

ANOTHER KIND OF PARK IN COASTAL LINCOLNSHIRE?

By I.G. SIMMONS¹

Some medieval and early modern documents from coastal Lincolnshire refer to ‘parks’ in contexts which seem unlikely to refer to the well-documented parks stocked with deer and timber trees. The county’s roll of deer parks is discussed by Manning (2006), and more broad-ranging (in time and space) accounts have been written by scholars like Rotherham (2007), Mileson (2009), Fletcher (2011) and Williamson (2013). Though focused investigations have been few, landscape and settlement histories of the Lincolnshire Marshlands and their backing Fens seem to lack examples of ‘pleasure and profit’ landscapes dotted with ‘typical’ deer parks, whereas once into The Wolds and westwards, the ‘normal’ types of park are reasonably common.

An example of a place-name from the Wolds that indicates the presence of a deer park is Skendleby Salter (TF 455717), which refers to a deer-leap, *i.e.* the place in a park boundary wall or fence where, in the medieval period, deer might enter the park to improve the sport and the genetic diversity (Simmons and Mussett 2011). On the One-Inch 7th series, the Ordnance Survey named it ‘Psalter’, giving rise to a number of colourful local interpretations. This paper however suggests that in the coastal lowlands of Lincolnshire, the term ‘park’ is used for a different kind of resource, usually in close proximity to reclaimed wetlands, with a documented continuity of creation from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries (Figs 1, 2).

One early example comes from Wrangle township (TF 424508), where around AD 1200 some charters of the abbey of Waltham Holy Cross use the vocabulary of making parks and employing a parker. Wrangle’s settlement context is one of a small vill (seven households at Domesday) whose eastward margin to The Wash in medieval times was dominated by mudflats and salt-marsh which were exploited for salt-making (Fig. 2). By the twelfth century the abbey had become the main local landlord and its early charters and grants have been edited by Ransford (1998), where the references are found. The Wrangle instances comprise (in Ransford’s listings):

#447; (1221)

... et unam acram terre in Perkes quam Rudulfus Brito tenuit ... et omnia servicia tenementorum [de] ... Magnus le Parkur ...

And one acre of land in the Parks which R. B. held ... and all the services relating to the holdings ... Magnus the Parker ...

#536; (1209 × 1230)

... deo servientibus unum parcum quod iacet inter

terram que fuit ... et servicium Magni Parkur xvj denariorum...

To those who serve God one park which lies between the land which was ... and the service of Magnus the Parker whose rent is 16d.

#469; (1205 × 1209)

... de tenemento memorati Oukes filii Roberti Northparcum suum ...

Of the holding of the said Oukes son of Robert his Northpark

These extracts convey nothing about the landscape setting of these parks, but they are located in areas of active reclamation (#469 has an *Estneuland*, an eastern new land) and there is reference to the making and operation of saltworks (*salinae*). Thus proximity to the coast is certain, though the frequent use of *terre* suggests drier land of the kind probably created by the reclamation of the low grounds and the drying-out of salt waste. It seems reasonable to conclude that this is not the typical terrain of the pleasure park, but one of a different type of resource, recently created. Compared with other land types (arable, pasture, foreshore, fisheries, fish traps) the mentions of ‘park’ in these sources are infrequent, which might suggest that they shared some special characteristic.

All the parcels of land in this area are bounded by ditches and/or banks, keeping a specialist labourer like Magnus well employed. Other sources of the period, such as the Earl of Lincoln’s 1275 accounts for his holdings in Wrangle, quote an income of 3s 3d for ‘keeping beasts in the park’ (Notts Archives DD/FJ/6/1/1 Mem 6; Mussett and Simmons 2014), with adjacent entries listing a sea fishery and the *hadik*, the sea bank. The continued use of the term is seen in a document of 1560 quoted by Pishey Thompson (1856: 599) which lists the uses of the Queen’s resources in Wrangle, which included ‘*sometymes by grazing of her parkes*’.

