



After two hundred years the end came for the Clumps when they were deemed dangerous. Local people hope to recreate the avenue and have taken part in planting new groups of saplings.

An avenue of more than a mile running not within a park, but across heath and arable, needed to be dignified by more than a single row of flanking trees if it was to impress

visitors. An apparently French solution was used; on each side at intervals clumps of trees, comprising four beeches around a fir tree were planted. In the 1980s, the last surviving clump had a misshapen fir tree at its centre.

#### *A sylvan setting*

The immediate surrounds of the Gatehouse needed to be improved, too. Isaac cleared away farm buildings, yards and ruins round the Gatehouse in order to set it in *Hall Green*, a lawn of ten acres. The road which ran in front of the Gatehouse was realigned behind a screen of trees. Before this time the road connecting Butley Priory with Woodbridge ran well south of the present road. Stretches of this medieval road can be followed today as a ride, numbered 10, in Tangham Forest. At Folly Cottage it is interrupted by the perimeter fence of the old air-base. Another plantation concealed a second new road on the east side of the site. The result was firstly the Six Ways we see today and secondly, the awkward bend where his second road joined an existing track to Abbey Farm.

Adjacent to Rendlesham Park, the grounds of Ashe Park, previously surveyed

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### Great havoc in Staverton Park

The park is the largest and most visible area of ancient woodland in the Sandlings. Before Isaac Johnson laid out the Clumps, some of Staverton's oaks had been despoiled. In the 18th century the park was part of the estate of Loudham Hall whose owner, Robert Oneby, wrote his will in 1743, ten years before he died. Clearly he expected his heirs to inherit, but should he lack one, his estate was to pass to his brother-in-law, Sir William Chapman, and his heirs. The problem was that neither gentleman produced children who outlived them.

Sir William died in 1785 and asked to be buried in his family vault at Ufford. His effects were auctioned at Loudham Hall. The rightful heir to the estate had to be decided by a judge and special jury at Bury Assizes. Judgement was reported in the *Ipswich Journal* in January 1786, 'The heirs at law of the late Robert Oneby esquire were put into full and quiet possession of the very valuable estate.' Afterwards there was a grand ball to celebrate.



An explanation of the pollarding at different heights which has puzzled Oliver Rackham appears in the *Transactions of the Suffolk Natural History Society* in a report by two botanists who passed through the park the following year and recorded that 'great havoc has been lately made and many fine trees appear shamefully dismembered; the branches of which it seems were cut off and carried away during the time the estate was in litigation.'

A story circulating in *The Oyster* as late as the 1970s echoed these events. It was said that two brothers owned the park and they fell out with each other, despoiling the other's trees by 'nipping out', that is, cutting out the leading branch.

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