

Domesday Lighthorne, How the Village was Assessed in 1087 A.D.

by Peter Hinman (2000)

Following the English revolt against Norman rule in 1076, the Norman Kings sought to reduce the power of the English Lords to prevent further insurrections. The bishops, having the only organised literate workforce, were ordered to assess the value of land in their diocese, ostensibly for tax purposes. The survey was subsequently used to dispossess virtually all of those landowners who had held land under King Harold. Within ten years most of the lands, including the bishoprics, had been transferred to Norman or French owners. This included men who had supported the Norman cause such as Thorkell of Warwick and Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester.

The following text was edited and printed by Abraham Farley in 1783. (Taken from the Phillimore publication "Domesday Book, Warwickshire".)

XXIX. TERRA WILLI Buenualleth IN TREMELAV HUND.
Wills Buenualleth ten de rege LISTECORNE. Ibi sunt
.v. hidæ p̄t inland. Tra. ē . xviii . caŕ. In dñio sunt . ii . caŕ.
7 vii . serui . 7 xix . uillti 7 ix . bord cū p̄bro hñt . vi . caŕ.
Ibi . xxx . ac̄ p̄ti . 7 una Graua . ii . q̄rent l̄g . 7 xx . p̄tiē lat̄.
Valuit . c . solid . Modo . vii . lib̄ . Radulf⁹ tenuit.

This translates as "Land of William Bonvallet, in Tremelau Hundred. William Bonvalleth holds Lighthorne from the King. 5 hides, beside the inland. Land for 18 ploughs. In lordship 2 ploughs; 7 slaves. 19 villagers and 9 smallholders with a priest have 6 ploughs. Meadow 30 acres; a copse 2 furlongs long and 20 Perches wide. The value was 100s; now £7. Earl Ralph held it."

The inland, about 230 acres, was held by Bonvalleth himself. He worked this with 7 slaves. Slavery was a Saxon practice which the Normans tried to abolish. Most slaves were captured in Ireland, but some criminals and prisoners were also made slaves. The rest of the Parish comprised about 600 acres of ploughland which was divided into strips, 30 acres of meadow and a small coppice, plus common grazing known as wasteland. Most of the wasteland lay to the east of the lane to Heath Farm. The ploughland and meadow was worked by 19 villeins, who supported themselves from holdings of 20 to 100 acres, 9 smallholders, usually with less than 10 acres, who added to their income by some rural craft such as masonry, carpentry, shearing, butchering or weaving. The villeins and smallholders would be liable to work for several days a year for the lord, as well as doing military service, as payment for their land holding.

The level fields stretching from Dark Lane bridge to the Fosse Way were the principle meadowlands and the coppice was probably where the Dark Lane copse is today. The priest probably worked a smallholding. No church is mentioned so services would have been in the open around the preaching cross, the remains of which can be seen in the churchyard.

Ralph, who held the land under Harold, was the Earl of Hereford. He was known as 'Ralph the Timid' because of his lack of military support for Harold in 1066.