

Part 4: Medieval and Tudor History of the Site

Shingle Hall park

NGR: TL465182

Date range: 1447 – perhaps late seventeenth century

Size: licence to impart 520 acres in 1447

Underlying geology: boulder clay

THE MANORS OF SHINGLE HALL and Mathams in Sawbridgeworth were joined about 1301 and were acquired by the Leventhorpe family in 1414.⁴² A few years later John Leventhorpe also obtained the neighbouring manor of Thorley.⁴³ In 1439 Leventhorpe's son, another John, obtained a grant of free warren in Sawbridgeworth, Thorley and Stortford.⁴⁴ In 1447 he obtained a licence to 'impart 400 acres of land, 40 acres of meadow and 80 acres of wood in Sawbridgeworth and Thorley and surround them with dikes, hays, hedges palings and stakes (*pilis*).'⁴⁵ John Leventhorpe was member of parliament for Hertfordshire in 1467 and succeeding generations of Leventhorpes enjoyed high social status – his grandson, another John, was sheriff of Hertfordshire in 1509 and, a century later, another John Leventhorpe was knighted, was twice sheriff of Hertfordshire and was created a baronet in 1622.⁴⁶ The park at Shingle Hall was shown on the sixteenth-century county maps by Saxton (1577) and by Norden (1598) (Figures 49 and 50).

Sir Thomas Leventhorpe sold the manor of Thorley, and perhaps a part of the park, in 1672.⁴⁷ He died without male heirs in 1679 and the manor of Shingle Hall passed to a niece who was married to John Coke of Melbourne, Derbyshire. Presumably Shingle Hall was leased to tenants during the later seventeenth century, but whether as a country house set within a park or as a farm is not known. Neither house nor park was shown on Seller's county map of 1676 but both were depicted on Oliver's map of 1695.⁴⁸

In 1706 the son of John and Mary Coke sold Shingle Hall and Mathams to Ralph Freman, member of parliament for

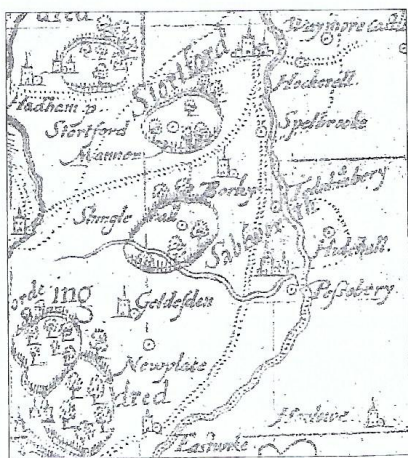


Figure 50. Detail of Norden's county map, 1598, showing the parks between Bishop's Stortford and Hunsdon at the end of the sixteenth century.

Pisho park is not shown but Shingle Hall is marked in the middle of its park. Reproduced by kind permission of Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.

excerpt from Anne Rowe 2009

Anne Rowe's books: *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* (Hertfordshire Publications, University of Hertfordshire, 2009) and *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire* (Hertfordshire Publications, University of Hertfordshire, 2019), describe the area that later became the airfield site and its identity from the medieval period. While the entire carefully researched books should be consulted for the whole context traced on the ground, I have excerpted sections of exact overlap with land used for twentieth century warfare.

Medieval Period:

Shingle Hall park: NGR TL465182

Date range: 1447 - perhaps late seventeenth century

Size: licence to impart 500 acres in 1447

See below a photocopied section of description with a detail of Norden's county map, 1598, showing parks including Shingle Hall, clearly already important, circled with palings in the centre.

On the OS map of 1878, the dotted area indicates area that was probably medieval parkland. Note how the farms, Shingle Hall and Blount's, are already bearing the names they continue to have at the present time. Whether there was once a country house is not known.

Excerpts

See the books for the rest of the entries.

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MEDIEVAL PARKS OF HERTFORDSHIRE



6 inches
Map 53 The park at Shingle Hall, Sawbridgeworth
the mile map sheets XXII, surveyed 1878, published 1883; XXIII, surveyed 1874-9, published 1879-83; XXX, surveyed 1873-80, published 1881-3
Annotated with features from the Sawbridgeworth tithe award and map, 1838 and 1839 (HALS DSA4/93/1 and 2).

