorporated into the park straightaway, while the site of the other two (*Churchyard Pightle*, next to the church) was variously let or held in hand until its eventual inclusion in the park in 1802 (Fig. 3: 18, 19).⁵⁹ Later annotations to the 1729 maps allude to these events, but without giving a precise date. The blacksmith's shop at the south-western corner of the park was demolished and rebuilt outside the park in 1753,⁶⁰ with the adjacent part of the

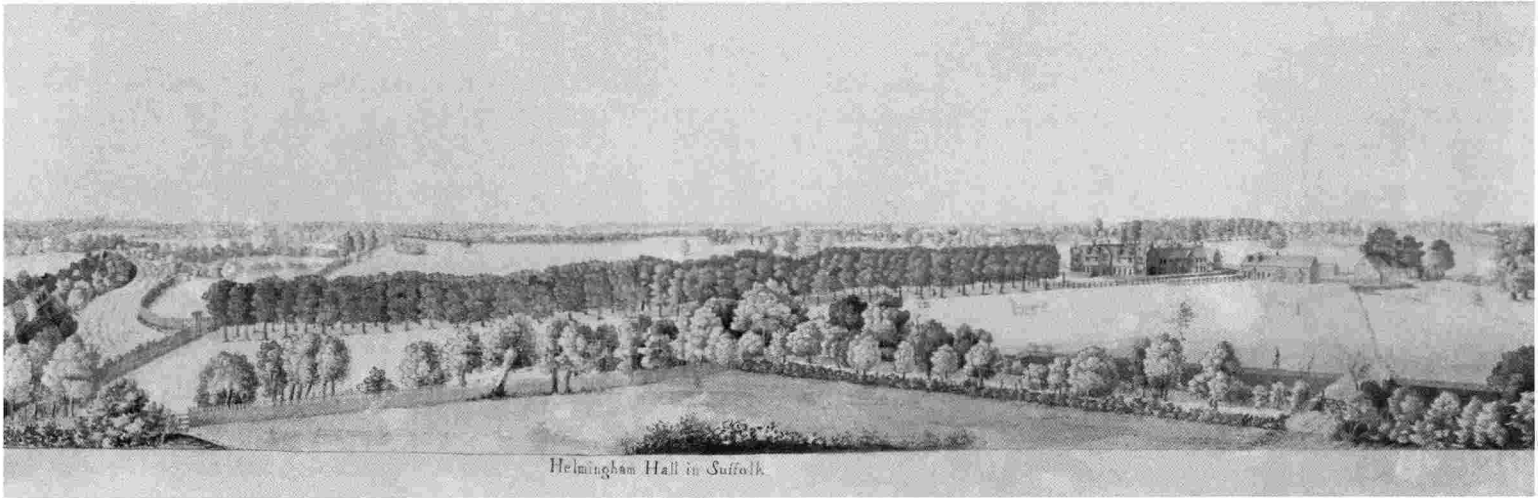


FIG. 6 – View of Helmingham Park from the church tower, c. 1730–40, perhaps by Edmund Pritchard. Note the pale fencing around the Hall, the fencing around the Oak Grove (behind the Hall) and the two fishponds (bottom right), only one of which is shown on the 1729 maps. A number of farm buildings in the vicinity of the Hall were cleared away in the mid 18th century. (*Private Collection*)

Gosbeck road slightly realigned at much the same time (Fig. 3: 20 and 36). The old barn and stables next to the Hall were taken down in 1759.⁶¹ This all appears to be a conscious attempt on the part of the earl, in line with contemporary thinking, to rid his park of extraneous buildings and people; although, strangely perhaps, the footpath to Debenham (noted in Brereton's correspondence in 1720) which passed (and still passes) through the eastern side of the park was not extinguished at that time, as were so many footpaths in similar parkland locations.⁶² In fact, it was not until the latter part of the 20th century that one footpath which crossed directly in front of the Hall was diverted to a new route outside the park; the rest (which constitute a very pleasant walk) remain intact. Eric Sandon notes that the Hall was extensively renovated between about 1745 and 1760, so the latter part, at least, of the three decades 1732–60 in the history of the park probably had as much to do with enhancing social status as with agricultural economics.⁶³ The westernmost fishpond, lying between the Hall and the church, is not shown on the 1729 maps, even as an addition, but may have been constructed around this time (Fig. 3: 25). It was certainly in existence by 1783, when Hodskinson's map of Suffolk was published. This is perhaps a strange addition to the park, as geometric fishponds were not a fashionable feature after about 1750 – the influence of 'Capability' Brown. Some were done away with, others linked together to form fashionable serpentines, but Helmingham kept its rectangular fishponds as well as its formal avenue.⁶⁴ The scattered clumps of trees evident on Isaac Johnson's map of 1801⁶⁵ (Fig. 5) – a Brownian feature – were probably planted around this time, although one is clearly visible as a semi-mature feature on the c. 1730–40 view from the church tower (Fig. 6).

THE 1765, 1802 AND 1815 ADDITIONS

The major addition of land in 1732 meant that the imparked area extended as far as public highways to the west, south and east.⁶⁶ To the north there was no such physical limitation, and the north-west corner of the park simply rose to the skyline; but to the north-east there remained 27 acres of south-facing farmland which could be seen from the Hall. This land was added to the park in 1765, thereby squaring off its northern boundary and giving the Tollemaches an uninterrupted view of parkland to the north (Fig. 4: g). These 27 acres comprised three fields belonging to the Lodge farm, (by then engrossed with Bocking Hall farm (Fig. 3: 5a–5c), and two fields belonging to Garnham's Farm (now North Park Farm) (Fig. 3: 26a–26b).⁶⁷ Garnham's Farm apparently did not belong to the Helmingham estate in 1765; perhaps financial difficulties persuaded the owner to sell the two fields at that date. The rest of the farm appears to have been sold to the estate in 1770.⁶⁸ Nathaniel Welton, the tenant of Bocking Hall, was instructed to make a summer fallow of both his and John Garnham's land in preparation for its grassing down and incorporation into the park.⁶⁹ The boundaries of the five fields added in 1765 were erased, but the trees standing on them were retained and show up clearly on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map. This area was then, and still is, known as the New Park (the third), the name implying that sometime between 1732 and 1765 the Old Park and second New Park had been amalgamated.

