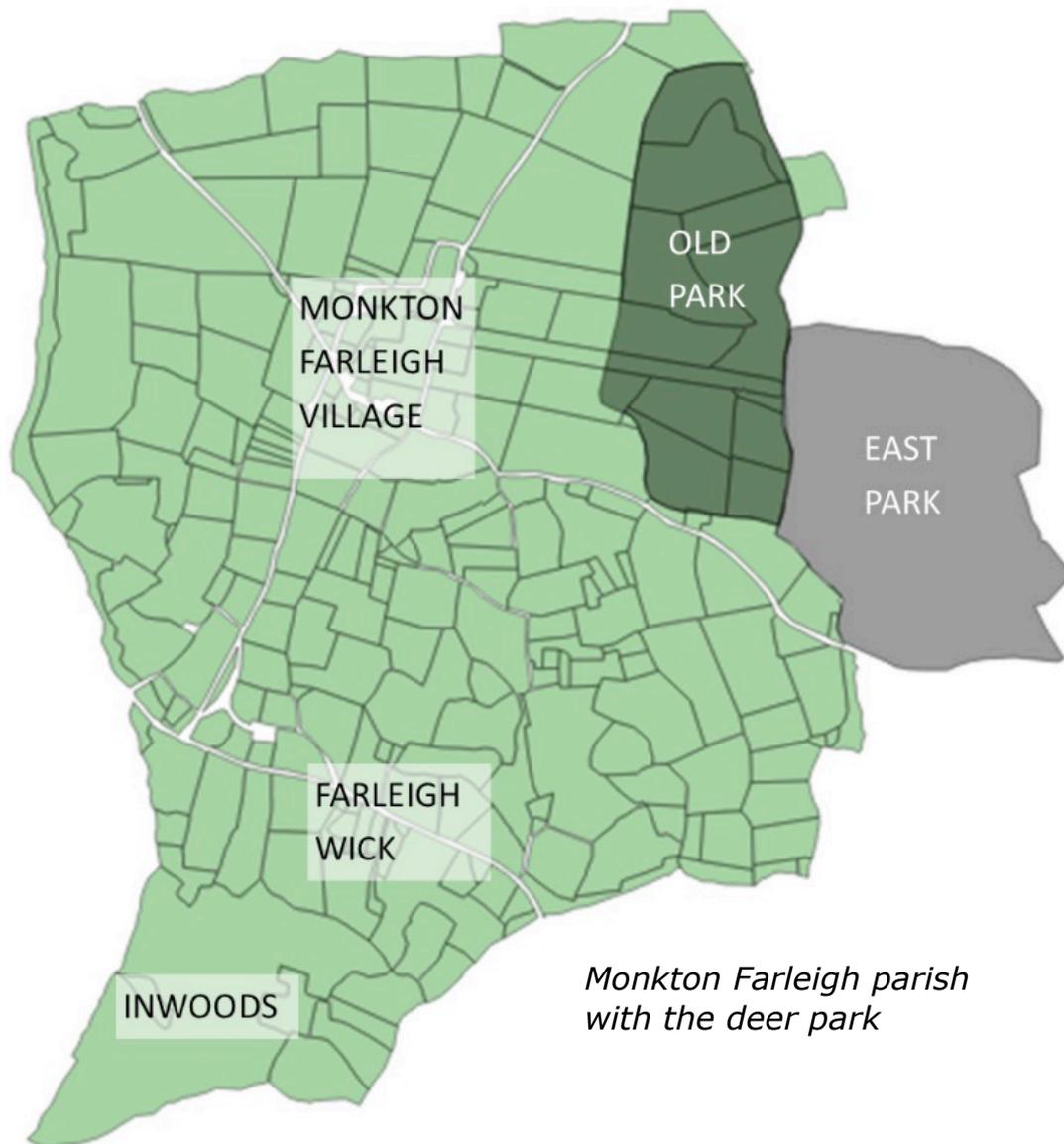


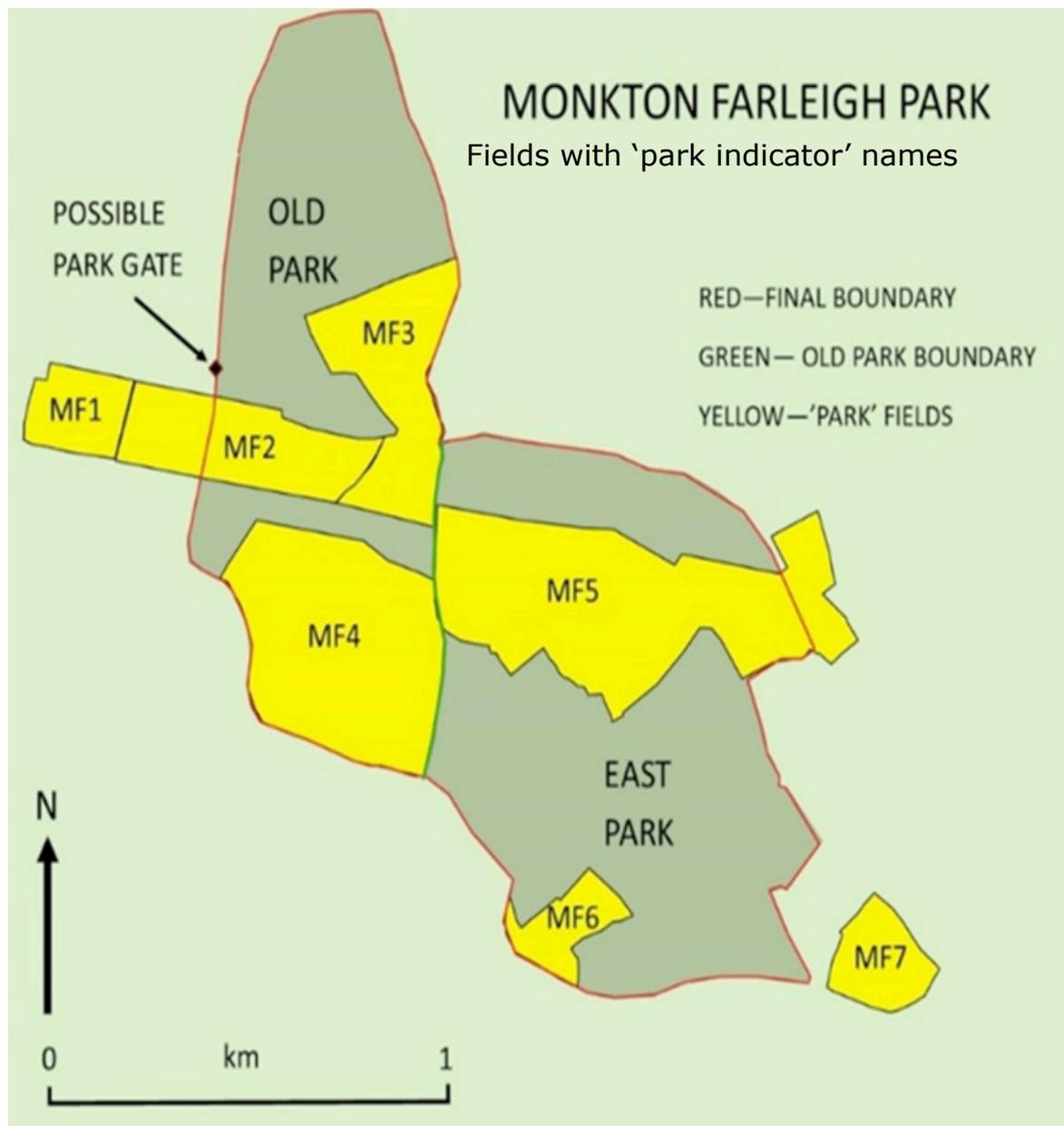
Monkton Farleigh's Medieval Deer Park

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The early park was specifically mentioned as part of the manor of Monkton Farleigh included in the foundation gift of Humphrey de Bohun II to Monkton Farleigh Priory in 1125. This seems to be the only direct reference to the park before 1500. However the presence of 'park indicator' field-names on the Tithe Map of 1846 allows the possible extent of the park to be deduced and its perimeter to be picked out by selectively following field boundaries. This is shown as 'Old Park' in figure 1. What would a Priory do with a deer park? Clerics were not supposed to hunt or keep dogs or birds of prey for hunting, however this rule was interpreted to forbid hunting for pleasure, but allowing hunting for the sake of recreation and health. The Priors could therefore have used the park themselves. An alternative explanation is that in the same way that the de Bohuns retained ownership of the Monkton Farleigh Manorial Court, perhaps they also reserved the right to continue hunting in the park.

The 12th century Old Park appears to have been enlarged to include an endowed manor in South Wraxall to create 'Le Estparke' recorded in a manorial court roll of 1513. The extent of the East Park on the map matches the 212.5 acres (86 hectares) of Priory land recorded in South Wraxall.



Monkton Farleigh Park with 'park' fields from the Tithe Map
