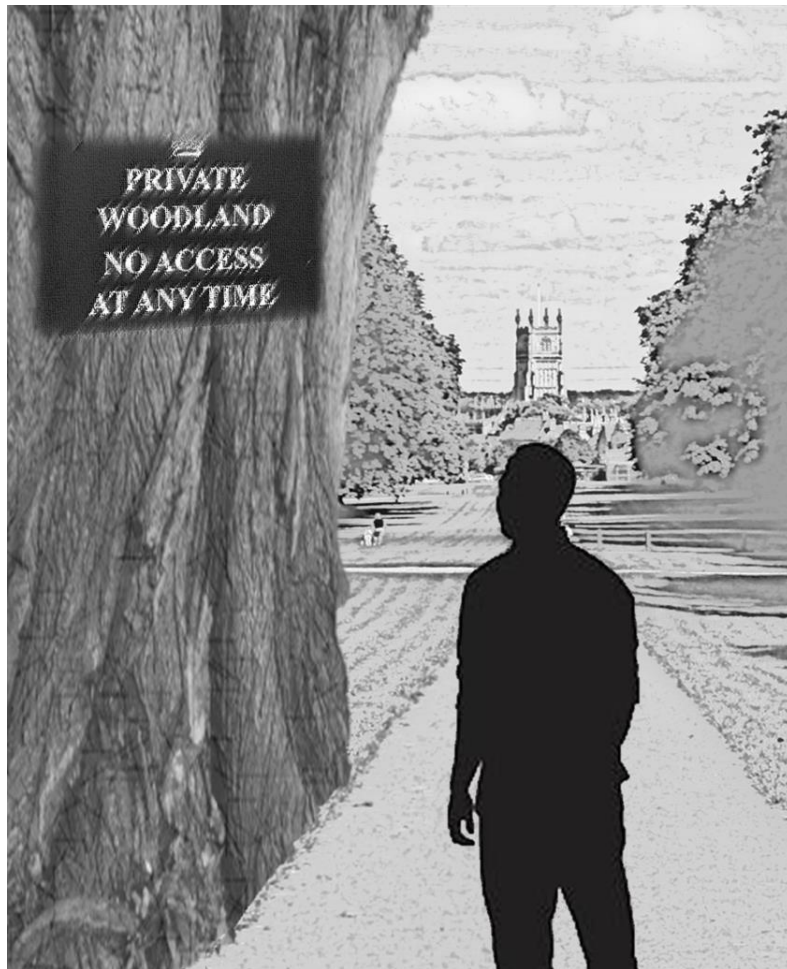


# *Cirencester Park*

## *A Short History*



David Watts

# Cirencester Park – A Short History

*A story of oppression, seizure, dissolution, injustice, murder, civil war, slavery and pay-walling.*

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2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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# 1. Introduction

We Brits sometimes have a romantic view of our history and automatically assume that everything about Britain is great. We do have much to be proud of but we should also know that our history was at times brutal, cruel and, by today's standards, unfair.

The inspiration for writing a short history of Cirencester Park was the Bathurst Estate's decision in 2024 to control access to the Park and to start charging admission fees after 300 years of free access. That decision made me ask: how did so much of the English countryside come to be owned by one family? How did that happen and who owned it before that, and before that? The more I researched the history of Cirencester Park the more surprises I found and the more I wanted to know.

This history of Cirencester Park tells the story of how the land around the Park evolved since Roman times and, on the way, highlights some of the realities of how Britain came to be what it is today. It is not a comprehensive history of Cirencester – there are plenty of books covering that – but instead it looks at some of the less well known and often controversial aspects of the Park's history. It is factual and referenced.

The story starts today and goes back in time.

## 2. Visiting Cirencester Park Today

Cirencester Park, which is part of the Bathurst Estate, covers more than 1000 acres of English countryside, extending 8 kilometres west of the town of Cirencester in Gloucestershire. The much larger Estate covers 15,000 acres of which 3000 acres are woodland.

