

SESSION 3 – BARONY, TOWNSHIP AND FARMSTEAD

SURNAMES

Before we look at the way townships and settlements were organised in medieval times, I want us to consider how our present surnames came about.

Old English names

Anglo-Saxon names were individual to the person.

Children were not usually named after immediate relatives, although siblings were often given names that began with the same letters such as Oswald and Oswy; or Osric and Osred.

Each element of a name had a meaning:

Os = god

Aelf = elf

Aethel = noble

Bald = bold

Berht = bright

Ead/Ed = wealth/fortune

Flaed/Fled = beauty

Frid = peace

Raed = counsel

Ric = power

Wal/Val – battle

Wald/Weald = leader/ruler

Wig/Wy = war

Wine/Win = friend

Wulf = wolf)

Examples

Aethel-frith=Noble peace

Ed-win=Fortune friend

Os –wald=God's leader

Os – wy=God's war

Surnames were only just becoming established in the 12th century.

Some of the land-holders identified themselves by the name of their barony or township, such as Bolam, Bradford, or Fenwick, and these became surnames in their own right.

Craftsmen and tradesmen adopted names related to their occupations like Butcher, Cooper, Smith, Fletcher or Shearer.

Others went by the name of their fathers, such as Robs-son, Hobs-son or Rogers-son.

There were also names that described particular personal or physical attributes like Armstrong, Redhead or Swift.

Some of the more colourful examples include Adam Ay-drunken, who is recorded appropriately as having fallen from a boat and drowned in the South Tyne. Then there was Richard Whirlepy-pin, a minstrel, and Robert Pusekat who was wounded in a fight on the bridge at Corbridge.

LAND TENURE

In Anglo-Saxon England there were four forms of land-holding; royal or “crown” land, bookland, folkland and loanland.

Royal land was owned directly by the king, from which he could grant estates as reward for loyal service.

Bookland was granted in perpetuity by a charter granted by the king or other great lord, and this allowed the owner of the charter to convey the estate to anyone else at will in the future. The concept of bookland became established in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the 7th century, to enable christian kings to grant land for the building and support of a religious establishments, with the stipulation that the holder of the charter must provide services for the upkeep of roads and bridges and supply men for the shire-levy, or fyrd. As time went by, the religious requirement fell away so that holding bookland resembled full ownership in the modern sense, and the owner could grant it to anyone in his lifetime or dispose of it by will.

In Northumbria, large areas of bookland estates were gifted directly to the shrine of St Cuthbert on Lindisfarne, and later at Durham.

As the guardians of Cuthbert’s shrine, the people of St Cuthbert’s Lands were known as the “haliwerfolk” (or “holy man’s people”) or sometimes affectionately as “Cuddy’s folk” (Cuthbert’s people).

By contrast, **folkland** was governed by folklaw or ancient custom, rather than by a charter. Folkland was held by a single representative of a kinship group. That person could not remove (alienated) folkland from the kinship group without the permission of the king.

Loanland was granted temporarily, without any loss of ownership. For a term of years or for the life of a person, or to an official for the term of his office

SHIRES AND HUNDREDS

The kingdom was divided into shires, each governed for the king by an ealdorman or earl who commanded the shire-levy in time of war. The administration of the shire was entrusted to the shire reeve or sheriff,

The shire was divided into hundreds, each of which originally comprised a hundred “hides”. The hide was an area of arable land that was supposed to support a freeman and his family and was the measure of tax liability in Anglo-Saxon times (as we saw last week). In most areas the hide consisted of 120 acres.

Below the king there were levels of freemen; thanes, ceorls (or churls) and drengs. Freemen had the right to bear arms and were free to quit the service of one lord and choose another.

A freeman could only be a thane if he owned at least five hides of land, which he held in return for military service to the king. .

A type of freeman that seems to have existed only in Northumbria was the “dreng”, who held his land in return for performing some type of service for the king.

The lowest rank of freeman was the ceorl, or “husbandman”.

