

Two sixteenth-century maps of Minworth and their context

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These two manuscript maps are now in the National Archives¹. I made tracings of negative photographic prints of them in 1979, as part of my PhD research which included Minworth.² The prints, produced at actual size, were then in Birmingham Museum (they may now be in Birmingham Museums Collections Centre). I traced all the lines but I stencilled the lettering, using modern spelling of places, resulting in maps which are not as visually attractive as the originals but are easier to read. They go alongside a map produced by the late Norman Evans in 1971 on which he added other features such as New Hall that existed in the 16th century.



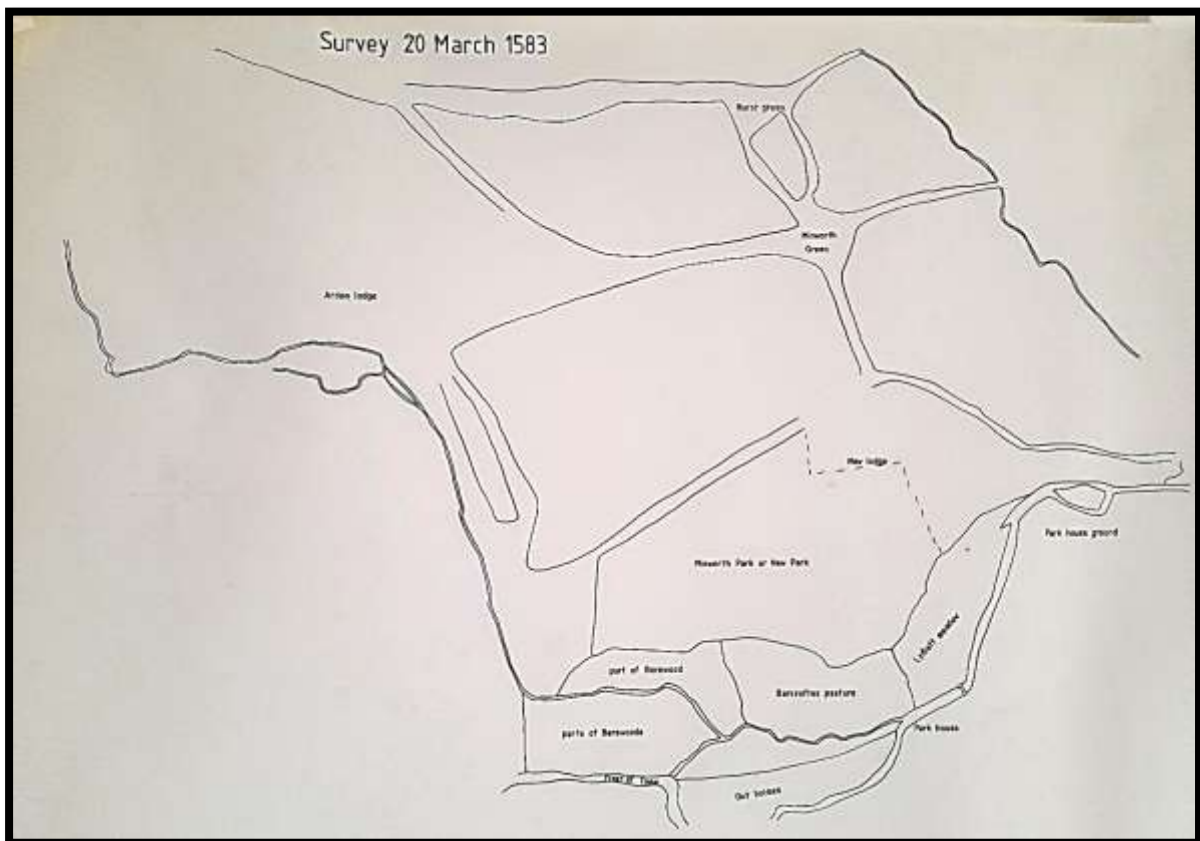
¹ The National Archives, E 178/2338

² M A Hodder (1988), *The development of some aspects of settlement and land use in Sutton Chase*, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/3607/>

Both maps depict land in Minworth owned by Edward Arden and neighbouring areas. Minworth was historically a detached part of Curdworth parish and separated from the rest of the parish by Wiggins Hill, a strip of land running down to the River Tame which was part of Sutton Coldfield.

Edward Arden lived at Park Hall in Castle Bromwich, on the south bank of the river Tame. Park Hall was built in the 16th century replacing a medieval house surrounded by a moat which was on higher ground, near the present Park Hall School. Arden was a Roman Catholic and he illegally kept a priest at Park Hall, disguised as a gardener. Elizabeth I and her advisors regarded all Catholics as a threat to the state. Edward was arrested and tried for allegedly plotting against the Queen and he was executed at Smithfield on London on 20th December 1583. His estates reverted to the Crown and were granted to Edward Darcy. They were subsequently recovered for the Arden family through legal proceedings by Robert Arden, Edward Arden's son³. The two maps, dated 1583 and 1589, relate to these proceedings. They are accompanied by written documents which as far as I know have never been transcribed.