With the modest addition of land in 1765 the park had almost reached its maximum extent, but there were another two small boundary alterations still to come. The first, in 1802, involved another exchange of land with the rector, in order to incorporate the glebe behind the church into the park.⁷⁰ This was, in part, the same land which had been given to the church in 1680 in exchange for West Close. This time the rector received in exchange a field opposite the rectory, on the other side of the road (Fig. 4: h; Fig. 3: 15 and 27). As already noted above, the Churchyard Pightle (which adjoined the affected glebe) was also added to the park at the same time (Fig. 3: 18). The final alteration was the addition in 1815 of two small pieces of land in the north-west corner of the park: one, a narrow copse, formerly part of the medieval road from Gosbeck to Bocking Hall and beyond; the other, the piece of land whose name helped to locate the park first mentioned in 1585 (Fig. 3: 1 and 28; and Fig. 4: i).⁷¹

FORMAL FEATURES AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

In terms of its area, the park was now complete. Modest embellishment continued: between 1841 and 1844 the two gatehouses (probably designed by Anthony Salvin) were built at the front entrance, the final status symbol.⁷² A new gate lodge, possibly by B.B. Catt of Ipswich, had already been built by the back entrance of the park *c.* 1820 (Fig. 3: 29, 30). Soon after that, the period of ‘High Farming’ in the middle decades of the 19th century witnessed fundamental changes on the Helmingham estate, with the building of the ‘model’ cottages for which Helmingham is well-known. Much of the fieldscape was altered too, as indeed was the complete farming structure of the estate. The impact of all this on the park itself was minimal, amounting to little more than the demolition of the Lodge, which, since at least 1734, had served as the residence of the park-keeper or gamekeeper.⁷³

Despite growing over the years to reflect the rising social rank of its owners, it seems that the primary purpose of Helmingham Park was always the very practical one of supplying timber, hay and meat (mostly venison, but rabbits too at one time, as the 1646 name *Conyfergrounds* testifies; and in 1768 there was a stock of ‘horned cattle and black swine’ in the park).⁷⁴ By and large the fashionable

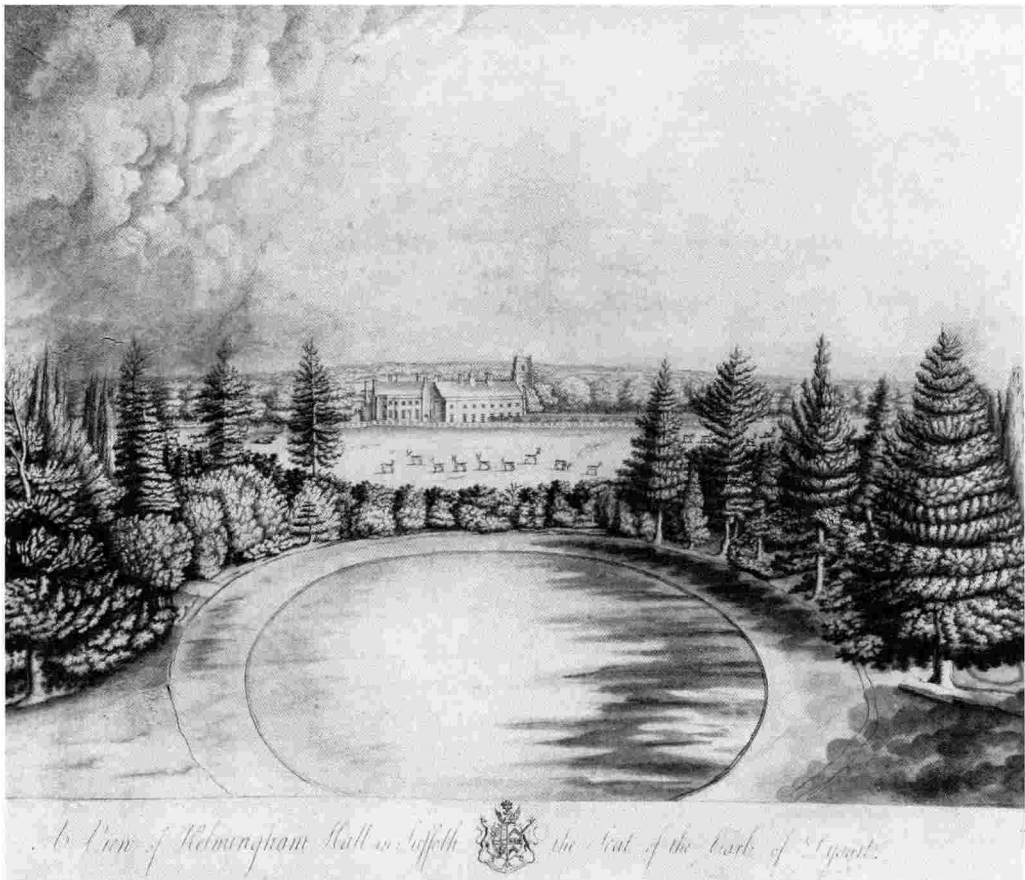


FIG. 7 – View of the pleasure grounds at the foot of the Mount, *c.* 1760–89. In the distance the Hall and church are framed by the trees and shrubs surrounding the formal water feature. In the early 19th century paths meandered through the shrubs. Today the pond would not be recognisable as a once-formal feature, and all the planting and paths have gone. The Mount, complete with obelisk, remains as a somewhat forlorn feature of the park. (Private Collection)

