

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Norton Fitzwarren was primarily an agricultural parish and its industries depended on agriculture including the brewery, bakery and Taunton Cider, a major employer for much of the 20th century. Women worked as outworkers in the late 19th century for Taunton collar, cloth glove and box makers and in the early 20th stitched leggings, boots and leather gloves. Improved train and bus services meant that by 1921 many men and women commuted to Taunton to work and by the 21st century most people worked in Taunton.¹

AGRICULTURE

Medieval

Norton was assessed at five hides in 1066 and was worth £8, £15 by 1086 when it had land for 10 ploughs of which three were in the demesne with 6 slaves. The 13 villeins and eight bordars had eight ploughs. There were 25 a. of meadow, 40 a. of woodland and two mills. In 1066 Ford hamlet paid geld for half a hide and was worth 20s. In 1086 it was worth 30s. and had land for a plough, 2 a. of meadow and two 2 bordars.²

A field system, probably dating from the 11th to 14th centuries, was identified at Wick Lane, presumably including ‘Wiklonde’ in 1386.³ Demesne lands called Steret, Shortalre and Colemannesleigh were recorded c.1341–3.⁴ In the 14th century Venhampton in had 5 a. of meadow.⁵

In 1327 Norton was taxed at £1 7s. 7d., of which Richard Stapeldon was assessed for 10s., Venhampton at 5s. 5d. and Langford at 6s. 6d., suggesting a wealthy parish.⁶ In 1334

¹ TNA, RG 9/1619; RG 12/1878; RG 15/11232; RG 101/305/1/WPWL.

² *Domesday*, 251.

³ M. Alexander and N. Adam, ‘Bronze Age and Later Archaeology at Wick Lane, Norton Fitzwarren’, *PSAS* CLVI, 1-17; *Cal. Close* 1385-9, 155, 252.

⁴ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1-2 (GAR386-7)).

⁵ Green, *Feet of Fines 1307-1346*, 106, 157; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VIII, pp. 251-2.

⁶ Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest Som.*, 144-5.

Norton was taxed at £1 8s. 2d., and Langford at 6s. 2d but Venhampton at 10s.⁷ In 1342—3 the manor had over three hides of tenanted land in c.15 half-virgate and 22 ferdell or quarter-virgate tenements but total rents were under £5 a year. Tenants owed 1 a. of ploughing per half virgate and harrowed with the lord's oxen.⁸

In 1262 Peter de Chauvent held oxen, plough-teams, corn and other stock.⁹ Arable farming dominated and the demesne employed a 'rookherd' for three weeks. In 1342—3 over £40 of the manor's £51 income came from grain sales and 334 quarters were winnowed. Wheat and oats accounted for most of the produce, including malt, followed by peas, some grown with vetches, barley and beans. A thatched grange and the west barton were recorded. The manor employed a granger, two ploughmen and a carter. Most of the equipment, sold in 1343, including four ploughs, two wains and a cart was described as old despite being maintained and some tools having been bought the previous year. In 1342 demesne livestock comprised 16 oxen and 101 pigs but no cows or sheep although two drovers were employed and only one swineherd. Tenants also kept pigs. The dovecot produced 67 squabs in 1342, some sent with other produce to Ablington, Gloucs, home of the Veels, but none in 1343 as it was held by the Constable of Taunton. At least 53 ½ a. of meadow were mown in 1342 but much pasture was sold and in 1343 hay had to be bought for the oxen. Lady Katherine le Veel sold all stock and implements possibly to pay her late husband's debts or because she feared losing possession to the Stapeldons. The 1342—3 account, which continued to October, was in deficit whereas the previous account was in surplus. Katherine's kinsman Richard de Clevedon managed the estate.¹⁰ In 1362 following her second husband's death Katherine

⁷ Glasscock, *Subsidy of 1334*, 264-5.

⁸ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1 (GAR386)).

⁹ TNA, C 60/59, 16 Henry III (28 Oct. 1261-27 Oct. 1262), <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk>: accessed 28 Jun. 2017.