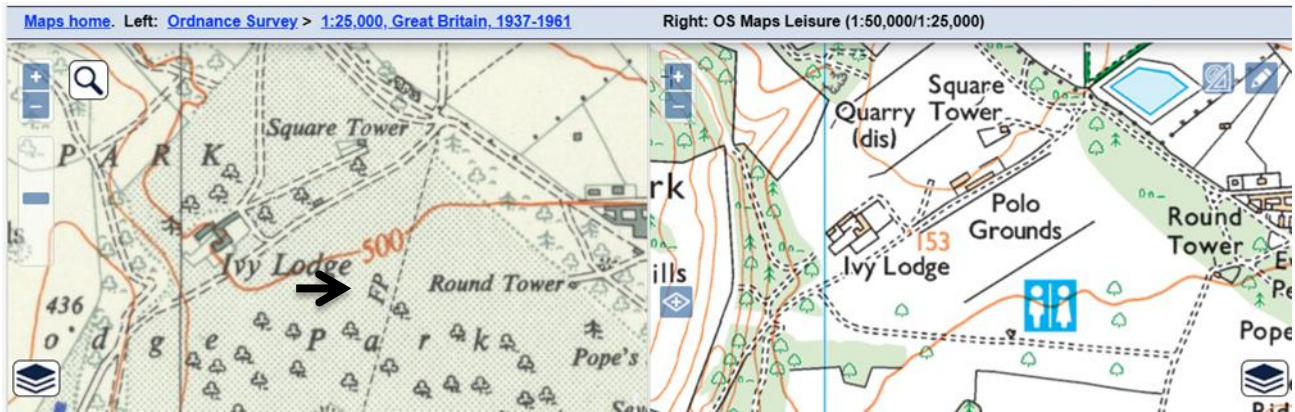
The public have been able to walk in the Park freely since Benjamin Bathurst created it in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 2024 the current Bathurst's decided to restrict access to the Park, erecting fences and security gates and introduced entry charges (£30 per year in 2024). The justification was to pay for environmental projects and because of increased footfall. The reality was more likely commercial considerations, as shown in the next Chapter.

### Accessing the Park

To enter Cirencester Park, which is bigger than Cirencester Town itself, you are now required to pay at one of two controlled ticket offices. Surprisingly, given the size of the Park, there are no public footpaths marked on current Ordnance Survey (OS) maps.

However, this has not always been the case. The Definitive Maps of Cirencester, which can be viewed in Shire

Hall<sup>1</sup> in Gloucester, show at least one historic footpath (F.P.) as can be seen in Figure 1. There is no legal extinguishment of the path on the Definitive Map so it's not clear why it isn't marked as a public right of way.



*Figure 1 – Historic Ordnance Survey Six Inch (1938) vs Current OS Map*

Historically there were other rights of way through the Park – in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Cecily Hill entrance was the start of the main road which went through the Park from Cirencester to Stroud before the Bathurst's funded the re-routing of the road to its current location, south of the Park.

As well as the ticket entry points there are uncontrolled entry points around Stratton, Daglingworth and Sapperton. At the time of writing there were no signs indicating that entry is not permitted at these points.

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<sup>1</sup> The Map Room in Shire Hall, Gloucestershire County Council, holds the definitive maps for the county.

## Summary of the Park

**Broad Ride.** The Park is well known for the tree lined Broad Ride which starts at the ticket entrance at the top of Cecily Hill and continues for 5 miles all the way to Sapper-ton. In 2019, some 29 aged and diseased Horse Chestnuts were felled along the Ride and have been replaced with 40 small-leaved lime trees.

**Historic Buildings.** There are several historic buildings in the Park including Pope's Seat, Queen Anne's Monument and Alfred's Hall; these were introduced by Allen, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Bathurst and are described in the next chapter on the Bathurst's.

**Sculptures.** Over recent years a couple of sculptures have been introduced to make the Park more interesting and to attract paying visitors. The first is *Coronation Tree* just after the Cecily Hill entrance, which has been carved out of an old tree and depicts aspects of the Park. The other sculpture is *Still Water 2019*, an upturned horses head made from beaten copper by Nic Fiddian Green – from a distance the modern sculpture situated in the middle of Broad Ride, surrounded by woodland, looks almost alien.

**Oakley Wood.** The west of the Park is dominated by Oakley Wood which consists of more than 700 acres of woodland. Once free to roam, access to this woodland is now restricted and is not included in the Park entrance tick-



ets introduced in 2024 (according to the Bathurst Estate Website, at the time of writing).



*Figure 2 – Bathurst Estate sign displayed to the north of Oakley Wood warning of Trespass in the adjacent Overly Wood, also part of the Bathurst Estate.*

### **3. The Bathurst's (1695 – Present)**

Sir Benjamin Bathurst (1639 – 1704) acquired Cirencester Manor from the widow of Lord Charles Newburgh in 1695. Sir Benjamin was a politician and held senior positions as Deputy Governor of the Leeward Islands and in the East India Company and the Royal African Company. He was also a shareholder of the Royal African Company making him very wealthy, which enabled him to acquire Cirencester Park.

#### **Bathurst Involvement in Atlantic Slavery**

Benjamin Bathurst was a deputy-governor of the Royal African Company in 1680–82 and a sub-governor in 1682–84, 1685–86 and 1689–90; he was also a shareholder of the company. The Royal African Company trafficked more than 100,000 slaves to the colonies in the West Indies in appalling conditions, many dying on the way.

Although there are accounts that Henry the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Bathurst was sympathetic to the anti-slavery cause, it was only after the Bathurst's had already profited from it and at a point when the tide was clearly turning. As Secretary of State for War and the Colonies until 1827, Henry's brief was to persuade the Caribbean land owners that slavery would eventually come to an end but that didn't happen until 1834.



