

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

HOOK NORTON

Economic History

Hook Norton's economy was long based on mixed farming with a significant pastoral element, complemented by craft production and retailing. A medieval market and fair underpinned lively trading in the 16th and 17th century, and continued at a reduced scale in the 18th and 19th. A separate livestock fair was established in 1887 close to the newly built railway station, which was also used to distribute beer from the successful brewery established at Scotland End c.1852. Farming suffered the usual difficulties from the later 19th century, although commercial ironstone extraction provided additional local employment from 1889 to 1946. Commuting became widespread during the later 20th century.

The Agricultural Landscape

Until enclosure in 1774 almost three-quarters of the parish was covered by extensive open fields, meadows, and commons, which were well established by the 12th century, and were probably taking shape before the Conquest.¹ Soils on the higher ground were partly upper oolite, elsewhere lower oolite and fertile red loam,² and the fields were well watered by springs and streams, which in places created marshy areas.³ Early 13th-century documents suggest the existence of two main fields (east and west), which in places both extended to the parish boundary.⁴ The field system was reorganised into northern and southern blocks or 'divisions' before the 1590s, probably in the late Middle Ages.⁵ Meadowland, including early lot meadow, was concentrated around the rivers and streams.⁶

Early enclosures, besides small closes and crofts behind village houses,⁷ included two hides given to Osney abbey in the 12th century: Priestfield (near Nill Farm), comprising

¹ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 257–8. Parts of the SW and SE parish boundaries seem to follow the outline of former furlongs.

² *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1869). For area's the rich red soils, coloured by ferruginous Marlstone: H.C. Darby, *Domesday England* (1977), 128; Young, *Oxon. Agric.* 4–5; Orr, *Oxon. Agric.* 64–5.

³ e.g. *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 263–4, 270, 278; above, landscape etc.

⁴ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 263–4, 269, 270–3. The village museum (in Hook Norton Brewery) holds a map by P. Hackling identifying extensive ridge and furrow in the parish.

⁵ Below (medieval agric.).

⁶ *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 260 ('Hememed', before 1185), 267 (common meadow called 'Smethedole', c.1270), 279.

⁷ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 262, 270–1; Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 372.

former church land, and Butter Hill, a name suggesting rich pasture.⁸ The parish also contained two medieval deer parks, one (south-east of the village) first mentioned in 1232, and attached to Hook Norton manor, until converted to farmland before the 18th century.⁹ The other, straddling the parish boundary in the far south, belonged to Swerford manor, and still partially survives.¹⁰ A rabbit warren was maintained on high ground in the north-east from the 13th century to the early 18th, close to the later Lodge Farm.¹¹



Medieval Agriculture

In 1086 Hook Norton manor had arable for 30 ploughteams, and extensive grassland comprising 140 a. of meadow and pasture 10 furlongs square. Woodland was apparently limited to a spinney measuring 1 furlong square. The arable was intensively cultivated and had perhaps been recently been expanded, since the manor's numerous tenants (of whom 76 were *villani* and three were small-holding bordars) worked the full 30 teams, while 5 *servi*

⁸ *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 29; above, landownership (Osney estate); *PN Oxon.* II, 354. Council Hill (near Priestfield) was named probably from William Couser, an early 16th cent. lessee of Priestfield: *Valor. Eccl.* II, 218; *PN Oxon.* II, 355.

⁹ *Cal. Curia Regis*, XIV, 493; *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 275–6; below. For a bank and internal ditch possibly marking part of the former park boundary, HER, PRN 10475.

¹⁰ Below, Swerford, landownership; econ. hist.

¹¹ Below.

ran five more on the 5-hide demesne farm. The Conquest had evidently caused no real long-term damage despite Hook Norton's location near a long-distance north–south route, since the estate had retained its £30 value.¹² Assarting is indicated by mention before 1185 of 'Wadbrech' ('breach where woad is grown') in West field.¹³

In the 12th century part of the d'Oillys' Hook Norton manor was granted to Osney abbey, but it remained a valuable estate worth £60 a year in 1253,¹⁴ and c.£26 (possibly an underestimate) in 1279 and in the earlier 14th century.¹⁵ In 1301 the demesne, worth £15 in 1279, comprised 404 a. of arable worth 2*d.* per acre, 41 a. of meadow worth 1*s.* per acre, and 60 a. of pasture worth 1*d.* per acre, while parkland pasture was worth 6*s.* 8*d.*¹⁶ The warren, licensed in 1251, contained rabbits, hares, pheasants and partridges in 1353.¹⁷ The smaller Osney abbey estate, worth £26 9*s.* 8*d.* over all in 1279, included two carucates (c.240 a.) in demesne worth £10 a year, presumably the enclosed hides mentioned in the 12th century.¹⁸ By 1254 (and probably until the mid 14th century) Hook Norton formed the head of an abbey bailiwick managed by a resident canon-warden,¹⁹ and then as later much of its produce and tithes in kind were carted to Oxford for consumption.²⁰

Tenant holdings varied considerably. Of eight free tenants on Hook Norton manor in 1301 Alice Charlton held 6 yardlands (c.180 a.); John de Heronville and John Trivet each held a carucate (c.120 a.) and a piece of pasture; John Dimmock held 2 yardlands; and three others a yardland. Their rents were low, Alice paying just 1*s.* a year. Thirty-three villeins held yardlands for 5*s.* rent, 56 days' work between midsummer and Michaelmas, and autumn works; two others held ½ yardlands, and over all their rent and labour was worth £17.²¹ On the Osney abbey manor in 1279 six free tenants held between 1/3 and 2 yardlands for 4*s.* 6*d.*–7*s.* a yardland, and four villeins held three yardlands for services worth 11*s.* 4*d.* each. The cottagers on both manors, together with two free tenants, apparently had no open-field holdings, but their houses probably had attached gardens or crofts. In reality the tenurial picture was almost certainly more complex, since small parcels of land changed hands or were sublet.²²

¹² DB, f. 158; VCH Oxon. I, 393 n.

