



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LANDSCAPE OF THE MIMRAM VALLEY

between Digswell and Panshanger

compiled by

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# PREFACE

This brief report on the history of the landscape in the Mimram valley between Digswell and Panshanger has been compiled at the request of David Rixson acting on behalf of Tewin Parish Council. Its purpose is to assess and highlight the most significant aspects of the heritage and environment of the area today. It has been written by outsiders who know their way around historical sources better than they know the landscape around Tewin. The authors hope that the residents of Tewin will use this report as a resource to which they can add their own knowledge, especially of more recent times, together with their observations and photographs. The report should also be used as a starting point from which to gather evidence of landscape features that can either be related to the history drafted here or which add new insights into unrecorded aspects of the valley's history. Input from local people is vitally important for seeking out these features and for compiling the more recent history of the valley.



The River Mimram

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# INTRODUCTION

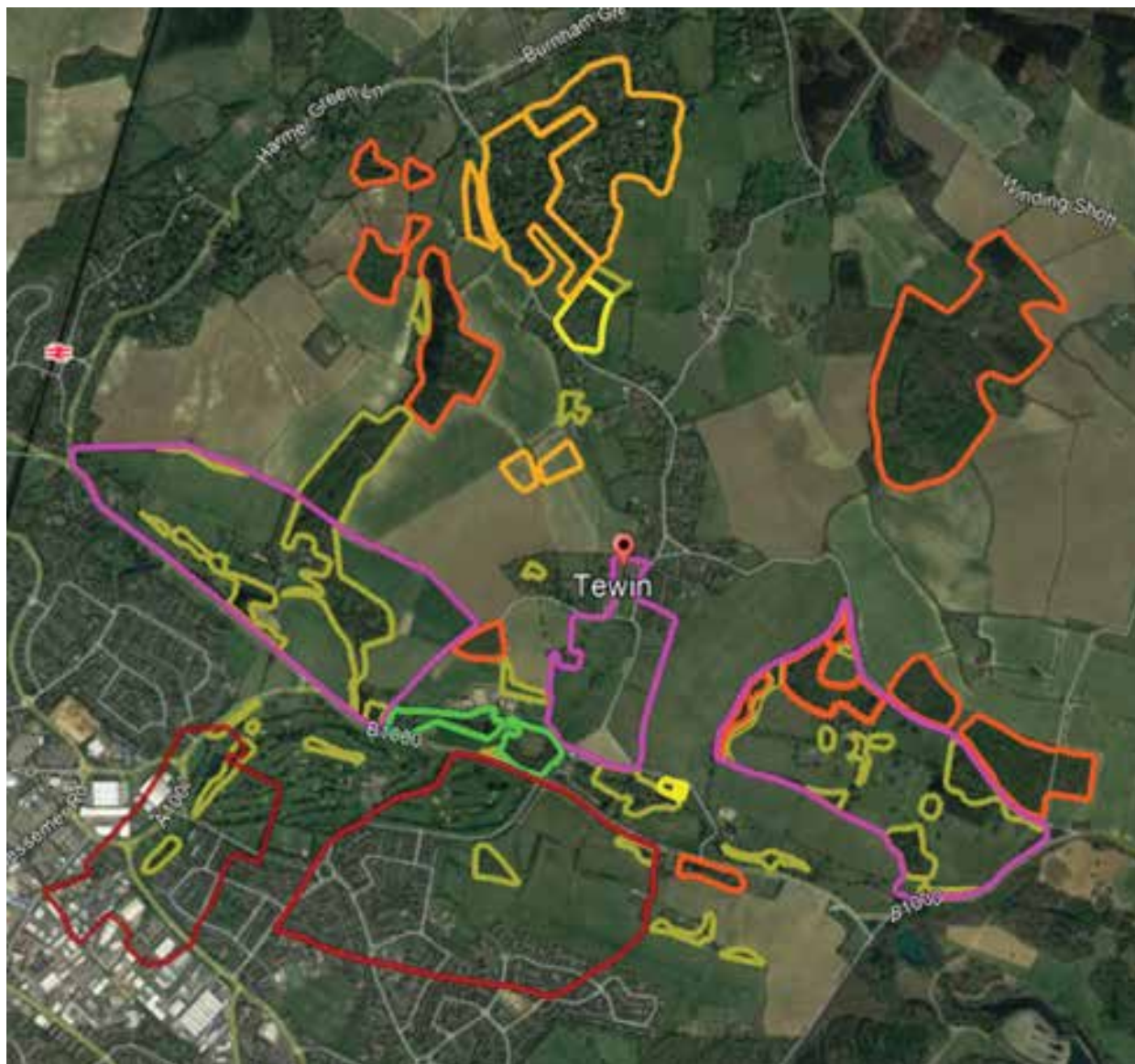
In a county with a rich history of mansions and designed landscapes, the Mimram valley is notable for its particularly dense concentration of country houses, parks and gardens heading west from Hertford. Proximity to the county town was no doubt important but it was the attractive landscapes and the history of land ownership within the valley stretching back many centuries that led wealthy men to build grand houses in and around the parish of Tewin in the 18th century. It is the gardens and status landscapes laid out around these houses in the 18th and 19th centuries that, in large part, have led to the preservation of the most ecologically diverse and valuable areas of the valley surviving today. Within the present study area these houses and landscapes were Tewin Water, Tewin House and Marden Hill, book-ended by Digswell Water and Panshanger Park, creating by the end of the 18th century near-continuous parkland in the valley. This was commented upon in 1799 by the eminent landscape designer Humphry Repton, who considered that the 'united woods and lawns will by extending thro' the whole valley enrich the general face of the country'.<sup>1</sup> The parkland in the Tewin area was populated by rabbits rather than by deer and

each of the grand mansions had a warren laid out beside it. Rabbits were still high-status animals in the 18th century, valued for their meat and their skins.

The majority of the report details the histories of the gardens and landscapes around Tewin Water, Tewin House and Marden Hill as these properties make significant contributions to the heritage of the area. The working landscape of farms and woodland that surrounded and sustained these properties also has a fascinating history which has left many valuable features that contribute to both the heritage and environmental value of the area but these are less obvious and often more vulnerable to change. The wealthy landowners of the past are responsible for an exceptionally rich collection of early manuscript maps dating from the end of the 16th century to the mid-19th century. These maps, which cover almost the entire area between Digswell and Panshanger, enable us to identify some of the oldest surviving features – hedgerows and woodlands – in today's landscape and could provide a focus for future conservation effort.<sup>2</sup>



Marden Hill House



Google Earth image of the Mimram valley around Tewin onto which the boundaries of a variety of historic features and priority wildlife habitats have been plotted.

## KEY

- historic parks and gardens
- ancient woodland
- lost woods
- SSSI
- priority wood habitat
- priority orchard habitat
- possible extent of 16th-century rabbit warrens

1. Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies (HALS) D/Z 42/Z1 Repton's Red Book for Tewin Water, 1799.

2. These maps are now in the care of Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies at County Hall and are available for anyone to see. Further details of each map are given at the end of this report.

# THE VALLEY IN PRE-HISTORY

There is no doubt that the Mimram valley has been inhabited for thousands of years but traces of early inhabitants are scarce and their effects on the landscape of the area can only be guessed at. The archaeological record includes a palaeolithic hand axe found west of Marden Hill, an early Bronze Age burial in Dawley Wood, a bronze axe south of Tewin Bury Farm, and Roman finds on Marden Hill.<sup>3</sup>

## MODEST BEGINNINGS

The manorial history of Tewin is fragmented and complex. There appears to have been no resident lord of the manor in overall control of the area and for hundreds of years until the 16th century much of the Mimram valley between Digswell and Panshanger was held by four monastic houses: St Albans abbey, the priory of St Mary at Little Wymondley, the priory and convent of St Bartholomew, Smithfield and the priory and convent of the Holy Trinity, London. Their lands were gifted to them piecemeal by numerous individuals during the medieval period and then rented out to tenants, before passing into private ownership in the decade after 1530 at the Dissolution of the monasteries. Tewin folk were not wealthy in medieval times, paying relatively low amounts of tax per 100 acres in 1307 compared with neighbouring parishes (except Bramfield which was equally poor), and they were only slightly wealthier by the middle of the 16th century. <sup>4</sup> Taxpayers in 1307 included a shepherdess and a tailor, and a weaver was recorded in the 16th century, evidence of a local wool trade. <sup>5</sup>

[View east along the valley towards Tewinbury Farm](#)



# LAND USE: PASTURE AND ARABLE BEFORE THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Extensive areas of the valley were, until the 20th century, divided into large, straight-sided fields. This suggests that the land had previously been unenclosed and was reorganised in a planned way at a relatively late date. Many of these large rectangular fields occur in areas where the soils are freely draining but relatively infertile and some appear to correspond with lands that had belonged to religious houses. Almost all the valley side south of the river was characterised by these late enclosed fields, land where farmers had to contend not only with poor soil but also with some fairly challenging steeply-sloping terrain. Surviving records suggest that this side of the valley featured extensive open pastures up until the late 16th and 17th centuries and also indicate that much of this pasture was grazed by rabbits rather than by sheep or other livestock. Rabbits were farmed by medieval manorial lords for their meat and skins and could provide a valuable source of revenue from land that was of limited value for growing crops with early farming technology.

One warren – known as Tewinbury Warren – was recorded in the mid-16th century when at least a part of it was still being ‘used for coneyes’ (rabbits). This land lay towards the top of the valley side under what is now Welwyn Garden City – namely the eastern part of the Panshanger estate and Springmead Primary School – but the name of the farm lying at the bottom of the hill beside the B1000 – Warrengate Farm – suggests that the warren may once have extended northwards to the valley road.<sup>6</sup> No record has yet been found of the area of this warren but a long, continuous boundary recorded on maps until the 20th century suggests that it may once have covered as much as 240 acres (97 ha) and may have included what is now the east end of the Panshanger golf course.



View over Tewinbury Farm Hotel to the golf course on the south side of the valley.