Beneath the freemen was the mass of un-free peasants, the “villeins” or bondmen, who were bound to their lord to whom they paid dues for their land in kind and with labour services. The lord could not sell his villeins, but if he sold the land the villeins were passed on to serve the new landlord

DURHAM AND NORTHUMBERLAND

In early medieval times, **Durham** was not considered to be a county in its own right, but as a “liberty” within the County of Northumberland. Durham comprised the estates granted in Anglo-Saxon times to the Community of St. Cuthbert, including **Bedlingtonshire**, and **Norhamshire** and **Islandshire**, which were known collectively, until the 19th century, as North Durham. In fact, though, Durham had its own legal and administrative machinery, separate from Westminster and controlled by the Bishop of Durham. Durham was also exempt from the system of national taxation.

The **County of Northumberland** effectively covered virtually the same area as the pre-1974 county, except **Norhamshire, Islandshire and Bedlingtonshire**.

Bamburghshire was a Crown estate within the County of Northumberland.

Hexhamshire and Tynemouthshire were reckoned to be parts of Northumberland, but were ecclesiastical holdings of the Archbishop of York and the Abbey of St. Albans respectively.

Northumberland also included several parishes on the north bank of the River Tees known as **the Wapentake of Sadberge**.

THE NORMAN FEUDAL SYSTEM

The Norman Conquest radically changed the pattern of land-holding in England.

Domesday Book, the survey of the estates and manors of England compiled for King William Rufus in 1086, did not include the land north of the Tees, which illustrates that Norman administration was late in coming to our region.

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon belief in the customary rights of folkland, under the Norman feudal system all the land in England belonged to the King, who granted titles to feudal lords in return for military or other services...

HANDOUT ONE - NORTHUMBERLAND HOLDINGS IN CHIEF 1166

A) Crown Lands

In Northumberland, the King retained the **Crown lands** of Newcastle and Bamburghshire.

B) Lordships In Regality

The western uplands of Tynedale and Redesdale were **lordships held in regality (B)** – The term “in regality” meant that the holders of the estate exercised powers equivalent to those of the king within their domain.

The County Palatine of Durham was held in regality by the Prince Bishops of Durham and was effectively a private shire.

C) Ecclesiastical Liberties

Northumberland contained several **ecclesiastical liberties** including **Norhamshire, Islandshire and Bedlingtonshire** (owned by the Bishop of Durham), **Hexhamshire** (which belonged to the Archbishop of York) and **Tynemouthshire** (owned by the Abbey of St. Albans)..

D) Baronies Held In Capite

Next came the baronies held of the Crown in return for a certain number of knights' fees.

William the Conqueror confiscated all the Anglo-Saxon land-holdings and divided up the land into **Holdings in Chief**, or **Baronies in Capite** as they were usually known.

The baronies were granted to reliable followers in return for military service in the form of payment of a certain number of **Knights' Fees**.

At first the requirement was to supply the actual knights on horseback and their armed retainers. Later this system was replaced by payments in cash with which the king or the feudal lord could buy the services of the necessary fighting men.

The **baron in capite** could divide up his lands among sub-tenants, a practice called **sub-infeudation**. (*We shall look at some examples of this sub-division later*).

Among the earliest baronies created in the region were Cornforth, Witton-le-Wear and Gainford in County Durham, and Bywell, Morpeth, Bolam, Dilston and Callerton in Northumberland - all of which lay south of the River Wansbeck.

By 1135, King Henry I had created 15 further baronies in Northumberland, and the Bishop of Durham created 21 on his estates, though many of these were quite small in size.

In addition, the Bishop of Durham created a discrete portion of his estate to endow the Priory of Durham. Durham Priory's estate also included the lordship of **Staindropshire**, which was the province of an old English family that later came to be called the Nevilles.

E) Lands held in Sergeantry

Sergeantries were held in return for non-military service (examples).

F & G) Thegnages and Drengages

In a few parts of the North East, the old Anglo-Saxon forms of land-holding – thegnages and drengages - survived alongside the Norman feudal structure,.