*Figure 3 – Coat of Arms of the Royal African Company*

The motto of the Royal African Company, shown in Figure 3, means “Business is flourishing due to royal patronage and the kingdom is flourishing due to business.” By the 1680s, the company's connections enabled it to control 74% of England's share of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

## **Allen, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Bathurst (1684 – 1775)**

Benjamin Bathurst’s wealth was so extensive that he was able to give each of his three sons separate country estates, one of those was the Cirencester Estate which was given to Allen, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Bathurst who was a Tory politician.

In the period 1714-1775 Allen Bathurst planted woodland with the help of the poet and architect Alexander Pope to

create what is now Cirencester Park. In 1716 he bought the Manor of Oakley including Oakley Wood to enable the creation of a Park which stretches from Cirencester to Sapper-ton.

At the same time he also built Cirencester House (now known as “the Mansion”) with major works believed to have been completed around 1718. The new house incorporated some of the centre sections of the earlier Elizabethan House (Oakley Grove) built by John Danvers, described in the next Chapter. The house was further modified by Henry, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Bathurst in 1810 and 1830.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl’s time a number of other buildings were added to the Park including:

- **Pope’s Seat.** Designed by Alexander Pope in early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Pope’s Seat is a small pavilion located at the top of Broad Ride situated to allow simultaneous views down several long rides.
- **Queen Anne’s Monument.** Erected in 1741, Queen Anne’s Monument is a 50 foot commemorative column with a statue of Queen Anne at the top, located at the top of an avenue leading to Cirencester House.
- **Alfred’s Hall.** Designed by Alexander Pope and Benjamin Bathurst in 1721, Alfred’s Hall may be the earliest gothic sham ruin in England. This is within Oakley Wood which is not included in the Park entrance tickets.

## The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

After its development in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century not much changed in the Park during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Eight generations of Bathurst's from Allen, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Bathurst to Henry, 8<sup>th</sup> Earl Bathurst continued to allow the public free access to the Park. In fact the original road from Cirencester to Stroud went from the top of Cecily Hill through Cirencester Park before it was rerouted in 1818 to its current location.

During the First World War, Cirencester's rail links made it a focal point for assembling troops, with the Park being used as a camp for a battalion of Gloucestershire Yeomanry. Historic Ordnance Survey maps show a rifle range in the south of the Park.

In the Second World War, the Park was used to establish a US field hospital to treat wounded soldiers, many of whom were flown into the nearby Kemble airfield from Europe. It is likely that during the war years some areas of the Park would have been restricted.

Throughout this period the Bathurst's continued to play a prominent role in the local community due to their enormous wealth, influence and the huge enterprise they created including 15,000 acres of land, residential renting (nearly all of Cecily Hill), holiday cottages, business property, farms, shops, financial investments and government subsidies.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Commercialisation of the Park

In recent years the Bathurst's have increasingly commercialised the Park with the introduction of coffee shops, theme parks, film shows, a heated dog wash and one of the most expensive car parks in the area.

During the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Bathurst's also sold large parts of the Estate for property development, most recently a 300 acre development to build 2,350 new homes on the outskirts of Cirencester, known as the Steadings. The sale was unpopular amongst many in the local community who feared the town's infrastructure had not been developed sufficiently to support a likely 20% increase in population in a short period.

The latest commercial move is the introduction of controlled access and charging for entrance tickets, bringing to an end 300 years of free access.

## Offshore Tax Havens

The Steadings, developed by Bathurst Development Ltd, had net current assets reported as £48M in 2023 but is under the control of Bathurst Trust PTC Ltd a company registered in Bermuda, which is not required to report its assets. In a 2016 special report, *Tax Havens – Selling England by the Offshore Pound*, the Private Eye publication reported the transfer of 1,800 acres of the Bathurst Estate to Bathurst

Trust PTC Ltd in the tax haven of Bermuda, where Capital Gains Tax does not apply.

It is not known how much Benjamin Bathurst paid for Cirencester Manor but back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century it is recorded that the three Manors of Cirencester, Oakley and Siddington sold for £2,600. In 2024 prices that would be the equivalent of ~£500,000 which, compared with the £10s of million that the Estate was worth in 2024, is an enormous capital gain.

## **Government Subsidies and Permissive Ways**

As well as the sale of land, the Bathurst Estate controls a number of other commercial entities, such as Cirencester Park Farms Ltd, which provide income for the Estate. In 2022/23, the Bathurst Estate received nearly £900,000 of government subsidies including Direct Aid and Rural Development funding.

However, government subsidies are now changing under new legislation following the UK's exit from the European Union. New Environmental Land Management schemes will introduce payments for environmental projects and also pay landowners who improve access to the countryside with new permissive routes, maps, signage and gates.