¹⁰ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1 (GAR386); BCM/A/3/14/2 (GAR387)).

bought pigs, oxen, cows wheat, beans and dredge, a mixed grain, for the manor in Gloucestershire in 1362.¹¹

Early Modern

In 1623 Sir Henry Hawley held common of pasture for all cattle in Norton.¹² In 1626 and 1637 8 a. of glebe land adjoining the parsonage house included a garden and an orchard.¹³ In 1626 Wooney rectorial manor (76 a.) produced an annual rent of £3 6s. 8d.¹⁴

Of 16 surviving 17th-century inventories six listed corn, hay and other crops, seven included pigs, five listed cattle and five mentioned horses, one with draught tackle and only one recorded oxen. There were few records of poultry or sheep, suggesting a farming economy based mainly on arable and dairy farming.¹⁵ Marlpit recorded in 1766 and 1840 may reflect earlier farming practice.¹⁶ Of four early 18th-century inventories, most listed crops, pigs and cattle and three showed evidence of cheese-making. Oxen and a horse were recorded but no poultry.¹⁷

Late 18th and 19th centuries

In the 1780s the area was described as woody with very rich land. Half the agricultural land was arable, worth 21s. per acre, producing wheat, barley, peas, flax, probably encourage by government bounties, clover and turnips. Fields were worked by oxen and manured with lime and farm dung were the used as manure. Pasture and meadow were worth 30s. to £3 per acre and there were 18 farms, mostly small, but a farmer had lately laid several together. The

¹¹ B. Wells-Furby, 'The costs of succession to lay estates: the death of Thomas, Lord Berkeley, in 1361', *Trans. Bristol and Gloucs Arch. Soc.*, 135 (2017), 299-301.

¹² Hawkins, *Sales of Wards*, 23-4.

¹³ SHC, D/D/rg/387/1-2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* D/P/n.fitz/3/1/3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* DD/SP/1637/3, 64; 1669/6; 1677/39; 1678/72; 1679/13; 1687/63; 1691/2, 79; 1694/29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Q/REI/35/14 (1766); tithe award.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* DD/SP/1714/17; 1723/53; 1732/8; 1739/51.

village streams contained trout, eels, roach and dace but there was probably no commercial fishing.¹⁸ Between 1766 and 1832 the lord of the manor was the dominant landowner and William Hawker and his heirs increased its holdings.¹⁹

Of 111 families in 1831, 68 were chiefly involved in agriculture. Of 117 adult males, 66 were employed as agricultural labourers and 13 men were farmers, of whom nine employed labourers.²⁰ In 1840 apart from 7 a. of glebe, arable land comprised c.639 a., pasture or meadow c.546 a. coppice c.22 a., orchard c.67 a. and garden c.22 a. The largest farm was Morses (c.285 a.), broken-up by 1851, only three others had over 100 a. and eight fewer than 20 a. although two were held with larger holdings.²¹ Of 11 farms listed in 1851 only Montys and Fitzroy were over 100 a. Montys farm, at 151 a., was considerably larger than the 20 a. recorded in 1840 having absorbed Way farm and Fitzroy farm, at 230 a. was larger than the two Fitzroy farms (115 a., 14a.) in 1840, of 115 a. and 14 a. probably because they included land outside the parish as well suggesting some amalgamation. Three farms were under 10 a. and a farmer of 4 a. was also a maltster. The 11 farms employed between them 32 men and four boys but there were 74 agricultural labourers and 20 farm boys resident suggesting many were casual workers. One labourer was also a carter and other men worked solely as carters. There were two dairymen at Way farm by 1841 but their houses were in other use by 1851 as Way became a private house. Dairymen and dairywomen were recorded elsewhere in the parish and in 1861 several women worked outside on farms.²²

The parish had rich sandy loam over marl and gravel producing excellent crops of wheat, beans, barley, mangolds, potatoes and turnips 1861 and there were 6 a. of allotment gardens on the manor land.²³ In 1869 Thomas Birch told magistrates that he had lost 150

¹⁸ McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 277; SHC, Q/RLH/63.

¹⁹ SHC, Q/REL/35/14.

²⁰ *Abstract of Population Returns, 1831* (Parl. Papers 1833 (149), i, pp. 604-5.

²¹ SHC, tithe award; TNA, HO 107/1923.

²² SHC, tithe award; TNA, HO 107/959/14; 1923; RG 9/1619.

