

## TENURE BY DRENGAGE IN LANCASHIRE, 1212-1348

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Although tenants described as drengs were recorded in Newton hundred in Domesday Book, they sink from sight thereafter. However, in editing King John's Great Inquest of Service of 1212, Farrer listed eight villis in Amounderness plus Bolton-le-Sands in Lonsdale (South of Sands) as villis held in drengage.<sup>1</sup> Two of them had been described as drengage villis earlier, Bolton-le-Sands in 1201, and Hambleton in Amounderness in 1206.<sup>2</sup> Haighton, Steyna, and Wrea were so recorded in the Great Inquest of Service in 1212,<sup>3</sup> and a further three, Alston, Bilsborough, and Ashton (on Ribble), were identified in the 1226 survey of the royal demesnes.<sup>4</sup> The remaining vill listed with the drengages by Farrer, Broughton, had been bestowed in the middle of the previous century on an ancestor of the Singleton family but his son had been dispossessed. King John took over the vill from the dispossessor and it was held in the king's hand in 1212, remaining so until it was restored by Henry III to the grandson, Alan of Singleton.

Seven of the drengage villis were assessed at one carucate or less, and through the next century and a half most were usually recorded as being held by one individual who took his surname from the vill. Three of them, however, were held by a larger number of tenants: Hambleton's three carucates were 'put to farm to the men of the vill', and the tenurial character of Broughton appears similar after it ceased to be held by the king. There were seven holders of the two and a half carucates of Bolton-le-Sands in 1212.

Rents did not wholly reflect the carucatage. The quarter

caruates of Bilsborough and Haighton each paid 2s. and although by the end of the period each had been assessed at a half carucate, the rent remained the same. The Alston tenant paid 4s. for his half carucate, but again the rent remained the same when the assessment was doubled. Proportionately Ashton paid the higher rent of 10s. for one carucate of land, while Steyna and Wrea with the same carucatage got off lightly with 5s. and 6s. rent respectively, and the men of Hambleton paid a rent of 24s. for three carucates. But the seven drenges of Bolton-le-Sands who paid 16s. per carucate, and the vill of Broughton (when held in hand) appear to have had grounds for feeling aggrieved: Broughton paid six marks, a total of £4, although some of it was evidently a payment for pasturage in the forest of Fulwood. When Broughton was restored to Alan of Singleton the rent was reduced to 8s., with an additional 10s. for pasturage.<sup>5</sup>

The middle years of the thirteenth century produced few records of these villis. Some were listed in the tallages of 1249 and 1261; the account roll of 1256–8 recorded three drengages in Wrea; and they were all listed in the inquisition *post mortem* of the earl of Lancaster in 1297–8, although only Steyna was then described as a drengage.<sup>6</sup> In addition, between 1244 and 1293 some of the men who held these villis were listed among the twelve ‘inquirers of the Wapentake’ (or ‘jurors’ in 1249) at inquisitions *post mortem* and other inquests: Roger of Bilsborough, John of Steyna and his son Roger, John of Haighton and his son Richard, and William, Alan, Robert, Alexander, and another William of Ashton all of whom probably came from Ashton on Ribble.<sup>7</sup> This is a clear indication of their status, as is the holding of inquisitions on the deaths in 1261 of John of Hackensall who held Hambleton, still described (rather ambiguously) as held in drengage in 1346; and in 1265 of John of Steyna when he was said to hold ‘eight bovates in the vill of Steyna in chief of the king by the service of drengage, of which four bovates are in demesne and are worth 2 marks, and the other four bovates are in service and pay by the year 2s. 6d. for which he renders to the king 5s. and does forinsec service, and one suit at the county and wapentake [courts]’. Further details come only in 1346 when another John of Steyna held half of Steyna (presumably the demesne of 1265), the other half being held by seven other tenants

(presumably that formerly held by service). The (forinsec?) service of the drengs was then described as 'finding meat and drink for the lord's foresters and provender for their horses and the lord's hounds'.<sup>8</sup>

