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THE BLACK DEATH IN WALES

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THE epidemics of the fourteenth century have been the subject of much discussion by eminent scholars, whose investigations have been supplemented by detailed studies of various localities. No considered attempt, however, has been made to trace the course of the disease within Wales, which, by reason of its isolated position and mountainous character, is frequently regarded as having largely escaped the visitation. The study of the effects of such an agent upon a society predominantly pastoral offers a subject of special interest.

The obscurity of conditions within Wales during the years of the Pestilence is primarily due to the paucity of evidence available from the usual sources. Contemporary chronicles throw no light upon the situation with the exception of Geoffrey le Baker's reference to the spread of the disease to Wales by the year 1349. Ecclesiastical evidence, to which Cardinal Gasquet attributed much importance in dealing with England, is conspicuously lacking, while parliamentary and legal evidence is, as a rule, inapplicable beyond the border. We are therefore driven to examine documents of a fiscal nature, but the less adequate machinery of record in Wales, particularly in the lordships of the March, constitutes a further obstacle. Not only is evidence scanty, but the manner in which the information for a large part of the country is presented, makes it difficult to obtain definite statistics. This was due to the complex conditions, political, economic, and social, which had arisen in Wales after a conquest extending over some two hundred years. That conquest had the effect of creating a

number of distinct political units, lordships or baronies of the March, each comprising one or more subordinate lordships, based on the original Welsh divisions; but in the lands of the Crown and in other parts conquered during the last Welsh War, the old divisions continued to be known as commotes. Each lordship now came to be regarded theoretically as a manor, but was not necessarily a unit of cultivation.

Where conditions were favourable, agriculture was introduced and manors on the English model established. These naturally developed in the lowlands, the castle forming the nucleus of foreign settlement. The lands of the lord formed the demesnes, English followers together with the Welsh of the lowland "vills" being incorporated within the manor as Free or Customary tenants. This area, therefore, came to be administered as a distinct section of the lordship known as the "Englishry," the resources of which were directly drawn upon for the support of the new administration. In contrast, stood the upland "Welshry," the remaining portion of the lordship, whose inhabitants continued, in the main, undisturbed by the newer influences of the valleys, the lord contenting himself with receiving the dues and services which had formerly been rendered in accordance with tribal custom. In the Welshry, therefore, tribute based upon communal obligations continued to be paid, while the feature of the Englishry was the payment of rent or the performance of service in return for direct and individual tenure of land. Any attempt, therefore, to analyse the effects of the Death in Wales must take cognisance of this very real economic division.

Owing to the nature of the country, agriculture could only assume serious proportions along the border and on the coastal plains of the south where manorial development was most marked and where the Englishry often occupied the major part of the lordships. These conditions were also to be found inland along the valleys, but beyond the mountain rim the Englishries were of very limited extent. In West and North Wales particularly they were frequently confined to the immediate vicinity of the castle, but at more accessible points some features of a manor might be found on the limited de-

mesnes of the lord. Little or no development, however, is perceptible, and before the close of the thirteenth century even these few acres of demesne had usually been given over to the customary tenants to hold "at will" as rent-paying "gabularii". The commotes were mainly made up of free and unfree "trefs," each of which participated in the use of the extensive mountain wastes and rendered its quota to the ancient dues of the commote. Tribesmen here held their land according to kindred principles, but by the early fourteenth century disintegration was proceeding within the kindred system, leading to a gradual extension of the practice of individual tenancy. This was especially the case in South Wales and in those districts more closely in touch with English influences.

The large manors were making rapid progress during these years, but signs of coming change were not lacking. Hired labour was being substituted for the services of the customary tenants; the lord was becoming a stranger to his Welsh possessions so that the produce of the manor was less directly necessary. Portions of the demesne were therefore let to freemen or to customary tenants, making for a considerable class of "gabularii" on the manors of South Wales. Attempts were being made to bring the elaborate organisation of the manor within more moderate proportions and to make up the revenue by less burdensome methods. The expedients of renting and "farming" were being applied wherever opportunity offered. In spite of these incipient changes, however, the manor in the early part of the reign of Edward III was still flourishing in Wales, but the outbreak of epidemics after the middle of the century immediately arrested development and hastened dissolution.

The spread of the Black Death into Wales would seem to have been by way of the lower Severn valley into the border counties and into the lordships of the South-eastern March. Previous to the winter or spring of 1348-49, records betray no sign of any untoward happening. By March the plague was raging in the eastern, and indeed in the western, portion of the lordship of Bergavenny, the lord of the former district falling a victim early in the month. By the middle of

the following month almost wholesale destruction had been wrought among the inhabitants, the extent of which loss can best be gauged from an examination of the rents.¹ In each of the hamlets, an average of one-third only of the original rents could be obtained; at some of the villages, *e.g.*, Werneryth and Trefgoythel, much greater losses occurred, pointing to almost complete extinction.² In the manor of Penros, only £4 of a total of £12 could be collected "because many of the tenements lie empty and derelict for lack of tenants". So disastrous had been the effects through the whole lordship that the guardian of the heir petitioned for a reduction of £140 in a rent of £340, "by reason of the mortal pestilence lately so rife in these parts".³ As a result of an enquiry arrears were allowed to the extent of £60, and £40 a year was deducted from the rents as permanent loss. The Prior of Bergavenny too, experienced serious financial difficulty at this time.

