

VCH SHROPSHIRE

Wem Rural

Horton

by Judith Everard and Wendy Horton

This is a draft text prepared by Dr Judith Everard for VCH Shropshire

Following on the completion of the Wem short (2019), we took the decision to work on the townships of Wem Rural especially those which fell within the manor of Wem. Now, in July 2021, we are publishing as drafts the text prepared by Dr Everard and Ms Horton.

This text will be further amended in a number of respects. It will be expanded to include more material on landholding. Subsequent versions will include maps and other illustrations. At a later stage there will also be a section on agriculture.

We welcome suggestions, corrections and additional references.

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July 2021

HORTON

Horton was a small and compact township north west of Wem town. Having been a two-hide manor in Domesday Book, the history of Horton is one of diminishing importance and population as a satellite of Wem. It has always had a rural character with agriculture and related services as the only economic activity.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT, AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and Township Origins

Horton is named in Domesday Book as *Hortune*. The first element derives from Old English *horu*, ‘dirt’.¹ In the mid 18th century the township’s territory was estimated ‘near a measured mile in length, from Goborn’s moat to Penceford brook; its breadth is much the same’ from Wem Pool to Newtown.² On the map, however, the broadest part was in the north, tapering towards the south, where Horton Moor edged Wem Pool. The south east boundary followed a stream down the western slope of Ditches Hill to the Roden. The river formed the south west boundary, also the parish boundary with Loppington. Turning north east from the Roden, a straight boundary divided the open fields of Horton and Wolverley. The northern boundary divided the open fields of Horton from Newtown; it was artificially straight with a salient from Newtown in the north west taking in Round Hill. In the north east the boundary ran east of the lane from Northwood Hall to the Ditches.³ At some time between c.1750 and 1805, the portion of Horton east of the lane was allocated to Lowe and Ditches, excepting the small

¹ Gelling, *PN Salop*. I, 160; Gelling, *PN Salop*. V, 246.

² Garbet, 301–2.

³ See Arundel map: ‘Gobbrands fields’ (Thomas Barnes) and Higgin’s Britch (William Marigold) (= Golborns fields and Hoggins Heys in 1561: *Survey 1561*, 80–3). Below, Settlement, and see ‘Lowe and Ditches’, 1.

roadside close occupied by the blacksmith's shop (since demolished).⁴ In 1841 Horton comprised 496 a.

In Wem parish government, 'Horton quarter' comprised the townships of Lowe and Ditches, Horton, Wolverley, Newtown and Northwood. This may reflect the antiquity of the arrangement, and of Horton – the same quadrant of the parish if created later would logically have been focused, more centrally, on Newtown.

Landscape

The higher ground is notably in the north of the township, particularly to the east (the flank of Ditches Hill), but nowhere does the elevation exceed 95 m. South of the Wem–Ellesmere road the ground slopes gently down to the river Roden and the former Wem Pool (75–80 m ASL).

The superficial geology of the adjacent settlements to the south east (Wem, Ditches Hill) and north west (Wolverley) is a well-drained, gravelly ridge of glacial moraine, but for most of Horton it is the clay-ey glacial till that elsewhere extends north of the moraine.⁵ Horton's comparatively low-lying and mostly clay-ey ground may explain its Old English name of 'dirt settlement'.

Several small streams flow from the higher ground of the township south to the Roden. One, perhaps known as Horton Brook,⁶ formed the rear boundary of closes on the west side of Green Lane and is the only watercourse (apart from the Roden) depicted on the 1631 map. Where the brook met the main road, it was diverted to flow west along the north side of the road to meet another north–south stream. The combined watercourse then flowed across the road and between the houses at the western end of the hamlet, continuing south to the Roden near Moor Lane. Further east, another stream formed the township boundary with Lowe and Ditches.

⁴ Golbornes fields were still in Horton in Garbet's lifetime (d.1756), but had been attached to Pym's Farm in Lowe and Ditches by 1805: 1805 Survey, 104–5, and see tithe apportionment maps for Horton and Lowe and Ditches.

⁵ See 'Introduction', and see British Geological Survey, Sheet 138, now BGS Viewer: <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geology-of-britain-viewer/>

⁶ The house at the junction of the stream and the main road is named 'Horton Brook Cottage' (pers. obs. 2021).

Communications

The principal route is the Wem–Ellesmere road which traverses the northern half of the township. Entering Horton after crossing Ditches Hill, it takes a north-westerly direction. This is the western continuation of the ancient route that forms the high street of Wem. It was turnpiked in 1771 as the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike and is today the B5063 road.⁷ Traversing Horton, the road crosses several streams. No bridges are recorded, so presumably these were forded before being culverted.⁸ Such a ford might explain the widening of the road in the hamlet depicted on the 1631 map.

