CAKE AND COCKHORSE

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2011 **£2.50**

Volume 18 Number 6

ISSN 6522-0823

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 269581
Website: www.banburyhistory.org

Details of the Society's activities and publications will be found on the back cover.

Cake and Cockhorse

The magazine of the Banbury Historical Society, issued three times a year.

Volume 18 **Summer 2011** **Number Six**

This issue sees the conclusion of the late Harry Thorpe's "masterly study" of Wormleighton, first published in 1965 in the *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*. To this we add a reprint by another sadly just deceased author, Ross Gilkes, who over fifty years contributed so much to these pages (page 203). 'Banbury Castle' was his first, appearing in 1960, so will have been read by so few of our present members that a second appearance seems well justified. Yet another reprint is the Friends of the Bodleian report on the acquisition of the important archive of Banbury printers Cheney & Sons.

This does not imply a shortage of material for future issues. Our second local history prize attracted a good number of worthwhile entries, posing the familiar problem of just which should receive the prize, as all had potential. As before, we decided it should be shared, between the Eydon Historical Research Group (for a description of their Photo Archive and some of its consequences) and Gareth Richard for his survey of 'Hook Norton: Railway and Ironstone Industry'. There are other submissions that we hope will turn into articles here or elsewhere. In addition we now have several pieces completed or in advanced preparation, so the next few issues, at least, should provide plenty of good reading.

* * * * *

A year ago members received their copy of *Turnpike Roads to Banbury*. Embarrassingly, we find that we printed too few, and it is now almost out of print. We would be most grateful to any members no longer wishing to retain their copy if they would donate it back, either by hand at the Museum or by post.

Cover: Wormleighton House in 1588, from the Sheldon tapestry (page 175)

THE ARCHIVE OF CHENEY & SONS

As noted briefly in our last issue, the Bodleian Library has been able to acquire the archive of Banbury printers Cheney & Sons. The following is reprinted, by kind permission, from the current Annual Report of the Friends of the Bodleian <www.bodleian.ox.uk/bodley/friends>.

Cheney & Sons were printers of Banbury in Oxfordshire from 1767 to 2001 (though by then they had ceased being an independent family firm for a few years). They were essentially jobbing printers, who also published books under their own imprint. The archive acquired from Offa's Dyke Books is a remarkable witness to their ability to adapt to the changing technology of the industry and the changing society both within and beyond Banbury.

The archive contains: chapbooks printed by Cheney and fellow Banbury printer Rusher [see *The Banbury Chapbooks*, by Leo De Freitas, Banbury H.S. vol. 28, 2004]; a vast range of jobbing work including advertisements, posters and forms, which reflect day-to-day life in and around Banbury from the 1760s to the 1920s; 45 broadside ballads, moralities, murders and executions – the majority of which are of exceptional rarity and interest, with over half apparently unrecorded. Material produced by nine other Banbury printers and seventeen others from the local area is also present.

The real distinction of the archive is its representation of the activities of Banbury printers at a time when the town was the hub of a network of chapmen distributing popular literature around the country as well as its comprehensive coverage of the commercial work of Cheney & Sons. The archive forms a single source which reveals the breadth, depth, and evolution of a good provincial printer's work within a sizeable town not far from Oxford. The importance of Banbury in the printing and publishing trade since the late eighteenth century is well known and the availability of the archive facilitates further research in this area allowing an imaginative focus for local people.

The Friends contributed for this purchase £10,000 from the Accumulated Fund. Further donations came from the V&A Purchase Grant (£25,000), the William Delafield Charitable Trust (£5,000), J.H.K. Brunner Charitable Trust (£1,000), other charities (mainly from Banbury [including Banbury Historical Society]) and private donors.

WORMLEIGHTON:

The changing fortunes of a Warwickshire parish. Part Two

The late Harry Thorpe, F.S.A.

First published in *The Transactions of the Birmingham & Warwickshire Archaeological Society.*

Part One of this article is published in the preceding issue of 'Cake & Cockhorse', vol. 18, no. 5. It describes the regional setting of the parish, its boundaries as in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 956, the Domesday Survey, and post-Conquest prosperity, to depopulation in the fifteenth century. The story continues with the advent of the Spencer family.

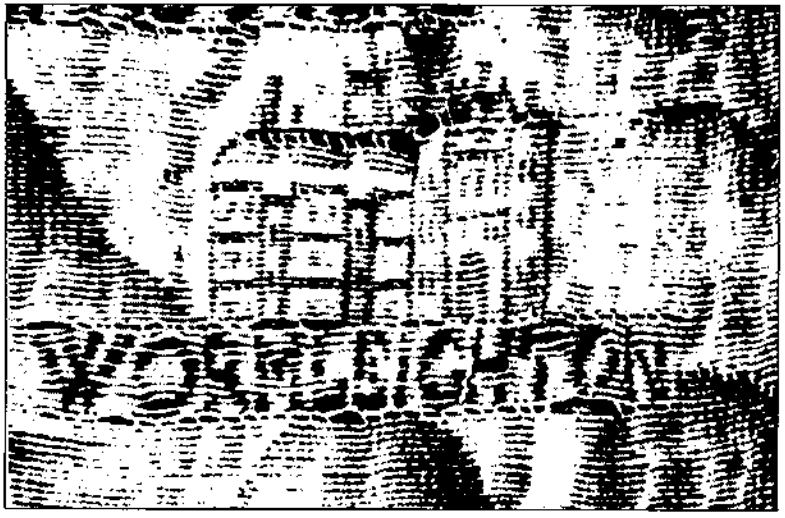
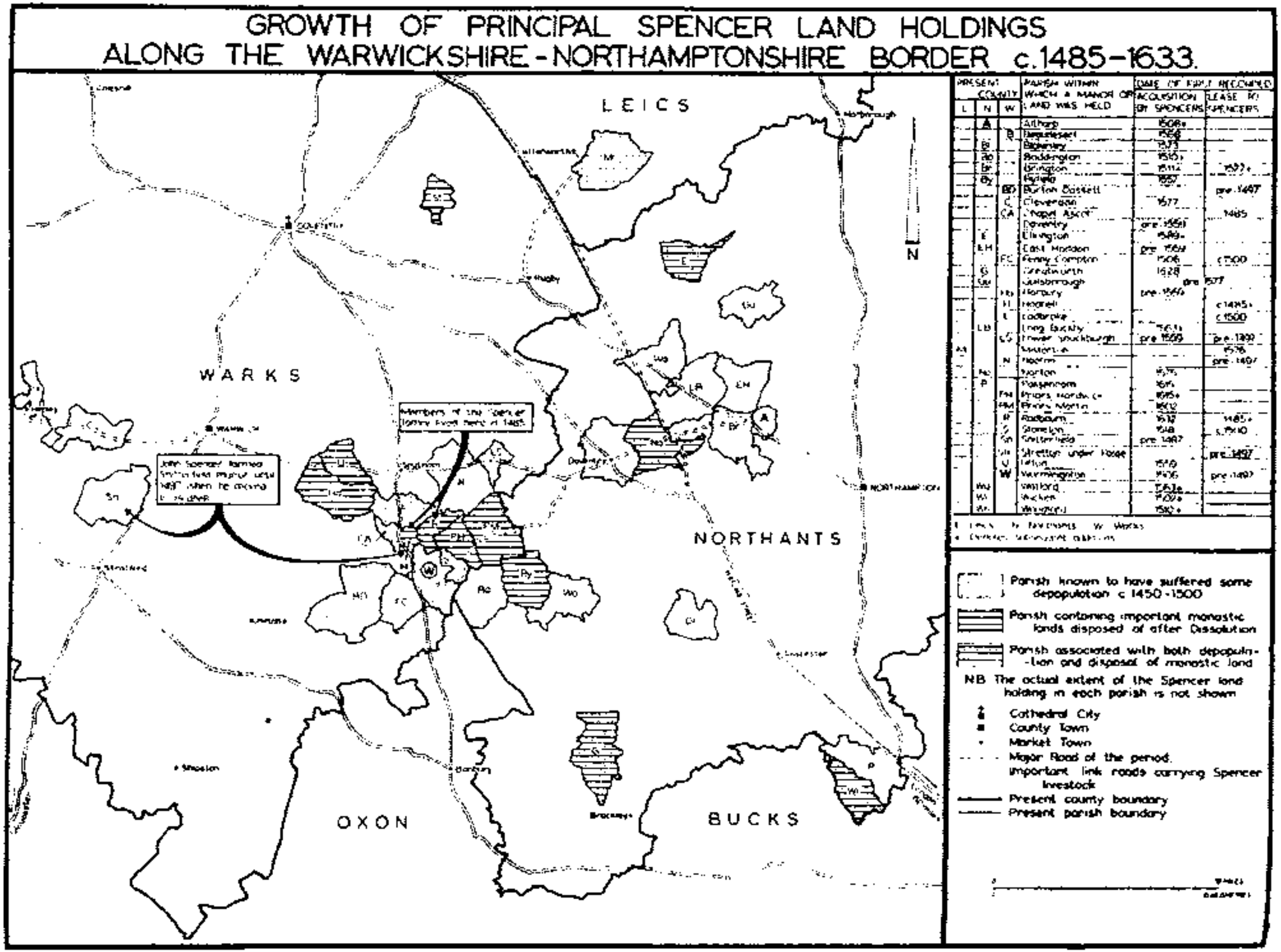


Plate 8: *Wormleighton House from the Sheldon tapestry bearing the date 1588. The fine Tudor building and strong gatehouse are depicted from the south with the square tower of the church rising behind. The original gatehouse was clearly more impressive than that shown in Fig. 5.*

REHABILITATION AND THE RISE OF THE SPENCERS

The Spencers first come prominently to our notice in the latter part of the fifteenth century, when, as prosperous Warwickshire farmers, they began to concentrate on the raising of stock on land that they had purchased or leased, particularly within parishes that had already suffered depopulation. For example, in 1485 we find John Spencer, who lived in Hodnell, leasing for a period of one hundred years all William Catesby's lands in Hodnell and Chapel Ascote, with some additional land in Radbourn.[5] As

[5] Early Spencer Papers, Box 8, in the muniment room at Althorp, Northamptonshire.



PRESENT COUNTY L	N	W	PARISH WITHIN WHICH A MANOR OR LAND WAS HELD	DATE OF FIRST RECORDED ACQUISITION BY SPENCERS	LEASE TO SPENCERS
	A		Althorp	1508+	
		B	[illegible]	1568	
	Bl		[illegible]	1573	
	Bo		Boddington	1515+	
	Br		Brington	1511+	1597+
	By		Byfield	1557	
		BD	Burton Dassett		pre 1497
		C	Claverdon	1577	
		CA	Chapel Ascot		1485
			Daventry	pre 1551	
	E		Elkington	1589+	
	EH		East Haddon	pre 1569	
		FC	Fenny Compton	1506	c1500
	G		Greatworth	1628	
	Gu		Guilsborough	pre 1577	
		Hb	Harbury	pre 1566	
		H	Hodnell		c1485+
		L	Ladbroke		c1500
	LB		Long Buckby	1563+	
		LS	Lower Shuckburgh	pre 1569	pre 1499
M			Misterton		1576
		N	Napton		pre 1497
	No		Norton	1575	
	P		Passenham	1615	
		PH	Priors Hardwick	1615+	
		PM	Priors Marston	1602	
		R	Radbourn	1612	1485+
		S	Stoneton	1518	c1500
		Sn	Snitterfield	pre 1497	
		St	Stretton under Fosse		pre 1497
		U	Ufton	1579	
		W	Wormleighton	1506	pre 1497
	Wd		Watford	1561+	
	Wi		Wicken	1609+	
	Wo		Woodford	1582+	

L Leics N Northants W Warks
+ Denotes subsequent additions

Fig. 4

a result of depopulation, great blocks of abandoned arable land had been put down to pasture in the area, and even today one can recognize these in distinctive local names of late origin such as Wills Pastures[1] (the name of a small extra-parochial district of 149 acres, between Wormleighton and Hodnell). The families, Catesby and Spencer, were clearly on very friendly terms, entered into many transactions[2] together, and were later to be related by marriage. For example, it is interesting to find in an undated letter,[3] thought to be pre-1486, that John Catesby of Althorp in Northamptonshire, requests 'Master Spenser of Hodynhill' to sell him 300 wether hoggerels[4] to help stock his farm. At the time of his death in 1497 John Spencer had extensive leases[5] of land in Napton, Lower Shuckburgh, Burton Dassett, Ascote, and Wormleighton, all close to Hodnell, as well as more distant holdings in Stretton-under-Fosse east of Coventry (Fig. 4). Apart from Napton all these parishes appear to have been affected by depopulation in some degree before 1497 or very soon after, though John Spencer does not seem to have been responsible. Instead he was probably very quick to take advantage of any leases being offered on enclosed tracts of former open field now put down to grass. From the list of his holdings given in the *Inquisition Post Mortem*[6] it is clear that he usually held messuages as well as land in the respective parishes, though many of the homesteads had probably already been abandoned. In Burton Dassett he held a virgate of land from Sir Edward Belknap in 1497, but we know that Belknap proceeded to enclose 360 acres of arable land here in 1499 and destroyed 12 messuages, later putting down a further 240 acres to grass.[7] The entry for Chapel Ascote refers simply to 20 virgates of land without reference to messuages, which had probably already been removed. Mention has already been made of the holding in Wormleighton of a messuage and 3½ virgates in socage.

