

Introduction

In 1570 Herstmonceux park in East Sussex was described as three miles in circumference, a third of it open grassland, the rest ‘well set with great timber trees’. Besides Herstmonceux castle in its western corner it contained some two hundred fallow deer, four well-stocked fishponds, a heronry (‘Hern wood’), a rabbit warren, and a thatched lodge and (ruined) stable. Two roads led through the park to the church, market, and townships adjacent.¹ This extensive parkland had evolved from a much earlier park, established by the thirteenth century when the manor was the main seat of the Monceux family, who perhaps had a house on the site of the later castle.² The earlier park was transformed into something resembling its sixteenth-century successor by Sir Roger Fiennes in the early fifteenth century. Sir Roger shut off a road through the park in 1413 and replaced it by a new route skirting the western and northern perimeter. Then in 1441, two years after being appointed treasurer of the royal household, he obtained licence to extend the parkland by 600 acres and to build the castle, which became the first major brick building in the south-east of England.³

Herstmonceux park was just one of many similar enclosures created in medieval England. Over the last fifty years a great deal of research has been devoted to these landscape features, and interest in them appears to be growing rather than diminishing. Recent work has adopted a variety of methodological approaches, used a wide range of historical, archaeological, and landscape evidence and started to engage in more wide-ranging and theoretical analysis.⁴ Yet until very recently the study of parks has been something of a historical backwater. Most of the research on the subject has had a local or regional focus, producing specialized studies that have been difficult for those with broader interests to combine into a coherent whole. Individual scholars have started to build larger interpretations based on this detailed work, but these have mainly grown up separately from one another and there have been few general surveys. As long ago as 1979 Leonard Cantor noted what he called the ‘considerable scope for an up-to-date and systematic book on medieval parks’, which might

¹ Parry 1833: 246–9. ² *VCH Sussex*, ix. 133–4; Venables 1851: 133–4.

³ *CPR*, 1413–16, 133; *CChR*, 1427–1516, 13–14; *New DNB* (s.v. James Fiennes); Emery 1996–2006, iii. 343–54.

⁴ See e.g. the various contributions in Liddiard 2007 (ed.).

‘co-ordinate and relate the growing volume of material that is now available’.⁵ Thirty years later, after much new work and increasingly divergent interpretations of many aspects of the subject, no such book has yet been attempted. Consequently, a great deal about the nature and development of parks is still uncertain or disputed and their significance in medieval society is only partially understood.

These circumstances seem to provide an ideal opportunity to present a general study of parks which both returns to first principles and also seeks to understand these institutions in a wider context. This book offers such a study, looking at the parks of kings, nobles, great churchmen, and gentry across the country, in upland and lowland areas alike, from the twelfth century to the early sixteenth.⁶ It focuses on what appear to me to be the most important of the many questions which have still to be resolved in this well-established and increasingly lively subject. Namely, when and why did parks first appear? What precisely was their purpose? Did common features outweigh differences between them? Did their function generally stay the same throughout this long period, or did it undergo major change? What was the impact of these numerous enclosures on the crown or on relations amongst the aristocracy? To what extent did the establishment of these private reserves affect local populations? Most of these questions are quite basic ones and have received at least some attention from previous scholars, but for all the research that has been done, current writing is very far from providing clear answers to them. In fact, as will become clear, in some areas there seems to be growing uncertainty and disagreement.

This is not to deny or undervalue the considerable achievements of modern research on parks. Above all, local studies have mapped out scores of medieval parks and set out details of their histories in dozens of articles. The best of them follow W. G. Hoskins’s and Maurice Beresford’s emphasis on the need to combine documents with map and fieldwork evidence to identify and date features on the ground and understand their context.⁷ In so doing they have provided a useful picture of the location of parks in the landscape. At a general level, it has been demonstrated that they were often located in areas of high medieval woodland cover, and were less common where woods were scarce, including in champion districts and on barren moorland.⁸ Within particular localities, it has been shown that they tended to be located on higher or more sloping ground near the boundaries of manors, parishes, and townships (at least until land became more available in the later middle ages).⁹

⁵ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 84.

