

SHORTER CONTRIBUTION

A SHORT-LIVED GENTRY PARK IN OTLEY

by STEPHEN PODD

IN HER WORK *Deer Parks of Suffolk 1086–1602*, Rosemary Hoppitt reminds us that there are still former parks in the county awaiting discovery. One such may have been in Otley. As with so many parks, the evidence is thin: two early seventeenth-century entries in court rolls, four later seventeenth-century ‘park’ field-names, and no contemporary maps. If a park did exist, then it was for a relatively short period, probably one hundred and twenty years at most, but perhaps fewer than fifty. Deer are never mentioned in the extant records; the park seems to have been no more than a fashionable status symbol to reinforce the rise of the Gosnold family to the ranks of the minor gentry. Over a period of some two hundred and fifty years, ten generations of the family in Otley had seen their fortunes grow, flourish and then wither away, the park disappearing with them.¹

In the sixteenth century there were two manors based in Otley: Overhall and Netherhall (Fig. 151).² Overhall’s moated manor house complex had been next to the church, but by 1577 the house and most buildings had gone, the site occupied by just ‘a littell howse for calves’.³ The associated ‘block demesne’ to the west was leased out for centuries, and is today still known as The Leaseland. There were two smaller ‘detached block demesnes’ against the parish boundary with Helmingham, also leased out, one of them from at least 1544 to the Gosnolds.⁴ Netherhall, as its name suggests, had a base geographically lower than that of Overhall. It was situated at the foot of the hill below (and to the south of) the church, next to Otley’s enigmatic castle motte.⁵ This site also appears to have been abandoned at some point in the sixteenth century.⁶ The demesne extended to the west, essentially the area now occupied by Gull Farm, with a further block abutting the parish boundary with Ashbocking; this latter block was leased by the Gosnolds from at least 1463 and remained in their occupation (and from 1542, possession) for the next one hundred and seventy eight years.⁷ It is the surviving court rolls for these two manors which provide the first known evidence for a possible park.

Firstly, in the Netherhall court rolls of 1607, a bay horse is said to have been found wandering loose on the demesne. It was caught and ‘put in the park of the lord’, the lord at the time being Robert Gosnold IV.⁸ Secondly, in the Overhall manor court rolls for 1632, there is a reference to ‘One piece of meadow containing three acres, lying by a meadow lately of Robert Gosnold, deceased, towards the south, *now enclosed in the park* [author’s italics] lately of the said Robert Gosnold, deceased’.⁹ This wording is ambiguous: was it the three-acre piece of meadow that had been enclosed in the park, or the meadow it abutted to the south? Either way, it points to a park. Earlier court roll entries confirm that this piece of meadow had been acquired by the Gosnolds in 1603, when the court roll description makes no mention of the park.¹⁰ This might suggest that there was no park here in 1603, but it could also be that the three-acre piece was added to an existing park after the Gosnolds acquired it, hence the change in the description.

The Gosnold family had been in Otley since the early fifteenth century, their initial seat being an engrossed free holding belonging to Netherhall manor which they had acquired by 1425 from the Pers family.¹¹ This holding became the core of the Gosnolds’ estate based around what later became Otley Hall. Robert I (1485–1572) in particular was clearly a man

of ambition; surviving court rolls and rentals show that he was steadily acquiring and disposing of land in and around Otley and in a number of adjoining or nearby parishes, slowly building up consolidated blocks, principally (in Otley) around the later Otley Hall and Otley High House. In 1542 he acquired the manor and demesne of Netherhall from John Cressener, merchant of London.¹² In 1544 Robert made a list of all the lands then in his possession, including the fields around what became Otley Hall.¹³ Immediately to the north was a block of fields held freely of Netherhall, but much of the other land was a mixture of free and copyhold land belonging to one or other of Otley's manors (Fig. 151).

Liddiard defines a park as 'a contiguous block of demesne that comprised wooded areas and grazing; a private wood-pasture'.¹⁴ In the sixteenth century parks were increasingly created around a principal dwelling, rather than in the more peripheral locations favoured by medieval park creators.¹⁵ In Otley the demesne and the deserted manor house site of Netherhall were a mile away from the Gosnolds' dwelling; if, having acquired the lordship of the manor, their next ambition was to proclaim and reinforce that elevated status by creating a park, the logical decision was to stay in their existing home and, now that they actually owned it, treat their land around Otley Hall, a large part of it held 'free', but with some held by copy of court roll, as demesne. The block north of the road immediately north of the hall would accommodate a park of some ninety-five acres, much larger than could be achieved on their other land in the immediate vicinity. Thus, the park lay across the road from their house, rather than enveloping it; this unusual juxtaposition was almost certainly a compromise in order to create as big a park as possible, but still close enough to the house to be viewed and enjoyed.¹⁶ As discussed below, the area around the house itself also displayed status features, with an avenue and formal fishponds.

