



**VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress**

**OVER NORTON**

**Social History**

**Social Character and Communal Life**

***The Middle Ages***

Over Norton was in many respects a typical agricultural community, although its proximity to Chipping Norton lent it additionally an almost suburban character, while the presence of Cold Norton priory and its associated hospital added a further dimension. Inhabitants attended church and manor courts in the town and frequented its market, establishing social contacts and engaging in the town's communal life:<sup>1</sup> in 1346 Hugh Nichol of Over Norton witnessed townsmen's charters, and in the 1450s two Over Norton husbandmen acted as feoffees to a Chipping Norton widow.<sup>2</sup> The outlying priory, though always small and impoverished, attracted some high-status gifts and was an employer of labour, while its wayside hospital and chapel seem to have been widely known, and presumably attracted many of the 'burdensome ... concourse of people' of which the canons complained in the 1390s.<sup>3</sup> The justiciar Stephen of Seagrave may have lodged at the priory in 1233.<sup>4</sup> More transient visitors to the neighbourhood included two murdered by unknown assailants in the 1260s, whilst a chapman from Shipton-under-Wychwood was attacked by his travelling companion on Over Norton heath in 1285. A Kingham man was beaten up at night by a group of local inhabitants in the 1320s.<sup>5</sup>

The settled population comprised mostly free or customary tenants of Chipping Norton manor, who lived in the village and worked the surrounding open fields. A few additional labourers perhaps lived out at the priory site.<sup>6</sup> Few inhabitants were well-off judging by tax assessments in 1306, when ten inhabitants paid between 4¼*d.* and 16½*d.*; Richard Thresher paid 2*s.* 5¾*d.*, however, and Hugh Clive the substantial sum of 12*s.* ½*d.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Above, landownership; below, relig. hist.; local govt.

<sup>2</sup> BNC, Chipping Norton 13–14; TNA, C 1/26/471.

<sup>3</sup> Above, econ. hist. (Middle Ages); below, relig. hist. (relig. life).

<sup>4</sup> *Close* 1231–4, 189; alternatively he may have lodged at the hospital.

<sup>5</sup> TNA, JUST 1/701, m. 24d.; JUST 1/703, m. 3d.; JUST 1/710, m. 36d.; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* II, p. 530.

<sup>6</sup> Above, landscape etc. (settlement); landownership; econ. hist.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, E 179/161/10.

Successive 14th-century plagues reduced the labour supply at least on the priory's estate,<sup>8</sup> and in 1402 a Cold Norton man was caught stealing £5-worth of goods at Woodstock,<sup>9</sup> perhaps partly reflecting local disruption. The priory's problems culminated in 1496 when there were no canons left to elect a new prior, prompting its seizure by the Crown and its eventual suppression,<sup>10</sup> and in 1507 neglect (and possibly enclosure) by a lessee of its former estate led to 20 people reportedly losing their 'habitations and occupations'.<sup>11</sup> The village itself may have escaped the worst of such problems, however, and though its population remained small, in the 1520s it was still substantially larger than Cold Norton's.<sup>12</sup>

### 1500–1800

Brasenose College acquired the former priory estate in 1513,<sup>13</sup> and though its role thereafter was largely that of absentee landlord, in the 1510s–50s it repaired buildings and maintained some religious provision at the former priory church and hospital chapel. Its early leases also reserved some domestic buildings at the priory for the college principal and fellows, some of whom stayed there in the 1520s during plague outbreaks in Oxford.<sup>14</sup> In the 1540s Priory farm's lessee John Pate was taxed on goods worth the exceptional sum of £50, besides becoming enmeshed in tithe disputes.<sup>15</sup>

Within the village local leadership devolved upon the better-off freeholders, among whom the Busbys gradually emerged pre-eminent, playing a key part in the creation of a separate Over Norton manor in the 1680s, and holding manor courts by the 1720s.<sup>16</sup> The family was first mentioned in the 1540s,<sup>17</sup> when Richard Busby featured amongst a group of people taxed in 1547 on goods worth £5–£12, the others including members of the long-standing Fletcher, Hutchins, and Ingram families.<sup>18</sup> By the 1570s the Huckvales, owners of Frenches (later Choicehill farm), called themselves gentlemen,<sup>19</sup> but remained closely tied to the township's more numerous husbandmen through bonds of friendship and marriage,<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Cal. Papal Regs* 1396–1404, 198–9.

