

## HISTORICAL NOTES ABOUT THE LAWN & PARISH FIELDS

### 1637

Earliest known map of the site by William Tampon, shows two separate fields or pastures owned or tenanted by John Wilby Junior (the northern part - now The Lawn) and Roger Folser (the southern part - known as Clay Close, later Parish Close).

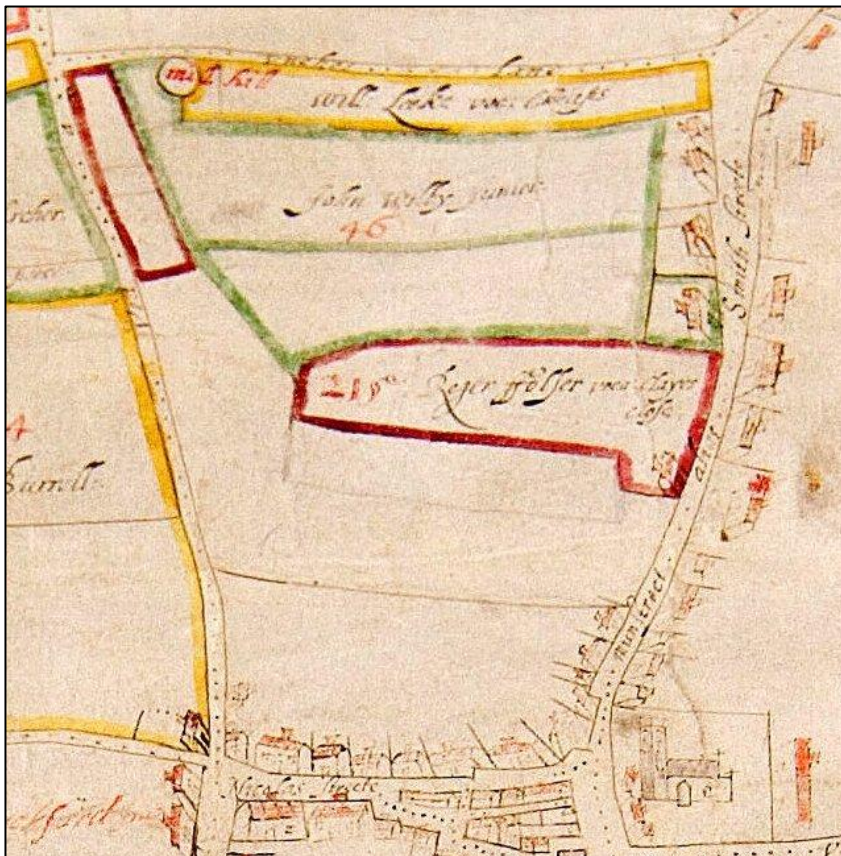


Image courtesy Chris Hoelzer

### 1722

Land recorded as formerly known as Parish Close and containing a large pit – thought to be that next to Mount Street. At that time Mount St (aka Mund St) was the old road from Diss to Norwich.

### 1781 to 1792

The Cedars, a Georgian mansion at Mount Street, Diss, is sold to a Mrs Browne by the executors of James Moore, a baker. He enhances his prospect of The Lawn by constructing an arc of brickwork with railings over the road from his house. The adjacent Manor House is bought by Meadows Taylor, one of a notable Norfolk family of Unitarian dissenters.

**1797**

Faden's map of Norfolk shows the site as indistinguishable from other pieces of farmland. By contrast, parkland is distinctly represented at Roydon and Thelveton.