The latter part of the medieval period had increasingly witnessed the creation of parks by the gentry and parvenus rather than by the aristocracy and powerful ecclesiastics.¹⁷ Hoppitt notes a marked increase in the number of Suffolk parks mentioned for the first time in the sixteenth century, and in particular in the second half of the century.¹⁸ This includes a small park at Framsdan Hall, just to the north of Otley, first mentioned in 1525, which the Gosnolds would doubtless have been familiar with. Their own park represents a continuation of that late medieval trend into the post-medieval, an expression of Robert Gosnold I's enhanced social status after he acquired the manor of Netherhall. Later generations of the family were

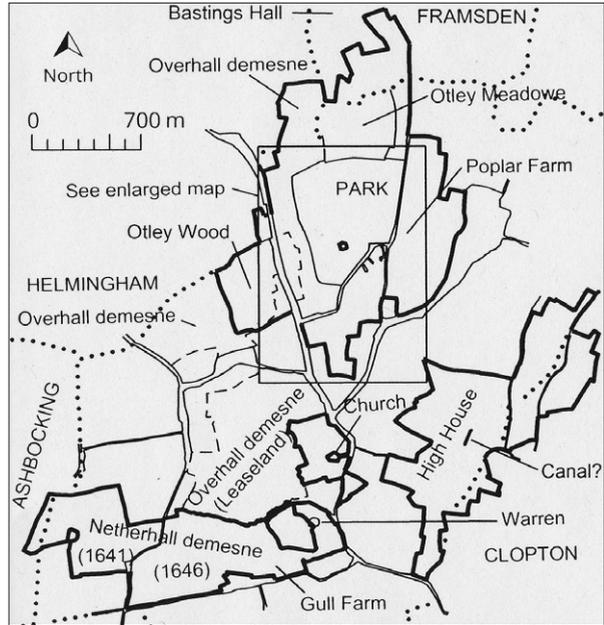


FIG. 151 – Overview of the Gosnold estate in Otley between the mid-sixteenth century and the final sale in 1671. The years in brackets are the dates of the sale of blocks of Netherhall demesne lands. Map reconstructed from sale documents, deeds, court rolls and various maps from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The western boundary of Otley Meadow is uncertain, the parcel apparently reduced in size before the Gosnolds bought it, see note 20.

also climbing the social ladder, mixing with the great and the good, and they too would have had good reason to possess a park. Families like the Gosnolds had risen into the ranks of the gentry through their activities as lawyers, politicians and courtiers. While Robert I was the main acquirer of land for the family estate, his son Robert II was a Justice of the Peace for Suffolk, while another son, John, was MP for Ipswich between 1547–53 and Solicitor General in 1552. Robert I's grandson Robert III married into the Naunton family of Alderton, themselves related to the Wingfields who had a park at nearby Letheringham; his brother John, Gentleman Usher to both Queen Elizabeth and King James 1 and Groom of the Privy Chamber to Charles I, married Winifred Windsor, a cousin of Elizabeth and James. Robert V married Anne Talmache, whose family owned the park at nearby Helmingham. Robert VI — a Royalist Colonel in the Civil War — married Dorothy Jegen, the daughter of the bishop of Norwich, whose own mother was wife of the bishop of London. The family's social trajectory and ambition is clear. Otley Hall itself was undergoing various phases of enlargement and aggrandisement throughout this period.¹⁹ A park to enhance its setting would have been a valuable status symbol to show off to the world. Unfortunately for the Gosnold family, their rise in status and fortune was to prove short-lived, and their park faded quietly away along with the family who created it.

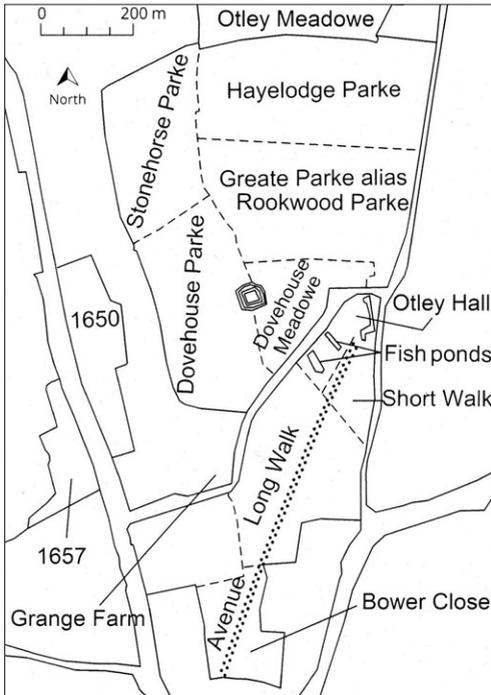


FIG. 152 – The conjectured boundaries of the park's compartments to the north of the highway, and the avenue and fish ponds on the south side. The internal boundaries are based on Johnson's 1806 maps, which are also the source of the Long Walk, Short Walk and Bower Close field-names. The years are the purchase dates of two small farms which completed the ring-fencing of the estate based around Otley Hall.