An Anglo-Saxon thegn held 3 or 4 settlements in return for military service.

A dreng held part or a whole or part of an estate in return for performing some non-military services, such as maintaining a horse and hounds for his lord.

TABLE TWO - HOLDINGS IN THE WAPENTAKE OF SADBERGE

Although it comprised parishes on the north bank of the River Tees, the Wapentake of Sadberge remained part of Northumberland until 1189 when it was sold by Richard I to Hugh de Puiset, Bishop of Durham, to raise money for the Crusades. Although from that time it was held by the Bishop of Durham, Sadberge was never absorbed into the County of Durham in medieval times.

Sadberge is the only example in the North East of a “wapentake”, the Norse equivalent of the Old English ‘hundred’, a sub-division of a shire. The word comes from a Norse word meaning “weapon taking”, as the land was held in return for military service.

The area around Sadberge shows evidence of Viking influence spreading across the Tees from Yorkshire and contains most of the examples in North East England of place names with the Norse ending ‘by’, such as Aislaby and Selaby. Small streams in the district are known as ‘becks’, in contrast to the Old English ‘burns’ to be found elsewhere in the region.

TABLE THREE - EXAMPLES OF ENGLISH LAND HOLDINGS

Most of the estates were in the hands of Norman incomers, like de la Val at Callerton, de Brus at Hart and de Balliol at Gainford.

However, a few English families continued to hold land in their own country.

For example, a handful of baronies were held by English families. Note the old English names of the barons of Gosforth, Dilston and Bradford.

The thegnages and drengages were usually held by English families.

THE BARONY OF WOOLER

We can see how the feudal system operated by looking in detail at the example of **the Barony of Wooler**.

SLIDE ONE - MAP OF BARONY OF WOOLER

The map shows the extent of the Barony.

TYPES OF TENANCIES

The handout illustrates how the tenements and assets of the barony were divided among the various types of tenants.

HANDOUT TWO - BARONY OF WOOLER , Circa 1220

ALSO REFER TO GLOSSARY

Demesne land The word comes from the Norman French meaning “belonging to a lord”. Demesne land was held and worked directly by and for the lord, partly by live-in paid workers known as the family and partly by the labour services provided by tenants as part of their conditions of tenancy. Gradually, demesne land became more difficult and expensive to retain and was often let out to tenants in return for cash rent.

Burgage tenements The township of Wooler had been created as a borough, which was divided into burgage tenements. We’ll look at boroughs in more detail later in this session. The "farm of the borough" was the income gained from rents paid for the burgage tenements. In addition, the lord gained income from market tolls, court fees and fines, grazing cattle and pigs (herbage and pannage), and from the business of the mill, brewhouse and bakehouse that were the monopoly of the lord.

Bondlands Bondmen held their tenements for an agreed period of years in return for paying rent, often in cash and kind, and some work for the lord on his demesne.

Cotlands A cottager held a cottage and adjoining smallholding in return for payment of rent, and sometimes some relatively light labour services.

The gressmen held their land for life in return for payment of the gressom or 'fine' on entry to the tenancy.

Socage tenements were free-hold tenements held in return for an annual payment, often in kind in the form of spices or other goods, or for minor services for the lord, and attendance at the lord's legal court.

Feudal tenements were held in return for military service (Knights' Fees). This division of the barony among sub-tenants was called sub-infeudation. Initially, **feudal sub-tenants** held their land in return for actual military service but this was later commuted to a cash payment.

The Barony of Wooler was held of the King for 4 knights' fees, but the baron in turn received payments from his feudal sub-tenants amounting to some 7 knights' fees.

Neifs

A survival in our region from Anglo-Saxon times was the status of the **neif**, or natives, which was a form of slavery. The neif could not move from the place where he was born without his lord's permission.

Neifity was inherited. Neifs could purchase their freedom, but it was expensive. In 1386, John Denom paid £40 for his manumission.

