PART III - CHAPTER SIX
PARK OWNERS AND PARK HOLDERS

While William Lambarde named the parks of Kent, he did not identify their owners, an omission that Part III seeks to rectify, especially concentrating on active rather than disparked parks, although there is uncertainty about the period in which each park contained deer.

Attention will first be paid to the royal, ecclesiastical, noble, titled and gentry owners of active deer parks at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign (i). Next identifying the acquirers of established parks from the crown, from private transfers and the owners of new parks (ii) will show whether there was a change in the profile of park ownership from 1558 to 1625. Lastly, factors behind the successful retention of parks by some park owning families, and the failure of others to keep their parks (iii) will be examined to enable conclusions to be drawn about the extent of continuity of park ownership.

The survival of family papers in various archives helps to establish ownership of some parks, but for others finding owners has proved to be elusive and inconclusive. Moreover, even where families are known, detailed background information on which to base an analysis has been much more difficult to uncover.¹

(i) Owners of active parks in 1558²

In the Middle Ages park ownership in England was restricted to the highest levels of the social scale, with no one below the rank of manorial lord owning a park, but with the crown, church and greater earldoms each holding many parks. The 200 or more members of the greater baronage are presumed to have owned at least one park each in the thirteenth century, while by the fifteenth century most of the 100 or so parliamentary peers each had one park.³ Some historians have hypothesised that park

² See Figure 6.1 'Gentry and noble park ownership in 1558', p.175.
ownership extended to lower landowning levels in the later Middle Ages, but others, including Mileson, have challenged this view, arguing that if, between 1350 and 1500, the number of parks in England dropped by 20 to 30 per cent, then there would have been a concomitant reduction in the circle of park owners, thereby maintaining the exclusivity of park ownership.\(^4\)

Without detailed research for Kent one can only speculate about park ownership prior to the Tudor period, but the backgrounds of Elizabethan park owners indicate that the more prominent gentry families had owned parks (or the land on which parks were created, but for which no date is known) back into the fifteenth century or before. When park ownership had filtered down to this level of society, or why, is beyond the scope of this study.

Incomplete and fragmentary evidence makes it impossible to be exact about the number of active parks or their owners at Elizabeth I's accession, or at other given time during her reign and her successor's for that matter. In any case, the situation was never static. Of 46 known active parks in 1558, the church had perhaps three active parks, the archbishop of Canterbury's Ford(35) and Westwell(99) parks, and the bishop of Rochester's park by his palace at Bromley(16).\(^5\) The crown had varying degrees of interest in about 16 parks.\(^6\) In 1558 noblemen, Lords Abergavenny, Burgh and Cobham, owned only five active parks, Birling(7) and Hungershall(47), Cobham(23) and Cooling(24), and Starborough(80), which partly lay in Kent. Members of the gentry, for the most part from long-established Kentish families, owned 22 parks, many of which had been in the same family for several generations.\(^7\) This group formed a small wealthy elite, often combining landholding with office in the royal court or in the legal profession. In this respect the evidence about park owners corresponds with Zell's research into landholding and the land market in early modern Kent, namely that there


\(^5\) Little is known about the parks at Ford(35) and Bromley(16). See Figure 6.2 for 'Social Status and Park Ownership', p.177.

\(^6\) See Figure 6.1 'Gentry and noble park ownership in 1558', p.175.

\(^7\) See Figure 6.2 'Social status and park ownership', p.177.
was no clear distinction between land owning local gentry and office holders because the two categories more often than not overlapped.\(^8\)

Under the heading of 'The Nobilitie and Gentrie' Lambarde named 225 members of these groups, many 'held together by blood as well as by class' through intermarriage.\(^9\) As Laslett emphasised, 'The genealogical interrelationships between the members were extensive, complicated and meticulously observed by all of them: it is astonishing how distant a connexion qualified for the title 'cozen'.'