At the foot of Ditches Hill, a lane ('Green Lane' c.1750⁹) leads north east from the main road for about 500 m. to a crossroads at the township boundary. Green Lane was the western end of an east–west route that was the king's highway (*regia via*) in 1561,¹⁰ despite the fact that it only connects Horton with Creamore. On a larger scale, however, it serves to link the Wem–Ellesmere road with the Wem–Whitchurch road, avoiding Wem town.¹¹ The crossroads ('Golborns cross'¹²) is formed by Drake Lane¹³ leading north from Ditches Hill to Northwood Hall. Further west, two more lanes lead south from the main road. Moor Lane gave access to Horton Moor.¹⁴ It survives as a farm track and is not a public right-of-way. The second, Spenford Lane (named Ryley Lane by Garbet), is the road to Loppington.¹⁵ It was turnpiked in 1771 to link the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike with the Shrewsbury–Ellesmere turnpike, which it joined at Burlton;¹⁶ it is now the B4397. A toll-gate was erected at the junction in Horton.¹⁷ A toll-gate keeper and his family resided at Toll Gate House in 1871; it was still called Horton Gate in 1881.¹⁸

⁷ 11 Geo III, c. 115; cf. *VCH Wem*, 5.

⁸ Culverted by 1840, as shown on the apportionment map.

⁹ Garbet, 308.

¹⁰ *Survey, 1561*, 48–9.

¹¹ See *Shropshire Star*, 22 Jan. 2014:

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2014/01/22/anger-over-long-term-flooding-on-shropshire-road/>

¹² *Survey, 1561*, 82–3; Garbet, 308.

¹³ Garbet, 293–4, 308.

¹⁴ Shown on Arundel map; Garbet, 308.

¹⁵ Shown on Arundel map; Garbet, 308.

¹⁶ *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons 1854–55 (20): Turnpike Trusts ...*, No. 27, Wem and Bron-y-Garth Roads, 146–50.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Marked on tithe apportionment map (1841), where fields opposite (3642, 3657) were named 'Turnpike field'.

¹⁸ Census 1871 and 1881.

Spensford bridge

Spensford bridge is an important and ancient crossing over the River Roden, marking the boundary between Wem and Loppington. It has had a variety of spellings: it is labelled Pensford Bridge on the 1631 Survey of Wem, and is referred to as Penceford Bridge by Samuel Garbet.¹⁹ There was a bridge here by 1561.²⁰ It is depicted on the 1631 map as having three small piers and low parapets. Samuel Garbet referred to ‘Penceford wooden bridge’.²¹ By 1829 the bridge was built of sandstone slabs with four 3 ft-wide openings. The roadway was 4 yd wide – too narrow for its carriage traffic, and the parapets were dangerously low. Thomas Stanton, on behalf of Thomas Telford, county surveyor, reported that the bridge was structurally secure and recommended repairs. Thomas Dickin, who had recently taken up residence at Loppington House nearby, claimed that the bridge obstructed the flow of water, which flooded his land, and demanded that the river bed to be lowered. Dickin was overruled, however, and the old bridge was repaired. A new enquiry in 1861 found that the bridge was causing flooding and the county agreed to pay for a new bridge. The bridge was designed by Edward Haycock, county surveyor, in August 1862. The segmental-arched, 15 ft span bridge is constructed of large sandstone blocks, except for the arch-ring which is brick. The squared sandstone string course rises over the top of the arch and supports the parapets which splay out towards rounded end piers. The project involved raising the level of the roadway slightly and lowering the river bed by 3 ft. Haycock’s drawing shows an inverted brick arch underneath the water, matching that above. The specification stated that stone from the old bridge should be reused, especially for the string course and parapets, and the contract was awarded to John Treasure. At a later stage, Edward Haycock proposed new culverts on each side of the old bridge, but it is not clear whether these were ever built.²²

Population

In 1327, five heads of household were assessed for the lay subsidy, a figure comparable with the other townships of Wem manor, and exceeding the larger townships of Aston and Tilley

¹⁹ SA, 972/7/1/49; Garbet, 308

²⁰ *Survey 1561*, 80–1. The arrangement of roads near the bridge, as well as the place-name, indicate the existence of a ford.

²¹ Arundel map; Garbet, 5.

²² SA, DP172; A. Blackwall, *Historic Bridges of Shropshire* (Shrewsbury, 1985), 34.

(four each).²³ The population assessed for the poll tax in 1381 was 19 (nine married couples and one single man), more than for Lowe and Ditches, Tilley or Wolverley.²⁴ In 1436, there were six messuages held as customary tenancies of the lord of the manor, still comparable with Aston (6) and Tilley (7).²⁵

From the 16th century, the relative decrease of Horton's population begins to become apparent. In 1525, just three Horton residents were liable to pay the lay subsidy, the lowest number of any township in the manor.²⁶ The tenurial survey of 1561 records 12 dwellings: 10 messuages, one house ('domus') and one cottage in Horton; and the crown valuation in 1589 reported 13 (eight 'messuages' and five cottages).²⁷ This corresponds with the 1631 map, which depicts 13 houses. In 1672 nine households were liable for hearth tax; again among the fewest in the parish. There were nine in Wolverley also, but two of those households had four hearths, whereas the two largest houses in Horton had just three.²⁸ Around 32 per cent of households may have been exempt from paying hearth tax due to poverty; hence the total number of households in Horton in the late 17th century can be estimated at 13.²⁹

A census taken by the curate of Wem in 1800 recorded a population of 79 in Horton township.³⁰ According to the national census, the population in 1811 was 78, with three uninhabited houses. The population then rose to 98 in 1821 but had fallen to 82 in 1841. After that, the population declined, to 79 in 1871, and around 67 in 1901.³¹ Thereafter, Horton was subsumed into Wem Rural Parish. It is unlikely that the population of the former township today exceeds its 19th-century level. The same dwellings continue to be occupied but with fewer residents, and very little additional new housing has been built in the former township since c.1900.