John Spencer of Hodnell had a brother, William, who lived in Radbourn and probably farmed in a similar way to his brother. William's son, who was also called John (henceforth to be called John Spencer I to distinguish him from his uncle) was destined to set in motion a great advance in the fortunes and social standing of the family. Before his uncle's death in 1497 John Spencer I was farming the manor of Snitterfield on the edge of the Avon valley west of Warwick (Fig. 4), and about this time he married Isabel, daughter and coheiress of Walter Graunt of Snitterfield,[8] which no doubt brought important additions to his estate. On the death of his uncle he moved to Hodnell to look after the extensive grazing business until his cousin, Thomas, came of age. His female cousin, Joan, had married William Cope, Cofferer to the king, who was granted the manors of Wormleighton and Fenny Compton in 1498, so John Spencer I quickly acquired powerful friends and relatives, and was in a good position to obtain grazing lands of his own in the vicinity, first by lease and

[1] *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, p. 149. Wills Pastures may have been identical with Hodnell Pastures first mentioned in 1603. A family by the name of Willes lived in the area during the early seventeenth century.

[2] For example, the will of William Catesby, Esquire, drawn up 25 August 1485, showed that John Spencer was then owed sixty pounds and possibly more. See W. Dugdale (1656), p. 586.

[3] Early Spencer Papers, Box 8.

[4] A wether was a castrated ram; a hoggerel was a sheep between one and two years old.

[5] *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, Henry VII, ii, item 245.

[6] Ibid., pp. 160–1.

[7] See W. Dugdale, (1656), p. 409; also M. W. Beresford. *The Deserted Villages of Warwickshire*. p. 88.

[8] F. L. Colville. *Worthies of Warwickshire* (1869), p. 706; also J. H. Round, op. cit., p. 187.

later by purchase. Thus in the early years of the sixteenth century we find him renting land in Hodnell from the Priory of Nuneaton, the manors and pastures of Wormleighton and Fenny Compton from William Cope, the manors of Ladbroke and Radbourn from Sir John Rysley, a pasture in Stoneton from Sir Edward Raleigh and other persons, and the rectory of Radbourn from the Priory of Henwood[1] (Fig. 4).

With the quick profits derived from intensive grazing on these rented pastures John Spencer I soon acquired sufficient capital to enable him to purchase estates outright, commencing with the manor of Wormleighton and another in Fenny Compton bought from William Cope for no less than £1,900 in 1506.[2] In the latter part of the fifteenth century depopulation had also been proceeding vigorously in the county of Northampton that adjoined Warwickshire to the east, and opportunities for John Spencer I to acquire lands there soon arose. Moreover, after his death in 1522, there were two sons not only to establish a strong male line, but also to carry on the process of acquiring more land. The gradual acquisition of local holdings by purchase or lease up to 1633 is summarized in Fig. 4.[3] From this it will be seen that a great block of land suitable for pasture and hay was acquired by the Spencers along the borders of Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, and, to a less extent, Leicestershire. Geologically the area included large expanses of impervious clays of the Lower and Upper Lias, producing long succulent grass, with shorter, drier pasture on the uplands of the Middle Lias Marlstone, Northampton Sands, and Oolitic Limestone. Clearly the opportunities for transhumance between parishes of contrasting physical and economic character were great. In 1508 John Spencer I purchased the manor of Althorp for £800 from the Catesbys.[4] This estate had been depopulated some time previously, and it would seem that although the Spencers never had either the brutality or the opportunity[5] to engage in wholesale depopulation themselves, they did not hesitate to turn to profitable use the fat pastures and former arable lands of abandoned settlements. Althorp was eventually to become not only a centre from which surrounding estates were administered, but also the great seat of the family. Wormleighton, too, was now to become the nodal point for vast pastures spanning the Warwickshire–Northamptonshire border, and a second family seat. As Fig. 4 shows, communications between Wormleighton and Althorp were good, and both places were near important roads leading to London. Stoneton, which was once part of the parish of Wormleighton though it is separate today, was also purchased in 1518; despite the fact that it was in Northamptonshire until 1896, it was from now on considered as a joint manor with Wormleighton, and the two are still administered partly as a joint estate today.

The severe depopulations to which we have referred above could not continue for

[1] M. E. Finch, op. cit., p. 39. See especially Spencer MSS. 1698 and 1699.

[2] Spencer MS. 1706. A supplication of *c.* 1519 by John Spencer I to Henry VIII states that £2,000 was paid for Wormleighton alone (*vide* I. S. Leadam, ii. 485).

[3] I am indebted to Professor M. W. Beresford and Mr. J. G. Hurst of the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group for their help in checking depopulated settlements in the Northamptonshire portion of Fig. 4.

[4] F. L. Colville, *Worthies of Warwickshire* (1869), p. 707.

[5] About 1502 John Spencer I may have enclosed part of the manor of Wicken in Northamptonshire and evicted people. See I. S. Leadam, i. 285.

over half a century without public outcry both in Warwickshire and elsewhere. The complaints of John Rous in 1459 probably had little immediate effect, but by the end of the century the State was compelled to take notice of the evils of depopulating enclosure and introduce legislation against it. Thus the general Statute of 1489 aimed at limiting depopulation, while the Act of 1515 forbade the conversion of tilled land to pasture.[1] A Bill connected with the latter complained that 'many merchant adventurers, clothmakers, goldsmiths, butchers, tanners and other artificers and unreasonable and covetous persons do encroach many more farms than they are able to occupy'.[2] The reference to butcher-graziers and tanners is particularly significant. Despite these moves to restrain depopulators little seems to have been achieved, with the result that in 1517 Cardinal Wolsey set up his famous Commissions of Inquiry. The greater part of the findings of the Commissions was printed in 1897 by Leadam,[3] under the title of *The Domesday of Inclosures*, and one can learn a great deal from these about the sequence of events in Wormleighton following the depopulation by William Cope in 1499. When Wolsey's Commissioners inquired into the facts of the depopulation at Wormleighton, William Cope[4] had been dead for four years so John Spencer I appears to have had some difficulty in convincing the Exchequer that he was not directly responsible. In proclaiming his innocence he disclosed many interesting details about changes that had been wrought on the landscape of Wormleighton since he purchased the manor in 1506, and these we will now examine.

John Spencer I, who by now had held the office of High Sheriff of Northamptonshire in 1511 and was to be knighted by Henry VIII soon after 1518, not only denied responsibility for the depopulation but in a letter of 1519[5] claimed to have partly rebuilt the settlement and to have made many improvements. The new settlement had been established on the hill-top adjoining the church, the site being much drier than the earlier one on the clays in the valley. Yet there was no difficulty in obtaining water, for wells could easily be sunk into the sand and gravel capping. By 1519 he claimed to have built himself a new manor-house on the hill, as well as four houses for his servants, and the total population in 1519 was stated to be only twenty less than had occupied the settlement before its depopulation in 1499. Later the number of houses appears to have been further increased to six,[6] and finally to twelve[7] by 1522 when Sir John I died, the total population then being only a little less than sixty. There is abundant evidence on the ground, in manuscripts, and on estate maps (e.g. that of 1634, Fig. 6) to show that Sir John Spencer I had indeed built a new settlement of some size, perhaps almost an early 'model village', on the hill.[8] The very range of his grazing activities required that he had shepherds, cowherds, drovers, and general labourers around him, as well as great barns for the storage of wool and

[1] For an example of both the Statute of 1489 and the Act of 1515 see M. W. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, pp. 104–6; also I. S. Leadam, i. 6–14.

[2] *Calendar of Letters and Papers of Henry VII* (eds. S. R. Gairdner and J. S. Brewer), iv (iii), no. 5750. For ease in reading punctuation has been added to the above quotation.

[3] Op. cit.

[4] William Cope died in 1513 (*vide* I. S. Leadam ii. 637, footnote).

[5] Ibid. ii. 483–7. Earl Spencer MS. of *c.* 1519. The original document is to be found in Earl Spencer Papers, Box 8, folder 15, at Althorp.

[6] Public Record Office, *Miscellanea of the Exchequer*, E 164/10/7.

[7] I. S. Leadam, ii. 637–8.

[8] Ibid. ii. 487–9, Earl Spencer MS. of *c.* 1522.

fodder. Until about 1516 John Spencer I continued to live in his uncle's house at Hodnell until his cousin came of age.[1] After that he may have continued to live there for a while, or else moved temporarily into what he describes as the 'sory thached hows' which is presumably a reference to the dilapidated moated manor-house in the valley.[2] In the meantime he was engaged in building a fine red-brick house on the hill that was probably begun in 1516 and completed by 1519.[3] It is interesting to find that John Spencer I had been given licence to castellate his manors of Althorp and Wormleighton in November 1512, though this does not appear to have been carried out until later.[4] The northern portion of this fine house still stands today and some idea of its original appearance may be gained from Plate 8 which shows Wormleighton manor-house, looking from the south, with the square-towered church behind, from the famous Sheldon tapestry map[5] of Warwickshire dated *c.* 1588. From this it will be seen that the house was a large Tudor building with a strong stone gatehouse and probably with embattled parapets. The prospect of 1588 may be compared with the etchings (Fig. 5) showing the remains of the manor-house and the considerably modified gatehouse in 1877.[6] The latter can be identified easily in the top left portion of the modern aerial photograph (Plate 7). John Spencer I also pleaded that he had spent a large sum of money in repairing the church 'whiche he found greatly in decay'. From the present architectural features of the church this does not appear to have involved any rebuilding, but rather a general renovation. He had also bought a 'Crosse, Bookes, Coope, Vestementes, Chalisis, and Sensers', and had organized regular choral services, whereas even before the depopulation the congregation 'were so poore and lyvd so poorely that they had no bookes to syng servis on in the Churche'. Finally, he emphasized that whereas the community had been served in the past by only a single priest, he now intended to have two or three, though whether he really did so is doubtful.

Away from the newly established settlement on the flat hill-top the former landscape of open field had given place to great enclosures, bounded by hedges and ditches, within which large flocks of sheep, smaller herds of cattle, and occasional groups of horses[7] grazed on the grassy corrugations of ancient ridge and furrow. The presence of new banks and ditches on depopulated sites was frequently mentioned by contemporary writers, and it is clear that not only were abandoned buildings,

[1] I. S. Leadam, ii, 485–6.

[2] A very detailed description of the old moated farmstead in 1322 is given in Early Spencer Papers, Box 8, folder 17, terrier 3.

[3] It is intriguing to find that in 1504 John Spencer I had undertaken in first leasing the manor of Wormleighton from William Cope 'within 12 years to build upon the premises as good a mansion as the said William has of late built in a Quadrant within the lordship of Hampton, co. Oxon.'. See Spencer MSS. 1698 and 1699.

[4] *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, i. pt. 1, item 1494, sect. 28, p. 684.

[5] This remarkable tapestry map, size 18 ft. 8 in. × 14 ft. 5 in., covering the county of Warwick, makes very early use of actual prospects as the cartographic symbol for places. Although the map bears the date 1588 and the incorporated topographic data agrees with that period, the tapestry may be a somewhat later copy of an original. For further information see P. D. A. Harvey and H. Thorpe, *The Printed Maps of Warwickshire 1576–1900* (1959), p. 5; also J. Humphreys, 'Elizabethan Sheldon Tapestries', *Archaeologia*, lxxiv (1923–4), 181–202; E. A. B. Barnard and A. J. B. Wace, 'The Sheldon Tapestry Weavers and their Work', *Archaeologia*, lxxviii (1928), 155–314.

[6] The etchings appeared in W. Niven, *Illustrations of Old Warwickshire Houses* (1878), plate 31 facing p. 32.

[7] A manuscript in Early Spencer Papers, Box 11, refers to sheep, bullocks, and colts received by John Spencer in 1515–16.

* Plate 8, the tapestry illustration referred to above, is reproduced on page 175.

In fn. 3, 'Hampton' is probably a misreading of Hanwell. See note at the end of Part One.