¹³ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 260, 261, 263; *PN Oxon.* II, 356.

¹⁴ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* I, 60 (including dower portions); above, landownership.

¹⁵ *Rot. Hund.* II, 725; TNA, C 133/101/7, m. 2; C 135/51/3, m. 4.

¹⁶ TNA, C 133/101/7, m. 2.

¹⁷ *Cal. Chart.* 1226–57, 369; *Parl. Rolls Med. England*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (2005), Edward I, roll 12, appendix, no. 21; *Cal. Pat.* 1350–4, 517–18.

¹⁸ *Rot. Hund.* II, 726; above (agric. landscape).

¹⁹ *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 320; D. Postles, *Oseney Abbey Studies* (2008), 39–40.

²⁰ Postles, *Oseney Abbey Studies*, 65; BL, Lansdowne MS 46, no. 108.

²¹ TNA, C 133/101/7, m. 2.

²² *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 264–5, 267, 268–9.

Cereal crops included wheat, barley, rye, oats, and pulses,²³ and field-names indicate cultivation of flax and stream-side withies.²⁴ Osney abbey's establishment of a mill in the 1220s may reflect an expansion in crop production,²⁵ with small-scale consolidation of open-field strips by lords and tenants perhaps slightly improving yields.²⁶ By the early 14th century not all the land was fully sown, however, possibly indicating withdrawal from cultivation of marginal land.²⁷ Demesne livestock included substantial sheep flocks: in the 13th century Osney abbey retained a shepherd, and c.1270 it was granted a sheepfold (*bercaria*) by John Charlton,²⁸ while by 1305 the Plescys' Hook Norton manor had at least three contiguous sheep folds and (in 1361) common for 300 sheep.²⁹ Field-names indicate a detached sheepcote, presumably stone-built, in or near west field.³⁰ Tenants kept horses, cows, sheep, and pigs, and used cereals partly for brewing.³¹

Demesne farming continued after the Black Death, and there was no marked accumulation of customary holdings, suggesting continued demand for land. In 1361 Hook Norton manor's demesne was little changed from in 1301 (with the price per acre of arable slightly increased, and of meadow slightly decreased), while the park with its pasture and underwood was worth 16s. 8d. Thirty unfree tenants each paid 13s. 4d. a year, and 15 free tenants 9s.³² By 1414 the manor was worth £40 a year,³³ and 84 a. of demesne arable on the Dimmock manor in 1422 was worth 6d. per acre, suggesting relative buoyancy.³⁴ Freehold land may have attracted a premium rent, since in 1417 John Charlton leased 1¼ yardlands from his mother for £2 a year.³⁵

Significant structural change apparently followed in the late 15th or early 16th century. Osney abbey retained all or part of its demesne in 1477,³⁶ but by 1509–10 received £8 from John Hall for the rectory and demesne land, and £6 13s. 4d. rent and 20s. for tithes from Priestfield (leased by John Cocks of Adderbury), while its customary tenants paid £11

²³ Ibid. p. 274; Postles, *Oseney Abbey Studies*, 53, 76, 78–9.

²⁴ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 258, 263, 278, 280; *PN Oxon.* II, 355–6.

²⁵ Below (mills).

²⁶ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 265, 268, 272.

²⁷ Bodl. *Oseney Rolls* 96; TNA, C 135/51/3; C 143/54/1; M. Dickins, *A History of Hook Norton* (1928), 56.

²⁸ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 265, 279, 287.

²⁹ *Parl. Rolls Med. England*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (2005), Edward I, roll 12, appendix, no. 21; *Cal. Fine* 1272–1307, 526; TNA, C 135/163, no. 14.

³⁰ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 268, 270 ('Lambecotestrete' by 'Wadbrech'); cf. *ibid.* 271 ('Le Scheld'); *PN Oxon.* II, 357.

³¹ New College, Oxford, 3619; Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 375; *ibid.* *Oseney Rolls* 96; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 53, 56; below (trade).

³² TNA, C 135/163, no. 14 (noting 400 a. demesne arable and 30 a. demesne meadow, at 3d. and 8d. an acre respectively). For some vacant tenements, above, landscape etc. (population).

³³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XX, p. 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.* XXI, p. 327.

³⁵ Unlisted deed in Hook Norton village archive.

³⁶ Postles, *Oseney Abbey Studies*, 83.

12s. 7d. in rent.³⁷ Any remaining common-field demesne was apparently enclosed, certainly by the 17th century.³⁸ Hook Norton manor's demesne remained in hand in 1437 but was leased by 1515, when Thomas Newman and two others received a 21-year lease of a parcel called Eastbury field (with a malt mill near Hook Norton park), a close called orchard close, and demesne land in South field.³⁹ Probably demesne leasing was accompanied by a reorganisation of the open fields, the mention of South field suggesting that the division between northern and southern 'sides' (or fields) documented in the 1590s had already taken place.⁴⁰ By the 18th century (and presumably earlier) the larger north side contained 80 yardlands, and the south side 30½,⁴¹ the north being divided into Sugarswell, Middle, Oat Hill, and Town quarters.⁴²

Farming remained mixed, though sheep farming may have expanded. In 1477 Osney abbey had 171 wethers kept presumably for their wool,⁴³ while in 1501 John Parr (tenant of a pasture called Westbury field) bequeathed 85 sheep,⁴⁴ and in 1519 the Osney abbey lessee John Hall had over 100.⁴⁵ Marketing links apparently included Chipping Norton and Banbury,⁴⁶ and from 1438 Hook Norton's newly established fairs were presumably used to buy and sell livestock and other produce.⁴⁷ Possibly wool profits underpinned the impressive investment in church alterations which date from this period.⁴⁸

Farms and Farming c.1535–1800

Sixteenth- to 18th-century farming was based around a handful of larger farms of c.150–350 a. and numerous smaller holdings, of which some were simple copyholds and others made up at least partly of leasehold and freehold land.⁴⁹ Until parliamentary enclosure in 1774 most still comprised open-field strips,⁵⁰ although there was some earlier piecemeal enclosure. Cowberry field and meadow, near Berryfield Farm, was purchased and enclosed in 1672 by a local grazier and two mercers (one from Chipping Norton),⁵¹ and c.1710 the

³⁷ *Oseney Cart*. VI, pp. 231, 243.