The neighbouring districts of Usk and Llantrissant, Trelech, Monmouth, Skenfrith, White Castle, and Grosmont were also very generally affected by what was termed the First or the "Great" Pestilence, the changes in the manor of Raglan necessitating a new rental.

Westward along the plain of Glamorgan the plague cannot be traced at this early date although a detailed inquisition was made in the spring of 1349 into the Glamorgan inheritance of Hugh le Despenser who had died on February 8 of that year. Northward, the epidemic spread through the border counties of Hereford, Shropshire, and the County Palatine of Chester, where it raged during the spring, summer, and early autumn. Of the border lordships north and west of Shrewsbury, Caus with its hamlets was seriously stricken,⁴ the rents of assise of the freemen of Yokelton falling from £8 to

¹ Evidence of reduction in rents must necessarily be regarded as of doubtful value unless such reduction is recorded as being due directly to the pestilence. The writer has endeavoured to keep this in view throughout this paper.

² *E.g.*, Werneryth: *There used to be of rents of assise £13 10s. 3½d. and now remain £1 14s. 6d. because of mortality.*

Trefgoythel: *Rents of assise used to be £3 10s. 6¾d. but now only 6s. because of the mortality.*

³ Rot. Orig. 24 E. III, mem. 8.

⁴ Inq. p.m., C. Edw. III, File 96 (14).

£1 10s. The mills, it is said, were rendered valueless "for lack of grinding, because there was no suit, and this because of the Pestilence". At Harlegh, in the same manor, the demesnes could not be extended and no one wished to hire. A similar condition was to be found in the neighbouring manors of Whittington, Ellesmere, and Whitchurch, and at the smaller districts of Roughton, Sutton, Wrokwardine, Moreton Saye, La More, Aldenham, and Bradford.¹ Little or no revenue was available from such sources as the courts, the markets and fairs, while in one case only £7 could be collected of a possible sum of £40. The accounts of the manor of Chester for many years after the first outbreak are eloquent of the disastrous consequences in that region.² Large tracts of the demesne lands and escheated tenements in the various villis were allowed to remain uncultivated, and could not be let owing to lack of tenants.

It may be presumed that the pestilence extended by way of the three important routes into the lordships of the eastern March, but on this, information is somewhat unsatisfactory. Detailed record of the Bohun lands of Brecon and Huntington offers no direct evidence of its presence, though the receipts show greater fluctuations than in ordinary years.³ Interest attaches to the visit of the lord and his lady to the castle of Brecon in the latter part of the year 1348, when elaborate preparations were made for a long stay. Little record is forthcoming to throw light on events in the adjoining lordship of Builth, a fact which is indeed true of the greater part of the Central March, including the extensive domains of the Mortimers.

We are more fortunate in respect of the lordships of North-eastern Wales, especially the districts on the coast route leading from Chester. The burgesses of Rhuddlan, because of the poverty of the people, were, in 1350, granted a rebate of one-fourth of their farm of £40 for certain

¹ Inq. p.m., C. Edw. III, Files 95 (7); 98 (2); 98 (3); e.g., Whittington: Michaelmas, 1349, two watermills, formerly worth £2, now only £1 yearly because the tenants are dead in the present pestilence. Rents of freemen formerly £3, now only £1.

² Ministers' Accounts, Bundle 783, Nos. 1, 15, 16, 17, including Escheators' Accounts.

³ Min. Acc., Bundle 671, Nos. 10810 *et seq.*

mills. This was raised to one-third for the following years "until the said mills were of more value". Many of the lead miners of Holywell died, the survivors refusing to work there. Debts of the courts of Flint could not be procured, and offices became difficult to farm.¹

The lordship of Denbigh² seems to have experienced the full force of the plague. Even in 1354, the heirs of deceased tenants of the villatae of Barrok and Petruel (commote Uwchalet) were unable through poverty to obtain possession, the lord thereby losing "tunk" and other customary payments attaching to the lands. Similar entries are noted in the remaining commotes, while the escheators' accounts for the whole district continue to record long lists of tenements still vacant through death or poverty.

The unique collection of Court Rolls that have been preserved for the lordship of Ruthin,³ makes it possible to follow the course of the disease there during the year of the outbreak as well as in succeeding years. In the first five months of the year 1349, the court proceedings are recorded in the usual manner, only an occasional death occurring, probably from natural causes. With extreme suddenness, however, in the second week in June, 7 deaths took place within the jurisdiction of the Court of Abergwiler. During the next fortnight, all parts of the lordship were seriously attacked. Within that brief period 77 of the inhabitants of the town of Ruthin died together with several of the "nativi" of the "maerdref" there; in the neighbourhood of Llangollen there were 10 deaths; in Llanerch 13, in Dogfelen there were 25, and in Abergwiler 14, figures which more than doubled in the next few weeks. Allowance, how-

¹ Min. Acc., Bundle 783, Nos. 1, 15, 16, 17; e.g., Chelmondston: 4s. 4d. issues of 1 place of land in the lord's hand because acquired without licence. Now the place lies uncultivated because of the pestilence, and is common.

