

## THE BORDARS OF DOMESDAY DERBYSHIRE

By David Postles  
(Sheffield City Libraries)

The term *bordarius* occurs extensively in the enumeration of the tenantry of Domesday Book. The basic characteristics of the bordar is that he was a smallholder, the equivalent of the cottager, the term being derived from the French *bordier*. Following from this element, it has traditionally been assumed that the bordars might have acted additionally as a demesne labour force, as wage labour, as *famuli*, or by service (such as *lundinari*). Occasional entries in Domesday support the latter assumption to some extent.<sup>1</sup> A recent re-appraisal of the bordars, by Sally Harvey, proposes that, in addition, some clusters of bordars may reflect agricultural expansion and colonisation. High numbers of bordars in some places could imply assarting of small parcels of land by smallholders encouraged by their lords.<sup>2</sup> The bordars of Domesday Derbyshire have not hitherto been examined in detail.

Derbyshire had neither a high nor a low population of bordars<sup>3</sup> The total tenantry of the Derbyshire section is 2746, comprising 1776 villeins, 734 bordars and 236 miscellaneous. Villeins thus comprised 65% and bordars 27% of the enumeration. Unlike villeins, however, the distribution of bordars was not even.<sup>4</sup>

The geographical and tenurial distribution of bordars is illustrated in Map I. This map reveals four concentrations or clusters of bordars: the Ferrers' estates in South and South-West Derbyshire; the Royal multiple-estates in Mid-Derbyshire; some other manors in Mid-Derbyshire; and some manors in North-East Derbyshire.

The clustering on the Ferrers' estates in the South and South-West of the county is significant. These manors contained some 350 bordars, accounting for 47% of the total number of bordars in the county. The number of bordars on each of these manors was unexceptional, rarely exceeding the number of villeins. The simple explanation of these bordars is that they formed the cottagers employed as wage or demesne labour. Support for this concept comes from the high number of Ferrers' manors which had had joint or multiple lordship before the Conquest. Of 101 Ferrers' manors, 43 had more than a single lord in 1066. Several of these manors had several lords in 1066: Tissington (7); Foston (4); Barton Blount (8); Hollington (6); Shirley (7); Hilton (4); Snelston (4); Swarkestone (4); Burnaston (5); Etwall (5). Divided or joint lordship must have increased the opportunity for casual or wage labour, the establishment of more smallholders to supply it, and so a modest number of bordars on each manor. Moreover, few *servi* are recorded in Derbyshire in 1086, only 20 for the entire county.<sup>5</sup> Demesne labour could not therefore be provided from that source.

The reasons for bordars in the royal multiple-estates in Mid- Derbyshire may have been substantially different. Matlock, Ashbourne, Bakewell and Wirksworth were the heads or centres of these multiple estates, with dispersed lordship, each having 6 to 8 berewicks or outliers.<sup>6</sup> The centres at Matlock and Ashbourne were 'waste' in 1086, without any recorded population. The population in these two multiple-estates was located in the berewicks only. The berewicks of Ashbourne (Mapleton, Thorpe, Fenny Bentley, Offcote, and Hognaston) were also described as partially waste. Re-colonisation may thus have been promoted by using smallholders to assart in the berewicks, whilst the centres still remained 'waste'.

Some other manors in Mid-Derbyshire had higher proportions of bordars. This higher

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BORDARS IN DERBYSHIRE IN 1086.



Map 1 The distribution of Bordars in Derbyshire in 1086

ratio could be explained by the smallness of the manors. The small manor of Wessington in the fee of Ralph FitzHubert supported one villein and six bordars, being assessed at only 3½ bovates *ad geldam*, with land for only one plough.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, the manor of Walter d'Aincourt in Morton, Ogston and Wessington, had 14 villeins and four serfs, being a much more substantial property with land for three ploughs, and assessed at 11½ bovates and 8 acres *ad geldam*.<sup>8</sup> Beeley was another small manor — land for only six oxen — where the bordars (5) outnumbered the villeins (3). Brampton and Wadshelf, assessed at only 3½ bovates and 4 acres, had but one villein and three bordars. Small manors such as these, would almost inherently have a high number of small tenants. Additionally, some of the manors in this area, which had higher numbers of bordars, were Ferrers' manors, some having had divided or joint Old English lordship: Elton, Stanton, Edensor, Winster. Rural industries or by-employment — particularly leadmining — and the resources of commons and waste, may also have been conducive to smallholdings.<sup>9</sup> The later evolution of topography and settlement in Ashover parish, however, suggests that the existence of 14 bordars alongside the three molmen (*censarii*) in 1086, was indicative of incipient colonisation and expansion.<sup>10</sup> Ashover is a parish with highly dispersed settlement.