ideals of the landscape park were shunned at Helmingham – although, as we have seen, ideas such as a further avenue or vista at the rear of the Hall were at least considered. Apart from the main avenue, the moated garden, and a few other minor embellishments – such as the flint flushwork bridge ('Debenham Bridge') over the Gull (built in 1815, close to where John Constable painted *Helmingham Dell* in 1800 (Fig. 3: 35)) – the park appears to have had few other fashionable decorative or leisure features. Among the more noteworthy are a bowling green, mentioned in 1766, (location unknown),⁷⁵ the Thorn Walk and the pleasure garden, both depicted on the 1801 map and the tithe map (Fig. 3: 32, 33). The Thorn Walk has all but disappeared, while the latter (now '*The Mount*') is a rather forlorn grassy mound surmounted by an obelisk, rather than the formal feature that it once was, surrounded by an octagon of trees and meandering paths beside the pond (Fig. 7).⁷⁶ Some formal circular clumps of trees are shown in the south and west of the park at the beginning of the 19th century, but it appears from the First Edition Ordnance Survey map that these, either by accident or design, had lost their formal structure before the end of the century.

Williamson mentions another pleasure ground in Helmingham, in *The Round Wood*. This was not in the park (as Williamson seems to imply), but some 500m beyond, in a block of ancient woodland (formerly known as Barnards Wood) to the south-east of the park (Fig. 3: 34). In the first two decades of the 19th century, Williamson says, the 6th earl of Dysart had walks, a number of summer-houses and statues there. A public footpath still leads from the vicinity of the Hall to the boundary of the park by the smithy and thence across the road and over the fields to the wood (Fig. 3: 31). This could well be the earl's route to the pleasure ground, but if so, none of the surviving maps hint at the existence of any sort of avenue or other formal approach. In fact, the Helmingham archive suggests the Round Wood was a favourite haunt of the Tollemaches as early as 1757, when an estimate was made for the building of a 'Round House' there.⁷⁷ Whether the *Oak Grove*, an area of old woodland in the second New Park, was also used for entertainment purposes, is not known.⁷⁸

One other fashionable feature which gets only one mention in the archives (in 1626), and which has long since disappeared, is the dovehouse.⁷⁹ The dovehouse was a powerful status symbol, being at one time restricted by law to manorial lords.⁸⁰ The location of the building at Helmingham is also unknown, but it could be what appears to be a small round building shown on the 1803 map, close to the north-east corner of the house moat.

THE WALLED GARDEN

Apart from the entrance avenue, the principal formal feature of the park is the moated, walled garden to the west of the Hall. (Fig. 3: 37, Fig. 8) There is some confusion surrounding the date of this. The Historic Environment Record (HER) held by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council describes it as 16th-century, somewhat vaguely giving the source of this information as an Ordnance Survey card. The HER also refers to an anonymous printed guide which suggests that the garden moat predates the house moat, with evidence of Saxon material and a stockade found within it. However, it is probable that these finds have been confused with others found in the *Wilderness*, (by the church), in the 19th century. The National Monuments Record says the gardens were created in 1749; however, there is a document in the Helmingham archives which relates to the rebuilding of the walls around the kitchen garden in that same year, so they are clearly of an earlier origin. In the inventory of 1626 there is a reference to 'the long wall between the garden and the mote', and a scythe was kept in the garden 'to mowe to the walles'.⁸¹ Thomas Breerton's sketch of 1720/1⁸² labels the area as 'Orchard or Garden', but shows no detail apart from what appears to be an east-west path through the centre, while the 1729 map shows an unregimented cluster of trees, presumably representing the orchard. Maybe the explanation is that the kitchen gardens and orchard were transformed into more formal gardens in 1749, the rebuilding of the walls being part of that process, although Williamson contends that walled gardens went out of fashion in the 18th century.⁸³ The 1802/3 map labels the garden area as the 'kitchen garden and moat'. The rectangular space is divided into four by cross-paths (like a St George's cross), with an unidentifiable feature – maybe a