Min. Acc., Bundle 1186, Nos. 4, 5, 11, 23. Account of the Ringild of Hopedale: Park of Lloetcoet; £1 5s. 10d. agistments of the Park, and no more because of the Pestilence in the previous year.

² Min. Acc., Bundle 1182, Nos. 3, 5 *passim*; e.g., Uwchalet Commote: Account of Griffith ap Madoc, Ringild. Allowed £2 14s. 1d. from the customs of divers tenants of the "villatae" of Barrok and Petruel, in the lord's hands because the tenants died in the time of the Pestilence and their heirs are unable to pay for the inheritance.

Min. Acc., Bundle 1183, No. 2, 3.

³ Court Rolls, Portfolios 217, 218, 219.

ever, must be made for duplication in the entries in the few cases where tenants might have held more than one tenement. The epidemic somewhat abated by the last week of July or early August, but it broke out with renewed violence during the remainder of that month when the death-rate reached its highest. After this it fell rapidly although a few deaths were ascribed to this cause throughout the following winter. The ordinary business of the courts almost ceased at these troublous periods, and the Rolls were mainly given over to the enumeration of vacancies in the holdings of deceased tenants, and to the recording of transfers, the profits from such sources often amounting to large sums. In these writings of the courts, two brothers are stated to have taken advantage of the plague to rob stricken families of their household goods and even of their animals.¹

Passing from the March into the Crown lands, we again find sufficient evidence of widespread mortality. It is difficult to determine whether infection was conveyed by land alone, or whether the sea also played a part. It may fairly be assumed that the latter is true in the case of Carmarthen where the two officials of the Staple were among the early victims—about the end of March. In fact, the Carmarthen district suffered severely at this first visitation, especially the small manor of Llanllwch,² where lay the main portion of the demesnes of the lord of Carmarthen—the Prince of Wales. These demesnes were held “at will” by a dozen gabularii, who all died, so that the tenements were left in the hands of the lord. By 1353, courts were still suspended and strangers were renting portions of the vacated lands, and had set up new tenements, though a large part “lay waste and unmeasured for lack of buyers”. Miscellaneous revenues of the borough of Carmarthen, such as the mill-tolls and

¹ Court Rolls, Portfolio 218, No. 4. *Also the jurors say that Madoc ap Ririd and Kenwric his brother came by night in the Pestilence to the house of Aylmar after the death of the wife of Aylmar and took from the same house one water pitcher and basin, value 1s., old iron, value 4d. And they also present that Madoc and Kenwric came by night to the house of Almar in the vill of Rewe in the Pestilence, and from that house stole 3 oxen of John the Parker and 3 cows, value 6s.*

² *E.g.*, Min. Acc., Bundle 1158, No. 2.

fisheries, were seriously diminished and the fairs could not be held.

During the summer, the pestilence made serious ravages throughout the commotes of Ystrad Towy and Cardigan, but inasmuch as the communities were answerable in a body for the various dues, it is almost impossible to make any but very general statements with regard to these areas. Items of evidence do occasionally appear. In every district great difficulty was experienced in obtaining anyone to hire the local offices of beadle, reeve or serjeant. The advowry tenants and chensers, some of whom were to be found in most of the commotes, either died or fled. In the districts of South Cardigan, 97 of a total of 104 "gabularii" withdrew before midsummer for fear of the pestilence. The issues from escheated lands reached high totals; a marked rise is noted in the fees derived from the Chancery seal, and the various towns and bailiwicks were from this time forward very commonly farmed. Accounts continued for many years to record deficits.

The documents of the Principality of North Wales offer a more illuminating picture. It would seem that a heavier toll of victims was exacted here than was the case in the South. In the Anglesey commotes¹ very large numbers of escheated tenements were still in decay in the year 1351 either through death or through the poverty of the people. Thirty-three such entries are noted for the hamlets of Trefdisteinydd, Dyndrovel, etc., in the Commote of Malldraeth, equivalent to a total of £6 13s. 2d. in rent. In Llifon Commote the decay of rents (mainly from native land) amounted to £4 18s., in Talybolion, £9 8s. 3½d., and in Turkelyn £6 9s. 9½d. The demesnes of Beaumaris were let to townsmen.

¹Min. Acc., Bundles 1149, 1150 *passim*; e.g., Commote of Malltraeth: *Decay of rents of Davydd Moil of the vill of Trefdisteinydd* 5s. 4d.; *Gronow With* 3s. 4d.; *Turlach* 22s. 4d.; *Cadwgan ap Jak of Trefithon* etc. (30 other like entries) *whose land were in the lord's hands for lack of tenants and because the lord's tenants in the same villis are incapable (impotentes et insufficientes) of holding the said lands.*

Commote of Turkelyn: *Allowed* 11s. 6d. *part of* £2 12s. 1½d. *rents of the Villeins of Bodevyney in the extent of Bodenawyn because there are now only two tenants there—one "native" and one advowry.*