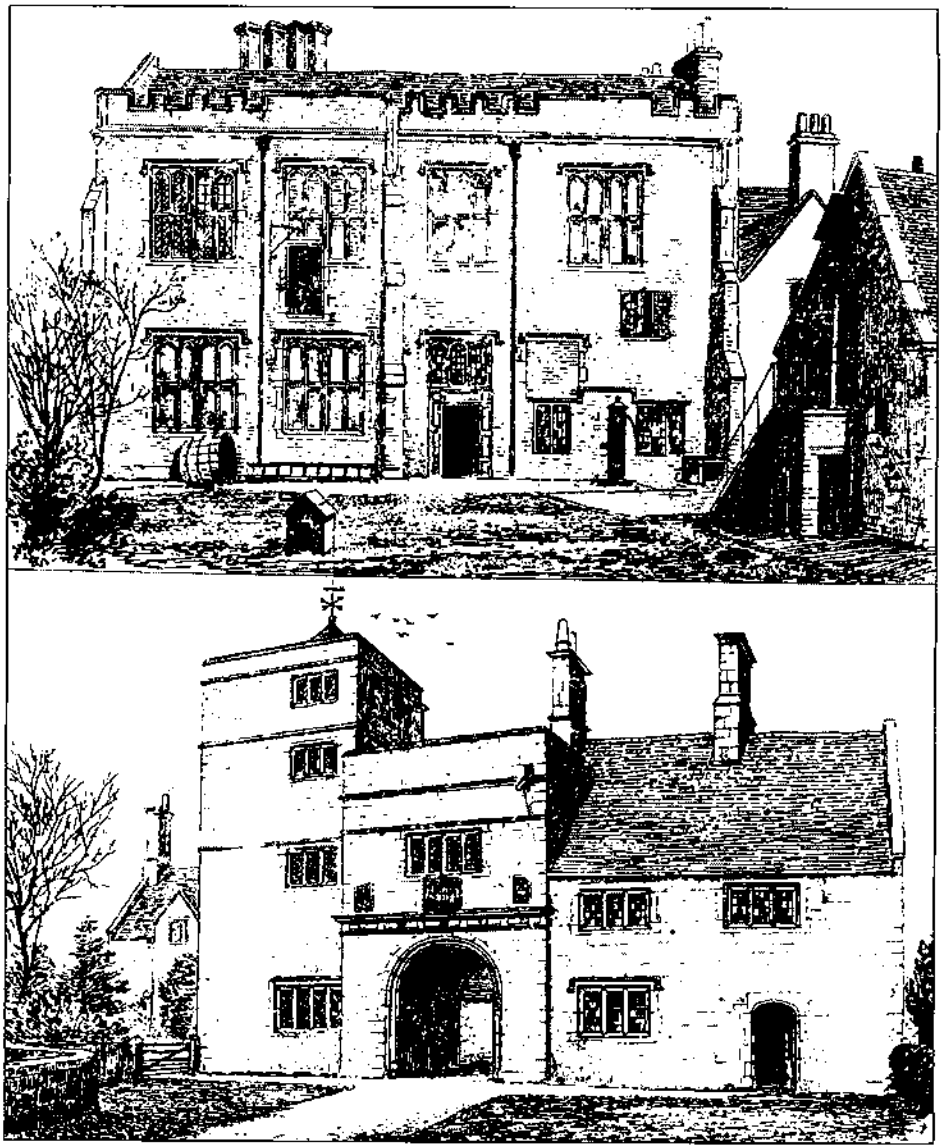
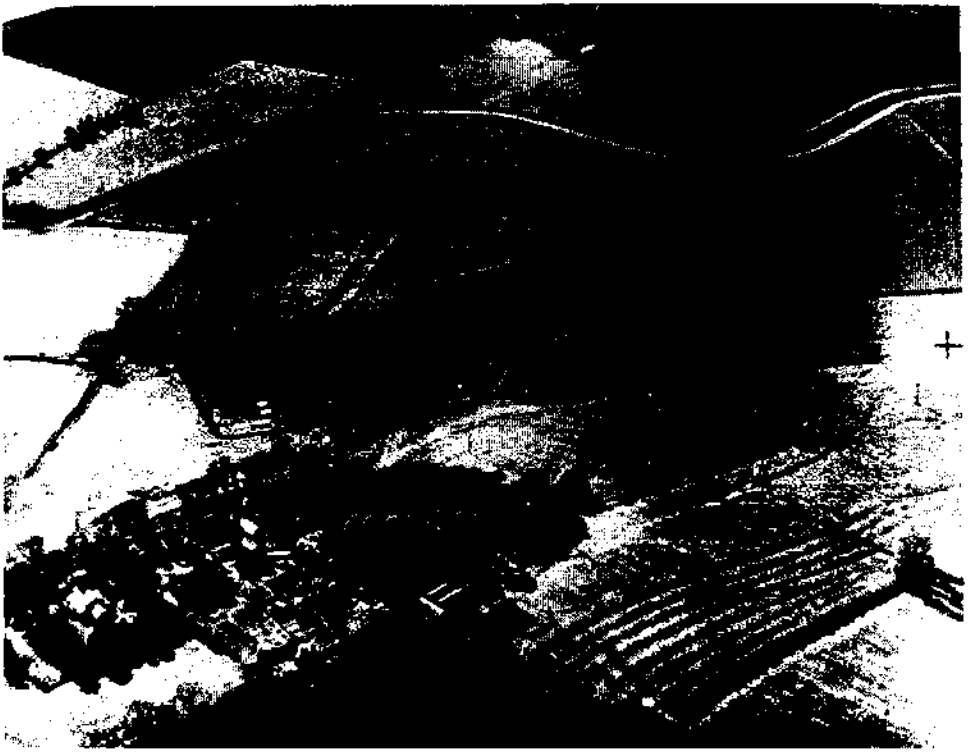


Fig. 5 . From W. Niven: *Illustrations of Old Warwickshire Houses*, 1878. These drawings of the north side of Wormleighton House made in 1877 show: *Below* – the remains of the two-storied stone-built gatehouse, bearing the date 1613 on the two shields; *above* – the principal remnant of the fine red-brick Tudor mansion now used as a farmstead with a barn hoist clumsily set in the wall. Water for the pump in the yard was derived from glacial sands and gravels capping the hill.

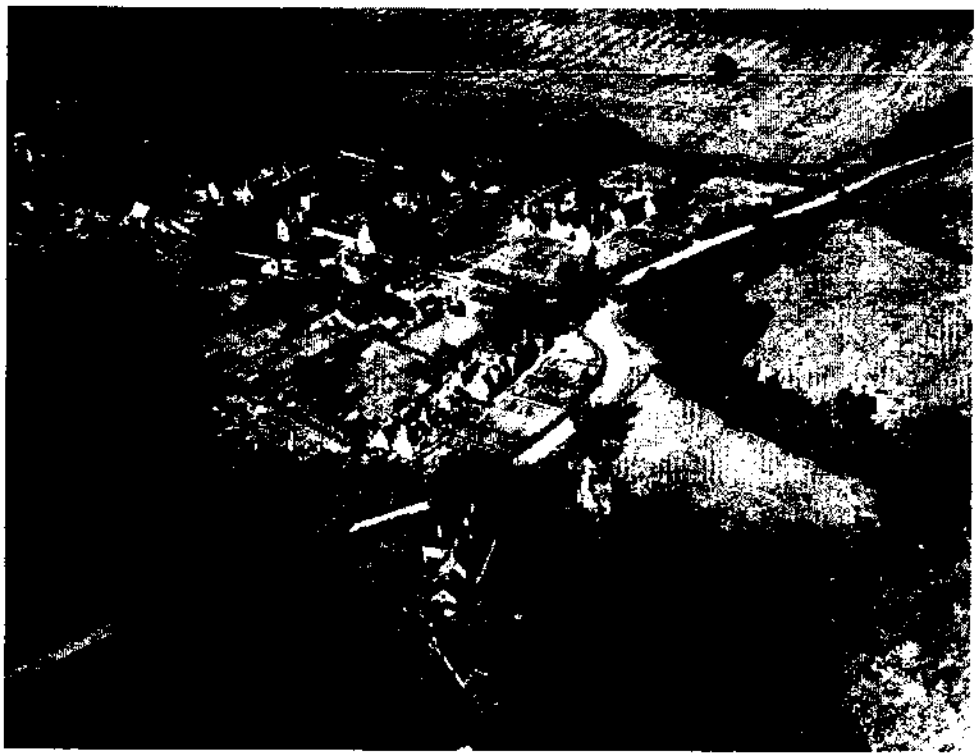
Plate 6



Dr. J. K. St. Joseph *Crown Copyright Reserved*

Aerial photograph looking north-west showing the old church of Wormleighton and a cluster of cottages on the hill-top (bottom left); earthworks of the deserted medieval village and rectangular moated homestead near the canal; outlines of a secondary cluster of deserted dwellings on the hill flank below the church; a great square fish pond with four small fish-breeding tanks (now drained); old water channels leading from the large fish pond into the valley below; remains of the great double hedgerows set up soon after 1499; ridge-and-furrow patterns of former arable land-use in the fields around the past and present settlements.

Plate 7



Dr. J. K. St. Joseph *Crown Copyright Reserved*

Aerial photograph of the modern estate village of Wormleighton looking north-east and showing the T-pattern of roads flanked by the remnants of the village green; the orderly rows of cottages with their large gardens; farmsteads with their out-buildings; the old gatehouse with the remains of the manor house beyond; the church with its square tower on the extreme left of the photograph; old ridge-and-furrow patterns of former arable land-use beyond the great hedges that sharply define the rectangular limits of the village.

gardens, and closes pressed into use for the penning of stock but a rectilinear grid of new closes grew up around or alongside them. Before 1491 Rous[1] complained that the depopulators 'enclose the area of the village with mounds and surround them with ditches', the like of which can clearly be seen on the lost village site at Wormleighton today. Thus the rectilinear ground patterns seen on the left of the four small fishponds in the aerial photograph (Plate 6) appear from field work to belong to this group, the ponds themselves then being convenient watering-places for cattle and horses. The long branching pattern of what appear at first glance to be sunken roads or old water-courses that once led from the right of the ponds on Plate 6 down to the stream (now to the canal) in the valley bottom also appears to be a post-depopulation feature. Although the courses, like the ponds, are dry today they were clearly not roads, for their branching heads lead straight to the ponds. Field work, including the running of levels along each course, suggests that there were indeed old water channels related to an irrigation scheme for watering meadows. Water from the spring, and also from the overflow in the north-east corner of the large square pool, appears to have been collected in a channel running along the northern edge of the large pool. From this channel, the flow into which was controlled by a small sluice, water could be released into the smaller ponds if required or could be directed into the network of small runnels. By blocking these runnels at convenient points a good flow of water across the fairly impervious surface was made possible. The small stream, emerging from a spring that fed this system of pools and channels, is today called the Washbrook and takes its name from a small stone-lined pit[2] that was once used for washing sheep.

Part of the higher ground around the newly established settlement on the hill-top still remained in arable use to provide grain for the community, but apart from this most of the parish was given over to pasture. Different kinds of stock were carefully segregated in great closes, while frequent movement of animals from one part of the parish to another, or even from one parish to another, ensured that no pastures were overgrazed. Such control had a strong landscape expression in the great hedges and ditches that separated the shrunken arable from the expanded pasture, one pasture from another, and grazing areas from the valuable meadowland. In his replies to Wolsey's Commissioners John Spencer I has much to say about the fine hedges and ditches some now twenty years old, that he, and William Cope before him, had constructed. He also stresses that when he came to Wormleighton there was 'noo wood nor tymber growing within xij or xiiij myle' and poor folk had to 'bren the strawe that theire cattell shuld lyve by'. To remedy this shortage of timber, which certainly presented a serious problem in many parts of the Feldon at this time, he had set acorns 'bothe in the heggerowes, and also betwixt the hegges adioynyng to the old hegges that William Coope made before'. It is interesting to notice that on two occasions he refers to his great field divisions as 'doble dyched and doble hegged' with trees set between. This was no exaggeration, for these great double field boundaries

[1] Op. cit.

[2] This small pool was not shown on the map of the lordship of Wormleighton prepared for Lord Spencer by Richard Norwood in 1634 (see Fig. 6), but appears on the estate map of 1734 made by John Reynolds. Both these fine maps are kept in the Muniment Room at Althorp and I am indebted to Earl Spencer for allowing me to consult them.

form a characteristic feature of the parish today and have been mapped in Fig. 6. Several good examples can be seen in the aerial photograph (Plate 6), for instance the field boundary immediately to the left of the large fishpond.

Various remarks by John Spencer I confirm the impression already gained that Wormleighton's land area had been very intensively used for arable and pasture in the four centuries preceding depopulation. Not only had almost complete deforestation made timber 'a grétter commodyte then eyther corne or grasse', but he complains that there was no intercommon remaining in the parish to provide free grazing for his tenants, a fact confirmed by the estate map of 1634. In view of our contention earlier that the clays of the Lower Lias are suitable for arable farming in favourable weather but in the long period are certainly better under grass, it is interesting to find that the same conclusion had been reached over four centuries ago by John Spencer who stressed that his manor 'was nevir good for corne as the cuntrey will testefye'. Perhaps the most illuminating part of Spencer's statement is the description of his occupation. He pleads to be allowed to retain his hedges and enclosed pasture 'for his lyvyng ys and hathe byn by the brede of cattell[1] in his pastures, for he ys neythir byer nor seller in comon markettes as other grasyers byn, but lyvyth by his owne brede of the same pastures, and sold yt when it was fatt to the Citie of London and other places yerely'. Further reference to the breeding of livestock is made in a letter to the Commissioners written in the winter of *c.* 1521/2 when Spencer pleads that if he had to sell his stock in mid-winter he would lose heavily 'for he hathe no maner of fatt cattell now lefte hym at this tyme but his brede.'[2] This might be taken as referring only to ordinary breeding ewes and heifers, but, as will be seen later, the Spencers were also engaged in selective breeding and in the sale of breeding stock. The importance of good road connexions between Wormleighton, Althorp, and London has already been mentioned, and in the succeeding years large numbers of fat stock were to be sold in the London market by the Spencers. Discreetly perhaps, there is no mention of the sales of wool which must also have been very great at this time, as will be demonstrated later. The pleas of John Spencer I were successful, he was allowed to keep his great pastures, the family fortunes continued to increase and he was knighted not long before his death on April 15 1522.[3]

THE PERIOD OF INTENSIVE STOCK RAISING AND THE ACQUISITION OF MORE ESTATES

The rise of the Spencer family has been described in considerable detail by Dr. M. E. Finch[4] for the period from 1540 to 1640, and I am grateful to her for allowing me to make use of her material in this paper. After the death of Sir John Spencer I the family's acquisition of grazing land in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire continued, aided in some degree by the Dissolution of the Monasteries in

[1] 'Cattell' in this sense would include livestock in general, but particularly sheep and cattle. John Spencer I makes this clear by quoting separate prices for beasts and sheep though both are collectively described as 'cattell'.