On Lambarde's list, twelve of the 21 titled gentlemen and Lady Golding of Roydon, the widow of a knight, held parks.\(^10\) However, the figure might be higher should more evidence about dates of other parks and their owners come to light, for example, Chafford(later park,102) held by the Rivers, Fairlawne(later park,103) by the Fanes and Scadbury(later park,105) park held by the Walsinghams.\(^11\) Eight other members of the gentry on Lambarde's list owned parks so when sons and other family members are included, 45 or 20 per cent of the 225 noblemen, knights and gentry were from park owning families.\(^12\) As in earlier times, park owners invariably belonged to the upper group of magnate gentlemen.\(^13\) None of the 'middling' or lesser gentry owned parks, although occasionally members of the former group might sublease parks, as did the Hamon family, sub-lessees of the crown park of Elham(30), who were notable enough to be included in the herald's visitation of 1574.\(^14\)

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\(^10\) Sir Richard Baker of Sissinghurst(79), William Brooke, lord Cobham, of Cobham(23) and Cooling(24) and Sir Henry Brooke as his heir, Sir Alexander Culpepper of Bedgebury(4), Sir Percival Hart of Lullingstone(55), Sir Thomas Kempe of Stowting(82), Sir Philip Sidney of Penshurst(69,71), Sir Warham Senteleger of Leeds(54), Sir Thomas Scott of Scot's Hall(77), Sir Walter Waller of Groombridge(40), Sir Thomas Guldeford of Hemsted(44), Lady Elizabeth Golding (nee Roydon) of Roydon(74), Sir Humphrey Gilbert briefly held Postling(73) park.  
\(^14\) Hasted 8 p.98.
### Figure 6.1 – Gentry and Noble Park Ownership in 1558

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Park Name</th>
<th>Owner in 1558</th>
<th>Date land/park acquired</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Lullingstone</td>
<td>Sir Percival Hart</td>
<td>1360 (via Peche)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Sissinghurst</td>
<td>Sir Richard Baker</td>
<td>c.1490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Scot's Hall</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Scott</td>
<td>1292s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Birling</td>
<td>Henry Nevill, lord Abergavenny</td>
<td>1430s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Birling, Comford</td>
<td>Henry Nevill, lord Abergavenny</td>
<td>1430s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bore Place</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Willoughby</td>
<td>1518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Boughton Malherbe, Lenham</td>
<td>Thomas Wotton</td>
<td>1413-1422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Cobham</td>
<td>William Brooke, lord Cobham</td>
<td>c. 1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Cooling</td>
<td>William Brooke, lord Cobham</td>
<td>c. 1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Glassenbury</td>
<td>Walter Roberts</td>
<td>1488 (new park)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Lynsted</td>
<td>John Roper</td>
<td>?1430s-60s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Shurland</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Cheyne</td>
<td>c.1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Starborough</td>
<td>William Borough, lord Burgh</td>
<td>1471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Throwley</td>
<td>?Sir Thomas Sondes</td>
<td>1520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Well Hall</td>
<td>William Roper</td>
<td>1488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bedgebury</td>
<td>Sir Alexander Culpepper</td>
<td>1544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Boughton Monchelsea</td>
<td>Robert Rudston</td>
<td>1551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Groombridge</td>
<td>Walter Waller</td>
<td>1413-1422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Postling</td>
<td>John Aucher</td>
<td>1546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Stowting</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Kempe</td>
<td>1434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>West Wickham</td>
<td>Sir Christopher Heydon</td>
<td>1469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21a</td>
<td>Chilham</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Cheyne</td>
<td>1509-1549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Hemnsted</td>
<td>Sir John Guldeford</td>
<td>1388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>Sir Anthony Sentleger</td>
<td>1548-1553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Lyminge</td>
<td>Edward Aucher</td>
<td>1546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Penshurst, Ashour</td>
<td>Sir William Sidney</td>
<td>1552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Penshurst, Northlands</td>
<td>Sir William Sidney</td>
<td>1552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Hungershall</td>
<td>Henry Nevill, lord Abergavenny</td>
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c/h = changed hands some time after 1558 and before 1625
See Park profiles p.360 for sources of information for each park
Parks might be acquired by new creation, inheritance, marriage, purchase, grant of gift, or exchange. Prior to Elizabeth I's accession, four acquisitions occurred by inheritance from blood relatives, 12 by marriage, six by royal grant of gift or freehold lease, and six by purchase (see Figure 6.2). The circumstances of the acquisition of Hungershall park by the Nevill family is unknown. As family histories were studied, it became clear that those who owned parks in Elizabeth I's reign were often the beneficiaries of their enterprising or acquisitive forebears, and that park ownership reflected not only the current, but also the past status of the family.

