

The demesne lands and parks of Sir Henry Maynard in 1594

by J.M. Hunter

The rediscovery of the 1594 map of Little Easton, Tilty and Broxted sheds invaluable light on the evolution of settlement and field patterns on the Essex Till from the 13th to 16th century; first, in confirming the ubiquity of former strip-farming in small common-fields based on hamlets, which were fast disappearing when the first estate maps were being made. Secondly, the concentration of demesne arable into large, often very large fields, which were sub-divided into smaller units from the 14th century onwards. The paper looks in detail at the demesne and two parks of Little Easton.

Introduction

The former mansion of Easton Lodge, set in its huge park, is remembered as the seat of 'Daisy' Countess of Warwick, and as a fitting scene for the entertainment of the future Edward VII and the Marlborough House set. A bird's-eye view engraving of 1756 shows the earlier house of 1597 and park in some detail (Plate 1), and from that date its history is reasonably well known with many prints and, latterly, photographs surviving. The First Edition OS six inch map (surveyed in 1875-6), with the remarkable standard of cartography we now envy, shows every free-standing tree in the extensive areas of wood-pasture and the phantom lines of the formal rides and avenues that were depicted as already mature in the engraving of 1756.

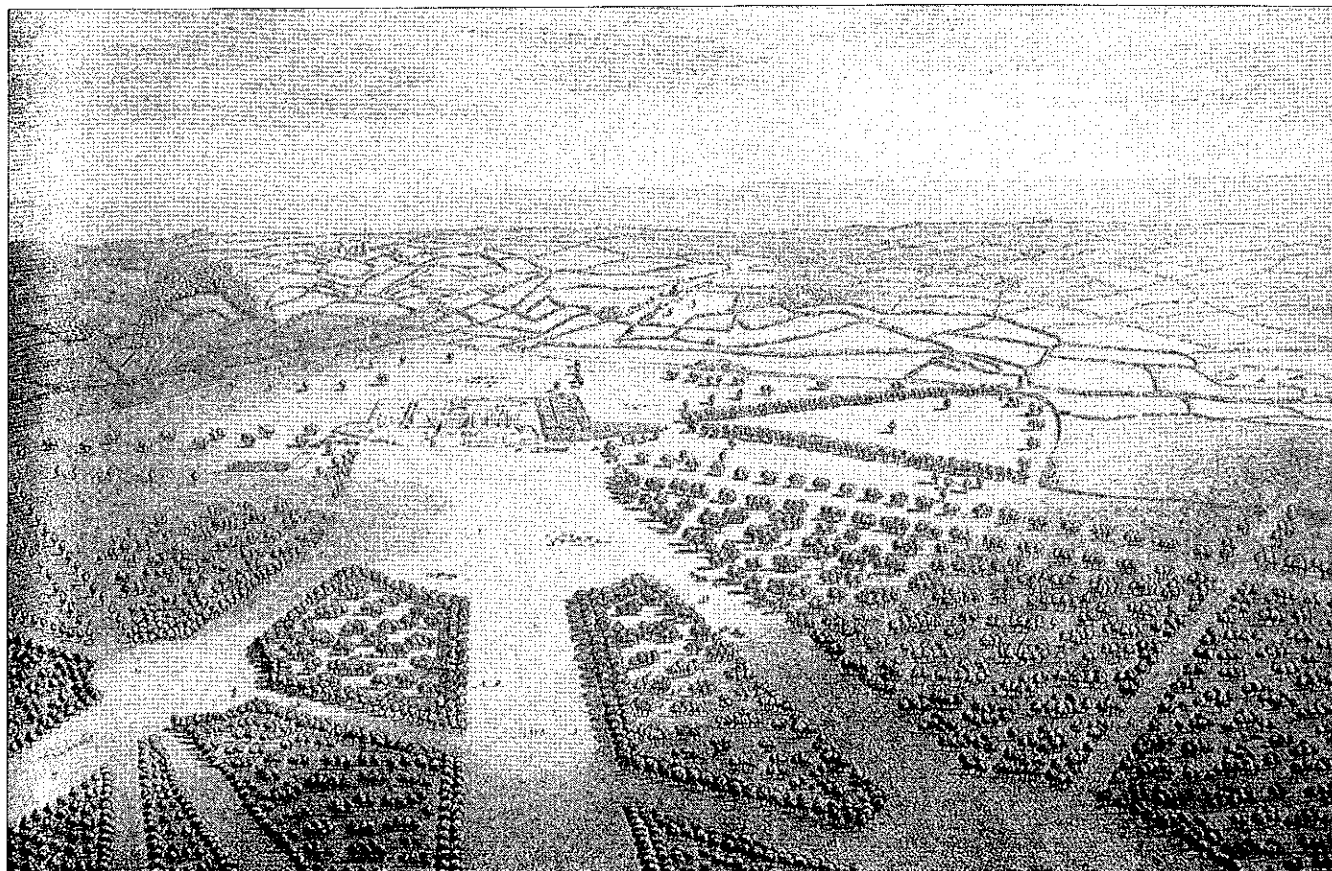


Plate 1 Easton Lodge, a Seat of The Right Hon'ble Charles Lord Maynard in Essex.
(J. Skynner del. 1756. P.C. Canot sculpt. ERO D/DMg Z1).

levels until the early 18th century.⁸ However, despite this massive loss the landscapes of these maps appear busy and prosperous, slowly changing and adapting to new circumstances in a considered manner suggesting agreement rather than coercion. These changes reflected a degree of redistribution following population decline, the engrossment of customary lands (arable strips), the demolition of cottages – especially around greens – and the merger of tenures.