[2] I. S. Leadam, op. cit., p. 488.

[3] The will of John Spencer I shows that he held certain lands in Essex as well as those in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. To the latter estates shown on Fig. 6 should be added 1 messuage and 60 acres of arable land, meadow, and pasture in Leamington. See P.R.O., MSS. C 142/40, nos. 83 and 124.

[4] Op. cit.

1536/9, though in few if any cases did the Spencers purchase an ecclesiastical estate direct from the Crown. Thus, selecting examples from Fig. 4, which records the growth of holdings, the manor of Byfield (purchased in 1557) had belonged to Sheen Priory, the manor of Wicken (1588) to Snelshall, and those of Priors Marston (1602) and Priors Hardwick (1633) to Coventry. The wealth of the Spencers also enabled them to make good marriages among important families, and in due course the estate was wisely entailed so that successive father and eldest son of the main line had only a life-tenancy. In consequence the estate remained a remarkably stable entity for long periods of time. Although a great deal of the wealth of the early Spencers was vested in land, a very large proportion was also held as stock on their pastures. Indeed, the holdings shown on Fig. 4 constituted an enormous, closely integrated stock farm organized around two main centres, Wormleighton and Althorp. Wormleighton, with its great enclosed pastures and many small pens and folds, was the main centre for livestock, whereas Althorp, with a great park soon to be added, became the principal residence, though still functioning as a secondary stock centre. Apart from a large white stone monument to John, son and heir of Sir Robert Spencer, who died in 1610, the lack of Spencer tombs in the old church at Wormleighton is an eloquent reminder that the main domestic life of the family was centred elsewhere, namely at Althorp with a mortuary chapel in the church at Brington. Local hearsay still maintains that up to 20,000 sheep were grazed on the Spencer estates during the sixteenth century, and it is interesting to find that Dr. Finch's analysis of the shepherds' accounts shows a total flock of about 14,000 sheep in May/June 1568 and again in October 1576. Of this total about 10,500 sheep and lambs appear to have been kept on the pastures peripheral to Wormleighton and between 3,000 and 3,500 on those around Althorp.[1]

We are fortunate in having an account of the manor of Wormleighton in 1554 which shows that it comprised '21 messuages, 21 tofts, a dovecot, 21 gardens, 1,100 acres land (arable land), 560 acres meadow, 2,500 acres pasture, 240 acres wood, 20 acres land covered with water and 540 acres heath'.[2] Compared with the present parish acreage (2,451) this amounted to no less then 4,960 acres in 1554. Even allowing for variations in the size of an acre between then and now it is clear that the manor of Wormleighton so described was a larger unit than the present parish, no doubt including the whole of Stoneton, part of Fenny Compton, as well as Watergall and Wills Pastures. The large amount of pasture does not surprise us, nor the 540 acres of heath which probably lay partly on the dry hills of the Middle Lias Marlstone and partly on the damp tracts of Watergall, but the reference to as much as 1,100 acres of arable land is unexpected. A large proportion of this arable area was probably in Fenny Compton, which, as will be seen later, was not enclosed until as late as 1778/9; the growth of population in Wormleighton, too, had no doubt required an extension in its arable acreage. The coincidence in the numbers of messuages, tofts, and gardens suggests that the grant referred simply to 21 homesteads with their adjoining plots of land. The large amount of meadow is to be expected, and the 20 acres of water would be approximately covered by the fishponds,

[1] M. E. Finch, Appendix I, Tables E and F.

[2] *Calendar of Patent Rolls: Philip and Mary, 1553–4*, p. 265.

other pools, and the shrunken remnants of Crane Mere. Although the amount of woodland would certainly suggest that Sir John Spencer I's policy of planting trees had been sound, it is again likely that some of this lay along the steep scarp in adjoining parishes, though the map of 1634, to be discussed in detail later, shows several square copses or coverts set amid the large enclosed pastures (Fig. 6).

Unfortunately no reference is made in the above account to the great house at Wormleighton which was often used as the home of a married son or other close relative now that the main seat of the family was at Althorp. A large shearing yard[1] and a great wool barn[2] are known to have adjoined Wormleighton house, and in the summer of 1577 a great deal of the wool from close on 10,000 sheep known to have been shorn that year on all the Spencer estates probably passed through this great barn. The purchasers of Spencer wool during the sixteenth century are not known, and one wonders what quantity of wool, if any, went to local cloth centres such as Coventry. Early in the seventeenth century a single buyer or a partnership took the entire clip, most of which went outside the local area to places like Norwich or London.[3] How great the clip might be is shown by a valuation of no less than £1,500 for that in the woolhouse at Wormleighton in February 1628.[4] That this was not exceptional may be judged by Dr. Finch's calculation that Robert, first Baron Spencer of Wormleighton, received £1,067. 7*s.* 0*d.* for wool and £1,539 for stock in his London accounts for the winter of 1610–11.[5]

In 1519 John Spencer I had stressed the importance of his 'brede of cattell' which referred to both sheep and cattle, and one cannot doubt that breeding stock formed the backbone of the great grazing enterprise. For example, in October 1576 the breeding flock to be carried forward to the next year amounted to 5,286 female sheep and 251 rams requiring extensive grazing and supplementary winter feed.[6] Unfortunately, the figures for cattle are not available, but from various references it is clear that they were an important subsidiary at both Wormleighton and Althorp.[7] The local landscape at this time must have presented a most colourful picture with closely segregated flocks of lambs, hoggerels, breeding ewes, rams, and wethers grazing the great hedged and ditched pastures with smaller pens holding stock selected for sale or slaughter. In smaller closes, near to water, cattle and horses were to be seen, while along the trampled green roads flocks and herds were being driven to new pastures or to markets. Aloof from this constant movement were the strongly hedged corn fields on the hill, and the narrower meadows glistening with water in the valley bottom. An entry in the Shepherds' Charges gives a list of the sheep counted in several closes of Wormleighton on 14 October 1580 and most of the closes named can be identified on the estate map of 1634. Thus in the great pasture of 'Sherton hill' there were 860 store ewes, in the 'great meadow' 79, and in 'Burmesleys Close' 60. Carefully separated were 135 store rams in 'the one part of the Town Hill', and 54 more in 'the nether part'.[8] Local sales of fat stock, surplus lambs, and calves to local butchers, such as

[1] Shown on the estate map of 1634.
[2] M. D. Harris, *Some Manors, Churches and Villages of Warwickshire* (1937), p. 165.
[3] M. E. Finch, p. 45 and footnote.
[4] Spencer, MSS., no. 1879.
[5] M. E. Finch, p. 46.
[6] Ibid., p. 41.
[7] *Vide* Early Spencer Papers, Shepherds' Charges, Box 11, for references to sheep, bullocks, and colts in 1515–16, and to sheep and cattle in 1576. See also M. E. Finch, p. 44, footnote.
[8] Early Spencer Papers, Box 11.

those of Lutterworth, appear to have been on a small scale only and the pattern established by Sir John Spencer I of selling the bulk in the profitable London market seems to have persisted through to the first quarter of the seventeenth century.[1] One would like to know more about the arrangements by which stock were driven south for delivery to London butchers. For example, were the animals handed over to butcher-graziers on the outskirts of London to spend a period in fattening pastures before slaughter, or did they go direct to the butcher after a journey of 100 miles by easy stages? As we have seen already, the Spencers were also willing to sell sheep to stock the estates of other great landowners, and in due course they acquired a reputation for the quality of their animals. We do not know the type or types of sheep that the Spencers favoured, but by careful selection and good feeding it is clear that they had built up breeding stock better than most. Sales of breeding ewes and rams were made not only to their relatives and to important local families, but also to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in 1576 and to Thomas, Lord Burghley, in 1602.[2] Thus the influence of the Spencers on the establishment and improvement of some early breeds may have been considerable. Finally, in view of what has been described above, one might reasonably claim that many of the distinctive patterns etched on the lost-village site of Wormleighton (Plate 6) are the result of vigorous and long-continued post-depopulation pastoral activity.

THE PERIOD OF LEASING OF SPENCER LAND

In the previous two sections we have seen how the Spencers used wealth gained from the leasing of great blocks of land to purchase large estates which were not dissipated like those of many other great families. The early profits that they derived from wool and meat were devoted to wise investment in land, which in turn supported further increases in their flocks and herds. Increase in wealth was matched by that in social status, for by 1603 Sir Robert Spencer had become Baron Spencer of Wormleighton, and in 1643 Henry Spencer, the third Baron Spencer, was created Earl of Sunderland. Commenting on the meteoric rise of the Spencers from humble graziers to a leading titled family within the short space of a century, J. H. Round has rightly emphasized that they owed their success 'neither to the favour of a court, nor to the spoils of monasteries, nor to a fortune made in trade, but to successful farming'.[3] The backbone of this farming had been grass, livestock, and wool, but a change was to come during the second quarter of the seventeenth century associated particularly with a decline in wool prices relative to those of other agricultural products.[4] The cloth trade was now undergoing a period of stagnation and wool was less in demand than formerly. Faced with the threat of a heavy decline in their revenues derived from wool, the prices obtained for mutton alone did not appear sufficiently rewarding for the Spencers to maintain their great sheep flocks for much longer, and other uses for their land had to be considered. Dr. Finch has shown that the numbers of sheep

[1] M. E. Finch, p. 44.
[2] Ibid., p. 45.
[3] J. H. Round. *Studies in Peerage and Family History* (1901), p. 281.
[4] See J. E. Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England* (1882), v. 207; E. Kerridge, 'The Movement of Rent, 1540–1640', *Economic History Review*, vi, no. 1 (1953), 16–34.

on their pastures remained high until 1628, after which a slow reduction may have set in while the Spencers debated whether or not to seek alternative forms of revenue.[1] In the previous half-century an increasingly important supplementary source of income had been derived from the leasing of land on those Spencer estates, distant from Wormleighton and Althorp, which do not appear to have been closely concerned with their grazing interests at that time. The rents derived from such leaseholds had been slowly increasing, and these sums may have insulated the family from the main shock of falling wool prices. The opportunities for leasing more enclosed land to upstart farmers, anxious to set up on their own as general producers of grain and livestock produce on compact holdings of a few hundred acres, were good, and the Spencers lost no time in taking advantage of this. Furthermore, small speculators could easily be found who, having seen the great profits that had been made in wool and meat, were now eager to try their hand at the grazing business hoping that the fall in wool prices was only temporary. Once again the change-over from stock ranching on great enclosed pastures to mixed farming by small leaseholders left its mark on the landscape.

By 1634 William, Lord Spencer, now a Knight of the Bath, appears to have made the decision to sub-divide even his lands in Wormleighton into compact blocks for leasing to tenants. It was even rumoured in February that year that some of the Wormleighton pastures might be leased for ploughing,[2] though in practice this probably did not come about for several years. It is most significant, however, that a large-scale estate plan of Wormleighton and Stoneton should have been made from a survey by Richard Norwood that year, and I am greatly indebted to the present earl for kindly allowing me to trace and photograph this.[3] Fig. 6, which incorporates data from the Wormleighton portion of the map, shows not only the well-enclosed character of the parish in 1634 but also the distribution of the recorded arable and meadow land. One should stress that the enclosed fields were still very large by modern standards, as a comparison of Figs. 6 and 7 will indicate. A large block of arable land lay south-east of the settlement, and many of the pastures, which were equally large, carried a rectangular spinney or covert in the centre. Two of the large pastures north of 'The Old Town' (the 'lost' village site) show signs of recent subdivision, for in each a spinney now adjoins two minor field divisions of apparently later date. The tracts of meadow were generally smaller, though that adjoining Fenny Compton Meadow may also show signs of recent subdivision. The site of the depopulated village had by now taken on the character of a great park for the large red-brick manor-house on the hill. Trees adorned the land around the fishponds which, though still holding water, had relinquished their old function and had become ornamental pools. So Wormleighton conformed in a modest way to the custom of the time, so well expressed in Christopher Saxton's map of Warwickshire and Leicestershire for 1576, that the fine house of a great lord should have its park.[4]

[1] M. E. Finch, p. 46.

[2] Letter from George Carter to William, Lord Spencer, in Spencer unlabelled folder.

[3] Since writing this account a similar map, also dated 1634, of enclosed Spencer pastures in Radbourn has been found in the County Record Office, Warwick (reference number CR. 732). This would appear to confirm that the Spencers were having their lands accurately surveyed at this time preparatory to making leases on a large scale.

