

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Norton Fitzwarren was primarily an agricultural parish until the early 20th century, although in the 19th century increasing numbers of villagers were employed in other industries, particularly Norton Brewery and the bakery at Norton Mills. Taunton Cider was a major employer for much of the 20th century.

AGRICULTURE

Medieval

Norton Fitzwarren was assessed at 5 hides in 1066 when it was worth £8. By 1086 it was worth £15. It had land for 10 ploughs, and in demesne had 3 ploughs and 6 slaves; and 13 villeins and 8 bordars with 8 ploughs. There were 25 a. of meadow and 40 a. of woodland, with 2 mills rendering 11s. 3d. The hamlet of Ford paid geld for half a hide in 1066 when it was worth 20s. In 1086 it was worth 30s. and had land for 1 plough with 2 bordars and 2 a. of meadow.¹

Little is known of medieval farming in the parish, although a field system, probably dating from the 11th to 14th centuries, has been identified at Wick Lane,² presumably including the field called ‘Wiklonde’ in 1386.³ Demesne lands called Steret, Shortalre and Colemanesleigh were recorded in accounts, which survive for c.1341–3.⁴ Land at Venhampton in the 14th century included 5 a. of meadow.⁵ Walter Stapeldon, bishop of Exeter, had a deer park at Norton Fitzwarren by 1315 and a building there was repaired in 1342–3.⁶

¹ Domesday, 251.

² M. Alexander and N. Adam, ‘Bronze Age and Later Archaeology at Wick Lane, Norton Fitzwarren’, PSANHS (2012), 1-17.

³ 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 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)).

In the 1327 lay subsidy Norton was taxed at £1 7s. 7d., Venhampton at 5s. 5d. and Langford at 6s. 6d. Norton's assessment suggests a wealthy parish compared to others in Taunton hundred, but Richard Stapeldon was assessed for the substantial sum of 10s.⁷ In the 1334 lay subsidy Norton Fitzwarren was taxed at £1 8s. 2d., Venhampton at 10s. and Langford at 6s. 2d.⁸ There were at least 15 half-virgate and 22 ferdell or quarter-virgate tenements on the manor in 1342—3 indicating over three hides of tenanted land but total rents were under £5 a year. The tenants owed 1 a. of ploughing per half virgate and also harrowed with the lord's oxen.⁹

In 1262 Peter de Chauvent held oxen, plough-teams, corn and other stock.¹⁰ Arable farming dominated on the demesne necessitating the employment of a 'rookherd' for three weeks. In 1342—3 over £40 of the manor's £51 income came from the sale of grain and 334 quarters were winnowed. Wheat and oats accounted for most of the produce followed by peas, some grown with vetches, barley and beans and malt was made with wheat and oats. A thatched grange and the west barton were recorded. There was a granger on the manor and two ploughmen and a carter were employed. Most of the equipment, which was sold in 1343, including four ploughs, two wains and a cart, was described as old although it had been maintained and some tools had only been bought the previous year. Stock on the demesne in 1342 stock comprised 16 oxen and 101 pigs but no cows or sheep although two drovers were employed and only one swineherd. The tenants also kept pigs. The dovecot produced 67 squabs in 1342, some of which were 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

⁷ Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest Som.*, 144–5.

⁸ Glasscock, *Subsidy of 1334*, 264–5.

⁹ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1 (GAR386)).

¹⁰ TNA, C 60/59, 16 Henry III (28 Oct. 1261–27 Oct. 1262), <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk> (accessed 28 Jun. 2017).

meadow were mown in 1342 but much pasture was sold and in 1243 hay had to be bought for the oxen. The sales of all stock and implements may be because the widowed Lady Katherine le Veel's needed cash to pay her late husband's debts and legacies or because she feared losing possession to the Stapeldons. The account for 1342—3, which continued to October, was in deficit whereas the previous account was in surplus. Much of the management was done by Richard de Clevedon, a relative of Katherine.¹¹ Following her second husband's death she bought wheat, beans, dredge, pigs, oxen and cows in Gloucestershire for the manor in 1362, the crops probably being to feed the farm servants as well as the animals.¹²

Early Modern

In 1623 Sir Henry Hawley, knight, held common of pasture for all cattle in Norton Fitzwarren.¹³ The glebe terriers of 1626 and 1637 record that 8 a. of glebe land adjoined the parsonage house, including a garden and an orchard.¹⁴ In 1626 the rectorial manor of Wooney, with 76 a., and six cottages, produced an annual rent of £3 6s. 8d.¹⁵

The evidence of 17th century probate inventories is of a mixed farming economy. Of 16 surviving inventories for the 17th century five included cows or other cattle, and six listed corn, hay and other crops. Horses were mentioned in five inventories, in one with draught tackle. Oxen may have been a more usual draught animal but were mentioned in only one inventory. Pigs were mentioned in seven inventories, though they may have been intended for domestic consumption. Poultry were mentioned in two inventories. Sheep were mentioned in

¹¹ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1 (GAR386); BCM/A/3/14/2 (GAR387)). The second account actually predates the first and is in worse condition.

¹² 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. Dredge was mixed corn. OED.

¹³ Hawkins, *Sales of Wards*, 23–4.

¹⁴ SHC, D\D\rg/387/1—2.