By whatever means and however far back a park was acquired, owners were overwhelmingly from Kentish gentry ancestry and newcomers from previous centuries had become totally absorbed into Kentish society. The Tudor owners, like their medieval predecessors, having acquired a park, considered it a matter of family honour to retain it. The majority of owners did so, with 19 parks continuing in the ownership of the same family throughout the reigns of Elizabeth I and of James I (see Figure 6.1).

(ii) New owners of established parks from the crown, by private transfer and the owners of new parks

Changes in park ownership would not necessarily be reflected in the number of active parks, which did not vary greatly in Elizabethan and Jacobean times. However, relative political stability brought long-term security in landownership, which gave families a better chance of retaining their parks. Overall, there were more changes of ownership of crown parks than of private parks, so that at the end of Elizabeth I's reign, of a possible 50 active parks, tentative assessments are that the crown owned 11 parks (reduced from 16), the church had two active parks (a loss of one), while noblemen with nine parks and knights and gentlemen with 28 parks had increased the number of active parks they owned. The position in 1625 was that of 43 active parks, crown ownership had dropped to nine, the church still had two, noblemen had nine parks, while the number of parks held by knights and gentlemen had slipped to 23, although for each

15 Figure 6.2 'Social status and park ownership', p.177.
17 See Figure 6.1 'Gentry and noble park ownership in 1558', p.175.
18 See Figure 6.3 'New owners (a) of established parks and (b) new parks (Appendix 6 pp.329-330).
group the exact number of parks remaining active is uncertain.\textsuperscript{19}

Although Elizabeth I acquired two Kentish parks, namely Westwell(99) in 1560, and Shurland(79) in 1564, she relinquished interest in several other parks (see Figure 6.4).\textsuperscript{20} She granted away five active parks at the beginning of her reign, re-granted two of these and restored Halden(41) to the Sidneys in the 1560s. She granted away a further two parks in the 1580s, and reluctantly, towards the end of her reign, she sold Canterbury(18) and Otford Great(62) parks.\textsuperscript{21} Thus the crown lost ten active parks, leased out Elham(30), Shurland(78), Northfrith(89-91) and Westwell(98), and kept only the parks at Eltham(31-33,53) and Greenwich(39) under direct control. Further losses occurred in James I's reign when Shurland(78) park was granted away, and Cobham(23) and Cooling(24) parks, seized in 1603, soon passed from the crown by grant.\textsuperscript{22} Of the few royal parks left, Elham(30) alone was sold, despite James I's instructions of 1604 forbidding the sale of any forest, chase or park, whether an entity in its own right or part of a manor.\textsuperscript{23}

Elizabeth I and James I granted parks mainly to kinsmen and favourites under favourable tenures, making virtual freeholds, either under fee tail to male heirs or, under a fee simple, socage or knight's service, to male or female heirs, only returning to the crown if the line of descent failed.\textsuperscript{24} The grant might involve a small fee or a reserved fee when the park was sold on, or alienated, at a later date.

Only four months after coming to the throne Elizabeth I granted lands, including ten parks in Kent, the most valuable group of which were Cage(89), Postern(93) and Northfrith(90-92), in tail male to Henry Carey, lord Hunsdon, her cousin, to enable him to maintain the lifestyle of his new peerage.\textsuperscript{25} The queen made another very extensive

\textsuperscript{19} See Figure 6.2 'Social status and park ownership', p.177 compiled from each park profile, see p.360 on.
\textsuperscript{20} See Figure 6.4 'Crown parks in Kent' (Appendix 7 pp.331-333); CPR part XIII, 13/12/1559, pp. 440-442; TNA SP12/98/29.
\textsuperscript{21} See Chapter Seven (iv) p.228 onwards.
\textsuperscript{23} Hasted 8 p.98; TNA SP14/36/13.
\textsuperscript{24} Baker J. H., An Introduction to English Legal History, pp.:273-274.
\textsuperscript{25} MacCaffrey, Henry Carey (1526-1596) (http://oxforddnb.com/articles/4/4649). Henry Carey, son of Thomas Boleyn, the brother of Elizabeth I's mother, Anne, was created Baron Hunsdon on 13 January 1559 within 2 months of Elizabeth's accession; CPR, Part IX, 20/3/1559, pp.115-118; these parks were
grant in fee simple to her favourite courtier, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, in 1561, which included Knole(50) and Panthurst(67) parks. However, he later surrendered them to the crown in a land exchange, and in 1566 Elizabeth I, subject to existing subleases, granted them to her cousin, Thomas Sackville, lord Buckhurst.