Settlement

²³ *Shropshire Lay Subsidy 1327*, 143–5.

²⁴ *Poll Taxes ... 1381*, 374–5, 378–9.

²⁵ TNA, C 139/76/34; *Cal. Inq. PM*, xxiv, 348, no. 495.

²⁶ *Shropshire Taxes*, nos. 449–57.

²⁷ *Survey 1561*, 78–91; TNA, LR 2/225.

²⁸ *Shropshire Hearth Tax Roll of 1672*, 47–52.

²⁹ Based on the average for parishes in North Bradford hundred: *Shropshire Hearth Tax Exemptions*, Table 3.

³⁰ *Wem Parish Registers*, 778–9.

³¹ The figures per township are uncertain from 1871 as the census reports were no longer based on the individual township.

Habitation in Horton is mainly concentrated in the north east of the township. Horton Hall farmhouse today dominates a hamlet set around the junction of the Wem–Ellesmere road and ‘Green Lane’ (see above), perhaps once known as Horton Green; beyond the hamlet, farms and residential properties are widely spaced along the main road.

Anglo-Saxon

In 1066 Horton was an estate of two hides with land for four ploughs and woodland for fattening 60 pigs. The woodland for 60 pigs is relatively large; in comparison, Wem (with Tilley and Trench) had woodland for 100 pigs and Aston for 40. Anglo-Saxon Horton may have been larger than the early modern township, extending northwards into the wooded area that would later become Newtown.

Medieval

The remains of a moated site lie about 700 m. south of Horton Hall farmhouse.³² As at Wolverley, this may represent habitation that was later abandoned for sites further from the Roden on higher, drier ground. There may have been another moated site, ‘Golborne’s moat’, north east of ‘Golborne’s cross’.³³ If that site existed, it may represent medieval colonisation of the North Wood.

Medieval Horton was a nucleated settlement, consisting of several houses clustered around the junction of Green lane and Moor lane with the Wem–Ellesmere road, converging here to cross Horton Brook, which flowed through the hamlet. Behind the houses, crofts extended to the open fields that surrounded the settlement; the open field system was in operation by 1436.³⁴ By 1561, there were 10 copyhold messuages, including two on the east side of Green Lane: Husseys and (until 1547) Ivesons.

Early modern to present

The hamlet is depicted in its present location on the 1631 map, with eight dwellings, plus four on Green Lane and one isolated cottage on the main road towards Wolverley. Two of the houses on Green Lane, on the eastern side, were the messuages of copyhold estates, while the two on the western side of the lane were cottages encroaching on the lord’s waste. There were approximately 13 dwellings in Horton in 1672.³⁵ There was also some concentration of

³² Below, ‘Built Character: Horton Hall Moated Site’.

³³ Garbet, 302. See ‘The Built Character’, below.

³⁴ TNA, C 139/76/34; *Cal. Inq. PM*, xxiv, 348, no. 495.

³⁵ See above, Population.

activity at Golborne's cross, where the three townships of Horton, Lowe and Ditches and Newtown met. In addition to the cottages on Green Lane, there was a blacksmith's shop by 1745, and a pinfold.³⁶

The turnpiking of Spenford Lane in 1771 led to development west of the hamlet. A timber-framed house of late 17th-century date, Chalk Hill, was already present.³⁷ A small toll-gate cottage was squeezed between the road junction and the chalk pit. Horton Gate Farm (now The Fields) was established to the north, apparently by the Dickin estate c.1860. A house was built on the north side of the junction, c.1880, now named 'Heatherlea'.³⁸

Within the hamlet, the density of houses decreased. In his account of Horton in 1752, Samuel Garbet mentions at least three former houses that had been taken down or moved.³⁹ One of the largest houses depicted in the hamlet in 1631 was the only one situated on the north side of the road. By 1752 this house had been taken down and part of it 'added to' a new one in the same croft, which stood alone on the bank north west of the hamlet.⁴⁰ By 1840 that house had disappeared, and the original house site was in use as a stackyard, apparently for Yew Tree Farm.⁴¹ At the time of writing there are no buildings on the north side of the hamlet except the two cottages at the Green Lane junction. The present 'Brook House Cottage' replaces, or incorporates, a cottage depicted on this site in 1631. On the opposite corner, the timber-framed cottage was probably 'Evans the weaver's house' in 1752.⁴²

East of Green Lane, the 1631 map depicts two messuages on the north side of the main road. The first was probably the messuage of the Menlove estate in 1561, today Horton House Farm. Adjacent to the east was another house in a close, still named House Field in 1840, although the house had disappeared by the late 17th century.⁴³

³⁶ The pinfold only appears to be recorded on the tithe apportionment map (lot 2742a). For the blacksmith's shop, see 'Economic History', below.