²³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1861); SHC, DD/CA/99, schedule 1861.

bushels of wheat to rabbits the previous year and had authorised one of his farm boys to trap them, fearing for his turnips.²⁴ In 1866 in the absence of crop returns arable was estimated at 9 a. of wheat, 5 a. of barley, 9 a. of turnips and swedes, 7 a. of clover and 12 a. of pasture clearly a gross underestimate. There were 95 milk cows, 177 other cattle, 958 sheep and 213 pigs.²⁵

In the later 19th century agricultural labourers were badly paid, an effect of the oversupply of labour. In 1872 a Norton labourer aged 23 years with a wife and two children received cider and 9s. per week, out of which he paid 1s. 9d. per week for his cottage. Average weekly wages in the district were 9s. to 10s. with cider. Carters and shepherds, of whom there were several due to the increase in sheep flocks, received an extra 1s.²⁶

By 1896 17 farmers rented their land, six owned it and one did both. The principal crops were 131 a. of barley and 88½ a. of wheat, although potatoes, turnips and mangolds were grown, the two latter for fodder. There were 228 a. of meadow and 41¼ a. of orchards. There were 31 farm horses, 165 cattle, 670 sheep and 126 pigs.²⁷

20th century to present

In 1902 had good grazing and continued to produce wheat, beans, barley, mangolds, potatoes and turnips.²⁸ Allerford farm, in Norton Fitzwarren and Hillfarrance, in 1905 had 76 a. of grazing and arable land.²⁹ By 1906 there was only 390¾ a. of arable but 922 a. of meadow and pasture.³⁰ In 1910 pasture and meadow were good but arable land was 'light'.³¹ Before 1893 there had been allotments on the Revd J. P. Hewett's estate and in 1914 an attempt to

²⁴ *Hereford Times*, 19 Mar. 1869.

²⁵ TNA, MAF 68/59-60.

²⁶ F. G. Heath, *The "Romance" of Peasant Life in the West of England* (London, 1872), 57-8; TNA, MAF 68/59-60; RG 12/1878.

²⁷ TNA, MAF 68/1626.

²⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1902).

²⁹ *Devon and Exeter Gaz.*, 28 Jul. 1905, 1.

³⁰ TNA, MAF 68/2196.

³¹ *Ibid.* IR 58/82130, 579; 58/82131, 615; 58/82132, 719.

provide them failed. However, by 1917 allotments were situated near the Village Club.³² Allotments were to be found by 1937 along Manor, later Rectory, Road and from 1944 in Station Road.³³ The 'Langford sale' in 1919 comprised mixed meadow and arable land with an orchard.³⁴ However, Fitzroy farm, c.190 a. in Norton Fitzwarren and Kingston St Mary, was sold in 1929 as a dairy and grazing farm with 7 a. of orchard. Land adjoining the Minehead road, was advertised as potential development land.³⁵

In 1921 many men were still agricultural labourers.³⁶ In 1926 32 horses still powered agriculture. Cattle and pigs had increased to 440 and 339 although sheep had reduced to 406 sheep. Agricultural land had shrunk to 1,111 ½ a., of which 455 ¼ a. was pasture, 247 a. was mowing meadow and there were 102¼ a. of wheat, 28 a. of barley, 54½ a. of oats and 45¼ a. of beans. Mangolds and turnips were grown to feed livestock. Of 22 holdings in the parish, five were over 100 a. but only 36 workers were employed, three of them women. There were no casual workers.³⁷ By 1936 there were 1,710 a. of agricultural land due to the amalgamation of the civil parish with Heathfield in 1933.³⁸ In 1939 there was a poultry farm at Pen Elm.³⁹

By 1941 most farms received an 'A' grading, though one small farm, described as a 'hobby farm', received a 'B' through its lack of good farming methods. Giffords farm (17 a.) at Langford was part of Rapshill farm, Kingston. Former grazing land was ploughed up for wheat or other approved crops and some agricultural land was taken for military sites.⁴⁰

Lower Portman farm, formerly in Taunton, was a market garden by 1957.⁴¹ Post-war housing

³² *Taunton Courier*, 27 Sept. 1893, 5, 28 Jan. 1914, 2; SHC, A/BLZ/2/4.

³³ SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/1/1.

³⁴ Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/3/1/2.

³⁵ Ibid. A/BNK/1/1/22; SHC, DD/BRO/4/7.

³⁶ TNA, RG 15/11232.

³⁷ Ibid. MAF 68/3312.

³⁸ Ibid. MAF 68/3809; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1935).

³⁹ TNA, RG 101/305/1/WPWL.

⁴⁰ Ibid. MAF 32/146/272; <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centre>: accessed 16 Feb. 2018.