These grandee noblemen were absentee landlords, although Lord Buckhurst would have liked to have resided at Knole, which Elizabeth I is thought to have granted to him to spare him the journey over the atrocious roads of the Weald because it was nearer to court than his seat at Buckhurst in Sussex. However, a royal grant, though well intentioned as a gesture of favour, was not necessarily of immediate benefit to the recipient and could result in detrimental legal disputes and costs, in this case because there was an existing 99-year lease, dating from 1565, for Knole and its park(50). It took an 18-year struggle for Lord Buckhurst to acquire the lease because of the complicated layers of interest that had accumulated on it, and it was not until 1603 that Lord Buckhurst purchased the remainder of the lease for £4000.

The last grant of parks Elizabeth I made was unusual in that the grantee was neither relative nor favourite, but the financier 'customer' Thomas Smythe, collector of the subsidy of imports at the port of London since 1558, an office which had netted him a profit of £50,000 over 18 years. It might have been his underwriting of the cost of building up defences prior to the Spanish Armada that led to the royal grant of land, including Westenhanger(97) and Ostenhanger(98) parks, in 1585, by military service

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and an annual fine of £13 8s 6½d.\textsuperscript{31}

By James I's reign there were not many active parks at the king's disposal in Kent, so to grant any away was a sign of special favour, and, like Elizabeth I, James I advanced a favourite and a relative. In 1605 the Shurland estate of 2245 acres with its 300-acre park went to Philip Herbert, earl of Montgomery, who 'by the comeliness of his person, his skill, and indefatigable industry in hunting' was 'the first who drew the King's eyes towards him with affection.'\textsuperscript{32} After the vacation of Cobham by the dowager Duchess of Kildare in 1612, the valuable Cobham estate with mansion and park(23) was granted by James I to his cousin, Ludovick Stuart, duke of Lennox, by fealty only in free and common socage of the manor of East Greenwich 'and not in chief, nor by knight's service', signifying special favour, because it carried the least obligations (most notably avoiding wardship).\textsuperscript{33}

The crown owned all the active parks in Kent held under lease in the period 1558 to 1625, and although some were leased to eminent national figures, most were leased to members of the upper echelon of the Kentish gentry. The leases for which some details are known were markedly different. Annual rents cannot be compared because in most cases the park was only a small element of a more extensive lease, and the fines were not always included in the calendars. Of the active parks available for re-leasing during Elizabeth I's reign, she granted one 50-year lease, one at an annual fine of £136, and two 21-year leases.

Aldington(1), active for part of the time, was held by the Sentleger family before 1591, and afterwards by the Scott family of Scot's Hall on 21-year leases – a term commonly adopted for disparked parks so perhaps it had been disparked by this time.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} Lambarde(1596); see Chapter Five (iii) (a) pp.155-157, and Figure 6.4 'Crown parks in Kent' (Appendix 7 pp.331-333); SP12/240/103, 22/12/1591; TNA SP12/265/20, 25/11/1597; SP14/28/58, 26/9/1607, for Addington read Aldington; TNA SC12/20/22, 1624-1625; TNA LR2/196, 1649-1650; TNA SP12/98/29, 7/10/1574. See Chapter Five (iii) (a) pp.155-157.
The lease of Shurland(79) park in the 1580s was also for 21 years, during which the tenants had to provide lodgings for ten men with weapons to defend the island.35

Southfrith until 1610, and Elham(30) and Westwell(99) throughout the period were active parks.36 The most prestigious lease was for Southfrith(94) near Tonbridge assigned in 1571 to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, for a 50-year term in reversion of an existing sublease, which was surrendered in 1573.37 Sir Robert Sidney inherited the lease in 1588, and transferred it to Lady Frances Sidney, as part of her widowhood settlement following the death of his brother and her husband, Sir Philip Sidney.38 From 1609 to 1611, Richard Burke, earl of Clanricarde, third husband of Lady Frances, built a new mansion called ‘Somerhill’ within the newly disparked Southfrith(94), and by 1622 had enclosed a park(94b) around it, the only new park in Kent created by an aristocrat (see Plate 6.1).39 In 1623 the earl and countess of Clanricarde were given a 21-year lease or lease of three lives of Southfrith(94).40