The Carnarvon records¹ also point to serious losses, particularly among the "advowry" tenants and "nativi," to the dearth of officials and to the higher receipts from the Seal. Almost all the villeins of Deganwy died, their lands being leased to a certain Glodyth for eight years. Tenements of the villein hamlets of Arllechwedd Isaf were, in the words of the account, "handed over to oblivion" and new tenements established. The little manor of Hirdref in Dinllaen was farmed for one year only, because assessment could not be made for a longer period owing to the great loss of tenants. Many escheated lands and tenements scattered throughout the various "vills" of the same commote were farmed with the manor of Bodefau and other lands in the county of Anglesey for a sum of £50. The villein hamlet of Redemknelyn in Eifonydd yielded after the pestilence only 5s. for its dues of oatmeal and butter, instead of £1 8s. as previously. The heavy decays of the Anglesey accounts are not repeated in all the commotes of Carnarvon, although in Commote Cafflogion the uncultivated lands of freemen dying without heirs showed a loss of over £4 a year.

By the end of the year 1349 the epidemic had very generally subsided, but from the Court Rolls we learn that in Ruthin a few deaths were still being attributed to the same cause in 1351 and 1354. These occurred only very occasionally during the period 1357-60. The winter of 1361-62, however, saw another, though a milder, outbreak referred to as the Second Pestilence.² The disease then almost disappeared until the summer of 1369, after which time it is seen to have spent its force.

¹ Min. Acc., Bundle 1171, *passim*. E.g., Commote of Cruthyn (Creuddyn). Account of the Rhingyll of the Commote, Michaelmas, 24-5 Edw. III. *Advowry 8d.—Advowry of Blethin ap Madoc and David ap Madoc etc. . . . and no more because the remainder are dead by the Pestilence.*

Farm.—Farm of the Rhaglwyry, used to be £2 3s. 4d. before the Pestilence.—Nothing, because let by the Justice's Deputy and the Chamberlain to Madoc Blodeyth for £1 6s. 8d.

Commote of Cafflogion. *Allowed £8 2s. 2d., viz., £4 2s. 2d. for this year and the last two years for the lands of divers freemen lying empty and uncultivated. Arllechwedd Isaf. Remittance of 5s. 2d. annual rent of the customs and services of the villeins of the king for 13 bovates of land with easements which were handed over to oblivion on the making of the extent.*

² Court Rolls, Portfolio 219/1. Ruthyn: *Edmund ap Madoc ap David qui tenuit unum Burgum in Novo Vico decessit in Secunda Pestilencia.*

The later epidemics are also traceable in the adjoining County of Flint,¹ in the lordship of Denbigh,² and to some extent in Anglesey and Carnarvon. One-third of the farm of the town of Montgomery, also, had to be remitted. Many tenements in the "patria" were vacant after 1361, and the "cylch" payment of the Commote of Teirdref was much reduced owing to fewness of inhabitants.³

On turning again to South Wales, we find that the plague of 1361 visited the plain of Glamorgan, especially the lordship of Ogmore and its "Welshry" of Eglwys Keynor. The manor of Caldecote had by this time lost about 4 gafolmen, 14 customary tenants, 19 cottars, and several holders of assart land, a loss which resulted in a deficit of rents of £3 2s. 9½d. from that source alone, while the custom of serjeantry only brought in the sum of 4½d., as the tenants who had been responsible for this particular payment had died.

In the Upper Gwent area, on the other hand, the outbreak which was sufficiently severe to be known as the Second Pestilence was that of 1369, while important changes, reflected in the issue of new rentals, occur again as late as 1382. The epidemic of 1369 was generally severe in South-eastern Wales, but it is impossible to estimate its extent since the documents group the losses to the lord from this plague with those still outstanding from the previous "death". Trelech borough lost nearly one-third of its burgesses, and there was a corresponding diminution in the rents of the tenants of Llangwm. The manor of New Grange was badly affected, and certain of the customary tenants of Tisset died. This decay in the rents caused directly by the pestilence continued to be recorded for many decades later in Usk manor and borough, in Tregrug, Troye, Caerleon, and Edelegan, the losses in the manor of Llantrissen being particularly heavy.⁴ Similar effects are seen in the lordships of Monmouth and the Three Castles. During the same year the customary tenants of Caldecote were further reduced to four and the lands let to strangers. This formerly

¹ Min. Acc., Bundle 1186, No. 23; Bundle 1187, Nos. 11, 12.

² Min. Acc., Bundle 1182, No. 5; Bundle 1183.

³ Min. Acc., Bundle 1206, No. 3.

⁴ Min. Acc., Bundle 928, *passim*.

flourishing manor had within twenty years been reduced to insignificance as a direct result of the plague.

Along the plain of Glamorgan the epidemic of 1369 is traceable at Leckwith, at Ogmore, and again at Llantwit, where 147 acres of villein land escheated to the lord.¹ The demesnes, before many years, were put to farm, as also were those of Oystermouth, Llandimore, and other Gower manors. The manor of Bronllys also shows traces of having been affected, certain of the customary services having lapsed owing to the death of villeins. Several of the advowry tenants, too, died, though in the neighbouring manor of Brecon in the same year few signs of the disease can be observed.