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3. For further information search for Tewin on the Heritage Gateway website - <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

4. A. Rowe and T. Williamson, Hertfordshire. A landscape history (Hatfield, 2013), pp. 20 and 27.

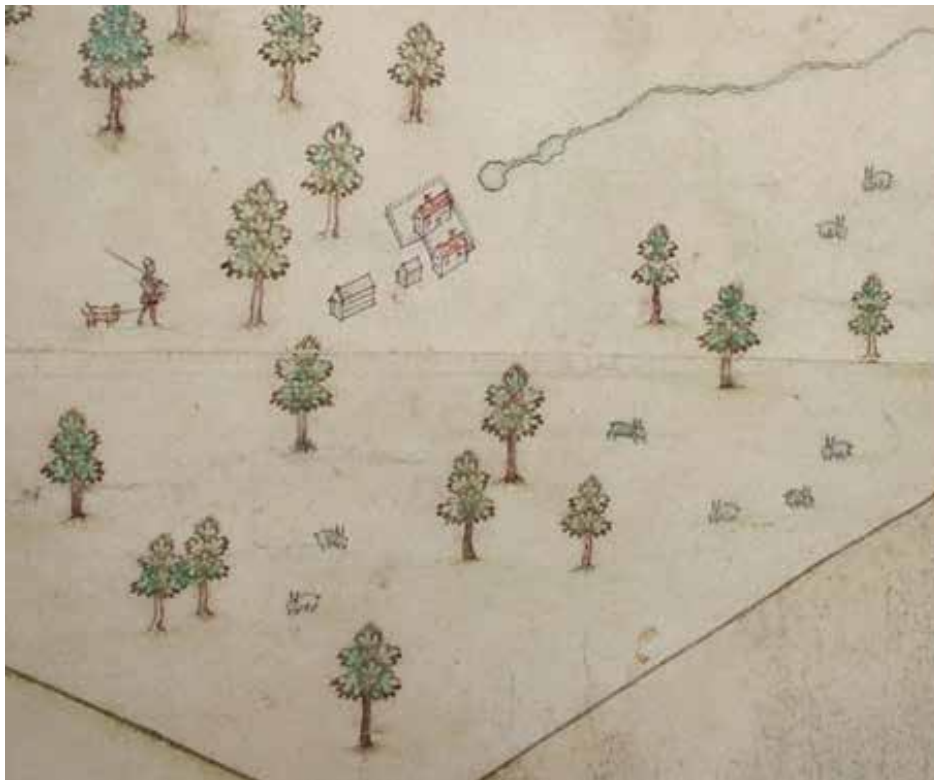
5. J. Brooker and S. Flood, Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls 1307 and 1334 (HRS, 1998), p. 6.

6. More research is needed on the origins of the name Warrengate – the house is named ‘Tewin Gate’ on maps 1676-1805, but Warren Gate Farm in 1699.

7. HALS DE/P/T1719c Digswell map, 1771.

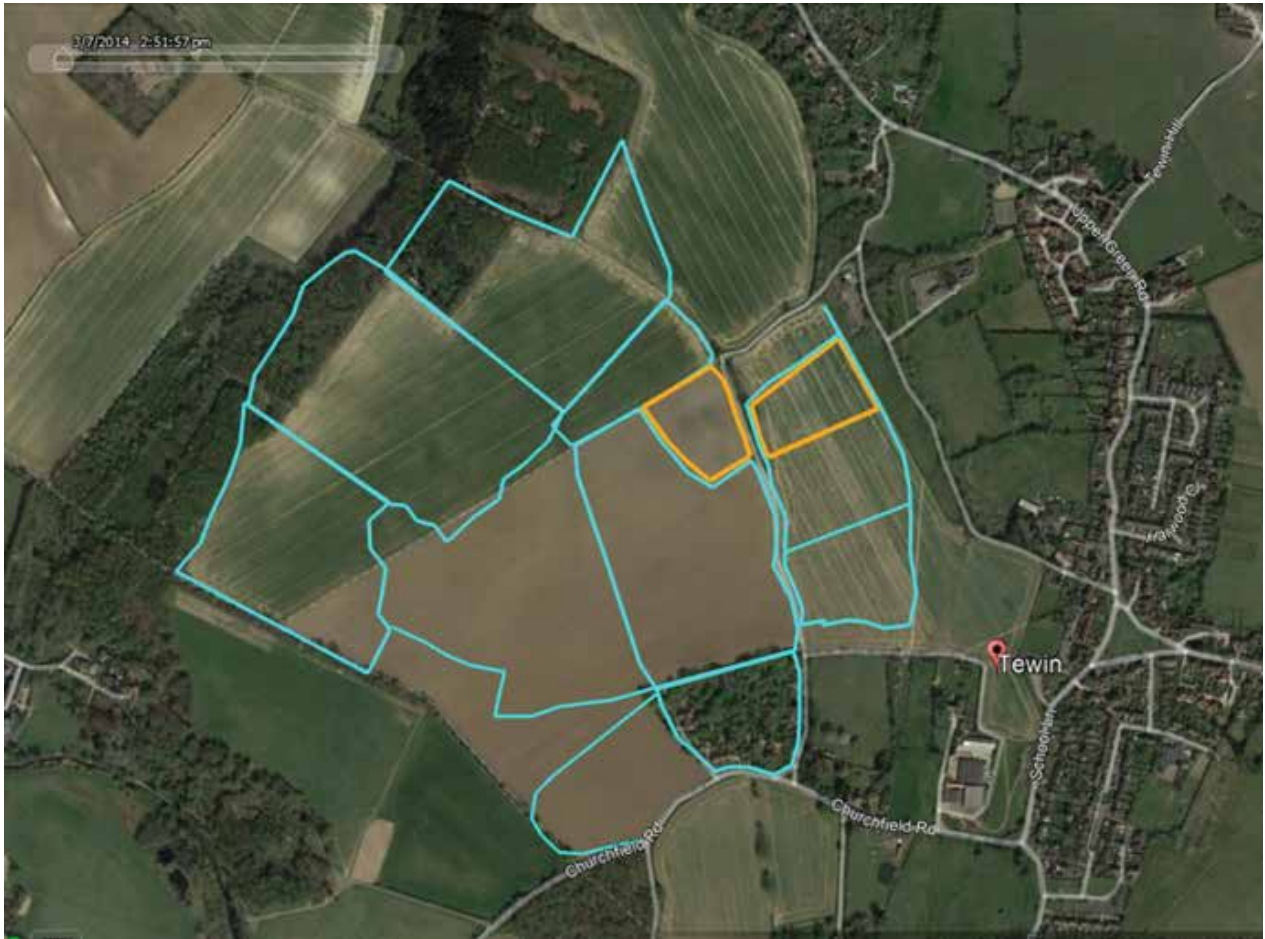
Further west along the valley was land belonging to the manor of Digswell. A beautiful and detailed map of the manorial lands was drawn in 1599 and shows that the lord of the manor of Digswell also had a rabbit warren. Illustrated on the map are the rabbits together with the warrener and his dogs. Lying just a short distance west of Tewinbury Warren, the Digswell warren covered about 110 acres (44 ha) centred on what later became Blackfan Farm and is now partly occupied by the west end of the golf course, the Mundells roundabout and the land to the east and south.

To the north and west of the Digswell warren the 1599 map shows four large fields, the two largest of which extended down to the road running along the south side of the river. Numerous scattered trees, both standards and pollards, are depicted in the warren and also in one of the adjacent large fields to the north indicating a wood-pasture landscape managed both for grazing animals and for wood production (whereby the trees are lopped or pollarded in regular cycles). The other large field contained fewer trees but appears to have also been pasture. These large fields were subsequently subdivided by straight hedges and ploughed for arable crops but a pasture track between the fields was recorded in 1771 as 'The sheep walk', a name that survived to be recorded again on the 1st ed OS map over a century later.<sup>7</sup>



Detail of the map of Digswell manor, 1599 showing the rabbit warren  
[HALS DE/P/P1] © HALS

Before the 18th century it appears that most of the arable land where the valley inhabitants grew their crops was on the south-facing slopes north of the river Mimram and, in particular, on the fertile soils on the higher ground north of what was to become Tewin Water Park and extending up towards Burnham Green. This area was characterised by smaller fields with wiggly boundaries, suggesting they were established as the land was gradually cleared for agriculture by individual farmers early in the medieval period. Many of these fields survived into the 19th century but few have survived to the present. The boundaries of the fields that used to lie west of the village – which would have been hedged – have been plotted in blue onto the following image from Google Earth. The two areas outlined in orange were Margery Wood and Workhouse Wood until the later 20th century.



Tenants of the manor of Tewin held strips in common fields lying near their cottages on the Lower and Upper Greens. Remnants of these fields survived to be recorded on early maps including a field called Wadling common field lying east of the lane between Lower and Upper Greens, and another called Lamb Dell or

Lamsden common field bordering the west end of the Marden estate. Both remain open farmland today, as does most of one of Digswell's common fields that lay to the east of today's Welwyn station, bordered by a lane heading towards Burnham Green (the lane has since been lost). A larger area of open arable land

lay south of the river at the eastern end of the study area. This land was farmed in strips held by the lords and tenants of the manors of Marden in Tewin and the manors of Panshanger and Hertingfordbury, and in common fields that included Ray Field, Pleasure Field and Bocker Field.

## LAND USE: WOODLAND

The most extensive woodlands survived longest on higher ground distant from the main settlements. Punchard/Punchetts Wood and the adjoining Swanhill

Wood formed the largest area of woodland until it was divided up for residential development and renamed Tewin Wood. These woods were named on a list compiled in

1544 detailing the woodland that had belonged to St Bartholomew's Priory at Tewin and were recorded as follows:<sup>8</sup>

1544 spelling	later spelling	area in 1544
Swannell grove	Swanhill (part of)	9 acres*
Punchehede coppice	Punchetts (now Tewin Wood) (part of)	8 acres*
Westley Woods	Westley	3 acres
Ryefeld grove coppice	Ray Field	1.5 acres
Knittes grove coppice	?Knightsbridge Wood	1.5 acres
Helefote coppice	Hillfoot	0.5 acre
Pleyse felde coppice	Pleasure Field	1 acre

\*The Priory held only a small part of Swanhill and Punchetts (Tewin) Wood.

