

Medieval Hammerwich

Introduction

The modern settlement of Hammerwich is situated approximately 5km west of the Cathedral city of Lichfield and 2.5km from the Roman fort of Wall (Letocetvm, 'The Grey Woods'). The Roman fort at Wall sat at the crossroads of two major cross country routes: Watling Street (A5) and Icknield Way. These ancient pathways provided Hammerwich with important trade and distribution routes. Hammerwich lay within that portion of Cannock forest which became Cannock Chase in the 13th century (B.H.O., doc.2, 1).

The King William inquest evidence for Hammerwich

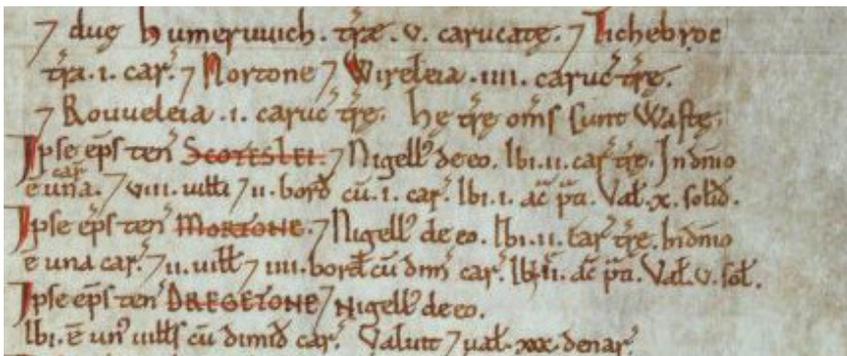


Figure 1. Part of *Domesday Book* for Staffordshire which records two Hammerwiches (T.N.A., E31/2/2/1922).

The following translation has been provided by The National Archives (T.N.A.)

“IN OFFLOW HUNDRED

The bishop himself holds **LICHFIELD** with its appendages. The church itself held it. There are 25 ½ hides and 1 virgate of land. There is land for 73 ploughs. In demesne are 10 ploughs, and 10 slaves; and 42 villans and 12 bordars having 21 ploughs; and 5 canons have 3 ploughs there. There are 35 acres of meadow, and 2 mills rendering 4s. It was and is worth 15l.

To this manor belong these members; Packington, land for 4 ploughs; and the two Hammerwiches [Hammerwich], 5 carucates of land; and Stychbrook, land for 1 plough; and Norton Canes and Little Wyrley, 4 carucates of land; and Rowley, 1 carucate of land.

All these lands are waste.”

Although the two Hammerwiches have 5 carucates of land between them, they were not being cultivated and were classified as waste land. Therefore we can assume minimal occupation and that it was of no value to the King. The 5 carucates would amount to around (5x110) 550 acres of land (one carucate of ploughland being as much land as one team [of eight oxen] can plough in an annual season; estimates vary but generally thought to be around 100-120 acres).

The Hammerwich estates in 1086 CE were owned by Robert de Limesey, the Bishop of Chester and were held and managed on his behalf by the priest of Saint Chads as part of his manor of Litchfield (later Longdon). They were not subinfeudated as manors but were held of the Bishop by freeholders (S.H.C.67). A portion of the land became part of the Farewell manor. In c.1140, the then bishop made an endowment to the nuns of Farewell priory which included half a hide held by ‘Haminch’ (or possibly Hamon?) of Hammerwich. Half of the estate was to be held by the nuns in demesne and half by Haminch heirs as tenants of the nuns. In c.1155, Henry II confirmed the nuns in their possession of a curucate in Hammerwich with villains, a free man named ‘Hamon the fiddler’ and the lands of those tenants and pasture which had belong to the estate in 1135 (V.C.H., 69). The nuns’ estate in Hammerwich remained part of the Farewell manor, which was granted to the dean and chapter on the priory’s suppression in 1527 and to Lord Paget in 1550 (V.C.H., 70).

Hammerwich's population, wealth and status 1300-1400 AD

In 1300 Henry Wymer held a windmill in Hammerwich. It is the earliest windmill in Staffordshire to have a definite record (S.I.A.S. 211). The location of the windmill in Hammerwich would suggest that it was the local centre for agriculture at the peak of population growth in Britain. The population increased from about 2 million in 1086 to 5 or 6 million in 1347 (Miller *et. al.*, 1978, 28-9. also see Woolgar *et. al.* 2006, 239). Peas and oats were grown at Hammerwich in 1359–60, and rye, peas, and oats were sown there in the later 1370s.