⁶ Parks existed elsewhere in Britain, Europe, and indeed further afield, but these areas are largely beyond the scope of this survey.

⁷ Hoskins 1955: 14; Beresford 1971: 19, 25.

⁸ e.g. Rimington 1970: 9; Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 74–6; Cantor 1982: 78–81; 1983; Rackham 1986: 123–5; Neave 1991: 5; 1996: 60–1; Higham 2004: 122–3; Winchester 2007: 165–7.

⁹ Rowe 2007: 135 (fig. 49), 143–4; Hoppitt 2007: 162; Moorhouse 2007: 102–6.

This sort of work has also made it possible to suggest something about the chronology of parks and their overall numbers. Cantor's pioneering trawl for evidence of parks in published calendars, antiquarian works, field names, and the *Victoria County History* produced his still highly useful county-by-county gazetteer of medieval parks¹⁰ and enabled him to estimate that there were at least 1,900 parks in existence at one time or another during the middle ages, most, he thought, created in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.¹¹ A subsequent estimate by Oliver Rackham posits a much larger number of parks: about 3,200 in the early fourteenth century, the period he takes to be the highpoint in their numbers.¹² This higher figure was reached by taking into account further discoveries, separating out individual parks found in close groups, and allowing for the existence of parks that are less well-documented in government records, quite a number of which were missed out by Cantor and other early searchers.¹³

Detailed studies have at the same time usefully illustrated the variety of parks. These fenced-off areas differed greatly in size: a fairly typical extent may have been around one to two hundred acres, but some small parks were under fifty acres and the biggest several thousand.¹⁴ Larger parks were usually owned by kings and nobles, often as part of wider forests or chases, and sometimes as part of a group of parks; smaller, isolated parks tended to be owned by gentry or religious houses. Though these enclosures were above all associated with wood-pasture, some were to be found in other landscapes, including upland moors and heaths, as well as champion belts and coastal areas; the majority were located in the Midlands and south-eastern England, but there were also large numbers in the northern counties and the south-west.¹⁵ Given these differences in size and location, it may not be surprising that lords appear to have used their parks in a number of different ways. Apart from deer herds and lodges for the parkers who supervised them, many parks also housed other game, especially rabbits in artificial warrens, as well as fishponds. In some there is evidence for the cutting of timber and exploitation of fuel wood, in others an apparent focus on the pasturing of cattle or breeding of horses. Certain parks were even partly put under the plough for arable farming.¹⁶ The way individual parks were used often seems to have altered over time, something no doubt related to the fact that many grew or shrank over the course of their existence.¹⁷

Besides these fundamentals, parks have been set within a wider context of hunting and game-keeping. Particular attention has been paid to the various ways in which hunting was regulated by the crown, and how parks fitted into a

¹⁰ Cantor 1983. ¹¹ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 71. ¹² Rackham 1980: 191; 1986: 123.

¹³ For further discussion about park numbers see below, p. 109.

¹⁴ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 74. ¹⁵ Cantor 1983.

¹⁶ Stamper 1988: 145–7; Roberts 1988: 74–5.

¹⁷ For an interesting reconstruction of the development of different areas of parkland at Lathom (Lancs.) see Bradley and Gaimster 2004 (eds.): 276.

larger schema of game reserves.¹⁸ Norman and later kings made a special claim to hunting by setting up forest law over large swathes of the country. The establishment of the royal forests secured these rulers an exclusive right to hunt large game, principally deer, in many well-wooded districts, moors, and heaths. The forests, which included settlements and fields as well as woods and wastes, were watched over by a hierarchy of officials and special courts were used to amerce those poaching deer or felling trees within the forest bounds. Rulers sometimes allowed favoured subjects limited hunting opportunities in the forest, but more often they permitted them to establish hunting reserves of their own, albeit apparently under strict royal control.¹⁹ Occasionally they granted forest rights over certain areas to important subjects, typically by the new name of 'chase'.²⁰ More commonly they gave lords licences to have 'free warren', or exclusive rights to hunt lesser game on their demesne lands outside forest areas.²¹ The main beasts of the warren were hares, game birds, foxes, wild cats, badgers, and other small animals,²² and lords with warren rights could prosecute those hunting these animals on their lands in the royal courts. Sometimes kings also acknowledged lords' rights to make parks in which to keep deer, including on estates which were under forest jurisdiction. Parks differed from forests, chases, and warrens in being fully enclosed, and to enter (or 'break') a park without permission was an act of trespass.