⁴¹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 120.

probably destroyed the Rectory Road allotments in 1953 but the Station Road allotments survived until 1962 or later.⁴² In 1956 the total acreage under crops and grass in the combined parishes had fallen to c.1,504 a., the lost acreage probably due to development. The main crops remained wheat, barley and oats and dairy farming had increased in importance, with 694 cattle across the two parishes and commercial poultry keeping. Little had changed by 1986 except for a reduction in cattle and pigs in favour of sheep and only 28 people across both parishes worked in agriculture.⁴³

An allotment site was established in 2008 and purchased by the parish council in 2010 but housing development in the early 21st century continued to threaten the remaining agricultural land. in the parish.⁴⁴

PARK

Walter Stapeldon, bishop of Exeter, had a deer park at Norton Fitzwarren by 1315 and a building there was repaired in 1342—3.⁴⁵ By 1653 the park was divided into Conquest, Bowling, Sutton and Lyddon Parks and other closes totalling 74a. then held with Court Place.⁴⁶ It was apparently based around the hillfort, known as Great Park in 1840 when surrounding fields had park names.⁴⁷

ORCHARDS

Orchards are mentioned in 1588 and the glebe included one in 1626.⁴⁸ Ancient orchards were allegedly destroyed at Knowle Hill in 1700.⁴⁹ In 1720 the Ring of Bells had an orchard and in

⁴² SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/1/1, 4/2/7.

⁴³ TNA, MAF 68/4547, 6025.

⁴⁴ <https://www.nortonfitzwarrenparishcouncil.com/allotments>: accessed 28 Mar. 2018.

⁴⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1313-17, 86, 420; *Cal. Chanc. Warrants*, I, 430; *Cal. Fine* 1319-27, 136; Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1 (GAR386)).

⁴⁶ Hants RO, 7M54/196/10.

⁴⁷ SHC, tithe award

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* A/EIK/18; D/D/rg/387/1-2.

⁴⁹ TNA, C 8/360/65.

1732 sheep grazed in an orchard.⁵⁰ Orchards covered 67½ a. in 1840 and several farms still had orchards in 1910.⁵¹ In 1917 apples from Norton Fitzwarren were sold at auctions in Taunton.⁵² The Norton Court estate included orchards in 1928, Fitzroy farm had 7a. in 1929 and in 1934 Bay House had a cider orchard.⁵³ Cider orchards were in decline nationally by 1975 but 7 ha. (c.17 a.) of orchard were recorded in 1986.⁵⁴ The village orchards have been lost mainly to housing development but new orchards have been planted in the south-west in the early 21st century including at Montys Court.

WOODLAND

Wood to the value of 200 marks was cut down c.1263–5 in the manors of Thomas de Audeham in Chiselborough and Norton.⁵⁵ Timber was sawn on the manor in 1342 including two pollards.⁵⁶ Trees were cut down during an assault on the manor in 1343.⁵⁷ In c.1700 Elias Norcott felled and sold oak, ash and elm timber at Knowle Hill timber without permission.⁵⁸ There are few references to forestry in the parish during the early modern or modern periods despite the area being described as woody in the 1780s.⁵⁹ In 1840 c.22 a. of coppice was recorded mostly at Knowle Hill whose plantations became part of Norton Manor grounds after 1842.⁶⁰

MILLS

⁵⁰ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1, 20 Apr. 1720; DD/SP/1732/8.

⁵¹ Ibid. tithe award; TNA, IR 58/82130, 579; 58/82131, 615; 58/82132, 719.

⁵² *Taunton Courier*, 22 Aug. 1917, 4.

⁵³ SHC, DD/BRO/4/7; A/AHD/1/10; *Taunton Courier*, 24 Apr. 1929, 6.

⁵⁴ TNA, MAF 68/6025; SHC, PAM 1005.

⁵⁵ *Placit. in Domo Capit. Abbrev.* 177; H. Ridgeway, 'Adam Gurdun at Dunster (c.1263-1265)', *PSAS CLIX*, 39-47.

⁵⁶ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/2 (GAR387)).

⁵⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1343-45, 99.

⁵⁸ TNA, C 8/360/65.

⁵⁹ McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 277.

⁶⁰ SHC, tithe award; above, landownership, Norton Manor.

In 1086 two mills rendering 11s. 3d.⁶¹ A corn mill, for which two millstones were bought in the 1340s, ground wheat and malt.⁶² John Davidge was a miller at Norton in 1568–9 but the type of mill is unknown.⁶³ It is likely that the later Norton Mills north of the village street were on the site of earlier mills. There may have been a mill near Ford where the farm had a leat and pond by 1840 but a post-medieval waterwheel found there may have powered farmyard machinery.⁶⁴

Grist mills

Before 1697, James Grove leased a grist mill to William Morse.⁶⁵ It descended with manor and in 1705 was known as Norton Mills comprising grist and malt mills.⁶⁶ In 1744, by which date a new grist mill and dwelling house had been erected, the Revd James Minifie bought the freehold subject to the life interest of Elizabeth Prowse, widow of James.⁶⁷ In 1757 Minifie sold them to John Duntze (d. 1768), Exeter merchant, probably for sale, with a proviso for watering the meadows from the mill stream every fortnight.⁶⁸