³⁸ Below (1535–1800).

³⁹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXIV, p. 474; TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/6900; below (1535–1800) (for Eastbury field).

⁴⁰ BL, Lansdowne MS 46, no. 108; Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 2503.

⁴¹ Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. c 229, f. 57v.

⁴² Tiller, 'Hook Norton', 287 and map; Dickens, *Hook Norton*, 34, 80.

⁴³ Postles, *Oseney Abbey Studies*, 83.

⁴⁴ Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 385; TNA, PROB 11/13/25.

⁴⁵ TNA, PROB 11/19/356.

⁴⁶ *Cal. Close* 1392–6, 369; TNA, PROB 11/19/356.

⁴⁷ Below (mks).

⁴⁸ Below, relig. hist (church archit.).

⁴⁹ For freeholds and mixed farms: OHC, BOR4/36/7D/15 (Berricraft in Southrop); *ibid.* MSS Wills Oxon. 149/2/28; 156/2/13; 22/4/27; TNA, PROB 11/ 226/110.

⁵⁰ e.g. Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. c 229, f. 58.

⁵¹ OHC, Hodgson VI/i/1.

warren (by then run-down) was turned to farmland, probably resulting in the creation of the 163-a. Lodge farm.⁵²

In 1551 twenty-four customary tenants of Hook Norton manor held a total of 32½ yardlands, of which 2 yardlands (or more) were in Sibford. One tenant (John Turbot) held 2½ yardlands, six had 2 yardlands, and the rest a single yardland.⁵³ Yardlands were commonly held for 13s. 4d. a year (the same sum as in 1361), with payment of entry fines and heriots.⁵⁴ The manor's demesne, which John Croker rented for £30 a year, included eight yardlands comprising c.100 a., a close called Orchard close, a pasture called Westbury field (with the rabbit warren and a house and 1½ yardlands belonging), an adjacent close, and the park, recently enlarged through the addition of land called 'le Parke' and of Eastbury field.⁵⁵ Nine Swerford manor copyholders at Southrop also included John Turbot, who occupied another 4 yardlands for 33s. 4d., while a freeholder occupied a single yardland for 10s. quitrent.⁵⁶ By the mid 17th century the bishop of Oxford's enclosed demesne (part of the former Osney abbey estate) was worth £200 a year, and his copyholders' entry fines and heriots £30; the copyholds' real value was £300 a year, however, and it was noted that a 'great improvement' could be achieved by enclosure.⁵⁷ Some large holdings continued in 1741, when out of nearly a hundred people paying the parish rate Nathaniel Appletree (of Deddington) held 8 yardlands, John Young just over 7, John Harwood and Daniel Lampett 5½ each, and Samuel Young, Robert Smith, Robert Barret, and Henry Langham c.4–5. Most people, however, had between ½ and 2 yardlands.⁵⁸

Mixed farming predominated throughout, with Banbury and Chipping Norton the chief markets.⁵⁹ Crops mentioned in the 17th century and earlier included wheat, barley (some of it malted), oats, maslin, peas, vetches, and hemp,⁶⁰ while the few major occupiers kept large sheep flocks: John Croker (d. 1569) had 1,000 sheep as well as 20 milk cows,⁶¹ and men such as John Woodford, a 'woolman' who lived in the parish c.1554–1614,⁶² presumably bought wool direct from local farmers. A few yeomen kept flocks of up to c.150, although most testators left fewer than 30, along with a few cows and pigs and (in some cases) stocks of bees.⁶³ Timber was scarce and carefully managed, the 40-a. coppice in Hook Norton park

⁵² LJ, XIX, 248, 292, 317, 323; Blenheim Mun., Shelf A2, bdle 22, 'Oxfordshire Particular 1759'; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 77.

⁵³ TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 122v. –124v. (Figs. exclude the Sibford holding).

⁵⁴ Ibid.; cf. OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 2120, f. viii (customs of bp of Oxford's manor).

⁵⁵ TNA, LR 2/189, f. 126; *Cal. Pat.* 1549–51, 2.

⁵⁶ OHC, M110/E/1; above, landownership.

⁵⁷ OHC, Clayton 1/14.

⁵⁸ Ibid. PAR137/4/F1/1, ff. 48, 49; *ibid.* P II/iii/13 (for Appletree).

⁵⁹ *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1589–93*, p. 7; TNA, PROB 11/ 248/110.

⁶⁰ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon., Hook Norton inventories (e.g. 25/5/10; 66/2/29; 149/2/28).

