

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Norton Fitzwarren formed part of the outfaring or foreign hundred of the Bishop of Winchester's Taunton manor, held of him indirectly but subject to certain dues and services.<sup>1</sup> It remained a foreign hundred within Taunton hundred until the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> In 1894 it became part of Taunton Rural District, in 1974 part of Taunton Deane district and since 2023 has been administered by Somerset Council.

## TITHINGS

The parish was divided into three tithings: Norton, recorded by 1286, included the eponymous village and Ford, Langford and Venhampton.<sup>3</sup> By 1887 Venhampton was no longer a separate tithing but Langford tithing was recorded until 1902.<sup>4</sup>

## MANORIAL ADMINISTRATION

In the 1340s Norton manor was managed by a reeve and a hayward. The court met at least three times a year but no records survive.<sup>5</sup> In 1646 it was to be held in the new church house, which may not have been built.<sup>6</sup> Norton tithingmen were required to attend the Taunton foreign hundred or outfaring courts, which may have continued to appoint the parish constables of whom there were three in 1842.<sup>7</sup> In 1858 it was reported, anecdotally, that the lord of the manor had owned the village stocks.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Domesday*, 234; VCH Som. XIII forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest*, 78; SHC, DD/X/WBB/49.

<sup>3</sup> SHC, T/PH/win 1286—7; Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest*, 144—5; McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 277; SHC, Q/RJL/35/14; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1861).

<sup>4</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887); *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1902).

<sup>5</sup> Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1—2 (GAR386—7)).

<sup>6</sup> Warws. RO, CR 2017/L1/(a)11.

<sup>7</sup> SHC, DD/SP/36—47; D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1; Q/APC/1/84.

<sup>8</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 3 Mar. 1858, 2.

A court roll for 1768–1879 survives for Wooney rectorial manor, which permitting sub-leasing of copyholds.<sup>9</sup>

## PARISH ADMINISTRATION

A vestry book survives for 1574 to 1836 but the earlier records are annual summary accounts and appointments. In 1604 the vestry appointed two churchwardens, two waywardens and two youngmen's wardens and overseers were elected by 1621.<sup>10</sup>

In 1647 the inhabitants objected to paying to maintain the bridge at Langford.<sup>11</sup> By 1692 it was confirmed that it was not a county bridge and by 1816 the bridge, on the boundary with Staplegrove, was the joint responsibility of the waywardens of both parishes.<sup>12</sup>

In 1803 the vestry agreed to levy a 6*d.* rate for road repair, in addition to the 4*d.* rate for poor relief, in lieu of statute labour.<sup>13</sup> The waywardens were also responsible for footpaths, except the church path. In 1846 the vestry employed a man for a year to clip hedges, clear drains and maintain the parish roads.<sup>14</sup>

In 1822 the parish appointed four overseers and a salaried assistant overseer at £6 annually from the poor rate.<sup>15</sup> In 1826 the vestry established a select vestry for poor relief and agreed that larger rate payers should take on a greater proportion of the burden of parish office rather than using a rota of names.<sup>16</sup> In 1869-70 the overseers were in arrears with payments to the Taunton Union.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> SHC, D/P/n.fitz/3/1/1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (9 Apr. 1604); E. H. Bates, *Quarter Sessions Records: 1607-1625*, 297–8.

<sup>11</sup> E. H. Bates Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records: 1646-1660*, 43.

<sup>12</sup> SHC, Q/SO/8, f. 182a; DD/DP/83/4; D/P/n.fitz/9/1/2, 5 Jul. 1839, 18 Apr. 1856.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (23 Feb. 1803, 29 Nov. 1822).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/9/1/2 (14 Jan. 1842, 25 Mar. 1846).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (25 Mar. 1822).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1 (30 Mar. 1826, 12 Apr. 1826).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. D/G/ta/8a/20.