The woods on the above list that still survive today, having existed since 1600, should all be designated as 'Ancient'. Currently missing from the Natural England inventory of Ancient Woodland<sup>9</sup> are Westley Wood, Ryefield Grove and Knittes Grove (either of which could be the wood beside Warren-gate Farm), Hillfoot Wood and Pleasure Field coppice (?lost).<sup>10</sup> These woods were all coppiced woodland, carefully managed by the Priory and harvested in rotation to provide a continuous supply of wood for fuel. As well as coppice, the Priory's former woods in 1544 contained trees grown for timber: 200 oaks of 40 and 60 years' growth and another 200 young trees of 20 and 30 years' growth. In addition to its woods the Priory held 16 acres of oaks and hornbeam pollards 'of 40 years growth' growing in 'parcels' dispersed about their lands. Pollarded trees can live for many centuries and the remnants of some of these groups of pollards may still survive today.

Other ancient woods such as Dawley and those at Marden were perhaps in different ownership but would have been managed for many centuries as 'coppice with standards' in the same way as those held by St Bartholomew's Priory. The woods on the Tewin estate in 1785 included 40 acres of Punchards Wood, Scrubbs Wood (6.5 acres), Hillford Wood (1.25 a), Dawley Wood (30 a), Nashes or Walches Wood (3.75 a), Margery Wood (3 a) and Westly Wood (5.75 a).<sup>11</sup> Sale particulars for the Marden estate, also in 1785, mention 'four thriving woods, and a shaw, plentifully stocked with underwood, containing sixty acres and twenty-nine perch', 'a part of which is nearly fit to fell'. Included in the sale were 'a great number of young trees, and seven hundred and seventy-three Pollards of considerable value', plus 238 oak trees, 45 'elm and ash' and 229 lime trees.<sup>12</sup> Woodlands on the former Marden estate have survived remarkably well and contain huge hornbeam coppice stools of very great age. The local diarist John Carrington described the annual sale of the coppice from Hooks Bushes at the beginning of the 19th century and estate accounts in the Panshanger archive at HALS show that at that time Dawley Wood covered 25a 3r and was divided into four compartments which were coppiced as follows:

1800 9a felled	1805 6a 2r felled
1801 8a 1r felled	1806 2a 1r felled
1802-4 - nil	

8.. TNA E318/8/295 grant of Tewin to John Cock, 1544.

9. [https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/data-](https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/data-sets/a14064ca50e242c4a92d020764a6d9df_0/explore?location=52.900079%2C-2.004678%2C6.71)

[sets/a14064ca50e242c4a92d020764a6d9df\\_0/explore?location=52.900079%2C-2.004678%2C6.71](https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/data-sets/a14064ca50e242c4a92d020764a6d9df_0/explore?location=52.900079%2C-2.004678%2C6.71)

10. The Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust is currently working to update the inventory of Ancient Woodland.

11. HALS D/EP/T2397 lease, 1785.

12. HALS DE/L/5591 sale particulars Marden, 1785.



Ancient woodland on Marden Hill



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- 13. Domesday Book, 1086.
  - 14. W. Page, *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford (VCH)* (London, 1912), vol. 3.
  - 15. J. Crick (ed.), *Charters of St Albans* (Oxford, 2007), No. 7.
  - 16. The National Archives (TNA) PROB 11-108-331 will of Edward North, 1606.

# LAND USE: SUMMARY OF EARLY HISTORY

In the early 17th century the Mimram valley between Digswell and Panshanger would have looked as it had done for many centuries. The south side of the valley was dominated by extensive open pastures, probably managed as wood-pastures with pollarded trees providing regular crops of wood and the pastures beneath grazed by sheep, cattle, horses and rabbits. The north side of the valley was divided into numerous fields enclosed by hedges which were full of pollarded trees. Both hedges and hedgerow pollards were vital sources of wood for the fuel needed for cooking and heating. Numerous small woods and copses, together with the hedgerow trees and the more extensive woodlands further up the valley sides, must have given this side of the valley a verdant, well-wooded appearance with relatively small open areas where the common fields were devoted to growing the arable crops of the local inhabitants.

In the valley bottom alongside the Mimram were the meadows where most of the annual crop of hay was grown. One of these meadows was a

common meadow – probably divided into strips and shared between a number of tenants. There was also an area of meadowland on higher ground to the west of Dawley Wood. The corn harvested from the arable fields was ground by a watermill on the Mimram for perhaps a millennium or more, but first recorded in 1086.<sup>13</sup> It later passed to St Bartholomew's Priory which was holding two mills in 1368, perhaps two sets of millstones under one roof. The buildings will have been rebuilt many times during its history and the last mill was demolished in 1911.<sup>14</sup>

On the highest ground around Burnham Green was probably an extensive area of unenclosed pasture, wood-pasture and woodland. The complex parish boundaries here suggest these resources were used in common by the inhabitants of the neighbouring areas of Tewin, Digswell and Welwyn. The Tewin wood-pastures were recorded over a thousand years ago in the will of a Saxon lady called Aethelgifu who left a bequest of the swine pastures at Tewin in her will c.980.<sup>15</sup>

## THE RISE OF THE BIG HOUSES

It was during the 17th century that wealthy residents started to build grander houses in Tewin and some were sufficiently noteworthy to be recorded on county maps. One of the earliest county maps (1598), by John Norden, named only one property at Tewin - Marden ('Mereden'). It was then owned by wealthy yeoman Edward North who lived in a house at Marden and died in 1606.<sup>16</sup> He was succeeded by his son, also Edward, who described himself as 'Esquire' in his will of 1653. His son Hugh 'erected a fair house' between 1653<sup>17</sup> and 1672 and his daughters subsequently sold the estate out of the family. Chauncy, writing shortly afterwards, described Marden as an 'ancient seat'.<sup>18</sup> The next county map, by John Seller and published in 1676, names 'Merden' and Tewin Bury

and also Tewin Gate south of the river. Few records of Tewin Bury have been found and it does not appear to have been regarded as the manor house of Tewin but was always one of the most important farms in the parish and held by the lord of the manor. It was not exclusively occupied by farmers however: by the beginning of the 17th century it was home to the Battel family who sent their sons to Cambridge University. Affabel Battel 'of Tewin Bury' attended Queen's from 1606 and his son Ralph 'of Tewin Bury' attained his B.A. in 1639.<sup>19</sup> The fine house that stands today is thought to date from the mid-late 18th century and it would be interesting to know more about its owners and occupants in the past.

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17. TNA PROB-11-225-121 will of Edward North, 1653.

18. Sir Henry Chauncy, *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* vol. I (first published 1700) p. 541.

19. *Alumni cantabrigienses; a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge* (Volume pt 1 vol 1), p. 107. Ralph subsequently served as vicar of All Saints', Hertford for nearly 40 years, was rector of Letchworth and Master of Hertford Grammar School until his death in 1701, aged 82.



Tewin Water

Similarly, more research is needed on the property known alternatively as Tewin Gate or Warren Gate Farm. The present farmhouse is considered to date from the beginning of the 18th century. If the 'warren' element can be traced back to the 16th century or earlier, it could provide evidence for the extent of the Tewinbury Warren recorded in 1556.<sup>20</sup>

John Oliver's county map of 1695 is the first to show a house called Tewin Water but a reference to a 'highway going to Mr Hales' suggests there was a significant house there by 1638.<sup>21</sup> Richard Hale 'of Tewin' was recorded in 1631 and again in 1634 when he was the only resident of Tewin to be recorded in The Visitations of Hertfordshire, complete with pedigree

and description of his Arms and Crest.<sup>22</sup> Was Hale the builder of the first house at Tewin Water? He had purchased Tewin manor from Beckingham Butler soon after Butler had mortgaged 'the capital messuage of Tewin manor' in 1622.<sup>23</sup> Richard Hale's house passed to his son who later sold it to William second Earl of Salisbury and it then descended to his younger son William Cecil whose grandson sold the estate in 1713.

Where was the 'capital messuage of Tewin manor' mortgaged by Beckingham Butler in 1622? The lords of Tewin manor for the preceding 80 years had been the Wroth family, absentee owners with grand residences elsewhere at Enfield and Loughton.

20. TNA E 315/391 Survey of royal manors, 1556.

21. The map shows houses at Marden, Tewin Bury and at Tewin Water (but not Tewin Gate); W. Brigg (ed.), *The Hertfordshire Genealogist and Antiquary* vol. iii (Harpenden, 1899), 337-8 Glebe Terrier, 1638.

22. W.C. Metcalfe (ed.), *The Visitations of Hertfordshire* (London, 1886), p. 61; John son of Richard Hale of Tewin matriculated in 1631, the Hale of Tewin pedigree was recorded in 1634 [J. Foster (ed.), *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford*, (Oxford, 1891)].

23. VCH 3.

24. VCH 3.

25. Chauncy, *Hertfordshire* vol. 1, p. 540-1.

26. Brigg, *Herts. Gen. and Antiq.* iii, 337-8 Glebe Terrier, 1638. The M.I. in Tewin church perhaps relates to this Edward North Gent in 1650.

27. Brigg, *Herts. Gen. and Antiq.* I (Harpenden, 1895), p. 275 Lay Subsidy return, 1545.

28. HALS DE/P/T2345

One possible location for the manor house is c.20m north-east of the church where Tewin House was later built, but there are conflicting accounts regarding an earlier house – or perhaps houses – on this site. According to the Victoria County History, the capital messuage called Tewin House was bought from the lord of the manor of Tewin by Thomas Montford, who died possessed of it in 1632, leaving a son John.<sup>24</sup> According to county historian Sir Henry Chauncy (1700) John Montford, doctor of Law, ‘built a fair House near the Church’. He died in 1651 and the house passed to the husband of one of Dr Montford’s daughters, Richard Rainsford, who ‘enjoyed this seat and the advowson’. On his death the house was sold and then changed hands several times. William Gore Esq JP was the owner at the end of the 17th century and ‘made a fair Addition to the House’.<sup>25</sup> Confusingly, in 1638 ‘a house of Edward North of Tewin’ was located, apparently on this same site, at the east end of Churchfield.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Edward North was simply a tenant in the Montford house in 1638 but the North family had been in Tewin since at least 1532 when John North was granted a lease of the manor of Tewin by the Prior of St Bartholomew’s and in 1545 an Edward North paid far more tax than any other resident.<sup>27</sup> As noted above, at some time in the second half of the 16th century an Edward North became possessed of the manor of Marden. However, precisely where the property/properties were located in the early 17th century is not especially relevant to the present project. What is more relevant is what happened a century later, the results of which are portrayed on the county map of 1766 by Dury and Andrews.