<sup>9</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1401–5, 123, 163.

<sup>10</sup> Above, landownership; below, relig. hist.

<sup>11</sup> I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–18* (1897), I, 384.

<sup>12</sup> Above, landscape etc. (popn).

<sup>13</sup> Above, landownership.

<sup>14</sup> F. Madan (ed.), *Brasenose College Quatercentenary Monographs*, II.1 (OHS 53, 1909), no. IX, 74–7; *VCH Oxon.* III, 208–9; below, relig. hist.

<sup>15</sup> TNA, E 179/162/259; *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposits 1542–50*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> Above, landownership; below, local govt.

<sup>17</sup> *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposits 1542–50*, pp. 5, 9; P.C. Beauchamp (ed.), *Oxon. Muster Rolls 1539–69* (ORS 60, 1996), 40; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 76/3/6; *ibid.* par. reg. transcripts.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, E 179/162/259; OHC, par. reg. transcripts.

<sup>19</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 185.468; *ibid.* P20/1D/6–7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* MSS Wills Oxon., Over Norton wills; *ibid.* par. reg. transcripts.

while Christopher Huckvale (d. 1577) made bequests to the village's 'poor cottagers'.<sup>21</sup> Servants and labourers are visible partly through wills, at least by the 17th century.<sup>22</sup>

Collective action was evident in a long-running dispute over the rabbit warren on Over Norton heath, which was built by the lord of Chipping Norton manor in the 1530s and became the target of destructive action by freeholders concerned to protect their rights of common grazing and gathering. Matters reached a head in 1613 when freeholders' wives tore down a newly laid fence extending the warren onto cultivated ground.<sup>23</sup> In the 1640s–50s inhabitants cooperated more peaceably to lease or sell rights and property held in common,<sup>24</sup> and again in the 1680s when Over Norton manor was separated from Chipping Norton through sales to a group of local yeomen.<sup>25</sup> Such cooperation was counterbalanced by competitive buying, selling, and exchange of land, the Busbys proving particularly acquisitive judging from surviving 17th-century deeds, and from their swift progression from husbandman to yeoman to gentleman in three generations.<sup>26</sup> The division of Over Norton manor into equal shares prompted further deals amongst its purchasers until its acquisition and consolidation (in 1726–7) by the newcomer James Dawkins. Thereafter the senior Busbys moved to Chipping Norton, leaving only lower-status family members in the township.<sup>27</sup>

The Civil War affected Over Norton as it did the town. The Parliamentary commander George Purefoy threatened to plunder it and 'hang your constable',<sup>28</sup> and a plague outbreak in 1645 was probably connected with movement of troops,<sup>29</sup> while in the conflict's aftermath Over Norton's constables were ordered to collect taxes for the support of injured soldiers, and to pay for continuing hostilities in Ireland.<sup>30</sup> Few households were wealthy, however, early 17th-century probate valuations ranging from under £4 to only £92, with an average of £28 and a median of £22.<sup>31</sup> Most houses were also modest, with 30 (58 per cent) of those assessed in 1662 having only one hearth, 13 (25 per cent) having two, and just 6 houses (11 per cent) having four or more.<sup>32</sup> Disparities of wealth increased over the following half-century, when probate valuations ranged from £7 to £393, with an average

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. MS Wills Oxon. 185.468.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. *ibid.* 30/3/36; 32/4/24; 1/6/11; 149/1/7.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, STAC 8/85/22; STAC 8/182/15; STAC 8/279/9–11.

