



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

GREAT ROLLRIGHT

Local Government

Manor Courts and Officers

Separate courts were held for the Despenser and Stafford manors by the 13th century, the former producing income of between 6s. 8d. and 15s. 6d. a year in the 1290s, but only 5s. in the 1340s and 12d. by the 1380s.¹ Presumably the courts continued, but no court rolls are known until 1655 when a court baron was held before William Sheppard's steward. Possibly that represented a revival following the disruption of the Civil War, since the only business was confirmation of the manor's copyhold and free tenures.² By the 1720s the court may have appointed a hayward, and in 1727 it rehearsed the manor's field customs. Agricultural orders continued until the 1760s,³ the courts perhaps ceasing at enclosure in 1776.

On the Stafford manor the Parleses claimed a manor court in the 1270s, and in 1450 their successors Cold Norton priory held a court baron dealing with failure to repair buildings and other nuisances.⁴ By the 1540s the court was worth 2s. 'in common years' to Brasenose College, which continued to hold it at irregular intervals,⁵ presumably at Courthouse Farm. The last known court was held there in 1908.⁶

Rollright's inhabitants also owed suit to Chadlington's hundred court and to its annual view of frankpledge, where by the 16th century a tithingman (accompanied by two affeerers) paid fixed sums totalling 9s. 5½d. for cert money, wardpenny, and hidage. Further sums of 8d. and 10d. respectively were paid on behalf of the Hungerford and Fitz Alan fees, representing the two main Rollright manors.⁷

¹ TNA, C 133/63/32; C 133/68/10; C 135/82/1; C 136/24/19; *ibid.* E 199/36/1; *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 314.

² Jeffery, *Rollright*, pp. viii (mentioning ct rolls dated 1655–1764, then in private hands), 93–6.

³ *Ibid.* 23–9; above, *econ. hist.* (16th cent. to parl. encl.).

⁴ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 114–16.

⁵ *Ibid.* 120–33; F. Madan (ed.), *Brasenose College Quatercentenary Monographs*, II.1 (OHS 53, 1909), no. IX, 193; BNC, D670 (cts baron 1793–1852, dealing with tenancies and encroachments).

⁶ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 124–5, 127; Bodl. GA Oxon. c 317/12, notice of ct (1908); above, *landownership* (Courtho. Fm).

⁷ TNA, SC 2/197/20–1; GA, D9125/3/26, ff. 44v.–45. For the Fitz Alan interest (as patrons of Cold Norton priory), above, *Over Norton, relig. hist.* (*relig. life*).

Parish Government and Officers

Two churchwardens were mentioned in 1530,⁸ and by the 18th century were often leading farmers who served for one or two years at a time.⁹ By then (as in the 1830s) they were presumably chosen by the rector and parishioners in the usual way, their duties including management of the Poor's Estate and of the parish's educational charities.¹⁰ Two overseers of the poor were mentioned from the 1640s, and a constable (by then a parish as much as manorial officer) in the 1640s–60s,¹¹ while a parish clerk received £3 a year in 1805 (rising to £5 by 1820).¹² A waywarden and a guardian were elected by the vestry in the 1880s,¹³ and an assistant overseer (William Hayes of Chipping Norton) was employed from the 1890s.¹⁴

The parish vestry was replaced under the Local Government Act of 1894 by an elected parish council of five (excluding the rector as chairman), which took over management of the charities, and in 1905 began a campaign to reduce county council spending.¹⁵ It continued (still with five members) after the civil parish's absorption of Little Rollright in 1932, responsibilities in 2020 including the children's playground and other open spaces.¹⁶ For ecclesiastical purposes a joint parochial church council with Hook Norton and Swerford was established following the parishes' unification in 1980, although Great Rollright continued to elect two churchwardens.¹⁷ The parish belonged from 1834 to Chipping Norton Poor Law Union, from 1894 to the newly formed Chipping Norton Rural District, and from 1974 to the new West Oxfordshire District, which in 1990 designated the village a conservation area.¹⁸

⁸ *Visit. Dioc. Linc.* II, 43.

⁹ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c 95.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* MSS Oxf. Dioc. b 38, f. 158v.; d 575, f. 61v.; above, social hist. (educ.; welfare).

¹¹ *Prot. Retns*, 96; TNA, E 179/255/3.

¹² OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 569, f. 58; d 579, f. 46.

¹³ *Oxon. Weekly News*, 31 Mar. 1886; for earlier surveyors of highways, above, landscape etc. (roads).

¹⁴ Until the early 1900s: *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1891–1903 edns).

¹⁵ *Oxon. Weekly News*, 12 Dec. 1894; *Oxf. Times*, 4 Feb. 1905; *Banbury Guardian*, 18 May 1905.

¹⁶ www.rollrightreview.co.uk/parish-council (accessed Dec. 2019).

¹⁷ *Oxf. Dioc. Year Book* (2009), 68; benefice profile [2018] (accessed online); above, relig. hist. (paroch. organizn).

¹⁸ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 404; *Oxon. Atlas*, pp. 145, 151; *Census*, 1981; WODC website (Dec. 2019).