

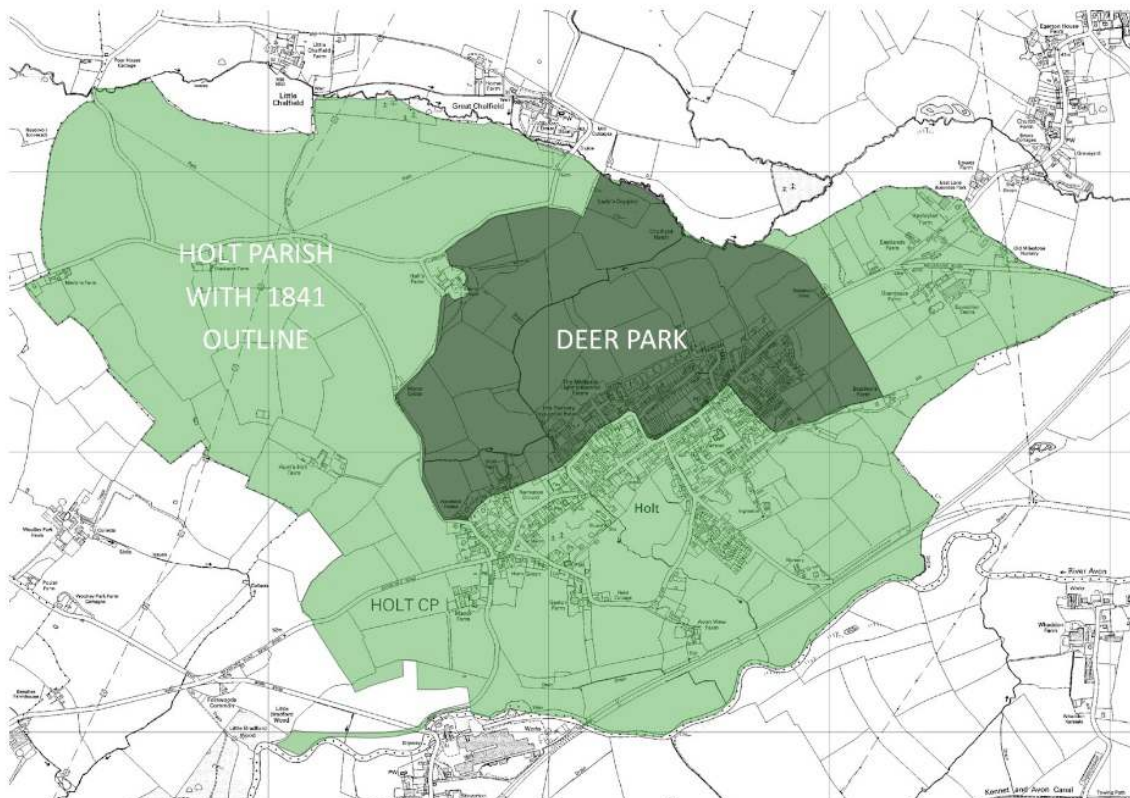
# Holt's Medieval Deer Park

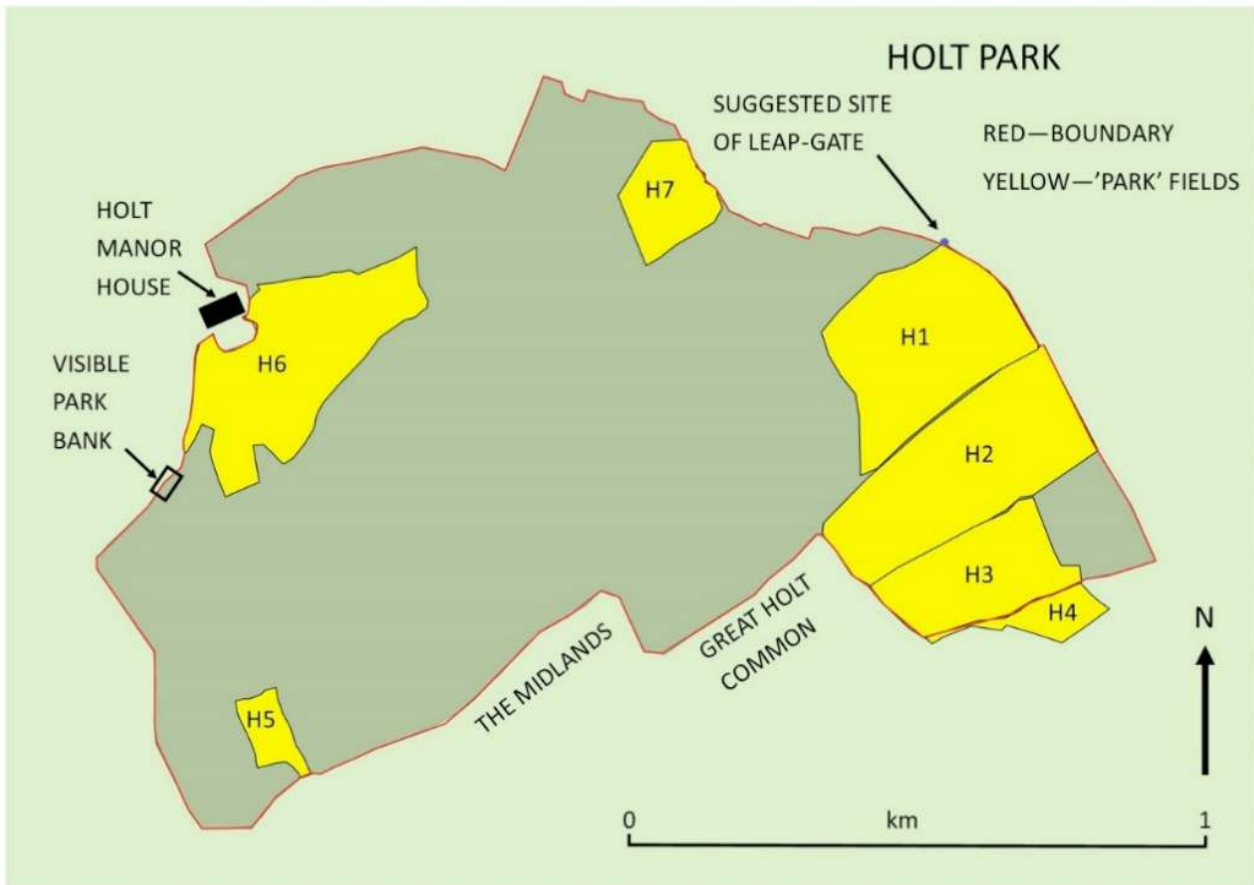
*Rob Arkell, Bradford on Avon Museum Research Group*

John de Holt was said to have had a 'chace' or hunting ground in Holt in 1307 and a park is referred to in 1316 when John de Holte complained of 'persons who broke (*entered*) his park at Holte, Co. Wilts, hunted therein and carried away deer and also a foal of his of the price 100s'.

The de Holt family had been rising up the social ladder during the 12th century. Edwin de Holt held land from Shaftesbury Abbey in 1130, Roger of Holt held the same land in 1170 and Thomas de Holt held it in 1190. Roger and Thomas were jurors at the Hundred and County Courts which meant that they mixed with the county's ruling class. Holt was made a manor in its own right at some time after 1243 and the de Holts then became Lords of the Manor. John de Holt was Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1314 and the park served to confirm his status.

© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 917065.





*Holt Park with 'park indicator' fields*

The extent of the park (116 hectares) has been estimated by using seven 'park indicator' field-names.