<sup>24</sup> Bodl. MSS dd Dawkins C3/IA6/1; C5/IA11/1; below (welfare).

<sup>25</sup> Above, landownership.

<sup>26</sup> Bodl. MSS dd Dawkins C1–C8, *passim*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* C8/IB2/3–4; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 117/2/32; above, landownership.

<sup>28</sup> P.E. Tennant, 'Parish and People: South Warwickshire and the Banbury Area in the Civil War', *Cake & Cockhorse* 11.6 (1990), 148, citing TNA, SP 28/43, pt IV, f. 577. For the general context, above, Chipping Norton, social hist.

<sup>29</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 149/1/7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* PAR64/6/L1/5–9.

<sup>31</sup> Based on 37 Over Norton inventories from 1600–49 in *ibid.* MSS Wills Oxon.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, E 179/255/3, m. 41; the remaining 3 houses (6%) were assessed on 3 hearths.

of £84 and a median of £62. Among the better-off, valuable stores of grain and livestock were matched by high-quality furniture and tableware, although real luxuries (such as silver) remained rare.<sup>33</sup> Newcomers included the Bucketts, Meekses, and Paxfords, attracted possibly by an active land market, although turnover among freeholders nonetheless appears low, suggesting relative social stability.<sup>34</sup>



*Chapel House in 2020, formerly part of the Shakespeare's Head coaching inn.*

Notable 18th-century changes included the Dawkinses' arrival at Over Norton House, the incoming lord James Dawkins (d. 1766), son of a Jamaican plantation owner, moving there from Wiltshire.<sup>35</sup> His nephew Henry (d. 1814) leased the house to outside gentry including Lord Edward Bentinck and Thomas Foley,<sup>36</sup> and local fox hunting attracted other wealthy incomers.<sup>37</sup> The village also became known for horse racing on Over Norton heath,<sup>38</sup> giving rise, presumably, to the name the Horse and Groom (or Horse and Jockey) for one of the village pubs.<sup>39</sup> On an entirely different level was Thomas Kerby's outlying coaching inn (the Shakespeare's Head) at Chapel House, which was nationally renowned

<sup>33</sup> Based on 39 Over Norton inventories from 1661–1711 in OHC; cf. above, econ. hist.

<sup>34</sup> OHC, par. reg. transcripts.

<sup>35</sup> Above, landownership.

<sup>36</sup> Oxf. Jnl Syn. 1 Aug. 1767, 4 May 1776, 30 Oct. 1779, 20 Sept. 1783; OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 558, f. 148; d 561, f. 141.

<sup>37</sup> Oxf. Jnl Syn. 11 Jan. 1772, 10 May 1787. Prioory Fm had gentry tenants (the Gardiners) in the early 18th cent., who presumably sublet the land: OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 28/2/13; 129/4/40.

<sup>38</sup> Oxf. Jnl Syn. 16 Sept. 1755, 26 Sept. 1758; VCH Oxon. II, 367.

<sup>39</sup> OHC, QSD/V/1–4; Oxf. Jnl, 28 Nov. 1801; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 233, 278.

and attracted praise from Samuel Johnson and others,<sup>40</sup> although in 1759 there was a malicious claim that it was frequented by a local gang, and in 1781 a traveller was robbed by highwaymen nearby.<sup>41</sup> The prosperity of the township's better-off farmers was reflected in fashionable rebuilding, although beneath this veneer considerable poverty continued, exacerbated by the loss of common rights at enclosure in 1770.<sup>42</sup> A poorly paid itinerant worker employed at the Chapel House inn ended up on parish relief along with his family,<sup>43</sup> while poverty drove some others (including the village rat catcher) to crime.<sup>44</sup> Unspecified tensions led to two Over Norton servants and several Chipping Norton tradesmen riotously attacking named individuals and breaking doors and windows in the village in 1752.<sup>45</sup>

