

Clopelle – Expanded translation and explanation.

'Nigel himself holds Clophill.' *Nigel d'Albini was the tenant-in-chief which meant that he held the manor directly from King William. Nigel held many manors spread across Bedfordshire and the rest of the country so he was very powerful and well liked by the King, probable for the support he gave in the Norman invasion.*

'It is assessed at 5 hides.' *A hide was the standard unit to tax. It was notionally the amount of land which would support a household.*

'There is land for 8 ploughs.' *One way of assessing the value of an estate was to estimate the number of eight-ox plough teams needed to cultivate the land. Thus, there was enough land on the estate to require 8 ox teams to work it. This measure could also be used to assess the value of the estate for taxation.*

'In demesne [are] 3 hides, and there are 2 ploughs;' *In demesne [pronounced dih-meyn] means that part of the manor either kept by the lord in his own hands or farmed for his own profit. He has probably kept the best land for himself.*

' and 5 villans have 6 ploughs.' *Villans could hold substantial areas of farmland, but had to work on the lord's land for two or three days each week.*

'There are 5 bordars and 1 slave,' *A bordar was a cottager, a peasant of lower economic status than a villan. Slaves were at the bottom of the economic and social scale, normally without resources of their own and there to perform their lord's bidding. They could be bought and sold by the lord.*

'meadow for 4 ploughs, [and] woodland for 200 pigs' *It has been estimated that about 15% of the area surveyed in Domesday Book was woodland.*

'and [rendering] 12d.' ???

'It is worth 60s;' *It was valued at £3 at the time of the survey (1086).*

'when received. 30s;' *It was valued at £1.5 at the time when the estate passed to its new holder. (C 1070)*

'TRE £8.' *TRE means 'Tempore Regis Edwardii' in the time of King Edward at the date of his death in 1066 when it was valued at £8.*

'2 thegns, men of Earl Tosti, held this manor.' *Earl Tosti, the brother of King Harold, was killed at the battle of Stamford Bridge in September 1066. Thengns are noble men who served him.*

'Of these 5 hides Nigel himself claims 1 virgate which his predecessor held TRE.' *A virgate is a quarter of a hide .*

'Nigel himself was seised of it after he came into [possession of] the honour, but Ralph Taillebois disseised him.' *Ralph Taillebois probably a Norman knight. Later he was sheriff of Bedfordshire.*

What does this tell us?

Only the head of a household was recorded in Domesday Book. In Clopelle there were eleven households; five villagers, five smallholders and one slave. If each household contained five people that would make a total population of fifty five. This is quite small for a manor although the assessment for tax (five hides) is quite large.

The value of the manor is recorded at three points in time; 1066 £8, 1070 £1.5, 1086 £3. The dramatic drop in its value after the Conquest has been interpreted by some to indicate that Clophill has ravaged by the army of William as he travelled through the area suppressing the English but that is another story.