

Introduction – One village or two?

The civil parish of Edingale was created in 1934 following a review of local government boundaries. It consists of about 2,100 acres of some of the most productive land in the Midlands, stretching from the sandy loam of the Trent valley to the heavy clay of Pessall. Surrounded on three sides by rivers, its highest point is around 285 feet at a spot about halfway between Raddle and Edingale Fields farms.

It is impossible to review the history of Edingale without understanding the role that boundaries have played in defining it. The civil parish encompasses two ancient ecclesiastical parishes: Croxall, including the township of Oakley, and Edingale. Each of these has its history – ancient and modern – and all are named in the Domesday Book.

Inevitably, history is about people, and our population lives predominantly in the village of Edingale. Most present-day villagers will have a vague understanding that the county boundary between Staffordshire and Derbyshire once ran through the village. But, without a detailed study of the relevant maps, they won't realise that the boundary line zigzagged through the community, almost randomly putting houses in the ecclesiastical parish of Croxall, therefore in Derbyshire, while their next-door neighbours were in Staffordshire. The logic of the line is hard now to comprehend, but, very roughly speaking, lower Edingale was in Croxall while the higher part of the village was in Staffordshire.

One of its many consequences was that, a little more than 100 years ago, on a bright Sunday morning, you would have seen more than a third of the villagers of Edingale walking to Croxall church for their morning service. And Croxall church claimed attendances of more than 130 souls through much of the nineteenth century. Croxall churchyard is full of tombstones with 'Edingale' names: Collingwood, Dicken, Pym and Hatchett to list but a few. Croxall is now in Staffordshire, but its historical connections with Derbyshire explain why the church is in the Derby diocese rather than the diocese of Lichfield.

The boundaries issue goes back much further than that. Although present-day Edingale tends to look towards Tamworth for shopping and recreation and Lichfield for administration, for more than a thousand years Edingale looked to Alrewas for all of these things. Whoever was Lord of the Manor of Alrewas was Lord of Edingale. So when the Tame and the Trent became the boundaries between the Danelaw lands ruled by the Vikings, Edingale, under Danish rule, was cut off from its 'mother' settlement of Alrewas, still under Mercian control. The human consequences of this dislocation are hard to imagine now.

More disruption came after the Norman invasion when Edingale – again associated with Alrewas and, therefore, Staffordshire – was caught in the middle of the Mercian rebellion against William that was put down with great savagery. Clearly, Edingale survived this onslaught, as our entry in the Domesday Book testifies, but, by 1086, only Rutland and Cornwall had smaller populations than Staffordshire.

Croxall, in Derbyshire, was not spared these terrible events – but the history of Croxall is distinct from the history of Edingale, and, to underline the point again, a significant proportion of what

we now call 'Edingale' owed its allegiance to Croxall. So the present day village of Edingale really has two histories: in two parishes, two counties and two dioceses. This is an interesting dilemma for the amateur historian to unpick and the reader to understand.



Croxall Vicarage (White Knights) from the rear – about 1890