¹⁵ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/1/3.

three inventories, which suggests that the village's agricultural economy was based more on arable and dairy farming than on meat and wool from sheep.¹⁶

Of the four surviving probate inventories for the early 18th century, three included evidence of cheese-making. Three included wheat, hay or other crops, and two listed cows, heifers or calves. Both the inventories with cows also listed oxen and at least one horse. Sheep were mentioned in just one inventory. Pigs were listed in two inventories, and a third inventory, taken in November, listed a pig sty, which suggests that a pig may have been slaughtered. Poultry were not listed, but it seems unlikely that there were none.¹⁷

Late 18th to 19th centuries

In the 1780s Rack described the parish as situated in a woody area, but the lands were very rich. There were 18 farms in the parish. Half the agricultural land was arable, worth 21s. per acre. Pasture and meadow was worth from 30s. to £3 per acre. The principal crops were wheat, barley, peas, flax, clover and turnips.¹⁸ Flax growing in the village in the late 18th century was probably encouraged by government bounties for growing hemp and flax.¹⁹ Oxen were used in husbandry, and lime and farm dung were used as manure. Streams running through the village contained trout, eels, roach and dace, but Rack did not mention fishing in the village. Farms were mostly small, but according to Rack several farms had lately been laid together and were held by the same farmer.²⁰ A comparison of the land tax returns for the period 1766–1832 shows that the manor was the dominant landowner in the parish, and under the lordship of William Hawker and his heirs increased its holdings.

¹⁶ SHC, DD\SP/1637/3, 64; 1669/6; 1677/39; 1678/72; 1679/13; 1687/63; 1691/2, 79; 1694/29.

¹⁷ SHC, DD\SP/1714/17; 1723/53; 1732/8; 1739/51.

¹⁸ McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey, 277.

¹⁹ SHC, Q\RLH/63.

²⁰ McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey, 277.

Nevertheless, there were throughout the period a number of small freeholders, often owning only a cottage and a small parcel of land, as well as larger tenant farmers.²¹

Of 111 families in the parish in 1831, 68 were chiefly involved in agriculture. Of 117 adult males, 66 were employed as agricultural labourers, with a further 13 men who were farmers, nine of whom employed labourers.²² The evidence of the 1840 tithe apportionment is again of a parish with a mixed agriculture, with most agricultural land described as arable, meadow or pasture, with some orcharding and coppicing. Of 1,304 a. 1 r. 34 p. of land in the parish, arable land comprised 638 a. 3 r. 28 p., pasture or meadow 545 a. 2 r. 32 p. and coppice 22 a. 1 r. 1 p. Garden grounds comprised 22 a. 2 r. 16 p, and the glebe land belonging to the rectory was estimated separately at 7 a. 1 r. 20 p.²³

Eleven farms were listed in the 1851 census, of which only two, Montys farm and Fitzroy farm, were over 100 a. Montys farm, at 151 a., was substantially larger than the land described as 'Montis' in the tithe apportionment a decade earlier, when it was just over 20 a. Fitzroy farm, at 230 a. in 1851, was again considerably larger than the two farms at Fitzroy in 1840, of 115 a. and 14 a.²⁴ This suggests some amalgamation of farm holdings. Three farms in the 1851 census were under 10 a., and the farmer of the smallest of these, a holding of 4 a., also worked as a maltster. The 11 farms employed between them 32 men and four boys. Seventy-four men were described as agricultural labourers and there were 20 farm boys in the 1851 census, which suggests that, while some may have been employed outside the parish, a number were working as casual labour, rather than being in regular employment. The dominant agricultural employment was that of labourer, but there were a handful of other agricultural employments. One of the labourers described himself as a carter as well as a labourer, and other men worked solely as carters. Two men were working as dairymen.

²¹ SHC, Q\REL/35/14.

²² Abstract of Population Returns, 1831 (Parl. Papers 1833 (149), i, pp. 604–5.

²³ SHC, tithe award.

²⁴ SHC, tithe award; TNA, HO 107/1923.

Women do not appear to have been employed in agriculture, although two women were working in the dairy at Montys Court.²⁵

In 1861 there were 6 a. of allotment gardens on the manor land.²⁶ In that year Norton Fitzwarren was described as being situated on a soil of rich sandy loam, with a subsoil marl and gravel, that produced excellent crops of wheat, beans, barley, mangolds, potatoes, turnips and other crops.²⁷ The fertile soil did not necessarily mean a bumper harvest. In 1869 Thomas Birch, farmer of Norton Fitzwarren, stated to magistrates that he had lost 150 bushels of wheat to the depredations of rabbits the previous year, and had authorised one of his farm boys to trap them because he feared for his current crop of turnips.²⁸

In 1866 the village had 9 a. under cultivation for wheat, 5 a. of barley, 9 a. of turnips and swedes, 7 a. of clover and 12 a. of pasture. There were 95 milk cows, 177 other cattle, 958 sheep and 213 pigs. The crop returns were estimated in the absence of the occupiers' returns and appear to be an underestimate, though they may reflect the proportion of crops grown in the parish.²⁹

By the late 19th century agricultural labourers around Taunton were badly paid, an effect of the oversupply of labour throughout the West Country. In 1872 a Norton Fitzwarren labourer aged 23 years with a wife and two children received 9s. per week, with cider in addition. Out of this he paid 1s. 9d. per week for his cottage. Wages had been increased by 1s. per week in the surrounding areas, and the man believed his wages would be increased by a similar sum. Average wages in the district were 9s. to 10s. per week, with cider supplied by the farmer. Carters and shepherds could expect an extra 1s.³⁰ To earn this extra 1s. was not

²⁵ TNA, HO 107/1923.