[4] P. D. A. Harvey and H. Thorpe, *The Printed Maps of Warwickshire, 1576–1900* (1959), pp. 2–5.

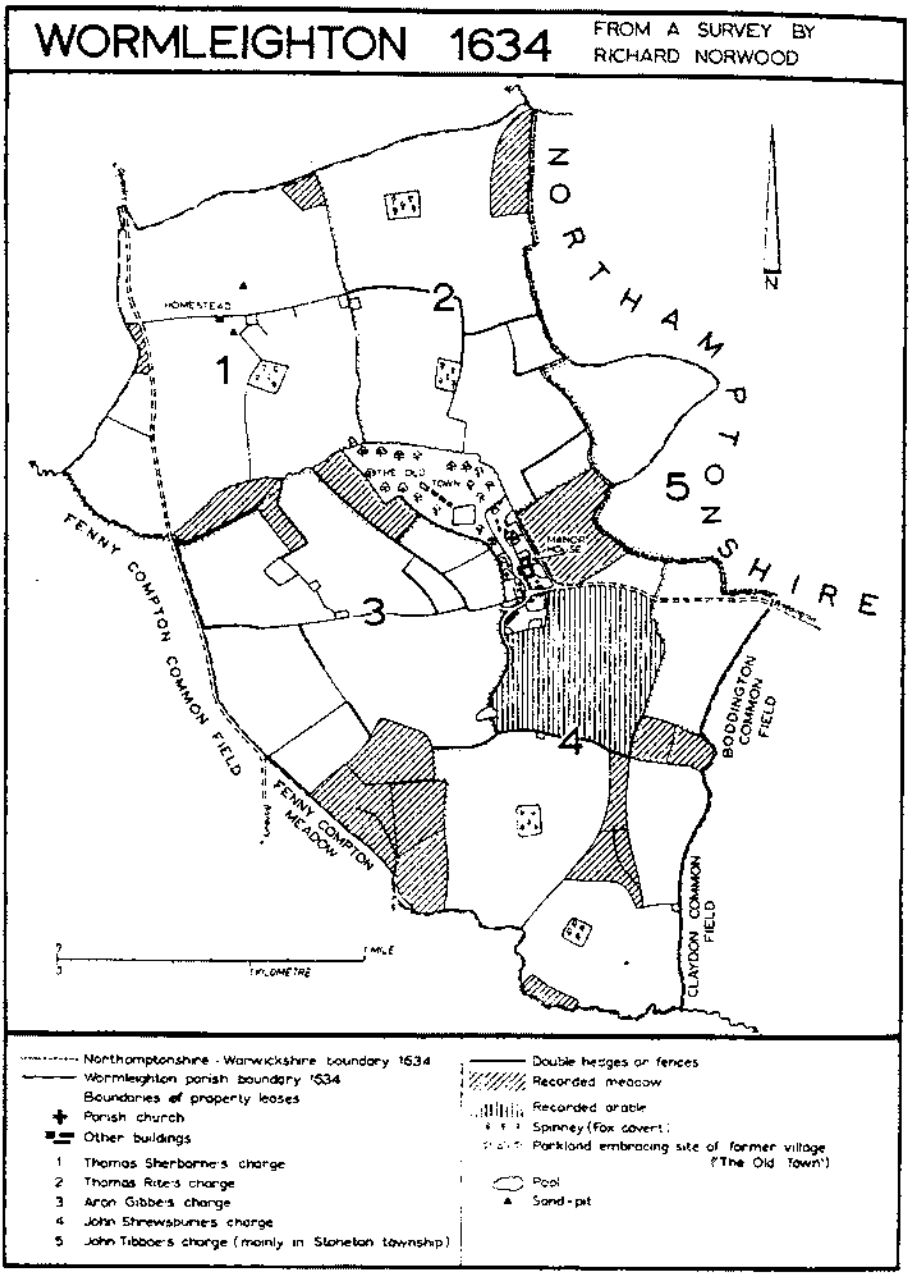

WORMLEIGHTON 1634
FROM A SURVEY BY RICHARD NORWOOD
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
N
HOMESTEAD
THE OLD TOWN
MANOR HOUSE
1
2
3
4
5
FENNY COMPTON COMMON FIELD
FENNY COMPTON MEADOW
BODDINGTON COMMON FIELD
CLAYDON COMMON FIELD
1 MILE
1 KILOMETRE
Northamptonshire - Warwickshire boundary 1634
Wormleighton parish boundary 1534
Boundaries of property leases
Parish church
Other buildings
1 Thomas Sherborne's charge
2 Thomas Rite's charge
3 Aron Gibbe's charge
4 John Shrewsburies charge
5 John Tibboe's charge (mainly in Stoneton township)
Double hedges or fences
Recorded meadow
Recorded arable
Spinney (Fox covert)
Parkland embracing site of former village ("The Old Town")
Pool
Sand-pit

Fig. 6

Gone were the small stock pens, while the sluices that once controlled the entry of water into the small runnels that formerly drenched the meadows had silted up or rotted away. The village, aligned along the street axis, had three major components: the core of the settlement comprised the impressive manor-house with its fine gateway, walls, and great barns; south of this was a cluster of homesteads grouped along the street and bordering a small green with a 'stockbank'[1] or pinfold for stray cattle; finally, to the north, a smaller group of homesteads nestled near the church, with an outlying windmill a quarter of a mile to the east. Apart from a single homestead near the sand-pits, everyone lived in the village. This particular homestead was probably the first farmstead to spring up outside the village, having perhaps developed from the former cottage of a master shepherd now occupying a convenient central position within Lease No. 1. The double hedges shown on Fig. 6, although only remnants of the former pattern, preserve enough order and alinement to show that an important part of their function was to prevent the trespass of stock on both arable and meadow within Wormleighton parish, on the adjoining open fields of Claydon and Boddington, and within the village itself. Of particular interest on the estate map of 1634 is the subdivision of land in the parish of Wormleighton into four great 'charges', apparently meaning leases, with a further two charges in Stoneton,[2] each charge being a well-balanced grazing unit with grass, meadow, and water. On the original map each 'charge' bears the name of the individual either renting or responsible for the land, and it would seem most likely that the map had been expressly made to record the areas covered by each lease.[3] Those in Wormleighton, which were apparently held in 1634 by Thomas Sherborne, Thomas Rite, Aron Gibbe, and John Shrewsburie, were more or less of the same size, averaging *c.* 500 acres (Fig. 6). The field names, which unfortunately could not be inserted legibly on Fig. 6, also suggest that at some time prior to 1634 each 'charge' had formed the nucleus of a single block of land. Thus 'Thomas Sherborne's Charge' (No. 1) embraced 'My Lady's Field' and 'Lady's Meadow', while that of Thomas Rite (No. 2) covered a former 'Windmill Field' now subdivided into three. Similarly the nucleus of No. 3 had once been called 'Shirton Hill' and No. 4 accorded closely with a former 'Banbury Field'. It is possible that these record an earlier four-field structure of pre-depopulation times. Leases Nos. 1, 2, and 3 on Fig. 6 apparently contained no arable land in 1634, and it might appear from this that at first the Spencers thought it advisable to maintain their land under grass and may well have sold part of their local stock to the first leaseholders. At least one of these leases must have changed hands very quickly, for Dr. Finch records that in 1636 Lord Spencer leased a holding of 442 acres to a Matthew Clarke for twelve years at an annual rent of £489. 8*s.* 0*d.* which amounts to no less than 22*s.* an acre.[4] The size of this holding would seem to agree very closely with one of the 'charges' mentioned above. Within two years Matthew Clarke, having found that stock-raising had lost its profitability, refused to pay his rent saying that it was too dear; he also removed his stock, some of which he had bought from Lord Spencer in

[1] A stone 'bus shelter was built on the site of the old pound or pinfold in 1955.

[2] The blocks of land and their stock may once have been the responsibility of separate master shepherds employed by the Spencers.

[3] Although it is not unusual to find later data superimposed on estate maps, the information on that of 1634 seems to date from one period only.

[4] M. E. Finch, p. 48 and footnote 5.

1636. The Spencers were now faced not only with the problem of declining revenues from sheep-farming, but also with the difficulty of persuading others to lease land from them. During this period of flux a large proportion of the land around both Wormleighton and Althorp probably lay under-stocked, for by now the Spencer sheep flock appears to have declined to only one-third of its former size if one can make adequate calculation from the wool weighed at Wormleighton in September 1639.[1] The answer lay, firstly, in a change to more mixed farming on the great home farms of the Spencers, producing grain and meat for urban markets, and, secondly, in a gradual allocation of land under lease to a new class of tenant farmer that arose later on the estates.

The leases proposed on the 1634 map do not appear to have become permanent, for when opportunity arose and policy dictated, Wormleighton and Stoneton—still treated as one manor, though forming separate parishes—were leased *en bloc* to suitable tenants who in turn may have sub-let. As the Spencers had their main residence at Althorp, with 42 men and 11 women on the domestic staff[2] there in 1637, the fine house at Wormleighton formed an attractive residence for wealthy tenants, both relatives and outsiders. Tenants taking on a block lease of this kind may well have sub-let land to individual farmers within the village, but it is interesting to find that no farmsteads were established outside the village apart from that near the sand-pits (Fig. 6). Thus, a century later, when a new map[3] of the manor of Wormleighton was prepared by John Reynolds in 1734, the settlement pattern had apparently not undergone any major change, but the subdivision of former great fields had proceeded vigorously within each of the old 'charges' of 1634 which were not shown on the new map. This suggests that more intensive use was being made of the land by leasehold farmers living in the village and in the single outlying farmstead, and it is probable that several of these small enclosures had again felt the bite of the plough. Even so, most of the larger closes were no doubt still under grass.

The changes shown on the map of 1734 were not considered sufficiently great to warrant the inclusion of a separate illustration in this account. Changes within the village itself had included the addition of a small square pool on the hill-slope immediately below the spring that still fed the old fishponds. As we have seen earlier, a sheep-dip (now called the Washbrook) was located on this spring near the foot of the hill and the Spencers ensured that it was kept in good repair for the use of their tenants' stock.[4] Around the old fishponds the trees had now disappeared from the former parkland of 'The Old Town' (Fig. 6) and the land appears to have been used as a large pasture, which is its function today. The disappearance of the park should be considered in relation to a great decline in the appearance of the manor-house between 1634 and 1734. By the latter date the house was only a shadow of its former self, for during the Civil Wars it had served as the headquarters for Prince Rupert and his cavalry before the Battle of Edgehill, fought in the autumn of 1642 when the crops had been harvested from the old open fields that still extended below

[1] M. E. Finch, p. 48.

[2] Ibid., p. 178, Appendix V.

[3] This map is housed in the Muniment Room at Althorp.

[4] See Spencer Account Books for 1777 where payments for sheep-washing and 'repair of the Washbrook' are mentioned.

the Cotswold scarp some five miles south-west of Wormleighton. As one would expect, the Spencers sided with the Royalists, and the manor-house at Wormleighton, with its stout embattled walls and gatehouse, formed an important local stronghold controlling the gap through the Cotswold scarp. Indeed, when at a later date the Royalists had to retreat south before the Parliamentarian forces it was felt that the manor-house should not be left to fall into enemy hands. A brief entry in the diary of Sir William Dugdale, the famous Warwickshire antiquary, records its fate on 7 January 1646: 'Wormleighton house, in Warwickshire, burnt by his Ma^ties forces of Banbury, to prevent the Rebells making it a Garrison.'[1] The destruction was certainly severe, and the present house, which is only a remnant of the original, incorporates mainly the north wing of the old Tudor building and the two-storied gatehouse (bearing a date 1613) with many associated repairs and alterations, often crudely effected (Plate 8 and Fig. 5). After 1646 the house degenerated into a large rambling farmstead, and still serves as such today, for there was no compelling need for the Spencers with their fine house at Althorp to rebuild it. The population had certainly remained fairly static at Wormleighton between 1634 and 1734 if one considers the pattern of buildings on both maps, a conclusion borne out by Dr. William Thomas who recorded 12 houses and 15 families there in 1730,[2] figures not far removed from those of two centuries ago.

The Spencer fortunes seem to have revived through the renting of land, and as there was as yet no necessity to contemplate actual sales of land in Wormleighton or Stoneton the estate here continued intact. A sharp contrast in the rural landscape was still discernible between Wormleighton with its enclosed fields, and such adjacent parishes as Priors Hardwick, Priors Marston, and Fenny Compton, which had never experienced drastic depopulation and still retained much open field. But this was to change in 1758, when some 770 acres in Priors Hardwick were enclosed by private Act and no less than 3,800 acres in Priors Marston.[3] This was a period of feverish activity in such recently enclosed parishes, as a new pattern of fields and farms was established. Improvements in long-distance transport were also being discussed, and in April 1769 an Act was passed to build a canal from Coventry to Banbury and Oxford.[4] It was understandable that this should use the Fenny Compton gap, that had for so long carried a road through the Cotswold scarp, and that part of its course should run through the parish of Wormleighton. The course of the canal, which was opened between Coventry and Banbury by March 1778 and to Oxford by January 1790, is shown on Fig. 7. Local tradition stoutly maintains that the sinuous course was determined by Earl Spencer who would only consent to the canal crossing his land on condition that it passed through the land of each of his tenant farms! Although there would clearly be advantages in bringing in lime and other commodities, it appears more probable that the course of the canal merely conformed to the dictates of physical geography by closely following the 400 ft. contour! From canal maps[5] dated 1777 and from a plan[6] of the manor of Wormleighton by John

[1] W. Hamper, *The Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale*, (1827), p. 83.