There is no mention of a park in Robert I's 1544 list of lands; however, the probable location can be deduced with certainty by comparing his field list with the descriptions of the family's lands in legal documents of a century or so later. In several cases Robert I's list gives only minimal abutments, so it is not easy to locate all the fields and parcels of land with absolute precision, but it is certain that fields called *Estewoodefeilde* (seventeen acres), *Holmes Feilde* 'with the grove' (just under eleven acres) and the 'feilde before the gates' (thirty-two acres) lay north of the former main highway passing immediately north of Otley Hall (today downgraded to a restricted byway), and west of the current minor road leading to Framdsen (Figs 151 and 152). In 1544 the large field north of *Estewoodefeilde*, *Otley Meadow*, was owned by the Tollemache family of Helmingham, an island surrounded by Gosnold lands; this would have limited the extent of a park to the north of Otley Hall.²⁰

Moving forward to the Civil War period, Robert Gosnold VI found himself in financial straits in 1646 after having to pay a substantial fine to repossess his estate around Otley Hall following its sequestration by the Parliamentarians. The core demesne block of Netherhall had already been mortgaged in 1633, and the western block of the Netherhall demesne near Ashbocking Green was sold in

1641, suggesting a need to raise some capital even before the war. In 1646 the mortgaged core demesne block was sold for £975.²¹ Demesne holdings and manors in Swilland and Witesham passed out of Gosnold ownership at much the same time.²² In 1649 some land closer to Otley Hall was mortgaged, including ‘enclosures’ called the *Greate Parke* and *Hayelodge Parke*. This suggests that those parts of the park were, out of financial necessity, potentially dispensable. The rental valuation of the estate made in 1646 shows Robert Gosnold VI holding land worth just £20, while William Bucknell held the largest tenancy, worth £60; although his holding cannot be identified with absolute confidence, it seems likely that it must have included much, if not all, of the park. The implication is that the park had been disparked by 1646 and was being used as tenanted farmland.

The 1649 mortgage was paid off, but some twenty years later that same land plus much more was first of all mortgaged, and finally, in 1669–71, sold, together with the rest of the Otley estate and the lordship of Netherhall manor.²³ The purchaser was Sir Anthony Deane, MP for Harwich, who probably knew the estate from his time working as a master shipwright in Harwich; as Commissioner of the Navy, a post he held from 1680, he is recorded as buying oak timber for thirty ships from Otley Wood.²⁴ As far as the park is concerned, the key point to note is that in the legal documents attached to the mortgages and sale, many of the fields described in 1544 had new names, particularly those close to Otley Hall; despite a discrepancy in the acreage given, the three fields mentioned above (*Estewoodefeilde*, *Holmes Feilde* and the ‘feilde before the gates’), immediately north of the road north of the hall, are clearly identifiable as *Hayelodge Parke* and *The Greate Parke alias Rookwood Parke* (twenty-four and twenty-six acres respectively; both first mentioned in 1649).²⁵ There were also fields called *Dovehouse Parke Close* (twenty acres, seventeen perches; also called *Dovehouse Parke alias Dovehouse Meadowe*; the first mention of the dovehouse so far found is in 1633) and *Stonehorse Parke* (seventeen acres, two roods, also first mentioned in 1633). The double-moated dovehouse stood in *Dovehouse Meadowe alias Little Dovehouse Meadowe*. These four ‘parkes’ and meadowland occupied the ninety-five acre block of former free land, and together represent the extent of the park (Fig. 152).

The 1544 and 1633–71 field-name evidence suggests that the park, rather than being a single, undivided entity, may have been compartmented throughout its existence, retaining the boundaries of the field parcels from which it was created. The *Greate Parke* contained a barn, probably on the same site as the present barn, now converted to residential use. *Hayelodge Parke* also suggests a building on site, and that the parcel was not grazed until after haysel, while the ‘meadow’ names between the hall and the dovehouse imply an open area, in essence a laund, perhaps again with a grazing regime following haysel, the open space allowing a view from the hall to the moated dovehouse over the road. The *Stonehorse Parke* may have been reserved for grazing by horses.²⁶ Liddiard notes a later Elizabethan and Stuart trend to compartmentalise parks, both old and newly created, mainly to allow more flexible management and the possibility of a better economic return from the land.²⁷ Certainly two of the four ‘parks’ in Otley were mortgaged as definable units, suggesting that clear, fixed divisions existed between the various compartments. Furthermore, in 1669 *Hayelodge Parke* was said to be divided into two closes by a dead fence, adding weight to the notion that the park was by then being farmed conventionally; Dorothy Gosnold was occupant of the hall in 1666 and 1669, but by 1674 the 1669 tenant farmer, Thomas Edwards, was the named occupant.²⁸ From that time on until the early decades of the twentieth century, when Hall Farm and Poplar Farm were merged and Poplar farmhouse became the tenants’ dwelling, the hall functioned as a tenant farmhouse.