### **Since 1800**

The Dawkinses were intermittently resident for much of the 19th century, when their social and material influence reached a peak. The creation of Over Norton park involved realignment of the village street, and in the 1870s the mansion house itself was rebuilt, while an elaborate monument to Henry Dawkins (d. 1864) and his wife Emma was installed over the village water pump.<sup>46</sup> The family also supported the village school and established a charity for the poor,<sup>47</sup> while under William Dawkins (d. 1914) the park was opened to local people as a venue for athletics, cricket, football, and horse racing, along with firework displays, battalion training, and meetings of the Heythrop Hounds.<sup>48</sup> Despite his philanthropy, William, who served as Lieutenant-Colonel in the army, has been described by a descendant as 'irascible and litigious', a 'raving paranoid', and a 'choleric Crimean War veteran', who fell into debt and died in penury.<sup>49</sup> Certainly he quarrelled with the vicar of Chipping Norton over religious provision and the school, and with others over local politics, being forced to pay £200 in libel damages to his tenant John Busby after placing defamatory placards around the village.<sup>50</sup> In 1897 he sold around three fifths of the Over Norton estate and left the parish soon afterwards, letting the mansion house to Captain (later Major) Denis

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<sup>40</sup> *Oxon. Atlas*, p. 102; *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 31 May 1790; H.A. Evans, *Highways and Byways in Oxford and the Cotswolds* (1927 edn), 382; above, landscape etc. (communicis; built character).

<sup>41</sup> *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 18 Mar. 1759, 27 Jan. 1781.

<sup>42</sup> Above, landscape etc. (built character); econ. hist.

<sup>43</sup> OHC, PAR64/5/A4/16; PAR64/5/A4/18; cf. below (welfare).

<sup>44</sup> *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 5 Oct. 1766, 10 Mar. 1770, 9 Apr. 1780. Conversely the Over Norton labourer John Austin was a trustee of the prosperous farmer Wm Wright in 1786: OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 75/1/24.

<sup>45</sup> OHC, Cal. QS, I, 322–4.

<sup>46</sup> Above, landscape etc. (settlement; built character); landownership.

<sup>47</sup> Below (educ.; welfare).

<sup>48</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 23 Apr. 1873, 28 July 1875, 5 June 1889; *Banbury Guardian*, 9 May 1878; *Bicester Herald*, 4 July 1879; *Oxf. Jnl*, 4 Dec. 1880, 10 Nov. 1894.

<sup>49</sup> R. Dawkins, *An Appetite for Wonder* (2013), 78.

<sup>50</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 23 Mar. 1898; *The Times*, 22 Nov. 1899; below, relig. hist. (relig. life). Cf. below, Salford, social hist.

St George Daly (d. 1942) and his wife Rose, the daughter of Albert Brassey of neighbouring Heythrop.<sup>51</sup>

Over Norton's status as an estate village continued even after the 1897 sale, which left Dawkins still owning around 50 cottages.<sup>52</sup> The lord's control of housing and land earlier in the century may have limited the village's population growth, with numbers increasing by only 16 per cent between 1801 and 1871, while in the 20 years to 1891 they fell by a quarter, probably reflecting the onset of agricultural depression.<sup>53</sup> Even so just over half of those resident in 1851 had been born elsewhere, falling to just under half by 1891.<sup>54</sup> The newcomers included farmers, trades- and craftspeople, servants, and labourers, while the Chapel House inn still attracted notable clientele, the future George IV (as Prince of Wales) reportedly staying there on several occasions en route to Ragley Hall (Warws.). By 1847 the inn had been subdivided, however,<sup>55</sup> and by the 1870s most of the buildings had been converted into workers' cottages,<sup>56</sup> the inn's closure leaving the Horse and Groom as the village's only pub until it, too, closed in the 1890s, replaced by a communal brewhouse.<sup>57</sup> A Band of Hope, promoting Temperance, met in the schoolroom in the 1880s.<sup>58</sup> Earlier, the Horse and Groom hosted meetings of the Over Norton Association for the Prosecution of Felons, established in 1814,<sup>59</sup> while the Dawkinses and other landowners employed gamekeepers to help control poaching.<sup>60</sup>

