

VCH SHROPSHIRE

Wem Rural

Northwood

by Judith Everard and Wendy Horton

This is a draft text prepared by Dr Judith Everard and Wendy Horton 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

NORTHWOOD

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Landscape, township origins and boundaries

Northwood takes its name from the woodland that in the Middle Ages extended north from Wem (township) to the Welsh border and Prees, and from the Roden east to Edstaston. The whole area is of quite level elevation (85–100 m. ASL). The soil is predominantly clay except to the west where it is ‘sandy with a mixture of gravel’.¹ To the north the medieval woodland ended at ‘the mosses’, a natural frontier zone between the North Shropshire plain and Flintshire. In 1648 it was reported that: ‘Neere the circumference of the said lordship [of Wem t]here are grounds called Mosses or ancyent pitts or lakes, which by long continuance of tyme are dammed and filled upp with mosse and other trash from the superficies of the earth, which beinge digged by the husbandmen and dried is called turfe or peate ...’.² Wem Moss (90 m. ASL), in the northwest of Northwood and one of the sources of the river Roden, is the southernmost portion of the Fenn’s, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses complex, partly isolated by the Hornspike, a spur of ground projecting northwards between Wem Moss and Whixall Moss.³ The mosses are lowland peat bogs originating at the end of the last Ice Age, about 12,000 years ago. Meltwater-filled depressions in the glacial drift landscape became overgrown with vegetation, whose uneven decay in waterlogged conditions led to the formation of peat domes or ‘raised mires’ which could reach up to 10 m. above ground level, surrounded by standing water and carr fen. Two such domes remain in Wem Moss, the others having collapsed due to drainage and peat cutting.⁴ Due to agriculture, forestry and commercial peat extraction, by the late 20th century much of the distinctive natural ecosystem of the mosses had been lost or was under threat. Since 1990, however, the surviving peat bog ecosystem has been conserved. Wem Moss had been the least exploited

¹ Garbet, 332; A.Q. Berry et al., *Fenn’s and Whixall Mosses* (Mold, 1996), 8.

² ACA, MS 508, f. 42r.

³ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 8, 146–7; ‘Wem Moss’, <https://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/wem-moss> (accessed 21 June 2021).

⁴ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 2, 8–9, 125; Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Ramsar Information Sheet UK11080 (2008).

historically, and hence remains the best preserved, the main damage having been caused by the England/Wales Border Drain which divides Wem Moss from Cadney Moss.⁵

The natural ecology of the mosses is of international importance. The Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses area was first notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1953 and Wem Moss in 1963. Shropshire Wildlife Trust took over management of Wem Moss in 1973.⁶ The two SSSIs were combined to form Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses SSSI (966 ha.) in 1994.⁷ The same year Wem Moss (28 ha.) was declared a National Nature Reserve (NNR).⁸ In 1997 Midland Meres and Mosses phase 2 (1588.24 ha.), including Wem Moss, was listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.⁹ Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses (948.84 ha.) was designated a Special Area of Conservation in 2005.¹⁰

'Northwode' was named in 1290 as one of four demesne woodlands in the manor of Wem.¹¹ Garbet derives the name from 'its situation in respect to Lineal wood, which was south of it',¹² but the more obvious derivation is 'northern woodland of the manor of Wem'. The township was 'villata de Northewood' in 1561.¹³ Until the 19th century the township was often formally named as 'Wem's Northwood' or 'Wemsnorthwood', to distinguish it from Northwood township in Ellesmere or other places named Northwood.¹⁴

Portions of the North Wood were colonised from the adjacent Wem townships during the late Middle Ages, notably the southern portion, which became Newtown in the 14th century (see Settlement, below). Hence Northwood township, when constituted in the 16th century, was more compact than the medieval woodland had been. By 1840 Northwood township

⁵ For exploitation of the mosses, below, Economic History.

⁶ Pers. comm. Jan McKelvey, Conservation Officer, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, 2 Aug. 2019.

⁷ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 7; <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/> (accessed 21 June 2021).

⁸ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 8; Natural England, *Corporate Report. Shropshire's National Nature Reserves*. 31 October 2008; Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Wem Moss: <https://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/wem-moss>.

⁹ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 3, 7; Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Ramsar Information Sheet UK11080 (2008).

¹⁰ SAC EU code UK0012912:

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012912> (accessed 21 June 2021); Berry et al., *Mosses*, 3, 7.

¹¹ TNA, E 133/57 No. 3; *Cal. Inq. misc.*, ii, 470 no. 773.

¹² Garbet, 331.

¹³ *Survey 1561*, 62.

¹⁴ E.g. *Wellington Jnl*, 14 Jan. 1882, 7. Gelling, *PN Salop*. V, 249–50.

comprised 1,409 a. For the purposes of parochial government, from its establishment Northwood was allocated to the Horton quarter of Wem parish. It was bounded by the townships of: Lowe, Newtown, Wolverley, Lineal, Welshampton, Bettisfield, Whixall and Edstaston. The western and northern limits of Northwood were also those of the manor, and at the north west the boundary with Bettisfield (Flints.) was the limit of Shropshire and of England. The border with Whixall (part of the episcopal manor of Prees) was perambulated and fixed by royal order in 1228,¹⁵ and was again reviewed and defined by the Wem manor court in 1612.¹⁶

The western border followed the upper reaches of the Roden, formerly known here as Blackford or Blackhurst Brook.¹⁷ In the north west, Wem Moss is depicted outside the manor boundary in the Arundel map of 1631 but other sources – including the 1561 perambulation of the boundary transcribed on the map – include Wem Moss within the manorial waste. Turning southeast at the Hornspike, the northern boundary was marked by the ‘vowree cross’,¹⁸ which was said to be no longer present in 1612, but was then depicted on the Arundel map of 1631, and in 1648 a new enclosure was at ‘the Bowry Crosse’.¹⁹ Thence after a short distance the boundary reached Redfellis Brook and turned south to follow its course. North of Newtown, a wedge-shaped area projected east of the brook to Pool Head. From Pool Head west to the Roden, the Northwood boundary followed field boundaries, presumably the limits of cultivation of Newtown and Wolverley, respectively, at the time the township was constituted. At the western end, however, the final section before reaching the river followed a low-lying boggy area, ‘the moors’, below the higher ground of Wolverley adjacent to the south. North of the moors was a detached portion of Wolverley, extending north to the river crossing, now Blackhurstford bridge.

Communications

The main road from Wem to Ellesmere (B5063) traverses Northwood from south to north west. It was incorporated in the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike in 1752 and a toll gate was

¹⁵ *Cal. Close Rolls Henry III*, [1228], 65.

¹⁶ SA, 167/5A, f. 5r.

¹⁷ *Survey 1561*, 165; Perambulation of Wem manor bounds (1561) recorded on Arundel map (1631); SA, 167/5A, f. 5r; Garbet, 5, 333.

¹⁸ ‘Perambulation of manor bounds’, Arundel map; SA, 167/5A, fo. 5r. See *VCH Wem*, 134.

¹⁹ SA, 167/5A, f. 5r; ACA, MS 508, f. 30r.

installed at the junction with Thieves Bridge Lane.²⁰ Northwood Lane extends north from Newtown bridge through the eastern part of Northwood to Whixall.²¹ ‘Thevis Bridge Lane’, so named by 1561, leads east from Northwood hamlet to join Northwood Lane.²² It was depicted in 1631 as ending at ‘Theeves bridge’, where the unenclosed woodland began, although the lane may not have ended there, as the Arundel map typically depicts roads only in relation to property boundaries. The lane is also known as Whixall Lane and (at the hamlet end) Chapel Lane.

The Ellesmere branch of the Shropshire Union Canal (now the Llangollen Canal) opened in 1805, passing a short distance north of the Wem (Northwood) boundary. The Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike crossed the canal on Hampton Bank bridge, where there was a wharf, less than one mile (1.6 km) north west of Northwood hamlet. There was also access to the canal at Bettisfield wharf, about 1¼ miles (2 km) north of the hamlet, via a road branching off the turnpike which crossed the canal at Bettisfield bridge. The Prees branch of the same canal ran south east from Whixall Moss to Quina Brook, its course not far from the eastern boundary of Northwood township and furnished with several wharves, the nearest at Waterloo (Whixall) and Edstaston (Wem).

The Cambrian Railways line from Whitchurch via Ellesmere to Oswestry followed an east–west route close to the Ellesmere canal at this point. Bettisfield station, opened in 1863, was a short distance north of the canal wharf.²³ The station, with the line, closed in 1965.²⁴ The Shrewsbury–Crewe line passes through Edstaston and Coton, east of Northwood, with stations at Wem and Prees, which opened in 1858. Neither canal nor railway entered Northwood, yet both were readily accessible from the township.