Elham(30) and Westwell(99) had been leased to magnate Kentish gentlemen prior to Elizabeth I’s accession, the former in 1551 for 80 years to Sir Edward Wotton of Boughton Malherbe and the latter, before the queen acquired the park, to John Tufton of Hothfield for 50 years from 1559, which was renewed in 1597 for a further 31 years at a rent of only £10 per annum.41 John Tufton did not own a park, but Westwell(99) park was conveniently near his mansion of Hothfield Place, where Elizabeth I stayed on her progress in 1573.42 Lastly, in 1593 Elizabeth reverted to the traditional custom of assigning parks to men of high status by granting Shurland(79), at an annual fine of

35 Cave-Browne, ‘Shurland House,’ p.92; CPR no.1457, 1/7/1580, p.180.
38 Harris, The History of Kent, p.322.
40 CKS U38/T1(part 2); Lennon, Richard Burke, 4th earl of Clanricarde and 1st earl of St. Albans (1572-1635) (http://oxforddnb.com/articles/67/67043).
41 TNA LR2/196; Hasted 8 p.98, at some time after the death of the sub-lessee in 1613, but before the lease expired in 1621 the reversion of fee was purchased and the park left crown ownership.
Plate 6.1
The Jacobean mansion of Somerhill near Tonbridge

(a) Front elevation of the Jacobean Somerhill mansion, built for the Earl of Clanricarde. 9 September 2006

(b) Continuation of Somerhill to the left of (a) showing Victorian additions, but also an ancient oak pollard, which is likely to have been there from Southfrith(93) forest when the house was built. 9 September 2006
£136, to Sir Edward Hoby, a distant relative by marriage and constable of Queenborough castle on the island.43

Only ten private parks changed hands, although it is not always possible to unravel the precise sequence of events. Of these five, Groombridge(40), Knole(50), Leeds(54), West Wickham(99) and perhaps Chilham(21a), contained deer or were in a position to be restocked with deer. An exceptional arrangement was made for Knole in 1625 to extricate Richard Sackville, earl of Dorset, from debt, whereby the manors of Knole and Panthurst in Sevenoaks, except for the use of Knole house and park(50) which were to remain under lease to the earl, were sold, but immediately put into trusteeship for charitable uses.44 It was left to a later generation to buy back Knole and its park(50), where the family still reside.45 Sir Walter Waller, having been hauled before the council of state for embezzling royal funds in the Netherlands in 1597, was eventually forced to sell Groombridge house and park(40) to the lord treasurer, Thomas Sackville, earl of Dorset.46 John Lennard, protonotary of the court of common pleas, purchased West Wickham(99) for £2700 in 1580, Sir Richard Smythe, 'customer' Thomas Smythe's son gained Leeds(54) park in 1618 from his brother-in-law, Sir Warham Sentleger, to save him from his creditors, and Dudley Digges, a diplomat and politician, making his fortune from investment in overseas trading ventures, purchased Chilham(21a). These three had made fortunes in their own right and had dynastic ambitions that were partly fulfilled by the purchase of these parks.

The creators of new parks had similar ambitions as those who purchased parks (see Figure 6.3).47 They were prepared to make an expensive investment in a park as an outward show of wealth and at the same time to mark out a superior position in society for themselves and their families. It is unclear from extant evidence exactly how many new parks were created between 1558 and 1625, because the actual date of imparkment is not always known, but there might have been about 12, including Somerhill(93b).48 Two

44 CKS U269/T1; Phillips, *The History of the Sackville Family*, I p.274, Richard Sackville, earl of Dorset, is said to have died owing £60,000; Hasted 3 pp.71-73.
47 See Figure 6.3 'New owners of established and new parks' (Appendix 6 p.329-330).
48 Chilham(21b), Eastwell(28), East Wickham(29), Great Chart(37), Halstead(42), Langley, Beckenham(51), Lee(53), Mersham Hatch(61), Roydon(74), Scotney(76), Surrenden(84), Somerhill(93b), Tyler Hill(94); see Figure 6.3 (Appendix 6 p.329-330); for new park at Southfrith see pp.181-182; CKS
Elizabethan owners of new parks were Sir Moyle Finch, who created Eastwell (28) in 1589, and Sir Roger Manwood, who had enclosed Tyler Hill (94) park by the 1590s. Both were lawyers and members of Parliament, descended from long established Kentish gentry families. New Jacobean parks can also be attributed to those with strong roots in Kent, eager to match their accrued wealth with an enhanced social standing within the county. The Knatchbull, Dering, Digges and Style families created Mersham Hatch (61), Surrenden (84), Chilham (21b) and Langley (51) in Beckenham, respectively. In northwest Kent new parks, such as East Wickham (29) enclosed by Sir Olyffe Leigh in 1610, Lee (53) by Sir Nicholas Stoddard in the 1600s, and Halstead (42) in about 1620 by Sir Thomas Watson, a newcomer to Kent, were created as speculative ventures to attract royal attention and were relatively short-lived because of the financial strain they imposed.