Hailey Wood, next to Cirencester Park, is also part of the Bathurst Estate and was free for the public to roam until 2024 when the Estate introduced new permissive routes in

order to reduce what they said was damage to the environment. This effectively restricted the public to a fraction of what was accessible before 2024.

Perversely, the government's objective to create more opportunities for the public to have access to woodland, through payments for permissive ways, has resulted in less access to the Bathurst Estate, as previously all of the woods were open to the public.

## **The Future**

With the commercialisation of the Estate, the future of Cirencester Park is looking less benevolent, despite numerous income sources, tax havens and government subsidies.

It is understood that Allen, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl Bathurst is stepping back from estate management and that his son Benjamin is now at the forefront of the Bathurst Estate and its commercialisation.

In the next chapter we will look at how the land where the Park is now situated was seized by the Crown in the Reformation and then granted to Lords of the Manor before being acquired by the Bathurst's.



## 4. Post Reformation (1534 – 1695)

In 1534, King Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church and founded the Church of England so that he could end his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. The Pope had refused his request to have the first marriage annulled.

The break from the Catholic Church also made him very wealthy as the Crown seized land, goods and riches from the Catholic monasteries, including Cirencester Abbey. The Catholic abbots held Cirencester Manor before the dissolution, including Oakley Wood within Cirencester Park. The dissolution of the monasteries and the wealth the Crown gained was used to fund wars abroad and pay off debts.

Henry was succeeded by his son Edward VI in 1547 who was just a boy and was surrounded by fanatical and unscrupulous Protestant and Catholic schemers who undermined political stability during his short reign. He died of Tuberculosis at age 15.

When his sister Mary I ascended the throne in 1553, she restored the Catholic faith to England before it reverted back to Protestant when her sister Elizabeth I was crowned Queen in 1558.

## The Surrender of Cirencester Abbey (1539)



*Figure 4 – The Surrender of Cirencester Abbey 1539 by John Beecham (Photo Credit Bingham Library)*

Cirencester Abbey was formally surrendered on 29th December 1539. In this painting by John Beecham, Abbot Blake, the last abbot of the Augustinian Abbey of St Mary, is seen sitting on the left side of the table signing the deed of surrender, while Henry VIII's Commissioners gather around them the valuable plates and silver from the abbey. Following the dissolution of the monastery William

Philippe was appointed as vicar of the parish church and he can be seen holding a book.

## **Cirencester Lords of Manor Post Reformation**

Introduced in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the system of landholding in England was based on a social hierarchy known as the feudal system. Rather than being owned by the people who worked it, land was granted by the Crown to members of society higher up the social tree, sometimes nobles but also to loyal subjects and friends.

The people who earned their living by working the land (the peasants) had to pay fees (tithes) to their superior manorial lords. The Lord of the Manor had extensive rights beyond ownership and collecting rent which included licensing of markets, hunting, milling and the right to dispense justice over his tenants.

Cirencester Manor changed hands many times in the turbulent years following the Reformation during which time Protestant and Catholic schemers were continuously plotting against each other, often resulting in executions without judicial process. The Crown retained the Lordship of Cirencester Manor for much of this period.

At the time of the dissolution of the Abbey, Cirencester Park didn't exist as it is today but evolved through a number of acquisitions from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently there is no simple explanation of who exactly held the park

land back in time. Historical records refer to Cirencester Manor, Abbey Manor of Oakley, Oakley Park and Oakley Wood, all of which are associated with the estate where the Park is located.

For the purposes of illustrating the history of the Park, the following is a chronology of the Cirencester Lords of the Manor (based on Baddeley's History of Cirencester), which would have included parts of Cirencester Park today.

## **1548 – 1549 Thomas Seymour**

In 1548, following the Reformation, Cirencester Manor was granted to Thomas, Lord Seymour of Sudeley.

After Henry VIII's death in 1547, the boy king Edward VI's reign was dominated by nobles trying to strengthen their own positions. The struggle for power between the Protestants and the Catholics raged and it was a brutal period of deceptions, attainders (trials without judicial hearing) and executions.

Seymour was caught up in the struggles for power and was arrested for treason in 1549 and found guilty not by a court but by the Act of Attainder (parliamentary bill). Historians believe his case was sent to parliament as he would most likely have been acquitted in a judicial court. There is evidence that he had ambitions that threatened his brother Edward, the Lord Protector of the boy King, and his conviction was too politically important to risk acquittal.

Thomas Seymour was beheaded at the Tower of London in 1549 and his brother Edward in 1552.

## **1553 John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland**

Following Seymour's execution Cirencester Manor was held briefly by John Dudley, self-proclaimed Duke of Northumberland, who was virtual ruler of England during Edward VI's throne. He was a highly unscrupulous and fanatical Protestant who was also found guilty of treason by attainder and executed.