The near continuous parkland of Tewin Water, Tewin House, Marden and Panshanger on the north bank of the river Mimram as depicted on Dury and Andrews’ map, 1766.  
[<http://www.duryandrewsmapsofhertfordshire.co.uk>]

29. HALS DE/P/T2030 draft court roll and survey, 1713.

30. HALS DE/P/T2345 deeds Tewin Water House, 1713; DE/P/T2400B An Eye draft of a Plan of several parcels of land situate in the Parishes of Tewin and Digswell, the estate of the Rt. Hon'ble Lady Cathcart, c1785–9.

31. TNA PROB 11/659/148 will of James Fleet, 1733; HALS T2400B plan of Lady Cathcart’s lands; S. Flood (ed.), John Carrington, Farmer of Bramfield, His Diary, 1798–1810, Vol. 1, 1798–1804, Hertfordshire Record Society, vol. XXVI (Hertford, 2015), p. 256.

32. HALS DE/P/T2356 conveyance of 1 acre of moory ground between the river and the garden of Tewin Water and Kites Croft, Thomas Shallcross to James Fleet, 1718.

33. N. Salmon, The History of Hertfordshire (London, 1728), p. 49.

# REMODELLING THE LANDSCAPE: TEWIN WATER

In 1713 James Fleet, son of a Lord Mayor of London, purchased from William Cecil 'of Tewin' the manor, a manor house and a 'mansion house called Tewing Water alias the Waterside'. Next recorded in the sale document was 'And all that the Warren ground and Tewing Croft thereunto adjoining and the field lately taken out of the said warren. And all those severall fields or closes of arable land meadow or pasture called The Dawleys Kitts Croft and the Waterside Dawley ...'.<sup>28</sup> The latter fields and closes lay in the valley close to the mansion but the Warren ground and Tewing Croft lay on the south side of the valley above Warren Gate Farm, namely the ancient warren of St Bartholomew's Priory. Despite this reference, it is clear from a survey of the manor undertaken in the same year, 1713, that the Priory's ancient warren was no longer pasture but had been divided into arable fields, including Tewin Crofts (19a 2r) and Pipkin Mare Pond Field (40 acres). The same survey does however record a close next to Tewin Water mansion called 'le Warren' containing c.20 acres, to which had recently been added another 16 acres of adjacent land and this was where James Fleet laid out his ornamental landscape in the formal style of the early 18th century.<sup>29</sup> Within a few years Fleet had diverted water from the river to create an ornamental canal extending eastwards from the house.<sup>30</sup> At the east end of the canal he built a 'very fine dove house' as an eye-catcher and along the north side he planted a double avenue of elm trees leading towards the church at Tewin.<sup>31</sup> In June 1718 James Fleet purchased from the lord of Digswell manor a narrow slip of land close to the mansion between the river and his kitchen gardens. The description of the land refers to a place 'where the water goes out of the said River into the Canalls in his gardens'.<sup>32</sup> This record of a second canal suggests that the course of the river itself had been straightened to look like an ornamental canal. County historian Nathaniel Salmon (1728) described Fleet's 'most agreeable Summer Seat here, by the River, which runs thro' the Gardens.' Salmon thought the house was probably 'built by William Cecil ... but has been lately much adorned and improved'.<sup>33</sup>

James Fleet's park (usually referred to as the warren) was bounded to the north and east by rectangular groves of trees planted in four or five straight rows and another grove of at least seven rows ascended the valley side north of the house. The park with the canal and dovecote (black square at east end of the rectangular canal) can be seen on the Dury and Andrews map of 1766 (above) and also on a plan of Lady Cathcart's estate drawn in 1785-9<sup>34</sup>

The third Earl Cowper (of Cole Green House) purchased the reversion of the Tewin Water estate but James Fleet's widow, Lady Cathcart, held a life interest and it only became the property of the Cowper family after she died in 1789 in her ninety-eighth year. Lady Cathcart's old house was demolished and replaced by a new house before the property was leased to Lord Townsend. When the fourth Earl Cowper came of age in 1797 he gave Tewin Water to his distant cousin and former guardian Henry Cowper for life.<sup>35</sup>

Henry Cowper did not like the new house so seven years after it had been built it was demolished and another 'more nobler house' was built in its place.<sup>36</sup> He also set about improving the setting of his new home: permission was obtained to re-route a 'road and footpaths which used to go by the house' and the park was extended eastwards to incorporate fields held by Upper Green Farm and Tewinbury Farm.<sup>37</sup> Mr Cowper attempted to modernise James Fleet's park, 'turning the course of the river to make a more famous water fronting the house' and converting the formal rectangular canal into a semi-circle of water in March 1798.<sup>38</sup> But it was evidently not a success and in 1799 Henry Cowper invited Humphry Repton to come and make proposals for improving the landscape around his new mansion.

The story of the expansion and remodelling of the parkland from the end of the 18th century is well recorded and resulted in Tewin Water being included on the Historic England register of Parks and Gardens. The listing entry can be read at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000920> and a more detailed account together with Repton's illustrations and a transcript of his Red Book can be seen in S. Flood & T. Williamson (eds), *Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire* (Hertfordshire University Press, 2018) pp. 159-184. Suffice to say here that the expansion and enhancement of the parkland was made possible by the re-routing of two roads - the Digswell-Hertford road and the road heading south-west from Lower Green - and also two footpaths.<sup>39</sup>

Repton's plan for improving the Tewin Water parkland, including altering the river Mimram to create a lake by flooding marshy ground. Note how Westley Wood was divided by the new road from the village.  
[HALS DE/Z42/Z1] © HALS



34. HALS DE/P/T2345 deeds, 1713; DE/P/T2400B plan of c1785-9.

35. Flood, Carrington's Diary, pp. 2, 6.

36. Flood, Carrington's Diary, April 1798, pp. 1-2.

37. HALS DE/P/T2400B An Eye draft of a Plan of several parcels of land situate in the Parishes of Tewin and Digswell, the estate of the Rt. Hon'ble Lady Cathcart, c1785-9; W. le Hardy, Calendar to the Sessions Books 1752 to 1799. Vol. VIII, Hertfordshire County Records (Hertford, 1935), p. 405 footpath diversion 1791 and p. 476 footpath diversion, 1798.

38. Flood, Carrington's Diary, March, April 1798, pp. 2, 256.

39. HALS map accompanying Quarter Sessions Highway Diversion Order 123, 1800.

The following images are two of the trademark 'before and after' scenes from Repton's Red Book for Tewin Water compiled in 1799.<sup>40</sup> In this pair of paintings Repton depicted the view south across the river from the house both as it was when he visited in April 1799 and how he thought it could look if his proposals were carried out. As well as a dead tree, which was easily remedied, Repton showed how the public road ran parallel with the river not far from the house – note the carter on the far side of the fence – and the ploughed field beyond.



Before and after images of the view to the south from Repton's Red Book for Tewin Water, 1799 [HALS DE/Z42/Z1] © HALS.



In addition to prettifying the garden, Repton proposed moving the road to a new route further south, out of sight beyond the hill and some carefully arranged trees. This was done and the new road became the B1000 that we use today. The ploughed field was laid to grass and became parkland but Repton's proposal of a distant temple to complete the vista does not appear to have been acted upon.

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40. HALS DE/Z42/Z1 Humphry Repton's Red Book for Tewin Water, 1799. The 'after' scene was revealed by lifting a cleverly-painted flap.

Tewin Water was let out on the death of Henry Cowper in 1840/41 and occupied by a variety of tenants, some of whom brought their own head gardeners. The parkland kept its well-wooded appearance (see below Gardening World) until after World War II.



From Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland by J P. Neale. circa 1820

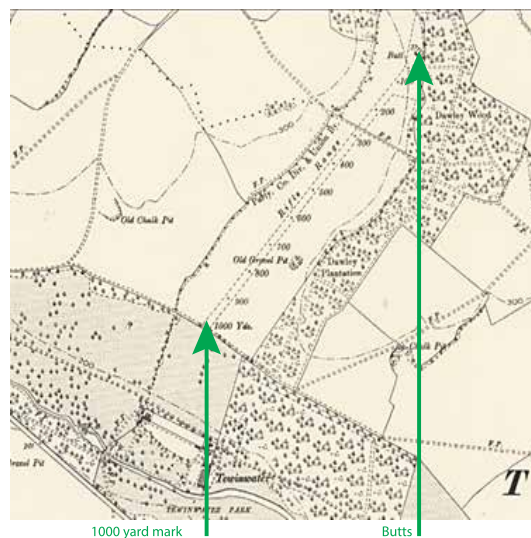


Tewin Water: The Seat of the Rt. Hon. Earl of Uxbridge JP Neale c. 1850 <sup>41</sup>

41. Hertford Mercury 11 March 1842. 'Lord Uxbridge, the late Lord Chamberlain, who has taken a residence at Tewin Water, removed in vans, on Thursday the 2nd inst, the whole of the furniture and other property left by his lordship (upon his retirement from office in the Royal household)'.

During the preparations for the South African (Boer) War rifle range and butts were laid out on the Tewin Water estate (and at Panshanger).<sup>42</sup> That at Tewin Water ran from the northern edge of the parkland in a northeast direction for 1000 yards, marked out in 100-yard intervals, to the butts at Dawley Wood. These were laid out in 1877 at about the same time as those at Panshanger and cost £154 1s. 10d for the earthworks, carpentry and making of the Butts. These were for local volunteer groups to practice.

