

on their pastures remained high until 1628, after which a slow reduction may have set in while the Spencers debated whether or not to seek alternative forms of revenue.<sup>1</sup> In the previous half-century an increasingly important supplementary source of income had been derived from the leasing of land on those Spencer estates, distant from Wormleighton and Althorp, which do not appear to have been closely concerned with their grazing interests at that time. The rents derived from such leaseholds had been slowly increasing, and these sums may have insulated the family from the main shock of falling wool prices. The opportunities for leasing more enclosed land to upstart farmers, anxious to set up on their own as general producers of grain and livestock produce on compact holdings of a few hundred acres, were good, and the Spencers lost no time in taking advantage of this. Furthermore, small speculators could easily be found who, having seen the great profits that had been made in wool and meat, were now eager to try their hand at the grazing business hoping that the fall in wool prices was only temporary. Once again the change-over from stock ranching on great enclosed pastures to mixed farming by small leaseholders left its mark on the landscape.

By 1634 William, Lord Spencer, now a Knight of the Bath, appears to have made the decision to sub-divide even his lands in Wormleighton into compact blocks for leasing to tenants. It was even rumoured in February that year that some of the Wormleighton pastures might be leased for ploughing,<sup>2</sup> though in practice this probably did not come about for several years. It is most significant, however, that a large-scale estate plan of Wormleighton and Stoneton should have been made from a survey by Richard Norwood that year, and I am greatly indebted to the present earl for kindly allowing me to trace and photograph this.<sup>3</sup> Fig. 6, which incorporates data from the Wormleighton portion of the map, shows not only the well-enclosed character of the parish in 1634 but also the distribution of the recorded arable and meadow land. One should stress that the enclosed fields were still very large by modern standards, as a comparison of Figs. 6 and 7 will indicate. A large block of arable land lay south-east of the settlement, and many of the pastures, which were equally large, carried a rectangular spinney or covert in the centre. Two of the large pastures north of 'The Old Town' (the 'lost' village site) show signs of recent subdivision, for in each a spinney now adjoins two minor field divisions of apparently later date. The tracts of meadow were generally smaller, though that adjoining Fenny Compton Meadow may also show signs of recent subdivision. The site of the depopulated village had by now taken on the character of a great park for the large red-brick manor-house on the hill. Trees adorned the land around the fishponds which, though still holding water, had relinquished their old function and had become ornamental pools. So Wormleighton conformed in a modest way to the custom of the time, so well expressed in Christopher Saxton's map of Warwickshire and Leicestershire for 1576, that the fine house of a great lord should have its park.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. E. Finch, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from George Carter to William, Lord Spencer, in Spencer unlabelled folder.

<sup>3</sup> Since writing this account a similar map, also dated 1634, of enclosed Spencer pastures in Radbourn has been found in the County Record Office, Warwick

(reference number CR. 732). This would appear to confirm that the Spencers were having their lands accurately surveyed at this time preparatory to making leases on a large scale.

<sup>4</sup> P. D. A. Harvey and H. Thorpe, *The Printed Maps of Warwickshire, 1576-1900* (1959), pp. 2-5.