During the same period Sir Anthony Kingston was granted the Abbey Manor in 1552 for £19 (according to Baddeley's history); other books (Kingsley) record him being granted Cirencester Manor in 1554.<sup>2</sup>

Kingston was arrested for plotting against Queen Mary in an attempt to place her half-sister Elizabeth on the Crown. He died in 1556 whilst being taken to London under arrest.

The Lordship then remained with the Crown until 1558.

## **1558 – 1563 Sir Thomas Parry and Son**

In 1558 Queen Elizabeth I conferred Oakley (Cirencester) Manor to Sir Thomas Parry, her Treasurer who had stayed by her side when she was imprisoned by Queen Mary. This

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<sup>2</sup> Different publications refer inconsistently to Cirencester Manor, Abbey Manor and Oakley Manor during the period and the boundaries in relation to the current Park are not clear.

did not include the Abbey grounds which Elizabeth sold to Richard Masters; the Chester-Masters would later give the Abbey Grounds to Cirencester Council.

Following Parry's death in 1560, his son inherited the manor and may have been the first private seller of the land where Cirencester Park sits today, his father having been bestowed it by the Queen.

### **1563 – 1615 Sir John Danvers and Sons.**

Sir John Danvers bought Oakley Manor from Parry in 1563 and by 1592 had built Oakley Grove house in the location where Cirencester House now sits. Queen Elizabeth 1 was recorded in 1592 as saying "staying at Sir John Danver's new house".

In 1594, as a result of a long standing dispute between the Danvers and Long families Charles Danvers, the son of John, was challenged to a duel by Henry Long and Charles was severely wounded. In a dramatic scene Charles' brother Henry Danvers shot and killed Henry Long. The brothers were outlaws and fled to France and served as soldiers of fortune under the French King Henry IV.

Meanwhile, with his sons in disgrace, Sir John Danvers died in 1594 and Charles inherited the estates including Oakley Grove and the land in Cirencester; the house and lands were looked after by caretakers during his exile. The

two brothers were eventually pardoned in 1598 conditional on payment of £1,500 to Sir Walter Long.

Following the pardon, Charles became close to the Earl of Essex and took part in the conspiracy against Queen Elizabeth. Both were tried of treason and executed – Charles in 1601.

Henry Danvers, who had been pardoned for the earlier Long shooting, inherited the Cirencester estate in 1603 and became the Earl of Danby. He later added the Manor of Siddington to his Cirencester estate.

## **1616 – 1692 The Poole's**

Sir Henry Poole of Sapperton bought the Cirencester Manor estate in 1616 in the year of his death. He paid £2,600 for the manors of Cirencester, Oakley, Siddington Peter and Siddington Mary, the equivalent of ~£500,000 in 2024 for thousands of acres of English countryside. The Manor passed to his son also named Henry Poole.

It was during this period that England entered into a civil war between Royalists and Parliamentarians fighting for democracy. Cirencester was the scene of several skirmishes as Royalists and Parliamentarians fought for dominance. Cirencester townsfolk supported the Parliamentarians and held the town until 1643, despite the clergy and gentry's support for the Royalists.

The Poole's were recorded as passing intelligence to the Royals which most likely enabled Prince Rupert to rush the town with overwhelming numbers in February 1643; Henry's son William later had to pay a fine of £1494 for that support, which nearly ruined the family. The fiercest fighting was around Cecily Hill at the entrance to the Park where around 20 of the town's defenders were killed and left naked in the street for days. The Royalists held the town until 1645 when the first civil war effectively came to an end with the defeat of the Royalists at the Battle of Naseby.

The Manor passed from Henry to his son Sir William Poole and then to Henry's daughter Anne who was married to James Livingston the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Newburgh.

## **1692 – 1695 Earl of Newburgh and Widow**

Following Anne's death in 1692 the Manor was passed onto her son Charles Livingston, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Newburgh. Charles was a wild teenager having fought his first duel at the age of 15 and was shot in the belly age 19 fighting as a cavalry officer. He also spent a month in the Tower of London, constantly under suspicion for his Royalist loyalties. Frances the widow of Charles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Newburgh's inherited the Park and sold it to Benjamin Bathurst in 1695. Ancestors of Bathurst still hold the land today.

The rights of the Lords of the Manor in England declined from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards with the rise of civil courts.



## 5. Cirencester Abbey (1131 – 1534)

### Rise of the Black Canons

Following the Norman invasion of England and the defeat of King Harold II in 1066, William the Conqueror became King of England followed by his son King William II. When William II died in a hunting accident his brother, Henry, seized control of England and was crowned King Henry I in 1100.