³⁷ Shropshire HER 19044.

³⁸ Not shown on OS 25", Shropshire Sheet XIV.14 (1881, surveyed in 1879), but recorded in 1881 census; advertised for sale: *Wellington Jnl*, 26 Nov. 1881, 1; SA, SC/10/48 (1974).

³⁹ Garbet, 302, 303–4, 305–6.

⁴⁰ Garbet, 302.

⁴¹ Tithe apportionment, lots 3692 and 3662. The site of the 'house on the bank' may be traced as a cropmark.

⁴² Garbet, 308. At the time of writing, named 'Horton Villa'.

⁴³ *Survey 1561*, 90–1; Garbet, 305–6; tithe apportionment, lot 3727.

On the more built-up southern side of the hamlet, the house belonging to the Tyler estate was taken down, and rebuilt in Wem.⁴⁴ The empty plot remains a close of pasture. By 1840 just three of the former messuages remained; Horton Hall farm house, Yew Tree farm house, and a farm house immediately to its south.⁴⁵ The latter too had been demolished by 1880, and its site and range of farm buildings incorporated into Yew Tree Farm, which belonged to the Dickin estate.⁴⁶ Horton Hall farmhouse was rebuilt in 1870 by the Dickin estate. In the 21st century, the Horton Hall farmyard barns were converted into four residences.⁴⁷

The Built Character

The depiction of Horton on the 1631 Survey of Wem shows buildings laid out around a small triangle which no longer exists, the settlement appearing to have shrunk since the early modern period. Two of the buildings shown on the south side of the triangle may be predecessors to Horton Hall and Yew Tree Farmhouse, whilst there is a building on the north side, no longer extant. Garbet discusses the early estate-holders of Horton, but even in his time, several of their messuages had gone.⁴⁸

Horton Hall: An attractive farmhouse dated 1870, with gables asymmetrically arranged and blue brick diapering. The large two-storey farmhouse is of red brick under tiled roofs with brick stacks and well-executed blue brick detail including the diapering, string courses, and segmental heads over the casement windows. There is an open timber porch to the three-bay entrance front, its gable pierced with gothic motifs, under which is an inscription reading ‘TAMD 1870’, referring to the owner, Mr T.A.M. Dickin. The right-hand gabled bay is slightly set forward, whilst to the left is a smaller gable over the upper storey window. The house extends some distance to the rear and there are gabled fronts facing east towards the

⁴⁴ Garbet, 303–4.

⁴⁵ The latter was the messuage of the Allen, later Morris, copyhold estate: *Survey 1561*, 86–7; Garbet, 304–6; tithe apportionment, lot 3690, owned by Anna Lawrence.

⁴⁶ OS 25”, Shropshire sheet XIV.14.

⁴⁷ Qu-est Design and Planning: http://www.qu-est.co.uk/www.qu-est.co.uk/Barn_Conversions.html (accessed xxx).

⁴⁸ SA, 972/7/1/49; Garbet, 301–8.

walled gardens and west towards the farmyard.⁴⁹ An earlier house preceded this one, but its exact location and form is not known.

Farm ranges constitute three sides of a courtyard and are mostly earlier than the house, some typical of the early 19th-century assemblages seen in this area, including the long, lofted west range with its pitching fork oculi. The 1833 OS map shows an L-shaped range here, probably the current south and west ranges. Some additions and alterations were made in 1870 as evidenced by the blue brick detail, including a boundary wall on the east side.⁵⁰ The farm ranges were converted to domestic dwellings in the early 21st century.

Horton Hall Moated Site: Further south towards the River Roden was a moated site, a more distant predecessor to Horton Hall. In 1752, Samuel Garbet described the site as measuring 36 by 17 yards with three arms of the moat and the house site ‘very visible’, and reporting a tradition that the house had been named Horton Hall. William Phillips, an antiquarian of Shrewsbury, located and sketched the moat in the 1880s: it was in the south east corner of a field named Bradley Moor on the tithe map. The monument is also marked on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1884, but by 1929 it is no longer shown. Although viewed as a cropmark in an aerial photograph of 1953, by 1983 only the western arm was extant, the rest having been cut away by a sand pit.⁵¹

Another moated site may have existed at the north east limit of the township. In his description of the bounds and dimensions of Horton, Garbet names ‘Goborn’s moat’ as a boundary point about one mile from ‘Penceford Brook’ (probably the Roden near Spenford bridge) measured roughly east–west. The moated site at Bradley Moor does not conveniently fit this location, but it would match Golborne’s fields in the north east angle of Golborne’s cross.⁵² Both Bradley Moor and Golborne’s fields belonged to the Barnes of the Lowe

⁴⁹ Newman and Pevsner, 677. A case of theft of building materials during construction: *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 21 Oct. 1870, 8.