The first extant maps of the former Gosnold farms (1806) show that by then the seventeenth-century fields had been further reduced in size, and there are just two ‘park’

names surviving: *Park Field* and *Stonehorse Park*.²⁹ They lie some way apart from each other and both are small compared with their seventeenth-century namesakes; based on this map evidence alone, one would suspect that the ‘park’ name on these nineteenth-century maps simply meant ‘enclosure’, rather than pointing to the former existence of a park. It is the earlier block of four contiguous ‘park’ names that points more definitively to an actual park here.³⁰

In 1685 Sir Anthony Deane sold the estate to the Rebows of Wivenhoe Hall in Essex.³¹ Both Sir Anthony and the Rebows were absentee landlords for the entire duration of their ownership.³² As noted above, Otley Hall had become a tenanted farmhouse, albeit somewhat grander than the average. With no gentry in occupation, a park here would have no further use as such; if it had not already been disparked after the Civil War, it was certainly worked as a conventional farm after the sale.³³

A switch from ‘park’ to, say, a commercial dairy or cattle-rearing farm would have been hardly noticeable. A late medieval deer park, with its prominent pale, was held to be ‘something special, distinct from the common working countryside’.³⁴ The extant documents make no mention of a park bank or pale around the Gosnolds’ park; there are certainly no discernible traces of a bank in the landscape today. Indeed, what evidence there is suggests that the park as a whole and its individual compartments were only ever bounded by ordinary hedges and ditches. The only surviving earthwork in Otley’s park is the moat (now single, rather than double) which once surrounded the dovehouse. A status park displaying the contemporary desire for a wood-pasture and sylvan landscape would, in the clayland area of Suffolk, have been almost identical to much of the surrounding countryside, where dairying was the prime agricultural activity. For example, the 1577 description of the northern part of the Overhall core demesne in Otley includes a laund (*Lawne Meade*), a coppice wood, two parcels called ‘thickes’, and ‘grasse closes’;³⁵ arable land was confined to a block of three fields in the south.³⁶ The language of this description could easily conjure up an image of a park, but as far as we know that demesne block was never a park. Early eighteenth-century maps of the adjoining Helmingham estate and, indeed, a number of the early nineteenth-century ones, show many enclosures quite densely studded with trees, both in infield ‘rows’ and randomly spaced (and in the case of some of the early nineteenth-century examples, in the process of being cleared).³⁷ A significant number of these eighteenth-century enclosures were well over forty acres in size, with some in excess of sixty or even eighty. Such enclosures must have looked very similar to a wood-pasture park. Seventeenth-century High Suffolk park landscapes similar to that at Otley Hall probably endured long after disparkment, simply blending back into the wood-pasture landscape around them.

On the south side of the road separating Otley Hall and the park, the Gosnolds owned or occupied a block of about forty-five acres of land, hardly enough to make an impressive park surrounding the house. This land was also encumbered with at least one farmstead and a ‘piece’ of glebeland, and to complicate things further, some of it belonged to Overhall manor. Thus, the area ‘over the road’ was a more appropriate location to create a park. However, the immediate environs of the house also incorporated status features, namely fishponds and an avenue (Fig. 152). Fishponds, as ‘an indispensable adjunct to every gentleman’s house’, were increasingly seen as an important asset, providing a further local source of food alongside the deer in the park, dovescotes and rabbit warrens.³⁸ Isaac Johnson’s 1806 map of Hall Farm shows two more or less parallel ponds close to the hall. These ponds still exist, albeit joined together in the latter years of the twentieth century to make an ‘H’ shape.³⁹ Although the ponds are not identical in size (the southern one is almost twice the size of its neighbour), their shape and juxtaposition suggest a deliberate formal creation. Williamson considers such formal ponds to be of predominantly post-Restoration date, which would not fit well with the

history of the hall in its last Gosnold years.⁴⁰ Suffolk examples are under-researched, so it is difficult to ascribe even a broad date to the fishponds, but logic suggests those adjacent to Otley Hall, along with the avenue, are likely to be of later sixteenth- rather than seventeenth-century date, possibly contemporary with the establishment of the park. Rowe's earliest potential example of such 'landscape' fishponds in a park in Hertfordshire is 1530, in a royal park near Hunsdon.⁴¹

