

The Creation of Richmond Park by The Monarchy and early years

The Richmond Park of today is the fifth royal park associated with the presence of the royal family in Richmond (or Shene as it used to be called).

The Earlier Parks

At the time of the Domesday survey (1085) Shene was part of the former Anglo-Saxon royal township of Kingston. King Henry I in the early twelfth century separated Shene and Kew to form a separate “manor of Shene”, which he granted to a Norman supporter. The manor house was by the riverside, between the river and the Green. It had a small park



King Edward III, National Portrait Gallery

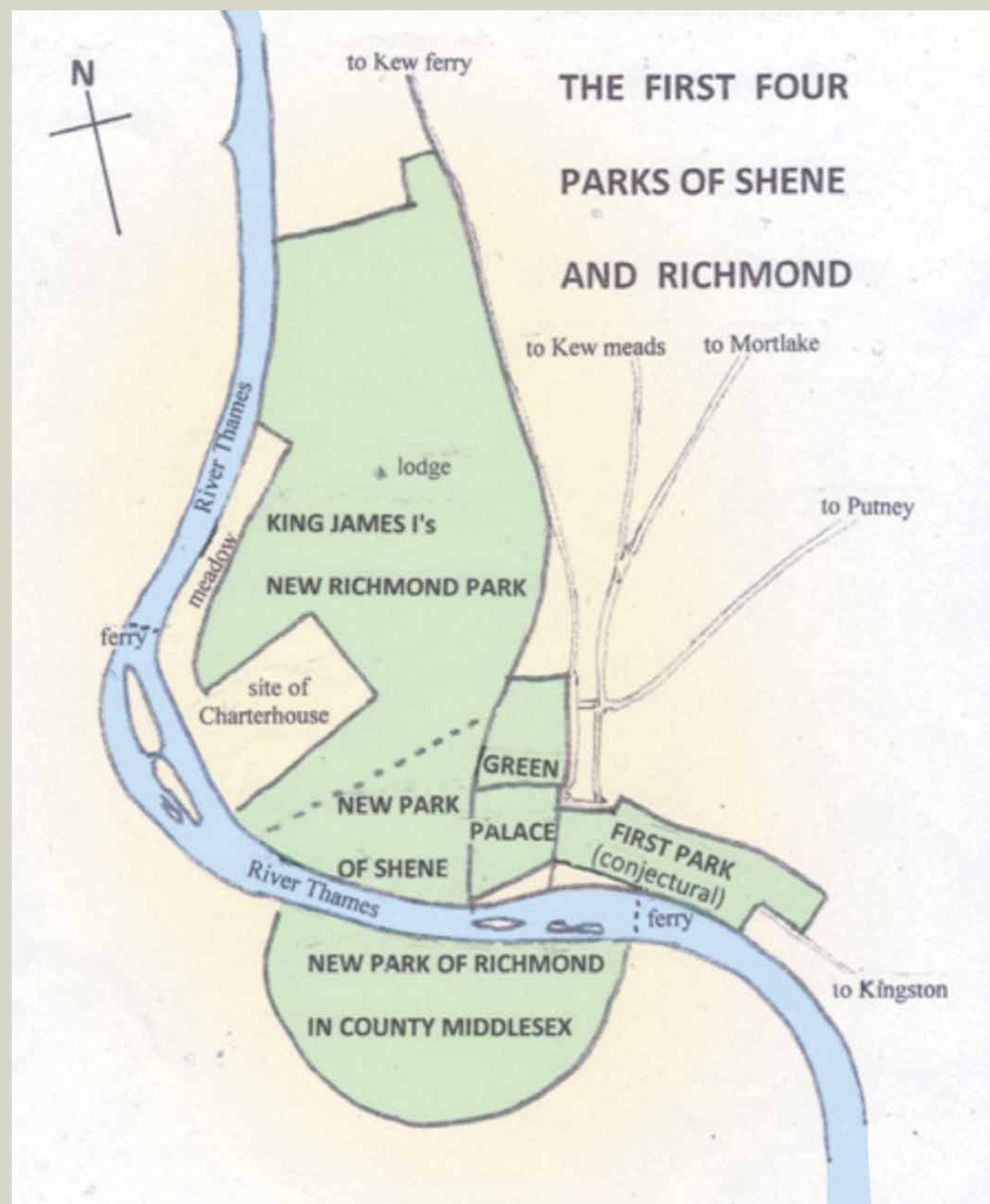
of Richard II and his young wife Queen Anne until she died there of the plague in 1394. Richard had the palace demolished. It was rebuilt in the reigns of Henry V and Henry VI; some of its original park was added to the palace grounds and much of the rest was granted out to local inhabitants. So by 1437 Henry VI used some 50 acres of royal land on the west side of the Palace and the Green to create “the New Park of Shene” [Park no. 2]. Henry VII found this too small and, after he had rebuilt the