Part 4: Medieval and Tudor History of the Site

Shingle Hall

NGR: TL465182

Dates: 1447–perhaps late seventeenth century

Size: licence to impark 520 acres in 1447

THE PARK AT SHINGLE HALL (or Shingehall) was laid out 1.5 miles north-west of the town of Sawbridgeworth in the mid-fifteenth century when John Leventhorpe obtained a licence to 'impark 400 acres of land, 40 acres of meadow and 80 acres of wood in Sawbridgeworth and Thorley and surround them with dikes, hays, hedges palings and stakes [*pilis*]'.³⁸ Leventhorpe had inherited his wealth and estates from his father John who, as senior administrator of the duchy of Lancaster, was 'one of the most powerful and influential figures of his day'.³⁹ Originating in Yorkshire, John Leventhorpe senior had been rewarded for his able and loyal service to both Henry IV and Henry V. He was granted duchy lands in Essex and Hertfordshire but had purchased the manor of Shingle Hall in 1400 and was buried in Sawbridgeworth parish church after his death in 1435.⁴⁰ The Hertfordshire estates inherited by his son John, also a 'distinguished employee' of the duchy and member of parliament, were said to be worth £63 a year.⁴¹ Succeeding generations of Leventhorpes generally filled prominent gentry roles in the county but, although it continued to exist, there is almost no mention of the deer park during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the 1540s and 1550s the owners of Shingle Hall spent long periods abroad, either fighting in the army of Henry VIII or fleeing religious persecution in the reign of Edward VI. During these absences the estate appears to have been left in the care of various family members.⁴² During the ownership of one Edward Leventhorpe (probably the one who died in 1566), Shingle Hall was leased to a Thomas Leventhorpe together with the park and 'all the deer and other game'.⁴³

The park is depicted on the county maps by Saxton in 1577 and by Norden in 1598, when it was owned by Edward's son John, who captained one of the five trained bands of soldiers in the county, commanding 300 men. John Leventhorpe was sheriff of Hertfordshire in 1593 and 1607 and was knighted by King James at Theobalds in 1603. He married Joan, eldest daughter of Sir John Brograve of Hamels, and was created a baronet in 1622.⁴⁴ The estate and baronetcy passed to their second son Thomas in 1625. Sir Thomas Leventhorpe married Dorothy Alington, a granddaughter of Thomas Cecil, earl of Exeter, but was killed in a duel with Sir Arthur Capell of Little Hadham in 1636.⁴⁵ A jury found Capell guilty of manslaughter and referred the case to the assizes, but the king intervened, ordering the justices to suspend punishment in view of Capell's services.⁴⁶ Sir Thomas' six-year-old son John became the third baronet but during his minority much of the estate was leased to Essex yeoman Henry Stracy for 13 years.⁴⁷ Stracy's lease included several rooms in Shingle Hall, stables and barns and 'the park adjoining', estimated to contain 200 acres of arable land, meadow and pasture, and also 343 acres of other demesne lands. Dame Dorothy Leventhorpe, who retained much of the mansion for her own use, also retained the liberty of hawking and hunting over the estate, but no deer are mentioned and it seems very likely that the park had been disparked. When Sir John died without issue in 1649 the baronetcy passed to his younger brother Thomas. This Sir Thomas, whose only