In 1386 a total of 21 neifly families comprising 84 individuals were living in twelve of the townships belonging to the Priory of Durham. By the 1460s there were only 8 neifly families, 41 individuals, all living in Billinghamshire.

Despite their lowly social status, some neifs owned substantial amounts of goods:

SLIDE TWO – GOODS AND CHATTELS OF THOMAS PAGE, NEIF

3 oxen worth £1 16s 8d;

1 horse worth 16s. 0d;

3 cows worth 11s 4d;

1 heifer worth 4s 0d;

4 boars worth £1 16s 0d;

1 sow worth 4s 0d;

2 pigs worth 4s 9d;

3 piglets worth 3s 3d;

2 iron bound carts worth 16s 0d;

1 plough worth harness worth 5s 0d;

1 iron stove worth 8s 0d;

1 “plumbum” worth 8s 0d;

1 winnowing fan and 4 sacks worth 3s 04;

2 oil lamps and 1 ewer worth 3s 0d;

Wheat, barley, oats and peas worth £6 13s 4d

BREAK

TERMS OF TENANCIES AND THE EFFECTS OF THE BLACK DEATH

Boldon Book - 1183

Although the North East was not included in the King's Domesday Book, we have our own equivalent known as Boldon Book, which was drawn up in 1183 by Bishop Hugh de Puiset and recorded the terms and conditions of the tenants living in the settlements within the Bishop's extensive estates.

Tenancies before The Black Death

Tenancy arrangements in the township of **SHADFORTH** in 1183 are typical of many of the settlements on these estates.

SLIDE THREE – BONDLANDS AT SHADFORTH 1183

Each bondman held a large tenement of 30 acres.

Part of the bondman's rent was paid in the form of work on the lord's demesne amounting to an onerous 144 days per year. In addition, his whole family, except his wife, had to perform 4 boon works during the busy harvest period, and to complete several other specific tasks such as reaping, ploughing and harrowing, mowing and helping construct booths for the St. Cuthbert's Fair in Durham.

Then there were additional payments in goods and cash.

The tenancy terms were not universal on the Bishops' estate, however. At Tursdale, for instance, the bondmen held their 30 acre tenements for 5s rent per annum, 2 hens at Christmas and 20 eggs at Easter, ploughing and harrowing an acre of the lord's demesne, and 4 boon works at the harvest with two men.

Effects of The Black Death

SLIDE FOUR – BONDLANDS AT SHADFORTH 1381

Things changed dramatically on many manors following the catastrophe of the Black Death, which hit the North East in 1349.

The relationships between many landlords and tenants also changed.

The demand for labour was far greater than the available supply and lords were willing to remove many of the old labour services, replacing them with cash payments.

Looking at the situation for bond tenants in Shadforth in 1381, some three decades after the Black Death devastated England, we see how all the rent for each of the 18 bondlands in terms of work services for the lord and payments in kind have now been converted to payments in cash.

SLIDE FIVE – TOWNSHIP OF SHADFORTH 1381

With the population halved, labour became scarce and many lords abandoned their demesne lands, letting them out to tenants instead of working them themselves.

The old perks of lordship - the mill, the forge, the brew-house and the bakery, were often leased to entrepreneurs in return for money rents.

SLIDE FIVE – TOWNSHIP OF SHADFORTH 1381

Free tenants There were three free tenants in the township, each holding a farm steading and relatively small parcel of arable land.

Bond tenants and engrossing

Until the 1350s, it was usual for a tenancy to be held for life and on the death of a tenant, the holding would pass to his widow and then to his eldest son or nearest male kin. However, after the Black Death, shorter leases became common, along with the practice of holding multiple tenements. This practice was known as engrossing. By 1381, some of the bondmen were holding more than one bondland, which shows evidence of engrossing.

Cottagers

You can see that one of the two cottages was originally the township's common forge, which had now fallen out of use through lack of local skilled craftsmen.

Exchequer Lands

The exchequer lands are a unique feature of the estates of the Bishop of Durham.