Ordnance Survey XXVIII.8 1898 25":1 mile (National Library of Scotland)



After World War II the house and grounds were a country club for a short while before being sold to Mr A H Adey who felled the timber and turned the parkland over to brussels sprouts. In 1950 the site was bought as a school for deaf children by Hertfordshire County Council and part of the formal gardens were tarmacked over for a playground. In 1954 the remaining 12,000 acres of the estate were sold and the woods, including the beech plantations on the ridge were felled, and houses were built in Repton's Wood to the northeast. The magnolias against the house survived but Repton's views were lost when planting along the river was introduced.

Two picturesque lodges, east and west, survived unchanged into the early 20th century, though these have subsequently been altered or replaced.

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42. At this time Panshanger played an important part in national life with the Prime Minister, AJ Balfour, visiting Panshanger no less than 24 times as one of the Souls, the distinguished social group which met at Panshanger. In the period before the Boer War, Sir Alfred Milner, Governor of Cape Colony and influential in the Boer War, also visited Panshanger several times. [He later set up Milner's Kindergarten round Pretoria/-Bloemfontein and orchestrated the formation of the Union of South Africa, of which he was the first High Commissioner] Query- is this where Beit heard of the Mimram valley properties? Beit was a diamond and gold entrepreneur at Witwatersrand just west of Pretoria; and Kimberley, just west of Bloemfontein. Also a friend of Rhodes and active in the Jameson Raid planning. Julius Wernher, of Luton Hoo, also friend and business connection of Beit in Kimberley. Walter Cohen, later of Amersfort at Potten End, was one of Milner's Kindergarten.



East (above) and West (below) Lodges. n.d. Historic England Red Boxes



The inventory of 1892 after the death of tenant George Burnand lists heated vinery and glass house as well as a span greenhouse and a 3-bedroom Gardener's house. In all the mansion, lodges, pleasure grounds, lawns etc (including the ice house) amounted to about 15 acres.

Repton's pleasure grounds were largely unchanged in outline until Mr H Tower's gardener Mr FP Thompson created 'several linns or small water falls' in the river Mimram and laid out the ornamental bog garden on the north bank from the beginning of 1898. The linns were put in 'to check the rapid course of the stream' (alas no longer as rapid) but one effect, also noted by those at the Clyde Linns, was that the 'sound of the waterfall was most refreshing'.

The bog garden had been formed with two islands of piled-up mud and contained variegated Negundo (*Acer negundo*, ash-leaved maple), *Prunus Pissardi* (with dark purple leaves on blackish stems), red and yellow barked willows, flowering currants, laburnums Shirley Poppies, aquilegia, delphiniums, Castor Oil plants, *Physalis Franchetti*, Palms, Musas (bananas), *Alocasias* (elephant ear plants), *Eulalias* and many other plants. In the water *Hedychium coronarium* (white ginger lily) grew happily.

A footpath ran alongside and a rustic bridge crossed the river at this spot so you could see the linns, possibly formed of artificial rock called Pulhamite.



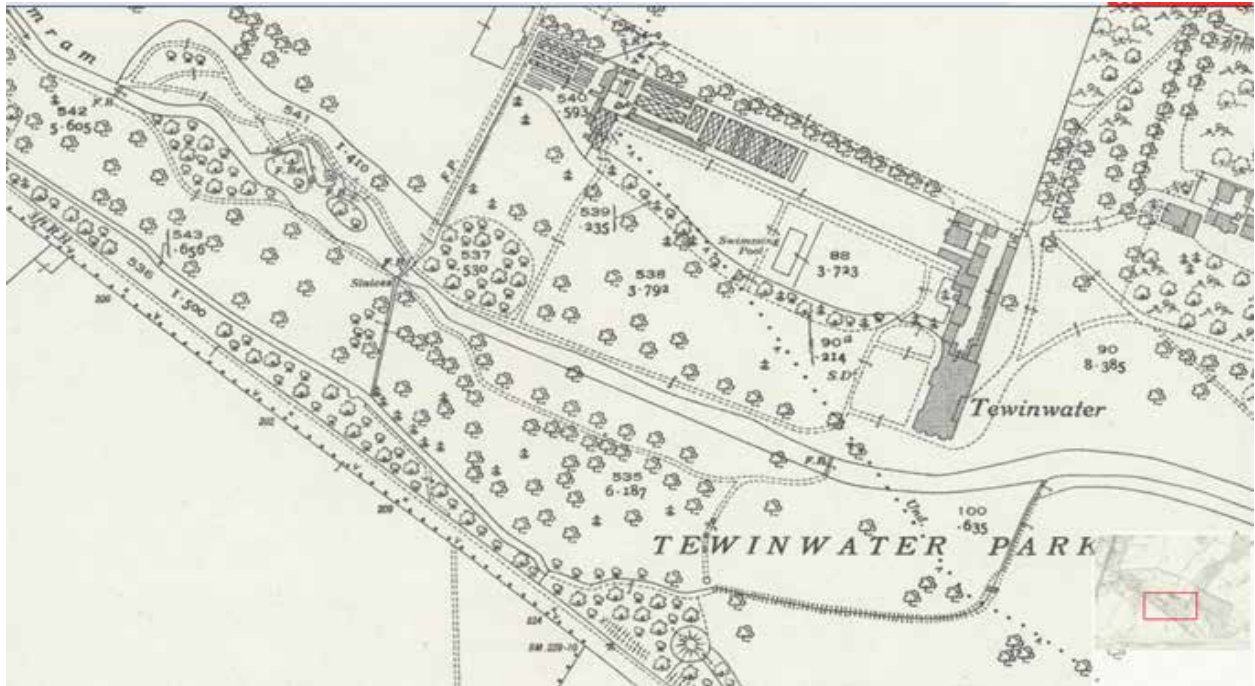
Postcard of rustic bridge and linns c 1920 [HALS]



Anne Hope in Lady Beit's Garden 1935 with the bog garden, rustic bridge and linns

This garden was maintained until at least 1937 and remnants of the fencing and the linns remain. There is still a footpath with a bridge in place of the long-gone rustic one, although these are not the gravel paths shown in the photographs of the 1930s. The Mimram Linns are all that remains of this magical garden with its modest tribute to the majestic Linns of the Clyde.

During the occupancy of the school a swimming pool was constructed in Repton's walled 'Kitchen and Fruit Garden'; there was a conservatory at the end of the long axis from the offices and many sheds and glasshouses in the frameyard and walled kitchen garden which was formed from Repton's 'Melon Ground, Forcing Gardens and Poultry Yard'. This was lost when housing was built in the former 'Kitchen and Fruit Garden' and the northern glasshouse area given over to car parking after the school vacated the premises in 1988 and the site was sold for housing development.



Tewin Water bog garden and walled kitchen garden. Ordnance Survey XXVIII.8 1937/41 25":1m (National Library of Scotland)



Tewin Water School 1954 showing Glasshouses and Conservatory (Britain from Above <https://britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EAW053202>)



Detail of Tewin Water School 1954 showing conservatory and swimming pool in Repton's Fruit and Kitchen Garden and the glasshouses and frameyard (Britain from Above)



Postcards showing garden on south and north of rustic bridge. n.d.



Tewin Water 1954 showing bog garden and rustic bridge (Britain from Above)





Tewin Water today

Historic England Red Boxes n.d.





Photos of old estate fencing (K. Harwood)



Photo of the Linns today (K. Harwood)

The following description of the trees on the Tewin Water estate was published in the journal *Gardening World* of July 29 1899:

The Magnificent Beeches and Elms and now in their summer garb of sombre green; but the Sweet Chestnut being covered with a profusion of scented blossom may justly be intitled to the epithet of queen of the woods for the time being, for they are highly conspicuous as far as the eye can discern them. The quantity of male flowers produced and the waste of pollen must be prodigious, for each short twig carries many long racemes of male flowers whilst only the uppermost one or two bear a few clusters of embryo nuts at their base. Other fine trees that attain magnificent dimension are the Oak, Ash, Gray Poplar (*Populus canescens*), White and Crack Willows, Birch, Alder, Horse Chestnut, Sycamore, English Maple and Wild Service Tree (*Pyrus torminalis*). The trees of the latter to the number of thirty or thereby form one side of a woodland avenue, and are believed to be the largest in the country; and in that opinion we shall concur until we see larger trees. They are 40ft to 50ft high (the height recorded by Loudon) with lone, ascending branches, particularly on one side and fruit freely. The trunks are proportionately stout, and present a spiral appearance in their manner of growth. The fruit is eatable only when in a bletted condition, or a state of incipient decay as is the case with the Medlar, which it resembles in flavour.



Google Earth image of Tewin Water Pleasure Grounds today annotated to show historic areas.

Some parts of the estate are thickly covered with fine timber of the above species of trees, while near the Maran are meadows with isolated trees or groups of them. The same holds good of the fields or park-like sides of the valley which ascend to a considerable elevation and carry fine crops of hay, which has just been stacked for the fine stud of hunter and carriage horses kept by Mr Tower. Clumps and isolated trees of great age are scattered about on these hay-producing slopes, and some of them present strange features of growth. Two tall Elms in proximity are joined by a perfectly horizontal trunk, as thick as a stout man's body, the pair forming vegetable Siamese twins:<sup>43</sup> for the horizontal limb belongs equally to both, the method or line of union being indiscernible. Of course, we regard it as a case of natural grafting at some early period of their existence. Another curious case of natural grafting is that of an Ash and a Crab, there being some fine trees of the latter on the higher grounds. At the base the Ash throws out a knee, which seems kneeling upon the lower part of the Crab, while they have become welded together as it were at two points higher up. The line of union is here

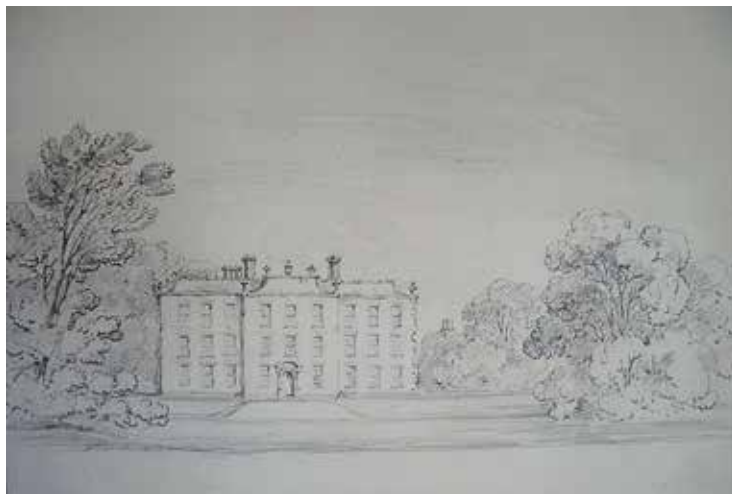
visible, and whether the Crab would live after being severed from its roots remains to be proved. There are many Oaks with gigantic trunks, and one we measured was between 23 ft and 24ft round the waist. At some early period of its existence it had nearly been blown down or was undermined by rabbits; but it must have grown enormously since then and the head is still healthy. Near the gardens an old pollarded Hornbeam had been hollow in the centre for many years, and the gardener, Mr. F. C. Thompson, had obtained good fibrous peat from this hollow, which he used for potting Allamandias. It seemed to be good enough for Orchids. Another curious phenomenon of growth presents itself in the shape of the tall Alders growing near the Maran. They must have been cut down like Willow stool in the early stages of growth and afterwards allowed to run up with three or four trunks from one root. They are 40 ft to 50 ft high, perfectly healthy and form clean, straight timber. The rural aspect of this demesne, and other estates in the neighbourhood is guarded by the proprietors, who discourage the letting of land for building purposes.