A bus service was running from Northwood to Ellesmere and Wem by 1922.²⁵ By 1926 a Midland Red bus passed through Northwood, between Ellesmere and Shrewsbury, on Tuesdays. At the same time, a local carpenter, Edwin Keay of Beechcroft, the proprietor of a motor omnibus, ran weekly services to Ellesmere, Wem, and Whitchurch on market days. By

²⁰ See *VCH Wem*, 5. ‘Former Toll House, Northwood’, HER (PRN) 15439; ‘Turnpike house’ in tithe apportionment; photographed in 1969: SA, PH/S/14/15/55.

²¹ Garbet, 335–6.

²² *Survey 1561*, 164; below *Bridges*.

²³ CPAT, ‘Historic Landscape Characterisation. Maelor Saesneg: Transport and Communications’: <http://www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/histland/maelor/mstransp.htm>

²⁴ P. Wright, ‘Disused stations: Site record’: <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/bettisfield/index.shtml> (accessed 21 June 2021).

²⁵ *Kelly’s Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1922), 127.

1934 Keay's service had been replaced by Moss Bros., which later took over all market-day services from Midland Red, and by 1941 there was also a Salopia Coaches service to Shrewsbury on Saturdays.²⁶ Services declined thereafter and by the 2000s no public bus service called at Northwood.

A post office was established by 1851 at Joseph Davies's premises (the Horse and Jockey inn and grocery shop) in Northwood hamlet, with the post despatched via Ellesmere.²⁷ It later operated as a sub-post office of Welshampton. James Nicholls was sub-postmaster from shortly before 1909 until at least 1941.²⁸ The private residence next door to the Horse and Jockey public house bears a sign 'The Old Post Office'. There is a post box outside the public house. A telephone was installed at the post office shortly before 1929.²⁹ By 1941 six farms in Northwood had private telephones, with Bettisfield numbers, while Ivy House Farm and New House Farm had Loppington telephone numbers.³⁰ There was a public telephone box in Northwood hamlet, but it had been removed by 2009.

Bridges

The river crossing at the north west boundary of Northwood, known as 'Black Ford' in 1561, was an important point where the Welsh Maelor Saesneg (Flints.) met English territory.³¹ There was a wooden bridge in the first half of the 18th century.³² As the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike crossed the Roden here, a substantial bridge would have been required. In 1812 the parishes of Wem and Welshampton were ordered to repair 'Blackhurst Ford Bridge', but in 1813 it was adopted by the county.³³

A proposal was put forward in 1813 by John Lawrence for John Simpson to build a brick-arched bridge in place of the old bridge at a cost of £163 10s. Thomas Stanton had undertaken an inspection of the old bridge earlier that year: it was of stone with two square openings 3 ft wide and without any parapets. Stanton regarded the bridge as dangerous as it could flood easily. A plan and elevation of the new bridge shows a segmental arch of 12 ft span and a rise of 4 ft, the roadway 18 ft wide. The river bed was to be excavated by 2 ft and

²⁶ *Kelly's Dir.*, 1926, 175; *Kelly's Dir.*, 1937, 177; *Kelly's Dir.*, 1941, 175.

²⁷ Bagshaw, 335.

²⁸ *Kelly's Dir.*, 1909, 169; *Kelly's Dir.*, 1941, 175

²⁹ *Kelly's Dir.*, 1929, 174–5.

³⁰ *Kelly's Dir.*, 1941, 175.

³¹ *Survey 1561*, 164–5.

³² Garbet, 5.

³³ *Quarter Sessions Orders*, III, 181, 185

a foundation built. The bricklayers were Joseph Hayward and Joseph Hodgson. The red brick bridge, of utilitarian appearance, has a segmental arch three bricks thick. A moulded string course leads to brick parapets with sandstone copings, slightly splayed at the ends and leading to end piers with capstones.³⁴

‘Theeves bridge’ is marked on the 1631 Arundel map as the point where a lane leading east from Northwood hamlet enters the unenclosed woodland. A stone bridge arch underlies Thieves Bridge Lane where the lane crossed a tributary of Redfellis Brook. On the south side of the lane were fields named ‘Washing Pit’ and ‘Thieves’ Bridge field’ in 1841.³⁵

A bridge labelled ‘Red Fellis Bridge’ is depicted on the Arundel map, apparently crossing Redfellis Brook just before it enters Newtown township. No roads are depicted leading to the bridge – although it is typical of the map not to depict lanes unless they relate to property boundaries – and the crossing does not fit what is known of the network of lanes between Northwood and Newtown.

Population

In historical times, prior to the 16th century Northwood probably had no permanent inhabitants. By 1561 there were at least 12 dwellings (seven ‘messuages’ and five cottages) in Northwood,³⁶ although a survey of the manor in 1589 reported just six (four ‘messuages’ and two cottages), the difference perhaps relating to the criteria used in the respective 16th-century surveys.³⁷ In any event, the number of dwellings more than doubled, to some 32 dwellings (houses and cottages) in 1648.³⁸ In 1672, 24 households were assessed for hearth tax, while around 32 per cent may have been exempt on grounds of poverty, giving an estimated total of 35.³⁹ Population numbers may be estimated by applying a multiplier of 4.5 to the estimated number of 35 households, giving an estimated population of 158.⁴⁰

³⁴ SA, DP17.

³⁵ Visit by author and Northwood and Newtown History Group, July 2017; Tithe apportionment, lots 3075 and 3076.

³⁶ Below, *Settlement*.

³⁷ TNA, LR 2/225.

³⁸ Counted from ACA, MS 508.

³⁹ *Shropshire Hearth Tax Rolls*, 51. For exemption rate, See General Introduction.

⁴⁰ For multiplier of 4.5, see General Introduction.

A census taken by the curate of Wem in 1800 recorded a population of 176 in Northwood township.⁴¹ In 1821 there were 33 habitations and a population of 182. In the next decade the population grew to 233, with 48 families living in 45 houses. The population continued to grow through the mid 19th century, but more slowly, reaching 262 in 1871, but declining thereafter.⁴² Caution is needed in interpreting trends, however, with such small numbers, as the inclusion of one or two properties could make a significant difference, and the allocation of individual farms to particular townships was variable. From 1861, however, figures are available for the population of Newtown parish, which offers a larger sample. The area of the parish is 2764 a., of which Northwood township represented about one half. The parish population in 1871 was 408.⁴³ By 1891 it had dropped to 359 and remained around that level to the mid 20th century.⁴⁴ Drawing out further still to the population of Wem Rural civil parish, for which census statistics are available, there was a further decline in the rural areas around Wem, from a population of 1,911 in 1951 to 1,175 in 1991, followed by a new rise to 1,659 in 2011. This trend can be applied to Northwood, where 13 additional new houses were built in one location, Salter's Mill, in 2005–8.

A survey of residents of Wem Rural parish was conducted in 2013, with 259 respondents, of whom 64 (26%) were from Newtown ward (including Northwood). The respondents were predominantly middle-aged, 74.5 per cent were aged 40 to 69; 64 per cent had lived in the area for more than 10 years, and 39 per cent for over 20 years. The majority of respondents were employed or self-employed (57%) or retired/semi-retired (36%), with 5 per cent either 'looking after a household' or studying.⁴⁵

Settlement

Due to its late colonisation Northwood did not have open or common fields; its settlement pattern is of dispersed farmsteads originating with the medieval and early modern enclosures.

⁴¹ *Wem Parish Registers*, 778–9.

⁴² Census.

⁴³ *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1879), 371.

⁴⁴ *Kelly's Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1900), 161; *Kelly's Dir. 1909*, 169; *Kelly's Dir. 1917*, 161; *Kelly's Dir. 1929*, 173; *Kelly's Dir. 1937*, 177.

⁴⁵ E. Craney, J. Horsley, J. Murgatroyd, L. Vernon, M. Whyte, S. Whyte and T. Wilton-Morgan (Wem Rural Community Plan Steering Group), *Wem Rural Community Plan* (2013), 9.

The present Northwood ‘village’ is a hamlet on the roadside common/waste formerly known as Northwood Green,⁴⁶ where routes converge at the river crossing.

Prehistoric to Anglo-Saxon

There is evidence for prehistoric activity in the Northwood area. A cropmark tentatively identified as a ring ditch has been observed between Northwood Farm and Wem Moss.⁴⁷ Due to lack of archaeological investigation the evidence is limited to chance finds. Human remains (‘bog bodies’) and a Middle Bronze Age bronze palstave were uncovered in Whixall Moss during commercial peat extraction.⁴⁸ In Northwood itself, a Middle to Late Bronze Age looped bronze palstave was found in plough soil in a field on the west side of Northwood Lane.⁴⁹ Another Bronze Age palstave and a perforated Bronze Age axe hammer have been found in fields at The Rookery, in the ‘moors’ between Wolverley and Northwood, possibly dredged from the Roden nearby.⁵⁰

Medieval

A tenement in the lord’s demesne named ‘the castellstede’ is recorded in 1561.⁵¹ Its 17 a. contained a close named ‘fordecrofte’, suggesting it was located near the Roden. A medieval fortification at the strategic river crossing into Wales is possible, however, there is no later record of it. This location also coincides with the exclave of Wolverley township, bounded by the Roden and, on the landward side, enclosed by a curvilinear ditch, whose origin may therefore be connected to this putative castle.