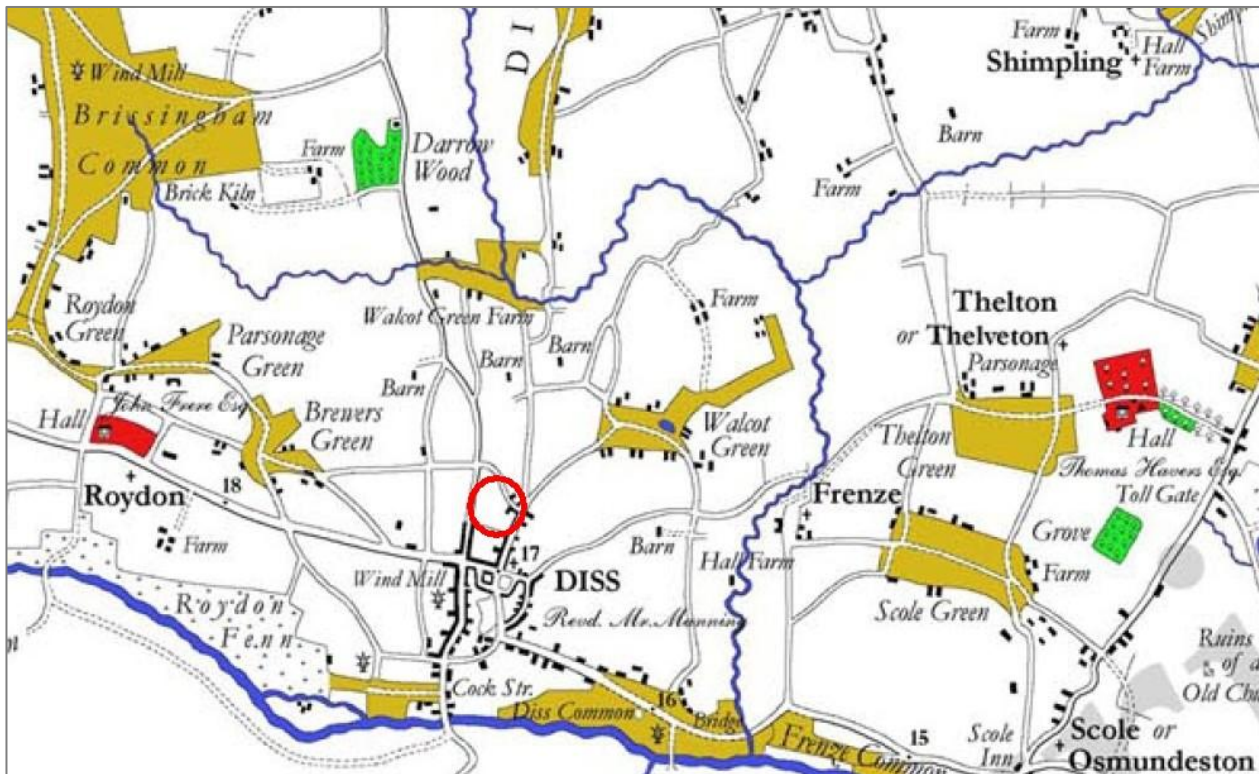


Image courtesy rectified map published in MacNair, A & Williamson, T: *'William Faden and Norfolk's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Landscape'*; Windgather Press, 2010.

**1815**

The Cedars is owned by Harry Browne, perhaps the son of Sarah Browne.

**1826**

Bryant's map of Norfolk shows evidence of emparkment here. A boundary belt encloses two sides. Note that the site has the same cartographic status as parkland at Roydon, Thelveton and other places.