The paternalism evident in the 19th century was continued in the early 20th by the Dalys, who supported the village school, mission room, and annual flower show, and on special occasions opened Over Norton park to visitors.<sup>61</sup> Their influence survived the First World War, which was commemorated in 1921 by a stone tablet commissioned by residents and unveiled by Major Daly, recording the names of 13 inhabitants killed in action.<sup>62</sup> Despite a further fall in population (down by 15 per cent between 1901 and 1931), village-based social activities continued, including establishment of a Church of England men's club in 1906 and a branch of the Women's Institute in 1933,<sup>63</sup> while inhabitants also participated in

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<sup>51</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 18 Nov. 1899; above, landownership.

<sup>52</sup> OHC, DV/X/80.

<sup>53</sup> *Census*, 1801–91; above, landscape etc. (popn); econ. hist.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732; *ibid.* RG 12/1179.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* HO 107/1732; *Oxf. Jnl*, 6 Feb. 1847.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, RG 10/1457; RG 11/1520; RG 12/1179; RG 13/1400.

<sup>57</sup> *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847 and 1869–77 edns); *Oxf. Jnl*, 21 May 1881; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 17 Aug. 1892.

<sup>58</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 7 Feb. 1883, 20 Oct. 1886, 21 Nov. 1888.

<sup>59</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 29 Apr. 1815, 24 Nov. 1832; *Banbury Guardian*, 13 Nov. 1851.

<sup>60</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 6 Sept. 1800, 23 Aug. 1856, 31 Jan. 1874, 8 May 1875, 6 Nov. 1886.

<sup>61</sup> *Cheltenham Chron.* 28 Dec. 1901; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 15 Sept. 1909, 7 Sept. 1910, 8 July 1914; *Banbury Advertiser*, 29 Mar. 1923, 29 Sept. 1927; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 152–7.

<sup>62</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 14 Sept. 1921; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 209–12.

<sup>63</sup> *Census*, 1901–31; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 23 Oct. 1907, 23 Sept. 1908; *Banbury Advertiser*, 26 Apr. 1934; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 213.

events at Chipping Norton.<sup>64</sup> A purpose-built wooden village hall opened in 1934, providing a new meeting place following the school's closure the previous year.<sup>65</sup> Incoming professionals and residents of private means included, in the 1900s, the actor Hippolyte Langlois and his wife Dora, a writer,<sup>66</sup> while other newcomers were among those who purchased the Dawkinses' remaining farmland and cottages in 1918. Chapel House farm was bought by the Baylisses, who established a short-lived Temperance hotel catering for tennis- and tea-parties, and providing accommodation for those attracted by local fox hunting.<sup>67</sup>



Over Norton war memorial.

During the Second World War the village billeted a considerable number of London evacuees, and soldiers and prisoners of war were housed in hatted accommodation in Over Norton park.<sup>68</sup> Rose Daly of Over Norton House died in 1949, and the next year the Dawkinses returned to live on the estate, the mansion house itself being converted into flats.<sup>69</sup> Village expansion roughly doubled the number of dwellings by the 1980s, while the

<sup>64</sup> e.g. *Cheltenham Chron.* 26 July 1913 (carnival).

<sup>65</sup> OHC, O41/1/C6/62; *ibid.* POX0195267; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 174; below (educ.).

<sup>66</sup> Arthur, *Over Norton*, 253–6; *Oxf. Jnl.*, 3 Nov. 1900; TNA, RG 13/1400; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1899–1911 edns).

<sup>67</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1920–4 edns); Arthur, *Over Norton*, 58; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 14 June 1922; OHC, POX0195376; above, landownership.