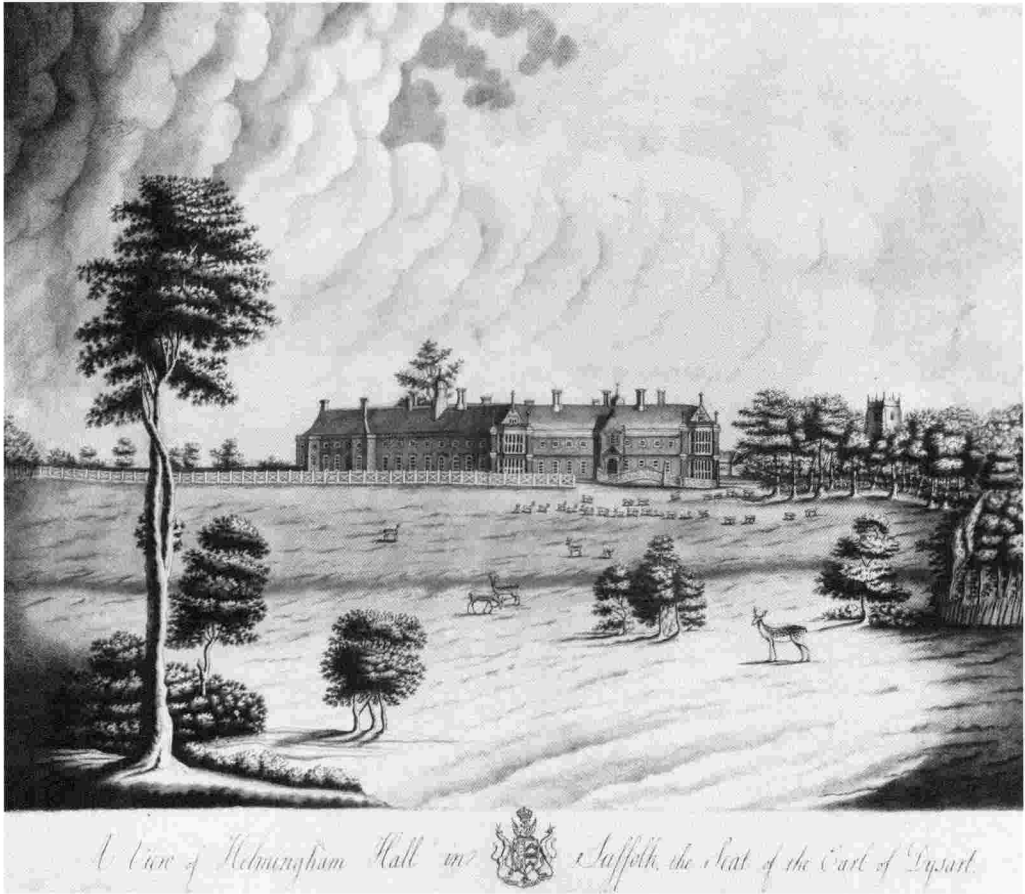


FIG. 8 – View of the Hall from the south-west, c. 1760–89. There is probably a degree of artistic licence in this view, as the church is actually some way out of sight to the right. Note the decorative fencing around the moated garden area (front and left of the Hall). The dark line in the foreground is probably one of the streams which feed the fishponds near the church. (*Private Collection*)

statue or fountain – at the centre. Each of the four quarters is then divided in two, to create a total of eight equal garden plots. An outer path runs around the entire periphery of the garden. The orchard was located in the triangle between the kitchen garden and the Thorn Walk. The gardens were altered again in the 19th and 20th centuries, and today, reflecting Lady Tollemache's national reputation as a garden designer, are a major attraction for visitors to the park, as are the rose, knot and herb gardens to the north east of the Hall planted in 1982.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The park shrank for a while in the 1970s and 1980s, when high cereal prices led to the cultivation of the (third) New Park and a small adjoining area of the Old Park (including the site of the Lodge); like the 17th-century ploughing up of part of the Old Park, that move was short-lived, and the area has once more reverted to parkland. The great storm of 1987 damaged or uprooted a considerable number of trees in the park. Replacements for many of these have been planted, together with new tree belts around much of the circumference of the park – the belated implementation of a Brownian feature from the eighteenth century – for future generations to enjoy.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The archive evidence has enabled a reasonably comprehensive picture of the development of the park to be assembled, but it is clear that documentary evidence alone is insufficient and that a multi-disciplinary approach should be used to try to fill the gaps in our knowledge. The most prominent archaeology at Helmingham consists of ditch-lines to the west of the church, near the road – the boundaries of the fields formerly belonging to the glebe. There are also noticeable ‘humps and bumps’ behind the Forge. Other than these, former boundaries are disappointingly less conspicuous, with some more visible than others on various aerial photographs as well as on the ground. There are signs of old field boundaries to the north-east of the Hall; these are almost certainly from Mayhiew’s farm in the 1630s and 1640s. There are also suggestive linear features in the Old Park, possibly relics from the landscape which preceded it. And perhaps more interesting still is an area in the Old Park which is distinctly corrugated when driven over – the corrugations were not particularly visible in early February 2005, but Lord Tollemache confirmed that they could be seen better in summer, when the grass is taller. Is this the area which John Nunn ploughed in the 1650s? If so, it would be a very rare fossilised survival of 17th-century ploughing in Suffolk. A LiDAR survey would doubtless make these features more explicit, if ever funding were made available for such a project in Suffolk.⁸⁴

CONCLUSION

Rosemary Hoppitt stresses ‘the importance of the investigation of local records and local landscape development’ in the study of parks.⁸⁵ A detailed study of maps, rentals, a late 16th-century survey and other documentary evidence, together with information from aerial photography and observation in the field, have together made it possible to piece together much of the developmental process of Helmingham Park. In terms of sequencing and dating the geographical changes to the park, it is hoped that this article can be viewed as reasonably definitive. However, some important questions still remain unanswered, principally the foundation date of the original park and the bounds of the first New Park. As one would expect, much of the story is idiosyncratic: Helmingham Park sometimes seems to follow local and national trends, and at other times ignores them. The social, political and economic reasons behind some of the changes and developments are not all easy to discover, but they may become clearer as more individual parks in the county and elsewhere are studied. In fact, many of the changes at Helmingham appear to be linked to an heir taking over the estate and introducing his own ideas for the park, be they fashionable, practical, or just economically prudent. Despite the gaps in the evidence, a close study of the available documentation for the park has, in many respects, given rise to a very different story of development from the much more generalised histories in print. Further studies may well prove or disprove the more speculative aspects of this article. Despite these reservations, it is hoped that this study will be seen as a useful contribution to our knowledge of park-making in Suffolk, and at the same time help dispel at least some of Williamson’s pessimism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer of this article is greatly indebted to Lord Tollemache for his encouragement and help, for allowing access to the archives and to pictures in his private possession, and for an extremely informative drive round the park in February 2005 to explore old ditch-lines and other archaeology. The permission of the Hon. Michael Tollemache to publish photographs of the *c.* 1730–40 sketch of the park and the sketches of the Mount and Hall is acknowledged with gratitude. Thanks must go to Bill Serjeant (Lord Tollemache’s archivist) for unstintingly ferrying documents from the Helmingham archive to the Record Office in Ipswich, and for double-checking a number of queries arising from them. Dr Rosemary Hoppitt and Edward Martin both kindly gave freely of their expertise and commented on various drafts of the text, and Dr David Dymond encouraged the writer to add a wider regional dimension to the original text. Likewise, Professor Tom Williamson and Dr Robert

Liddiard have contributed their thoughts and knowledge to various aspects of the article. The writer is grateful to Dr Colin Pendleton of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service for supplying aerial photographs of the park and associated data from the Historical Environment Record, and to Nigel Macbeth for producing the photographs of the 18th-century sketches published with this article.