Image courtesy Barringer (ed). 'Bryant's Map of Norfolk', Lark's Press 1998



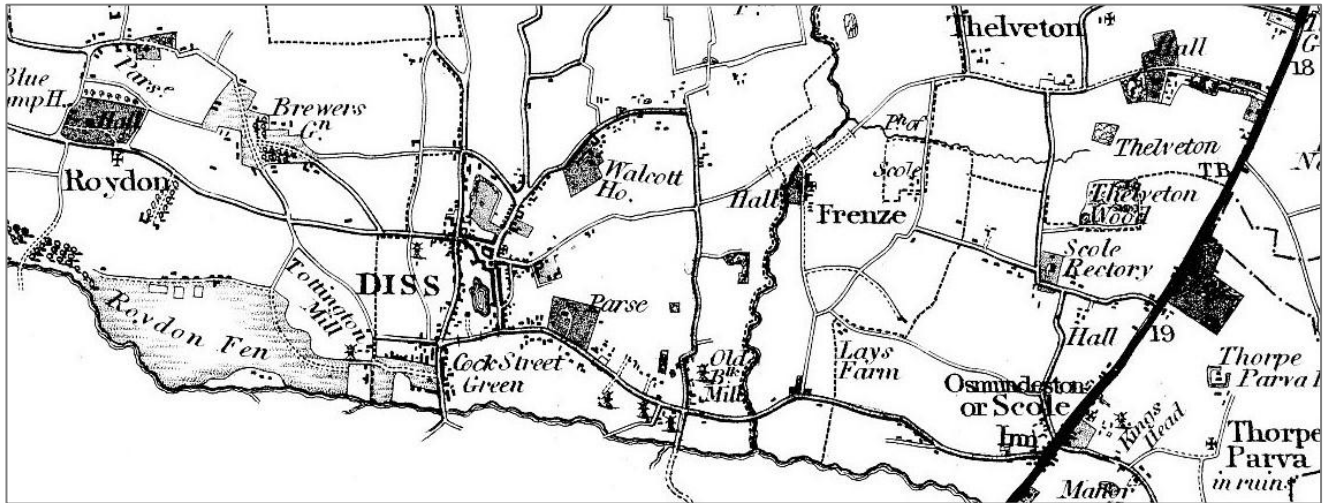


Image courtesy Barringer (ed). 'Bryant's Map of Norfolk', Lark's Press 1998

### 1838

The Cedars and The Lawn is recorded as owned by Harry Browne, as one unit.

### 1840 (circa)

A Tithe Map shows the site as emparked with two clumps of trees and boundary belts on three sides, and a vista splay from The Cedars. There is evidence for a trackway running through the belt, perhaps an amenity walkway.

The land to the south, known as Parish Fields, is marked as being separately owned by Robert Sherriff.



Image courtesy National Archives, Kew, IR 30/23/175

[The Cedars is circled in red]





David Whatley counting 182 growth rings on a recently-felled dead oak in the Boundary Belt, March 2019. This suggests it was planted in 1838, the year of Queen Victoria's coronation.

### 1850

Harry Browne's widow Mary Ann sells The Cedars to Elizabeth Dover. The sale particulars dated 1849 include a plan showing the house, gardens and an adjacent cottage. It is not known who owns The Lawn at this time.