The most widely available sources of social and economic information for this period are the Lay Subsidies of 1327, 1334, and the Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381.

Lay Subsidies

Lay subsidies were granted by Parliament to the Crown in the form of taxes on the personal wealth of the laity. People paid taxes based upon the value of their moveable goods, mainly on crops and stock rather than on land or buildings (Glasscock, 1975, 13). Although some early examples survive from the twelfth century, they survive most widely from the first half of the fourteenth century, especially under Edward III.

The Lay Subsidy's of 1327.

Homerwych. (Offlow Hundred)

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
De Will'mo le Bonde	ij.	
Galfrido Swetelove	ij.	
Henr' Dolben		xviiij.

Joh'e Odames		xij.
Thoma Attewal		vj.
Nich'o Odames		vj.
Agneti Atte Mor		vj.
Christiana Atte		vj.
Henr' Atte hul		vj.
Henr' de Barre		vj.
Adam Bacun	ij.	
Galfr' le Stedemon		vj.
Ric'o de Hondesacre	ij.	
Henr' filio Gilberti		vj.
Ric'o le Bercher		viiij.
Ric'o Crouke		vj.
Rob'to Sterre		vij. qu.
Ric'o Deward		vj. ob. qu.
Rob'to filio Roberti		vj.
Adam Sterre		vj.
Nich'o Odam		vj.
Galfr' de Overton		vj. ob. qu.
Will'o de Overton		xij.
Editha del Overton	ij.	
Marg'ia del Overton		vj.
Alicia de Harpeleye		viiij.
Ric'o de Esyngton	iiij.	
Nic'o del Heth	ij.	
Rad'o de Hopton		xij.
Rog' de Overton		xij.
Summa	xxx.s. vj. d. ob. qu. p'b'	

Figure 2. The 1327 Lay Subsidy for Hammerwich (B.H.O., doc.1).

From the 1327 Lay Subsidy taxes in Fig.2 above, it is noted that in Homerwych some thirty people were assessed at a twentieth of the value of their moveable goods. Two of them, Ric'o Deward and Galfr' de Overton have the reference of 'ob' (*obiit*) meaning 'he died' and 'qu' (*quaestor*) meaning that the death had probably been certified by a magistrate or legal equivalent. The total Lay Subsidy paid by the

people of Homerwych in 1327 was (xxx.s vj.d) which is equal to 30s and 5d (j in this case defining the end of the sum although some clerks at the time used the j to equal 1 for clarity).

Lay Subsidy 1332-3

In 1332 the Lay Subsidy was fixed at either one tenth for boroughs and ancient demesnes or one fifteenth for rural areas (Glasscock 1975, 14). Certain items were exempt from the tax and those whose moveable items taken together were valued at less than a minimum threshold were not required to pay (less than ten shillings in rural areas and six in boroughs and ancient demesnes (Glasscock 1975, 22). It is possible that some people in Hammerwich came below this threshold and thus are not recorded as living in the village.

Homerswych (Hammerwich, Offlow Hundred 1332-3).

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
De Will'o le Bounde	v.	iiij.
Galfr' le Sweyn	v.	iiij.
Thom' fil' Walt'i		xvj.
Henr' Dobbe	iiij.	
X'piana Attemosse		xij.
Thom' de Hulton'		xij.
Henr' de Barre	iiij.	iiij.
Ric'o le Shepeherde	iiij.	iiij.
Rico' de Hondesacre	v.	iiij.
Ric'o Cronke	iiij.	iiij.
Adam Sterre	ij.	
Rog'o de Overton'	ij.	viiij.
Adam Bacoun	ij.	

Figure 3. The Lay Subsidy for 1332-3 (B.H.O. doc. 3)

Thirteen people in Hammerwich are assessed for the 1332-3 Lay Subsidy. The total Lay Subsidy paid by the residents of Hammerwich in 1332-3 was 32s : 1d (again, assuming j represents the end of the number and not 1). Although the number of people in Hammerwich paying tax in 1332-3 was reduced to less than half of those paying tax in 1327, they are actually paying more in taxes in order to support the King in various wars.