Nonetheless, for all this valuable information, the predominance of local studies and the close interest in the formalities of forest law and niceties of hunting franchises have tended to bring with them a slight narrowness of focus. The emphasis on topography carries on Hoskins's vision of the landscape as an object worthy of serious study, potentially, indeed, the 'richest historical record we possess',²³ but, on its own, it can actually only tell us so much about parks. At the same time, the concentration on individual parks and those of particular counties, allied to the differing interests and approaches of particular scholars, has contributed to the problems in reaching any coherent conclusions about parks as a whole. This applies to many areas but is particularly evident in terms of the crucial question of the function of parks.

At first glance it might seem simple enough to provide an answer to the question of what parks were for: those who created parks wanted somewhere to hunt. This has long been a favoured interpretation, fitting in well with the traditional assumption that medieval kings and lords were obsessively keen hunters who established and maintained forests and chases as hunting grounds.²⁴

¹⁸ Turner (ed.) 1901: pp. i–cxxxix; Cantor 1982. ¹⁹ Petit-Dutaillis 1930: 149–54.

²⁰ Ibid. 154. ²¹ Turner (ed.) 1901: p. cxxiii; Crook 2001: 36–7.

²² In practice, deer were sometimes preserved by rights of warren, and the roe deer at least may have been formally recognized as a beast of the warren in the earlier 14th cent.: Turner (ed.) 1901: pp. cxxvii–cxxxii; Roberts 1988: 67; *CChR, 1427–1516*, 8.

²³ Hoskins 1955: 14.

²⁴ Petit-Dutaillis 1930: 151–4, esp. 154; Warren 1961: 140; Stenton 1965: 100.

The prime quarry in the forest was the deer and so it would seem logical to suppose that parks full of deer were likewise areas put aside for great men's hunting.²⁵ However, some time ago Oliver Rackham provided a strong challenge to this view by asserting that the idea of forests and parks acting primarily as hunting grounds is a myth.²⁶ Others seem to have backed this claim up, not least by pointing out the limited evidence of aristocratic participation in hunting and by raising particular objections to the role of parks as lordly playgrounds because of the relatively confined area of many of these enclosures.²⁷

The questioning of older assumptions about parks and forests as lords' hunting grounds has had a mixed impact. Many recent writers continue to stress aristocratic recreational hunting, perhaps unconvinced by the objections, or unaware of them. For them the park remains, quite simply, the 'hunting-park', part and parcel of the elite's shaping of the landscape for the pleasures of the chase, a miniature version of the forest.²⁸ Some though have felt the need to provide alternative explanations for the purpose of parks, perhaps because of the doubts about hunting, perhaps simply through examination of the other activities that went on in and around them.²⁹ A number of historians still lay great stress on deer, but in a rather different way, seeing the main purpose of parks as breeding deer to supply luxury fresh meat, to be unceremoniously culled by the lords' officials.³⁰ The park may thus be seen as a 'deer farm', or at least some kind of storage area and collection point for game, with any real hunting going on in forests and chases outside.³¹ In this way park-making was an activity that had much to do with aristocratic tastes, hospitality, and social networking, but little connection with more active leisure pursuits.

Others, though, have focused their attention elsewhere. For instance, it has been claimed that parks were partly a means of preserving and controlling valuable woods and grassland for their economic use, rather than just for hunting.³² Or, especially among some recent landscape historians, there is an increasing tendency to view parks of all periods as having been an integral part of lords' concern with the appearance of their residences and estates, providing a carefully arranged, in some sense landscaped, backdrop to castles and manor houses.³³ This kind of use of parkland is sometimes suggested as having significant 'aesthetic', decorative functions,³⁴ but has also been interpreted as part of lords' demonstration of power and sophistication.³⁵ The latter interpretation draws heavily on an older and frequently repeated idea that parks served a less

²⁵ Shirley 1867: 13, 15; Platt 1978: 47; Saul 1986: 189.