The 14th century also saw the decline of villenage and by the second decade of the 15th century labour services in Essex had faded away. This is likely to have encouraged peasant proprietorship and the consolidation by agreement of strips in the common fields into discrete closes – a process largely complete by the late 16th century, except in the north-west corner of the county.⁹ The small size of the fields compared with those of Midland England, and their relationship to a settlement pattern based on hamlets, gave flexibility and an ability to change with a minimum of fuss if parties were agreed.

On the demesne lands of the Essex Boulder Clays, direct farming gave way to leasing over the course of the 14th century. Landlord interest in progressive estate maps show the subdivision of the arable fields, often huge, into smaller units for ease of leasing and rotations with livestock, the straightness of the new hedgerows contrasting with the sinuousness of the older. There is also the new fashion on demesne land for the narrow woods termed springs or shaws – an indication that amenity, or an appreciation of landscape quality was now a factor in estate management, as well as meeting a growing demand for faggots and charcoal. These features, fashionable in the 15th and 16th centuries, did not occur on the Maynard estate in the late 16th century, but there was no shortage of woodland then, situated in the parks and beside the site of Tilly Abbey.

To summarise, between the early 14th century and the late 16th century, considerable changes had taken place in tenurial practice with the ending of villenage, consolidation of strips in the common fields, and the sub-division of demesne arable into smaller units for letting. There was some increase in woodland, often on the margins of closes. Nevertheless, these changes were relatively minor looked at in the overall pattern of the landscape, where boundaries defining land-use, ownership and administration were in the main those established before 1300, in many cases a long time before.

The map of 1594

This fine map, the work of Ralph Agas of Stoke-by-Nayland, was believed to have perished in the fire which ravaged Easton Lodge in 1918, but by a stroke of extraordinary good fortune it safely re-emerged in

The founder of the great estate on which Lady Warwick's fortunes rested was her ancestor Sir Henry Maynard, secretary to Lord Burligh.¹ In 1588 he received a Crown grant of the manor of Tilly, the demesne lands and abbey complex of the former Cistercian house.² To this was added by grant the manor of Little Easton and a farm called Ravens, Broxted Hall and Brokehall (Little Broxted Hall).³ These contiguous estates (Fig. 2), which were coterminous with the parishes of Tilly, Little Easton and Broxted (excepting the manor of Chaureth, or Cherry Hall which covered the northern part of Broxted), were depicted on Ralph Agas' map of 1594 which has provided the information on which this paper is based.⁴

Subsequently in 1597, Maynard purchased the manor of Great Easton from one Oliver Cromwell of Hinchingsbroke in Huntingdonshire, and at the time of his death in 1610 he also owned the manor of Little Canfield Hall – the date of acquisition is unknown, but Easton Park extended onto land within this manor, so an arrangement had clearly been agreed and the boundary defined long before Maynard's time.⁵ His son William was made baron in 1620 and Morant reports that he acquired Great Canfield Park (150 acres, pale, and Canfield Lodge), and in 1749 a descendant owned Yardleys, a small manor in the parish of Thaxted.⁶

Early estate maps

The massive changes in land ownership which followed the Dissolution, much of it in royal grants or at knock-down prices as monastic land came on the market, amounted to perhaps a third of the kingdom. A benefit for posterity in this Age of Plunder, as W.G. Hoskins termed it, was the development of map-making as many of the new, upwardly mobile, landowners such as Henry Maynard commissioned mapped surveys of their estates. The art of cartography had arrived, and in the hands of masters such as the Walkers of Hammingfield and Ralph Agas achieved a high level of accuracy. Moreover, the pictorial convention of the time, which showed features in elevation, gives an insight into the working landscape of the late 16th century that escaped the mapping of later times. Examples are details such as chimney stacks on buildings and the spacing of trees in hedgerows.

I have suggested elsewhere that the landscapes depicted on the estate maps of this time had seen relatively little change since the early 14th century, which marked the end of the period of medieval high farming.⁷ In the course of that calamitous century crop failures, famine and murrains were followed by the Black Death which, with subsequent recurrences, resulted in a halving of the population in Essex by 1400. Population levels were very slow to recover and probably did not reach their former