<sup>68</sup> Arthur, *Over Norton*, 214–16, 224; above, landscape etc. (settlement). One parishioner was killed in action.

<sup>69</sup> *The Times*, 23 May 1949; Dawkins, *Appetite for Wonder*, 79–80.

population increased by more than half.<sup>70</sup> The village hall continued to host community events including coronation celebrations in 1953, and in the absence of a pub was licensed to serve alcohol at meetings of a revived men's club.<sup>71</sup> In 1954 village solidarity was reinforced by a rating dispute with Chipping Norton, but by 1977 there was reckoned to be 'little community spirit' despite celebrations of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, and the village hall, which had almost closed in 1956, was in an 'advanced state of decay'. Money raised at the Jubilee paid for repairs, and in 1980 the village combined to build a new hall on a different site,<sup>72</sup> used by (among others) the Women's Institute, a village youth club, and the Over Norton History Group. It remained open in 2021, when other community initiatives included a new village newsletter and voluntary assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>73</sup>



*The village hall, built 1980 (left) and the 19th-century school and teacher's house (right).*

## Education

Charitable bequests by the prosperous farmer William Wright (d. 1786) included £100 to pay an Over Norton schoolmaster should a school be established there.<sup>74</sup> None is known until 1835, however, when a day school was attended by 20 children paid for by their parents.<sup>75</sup> Two schoolmistresses were resident in 1851, of whom Ann Martin ran an 'infant school' supported by the Dawkinses, while Sarah Joynes may have opened a dame school,<sup>76</sup> and in

<sup>70</sup> *Census*, 1931–81; above, landscape etc. (settlement).

<sup>71</sup> Arthur, *Over Norton*, 277–9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 280–1; *Banbury Advertiser*, 18 Aug. 1954, 18 Apr. 1956; *Oxf. Times*, 1 Aug. 1980.

<sup>73</sup> Arthur, *Over Norton*, 282, 284; [www.overnortonparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.overnortonparishcouncil.co.uk); Char. Com. website, no. 285444 (both accessed Nov. 2020); information from Jan Cliffe (Mar. 2021).

<sup>74</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 75/1/24 (leaving the money in default to a bread charity: below, welfare). Wright had widespread connections in Witney, Hailey, Gt Rollright, Swerford, and elsewhere.

<sup>75</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract*, p. 751.

<sup>76</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732, nos. 10, 42; *Lascelles' Dir. Oxon.* (1853); Arthur, *Over Norton*, 178–9.

the 1860s a short-lived private boarding school operated at Chapel House.<sup>77</sup> The Dawkins school continued as a private, non-denominational voluntary school until the 1890s, held in a converted cottage which from the 1860s also accommodated Anglican church services.<sup>78</sup> In 1871 it had 24 pupils and accommodation for 39,<sup>79</sup> expanded by the late 1870s to space for over 70 and attendances of 34–50. There was then a certificated teacher and adjacent teacher's house, and the school received government grants,<sup>80</sup> although staff turnover was high.<sup>81</sup>

By the 1890s doctrinal tensions between William Dawkins and Chipping Norton's Anglican clergy had ended the school's use for church services,<sup>82</sup> and similar differences provoked at least one temporary school closure after Dawkins withdrew his support, complaining in 1898 of outside attempts 'to prevent parents from electing [school] managers ... and trying to force Nonconformists and all under a church school'.<sup>83</sup> A school board established shortly afterwards borrowed £1,012 to build a new school and teacher's house on the village's edge, on a site provided by Peter Yapp of Leafield;<sup>84</sup> that opened in 1901 after a short hiatus, with space for 30 infants and 30 older children in two classrooms divided by a partition. Teaching was generally satisfactory despite overcrowding and lack of maintenance, and in 1927 it was reorganized as a junior school, with children over 11 transferred to Chipping Norton. It was closed in 1933 when it had only 20 pupils, the buildings being converted into private houses.<sup>85</sup>

## Welfare

During the Middle Ages medical care was presumably available at the hospital associated with Cold Norton priory, if not necessarily to all villagers.<sup>86</sup> Small one-off bequests to the poor were common in 16th- and 17th-century wills,<sup>87</sup> and the township also benefited from

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<sup>77</sup> TNA, RG 9/911, no. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Below, relig. hist.