This brief survey of these years would lead us to believe that the pestilence did not attack with equal force all parts of Wales. It is on the manors that the effects are most clearly seen. The seriousness of the blow to many made even the semblance of recovery difficult. The appearance of the disease at the critical sowing season brought about a heavy reduction not only in the rents, but in the total receipts of the manor. The problem of obtaining a revenue at once presented itself to the lord, who accommodated himself to the new circumstances by renting out his lands. Consequently, in succeeding years, the revenue of the manor was again noticeably on the increase, and occasionally, within a brief period, the original totals were even exceeded. But agriculture was no longer developed. No expenditure was now incurred either in labour, implements, or in material. Sales of corn, stock, or miscellaneous products ceased. Such manors became solely units for the collection of rents. Others, less directly affected, were able to retain their organisation for the time, only to be involved in the economic disturbances which followed. The manors of Brecon, Bronllys, Roath, Llantwit, and Ogmore still continued cultivation on quite a considerable scale, the first-named maintaining a vigorous existence even after the two pestilences.

It is a matter of surprise that sheep-farming was not widely adopted as an alternative for meeting the new

¹ Inq. P.M., C. Edw. III, File 253.

situation that had arisen. This was possibly due to the fact that Welsh wool had a poor sale in the markets of the time. Only, therefore, in the lordships of the Middle-eastern March was there a considerable and rapid development in this direction, probably representing the expansion into Wales at this point of the wool-growing industry of Hereford and Salop. By the reign of Richard II the manor of La Royl and the neighbouring grange of Cybalfa in Elvael had between them a flock of over 1000 sheep belonging to the lord of Painscastle. The Bohun lordships of Brecon, Bronllys, Hay, and Huntington are particularly noticeable in this connection. The manor of Huntington had over 300 sheep, Hay had 335, and at Brecon a flock of nearly 1000 is recorded in 1373, more than 400 being purchased in that year alone, though agriculture still flourished in these manors. The chief sheep-farm was at Bronllys, which had over 1000 sheep distributed among the hill-farms of Gwenddwr, Troscod, and Llaneglwys. These were formerly the grazing-grounds of the monks of Dore, but were now rented by the lord from the monks. The Bohun manors furnish the best examples in Wales at this time of the production of wool on a commercial scale, the amount derived from all the manors being considerable. It was either sold the same year or allowed to accumulate. In the year 1373 it reached the high total of 18,500 fleeces, 3000 of which were packed and sent to Blanche Appleton, 6000 were sold, and the remainder reserved for future sale.

During the succeeding years, notwithstanding the vitality thus displayed by certain manors, the practice of letting the demesne gained ground. Labour troubles were undoubtedly an important cause, but it is probable that the renting of the land proved both profitable and convenient. One by one the manors as agricultural "units" were being reduced to the same stage of decadence, and that by the rapid extension of those processes which are noted in their incipient stages at a much earlier date. The miscellaneous elements of the manor were among the first to be involved in the change. The courts were held less frequently and their perquisites were reduced. The garden was let out as pasture; the dove-

cote and the fish-stew remained unstocked or were farmed; the ferry-boat was hired out; the profits from pannage and timber declined, and the quarries were let. The letting of the mills became now almost universal, and these were often leased for life or for a period of years. In a lease of this character the suit of the customary tenants who remained was also transferred, and it was usual for the lord to undertake the heavier repairs to the building, to replace the millstones, and to reconstruct the weir in case of "grand-breach".¹

The system of letting out the pastures was extended to every available plot for which offers could be obtained, including even the parks and old stubble or "frisc" land. The hay of the meadows was sold in the fields, or the meadows were leased often on condition of being enclosed. It is of interest to note that the prices at which these lands were let were, on the whole, the same as those which prevailed formerly. Presumably this was to avoid competing with the rents already ruling, so that land often lay idle for the year "for lack of hirers," though possibly it could have been let at a lower figure. Lands thus remaining vacant were not uncommonly given to manorial officers to supplement dwindling incomes. Far larger portions of the demesne soon came to be rented.² The demesnes of Hay were let in gross to a few of the enterprising townsmen; those at Penkelly were leased for twelve years to one man. At Dyveles they were let in plots to those tenants who wished to avail themselves of the same but on the neighbouring manor of Rumney they were rented for ten years to the whole body of villeins on condition that they maintained the buildings, walls, and ditches in an efficient state. The letting of the demesne did not necessarily include the services of the villeins or the buildings of the manor, both of which were often disposed of separately. The stock and implements were largely sold, and only in one instance, at Huntington, can reference be found to the expedient of

¹ E.g., Grosmont: £4-farm of the Mill of Grosmont let to William atte Hulle, from Michaelmas 36 Edw. III for 12 years, the lord to find the heavy timber, and millstones only for repairs and to pay half the expenses.

² E.g., Min. Acc., Bundle 1209, Nos. 5, 11, 12, 13, 14; Bundle 1236, Nos. 4, etc.

leasing the stock with the demesnes. In contrast with the above arrangements, whereby the manor was let in portions, stands the policy adopted by certain lords of farming out the whole manor as a unit at a fixed sum. The seignorial rights of the lord were not, however, included in such transactions, advowsons of churches and all royalties, including the perquisites of courts, being reserved by him.