²⁶ Rackham 1986: 125, 133; 1989: 51. ²⁷ Below, pp. 15–16.

²⁸ Crouch 1992: 309–10; Thompson 1998: 152; Emery 1996–2006: ii. 225; Short 2000: 136.

²⁹ See e.g. Creighton 2002: 190–1.

³⁰ Rackham 1980: 197; Birrell 1992: 113, 122; Bond 1997: 25; 1998: 24. For an early anticipation of this view see Crawford 1953: 189.

³¹ Liddiard 2000b: 51. ³² Britnell 1977: 109; Hoppitt 1992: i. 278.

³³ For an up-to-date discussion of parks and landscaping see Liddiard 2005: 97–121.

³⁴ Taylor 2000: 39, 50; Bond 1994: 144. ³⁵ See e.g. Liddiard 2000a: 182.

tangible, but nonetheless important, role as status-symbols, hand in hand with—or perhaps above and beyond—more functional uses.³⁶

To add to this complexity, many writers have drawn a sharp distinction between the purpose of high and later medieval parks, usually taking the Black Death as the watershed. According to this view, the function of parks was transformed in the later middle ages. New parks created in that period little resembled their predecessors and the use made of older parks was likewise changing. A focus on deer-keeping and hunting was increasingly giving way to ‘landscaping’—with new parks apparently being established as settings for grand houses more frequently than ever before—and to ‘mixed-use’, chiefly stock fattening and wood production.³⁷ This idea of transition seems to chime in with what is often perceived as a general shift in the later middle ages away from militaristic architecture and residences as defensive structures, towards the country house, with a greater concern for decorative gardens and parkland.³⁸ It may also seem to be supported by the suggestion that in this era of reduced pressure on land and fewer people there were more abundant game supplies, perhaps implying that nurturing and protecting deer was less necessary.³⁹ The changes in purpose were allegedly signposted by an alteration in the nature of park perimeters, with more impenetrable barriers of ditches and pales on mounds of earth being replaced by simple fences, which, it is argued, could not have so effectively retained deer.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, despite its general currency, the idea of a late-medieval shift in the function of parks is as yet unproven and may actually present several problems.

All this leaves us with an interesting but rather disorderly range of suggestions about why these enclosures were set up and how the priority of various factors may have shifted over the course of the middle ages. In the absence of any real consensus, various supposed roles are frequently lumped together, with emphasis on the individual ingredients according to preference or awareness of particular interpretations or local examples. The latest scholarship, far from moving towards any consensus about the function of parks, has actually started to question whether these enclosures really formed a coherent group at all. It was long assumed that the use of the word ‘park’ (or its Latin or French equivalents) to describe part of a lord’s demesne signified a special kind of enclosure for deer.⁴¹ But confidence in this idea is rapidly diminishing. One recent approach has been to suggest that there were different ‘types’ of lordly parks, including not just deer reserves but also places devoted entirely to wood production or livestock.⁴²

³⁶ Below, pp. 101–3.

³⁷ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 79; Platt 1978: 47; Rackham 1986: 128–9; Bond 1998: 26; Stamper 1988: 146–7; Hoppitt 1992: i. 91; Bailey 2007: 101.

³⁸ For a recent exposition of this view see Johnson 2002: 39–40, 44–5.

³⁹ Almond 2003: 169; Pollard 2004: 89.

⁴⁰ Cantor 1964: 61–2; Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 74.

⁴¹ See e.g. Turner (ed.) 1901: p. cxvi n. 1.

⁴² Winchester 2007: 166.