<sup>79</sup> *Returns relating to Elem. Educ.* (Parl. Papers 1871 (201), iv), pp. 326–7.

<sup>80</sup> TNA, ED 2/365/12; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1877); *Retn Public Elem. Schs* (Parl. Papers 1877 [C 1882], lxvii), pp. 342–3; *Rep. of Educ. Cttee of Council* (Parl. Papers 1880 [C 2562-I], xxii), p. 676. For its possible enlargement or rebldg c.1870–4, *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1887); TNA, ED 2/365/12; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 180.

<sup>81</sup> TNA, RG 11/1520; RG 12/1179; RG 13/1400; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–99 edns).

<sup>82</sup> Below, relig. hist.

<sup>83</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 23 Mar., 4 May 1898; TNA, ED 2/365/12; ED 21/14518; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 182–4.

<sup>84</sup> OHC, CC4/164; for Yapp, *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 136, 149.

<sup>85</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 11 Sept. 1901; OHC, CC4/164; *ibid.* S64/4/A1/1; TNA, ED 21/38050. For the bldgs, J. Cliffe, *An Architectural Record of the Buildings in the Parish of Over Norton, Oxfordshire* (1999), 32.

<sup>86</sup> Below, relig. hist. For individuals named *medicus* (doctor), BNC, Chipping Norton 6; Jeffery, *Rollright*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 185.468 (4d. to every cottager); 55/2/45 (10s. to poorest sort).

some parish-wide benefactions,<sup>88</sup> although several others established specifically for Over Norton were later lost. Of those, William Busby (d. 1604) left 3s. 4d. a year for distribution on Good Friday, while Nicholas Braine (d. 1616) and John Hopkins (d. 1625) respectively left 6s. 8d. and 6s. a year during their wives' lives.<sup>89</sup> A later William Busby left the interest from £5 invested in stock in 1681,<sup>90</sup> and in 1649 John Dixon of Little Rollright gave 2s. a year to the poor in return for a surrender of common rights over certain Over Norton lands, a further 1d. being added in 1653 following a similar agreement with William Busby.<sup>91</sup> Later one-off gifts included the considerable sum of £10 from Sarah Timms (d. 1768), and Thomas Hopkins (d. 1775) divided his clothes among eight poor men,<sup>92</sup> while in 1786 a charity of unknown origin produced 10s. a year for paupers not on parish relief, but was later lost.<sup>93</sup> More long-lasting was the enclosure commissioners' award in 1770 of a 50-a. allotment to the poor in lieu of common rights, thereby establishing a long-lasting fuel charity, while the farmer William Wright's bequest of £100 in 1786 established an equally long-standing bread charity.<sup>94</sup>

The bulk of the township's poor relief costs were met from the poor rates, which the township administered independently by the 17th century.<sup>95</sup> Overseers' accounts survive from the 1730s,<sup>96</sup> and by 1776 the township spent more than £66 on the poor. Of that £8 was for accommodation: a cottage let to the overseers was mentioned in 1762,<sup>97</sup> and a village workhouse let for £80 a year existed by 1780, the lessee agreeing to provide inmates with four hot meals a week.<sup>98</sup> By 1783–5 poor relief costs averaged £164 a year, and following a common pattern more than trebled to £546 in 1803, levied at the high rate of 7s. in the pound. Forty-five adults and 70 children received outdoor relief throughout the year, and a further 12 inhabitants occasional relief, in all around a third of the population.<sup>99</sup> By 1814 costs had risen to £683 (supporting 45 permanent and three occasional paupers), and peaked in 1818 at more than £739 (c.39s. per head of population). Thereafter they fell irregularly to £508 in 1821 and £360 12s. (c.19s. per head) in 1827, rising to £444 in

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<sup>88</sup> e.g. OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 153/4/3 (12d. to each parish almsman); above, Chipping Norton, social hist. (welfare).

