



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

OVER NORTON

Local Government

Manor Courts and Officers

In the Middle Ages most of the township's inhabitants presumably attended Chipping Norton manor court, and joined Chipping Norton in its suit to Chadlington hundred court.¹ No separate manor court was held for Cold Norton manor: almost certainly the priory held its estate in the township in demesne, and though it employed agricultural and other workers, it did not lease land to manorial tenants. Its successor Brasenose College probably continued the practice, and in 1547 received nothing in court profits.²

A court baron and a view of frankpledge for the newly created Over Norton and Bartletts manor were established before 1723, when they were held in William Busby's name and reissued field orders agreed in 1719. By 1799, when the manor belonged to Henry Dawkins, the court was attended by a steward, bailiff, constable, and tithingman. After enclosure in 1770 the court's business was limited to collecting quitrents, and it may have ceased soon afterwards.³

Parish Government and Officers

Despite its inclusion in Chipping Norton parish, by the 17th century Over Norton had its own churchwarden (responsible for contributions towards Chipping Norton church), and two overseers of the poor who administered the township's poor relief.⁴ Constables mentioned in the 1630–40s were probably also 'parish' (i.e. township) officials.⁵ As only the churchwarden was elected in the Chipping Norton vestry, the township's other officers were presumably appointed by a separate Over Norton assembly, perhaps the so-called 'vestry' which met in

¹ Above, Chipping Norton, local govt.

² F. Madan (ed.), *Brasenose College Quatercentenary Monographs*, II.1 (OHS 53, 1909), no. IX, 193; cf. below, Great Rollright, local govt (manor cts).

³ Bodl. MSS dd Dawkins C7/IA16/3; C8/IB3/8; above, landownership; econ. hist.

⁴ TNA, PROB 11/104/493; OHC, PAR64/6/L1/5; PAR64/5; above, landscape etc. (boundaries); social hist. (welfare); relig. hist. (since 1560).

⁵ OHC, PAR64/6/F1/1; PAR64/6/L1/1–9.

a private house in 1737.⁶ The township became a separate civil parish in 1866,⁷ and by the 1880s the overseers, a guardian of the poor, and a waywarden were nominated at an annual vestry meeting held in the village schoolroom,⁸ although the churchwarden continued to be elected by the Chipping Norton vestry.⁹ William Hayes of Chipping Norton was employed as assistant overseer in the 1880s–90s.¹⁰

Under the 1894 Local Government Act Over Norton's vestry was replaced by a five-member parish council, whose election in 1899 generated 'little excitement', William Dawkins (as lord of Over Norton manor) topping the poll of the 'small number of electors' who turned up to vote.¹¹ Thereafter the council appointed the overseers and (among other issues) oversaw water supply, refuse disposal, street lighting, charities, and footpaths.¹² In 2021 it met every two months, its responsibilities including the village fountain (restored in 2019), bus shelter, playground, and defibrillator.¹³ The village 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 created a conservation area in 1992.¹⁴

⁶ Ibid. PAR64/5/F1/1, 21 Nov. 1737; for Chipping Norton vestry, *ibid.* PAR64/2/A1/1; above, Chipping Norton, local govt.

⁷ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 402.

⁸ *Oxf. Jnl*, 3 Apr. 1886, 1 Apr. 1893. The office of waywarden dated from 1864: *London Gaz.* 8 Jan. 1864, p. 102.

⁹ *Oxon. Weekly News*, 12 Apr. 1899, 28 Apr. 1900, 30 Apr. 1924; above, Chipping Norton, local govt.

¹⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–7 edns); Arthur, *Over Norton*, 27.

¹¹ *Oxf. Jnl*, 1 Apr. 1899; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 27, 138–9. By then Dawkins was no longer permanently resident.

¹² *Oxon. Weekly News*, 27 Apr. 1898; Arthur, *Over Norton*, 27, 35–6, 41–3, 114, 117–19, 228.

¹³ www.overnortonparishcouncil.co.uk (accessed Jan. 2021). For the fountain, *Oxf. Mail*, 14 June 2018; information from Jan Cliffe (Mar. 2021).

¹⁴ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 402; *Oxon. Atlas*, pp. 145, 151; *Census*, 1981; WODC website (Jan. 2021).