With the exception of those prestigious outsiders who received royal grants of park, the owners of newly acquired parks, by purchase or creation, in Elizabeth I's and James I's reigns continued to be drawn mainly from the aristocracy and from well-established Kentish gentry families, who used their parks to enhance their life-style and with aspirations aimed as much at county level as to wider horizons. When Lambarde wrote of those who were 'continually translated, and do become new plants,' and that 'gentlemen be not heere of so auncient stocke as elsewhere especially in the partes neerer to London', he did not have parks in mind, but men like John Lennard, Sir Thomas Watson and Thomas Smythe among new park owners could fit this description. Such men had the means to buy up or create parks, but they were the minority among the new park owners.

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51 See Chapter Eight p.291-292; see Chapter Four p.138; see Chapter Four p.137.
52 Lambarde(1576) p.10.
(iii) **Factors influencing retention and loss of parks**

Families who retained their parks were either lucky, or careful, or were able to overcome unfavourable factors, while those that lost their parks were overwhelmed by one problem, such as financial strain or minority or broken succession, or a combination of disadvantageous circumstances, which were not easily combated.

Most owners benefited from the success of their predecessors, but continuity depended on each inheritor making a conscious decision to maintain the deer park, influenced perhaps by the enjoyment of the park with all its facets, or from a desire to maintain or enhance family status, or both. Along with the will to retain a park there had to be the income to support the ongoing costs. Various means were employed to support a luxurious way of life, which included park ownership, and among the options to this end were the pursuit of a career at court, in the legal profession, living off landed income, investing in business ventures or acquiring more land through marriage, grant or purchase. Only a handful of owners, who inherited parks later in Elizabeth I's reign and into the seventeenth century, parted with their parks shortly after taking them over, and usually they had no option but to sell.\(^{53}\)

In the absence of detailed financial assessments, only educated guesses can be made about the amount and source of a family's income. The Wotton, Roberts, Scott, and Guldeford families were among those who seem mainly to have depended on the income from landed estates. Other families such as the Bakers, Culpeppers, Nevills and Sidneys had supplementary income from assets in the iron industry. Additionally, the Auchers, Brookes, Harts and Sidneys served at court, and the Ropers gained wealth through their legal careers.

While not unaffected by external economic forces, a crucial factor in the survival of a park was the continued investment in its management. This did not necessarily depend on the overall income of the owner, but on his ability to manage his finances. The landowner who took an interest in his estates and expected accountability from his servants was more likely to be able to plan his finances and manage his resources effectively, an important factor in keeping an estate, and its park, intact. The

\(^{53}\) For example see Postling(73) Chapter Five p.154.
bailiff’s accounts for Birling manor covering 13 years from 1586 to 1599 point to
careful administration and management of the Nevill estate there. 54 Thomas Wotton
lived within his means and the book of 571 pages he compiled in 1567 of his estate of
over 80 Kentish manors, including his three parks at Boughton Malherbe(10-12), is
testament to his close supervision and interest. 55 Sir Robert Sidney of Penshurst was
often absent overseas and at court, but was well served by his advisors. 56 His bailiffs
and stewards submitted regular accounts and the rapport between them was such that
they gave advice or voiced their opinion on their own initiative, as illustrated by his
steward's successful opposition to the extension of Penshurst(71) park. 57 However, his
accountant remonstrated in vain over his extravagance, linked to his high-risk strategy
of pursuing personal advancement at court. 58 'I must confess,' wrote Thomas Knevett,
'that much of your charges in apparel for yourself and children might have binne saved
as I have many tymes made bold to informe your honour.' 59 Sir Robert Sidney ran into
debt, but managed to avoid disaster by judicial sales of land, through the backing of a
very competent wife, through the credit of family and friends, and with the close
oversight and loyal service of his staff. 60