43. This arrangement is seen in other 18C gardens/parks as a novel way of making a seat.

# REMODELLING THE LANDSCAPE: TEWIN HOUSE

Major General Joseph Sabine purchased Tewin House in 1715 and the following year bought adjoining land from James Fleet to enhance its setting. He built a magnificent house in 1716-1718 that was said to have cost £40,000. A French traveller, Cesar de Saussure, who visited in 1725 wrote a fulsome account of the magnificent interiors and stated that King George I had visited on two occasions. Three illustrations portray the east front of the house, beneath which the gardens were laid out but the gardens are not shown on any of the pictures. The gardens lay below the house on the east and west-facing slopes of a valley that ran southwards to the river. According to Salmon (1728) the house and all the offices had been rebuilt 'in a magnificent manner' and the gardens had been improved.<sup>44</sup> When advertised for sale in 1788 Tewin House was said to have 'beautiful lawns on both Fronts of the House, with the Shrubberies, Plantations, and Paddock, extending to Tewin River'.

<sup>45</sup>



The east front of Tewin House at the beginning of the 19th century by R. Clutterbuck [HALS DE/CI/Z9] ©HALS

In order to make his gardens Joseph Sabine had to close and re-route the main highway south from Tewin village to the river Mimram. He obtained permission from the Court of Chancery to close the road in 1717 and laid out a new road further east, enabling him to take about 8 acres of wood into his gardens and to lay out a grand tree-lined vista from the east front of his new house. The new road headed south towards the river and King's Bridge, passing through the 32-acre warren that Sabine laid out to the south of his gardens. He was instructed to enclose the 'new highway on both sides, leaving sufficient room for carts, wagons etc to pass through as in the other old highway'.<sup>46</sup> This new highway is the lane used today, passing through Joseph Sabine's former warren which is bounded by a footpath on its east side.

The property became part of the Cowper estate in 1804 and in 1808 the house was demolished.<sup>47</sup> Nineteenth century county historians recalled the former 'magnificent gardens', Cussans, noting that 'the garden terraces on the south side of the mansion, overlooking the lovely valley of the Mimram, can still be traced, though they have been overgrown with grass for many years'.<sup>48</sup>

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44. Salmon, Hertfordshire, p. 49.

45. HALS D/EP/T2129 sale particulars, 1788.

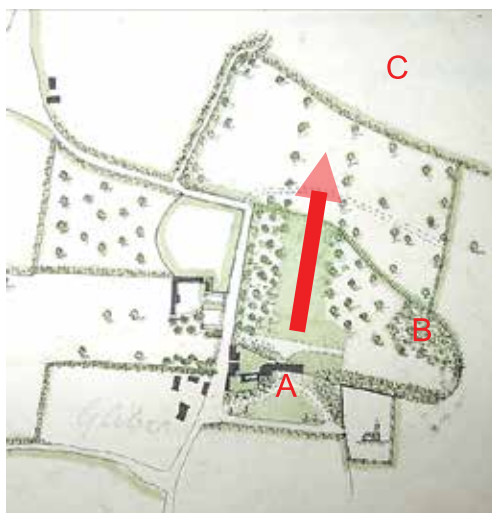
46. HALS D/P 106 1/1 Parish records.

47. Detailed accounts survive at HALS.

48. R. Clutterbuck, *The history and antiquities of the county of Hertford*, vol 2, 1821; J.E. Cussans, *History of Hertfordshire*, vol 2, 1877.

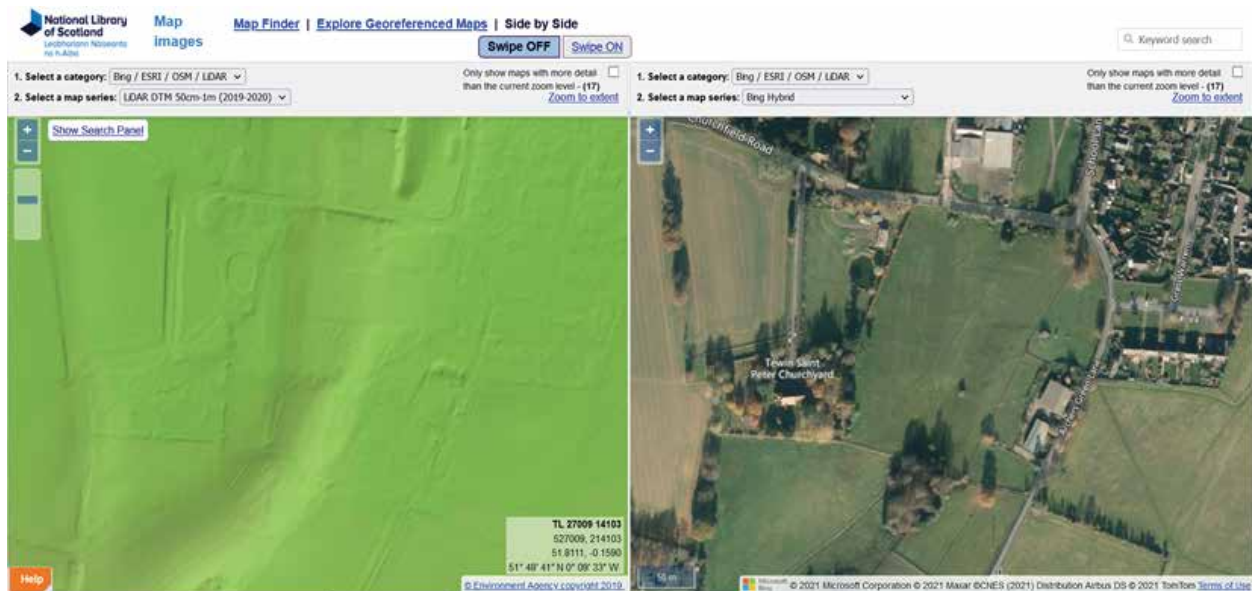


View east over St Peter's Church and the site of the former Tewin House towards Marden Hill.



Part of a plan of the Tewin House estate drawn just before the mansion was demolished in 1807-8. NB north is to the left. [HALS DE/P/P31] ©HALS.  
The key to both images is: A = site of Tewin House; arrow indicates the former tree-lined vista east from the house; B = grove of hornbeam pollards on terraced slope; C = former Lamsden common field; D = Marden Hill estate.

The archaeological remains of the former house and its gardens can still be detected by observant walkers crossing the field to the east and north-east of the church. There are minor earthworks of terracing, embankments and levelled ground which are also visible on LiDAR images, and parchmarks are also visible on aerial photographs after periods of dry weather. The following screengrab is taken from the National Library of Scotland website and shows how the valley has been 'sculpted' – with a great deal of earth-moving – to create Sabine's formal gardens [https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=17&lat=51.81336&lon=-0.15981&layers=LIDAR\\_DTM\\_1m&right=BingHyb](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=17&lat=51.81336&lon=-0.15981&layers=LIDAR_DTM_1m&right=BingHyb)



Images courtesy of The National Library of Scotland

Among the surviving earthworks and historic features are:

- a series of minor terraces on the steep side of the valley immediately beneath the house site (now a pond)
- shallow embankments running east up the valley side opposite the house site indicating the sides of the avenue of trees
- a Cedar of Lebanon just south of the house site
- the semi-circular protrusion into the field (former warren) to the south
- a grove of hornbeam pollards growing on distinct terraces within the east side of the semi-circular protrusion
- terraces on the west side of the valley within the semi-circular protrusion, opposite the hornbeam pollards

The hornbeam pollards are an interesting feature: were they part of the gardens, perhaps partly ornamental and partly functional, lopped to provide 'leafy hay' for the rabbits in the winter months and as a source of fuel? It is possible that the terracing within the semi-circular protrusion has agricultural origins pre-dating the gardens, perhaps the adapted remnants of earlier strip lynchets. If so, these would also be a significant archaeological feature for the area.

The site of Tewin House with 'pleasure grounds and walnut tree orchard' covering 23 acres was recorded in the early 19th century and on the tithe map and award of 1838.<sup>49</sup> To the north, on the other side of the lane, was the site of the kitchen gardens for Tewin House and part of the surrounding brick wall still remains.

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49. Bedfordshire Archives X899/1a Marriage Settlement Peter Leopold Louis Francis Nassau Clavering, [5th] Earl Cowper..., 1834; HALS DP/106/27/1 Tewin tithe award and map, 1838.