By 1334, 'Homerwych' as part of the 'Offlow Hundred' was assessed at £2 : 4s : 6d (Glasscock 1975, 280). Most of the people who paid would probably have been heads of household. The 1334 tax system differed from its predecessors by moving away from a direct tax on the wealth of individuals since corruption was an issue with earlier systems. The earlier tax systems were replaced in 1334 by one whereby every community agreed upon a sum to pay and hence there is no breakdown or list of what individuals paid. This sum was negotiated but could not be less than the sum of the tax paid in 1332 (Glasscock, 1975, 14). The increase in the amount of Lay Subsidy paid by Hammerwich would suggest an increase in its population, status and wealth which also coincides with a general population increase in Britain prior to the Black Death of 1348.

The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381.

The Poll Tax was levied at the rate of one groat (about 1.5 p) per head on all males and females aged fourteen and over. Exceptions to this tax were the beneficed clergy who were taxed separately, and 'mendicant friars' who paid no tax at all. The 1377 Poll Tax was granted in the context of the imminent threat to national security from the combined French and Castilian armada (B.H.O. doc.3). The 1377 tax was

collected on a county basis by local collectors who went from house to house and street to street collecting the money. Document 240/259/4/148 under E179/177/19m2/E179 in 1377 as part of the Offlow Hundred records for Hammerwich: Thomas Bonde 'C' (collector) and Rogerus Overton' & Robertus Sweetlove 'PH' (*Probi Hominess* meaning: good and lawful men, competent on point of law to serve on juries) (Fenwick 2001, 470). In the 1381 poll tax for Hammerwich, these three people paid 18d each and were obviously prominent people of the 'superior' part of the village. (The spelling of names varies slightly between documents, such variation being quite common)

The 1381 Poll Tax assessment for Hammerwich

Homerwych'		
Hammerwich		
Thoma le Bonde	cult'	18d
Rogero de Overton'	cult'	18d
Roberto Suetelove	cult'	18d
Agn' de Overton'		12d
Johanne filio Rogeri de Overton'	s'	12d
Johanne Hopkyns	cult'	2s 0d
Sibilla ux' eius		
Rogero Parnel	cult'	12d
Agn' Parnel vidua		18d
Rogero filio predictae Agn'	s'	12d
Roberto del Overton'	cult'	12d
Sibilla ux' eius		
Ricardo le Walsh'	bercar'	12d
Alicia Bewesere vidua		12d
Adhuc Homerwych' superius		
E179/177/22/2 c.3		
Adhuc Homerwych'		
Roberto le Webbe	cult'	18d
Johanna ux' eius		12d
Alicia le Wright'		9d
Waltero Bron'	laborar'	12d
Willelmo Gentil	s'	9d
Christiana Suetelove vidua		6d
Hugone de Bowelond	cult'	18d
Emmota ux' eius		
Johanna ux' Thome le Bonde		12d
Adam le Bonde	s'	12d
Johanne filio Roberti Suetelove		12d
Agn' Suetelove		12d
Henrico Sterr'	s'	12d
Johanne filio Roberti le Webbe		12d
Summa den' 28s 0d probata		
de 28 ca'		

Figure 3. 1381 Poll Tax assessment for Hammerwich (Fenwick 2001, 489).

The 1379 and 1381 Poll Tax assessments used a sliding scale so that the rich paid more than the poor. The scale graduates upwards; so that the minimum payment was set at one groat. The average payment was two groats in 1379 and three groats in 1381. The graduation was set according to rank, profession, public office or occupation (Midgley, 1970, 2). The consequence of the raised taxation was widespread evasion of taxes. Widespread evasion affects the accuracy of the assessments with regard to population figures (Postan 1972, 30-31) for settlements such as Hammerwich and can range from 3.6 people per household to 5. However the Poll Tax assessment does give us an indication of the occupations of the inhabitants of Hammerwich. For example: in fig. 3 table, eight were listed as (cult') would probably be cultivators, there was one labarar, (labourer) and one bercar (leather worker).

The Poll Tax paid by the twenty eight people totals 28s 0d in the 1381 assessment. Although there was an increase in taxes there was a reduction from the total amount of taxes paid in the 1334 assessment of £2 : 4s : 6d. (a fall of 16s, which might represent up to 20 people). One explanation for this reduction could be due to the Black Death which probably caused a reduction of the available work force to manage and to work the land. Hammerwich with its closeness to major trade routes would be particularly vulnerable to the spread of plague.

Previous assessments for Hammerwich only mention one settlement or were assessed as one, but in the 1381 assessment it is split into two (see fig. 3 above). One section has the title of 'Adluc Homerwych' superius' meaning 'so far or thus far Homerwych superior'. This would indicate that the upper part of the Hammerwich

table is of higher status and was probably part of the Farewell manor held and farmed in demesne by the nuns of Farewell Priory. Farewell Priory was also receiving rents from other estates including Hammerwich. Farewell Priory held 'leet' jurisdiction over Hammerwich meaning a yearly or half yearly court of record which could be held by lords of certain manors (D. & C. Lich.).