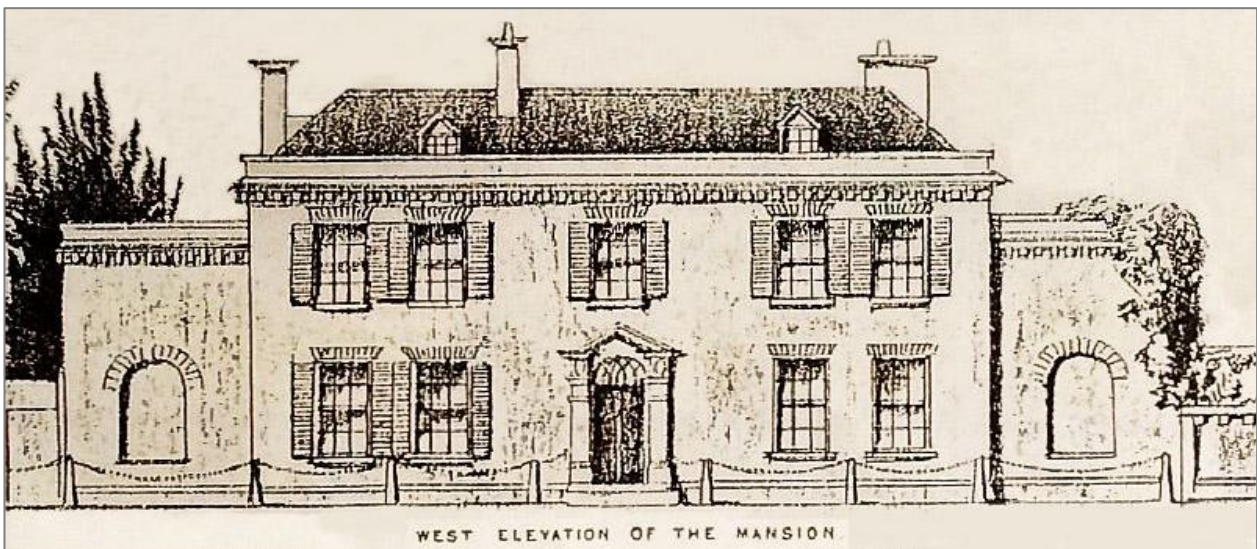


Image courtesy Peter Ellis, Diss.

### 1867

The Cedars is recorded as owned by Rev. Willaim Wenn but occupied by a tenant, the Diss surgeon Dr Thomas Amyot. On the death of the Rev. Wenn, the property is left to his children, who then sold it to Dr. Amyot.

### 1871

A hoard of over three hundred Medieval gold and silver coins of King Edward IV dating from c.1485 found in a pottery vessel in Mount Street. As a result there is a lot of interest in excavating the nearby Parish Fields.

### 1886

First edition OS map shows Parish Fields and The Lawn as mature parkland surrounded by a belt of trees and having two ponds, two clumps of trees and a vista splay from The Cedars.



Image courtesy National Library of  
Scotland - maps.nls.uk

[The Cedars  
circled red]

#### 1890

Mrs Heffill is residing at No.1 Mount Street, and on her death the property is sold Including 'Lot. 3 - A small plantation called Parish Meadows'. This is likely to refer to the land area south of The Lawn. The Lawn itself is bought by Francis Taylor MP for £360, and leased to Walter Burroughs.

#### 1895

Dr Amyot dies, and The Cedars is sold in the following year to surgeon Frederick Edmund Hubbard, who was already in residence.

#### 1902

Hubbard's widow leases The Cedars to Henry George Dickman.

#### 1904

Mrs Hubbard sells The Cedars to Francis Taylor MP, so The Cedars and The Lawn are back in single ownership. The Lawn now forms part of the pasture for Brewery Farm owned by the Taylor family, and it is leased to local farmer Clement Gaze who rears Red Poll cattle.

#### 1939-'45

Local residents dig temporary Victory Gardens on bordering parts of The Lawn.

#### 1946

An RAF aerial photo of the site shows many mature trees and intact boundary belts.





Image courtesy Norfolk eMap Explorer - [historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/](http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/)

## 1964

John Betjeman (later Poet Laureate) visits Diss to make a film called 'Something about Diss'. He remarks on The Lawn.

*"On the other side of Mount Street do you see that bit of country? ... A bit of country coming right into the town - a little park".*

It is part of his vision of what a country town should be, in the face of the threat from London overspill which is irrevocably altering the character of small East Anglian towns such as Brandon, Haverhill and Thetford.



Image courtesy Youtube - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8Dmhn9wTxJM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8Dmhn9wTxJM)

### 1970s

Diss Youth Centre is built at the south-western corner of the Parish Fields by Diss Urban District Council.

By this time the integrity of the northern and western parts of the boundary belt has become compromised by tree felling and piecemeal encroachments of gardens. Only the southern and south-western parts of the belt remain.

### 1980s

Commander Patrick Taylor dies and The Lawn area is sold to farmer Ben Gaze. The site is used for grazing cattle.

The Parish Fields area is also sold - one part to Diss Town Council (for the Health Centre) and the other to South Norfolk Council (for the Youth Centre, two car parks and (later) the Citizens Advice Bureau).

### 1997

The Lawn is recorded in the Norfolk Gardens Survey Report, commissioned by English Heritage. It is recorded as '*The only remaining known example of detached parkland style landscape in a Norfolk town*'.