He was a supporter of religious reform and gave extensively to reformist groups, including promoting communities of Augustinian Canons. The 11<sup>th</sup> century Augustinians were the first priests in the Roman Catholic Church to combine clerical status with a communal monastic life but their rule was not quite as strict as that followed by the monks of other orders. The Augustinians are sometimes referred to as the Black Canons on account of their black coats. At the head of each Augustinian abbey and its canons was the abbot.

It was King Henry's support of the Augustinians that led to the building of a new church and monastery at Cirencester in 1117. Progress on the church was rapid and by 1131, Abbot Serlo was consecrated as the first abbot of Cirencester Abbey, although the Abbey wasn't finished until 1176.



*Figure 5 – Depiction of a Cirencester “Black Canon”*

## **Manorial Control**

Not only did the abbots have possession of the Abbey, Henry I also granted them large parts of Cirencester, including the wood of Oakley where Cirencester Park now sits, although the Crown reserved hunting rights in the deer park.

The charter granted to the abbots included a share of the profits from Cirencester’s market. This Charter continued under King Henry II until the reign of King Richard I when, desperate to fund his crusades, he sold the manorial rights of Cirencester to the Abbott for £100 and a rent of £30 a year. As well as providing the church with a more permanent possession it gave them greater control over the local townsfolk, including all the profits from the market.

By the early 13<sup>th</sup> century the abbots had bought the right of excluding the sheriff and, under Henry III, they were al-

lowed to build their own gaol as a result of Richard I's grants of the manor.

## **Friction with the Townsfolk**

Cirencester trade increased rapidly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was entirely under the control of the abbots. This control became the cause of growing friction between the Monastery and the townsfolk.

The townsfolk made a number of official complaints over the period, citing extortion, assault, false imprisonment and theft – tenants would use hand mills in their homes to grind corn to avoid the obligation and cost of using the abbot's mill; this resulted in the abbot's servants breaking into their homes and either destroying or confiscating the mills. These complaints were dismissed by the justice system. The town was at the abbot's mercy because of their tenure and rights.

There continued to be friction between the townsfolk and abbots into the 14<sup>th</sup> century sometimes leading to violent riots. There were also rumours of evil-living among the canons, resulting in an intervention by the Bishop of Worcester who asked the Abbot to look into the matter but there is no record of any action being taken.

## **The Dissolution and Demolition of the Abbey**

There were 30 abbots of Cirencester from its consecration in 1131 until its surrender in 1539. John Blake was the last Abbot and is depicted in the John Beecham painting in Figure 4.

The monastery had dominated town life and was very prosperous until the Black Death, although there is no record of the mortality among the canons or in the town of Cirencester.

After the reformation and dissolution of the monasteries, Henry VIII ordered the demolition of the Abbey. Today, all that remains of the Abbey is a Norman arch in the Abbey Grounds.

## 6. Before the Abbey (AD 50 – 1131)

### Roman Foundations

Cirencester's history started sometime around AD 50 just after the Roman invasion of Britain. The first Roman settlers were believed to be cavalymen located in a fort in the centre of today's Cirencester, adjacent to the nearby Fosse Way.

By AD 70 the town had a civilian population and was named Corinium Dobunorum (the Dobunni were one of the Iron Age tribes living in the area prior to the Roman conquest). The population grew to 15,000 people and, covering 240 acres, it was the second largest town in Roman Britain after London.

Extensive archaeology work over recent centuries has mapped out the Roman town in detail including a Forum (social gathering place) and a Basilica (public building for official and public functions) in the centre of town and an Amphitheatre (used for gladiatorial contests and executions) located not far from Cirencester Park.

There is little archaeological evidence of Roman presence in the location of Cirencester Park probably because it is private and hasn't been used as arable land, which often turns up artefacts during ploughing.

However, there was clearly a Roman presence in and around Cirencester Park as Corinium was such a large town. Grismond's Tower hidden inside the private grounds of Cirencester Mansion is a very large barrow or mound which is thought to be the location of a Roman burial site (around 1780 an ice house was built into the mound). In addition, mosaic remains have been found in Oakley Wood.

Who knows what other treasures are buried in the private and now restricted grounds of Cirencester Park.

## **After The Romans**

Following the departure of the Roman legions around AD 408 the Anglo-Saxons started migrating to Britain. The Anglo-Saxons were part of a North European Germanic group who fought the Romans and migrated across Europe during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The migration to Britain is now thought to be a mix of small groups of fighters who drove the sub-Roman Britons off their land into the western extremities of Britain and a mass migration that resulted in demographic change.

During this period, often referred to as the Dark Ages, the peoples of Britain formed small kingdoms led by chieftains or kings who preserved their own order and had to deal with the Anglo-Saxon invaders and migrants. The infamous King Arthur has often been cited as a leader of one or more of these kingdoms during this period.

A medieval castle with motte and bailey is believed to have been located near where Cirencester Park sits and according to medieval legend the Castle was the location of King Arthur's coronation, although there is no evidence of this.