The manor of Caldecote affords some interesting evidence during the years succeeding the Black Death. In spite of the great loss of life there, the demesne continued to be cultivated. Several of the servants were retained and a few customary services employed. Labour, too, was being hired and the stock was still considerable. By 1367 the value of the demesne land let, totalled about £6 13s., at which figure it remained until the second pestilence two years later, when it rose to £7 10s., and the whole of the demesnes were farmed some years later at about £8. Cultivation ceased and the numerous other issues of the manor were collected separately, the services of the few remaining "nativi" being sold. Early in the following century all the villeins are stated to have died, with the result that there was no one available to become reeve. The office was therefore replaced by that of a salaried bailiff whose work consisted solely in collecting the rents. The death of customary tenants on so large a scale presented a serious problem and resulted in further disintegration of the manor. An immediate effect was experienced in the lapse of the services and customary obligations of those who had died, for it was found difficult to revive the same in the case of new holders. Services were therefore only continued for those villeins who survived.¹ The disposal of the escheated land in villeinage figures largely in the business arrangements of the manor. Where possible it was relet, leased in tenements or broken up into smaller parcels, and sometimes a number of holdings were grouped and farmed as one tenement. Cases occur where freemen assumed villein status upon taking up a customary holding. It was far more common,

¹ E.g., 2s. increased rent of 2 acres of "native" land late of Wm. Macy in decay, let to John Saith to be held freely by him and his heirs for ever.

however, for the rent of the tenement to be approximately assessed at an increase on the original rental *plus* the value of the services, or the prices of the demesne land might be taken as the basis of estimate. In certain instances the lord allowed the holdings to be let at a lower rent, or for "lack of hirers" they remained vacant.

In view of the greatly increased supply of available land and the decrease in population, it would be reasonable to assume that the land would be obtainable at cheap rates. This was not the case. No one reading the records for South Wales can fail to mark the tremendous transfer of land that was proceeding within the manors, and that at increased prices. Portions of the demesne, as well as the tenements of deceased bondtenants, were being acquired by freemen, by villeins and even by cottars and strangers, many tenements of considerable size being built up. The demesne itself might represent but one of several larger tenements and thus have lost its original character.

The release of so large a proportion of land, therefore, had the effect of creating a new position on the manor within a comparatively brief period. The distinction between the different classes of land was fast disappearing, as, moreover, was the distinction in practice between the classes of tenants. Bondage was becoming a less prominent feature, though the lord continued his hold on a substantial remainder of his villeins. It is evident that a greater degree of independence was being displayed by the villeins themselves. The customary tenants in Leweleston and Pelcam compelled the lord to remit for a money payment the obligation of any of them to become reeve, threatening to withdraw unless he complied with their request. Facilities for liberation, too, were once again beginning to offer themselves. Apart from the escheated villein land which was regranted as free land, many customary tenants were permitted on payment of an increased rent to hold their land freely, for the lord no longer required their services.¹ On certain manors a portion of the tenements came to be

¹ Rentals and Surveys. 13s. 8d. *Jenan ap Griffith holds 4 acres of free land by extent and when it was native land he rendered thence at Michaelmas 1s. 2d. and for works at Michaelmas 10½d.*

held by burgage tenure, whereby the holders were freed.¹ Villeins, too, were allowed on payment of a small fine (capitagium) to leave the lordship and dwell elsewhere.²

A section only of the tenantry, however, had been able to avail themselves of the opportunities thus opening up, but the large proportion must have felt keenly the difficulties of the period. Lack of cultivation had resulted in higher prices of foodstuffs, as, indeed, of all other commodities. The wages of the worker were slightly increased, but not in proportion to the cost of living, for while workers were fewer in number, the demand for labour had also fallen. The lord, the chief employer in the past, now that his demesnes were let, had little need of labour. The individual tenement holders who had taken his place, worked their own land with the aid of their families and hired as little labour as possible. Again many of the holdings having been converted into pasture required fewer workers. The labouring class was also receiving additions from the advowry tenants who were settling upon the manor at this time in increased numbers. The equilibrium of labour which had at first been disturbed by the Black Death was largely restored as a result of the policy of the lord in dissolving his demesne.

The consequences of the Black Death on the Welsh lands are more obscure. As in the case of the manor, the lord necessarily experienced immediate loss in rents and customs,³ a loss for which he was, to a great extent,

¹ Min. Acc., No. 9056. 1113*d.* increase of rent of *Fenan Vachan* for three parts of one rood of "native" land of his own land to hold for himself and heirs in one burgage.

² Min. Acc., 924/18.

³ *E.g.*, Min. Acc., Bundle 1182, No. 3; 1183, No. 2. Denbigh Lordship, Keymerch Commote: Respited £1 4s. 6*d.* for this year and the two preceding years, *viz.*, 8s. 2*d.* a year, for customs and services of 7 *nativi*, *viz.*, for each 1s. 2*d.*, because they are included in the 31 "*nativi*" above, and there are only 24. Respited 3s. 4½*d.* for the services of 9 freemen, *viz.*, for the same years, 1s. 1½*d.*, because they are included in the 45 tenants and there are only 36.