By 1767 the mills and the house were held separately by members of the Turner family but in 1793 William Haskins acquired both and replaced the house. In 1814 he left the premises to his daughter Ann Haskins, who in 1829 conveyed them to Jonathan Payne, miller. Payne had erected more dwellings on the premises by 1832 when he sold two houses to Betty North.⁶⁹ In 1818 William Temlett, miller, insured the mill and his new thatched dwelling from loss by fire.⁷⁰

⁶¹ *Domesday*, 251.

⁶² Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1-2 (GAR386-7)).

⁶³ SHC, DD/SP/2.

⁶⁴ SHC, tithe award; Gathercole, *Archaeological Assessment of Taunton*, 50.

⁶⁵ TNA, C 8/357/175.

⁶⁶ SHC, DD/WN/3/4, purchase from Grove.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* DD/CH/122/5, 3 July 1744; *London Gaz.*, 5 May 1744, no. 8325, p. 3.

⁶⁸ SHC, DD/CH/122/5; TNA, PROB 11/937/83.

⁶⁹ SHC, Q/REI/25/14; DD/HC/77/15/3; tithe award.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* DD/HC/19/13/20.

Flour mills

From the mid-19th century if not earlier, Norton Mills specialised in flour milling. In 1848 Jonathan Payne leased them as flour mills with the mill house, stables, piggery, malthouse, waggon house, gardens, bakehouse and lincay to John Hobbs, miller of Cannington, at a yearly rent of £150, payable quarterly.⁷¹ In 1851 John Mordle, a Taunton starchmaker, held the mills, assisted by his father and brother Frederick, who by 1861 ran the premises as flour mills and starch works. The site was greatly expanded and as Mordle and Son in 1881 employed 16 men and boys. In 1886 Frederick was declared bankrupt and sold the business, having a steady trade with lace manufacturers in Nottingham, London, Tiverton and throughout southern England, a house, cottage and gardens, the stock of flour, livestock, carts, a fire engine and other equipment.⁷²

The site was reduced in size and Spring Terrace built on the street.⁷³ From c.1887 Norton Mills, still water-powered, had a bakery, a depot in Taunton and was a major non-agricultural employer. Despite competition from American flour the company continued to supply plain and self-raising flours to grocers in the west of England and make daily deliveries of bread within Taunton in 1900.⁷⁴ It remained in business in 1950, but was lost in the 1960s and is now a residential site.⁷⁵

INDUSTRY

Quarrying

⁷¹ SHC, DD/CH/81/7.

⁷² TNA, HO 109/972, 1923; RG 9/1619; RG 11/2369; *West Somerset Free Press*, 16 Oct. 1886, 1.

⁷³ OS Map 1:10560, LXX. NW (1889 edn, 1904 edn).

⁷⁴ TNA, RG 12/1878; *Taunton Courier*, 28 Feb. 1894, 8; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900).

⁷⁵ SHC, D/R/ta/24/1/523; Johnson, *100 Years of Norton Fitzwarren*, 9.

Stone for the parish church is reputed to have come from Knowle Hill, composed of North Curry sandstone.⁷⁶ An illicit quarry was recorded c.1700.⁷⁷ Legitimate quarrying was being undertaken by 1733, when tools were stolen from the quarry house of Joan Moor.⁷⁸ In the 1780s the stone was used for rough building.⁷⁹ It was probably a surface quarry and in 1840 the quarry closes were pasture and arable.⁸⁰

Cloth

A tucking mill was recorded at Langford in 1504.⁸¹ A weaver was at work c.1612 and looms are recorded in three 17th-century inventories, one listing five pairs of looms, suggesting a small workshop.⁸² Three other inventories record spinning turns.⁸³ Henry Shattocke was a 'clothier' in 1678.⁸⁴

There were a flax workshop and possible retting pond at Way Farm, probably in the later 18th century when flax was grown in the parish.⁸⁵ In 1861 three women were cloth gloving and between 1841 and 1871 up to 19 women worked in the Staplegrove silk factory. Later men and women worked in its successor flock and flax industries.⁸⁶

Brewing

Adam le Brewer was recorded in Norton tithing in 1332.⁸⁷ In 1630 Ann Sloper was licensed to buy six quarters of barley weekly to convert into malt and sell in open fair or market.⁸⁸ A

⁷⁶ Prudden, *Geology and Landscape of Taunton Deane*, 76; H. Prudden, 'The geological landscape of Somerset in the late 18th century: the observations of Rack and Collinson', *PSAS* CLVIII, 105.

