

The Medieval Parks of Suffolk's Ecclesiastical Nobility

Dr Rosemary Hoppitt

Deer parks were prominent features of the medieval landscape – particularly so in Suffolk, where over 130 parks at one time or another occupied hundreds of acres of enclosed woodland and pasture. They were also symbolic features signalling the status, power and control of their owners in both the landscape and society. Parks began to be established in England during the early years after the Norman invasion, and some of the earliest and most prolific park-creators were the ecclesiastical élite – the bishops and abbots – despite Canon Law ruling against churchmen being involved in hunting.

In Suffolk the bishops of Norwich and Ely, and the abbots of Bury St Edmunds were creating parks from at least the 12th century, locating within them their palaces and lodges. They were using them as hunting grounds and larders, places for entertainment and retreat as well as manorial resources which generated income and offset the costs of maintenance.

The talk will examine these parks through the rich documentary records that Suffolk is fortunate to have, as well as through the footprints still visible in the landscape, and we shall track the story of three of the many parks this élite group held in the county.

Rosemary Hoppitt was awarded her PhD by the University in East Anglia in 1992 for her dissertation: *A study of the development of deer parks in Suffolk from the 11th to the 17th century*. Further research led to the publication in 2020 of her book *Deer Parks of Suffolk 1086 – 1602* published by the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History.



Another in our occasional series
of **Talk and Cake** sessions:

Deer Parks

by **Rosemary Hoppitt, Ph.D.**

Sunday 26th January

St Mary's House, Woodbridge IP12 4LP

Talk at 3pm then Tea and Cake

Donations, please, for our Building Project Appeal