A slightly different, though related, tendency has been to see parks as fundamentally multi-purpose enclosures, where deer-keeping was just one among a number of uses, and not necessarily the most important.⁴³ If these kinds of ideas are accepted, the parks owned by kings and aristocrats, or at least many of them, seem to differ more in scale than in substance from the ordinary field or woodland closes which were sometimes also called 'parks' (especially in the west of England).⁴⁴ The very identification of parks as a distinctive and meaningful category of enclosure, so long taken for granted, might thus appear to be endangered.

Similarly, there are strongly divergent interpretations of the chronology of park-making, another central issue, with several different views about when parks were introduced and when they started to decline. Whatever their ultimate Roman or Arab roots, parks have traditionally been claimed as a Norman innovation in England, and late Anglo-Saxon references that might imply parks have been played down.⁴⁵ The main growth in park numbers is usually thought to have occurred a considerable time after the Conquest, but there is uncertainty about exactly when. Some see the twelfth century as the likely period when park-making really started to take off on a large scale,⁴⁶ but others focus much more on the thirteenth and early fourteenth century.⁴⁷ More recently, however, it has been argued that parks were widespread in late Anglo-Saxon society and may have had their origins there.⁴⁸ The later chronology of parks is likewise rather unclear. Park creation and maintenance is generally thought to have been in decline after the Black Death, but even this has not been fully established. Many have claimed that there were very large falls in park numbers after 1350,⁴⁹ suggesting that the rising cost of wages and decline in tenant labour services may have made it too expensive to maintain existing parks or to create new ones,⁵⁰ or that worsening climatic conditions and disease badly affected deer stocks.⁵¹ But others have given a more positive view of the level of later medieval park-making,⁵² sometimes arguing that economic conditions could be favourable to imparking in this period.⁵³

However, just as significant as disagreements over the function of parks or their chronology is the fact that the wider importance of the subject has seldom been adequately conveyed. A good deal of work is still required to show that

⁴³ Liddiard 2007 (ed.): 1. See also Muir 2006: 128.

⁴⁴ Cuhn 1981 (ed.): 627–8; Latham 1965 (ed.): 332; Rothwell *et al.* 1992 (eds.): 496; Field 1993: 25–6; Adams 1976: 125; Hoskins 1955: 143, 146; Lock (ed.) 1998, 2002: ii. 340; Shirley 1867: 14 n. 1; *VCH Oxon.*, x. 50; *CPR*, 1345–8, 73.

⁴⁵ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 71; Rackham 1986: 122–3; Rowley 1997: 130. Cf. Shirley 1867: 3–4, which ventures less firm conclusions.

⁴⁶ Rackham 1986: 123; Hoppitt 1992: i. 76.

⁴⁷ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 73; Dyer 1994: 20.

⁴⁸ Liddiard 2003: 4.

⁴⁹ Cantor 1970–1: 12; Platt 1978: 46–7; Rowley 1986: 135; Squires and Humphrey 1986: 9; Taylor 1998: 19; Hoppitt 1999: 66; Emery 1996–2006: ii. 226.

⁵⁰ Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 79.

⁵¹ Hoppitt 1992: i. 82–3.

⁵² e.g. Bond 1994: 134; Stamper 1988: 146.

⁵³ Beresford 1971: 207; Britnell 2004: 41; Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 79; Hoppitt 1992: i. 86.

park-making, besides being a significant social practice in itself, could cast light on other better-studied aspects of the development of medieval society. For instance, although it has long been claimed that these big and costly enclosures were ‘status-symbols’, this is an idea which has seldom been tested or developed further.⁵⁴ In fact, if it is accepted that parks really were a central part of the package of gracious living, essential to the lifestyle and image of an aristocrat, their creation and use ought to be closely related to lords’ interests and sense of identity and, therefore, to questions of social standing and authority. Particular episodes in the history of individual parks certainly suggest that contemporaries closely identified these enclosures with power and lordship. At Herstmonceux in 1243, for instance, servants of the countess of Eu apparently attempted to assert her overlordship of the manor against a rival claimant on the death of the lord, William de Monceux, by hunting deer in the park.⁵⁵ A generation later, Henry III and his army took revenge on Waleran de Monceux (William’s son) for supporting the rebellious Simon de Montfort by wrecking the same park and killing the deer.⁵⁶

