

# POPULATION CHANGE IN MEDIEVAL WARWICKSHIRE: DOMESDAY BOOK TO THE HUNDRED ROLLS OF 1279-1280

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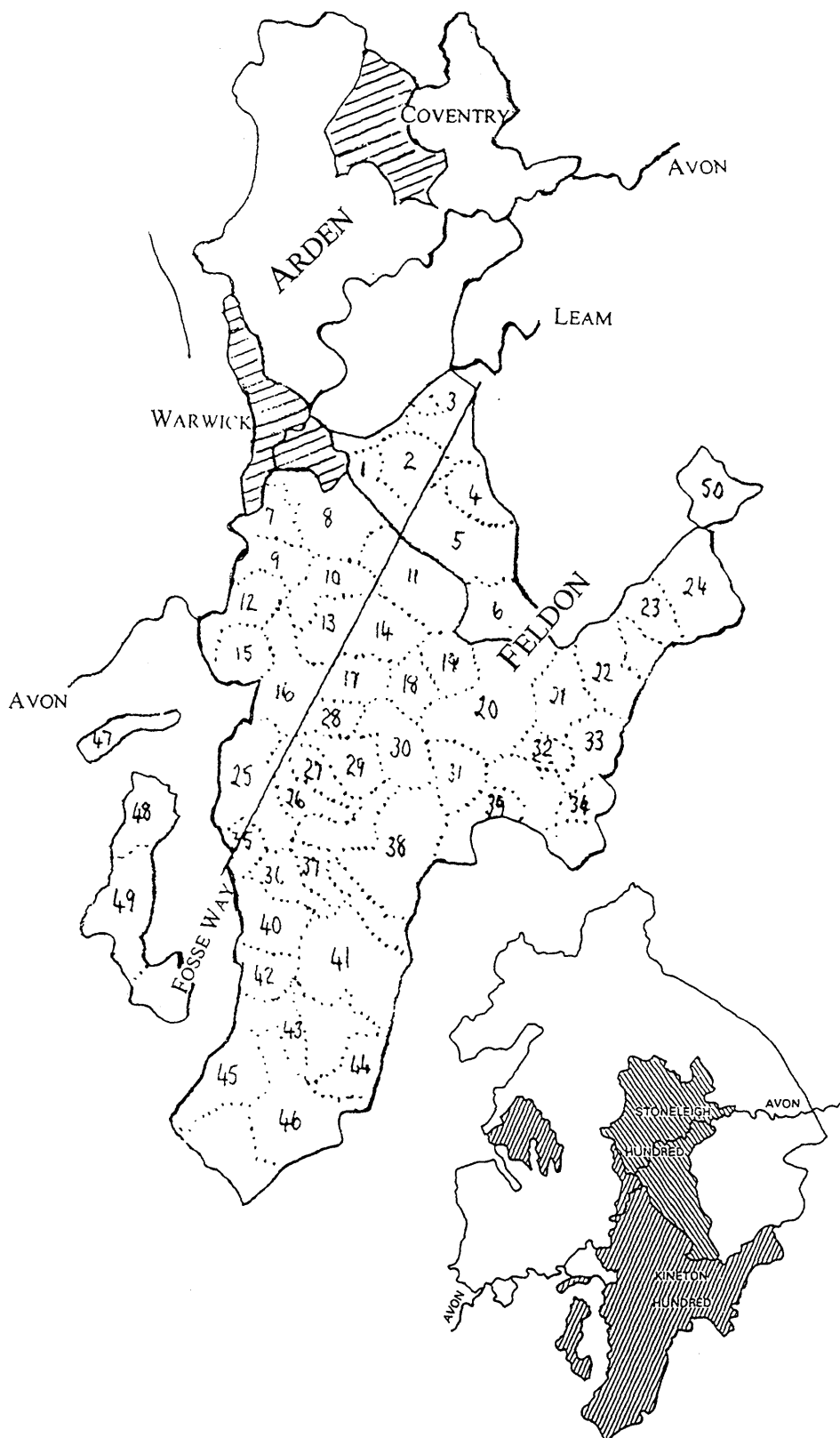
## Introduction