The park is shown containing fields labelled H1 to H6 which are named on the Tithe Map of 1841. Breach field (H1) may indicate a deer leap or leapgate, which allowed deer to jump into the park, but prevented them from jumping out. Breach field may mark the site of Alwine's leapgate recorded in the Shaftesbury Abbey Charter of 1001, which lay near Holt. This leapgate would then have been incorporated into John de Holt's park boundary.

Great and Little Parks (H2 & H3) are in the north-east of the present village. Park Mead (H4) is shown outside the park as it is on the other side of the old route to Melksham. Possible 'park' field Ground Corner is H5.

A field adjoining the manor house, H6, was known as 'The Park' in 1545 when it was grouped with Holes and Lousley fields which can be found on the Tithe Map. This field still retains the appearance of a park.

The boundary also includes an area shown on the OS map as Chalfield Hatch, another 'park' indicator (H7).



*Cattle now graze in 'The Park', H6*

There is a bank visible below Holt Manor's south-west drive which follows the park boundary, but otherwise there are no obvious banks or ditches to mark the boundary.



*Possible park boundary bank visible below Holt Manor's south-west drive*

Holt Manor passed from the de Holts to the de Lises before 1408 and it is likely that the park would have gradually reverted to agriculture after this date and certainly before the first recorded farm tenancy of the park area in 1532.