Tudor and Early Stuart period
Shingle Hall park. Hall farm NGR:
TL465182

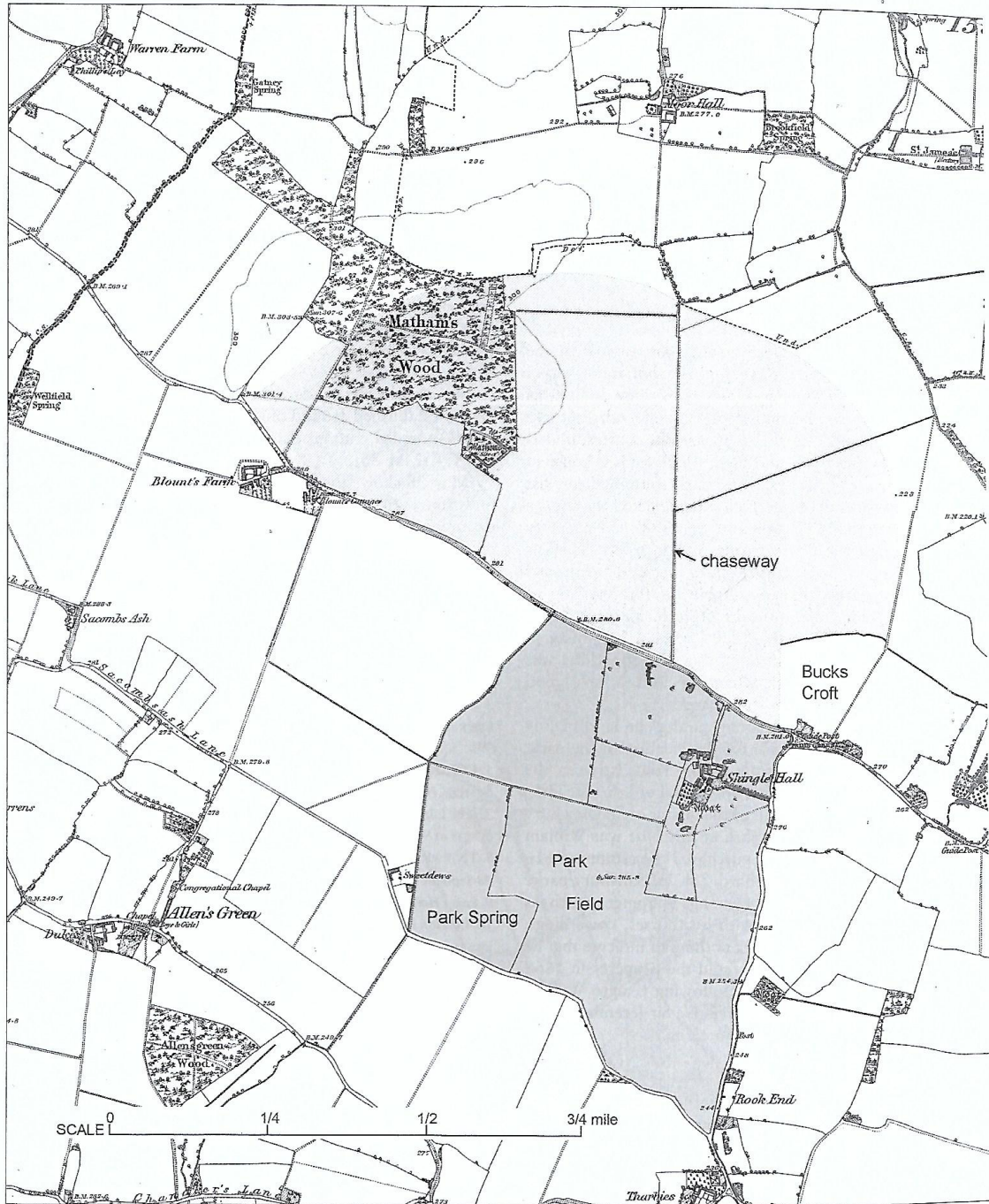
Dates: 1447 - perhaps late seventeenth
century

In the Tudor period Shingle Hall park, continuing to include a section of Matham's Wood, exists in more or less the same space. A southerly section including Shingle Hall farm is recorded in 1636, darker shading, 200-acre park, (OS 6 inch map XXII surveyed 1878). A second section of the park is more northerly, including a part of Matham's wood, perhaps 300 acres though boundaries are not known.

See the books for the rest of the entries.

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TUDOR AND EARLY STUART PARKS OF HERTFORDSHIRE



Map 37 The park at Shingle Hall, Sawbridgeworth

The likely extent of the 200-acre park recorded in 1636 is shown in solid green. The remainder of the 520-acre park licensed in the mid-fifteenth century lay immediately north (lighter shading), but its boundaries are not known. Annotated with features from the Sawbridgeworth tithe award and map, 1838 and 1839 (HALS DSA493/1 & 2). OS 6-inch map sheet XXII, surveyed 1878, published 1883; sheet XXIII, surveyed 1874-9, published 1879-83; sheet XXX, surveyed