²⁶ SHC, DD\CA/99, schedule 1861.

²⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1861).

²⁸ *Hereford Times*, 19 Mar. 1869.

²⁹ TNA, MAF 68/59—60.

³⁰ F. G. Heath, *The "Romance" of Peasant Life in the West of England* (London, 1872), 57–8.

something which most Norton Fitzwarren labourers could expect to achieve; there were few specialist agricultural workers in the 1891 census.³¹

By 1896 there were 17 farmers who rented their land, six who owned it, and one who both rented and owned land. The principal crops were 131 a. of barley and 88 ½ a. of wheat, although potatoes, turnips and swedes, and mangolds were also grown, the latter two possibly as animal feed. There were 228 a. of meadow and 41 ¼ a. of orchards. Thirty-one horses were used for agricultural purposes. There were 165 cattle, 670 sheep and 126 pigs.³²

20th century to present

In 1902 the parish was described as having some fine grazing land, and produced crops of wheat, beans, barley, mangolds, potatoes and turnips.³³ When Allerford farm, in the parishes of Norton Fitzwarren and Hillfarrance, was advertised for sale in 1905, it was described as having 76 a. of grazing and arable land.³⁴ Agricultural statistics of 1906 showed that the parish had 390 ¾ a. of arable and 922 a. of meadow and pasture.³⁵ By 1910 several farms were described as having good pasture and meadow land, though the arable land was ‘light’.³⁶

Land owned by the late Revd J. P. Hewett was being let for allotments by 1893, but it is unclear what happened to the land after Hewett’s estate was sold in that year.³⁷ A proposal made in January 1914 to provide allotments seems to have foundered but, possibly because of the need to produce food in wartime, by 1917 allotments were situated near the Village

³¹ TNA, RG 12/1878.

³² TNA, MAF 1626.

³³ Kelly’s Dir. Som. (1902).

³⁴ Devon and Exeter Gaz., 28 Jul. 1905.

³⁵ TNA, MAF 68/2196.

³⁶ TNA, IR 58/82130, 579; 58/82131, 615; 58/82132, 719.

³⁷ Taunton Courier, 27 Sept. 1893.

Club.³⁸ Allotments were to be found by 1937 along Manor Road (described as Rectory Road from 1946 onwards), and from 1944 there were also allotments in Station Road.³⁹

The lands sold as the ‘Langford sale’ in 1919 were mixed meadow and arable land, with an orchard.⁴⁰ Though this suggests that the farming economy remained mixed, when Fitzroy farm was sold in 1929, it was described as a dairy and grazing farm, excepting its 7 a. of orchard. At 190 a. it was a large farm for the parish.⁴¹

By 1926 there were 32 horses used in agriculture, a number not appreciably different from the number of thirty years previously. There were 440 cattle, 406 sheep and 339 pigs. Crops and grass totalled 1,111 ½ a., of which 455 ¼ a. was grazing or pasture land, and 247 a. was meadow land for mowing. Wheat remained the main single crops, at 102 ¼ a., but only 28 a. of barley was grown, with 54 ½ a. of oats and 45 ¼ a. of beans. Mangolds and turnips or swedes continued to be grown, possibly to feed the increasing numbers of cattle. Of 22 holdings in the parish, five were greater than 100 a. The numbers of people employed on the land was a fraction of its 19th-century figure; only 36 workers were recorded in 1926, three of them women. All were permanent workers; there were no casuals.⁴² By 1936 there were 1,710 a. of land under crops or grass in the parish,⁴³ an increase on the 1926 figure which would have been due to the amalgamation of Norton Fitzwarren with the civil parish of Heathfield in 1933. By 1939 there were nine farms in the parish, four of which were over 150 a.⁴⁴

Some former grazing land was ploughed up during the Second World War to grow wheat or other approved crops. Most farms received an ‘A’ grading, though one small farm,

³⁸ Taunton Courier, 28 Jan. 1914; SHC, A\BLZ/2/4.

³⁹ SHC, D\PC\n..fitz/4/1/1.

⁴⁰ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/1/2.

⁴¹ Taunton Courier, 24 Apr. 1929.

⁴² TNA, MAF 68/3312.

⁴³ TNA, MAF 68/3809.