THE DEMESNE LANDS AND PARKS OF SIR HENRY MAYNARD IN 1594

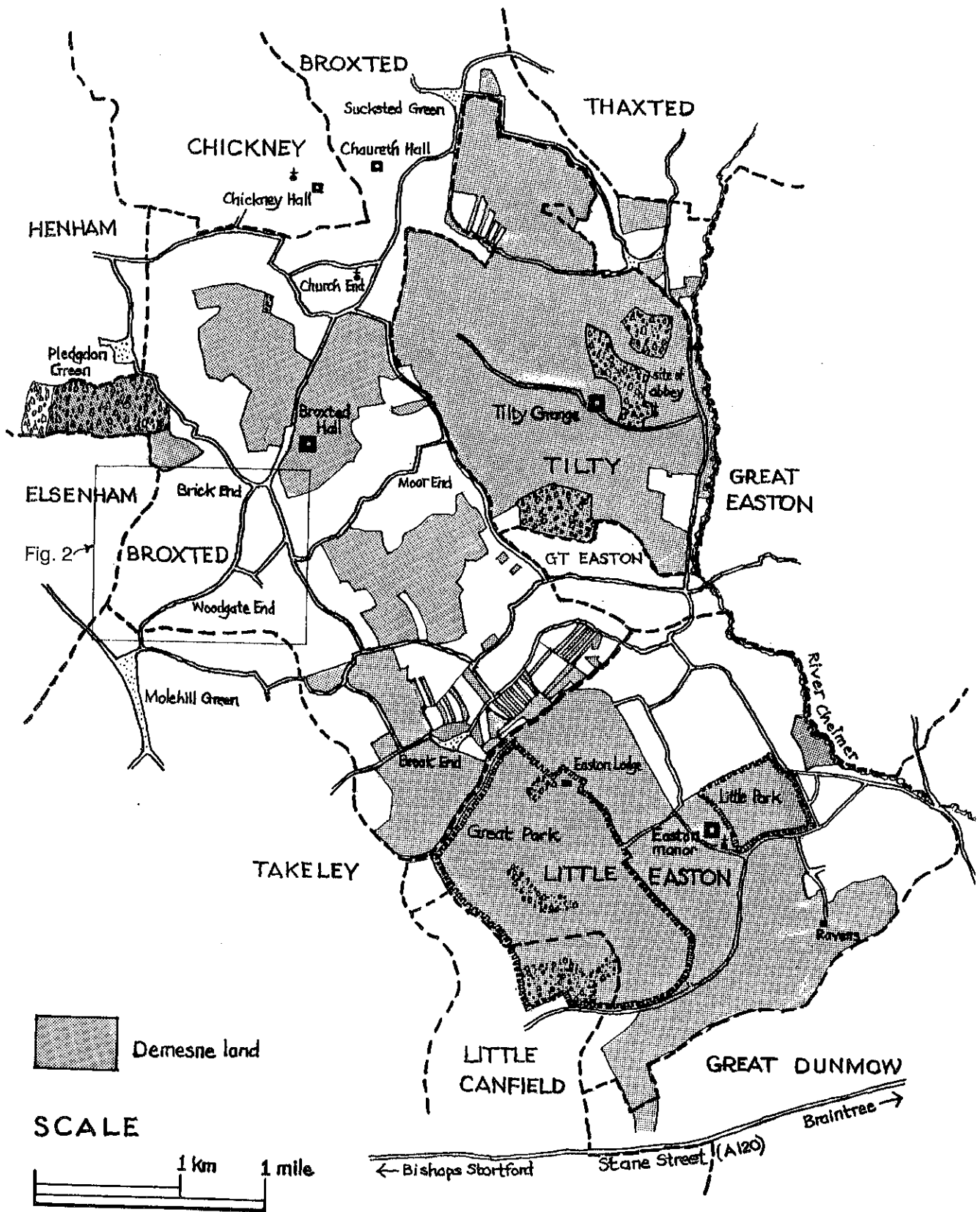


Fig. 1 Little Easton, Tilty and Broxted in 1594. The demesne land depicted on the 1594 map is shown shaded.

1997 from an Essex barn once owned by the Maynard estate. Except for some damage from damp over a small area covering the south-east corner of Little Easton, the condition is good. The red ink used for notations on the demesne land has survived very clearly; less clear but still legible, is the blue ink used for the lands held by the freeholders of the manor, but unfortunately the remaining notations, presumably for the copyholders' land, has mostly faded to illegibility.¹⁰ Buildings are evident from the russet colouring of their roofs, but the small scale of the map precludes the detail we find on the Walker maps, and the blurring of the principal complexes is tantalising - points where inevitably index fingers would have rested when the map was in use.

The demesne lands of the three manors (Fig. 1) are shown with their fields now divided into smaller units and leased out as described above, but comparison with the demesnes of Cressing Temple and Walthambury suggest that their boundaries were substantially those of 1300.¹¹ The demesne covered nearly three-quarters of the parish of Little Easton which will be considered in detail below. That of Broxted Hall was smaller, covering slightly less than half of the manor and consisting of three compact blocks: the first, compact and focussed on the hall but lying mainly to the north towards Church End; the second, also compact, lying to the south of Moor End. The third block lay mostly in common fields to the south beside the sub-manor of Broxkhal, in the hamlet of Broxkhal Green or Little Broxted (now Broxkend), and adjacent to the northern boundary of Little Easton. This suggests that Broxted Hall and its block is the late Saxon manor with the second block an early clearance of waste, while the Broxkhal fields were a part of the final expansion to the boundaries, propelled as elsewhere by the rising population of the 13th and 14th centuries, a joint enterprise with the tenants who held tofts around the green and strips in the fields. Confirmation comes from Domesday Book which lists two Broxted manors worth £8 and £4 respectively. Morant considered the larger to have been Chureth and the smaller Broxted Hall,¹² and it follows that Broxkhal was a post-Conquest sub-manor, established as clearance proceeded southward.