About 2 km to the northeast stood the ‘vowry cross’, depicted on the 1631 map as standing in isolation just outside bounds of Northwood. The custom of *advocaria* was claimed by Ralph le Botiler as lord of Wem in 1255, so it is likely that a ‘vowry cross’ then existed at the

⁴⁶ Garbet, 334, 335; *Church and Chapel*, 108; Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1890, Shropshire Sheet 14NW.

⁴⁷ Shropshire HER 34326. The site is visible, but indistinct, in LiDAR imagery.

⁴⁸ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 30–1, 41–6, 179.

⁴⁹ Shropshire HER, 03422; L.F. Chitty, ‘A bronze looped palstave from New House Farm, Wolverley, near Wem, Shropshire’, *TSAS*, 58: 1 (1965), 101–6. See also PAS, CPAT-79CD04: Late Bronze Age socketed axehead found in Wolverley.

⁵⁰ Shropshire HER, 02660 and 02920; D.A. Higgins, ‘Three unlooped palstaves from Shropshire’, *West Midlands Archaeology* 26 (1983), 1–7.

⁵¹ *Survey 1561*, 166–7.

boundary of Wem and Whixall to signify where his authority began and ended.⁵² The cross is not mentioned in extant documentary records until 1612, however.⁵³

The medieval woodland probably lacked permanent habitation, but would have been frequented by the lord's agents and manorial tenants exploiting the woodland resources. The North Wood does not appear to have been densely wooded; it is depicted on the 1631 Arundel map with standard trees widely spaced (compared with the map's depiction of trees in Tilley Park and Brockhurst, for example), and it was customarily used for woodland pasture. Place-names recorded in 1561 indicative of woodland management include: hazel hurst, hedge coppice ('hagge coppinge'), long hey, oak leas ('hoke lees'), and the old folds.⁵⁴ Redfellis Brook appears to take its name from Redfellis meadows, through which the brook flowed south into Newtown.⁵⁵ The same brook, further upstream at least, was named Horseheath Brook in 1561 – perhaps connected with Hossage ('horse stage' in 1714) in Whixall, probably the origin of the name of Ossage Lane which converges with the brook near its source.⁵⁶

The woodland regime was eroded by medieval enclosure from Lowe and Newtown to the south, by the second half of the 14th century.⁵⁷ The Northwood Hall farm extended north from the Lowe; it was incorporated into Newtown township c.1400, but its name indicates that originally it was within the North Wood. An enclosure of unknown date, comprising about 50 a., bounded by the Roden to the west and Northwood Green to the north, its sub-circular landward boundary marked by a ditch, remained a detached portion of Wolverley township.⁵⁸ Further north, part of Wem Moss was apparently annexed, before 1516, by John Hanmer of Bettisfield (Flints.) who enclosed 16 a. of waste at 'Blackfordes Heath'.⁵⁹

Early modern

⁵² *Rot. Hund.* II, 58b; *VCH Wem*, 134.

⁵³ SA, 167/5A, 18 Apr. 1612. A 'new inclosure called the Bowry Crosse' in 1648: ACA, MS 508, f. 30r.

⁵⁴ *Survey 1561*, 164–7.

⁵⁵ *Survey 1561*, 70 'Reddfelles broke', 164; Arundel map, 'Red Fellis'; ACA, MS 508, f. 6r, 'Redd fields meade' (1648); ACA, MS MD59, p. 76, 1652; Garbet, 325; Tithe apportionment, 'Red Fallows meadow'. Cf. Gelling, *PN Salop.* V, 250.

⁵⁶ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 51; *Shropshire Place-Names*, V, 287.

⁵⁷ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* III, nos. 880, 955; *Cal. Close Rolls, 1369–74*, 507; *Cal. Close Rolls, 1374–77*, 159. See 'Newtown'.

⁵⁸ Arundel map, adjacent closes dividing a sub-circular enclosure, labelled 'B. Richard Barclam' and 'B. William Ison'; Tithe apportionment, lots 3448–67, but apparently counted in Northwood in the 1805 Survey, pp. 82 ff.

⁵⁹ *Survey 1561*, 166–7; Garbet, 336.

Planned clearance and enclosure of what remained of the North Wood seems to have been initiated by William, Lord Dacre, lord of the manor from 1526 to 1563.⁶⁰ Organised enclosure in the mid 16th century is evidenced by the six tenements held at the lord's will that are listed together at the beginning of the 1561 survey of Northwood, apparently as planned allotments rented at 1s. per a.⁶¹ Three were of 14–15 a. (John Higginson, Thomas Lee, Randle Adams); John Harper held 10 a., but he also rented the herbage of an enclosed coppice of 3 a. ('the hagge coppye'); two more were both of 8 a. (Peter Harper, William Davies). These six tenements appear to have been regularly arranged, with two (Higginson and Lee) lying adjacent along Redfellis Brook, and the other four grouped in two pairs lying north and south of Thieves Bridge Lane, the northern pair (Adams, Peter Harper) extending north from the lane to the Roden.⁶²

By 1561, when the 'villata de Northewood' was appended to Lord Dacre's survey of the manor of Wem, there were seven small farms (around 8–17 a.) and five cottages on enclosures of just ½ a. to 2 a.⁶³ Clearance of the woodland was by no means complete but it was beginning to alter the traditional land uses. By 1579 Northwood tenants were driving away from their newly enclosed pastures swine that belonged to the burgesses of Wem, who had a customary right of pannage in the North Wood.⁶⁴ In 1589 Northwood was reckoned at 200 a., of which about 100 a. was cleared and leased to tenants, with the remainder still wooded, including large trees and coppices. The 100 a. still wooded seems an underestimate, even with Wem Moss (the 'moss or heath called Thornspike') as an additional 30 a.⁶⁵ The manor court regularly fined individuals for cutting down trees and removing cartloads of wood, and for encroachment on the lord's waste, enclosing land and building cottages in Northwood⁶⁶ – in 1618 ordering all unauthorised encroachments in Northwood to be laid

⁶⁰ S.G. Ellis, 'Dacre, William, third Baron Dacre of Gilsland and seventh Baron Greystoke (1500–1563)', *ODNB; Garbet*, 336. On this process, see S. Watts, 'The significance of colonisation in two north Shropshire parishes: Wem and Whitchurch c.1560–1660', *Midland History*, 25 (2000), 61–77, at 65.

⁶¹ *Survey 1561*, 164–5. See also the 1589 valuation: TNA, LR 2/225, listing the same six tenements.

⁶² This pattern is shown on the Arundel map (1631), when the tenants were Thomas Broomhall (of Northwood Hall) and William Cowper at Redfellis, Richard Adams and Thomas Gregory north of Thieves Bridge Lane, and 'Davis' and John Harper south of the lane.

⁶³ *Survey, 1561*, 164–7.

⁶⁴ SA, 167/1, 22 Apr. 1579.

⁶⁵ TNA, LR 2/225.

⁶⁶ SA, 167/3–167/5A.

open on pain of £1 19s. 10d.⁶⁷ Colonisation continued under Ann, countess of Arundel, lord of the manor, 1589–1630.⁶⁸ A petition from the overseers of the poor to the countess claiming that the parish of Wem ‘was overcharged with divers poor cottagers ... (most of them dwelling upon her lands) and placed there by her officers heretofore to work in her woods’, but ‘now her work being done’,⁶⁹ may refer to the situation in Northwood.

The Arundel map of 1631 depicts a large increase in the number of dwellings since 1561, with just the portion of Northwood east of Redfellis brook and a corridor approximately following Northwood Lane, extending more widely at the north limit of the township, remaining unenclosed. At the Wolverley boundary, both the ‘Narrow Lane’ tenements and, across the road, the later Rookery Farm (Rowland Weaver, later the School Lands) were already established. In 1648 there were at least 32 dwellings in Northwood, the majority modest, of one to two bays. Of the 24 households that paid hearth tax in 1672, 22 were taxed on a single hearth; only the houses of Thomas Fardoe and Roger Adams were larger, with three hearths each.⁷⁰ There were still tenements termed ‘new enclosure’ in 1648, but by then the woodland had been ‘extinguished’ and the last 217 a. was subdivided and let to tenants by the earl of Arundel’s trustees.⁷¹

The present Northwood ‘village’ grew up at Northwood Green, the common or waste land at the junction of the Wem–Ellesmere road and Thieves Bridge Lane, extending west to the ford on the Roden, now Blackhurstford bridge. By 1631 there was already the appearance of a roadside hamlet, with six houses clustered along the road leading to the ford. The triangular space to the east, labelled ‘waste’ on the 1631 map, is edged with another six houses and several small closes.

Settlement from the 18th to 21st centuries

With the creation of the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike, a toll house was constructed at the road junction. The area grew busier in the 19th century with the arrival of the canal and then the railway about one mile to the north. By 1841 there were about 14 residential or commercial premises clustered around the road junction and along the turnpike road to the

⁶⁷ SA, 167/5A, 20 Apr. 1618.