Monkton Farleigh's original 75 hectare Old Park has Park Mead (MF1 & MF2), Park Wood (MF3) and Park Furlong (MF4) fields. Park Furlong is recorded in the Court Rolls of 1583. The South Wraxall portion has six Park Hill fields (MF5), possible 'park' field Pye Corner (MF6) and Park End (MF7) which lies outside the park. Park Hill and Pye Corner are recorded in a will of 1724.



The site of a possible park gate lies on earthworks on the western boundary of the Old Park facing towards the village. It was obviously more than a field gateway in 1881 when it was described as 'two large upright stones, facing one another with eyelets in them'. One of these, now reduced to one metre high, is still visible with its eyelet.



A similar pair of posts was described inside the park, a little to the north east, at right angles to the first set, which suggests that the Old Park may have been divided into north and south halves. One of these posts also survives.

The lack of any recorded poaching offences makes it likely that the park was not long-lived. Monkton Farleigh Priory had an inventory taken in 1294 when it was confiscated by the king because the Priory was an 'alien' house derived from a French monastic order. There are no deer recorded among the livestock in the inventory so perhaps hunting had ceased by that time.

If the de Bohun family had continued to use the park then they would have had no need for it after 1331 when they acquired Seend Park which lay between Semington and Seend. This was four times larger than Monkton Farleigh park with a circumference of 2 leagues (6 miles), and was closer to their castle in Trowbridge, so perhaps 1331 can be taken as the last date for hunting in the park.