TABLE 1. Some Ferrers' Manors

Manor	Villeins	Bordars	Manor	Villeins	Bordars
Winster	7	12	Elton	9	10
Tissington	12	8	Croxall	35	11
<i>Bolun</i>	8	8	Doveridge	30	10
Foston	12	8	Scropton	32	26
Barton Blount	19	11	Alkmonton	8	7
Oxhay	4	5	Hollington	11	7
Shirley	6	7	Bradley	11	6
Hilton	12	7	Hough	11	5
Hatton	5	5	Eaton	5	5
Snelston	9	9	Cubley	4	4
Boylestone	8	8	Fenton	11	10
Norbury	17	7	Stanton in the Peak	4	6
Kedleston	5	5	Twyford	4	5
Ireton	6	6	Mugginton	8	8
Etwall	14	8	Radbourne	6	5
Edensor	10	7			

TABLE 2. Royal Multiple-Estates

Estate	Villeins	Bordars
Matlock Centre	—	—
Berewicks	11	12
Wirksworth Centre	16	9
Berewicks	36	13
Ashbourne Centre	—	—
Berewicks	11	7
Bakewell and berewicks	35	14

In the villis of North-East Derbyshire with a bordar population, the ratio of Villeins and bordars is mainly unexceptional. At Stainsby, there were 8 villeins and 5 bordars, at Staveley 21 villeins and 7 bordars. The remarkable exception is Barlborough *cum* Whitwell, where 36 bordars existed alongside the 10 freemen and 10 villeins.<sup>11</sup> This manor was quite substantial, with land for 8 ploughs, and assessed at 6 carucates *ad geldam*. The value before 1066 and in 1086 was £6, by contrast with the decline in value of all the other manors of Ralph FitzHubert. It would therefore seem that there had been some restitution of agriculture on the manor between 1066 and 1086. The manor also had extensive woodland pasture and underwood, the sort of topography where assarting of smallholdings might be expected. The reconstruction of the agrarian economy may well have been easier in this area than elsewhere in North Derbyshire, because Barlborough is at the juncture of the Magnesian Limestone, with richer soils, and the less productive Coal Measures, lying mainly on the Limestone.

The distribution of bordars can thus be associated with local circumstances. Many small manors had a high percentage of smallholders. On the Ferrers' estates, where joint or divided lordship had often been the pre-Conquest arrangement, bordars formed a strong element of the population, perhaps as demesne or wage labour in the local economy. In the royal multiple-estates of Mid-Derbyshire, the population of bordars may have reflected the re-colonisation of the dispersed estate, initially in the berewicks. The main association of bordars with colonisation, however, seems to have occurred at Barlborough *cum* Whitwell. By contrast, there are some parts of the distribution map where bordars were sparse, particularly the North and North-West, where settlement was in any case sparse, and the South-East.

#### REFERENCES

1. (Sir) P. Vinogradoff, *English Society in the Eleventh Century*, (Oxford, repr. 1968), 457-458. F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, (1960 edn.), 64 *et seqq.*
2. Sally Harvey, 'Evidence for Settlement Study: Domesday Book', in *Medieval Settlement*, ed. P. Sawyer, (1976), 197-199.
3. High and low counties are listed by Harvey, *loc. cit.*
4. The global figures for the county are taken from D. Holly, 'Derbyshire' in *The Domesday Geography of Northern England*, ed. H.C. Darby & I.S. Maxwell, (Cambridge, 1962), 297-301.
5. D. Holly, *loc. cit.*; also R. Lennard, *Rural England, 1086-1135*, (Oxford, 1959), 241. Ten of the *servi* occur at Duffield with its appurtenances.
6. Lennard, *op. cit.*, p.239.
7. *Db* I, 277b.
8. *Db* I, 276c.
9. Lennard, *op. cit.*, 241-242.
10. *Db* I, 273a (Beeley), 276c (Brampton), 277a (Ashover).
11. *Db* I, 277a.