[park no. 1], probably by the river to the south-east of the house. (A “park” was land enclosed for the purpose of hunting – usually deer.) The manor of Shene with its little park came back into royal hands by 1312, in the reign of Edward II, and was subsequently owned by his widow Queen Isabella until her death in 1358.

Her son Edward III then enlarged the manor house into “the Palace of Shene”. It was the favourite place



King Henry VII, National Portrait Gallery



The first four royal parks of Shene and Richmond

Palace, badly damaged by a fire in 1497, and renamed it (and the manor) “Richmond” – because he and his father had been Earls of Richmond in Yorkshire – he made “the New Park of Richmond in County Middlesex” [Park no. 3] on the Middlesex bank of the river opposite the Palace and the New Park of Shene. Queen Elizabeth I, though Richmond was one of her favourite palaces, gave this park away in 1574, when it was renamed “Twickenham Park” – today East Twickenham and St Margaret’s.

After the Death of Queen Elizabeth at Richmond Palace in 1603, her successor King James I of England and VI of Scotland took over the Palace. He was very keen on hunting and urgently needed a park of some size to be attached to Richmond Palace. Mainly out of land

belonging to the Crown (including the old New Park of Shene), but also buying an extra 33 acres from the local inhabitants, he created Park no 4 – today the “Old Deer Park” and much of the southern part of Kew Gardens. The park was completed by 1606, with a hunting lodge built in the centre of it. But King James then decided to use Richmond Palace primarily as a home for his children;

James I of England and VI of Scotland, David Mytens 1621, National Portrait Gallery



Richmond Palace from across the river circa 1630 (detail from a painting by an unknown Flemish artist) Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