⁵⁰ OS Old Series, 1833; Google Street View, April 2009; Shropshire HER 26665: C. Baxter, *Historic Farmstead Characterisation Dataset* (2010) (ESA6427).

⁵¹ SA, 6001/240: William Phillips mss, 1889, p. 10; Shropshire HER ESA2712 (check DRF); tithe map (Horton township); OS 25”, Shropshire Sheet XIV.SW, 1884 and 1924 editions.

⁵² Garbet, 302, 305; *Survey, 1561*, 82–3. ‘Gobrand’s fields’ on the 1631 map. Thomas Barnes enfranchised ‘Goleborne fields’ with most of his copyhold estate in Lowe and Ditches, c.1650: ACA, MS MD 59, p. 32. ‘Big Goulburn’ and ‘Little Goulburn’ c.1840: Tithe apportionment, lots 3832 and 3834.

estate,⁵³ so in writing of the moated site he later described in detail as belonging to Barnes of the Lowe, Garbet could have referred to either.

Yew Tree Farmhouse: Located west of Horton Hall, slightly set back and with gable end to the road, this painted brick house under a slate roof has a prominent dentilled brick band at first floor level, suggesting a mid-18th-century date. As depicted on the 1840 tithe apportionment map, the house was L-shaped, with a west range that had disappeared by 1880 and has been replaced by a lean-to.⁵⁴ Of two storeys and an attic, the front faces east with entrance right of centre and three windows unevenly spaced, suggesting the house may have earlier origins. There is an external brick stack to the left end and a further stack to the right. The north gable end, facing the road, has two windows to each storey, including small attic lights. In the late 19th century, gabled attic dormers were added, but these have now been removed, and there are 20th-century lean-tos to front and rear.⁵⁵

Horton Villa, positioned at the junction of the B5063 and the lane leading north east towards Lowe ('Green Lane'), is not Victorian as the name suggests, but a good survival of a small timber-framed dwelling of 17th-century date, possibly an encroachment on unenclosed land. A building is marked in this vicinity on the 1631 Survey of Wem, whilst it is clearly marked on George Baugh's map of 1806. The two-bay cottage is single-storey with an attic, the irregular box-panelling with brick infill. Some framing has been lost and replaced with painted brick, including imitation framing, and the roof is now tiled. The brick stack on the rear left roof pitch is unusually positioned for a sub-medieval house, so may be later. The doors and windows are mainly 19th century, with two doorways to the front, boarded and planked, respectively. Above the boarded door is a timber-framed gabled dormer with three-

⁵³ Bradley Moor was the lord's demesne as it adjoined Wem Pool. As depicted on the Arundel map in 1631 it was '*terra domini*' held by Thomas Barnes. However, c.1650, Thomas Barnes enfranchised Bradley Moor among other parcels of land formerly the inheritance of William Marigold: ACA, MS MD 59, p. 32. In 1805 it was the only land the Barnes estate still owned in Horton, since Golborne's fields had been transferred to Lowe and Ditches.

⁵⁴ Tithe apportionment, lot 3690; OS 25", Shropshire Sheet XIV.14, surveyed 1879.

⁵⁵ Historic England, List Entry No. 1236502, including images of England, August 2007

light window, whilst a sash window lights the attic in the south gable.⁵⁶ Between 2010 and 2020 a new house was built on its north east side, the two joined by a link.

At the north end of the township is the junction with the B4397 to Loppington. Tightly packed in the junction was *Hortongate turnpike toll house*, probably of late 18th-century date and marked on George Baugh's map of 1806. The toll house is present on the Tithe map of 1845 but by 1901 it had been demolished and nothing is known of its appearance. The site had been encroached upon by a pond, possibly the infilled chalk pit (see Chalk Hill cottage below).⁵⁷

Chalk Hill Cottage is located at the north end of the township, just beyond the site of the former toll house and a pond, presumably the former chalk pit. This timber-framed cottage is not shown on the 1631 Survey of Wem and is probably late 17th century. It is single-storey with an attic, constructed of irregular box-panels infilled with painted brick under a slate roof. The original plan-form is unclear, especially as the gable walls have been rebuilt in brick along with the brick end stacks. The front is asymmetrical with a boarded door just left of centre and three small windows, whilst the attic is lit by a gabled dormer. The rear elevation is also box-panelled with two gabled attic dormers.⁵⁸

LANDOWNERSHIP

Before the Norman conquest, Horton was held by one free man and assessed as two hides. In 1086, when it was held by William Pantulf, lord of the manor of Wem, there were two slaves (*servi*) and three *bordarii*; there was one plough team, half pertaining to the lord's demesne

⁵⁶ Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 677; Google Street View, April 2009; Historic England, List Entry No. 1236693, including images of England, August 2007; SA, 972/7/1/49; G. Baugh's Map of Shropshire, 1806.

