

Chapter Two: The Normans and the medieval period

The Earl of Mercia was not involved in the battle of Hastings. Probably of more significance (at the time) were the battles immediately preceding Hastings where King Harold faced his brother Tostig and Hardrada, King of Norway. The Earl of Mercia (Edwin, Algar's teenage son) and his local army joined Harold at Fulford, just outside York. The untested Mercian army held the line against the Norsemen until Hardrada himself led a ferocious counter-attack that left much of the Mercian army dead. While Fulford was a defeat for Harold – and for our local soldiers - the subsequent battle of Stamford Bridge was a great victory and the Vikings fled to their boats.

The battle of Stamford Bridge was on 25th September 1066 and, by the 27th, William Duke of Normandy finally set sail for England. Harold hurried south to a fate we know well.

But he hurried without the wounded Mercian army – and that fact alone meant that in the early days of Norman rule, Mercia did not fare too badly. William was busy consolidating his new conquest and, as they had not fought and died at Hastings, the structure of the lesser nobility in Mercia was at least partly still in place. However, this was an uneasy peace and, in 1068, Mercia was at the heart of a rebellion against Norman rule. The direct cause of the rebellion seems to have been the failure of a marriage proposal by Edwin to William's daughter. William hurried from Exeter (where he was putting down another rebellion in Easter 1068) and gathered an army round him at Warwick castle. He then marched from Warwick to Nottingham along the road we now know as the Ashby Road. His retribution in Mercia was severe and villages along his route were laid completely to waste – so, even in the Domesday Book 18 years later, settlements such as Measham and Oakthorpe are simply labelled as 'waste'. The Norman chronicler Oderic Vitalis has William saying, *"I fell on the English counties like a raving lion subjecting them to the calamity of a cruel famine and by so doing ... became a barbarous murderer of many thousands, young and old."*

By the time of Domesday, Staffordshire still had the third smallest population of any county with only diminutive Rutland and distant Cornwall having smaller numbers of inhabitants. Staffordshire had only five hundreds (areas of local government) whereas Sussex had 58 and Kent 68. To reinforce his rule, William took direct ownership of many Mercian manors, including Alrewas, so, at the time of Domesday, Edingale (but not Croxall) was owned and held directly by the monarch.

After consolidating his hold on the land, William's next step was to fortify it. Locally, that meant the complete reconstruction of the Anglo-Saxon castle at Tamworth and its replacement by a building that is at the core of the present-day structure. Other castles followed at Tutbury, Stafford, Chartley and Ashby.

Having fortified his land, William then wanted to tax it – this was the primary purpose of the Domesday Book.

The Domesday Book

Domesday is really a symbol of what Norman rule meant in England: it was part of a slow move towards taxation as a means of revenue raising and it illustrates the ever-stronger grip of central administration. Each village had to send its priest or headman (reeve) to a local centre to give on oath answers to set questions, which were recorded and held in a store in London called Domus Dei – House of God – from which the name of the record is derived. Domesday entries for our parish, with Alrewas as a comparator, are as follows.

	Alrewas	Edingale (Staffordshire)	Croxall	Edingale (Derbyshire)
Holders of the land in 1066	Earl Algar	Earl Algar	Siward	Siward
Holder in 1086	The King	The King	Henry de Ferrers	Henry de Ferrers
Hides (Saxon) or caracutes (Danish). A hide being roughly 120 acres and a caracute being a plough team capable of ploughing 60-80 acres	3 hides (approx 360 acres arable land)	3 caracutes (around 240 acres of arable land)	3 caracutes	3 caracutes
Villeins – holders of land in the common fields/Bordars – poor peasants	6 villeins and 20 bordars	20 villeins holding (many) caracutes	35 villeins and 11 bordars	4 villeins
Acres of hay meadow	24		22	
Slaves (not found in areas of Danish influence)	1	-	-	-
Ploughs			Others, 8 ploughs. Demesne, 2 ploughs	
Area of woodland	1 league x ½ league	3 furlong x 1 furlong	2 furlong x 1 furlong	3 furlongs x 1 furlong
Worth 1066	£10	40 shillings	60 shillings	-
Worth 1086	£11	40 shillings	80 shillings	-
Other assets	Eel fishery		2 mills	-

Domesday entries for the parish

As ever, there is confusion even here about the split personality of Edingale: the table assumes that there are three relevant entries for Edingale – one each for east and west Edingale and one for Croxall. This is the most logical – but not the only – reading of the text.