⁶⁸ N. Pollard Brown, ‘Howard [née Dacre], Anne, countess of Arundel (1557–1630)’, *ODNB*.

⁶⁹ Garbet, 59.

⁷⁰ *Shropshire Hearth Tax Rolls*, 51.

⁷¹ ACA, MS 508, fols. 29v–30r, 26v.

bridge.⁷² In 1851 there was a smithy, a public house (as now, the Horse and Jockey), grocery shop, and post office.⁷³ A Methodist chapel was added in 1861.⁷⁴ During the 20th century there was some low density infilling, and a development on the eastern edge of the hamlet, Salter's Mill, added a dozen new houses in 2005–2008.⁷⁵

The Built Character

Northwood Primitive Methodist Chapel

The foundation stones of this chapel were laid on Monday 16 July 1860 and it opened on 25 November of that year. Constructed of brick under a slate roof with a blue-brick plinth, it is typical of a small rural chapel with entrance in the front lateral wall. The front has double boarded doors between two tall windows with patterned cast iron glazing, all three openings with prominent wedge lintels. Above the doorway is a stone tablet with recessed panel reading 'PRIMITIVE METHODIST/ Jubilee Chapel/ 1860/ The land kindly given/ by W. Williams'. Two patterned cast iron windows light the rear, matching those to the front. A further bay with lower roof-line was added to the east end by 1902: it contains the current entrance in the east gable end and two windows to the front, all with wedge lintels. Inside the east entrance is an ante-room and community space. This leads into the chapel which has an open three-bay roof with light queen-post trusses. There is no gallery. The seating consists of rows of raked and panelled pews facing a small rostrum and the walls are partly wood-panelled.⁷⁶

The Horse and Jockey Public House

The building is marked on the 1833 Ordnance Survey and 1841 tithe map, and the long plan of the inn is shown on Ordnance Survey maps from 1884 onwards. It was in a strategic position on the former turnpike road (B5063) and near the river crossing, which marks the

⁷² Tithe map. Below, 'Economic History'.

⁷³ Bagshaw, 334–5.

⁷⁴ Below, Religious History.

⁷⁵ Shropshire Council, Planning, application reference no. NS/04/05682/DOMFP. Below, 'Economic History'.

⁷⁶ Cox, *Shropshire's Nonconformist Chapels*:

<http://www.users.waitrose.com/~coxfamily/northwd.htm>; RCHME, citing C. Stell, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses: Shropshire & Staffordshire* (1986), 203; OS 25", *Shropshire Sheet XIV.NW 1884, 1902*; Site visit 23 Jan. 2020 (Public lecture).

border with Flintshire. The inn comprises a long two-storey range of painted brick, the roof coverings replaced. One rendered stack to the centre probably also serves the rear wing. There are five wooden casement windows to each storey, irregularly arranged, those to the ground floor under segmental heads. The entrance is right of centre and consists of a boarded door under an open, gabled timber porch. In front of the property is a low forecourt wall with bullnose blue brick copings.⁷⁷

Turnpike Toll House (now Northwood Cottage)

The turnpike toll house is shown on the tithe map of 1841, and fronts the B5063 road at the road junction. The former toll house has been much altered and modernised, but is shown in its original condition in a photograph of 1969. The two-storey, two-window cottage is of brick under a slate roof with dentilled brick eaves. There were two brick chimneys, to left of centre and the left end, the latter now removed, and a rear wing. The 1969 photograph reveals a boarded door under an open gabled porch to the right of the front elevation, whilst the windows to the left were wooden casements with small panes. In recent years, the cottage has been rendered, the windows replaced and the entrance moved to the right-hand gable end. A five-bar gate is shown in the 1969 photograph, on the right-hand side of the house.⁷⁸

Further north along the road, next to the Horse and Jockey Inn, is another two-storey, two-window cottage of probable 18th-century date which is shown on the tithe map of 1841. It has dentilled brick eaves but is otherwise modernised. It is known as the Old Post Office, though when it functioned as such is unclear.⁷⁹

Northwood House

Northwood House is shown on the 1833 Ordnance Survey along with the lane it borders, at Northwood Green. The early 19th-century Georgian villa is of two storeys with an H-type plan. It is rendered under a shallow hipped roof with wide boarded eaves. The entrance in the south-facing range consists of a square portico with shaped arches on three sides, with

⁷⁷ SA, 972/7/1/49; OS old edition, 1833; tithe map (Northwood township); OS, Shropshire Sheet XIV.NW 1884; Bagshaw, 335.

⁷⁸ SA, PH/S/14/15/55: photograph sourced from *Shropshire Newsletter*, 1969, 37, p. 35; tithe map, 1840 (Northwood township).

⁷⁹ Tithe map (Northwood township). The 'Old Post Office' name-plate has been added since 2011: Google Streetview, May 2011.

keystones rising to the cornice, inside which is a panelled door. The flanking windows are narrow and contain modern glazing. Bordering the lane, the long west side is two-window to the centre, with blind windows to the projecting gable ends. There are recent additions to the rear and east side.⁸⁰

The Lawn

An elegant country house said in 1839 to be ‘newly erected’ by Samuelus Wilkinson,⁸¹ although stylistically it appears to be of the late 18th century with 19th-century alterations and additions.⁸² The tall three-storey symmetrical house is constructed of brick under a slate roof with brick end stacks and a dentilled and fluted eaves cornice. It has prominent stone dressings in classical style, including raised copings on carved kneelers which support tall finials. The house has a central stone Tuscan-style portico with raised pediment carved with a ship’s anchor, inside which is a panelled door with over-light. The house has tall sash windows with wedge lintels with keystones and sills with aprons. Over the central first-floor window is a later inscription reading SW (inverted) and 1898. To the rear is a central, full-height gabled staircase projection, the oak winder staircase survives on the upper floor only. The rear windows are small casements with wedge lintels as front, and adjoining to the right is a single-storey rear range with large end stack.⁸³

The house is set within generous gardens, laid to lawn with specimen trees. A through-driveway runs from north to south, effectively forming the third side of a triangle in the junction of two lanes, an arrangement shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1890. At both entrances are stone gate piers with finials on the capstones, each supporting an ironwork gate and with flanking brick quadrant walls. Opposite the south entrance is a small plot labelled ‘Garden Buildings’ on the tithe map.⁸⁴

Northwood Farm

⁸⁰ Ordnance Survey, 1833; tithe map, 1840 (Northwood township).

⁸¹ Will of Samuelus Wilkinson, 6 Dec. 1839: TNA, PROB 11/1953/132.

⁸² Historic England, List Entry No. 1236485.

⁸³ Historic England, List Entry No. 1236485; OS old edition, 1833; tithe map (Northwood township); Bagshaw, 335; Google Street View, April 2009.

⁸⁴ Tithe map (Northwood township); OS, 1st edition, 1890, Shropshire Sheet 14NW

Northwood Farm can be identified with Hazelhurst, the tenement of Randle Adams in 1561. There was a dwelling house in 1561, depicted in 1631 at around the same location as the present house but closer to the road. By 1648 it was one of the largest houses in the township, of three and a half bays ‘of good building’, with a three-bay barn, another of two bays, a turf house and ‘kill house’, all in good repair, a garden and some fruit trees.⁸⁵ In 1672 it was assessed for three hearths. As described by Garbet *c.*1750, the house lay ‘up to Thieves Bridge Lane’.⁸⁶

The present Northwood Farm is a good example of the early 19th-century farmstead in this part of North Shropshire. The Georgian-style, symmetrical two-storey house is of red brick under a hipped slate roof, with two brick chimney stacks set back behind the ridge. It is characterised by tall 16-pane sash windows with large wedge lintels, three to the upper storey and flanking the central door-case with panelled door. To the rear and extending to the left is a large two-storey brick wing with small casement windows.

The farm is included in the sale catalogue for The Woodlands estate in 1947. A photograph in the catalogue shows the house much as now, but the rear range had no windows, perhaps suggesting a non-domestic function. The catalogue lists the rooms as dining room, drawing room, kitchen and pantry, a passageway with sink, dairy, press-house and wash-house. The upstairs contained up to eight bedrooms, with a further three in the attic, probably to accommodate farm workers and servants.⁸⁷

The extensive farm buildings advertised included several cow-houses, a piggery, loose boxes, stall-stables, a meal-house, engine house, an open shed and hay barn. These are located to the north of the house, except for a long brick range fronting the road with slate roof, dentilled eaves and diamond-shaped ventilation panels. Although now altered, a building is shown here on the 1833 Ordnance Survey. A longer brick range with corrugated roof, probably a multi-purpose farm building, is located behind and at a slight angle, following the field boundary. It has pitching-fork oculi to the loft and ventilation panels and is shown on 1890 map. There was an orchard to the left of the farmyard.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ ACA, MS 508, fo. 11r.

⁸⁶ Garbet, 332–4; SA, 972/7/1/49.