The avenue is first depicted on Isaac Johnson's 1806 map of Hall Farm. It runs south-westwards from the hall to the edge of the estate land, a distance of a little over seven hundred and fifty metres. The avenue is also shown on the 1837 1in Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1816–20); but not on the tithe map of 1840 or any subsequent map. The 1806 map names a land parcel by the hall, encompassing the avenue, the *Short Walk*; the next parcel further along the avenue was called the *Long Walk*, both names implying some sort of recreational activity. In fact, the avenue continued across the next field, *Bower Close*, too. Was this avenue a feature of a 'little park' around the house, a tree- or shrub-lined path to some sort of shady bower, a kind of 'there and back' genteel walk extending out into the countryside? As with the fishponds, Williamson regards such avenues as predominantly post-Restoration features, noting, however, that one had been created at Hengrave in or by 1587.⁴² By the time of the Restoration, the Gosnold estate was already in sharp decline, so the creation of an avenue around that time seems unlikely. Frustratingly, the first record found so far of the field-name *Bower Close* is post-Restoration (1669), and that of *Long Walk* and *Short Walk* 1806; if the suggested association of the avenue with a shady bower is correct, the 1669 name tends to confirm that the avenue was already established by then.⁴³ Logically, it is probable that it was created at the same time as the fishponds. The glebe terrier of 1635 states that land, unnamed in the terrier, but identifiable as 1669 *Bower Close*, was then in the 'tenure and occupation' of Robert Gosnold, implying a direct association with the hall at that time. By 1669, on the eve of the Gosnolds' sale of the estate, *Bower Close* appears to have become part of the farm tenancy based at what is now Grange Farm, suggesting that any formal use of the land around the hall had been given over to a more pragmatic use that gave a more economic return.⁴⁴ Like the park, the avenue would possibly have had no status value to the post-Gosnold era tenants, especially as it lay partly in Hall Farm and partly in Grange Farm by then. A relatively early establishment date might explain why subsequent tenants left the avenue in place until the early decades of the nineteenth century, its defining lines of trees perhaps too well-established to warrant the cost of grubbing; alternatively, the avenue may have afforded shade and shelter to livestock initially, but was deemed to be an obstacle when land suitable for highly profitable wheat production was at a premium in the Napoleonic War period. The line of part of the avenue is still retained today in the form of a hedged field boundary.

Eric Sandon had noted the avenue on the early Ordnance Survey map; he considered it to be 'the sort of approach to be expected in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' to a manor house of importance.⁴⁵ The problem with this view is that the avenue lay to the rear of the hall. Before the early years of the twentieth century, when the then owner, Mrs Sherston, made a new entrance in the former stair-turret on the southern side of the house, the main approach was from the road immediately to the north.⁴⁶ Robert I's 1544 list of lands certainly implies a main entrance from that northern road. Given, too, that the avenue did not link up the wider road network, Sandon's view of its purpose cannot be substantiated.⁴⁷ It seems most likely that the avenue was a recreational feature that could be utilised by residents and guests at the hall without having to cross the public highway that divided the hall from its park.

Mention ought to be made of one other status feature — albeit a mile away from their park — with possible Gosnold associations: a rabbit warren.⁴⁸ When the old Netherhall core demesne (later Gull Farm) was mortgaged in 1633, the legal documents reveal field-names



FIG. 153 – Extract from a map of 1776 showing the field-name Warren; north to the right. The warren house mentioned in 1633 had gone by 1776. The field is still called Warrens today. The map is part of the Christopher Hawkins Collection (reproduced by kind permission).

Warren Close, Warren Pigtle and Warren Howse Pigtle [sic]; a Netherhall court book mentions ‘Le Castle Ditches, now commonly called Le Warren’ in 1692.⁴⁹ These field-names may simply be a memory of an earlier warren attached to the Netherhall manorial premises before they were abandoned — we know there had been a dovehouse there in 1344 (as there had also been on the Overhall manor house complex), so at that time the manor was certainly seeking to have access to managed food sources.⁵⁰ However, the few surviving reeve’s and minister’s accounts from that time make no mention of either a warren or rabbits. Nor are the early field-names in the accounts suggestive of a warren.⁵¹ An alternative scenario could be that the warren, complete with a warrener’s house, was established after the Gosnolds acquired the manor. Certainly the phraseology of the 1692 court book entry tends to confirm that the alternative name was a comparatively recent coinage. Rabbits thrived best in certain circumstances, ideally a sandy soil, with sloping terrain. The heavy, flat Beccles 1 Association clay soil around Otley Hall would not have been ideal.⁵² Although still far from perfect, the more amenable Hanslope Association soils where the Netherhall manor house had stood would have been more suitable, especially as there is sand close to the surface in the vicinity.⁵³ It could be that after abandonment, the sloping banks and ditches of the castle motte, and also, perhaps, the deserted site of the manor house and yards, had been converted into a warren, and thus became a detached food source for Otley Hall. However, the Dade family acquired the manor of Netherhall in 1646, and they also owned the eastern demesne block (now Gull Farm) from this time until well into the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Whether the warren had already been abandoned by the Gosnolds by 1646 (that is, at more or less the same time as the park may have been disparked), or whether the Dades acquired it as a going concern