In 1958 J. B. Harley published an article in the *Economic History Review* which was a pioneering work in English medieval demography and its relationship to agrarian development.<sup>1</sup> It is still referred to as authoritative.<sup>2</sup> Harley's study was based on the evidence for Warwickshire, a typical midland county with a variety of landscape, the result of geology, soils and relief, and the action of man upon them. His main documentary evidence was a comparison of the Domesday Book for Warwickshire with the Hundred Rolls of 1279. The latter did not cover the whole county, but only two hundreds, Stoneleigh and Kineton (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> Harley argued that by 1086 the south east of the county was a long-settled area of nucleated villages whose agriculture was largely devoted to cereal production. This area, known by the sixteenth century as the Feldon, included the hundred of Kineton, and was the more populous and densely settled part of Warwickshire. The north west by contrast was much less densely settled, largely a forest area known by the eleventh century as the Arden, in which colonization was taking place as the population increased. Much of Stoneleigh hundred was in the Arden or on its fringes. Between 1086 and 1279 the Feldon was an area of population stability, an indication that there a balance between population and resources had reached equilibrium. The Arden, however, was an area of population expansion, with some parishes doubling or even trebling their inhabitants, and the density of its population was by 1279 at least equal to that of the Feldon. This must have been the result of continuing colonization.

Harley presented a coherent picture of the development of medieval Warwickshire society. Also his interpretation supported the thesis advanced by Professor Postan that the population of England was approaching a crisis well before the Black Death struck, as increasing numbers pressed upon the resources of the land to feed them adequately. Harley's evidence seemed to show medieval Warwickshire was on the way to a possible crisis of subsistence under population pressure by 1279: the long settled south could cope with no further increase; the population of the more recently colonized north was surviving on much less *per capita* arable land than the south.<sup>4</sup> It is time to re-assess Harley's work, and a printed edition of the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls, which, when

Figure 1 Feldon Parishes mentioned in the text

1. Whitnash
2. Radford Semele
3. Offchurch
4. Ufton
5. Harbury
6. Bishops Itchington
7. Barford
8. Bishops Lachbrook
9. Wasperton
10. Newbold Pacey
11. Chesterton and Kingston
12. Charlecote
13. Moreton Morrell
14. Lighthorne
15. Wellesbourne Mountford
16. Wellesbourne Hastings
17. Compton Verney
18. Chadshunt
19. Gaydon
20. Burton Dassett
21. Fenny Compton
22. Wormleighton
23. Priors Hardwick
24. Priors Marston
25. Over and Nether Ettington
26. Pillerton Priors
27. Pillerton Hersey
28. Combrook
29. Butlers Marston
30. Kineton
31. Radway
32. Avon Dassett
33. Farnborough
34. Mollington
35. Halford
36. Idlicote
37. Whatcote
38. Tyscot
39. Ratley
40. Honington
41. Brailes
42. Barcheston
43. Cherrington
44. Whichford
45. Wolford
46. Long Compton
47. Atherstone on Stour
48. Whitchurch
49. Ilmington
50. Shuckburgh (in Marton Hundred)



Map of the County of Warwick showing the location of Stoneleigh and Kineton Hundreds.

Harley wrote, was only available in a manuscript in poor and confused condition among the Miscellaneous Books of the Exchequer in the Public Record Office, has made this feasible.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Sources: Domesday Book and the Hundred Rolls**

Harley was right in stressing the importance of the Hundred Rolls to population history as well as to that of the manorial and social structure which had been examined by Kosminsky and Hilton.<sup>6</sup> Though they are not a population census, the Hundred Rolls include more of the population than most taxation records, the lay subsidies for example, and they cover whole regions unlike manorial extents or estate surveys. Domesday Book provides, however imperfectly, a base, and the Hundred Rolls, where they exist, the first means of measuring the population increase from the eleventh century to the thirteenth century with some confidence. But Domesday Book and the Hundred Rolls are not quite similar documents. The former enumerates the land-holding population: it lists numbers of tenants.<sup>7</sup> The Hundred Rolls in their fullest form, like manorial surveys, list holdings rather than tenants, though the tenants of the holdings are named. Therefore, to be certain that like is being compared with like, because one individual may have two or more holdings, figures from the Hundred Rolls must be reduced to a list of tenants, and this has been attempted for the two Warwickshire hundreds. Harley did not do this and this is one reason for some discrepancies in our figures. It is a laborious process and undoubtedly errors have been made. It has been assumed that tenants of the same name within a vill are the same person, and they have been counted as one, not two or more. Also some tenants have land in more than one vill: this frequently occurred with freeholders in the Oxfordshire hundred of Bampton, but no allowance has been made for this here.<sup>8</sup> Since the first process leads to under counting and the second to over counting, it is hoped that they will compensate for each other. Not too much importance should be attached to the absolute figures for tenants in each vill or the overall aggregate, though some care has been taken to make them as accurate as possible. The percentages and growth ratios resulting from the comparison will be the best guide to the changes which have taken place between 1086 and 1279.<sup>9</sup>