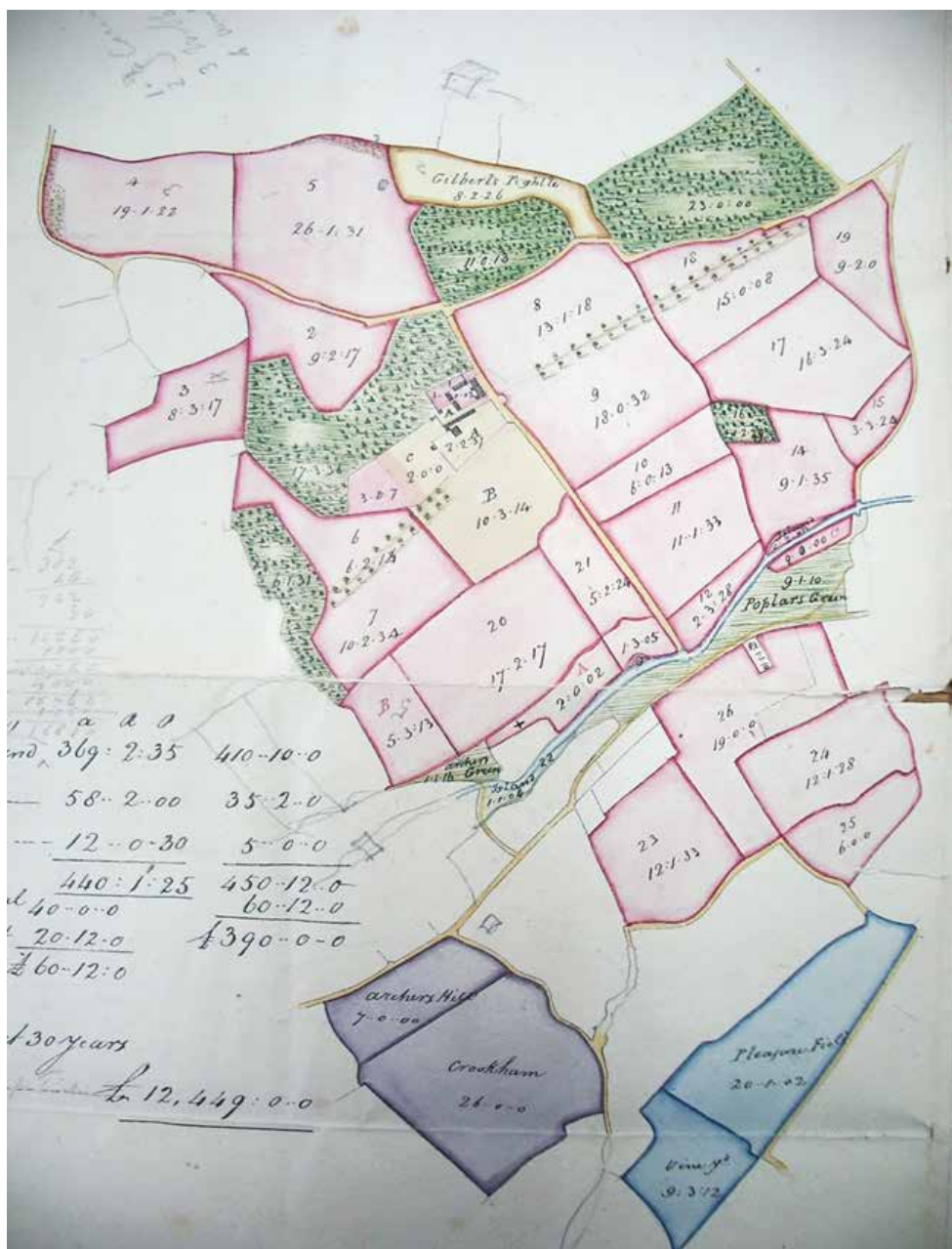
# REMODELLING THE LANDSCAPE: MARDEN HILL

Marden descended from Edward Warren to his son Richard who was High Sheriff of Hertfordshire in 1726 when Nathaniel Salmon was writing his history of the county. Salmon considered the house 'beautifully situated'.<sup>50</sup>

Dury and Andrews' county map of 1766 shows the house with formal gardens to the west and south, all set within extensive parkland ornamented with rows of trees including avenues to the east and west. The map suggests the park may have extended south to the river and northwards and eastwards to the Tewin and Hertford roads respectively but by 1785, when Arthur Warren (son of Richard) decided to sell Marden, almost all of this land was under the plough. The sale particulars describe 'a spacious dwelling-house' with 'two agreeable Vistos, through which the Country exhibits most beautiful and luxuriant Prospects'. The house had 'every useful domestic office, excellent vaults and cellarge; large court-yard, with stabling, coach-houses and various buildings; a well-stocked Dove-house, Pleasure and Kitchen Garden'. The

229 Lime Trees recorded in the particulars perhaps formed the avenues portrayed in 1766. However, the dwelling-house was said to be 'capable of great Improvement'.<sup>51</sup>

The estate was sold to Robert Mackey who rebuilt the house 1790-4, retaining fragments of the house built c.1655 for Hugh North<sup>52</sup>, and by 1801 there was a 5-acre warren west of the house. Mackey probably built the ha-ha south of the house to separate the park from the gardens and to enhance views across the valley towards Henry Wood. The avenues of lime trees continued to approach the house from the east and west.<sup>53</sup> Many of the lime trees in the western avenue survive today: some are magnificent mature trees; others have been felled by high winds but have re-sprouted from their roots, giving the erroneous impression that they have been coppiced. In the gardens south of the house today are the remains of terraces, paths, planting and perhaps a rockery, now laid to grass.



Plan of the Marden Hill estate in 1801 [HALS DE/P/T2452 ©HALS]

A listed red brick octagonal former dairy with tiled roof lies to the east of the house, just to the east of the former farm buildings. This has been dated to c.1790.<sup>54</sup> It is likely to have been ornamental in character, similar to that at Panshanger for the display of china, etc. A listed walled garden, also considered to date from c.1790<sup>55</sup> lies to the north of the house together with the remains of a fruit house or conservatory which is free standing to the south of the walled garden. Map evidence suggests however that the walled garden was built in the early 19th century and enlarged after 1838; the fruit house or conservatory was probably built in the mid-19th century, appearing for the first time on the OS map of 1884.

50. Salmon, Hertfordshire, p. 49.

51. HALS DE/L/5591 sale particulars Marden, 1785.

52. Historic England Marden Hill House <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1366605>

53. HALS DE/P/T2452 map and list of lands, 1801.

The 1801 plan of the estate shows the main carriage drive approaching the house from the south, having forded the river on Poplars Green. Beyond the gardens in 1801 there was only about 15 acres of Brick Wall field and the adjacent Warren serving as a 'park'. The surrounding fields were part of Marden farm and were ploughed for crops, but by 1821 the fields west, south and east of the house had been laid to pasture to create c.140 acres of parkland that extended eastwards to the road (now the B1000) created by the 5th Earl Cowper around the outside of his new Panshanger Park at the beginning of the century.<sup>56</sup> This newly enlarged park was associated with alterations made to the house 1818-19 by Sir John Soane for Claude George Thornton, Governor of Bank of England, who had acquired the estate from Richard Flower in 1817.<sup>57</sup> Soane re-sited the entrance front to the east and added the portico there as well as putting a double-height bay on the south front to take advantage of the views.

The carriage drive from the south continued in use and the 1838 tithe map suggests that it crossed the river via a bridge and also shows that the northern end was altered to curve slightly to the east to give an oblique approach to the house. The 1884 OS map shows the drive bordered by trees. A public footpath now follows the route of the carriage drive from Poplars Green and crosses the river over a brick bridge with predominantly yellow bricks to match the house on the upper parts but perhaps an older phase, in red brick, below. Further up the hill the original straight route of the drive can be seen as a hollow way beside the path.



The bridge over the Mimram on the former carriage drive to Marden Hill (A. Rowe, August 2021).

The tithe map also shows that a new drive had been created through the park along the avenue to the east and that the grove at the south-east corner of the park had been significantly enlarged.

Claude George Thornton died in 1866 and his son George died the following year when Marden passed to the latter's son Godfrey Henry Thornton. In 1878 Earl Cowper of Panshanger purchased the estate. The survey carried out for the Earl describes Marden Park East as 36 acres and Marden Park West as 35 acres, both laid to pasture. The mansion and gardens accounted for a further three acres and the rest of the 420 acres was fields and woods. The 1884 OS map (surveyed 1879-80) shows a lodge at the east end of the tree-lined east drive but many of the trees have since been lost. There were numerous mature hawthorns and holly trees on the estate which were greatly prized in the 18th and 19th centuries. Six White Thorns and two holly trees are annotated on the 1884 OS map marking the course of the parish boundary as it crossed the east end of the park.

Much of the land around the house was subsequently sold to a gravel company and by 1957 the house was leased out and a converted to nine flats. The listed stables and coach house have also been converted to residential use and many of the farmyard buildings demolished.

The lands south of the house have now been further subdivided into very small plots, known locally as the Plotlands. The lack of management of these has resulted in degradation of the landscape but the important views from the mansion and grounds largely remain despite some diminution of the area open to the south.

54. Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1089094>

55. Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1055788>

56. H. Prince, *Parks in Hertfordshire since 1500* (Hatfield, 2008), p. 170 based on the county map by A. Bryant, 1822.

57. Soane also designed a house for Godfrey Thornton, Governor of Bank of England (1790-1799) and Stephen Thornton (1806-1811), at Moggerhanger Park, Bedfordshire; VCH 3.

58. HALS D/P106/27/1 Tewin tithe map and award, 1838.

The ha-ha bounding the south side of the gardens and dated to c.1790. There is a Cedar of Lebanon out of shot to the left which would have featured in the view from the house (A. Rowe, August 2021).



The lime avenue west of the house showing some of the mature trees and others that are regrowing from the roots of fallen trees (A. Rowe, August 2021).





Marden House today

## THE LATE 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY LAND-SCAPE OF THE MIMRAM VALLEY

Although sheep remained a significant part of the farming economy – diarist John Carrington makes several references to shepherds, shearing sheep and selling wool – by the later 18th century almost the entire valley, with the exception of the meadows and woodlands, was devoted to arable cultivation. The earlier pastures and wood-pastures had almost all been ploughed up and the only remaining areas of pasture of any significance were the warrens around the gentlemen's houses at Tewin Water, Tewin House and Marden Hill plus the deer park just beyond the study area around Cole Green mansion. The woodlands on these elite properties were managed for recreation – for raising and providing habitat for pheasants, partridges and other small game shot in huge numbers for sport – as well as for the production and sale of timber and wood. The river was prized for the fishing opportunities it provided: foremost among the assets of the Marden estate proclaimed in the 1785 sale particulars were 'The Royalties of Hunting, Hawking, Shooting, [and] extensive Fishery in a very excellent Trout Stream'.