Why record two Hammerwiches in *Domesday*?

The recording in *Domesday* of two Hammerwiches probably relates to the modern prefixes of 'Great and Little' settlements such as the Haywards near Shugborough and the Saredons south-west of Cannock. Today, there is only one modern village with the name of Hammerwich. It is suggested by Cannock Chase History society that the smaller of the two settlements listed in *Domesday* no longer exists. It has also been suggested that this smaller settlement must lie in close proximity to the modern surviving settlement of Hammerwich. This lost settlement of Hammerwich is thought to lie only one-quarter mile to the south-east where a number of roads converge and Hammerwich Place Farm is located; it is also thought significant that Hammerwich Hall (farm) is placed closer to this area than the modern village.

(www.CannockChaseHistory.org.uk).

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- S.R.O. 71, Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford. (W.) 1734/2/1/598, mm. 47–8, 60;

D. (W.) 1734/2/1/603, m. 6.

V.C.H. 70, Victoria County History Staffs. iii. 166, 224; below, local govt. For the bounds in 1574 see S.R.O., D. (W.) 1734/2/3/57

Woolgar, Serjeantson, and Waldron, 2006, *Food in Medieval England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Appendix 1

One of the most prominent families to be associated with Hammerwich is the Stanleys. The Stanleys held property in Hammerwich of the Longdon manor (formerly part of the Offlow Hundred) in the 15th century (S.R.O. 71). George Stanley, a younger son of Thomas Stanley held an estate in Hammerwich of the Bishop by 1475 and was described as 'Lord of Hammerwich' in the 1480s (S.R.O. 73). George Stanley died in 1508 and his son then held three messuages and meadow in Hammerwich at his death in 1534.

Appendix 2

Some incidentals that came up as part of the research

Thomas de Clopton sued John de Hondesacre and Isabella, his wife in a plea that they should carry out a covenant made between them respecting sixteen acres of land and four acres of meadow in Homerwych. The defendants did not appear, and the Sheriff was ordered to attach them for the Octaves of Hillary.

'Plea Rolls for Staffordshire: 14 Edward III', *Staffordshire Historical Collections*, vol. 11 (1890), pp. 100-108.

William de Halsheye of Churleye had feloniously killed Thomas Deu vos garde of Homerwych at Churleye.

From: 'Gaol Delivery for Staffordshire: 34 Edward I', Staffordshire Historical Collections, vol. 7, part 1 (1886), pp. 154-172.

No. 43. On the Quindene of St. Hillary. 19 E. III.

Between Thomas de Clopton, Clerk, complainant, and Thomas de Hulton, and Leticia his wife, deforciant of a messuage, fifty-six acres of land, three acres of meadow, seven acres of moor, and 2s. 5d. of rent in Homerwych.

Thomas de Hulton and Leticia remit all their right to Thomas de Clopton and his heirs, for which Thomas de Clopton gave them 100 marks of silver.

No. 44. On the Quindene of St. Hillary. 19 E. III.

Between Thomas de Clopton, Clerk, complainant, and John de Hondesacre, Carpenter, and Isabella his wife, deforciant of a messuage, eight acres of land, and one acre of moor in Homerwych.

John and Isabella remit all their right to Thomas and his heirs, for which Thomas gave them 20 marks of silver.

From: 'Staffordshire Fines: 11-20 Edward III', Staffordshire Historical Collections, vol. 11 (1890), pp. 141-160.

An assize, &c., if Thomas de Hamstide, father of Thomas, son of Thomas de Hamstide, was seised in his demesne, &c., of 3s. rent in Homerwych when he died, and of which Robert Russel had deforced him; Robert called Richard fitz Wydo to

warranty, who came and warranted the rent to him. The jury find in favour of Thomas, and Richard is to compensate Robert from other tenements.

From: 'Staffordshire Assize Roll: 56 Henry III', Staffordshire Historical Collections, vol. 4 (1883), pp. 191-215.

There were two shepherds among Farewell priory's free tenants in Hammerwich in 1318, (fn. 200) and sheep farming continued there, with the extensive heathland providing grazing.

From: 'Townships: Hammerwich', A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 14: Lichfield (1990), pp. 258-273.