Uwchdulas: Decay of rents and services of various "gavells" with other rents £4 17s. 5½*d.*

Uwchalet: Whence he allows (to the computor) for "tunc" and custom of butter from 2 "gavells" of land in *Llechthalhaern*, because they are in the lord's hands for lack of service of the tenants, £1 0s. 10*d.*

Min. Acc., Bundles, 1149, 1150. Min. Acc., Bundle, 1171. Commote of *Eifonydd*: In decay of rents of the "vill" of *Redemknelyn* which was in the hands of villeins, vacant since the Pestilence, extended at £1 8s. for 8 "craunogs" of oatmeal and 3 vessels of butter, for which the computor is charged

compensated in other ways. Issues derived from miscellaneous sources show a decline in value but the practice of farming was now extended in many cases to include almost every item of the accounts.

Some reduction in revenue was caused by the death of chensers and advowry tenants, though the goods of those dying intestate became the property of the lord, and a fine was exacted from any who wished to withdraw from the district.¹ The most serious difficulty was experienced as a result of the death of the tenants. Welsh freemen, though still adhering very largely to tribal principles in their occupation of land, were officially assessed, on a quasi-feudal basis, as individual holders, the obligations of the holder being interpreted as the rent of the tenement, or "gavell". It must be understood that such an interpretation could only apply to the immediate share of the household in arable, and not to open wastes or pasture grounds of the kin. Death on so large a scale naturally resulted in the escheat of many tenements of this kind. The accustomed payments of "ebedw" from the goods of the deceased or the payment of relief by his heir, brought to the lord a considerable immediate return. When no heirs came forward or when they were too poor to pay the requisite fine, the holding was if possible rented to others, though lack of applicants often made this difficult. Expedients of agisting or of selling the herbage might then serve to diminish the loss in some measure.² It seems clear that

above 5s. Respited £1 18s. 1½d. part of £1 17s. 3½d. rents of lands and tenements of free tenants in the lord's hands because there are no heirs neither could anything be raised from the same.

¹Min. Acc., Bundle 1171, No. 7. Carnarvon, Commote of Creuthyn: *8d. advowry fine of Blethin ap Maddoc and David ap Maddoc . . . and no more because the remainder are dead by the Pestilence. Of the reliefs of "advowry" tenants dead, from whom the lord has from each half a mark, and from the goods of the same which the lord shall have if they die without heir.*

²Court Rolls, Portfolio 217, No. 14. Ruthin. Court of Colyan: *Llewelyn Seys who held English lands died in the Pestilence, from whose death came to the lord, 1 horse. And afterwards Fenan his son came and sought to be admitted to hold the said lands to whom it was granted, . . . saving the rights of the lord, and he paid for relief 9s. 2d. and for rent 9s. 7d. Feuan ap Heylyn who held from the lord hereditary lands and lands "in acres" died . . . from whom there came heriot and "gobrestin". (The nearest heir claimed and paid relief £1). David ap Maddoc who held from the Lord "native" land and 3 acres of free land in Wernlydyr died in the Pestilence. Because he has no heirs it was conceded that Wladus his widow should hold it for life, performing the various services due therefrom. And she pays no heriot or relief.*

here again as a general policy a strong effort was made to maintain the original rents in disposing of the escheated lands, and instances even occur where these figures were increased. In some commotes the community was able to establish their claim of common to certain escheated lands.¹

The effects of the Black Death upon the revenue of the commotes of South Wales were much less marked. The totals of escheated lands were much lower, a fact that would lead us to suppose that the fatalities were few in comparison with those of North Wales. Again, notwithstanding that the chief rents such as the "Westva" and the Rents of Extent had come to be assessed in many cases upon smaller groups and even households, the commote was still responsible for the payment of the full amount. Indeed, the outstanding feature in these districts throughout the period is the persistence at the original figures of the old common assessments. Certain early evidence tends to show that tenements in decay were exempt from such rents, though the best testimony points to a contrary view, a condition which would impose a heavier burden upon survivors.

On all sides the unfree tenants of the Welsh lands suffered very real hardship as a result of the pestilence, and their villages were seriously depleted. This class of tenant held almost invariably by the tenure of "trefgyfrif," according to which, upon the death of a holder the land was redistributed equally among the remaining members, who were responsible for all the dues of the "tref". The heavy death-rate, therefore, threw an almost insupportable burden on the remaining tenants of the villas compelling them in many cases to surrender their holdings and to join the ranks of the advowry. Such examples as the following are constantly found among the records of North Wales: "£2 13s. 4d., part of £6 13s. 4d. rents of the tenants of the villata of Cotimot . . . because five villeins are unable to hold the vill and can scarce pay the £4 os. 2d."²

"Decay of land of Meredith Benhir, escheat in Llanbigail, 15s. 6d. because no *one* tenant could hold it."³

¹ *E.g.*, Min. Acc., Bundle 1182, No. 4. Talabryn.

² *E.g.*, Min. Acc., Bundle 1149, No. 1—Commote of Turkelyon.