⁵⁷ Shropshire Newsletter, 1969, 37, p. 35; G. Baugh's Map of Shropshire, 1806; tithe map (Horton township); OS 25", 1901, Shropshire Sheet XIV.14.

⁵⁸ Historic England, List Entry No. 1264452, including images of England, August 2007; Arundel map.

and the other half to the tenants. The dominant form of landholding was copyhold; by the mid 16th century there was no freehold and little demesne.

Demesne

The Wem Pool marshland, originally all the lord's demesne, extended up the course of the Roden from Wem township into the south east of Horton township, where it became Horton Moor. In 1289/90, the annual value to the lord of the manor of payments from tenants for the use of Horton Moor was 6s. 8d.⁵⁹ Wem Pool was drained and enclosed by the early 17th century, an enterprise first of William, Lord Dacre, and later of Ann, countess of Arundel. A dispute ultimately arose over whether the enclosure should extend to Horton Moor. The Horton tenants continued asserting their customary common rights until, in 1622, the countess of Arundel as lord of the manor sued the copyholders William Moody, Adam Tyler, John Allen and William Chettoe for trespass on the newly-enclosed land. These tenants asserted that Horton Moor was not legitimately enclosed because it was not part of Wem Pool.⁶⁰ A settlement may have been reached whereby a portion of Horton Moor remained unenclosed. In 1648, it was reported that 7 a. called Horton Common had been 'left open as common to the customary tenants when the rest of Horton Common was inclosed to the lords use'.⁶¹ In the ensuing sale of demesne, in 1652 the earl of Arundel's trustees sold the 7 a. piece ('Horton Poole land', then in the tenure of Edward Tyler) and 'the Poole piece adjoining to Horton Commons' (4 a. 2 r.) in the tenure of William Hussey.⁶² In 1654 the trustees sold 'Lord's Meadow' (8 a.), which adjoined Wem Pool and was in the tenure of Thomas Barnes the elder, and Pinfold leasow (4 a.), to Richard Bostock for £140.⁶³

There had also been encroachment on the lord's waste beside Green Lane, where in 1561 half an acre was held as three parcels; it was held at will by Richard Allen for 12d. per year but, around the time of the survey, Allen exchanged some of his land at Pensford croft, which was enclosed by the lord's agent, and he was discharged from paying rent thereafter.⁶⁴ By 1805

⁵⁹ TNA, E 149/1; *Cal. Inq. pm*, ii, p. 470 no. 774.

⁶⁰ TNA, E 134/20Jas1/Mich5. The outcome of the litigation is not known as only the depositions survive.

⁶¹ ACA, MS 508, f. 4v.

⁶² To Richard Wynne of Lincoln's Inn: SA, 6000/283; Arundel Castle MS MD 59, pp. 74–5.

⁶³ ACA, MS MD 59, p. 56. In the 19th century, the pinfold was on the lane from Horton and to Northwood Hall: Tithe apportionment, lot 3742.

⁶⁴ *Survey 1561*, 86–9.

the only demesne in Horton consisted of such former encroachments: three houses and gardens totalling about one acre.⁶⁵ One was a house and garden of about half an acre occupied by Joseph Blakeway; perhaps this was beside Drake Lane, where there was a close named Blakeway's field in 1841.⁶⁶ All three were sold to their tenants by the earl of Darlington's trustees in c.1810.⁶⁷

Copyhold tenements

In 1436, customary tenants held six messuages and 30 nooks of arable land (approximately 270 a.), for which the total rents were 12s. and 40s. per annum, respectively.⁶⁸ By 1561, the only freehold in Horton was a former assart pertaining to The Ditches estate (Churings Britch).⁶⁹ Otherwise, other than the small parcels of demesne, all the tenements in Horton were copyhold. There were 11 copyholders in 1561, and those with the largest holdings in Horton did not hold other agricultural land in the manor (but several held burgages in Wem).⁷⁰

The largest estate in Horton in 1561 was that of William Moody who held three messuages and a cottage, crofts and parcels of meadow totalling 62½ a., and six nooks (54 a.) and a further 31 a. of land in the open fields of Horton, paying rent of 40s. per year. There were then four copyhold tenements of similar size. Robert Menlove held a messuage, crofts and parcels of meadow totalling 50 a. and four nooks (36 a.). The tenement held by Katherine, widow of Thomas Hussey, included the messuage with orchard and garden, 50 a. in crofts and parcels of meadow, and one nook (9 a.). The holdings of John Chetwall (*alias* Chettoe) and Richard Allen were similar.⁷¹

⁶⁵ In the 1805 survey, two of the houses are listed as owned by Philip Hales and Thomas Stockall, respectively, but they appear to be the same three houses sold by the lord's agents in 1809: SA, 6000/12498.

⁶⁶ 1805 Survey, 16–17; tithe apportionment, lot 3725. See also SA, 3994 box 5, Horton: 'Canterbury Cottage', smallholding: 1814–1959: Lord Barnard-Blakeway-Roberts-Davies-Rogers: original indenture, conveyance 10 May 1814.

