

other pools, and the shrunken remnants of Crane Mere. Although the amount of woodland would certainly suggest that Sir John Spencer I's policy of planting trees had been sound, it is again likely that some of this lay along the steep scarp in adjoining parishes, though the map of 1634, to be discussed in detail later, shows several square copses or coverts set amid the large enclosed pastures (Fig. 6).

Unfortunately no reference is made in the above account to the great house at Wormleighton which was often used as the home of a married son or other close relative now that the main seat of the family was at Althorp. A large shearing yard¹ and a great wool barn² are known to have adjoined Wormleighton house, and in the summer of 1577 a great deal of the wool from close on 10,000 sheep known to have been shorn that year on all the Spencer estates probably passed through this great barn. The purchasers of Spencer wool during the sixteenth century are not known, and one wonders what quantity of wool, if any, went to local cloth centres such as Coventry. Early in the seventeenth century a single buyer or a partnership took the entire clip, most of which went outside the local area to places like Norwich or London.³ How great the clip might be is shown by a valuation of no less than £1,500 for that in the woolhouse at Wormleighton in February 1628.⁴ That this was not exceptional may be judged by Dr. Finch's calculation that Robert, first Baron Spencer of Wormleighton, received £1,067. 7s. od. for wool and £1,539 for stock in his London accounts for the winter of 1610-11.⁵

In 1519 John Spencer I had stressed the importance of his 'brede of cattell' which referred to both sheep and cattle, and one cannot doubt that breeding stock formed the backbone of the great grazing enterprise. For example, in October 1576 the breeding flock to be carried forward to the next year amounted to 5,286 female sheep and 251 rams requiring extensive grazing and supplementary winter feed.⁶ Unfortunately, the figures for cattle are not available, but from various references it is clear that they were an important subsidiary at both Wormleighton and Althorp.⁷ The local landscape at this time must have presented a most colourful picture with closely segregated flocks of lambs, hoggerels, breeding ewes, rams, and wethers grazing the great hedged and ditched pastures with smaller pens holding stock selected for sale or slaughter. In smaller closes, near to water, cattle and horses were to be seen, while along the trampled green roads flocks and herds were being driven to new pastures or to markets. Aloof from this constant movement were the strongly hedged corn fields on the hill, and the narrower meadows glistening with water in the valley bottom. An entry in the Shepherds' Charges gives a list of the sheep counted in several closes of Wormleighton on 14 October 1580 and most of the closes named can be identified on the estate map of 1634. Thus in the great pasture of 'Sherton hill' there were 860 store ewes, in the 'great meadow' 79, and in 'Burmesleys Close' 60. Carefully separated were 135 store rams in 'the one part of the Town Hill', and 54 more in 'the nether part'.⁸ Local sales of fat stock, surplus lambs, and calves to local butchers, such as

¹ Shown on the estate map of 1634.

² M. D. Harris, *Some Manors, Churches and Villages of Warwickshire* (1937), p. 165.

³ M. E. Finch, p. 45 and footnote.

⁴ Spencer, MSS., no. 1879.

⁵ M. E. Finch, p. 46.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷ *Vide* Early Spencer Papers, Shepherds' Charges, Box 11, for references to sheep, bullocks, and colts in 1515-16. and to sheep and cattle in 1576. See also M. E. Finch, p. 44, footnote.

⁸ Early Spencer Papers, Box 11.