A wider search for parks in east Lincolnshire includes examples of timber reserves and at Louth an ambiguous case. On the Wolds, there are examples not far from the coast: at Skendleby (as mentioned above, at 200ft (61 m) OD)) and at Kirkby (>100ft OD (30 m)), from where oak timber was used to mend sluice gates on Wainfleet Haven in 1422:

The council [of the Duchy of Lancaster] grants to [the farmer of the fishery and harbour of Wainfleet] 4 oaks to be taken from the park of the king at Kyrkeby
(The National Archives (TNA): DL25/1819)

On the very margins of the East Fen at Great Steeping, Matilda, widow, granted to Henry de Steeping her lord

¹ Durham University

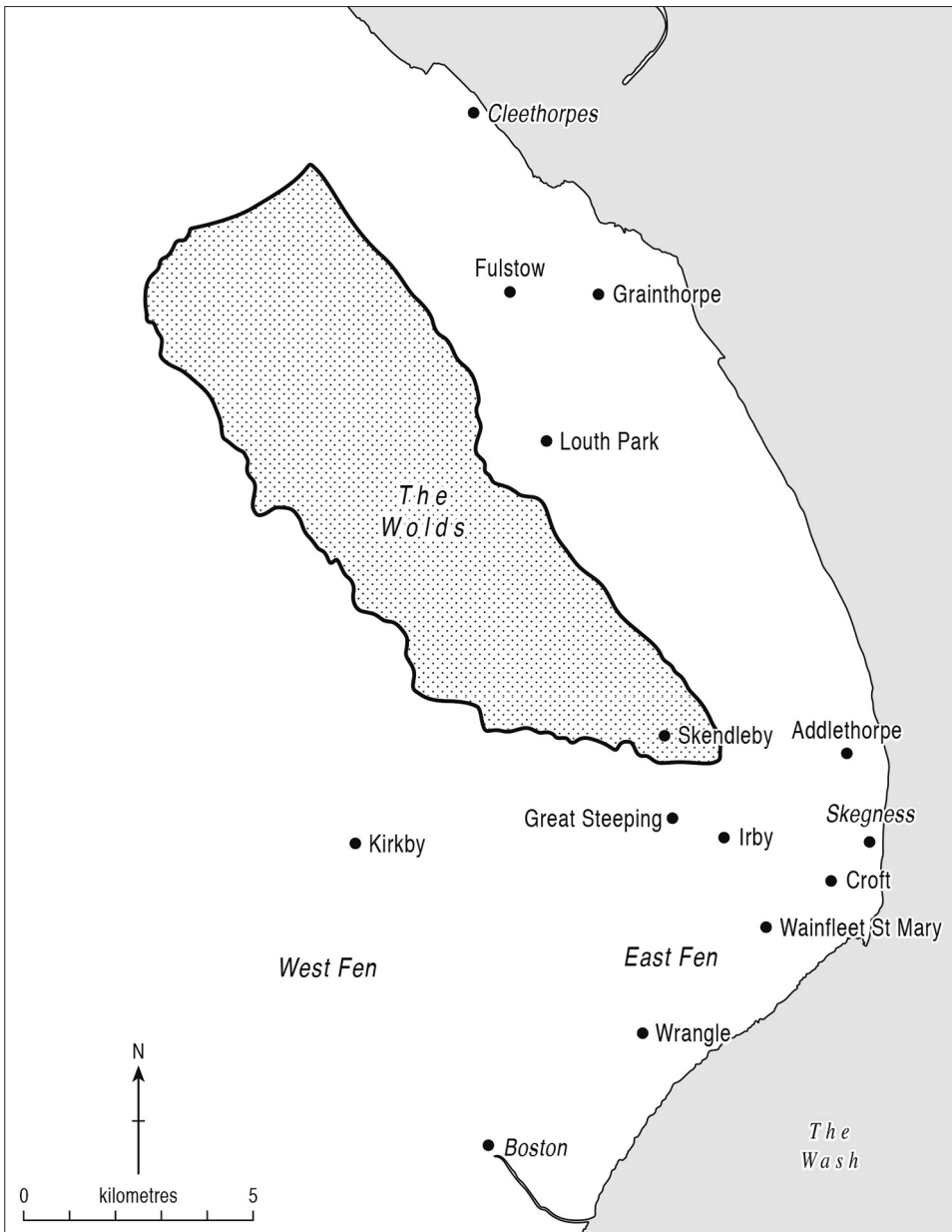


Figure 1 Places mentioned in the text. North of a line joining Croft and Skendleby, the region between the Wolds and the sea is usually called 'Lincoln Marsh'. The modern coastline is depicted on this map. Figure by Chris Orton (Design and Imaging Unit, Dept of Geography, Durham University).

in 1240 × 1250, '2 selions, the road to Irby south and Henry's park west' (Lincs Archives (LA): 2ANC1/20/1). This site is identifiable as being in the vicinity of the moated Kelsey Hall (TF 446646) just above the 25ft (7.6m) contour, so clear of the fen flood line that would need embanking to dry it out.