⁴⁴ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1035, 1939).

described as a ‘hobby farm’, received a ‘B’ through its lack of good farming methods.⁴⁵ Some agricultural land was taken for military sites,⁴⁶ and after the war for housing. This appears to have been the fate that befell the Rectory Road allotments in 1953, but the Station Road allotments were still extant in 1962.⁴⁷ Despite those losses in 1956 the total acreage under crops and grass was 1,504 $\frac{3}{4}$ a., of which 93 $\frac{1}{2}$ a. was under wheat, 128 $\frac{3}{4}$ a. under barley and 70 a. under oats. Dairy farming had increased in importance, with 509 $\frac{1}{2}$ a. of grazing land and 338 a. for mowing. There were 694 cattle, 343 pigs and 479 sheep and lambs. Poultry farming was practised commercially, with 2,938 poultry. Thirty-four people still worked on the land, two of them women working part-time.⁴⁸

Thirty years later, the 1986 agricultural returns showed that there were 650.2 ha. (c.1,607 a.) of crops and grass in the parish, of which 271.8 ha. (c.672 a.) was grassland. There were 209.3 ha. (c.517 a.) of wheat and 32.2 ha. (c.79 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.) of barley. Only eight pigs were recorded, and the number of cattle had dropped to 418. There were 761 sheep and lambs. Poultry farming continued to be practiced commercially, with over 18,000 poultry recorded, almost all for meat rather than egg production. Twenty-eight men and women were working on the farms, including the farmers themselves.⁴⁹

An allotment site was established in 2008, by which time there no longer appeared to be allotments in the village. The parish council purchased the allotment plot in 2010.⁵⁰ The need for new housing in the early 21st century continued to threaten the remaining agricultural land in the parish; in c.2013 450 new homes were proposed at Ford farm.⁵¹

⁴⁵ TNA, MAF 32/146/272.

⁴⁶ <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centre> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018).

⁴⁷ SHC, D\PC\n.fitz/4/1/1. For building along Rectory Road in 1953 see SHC, D\PC\n.fitz/4/2/7.

⁴⁸ TNA, MAF 68/4547.

⁴⁹ TNA, MAF 68/6025.

⁵⁰ <https://www.nortonfitzwarrenparishcouncil.com/allotments/> (accessed 28 Mar. 2018).

⁵¹ <https://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/media/1046/ford-farm-sequential-and-exceptions-test.pdf> (accessed 28 Mar. 2018).

ORCHARDS

Orchards are mentioned in a deed of 1588.⁵² They continued to be a feature of the parish well into the 20th century. Ancient orchards were allegedly destroyed at Knowle Hill in 1700.⁵³ In 1720 an orchard was situated at the Ring of Bells.⁵⁴ A probate inventory of 1732 listed sheep grazing in an orchard.⁵⁵ Orchards covered 67 a. 2 r. 17 p. in 1840.⁵⁶

Several farms had orchards in c.1910.⁵⁷ In 1917 apples from Norton Fitzwarren were sold at the apple auctions in Taunton.⁵⁸ The sale of the Norton Court estate in 1928 included orchards,⁵⁹ and the 1929 sale of Fitzroy farm included 7 a. of orchard.⁶⁰ In 1934 the sale of Bay House included an orchard with cider fruit.⁶¹ Seven hectares (c.17 a.) of orchards were recorded in the 1986 agricultural returns,⁶² but cider orchards were already in decline nationally by 1975.⁶³ Some of the Norton orchards may have been lost to the army camps of the Second World War and later building development, though in 2009 an orchard still survived at Montys Court.⁶⁴

WOODLAND

In c.1263–5 wood to the value of 200 marks was cut down in the manors of Thomas de Audeham in Chiselborough and Norton, though it is not known how much of this took place

⁵² SHC, A/EIK/18.

⁵³ TNA, C 8/360/65.

⁵⁴ SHC, D/P/n.fitz/9/1/1, 20 Apr. 1720.

⁵⁵ SHC, DD/SP/1732/8.

⁵⁶ SHC, tithe award.

⁵⁷ TNA, IR 58/82130, 579; 58/82131, 615; 58/82132, 719.

⁵⁸ *Taunton Courier*, 22 Aug. 1917, 4.

⁵⁹ SHC, DD/BRO/4/7.

⁶⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 24 Apr. 1929, 6.

⁶¹ SHC, A/AHD/1/10.

⁶² TNA, MAF 68/6025.

⁶³ SHC, PAM 1005.

⁶⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/property/period-property/5330134/Period-property-Time-catches-up-with-Montys.html> (accessed 5 Dec. 2017).

in Norton.⁶⁵ Timber was sawn on the manor in 1342 including two pollards.⁶⁶ Trees were cut down during an assault on the manor in 1343.⁶⁷ In c.1700 Elias Norcott (or Northcott) felled timber trees of oak, ash and elm at Knowle Hill and sold the timber without permission of the lord of the manor.⁶⁸ A probate inventory of 1732 mentioned one timber tree.⁶⁹ Rack described Norton's situation in the 1780s as 'woody', but there are few references to forestry in the parish during the early modern or modern periods.⁷⁰ Some forestry or coppicing was taking place at the time of the tithe apportionment in 1840, which listed just over 22 a. of coppice in the parish. This was mostly situated at Knowle Hill.⁷¹ The Knowle Hill plantations became part of the wooded grounds of Norton Manor after 1842.⁷²

MILLS

Two mills were noted in the Domesday survey in 1086, rendering 11s. 3d.⁷³ A corn mill was recorded in the 1340s when wheat and malt was taken in toll and two millstones were bought.⁷⁴ A fulling mill at Langford was recorded in 1504.⁷⁵ John Davidge was a miller at Norton in 1568–9,⁷⁶ but whether he held a fulling mill or a grist mill is unknown. The whereabouts of these early mills is unclear, although it is likely that the mill later known as Norton Mills was one of these sites. Another mill may have been in existence c.1839 near Ford, and a post-medieval waterwheel was found at Ford Farm.⁷⁷

⁶⁵ Placit. in Domo Capit. Abbrev. 177; H. Ridgeway, 'Adam Gurdun at Dunster (c.1263–1265)', PSANHS 159, 39–47.