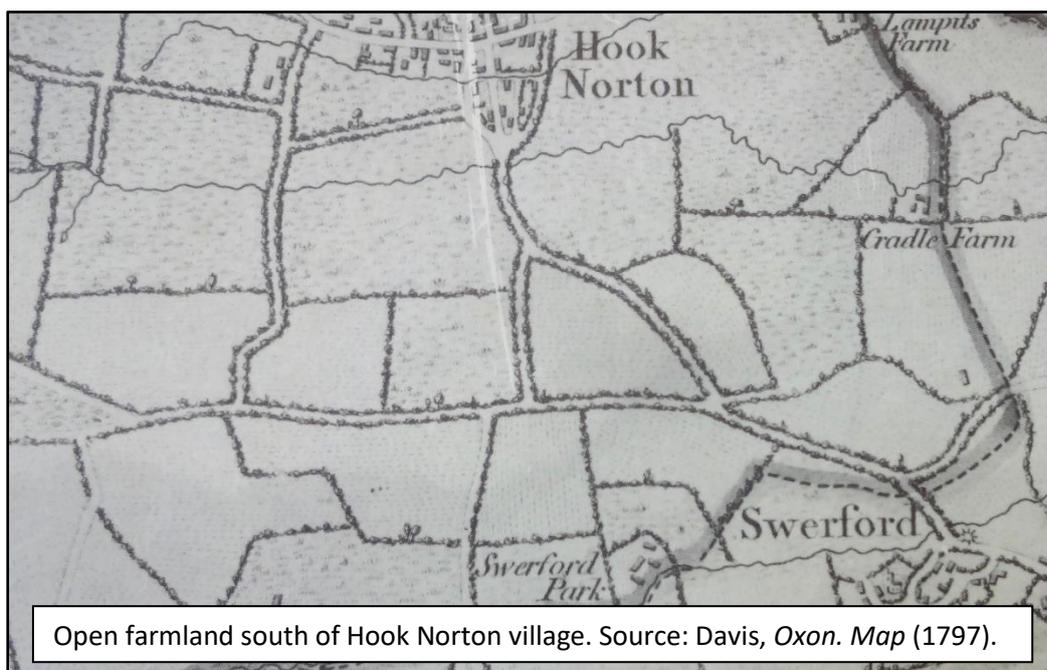
⁶¹ TNA, PROB 11/51/109.

⁶² *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1609–16*, p. 54.

⁶³ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon., Hook Norton inventories.

(worth £12 an acre in 1551) being reserved to the Crown, along with trees growing on the copyholds.⁶⁴ Wood sales on the bishop's estate c.1650 raised a mere £10.⁶⁵ The warren was apparently well stocked in 1548 when 400 couples of rabbits were allegedly taken by poachers.⁶⁶ The park was used mainly for sheep,⁶⁷ although 80 red deer there were to be reserved to the king in 1535.⁶⁸ By the 18th century it had been turned into farmland.⁶⁹

Open-field farming on the eve of enclosure in 1774 followed a rotation of wheat, beans, barley and fallow. The c.3,020-a. north-side field included (besides roads) 1,441 a. of arable (171 a. of it newly broken), 925 a. of sheep common, and 607 a. of meadow, while the c.1,050-a. south-side field had c.627 a. of arable, 243 a. of common, and 180 a. of meadow. Some north-side meadow could be mowed every year, some three years in four, and some every other year.⁷⁰ A total of 4,092 a. was enclosed later that year under an Act supported by the bishop and his lessee, leading to a rationalisation and, in some cases, enlargement of holdings.⁷¹ Even so, the high and growing cost of poor relief (presumably exacerbated by enclosure) posed an ongoing problem for local farmers.⁷²



⁶⁴ TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 126–128v.

⁶⁵ OHC, Clayton 1/14.

⁶⁶ TNA, STAC 3/1/62. For a 1618 poaching case: STAC 8/56/14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* C 2/Eliz/L5/45.

⁶⁸ *L&P Hen. VIII*, VIII, p. 431.

⁶⁹ OHC, SL208/D/1–2; *ibid.* QS/D/A/book99 (F15); Bodl. (R) MS Dep C17:49 (160); Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 169.

⁷⁰ OHC, MS Archd. Oxon. b 24, ff. 359–63.

⁷¹ Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. c 229, ff. 52–58v., 64–91v.; W.E. Tate, 'Oxfordshire Parliamentary Enclosures, 1696–1853: A Study of the House of Commons Journal as a Source for the History of Enclosures in the County of Oxford', Oxford Univ. B.Litt. thesis (1947), 49, 75; above, landownership.

⁷² Below, social hist. (welfare); OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 2116, no. 23 (local copy of Enclo. Act, bearing a note of c.1801 regarding 'The be fools as did contrive Hooknorton field to be inclosed').

Farming since 1800

The largest farms in the early 19th century included the bishop of Oxford's Rectory or Nill farm (646 a.), created at enclosure and held in 1807 by William and Thomas Owen, and Manor or Lampetts farm (318 a.), held by William Lampett, who also received £51 in tithe rents. Rents for both farms were increased in 1805 and 1819 but reduced from 1831 because of low corn prices, to £835 and £475 respectively.⁷³ Many smaller tenants remained, however, including 21 copyholders (also on the bishop's manor) who occupied c.400 a. in all,⁷⁴ while some 20 farms of over 50 a. in 1834 were held by a mix of owner-occupiers and tenants.⁷⁵ Nill and Manor farms were almost two-thirds arable in 1818, with wheat and barley complemented by fodder crops such as beans, vetches, and turnips. Manor farm (which included the rich pasture of Butter Hill) had accommodation for 28 cows, and Nill farm had a 'capital' sheep yard, while both farms had use of a lime quarry supplying 'excellent manure'.⁷⁶ Markets included Banbury, Chipping Norton, and Shipston-on-Stour (Warws.),⁷⁷ and stock and small amounts of wood were sold in local auctions.⁷⁸

