

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By the time of the Domesday survey the Bishops of Winchester held substantial estates in and around Taunton. Norton Fitzwarren was part of those estates in the Liberty or Outfaring, held indirectly of the bishop, but still subject to certain dues and services.¹ It was part of the administrative hundred of Taunton Deane in 1316.² It was listed as one of the foreign hundreds, 1567–9,³ and in the Outfaring (western division) of the hundred, c.1735.⁴ After the local government reorganisation of 1894 it became part of Taunton Rural District. Since 1974 it has been part of the district of Taunton Deane.

TITHINGS

The parish was described by Rack in the 1780s as being divided into three tithings: Norton, Langford and Venhampton (Fenhampton).⁵ Norton tithing, recorded by 1286,⁶ included the main village settlement, and the settlement of Ford. Langford and Venhampton were separate tithings⁷ until 1861.⁸ By 1887 Venhampton was no longer a separate tithing⁹ but Langford tithing was recorded until 1902.¹⁰

MANORIAL ADMINISTRATION

In the 1340s Norton manor was managed by a reeve and a hayward and met at least three times a year but no court rolls survive.¹¹ In 1646 it was held in the church house.¹² The extent of its administrative function is unknown. It may have appointed the parish constables, for

¹ *Domesday*, 234; Gathercole, *Archaeological Assessment of Taunton*, 2.

² Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest*, 78.

³ SHC, DD/SP/2.

⁴ SHC, DD/X/WBB/49.

⁵ McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 277.

⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1286—7.

⁷ Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest*, 144–5.

⁸ McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 277; SHC, Q/RJL/35/14; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1861).

⁹ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887).

¹⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1902).

¹¹ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1—2 (GAR386—7)).

¹² Warws. RO, CR 2017/L1/(a)11.

whom no record exists in the vestry book of 1574–1836.¹³ In 1858 it was reported, anecdotally, that the village stocks had been the property of the lord of the manor.¹⁴

A manor court roll survives for the rectorial manor of Wooney for the period 1768–1879. Tenancies were held for three lives, and sub-leasing was permitted.¹⁵

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

A vestry book survives for the period 1574 to 1836, many of the earlier records being annual summary accounts and records of appointments. In 1604 the vestry appointed two churchwardens, two waywardens and two youngmen's wardens.¹⁶ Appointments of churchwardens and waywardens were made annually, and overseers were elected by 1621.¹⁷

In 1647 the inhabitants objected to paying towards the maintenance of the bridge at Langford,¹⁸ but by 1692 it was confirmed that the county was not responsible for its upkeep.¹⁹ The bridge was on the parish boundary with Staplegrove, and by 1816 it had been agreed that the waywardens of the two parishes were jointly responsible for the bridge.²⁰

In 1803 the vestry agreed to levy a 6d. rate for the repair of the roads of the parish, in the same manner as a 4d. rate made for the relief of the poor.²¹ By 1822 a rate was collected in lieu of statute labour²² and in 1846 the vestry contracted a man for a year to clip hedges, clear drains and maintain the roads in the parish.²³ The parish waywardens were also

¹³ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1.

¹⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 3 Mar. 1858, 2.

¹⁵ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/3/1/1.

¹⁶ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (9 Apr. 1604). For youngmen's wardens see rel. hist.

¹⁷ E. H. Bates, *Quarter Sessions Records: 1607-1625* (Som. Rec. Soc. 23), 297–8.

¹⁸ E. H. Bates Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records: 1646-1660* (Som. Rec. Soc. 28), 43.

¹⁹ SHC, Q/SO/8, f. 182a.

²⁰ SHC, DD/DP/83/4; SHC D/P/n.fitz/9/1/2, 5 Jul. 1839, 10 Dec. 1855, 18 Apr. 1856.

²¹ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (23 Feb. 1803).

²² SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (29 Nov. 1822).

²³ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/2 (25 Mar. 1846).

responsible for footpaths, although in 1842 it was noted that they were not responsible for the church path.²⁴

Although no records exist for the appointment of constables, they were recorded in 1819 in quarter sessions records and in 1842 three constables were recorded in the parish.²⁵

In 1822 the parish appointed four ‘substantial householders’, the qualification for appointment, as overseers, and a salaried assistant overseer at £6 p.a. out of the poor rate.²⁶ In 1826 a select vestry for the poor was established, comprising substantial householders or occupiers within the parish, and it was agreed that the larger rate payers in the parish should take on a greater proportion of the burden of parish offices than by rotation of names only.²⁷ There may have been some difficulties in collecting dues in 1869 and in 1870, when the overseers were in arrears with their payments to the Taunton Union.²⁸

In 1888 the parish appointed an assistant overseer and rate collector at a salary of £25 p.a.,²⁹ who by 1891 was also serving as assistant overseer for West Monkton. In that year Wilfred Marshall, who had recently purchased the manor, was an ex-officio guardian on the Taunton Board of Guardians, in addition to Norton’s own representative.³⁰

In 1894 an elected parish council was formed, meeting in the village school, with a salaried clerk. The offices of overseers and waywarden continued and the post of assistant overseer was maintained.³¹ In 1895 the parish council undertook its own study into sewerage problems.³² Sewerage and water issues continued to concern the parish council well into the 20th century.³³

²⁴ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/2 (14 Jan. 1842).