So what conclusions can we draw from these entries? First, the Danish influence in measures, terms and customs in the lands east of the Trent are self evident, and underpin the importance of the ancient Danelaw split. ‘Staffordshire’ Edingale measures its land in caracutes – and so was part of the Danelaw even though Alrewas was not.

Secondly, Staffordshire Edingale (remember, this means the eastern part of the present village and the land towards Lullington and Raddle) was poor – but there were no people noted of slave or peasant rank. While there were only six villeins in Alrewas and two in Catton, there was a total of 59 in Edingale and Croxall. In so far as the entry can be understood, there was little common land for hay: the villeins held the land directly. The same land pattern followed right through to the inclosures of the eighteenth century: in a nutshell, there is not much influence of a ‘big house’ in Edingale. Several small landholders are each looking after their own. Perhaps they were more yeoman than villein? It is worth noting that Oakley – then a populated village – was entered as one of the three parts of Elford (which was one of the most prosperous local villages). To confuse us completely, it is entered in hides not caracutes, being two hides in extent, with land for four ploughs and valued at 20 shillings.

Finally, Croxall has two mills. Clearly, we can guess with some certainty where one of them lay (broadly where the farm bearing its name is today), but there is no subsequent record of a second mill, and it would make sense if it had been much closer to Edingale.

After William died, his throne passed to his son, William Rufus. On William II’s death, England was again unstable: a thirty-year civil war decided the succession between Henry I and Stephen. Henry II became the first Plantagenet and laid down the foundations of a lengthy period of stability. So much so, that it is worth looking at the expansion of both farming and civil justice in the Middle Ages.

Farming patterns in Edingale and Croxall

For long before – and after – the Middle Ages, the principal occupation of local people would have been farming. Every cottage, no matter how simple or ‘rude’, would have been surrounded by enclosures for animals, hayricks and stores. Beyond these would have stretched the open fields: some for plough land and some for common hay meadows. Hedges or simple fences would have surrounded the common arable fields, but otherwise, land outside the village boundaries was open – apart from the odd tree that had survived forest clearance. The ultimate manorial boundaries were themselves forest.

Each arable field was subdivided into flats or shotts and these were further divided into the long narrow strips we now know as ‘ridge and furrow’ – also known locally as ‘lants’ or ‘lonts’, presumably from ‘lands’. These were created by ploughing the ridge only towards the centre with soil turning, year after year, to create a higher centre point. Over many years and many ploughings, ridge and furrow patterns were created. In the larger fields, ridges were one furrow long – or a furlong – with flat headlands at either end for turning the plough teams.

A landholder would farm several strips: a farmer of 30 strips held a 'bovate' and was required to contribute an ox to the plough team. 60 strips constituted a 'virgate'. Cottagers may have farmed only a small number of arable strips. The system of land holding was strictly regulated. At the time of Domesday, there were no 'freemen' in either Edingale or Croxall (these were not quite free of service to the Lord of the manor, but were free enough to have to fight in his army if he commanded). Next in the pecking order were villeins: they were required to work in the lord's service for two or three days a week but were otherwise able to farm their holdings of up to 30 acres or so. They had to pay a tax on the marriage of their daughters and were subject to a form of death duty known as a 'heriot'. Otherwise, the lord could not "*slay, maim or beat*" them.

Finally, the bordars and cottars (cottagers) were the peasants. They held 'toft and croft' – a hovel and a small croft. They may also have held small amounts of the common land. Cottars were the class of people who took on other part-time roles: smith, cooper, cowman or shepherd, and they would also labour for the villeins. Domesday mentions 35 cottars or bordars for Croxall, but none for Edingale. This presumably means that more of Croxall was 'demesne' or land directly farmed by the lord. It may also give an indication of how big a village Croxall was.

There were no slaves in Croxall or Edingale as they had been under Danish influence and had abandoned slavery. There was, however, a slave at Alrewas – which had not been under Danish influence. The lord could dispossess villeins and cottars, but usually their holdings would pass to a son on death.

Farming practices were strictly regulated by a headman or 'reeve' (an elected – and highly unpopular – position). Deadlines were set each year for when ploughing must stop, or the hay meadow be shut up for growth. Crops were grown on a strict three-year rotation, lying fallow every third year. The woods mentioned in Domesday were also farmed – they were not wild forest. 'Pannage and mast' was a right to let pigs graze in the wood, for which occupiers had to pay the lord. Come the autumn, surplus animals, especially pigs, were slaughtered and the meat salted in barrels (thus the need for a cooper) or smoked. Animals over-wintered could only be fed hay, as the grain was needed for bread for the villagers. Thus, a poor hay harvest presaged a grim winter for both the human and animal occupants of the village. Even haymaking was regulated by the 'hayward' and villagers had a common duty to protect the emerging hay crop from grazing animals.