and maintained it for a while longer, is unknown. The first known map of the area (1776) shows no building where the warren house may have once stood (Fig. 153). For now the dates of the warren as a functioning feature remain elusive.

The experience of recent park researchers such as Hoppitt in Suffolk, Pittman in Kent and Rowe in Hertfordshire shows that definitive evidence for some parks is hard to come by, and this Otley example is yet another case in point. There are far more unanswered questions than hard facts. However, that should not deter us from looking. Cavill's observation that 'park' field-names meaning simply 'enclosure' are rarer outside the south-west of England (see note 30) suggests that it would certainly be worth recording the many isolated 'park' field-names in Suffolk, including those first appearing on tithe maps, to try to determine if they really do refer to lost deer or status parks rather than simple enclosures (names such as Wren's Park, a humorous appellation for a very small parcel of land, would obviously be excluded).⁵⁵ Ascertaining the age, quality and status of the associated house, together with the social standing of earlier owners and tenants, would be an essential part of the research. Additional signs, such as remnants of an avenue or formal water features may survive in the immediate environs. By way of illustration an isolated 'park' field-name (*Parkeclose*) associated with the former Gosnold property now known as Otley High House has recently come to light. The name is recorded in 1632 in a manorial court book for the Clopton manors of Kingshall, Brendhall and Wascolies.⁵⁶ The house is grade II* listed, and displays many features not found in an ordinary farmhouse. From the end of the sixteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth, the High House was the largest farm in the parish. The limited information in the court book means the field cannot be located with precision as yet, but the name maybe hints at a possible small park immediately north of the High House. At this stage, all we can say with certainty is that, if there was a park there, it was created in 1632 or earlier. From a range of other documents and sources we can set the field-name in the context of the landholding and of some of the earlier owners and occupiers, while noting the presence on the ground of a 65m long canal-like water feature (which could well be later) to the north of the house. But, as in so many other cases, further evidence is needed to confirm beyond doubt the former existence of a park there.

We have considerably more evidence at Otley Hall, but even so there are still significant gaps in our knowledge. We can take educated guesses at the possible dates of the park's creation and demise, but all we can say with any certainty is that it was in existence between 1606 and 1632, and that it was probably compartmented from the outset, retaining pre-existing field boundaries. We have no hard date for disparkment, although the likelihood is that its compartments were increasingly farmed out over a period around the time of the Civil War, gradually, almost imperceptibly, merging back into farmland as economic necessity became the priority. We have no evidence for the avenue and the fishponds before 1806, although the 'Bower' field-name suggests that the avenue was in existence by 1669. The warren appears to be a post-medieval creation, but we do not know for sure if it was the Gosnolds who created it. If no more documentary evidence comes to light, its full history may never be known. For now, at least, much of the history of Otley's short-lived park must continue to be elusive.

