

Edward III

Since there were changes in the ownership of the manor during Edward III's reign there is a comparatively large amount of documentary evidence for this period. The Mortimers did not farm the land themselves. Indeed, at the beginning of the reign they did not even own the manor as it had fallen into the hands of Edward II (although it is not clear why). In 1329 the land reverted to the Mortimers and in the following year the reeve, John atte Thorne, wrote an account of the manor, and later in 1330 the Sheriff also produced an account which showed that 46 acres of corn and 12 acres of mixtilion (wheat and rye mix) had been sown. Many of the villagers had helped as there is a note that 28 men with 14 ploughs had been paid for one day's "*ploughing of the land of the lord for the Lent seed*". The ploughing was done using oxen rather than horses, but there were four horse harrows as well as two oxen ones. The account also mentions that there were 17 pigs (including one boar) and that 30 pigs were born that year - three of which were given in tithe. No other animals were kept in large numbers but the dovecote continued to produce a profit of 4^d a year.

Royal Horses

Another enterprise being conducted in Mortimer was the Royal Stud Stable on the Manor Farm, which was near St. Mary's Church. The first reference to it was in 1325-26 when Adam atte Hyde spent £24 10s 1d on hay and oats and the wages of the keepers of the stud stable. It is unlikely though that Edward II had one of his stud stables on land so closely linked with the Mortimers. At that time Roger Mortimer, who had just escaped from prison where he had been placed for plotting against the King, was about to return to England with an army and his lover, Isabella (who happened to be the wife of Edward II). It is quite probable that Roger Mortimer backdated the date of the inception of a Royal Stud Stable at Mortimer so that the Exchequer would pay for the raising of his own horses.

In 1330 the stables in Mortimer held seven horses. There were three large cart-horses: Ellen was black with a white star on the forehead; Cesse was dun coloured with a similar star; Cappe was sorrel (i.e. bright chestnut) also with a similar star. There were also four foals. It was horses like these which were used to support Edward III's campaigns in the Hundred Years War against France. An account rendered in 1336 said that John Brocas had given a warhorse stallion, called Mecwyard, to the stud and that there were 19 young warhorses. There were also 12 carthorses and six colts. Eleven of these horses had come from the Mortimer family's estates in Clun, Shropshire. The others had come from the King's Stud at Odiham and from Woodstock and Princes Risborough. The warhorses would all have been stallions as it was believed that geldings and mares would lack the necessary courage in battle.

Although it is possible that the King's Stud continued in Mortimer until the late 1440s, there is no mention of it after 1352 when Thomas de Colle complained that mares, colts

and fillies from it were eating the grass in the Great Park, which he had leased.

During Edward III's long reign Mortimer remained an agricultural parish which was mostly put to arable use and to parkland.