In an insightful couple of paragraphs, David Crouch has suggested that knights created parks as part of their self-conscious assertion of aristocratic credentials in the later twelfth and thirteenth century, providing them with places to hunt in emulation of greater lords in their wide forests.⁵⁷ He sees this as part of the same process of ‘social diffusion’ illustrated by their adoption of heraldic devices and improvement of their residences in the same period.⁵⁸ Viewed in this way, parks may offer a new approach to analysing the definition and assertion of status within the aristocracy, one that has a wide applicability, relevant to the whole of the middle ages. In other words, if parks really were status-symbols, and given that status competition has been suggested in other areas, should they not form part of the historiography on aristocratic competition? If parks moved down the social scale, as has been suggested, what was the effect of this? Did poaching become a sublimated form of private warfare? Should some alleged aristocratic attacks on or misuses of parks be interpreted in this way? How far were park-makers attempting to affirm, or indeed assert, pre-eminence by managing the use of space? And how far did this involve manipulating the wider setting and appearance of major residences through surrounding parkland?⁵⁹ As well as adding significance to the spatial relationship between parks and residences, this last question raises further problems about how status and, indeed, how parks themselves were understood. How important, for instance, were they in projecting a visual image compared to gardens? A clearer perspective is evidently required on parks’ role in elite leisure, culture, and social competition.

⁵⁴ Cf. Birrell 1992: 126.

⁵⁵ *CRR*, 1242–3, 422–3.

⁵⁶ Venables 1851: 134.

⁵⁷ Crouch 1992: 309–10.

⁵⁸ See also Coss 2003: 34–8 on the wider emulation of the attributes of nobility over the course of the 12th cent.

⁵⁹ Cf. Johnson 2002: ch. 3, esp. pp. 48–52.

Equally importantly, the extent to which parks affected men and women of different classes has received only very limited attention from a literature where comments on the social effects of imparking on the wider community have tended to be scattered and brief.⁶⁰ This is partly because of the focus of many older studies on forests and the royal licensing of parks, which can make it seem that park creation was purely of concern to the crown. Some recent work has begun to develop a more nuanced and sophisticated approach, particularly by exploring the meanings which contemporaries from various social groups may have vested in parks and the hunting and other activities that went on within their bounds.⁶¹ As we shall see, lords and their servants seem to have wished to impress ordinary people with their parks and hunting exploits, and they necessarily involved a few of them in their hunts. But quite how lesser folk typically looked upon reserves which so often interfered with their traditional land uses is uncertain.

A number of areas need to be addressed if we are to better appreciate the impact of parks on wider communities. Among these is the extent to which parks represented an affront to traditional peasant hunting activity, since hunting was actually practised at all social levels. In other words, did park-making bring an end to the activities of lesser local huntsmen or did they manage to carry on with their hunting and trapping more or less unmolested, in the park or elsewhere? This issue may be illuminated by examining the motivation of the lesser individuals who often took part in poaching raids on parks. But besides hunting, there is the important question of how far parks affected the use of land for other activities. After all, these enclosures were very widespread, if unevenly distributed, and in the most densely imparked counties they were created in as many as one parish in three.⁶² Despite this, their agricultural impact has usually been neglected by general surveys of medieval farming.⁶³ Where wider agrarian issues have been touched upon, the significance of parks has been downplayed, and the focus has generally been on how the control of resources may have been important to lords making parks, rather than on the effects of park-making on local inhabitants. As one recent writer has put it, medieval parks are 'very much under-researched as an aspect of enclosure' and their 'effect on local economies and populations is still largely unknown'.⁶⁴ To progress beyond this limited understanding, parks clearly have to be more closely fitted into an analysis of the wider enclosure movements of the middle ages: in other words, all those changes in farming practices and rural life

⁶⁰ Manning 1993: 116; Beresford 1971: 192–5, 204–6; Hoskins and Stamp 1963: 37–8; Franklin 1989: 149, 165; Neave 1991: 11–13; Crook 1976: 35–6. Way 1997 is more substantial, but geographical rather than historical in methodology; reviewed by Stamper 1998.