Only the figures from Domesday Book for villeins, bordars and serfs have been used; the miscellaneous population, statistically almost insignificant, has not been included. The serfs of Domesday Book were probably slaves and present a problem in that it is not certain they should be classed as tenants.<sup>10</sup> Manorial lords and ecclesiastical tenants are omitted from the Hundred Rolls figures. The aim is to compare the recorded peasantry at the two points in time. Also excluded from the calculations are seven settlements recorded in Domesday Book but not in the Hundred Rolls.<sup>11</sup> For example, Myton and Roundhill do not appear in the Stoneleigh roll, and Barcheston and Burmington are absent from the Kineton section. These settlements certainly existed in 1279 as well as 1086, and therefore to include them in the Domesday Book figures would be misleading. The five vills whose entries in the Hundred Rolls are largely illegible have also been omitted from the calculations.<sup>12</sup> The figures for Warwick and

Coventry have been omitted from the overall calculations in order to focus on the changes in the rural communities.

Where however there are Hundred Rolls figures for settlements which are not, or have no separate entry, in Domesday Book, these have been included in the calculations. As will be shown, to have omitted them would have resulted in the under-estimation of the population increase by 1279. There are no Domesday Book figures for some settlements possibly because they did not exist in 1086 but had become established by 1279. It is impossible to state which these are. Domesday Book is by no means a complete record of all villis in existence by 1086:<sup>13</sup> some settlements were included with another, sometimes explicitly as Wellesbourne with Kineton, sometimes not. For example, Offchurch almost certainly existed in 1086 but it is not mentioned in Domesday Book. It was a manor of the abbey of Coventry, and was perhaps included in another nearby estate of the abbey.<sup>14</sup> In Kineton hundred there are no separate Domesday Book figures for 28 out of 72 villis in 40 parishes recorded in the Hundred Rolls, and in Stoneleigh hundred 24 out of 51 villis in 27 parishes.

It is also worth stressing, as Harley did, that the figures from Domesday Book and the Hundred Rolls indicate probable trends not absolute population figures, and it is not possible to say how closely the two are related. Indeed L. R. Poos would include them among 'relatively tangential source material' for the study of population growth and trends. He warns of the difficulty of converting tenurial lists into population figures.<sup>15</sup> Domesday Book and the Hundred Rolls by no means record even all heads of households. Postan suggests that the compilers of Domesday Book were more interested in units of land-holding rather than actual holders of land, and therefore the figures may conceal the real numbers of heads of families. It is also possible that certain categories of tenants in certain areas may have been ignored altogether. The *censarii* in the Burton Abbey estates in Derbyshire and Staffordshire are a case in point: they are recorded in surveys of 1114 and c.1126, but not mentioned in Domesday Book, though it is possible that they are settlers on land newly-cleared between 1086 and 1114.<sup>16</sup> The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls hint at the existence of more small family holdings than are listed in the document, and that the actual occupancy of the land may be more complex than appears in the written record. At Wasperton, a freeholder of a virgate (Robert le Hyer) is obligated to come to the great reaping of his manorial lord 'and if he has cottagers they ought to reap there' (*et si habeat cotarios debent ibidem metere*).<sup>17</sup> There was also probably an underclass of propertyless rural poor: at Halford, a village where 47 tenants are listed, John le Breggewrythe held three acres of land for homage and finding 36 paupers bread, herring and ale on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (8 September).<sup>18</sup> Both these villis are in the Feldon.

On the basis of these calculations the peasant tenant population of the two hundreds where they can be compared, was in 1086 2,325, and in 1279 it was 4,317. This is an increase of 86 per cent, or alternatively expressed as a growth ratio 1.9:1. Though our particular figures differ, this is very close to Harley's final calculation made in a second article published in 1964. His growth ratio of the tenant population from Domesday Book to the Hundred Rolls was 1.8:1 (his