[2] W. Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 2nd edition (1730), i. 517.

[3] W. E. Tate, 'Enclosure Acts and Awards relating to Warwickshire', *Transactions Birmingham Archaeological Society*, lxv (1943-4). 79.

[4] C. Hadfield, *British Canals* (1952), p. 75.

[5] Spencer Muniments.

[6] Ibid.

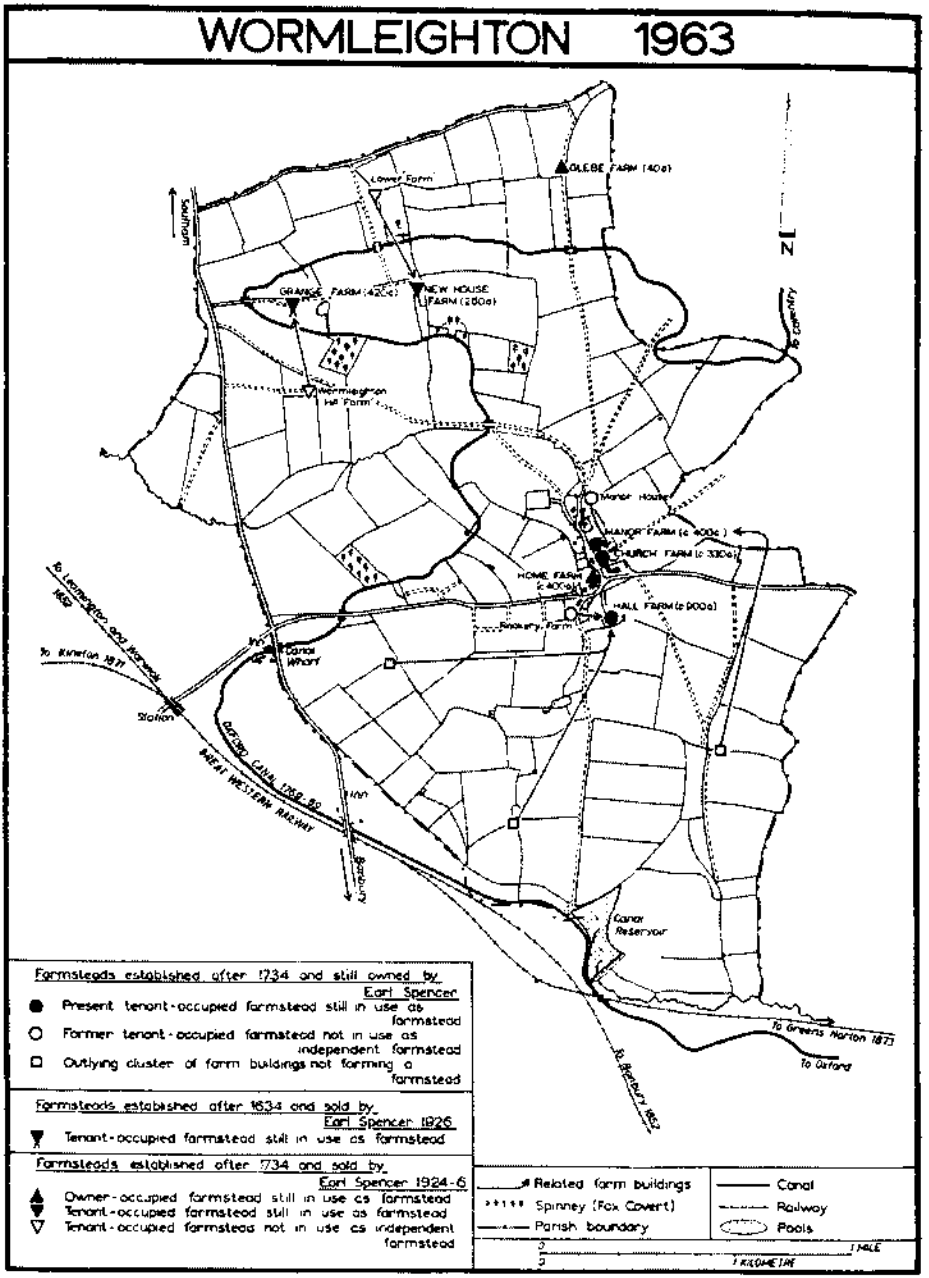

WORMLEIGHTON 1963
Southam
Lower Farm
GLEBE FARM (140a)
GRANGE FARM (420a)
NEW HOUSE FARM (280a)
Wormleighton Hall Farm
N
Manor House
MANOR FARM (c 400a)
CHURCH FARM (c 330a)
HOME FARM (c 400a)
HALL FARM (c 900a)
Rookery Farm
To Leamington and Warwick 16M
To Kineton 18M
Canal Wharf
Station
OXFORD CANAL 1788-89
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
Canal Reservoir
To Greens Norton 18M
To Oxford
To Banbury 16M
Farmsteads established after 1734 and still owned by Earl Spencer
Present tenant-occupied farmstead still in use as farmstead
Former tenant-occupied farmstead not in use as independent farmstead
Outlying cluster of farm buildings not forming a farmstead
Farmsteads established after 1634 and sold by Earl Spencer 1926
Tenant-occupied farmstead still in use as farmstead
Farmsteads established after 1734 and sold by Earl Spencer 1924-6
Owner-occupied farmstead still in use as farmstead
Tenant-occupied farmstead still in use as farmstead
Tenant-occupied farmstead not in use as independent farmstead
Related farm buildings
Spinney (Fox Covert)
Parish boundary
Canal
Railway
Pools
1 MILE
1 KILOMETRE

Fig.7

Corris, prepared in 1779, it is clear that only two farmsteads then lay outside the village, namely those called Grange Farm and New House Farm on the map of 1963 (Fig. 7), both located on the long spur within the great canal loop. The homestead of New House Farm had apparently been built between 1734 and 1777, and marks a belated second stage in the spread of tenant farmsteads outside the main village. A wharf had been established at the point where the road from Southam south to Banbury crossed the canal, and an inn soon sprang up on the Fenny Compton side of the road. Fenny Compton parish, with its strong village community, had now acquired a 'new look', not because of the canal, but as a result of the enclosure of no less than 2,200 acres of former open field in 1778/9.[1] In the very south of Wormleighton parish, the shrunken remnant of Crane Mere (Fig. 2) that had been steadily silting up since Anglo-Saxon times was now dug out, embanked, and pressed into service again as a reservoir for the canal (Fig. 7). So man continually reappraises the latent opportunities of the landscape. Similarly, the old fish-ponds in the valley had been drained, and an enterprising tenant farmer had cropped the silty bed of the largest, leaving the ridge-and-furrow patterns still discernible in Plate 6.[2]

When the formal programme of Ordnance Survey mapping at a scale of 2 in. to 1 mile crept northward across the Feldon in the years immediately following 1810, the pattern of fields in Wormleighton parish, surveyed around 1812, was not substantially different from that of 1734.[3] The great change to the present-day landscape of smaller fields, shown on Fig. 7, came about soon after 1812, and was particularly associated with the growth of smaller leaseholds and the granting of permission for farmsteads to be built outside the village in the midst of their own land. Compared with the 12 houses and 15 families recorded in 1730, the population[4] had risen to 149 by 1801 with 28 families occupying 28 houses of which all but two were in the village. Of the total population of 149, no less than 127 were recorded as employed in agriculture. About 1850 the main settlement in Wormleighton had very much the appearance of an estate village, with neat farmsteads and cottages blending well with the remains of the manor-house. In 1848 the orderly row of ten cottages, locally called the 'Ten Commandments', had been built, reputedly on the site of the old wool barn that had handled so much of the Spencer income in the sixteenth century. A school had also been established by the Spencers in 1839 with a house for the mistress, but the village folk were denied the comforts and pleasures of an inn, and this remains so even today! From the Census Enumeration Schedules[5] for 1851 one obtains a very detailed picture of the parish at this time. For example, there were now seven leasehold farmers, of whom four held between 460 and 480 acres, figures which recall those of the four 'charges' of 1634. The three remaining holdings ranged from 150 to 320 acres. All but one of the farmers were engaged in mixed farming, but one still described himself specifically as a grazier and presumably employed the six shepherds mentioned. The other six farmers employed no less than 53 agricultural labourers

[1] W. E. Tate, p. 83.

[2] The drained bed of the old pool is shown as being under arable land use on a 'Map of The Wormleighton Estate, 1856' in the muniment room at Althorp.

[3] See Ordnance Survey 2 in. = 1 mile, field sheet No. 227, surveyed some time before 1812.

[4] Census Returns for 1801.

[5] Enumeration Schedules, Public Record Office.

and two boys, so that the labour force was then high. The number of domestic servants (21) suggests that life in the manor-house and in the large farmsteads was very comfortable, and the services of a jobbing gardener, three laundresses, a seamstress, and a charwoman were also available. Contact between Wormleighton and the outside world was maintained by three carriers and two wagoners, while services along the canal were to be reinforced in 1852 by the completion of the section of the Great Western Railway linking Banbury with Warwick and Birmingham. Like the canal, the railway utilized the Fenny Compton gap and a station was established well outside the parish on the road running west from Wormleighton (Fig. 7). Unfortunately there is no tithe map[1] for Wormleighton, so one cannot describe the detailed land use of the parish in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Instead, reference will be made to the Board of Trade Returns[2] for 1867, which confirm that although Wormleighton raised wheat, oats, beans, and small acreages of peas, turnips, swedes, and clover on 23 per cent. of its area, the remainder of the large parish was still under grass. Certainly one's mind is carried back to Sir John Spencer I's assertion in 1519 that his manor 'was nevir good for corne as the cuntrey will testefye'. The livestock figures for 1867—617 cattle, 3,480 sheep, and 37 pigs—may not together equal those of the sixteenth century but they were still considerable. Farmers today continue to take pride in the strong pastoral tradition that has been established in the parish over the past four centuries. The emphasis on the rearing and fattening of cattle and sheep remains very great, and both cereal production and dairying have been of only slight importance.[3]

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: SALES OF SPENCER LAND

Within the parish today there are still seven separate farm units, four of which are worked from farmsteads within the village. Until early in 1924 all were tenant farms, and the maintenance of buildings and general supervision of the estate were carried out by agents of Earl Spencer living in the village. But a great change was to come about later that year when the present earl, who had succeeded to the title in 1922, was faced with the payment of heavy death duties on his father's estate. The decision was now taken to sell land within Wormleighton parish which had been in Spencer hands for over four centuries. Part of the sum was raised by the sale of two farms to their tenant occupiers in October 1924—Home Farm (then 253 acres) within the village and New House Farm (then 262 acres) outside (Fig. 7).[4] In April 1926 Wormleighton Hill Farm[5] (424 acres), which had been established outside the village soon after 1834, was also sold, together with a very small farm (Glebe Farm *c.* 40 acres) on the northern extremity of the parish. Glebe Farm appears to have come into being as a small tenant holding soon after 1834. Since 1926 no further sales have been necessary, but some of the farms already sold have changed hands.

[1] H. C. Prince, 'The Tithe Surveys of the Mid-nineteenth Century', *Agricultural History Review*, vii, pt. 1 (1959), 14–26.

[2] *Agricultural Returns for Great Britain*, 1867. Parish summaries for England and Wales are held by the Collection of Statistics Branch, Ministry of Agriculture, Government Buildings, Epsom Road, Guildford, Surrey.

[3] For example, see Land Utilization Survey of Britain, 1 in. = 1 mile, sheet 83, surveyed 1931–7.

[4] 1924 Rental in Spencer Muniments.

[5] 1926 Rental in Spencer Muniments.

Certain re-groupings of both buildings and land have also occurred, as well as confusing changes of farmstead names. Thus, of the farms no longer owned by the Spencers, Grange Farm and Wormleighton Hill Farm are now worked together as one holding, the buildings of the latter no longer serving as an independent farmstead. Similarly, New House Farm and Lower Farm (established soon after 1834) are 'paired', the latter's buildings no longer constituting a separate farmstead. Of the three remaining tenant farms, Manor Farm (*c.* 400 acres) has its farmstead in the village and an outlying cluster of barns that came into being about a century ago; Hall Farm (*c.* 900 acres) has a similar disposition with two outlying building-clusters of similar age, and part of a former farmstead, Rookery Farm, lying on the outskirts of the village. Finally the buildings of Church Farm (*c.* 330 acres) within the village include both the remains of the former Tudor manor-house and a separate group[1] near the old gatehouse (Fig. 7). A close rectangular grid of fields, many dating from the period after 1734, is now associated with the farms, but the ghostly outlines of former larger fields can still be clearly traced on the ground today in ancient fieldways and in double ditches and hedges.