⁸⁷ The Wolverley Estate, sales catalogue: 6 Mar. 1947.

⁸⁸ Ordnance Survey, 1833; Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1890, Shropshire Sheet 14NW; Shropshire HER PRN 26737: ESA6427.

Poolhead Primitive Methodist Chapel

A small rural chapel located on the east side of the township, close to the border with Edstaston, in a former field named ‘Jackson’s Croft’ on the tithe map. A chapel is said to have been built here in 1841, but the current building is dated 1864 and it appears to have been remodelled. The chapel is reported to have had four new windows, a new front wall and entrance, new facings and iron palisading, all at a cost of £55. The cast iron windows would certainly favour the later date (1864), and it is interesting that a blocked pointed-arched window can be seen in the west gable, perhaps part of the earlier phase.

The chapel is constructed of brick under a slate roof with dentilled brick eaves, and brick dentils to the gables. The front faces south and is entered via a gabled brick porch with round-arched entrance. This is flanked by tall round-arched windows with cast iron radial glazing; there are two similar cast iron windows to the north wall. Above the entrance is a stone tablet with sunken panel, the inscription reading: ‘PRIMITIVE/ METHODIST CHAPEL/ ERECTED 1864/ THEY SHALL PROSPER/ THAT TRUST IN/ THE LORD’. In 1864, the interior is said to have had eight rising pews installed, along with a boarded floor and a platform. The chapel closed in 1983 and by the turn of the millennium was derelict and boarded up. In 2003, it was converted into a dwelling, but much of its external character has been retained.⁸⁹

In 1941 Wem Rural District Council drew up plans to build social housing, two pairs of semi-detached houses, in Northwood hamlet next to the chapel.⁹⁰ The site is occupied, however, by a detached private house of mid 20th-century architectural style. The council’s planned houses were instead built on a more isolated plot beside the road from Wolverley, at the southern limit of Northwood.

The Salter’s Mill residential development of 2005–2008 comprises thirteen detached and semi-detached houses of varied design but in matching brick, with imitation roof slates and

⁸⁹ <http://www.users.waitrose.com/~coxfamily/paddolgr.htm>; Google Street View, April 2009; tithe map (Northwood township).

⁹⁰ SA, DA27/701/1/7; DA27/701/1/22; DA27/743/5.

stone lintels, designed in some sympathy with the vernacular and Arts and Crafts styles of existing local housing.⁹¹

LANDOWNERSHIP

Manorial Demesne

In its woodland state, prior to the 16th-century colonisation, the whole of Northwood was demesne as the lord's waste, with some of the manorial tenants holding customary rights of pasture and turbary. In 1561, when the 'villata de Northwood' was appended to Lord Dacre's survey of the manor of Wem, there were 11 tenants of the lord's demesne and three copyhold tenements.⁹² A survey in 1589 found that there were no freehold tenements in Northwood and but one small tenement held 'by indenture', while rents from tenants at will totalled £5 16s. 8d. This is in marked contrast with the other Wem townships, where tenure was freehold, copyhold or a mixture of both, and rents from tenants at will were negligible.⁹³

By 1648 there were just over 40 tenants-at-will in Northwood, with holdings of widely varying size, from the smallest new 'intake' of an acre or less, to the 140 a. farm of Roger Gorstilowe with 'a fair dwelling house' of seven bays, or the 105 a. farm of Richard Adams.⁹⁴ The trustees for sale of Thomas, earl of Arundel, finally leased the last remaining 217 a. 'common of pasture' to a dozen tenants in lots for terms of nine years from 1649.⁹⁵

Between 1652 and 1654 just under half of the Northwood tenements were sold by the earl's trustees, either to the sitting tenants or to wealthy investors, notably Thomas Barnes of Lowe Hall and Sir Thomas Adams.⁹⁶ By 1805 the demesne had been reduced to about 68 a., made up of scattered pieces of agricultural land and about four smallholdings, most if not all of which were sold by the earl of Darlington, the new lord of the manor, in 1809.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Shropshire Council, Planning, application reference no. NS/04/05682/DOMFP: Below, *Buildings*, and 'Economic History'.

⁹² *Survey 1561*, 164–7.

⁹³ TNA, SC 12/26/56.

⁹⁴ ACA, MS 508, fols. 5r–24v.

⁹⁵ ACA, MS 508, fols. 27r–29v.

⁹⁶ E.g., ACA, MS 508, fols. 10v–13v; ACA, MS MD 59, pp. 51–83; for Adams: Garbet, 332–5.

⁹⁷ 1805 Survey; 1809 account of sales: SA, 6000/12498; deed regarding sale by the earl's agents in 1810 to David Roberts of a messuage with 4 a. 2 r. 7 p. for £500: SA, 3994 box 5.

Wem Moss remained in the lord's hands, with tenants exercising common rights.⁹⁸ In 1704–5, the copyholders of the manor petitioned the trustees of the lordship over abuses of office by their receiver, Thomas Chettoe, who had 'given away the lord's rights in a heath called Wem Heath to Sir Thomas Hanmer for whom he keeps courts so that some of the tenants have lost the rites of turbury'.⁹⁹ In the 1805 survey 'Wem Heath' (72 a.) was not assigned to any owner, but in the 1841 tithe apportionment it was the only property in the township pertaining to the lord of the manor.¹⁰⁰ Wem Moss, comprising 70.88 a. (28.68 ha.), was provisionally registered under the Common Registration Act 1965 by Wem Rural Parish Council in 1968.¹⁰¹ At that time, three commoners were registered, including D.E. Thelwell of Old Hall, Hanmer, whose common rights were said to include estovers, turbury, grazing for 14 cattle, and sporting rights. A second, Frank Hulson of Northwood Farm, claimed common rights of pasture for 50 sheep, 50 cattle and 50 pigs; he also paid the lord of the manor for licence to shoot on the moss. Registration was disputed by E.W. Stokes, the tenant of Top House Farm, who claimed exclusive possession by grazing and enclosure of the moss for several decades. In 1975 the Commons Commissioner confirmed Lord Barnard's ownership of Wem Moss and its registration as common land. At the same time, the Commissioner declared the claims of two commoners void but confirmed the right of common pertaining to Northwood Farm, limited to grazing 15 cattle and six pigs.¹⁰² In 1990 Lord Barnard sold his rights in Wem Moss to Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the nature conservation charity that continues to manage the property.¹⁰³

Copyhold tenements

At an early stage in the colonisation of the North Wood, it appears that some new enclosures, once authorised, were held by customary tenure. In 1561 there were four such tenements, whose rents were accounted with those of Newtown.¹⁰⁴ Two were half-acre enclosures located on the edge of Newtown: a cottage at 'Longe Haye' and 'the house at the

⁹⁸ TNA, LR2/225.

⁹⁹ National Library of Wales, MS Bute Estate Records M70/3.

¹⁰⁰ Tithe apportionment.

¹⁰¹ SCC, Register of Common Land, registration unit CL18.

¹⁰² SCC, Register of Common Land, registration unit CL18; Commons Registration Act 1965, ref. no. 231/D/32, 33 and 34, hearing at Shrewsbury, 21 Apr. 1975.

¹⁰³ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 8; Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Wem Moss.

¹⁰⁴ *Survey 1561*, 166–7: '[memorandum] this is in the Rentall of the newtowne'.

Northwood Lanes ende'.¹⁰⁵ Of a different order, however, was the tenement of John Hanmer of Bettisfield, a copyhold tenement created or renewed by Lord Dacre in 1516 based on the enclosure of 16 a. of Wem Moss, where he had built a dwelling house, paying a low rent of 12*d.* per annum.

By 1589 there were no copyhold tenements in Northwood, implying that the few copyhold tenements had been taken back into the lord's hand, or added to Newtown. John Hanmer of Bettisfield died in 1589 leaving apparently no estate in Northwood.¹⁰⁶ The Hanmer tenement may be identified with the Hornspike farm, which was the lord's demesne by 1631, when the substantial dwelling house and farm was let to a Richard Penson, and around 1648 was sold by the earl of Arundel's trustees to William Toomes, probably as agent for Sir Thomas Adams.¹⁰⁷

Freehold estates

About half of the Northwood tenements were enfranchised by the earl of Arundel's trustees and converted to freehold in the mid 17th century, a process that continued until all but Wem Moss had become freehold by the 20th century. In the Arundel sale, some tenements were accumulated by wealthy speculators, who generally retained the sitting tenants, and others were purchased by their tenants, so the numerous smallholdings that were the legacy of piecemeal enclosure persisted. Garbet's account of the township, in place of the usual account of the principal estates in 1752, describes just three: the large estate acquired by Sir Thomas Adams, which had since been disposed of by Adams' descendants; the 'school lands' purchased from John Broomhall of Northwood Hall (Newtown) by the feoffees of Wem Grammar School in 1655; and the Wilkinson/Wingfield estate (see below).¹⁰⁸

In 1805 there were about 35 freeholders¹⁰⁹; the largest estate was that of Lord Kenyon (George Kenyon, Lord Kenyon of Gredington (Flintshire), 1776–1855¹¹⁰) with three farms

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. For 'Long Hay', another tenement called 'the Longhayelake' was described as adjoining a close called Kenricks (ibid.), which was in Newtown: Arundel map.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PROB 11/74/525.

