

SWALLOWFIELD PARK

from

"The Medieval Parks of Berkshire"

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"Swallowfield is first mentioned in 1316 when it belonged to John de St. John and contained pasture and pannage worth 30 shillings per annum (Cal IPM VI, 246). The Crown acquired it from the St. Johns by about 1353 and in 1354 Edward III sent in workmen to 'repair the mansion and to enclose the park' (Cal Pat 1354-8, 36). There was also a stud farm there at that time. Numerous grants of keeperships can be found stretching into the reign of Henry VIII. Disparkment had taken place before 1542 since in that year the King leased out 'a mansion and certain lands called Swallowfield, lately disparked' (L & P Henry VIII, 264). These former park lands amounted to over 50 acres of pasture and meadows and retained such names as Newlands and Park Meadow. By 1776 these lands were in arable use. The rump of the medieval enclosure is still marked on modern maps as Swallowfield Park, an ornamental area of about 500 acres."

References: Cal IPM: *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* (Public Records Office)
Cal Pat: *Calendar of Patent Rolls* (Public Records Office)
L & P Henry VIII: *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* (Public Records Office)

The English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, describes Swallowfield Park as a 135 hectare site. "A 17th century and later country house with gardens and pleasure grounds, surrounded by a landscape park laid out in the 18th century." It was "sold to Sir Henry Russell, first Baronet in 1820. The formal landscape of rides present to the south of the house in the 1760s (Rocque, 1761), laid out in patte d'oise form, had disappeared by the 1790s (Pride, 1790), by which time the park had been entirely landscaped. In the early 19th century (estate map, 1809) the estate was crossed by a network of ponds and canals, these being removed in the 1850s. The estate remained in the Russell family until 1965 when it was divided up and sold, the house and stables being converted into residential apartments for the Country Houses Association".

Maps: J Rocque, Map of Berkshire, 1761; T Pride, A topographical map of the Town of Reading and the County adjacent to an extent of 10 miles, 1790; Map of an Estate ... in the Parishes of Arborfield and Swallowfield belonging to T H Earle, 1809 (Berkshire Record Office)





Swallowfield Park has been partially surveyed by members of the Dinton Volunteer Group, who survey veteran trees during the winter and are involved in various other surveys during the warmer months. They recorded 221 veteran trees in Swallowfield Park between October 2010 and November 2012. Unfortunately they have not been allowed to survey since then because of shooting on the estate.