⁶⁶ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/2 (GAR387)).

⁶⁷ Cal. Pat. 1343–45, 99.

⁶⁸ TNA, C 8/360/65.

⁶⁹ SHC, DD\SP/1732/8.

⁷⁰ McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey, 277.

⁷¹ SHC, tithe award.

⁷² Above, landownership, Norton Manor.

⁷³ Domesday, 251.

⁷⁴ Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/1—2 (GAR386—7)).

⁷⁵ F. W. Weaver, Som. Medieval Wills, 1501–1530 (Som. Rec. Soc., 19), 52–7.

⁷⁶ SHC, DD\SP/2.

⁷⁷ Gathercole, Archaeological Assessment of Taunton, 50.

Grist mills

The mill, or mills, were part of the manorial estate in 1697, when James Grove, then lord of the manor, recorded leasing a grist mill to William Morse, by then deceased.⁷⁸ In 1705 a water grist mill and a malt mill, together known as Norton Mills, were in the tenure or occupation of Joseph Kebby.⁷⁹ By 1741 Norton Mills had passed into the ownership of George Prowse, gentleman. In 1744 the freehold of the mills was bought by Revd James Minifie, subject to the life interest of Elizabeth Prowse, widow of George's brother James. By this time a new grist mill and dwelling house had been erected.⁸⁰ Minifie mortgaged the mills, and in 1757 sold the freehold to John Duntze. The conveyance of 1757 included a clause for watering the meadows from the mill stream every fortnight.⁸¹

In 1793 William Haskins acquired the house and mill and built a new house on the site of the old mill house. By his will of 1814 he left the premises to his daughter Ann Haskins, who in 1829 conveyed the same to Jonathan Payne, miller. By 1832 Payne had erected another dwelling house on the premises, and in that year conveyed both houses to Betty North of Norton Fitzwarren, one house being in the occupation of Payne and the other of Susannah King.⁸² In 1818 William Temlett, miller, insured the mill and his new dwelling house from loss by fire.⁸³

Flour mills

From the mid-19th century onwards, if not before, the mills at Norton specialised in flour milling. In 1848 Jonathan Payne of Norton Fitzwarren, miller, leased the flour mills known as Norton Mills to John Hobbs, miller of Cannington, at a yearly rent of £150, payable

⁷⁸ TNA, C 8/357/175.

⁷⁹ SHC, DD\WN/3/4, purchase deeds of Norton Fitzwarren from Mr Grove.

⁸⁰ SHC, DD\CH/122/5, 3 July 1744; London Gaz., 5 May 1744, no. 8325, p. 3.

⁸¹ SHC, DD\CH/122/5.

⁸² SHC, DD\HC/77/15/3.

⁸³ SHC, DD\HC/19/13/20.

quarterly. The lease included the mill house, with stables, piggery, malthouse, waggon house, gardens, bakehouse and linhay.⁸⁴

The premises were later taken over by Frederick Mordle, who ran the Norton Flour Mills and Starch works as Mordle and Son. In 1886 he was declared bankrupt, leading to the sale of what appears to have been a well-established business, having a steady trade with lace manufacturers in Nottingham, London, Tiverton and throughout southern England. A house, cottage and gardens were sold along with the business premises and its stock of flour, livestock, carts and other equipment, including a fire engine.⁸⁵

By 1891 Norton Mills was operating as a bakery and was one of the major non-agricultural employers in the parish.⁸⁶ In 1894 the seventh annual general meeting of the directors and shareholders of the company heard that the company had been affected by the general depression in the milling industry, and by competition from American flour. The mill was still water-powered, as drought had affected the mill stream and in consequence the working of the mill. A new depot in Taunton had been an additional expense.⁸⁷ The company appears to have overcome these difficulties, and an advertisement of 1900 announced that Norton Mills was making daily deliveries of bread within Taunton, and supplying plain and self-raising flours to grocers in the west of England.⁸⁸ It was still operating as a bakery in 1950,⁸⁹ but the site was lost to the expansion of the cider factory in the 1960s.⁹⁰

INDUSTRY

Quarrying

⁸⁴ SHC, DD\CH/81/7.

⁸⁵ West Somerset Free Press, 16 Oct. 1886, 1.

⁸⁶ TNA, RG 12/1878.

⁸⁷ Taunton Courier, 28 Feb. 1894, 8.

⁸⁸ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1900).

⁸⁹ SHC, D\R\ta/24/1/523.

⁹⁰ Johnson, 100 Years of Norton Fitzwarren, 9.