Visitors to the village today cannot fail to be impressed by its neat appearance and wise planning. The neat rows of cottages provide very good housing, and the spaciousness of the settlement owes much to the large gardens that surround them. In strong contrast to the estate cottages, all but six of which still belong to the Spencers, are the large rambling farmsteads, well-constructed in brick and stone, with fine outbuildings, yards, and lawns. As one walks along the street, whose green—before the cottage gardens enclosed parts of it—was once much wider, one's attention is focused on the manor gatehouse adorned with a Spencer shield and through its archway to the square-towered church beyond. But an inn is lacking, and one must search diligently among the small cottages beyond the church for the tiny cottage-shop and post office. The prominence of pumps in the gardens of the homesteads is an eloquent reminder that the village only acquired a piped water-supply within the past six years! This was long overdue, for even today the village has no piped sewerage system and is dependent on the services of a 'night-soil man' who calls periodically; in consequence the danger of water-pollution in wells and pumps had been great. Similarly, it was not until as late as 1938 that a supply of electricity reached the village and made possible improvements in lighting, cooking, and heating. The 'old world' character of village life changed dramatically during the Second World War, when evacuee families from Coventry were billeted there, raising the population perhaps to an all-time peak and bringing in a temporary flood of children to a village that had previously shown an ageing population structure. Since the war there has been a tendency for the dormitory element in the village population to increase. This is understandable when one recalls that less than twenty labourers are now employed on the farms, and only a handful on the estate, so that good cottage homes are available for renting to people who live in the village but work elsewhere. In particular men travel to Banbury and Coventry or work in a small factory near Fenny Compton station producing sectional concrete.

[1] The present detached farmhouse known as Church Farm is thought by some to have been part of the bakehouse and kitchens of the manor-house.

The tendency for younger people in Wormleighton to look beyond their own village for many services as well as for employment has been further encouraged by drastic changes in local administration. Thus, the village school, which had 42 scholars on the register in 1907, could only muster 12 in 1949. As a result the school was closed, and Wormleighton children now travel by 'bus to attend the primary school in more populous Fenny Compton and the secondary modern school in the former market town of Kineton, the latter over seven miles away. But the closure of the school brought one small benefit, for Earl Spencer kindly gave the building to the village for use as a much needed village-hall for meetings and social functions. The services of teachers resident in the village had meant much to the social life of the community, and the reliance of the latter on their resident vicar now became even greater. But in 1954 a further blow was to fall, for in that year for reasons of economy the ecclesiastical parishes of Fenny Compton and Wormleighton were joined in a united benefice with a joint vicar resident in Fenny Compton. Wormleighton vicarage, which was now sold, became a private residence, and the community lost yet another key figure. In recent months there has been some slight redress, for two teachers from Fenny Compton have now come to live in Wormleighton. Contact between Wormleighton and the 'outside world' is maintained by motor car and a skeleton 'bus service, and it is only in the last few years that the attractive character of the village and its interesting story have caught the attention of a small number of visitors. At the week-end an increasing number of motorists penetrates the seclusion of the village street, while with the coming of pleasure craft to the Oxford Canal summer visitors tie up for the night near the wharf where barges once off-loaded.

Even today, with some 150 folk in the parish, of whom about 110 live in the estate village on the hill, Wormleighton probably has fewer people than lived in the earlier village down in the valley in Domesday times. The acreage of arable land is also probably considerably less today than it was then, while the corrugations of ridge and furrow on the present fat pastures remind one of great changes in land-use through time. It is not surprising that the severe disturbances associated with the depopulation of 1499, the sweeping changes from arable to pasture, the quick regeneration of the village on a new site with a different way of life, and the close dependence of the new community for so long on a distant lord have left structural weaknesses in the social and economic life of Wormleighton today. By contrast the neighbouring parish of Fenny Compton, physically similar but for long held by several rival lords, managed to escape depopulation, maintained its open-field husbandry until very late and, apart from minor set-backs (notably the general exodus from the land in the latter half of the nineteenth century), continued strongly in being to return a parish population of about 500 today. Innate strength and stability over many centuries have therefore secured for Fenny Compton a size and status somewhat above that of Wormleighton today. That this should be so between two contiguous parishes of similar extent cannot be satisfactorily explained in physical terms alone. Emphasis must be placed on their contrasting historical geography, so many aspects of which are tangibly incorporated into present landscape features, notably into field patterns and village morphology, but which at the same time still have a more subtle expression in the character and outlook of the very folk themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to those persons specifically mentioned in the text and in the footnotes I am indebted to Mr. D.M. Stephens of the Department of Geography, University of Birmingham, for the fair-drawing of the maps, and to Mr. R.C. Swift of the same Department for photographic work connected with the Illustrations; and, finally, to the people of Wormleighton who so readily gave me access to their farmsteads and fields, and answered questions so patiently.

H.T., 1965

Note. This article first appeared under the title 'The Lord and the Landscape' in *The Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, Vol. 80 (1965). We are most grateful to the Society for their permission to reprint it (in two parts) in *Cake & Cockhorse*.

As the article is reprinted in facsimile, the numbering of Plates follows the original publication, from 6 to 8. There are no Plates 1 to 5.

SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Deborah Hayter

From the Survey of the Duchy of Lancaster manors in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. [TNA DL 42/117]

Dedington *The presentment of the foreseyd Jurie concerninge their Customes and other things.*

Custom for granting estats by copie: *They present that the custome of the seyd mannor is that the Lord for the time beyinge, may graunt estates by Copie, To hold unto the takers for two lives successively, the same beinge in possession at the time of the graunt and not otherwise.*

Widdowes estate: *The wife of anie tenant diinge in possession, shall enjoy the Landes and Tenements Customerie, wherof her seyd (husband) dyed possessed, during her widowes estate, livinge chaste.*

For letting their copyholds: *No tenaunt may graunt his customarie tenement for a longer terme than one yeare, without license upon peyne of forfeiture.*

Forfeiture: *If a tenaunt customary of the same mannor doe sell anie timber tree or trees, without warrant, it is also a forfeiture by the same Custome.*

Harriott: *A Copieholder dyinge possessed of a Tenemente Customary within the seyd mannor is to paye for his heryot his beste good, quick or dead, and the cottage tenaunte for heryot is to pay double his rent.*

This survey is dated 1592, and comes from the huge archive concerning the estates of the Duchy of Lancaster. Deddington was divided into three manors, but even so the crown was interested in the income

By the end of the sixteenth century many manorial courts had ceased functioning as they produced little profit for their lords, but where land was held by copyhold, as here, the court had to continue to meet so that land could be inherited, sold and let.

Copyhold tenure lasted in some places until 1925 when it was abolished by the Law of Property Act of 1922, but in most places copyholds had been converted either to freeholds or to leaseholds long before then. Copyhold tenure meant that the tenement had to be transferred through the manorial court – technically into the hands of the lord and then out again, usually in practice through the steward, and sometimes it seems there was some kind of ceremony with a rod, described as '*per virgam*' in Latin records. Proof of title was the copy of the entry in the manorial court roll or book – hence copyhold.

Manorial courts did not administer the law of the land, but 'the custom of the manor'. These varied from place to place, as described by a seventeenth century treatise for manorial stewards: *'The customs of this nation are so various and differing in themselves as that a man might almost say that there are as many several customs as manors or lordships in a country, yea, and almost as many as there are townships or hamlets in a manor'.*

So it was necessary to gather together a 'jury' who were '*jurati*' or sworn in. These would be the more substantial men of the manor, holders of land themselves, whose memories and the memories of their fathers and grandfathers would be quarried to 'present' the facts about their local customs. Those described above were extremely important as they laid out the rights of the tenants as well as the ways in which they were restricted; widows could only keep their husband's tenements as long as they remained 'chaste', and no tenant was allowed to sell timber trees from their property without permission.

The 'heriot' of the last item was a form of death duty or inheritance tax: the estate of a defunct tenant forfeited its most valuable property to the lord (*'his best good'*). This was often 'quick' – that is, the best animal, probably an ox or a cow, or if 'dead' it would be the most valuable asset of a tradesman. In practice these heriots would probably be bought back – paid in cash rather than kind.

This is just a small part of a much longer document which describes the bounds of the manor and also lists the freeholders and the tenants, what they hold and how much they pay in rent. There is also a list of shops and a note that there are two rows of shops 'decayde'.

OBITUARY

Ross K. Gilkes, M.A. (Oxon.), F.R.Hist.S.

Ross Gilkes, who died in May, was a long-standing member of our Society and one of the more prolific contributors to *Cake & Cockhorse*. Moreover he was probably the only remaining member who had known our co-founder 'Dr' Ted Brinkworth in his younger days, when they were pupil and master first at Dashwood Road School and then at Banbury County (subsequently Grammar) School. These times, and his close friendship with 'Brinky' (as he called him) from sixth form days on, he recounted in 'E.R.C. Brinkworth: A Celebration', ten years after Ted' s death, in vol. 10 no. 9 (Summer 1988).

Ross Gilkes's career was mostly teaching history at Fairfield Grammar School in Bristol (his centenary history was published in 1998). He was long a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Of much greater relevance to Banbury is that his close friendship with Ted remained until death, and that he worked on research for the Banbury section of the *Victoria County History*, although in the event others completed the work. We were to benefit from the comprehensive knowledge of the Borough Corporation (1553-1835) he thus gained, which he distilled in a series of articles between 1971 and 2004 (listed below). An account of Banbury Castle had appeared as early as 1960. This we reprint here, as, although it is available on our website, very few are likely to have it in 'hard copy', published as it was in Vol. 1, No. 5, of what at that time must have seemed likely to be an ephemeral newsletter.

However, undoubtedly his greatest contribution to recording Banbury's history was his edition of *The 'Bawdy Court' of Banbury: The Act Book of the Peculiar Court of Banbury, 1625-1638*. The original manuscript, much in abbreviated Latin, had been transcribed by Ted Brinkworth, who died before editing could commence. Fortunately his work was in the Society's care, and in due course Ross (very willingly) agreed to take on the formidable task of editing and preparation for publication. The triumphant completion of this work was published as our records volume 27 in 1997. His and Ted's combined work made available a source unlikely otherwise ever to have been used, revealing the often entertaining or embarrassing misdeeds of Banbury's avowedly strict puritan townsfolk. It received far more (all complimentary) reviews than any of our other publications. **J.G.**

Articles, *etc.* by the late R.K. Gilkes, M.A. (Oxon.), F.R.Hist.S.

Cake and Cockhorse:
'Banbury Castle'. **1**.5 (September 1960).
'Banbury: The Pattern of Local Government, 1554-1835.' Part 1. **5**.1 (Aut. '71).
'Banbury', [as above], Part 2: 'Corporation Reform.' **5**.5 (Spring 1973).
'The Chamberlain and his rôle in local government in Banbury, 1554-1835', Part 1. **10**.2 (Spring 1986).
'The Chamberlain...' *etc*, Part 2. **10**.3 (Summer 1986).
'The Corporation of Banbury and National Affairs, 1783-1835.' **10**.4 (Aut. '86).
'The Town Clerks of Banbury: 1554-1835.'**10**.7 (Autumn 1987).
'E.R.C. Brinkworth – A Celebration.' **10**.9 (Summer 1988).
'The Banbury Toll-Books, 1754-1826 and the Horse Fairs.' **15**.5 (Spr/Sum 2002).
'The Banbury Journal (the working of Banbury Town Council), 1722-1761.' **16**.3 (Summer 2004).

Records volume 26.
The 'Bawdy Court' of Banbury: The Act Book of the Peculiar Court of Banbury, 1625-1638, transcribed and calendared by E.R.C. Brinkworth, 1997.
Reviewed in *Cake & Cockhorse*, **14**.2 (Spring 1998).

BANBURY CASTLE

By the late **R.K. Gilkes**, first published in *Cake & Cockhorse*, vol. 1, no. 5. 1960.

On 27th May 1648, the House of Commons, prompted, no doubt, by a petition from the citizens of the town, resolved "that Banbury Castle be forthwith demolished." Its destruction was not complete; William Stukeley in 1712 saw the "remains of four bastions", and two towers at least remained in the latter part of the eighteenth century, but today [1960] virtually nothing remains above ground to remind us of the great castle, standing on the north side of the Market Place, which had dominated the town for over five hundred years.

Banbury Castle, in building in 1136, was one of three great castles (the others were at Newark and Sleaford) built by the princely Norman ecclesiastic, Alexander of Blois, Bishop of Lincoln (in whose diocese his manor of Banbury then lay). Its central mound, over one hundred feet in diameter, was surrounded by a double wall and ditch, the water for the moats being supplied from the Cuttle Brook. Although known at the court of Rome as "The Magnificent", Alexander may have had an eye to economy in his building, for he did not put up an expensive tower keep, but the inner wall of the Castle constituted a shell keep, and within it on the north side and against the wall itself were built the various living

and administrative apartments – solidly built of stone and later extended, for a survey of 1606 speaks of "a Mansion House within the inner gates... twenty-three bays covered with lead." The thirteenth century saw additions to the defences with the building of at least one flanking tower, together with a gatehouse, and a barbican. These were formidable improvements, but their strength was never tested by actual fighting until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, and by that time some restoration work was needed to be done as for years before only the barest maintenance work had been carried out; by 1564, in fact, the Castle was reported to be in "greate decaye ... and the repayringe of the said Castell will cost aboue fyftie pound." How much that meant had to be done can be judged by the fact that when Banbury became a free corporate borough, and in 1556 a hole was knocked in the Castle wall to allow the transfer of a wooden cage to the new Town Hall, the repairs to the wall cost fourpence.!

