

Detailed history

The Medieval and Tudor Deer Park

The presence of a park at Langley was first noted in 1202 when King John granted Richard Montfitchet '100 live does and bucks out of his forest of Windsor to stock his park'. It seems likely that the park was already established by this time and was part of the forests of Wradisbury hunted in by Saxon kings, Wradisbury being the area with which Langley was surveyed for the Domesday Book.

Langley Park reverted to the crown in 1268 due to the lack of a direct Mountfitchet heir and in 1285 Edward I granted Christine de Marisco the manor for life. It is from the de Marisco family that the parish within which Langley is situated gets its name – Langley Marish. It was part of the Royal Forest of Windsor together with Datchet, Upton and Eton, and subject to forest law.

The park remained essentially a royal park in the gift of kings, an attractive hunting property in close proximity to London and Windsor. Henry VIII lived at Langley for a time and made John Kederminster his Ranger there in 1547. In 1551 the park was granted to the 18 year old Princess Elizabeth by her brother Edward VI.

John Kederminster's son Edmond succeeded his father. After a period of considerable neglect resulting in little standing timber of any value, Edmond undertook improvements to the park at his own cost. This included planting, levelling and drainage, work referred to by John Norden, Surveyor of the Woods to King James I:

'Langley Parke, lying within Buckinghamshire, whereof M. Edmund Kederminster is keeper, hath about 140 fallow deere, about 35 of antler, about 14 buckes. This parke is divided into two partes by a new erected pale. The grounds also differ in nature. The upper grounde heath and full of bogges, unprofitable and impassable. The lower ground reduced to better use, for the game, and more delightful to hunt in, by reason of the faire and artificial lawnes latelie made and leveled with maine convenient and pleasnt standinges.'

James Treswell's plan of 1603 provides the earliest record of the southern half of the park. Pales define the east and part of the west boundary. An 'Olde Diche' bridged by a gate and three leaps separates the southern part of the park from the north. A number of lines divide the park, lines that are often but not always consistent with the boundaries of woods, lawns and thickets. There is a centrally placed lodge and a court garden. The boundary pale, leaps, woodland and open lawn areas are confirm that Langley was as a deer park. The names given to different areas derive from old English and French words used to describe the nature of the landscape; laund – a glade, a grassy place; bavin – a bundle of brushwood, and frith – a wooded country.

The whole park is recorded on John Norden's plan of 1607 showing boundaries, woods and lawns consistent with Treswell's plan of 1603. The later plan differs in the absence of lines dividing the park. It seems likely that Treswell chose to depict the recently dug drainage ditches but that these were not shown on the plan of 1607. A Court Garden, situated in the south of the park detached from any building, is shown on both plans. Also shown is the pale dividing the upper ground to the north with its unprofitable heath and bog from the south with its woods and fair lawns so pleasant to hunt in.

Edmond's son John Kederminster succeeded him as keeper at Langley. In 1603 he rebuilt the hunting lodge as a manor in red brick, was knighted in 1608 and granted the manor and park by Charles I in 1626. There is no further record of changes to the park during the 17th century.