Stone for the parish church is reputed to have come from Knowle Hill.⁹¹ An illicit quarry was recorded there c. 1700.⁹² Legitimate quarrying was being undertaken by 1733, when tools were stolen from the quarry house of Joan Moor at Knowle Hill.⁹³ Quarrying there was recorded in the 1780s, when the stone was used for rough building.⁹⁴

Textile industry

A tucking mill at Langford was recorded in the 1504 will of Agnes Burton of Taunton.⁹⁵ A weaver was working in the parish c.1612⁹⁶ and looms are recorded in three 17th-century inventories, one listing five pairs of looms, which suggests a small workshop.⁹⁷ Spinning turns or wheels are recorded in three other inventories.⁹⁸ Henry Shattocke was described as a ‘clothier’ in 1678.⁹⁹

By 1841 village women were employed in the silk industry, probably at the silk factory situated in Staplegrove.¹⁰⁰ Silk workers were recorded until 1871, but not thereafter. Women glovers were recorded in 1861, but this does not appear to have been an important industry in the parish.¹⁰¹

Brewing

⁹¹ 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’, PSANHS 158, 105.

⁹² TNA, C 8/360/65.

⁹³ SHC, Q\SR/301/66.

⁹⁴ McDermott and Berry, Rack’s Survey, 277–8.

⁹⁵ Weaver, Som. Med. Wills, 52–7.

⁹⁶ SHC, D\D/ca/172.

⁹⁷ SHC, DD\SP/1669/6, 1677/39, 1684/147.

⁹⁸ SHC, DD\SP/1637/3, 1679/13, 1687/63.

⁹⁹ SHC, DD\SP/1678/72.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centre> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018).

¹⁰¹ TNA, RG 9/1619; RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369.

In 1630 Ann Sloper, widow, of Norton was granted a licence to buy weekly six quarters of barley to convert into malt and sell the same in open fair or market.¹⁰² A maltster is listed in a directory of 1861, but no maltsters were recorded in 1891.¹⁰³

Brewing vats and other equipment are recorded in 17th and 18th century probate inventories, but any brewing activity prior to the 19th century appears to have been small-scale.¹⁰⁴ By 1841 William Hewett had established a commercial brewery.¹⁰⁵ There were two brewers in the parish in 1864, including Hewett's son W. H. Hewett.¹⁰⁶ The Hewett brewery, later the Norton Brewery, was situated beside Court Place, and by 1887 it was only brewery in the parish.¹⁰⁷ W. H. Hewett went into partnership in 1880 with Charles Raymond Rodwell and Thomas Arthur Hussey. Hewett died in 1881, and his widow entered into a lengthy period of litigation with Rodwell and Hussey over the brewery assets.¹⁰⁸

The firm of W. Hewett & Co was wound up in 1896 and re-established as William Hewett & Co. Ltd, with offices in Taunton.¹⁰⁹ In 1898 the company became S. W. Arnold & Sons, under the directorship of Stephen William Arnold and his sons. The company already owned Rowbarton brewery in Taunton, and later that year acquired a number of licensed premises, including the refreshment rooms at Norton Fitzwarren railway station.¹¹⁰ The brewery, which did its own malting, remained at Norton Fitzwarren until 1928. By 1931 the company, then Arnold & Hancock Ltd, was based at Rowbarton and Wiveliscombe and the Norton brewery had closed.¹¹¹

¹⁰² E. H. Bates Harbin, Quarter Sessions Records, 1625-1639 (Som. Rec. Soc. 24), 126.

¹⁰³ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1864); TNA, RG 12/1878.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, DD\SP/1669/6, 1677/39, 1678/80, 1687/63, 1691/79, 1714/17, 1723/53, 1732/8; 1739/51.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, HO 107/959/14.

¹⁰⁶ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1864).

¹⁰⁷ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1887).

¹⁰⁸ SHC, DD\CH/28, Hewett v. Rodwell, 6 Aug. 1887, 9 Jan. 1889.

¹⁰⁹ SHC, DD\HCK/1/2/4.

¹¹⁰ SHC, DD\CH/129/3.

¹¹¹ TNA, RG 14/14259; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1928, 1931); SHC, DD\HCK/1/2/4.

Cider making

Cider was made on the manor in the 1340s.¹¹² Cider-making equipment is recorded in probate inventories from 1669 onwards.¹¹³ In 1790 Sarah Poole entered the cider house of Abraham Turner with intent to steal cider.¹¹⁴ Small-scale cider production would have been an established practice when the tithe commutation agreement of 1839 recorded a tithe of 2d. a hogshead on apples made into cider.¹¹⁵ It was usual for agricultural labourers in the district to receive an allowance of cider in addition to their wages, a practice recorded at Norton Fitzwarren in 1872.¹¹⁶ By the early 20th century some farm cider was being produced commercially; 2,700 gallons from Montys farm were sold at auction in 1904.¹¹⁷

Factory-based commercial cider production began in the parish after the Heathfield rectory business transferred to Norton Fitzwarren. The rectors of Heathfield parish had been producing cider commercially since at least the 1840s, but the Heathfield enterprise seems to have ceased after it lost Arthur Moore, one of its leading cider makers. Moore may have been induced to move to Norton Fitzwarren in c. 1911 by the promise of an extra 1s. per week,¹¹⁸ or by the illness in 1912 of the Heathfield rector and his successor's decision to cease cider-making. William Vickery, a Milverton builder, bought the orchards and equipment, and went into partnership with Moore. in Norton Fitzwarren. The business was not successful, and during the First World War was sold to George Pallett, a businessman with experience in cider making.¹¹⁹

In 1921 Pallett's Cider became the Taunton Cider Company Ltd. The business was still small, with six employees, and a production of 10,000 gallons p.a. In 1927 the company

¹¹² Glos. Archives, MF1418 (BCM/A/3/14/2 (GAR387)).