### 1998

'The Cedars and The Lawn' is designated as Norfolk Historic Environment Record site 33463, '*The only example of a detached landscape park within a town in Norfolk*'.

### 2019

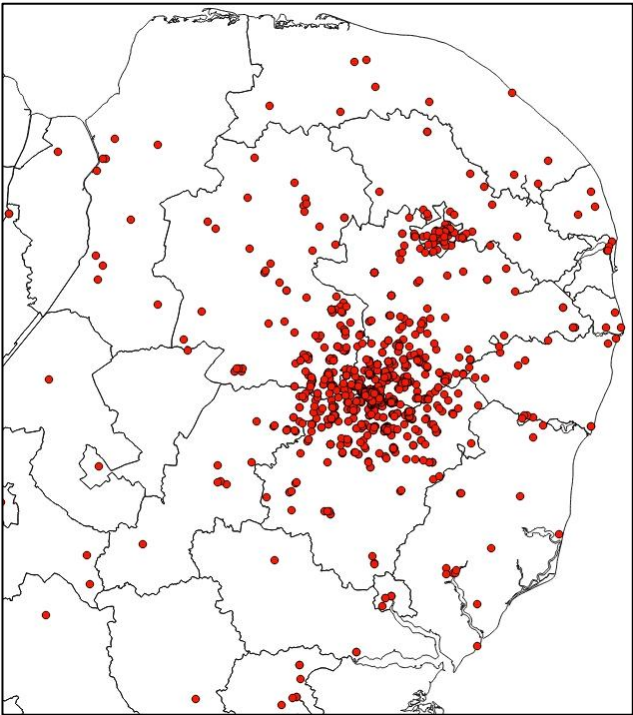
A property development company, Scott Properties Ltd, proposes to build 24 bungalows and associated garages on western half of the site, with the remainder given over to public access of some kind.

The Parish Fields Friends group is formed to oppose this threat. A petition campaign is started, both on paper and online.

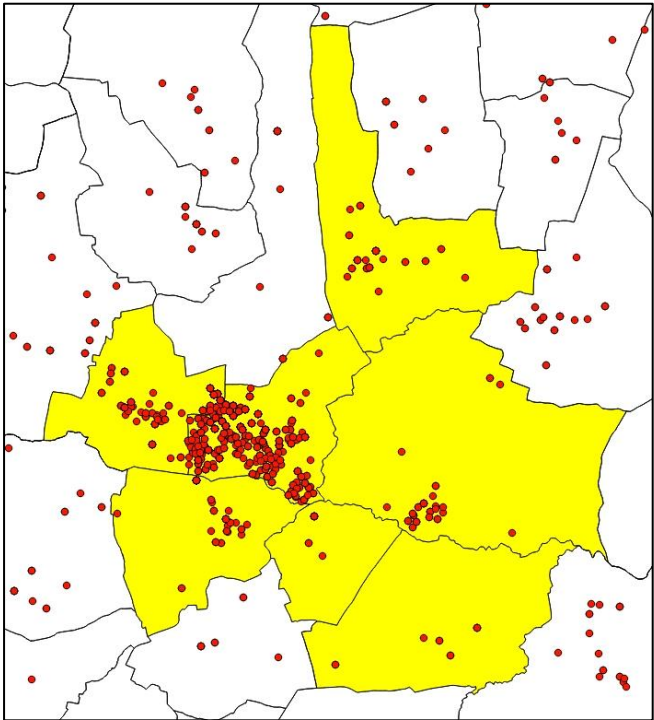
### 2020

On February 19<sup>th</sup> Diss Town Council votes that <*The Town Council will not support the development of this site and the resultant loss of any of this historic important open space*>.

By the end of February the petition campaign has gathered over 2600 signatures, the majority local.



Petition signatures in East Anglia plotted on GIS.



Petition signatures plotted on GIS against Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan parishes.

---

Information compiled by Chris Aldhous, Jim Bootman and Tim Holt-Wilson, 2020