

village (Plate 6). The size of the great square pond reminds one of the importance of fish-breeding in medieval times, a fact well borne out for Warwickshire by recent research by Mr. B. K. Roberts.<sup>1</sup> Before Wormleighton was enclosed in 1499 great open arable fields crossed by ridge and furrow lay around the village, and to give a general impression of this orderly patterned landscape the incidence of ridge and furrow, discernible both on the ground today and on aerial photographs such as Plate 6, has been plotted on Fig. 3. It is certainly not claimed that the ridge-and-furrow patterns seen today are all a direct relic from medieval times. One has only to look at the corrugations that cross the bed of the large drained fishpond to realize that many of these patterns have been etched on the landscape, or parts thereof, since the depopulation. Yet one must also bear in mind that many aspects of open-field patterns, particularly those contained within headlands and field ways, were semi-permanent features of the medieval landscape, and in Wormleighton, with such a strong pastoral tradition after enclosure, the surviving ridge-and-furrow grid may still give a reasonable picture of the topographic framework of strip cultivation during the fifteenth century. Recent research work on ridge and furrow has also led one to think that the actual pattern of ridges and furrows may have changed very little during several centuries of cultivation. Co-aration in medieval times on the Lower Lias Clay of Wormleighton would have found ridging a great convenience, not only in identifying strips of land but more particularly for ensuring good drainage in times of excessive rainfall. Unfortunately little is known about the nature of the field-system that was operated at Wormleighton itself in medieval times, though four compact fields survive as names on the estate plan of 1634. On the Bishop of Worcester's vill in the neighbourhood a two-field system was favoured, and this may well have been customary over extensive areas of the southern Feldon.<sup>2</sup> By contrast further north three-field and four-field farming was often practised.

The aerial photograph (Plate 6) reveals a remarkable variety of ground patterns, some of which are residual elements from the pre-depopulation landscape, whereas others, particularly the hedgerows and buildings other than the church, are more recent. In describing aerial photographs of 'lost village' sites many research workers have tended at times to see the present landscape merely as a doubly exposed photographic plate, one horizon revealing skeletal features of the old village organism, the other containing 'modern' features that are still viable topographic elements, though such features as roads may yet be very old beneath the surface. As will be seen later, the years immediately following the abandonment of a settlement were often associated not only with the destruction of all or part of the old village or hamlet, but also with further alteration of the landscape to meet the needs of the changed economy. Thus many closes and folds, as well as great pastures strongly hedged, banked, and ditched, were fashioned from former open fields and village remnants. Surviving

<sup>1</sup> B. K. Roberts, 'Moated Sites in Midland England,' *supra* p. 30. Mr. Roberts was formerly engaged in post-graduate research in the Department of Geography, University of Birmingham, and will shortly submit a dissertation entitled 'Settlement. Population and Land Use in the Western Portion of the Forest of Arden, 1086-1350'. I am indebted to him for help

in locating various unpublished manuscripts relating to Wormleighton.

<sup>2</sup> See H. L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (1915), pp. 499-500; R. H. Hilton, 'Social Structure of Rural Warwickshire in the Middle Ages', *Dugdale Society* (1950), pp. 22-25.