¹¹³ SHC, DD\SP/1669/6, 1691/79, 1714/17, 1732/8, 1739/51.

¹¹⁴ SHC, Q\SR/359/1/10.

¹¹⁵ SHC, DD\CH/28, copy of tithe commutation agreement.

¹¹⁶ Heath, "Romance" of Peasant Life in the West of England, 57–8.

¹¹⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 1 Jun. 1904, 1; 8 Jun. 1904, 1.

¹¹⁸ P. Legg and H. Binding, *Somerset Cider: The Complete Story* (Tiverton, 1998), 33.

¹¹⁹ R. W. Holder, *Taunton Cider and Langdons: A West Somerset Story of Industrial Development* (Chichester, 2000), 9–10.

began supplying cider to the tied houses of breweries. By 1939 the company employed 15 people, and it continued to expand following the war as sole supplier to tied houses.¹²⁰

Although by the early 1960s it still had a turnover of no more than £500,000, it was providing cider to an increasing number of tied houses. As local orchards could not meet the increased demand of the Taunton Cider factory, apples, and later apple juice, were imported from abroad.¹²¹

The cider factory expanded throughout much of the 20th century, taking over land along Station Road as it added new facilities to the premises.¹²² Although it had no tied houses, the firm of Guinness took shares in the business, and oversaw Taunton Cider's expansion into the retail trade.¹²³ This expansion resulted in the construction of new buildings on the factory site, and increased noise, and was not welcomed by all residents of Norton Fitzwarren.¹²⁴ By 1975 the company was the third largest cider producer in Britain,¹²⁵ and in 1987 Queen Elizabeth II visited the cider factory.¹²⁶

In 1991 the company was bought in a management buy-out, and in 1992 floated on the stock market.¹²⁷ It remained one of the three largest cider producers in Britain in 1992, employing a total of 470 people, most in the Taunton area.¹²⁸

As Taunton Cider plc it had plans to expand into drinks other than cider, but the site at Norton Fitzwarren was limited in size, and inconvenient for road haulage. The railway station had closed to general goods traffic in 1964, but although Taunton Cider had continued to

¹²⁰ Holder, Taunton Cider, 10, 30, 35.

¹²¹ Holder, Taunton Cider, 48–52.

¹²² SHC, D\R\ta/24/1/79, 34, 704, 786, 1073.

¹²³ Holder, Taunton Cider, 63.

¹²⁴ SHC, D\PC/n.fitz/6/2.

¹²⁵ SHC, PAM 1005 (W. E. Minchinton, 'The British Cider Industry since 1870', Nat. West.Quarterly Review, Nov. 1975, 55–68).

¹²⁶ SHC, A\BVF/2/8.

¹²⁷ Holder, Taunton Cider, 68–9, 93; SHC, PAM 1467 (P. Ghazi, 'Freight abandoning rail for roads', Observer, 31 Jan. 1993, 9).

¹²⁸ SHC, PAM 1359 (M. Goldwater, 'Drink on the Brink', Observer magazine [Jun. 1992], 52–3); Holder, Taunton Cider, 68–9.

send some of its products by rail, this had ceased by 1993, and heavy trucks found it difficult to get through the narrow village streets to the factory site.¹²⁹ The company was bought by a major drinks manufacturer, Matthew Clark, in 1995, who moved production to Shepton Mallet. The Norton factory closed in December 1998, and made most of the Norton Fitzwarren employees redundant.¹³⁰

TRADES AND CRAFTS

There is evidence of pottery manufacture during the Romano-British period.¹³¹ Some pieces of Bronze Age metalwork found close to the bank of Norton Hillfort had casting faults, suggesting they were made on site, or nearby.¹³² There is archaeological evidence for metalworking at Wick Lane during the middle ages.¹³³

Norton Fitzwarren had, for a time, its own printing press. In 1767 John Pile of Norton Fitzwarren was recorded as a printer.¹³⁴ Alexander and John Pile owned a printing press in the village in 1799.¹³⁵ In 1822 A. Pile of Norton Fitzwarren, printer, subscribed for three copies of a history of Taunton, probably for re-sale.¹³⁶ The father of a child recorded in the Congregational birth register, 1826–37, was a printer, but thereafter Norton's printing press disappears from the record.¹³⁷

In 1619 William Smythe was recorded as a butcher.¹³⁸ William Dinham was working as a butcher in 1830.¹³⁹ By 1864 the village had a butcher and a tailor,¹⁴⁰ and in 1887 a trade

¹²⁹ Holder, *Taunton Cider*, 68–9, 93; Coleby, *Minehead Branch*, 135; SHC, PAM 1467.

¹³⁰ Holder, *Taunton Cider*, 111–12, 116–7; *Taunton Times*, 24 Dec. 1998, 1.

¹³¹ *PSANHS* 11, 33, 56; 159, 226–7.

