

Gone were the small stock pens, while the sluices that once controlled the entry of water into the small runnels that formerly drenched the meadows had silted up or rotted away. The village, aligned along the street axis, had three major components; the core of the settlement comprised the impressive manor-house with its fine gateway, walls, and great barns; south of this was a cluster of homesteads grouped along the street and bordering a small green with a 'stockbank'¹ or pinfold for stray cattle; finally, to the north, a smaller group of homesteads nestled near the church, with an outlying windmill a quarter of a mile to the east. Apart from a single homestead near the sand-pits, everyone lived in the village. This particular homestead was probably the first farmstead to spring up outside the village, having perhaps developed from the former cottage of a master shepherd now occupying a convenient central position within Lease No. 1. The double hedges shown on Fig. 6, although only remnants of the former pattern, preserve enough order and alinement to show that an important part of their function was to prevent the trespass of stock on both arable and meadow within Wormleighton parish, on the adjoining open fields of Claydon and Boddington, and within the village itself. Of particular interest on the estate map of 1634 is the subdivision of land in the parish of Wormleighton into four great 'charges', apparently meaning leases, with a further two charges in Stoneton,² each charge being a well-balanced grazing unit with grass, meadow, and water. On the original map each 'charge' bears the name of the individual either renting or responsible for the land, and it would seem most likely that the map had been expressly made to record the areas covered by each lease.³ Those in Wormleighton, which were apparently held in 1634 by Thomas Sherborne, Thomas Rite, Aron Gibbe, and John Shrewsburie, were more or less of the same size, averaging *c.* 500 acres (Fig. 6). The field names, which unfortunately could not be inserted legibly on Fig. 6, also suggest that at some time prior to 1634 each 'charge' had formed the nucleus of a single block of land. Thus 'Thomas Sherborne's Charge' (No. 1) embraced 'My Lady's Field' and 'Lady's Meadow', while that of Thomas Rite (No. 2) covered a former 'Windmill Field' now subdivided into three. Similarly the nucleus of No. 3 had once been called 'Shirton Hill' and No. 4 accorded closely with a former 'Banbury Field'. It is possible that these record an earlier four-field structure of pre-depopulation times. Leases Nos. 1, 2, and 3 on Fig. 6 apparently contained no arable land in 1634, and it might appear from this that at first the Spencers thought it advisable to maintain their land under grass and may well have sold part of their local stock to the first leaseholders. At least one of these leases must have changed hands very quickly, for Dr. Finch records that in 1636 Lord Spencer leased a holding of 442 acres to a Matthew Clarke for twelve years at an annual rent of £489. 8s. *od.* which amounts to no less than 22s. an acre.⁴ The size of this holding would seem to agree very closely with one of the 'charges' mentioned above. Within two years Matthew Clarke, having found that stock-raising had lost its profitability, refused to pay his rent saying that it was too dear; he also removed his stock, some of which he had bought from Lord Spencer in

¹ A stone 'bus shelter was built on the site of the old pound or pinfold in 1955.

² The blocks of land and their stock may once have been the responsibility of separate master shepherds employed by the Spencers.

³ Although it is not unusual to find later data superimposed on estate maps, the information on that of 1634 seems to date from one period only.

⁴ M. E. Finch, p. 48 and footnote 5.