²⁵ SHC, Q/APC/1/84.

²⁶ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (25 Mar. 1822).

²⁷ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (30 Mar. 1826, 12 Apr. 1826).

²⁸ SHC, D/G/ta/8a/20.

²⁹ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/3 (29 Mar. 1888).

³⁰ SHC, D/G/ta/4/1; *Taunton Courier*, 17 Sept. 1890, 5.

³¹ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6, pp. 1–3; D/G/ta/4/1.

³² SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6, pp. 20–4.

³³ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/2/7, 6/10.

The parish council was concerned about housing throughout the 20th century. By 1946 12 houses in the village had been condemned and about 32 new houses were needed but Taunton Rural District Council received permission to build only 28.³⁴ It was hoped to use Burnshill and Courtlands camps were suggested for temporary or permanent housing once vacated by the military but this recommendation was not taken up.³⁵ In 1948 the parish council claimed quality arable land was being taken for local authority housing when other sites were available. No agricultural workers in the parish needing housing as therefore assumed that the proposed new dwellings would be occupied by people working elsewhere.³⁶ Burnshill Camp site remained undeveloped in 1975 and in 1976 the parish council deplored the high level of local authority housing proposed for the site, owing to the high ratio of council to private housing already in the village.³⁷

The risk of flooding was raised in 1966 and the need to keep streams free from obstruction.³⁸ The construction of new local authority houses along Station Road was seen as a flood risk in 1972 but Taunton Rural District Council was unable to resolve the problem for another two years, when a new sewerage scheme was due for completion.³⁹ In 2001 1,100 new houses were proposed for the parish and in 2003–4 concerns were raised about the risk of flooding if the development of the former cider factory site went ahead.⁴⁰

In November 2016 there were eight parish councillors, as well as two district councillors and a county councillor representing the parish.⁴¹

Local services

³⁴ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/7 (11 Feb. 1946), 4/2/7.

³⁵ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/7, 27 May 1946), 4/2/7.

³⁶ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/2/7.

³⁷ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/2 (17 Feb. 1975, 5 Jan. 1976).

³⁸ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/2 (19 Sept. 1966).

³⁹ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/2 (15 May 1972).

⁴⁰ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/9 (26 Nov. 2001); D\PC\n.fitz/1/2/10 (6 Oct. 2003, 2 Feb. 2004).

⁴¹ *Norton News*, Nov. 2016, 3.

In 1904 Taunton town council informed the parish council that the Taunton fire brigade was unable to attend fires outside the borough. In 1906 the parish council agreed to accept the offer of Mr Arnold, manager of the Norton Brewery Company, of the use of the brewery fire engine, on condition that the parish maintain the engine at its own expense. Parishioners were to be enrolled in a village fire brigade.⁴² A fire appliance was still available in 1924, but no fire engine was stationed in the village by 1944.⁴³

A police constable was resident in 1863, the nearest police station being at Taunton.⁴⁴ There was a police station in 1911 and the village had a resident police constable in the 1930s.⁴⁵ The lack of a resident officer was felt in 1947 following a spate of minor incidents.⁴⁶ An officer was resident by 1980, but the police sub-station closed in 1994.⁴⁷

There was electricity in village by c.1931, when the church had electric lighting.⁴⁸ Gas was supplied to private properties by 1930.⁴⁹ By 1947 the Taunton Electricity company and the Taunton Gas company were supplying these utilities to the village.⁵⁰ Gas street lighting was installed in the 1930 and electric lighting between 1950 and 1954.⁵¹

In 1895 the sanitary inspector found no need to interfere with a drain beside the school, but the disposal of waste water in the village was a serious problem; sewage and waste water from a slaughterhouse entered a stream.⁵² By 1938 the medical officer reported that there was a piped water supply to the parish from a reservoir in the Blackdown Hills, though a few homes had privately-owned wells. The disposal of waste water remained a problem but in 1938 improvements were scheduled. An existing scheme for collecting

⁴² SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6 (4 Jul. 1904, 1 Jan. 1906, 25 May 1906).

⁴³ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/7 (24 Mar. 1924, 23 Mar. 1944).

⁴⁴ SHC, Q/SR/650/125–127.

⁴⁵ TNA, RG 14/14259; SHC, Q/SR/921/205; *Som. Co. Herald*, 20 Mar. 1937, 1.

⁴⁶ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/ (7 Aug. 1947).

⁴⁷ SHC, A/AGH/1/255; D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/5 (1 Aug. 1994).

⁴⁸ SHC, D/D/rrd/2.

⁴⁹ *Taunton Courier*, 30 Jul. 1930, 5.

⁵⁰ SHC, A/AGH/1/255.

⁵¹ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/1/11–12.

⁵² SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6, 16, 20–4.

household refuse that could not be burnt by householders was to be extended to Norton Fitzwarren in 1939.⁵³ In 1946 piped water and mains drainage was only available in part of the village. Many houses still had bucket closets.⁵⁴ In 1948 a new sewer drained Station Road and the southern side of the village.⁵⁵

⁵³ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/6/10, 12.

⁵⁴ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/2/4/7.

⁵⁵ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/2/7.