NOTES

All T/Hel/ references are to documents in the Helmingham Hall archive, which is in private hands.

SROI = Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich.

- 1 Cantor 1982, 1983; Williamson and Bellamy 1987; Rackham 1976, 1986; Hoppitt 1992, 1999; Williamson 2000.
- 2 Williamson 2000, 70.
- 3 Hoppitt 2007, 149–61.
- 4 Liddiard 2007, 8.
- 5 Farrer 1923, 54. Helmingham and the nearby Shrubland Park are the only Grade 1 registered parks in Suffolk. Richard was not directly related to the Tollemaches of Helmingham. Son of William Tallemach, who was also a surveyor (active 1710–22), he lived at Coddenham, and, as well as the Helmingham estate, mapped the Middleton estate at Crowfield and various properties owned by Ipswich Corporation (all in SROI). Eden 1976, III, 244.
- 6 T/Hel(S)/27/4 originals; T/Hel(S)/27/5 photographic copies.
- 7 T/Hel/69/98. There is a chance that this ‘park’ name refers to a ‘deer haugh’ in Helmingham, probably located in the Bocking Hall area, adjacent to the parish boundary with Pettaugh. See Fig. 3: 24. This *Derehaugh* appears in an undated document transcribed in the Davy Manuscripts for Pettaugh (SROI, J400/13.29). The document is probably of mid 16th century date, although the abutments of the land mentioned in it could be a repetition drawn from much earlier documents. There are a significant number of ‘haugh’ (‘hedged or fenced enclosure’) names in this part of central Suffolk. In part, they seem to represent former areas of woodland, purposely fenced to retain animals such as deer (Monewden, Monk Soham), horses (Worlingworth, Pettaugh), calves (Helmingham) and pigs (Pettaugh), presumably as the woodland and wood-pasture resource diminished in the face of population pressure in the early medieval period. Some, like Haughwood in Otley (on the boundary with Helmingham) may have always existed as managed woodland, although it is equally possible that the woodland recorded there from the 16th to the 19th century was itself a secondary feature following on from earlier use as an animal-rearing area. A parish boundary or demesne boundary location for ‘haugh’ names is typical. One caveat to bear in mind is that the ‘dere’ element may simply mean ‘animal’ in general, rather than ‘deer’ in particular – see Sykes 2007, 60–61. See also note 27 below; Podd 1994, 37–38, and Hoppitt 2007, 163.
- 7 Rosemary Hoppitt, personal communication. Examples include Hawstead (three Park Fields abutting onto the southern boundary of the Little Park, and two Park Fields abutting onto the western side of the former Great Park); Hoxne; Hundon; and Eye. Of six ‘Park ...’ names at Wetheringsett, two abut the park, but four others could be inside or outside, depending on the original boundaries and subsequent changes that may have taken place. Where ‘Park’ is the *final* element of a field name, it generally has the meaning of ‘paddock’ or ‘enclosure’, as at Otley (four 17th-century examples near the Hall (Podd 1985, 46) or Helmingham (Wrens Park (1803), a humorous name for a very small enclosure (Podd 1980, 7)). The exception would be an obvious name like ‘Deer Park’.
- 9 MacCulloch 1976.
- 10 Williamson 2000, 23; Hoppitt 1999, 66.
- 11 Hoppitt 1992, 281.
- 12 T/Hel/24/3. Similarly, the park once attached to Framsdon Hall, in the adjoining village to Helmingham, is not mentioned in the 1560, 1575 or 1602 sources, but there is ample evidence in manorial surveys and rentals of its existence from at least 1525 and throughout the 16th century, e.g. T/Hel/35/33 (1525/6); T/Hel/24/2 (1568). In 1525/6 the park at Framsdon was 50 acres in extent, but by 1568 had grown to 75. It is mentioned in the rentals through the 17th century, but was disparted sometime before 1729.
- 13 Other entries for *non-partible* lands in John Pettauge’s sole occupation include Crabtre Close, pightles called Andrewes, a close called Starlyngs and a way called Starlyngs Waye. The survey implies that these were close to (and probably adjoining) the partible lands. None of these names is found on the 1729 maps. If, as this article suggests, they had been incorporated into the Old Park, it would help explain their absence from the 1729 maps. Starlynges is mentioned in 1404 and 1416 in the Iveagh Manuscripts, SROI, HD1538/253/47 and /66; Andrewes in 1489, HD1538/253/128; but in all cases with insufficient evidence to locate them. A single document in HHA (A24/8/4 in the old catalogue notation) suggests that Starlyngs was immediately east of Tintwood, in other words, within the later park.
- 14 Podd 1986, 41–43.