At Broxted an accommodation between landlord and tenantry is evident in the settlement pattern and an 'organic', evolved character is apparent in its boundaries and field patterns. Tilly is very different: there are no hamlets and the demesne covered almost the whole of the manor with only a very small relic common-field on its northern boundary and a copyhold farm beside the main valley road. Otherwise, in the 13th century it appears to have been a centralized, planned estate, focussed on the abbey and grange curia and with its inhabitants directly employed and housed. It was an efficient

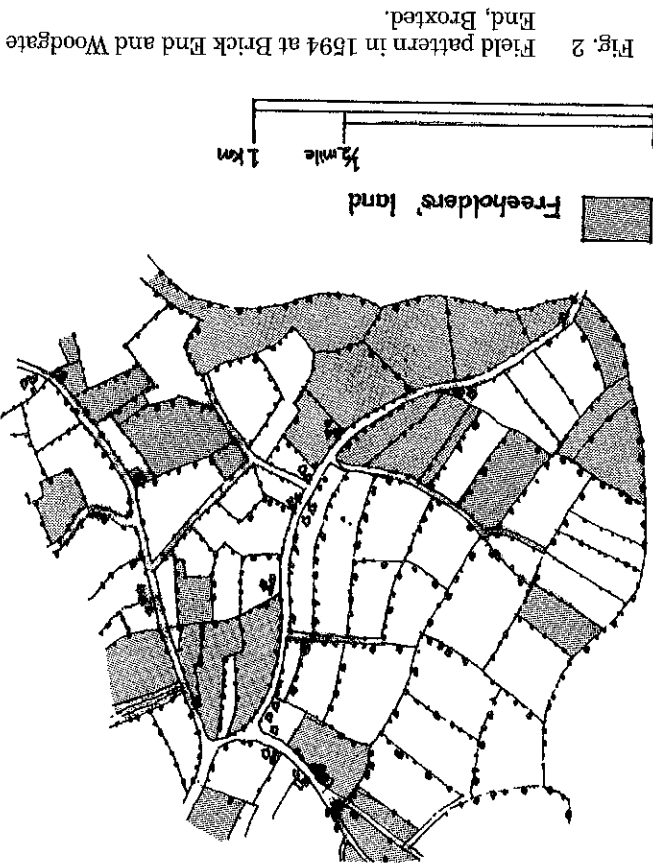


Fig. 2 Field pattern in 1594 at Brick End and Woodgate Rnd, Broxted.

agribusiness, as one would expect of a Cistercian house. Agas' map shows the huge arable expanse lying in the southern half of the manor sub-divided with straight hedges, planted when the decision was taken by the monks to lease out, and also a complex of woods on the higher land beside and above the abbey and behind the grange - the landscape setting of the abbey mattered to the monks.

Turning back to Broxted, the dwellings of the tenantry are shown loosely grouped in five hamlets of which only Broxkhal Green is named on the map; the others are roughly those later named Church, Brick, Woodgate and Moor Ends. Two further greens are shown in the parish of Broxted: Broxted Green beside the hall and Sucksted Green in the manor of Chureth Hall. The small number of greens is significant, reflecting the low density of population. In manors where population pressure was high in the 12th and 13th centuries, the establishment of greens preserved areas for common grazing as the remaining waste was converted to arable.¹³ In addition to the hamlets there are scattered crofts.

The map shows the process of enclosure of strips in the common-fields in many areas, notably beside Brookhall (i.e. Brook End) where it has barely begun (Fig. 1), and at Woodgate End where the process has been completed with all strips now consolidated into hedged closes (Fig. 2). There is no demesne land shown in this area of the manor, so the earlier clearance of woodland into common-fields and its

subsequent enclosure by the holders of the strips was probably undertaken with minimum interference from the manor provided that rents and customary taxes were paid. All hedges on the map are shown well stocked with trees, probably mostly pollards at this time as the underwood supplied the tenants' fuel. Timber trees were grown in the woodlands which the landlord retained in hand.

The relatively low population pressure in the 13th century, evident in the lack of common grazing areas, may relate to the position of Broxted and Little Easton on the margin of an area that was heavily wooded in the late 11th century according to the record of Domesday Book. The bizarre method in the Essex Domesday of measuring woodland in terms of grazing for pigs suggests that the three manors in the adjacent parish of Takeley could together graze 2,200 - one of the highest assessments in Essex. For Little Easton the figure is 800 - very high for its size - and Broxted 350, which must relate to the southern part of the parish. In

Broxted the theoretical pigs were to give way to crofts and common-fields, in Little Easton to a deer park.