**Table 1    Population of Feldon and Arden Villis**

Feldon Villis	Population Kineton Hundred	Adding Villis south of the Leam	Total Population	Percentage increase	Growth Ratio
Domesday Book	1785	164	1949		
Hundred Rolls	2632	357	2989	53	1.5:1
Arden Villis	Population Stoneleigh Hundred	Deducting Villis south of the Leam	Total Population	Percentage increase	Growth Ratio
Domesday Book	540	164	376		
Hundred Rolls	1685	357	1328	253	3.5:1

absolute figures were 2,563 and 4,578 respectively).<sup>19</sup> Comparing the two documents further he found that the increase had mainly been concentrated in the Arden/Stoneleigh area (a growth ratio of 3.9:1) while in the Feldon/Kineton it had not been significant (1.1:1). Harley assumed that the area covered by the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls was broadly representative of the two distinct geographical regions of the county. Using J. C. Russell's figures for the country in 1086 and 1377 he estimated the eve of plague population at about 68,000 and concluded that between 1086 and 1348 Warwickshire's population had at least doubled and perhaps trebled (a growth ratio of 2.8:1). He was therefore able to suggest the upward trend of the population persisted into the early fourteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

### **Regional variations: Arden and Feldon**

According to my calculations the tenant population of Kineton hundred in 1086 was 1,785 and in 1279 it was 2,632; in Stoneleigh hundred 540 and 1,685 respectively. But before these figures can be related to the Arden/Feldon division of Warwickshire, how the administrative divisions of the hundred correspond with the geographical and economic regions must be determined.

If the traditional boundary between the Arden and Feldon, that is the Avon valley, is taken, then Kineton is completely in the Feldon apart from the outlying block of Tanworth, Packwood and Lapworth, but almost as much of Stoneleigh hundred lies south as north of the Avon. Thus only about half of the latter hundred would come within the Arden and then only on its southern fringes. A view which corresponds more to geographical realities is to take the six Stoneleigh hundred villis south of the river Leam, that is Bishops Itchington, Harbury, Whitnash, Radford Semele, Offchurch and Ufton, as having a Feldon character.<sup>21</sup> This would correspond with the medieval view that the large parish of Stoneleigh which straddles the Avon was part of the Arden.<sup>22</sup> Thus in order to use the recorded population to reflect the regional differences, the totals for the six Stoneleigh villis must be added to the total for Kineton hundred and subtracted from the Stoneleigh totals. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 2    Feldon vills showing tenant population decline 1086–1279**

Vill	Tenants 1086	Tenants 1279	% decrease
Ailstone	19	14	26
Brailes	145	134	8
Chadshunt	36	23	36
Compton Verney	47	45	4
Ettington	69	45	35
Farnborough	21	19	10
Fenny Compton	46	32	30
Idlicote	36	28	22
Ilmington	86	64	26
Kineton	116	102	12
Pillerton Hersey	40	33	18
Pillerton Priors	41	33	20
Priors Hardwick	49	43	12
Radway	33	24	27
Whichford	64	55	14
Whitchurch	25	8	68
Wolford	49	38	22

The outcome of this is that Harley's conclusion that the north of Stoneleigh hundred, on the fringe of the Arden (and not taking into account the growth of Coventry), was an area of 'outstanding population increase' stands, but that he underestimated the population increase in the south, the Feldon area. This is important because it calls into question his other conclusion that:

Apparently in this area (the Feldon) closely farmed and occupied in Domesday times, some equilibrium or point of saturation had then been reached between economic resources and population capacity at the local medieval level of technical initiative and skill, and was apparently maintained during the next two centuries ...<sup>23</sup>

It is possible to exaggerate the number of settlements which actually declined in population in Kineton hundred between 1086 and 1279 as, I think, Harley did. Apparently some seventeen settlements have a reduced population at the latter date (see Table 2). But in ten of these cases it may well be that the Domesday Book figure is inflated by the population of a nearby or related settlement being included but its separate existence not acknowledged (see Table 3). For example, Priors Hardwick has a tenant population of 49 in 1086 and only 43 in 1279, but the neighbouring Coventry Abbey estate of Priors Marston is not mentioned in 1086. It may well have existed and its tenants been included with the total for Priors Hardwick because they formed one manor. By 1279 the tenant population of Priors Marston alone exceeded that of Priors Hardwick in Domesday Book, and their combined total was 148 tenants in 1279. This is an increase of 202 per cent on 1086, yet Harley uses Priors Hardwick as an example of a Feldon vill where the population declined. The intimate connection of the economies of the two vills is shown by the demesne at Priors Hardwick being five carucates (and possibly another two carucates, the endowment of the parish church and the