An intermediate case might be Louth Park Abbey, built from about AD 1140. It was set in a park owned by Alexander of Lincoln and, although sited at about 10m OD, was said to be on an elevated tract of land where the river was fast-flowing enough to turn a mill-wheel (TF 353886). In 1337, the Abbot was licensed to enclose pasture 'in the waste of Fulstowe' and marsh in that of Foulsthorp (*Cal Pat Rolls Edw III*, 401). The enclosure of low-lying land was clearly an important step. A comparable though later case might come from Bratof, where the Town Book of the seventeenth century (LA: MG 5/1/7; probably a copy of information from c. 1520) relays holdings:

...at Somergate Brigge, upon the west syde thereof lyeth the parke cont' j acr'. Item two closes called Somergate wonge upon the north syde of the park cont' v akers

(fol 35r).

Fol 33r records 'Saltmarsh' c. 1.3km to the north and the bridge (TF 483645) is at 4m OD.

Further examples suggest that the term 'park' might have even wider usages, including a larger range of resource types. One comes from the Fen Laws of Common which governed the resource uses of the fens of south Lindsey and north Holland (Brears 1929; Hallam 1963), regulating the use of a man's 'sod park' and the maintenance of his 'sod park dyke'. Resources gathered from the fen such as herbage, hay and reeds were not taken randomly but from places specific to a commoner and endorsed by the Fen Approver, a Soke official. Thus the park and its dyke delineated the area