¹⁰⁷ Arundel map: substantial dwelling house on close let to Richard Penson; ACA, MS 508, f.12r, 'Mr Toomes' purchaser, presumed agent for Sir Thomas Adams. The 17th-century farmhouse is Grade II listed: Historic England, no. 1264233.

¹⁰⁸ Garbet, 332–6, also 180 (Adams), 182 (the school lands).

¹⁰⁹ 1805 Survey.

totalling 235 a., extending east from Northwood hamlet and north from Thieves Bridge Lane to the parish boundary – largely corresponding with the former Adams estate. The next largest landowner was the Lowe Hall estate (‘Mr Watson’), with a 146 a. farm in the portion of Northwood east of Redfellis Brook. Wem Grammar School still owned its 71 a. Samuel Wilkinson was the resident landowner with the largest estate, combining freehold and leasehold (see below).

At the tithe apportionment in 1841 there were 48 landowners, with about half the township’s land owned by five or six, notably, as in 1805: Lord Kenyon, the Lowe Hall estate, the heirs of Samuel Wilkinson, and Wem Grammar School.

By the mid 1870s, Lord Kenyon was replaced as the principal landowner in Northwood by the Revd Sir William McDonald Honyman, bt (1820–1911), who presumably had acquired some of the former’s estate there. Honyman had inherited Coton Hall (Coton, Wem), from his maternal uncle, George Bowen, and resided there for the rest of his life.¹¹¹ The Coton Hall estate was sold by Honyman’s heiress around 1920,¹¹² and at least some of the tenements in Northwood were eventually acquired by the Maddocks’ Woodlands estate.

In 1807 Thomas Maddocks, newly arrived from Bronington (Flints.), purchased New House farm, including 72 a. in Northwood (see Wolverley). By 1841 the estate was supplemented by land and three smallholdings at Northwood Green, including the public house.¹¹³ The Maddocks estate was progressively enlarged in Northwood – Northwood Farm (133 a.) may have been purchased in the break-up of the Lowe Hall estate in 1874–8¹¹⁴ – as well as Newtown and Wolverley, and from the 1920s it was the principal landowner in Northwood.¹¹⁵ When the estate was sold in 1947, the Northwood properties were: New House Farm, Northwood Farm, Top House Farm, Pinfold House, a tenement on Narrow

¹¹⁰ Lord Lloyd Tyrell-Kenyon, ‘Kenyon family’ (1959), *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*: <https://biography.wales/article/s-KENY-ON0-1694> (accessed 21 June 2021).

¹¹¹ ‘Honyman, Sir George Essex, fourth baronet (1819–1875)’, *ODNB*. George Bowen, son of Admiral George Bowen, fl. 1864: SA, 6000/15097, 6000/15100; SA, P295/Q/8/1/4.

¹¹² *Kelly’s Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1917), principal landowner: Capt. Robert Charles Wilson-MacQueen; J. Phillips-Evans, *The Longcrofts: 500 Years of a British Family* (2012) (cited in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coton,_Shropshire).

¹¹³ *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 16 Nov. 1838, 1; Tithe apportionment; SA, 2018/3, Map of estate of Thomas Maddocks, esq., by S. Groom (no date, before 1870).

¹¹⁴ Sold in 1874: SA, SC/6/59; *Eddowes’s Jnl*, 19 Aug. 1874, 1. Eight lots comprising: Northwood Farm (c.133 acres).

¹¹⁵ *Kelly’s Directory of Shropshire 1929* (London, 1929), 173.

Lane, Wheelwright's Cottage and a smallholding at Wem Moss, plus accommodation land, around 500 a. in total.¹¹⁶

Returning to the resident Wilkinson family,¹¹⁷ by 1631 Robert Wilkinson (probably from Wolverley) held a tenement with a dwelling house in Northwood beside Redfellis brook. In 1648 the tenement consisted of a two-bay house, barn, garden, 34 a. of common pasture and 20 a. held in lease until 1658.¹¹⁸ In 1652 Robert Wilkinson purchased from the earl of Arundel's trustees the tenement he then occupied.¹¹⁹ At the same time, Thomas Wilkinson held another tenement of the lord's demesne, the Hornspike farm.¹²⁰ That farm was purchased around 1648 by William Toomes of Hackney (Middlesex), who in 1653 leased it to Thomas Wilkinson, his wife and son Robert for their lives, along with other pieces of land at the Hornspike.¹²¹ Robert, the son, moved to Aston Hall (Aston, Wem) where he died in 1700,¹²² apparently ending the family's interest in the property.

Andrew, the son of Robert Wilkinson (of Wolverley), around 1679 sold his freehold tenement in Wolverley to Rowland Wingfield of Preston Brockhurst.¹²³ It appears that he also sold his Northwood tenement to Wingfield, as the Pinfold farm was owned by the Wingfields into the 19th century. Wilkinsons remained as tenants of both the Wolverley farm and the Pinfold.¹²⁴ Samuel Wilkinson purchased the freehold of a farm and land in Northwood from George Watson of Whitchurch in 1775.¹²⁵ In 1805 Samuel Wilkinson was the resident landowner with the largest estate in Northwood, with 103 a. in freehold plus 97 a. leased from John Wingfield.¹²⁶ Samuel's son, Samuelus resided at Pinfold House and built a gentleman's residence, The Lawns, on his freehold property, completed shortly before

¹¹⁶ Woodlands estate, 1947 sale catalogue.

¹¹⁷ See SA, 1416, Lee, Bygott & Eccleston solicitors: Wilkinson of Northwood family papers.

¹¹⁸ Arundel, map; ACA, MS 508, f. 20r.

¹¹⁹ ACA, MD 59, p. 72.

¹²⁰ Arundel map; ACA, MS 508, fo. 12r, 30r. Above, 'Copyhold'.

¹²¹ SA, 1416, box 3, indenture of 29 Mar. 1692.

¹²² Garbet, 335–6, 355.

¹²³ SA, 306 boxes 3c, 5b and 5c, 6b, sale of Wolverley messuage and farm by John Wingfield to Thomas Dickin, 1825–6; Also, SA, 306 box 5e: conveyance 1. Thomas Wingfield of Preston Brockhurst and Thomas Wilkinson of Wolverley to 2. Daniel Payne of Wolverley, a croft in Wolverley known as the Lyners, 8 May 1708. Garbet, 330.

¹²⁴ Garbet, 330, 335–6; Abstract of title to Pinfold Farm, 1764–1847: SA, 1868 box 159; Notice of sale of a freehold estate at Wolverley and Northwood, including Pinfold Farm (98 acres), by John Wingfield, in 1825: SA, 306 box 5b.

¹²⁵ SA, 6000/11779.

¹²⁶ 1805 Survey, xx. For the Wingfield estate: <https://shrewsburylocalhistory.org.uk/street-names/wingfield-gardens>

1839.¹²⁷ Richard Wilkinson, a younger son, remained at the Pinfold farm until it was sold by John Wingfield in 1847.¹²⁸ Samuelus' posthumous son, Thomas Wilkinson,¹²⁹ resided at The Lawns until his death in 1912, when it was sold to Joseph Lockett, then of the Pinfold Farm. Lockett's younger son, John, and daughter Margaret, occupied the Pinfold farm until the latter's death in 1955, while the older son, William, inherited The Lawns, which is still in the ownership of the Lockett family.¹³⁰

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Woodland and Forestry

In the Middle Ages the economy of the North Wood was entirely based on the exploitation of woodland resources. Being the lord's demesne, all its products and rents were perquisites of the lordship, with tenants of the manor holding customary rights of pasture and estovers.

The particular economy of the North Wood cannot generally be discerned, however, because there were also large areas of woodland in the south of the manor (Tilley Park, Trench and Brockhurst) as well as the north (the North Wood, Coton Wood and Edstaston Park), and the earliest records do not generally distinguish them. In the decades after the plantation of Wem as a Norman castle-town, the woodland extending far to the north may have barely been incorporated into the manor, let alone the manorial economy, in contrast with Tilley Park ('the old park'). In 1086 a hawk's nest (*aira acciptris*) was deemed a particularly valuable asset of the manor, and in 1290 sparrowhawks (*espervarii*) along with honey (*mel silvestris*) from the lord's woods were valued at 20s. per annum,¹³¹ but whether sparrowhawks were bred in the North Wood is not specified. Likewise, in 1086 *Weme* manor was said to have woodland pasture sufficient for 100 swine, a figure that seems too low to have included the North Wood.

¹²⁷ Samuelus Wilkinson died in 1841: TNA, PROB 11/1953/132; Bagshaw, 334–5.