⁷⁷ TNA, C 8/360/65.

⁷⁸ SHC, Q/SR/301/66.

⁷⁹ McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 277-8.

⁸⁰ SHC, tithe award.

⁸¹ Weaver, *Som. Med. Wills*, 52-7.

⁸² SHC, D/D/ca/172; DD/SP/1669/6, 1677/39, 1684/147.

⁸³ Ibid. DD/SP/1637/3, 1679/13, 1687/63.

⁸⁴ Ibid. DD/SP/1678/72.

⁸⁵ Ibid. tithe award; above, this section.

⁸⁶ TNA, HO 107, 959, 1923; RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878; RG 15/11232; Staplegrove, econ. hist.

⁸⁷ TNA, E 179/169.6, f. 12.

malt mill recorded in 1705 may have been the malthouse with mills, presumably animal-powered, in 1840. It presumably closed when the brewery opened on an adjoining site.⁸⁹ A maltster was recorded in 1864.⁹⁰

Brewing equipment was recorded in 17th and 18th-century probate inventories.⁹¹ William Hewett established a commercial brewery c.1841 and later worked with his son.⁹² Their brewery, later Norton Brewery, beside Court Place was by 1887 the only brewery in the parish.⁹³ In 1880 W. H. Hewett (d. 1881) went into partnership with Charles Raymond Rodwell and Thomas Arthur Hussey with whom his widow later entered into lengthy litigation over the brewery assets.⁹⁴ W. Hewett & Co. was wound up in 1896 and re-established as William Hewett & Co. Ltd with offices in Taunton.⁹⁵ In 1898 it was acquired by S. W. Arnold & Sons of Rowbarton brewery, Taunton, who took on licensed premises, including the station refreshment rooms.⁹⁶ The brewery, which did its own malting, closed c.1930.⁹⁷

Cider-making

Cider was made on the manor in the 1340s.⁹⁸ Cider-making equipment and cider houses were recorded from 1669 onwards.⁹⁹ Cider apples were tithed at 2d. a hogshead in 1839 and labourers received an allowance of cider.¹⁰⁰¹⁰¹ In 1904 2,700 gallons from Montys farm were sold at auction.¹⁰²

⁸⁸ E. H. Bates Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1625-39*, 126.

⁸⁹ SHC, DD/WN/3/4; tithe award.

⁹⁰ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864).

⁹¹ SHC, DD/SP/1669/6, 1677/39, 1678/80, 1687/63, 1691/79, 1714/17, 1723/53, 1732/8; 1739/51.

⁹² TNA, HO 107/959/14; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864).

⁹³ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887).

⁹⁴ SHC, DD/CH/28, Hewett v. Rodwell, 6 Aug. 1887, 9 Jan. 1889.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* DD/HCK/1/2/4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* DD/CH/129/3.

⁹⁷ TNA, RG 14/14259; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1928, 1931); SHC, DD/HCK/1/2/4.

⁹⁸ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/2 (GAR387)).

⁹⁹ SHC, DD/SP/1669/6, 1691/79, 1714/17, 1732/8, 1739/51; Q/SR/359/1/10.

¹⁰⁰ SHC, DD/CH/28, copy of tithe commutation agreement.

Factory-based production began in the parish when the 19th-century Heathfield business transferred to Norton Fitzwarren with leading maker Arthur Moore.¹⁰³ William Vickery, a Milverton builder, bought the orchards and equipment and went into partnership with Moore. The business was not successful and during the First World War was sold to George Pallett.¹⁰⁴ In 1921 Pallett's Cider became the Taunton Cider Company Ltd. with six employees producing 10,000 gallons p.a. In 1927 the company began supplying cider to brewery tied houses, eventually becoming their sole supplier and by 1939 employed 15 people. By the early 1960s with a turnover of c.£500,000 it started importing apples and later concentrate as local orchards could not meet demand.¹⁰⁵

Guinness took shares in the business and oversaw expansion into the retail trade resulting in new buildings on an enlarged site and noise problems.¹⁰⁶ By 1975 Taunton Cider was the third largest cider producer in Britain and in 1987 Queen Elizabeth II visited the factory.¹⁰⁷ In 1991 management buy-out led to the company being floated on the stock market in 1992 when it employed 470 people. Taunton Cider plc found the site too small for expansion and inconvenient for road haulage, railway traffic having ceased by 1993.¹⁰⁸ In 1995 drinks manufacturer, Matthew Clark bought the company and moved production to Shepton Mallet closing the Norton factory in December 1998 and making most staff redundant.¹⁰⁹ The brand was relaunched c.2016 in Churchstanton.