⁶⁷ SA, 6000/12498; SA, 3994 box 5 (as note XXX).

⁶⁸ TNA, C 139/76/34; *Cal. Inq. PM*, xxiv, 348, no. 495.

⁶⁹ *Survey 1561*, 58–9. See Lowe and Ditches.

⁷⁰ *Survey 1561*, 78–91.

⁷¹ *Survey 1561*, 78–9.

The Chettoe estate of about 50 a. was enfranchised in the mid 17th century. Thomas Barnes of Lowe Hall also enfranchised his copyhold tenement in Horton in 1652.⁷² By 1805 the Lowe Hall estate's holding in Horton was just the freehold close of Bradley Moor (4 a.), near The Ditches. The rest of the estate's land in Horton had been rationalised into Lowe and Ditches by a boundary change, leaving only the smithy in Horton. Landholding in the township was by then dominated by three estates. Thomas Dickin of Wem was the greatest landholder in Horton in 1805, having acquired the former Chettoe and Moody estates, with nearly 196 a. in closes distributed across the township. Dickin also held several cottages including the turnpike house.⁷³ There were then two similar sized tenements: Sir Richard Hill of Hawkstone with 102 a. 3 r., and John Walford, the Wem attorney, with 90 a. 'Miss Nixon' and Hannah Lawrence each had about 30 a., and there were half a dozen cottages with individual owners.

After moving from The Hall in Wem to Loppington House in the mid 1820s, Thomas Dickin set about consolidating his estate by acquiring properties in Horton, Wolverley and Loppington adjacent to his new country seat. In Horton, by 1840 he held about 338 a., over half of the township area. Horton Hall Farm, let to William Heatley, was 185 a., and Yew Tree Farm, let to Robert Phillips, was 114 a., as well as Chalk Hill and ?Ashleigh cottages; and 21½ a. kept in hand as 'plantations'. The Dickin estate in Horton was a coherent block in the part of the township lying between Wolverley and Loppington. Just three small farms, including Horton House farm, and several cottages, belonged to other landowners. In 1865 T.A.M. Dickin sold most of his property in Wem and Aston townships. Horton Hall and another farm were also advertised but not sold,⁷⁴ and Dickin invested some of the sale proceeds in rebuilding Horton Hall farmhouse, which bears the date 'T.A.M.D. 1870'.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Farming

⁷² SA, 731/2/3702; ACA, MS MD59, pp. 32, 36.

⁷³ 1805 Survey, 10–11, 14–15. See also SA, 306, box 9a: two copies of court: admission of T.A.M. Dickin to Lords Meadow and Chalk Hill in Horton, and six pieces of copyhold land in Horton, 19 Feb. 1858; and boxes 9b and 9d: Chettoe estate.

⁷⁴ SA, 1186/47–66; *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 2 Jun. 1865, 1.

Horton had four open fields: Homore/Homan field, on the slope of Ditches Hill north of Horton Moor; Sinden field, on the western side of township, on both sides of the main road; Gronow field in the central northern portion; and Ryley field, the smallest, situated near the river and west of Moor Lane.⁷⁵ The open fields, in the north, appear to have extended to the Newtown boundary, and likewise, in the south, open fields extended close to the river. Some enclosure had occurred by 1561. The open field system was still operating in 1589, but enclosure was complete by 1631.⁷⁶

Industry and services

Flax was grown and processed in Horton; Flaxpool meadow lay beside the Roden just below Spenford bridge. ‘Evans the weaver’ lived in Horton hamlet in the mid 18th century.⁷⁷

A public house operated in Horton hamlet in the mid 19th century, probably at Horton Brook Cottage, owned by William Hampson, ‘publican’ in 1841. A public house named the Black Horse operated between 1861 and 1871. The publican in 1871 was William Hall; however, in the census he gave his occupation as cutler.⁷⁸ A Royal Mail post box from the reign of Queen Victoria is embedded in the wall of Horton Brook Cottage.

There was a blacksmith’s shop at the south east angle of ‘Golborne’s cross’. The location, a crossroads at the eastern limit of Horton township, was perhaps intended also to be accessible for Newtown and Lowe and Ditches, where no forge is recorded. The small roadside close belonged to the Lowe Hall estate from the mid 17th century.⁷⁹ The blacksmith’s shop was in operation by 1745.⁸⁰ Thomas Morgan, his son Thomas, and grandsons Thomas and John Morgan were the smiths from before 1745 to after 1805.⁸¹ In 1841, there were two blacksmiths, William Rogers and Thomas Harper, and an apprentice.⁸² By 1850 it was a freehold tenement of house, workshop, garden and meadow of nearly 2 a. belonging to the

⁷⁵ Garbet, 307–8.

⁷⁶ *Survey 1561*, 78–91; TNA, LR 2/225.

⁷⁷ Garbet, 307–8.

⁷⁸ Tithe apportionment, lot 3709; 1841, 1861, 1871 census, Horton; *Harrod’s Dir.*, 1861, 728; *Cassey & Co. Dir.*, 1871, 378.