Little Easton in 1594

Fig. 3 is a conjectural plan of the parish in 1300 with the manor house and church sited on a spring line near the centre, and shown on the map of 1594 as still comprising a substantial complex of buildings. The tenants holdings lay on the well draining land between the demesne and the river, with their dwellings mostly scattered along the main road, then as now, in a loose type of ribbon development. The topography (Fig. 4) is dissected plateau, typical of the Essex Till, where early settlement favoured the lighter, free draining soils of the main valley and its rills, the flatter land of the higher contours being much less attractive for farming and in 1086 providing the woodland that could graze notional pigs. The subsequent development of the demesne farmland, establishment of the two parks and

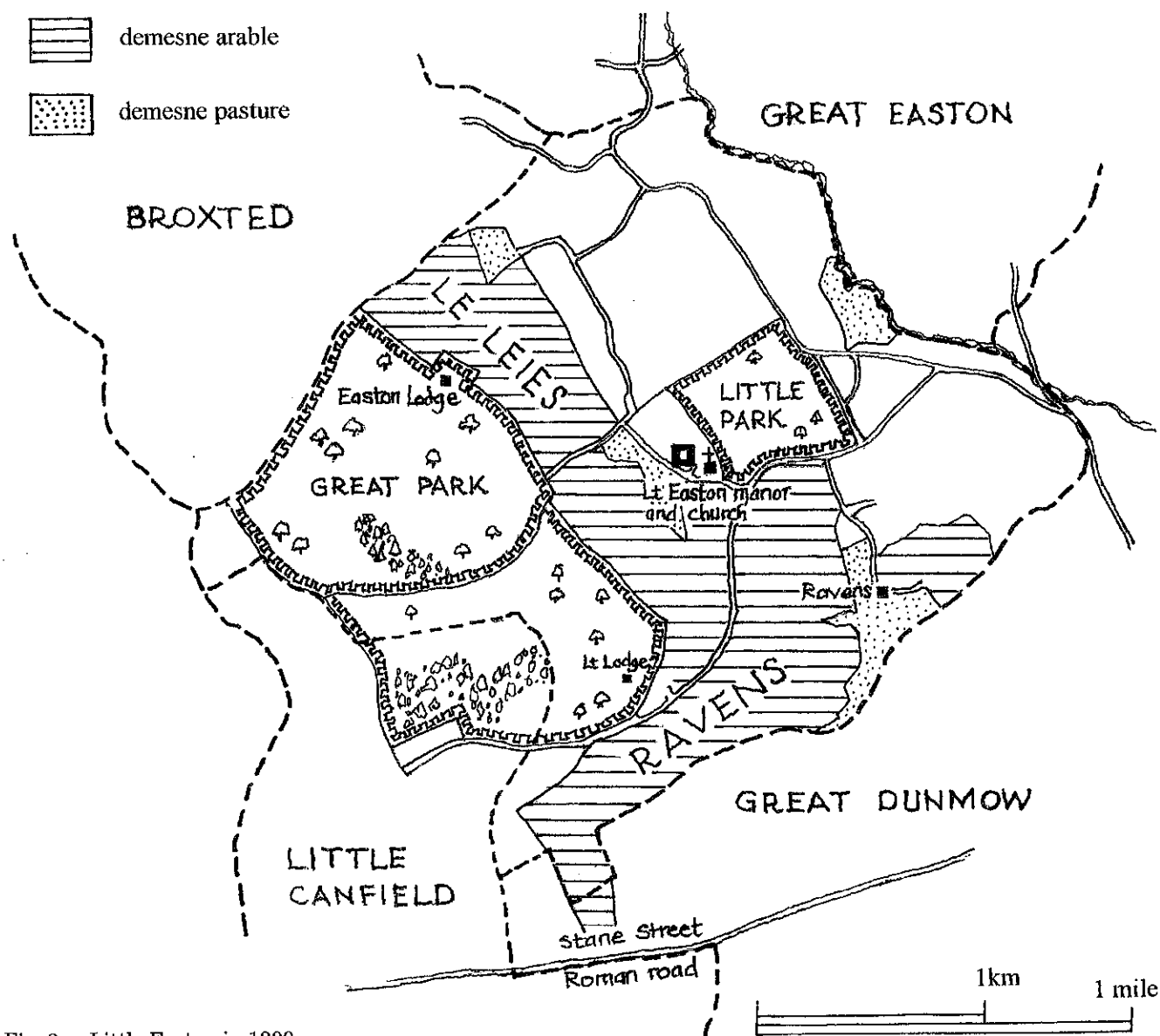


Fig. 3 Little Easton in 1300.

'percella Ravens'. So it seems likely that the Ravens sector of the manor consisted of a number of fields before the 14th century, which were mostly much larger than those shown in 1594, the largest being Le Leies. For convenience of management and variety of cropping, these were subsequently broken down into smaller areas. Some individual field names of 1593 are still in use: Holly oak, Satron and Bushfield. A large mead of 14 acres, Fulmedoe, lay beside the River Chelmer.

The Parks

In 1302 Matthew de Loveyn acquired a licence for two parks in Little Easton which, given its relatively late date, was almost certainly retrospective.¹⁴ The Essex at the time of Domesday Book had yielded to pressure from a fast growing population and was now farmland (as at Broxted), enclosed wood-pasture under the direct control of the manor (parkland), or intensively managed woodland, which would normally lie within the park on those manors which possessed one. Parks were prestigious, and to own two suggests high status for both the owner and the manor.

The Great Park appears to have been established in two phases. The first, comprised 245 acres, with its lodge - the site of the future mansion Easton Lodge - on a high point near the 100 metre contour. South of the lodge lay Le Launde, an open grassy area familiar in medieval parks. On the map it is shown sub-divided with half, beside the lodge, retained in hand, but with two smaller closes let out - Middle and Nether Launde. Three areas, all let, are described as 'quarters' - a term we encounter elsewhere in parks and royal forests from the early 14th century.¹⁵

At some stage the Park was extended southwards, enclosing a further 224 acres which included land in Little Canfield, and with the Little Lodge sited on the highest ground near the southern boundary. Three areas of woodland are shown retained in hand, but all other land is let.