In 1888 the parish paid an assistant overseer and rate collector £25 p.a.<sup>18</sup> By 1891 he was also assistant overseer for West Monkton. Wilfred Marshall, lord of the manor, was an ex-officio member of the Taunton Board of Guardians, in addition to the parish representative.<sup>19</sup>

In 1894 an elected parish council was formed, meeting in the village school, with a salaried clerk. The offices of overseer, waywarden and assistant overseer were maintained.<sup>20</sup> In 1895 the parish council undertook to study the long-standing problem of sewage and industrial effluent going into streams and open cesspits but sewerage and water issues continued well into the 20th century.<sup>21</sup>

By 1946 12 houses in the village had been condemned but Taunton Rural District Council received permission to build only 28 of 32 needed. Burnshill and Courtlands camps were suggested for temporary or permanent housing but in 1948 the parish council claimed quality arable land was being taken for local authority housing when other sites were available.<sup>22</sup> Burnshill Camp site remained undeveloped and in 1976 the parish council deplored the high level of local authority housing proposed for it, 68 of 169 houses planned for the parish, owing to the existing high ratio of council to private housing in the village.<sup>23</sup>

The risk of flooding was raised in 1966 and 1972 when a new sewerage scheme was due for completion in 1974.<sup>24</sup> In 2001 1,100 new houses were proposed for the parish including the former cider factory site, which led to flooding concerns in 2003–4.<sup>25</sup>

In 2026 the parish was served by nine councillors, including vacancies, two county councillors and a clerk.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. D/P/n.fitz/9/1/3 (29 Mar. 1888).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. D/G/ta/4/1; *Taunton Courier*, 17 Sept. 1890, 5.

<sup>20</sup> SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6, pp. 1–3; D/G/ta/4/1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. A/EPF/250/4/1 (1873, 18); D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6, pp. 20–4, 4/2/7, 6/10.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/7 (11 Feb., 27 May 1946), 4/2/7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/2 (5 Jan. 1976); D/DC/tau/d/2/2/4 (16 Nov. 1976).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/2 (19 Sept. 1966, 15 May 1972).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/9 (26 Nov. 2001); 1/2/10 (6 Oct. 2003, 2 Feb. 2004).

<sup>26</sup> <https://nortonfitzwarren-pc.gov.uk>: accessed 19 Feb. 2026.

### *Local services*

In 1904 the parish council was informed that the Taunton fire brigade could not attend fires outside the borough. In 1906 the council agreed to accept the offered brewery fire engine and maintain it and establish a village fire brigade.<sup>27</sup> A village fire appliance was available in 1924 but not by 1944.<sup>28</sup>

A police constable was resident in 1863 but Taunton was the nearest station.<sup>29</sup> By 1911 there was a police station south of Norton Court but by 1946 there was no resident constable.<sup>30</sup> One was resident by 1980 but the police sub-station closed in 1994.<sup>31</sup>

Gas was supplied to private properties by 1930 and there was electricity c.1931 both supplied from Taunton in 1947.<sup>32</sup> Gas street lighting was installed in 1930 and electric lighting between 1950 and 1954.<sup>33</sup>

In 1895 sewage and waste water from a slaughterhouse entered a stream.<sup>34</sup> By 1938 water was piped from a reservoir in the Blackdown Hills, although some homes had private wells, but waste water remained a problem. In 1946 piped water and mains drainage was only partly available and many houses still had bucket closets. In 1948 a new sewer drained the southern side of the village.<sup>35</sup> Household refuse that could not be burnt by householders was collected from 1939, every four weeks in 1947.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6 (4 Jul. 1904, 1 Jan. 1906, 25 May 1906).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/7 (24 Mar. 1924, 23 Mar. 1944).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Q/SR/650/125–127.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, RG 14/14259; SHC, Q/SR/921/205; D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/7 (7 Aug. 1946).

<sup>31</sup> SHC, A/AGH/1/255; D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/5 (1 Aug. 1994).

<sup>32</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 30 Jul. 1930, 5; SHC, D/D/rrd/2; A/AGH/1/255.

<sup>33</sup> SHC, D/PC/n.fitz/4/1/11–12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/1/2/6, 16, 20–4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/2/4/7, 4/2/7, 6/10, 12..

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. D/PC/n.fitz/6/10, 12; A/AGH/1/155 (1947).