**Table 3** Parishes of villis in Table 2 which show overall population increase 1086–1279

Vills	Tenants 1086	Tenants 1279	% increase
Atherstone with Ailstone	31	36 (22+14)	16
Brailes with Chelmscote and Winderton	145	176 (134+15+27)	21
Chadshunt with Gaydon	36	50 (23+27)	39
Ettington with Fullready and Thornton	70	110 (45+44+21)	57
Kineton with Wellesbourne	116	209 (102+107)	80
Priors Hardwick and Priors Marston	49	148 (43+105)	202
Whichford with Ascott and Stourton	64	76 (55+21)	19
Whitchurch with Wimpstone and Crimscote	25	40 (8+32)	60

**Note:** The Wolford figures (Table 2) show a decline of 22 per cent, but the 1086 figure is for Great and Little Wolford and the 1279 figures is for Little Wolford only. Radway also shows a decline of 27 per cent, but part of its tenant population was included in Burton Dassett in 1279, and therefore it may not have declined at all. The Whitchurch figure for 1279 (8) in tables 2 and 3 is almost certainly incomplete.

chapels of Priors Marston, Stoneton and Shuckburgh); at Priors Marston there is no demesne but a large number of serfs charged with heavy seasonal labour services similar to those of the serfs at Priors Hardwick.<sup>24</sup>

A parallel situation pertains at Chadshunt and Gaydon where the Bishop of Coventry is lord of both adjacent villis: the former vill has a demesne of six carucates, the latter no demesne. Both villis have serfs charged with three days a week work on the lord's demesne throughout the year. Chadshunt had 36 tenants in 1086 and only 23 in 1279, but Gaydon, not mentioned in Domesday Book, has 27 tenants in the Hundred Rolls, a combined tenant population increase of 39 per cent.<sup>25</sup> The royal manor of Kineton, even including its members of Little Kineton, Combrook and Brookhampton, looks as if it has suffered a decline in the two centuries, from 116 tenants to 102, but Domesday Book specifically includes with Kineton an estate at Wellesbourne for which there is no separate figure.<sup>26</sup> By 1279 the two manors at Wellesbourne, no longer part of the royal estate, have a combined tenant population of 107, so the combined totals of Kineton and Wellesbourne show an 80 per cent increase on 1086.<sup>27</sup>

Only seven villis show a definite decline on the figures for 1086 with no compensating growth within the parish. Four of them, Idlicote, Pillerton Priors, Pillerton Hersey and Compton Verney, form a not quite contiguous group of parishes along the Fosse to the south and east of the Avon, though there would appear to have been more than compensating growth in the nearby parishes of Ettington, Wellesbourne (including the two Walton villis) and Halford (not mentioned in 1086). Ilmington in the same general area, though a detached portion of Warwickshire, has a reduced population even when the tenants at Foxcote (not in Domesday Book) and Compton Scorpion were added to the total. On the eastern side of the hundred, the neighbouring parishes of Fenny Compton and Farnborough show reductions in tenant population. In the area near the Fosse, Whatcote shows only a small increase (two) on 1086, and in the

**Table 4 Feldon vills showing tenant population growth 1086–1279**

Vills in Kineton Hundred	1086	1279	% increase
Avon Dassett	27	43	59
Barford	19	30	58
Bishops Tachbrook	27	68	152
Butlers Marston	40	78	95
Charlecote	23	56	143
Chesterton	47	78	66
Honington with Broadmoor	53	71	34
Lighthorne	35	64	83
Long Compton	83	108	30
Mollington	9	20	122
Moreton Morrell	39	55	41
Newbold Pacey with Ashorne	27	49	82
Ratley	31	33	6
Shuckburgh (in Marton Hundred)	23	33	43
Tysoe with Westcote and Hardwick	90	125	39
Walton in Wellesbourne Parish	60	70	17
Wasperton	21	33	57
Whatcote	26	28	8
Willington (in Barchester Parish)	11	41	273
Wormleighton	44	48	9

Vills in Stoneleigh Hundred			
Bishops Itchington	43	84	95
Harbury	41	118	188
Radford Semele	35	39	11
Ufton	21	43	105
Whitnash	24	36	50

**Note:** Feldon vills not listed in Domesday Book but included in the Hundred Rolls, with their tenant population in brackets: Cherington (34); Weston by Cherington (in Long Compton Parish) (23); Kingston by Chesterton (10+), Compton Wynates (26), Halford (47), Hunscombe (in Balichway Hundred) (12), Offchurch (37). Packwood (8) is also included in the Hundred Rolls, but is in a detached portion of Kineton Hundred in the Arden area.

east likewise Ratley and Wormleighton (two and four respectively). Welford and Radway figures for 1086 and 1279 are not possible to compare with confidence (see note at end of Table 3); they may or may not have declined.