- 15 T/Hel/24/7. Field-walking the arable land north of the park might help resolve the issue of the location of Pettaughe and Deynes' tenements.
- 16 T/Hel/24/7.
- 17 The de Creke family held Helmingham in the 13th century by knight's service to the Bigods, earls of Norfolk. The family took its surname from its property in North Creake in Norfolk, but they also held land in Combs and Flixton (where they founded the priory) in Suffolk and Hillingdon in Norfolk. Geoffrey de Crek was granted free warren in Helmingham in 1266–67 (*Charter Rolls* 51 Hen. III, 4) and his brother John de Creek was granted free warren in Combs and Helmingham in 1284–85 (*Charter Rolls* 13 Edw. I, 54). William Joice was holding the manor at farm in 1386 (SROI, HD1538/253/31) and purchased it in 1391–92 (SROI, HD1538/253/34 and 37). Bocking Hall in Helmingham was also part of the de Crekes' estate from 1228 to c. 1315. (Edward Martin, personal communication).
- 18 Rosemary Hoppitt, personal communication; Copinger 1905–11, II, 307–8.
- 19 Williamson 2000, 27; Hoppitt 1999, 66.
- 20 There is considerable doubt about this visit. J. Nichols, in *Progresses, Public Processions &c, of Queen Elizabeth, I* (London, 1823), identifies *Hemingham* (which the queen visited in August 1561) as Helmingham, but as the context of the visit falls between Bures St Mary and Gosfield (Essex), it is more likely that *Hemingham* was Castle Hedingham in Essex. (The writer is grateful to Edward Martin for this reference).
- 21 Tom Williamson, personal communication; Williamson 2000, 22; Hoppitt 1999, 66; Rackham 1986, 128–29. Many early detached parks may have been created from existing demesne woodland. Some were situated well away from the *caput* of their estate, for example the parks at Eye, Staverton, the three parks at Hundon, and Hoxne Old Park. Examples of Tudor parks which surround the mansion include Hawstead and Hengrave. (Rosemary Hoppitt, pers. comm.).
- 22 Hoppitt 1999, 66; and 2007, 152. The 1631 rental describes the Parks as 'new empaled'. The Helmingham archive contains a few 18th-century documents relating to paling for the park (e.g. T/Hel/9/5/1). The c. 1730–40 view of the Park from the church tower shows paling round both the Old and New Parks, around the Hall itself and around the Oak Grove. The style of the paling is worthy of mention. It appears to be a solid, planked fence, with alternating tall and short boards, thus giving a deeply incised crenellated appearance. This planking was supported by posts and rails. (See the photograph of a less formal, modern example at Moccas Park, Herefordshire in Rackham 2006, 140). The timber was all local, taken from the estate farms. The upkeep of the paling must have been a very expensive and time-consuming item, but the estate must have employed a number of full-time wood cutters. The 63 timber trees earmarked to provide paling for the 1732 park (T/Hel/22/31) and the 30 loads required to fence the 1765 New Park (T/Hel/9/5/26) are comparatively minor figures compared to the estimated 5000 loads (400 trees) of oak sold to a London shipwright in 1708 (T/Hel/22/5).
- 23 Williamson 2000, 81–82. Paris Farm did not become part of the Helmingham estate until 1738. To the south of Paris Farm, and due west of the surmised first park, an area known as Olivers had become part of the estate by 1585. This ring-fenced block of land appears to have been a small manor in the later medieval period, named after its late 13th/early 14th-century owners (Fig. 3: 3). It is not known when the Tollemaches first acquired it, but quite possibly it was after the creation of the Old Park; it is not mentioned by name in Copinger, and no manorial records exist in the Helmingham archive. By c. 1630 a map (T/Hel/27/34) shows that much of this land was quite heavily treed pasture. The 1585 survey implies that Olivers manor house was then still occupied as an isolated farmstead, but having been the focal point of a busy hamlet in the Middle Ages (from the evidence of the writer's field-walking), it had been deserted by c. 1630, and the land leased to adjoining farms.
- 24 The possibility must always be borne in mind that Helmingham Hall does not occupy the same site as Crekes Hall. Could it be that Crekes Hall stood in the Old Park (although there is no obvious site), and that the 34-acre New Park was created at the same time as Helmingham Hall was built? Similarly, if the two halls occupied the same site, was it the medieval Crekes Hall which was detached from its park, with the New Park again created to impark the newly-erected Helmingham Hall? The main counter-argument to this is that all references to a park at Helmingham arc in the singular until 1631.
- 25 Williamson 2000, 21. Neale had remarked upon these ancient trees in 1818 (J.P. Neale, *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen*, ... 4, (1818) quoted in the English Heritage listing, 1999).
- 26 See Martin 2008, 40–45.
- 27 Nothing much is known of the early history of Framsdon Park, but part of the area it must have occupied is shown as woodland or wood-pasture on the 1729 maps, and is called there *The Grove*. It may be that this park was created out of demesne woodland or wood-pasture – possibly an unrecorded **Great Haugh Wood*. A demesne wood called *Little Haugh Wood* (now gone) was close by, but it lacks a 'Great' counterpart in the extant historical record. From later field names it seems that Framsdon Park included a 'Laund' or 'Lawn', a more open space within an area of wood or wood-pasture (Rackham 1976, 142–48; Rackham 1986, 125–29; Williamson 2000, 19). This again suggests a park created out of woodland or wood-pasture.
- 28 Williamson 2000, 81–82.
- 29 T/Hel/104/3. T/Hel/104/3. Free warren was 'the entitlement to hunt lesser game on the demesne land of the grantee' (Almond 2003, 5). Lesser game included rabbit, hare, fox and pheasant. Such a grant suggests formalised hunting, but does not usually imply, *de facto*, the presence of a park. The writer is grateful to Rosemary Hoppitt for this reference.