By the middle years of the fourteenth century we can see changes in the description of the drengage tenures. Three vill retained their earlier status as drengage vill: Steyna and Hambleton (already discussed), and Wrea, where fifteen people held in drengage.<sup>9</sup> The Bilsborough and Haighton families had been displaced in those vills by the Singletons (later, by marriage, the Banastres), the hereditary serjeants of the hundred. But while those vills, with Broughton, swelled the size of the Singleton fee they were not held by service of serjeanty, but by knight service. However, it seems possible that the earlier tenants were still *in situ* and that the Singletons had been inserted between them and the king. Broughton was once again in the king's hand, this time through the minority of the heir. The Alstons had gone and two other men hold that vill in socage; Ashton too was held in moieties, one in socage and the other by knight service; while Bolton-le-Sands, paying a yet higher rent, was held by nine men and women. The fourteenth-century records prove that many tenants of drengage vill were then free tenants,<sup>10</sup> but it is evident from their status that most, if not all, were probably free throughout the previous century as well.

Jolliffe, in examining drengages in Durham and Northumberland, surmised that drengages were 'modifications of the office of reeve'.<sup>11</sup> He regarded the holders as men who held in drengage the vills of the royal demense for which their predecessors had once served as reeve. Such an explanation accords with Farrer's assertion that all the Lancashire drengage vills had been members of the royal demesne before 1212. It was a known practice in Lancashire to put the royal vill at farm to the 'men of the vill'.<sup>12</sup> and such a practice could explain why Steyna, apparently held solely by the Steyna family for almost a century and a half, was suddenly recorded in the 1346 extent as held by eight drengage tenants, of whom John of Steyna, holding half the vill, was the leading one. One must suspect that the greater detail of that extent has permitted us to see what may, in the terser descriptions of previous years, have been omitted, and that, like Hambleton, the vill of Steyna had been



let to the 'men of the vill', of whom the leading one, perhaps the descendants of a reeve, answered for the vill.

## NOTES

- 1 *Lancashire inquests, extents and feudal aids*, ed. W. Farrer (3 vols, R.S.L.C. XLVII, LIV, and LXX, 1903-15), I, pp. 48, 50-52, 95-96.
- 2 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 51, 95.
- 3 *Ibid.*, I, p. 51.
- 4 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 139-140.
- 5 *Ibid.*, I, p. 289.
- 6 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 176, 227-228, 284-301. In that period only three villis were named as holdings in drengage (Haighton, Steyna, and Wrea), with one other unnamed vill.
- 7 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 151, 159, 165, 172, 174-176, 183, 189, 192, 194, 212, 225, 231, 277, 280, 282.
- 8 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 229, 234, II, p. 111; III, p. 115. Despite Farrer's footnote (III, p. 114) suggesting that the rent in 1346 was 10s., the rent of Steyna was at all times earlier given as 5s.
- 9 Compare *ibid.*, II, p. 133; III, pp. 125, 173. '11s. 3d. of the rent of the free tenants in drengage' was paid in 1348, the same total sum paid by named tenants in 1346 and 1323. Furthermore, some of the named tenants of 1346 can be related to those of 1323.
- 10 In 1323 in Haighton, Bilsborough, and Bolton-le-Sands all the tenants listed were free tenants (*ibid.*, II, p. 112-113, 125) and in Broughton only free tenants were listed (*ibid.*, II, pp. 112-113, 125.) In 1346 in Ashton, one moiety was held as a knight's fee and the other moiety by three tenants in socage (*ibid.*, III, p. 112) and in Alston all three tenants held in socage (*ibid.*, III, p. 112). In 1348 the tenants of Wrea were described as 'free tenants in drengage' (*ibid.*, III, p. 173).
- 11 J. E. A. Jolliffe, 'Northumbrian Institutions', *English Historical Review*, XLI (1926), pp. 15-16.
- 12 The royal demesne grange of West Derby had been let to the tenants by 1300, and so had Hambleton as early as 1206: *Lancs. inquests*, I, p. 51; III, p. 283