Following the departure of the Romans, Cirencester town dwindled and one of the many Anglo-Saxon kings, the King of Wessex, took Cirencester in 577 at the Battle of Dyrham. A Saxon settlement is believed to be sited near Cecily Hill at the entrance to Cirencester Park.

During the later medieval period Cirencester again prospered, mostly through the wool trade, producing some of the best cloth in Europe. By the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, all the profits from Cirencester's trade were to pass to the abbots of Cirencester who were the Lords of the Manor.

## 7. Epilogue

Since the birth of Roman Cirencester, the Park area has been at the centre of the town's dramatic history, which at times was brutal, cruel and, by today's standards, unfair.

Throughout its development the Cirencester Lords of the Manor have profited from the land but when Allen, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Bathurst built Cirencester Park in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century he created something which he shared with the people of Cirencester allowing free access for everyone to enjoy the sculptured woodland.

Now in 2024 that freedom to walk in the Park and the thousands of acres of surrounding woodland is being eroded.

As described previously, the Cirencester townsfolk have a history of standing up to the Lords of Cirencester. After 300 years of free access to Cirencester Park, it will be interesting to see if the new barriers and restrictions serve any purpose.



# A. Cirencester Lords of the Manor

This list of Cirencester Lords of the Manor is based on the *History of Cirencester* by Baddeley in 1924 (see References). Although it doesn't directly correlate with Cirencester Park which was created in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it provides a useful timeline and summary of who owned the land where Cirencester Park is located.

Date	Lords/Owners of the Manor	Means of Ownership	Notes
<b>11<sup>th</sup> Century</b>	The King	Title	
<b>1189-1539</b>	Abbots of Cirencester	Granted/Rented/Bought	Henry I created the Abbey and leased the surrounding land to the Abbot. Henry II continued the Charter. Richard I sold and rented Cirencester Manor to the Abbots
<b>1539-48</b>	The Crown	Reformation Seizure	Following dissolution of the Abbey, the Crown and Church seized Catholic assets including Cirencester Abbey
<b>1548-49</b>	Thomas, Lord Seymour of Sudeley	Granted	Tried for treason without a judicial process and hanged. In 1552 Sir Anthony Kingston was granted the Abbey manor for £19, he was later arrested and died on his way to the Tower of London.
<b>1553</b>	John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland	Granted	Tried for treason and hanged
<b>1553-58</b>	The Crown		The Crown retained the Lordship
<b>1558-63</b>	Sir Thomas Parry	Bestowed	Conferred by Queen Elizabeth I to Parry, her Treasurer, for his loyalty and services to Elizabeth

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lords/Owners of the Manor</b>	<b>Means of Ownership</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1563-95</b>	Sir John Danvers	Bought	Danvers thought to be the first private buyer of the Manor and built Oakley Grove manor house around 1592 where Cirencester House is today.
<b>1595-1601</b>	Sir Charles Danvers (son of John)	Inherited	Charles and Henry murder Sir Henry Long and seek refuge in France. Charles later tried for treason and beheaded.
<b>1601-15</b>	Henry Danvers Earl of Danby (son of John)	Inherited	Henry was pardoned for the Long shooting and added Manor of Siddington to his Cirencester Estate.
<b>1616</b>	Sir Henry Poole	Bought	Payed £2,600 for the manors of Cirencester, Oakley, Siddington Peter and Siddington Mary (Parliament Online)
<b>1616-1645</b>	Henry Poole (son of Sir Henry)	Inherited	English Civil War 1642 – 1645. Entrance to the Park was the scene of a fierce fight with 20 parliamentarians left dead and naked on Cecily Hill for days.
<i>The rights of the Lords of the Manor in England declined from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards with the rise of civil courts.</i>			
<b>1645-1651</b>	William Poole (son of Henry)	Inherited	
<b>1651-1692</b>	Anne Poole (daughter of Henry) Countess of Newburgh	Inherited	
<b>1692-94</b>	Charles 2 <sup>nd</sup> Earl of Newburgh (son of Anne)	Inherited	
<b>1695</b>	Frances, Countess of Newburgh	Inherited	
<b>1695-1704</b>	Sir Benjamin Bathurst	Bought	Purchased Manor of Little Oakley. Benjamin Bathurst wealth came from Royal African Company and the slave trade
<b>1704-75</b>	Allen, Lord Bathurst	Inherited	Created Cirencester Park with Alexander Pope and became 1st Earl Bathurst in 1772. Added Oakley Wood to the estate.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lords/Owners of the Manor</b>	<b>Means of Ownership</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1775-94</b>	Henry, 2nd Earl Bathurst	Inherited	
<b>1794-1834</b>	Henry, 3rd Earl Bathurst	Inherited	Slavery Abolished in 1834
<b>1834-66</b>	Henry, 4th Earl Bathurst.	Inherited	
<b>1866-78</b>	William Lennox, 5th Earl Bathurst	Inherited	
<b>1878-92</b>	Allen Alexander, 6th Earl Bathurst	Inherited	
<b>1892- 1943</b>	Seymour Henry, 7th Earl Bathurst	Inherited	
<i>The following entries came after the publication of Baddeley's list of Lords of the Manor but are included to show the succession of Cirencester Park and House</i>			
<b>1943-2011</b>	Henry, 8 <sup>th</sup> Earl Bathurst	Inherited	
<b>2011 – Present</b>	Allen 9 <sup>th</sup> Earl Bathurst	Inherited	Lived in Cirencester House from 1999. Along with his son Benjamin, who now manages the estate, the 9 <sup>th</sup> Earl has overseen the commercialisation of the Park and has restricted access to the Park and surrounding Woodland which was free to roam.