Two localised areas within the Kineton part of the Feldon show possible stagnation or decline, but it would be wrong to take them as representative of the whole region. Some Feldon parishes show considerable tenant population increases on 1086 (see Table 4): Bishops Tachbrook 152 per cent, Butlers Marston 95 per cent, Lighthorne 83 per cent, Burton Dassett (including its members) 69 per cent, Chesterton 66 per cent (excluding Kingston which is not in Domesday Book and largely illegible in the Hundred Rolls), Avon Dassett and Charlecote both 59 per cent, Tysoe (including Westcote and Hardwick) 39 per cent. So too do Stoneleigh hundred parishes which are more Feldon than Arden in character: Harbury 187 per cent, Ufton 105 per cent, Bishops Itchington 95 per cent,

Whitnash 50 per cent. Most other Feldon settlements show smaller percentage increases than these but even if they are approximately correct they call into question Harley's conclusion that by 1086 a balance between population and resources had been reached in the Feldon which was then maintained until the end of the thirteenth century. This may be true of only a limited number of settlements, more local than the Feldon in general. Overall the population of the Feldon had increased definitely, if not as spectacularly as in the Arden, and it cannot be proved that 'equilibrium' or 'point of saturation' had been reached even by 1279. It is not possible to be certain that the trend was either still upwards or stagnant.

Why eleven particular settlements in the Feldon had declined or stagnated is not clear. The soils of those settlements were, like most of the rest of the Feldon, based on Lower Lias heavy clay, easily water-logged in winter, deeply fissured in dry summers, and difficult to manage under almost continuous arable cultivation or short term pasture, once every two years (the two field system prevailed in south Warwickshire).<sup>28</sup> The surface structure could easily be destroyed by the trampling of cattle and sheep and by 'puddling' by cultivation which accentuated the problem of drainage. Such soils can in favourable conditions today produce excellent crops of wheat or be used for permanent pasture, but this depends on careful management and the installation of effective drainage just beneath the surface. It is assumed that neither of these were available to the Feldon peasant in the medieval period.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand it has been suggested that medieval practices and methods could sometimes avoid the problems of modern farming with its heavy machinery and intensive methods.<sup>30</sup> Even with the climatic deterioration of the fourteenth century and the premium on the conversion of arable to pasture in the fifteenth century (often involving depopulation) the Feldon remained the granary of Warwickshire well into the seventeenth century, and a prosperous region in the eyes of contemporaries. John Leland, John Speed, William Dugdale and Daniel Defoe all bear witness to this. It was to be eighteenth century enclosure which made Warwickshire by 1800 'almost throughout a dairying county'.<sup>31</sup> The distribution of market towns, which puzzled Harley, is related to the complementary nature of the economies of the two regions of Warwickshire before the eighteenth century. The Arden economy needed the markets to acquire produce in which it was deficient, particularly the surplus corn of the Feldon. The markets which prospered most and survived the economic contraction of the later middle ages were those best placed to facilitate the necessary interchange between the regions: Henley, Stratford, Warwick and Coventry.<sup>32</sup>

## Population Density

Harley also called attention to the equalisation of tenant population density between the two hundreds from 1086 to 1279. A 'regional re-adjustment of population densities' had taken place in the two centuries with 'a relocation of the chief centres of population away from the south' (the Feldon). Indeed 'if anything there was a tendency towards the ascendancy of the north' (the Arden).<sup>33</sup> Harley subsequently had doubts that his methods might have exaggerated the regional contrast; particularly he had reservations about his

calculation of parish density figures.<sup>34</sup> A different approach is to calculate the tenant population density for the whole area of Kinton hundred for which there is evidence, excluding those vills for which there are no figures. The area of Kinton hundred remaining is nearly 172 square miles (or 109,930 acres or 44,488 hectares).<sup>35</sup> The tenant population of this area in 1279 was 2,624. This gives a tenant population density of a little over 15 per square mile (in 1086 it was approximately 11) or one tenant for every 42 acres of land or 17 hectares (arable and pasture). The overall average remains the same if the area and tenants of the six villages in Stoneleigh hundred south of the Leam are included in the calculations, though taken separately as a group they have a slightly higher tenant population density of 16 per square mile.