Other families, such as the Roberts of Glassenbury(37) and the Scott family of
Scot's Hall(77) also ran into financial difficulties, but managed to retain their parks, at
least until the end of James I's reign. 61 However six of the ten parks that changed hands
between 1558 and 1625 fell victim to the indebtedness of their owners. Other owners
such as Sir Percival Willoughby of Bore Place(9), Sir Henry Cheyne of Shurland(78),
Sir Warham Sentleger of Leeds(54), and Sir Christopher Heydon of West
Wickham(99) parks disposed of their land in Kent in order to consolidate their positions
in other counties. 62

54 ESRO ABE 18/R1 & 2.
42715.
56 BL Add.Mss.12066; Hay M.V., The Life of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester 1563-1626 (Washington,
57 Shaw, Manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, IV pp.265-266, 9/5/1611, Golding to Viscount Lisle.
58 Shaw, Manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, IV pp.265-267.
59 BL Add.Mss.12066.
60 Ibid; Hesketh C., The Manor House and Great Park of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Otford’ in
61 Documentation for these families is sparse.
62 Phillips, c.1909, unnamed and undated newspaper cutting, from Ramon Higgs; Reed T., Guide to
XXIV (1900) pp.122-125; Geoffrey-Lloyd Lord & Wilson P, Leeds Castle - a brief history (1st published
A strong line of primogeniture inheritance was advantageous in retaining parks, while a weak minority or joint-female succession, although not insurmountable made a park more vulnerable to a change in ownership. The ownerships of Hungershall (47) park by the Nevills, Sissinghurst (79) park by the Bakers and Hemsted (44) park by the Guldefords were weakened by minority successions, although the last two parks continued to function into Charles I's reign. 63 Chilham (21a) survived joint inheritance by daughters, because one husband was rich enough to buy out other shareholders, however, the parks on the Starborough (80) and Stowting (82) estates succumbed to change of ownership because no such accommodation could be made. 64

Lastly, families who managed to weather the religious and political storms of the period were in a much better position to maintain an active park. Recusants like the Ropers of Lynsted (58) and Well Hall (95), were cushioned against recusancy fines and penalties by the profits of office, but the Culpeppers of Bedgebury struggled to keep their estate, and perhaps their park, intact. 65 The Brooke family was ruined by political intrigue and its fate demonstrates how quickly family fortunes could change. Cobham (23) and Cooling (24) parks were safe in the hands of William Brooke, lord Cobham, lord chamberlain of England, with an annual income of over £5000, until 1597, but were lost under his son and heir, Henry Brooke, lord Cobham, who not only ran into debts of £10,000, but lost all his land through attainder in 1604 after being implicated in the Bye plot. 66

As has been demonstrated the continued possession of an active park partly depended upon the will, ability, good judgement, financial control and managerial competence of the park owner, but even a model owner might be faced with unpredictable circumstances, which could sway the balance and lead to the loss of a

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63 Burke B., Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain & Ireland (London, 1879) I pp.19-20; ESRO ABE/52.1; Zell M.L., Industry in the Countryside - Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge, 1994) p.36, in the early C17th the Baker estate was the greatest in the Weald, although land was being sold off after 1596; SuffRO HA43/T501/242.


park. Although 19 parks saw no change of ownership, several faced uncertain futures after 1625.

**Conclusion**

Very few parks, and even fewer active parks, came onto the open market, which underlines the relative stability of park ownership and the reluctance to part with a park until it became unavoidable. Often the line between retention and loss was very fine. The majority of longstanding active parks were retained or acquired by wealthier gentry or titled Kentish families, who kept a tighter control on their budgets, and by those with a strong line of male succession. Conversely, the loss of a park can be seen to have followed a decline in fortune largely brought about by the drain on finances caused by overspending or by a decline in wealth, or by weakness in the family succession. Few new park owners, whether park creators or park purchasers, came from outside the county and still fewer of them were the *nouveaux riche*.

The difficulty encountered in isolating factors that distinguished park owning from non-park owning gentlemen of equal financial and social standing was found to be a daunting task requiring extensive genealogical research and presupposing a wealth of data about the financial standing of individual members of the gentry with which to make a comparison. However, those gentlemen with the necessary resources desirous of a park had the option either to create their own or to acquire one that came onto the market, so it is unlikely many had their ambition to own a park thwarted.