- 30 T/Hel/27/34.
- 31 T/Hel(S)/27/1; T/Hel(S)/27/2.
- 32 Tollemache 1949, 52. In fact, Sir Lionel Tollemache (1591–1640) was already ‘of Fakenham’ in 1622 (T/Hel/112/1). However, he was actively extending the Helmingham estate at the same time, purchasing from the Harvies what later became known as Valley Farm in or around 1625 (map, T/Hel/27/1); and at least six other farms (including the 280-acre Bocking Hall from Robert Harvie) between 1632 and 1636. The same period also saw the purchase of five farms in Framdsen and one in Cretingham (T/Hel/24/7).
- 33 T/Hel/25/7; Williamson 2000, 23.
- 34 Hoppitt 1999, 66; Rackham 1986, 126; Williamson 2000, 19–21.
- 35 We can only speculate about the bounds of the first New Park. There are two main possibilities. Using the stream as a natural boundary to the south, a rectangular park of 34 acres would comfortably encompass the Hall and the area to the east as far as the road, thus including what is now the rear entrance – but which, before the creation of the oak avenue in 1680, could have been the main approach to the Hall. However, a park of this size in this location would, of necessity, have been detached from the Old Park. The other – and perhaps more likely – possibility is that the first New Park adjoined the Old Park to the west (and the stream to the south), with access to the Hall by the track from the east, passing through the then home farm – effectively the present rear entrance to the park. Such a hierarchical approach – through the public area of the farmyard, then into the more private confines of the Hall, and ultimately into the very private gardens beyond – was not uncommon in Suffolk, with Westhorpe Hall, Moat Hall Parham, Mettingham Castle and Shelley Hall being examples. See Martin 2000, 10–29. No obvious boundaries for the first New Park are discernible on aerial photographs.
- 36 T/Hel/25/7–98.
- 37 T/Hel/25/7.
- 38 Williamson 2000, 24. He cites Somerleyton and Hoxne as examples of parks where fields were added around this time and their boundaries erased.
- 39 Shirley 1867, 47–49. The writer is grateful to Rosemary Hoppitt for this reference.
- 40 Cripps 1975, 3–30. Lionel (VI)’s father, a Privy Counsellor to both James I and Charles I, spent much time at Fakenham, where the family had a large mansion (40 hearths in 1662) but no park. Edward Martin (personal communication) has suggested that Lionel (V)’s interest in Fakenham may well be because of its potential for game and hunting, being situated on the edge of Thetford Chase. James I, in particular, had a great interest in hunting, and he visited Thetford for that purpose on a number of occasions. The enlargement of Helmingham Park at the beginning of the 17th century could have been prompted, in part at least, by Lionel’s own interest in hunting, and, perhaps, the hope of a royal visit to hunt there. In 1636 Lionel (V) was granted a warrant ‘for preservation of His Majesty’s game of hare, pheasant, partridge, and other wild fowl in Thetford and Ipswich, and within 12 miles thereof’ (*Cal. of State Papers 1635–36* (London 1866), 235).
- 41 Ham House guidebook.
- 42 T/Hel/25/7. From at least 1631 the Lodge Farm was traditionally let to the park-keeper, who thus had a farm of his own to work in tandem with his obligation to look after the park.
- 43 TNA (the National Archives), E179/183/616; E179/257/17; Hervey 1905.
- 44 20 July 1696, letter written by Humphrey Prideaux: ‘Ld Huntingtounr ... is a very sensible man, and with great prudence manageth all affairs that he puts his hands unto, only, haveing come to an incumberd estate, that frugality and spareing way of living wch his circumstances at first made necessary hath habituated him to that wch, now he is out of those circumstances, is downright stingynesse’. The letter goes on to say that the debts had been cleared. (Thompson 1875). Thanks to Edward Martin for this reference. See also note 50 below.
- 45 Williamson 2000, 50. However, licence to empark at Euston was granted a few years earlier, in 1671 (Edward Martin, personal communication).
- 46 T/Hel/25/9.
- 47 T/Hel/26/86. Despite this exchange, the Helmingham glebe terriers continued to include West Close right up to the 19th century.
- 48 See note 35 above. 1801 map: SRO/1 HD11:475/1912; 1802/3 map: T/Hel(S)/27/6 (photographic copy). The approach to Hoxne New Park had a similar hierarchy (Rosemary Hoppitt, pers. comm.).
- 49 T/Hel/1/64. The other letter is T/Hel/1/63.
- 50 The sketch of the park is by an unknown artist, but Edward Martin suggests that it may be the work of Edmund Prideaux (1693–1745). His father, Humphrey (1648–1724), was Prebendary of Norwich 1681; rector of Saham Toney in Norfolk 1686–94; Archdeacon of Suffolk 1688–1724; rector of Trowse in Norfolk 1696–1710; and Dean of Norwich 1702. In 1686 he married Bridget, the only child of Anthony Bockenham, rector of Helmingham. He also owned land in the South Park Farm area of Helmingham, which had previously belonged to Anthony. This land was sold to Christopher Groves of Bury St Edmunds in 1723, and Groves in turn sold it to the Tollemaches in the 1730s: T/Hel/114/62. On his father’s death Edmund inherited the family estate in Cornwall. He produced drawings of his various tours in England, and especially of places with a family connection – see Harris 1963. He is known to have visited Suffolk in 1725, although no mention is made of Helmingham. However, it seems not unreasonable to suggest Prideaux and c. 1730–40 as the artist and date of the sketch.
- 51 Williamson 2000, 33–35. Euston, Little Glemham, Broke Hall (Nacton), Bradfield Combust, Coldham Hall,