On the death of a Bishop of Lincoln the land and possessions of the bishopric passed to the King, and for this reason Banbury Castle was held by the King for several periods between 1166 and 1318; but in 1321, when Henry Burghersh was rash enough to support the Earl of Lancaster's revolt against Edward II, the Sheriff of Oxfordshire was ordered to seize the Castle and deliver it into the hands of Robert of Ardern, knight of the shire, who lived at Wykham. The Bishop of Lincoln ceased to hold the Castle from 1547 when it was transferred to the Duke of Somerset, and, on his overthrow in 1549, to his rival, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. When Northumberland paid the price of his treason the Castle reverted to the Crown until 1595, when it was leased, at an annual rent of 78s., to Sir Richard Fiennes, for the lives of his three children, William, Ursula, and Elizabeth. Charles I renewed the grant to William Fiennes in 1629, and the Castle and Castle lands remained with the Saye and Sele family until their sale in 1792.

The custodian of the Castle was the Constable, an office held by several members of the Segrave family of Chacombe, although the actual duties of the office were usually carried out by men lower down the social scale and of widely differing ability and integrity. Thomas Chaucer, possibly the son of the poet, who fought at Agincourt, a member of the King's Council and already Constable of Wallingford Castle, became Constable of Banbury Castle in 1412. In 1507 the offices of Constable and steward of the hundred of the Castle and town of Banbury were held jointly by Sir Richard Empson (the unscrupulous and unpopular minister of Henry VII's last years) and his brother, Thomas.

Although Bishop Alexander may have preferred a shell keep at Banbury because it was cheaper (and quicker) to build than a tower keep, his ideas were grand enough for us to be quite sure that he planned a building that would be fit for the entertainment, not only of Bishops of Lincoln, but also of the King himself. The Bishop, obviously, was a frequent visitor; of the best-known holders of the bishopric, the saintly Bishop Hugh lodged in the Castle in 1191, as did the learned Robert Grosseteste in 1240. Nor were royal visitors infrequent, as Banbury was included in the annual itinerary of the medieval kings, who passed through on their way from Chipping Campden to Northampton. Henry II visited the Castle no less than six times between 1218 and 1266, which is sufficient recommendation for the accommodation and entertainment provided, as indeed is the fact that Edward I, on his second visit in 1217, stayed for a week. Edward III was at the Castle in 1328, 1329, and 1348, Richard II in 1397, Henry VI in 1438 and 1457, and Edward IV in 1470 and 1474. A Royal Council was held at the Castle on 5th February 1501. The last monarch to visit the Castle was Charles I, a fleeting visit in 1645, long enough to dine at the Castle before continuing on his way to Oxford.

The statutes of the Council of Lambeth of 1261 required that every bishop should provide himself with one or two prisons in his diocese. Banbury Castle was the Bishop of Lincoln's prison, and Leland in his 'Itinerary' mentions "a terrible Prison for Convict Men" in the outer bailey of the Castle. It is safe to assume that conditions in this prison were pretty grim and uncomfortable, for it was generally considered that it cost only a farthing a day to keep a clerk in prison, which suggests the lowest of low diets when one remembers that the recognised rate for the support of the Friars Minor was fourpence a day! In 1510, when nineteen convicted clerks were imprisoned in the Castle – ten of them for the whole year – the cost of their maintenance was also a farthing a day. Only once a year – on Maundy Thursday – was the prison cleaned, by two men who were paid 4d. apiece. Fresh straw for the upper part of the prison and the dungeon cost 17d., and during the cleaning process the prisoners were allowed out in the town, under guard, to beg for alms in wallets specially provided by the bailiff at a cost of 12d. each. After this spell of fresher air they returned to the care of five warders, and the attention of Thomas Langley, who received 13s.4d. in the year for "serving … and cleansing nature of said convicts." But the Castle prison was not escape-proof, however "terrible" it may have appeared. Some

who escaped were recaptured, but a fair number got clear away; John Longland, the Bishop's gaoler, lost 28 prisoners in the three years 1534, 1539 and 1544. William Basiate, a convicted thief, was, therefore, clearly out of luck when he escaped in 1276; having taken sanctuary in the church he abjured the realm and made for the coast, but the Constable, Philip de Burne, possibly over-zealous, but more likely afraid of the heavy fine that might be imposed upon him, sent men in pursuit, who, catching up with Besiate, beheaded him on the spot.

As well as criminous clerks, religious dissidents were lodged at Banbury Castle. In 1415, the year of Agincourt, the Archdeacon of Oxford was ordered by the Bishop of Lincoln to hand over any Lollards to the Constable of the Castle, while during the religious troubles of Elizabeth I's reign recusants were housed there. They were better provided for than the ordinary prisoners, in fact their provisions allowance was increased in 1596 in step with rising prices – not necessarily indicative of excessive charity, of course, as they were expected to contribute to their own keep. Generally, they were leniently treated, but changes in the political-religious barometer in the latter half of the sixteenth century meant changes in the official attitude towards recusants; in quieter times parole was allowed, but in 1592, 1596 and again in 1599, letters were directed to the Constable from the Privy Council ordering him to exercise stricter vigilance over his charges. However, such restrictions were soon eased, and we find Thomas Throgmorton, detained along with fifteen other recusants "of qualitie and calling", in 1589, regularly being allowed out on parole, either to settle some apparently recurring legal business, or, as in 1593, for five months because of ill-health. Accommodation for the recusants seems to have presented no problem until 1612, when Lady Stonor and five other gentlewomen were committed to the Castle, and a tenant, Downes, who had leased apartments there from Lord Saye and Sele, was, very much to his annoyance, turned out to make way for the ladies.

For over five hundred years Banbury Castle had pursued its un-military way, but with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, it entered very much into the thick of things, and it was certainly rapidly placed on a war footing, so that Joshua Sprigge, writing immediately after the second siege of the Castle in 1646, could say that it had been "recovered and revived by art and industry unto an incredible strength, much beyond many places of greater name and reputation."

The town declared for Parliament, yet, with the geographical disposition of the King's areas of support, the Castle was of obvious importance to the Royalists. Twice in 1642 the Castle was attacked, the second attack on 27th October, when cannon were brought up, and, just as soon as they began firing, the garrison surrendered. A Parliament report gives a garrison of almost a thousand men, and suggests that they surrendered through lack of supplies necessary to withstand a siege, but the real weakness was that the defenders were divided in their loyalty, for two regiments of foot and a troop of horse from the garrison took service with the King.

Leaving a garrison under the command of the Earl of Northampton, Charles moved on with his main army to Woodstock. Strenuous efforts were made in the late summer of 1644 to win the Castle for Parliament. Colonel John Fiennes, with some 3,500 men, drawn from Warwick, Northampton and Coventry, together with cannon and mortars, besieged the Castle and seemed certain of success. The walls were breached, and the small garrison, only about four hundred men, commanded by Sir William Compton, had consumed their normal provisions and all but two of their horses. Then a relieving force under the Earl of Northampton reached Banbury on 25th October and raised the siege, which had lasted for fifteen weeks.

The Royalist position in the Castle was not a happy one as the town remained loyal to Parliament and made it difficult for the garrison in the matter of supplies; the damage caused to the town in the hard fighting of 1644 had further aroused the hostility of the townsfolk. Strategically the Castle was of the greatest importance to the King, for, should Oxford be lost, the King's strength in the centre of England would depend wholly on his possession of Banbury; thus the year 1645 was busily occupied in further strengthening of the Castle defences, pulling down houses in the Market Place and digging fresh earthworks, and adding to the Castle itself "2 new bulwarkes and 2 sally portes."

These preparations were opportune. In 1646 Colonel Whalley, commanding about a thousand foot and some four troops of horse, arrived before the Castle and proceeded to attack, as Sir William Compton, the young Governor of the Castle, had summarily rejected Whalley's surrender demand. As in 1644, although the Royalist garrison again numbered only four hundred men, the Castle defences held firm; engineer Captain Hooper's efforts to undermine the Castle were countered, and "by flinging down stones and hand-grenadoes" Compton "mightily annoyed the enemy."

But the heart had gone out of the Royalist cause; attempts to relieve the Castle had failed, and on 27th April the King left his headquarters at Oxford, giving himself up to the Scots at Newark a few days later. That same day, 6th May, fifteen weeks after the siege had begun, surrender terms were agreed between Sir William Compton and Colonel Whalley.

Almost immediately the levelling of the Castle outworks was ordered, and on 14th June 1648, the House of Commons resolved that the Castle itself should be demolished, "leaving only ... a little Stable, and another little Storehouse, both lately built for Lord Say to keep his Hundred Courts in: And that the materials ... be employed and bestowed for the use and repairs of the town of Banbury", which had suffered considerable damage; compensation of £2,000 was to be granted to the owner of the Castle and land, Lord Saye and Sele.

Had the Castle survived it would not, perhaps, have been for long; the attitude that consented to the destruction of a beautiful church would have had no time for a decaying castle. For castles had passed out of fashion – long before 1642, even – and after 1556 the small Town Hall was of more significance that the lowering Castle, symbolising as it did the newer moods of independence and civic freedom.

Editorial note. In the fifty years since Ross Gilkes wrote this article, there have been a number of histories of Banbury, all with their sections on the Castle, the most authoritative being volume ten of the Oxfordshire *Victoria County History*. That and, of course, Alfred Beesley's never superseded *History of Banbury* (published in 1842) will provide sources of the various quotations.

There has also been considerable archaeological investigation of the Castle site, now irretrievably covered by shopping developments. Reports on discoveries have appeared regularly in *Cake & Cockhorse*, which undoubtedly add detail to Gilkes' description. This, nevertheless, remains a fair account of the place that so dominated the medieval and Civil War-torn town of Banbury.

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Banbury Historical Society was founded in 1957 to encourage interest in the history of the town of Banbury and neighbouring parts of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The magazine *Cake and Cockhorse* is issued to members three times a year. This includes illustrated articles based on original local historical research, as well as recording the Society's activities. Approaching one hundred and fifty issues and five hundred articles have been published. All but the most recent issues have been digitised and are available on the Society's website (see inside front cover). Most back issues are also still available in their original form.

There are now thirty volumes in the records series. Those still in print include:

Banbury Wills and Inventories 1591-1650, 2 parts (vols. 13, 14).

Banbury Gaol Records, ed. Penelope Renold (vol. 21).

Banbury Baptism and Burial Registers, 1813-1838 (vol. 22).

The earlier registers, *Marriages 1558-1837*, *Baptisms and Burials 1558-1812*, are now out-of-print, but are available on fiche and CD from Oxfordshire Family History Society, website at: www.ofhs.org.uk

Oxfordshire and North Berkshire Protestation Returns and Tax Assessments 1641-1642 (vol. 24, with Oxfordshire Record Society).

King's Sutton Churchwardens' Accounts 1636-1700, ed. Paul Hayter (vol. 27).

The Banbury Chapbooks, by Dr Leo John De Frietas (vol. 28).

Early Victorian Squarson: The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington, Part One, *1835-1848*, ed. Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson (vol. 29).

Banbury Past through Artists' Eyes, compiled by Simon Townsend and Jeremy Gibson (vol. 30).

Turnpike Roads to Banbury, by Alan Rosevear (vol. 31).

Current prices and availability of other back volumes, and of *Cake and Cockhorse*, from the Hon. Editor (Harts Cottage, Church Hanborough, Witney OX29 8AB).

In preparation:

Selections from the Diaries of William Cotton Risley, ed. G.W. Smedley-Stevenson: Part 2. *Mid-Victorian Squarson, 1849-1869*.

Alphabetical Digest of *Rusher's 'Banbury Directory' 1833-1906*

The Society is always interested to receive suggestions of records suitable for publication, backed by offers of help with transcription, editing and indexing.

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month, at Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park Road, Banbury. Talks are given by invited lecturers on general and local historical, archaeological and architectural subjects. Excursions are arranged in the spring and summer, and the A.G.M. is usually held at a local country house.

Membership of the Society is open to all. The annual subscription (since 2009) is **£13.00** which includes any records volumes published. Overseas membership, **£15.00**.

All members' names and addresses are held on the Society's computer database for subscription and mailing purposes only. Please advise if you object to this practice.

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Autumn 2011 Programme

Meetings are held at Banbury Musum at 7.30pm, entrance from Spiceball Park Road.

Thursday 8th September, 2011
Preceded by Reception at 6.30pm for 7pm
Instruments of Medieval Music: A presentation including live music on a selection of instruments
Richard York

Thursday 13th October 2011
The Seventeenth Century Village: Who was in charge?
Deborah Hayter

Thursday 10th November 2011
Banbury: Metropolis of the carriers' carts
Dr Barrie Trinder

Thursday 8th December 2011
The South Warwickshire Hoard: The story1 so far
Dr Stanley Ireland

Printed from Copy Supplied, by Parchment (Oxford) Ltd
Printworks, Crescent Road, Cowley, Oxford, England OX4 2PB
email: print@parchmentUK.com www.PrintUK.com