As far as one can discern, for the map is faint at this point, Easton Lodge in 1594 was a house and much more substantial than the grandest park lodge, as for example, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge (actually Henry VIII's) in Epping Forest. The house appears to be a long building with two towers, fronted by a large court with corner buildings. Formal gardens lie behind, and to the north is what appears to be a large free-standing tower, perhaps not unlike the present water-tower as a landmark, although hardly approaching it in height. The later approach road to the mansion from Easton Manor had not then been built; a road (long gone) led directly into Le Launde and then passed, following no defined route, over the grass.

expansion to the boundaries of the manor, are considered below.

Fig. 5 is a transcription of the map showing the field and parcel names in the demesne. On the original these are simplified as shown in this typical example which reads 'Dominical pastura parcel Parc' vocat HERNs quarter cont. 58-1-34 1/4 in firma.....; which translates as 'parcel of demesne pasture in the park called HERNs quarter, comprising 58 acres, 1 rod and 34 perches and let to.....'. It is shown on the transcription as just 'HERNS quarter'.

We have noted earlier that the period of seigneurial high farming gave way to leasing in the course of the 14th century and the former fields were often divided up into much smaller units. A good example is Le Leies, formerly one field of 107 acres, now in 1594 divided into eight closes. Le Leies, together with all the demesne land lying north of the trackway running south-west to Little Canfield, would have been farmed from Little Easton Hall. This included the fields between the church and the park whose relatively large size - three over 20 acres - and distinctive names, such as Ladieallyfede, Parkfede, and Bushfede, suggest that no subdivision had taken place.

Ravens appears to have been the centre from which the rest of the demesne was farmed, much of it land that is still farmed from Ravens today. Unfortunately, the area of the farmstead on the map is faint and the writing illegible. Nearby lie three fields: Great, Upper and Nether Ravens - clearly once one field of 63 acres. All the other fields, which include three Brickhills, three Stroues and two Thistles, are each described (after the field name) as

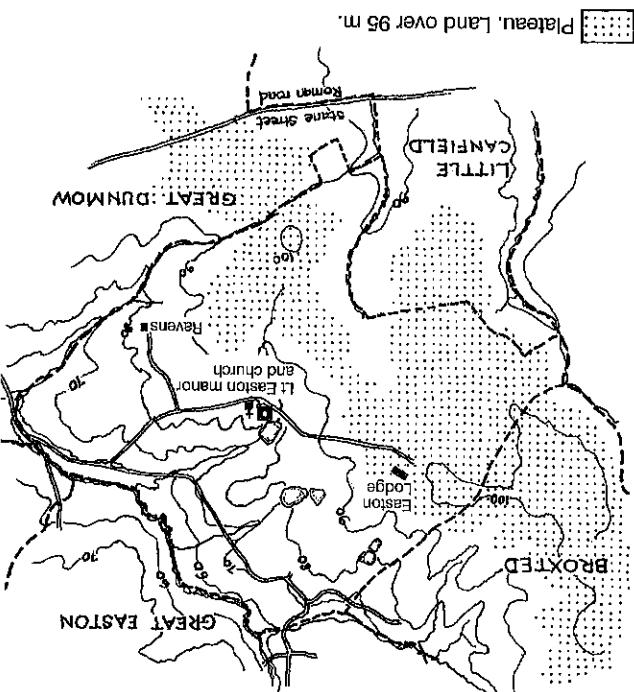


Fig. 4 Little Easton: topography.

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Fig. 5 Little Easton in 1594. The demesne is shown with shaded outline.



Henry Maynard built his fine mansion on the site in 1597, which lasted until a disastrous fire in 1847, and there seems a parallel here with Copped Hall, Epping, a park which had belonged to the abbots of Waltham, licensed in 1293. Sir Thomas Heneage built a new mansion between 1564 and 1567 on the site of a former house where Princess Mary had been held under house arrest, itself replacing the earlier lodge or standing.¹⁶ Similarly, the map of 1594 clearly shows an earlier mansion at Easton Lodge, which probably dated to the early Tudor period and was itself predated by a great lodge.¹⁷

The Little Park (74 acres) lay directly below the manorial complex and its purpose, on prime land, must have been amenity - a pleasing setting on a rill leading down to the river Chelmer with pollard oaks, semi-tame fallow deer, and doubtless somewhere a pavilion or gloriette; I have argued that the Little Park at Thaxted fulfilled a similar role,¹⁸ and so too the Little Parks of St. Osyth and Pleshey - the latter encircling the castle and town. An appreciation of landscape is evident in planned 'ornamental landscapes' surrounding palaces and seats such as Kenilworth and Bodiam,¹⁹ and it would seem that

Later history

So, at some point between 1713 and 1726, the former Easton Great Park became a functioning deer park once more, although the emphasis would now have tended more toward amenity and prestige than production. Avenues were in fashion and those shown in the engraving of 1756 must have been planted when the park was restored. As the century progressed the informal wood-pasture of medieval and Tudor parks, such as survived at Easton, became a dominating element of parkland landscapes as fashion swung away from the formal and geometrical.