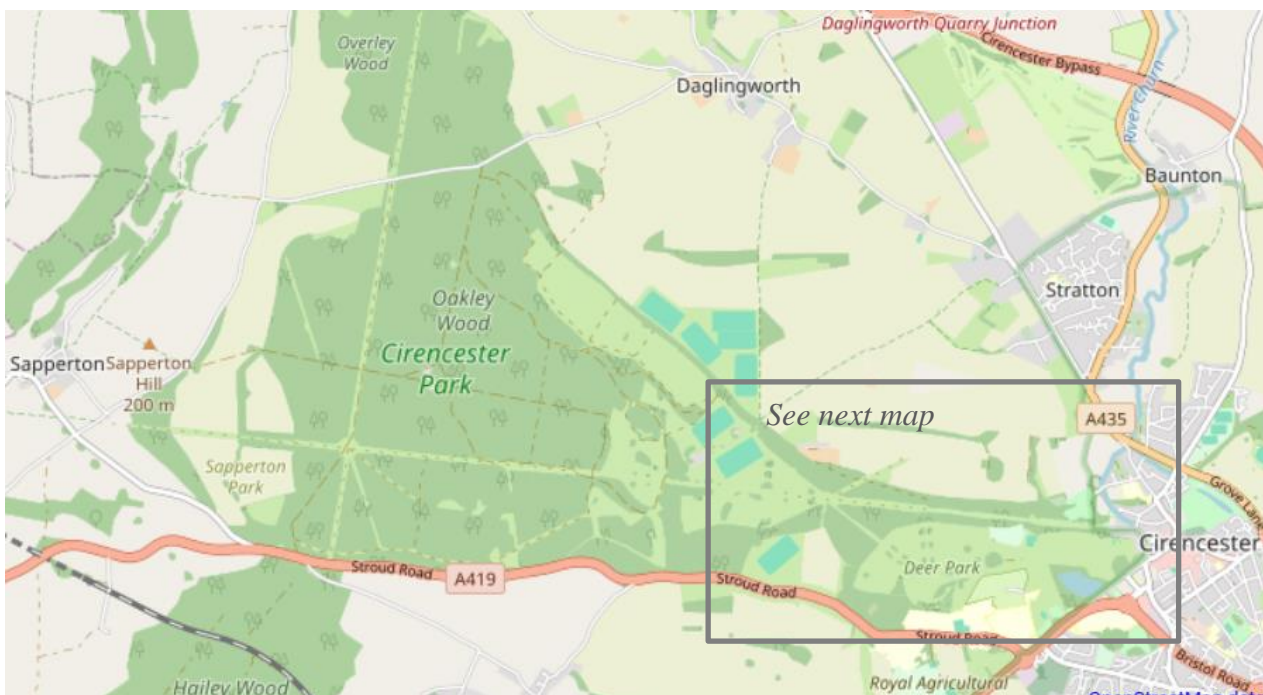
## B. Maps of Cirencester Park

Cirencester Park covers more than 1000 acres and extends 8 kilometres west of Cirencester all the way to Sapperton.

The much larger Estate covers 15,000 acres of which 3000 acres are woodland, including Overly Wood, to the North, and Hailey Wood, to the South.

The public were allowed to walk freely in the woodland until 2024 when new restrictions were introduced.

### Map 1 – Cirencester Park



## Map 2 – East Section of the Park



This map shows a small section of the Park next to Cirencester, which is the limit of what tickets introduced in 2024 allow access (at the time of writing).

1. Cecily Hill
2. Historic OS (1938) Footpath
3. Cirencester House (the Mansion/Oakley Grove)
4. Broad Avenue/Ride
5. Pope's Seat
6. Queen Anne's Monument
7. Grismond's Tower
8. Roman Amphitheatre

## C. References

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[History of Cirencester — Cirencester Town Council](#)

[Cirencester Town Landscape 1st-half-1.pdf \(cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk\)](#)

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# **Cirencester Park – A Short History**

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