⁷⁹ Tithe apportionment, lots 2742–3; *Survey 1561*, 59; Arundel map (1631). See Lowe and Ditches, ‘The Ditches’; and ‘Landownership’ above.

⁸⁰ *Wem Parish Registers*, 530; Garbet, 308.

⁸¹ *Wem Parish Registers*, 530, 551, 556, 563, 571, 584, 618, 626, 652, 702, 706; 1805 Survey, 16: John Morgan.

⁸² 1841 census.

Low Hall estate.⁸³ The smithy was demolished and replaced by a new one, on the opposite (northern) side of the road, described as ‘newly built’ in particulars for sale of part of the Low Hall estate in 1877.⁸⁴ William Rogers, from Edstaston, took over the new blacksmith’s house and workshop, between 1871 and 1881.⁸⁵ By 1901 it was occupied by his son, William Henry Rogers; William the elder, with his other 11 children, had moved to Elm Cottage (Newtown), nearby.⁸⁶ The blacksmith’s shop, house and land was sold in 1909 to the tenant, Mrs Rogers.⁸⁷ By 1941, George Henry Rogers traded as an ‘agricultural implements repairer’.⁸⁸ The ironwork decorating the existing house at this location suggests that the blacksmith’s shop was in operation until recent decades. A business supplying agricultural and garden buildings now operates from the premises.⁸⁹

SOCIAL HISTORY

Horton lacks municipal or civil amenities. However, Horton was close enough to Wem to have access to all amenities there, leaving Horton exclusively residential/agricultural.

Until the 18th century the Horton community was characterised by several estates of similar size, with the tenants farming their own land. In 1561 the copyholders with the largest holdings – Adney, Allen, Chettoe, Hussey, Moody, Tyler – did not hold other agricultural land in the manor (some had burgages in Wem); hence some copyholders may have resided and farmed their own land in Horton, where there were nine farmsteads (messuages), a house (‘domus’) and a cottage in 1561.⁹⁰ Richard Tyler was said to have been killed in 1644 when

⁸³ SA, 3994 box 4: Lowe Cottage Farm, 1878–1960; Tithe apportionment, lots 2742–3; *Slater’s Dir.*, 1868, 103.

⁸⁴ See plan, sale catalogue for Lowe Cottage Farm, Wem: SA, SC/6/44; OS 25”, Shropshire sheet XIV.14 (1881). Cf. *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 15 July 1864, 6: the old smithy proving too cramped.

⁸⁵ 1861 census, Edstaston; 1871 and 1881 census, Horton.

⁸⁶ 1901 census, Newtown, Horton.

⁸⁷ *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 10 Apr. 1908, 1; Lowe Cottage Farm, 1878–1960: conveyance by George Fenn, 1909: SA, 3994 box 4.

⁸⁸ Trade directories, 1913, 1922, 1941.

⁸⁹ In 2010, trading as A. Williams Timber Buildings of Wem: <https://www.awilliamstimberbuildings.co.uk/>.

⁹⁰ *Survey 1561*, 78–91.

soldiers plundered his house, presumably in Horton.⁹¹ There was no outstandingly large house. In 1672, nine houses were assessed for hearth tax, of which two had three hearths (William Chettoe and William Tyler), three had two hearths (Richard Allen, William Moody and John Moody) and the remaining four had one hearth (Roger Hussey, John Chettoe, Richard Tyler and John Fardell). Two households in Horton had been specifically exempted on grounds of poverty in the 1660s.⁹²

By 1752, however, all but one of the tenements were let to tenants. Samuel Garbet observed that there was only one ‘considerable inhabitant’ living on his own estate who still resided in Horton – Andrew Morris, who had acquired the former Allen tenement with its farm house in the hamlet. After Morris’s death, his son sold off the estate ‘in lots’.⁹³ By 1805 the remaining estate was the farmstead with 31 a., let by Hannah Lawrence to a tenant.⁹⁴ The concentration of landownership, mainly in the Dickin estate, meant that in the 19th and 20th centuries there were fewer tenants of larger farms.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Francis Chambre of Wolverley Hall, by his will of 1676, charged a certain ‘pasture ground’ to pay 40s. per year to keep Newtown chapel in repair, with any surplus to be paid to the third schoolmaster of Wem grammar school. The land was in Horton, near Pensford bridge; by 1831 it belonged to Thomas Dickin, who undertook to pay the 40s. to the chapel and the third master in alternate years.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Horton township did not join Newtown chapelry and remained in Wem parish.

⁹¹ Garbet, 304.

⁹² *Shropshire Hearth Tax Exemptions*, 51–2.

⁹³ Garbet, 306. An annotation by ‘G.M.’ (George Morris of Shrewsbury?) to London, Society of Antiquaries, ref. 57 c (first edition of Garbet), ‘And Morris the son has sold it in lots to many abt the year 1770’.

⁹⁴ 1805 Survey, 14–17.

⁹⁵ Garbet, 327–8; *Charities Commission Report*, 332; *Shropshire Glebe Terriers*, ed. S. Watts, 44.