The Bishop of Durham responded to the changing circumstances in a way that was unique to his estates in the North East by creating a new form of tenancy; the Exchequer Land.

The Exchequermen held their small tenements in return for cash rent paid directly to the Bishop's Exchequer.

The Example Of Bingfield

Bingfield provides another illustration of the situation on an estate in transition in 1379, thirty years after the Black Death devastated England. –

SLIDE SIX - BINGFIELD

The demesne lands of the manor grange have been leased out to a co-operative of three tenants, and the mill, brew-house and one of the farms have all been let out for cash rent.

Engrossing at Southwick, Sunderland

As another example, in the 1340s, Southwick in Sunderland had 2 freeholders, 10 bondmen each with 48 acres, and 3 cottagers with 6 acres each.

By the mid-15th century, there were still 2 freeholders, one with 14½ acres the other with 87, and 3 leaseholders with farms of 96, 144 and 205 acres respectively. The bond-lands and cottages have been absorbed into these new large tenancies.

The Golden Age of The English Peasant

As a result of these changes, the 15th century came to be known as the 'Golden Age of the English peasant'. It was in this period when we see the rise of the substantial yeoman farmer, who was to become the essential element of English rural society over the next four centuries.

REFER TO COATHAM MUNDEVILLE HANDOUTS

In summary we can look at the detailed accounts of **Coatham Mundeville**, on the Bishop of Durham's estate in south central Durham, which provide an illustration of a manor operating in the period when the effects of the Black Death were beginning to force changes in the running of an estate.

BOROUGHS

SLIDE SEVEN - LIST OF BOROUGHS

Boroughs were created by the Crown, and by great barons, either lay or ecclesiastical. Most were founded in the 12th century and brought revenue to their lord from rents and from duties and tolls levied on commercial transactions.

Where were boroughs created?

- 1) **Around baronial castles** (such as Barnard Castle or Warkworth), to attract craftsmen and tradesmen to supply the goods and services needed by the lord's household.
- 2) **Around an ecclesiastical establishment** (e.g. Durham, or Canongate in Alnwick).
- 3) **At a traditional centre of routes** at a river crossing or valley (such as Wooler, Corbridge and Haydon Bridge).
- 4) **Ports**, like Alnmouth, Hartlepool and Waremouth.
- 5) **In a few cases, multiple boroughs were created in the same locality.** For instance, in Durham there were 4 boroughs (Durham, Gilesgate, Crossgate and Elvet); Alnwick and Canongate; Warkworth and its New Borough; Bamburgh and Spitalgate. Subsidiary boroughs were not usually allowed to have their own markets or fairs, in competition with the greater borough.

The essential features of a borough:

- 1) **Burgage tenure** – The burgage tenements were held in perpetuity, for money rent, called landmale, free of services to the lord. Burgage tenure gave the tenant the freedom to produce and sell, his goods, and the stability of the holding allowed him to invest in and develop his business.
- 2) **A Borough Court** was run through the landlord's bailiff or by the burgesses themselves., regulated the affairs of the Borough.
- 3) Burgesses were **exempt from the jurisdiction of the King's Sheriff** of the County.

Other features that were common to some, but not all boroughs:

- 1) The right to hold **weekly markets and annual fairs**
- 2) The right to establish **craft, trade or merchant guilds** to protect the interests of the burgesses
- 3) A certain amount of **self-government in return for an annual cash payment.** The level of autonomy depended on the lord, varying from no trade guild, no town officers and only vague privileges in Corbridge to a full county status by 1400 for Newcastle.
- 4) **Certain local customary privileges.** For example, in Alnwick, burgesses had free use of stone, lime, slate and clay from Haydon Forest and Alnwick Moor, and were exempt from tolls and stallage.
- 5) **The freedom for burgesses to farm some of the basic revenues of the borough.**
- 6) **The right to construct defensive walls round the borough.** However, only 6 out of the boroughs in the North East constructed walls, despite the proximity to the Border.

SLIDE EIGHT – GROWTH AND LOSS OF THE PERCY ESTATES