

soon after the Norman Conquest to conform more closely with the architectural standards of the foreign lord.

In the century following the Domesday Survey the three separate manors in Wormleighton continued in being, but nothing more is heard of the Mandeville holding after 1221. The two remaining holdings appear to have been consolidated and their overlordship passed entirely into Norman hands, first to Henry de Newburgh, Earl of Warwick, and then to the Crown. Henry I seems to have granted the manor to his Chamberlain, Geoffrey de Clinton, whose son later gave the church of Wormleighton to Kenilworth Priory.¹ The high degree of organization that the Normans brought to their new land holdings, especially in the early years following the Conquest when the aim in the first flush of victory was to make their manors as profitable as possible, no doubt gave rise as we have seen to some increase in farming efficiency and intensity in Wormleighton and elsewhere. With the coming of peace and prosperity population numbers in many villages increased, being accompanied in some cases by the establishment of dependent hamlets. From the twelfth century onward the opportunities for expansion and further colonization were particularly good north of the Avon where large tracts of Arden woodland still remained to be cleared and settled.² In the Feldon, however, one suspects that not only was *Lebensraum* already considerably reduced, but also that the carrying capacity of many soils, particularly those of the heavy Lower Lias Clays intensively used by strong village communities for five centuries or more was rapidly reaching a limit. This limit was related to soil and climatic conditions on the one hand, and to complex social and economic factors, as well as to technological skill, on the other. Confirmation that saturation point had already been reached in many Feldon vills is contained in the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279 which have been very thoroughly analysed for the Hundreds of Stoneleigh and Kineton by Dr. J. B. Harley.³ Comparison of the recorded populations for Feldon vills between 1086 and 1279 shows that in general only slight increases of population had occurred in these two centuries, several vills had remained almost stationary, while in the Hundred of Kineton (which then included Wormleighton) seven parishes out of the forty examined showed slight decreases. Apart from John Peche, who held 2 carucates in demesne, and John Passelewe, who held a further 2 carucates of him, the landholding population in Wormleighton in 1279 amounted to 36 villeins holding 23¼ virgates, 6 freemen with 2¼ virgates, and 3 cottagers with 1 virgate, making a total of 47 recorded persons with 4 carucates and 26½ virgates. The recorded population was therefore very slightly below that of 1086, though the amount of ploughland would appear to have been greater, perhaps about one-third of the parish area then being arable.

It is tempting to conclude from this evidence, supported by data for other vills, that long before the Black Death had catastrophically upset the life of many villages

¹ W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), 404-5.

² P. N. Nicklin, 'The Early Historical Geography of the Forest of Arden', *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, lvi (1932), 71-76; B. K. Roberts, 'Moated Sites', *The Amateur Historian* (Winter 1962), 34-38, and maps facing p. 40; also 'Moated Sites in

Midland England', *supra* 26-37.

³ J. B. Harley, 'Population Trends and Agricultural Developments from the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279', *Economic History Review*, xi, no. 1 (August 1958), 8-18; also 'The Hundred Rolls of 1279', *The Amateur Historian*, Autumn 1961, 9-16.