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NOTES

- 1 Following on from two Johns, there were seven successive Roberts, two of whom predeceased their fathers. The estate was finally disposed of by two Lionels. John I – *fl.* 1525–d.post-1472/3; John II – d.1511; Robert I – *c.*1485–1572; Robert II – 1512–59; Robert III – *c.*1534–1615; Robert IV – *c.*1560–96; Robert V – *c.*1587–1632/3; Robert VI – 1611–58; Robert VII – *c.*1634–68; Lionel I (Robert VII's brother) – *c.*1640–1702/3; Lionel II (Lionel I's son) – *c.*1676–1711/2.
- 2 Copinger 1909, vol. 3, 83–5.
- 3 ESRO, ACC 560–6.
- 4 Martin 2008, 13.
- 5 The names of the manors reflect the location of their seats in the landscape. The Netherhall manorial site was just above the 35m contour, that of Overhall just above 55m. Otley Hall sits on the 65m contour, too high to be the original Netherhall.
- 6 In 1543 Thomas Geldersleve was holding *Netherhall Clos* with *le Halleyerde*, and a pightle adjoining, 8 acres together; plus another 17 acres adjoining. This is identifiable as the site of the manor, at the eastern end of the Netherhall core block demesne. Thomas is not mentioned after 1544, nor is the land; it seems likely that the Gosnolds took the land in hand, SA/I, HB11/1/117.
- 7 SA/I, HB11/1/132 and 134.
- 8 SA/I, HB11/1/118. The court was held on 16 October 1607; the horse had been caught a year earlier, on 5 October 1606. After proclamations at Wickham Market and Woodbridge in an attempt to establish ownership, the horse was taken 'without licence' by Francis Higate, bailiff to the king, 'for the use of the king'.
- 9 HHA, T/Hel(S)/39/1.
- 10 SA/I, HB11/1/118.
- 11 A rental of 1400 for Netherhall manor makes no mention of John I, but that of 1425 confirms his holding land acquired from the Pers (also spelt Piers/Peys) family, SA/I, HB11/1/136, HB11/1/132. This almost certainly included the site of what became Otley Hall. In 1358 John Piers held land abutting the southern boundary of *Estwodefeld*, which was named after Henry Estwode, tenant of 'a messuage and 30 acres of land' (identifiable as the later *Estwodefeld*) prior to William Pers, SA/I, HB11/1/132.
- 12 Copinger 1909, vol. 3, 83. Copinger says the manor was vested in John Gosnold shortly after 1454, passing to Robert I in 1470 and then to Robert II. This does not necessarily imply Gosnold ownership of the manor; they were possibly acting as stewards of the manor, on behalf of the absentee lord, or maybe they had leased it. The Gosnolds appear consistently as jurors rather than lords in the earliest court rolls (second half of the fifteenth century); John Cresner [*sic*] held his first court on 10 April 1505, and is noted as lord in the 1528 rental. Robert Gosnold I held his first court on 16 April 1543, soon after purchasing the manor, SA/I HB11/1/117.
- 13 SA/I, HB11/1/135.
- 14 Liddiard 2019, 176.
- 15 Hoppitt 2020, chapter 9, especially 235; Liddiard 2019, 181–2.
- 16 Rowe 2020, 26–7; Williamson 2000, 27–8; Hoppitt 2020, 235, 278.
- 17 Mileson 2007.
- 18 Hoppitt 2007, 146–64; 2020, 30–3.
- 19 Hagger 2001.
- 20 The Civil War caused the Gosnolds great financial hardship, but they nevertheless bought Otley Meadow from the Tollemaches in 1649 for £380, and shortly afterwards (in 1650 and 1657) bought two small farms adjoining the Otley estate, SA/I, HB78:935, (13) and (16). These purchases completed the ring-fencing of the estate, but it would have taken years to recoup the outlay from the rental income. Robert Gosnold (probably III, possibly IV) was leasing Otley Meadow in 1585, HHA, T/Hel/24/3, when the size was given as 37 acres, 1 rood, 11 perches, but by the early 1600s it was being let to Bastings Hall, Framsdon, immediately north of the Gosnold estate. It is not clear how or when the parcel was reduced to 26 acres.
- 21 The Gosnolds leased out the manor temporarily at this period. Henry Dade held his first court as lord of