By 1851 there were 44 farmers and a single farm bailiff. Nill farm (at 645 a.) remained easily the largest holding, followed by the 440 a. held by John Godson, a farmer and grazier, and the 400-a. Harwood farm. Of the other farms, four were 200–315 a., eight 100–180 a., twelve 50–90 a., and 17 under 46 a.⁷⁹ By 1881 the tenant of Nill farm (John Robert Lovell) occupied 810 a.,⁸⁰ probably reflecting availability of land following the onset of agricultural depression,⁸¹ which led to a marked drop in rents.⁸² The established pattern of stock and crop farming continued alongside an increase in permanent pasture.⁸³ By 1896 there were 2,945 sheep (compared with 2,664 in 1866), and 688 cattle including 198 in milk or calf (up from 435 cattle in 1866). Barley was the chief cereal crop, followed by wheat and oats.⁸⁴ Sheep numbers remained high in 1909, but fell by 1914.⁸⁵ Marketing was helped by the arrival of the railway in 1887: a livestock market was established by the station the same

⁷³ OHC, Shrew. VII/i/1; Shrew. VII/ii/1–2; Shrew. VII/iii/1.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Shrew. VII/i/1 (fig. excludes those holding houses only). Copyhold rents and quitrents yielded only £10 a year, but fines over £170: *ibid.* Shrew. VII/iii/1.

⁷⁵ Ibid. QS1834/2/A10/1.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Shrew. VII/i/1; Shrew. VII/iii/1. For lime kilns, *ibid.* Stilgoe A25; HER, PRN 4206; 4217; 4836.

⁷⁷ OHC, Shrew. VII/iii/1.

⁷⁸ e.g. *Banbury Guardian*, 27 Mar. 1845.

⁷⁹ TNA, HO 107/1733.

⁸⁰ Ibid. RG 11/1522.

⁸¹ F. Beale, 'From our Own Correspondent', *Cake & Cockhorse*, 9:1 (1982), 24.

⁸² CERC, CC/OF/NB27/258C; *ibid.* ECE/7/1/50964.

⁸³ Beale, 'From our Own Correspondent', 23; ChCh, MS Estates 73, ff. 208–12; TNA, MAF 68/1623.

⁸⁴ TNA, MAF 68/53; MAF 68/1623.

⁸⁵ Orr, *Oxon. Agric.*, statistical plates.

year, attracting buyers from Banbury, Chipping Norton and Leamington Spa,⁸⁶ and produce including hay and straw was sent by train to a variety of markets. Livestock transport fell away in the 1930s, however, and the market ceased.⁸⁷

By the early 1940s there were c.37 main holdings, including five over 200 a., fifteen of c.107–180 a., and the rest of 96 a. or less. Many were tenant farms, but a few (including C.W. Griffith-Jones's 210-a. Lodge farm) were owner-occupied. Park and Grounds farms (265 a. combined) supported 100 cattle, and Manor farm (302 a.) 80, though most herds numbered under 40. Sheep flocks of 100–200 were common, with 266 kept on the then 219-a. Nill farm, and much land (c.62 per cent) was permanent pasture, despite some ploughing up for the 1941 harvest. Many of the medium-sized and smaller farms especially suffered from poor management and infrastructure.⁸⁸ During the later 20th century land became concentrated in fewer hands, and in 1988 (when c.73 per cent of farmland was owner-occupied) there were 34 holdings including 24 over 50 acres. One farm was between 500 and 740 a. and five were 251–500 a., with eight of c.125–250 acres.⁸⁹ Five milk producers in 1993 included Redlands farm (with a 250-strong herd), and Lower Nill Farm had an intensive poultry unit,⁹⁰ while much permanent pasture remained in 2019.⁹¹ Land which had formerly been used for ironstone quarrying was returned to agricultural use after the Second World War.⁹²



Sheep grazing on some of the parish's undulating grassland, 2018.

⁸⁶ Beale, 'From our Own Correspondent', 25–6; above, landscape etc. (communications).

⁸⁷ W. Hemmings, P. Karau, and C. Turner, *The Banbury & Cheltenham Railway, Volume Two* (2004), 293, 299.

⁸⁸ TNA, MAF 32/914/90; *Sale Cat., The Lodge Farm* (1945), copy in OHC.

⁸⁹ TNA, MAF 68/6123.

⁹⁰ 'Outskirts of Hook Norton' (1993): video by J. and B. Gibbs, accessed online Dec. 2019.

⁹¹ *Sale Cat., Manor Farm* (2019), copy in private hands; VCH fieldwork.

⁹² R. Gorton, 'The Hook Norton Ironstone Companies', *Cake & Cockhorse*, 9:1 (1982), 20.

Non-Agricultural Activities

Mills

In 1086 Hook Norton manor had two mills worth £1 a year,⁹³ most likely a double mill under one roof. Probably those were the same two mills to which Hook Norton inhabitants owed suit in 1226, although if so they were by then attached to Swerford manor, presumably following a grant by the d'Oillys, who had earlier held both manors together.⁹⁴ The mills stood presumably on the River Swere on the site of the later Hook Norton mill,⁹⁵ which was apparently still attached to Swerford manor in the 16th century. By 1759 (when described as a 'water grist mill') it belonged to the duke of Marlborough, and then as later was run by members of the Colegrove family,⁹⁶ continuing in use until the early 20th century.⁹⁷

Osney abbey built a separate mill during the 13th century, obtaining Simon de Heronville's rights in a stream called 'Karswellelake' (in east field) in order to divert it to feed the mill race.⁹⁸ A resulting claim that their tenants owed suit to the lord of Swerford's mill was successfully defeated,⁹⁹ but the mill was apparently abandoned before the end of the Middle Ages, along with a windmill established by the Plescy family in the mid 14th century.¹⁰⁰ A mill on a tributary of the River Stour (just over the parish's northern boundary in Sibford Ferris) existed by 1153 and continued until just after the Second World War.¹⁰¹

Markets, Fairs, and Trade

Hook Norton's craft and retail sector was significant and varied.¹⁰² A weaver was mentioned in the early 13th century, and bynames suggest tailoring alongside rural crafts such as smithing, sawing, and barrel-making.¹⁰³ Butchers and a chapman were also mentioned,

⁹³ DB, f. 158.

