

in the middle of the fourteenth century, stagnation in the growth of both population and farming resources had already been reached in parts of the Feldon. Lords of the manor must have struggled to increase or even maintain their profits, while village folk must have experienced increasing difficulty in getting an adequate livelihood from the land. Under such conditions of increasingly delicate equilibrium the influence of any disrupting forces—social and economic change, inclement weather, political unrest, famine, and disease—was acutely felt, and magnified, leaving its impress deeply on both man and land. It is interesting to consider to what extent the vulnerability of a parish to social and economic change was partly reflected in taxation returns. Thus, in the Lay Subsidy¹ of 1327 Wormleighton and Fenny Compton were assessed at 62s. and 61s. 4d. respectively, Ladbroke at 54s., Priors Hardwick at 35s., Hodnell at 22s., and Radbourn at 9s. 6d. The two latter places were depopulated by 1486, whereas the remainder still exist as villages today although, as we shall see later, Wormleighton must be treated as a special case. It may well be that the Lay Subsidy of 1327 had already foreshadowed the decline of Hodnell and Radbourn, whereas Wormleighton was still fairly prosperous, as the assessment suggests, though it, too, was to suffer later. The decline in Hodnell² must have been particularly pronounced, for the parish appears then to have included also Chapel Ascote and Watergall, both subsequently depopulated (Fig. 2). The number of taxpayers listed in the Subsidy and the magnitude of the total amount of tax paid for each vill also give some indication of the relative prosperity, and possibly population size, of the settlements. Thus, whereas in Radbourn 6 taxpayers subscribed a total of only 9s. 6d. and the 14 taxpayers of Hodnell only 22s., the corresponding figures for Wormleighton were 22 taxpayers (62s.), Fenny Compton 16 (61s. 4d.), Ladbroke 23 (54s.), and Priors Hardwick, owned by the Priory of Coventry, 18 (35s.). Among the taxpayers listed for Wormleighton in 1332³ and 1337 were Sir John Peche, who held the main manor, and Nicholas Passelewe, holding a sub-manor, while the remainder included a hayward, a smith, and a reeve. Although from the Lay Subsidies quoted above Wormleighton (parish area 2,425 acres in 1894) yielded slightly less than its neighbour Fenny Compton (2,157 acres in 1894), other evidence suggests that it was more prosperous. In Domesday times the value of the manor of Fenny Compton was only £6 compared with £15. 5s. 0d. for Wormleighton, while the recorded value of the Spiritualities in the Pope Nicholas *Valor*⁴ of 1291 were £7. 6s. 8d. and £10 respectively. Similarly, the recorded value of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs in the *Nonarum Inquisitiones*⁵ of 1342 amounted to £33. 6s. 8d. for Fenny Compton, but no less than £50 for Wormleighton.

¹ W. F. Carter and E. A. Fry, 'Lay Subsidy Roll of 1327 for Warwickshire', Supplement to *Transactions Midland Record Soc.* iii (1899), 1-12.

² The derogatory name *Schytenhodenhull*, applied to part of the manor from 1232 to 1401, may have reflected this decline. See *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, 132-3.

³ W. F. Carter, 'Lay Subsidy Roll for Warwickshire, 1332', *Dugdale Society Publications*, vi (1926), 27.

⁴ S. Ayscough and J. Caley (eds.), *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate Papae Nicholai IV circa 1291*. Record Commission (1809), 216-57. From the

nature of the entries these two manors were better compared as regards Spiritualities than as regards Temporalities, though the latter may be generally more useful.

⁵ G. Vanderzee (ed.), *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii*. Record Commission (1807), 438-48. In the 1342 figures quoted above for Fenny Compton and Wormleighton the recorded values of the ninth of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs have been multiplied by ten, to include the tithe and so give an overall index of wealth derived from agricultural production in these parishes.