- the manor on 30 September 1644; Sir Lionel Talmage held his first court in April 1652, before Robert Gosnold (VI?) resumed for the court of 12 December 1653. Anthony Deane's first court was held on 12 July 1670, SA/I, HB11/1/120.
- 22 Copinger 1908, vol. 2, 366 (Swilland); Copinger 1909, vol. 3, 121–2 (Witnesham).
- 23 SA/I, HB78:935; SA/I, T10/5.
- 24 EAM, 11714.
- 25 The acreages do not quite tally, but there is no doubt about the general location of the fields. Many of the field boundaries here were modified in the High Farming period of the nineteenth century, so definitive boundaries of the park, in particular the internal ones, are impossible to depict with absolute certainty.
- 26 Pittman 2011, 103–4. A statute was passed in Henry VIII's reign requiring park owners to breed strong horses, using mares of at least 13 hands and stallions of at least 14 hands. Elizabeth I stipulated two mares in a park with a perimeter of one mile (which would have included the park in Otley), more in larger parks up to a maximum of four.
- 27 Liddiard 2019. A later (eighteenth-century) exception is Helmingham, where two adjoining parks and a number of adjacent fields were amalgamated to make a single entity, Podd 2009, 42–8.
- 28 Hervey 1905. Earlier hearth tax lists 1666 and undated [but probably between 1666 and 1674] in TNA, E179/183/616, part 5 and E179/183/610; SA/I, HB78:935; SA/I, T10/5; Liddiard 2019, 192.
- 29 SA/I, HD11/475/446.
- 30 Cavill 2018, 317–8, emphasises that 'park' names referring to a deer or status park are difficult to differentiate from those where the 'park' element means 'enclosure'. However, he notes that 'park' meaning 'enclosure' is rarer outside the south-west of England.
- 31 The whole of the Rebows' Essex and Suffolk estate, apart (it seems) from Otley, was mapped between 1728 and 1734 by three Wivenhoe-based surveyors (Jeremiah Loan, Joseph Kendall and Hayward Rush; ERO, C47 Box 61; ERO, C47 Box 60; ERO, D/DU 27/1). It seems unlikely that the Otley land was not mapped. If any reader has knowledge of any maps of the Rebows' Otley estate from this time, the author would like to hear from them (via the SIAH secretariat).
- 32 The Rebows sold the estate in 1900.
- 33 There seem to be few references to categoric disparkment as a consequence of the Civil War. Anne Rowe (pers. comm. and 2020) notes a handful of examples in Hertfordshire. In Suffolk, the Old Park in Helmingham was converted into a farm in 1648, but the adjoining New Park was enlarged at the same time. The Old Park was soon taken back in hand, and Old and New Parks were amalgamated in the mid-eighteenth century: see note 27.
- 34 Williamson 2000, 27.
- 35 These were presumably wood-pasture or woodland of some sort; cp., for example, Assington, Staverton, Ufford and Witnesham Thicks in today's landscape, and others, now lost, at Badwell, Langham and Livermere depicted on Hodkinson's 1783 map of Suffolk, Dymond 1972.
- 36 ESRO, ACC 560-6.
- 37 Otley and Helmingham were on the southern edge of the area which Young described as 'the seat of the dairies' at the end of the eighteenth century, Young 1813, 199.
- 38 Williamson 2000, 24; 2007, 156–9
- 39 See the illustration in Hagger 2001, 40.
- 40 Williamson 2000, chapter 3.
- 41 Rowe 2020, 26.
- 42 Williamson 2000, 33; Hoppitt 2020, 260–2. The entrance avenue at nearby Helmingham falls into Williamson's post-Restoration surge, being established around 1680, Podd 2009, 45–6. Early maps of Hengrave show some sort of feature at the end of the avenue there, possibly a viewing mound or tower. These 'recreational' avenues often led to focal points, be it (in the case of Otley) to a bower; or, as at the end of the 'Thorn Walk' in Helmingham park, to a summer house and garden.
- 43 Cavill 2018, 41, defines 'Bower' as "'Land with a cottage or rough dwelling" [OE *būr*]; adding that 'the "romantic" sense of *bower* was a late development, but may have influenced some names.' The context of the Otley example seems to reflect this later meaning.
- 44 The field has been part of Grange Farm ever since.
- 45 Sandon 1977, 195.
- 46 Sandon 1977, 195; Hagger 2001, 39.
- 47 The Overhall court rolls contain an entry where Robert Gosnold VI is given licence to build a stable on the manorial waste by the church, in order to shelter his horses during services, HHA, T/Hel/39/2, court held 16 September 1647. Although the practical value of sheltering his horses is clear, this personal stable was doubtless also meant to be a status symbol. Are there other examples of this in the county?

- 48 Rowe 2020, 15; Williamson 2007, chapter 6.
 49 1633: SAI, HB78:935 (9), (10), (11); 1692: SAI, HB11/1/124–5.
 50 SAI, HB11/1/136 (Netherhall, 1344); SAI, J400/4 Davy MSS and SAI, HD1538/314/1 (Overhall, 1361).
 51 All the older field-names there (e.g. *Whynes Yrland*, *Reyland*, *Castellinclos*) had gone by 1633, replaced by the ‘Warren’ names. The field is still called Warrens today.
 52 Williamson 2007, 12. However, he notes that ‘at a pinch’ they can make their burrows in the heaviest clays. Helmingham (on similar soil to Otley Hall) had a *Conyferground* in 1646, just outside the Old Park; it was incorporated into the New Park in 1648, Podd 2009, 43; HHA, T/He/25/7.
 53 Soil Survey of England and Wales, map sheet 4. There were two sandpits in the vicinity, on adjoining farms; one of the pits was opposite a field called Sandy Field in 1799, SAI, HD11/475/428.
 54 SAI, HB78:935 (12).
 55 The 75 acre park in Framsdén, adjoining Otley, first recorded in 1525, was reduced to 51 acres between 1578 and 1585. It disappears from the records after 1646. The tithe map reveals not only an isolated ‘park’ field-name at Framsdén Hall, but also ‘Lawn’ and ‘Stone Horse’ names. Depending on context, these latter names, Lawn in particular, might also afford a clue to lost parks.
 56 Huntington Library, San Marino, California, HM 73702.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EAM	<i>East Anglian Miscellany</i>
ERO	Essex Record Office
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
HHA	Helmingham Hall Archives
SAI	Suffolk Archives, Ipswich
TNA	The National Archives