<sup>89</sup> TNA, PROB 11/104/493; PROB 11/127/715; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 31/1/3.

<sup>90</sup> TNA, PROB 11/368/298.

<sup>91</sup> Bodl. MSS dd Dawkins C3/IA6/1; C5/IA11/1.

<sup>92</sup> OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 155/2/18; 36/2/30.

<sup>93</sup> *Char. Don.* 982–3; *12th Rep. Com. Char.* (Parl. Papers 1825 (348), x), 272.

<sup>94</sup> OHC, encl. award; *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 75/1/24 (leaving the money for bread or a school, which was not founded: above, educ.).

<sup>95</sup> Below, local govt.

<sup>96</sup> OHC, PAR64/5/F1/1.

<sup>97</sup> *Poor Abstract*, 1777, 141; Bodl. MSS dd Dawkins C42/IF7/1–2.

<sup>98</sup> OHC, PAR64/5/L1/1; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 108–9.

<sup>99</sup> *Poor Abstract*, 1787, 190; 1804, 402–3; *Census*, 1801.

1834.<sup>100</sup> Formal responsibility passed that year to the new Chipping Norton Poor Law Union, whose establishment one local farmer claimed had improved his labourers' obedience.<sup>101</sup> The township workhouse probably continued in 1818,<sup>102</sup> but no later references have been found, and no friendly or benefit societies are known.<sup>103</sup>

By the 1820s Wright's charity annually provided bread worth £3 18s., distributed to c.70 poor families at Christmas in shilling or sixpenny loaves.<sup>104</sup> By the 1870s the value had fallen to £3 12s., unaltered in 1939 when it was one of three remaining parish charities.<sup>105</sup> The second was the poor's allotment, which in 1871 produced £50 a year spent on fuel, and by the 1880s also provided clothes, linen, bedding, tools, food, and medical aid.<sup>106</sup> The other was established in 1873 by Juliana and Augusta Dawkins, and produced £24 15s. a year distributed in money.<sup>107</sup> All three charities were amalgamated in 1992 to create the Over Norton Welfare Trust, which in 2019 spent £2,970 on relieving inhabitants in financial distress.<sup>108</sup> The only other surviving charity was that established in 1981 to support the new village hall, a charity for the original hall (opened in 1934) having ceased in 1966, and one to assist the Women's Institute in 2001.<sup>109</sup> The nearest medical provision was in Chipping Norton.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Poor Abstract*, 1818, 354–5; *Poor Rate Retns*, 1822, p. 136; 1825, p. 171; 1830–1, p. 159; 1835, p. 155; cf. *Census*, 1821–31.

<sup>101</sup> P. Horn, 'Aspects of Oxfordshire's Poor Relief: the 1830s', *Cake & Cockhorse* 8.3 (1980), 64; below, local govt.

<sup>102</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 28 Nov. 1801; Dawkins' 1818 survey (in private possession), p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> Some inhabitants possibly joined Chipping Norton friendly societies: above, Chipping Norton, social hist. (welfare).

<sup>104</sup> *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 271–2; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 114.

<sup>105</sup> *Char. Digest*, pp. 18–19; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939).

<sup>106</sup> *Char. Digest*, pp. 18–19; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1887). By 1910 the charity owned a further 16½ a.: OHC, DV/X/80, no. 26.

<sup>107</sup> *Char. Digest*, 1890 (Parl. Papers 1890 (247), lv), pp. 6–7; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1907).

<sup>108</sup> Char. Com. website (Oct. 2020), no. 237881.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* nos. 285444, 304337, 1020374.

<sup>110</sup> Above, Chipping Norton, social hist. (welfare).