It isn't easy to see where all of Edingale and Croxall's common fields were. There were at least five, possibly six, common arable fields in Edingale and Croxall. Remains of Edingale's ridge and furrow are very clear in the river meadows to the south of the church. One of the best examples in the county, these fields are presently under the protection of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. It is then not unreasonable to suppose that the hay meadows were somewhere off Raddle Lane. Historically, this was known as Moores Road and the name 'moor' can signify meadow. The fields to the south of Pessall Brook are also called Moors. Land on both sides of the Lullington Road was known as 'Edingale Fields' pre-inclosure and this signifies arable use. The wood may have been towards the end of

Raddle Lane where woodland proliferates even today. Western Edingale (in Croxall) would have had its meadowlands on the 'holmes' (a word of Danish influence) behind the school to the south of Croxall Road. Presumably, the wood would have been off Pessall Lane. We have a tithe map of the parish of Croxall (there is no tithe map of Edingale parish) and this shows that, as the Middle Ages advanced, better-off villeins had their own hay meadows known as 'closes' or 'doles'. For example, the late John Mason's farm in Pessall has a field of about 17 acres known as Kensel's Close – a clear reference back to a known Croxall family that appears in the Croxall registers right up to the eighteenth century. A great swathe of arable land was to the north of what is now The Grange, marked as 'Near', 'Middle' and 'Further' fields. The tithe map is reproduced in the next chapter.

When villagers harvested their corn, they would take it to be milled at one of Croxall's two mills. The lord of the manor used this as another means of taxation, but there was no alternative to using his mills other than to grind corn by hand.

Obviously, our parish is much bigger than the areas of common arable fields and hay meadows. The land between them was the common, available for all villagers to graze their livestock through the year. With no fences, some livestock inevitably escaped to neighbouring settlements. Each village therefore had its 'pinfold' run by the pinner, where stray animals were impounded until claimed – again, on the payment of a fine. Edingale's pinfold was where Rose Cottage stands now, at the junction of the Harlaston and Lullington Roads.

Justice in the Middle Ages

Local historians are well blessed by the existence of the Alrewas manorial court rolls. Norman Stubbs gives an excellent account of the background to this institution. He paints a picture of Alrewas as a village where the church building stands at the centre of life – ringing the bell to regulate daily activity and setting saints' days to mark the passage of a year.

The church in a physical sense was the only local building that could hold a large gathering of men, and the priest was one of the few literate villagers who could record the proceedings of the civil – or manor – court. Court rolls dating from 11th June 1259 were found locked in the church chest some six centuries later. The records are the oldest in Staffordshire; expressed in abbreviated Latin, they give a day-to-day account of minor grievances in Alrewas, Orgreave, Fradley, Edingale and Croxall.

The court met every three weeks, and all the holders of land in the manor, as well as outsiders who had acquired land here from the lord, had to attend the court. Most attendees were tenant farmers (or villeins) of small pieces of land and the court was important to them in upholding their rights.

The bailiff presided at court (representing the lord of the manor, who rarely attended). The priest or clerk kept a record of proceedings and fines, noting agreements, land transfers, the election of officials, offences against the lord or neighbours, and so on. Other court

personnel included the reeves or headmen for Alrewas (covering Edingale), Fradley and Orgreave, who were known locally as provosts. There was also the beadle (who acted both as a modern police officer and court bailiff) who carried out the judgements of the court, and the summoner or sumner, who was responsible for the practical business of running the court, including the attendance of complainants, defendants and witnesses. Some Croxall cases were under the court's jurisdiction, although it is not immediately clear why.

There was no judge or jury, as this was rule by the people (or, at least, by men): it was the whole court that decided cases, determining grants or fines. This was independent governance at its height, in that everyone was involved in some way in the working of the court. Responsibility for the conduct of individuals was placed squarely on the shoulders of their neighbours, who would face punishment for any future repetition of the offence by the offender. This duty was known as the 'frank pledge'.

There are many entries in the rolls, some of them repetitions of excuses from court, of breaking the assizes of bread or ale, or transfers of land. The following entries are taken from the court rolls beginning at 1259.