¹²⁸ Sold to John Lloyd Rodenhurst of Coton: Abstract of title to Pinfold Farm: SA, 1868 box 159; Census 1841, 1851; *Eddowes's Jnl*, 27 Jan. 1847, 3.

¹²⁹ Samuelus' elder son, Samuel, took holy orders; he returned to officiate at the laying of the foundation stone of Newtown church in 1868: *Wellington Jnl*, 30 May 1868, 7.

¹³⁰ *Crewe Chron.*, 19 Mar. 1955, 13; pers. comm. Mark Lockett at The Lawns, 2019.

¹³¹ TNA, E 149/1, *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, ii, 470, no. 774.

Woodland pasture in the North Wood was regulated by 1290, when Whixall tenants paid the lord of Wem an annual rent for access to pasture there.¹³² The copyhold tenants and burgesses of Wem had the right of free common pasture; hence the grazing (*herbagium*) of ‘le Northwode’ was of no value to the lord.¹³³ For pannage, however, the tenants rendered ‘wormtach’, a customary due of 2*d.* per adult swine (the rate in 1564, with one boar and one sow free of charge) or ½*d.* in years when there was insufficient mast.¹³⁴

Honey was another valuable product of Wem’s medieval woodlands, as noted above. Apiculture was certainly carried on in Northwood in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, when a ‘swarm of bees’ or ‘the Bees’ were counted as goods and chattels in a small number of probate inventories.¹³⁵

The North Wood was also exploited for wood and undergrowth (*subboscus*), worth 2*s.* per annum to the lord in 1361 and 10*s.* in 1369.¹³⁶ The woodland was managed in certain places by coppicing; withies were grown at Northwood Spring.¹³⁷ In the late 16th century fines were regularly imposed by the manor court on tenants for cutting down trees and taking wood in Northwood, although this may evidence unauthorised clearance and enclosure rather than simple breaches of the medieval woodland regime. The tenants of new enclosures in Northwood, from the mid 16th century, would also have been clearing their land and they or their neighbours worked the timber into boards, spokes, spars, beams and posts. One was Thomas Cowper who farmed a tenement held of the lord at lease for a fixed term; at his death in 1593 his goods included: ‘rent timber’, ‘clyft timber of ashe and sawed boordes with one trine of feelyes with three trine of spookes’, ‘sawed timber at the sawpit’ and ‘yrne ware sawes and edge toyles’. John Menlove (d. 1615) left ‘timber wrought’, standing and fallen trees, and wood valued at £15 5*s.* James Jackson, who also produced barley, flax, and woollen cloth from a small flock of sheep, died in 1616 leaving 28 ‘spares’ of timber and 19 more pieces, four ‘standerts’, three posts and two beams ‘in the parke’ worth 13*s.*; six

¹³² TNA, E 149/1, *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, ii, 470, no. 774.

¹³³ TNA, C 135/157/4, *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, xi, 27 no. 37 (1361); TNA, C 135/206/15, *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, xi, 324 (1369).

¹³⁴ Garbet, 119; SA, 167/000; SA, 167/1, 22 Apr. 1579.

¹³⁵ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’: Thomas Cowper, [timberman] (d. 1593), Edward Williams, ‘husbandman’, of ‘Weme Northwood’ (d. 1622).

¹³⁶ TNA, C 135/157/4, *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, xi, 27 no.37 (1361); TNA, C 135/206/15, *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, xi, 324 (1369).

¹³⁷ SA, 167/5A, 5 May 1617. Above, ‘Settlement’.

‘standerts’ and more pieces of timber ‘about the house’ worth 10s.¹³⁸ The North Wood was ‘extinguished’ by 1648, but commercial timber production continued. In 1791, 408 oak trees growing on a farm in Northwood were advertised for sale.¹³⁹ Such sales, on a smaller scale, continued into the mid 19th century; John Dobell sold 77 ‘good oak trees’ growing on his farm in 1842.¹⁴⁰ Northwood today is predominantly an open agricultural landscape with isolated mature trees and hederows.

The ‘mosses’ north of Wem were a valuable source of peat, exploited both for domestic use and commercially.¹⁴¹ A valuation of the manor of Wem in 1589 included 30 a. of ‘moss or heath’ called ‘Thornspike’ (the Hornspike) where the tenants cut turves and paid the lord of the manor,¹⁴² although common of turbary was an appurtenance of some Northwood tenements.¹⁴³ Roger Harper, who died in 1624, left various implements probably used for peat cutting including ‘a cutting iron and a shoovell’.¹⁴⁴ The peat dug by the tenants was used mainly for fuel: ‘they usually burne [it] and therewith maintaine good fireinge’.¹⁴⁵ Samuel Garbet wrote, c.1740, that ‘the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages get turf for fuel’ in the ‘morass’;¹⁴⁶ in 1648 one of the Northwood tenements included ‘a little turfe howse’.¹⁴⁷ The enclosure of Fenn’s, Bettisfield and Whixall mosses, initially resisted by their commoners, ultimately led to their commercial exploitation.¹⁴⁸ Wem Moss never seems to have been enclosed or exploited on a large scale, however. From the mid 19th century men from Northwood were engaged in commercial peat extraction at Bettisfield and Whixall mosses, where ‘many of the labouring population are employed in cutting the moss and raising the submerged timber which they carry to the surrounding towns for fuel; immense quantities of oak and fir trees are constantly got up’.¹⁴⁹ In 1851 John Brown gave his occupation as farmer (of 13 a.) and ‘turf man’, but some of the men whose occupation was recorded in the census as ‘general labourer’ may have been engaged in commercial peat digging. In 1901 George

¹³⁸ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’.

¹³⁹ *Chester Chron.*, 25 Mar. 1791, 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Chester Chron.*, 18 Mar. 1842, 2. Also *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 1 Feb. 1833, 2.

¹⁴¹ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 47–50, 87–111.

¹⁴² TNA, LR2/225.

¹⁴³ SA, 1416, Wilkinson of Northwood papers, box 3: indenture of 29 Mar. 1692, reciting 1653 lease by William Toomes to Thomas Wilkinson; Berry et al., *Mosses*, 48–50.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’.

¹⁴⁵ ACA, MS 508, f. 42r.

¹⁴⁶ Garbet, 336.

¹⁴⁷ ACA, MS 508, fol. 7v; Berry et al., *Mosses*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 50–4.

¹⁴⁹ Bagshaw, 334; Berry et al., *Mosses*, 87.

Williams gave his occupation as ‘turf cutter’, but notably his adult son was employed as a signalman on the railway. Commercial peat cutting at Fenn’s, Bettisfield and Whixall mosses ceased during the 1990s, but hand-cutting was permitted, under strict regulation, until 2008, when it was declared incompatible with restoration of the natural environment.¹⁵⁰

Farming

Early modern

Clearance of the woodland gave way to a mixed agricultural economy. By the 1590s rye and barley were cultivated and, in the early 17th century, buckwheat and oats as well.¹⁵¹ In the 18th century the sandy-gravelly soil in the west of the township was deemed best for growing rye, while the clay soil of the east ‘produces excellent wheat’.¹⁵² Marl dug within the township, lime and manure were all used to improve the soil.¹⁵³ Oxen were used for ploughing in the 17th century, but had been replaced by horses by the 18th.¹⁵⁴

Hemp and flax were cultivated by the 1590s.¹⁵⁵ In 1612 eleven Northwood tenants were fined for watering hemp.¹⁵⁶ The tow was spun into yarn domestically and there were also local weavers.¹⁵⁷

Horses, pigs and poultry were kept for domestic use. In the 16th and early 17th century there were small flocks of sheep,¹⁵⁸ probably grazing in the residual woodland. By c.1740 Samuel Garbet could remark that ‘few sheep are kept’ in the whole manor, noting in particular sheep on woodland pasture in Coton, which were ‘of a small size’.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁰ Berry et al., *Mosses*, 124–6; Countryside Council for Wales, *Core Management Plan Including Conservation Objectives for Fenn’s, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*, 12 Mar. 2008, 13, 18.

¹⁵¹ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’: Thomas Cowper (d. 1593), and see, e.g., William Davies (d. 1621), Roger Ditchfield, husbandman (d. 1632).

¹⁵² Garbet, 332.

¹⁵³ Wem manor court: SA, 167/6, June 1623; ACA, MS 508, f. 42r, on marl; Garbet, 332.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’, e.g. John Menlove (d. 1615), William Penson (d. 1616), William Davies, husbandman (d. 1621); Garbet, 13.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’: Thomas Cowper (d. 1593).

¹⁵⁶ SA, 167/5A, 19 Oct. 1612.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’: Thomas Davies, weaver (d. 1614); James Jackson (d. 1616).

¹⁵⁸ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’: e.g., Thomas Cowper (d. 1593), Thomas Davies, weaver (d. 1614), John Menlove (d. 1615), James Jackson (d. 1616).

¹⁵⁹ Garbet, 13.