Chapman and Andre's Map of Essex 1777 (Fig. 6) shows the park now enlarged, extending over Le Lées and the cluster of fields lying between Easton Manor and the former park pale. High Wood had been planted to the south, between the park and Stane Street (A120), and Sadds Wood adjoining the north-west corner. This is substantially the park surveyed a century later for the First Edition OS six inch map which shows it in great detail. The avenues have been thinned to disguise their formality, but the open vistas remain. The boundaries of the quarters have now gone and the woods are no longer enclosed, and overall the landscape is now one of wood-pasture, sometimes quite dense. Outside the

ideas as well as fallow deer came from contacts with sophisticated eastern traditions in Sicily and Spain. By 1594 the Little Park had been disparaged and divided up into eight closes, mostly small, which are each referred to as parcels of the Little Park and not yet with the names which appear on the Tithes Map of 1839 when the former park had been forgotten. Without the map of 1594, the existence of the Little Park would have remained unknown.

Although evidence for its former existence might have survived in field names, the history of the Great Park could have been similar. Its survival and later extension and enhancement was due to its position as the setting for Easton Lodge, the seat of the Maynards and the centre of their estates. In the 16th century traditional parkland was seen as enhancing the status of a new mansion - examples in Essex being Leez Priory, Henham and Copped Hall - but in the case of Easton Lodge, although the park provided the ambience it was no longer empaled and its many quarters were let out with only the Launde and woodlands kept in hand, and the deer now presumably free range. Since the park was in abeyance it was not shown on John Norden's map of Essex in 1594, nor Henry Overton's of 1713, but it does appear on John Warburton's of 1726 and all maps thereafter.

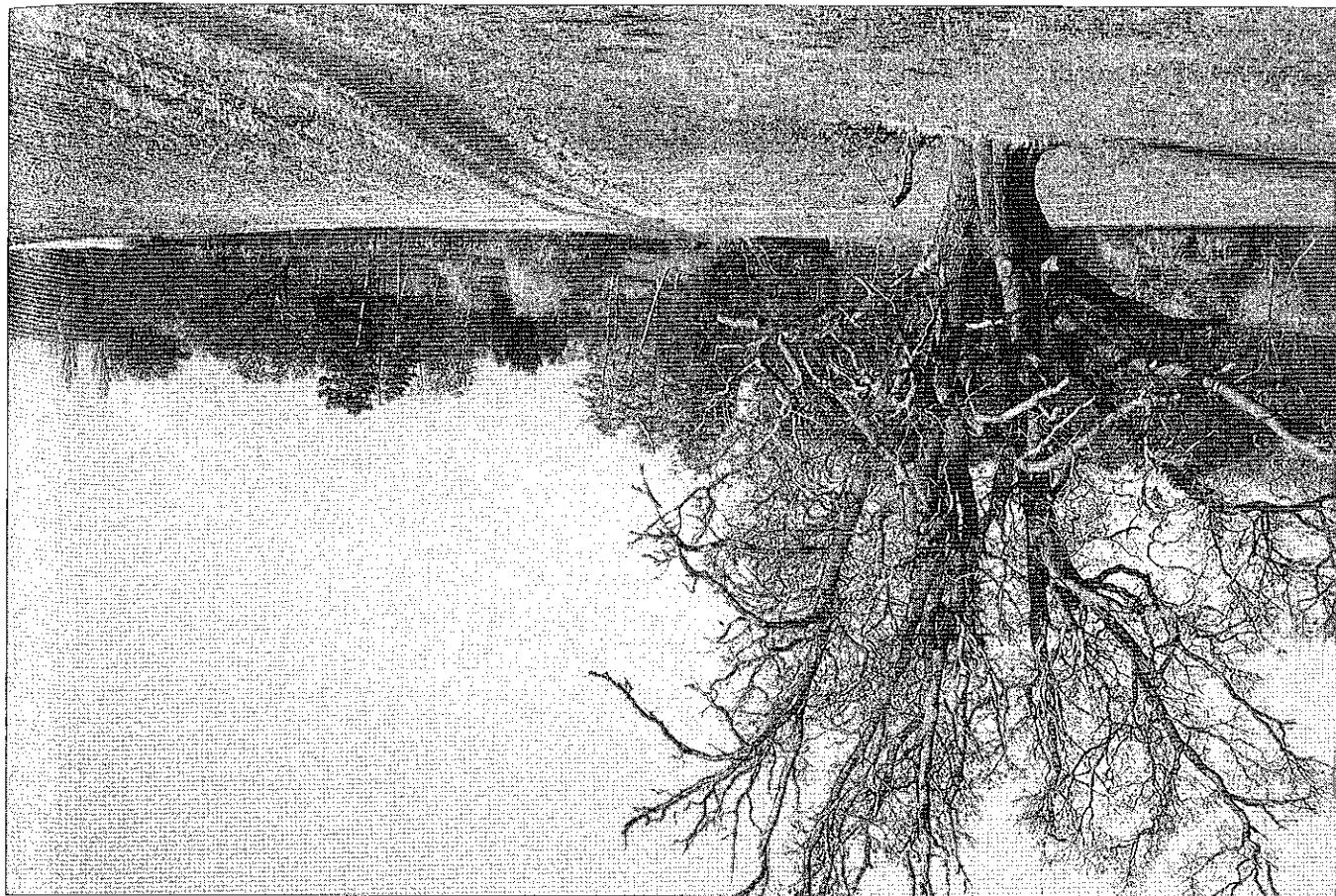


Plate 2 The site of the Little Park in January 2001. The pollard oak is likely to be a relic of the parkland wood-pasture.

