

Domesday times the landscape had already become markedly 'open', and in succeeding centuries wood was very scarce. The road south through the Fenny Compton gap, and the Ridge Way which it intersected, ensured that Wormleighton did not suffer from isolation, while the Salt Street from Droitwich brought in not only salt, so important for preserving meat and fish, but other commodities too. During the period of Scandinavian invasions Warwickshire eventually lay on the border between resistant Anglo-Saxon England to the west and the Danelaw to the east, the frontier between the two closely following the line of the great Roman road, the Watling Street, which later formed the north-eastern boundary of the county (Fig. 1). Whereas Danish influence on settlement along the eastern fringe of Warwickshire was slight and sporadic, in the adjoining counties of Northamptonshire and Leicestershire to the east it was very strong as the place-names indicate. There is no evidence to show whether Wormleighton was attacked at this time, but together with other places it was probably called upon to contribute in men, money, and goods to the defence of the shire and particularly of the Hundred of *Honesberie* to which it apparently belonged.

The charter of 956 is preserved in the cartulary of Abingdon, and it appears from a later charter<sup>1</sup> that the estate belonged to the Abbey for a period in the eleventh century, though they had lost it by 1066. From that remarkable national survey, Domesday Book, prepared for William of Normandy in 1086, one can obtain a good general picture of the social and economic geography of the vill of Wormleighton twenty years after the Norman Conquest. Unfortunately we know virtually nothing about the fate and changing fortunes of the local Anglo-Saxon lords and their peasantry during the early years of the Norman occupation. For example, we do not know whether those who had supported King Harold at the Battle of Hastings continued to organize local resistance for a time and whether their villages suffered in consequence. From the Domesday evidence it would seem that Norman control was quickly asserted in Wormleighton and neighbouring vills, and judging by the general paucity of Norman defensive works<sup>2</sup> of motte and bailey type in the area peaceful conditions quickly obtained. At the time of the Domesday Survey Wormleighton was divided into three estates, the largest of which was still in the hands of an English lord by the name of Turchil of Warwick who had granted it to a tenant called Warin who may or may not have lived in the village.<sup>3</sup> The size of Turchil's holding was 3 hides, a hide<sup>4</sup> being a conventional assessment unit comprising, in Warwickshire, 4 virgates. The remaining two estates were in Norman hands; that of the Count of Meulan, which comprised 1½ hides, was leased to a tenant called Gilbert; that of Geoffrey de Mandeville, amounting to only ¾ hide, was held by someone known as William.

Consolidating the information for the three estates in order to obtain an overall picture for the entire vill, one finds that there were no less than 14½ ploughlands in

<sup>1</sup> D. Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, i (1955), 537-9.

<sup>2</sup> See *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, i, 345-406.

<sup>3</sup> The complete Domesday entries for Wormleighton are given in *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, i, 316, 324, 335.

<sup>4</sup> Although a nominal figure of 120 acres is often stated as the approximate size of a hide, one should emphasize that the unit varied considerably from region to region. As the assessment was imposed from above, it would be rash to rely on the hidage as an index of the relative prosperity of different areas. See *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, i, 208.