¹³² N. G. Langmaid, 'Excavations at Norton Fitzwarren, 1970', *PSANHS* 114, 105–6; S. Needham, 'The Clay Mould Assemblage', in P. Ellis, 'Norton Fitzwarren Hillfort', *PSANHS* 133, 24–9.

¹³³ M. Alexander and N. Adam, 'Bronze Age and Later Archaeology at Wick Lane, Norton Fitzwarren', *PSANHS* 156, 1, 8.

¹³⁴ A. J. Webb, *Somerset Wills II* (Som. Rec. Soc. 94), 195–6.

¹³⁵ SHC, Q\SR/367/3/86.

¹³⁶ J. Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, ed. J. Savage (Taunton, 1822), xvii.

¹³⁷ TNA, RG 4/2873.

¹³⁸ SHC, Q\RLA/33.

¹³⁹ SHC, A\AZH/1.

¹⁴⁰ *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864).

directory listed three blacksmiths, two bootmakers, three butchers, a plumber and a carpenter.¹⁴¹ There were still wheelwrights in 1891.¹⁴² A directory of 1900 listed three blacksmiths, two boot or boot and shoe makers, three carpenters (one also working as a postman), a butcher, a plumber and a builder.¹⁴³ In 1911 three blacksmiths worked the Cross keys smithy and there were two in the village, one employing three men. The railway employed many people including five signalmen.¹⁴⁴ Traditional rural trades had declined noticeably by the publication of a 1939 directory, with only one blacksmith listed, although other tradespeople in the village included a boot repairer, plumber, builder, dressmaker, mason and butcher. The importance of motor vehicles was reflected in the two motor engineers established in the village.¹⁴⁵

In c.1961 a manufacturer of nuts and bolts was situated in the village¹⁴⁶ and remained there in 1966, but of the trades represented in 1939 only a dressmaker, butcher, boot repairer and one motor engineer were still listed in 1966.¹⁴⁷

RETAIL AND SERVICES

By 1864 the village had two shopkeepers.¹⁴⁸ In a directory of 1887 no shopkeepers were listed, but it seems unlikely that there were none, especially as the village had a post office.¹⁴⁹ By 1900 there were three shops listed in the village, one described as a general shop and baker, as well as the post office.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1887).

¹⁴² TNA, RG 12/1878.

¹⁴³ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1900).

¹⁴⁴ TNA, 14/14259.

¹⁴⁵ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1939).

¹⁴⁶ SHC, A\APN/2/6.

¹⁴⁷ Kelly's Dir. Taunton (1966).

¹⁴⁸ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1864).

¹⁴⁹ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1887).

¹⁵⁰ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1900).

By 1928 Norton Fitzwarren had two grocers, a newsagent, two other shopkeepers, a plumber, a wheelwright, a mason, a firm of coal merchants, a blacksmith, a bakery at Norton Mills, a butcher, a plumber and a boot repairer. The increasing importance of the motor trade was reflected in the presence of a motor engineer and a taxi-cab firm in the village, as well as a firm of hauliers. Apartments were offered at Bay House, which was probably a lodging house.¹⁵¹

In 1950 the village had two general stores, a butcher's shop and a bakery. Two shoe repairers worked in the village and there was a hairdressing salon for men and women. There were three garages in the village.¹⁵² The military supply depot closed in 1966, by which time it employed four service personnel and around 230 civilian staff, and, though there were no immediate plans for the 70 a. site, it was deemed suitable for warehousing, storage and distributing facilities, or light industry.¹⁵³ By 1980 the village had two shops supplying groceries and a fish and chip shop. There was a garage, and a boot repairer worked in the village.¹⁵⁴ A garden centre opened in the 1980s on land opposite Norton Manor Camp on land previously used for horse livery and as a market garden.¹⁵⁵

The site of the former supply depot became a trading estate, and the former sheds, some of them triple units, provided warehousing and garages for buses and lorries. In the early 21st century pressure for redevelopment led to the demolition of many structures to provide a new business and trading estate and housing. By 2010 only about four wartime stores and some other structures survived.¹⁵⁶ By 2017 one surviving triple unit was used by a coach firm, and there were new units built in c.2010; two units for the Somerset Heritage

¹⁵¹ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1928), 195–6.

¹⁵² SHC, A\AGH/1/255.

¹⁵³ TNA, EW 22/92; <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centre> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018).

¹⁵⁴ SHC, A\AGH/1/255.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.wyevalegardencentres.co.uk/stores/taunton-2201/> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018).

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/somerset-heritage-centre> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018).

Centre, and units occupied by a wholesaler and a farming store. Another trading estate was established on the former Courtlands military site, as Courtlands Industrial Estate, with units including vehicle hire and building services.¹⁵⁷ Small businesses, including a car repair workshop, were established on a small trading estate on the former brewery site near the parish church.

A general stores and post office closed in 2017.¹⁵⁸ By 2018 many village shops had gone, and retail opportunities centred around new shops built on the site of the cider factory. These included a Co-operative store, charity shop, two take-aways and a veterinary surgery. A pharmacy was located opposite this development on the former Norton Mills site. Of the former village shops, only a take-away remained, situated on the road towards Taunton.

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.192.com/places/ta/ta2-6/ta2-6ns/> (accessed 28 Mar. 2018).

¹⁵⁸ Norton News, Oct. 2017, 5.