⁶¹ Marvin 1999; Johnson 2002; Herring 2003; Liddiard 2005.

⁶² Cantor and Hatherly 1979: 74–5 (esp. fig. 1); Rowe 2007: 144.

⁶³ See e.g. Hallam 1988a (ed.); Miller 1991 (ed.), apart from e.g. 80–1, 118–19; Thirsk 2000 (ed.), except Dyer, 110, and Short, 136–7. Campbell 2000 considers the distribution of wood-pasture (94–101), but provides no specific discussion of parks.

⁶⁴ Hollowell 2000: 1.

associated with the growth of population, spread of arable farming and intensification of land use in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and the different types of enclosure which accompanied the radically changed economic climate of the late middle ages.⁶⁵

It should be clear, then, that many significant and interesting questions about parks are open for debate. In attempting to provide answers to these questions this book contends that parks, for all their variety, can be understood as a special and distinctive kind of land use. Ultimately, perhaps, a general study is needed to counteract the inherent shortcomings of the pursuit of the individual park through local studies, which, like the search for the individual baron, puts us 'in danger of losing our sense of the class as a whole'.⁶⁶ Some will no doubt disagree with the conclusions presented here, a few perhaps even with the idea that general conclusions of any kind can be reached, but the aim of the book is to stimulate further debate and provide it with some focus rather than to claim definitive solutions.

A broad chronological spread has been adopted to provide a longer view of supposed key periods of transition, such as the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century. The particular start and end points have been selected for a variety of reasons. The choice about where to start presents some difficulties, as the earlier discussion of origins might suggest.⁶⁷ But the twelfth century has been selected as the main departure point based on the belief that it marked the real beginnings of medieval park-making, distinct in character and scale from related activities that had come before.⁶⁸ The conclusion of the study in the early sixteenth century is based mainly on the view that the social changes taking place in the second quarter of the sixteenth century significantly affected the purpose and function of parkland. In any case, there are already a number of studies of the evolution of hunting and parks in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a vast literature on the landscape parks of the eighteenth century.⁶⁹ The 'post-history' of the medieval park can safely be left to others.

The rest of the book is divided into two parts. Part I comprises four chapters (Chapters 1 to 4), each looking at different aspects of the function of parks and their social meaning. The overall aim of this section is to suggest an answer to the fundamental question of why parks were created and maintained. Chapter 1 looks at the place of hunting in aristocratic social life and how far it motivated park-making; it is here that the continued survival of parks in the later middle ages is closely addressed. Chapter 2 examines the evidence for the economic exploitation of parks and provides an assessment of its significance. Chapter 3 explores the extent to which parks were laid out or landscaped to provide a contrived stage for aristocratic living. Chapter 4 deals with the important issue

⁶⁵ Cf. Miller and Hatcher 1978: 33–41; Birrell 1987; Dyer 2006.

⁶⁶ Carpenter 1992: 6. ⁶⁷ Above, p. 7. ⁶⁸ Below, pp. 134–6.

⁶⁹ See e.g. the following and the further works cited therein: Shirley 1867: 27–51; Prince 1967; Hyams 1971; Lasdun 1991; Manning 1993; Bond 1998; Williamson 1998 and 2000.

of how far parks were created as status-symbols, looking at the particular social circumstances of various park-makers and how these may have affected their decision to impark.

Part II approaches parks from the other direction, looking at the effects that they had on society as a whole, both on the king at the centre and on individuals and communities in the localities. It starts, in Chapter 5, with an investigation of how and to what extent parks affected the crown and what the royal response was. This chapter provides a discussion of the early chronology of park-making as part of an analysis of the supposed royal stringency over park creation. The subject of Chapter 6 is the impact of park-making on the aristocracy, on their leisure, jurisdiction, self-perception, and estate economy. Chapter 7 looks at the effects of parks on wider society. A short conclusion follows.