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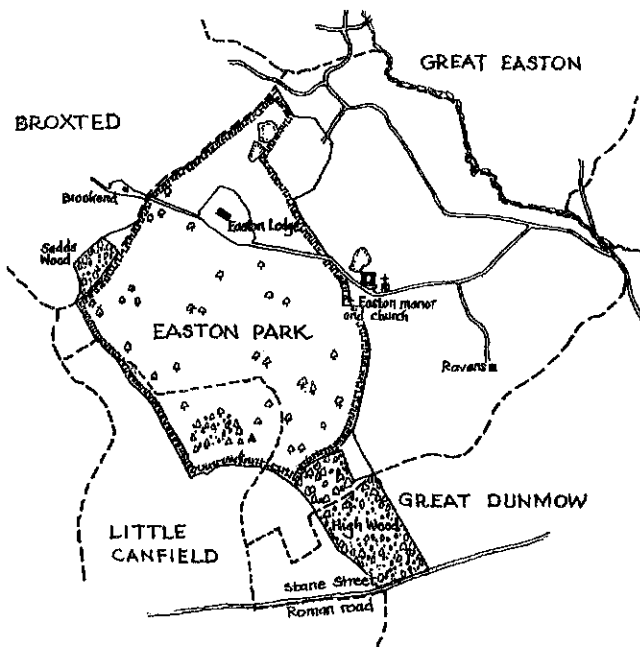


Fig. 6 Little Easton in 1777. From Chapman and André's Map of Essex.

park, the landscape farmed from Ravens has become considerably more open - the large fields with their boundaries much as they are today. The road which formerly linked the south of the park with Easton Manor has gone, its line preserved as a field boundary.

In Broxted, the OS map shows the hamlets with a similar scatter of buildings as in 1594, although not necessarily on the same sites, and purprestures of a later date have been established on highway land. Brookhall is now Brookend, and Moor End a farmstead. A lane and small hamlet south-west of Moor End had vanished.

Postscript

The Elizabethan mansion was rebuilt following a fire in 1847. Now only the west wing, Warwick House, remains, itself rebuilt after a fire in 1918. The rest of the mansion was demolished in 1950, like so many at that time unwanted and too costly to maintain. However, in 1993 restoration began of the extensive gardens designed for Lady Warwick by Harold Peto and laid out in 1902-3. In 2000 so much progress had been made that they were placed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, and the work continues.

The destruction of most of Easton Park to make an airfield, while no doubt important for the war effort, must nevertheless be seen as the saddest loss to the historic environment of Essex during that conflict, indeed probably the worst loss since the grubbing of Hainault Forest in the mid 19th century. On the credit side, the area of the Little Park (Plate 2), crossed by several footpaths, remains an area of high amenity, and as already noted, the landscape of Ravens survives much as it was in 1875, with many

ancient field boundaries as well as the verdant character of the valley of the small brook which marks the southern boundary of the parish.

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Notes

1. In addition to the estates described or noted in this paper, later Maynards acquired Broadoaks (Wimbish), Yardley Hall (Thaxted) and the considerable Ashdon Estate, amounting in all to some 12,000 acres in Essex in Lady Warwick's time. She also had extensive holdings in other counties.
2. The magnificent deed of grant is preserved in the Essex Record Office (ERO) D/DMg T45.
3. P. Morant, 1768, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, vol II, 431 and 448. Morant's *Brokehall* is spelt *Brookehaule* by Agas. Brookhall is used in this paper for the medieval and Tudor periods. It is Brookend today.
4. ERO Acc. A9980, D/DMg P25.
5. Morant, 434 and 463.
6. *Ibid.* 462.
7. J.M. Hunter, 1999, *The Essex Landscape: a Study of its Form and History*, Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 91 and 137.
8. *Ibid.* 130 and 150.
9. Here large common-fields remained the rule on the better land until late enclosure by act of parliament. Hunter 1999, 162.
10. Freeholders were required to attend the court and were subject to certain manorial perquisites such as payments at a death. Copyholders were the successors of the villeins and other categories of tenant, formerly unfree.
11. Hunter 1999, 116.
12. Morant, 448.
13. Hunter 1999, 99 and 104.
14. Calendar of Inquisitions post Mortem, IV, 62.
15. O. Rackham, 1989, *The Last Forest*, London: Dent, 12 and 92. It is suggested that the quarters in Hatfield Forest may have been defined during the tenancy of the De Bohuns who had divided their park at Walden into 17 quarters.
16. Hunter 1999, 145.
17. The earlier mansion, pulled down by Sir Henry Maynard, would have been built by the Bouchiers who held Little Easton (together with Broxted and other Essex manors) from 1365 until the death of William Bouchier in 1540. See F. Spurrier, 1999, *Estaines Parva - A history of Little Easton*, Five Parishes Publication.
18. Hunter 1999, 113.
19. C. Taylor, 2000, *Medieval Ornamental Landscapes, Landscapes*, 1.