⁹⁴ *Cur. Reg.* XII, p. 357; below, Swerford, econ. hist. (mill).

⁹⁵ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XV.1 (1881 and 1900 edns).

⁹⁶ OHC, M110/E/1; Blenheim Mun., Shelf A2, bdle 22, 'Oxfordshire Particular 1759'; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1877); below, Swerford, econ. hist. (mill).

⁹⁷ *Sale Cat., Estates of Hector R.L. Graham* (1918), copy in OHC.

⁹⁸ *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 266 (dating the grant to 1221 x 1229); A. Clark (ed.), *The English Register of Oseney Abbey*, I (Early English Text Society 133, 1907), p. 180 (dating it to ?c.1260); Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 32.

⁹⁹ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 296–7; Clark (ed.), *English Register*, p. 203.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, C 135/163, no. 14 (windmill); neither was mentioned later. For possible traces of a mill race at Beggar's Head (north-west of Cradle Farm), HER, PRN 13157.

¹⁰¹ Temple mill: *VCH Oxon.* X, 245; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 5, incorrectly stating that it was in Hook Norton parish.

¹⁰² *Oxon. Atlas*, 90–1.

¹⁰³ *Oxon. Eyre, 1241*, p. 150; *Oseney Cart.*, IV, p. 257; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 57.

along with the usual small-scale brewing.¹⁰⁴ The grant in 1438 (at the earl of Suffolk's behest) of a weekly Tuesday market and two annual fairs (on 29 June and 17 November) presumably stimulated trade and retail,¹⁰⁵ and by the 16th century and probably earlier there were several 'shops' or stalls close to the churchyard.¹⁰⁶

In 1590–1 Hook Norton's market was used mainly for agricultural produce,¹⁰⁷ and tolls on the fairs were let for a modest 10s.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in the 17th century one of the trade tokens of the Hook Norton mercer James Beale was found in Bampton (almost 25 miles away).¹⁰⁹ By then the village supported tanning, weaving, shoe- and glove-making, and tailoring,¹¹⁰ alongside building trades including those of carpenter, mason, and glazier-cum-plumber.¹¹¹ Retailers included a tallow chandler and a succession of butchers and bakers,¹¹² and a 'physician' was resident in the 1690s.¹¹³ Beer was supplied by one or two maltsters,¹¹⁴ and a local alehouse was visited in 1611 by a Staffordshire sheep trader on his way between Chipping Norton and Banbury.¹¹⁵ Possibly that was Hook Norton Lodge, which was a pub or inn by 1687 and probably in the 1640s.¹¹⁶

The market had apparently ceased by 1689, perhaps partly because of the revival of the market at Charlbury in 1678.¹¹⁷ Annual livestock fairs continued until the later 19th century, however, albeit at a reduced scale from c.1770.¹¹⁸ In the 18th century, besides weavers and other craftsmen,¹¹⁹ the village had a couple of shopkeepers,¹²⁰ one of whom, Stephen Haynes, was a mercer and grocer.¹²¹ By then there were also usually four to six licensed premises, including (in 1790) The Sun, The Bell, The Fox and Hounds, and the

¹⁰⁴ TNA, C 133/101/7, m. 2; *Oseney Cart*. IV, p. 277; Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 375; *ibid.* Oseney Rolls 96.

¹⁰⁵ *Cal Chart*. 1427–1516, 2.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, LR 2/189, f. 125 and v. For the mkt area there, above, landscape etc. (settlement).

¹⁰⁷ *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1589–93*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, LR 2/189, f. 126v.

¹⁰⁹ PAS, WAW-1B3F03. For his token of 1668, and that of the ironmonger Richard Parks, Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 188.

¹¹⁰ e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 190.16; 107.361; 194.41; 106.71; 300/3/37; *ibid.* BOR4/36/7D/15; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 190.

¹¹¹ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 189.359b; 195.179; 196.296; 204.186; 204.133.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 73/1/11; 76/1/10; 1/5/44; 71/4/9; 120/2/39; 78/3/1; 120/4/26.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 204.324 (Joseph Stanton).

¹¹⁴ *Cal. Pat.* 1549–51, 2; docs about the 'Cornelius Malthouse' (Southrop) in village archive; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 72.

¹¹⁵ R.F. Taylor and M. Hodges (eds.), *Cal. of Ct Bks of the Borough of New Woodstock 1607–1622* (ORS 65, 2007), 104.

¹¹⁶ M.S. Gretton (ed.), *Oxon. Justices of the Peace in the 17th Century* (ORS 16, 1934), 41; below, relig. hist. (Reform to 1840: nonconf.).

¹¹⁷ *Cal. SP Dom.* 1678, 63; OHC, Jo. I/v/5.

¹¹⁸ OHC, Hyde IV/i/1; *ibid.* QS/D/A/book99 (F15); W. Thwaites, 'Marketing of Agricultural Produce in 18th-Century Oxfordshire' (Birmingham Univ. PhD thesis, 1981), 58; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 191.

¹¹⁹ OHC, par. reg. transcripts; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 157.

¹²⁰ OHC, PAR137/5/F1/1, ff. 61v., 63v.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 215.132.