- ❑ Henry the smith of Edingale excused by Thomas son of Henry the smith – first time.
- ❑ All the men of Edingale are fined two shillings for hiding Geoffrey White.
- ❑ Edith at the Mill and her son Walter, and Hugh, the Provost of Croxall, are to be punished for settling their dispute without bringing it to the Lord's court.
- ❑ Geoffrey, the clerk of Edingale, is accused that he struck John Burdon and drew blood. Sureties Thomas at the Stile and Walter Beryn.
- ❑ Thomas son of Robbert Agnes of Hedeninghale was fined 6d because he kept back the pannage (pig grazing) money payable in respect of the 'foreign' wood of Alrewas.
- ❑ Ralph de Edengale paid 12 pence for a licence to brew ale to the next court after Easter.
- ❑ All the men of Lullinton are summoned for raising an embankment on the boundary of Hedeinkhale and Lollinton (sic).
- ❑ The next court will make an inquiry about those in Edeinkhale and Alrewas selling bread and ale against the assize (regulations on brewing and baking).
- ❑ Eleanor of Edingale gives 2s for an enquiry to be held about a messuage (dwelling) now in the tenure of Ralph Freford in Edingale and the enquiry is to be held in the next court when Nicholas, the son of Goffrey of Edingale and Eleanor his wife quit claim all their right to the said messuage to the said Ralph.
- ❑ Henry Faber of Edenighale is fined 12d because he made a rescue of his animals when they were in the custody of the frankpledgers – (neighbours who stood surety for him).

The rolls record the many exploits of Geoffrey Curzon and his apparent dispute with Richard de Somerville and others (Curzons and Somervilles being lords of Croxall and Alrewas/Edingale respectively). This seems to have been over land access.

- 1st March 1287 – Geoffrey Le Corsun is summoned for a debt of 14½d owed to John De Herby.
- 25th April 1287 – Geoffrey Le Corsun made an agreement and afterwards disavowed himself in ession (excuse) in that injury was amerced (fined) to the damage of 80d and 24d amends.
- 20th May 1287 – Geoffrey Le Corsun is accused of multiple trespass and distained to make amends to Richard de Somerville.
- 12th June 1287 – Geoffrey Le Corsun is charged with trespass and removing wheat in sheaves and of ploughing the desmesne land with his plough. The lord is to wage his law.

Later court rolls record disputes between the tenants of Edingale and those at Alrewas about the obligation on everyone to mow the lord's hay meadows at Alrewas. In 1334, 21 Edingale men and women refused to mow at Alrewas: *"they did not wish to come to mow ... when given notice by the lord's bailiff according to custom."*

There was similar trouble in 1334 and in 1345, when 22 people *"on the day assigned for mowing the meadow with scythes did not come themselves or send anyone else."*

The court rolls are not the only record of disputes settled in Edingale. Records of other courts, show the following relevant cases:

1272. Geoffrey de Edingale had three sons, Nicholas married to Eleanor, Robert the smith of Edingale and William, also called William Macunes. William sued Robert over a claim for land in Edingale. He did so before an itinerant judge in Lichfield. He was, however, fined 6d because he did not take his case before Sir John de Somerville (Lord of the Manor) in his manorial court in Alrewas. The suit ended with William being further fined – presumably in the Alrewas court – for his false claim to land in Edingale.

1282. Susanna, the widow of Roger de la Bache sued Roger de Somerville for a third of 40 acres of meadow in Allerwathe (Alrewas) as she sued Matilda the widow of Ralph de la Bache and John her son for a third of two virgates and a half of land in Edeninghale and she sued Richard Curson for a third of ten acres of meadow in the same village as her dower. The defendants did not appear and the sheriff was ordered to take the dower claimed into the King's hands, and to summon them for Trinity Term.

1317. Complainant William de Herlaston, clerk. Deforciant, Adam le Walkere of Ednynghale and Matilda his wife. Four acres of land and one rood of meadow in

Edenyngale by Herlaston co Staffs and six acres of land and a fourth part of one messuage (dwelling) in Edenyngale by Harlaston Co. Derby. Granted to William and his heirs, quit of Adam and Matilda and heirs of Matilda, for which William gave to Adam and Matilda ten marks of silver.

1325. A legal agreement made between Sir Thomas de Ridware knight of the one part and William de Freford and John his son of the other part concerning exchange of land in Edingale. William and John receive from Sir Thomas three selions of land (three furrows) in Edenyngale, one selion of which was of the land of John of Tamworth, lying together in the Myddelfeld on the Wateryates, between the land of the said William and John and the land of Robert ate Style, extending from the headland of William de Mouseleye to the headland formerly belonging to Adam le Walkere. (The disputed land lies between present day Lullington Road and Raddle Lane close to the way-marked path)

Sir Thomas receives three selions of land in Edenyngale, two selions ... in the said field next to the Longedych (now the Lullington Road) between the land of Philip de Somerville and that of John de la Bache extending from the marlera (marl pit) formerly belonging to Roger de Draycote as far as the land formerly held by the said Roger of which one selion will remain with John de Tamworth for life. The third selion lies in the same field in le Budene nearest the village between the land of John de la Bache and that of Sir Thomas, extending from the headland of Robert le Champyon to le Waryedehanedlond. The witnesses were William de Cursonn, Richard Austyn of Harlaston, John de la Bache, William de Mouseleye and John de Tamworth.