Other industry

¹⁰¹ SHC, DD/CH/28; Heath, "Romance" of Peasant Life in the West of England, 57-8.

¹⁰² *Taunton Courier*, 1 Jun. 1904, 1; 8 Jun. 1904, 1.

¹⁰³ P. Legg and H. Binding, *Somerset Cider: The Complete Story* (Tiverton, 1998), 33.

¹⁰⁴ R. W. Holder, *Taunton Cider and Langdons: A West Somerset Story of Industrial Development* (Chichester, 2000), 9-10.

¹⁰⁵ Holder, *Taunton Cider*, 10, 30, 35, 48-52.

¹⁰⁶ Holder, *Taunton Cider*, 63; SHC, D/R/ta/24/1/79, 34, 704, 786, 1073; D/PC/n.fitz/6/2.

¹⁰⁷ SHC, PAM 1005; A/BVF/2/8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* PAM 1359, 1467; Holder, *Taunton Cider*, 68-9, 93; Coleby, *Minehead Branch*, 135.

¹⁰⁹ Holder, *Taunton Cider*, 111-12, 116-7; *Taunton Times*, 24 Dec. 1998, 1.

The railway employed several men including policemen by 1861. In 1901 there were 19 railway employees including seven signalmen.¹¹⁰ In the 1950s and 1960s there was a nut and bolt manufactory.¹¹¹ The 70-a. military supply depot employed four service personnel and c.230 civilian staff when it closed in 1966. The site was considered suitable for light industry or warehousing, storage and distribution facilities but was developed for the latter including storage of buses and a large haulage business.¹¹²

TRADES AND CRAFTS

A Roman-British pottery site found near Montys Court had produced Norton Fitzwarren grey ware.¹¹³ Bronze Age metalwork found close to the bank of Norton Hillfort had casting faults, suggesting local manufacture.¹¹⁴ There is evidence of medieval metalworking at Wick Lane.¹¹⁵ There was a smithy near Way farm in 1754 apparently replaced by 1840 with a village smithy, later moved south-east of the street.¹¹⁶ By 1851 there were smithies and wheelwrights near Cross Keys and Ford.¹¹⁷ In 1911 three blacksmiths worked the Cross Keys smithy and another employed three men.¹¹⁸ By 1939 a motor garage, with filling station, had replaced the Cross Keys smithy and the village had one smith and a motor engineer.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁰ TNA, RG 9/1619; RG 13/2279.

¹¹¹ SHC, A/APN/2/6; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957, 1966).

¹¹² TNA, EW 22/92; <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centre>: accessed 16 Feb. 2018; below, this section.

¹¹³ *PSAS* CLIX, 226-7; Som. HER, 44483.

¹¹⁴ N. G. Langmaid, 'Excavations at Norton Fitzwarren, 1970', *PSAS* CXIV, 105-6; S. Needham, 'The Clay Mould Assemblage', in P. Ellis, 'Norton Fitzwarren Hillfort', *PSAS* 133, 24-9.

¹¹⁵ M. Alexander and N. Adam, 'Bronze Age and Later Archaeology at Wick Lane, Norton Fitzwarren', *PSAS* CLVI, 1, 8.

¹¹⁶ SHC, DD/SLM/6; tithe award.

¹¹⁷ TNA, HO 107/1923.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* RG 14/14259.

¹¹⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1939).

Alexander and John Pile, probably brothers, were printers with a press in the parish by 1767.¹²⁰ Alexander (d. 1832) was also a bookseller but his son Alexander moved the business to Taunton before 1841.¹²¹

A butcher was recorded in 1619.¹²² The increased population by 1887 supported three butchers, two bootmakers, a plumber and a carpenter, three by 1900, and in 1901 there were two builders, two coopers, and a slaughterman who was also a retail butcher.¹²³ In 1928 there were a plumber, a wheelwright, a mason, a boot repairer, a motor engineer and a firm of hauliers.¹²⁴ In the 1960s there remained a dressmaker, butcher, boot repairer and motor engineer.¹²⁵

In the 2020s Courtlands Industrial Estate on the former Courtlands military site provided self-storage, vehicle hire and building services. Small businesses, including a car repair workshop, occupied the former brewery site.¹²⁶

RETAIL SERVICES

Two women were grocers in 1841, in 1851 there was a tea dealer and two village shops were recorded in 1891.¹²⁷ By 1901 there were a post office, three shops, one at Pen Elm, and milk was delivered.¹²⁸ In 1928 there were four grocery and other shops, a newsagent, coal merchants and a taxi-cab firm. Apartments were offered at Bay House.¹²⁹

¹²⁰ A. J. Webb, *Somerset Wills II*, 195-6.

