



## VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

### HOOK NORTON

#### Local Government

## Manor Courts

Courts were held for all three manors from the Middle Ages, that for the Dimmock fee valued at 2s. a year in 1422, and Osney abbey's at 4s. in 1535.<sup>1</sup> Officers of Hook Norton manor included a reeve (mentioned in the 1180s), and in 1549 a steward and a bailiff-cum-park keeper.<sup>2</sup> The Hook Norton court continued to deal with agricultural regulation (including grazing and maintenance of hedges) until enclosure, especially on the parish's 'north side',<sup>3</sup> while in the 1750s a separate court for 'Southrop manor' (attached to Swerford) dealt with the 'south side'.<sup>4</sup> The Dimmock court, latterly restricted mainly to customary tenancy transfers, appears to have ceased soon after 1617,<sup>5</sup> but courts for the former Osney abbey manor, held by the bishop of Oxford's lessee, continued until c.1893, similarly concerned almost exclusively with copyhold tenancies.<sup>6</sup>

By the late 13th century Hook Norton's lords also claimed view of frankpledge (with the right to exclude royal bailiffs), gallows, and the assizes of bread and ale.<sup>7</sup> Their jurisdiction extended to the Osney abbey and Dimmock fees,<sup>8</sup> although until the Dissolution the abbey received all fines from the view.<sup>9</sup> In the 16th century the view dealt with assaults, breaches of the assize of bread and ale, and excessive prices charged by butchers;<sup>10</sup> by the 1750s, however, the only view appears to have been one held for 'Southrop manor',<sup>11</sup> and in 1806 William Walford unsuccessfully claimed a piece of waste land called the cow pen (or pound garden) as 'lord paramount of the manor of Hook Norton'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXI, 327; *Valor Eccl.* II, 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 258; *Cal. Pat.* 1549–51, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. c 769; *ibid.* MSS North Adds c 7 and c 2; P. Ashbridge, *Children of Dissent* (2008), 98 and n. Officers included tithingmen and constables, by then also involved in parish govt: Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 97–8; below.

<sup>4</sup> OHC, M1/5/CR.

<sup>5</sup> Bodl. MSS Ch. Oxon. 386–398.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* MSS Oxf. Dioc. c 2119–2121.

<sup>7</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 33, 726, 736; *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 26.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Bodl. Oseney Rolls 1 and 96; TNA, SC 2/197/46.

<sup>9</sup> Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 375; TNA, SC 2/197/46.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, 2/197/46–47; Bodl. MSS North Adds. c 7 and c 2; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 67–8.

<sup>11</sup> OHC, M1/5/CR

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 2120, p. 127.

## Parish and Vestry Government

Hook Norton had two churchwardens by 1519, one of them later selected by the incumbent and the other by the vestry.<sup>13</sup> Other parish officers included overseers (mentioned in the 17th century),<sup>14</sup> constables, and waywardens,<sup>15</sup> with officers' duties customarily divided between the parish's north and south (or Southrop) 'sides'.<sup>16</sup> Early 18th-century vestry meetings were held in licensed premises, moving later into the schoolroom in the church's north transept.<sup>17</sup> Parish facilities included, by the 18th and 19th centuries, stocks, a pump, a pound, and a lock-up or 'dungeon' (sold in 1892).<sup>18</sup> By 1861 there was a resident police constable, who by 1928 occupied a purpose-built police house on The Bourne.<sup>19</sup>

Under the 1894 Local Government Act the vestry's remaining civil functions passed to a new parish council, which established committees for the cemetery (opened at Down End in 1899 and later extended), footpaths, lighting, allotments, the Memorial Hall, and (later) the playing field and children's play area.<sup>20</sup> A volunteer fire brigade established in 1896 passed to county council control under the 1947 Fire Services Act, moving in 1952 into a purpose-built station on Bourne Lane, where it remained in 2021.<sup>21</sup> The brigade was long led (c.1930–1996) by members of the Clarke family, directors of Hook Norton Brewery.<sup>22</sup> For church purposes Hook Norton retained its own parochial church council, with additional representation on a district church council overseeing all churches in the team benefice.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> TNA, PROB 11/19/356; OHC, PAR137/4/F1/1.

<sup>14</sup> M.S. Gretton (ed.), *Oxon. Justices of the Peace* (ORS 16, 1934), 11. For 18th-cent. accounts, OHC, PAR137/5/F1/1.

<sup>15</sup> OHC, PAR137/7F1/1; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 98, 142 (par. clerk).

<sup>16</sup> Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 96, 98, 157.

<sup>17</sup> OHC, PAR137/4/F1/1–2; PAR137/2/A1/1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c. 2120, p. 127; PAR137/2/A2/1; Dickins, *Hook Norton*, 97. For the parish workhouse, above, social hist. (welfare).

<sup>19</sup> TNA, RG 9/913; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1928 and later edns).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* PC137/1/A1/1–9 (mins from 1906); *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 1863/1, cemetery consecrations; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. IX.9 (1881 and later edns); par. council website (Apr. 2021); above, social hist.

<sup>21</sup> J. Clarke (ed.), *Hook Norton Fire Brigade: A Celebration* (1996), copy in OHC; S. Callery, *The Story of Hook Norton* (2017), 32–3; *Banbury Guardian*, 19 Feb. 2021 (accessed online). For the county council library, above, social hist.

<sup>22</sup> R. Woolley, *Brewed in the Traditional Manner: The Story of Hook Norton Brewery* (2015), 212.

<sup>23</sup> 'Benefice of Hook Norton ... Profile' [2018] (pdf accessed online Apr. 2020).