1330. The Sheriff had been ordered to distrain the following tenants in Ednyngale to acknowledge their tenancies in the said village, which Richard de Twyford had conceded by a fine levied at York, to Isabella, formerly wife of Thomas de Rydware viz. John de Tamworth, two messuages and a virgate and a half of land. William de Mousele, a messuage and a virgate and a half of land. Henry Sele and Richard Sele, a messuage and half a virgate of land. Simon Christian of Bromley and John his son, a messuage and half a virgate of land. Robert at Mere of Linlinton (Lullington) chaplain, a messuage and half a virgate of land. Jon Godrich and Elena his wife, half a virgate of land.

And likewise to distrain John de Freford and Robert de Gresley to appear and acknowledge by what services they held their tenancies of the said Richard de Twyford in the same village, which the said Richard had conceded to Isabella as above. None of the tenants appeared and the sheriff was ordered to distrain again and produce them on the Octaves of St Michael.

1341. Henry de Tymmor, clerk, appeared by attorney against John de Cobbeleye for wounding, beating and ill-treating him at Ednyngale. John did not appear and the Sheriff was ordered to arrest and produce him at the Octaves of Michaelmas.

1349. Between Sibil, formerly wife of Ralph de Grendon, complainant and Robert de Greseleye, knight, deforciant of four messuages and three virgates of land in Ednyngale in Co. Derby and two messuages and four virgates of land in Ednyngale in Co. Stafford.

Robert grants the tenements to Sibil for her life with remainder to John, son of Sibil and to his issue, and failing such to Thomas, brother of John and to his issue and failing such to William, brother of Thomas and to his issue.

1368. Thomas son of Ralph de la Bache, sued Thomas de Gresele for two messuages, two virgates of land, three acres of meadow and a moiety (half) of a messuage in Ednyngdale, which Thomas de Smythesby, chaplain, had given to John de la Bache and Joan his wife.

1372. Richarde de Ruggeleye appeared in person against Thomas de Greseleye, for taking, vi et armis, (by force and arms) from Ednyngdale a boar belonging to him which was worth 20s. Thomas did not appear and the sheriff was ordered to distrain and produce him on the Octaves of St. Hilary.

1374. John de la Croice and Margaret his wife sued Henry Austyn for 20 acres of land in Ednyngdale, which they claimed as the right of Margaret, and in which Henry had no entry except by Richard Austyn who had unjustly disseised Thomas de Swynford, Chevalier, the father of Margaret whose heir she was. Henry pleaded that Margaret was a bastard and not heir to Thomas.

1386. Margaret, formerly wife of Ris ap Griffith, Knight (the Griffiths were the Lords of Alrewas) sued John Smyth of Ednyngdale to render her a reasonable account for the time he was her bailiff and the receiver of her money at Allerwas.

Date not noted. Margaret Griffyth in her own person sued John Pye of Ednyngdale for reaping and carrying away her corn from Ednyngdale vi et armis to the value of £10. John did not appear: the Sheriff was ordered to arrest him and produce him on the Octaves of St. Hilary.

1424. John Cursun sued John Boteler of Ednyngdale, clerk, and Thomas Halfpenny of Ednyngdale, husbondman, for taking fish from his several fishery at Croxhall, to the value of 40s and for treading down and consuming his corn and grass at the same place with their cattle, to the value of 40s. The defendants did not appear and the sheriff was ordered to arrest and produce them on the Octaves of Holy Trinity.

1442. Thomas Stanley, armiger sued John Verney, late of Lychefeld, clerk, John Joly of Lychefeld, clerk, William Saynt Jones of Lychefeld, smythe, Thomas Boteler of Longdon, yoman, Thomas Swinfen, gentilman, Robert Webbe of Ednyngdale, yoman, John Webbe of Hommerwych, husbondman, John Heuster of Lychefeld, yoman and upwards of 40 others (all tradesmen of Lichfield) for assembling together and collecting a number of unknown malefactors and beating and wounding his servants and tenants and so terrifying them that for fear of their lives they were unable to prosecute his business or leave the enclosure of their houses. The defendants did not appear and the Sheriff was ordered to arrest and produce them on the Quindene of Easter day.