Pole Axe.¹²² A less usual business was the private lunatic asylum which operated in Southrop from c.1725 to 1854. Long owned by the Minchin and Harris families and operating at Bridge House,¹²³ in 1835 (under Henry Tilsley) it expanded into nearby premises to accommodate a large number of pauper patients, of whom there were 70 (out of 90 patients) in 1842. In addition to his in-house duties, the asylum surgeon-cum-apothecary often seems to have carried on general practice in the village.¹²⁴

In 1801 there were 90 people employed chiefly in trade, manufacturing, and crafts,¹²⁵ the more specialist craftsmen including the clockmaker Thomas Webb and (later) his Quaker successor John Paine.¹²⁶ By 1851 there were a number of tailors, numerous shoe makers, two drapers, a glover, and several women making clothes and bonnets, as well as skinnners, a calf dealer, and a weaver. Other retailers included two grocers, several bakers, a cider maker, a general dealer, and a timber merchant (a business which continued in the earlier 20th century).¹²⁷ In addition to blacksmiths, carpenters, and saddlers, there were stonemasons, slater-plasterers, lime-burners, a sawyer, a plumber and glazier, a cooper, a cabinet maker, and a maker of agricultural machinery.¹²⁸ The 61 craftsmen and traders of 1876 included as many as five grocers and four bakers, as well as drapers, tailors, butchers, and market gardeners.¹²⁹ Similar trades and retailers continued in the late 19th century, when there was a hotel (by the railway station), five pubs (including The Gate Inn on the Whichford road), and several beer retailers.¹³⁰

In the 1930s there were still c.41 craftsmen and traders,¹³¹ though by then village shops stocked goods brought by train from London and elsewhere.¹³² In 1966 c.15 retailers continued, most of them (as earlier) located on High Street, but by then over half the inhabitants shopped regularly in Banbury.¹³³ Competition from supermarkets led to shop closures in the 1980s and 1990s (when the local bank branch, established before 1961, also closed), though in 2019 the village retained a grocery store-cum-post office, and a butcher at

¹²² Ibid. QSD/V/1–3; Dickens, *Hook Norton*, 182.

¹²³ NHLE, no. 1198472.

¹²⁴ *Hook Norton and Witney Lunatic Asylums: Admission and Discharge Certificates 1845–1856* (2015): pamphlet in OHC; W.L. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (1972), 131–44; OHC, QSL III/1 (ground plan); TNA, HO 107/1733; *Banbury Guardian*, 28 Jan., 8 Apr. 1847.

¹²⁵ *Census*, 1801.

¹²⁶ T. Marshall, *The Quaker Clockmakers of North Oxfordshire* (2013), 174; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1869 and earlier edns).

¹²⁷ TNA, HO 107/1733; *Banbury Guardian*, 27 Oct. 1949.

¹²⁸ TNA, HO 107/1733.

¹²⁹ *Harrod's Dir. Oxon.* (1876); also Tiller, 'Hook Norton', 279.

¹³⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1899 edn).

¹³¹ Ibid. (1939 edn).

¹³² Hemmings et al., *The Banbury & Cheltenham Railway, Volume Two*, 289.

¹³³ M.W. Robinson, *Hook Norton: Report on the Survey and Plan* (1966): copy in OHC.

Heath Court, Queen Street.¹³⁴ Other modern businesses included a dentist, a vet, a hairdressing salon, a plant and skip hire depot, and a car dealership on the Whichford road (established in 1960),¹³⁵ while in the 1970s a potter employed six people.¹³⁶

Ironstone Extraction

Hook Norton's ironstone quarrying, along with that at Adderbury, became within a short period 'the most extensive form of mineral development in the county', the iron ore being sent to south Staffordshire and north Wales.¹³⁷ In 1869 it was noted that ironstone and limestone 'abound', and that there was a 'quantity of excellent brick earth'.¹³⁸ The eventual extension of the railway to the parish facilitated large-scale ironstone extraction from 1889 by the Hook Norton Ironstone Partnership, which in 1891 employed 10 men who lived in the parish,¹³⁹ and worked fields by the station. The business wound up by 1903, however, as a result of reduced orders and high extraction costs in an area of uneven terrain, requiring construction of a tunnel and use of a cable winch for the narrow-gauge railway. The Partnership was survived by two smaller quarrying business, one owned by the local farmer Henry Baker (operating c.1895–1918), and the other by the Earl of Dudley (operating c.1901–16). The Dudley works, south of the village, included a calcining kiln and tramway,¹⁴⁰ and in 1899 the ironstone quarries as a whole were said to employ c.100 men.¹⁴¹

More significant in terms of output was the quarrying carried out by Wrexham-based Brymbo Steel, which bought Park Farm in 1898 – where it started extraction – and subsequently other land, including (in 1909) the former Partnership works. The Brymbo quarries, which had their own railway system and calcining kilns, included flatter terrain and shallow overburden, and soon achieved a weekly output of 1,000 tons, rising to 5,000 tons during the First World War when the Brymbo quarries alone had c.100 employees. Reduced demand for steel led to a fall in output in the 1920s–30s, and total annual output in 1935 was

¹³⁴ S. Callery, *The Story of Hook Norton* (2017), 43; VCH fieldwork (2019). For the bank, Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. c 490 (photo, 1961).

¹³⁵ 'Outskirts of Hook Norton' (video 1993); *Mappa Hooky: The Village of Hook Norton 2020*.

¹³⁶ *Banbury Guardian*, 17 Feb. 1977.

¹³⁷ Orr, *Oxon. Agric.* 74; VCH *Oxon.* II, 268. Following based on: E. Tonks, *The Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands. History, Operation and Railways. Part II: The Oxfordshire Field* (1988), 72–107; Gorton, 'The Hook Norton Ironstone Companies', 14–22, incl. sketch map on p. 19; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. IX.9 and IX.13 (1900 and 1922 edns).

