

sealt straet (Salt Street)¹ eastward to *Wilmanford*, where it crossed *Wylman broce* (Wilman Brook), and so to join the *hricweg* (Ridge Way) running from north to south along the scarp-foot to cross the Cranmere Brook just east of the mere. It will be clear from Fig. 2 that these boundaries agree remarkably closely with those of the later parish established in the post-Norman period, indicating that here, as elsewhere, many of our local administrative units are territorially of great antiquity. The extent of the land unit of Wormleighton in 956 was somewhat larger than the present parish, as it appears then to have included Stoneton, now a separate parish of significantly 'immature' shape (Fig. 2). Both places remained closely linked for many centuries and were still considered as one land-holding when the first large-scale map was made in 1634 for Lord Spencer (Fig. 6).

Wormleighton was just one of a great cluster of Anglo-Saxon villages and hamlets shown on the Feldon, the majority lying only one or two miles apart. Of its neighbours shown on Fig. 2, Fenny Compton² records in its name both the location of the settlement in a valley (combe) at the scarp-foot and the water-holding character of the Lower Lias Clays that receive copious spring-line water from the base of the Marlstone. Stoneton to the east may have derived its name, 'stone farm', from rock exposures or from actual quarrying along the scarp, while Radbourn (*Hreodburna* = 'reed stream' in 998) described the reed-fringed brook near by. Further reference to the damp conditions of the clay land is contained in the name, Watergall, signifying soggy, infertile, ground. By contrast, Hodnell ('Hoda's hill') appears to have taken its name from the wise choice made by a colonist called Hoda of a dry-sand and gravel-capped hill rising above 400 ft. as the site of his dwelling. Ascote probably means simply 'Eadstan's cottage(s)', the association with a chapel coming much later. The grant of land at Wormleighton in 956 tells us nothing about the precise location of the village or hamlet. An attractive site for settlement was provided by the small flat-topped hill marked *A* on Fig. 2. Here the site was dry and wells could be sunk into the small expanse of glacial sands and gravels capping the hill which slightly exceeded 500 ft. It is not unlikely that some early occupation did take place here, but, from evidence to be given later, it would seem that the main settlement actually occupied site *B* (Fig. 2) in a shallow valley in the Lower Lias Clays just to the north-west of *A*. Field work has shown that *B* was not a particularly damp site, despite its position on the clays, and it had the advantage of good spring water issuing from the base of the sands and gravels below *A* and feeding northward into a small stream.

In common with other settlements in the vicinity the inhabitants of Wormleighton probably practised mixed farming, having large open arable fields on the cleared clay lands of the valley with extensive grazings for cattle, sheep, and swine on the higher ground adjoining to the east. At first plentiful timber was available for fuel and for construction purposes, but as population grew, clearing in the Feldon generally and in Wormleighton in particular appears to have proceeded so vigorously that by

¹ This 'salt street' ran from Priors Marston through Stratford-upon-Avon to the brine springs at Droitwich in Worcestershire. See F. T. S. Houghton, 'Salt-Ways', *Transactions Birmingham Archaeological*

Society, liv (1932), 1-17 and map, Pl. 4.

² For the meaning of these and other Warwickshire place-names see *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, op. cit.