- Thornham, Rougham, Somerleyton and Campsea Ash High House are all quoted as examples, with Great Saxham Hall, Barking Hall, Badley Hall and Combs Hall having avenues extending out across the fields.
- 52 T/Hel/9/5/1. The rentals suggest that the park was enlarged between 1736 and 1737, but the evidence of T/Hel/9/5/1 for a 1732 date is beyond doubt.
- 53 Theobald 2000, 57, 59.
- 54 T/Hel/20/42.
- 55 T/Hel/25/13.
- 56 Theobald 2000, 60.
- 57 Williamson 1999, 100; Williamson 2000, 50 and 57. Glemham (*c.* 1720) and Livermere (*c.* 1725) are quoted as examples of new parks created at this time. Culford was expanded in 1714, Rushbrooke in 1724.
- 58 T/Hel/9/5/1.
- 59 T/Hel/25/13. The land belonging to these small farms which was not incorporated into the park was ultimately added to either Park Gate Farm or Old Hall Farm. Initially (1735 in the rentals) the residual land of two of the small farms was combined into one unit, but within four years this new farm had been broken up and the land added to neighbouring holdings. William Wood's cottage is not mentioned after 1736, Denny's cottage after 1738 (Fig. 3: 23 and 19 respectively). The land taken from Mrs Nunn's farm (Fig. 3: 10–12 and 21) was compensated for by the addition to her farm of adjoining land purchased by the earl of Dysart in 1730/31. The cottages by the church disappear from the rentals after 1743 and had certainly been demolished by 1765. A number of other small farms on the estate were amalgamated with larger neighbours at the same time.
- 60 T/Hel/26/29.
- 61 T/Hel/5/15.
- 62 Williamson 2000, 58.
- 63 Sandon 1977, 157. The 4th earl also spent considerable sums of money in the 1740s carrying out structural repairs to Ham House (Ham House guidebook).
- 64 Williamson 2000, 58.
- 65 SROI, HD11:475/1912.
- 66 That to the west – the medieval Boyeses Way/Grudgmere Way/Slade Way – is now just a bridleway; the road to the east – Wash Lane, a name which was probably an apt description of its condition – was closed in or around 1844 (Fig. 3: 39).
- 67 T/Hel/9/5/25, 28, 29 and 30 (plan). Williamson (2000, 71) cites the expansion of Helmingham Park from 119 acres in 1729 to 351 acres in 1770, with 'much of this increase' occurring in 1765, with the incorporation of Bocking Hall Farm and North Park Farm. In fact only 27 acres were taken from those two farms. The balance is made up of the pre-existing 122 acres in the Old Park and the addition of about 90 acres in 1732. Williamson's erroneous conclusions here, and those concerning the Old and New Parks, were drawn from limited information, and prove the need to research all parks at a very detailed local level if their true chronology and development is to be ascertained (Hoppitt 2007, 164).
- 68 The farm first appears in the rentals in 1770: T/Hel/25/13.
- 69 T/Hel/9/5/27.
- 70 T/Hel/114/297.
- 71 T/Hel(S)/27/6.
- 72 English Heritage listing, 1999; Sandon 1977, 154–57.
- 73 T/Hel/25/15; T/Hel/25/18.
- 74 T/Hel/26/90.
- 75 Uncatalogued document, 1661, framed and hanging in Helmingham Hall. It is a work contract for William Dimmock of Twickenham, who had been employed as head gardener at the Hall. His address makes it likely that he was previously a gardener at Ham House, Richmond, which was owned by the Dysarts.
- 76 According to the Suffolk Historic Environment Record, the obelisk was built in 1860, using bricks salvaged from an earlier (1760s) summer-house which had stood on the site, but the Helmingham Hall website says the bricks came from the remains of a 17th-century walled arboretum on the site. T/Hel/9/5/32 relates to work to be done on the summer-house on the mound in 1766. Williamson (2000, 22), speculates that the mound may be a 16th-century viewing mound in origin. Neither the mound nor the arboretum is shown on the 1729 map. Edward Martin notes the 18th-century mound by a canal at Pettistree as a comparison with the Helmingham example near a pond or 'basin' (Martin 2008, 553–55). Figs. 6 and 7 have the impaled arms of Tollemache and Walpole, representing Lionel, 5th Earl of Dysart and his first wife Charlotte Walpole, and therefore must be dated between their marriage in 1760 and Charlotte's death in 1789 (Edward Martin, personal communication).
- 77 Other examples of detached pleasure grounds are Holbrook Park, cited by Williamson (2000, 78) as a pleasure ground for Woolverstone Hall, 2 kilometres away; and Somerleyton, which had a detached pleasure ground as early as 1652 (Williamson 2000, 28). Edward Martin (personal communication) notes that Holbrook Gardens originated as an independent garden/park around the house of Sir John Clench in the late 16th century. It eventually came into the hands of the Berners family of Woolverstone Hall after 1783, at which point it did indeed become a detached pleasure ground. At Somerleyton the gardens were created by Sir John Wentworth at some point between his succession to the estate in 1619 and his death in 1651.

78 The Oak Grove (Fig. 3: 36) is something of an enigma. It is now listed as Ancient Woodland, and consists almost entirely of large oaks with no under-storey. It is currently unfenced, so the deer in the park can wander freely in and out, although the mid-18th-century view of the park from the church tower shows it fenced. It is not shown on the 1729 or 1802/3 maps, nor on the 1841 tithe map (SROI, P461/123; FDA123/A1/1a); nor, it seems, is it mentioned in any of the Helmingham archives which list all the woods on the estate – the earliest such list dates from 1631. Perhaps it is the relic of John Mayhew's 'great [wood]-pasture called *Hoxon Bottom*'. Certainly the location, dropping away towards the Gull to the north, would fit with the 'Bottom' element. The 1729 maps in particular show in some detail the distribution of trees around the estate farms, so it is strange that the Oak Grove is omitted from them (the English Heritage listing erroneously states that the Old Grove is shown on the 1729 maps) and virtually all other maps and documents. However, the estate steward, Thomas Brereton, shows a quite densely treed area here in 1720/1 on his sketch map of the proposed rear vista to the Hall, where he calls it *The Thicket*, implying a denser, rather than a more open, wood (T/Hel/1/64). The view from the church tower also depicts it as a distinct and mature wooded area. Whatever the reasons for its general omission in the archives, it is certainly an historically and botanically important component of the park.

A short distance from the north-eastern corner of the Oak Grove is the spot where John Constable painted *Helmingham Dell* in 1800. The twisted tree in the picture still exists. Constable's brother was steward of the Tollemaches' woods at Helmingham and Bentley, and John himself lived at Helmingham Rectory for a short while (Helmingham Hall website).

79 T/Hel/9/1/1.

80 Williamson 2000, 27. Nearby Framsdon Hall had a dovecote in 1525/6, several decades before it was acquired by the Tollemaches (T/Hel/35/33).

81 T/Hel/5/4; T/Hel/9/1/1. Williamson (2000, 12), suggests that the garden moat may have existed since the early 16th century. For parallels for 16th-century garden moats, see Martin 1998 and Martin 2000, particularly 13-16.

82 T/Hel/1/64.

83 Williamson 2000, 13.

84 LiDAR or Light Detection And Ranging is a means of accurately plotting ground contours at a very subtle level using laser beams bounced down from an aeroplane. For a full explanation of the system, see, for example, www.ambercore.com/files/TerrapointWhitePaper.pdf.

85 Hoppitt 2007, 164.

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