By 1809 almost the entire valley, with the exception of the Marden Hill estate, had become the property of the 5th Earl Cowper of Panshanger (Marden was added later). The Warren at Tewin House was returned to arable cultivation but

the former gardens, recorded on the 1838 tithe award as 'Walnut Tree Orchard, etc' remained 23 acres of pasture. The reinstated parkland at Marden Hill will have boosted the area of pasture in the parish and in 1838 the land-use was assessed as 65.7% arable land, 20.6% meadow or pasture and 12% woodland; 20a acres of 'waste land' remained 'subject to rights of commonage by copyhold tenants of the manor'.<sup>58</sup> Much of the woodland was managed as coppice with standards and this will have continued into the 20th century. During the later 19th century Dawley Wood started to spread southwards as former arable and meadowland on the steeper slopes between the wood and Tewin Water Park was planted up for forestry.

Pollards became unfashionably 'utilitarian' during the 19th century. Most ceased to be lopped and many old pollards were left to continue growing into huge and ancient trees, many of which can still be seen in parks and hedgerows although large numbers have been lost to high winds in recent decades. The surviving old pollards are a significant part of our heritage and are of great ecological importance, supporting thousands of different species from birds and small mammals to insects, lichens and fungi.

# THE LATE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

The most dramatic change to the landscape came during the 20th century with the development of Welwyn Garden City which gradually spread northwards over former arable fields. Interestingly those areas of the south side of the valley that did not disappear under houses and factories largely reverted to the pasture landscape that had previously existed until the 18th century, but now providing the setting for a golf course and an aerodrome. On the north side of the valley arable farming continued to dominate the scene and with increasing mechanisation in the second half of the century miles of ancient hedgerows were removed to facilitate the use of increasingly efficient and ever-larger agricultural machinery. In the area between Tewin Water Park and the village ten fields and two woods have all but disappeared. A narrow strip of wood at Margery Green remains alongside the site of the former Margery Wood, felled within living memory (see Google Earth image above, p. 8).

## THE MIMRAM RIVER LANDSCAPE

The Mimram is a chalk stream, fed by chalk springs, and was regarded by English Nature (perhaps 20 years ago) as the best chalk stream in East Anglia/Midlands. It flows mostly through agricultural land but has been protected locally from excessive agricultural run-off by parkland lying alongside it at Tewin Water and Panshanger. A series of alluvial meadows and marshes bordering the Mimram at Tewinbury was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1969 and is considered one of the most important species-rich river valley complexes in Hertfordshire.<sup>59</sup> Part of the SSSI is now a nature reserve in the care of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The Trust has also been working to improve the wildlife habitats along the river in partnership with the Environment Agency, the Friends of the Mimram, Affinity Water and others.<sup>60</sup>

The course of the river has been repeatedly modified over the centuries to meet the requirements of the people living along its banks. Since the early 18th century the river running through the Tewin Water estate has been used to enhance the landscape designs of its owners according to the fashion prevailing at the time. From the end of the 18th century the river, as modified by Repton, was a broad shallow stream controlled by weirs to create a lake at the east end of the park. Over time the weirs were neglected and the lake silted up. The Environment Agency in the 21st century has reduced the width of the river to improve flow rates so that Repton's wide stream of water is now a weed-ridden ditch.



Historic England Red Box for Tewin Ref 2216/10 (negative number BB88/1604).

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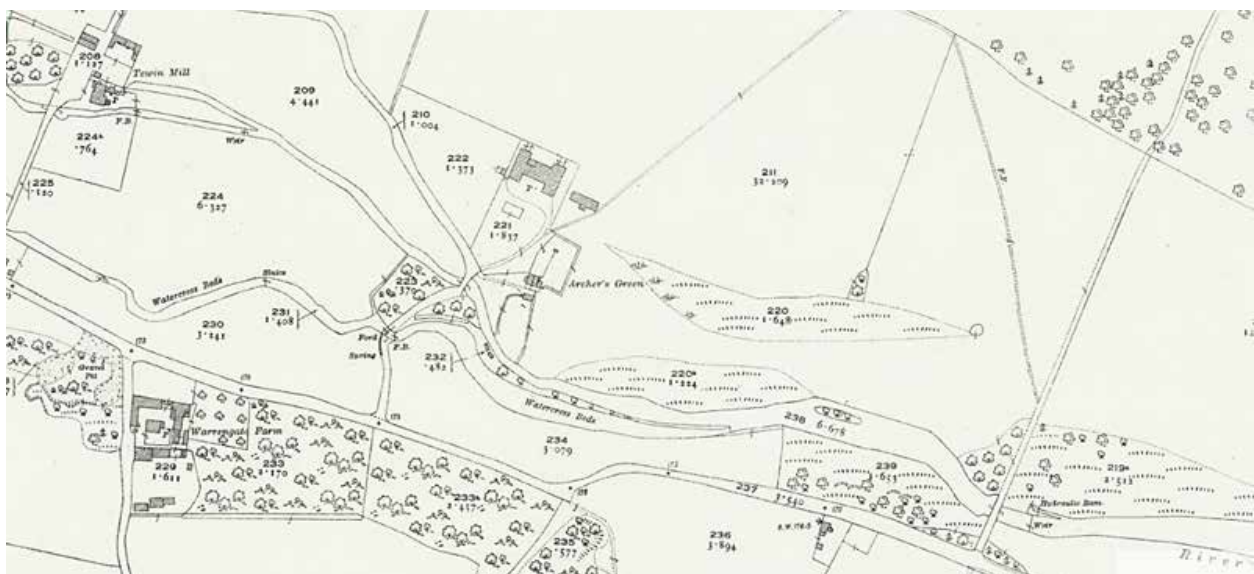
59. East Herts District Landscape Character Assessment, Area 43, 2004.

60. <http://www.riverleacatchment.org.uk/index.php/river-mimram-home>



Repton allowed the river to flood over marshy ground at the south-east corner of the park to create a lake. The 1884 OS map above shows a weir and a boat house in the corner of the park. (National Library of Scotland)

Downstream of Tewin Water lake the river flowed in two channels towards the ford at Kingsbridge, passing by Tewin Bury where the two branches join in a wide mill-pond type stream leading to Tewin Mill. The southerly millrace for the mill joined up with the main stream at Archers Green where there was also a ford. The broad stream continued on towards Panshanger with a weir and hydraulic ram (similar to those in Panshanger park) just downstream of the old approach drive to Marden Hill House. Watercress beds are shown on the 1922/23 Ordnance Survey map extending from south of Tewin Mill past Archers Green.



Water Cress beds along the Mimram below Marden Hill (Tewin Mill eastwards) OS map 25" XXIX.9 1922/23 (National Library of Scotland)

The Friends of the Mimram is a local action group working to keep the River Mimram flowing and to make it as attractive as possible for the community. In 2005 and 2012 this rare chalk river dried up through over extraction. The Friends aim to reduce the abstraction by 1/3rd. They lobby the Environment Agency, landowners, MPs, councils and agencies.

They develop initiatives to maintain the river in a healthy position for its fauna, flora and visual appearance. This includes improving the flow to remove the silt and to make it attractive, undertaking the work themselves when necessary. They work to maintain and improve access at Singlers Marsh, the Mardon Banks and Panshanger and assist in maintaining the Tewinbury SSSI.

Membership of the group is free and further information can be found on the Friends' Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Mimram>

In 2020 the Friends joined the Chalk Aquifer Alliance which is lobbying for more protection and improvements to our rare English chalk streams. <https://chalkaquiferalliance.wordpress.com/>

## Views

There are key views across and along the valley, including those from (and to) the properties which sit on the valley sides, such as Marden Hill, Tewin Church and the Panshanger golf course, and Tewin Water and Tewin Bury in the valley bottom.

Useful websites for local ecological information:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1001827>

<https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/tewinbury>

<http://www.riverleacatchment.org.uk/index.php/river-mimram-cmp/river-mimram-projects/90-enhancing-tewinbury-sssi>

[https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/data-sets/a14064ca50e242c4a92d020764a6d9df\\_0/explore?location=52.900079%2C-2.004678%2C6.71](https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/data-sets/a14064ca50e242c4a92d020764a6d9df_0/explore?location=52.900079%2C-2.004678%2C6.71)

Maps and documents consulted at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS)

DE/P/P1 map of Digswell manor, 1599

DE/P/T1719c map of Richard Willis's Digswell estate, 1771

DE/P/T1719b Digswell Field Book, 1771

DE/P/T2400b plan of Lady Cathcart's estate, 1785-9

DE/P/T2397 lease of manor of Tewin, Tewinbury and Wimbley, 1785

DE/P/T2430a Marden estate abstract of title & particular c.1785

DE/L/5591 sale particulars Marden, 1785

DE/P/P20 tracings of map of Marden Hill estate (no date)

DE/P/P14 highway diversion plan, c1798

DE/Z42/Z1 Humphry Repton's Red Book for Tewin Water, 1799

Map accompanying Quarter Sessions Highway Diversion Order of 1800

DE/P/T2452 Plan of the Marden Hill estate, 1801

DE/P/P31 Tewinbury map with cropping, 1808

DE/P/P33 Cowper estate map, 1809

DE/P/P34 Digswell field book, 1810

D/EP/P40-43 Four Maps of Panshanger Estate showing Plans for crops, 1812-1815

D/P34/3/1 Digswell Parish 1822 Volume of 18 Plans

80244 Plan of Digswell Parish, 1822

D/EP/P48 map of Cowper estates, 1833

DP/106/27/1 Tewin tithe award and map, 1838

Documents at The National Archives, Kew (TNA)

E318/8/295 grant of the lands & possessions of the late Priory of St Bartholomew in Tewin to John Cock, 1544

E315/391 survey of royal manors, manor of Bircheholte, 1556