King Charles I at the hunt by Anthony Van Dyck 1635, Musée du Louvre

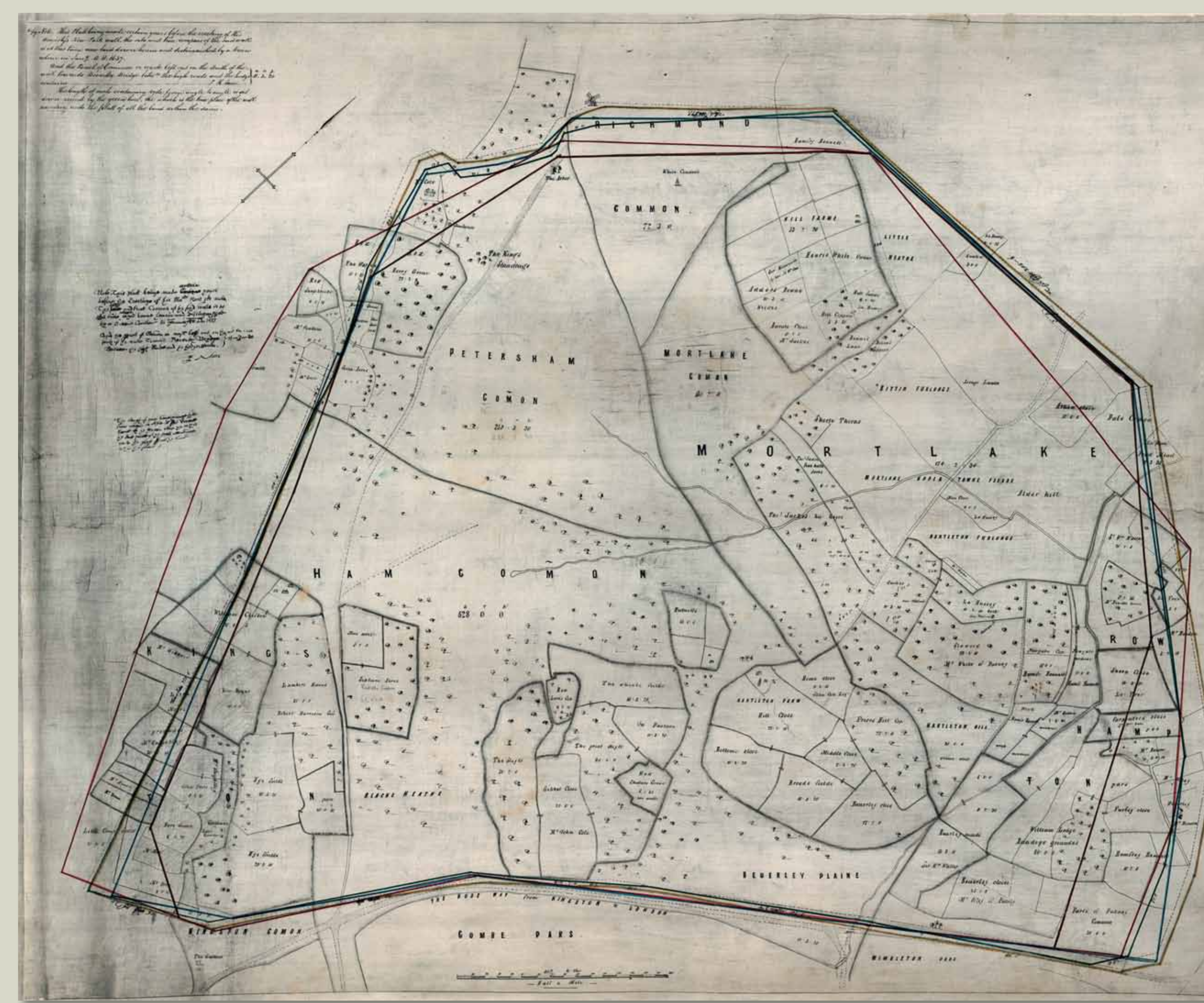
and when his eldest son Henry was invested as Prince of Wales in 1610 he was granted Richmond Palace as a country residence.

Charles I's New Park

Prince Henry died of a fever, aged only 18, in 1612. His brother Charles was made Prince of Wales in 1616 and was in his turn granted Richmond Palace. He was another keen hunter and not long after he became King in 1625 he conceived the idea of making an even bigger Richmond Park, on the hill between Richmond and Roehampton, Mortlake and Kingston. He owned directly some small bits of woodland in the area, and as Lord of the Manors of Richmond, Petersham and Ham he was the titular owner of the Commons of these manors – but the inhabitants

of course had rights in the Commons. In 1632 he had a surveyor, Nicholas Lane, prepare a map of the lands he was thinking to enclose, showing their ownership. The map shows that the King had no claim to at least half the lands, including Mortlake Common and a large part of the Mortlake open common field and many “closes” in private ownership in Mortlake, Roehampton, Putney, Kingston, Ham and Petersham. He would have to buy out their owners – and the rights of common.