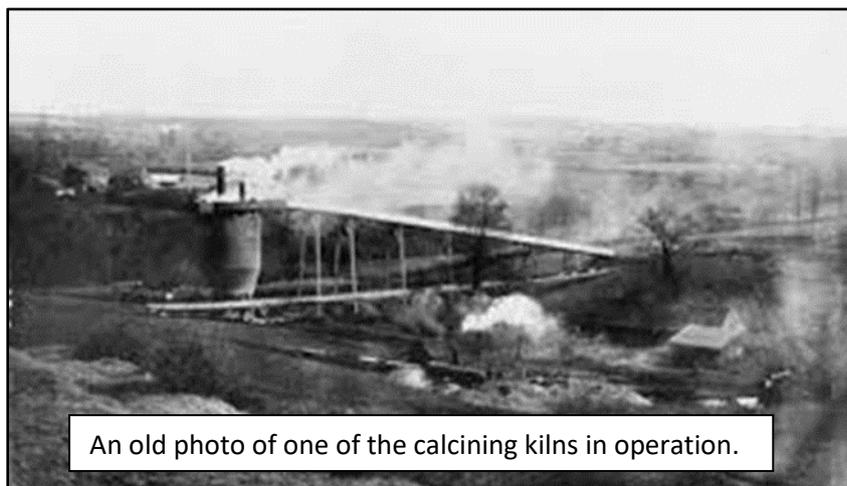
¹³⁸ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1869 edn).

¹³⁹ TNA, RG 12/1180; fig. excludes railway workers.

¹⁴⁰ Tonks, *Ironstone Quarries Part II*, 82–3, 103–7. For Dudley and the other extractors' private sidings, W. Hemmings, *The Banbury & Cheltenham Railway, Volume One* (2004), 112.

¹⁴¹ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1899 edn), apparently relating to the HNIP and Brymbo works. In 1901 there were c.50 ironstone workers living in the parish: TNA, RG 13/1401.

41,922 tons. The Second World War brought a brief revival (with output of 161,602 tons in 1943), but production ceased in 1946 due to reduced demand.¹⁴²



An old photo of one of the calcining kilns in operation.

Hook Norton Brewery

Hook Norton Brewery originated in a farm and maltings at Scotland End which John Harris (d.1887) took over in 1846.¹⁴³ Harris, who was brewing beer commercially by 1852, employed advanced techniques to maintain quality, and despite its rural location the business prospered, with 18 employees in 1881 (seven of them from Hook Norton). Further success was achieved under the management of Harris's nephew Alban Clarke (d. 1917), when the farm, which continued to supply some of the raw materials,¹⁴⁴ was run by John's son John, who maintained a close interest in the brewery business until his death in 1934. In 1888 and 1891 The Gate Inn and the Sun Inn were added to The Pear Tree (acquired in 1869) as tied houses, though most of the beer was still sold to free houses and individual customers. Transport was by dray, with more distant sales enabled by use of travellers from 1863, and by railway delivery (initially from Banbury) by 1874, including to Coventry, Shipston-on-Stour (Warws.), and Buckingham. From the late 1880s, when Hook Norton had its own station, the West Midlands, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Oxford were all supplied by rail.¹⁴⁵

Rising sales in the late 19th century (following a national trend) underpinned major investment and a new business structure. Structural works in 1899–1900 cost over £19,000,

¹⁴² Tonks, *Ironstone Quarries Part II*, 90; Gorton, 'The Hook Norton Ironstone Companies', 19; Hemmings et al., *The Banbury & Cheltenham Railway, Volume Two*, 295.

¹⁴³ Account based on: D. Eddershaw, *A Country Brewery: Hook Norton, 1849–1999* (1999); R. Woolley, *Brewed in the Traditional Manner: The Story of Hook Norton Brewery* (2015).

¹⁴⁴ Eddershaw, *A Country Brewery*, 31–2.

¹⁴⁵ Woolley, *Brewed in the Traditional Manner*, 134.

and in 1900, when the business employed c.50 men, it became a limited company with a share capital of £67,000.¹⁴⁶ By then it had 27 tied houses, and sales of bottled beer were growing.¹⁴⁷ Lean years during and after the First World War were survived partly by securing a licence in 1918 to supply working men's clubs in Coventry, and by the purchase of further licensed premises, while some deliveries were carried out by a brewery-owned steam waggon in 1904–9, and by motor lorry from 1928.¹⁴⁸ The Second World War brought increased demand, but during the post-war slump the Clarkes sold most of their shares (in 1950) to the Gilchrist family of Warrington, albeit they continued to run the brewery.¹⁴⁹ Between 1960 and 1985 (despite intense competition from lager in the 1960s and early 1970s) annual output doubled to 22,000 barrels or over 6 million pints, supplying 34 tied houses, free houses, and clubs.¹⁵⁰ About 24 local people were employed in 1962, and in 1999 most of the 36 employees lived in the village.¹⁵¹ Later 20th-century success followed partly from the revived popularity of 'Real Ale', and in 2012 the company owned 44 tied pubs,¹⁵² reduced to 34 by 2019 (three of them in the parish, the rest within 28 miles).¹⁵³



¹⁴⁶ Eddershaw, *A Country Brewery*, 34; VCH Oxon. II, 265; for the bldgs, above, landscape etc. (industrial archit.).

¹⁴⁷ Woolley, *Brewed in the Traditional Manner*, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 127–37.

¹⁴⁹ Woolley, *Brewed in the Traditional Manner*, 185–7.

¹⁵⁰ J. Bond and J. Rhodes, *The Oxfordshire Brewer* (Oxon. Museum Services, 1985), 34, 241.

¹⁵¹ *Oxford Times*, 22 June 1962; Eddershaw, *A Country Brewery*, 116.

¹⁵² <https://www.caterlyst.com> (accessed Nov. 2019).

¹⁵³ List on brewery website (Dec. 2019).