Equivalent figures for the remainder of Stoneleigh hundred are more tricky to calculate. Coventry, a city of at least 4,000–5,000 inhabitants in 1279 must be excluded of course, and so too the seven hamlets around Coventry which did not have an independent parochial or economic existence from the city. This leaves in Stoneleigh hundred settlements in the Arden with a total tenant population of 1,240 in an area of nearly 70 square miles or 44,605 acres or 18,051 hectares. This gives a tenant population of 18 per square mile (in 1086 it was approximately 7) or one tenant for every 36 acres of land or 14.5 hectares. These calculations bear out Harley's conclusions as to the tendency of the north of the area to be more densely populated in 1279 than the south although the high density revealed by the Hundred Rolls may not be applicable to the Arden generally, but only to the area close to Coventry, which may well have been on the verge of a boom period. In addition the problem of the relation of the recorded tenant population figures to actual numbers remains. If many of the villein holdings in Kinton hundred were 'mere tenurial units', and there were numerous unrecorded sub-tenants or 'undersettles', the contrast might not be so great.<sup>36</sup> As has been seen, the Hundred Rolls hint that there were such in Kinton hundred.

The problems of how far lists of holdings reflect tenurial reality and how large the propertyless underclass was may well be insoluble, but the Hundred Rolls as a source for the first problem should not be undervalued. They list at least some sub-tenants unlike most manorial documents, and, with the exception of manorial court rolls and tithing lists, penetrate further into peasant society than most other surviving royal or seigniorial documents, taxation and tallage rolls for example. The Lay Subsidies of 1327 and 1332 record as individuals less than half those recorded in Kinton Hundred in 1279 (47 per cent in 1327) and just over one third of those in Stoneleigh (37 per cent in 1327).<sup>37</sup> There may have been some population decline in the intervening period, especially as a consequence of the Great Famine of 1315–1317, but the discrepancy cannot be as great as the figures indicate. A tallage list of the abbot's tenants on his manor of Stoneleigh in 1305 enumerates 133 payers: in the equivalent area the abbot has 223 tenants recorded in the Hundred Rolls.<sup>38</sup>

A comparison of the Hundred Rolls with the Lay Subsidy of 1327, however, does suggest that the peasants of the Feldon were more prosperous than those of the Arden. As the percentages of taxpayers above shows, fewer tenants were exempt from taxation in Kinton hundred than Stoneleigh (the exemption point was

having movable goods of less than 10s in value). It is assumed that the capacity to pay tax is an indication of wealth, though other factors may be involved, corruption of the tax collectors, underassessment, perhaps even a deliberate selection by the assessors of rich, middling and poor in the vill.<sup>39</sup> In the assessment of 1334 the average assessment per taxation vill in Kineton hundred was almost twice the average in Stoneleigh.<sup>40</sup> But perhaps the more outstanding feature of the comparison, though slightly exaggerated if there had been a decline in population between 1279 and 1327, is the high proportion of the peasantry, 57 per cent overall taking both hundreds together, too poor to pay tax, that is assessed as not having moveables of 10s in value, and the exemption is unlikely to have been a generous one.

## Conclusion

Whatever the limitations of the evidence for the population history of Warwickshire some conclusions become clear. The growth of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries and subsequent decline did not alter the basic economic character of the country: its division into two regions, distinct but whose economies complemented each other. The contraction also thinned out some settlements, particularly the Feldon. In Kineton hundred some were former main settlements in their parishes in 1279, for example Charlecote, Chesterton, Compton Verney, Burton Dassett, Wormleighton. But more often they were secondary settlements in the parish, such as Bradmore in Honington, Brookhampton in Kineton, Hardwick and Westcote in Tysoe, Kingston in Chesterton.

Altogether ten main settlements became deserted, as well as seventeen which were probably in origin secondary settlements. This is 36 per cent or over one third of the settlements in Kineton hundred, but the majority of these were not the largest villis. There is something of the retreat from the margin in this, though it may not have been from inferior soils but more of a withdrawal to a nearby, still populous parochial centre.

Ultimately, the settlements in Kineton hundred give some support to the Postan thesis, though not necessarily with the population – resources crisis coming as early as he claimed. For the Arden settlement, at least that area of it near Coventry, the thesis is irrelevant. What this study indicates, as Barbara Harvey has suggested, is ‘the primacy of regional and local factors’ in understanding medieval population change.<sup>41</sup>

## NOTES

I would like to thank Mr Tom Arkell for all his help in making this article presentable.

1. J. B. Harley, ‘Population trends and agricultural developments from the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279’, *Economic History Review*, 11 (1958), 8–18.
2. R. M. Smith, ‘Demographic developments in rural England 1300–48: a survey’, in B. M. S. Campbell ed., *Before the Black Death: studies in the crisis of the early fourteenth century*, (Manchester, 1991), 39.
3. Stoneleigh, a hundred in Domesday Book, later became a sub-leet of Knighlow hundred.