The King’s plans were opposed by all his ministers, both on account of cost (for he was offering very generous terms to buy out the private landowners) and on account of the popular discontent it was arousing. Even with good compensation many didn’t want to lose their lands – but had no option – and the people of Mortlake were particularly incensed at the loss of so much of their common field. But King Charles pressed ahead regardless. In December 1634 he appointed commissioners to negotiate the sales and in the following February he ordered a start on the construction of the enclosing wall. It was completed by the end of 1637. Despite the discontent and resentment caused by the King’s action at the time, we can today be grateful to King Charles, for if he had not enclosed the Park, and had his successors not preserved it, its four square miles would certainly now be covered by suburban housing. The King appointed a Keeper of the Park, which was divided into two “walks”, Petersham and Hartleton, with a deputy keeper in charge of each. The deputy keeper for Petersham walk was a courtier and dramatist, Ludowick Carlile, and as a residence he was allotted



Nicholas Lane's map of the lands for enclosure in King Charles I's new park shows several different lines of enclosure considered (coloured for present display – the one eventually chosen is in blue). This later copy, in the National Archives, is much clearer than the original in the Museum of London.]

two working “under-keepers”. From about this time the Keeper began to be called the Ranger. In 1683 Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, was made Ranger; and three years later he was granted Petersham Lodge. He had the house rebuilt in 1692-3 as a splendid mansion, and then got grants of land from the Park, extending his personal grounds to more than 50 acres. He named his new estate simply “New Park”.

After the New Park Mansion was destroyed by a fire in 1721 a new Petersham Lodge was built in the 1730s by the Earl of Burlington for the Earl of Harington. King George II bestowed the rangership on Robert Lord Walpole, eldest son of Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister (who was of course the real Ranger). In the last year of his life King George I had ordered a new lodge to be built for his own use. The King died in June 1727 with the work only just begun; but “White Lodge” (it was faced with Portland stone) was completed in 1729 by Sir Robert Walpole for King George II and Queen Caroline.

Petersham Lodge (at the foot of what is now Star and Garter Hill), the former Petersham manor house. Carlile’s wife Joan was a talented painter, who produced a view of a hunting party in the new Richmond Park.

After the execution of King Charles I in 1649, the Commonwealth authorities granted Richmond New Park to the City of London. The City looked after it well and handed it back promptly to King Charles II at the Restoration in 1660. After a few years the division into two “walks” and the appointment of courtiers as “deputy keepers” lapsed; and the Duke of Lauderdale (of Ham House), appointed Keeper in 1673, brought in