20th March 1583: an outline map



This map includes the river Tame, with its meanders and islands within them, one of which is named "holme" an Old Norse term for such features.⁴ On the west side of the map the Ebrook is shown as an unnamed stream flowing in a meandering course into the Tame, and fields each

³ W Dugdale (1656), *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (London), 681

<https://archive.org/details/antiquitiesofwar00dugd/>

⁴ M Gelling (1984), *Place-names in the landscape* (London: Dent) 50-52

named “part of Berwood” are marked on each side of it just before the confluence. Berwood, west of Minworth, was in Curdworth parish and land there was given to the canons of Leicester Abbey about 1160.⁵ To the south of the river, “Park House” (Park Hall) and Park House grounds are named, and to the north there are two fields called “Barcroftes Pasture” and “Lydiatt Meadow”. They lie on the south side of “Minworth Park or New Park”. “New Lodge” is labelled near a dashed line indicating a subdivision in the park. New Park was an extension of Castle Bromwich Park, which was south of the Tame.⁶ “Arden lodge” is marked near the Ebrook further upstream, at a location which corresponds to that of the later Plants Brook Forge, near the present Plants Brook Nature Reserve. It might be the lodge of the bailiwick of Berwood in Sutton Chase, which is mentioned in 1480.⁷ On the east side of the map there is an unnamed stream which is the stream flowing from Peddimore Hall, probably the *Hyntesbrok* or Hurst Brook mentioned in 1240-41.⁸ This formed the boundary between Minworth, a detached part of Curdworth parish, and Sutton Coldfield. Hurst Green and Minworth Green are named and the roads leading to them from the west, Walmley Ash Lane Walmley Ash Road which continues as part of the present Kingsbury Road, are marked but not named. Wishaw Lane and Kingsbury Road continue to the north-east and east respectively.

1589: coloured, and depicting much more detail than the earlier map

There seems to be some confusion between the dating of the two maps. Some reproductions of this map, including Norman Evans’s, date it to 1583.

The river Tame is again prominent. On its south bank there are “Park Hall”, a dovecote, and a bridge over the river. In the early 2010s an abutment of the bridge was visible, together with rubble marking the site of Park Hall, and a brick wall around its garden.⁹ An archaeological assessment of the area was carried out in 1992.¹⁰ Much of the Park Hall area is now on the route of the HS2 railway. Downstream along the river there are flood gates which controlled the water flow to a mill, also marked on the map. Water Orton Bridge, reportedly built by Bishop Vesey with stone from the chapel of St Blaise in Sutton manor house (together with Curdworth Bridge which is marked further along the river)¹¹ leads to the schematically-depicted “town of Water Orton”.

The Ebrook is marked but not named, running from the “town of Sutton”, which is schematically shown as buildings on each side of a road, probably Mill Street, leading from Holy Trinity church, whose tower is shown. “Berwood” is labelled east of the Ebrook at its confluence with the Tame, and a building shown to the west of the Ebrook can be identified as Berwood Hall.¹² “The Out Holmes” and “Barcrofts Meadow” lie within “an arm of Tame” near “Mount Spring Ford”. To their north is a field called “Bercrofts” and to the east, “Kitching Meadow”, “Someralands Meadow” and “Lydiate Meadow” (all of these names are probably landowners), in what would have been

⁵ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 238

⁶ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 147-149

⁷ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 300 and fig 4

⁸ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 298-299

⁹ Observations by M Hodder; site locations at <https://maps.birmingham.gov.uk/webapps/her/>

¹⁰ A E Jones, *Tame Valley Nature Park, Parkhall, Water Orton, Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment 1992*, Archaeology Data Service [archiveDownload](#)

¹¹ W Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 667-668

¹² Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 238

survive as ridges in “ridge and furrow”.¹³ Strips in the open field at Minworth Greaves, along Kingsbury Road between Minworth and Curdworth, survived as ridges until fairly recently near Minworth Greaves Farm (which includes a 15th-century timber- framed barn, visible from Kingsbury Road).¹⁴ A map of 1791 by John Sherriff shows the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal running across open field strips here and in Curdworth, shortly before they were enclosed into separate fields.¹⁵ The 16th-century map also shows open fields and their strips around Curdworth church. Each strip was slightly curving at each end because they were ploughed by oxen who had to start to turn before the end of each furrow. Curving field boundaries following the “reversed-S” shape of the strips are visible on the west side of Curdworth Lane. Between the open fields of Curdworth and those of Minworth there is a line of fields labelled Sutton. This strip of land, which extended down to the river Tame and divided the two parts of Curdworth parish, Curdworth proper and Minworth, is Wiggins Hill, which is not shown in detail on these maps because it did not form part of the estate they were depicting. Wiggins Hill was part of Sutton parish, but it is listed separately in Domesday Book.¹⁶

North of Minworth, the map shows a building labelled “the lodge of the waste of Arden Hills in Minworth”. This is assumed to be Peddimore Hall, although this has never been in Minworth (part of Curdworth parish) but always in Sutton. The existing building here dates from the 17th century and it is surrounded by a much older moat; there was a house at Peddimore by the 13th century¹⁷. There were no buildings here in 1656,¹⁸ so if it is correctly identified as Peddimore Hall, the map shows the building which had disappeared by 1656. “Waste” here refers to land which was uncultivated and used for rough grazing, not abandoned, useless or worthless land. “Arden Hill”, which is marked to the north, probably refers to the high ground along Bulls Lane.

A medieval landscape

The maps provide a vivid depiction of the landscape of Minworth and its surroundings in the 16th century and include many features which are no longer visible. Although they were drawn at the end of the Middle Ages, they effectively show a medieval landscape of villages, roads and fields before it was drastically altered in the 18th and 19th centuries by the canal, enclosure of the open fields, a railway, and of course by subsequent industrial development and a sewage farm.

¹³ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 60-63

¹⁴ M Hodder (2004/2011), *Birmingham, the hidden history* (Stroud: Tempus/The History Press), 99-100

¹⁵ In Warwickshire County Record Office

¹⁶ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 211-213

¹⁷ Hodder, *Sutton Chase*, 258

¹⁸ Dugdale, *Antiquities*, 674

1791 John Sherriff Map