³ *Ibid.*—Commote of Talybolion.

In the Commote of Malltraeth, Anglesey, long lists of lands in certain of the vills are vacant "because the lord's tenants in the same 'vills' are incapable of holding the same and are *insufficient*".¹ Occasionally, tenants are seen to resume their tenement after an interval, as did a certain Llewelyn ap Madoc ap Howel, of whom it is said that "he left his land during the Pestilence on account of poverty, but now came (1354) and was admitted by the lord's favour to hold the said land by the service due from the same".² The position of some was temporarily relieved by respiting the rents, but the situation was so serious in the northern Principality that in July, 1352, a general order was issued by the advice of the Council of the Prince of Wales to the Justice's Deputy and Chamberlain of North Wales relieving the villeins and men of advowry of each commote from their obligation to contribute cattle for the munitioning of the castle (*staurum principis*). The terms of the order were retrospective, and were to continue until conditions improved.³

The reversion to the lord, not only of the land "in acres," assarted land and native land, but also of the "hereditary land," had important consequences. It enabled the lord to assume direct hold over the tenure of a far larger part of the lands of the commote. These lands were usually let on a yearly tenancy or on a lease to the

¹ Min. Acc., Bundle 1149, No. 1 (mem. 3)—Commote of Malltraeth.

Commote of Talybolion. "Native" Land; 14s. 6d. herbage of Villein land in Aberalaw which Madoc ap Philip, Eynon ap Philip, and 3 others (named), nativi, held for £1 12s. 2d., because the nativi who were surviving after the Pestilence were not "sufficient" on account of their inability to hold the said lands.

² Court Rolls, Portfolio 218, No. 4.

³ Min. Acc., Bundle 1171, Nos. 7 and 8—Commote of Creuthyn.

Store of the Prince (*Staurum Principis*): 5s. 4d., received from half of the value of 2 cows which the community of the Commote (viz. the Villains and men of advowry) used to give to the lord's lardar for munitioning the castle of Conway—a cow appraised @ 5s. 4d. this year. Nothing received from half the value of one ox which the lord was accustomed to have from the community for the same store, because it was remitted owing to the poverty and fewness of the tenants. Sum 5s. 4d.

Text of Remission: "Edward, etc., Prince, to the Deputy of the Justice of North Wales and to the Chamberlain there.

Because of our especial grace and by the advice of the Council, We have respited to our bond tenants and the people of our advowry, the money for which our Auditors of Accounts have charged them to find for the "garnestures" of our castles in your bailiwicks, since the time of the pestilence. We ask you to cease to levy the said money until further command.

Given under our privy seal, London, 30 July, 26, E. III."

highest bidder, although it is true that a proportion was still unoccupied even fifty years later.¹ As on the manors, however, much land changed hands about this time. Men who were able added to their own tenements or acquired others. New holdings were established, some on a considerable scale. Greater mobility is seen, and the opening up of opportunities for individual initiative seems to have encouraged the renting of larger tenements than had formerly been the custom, and members of kindreds frequently came to occupy lands irrespective of their fellows and additional to their kindred holding. The cumulative effect of such circumstances, therefore, is to be seen in the gradual breaking away from tribal customs and the establishment more and more of direct tenure and personal responsibility. The social cleavage between tribesmen and non-tribesmen based upon descent, was now giving place to an economic distinction. Greater inequality existed even among land-holders themselves, while the landless class was on the increase. That the latter experienced difficulty in obtaining employment may be gathered from references made to their leaving the "Welshries" in search of work. In the "Englishries" we are not able to trace any restrictions on wages, for English statutes did not apply over the border, but some restrictive measures had been in operation from the time of Edward I. in the Commotes of the Principality. Servants were not permitted to receive more than a certain wage "according to the Statute of the patria," and workers were from time to time fined in the commote courts for breach of the Statute. The whole community of servants of Mabelvew were on one occasion fined for this reason, but in the March lands no restrictions of such a nature appear. The renewed prominence given to the Statute in the late fourteenth century points to a rise in wages beyond the former limits, but the policy was hardly one of strict adherence to the regulation. The com-

¹ Ministers' Accounts and Court Rolls during these years record long lists of lands and tenements transferred.

Min. Acc., 1182/3. Isalet: Allowed "Tunk" and other customs of $\frac{1}{4}$ part of 1 "gavell" of land of Cadarn within the parts of Lewenny which Thomas ap Lowarch held there and which came into the lord's hands. The lord gave it to John de le More to hold in the English manner for rent.

munity of workers, upon payment of a fine, was tacitly permitted, at least in certain years, to break the Statute and wages would thus tend to find their natural level.

It cannot be supposed that the economic strain and a social upheaval, which frequently had the effect of estranging men from their inherited rights in land, could fail to give rise to serious unrest among a people subject to alien rule. Administrative evils and a system of exploitation but served to add to racial hostility, and before the effects of the Black Death had culminated in the new economy observable in the manors and "Welshries," the situation was seriously complicated by the outbreak of the Glendower rebellion, which was far more disastrous to the economic life of Wales than even the ravages of the Pestilence. The final consequences of the Black Death, therefore, are lost among the devastations of war.