4. For a summary of the debate on Postan's thesis see B. F. Harvey, 'Introduction: The crisis of the early fourteenth century', in Campbell, *Before the Black Death*, 1–24.
5. T. John ed., *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279–80: Stoneleigh and Kineton Hundreds*, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 19, (Oxford, 1992).
6. E. A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the agrarian history of England in the thirteenth century*, (Oxford, 1956); R. H. Hilton, 'Social structure of rural Warwickshire in the Middle Ages' in *The English peasantry in the later Middle Ages*, (Oxford 1975), 113–38, first published as an Occasional Paper of the Dugdale Society, 9, 1950.
7. Philip Morgan, however, believes 'it is probably wise to think of these listings of people rather as holdings than individuals, heads of household or families' (P. Morgan, *Domesday Book and the local historian*, (London, 1988), 22–3). If he is right, my reduction of holdings to tenants would not be necessary.
8. E. Stone ed., *The Oxfordshire Hundred Rolls of 1279*, Oxfordshire Record Society, 46 (1969), 13–4.
9. Harley, 'Population trends', 11.
10. F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond*, (London, 1960), 53–5; R. Welldon Finn, *An introduction to Domesday Book*, (London, 1963), 119–20. Both regard the serf as possibly having a household and a holding.
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13. On this problem see H. C. Darby, *Domesday England*, (Cambridge, 1977), 15–26.
14. W. Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire*, (London, 1656), 290.
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17. John, *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls*, 179.
18. John, *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls*, 293.
19. J. B. Harley, 'The settlement geography of early medieval Warwickshire', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 34 (1964), 117. Part of these larger figures may be the result of some double counting, Harley not allowing for the repetition of entries in the Exchequer manuscript in Stoneleigh Hundred between folios 45–51 (John, *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls*, 8–9).
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22. J. E. B. Gover, A Mawer, and F. M. Stenton, *The place-names of Warwickshire*, (Cambridge, 1936), 180.
23. Harley, 'Population Trends', 13.
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27. John, *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls*, 165–9, 190–2, 233–5, 278–80.
28. B. K. Roberts, 'Field systems of the West Midlands', in A. R. H. Baker and R. A. Butlin eds, *Studies of field systems in the British Isles*, (Cambridge, 1973), 221–31.
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31. T. Slater, *A history of Warwickshire*, (Chichester, 1981), 16, 79; R. H. Kinvig, 'The Birmingham district in Domesday times', in British Association for the Advancement of Science, *Birmingham and its regional setting: a scientific survey*, (Birmingham, 1950), 125; Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire*, 422; D. Defoe, *A tour through England and Wales*, (London, 1928), 42.
32. W. A. Baker, 'Warwickshire markets', *Warwickshire History*, 6 (1986), 167.
33. Harley, 'Population trends', 13–4.
34. J. B. Harley, 'Supplementary note' to a reprint of his original article in A. R. H. Baker, J. D. Hamshire and J. Langton eds, *Geographical interpretations of historical sources – readings in historical geography*, (Newton Abbot, 1970), 67.

35. I have taken the parish acreages from Francis White & Co., *History, gazetteer and directory of Warwickshire*, (Sheffield, 1850) on the assumption that they were closer to the medieval areas than those given in the *Victoria county history of Warwickshire*, II (London, 1904), 187–92.
36. Harley, 'Supplementary Note', 67.
37. *Lay Subsidy Roll for Warwickshire of 1327*, supplement to Transactions of the Midland Record Society, 5, (1901), 5–11, 16–27; W. K. Carter ed., *Lay subsidy roll for Warwickshire of K. Edward III, 1332*, Dugdale Society Publications, 6, (London, 1926), 2–28, 38–48.
38. R. H. Hilton ed., *The Stoneleigh leger book*, Dugdale Society Publications, 24, (Oxford, 1960), 50–4.
39. M. J. Stanley, 'Medieval tax returns as source material', in T. R. Slater and P. J. Jarvis eds, *Field and forest – an historical geography of Warwickshire and Worcestershire*, (Norwich 1982), 237–40; P. Franklin, Gloucestershire's medieval taxpayers, *Local Population Studies*, 54 (1995), 16–27.
40. R. E. Glasscock, *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 2, (London, 1975), 320–3.
41. Harvey, 'Introduction: the crisis of the early fourteenth century', 10.