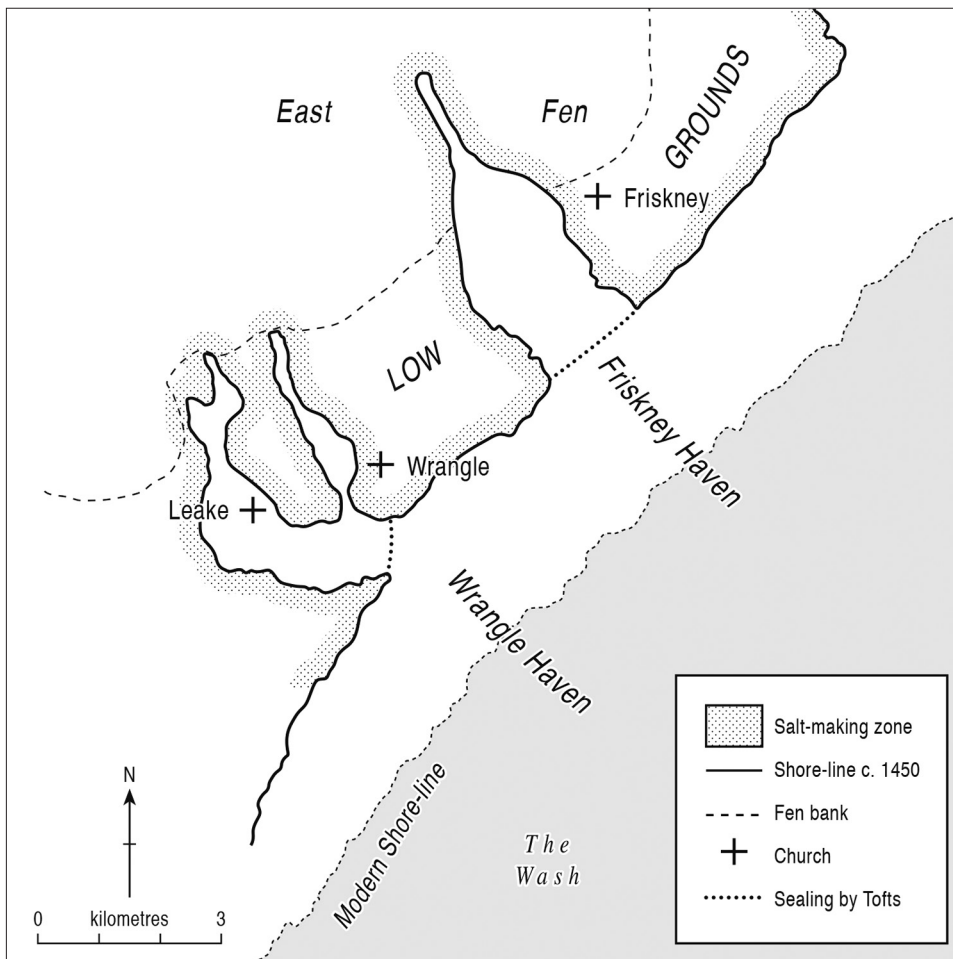


Figure 2 Medieval Wrangle. The zone in which the 'parks' are found is that of the Low Grounds, flanked by a tidal saltern zone. Salt water penetrated towards the Fen in the form of Havens, which in time became cut off from The Wash. Between the 1450 shoreline and today's coast there was a strip of Toft (mostly salt waste) and a broader strip of reclaimed salt-marsh. Figure by Chris Orton (Design and Imaging Unit, Dept of Geography, Durham University).

of the fen from which the commoner might take, in this instance, turf or peat turves for his own use.

The use of the term 'park' in the Fen is seen in a seventeenth century list of acquisitions in Wainfleet by Robert Barkham, which included '3 acres in the Parkes ... whereof 1 piece bounds ... on little Lusdyke on the W and on Pasdyke on the E' (Bethlem Box 43). This places it at 3m OD on the edge of the pre-drainage East Fen, where an artificial channel brought water from the Lymn at Firsby Clough to the head of Wainfleet Haven (TF 455592).

A final instance exists in reference to oyster beds in Hampshire, where hurdles were held down with ballast and seeded with oysters. The water level was maintained by enclosing the beds which, in one nineteenth-century example, were called 'parks' (Currie 2000). Readers with knowledge of other unconventional usages might care to tell the author about them.

The quantity of evidence is small and its meaning indeterminate. Yet there is enough to suggest that historians should look out for a different kind of park in coastal areas where they might be part of a land use complex that includes salt waste, reclaimed salt-marsh, drained freshwater mires and occasional dry land on Pleistocene deposits. The dominant land use was pasture, though arable was never far away, suggesting that effective drainage was one of the tasks of the Parker. Timber trees were certainly absent and any deer were lying inconspicuously fallow.

Bibliography

- Bethlem Box 43. Bethlem Royal Hospital archives: Box 43: Edward Barkham's Book of Survey [1610].
- Brears, C. 1929. The fen laws of common. *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries* 20: 58–64, 74–77.
- Cal Pat Rolls 11 Edw III: Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward III, AD 1334–1338* (London: HMSO, 1895). Available on-line at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011275826;view=1up;seq=5>; accessed December 2017.
- Currie, C. 2000. Sea ponds, with reference to the Solent, Hampshire. In A. Aberg and C. Lewis (eds), *The Rising Tide. Archaeology and Coastal Landscapes*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 117–124.
- Fletcher, J. 2011. *Gardens of Earthly Delight: the history of deer parks*. Oxford: Windgather.
- Hallam, H.E. 1963. The fen bylaws of Spalding and Pinchbeck. *Reports and Papers of the Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society* 10: 40–65.
- Manning, C.J. 2006. *Deer and Deer Parks of Lincolnshire*. Horncastle: Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union.
- Miles, S.A. 2009. *Parks in Medieval England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mussett, P. and Simmons, I.G. 2014. Luxury living at Bolingbroke Castle in the thirteenth century. *Lincolnshire Past and Present* 96: 14–16.
- Ransford, R. (ed.) 1989. *The Early Charters of the Augustinian Canons of Waltham Abbey, Essex*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
- Rotherham, I. (ed.) 2007. *The History, Ecology and Archaeology of Medieval Parks and Parklands*. Sheffield: Wildtrack.
- Simmons, I.G. and Mussett, P. 2011. Jumping to conclusions. An excursion with Arthur Owen. *Lincolnshire Past and Present* 85: 8–9.
- Thompson, P. 1856. *The History and Antiquities of Boston and the Hundred of Skirbeck*. Boston: John Noble. Facsimile reprint 1997. Sleaford: Heritage Lincolnshire.
- Williamson, T. 2013. *An Environmental History of Wildlife in England 1650–1950*. London: Bloomsbury.