

that had been destroyed by Sir Edward Raleigh,¹ the total destruction in Wormleighton around 1499 amounted to no less than 18 messuages and three cottages with an estimated population of about 85. That an enclosed, depopulated manor was now more valuable than one in which village folk still derived a livelihood from mixed farming may be judged by the fact that the annual rent due to the Crown from Wormleighton, which before depopulation had been £8, increased after enclosure to £13. 6s. 8d.² Similarly the value of the land to Cope rose from £40 to £60 per annum.³

Using aerial photographs, documentary evidence, and field investigations, an attempt has been made in Fig. 3 to reconstruct the fifteenth-century settlement pattern and rural landscape of the immediate neighbourhood of Wormleighton before the final depopulation. The major settlement, of village status, nestled on fairly well-drained land close to a stream about one-third of a mile from the church. In common with many Warwickshire villages, both past and present, the settlement seems to have consisted of two parallel rows of rectilinear homesteads and crofts separated by a long narrow green⁴ that extended from the ford, close by the road to Southam, south-east towards a suite of fishponds. Investigation with the aid of soil augers of the small mounds and long narrow banks forming the rectilinear mesh of former cottages, gardens, and closes, with their associated lanes, has revealed little stone walling, and one supposes that the homesteads on these heavy clays were simple thatched structures of timber, infilled with brushwood, clay, and daub. Immediately west of the village the moated house of former lords no longer formed an impressive sight, for it had been allowed to fall somewhat into disrepair after the widow of Sir John Peche ceased to occupy it. The site of the village and ancient manor-house stand out very clearly on the aerial photograph (Plate 6), though partly truncated by the canal that now cuts across the area. A second, but considerably smaller, cluster of homesteads may have occupied the dry slopes of the hill west of the church and the rectilinear outlines of former cottages and closes can be clearly seen in Plate 6. As one might expect, the church seems to have received few major additions during the fifteenth century, though the south porch (which could be either early fifteenth century or late fourteenth), the clerestory above the nave, and the rood-screen and loft were added then.

Prominent on Fig. 3 and Plate 6 are the fishponds (now dry), the largest of which was fed by the spring issuing half-way down the drift-capped hill. The controlled effluent from this large embanked pond seems to have led off from the north-east corner following a small runnel along its northern edge, to enter the smallest of the four fish-breeding tanks. Surplus water could be directed from the large pond down a small channel into the main stream in the bottom of the valley below, by-passing the

¹ W. Dugdale, (1656), p. 405.

² I. S. Leadam, ii. 483.

³ Ibid. 404. See also Spencer MSS. 1698 and 1699.

⁴ Villages and hamlets with their homesteads arranged around a central open space, or green, seem to have been common in many parts of England from Anglo-Saxon times at least. An examination of many lost village sites in England suggests that the green was often an important morphological feature. See M. W. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, pp. 32-

38, 54; also 'The Deserted Villages of Warwickshire', *Transactions Birmingham Archaeological Society*, lxxvi (1945-6), 78; H. Thorpe, 'The Green Village as a Distinctive Form of Settlement on the North European Plain', *Bulletin de la Société Belge d'Études Géographiques*, xxx, no. 1 (1961), 93-134; also the section and maps on Rural Settlement in *The British Isles: A Systematic Geography* published for the International Geographical Congress (1964).