¹²¹ J. Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, ed. J. Savage (Taunton, 1822), xvii; SHC, D/P/n.fitz/2/1/2 (1802), 7 (1832); TNA, HO 107/972/2.

¹²² SHC, Q/RLA/33.

¹²³ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887, 1900); TNA, RG 13/2279.

¹²⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1928).

¹²⁵ SHC, A/APN/2/6; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1966).

¹²⁶ <http://www.192.com/places/ta/ta2-6/ta2-6ns>: accessed 28 Mar. 2018.

¹²⁷ TNA, HO 107/959, 1923; RG 12/1878.

¹²⁸ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900); TNA, RG 13/2279; *Taunton Courier* 28 Jun. 1905.

¹²⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1928).

In 1950 the village had two general stores, a butcher's shop and a bakery, two shoe repairers, three garages and a hairdressing salon for both sexes. By 1980 the village had two shops supplying groceries and a fish and chip shop, one garage, and a boot repairer.¹³⁰ A garden centre opened in the 1980s opposite Norton Manor Camp on the site of a horse livery and market garden.¹³¹ Most of the former military supply depot site was cleared for a smaller business estate and housing in the early 21st century much of the site was cleared for a smaller business estate and housing. From 2014 one surviving triple unit was used by a coach firm and new units built c.2010 were occupied by a wholesaler and a farming store.¹³²

A general stores and post office closed in 2017 but the Cross Keys petrol station was rebuilt with a small supermarket and new shops were built on the site of the cider factory.¹³³ In 2026 the latter comprised a Co-operative store, with post office counter, charity shop, pharmacy and a food takeaway opposite a medical centre and a veterinary surgery. Another takeaway, an art pottery and a hairdresser were sited on the main street.

Public houses

A man was presented as a tapster in 1568-9. There was a licensed tippler in 1608 and an innholder in 1619.¹³⁴ The Anchor as named in 1651.¹³⁵ By the 1670s there were four licensees rising to five in the mid 18th century when at least one person convicted of selling beer or cider without a licence had previously been licensed.¹³⁶

In 1849 there were four beer and cider houses.¹³⁷ The Ring of Bells was recorded by 1720.¹³⁸ In 1813 the New Inn was licensed and stood east of the village until 1838 or later.¹³⁹

¹³⁰ SHC, A/AGH/1/255.

¹³¹ <https://www.wyevalegardencentres.co.uk/stores/taunton-2201>: accessed 16 Feb. 2018)

¹³² <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centr>: accessed 16 Feb. 2018.

¹³³ *Norton News*, Oct. 2017, 5.

¹³⁴ SHC, DD/SP/2; Q/SR/3/116; Q/RLA/33.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* Q/SR/83/122.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* Q/RLa/19/1-2; Q/RS/322/2/41; Q/RS/322/2/42; Q/SR/331/3/20; Q/SR/333/3/19d.

¹³⁷ *Morning Post*, 23 Jun. 1849, 2.

¹³⁸ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1, 20 Apr. 1720.

The Cross Keys at the junction of the Minehead and Wiveliscombe roads was open by 1837.¹⁴⁰ The adjoining Rose was recorded in 1851. In the village Bryants Cottage inn was open between 1841 and 1871.¹⁴¹ By 1886 there were licensed refreshment rooms at the railway station, renamed the Railway Inn by 1901 and the Railway Hotel by 1957 but closed after 1966 and since demolished.¹⁴² Five unnamed public houses were recorded in 1947 but by 2018 only the Ring of Bells and the Cross Keys remained in business.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Ibid. Q/RLA/30; *Taunton Courier*, 12 Dec. 1838: BNA accessed 6 Feb. 2026.

¹⁴⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 7 June 1837: BNA accessed 6 Feb. 2026.

¹⁴¹ TNA, HO 107/959, 1923; RG 9/1619; RG 10/2375.

¹⁴² *Taunton Courier*, 22 Sept. 1886; TNA, RG 13/2279; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (19957, 1966).

¹⁴³ SHC, A/AGH/1/255.