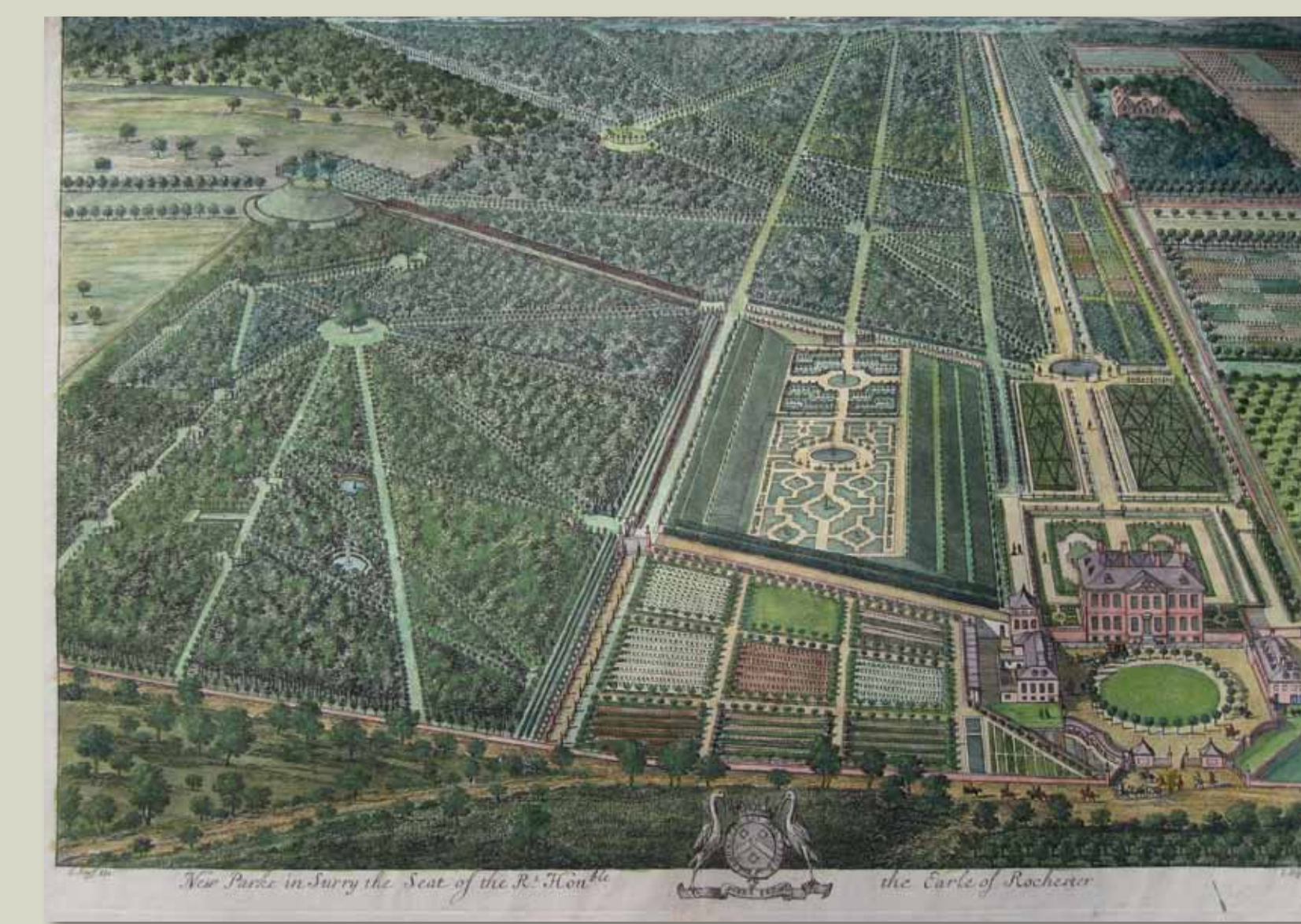


A stag hunt in Richmond Park. A painting attributed to Joan Carlile (Lampart Hall Trustees). It is thought that the gentleman pointing to his kill was Sir Justinian Isham, who lodged with the Carliles for a while and brought the painting back to his home at Lampart.



John Maitland, 2nd Earl and 1st Duke of Lauderdale, Sir Peter Lely, 1665 National Galleries of Scotland

“New Park” at Petersham in 1708, engraved by J. Kip for Britannia Illustrata from a drawing by Lawrence Kniff. “Henry VIII’s Mound” can be seen on the left and Hatch Court, the forerunner of Sudbrook Park, at the top right



White Lodge circa 1750, before the addition of the wing pavilions. A drawing by Augustin Heckel, from an album that belonged to Horace Walpole (who probably wrote the note below it), now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York



Sir Robert Walpole at his own expense repaired and enlarged the remains of Hartleton Lodge, henceforward called “the Old Lodge”. He also enlarged one of the keepers’ lodges, and built a little thatched summer house in its grounds – from which the house derives its present name of “Thatched House Lodge” Walpole, the King and the royal family and the court hunted frequently the deer in the Park, and also shot at a large flock of wild turkeys, raised specially as game birds. The local inhabitants, who had been allowed free access into the Park, crowded in to watch. This became both inconvenient and dangerous, so in 1735 restrictions were introduced. Tickets for carriages had to be obtained in advance, and the ladderstiles at the gates were removed as the gatekeepers were instructed to “open to all foot passengers in the daytime”.



Sir Robert Walpole by John Wootton, 1725, Houghton Hall