From an early date, the keeping of dairy cattle predominated. Butter and cheese were produced for domestic consumption, but the numbers of livestock kept by some farmers indicate commercial production as well.¹⁶⁰ There was ‘good pasture for cattle’ on both the sand-gravel and clay soils of Northwood.¹⁶¹ Of the manor of Wem in general, Samuel Garbet wrote, c.1740, of the ‘great dairies, which supply the markets with plenty of butter, and the factors with vast quantities of cheese, in goodness not much inferior to those of Cheshire’.¹⁶² The stock of a farm sold in 1799 featured a dairy herd of ‘capital milkers’ and ‘cheese-tubs, vatts and presses and other dairy utensils’, but also five ‘strong wagon horses’, two ploughs, and other agricultural equipment.¹⁶³

19th to 21st centuries

The agricultural economy remained mixed, but with commercial dairying predominant.

c. 1900–1925, trade directories list Oliver Birch, ‘threshing machine owner’.

Industry and services

Commerce and industry in Northwood has mainly been limited to the provision of services to the agricultural economy.

Alesellers were operating in Northwood by 1612. William Davies, husbandman, died in 1621 leaving equipment for malting.¹⁶⁴ At the end of the 19th century, beer was still brewed at the Horse and Jockey public house. There was a licensed alehouse in Northwood by 1753,¹⁶⁵ and the Horse and Jockey public house, on the Wem–Ellesmere turnpike, was established by 1833 when Joseph Davies was the tenant.¹⁶⁶ In the mid 19th century, Davies’s daughter Eliza ran a grocery shop and his son, Joseph, made shoes and boots, apparently from the same premises. The younger Joseph Davies took over the licence in 1874 and the Davies family tenancy only came to an end between 1891 and 1900 when Joseph’s widow handed over to

¹⁶⁰ ‘Wem Probate Inventories’: e.g. Thomas Cowper (d. 1593), Anne Cowper, widow (d. 1613), William Penson (d. 1616).

¹⁶¹ Garbet, 332.

¹⁶² Garbet, 8.

¹⁶³ *Chester Chron.*, 8 Mar. 1799, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Wem Probate Inventories.

¹⁶⁵ Register of alehouse recognizances, 1753: SA, QE/2/1.

¹⁶⁶ *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 1 Feb. 1833, 2; 16 Nov. 1838, 1.

John Fardoe.¹⁶⁷ *The Horse and Jockey* appears to have traded continuously to the time of writing.

In the 1840s John Dobell and his son Thomas carried on their cheese factoring business from Grange Farm, but in the 1850s the business moved to Bellevue, near Wem.¹⁶⁸ As well as dealing in farmhouse cheese, by the late 1870s Platt & Dobell collected fresh milk from farms in the area, including Northwood, for commercial cheese production at the Bellevue plant or for transport by rail to urban areas.¹⁶⁹ Domestic cheese production remained common until the Second World War, with large quantities of farmhouse cheese sold through regular cheese fairs at Wem and the neighbouring market towns.

From at least the early 19th century to the mid 20th, Northwood hamlet had a public house, one or two grocery shops, as well as services such as shoemakers and tailors.¹⁷⁰ Clement Lister traded in Northwood as a seed merchant in 1900.¹⁷¹ In 1909 James Nicholls arrived to operate the sub-post office, but also advertised his business as ‘grocer and corn, oil cake, manure and coal merchant, [Northwood] post office and at canal wharf, Hampton Bank and Welshampton station’.¹⁷²

There was a smithy at the junction of Thieves Bridge Lane and Northwood Lane, where Thomas Davies, his son William and grandson Thomas lived and worked as blacksmiths from before 1841 to the 1870s, when William Davies moved the family to Loppington.¹⁷³ The smithy had disappeared by c.1880, when instead there was a smithy beside Blackhurstford Bridge. In 1889, Mr Edge, wheelwright, sold the three cottages and blacksmith shop here.¹⁷⁴ There was a blacksmith trading in Northwood until around 1920.¹⁷⁵ The three cottages near the bridge are still extant, but the smithy has been replaced by a modern house.

¹⁶⁷ Census, 1841–1901; Bagshaw, 335; *Kelly's Dir. Shropshire*, 1856, 141; 1870, 163; 1879, 372; 1891, 377; 1900, 161; 1941, 175.

¹⁶⁸ Census 1841, 1851; *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1856), p. 141.

¹⁶⁹ L. Etherington, ‘Memories of Whixall’, *The Wemian* (1997):

<http://www.wemlocal.org.uk/wempast/memories/whixall.htm> (accessed 21 June 2021). For Platt & Dobell, see *VCH Wem*, 57–8.

¹⁷⁰ SA, Newtown Parish Register (typescript copy) from 1812; from 1860s, trade directories under ‘Newtown’.

¹⁷¹ *Kelly's Dir. Shropshire* (London, 1900), 161.

¹⁷² *Kelly's Dir. Shropshire* (London, 1909), 169. Generally, from 1860s, trade directories under ‘Newtown’.

¹⁷³ *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 14 Aug. 1840, 2; Tithe apportionment, lots 3079, 3080; Census 1851.

¹⁷⁴ *Wellington Jnl*, 7 Dec. 1889, 4.

¹⁷⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Shropshire* (London, 1917), 161.

Throughout the 19th century Northwood also supported a wheelwright.¹⁷⁶ By 1846 John Stokes was the wheelwright at Northwood Green.¹⁷⁷ During the 1870s, William Edge also began trading as a wheelwright, and William Worrall in the 1880s.¹⁷⁸ The Stokes wheelwright and carpentry business, including coffin making, continued until the 1940s at the smallholding still known as Wheelwright Cottage.¹⁷⁹

During the 20th century the various trades typical of a self-reliant agricultural community disappeared from Northwood, leaving the services: the public house, post office and shop, of which only the public house remained in 2021.

In the second half of the 20th century, some light industry was carried on at Northwood village. A livestock feed milling business was established by a Mr Salter of Northwood House, which employed around 10 people. The business was taken over by HST Feeds (Crewe), and the mill closed around 2002.¹⁸⁰ The land was then redeveloped as a housing estate named Salter's Mill.

Nearby, on the other side of the Methodist chapel, another post-war business developed. In the 1960s, H.W. Nicholls, electrical contractor, supplied freezers for commercial premises.¹⁸¹ By 1977 Bill Greaves and sons (Lindon Mechanical Services Ltd) supplied heaters for commercial premises, in 1982 becoming Lindon Environmental Air Services Ltd, trading as Lindon Heating and Cooling. The business relocated to Market Drayton in the 1990s and the Northwood premises remained vacant at the time of writing.¹⁸²

Visitor economy

The unique environment of the mosses is a visitor attraction in the area. The extant portion of Wem Moss (28 ha.) is designated a National Nature Reserve and as such is promoted for

¹⁷⁶ SA, Newtown Parish Register, Births (father's occupation): 1815, Richard Cooper; 1829, William Minshall.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 1846, 1854; Bagshaw, 335; *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1856), 141.

¹⁷⁸ *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1879), 371; *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Shropshire* (London, 1891), 377.

¹⁷⁹ *Kelly's Directory of Shropshire 1941* (London, 1941), 175; reminiscences of Ernest Stokes (born at Top House Farm, 1930), pers. comm. Eirene Craney, 2019; Woodlands estate sale catalogue, 1947, lot 10.

¹⁸⁰ Pers. comm., Eirene Craney, 2019.

¹⁸¹ *Crewe Chron.*, 19 Sept. 1964, 17, 28 Aug. 1969, 21.

¹⁸² *Liverpool Echo*, 28 Oct. 1977, 19; <https://www.lindonheating.co.uk/about-us/> (accessed 21 June 2021).

ecological tourism and research, although it is not generally open to the public due to the fragility of the ecosystem.¹⁸³ An equestrian centre, Siddle Equine Services at Long Barn, established in 2009, has show jumping and dressage arenas for hire, training, clinics, and visitor accommodation.¹⁸⁴ At the time of writing, the farm house at Top House Farm was let as a holiday cottage, and there was a boarding cattery at Sycamore House.¹⁸⁵

A survey of Wem Rural residents in 2013 found that the majority felt that more tourists could be attracted to the area by better promotion, and they were strongly in favour of developing small businesses, agricultural diversification, shops, and leisure facilities. Specifically tourist developments, such as tourist attractions and holiday accommodation were less popular, however.¹⁸⁶

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Character

The population of Northwood was spread over numerous farms and smallholdings, with no particular elite family or group holding social or economic dominance. Typically, the largest landowners in Northwood resided elsewhere. The colonisation of the North Wood proceeded in the 16th and 17th centuries by the allocation of regular tenements, as well as by disorderly enclosure by squatters. As a result, there were numerous tenants, all holding modest tenements at the lord's will. In 1672, the two largest houses in the township had just three hearths; of the remainder, none had more than one hearth. Lists of tenants from the 17th to the 19th centuries, such as the hearth tax assessment or the church rates accounts, typically contain many more names/tenements for Northwood than for Lowe and Ditches, Horton, Newtown or Wolverley.

The Adams family might have become a dominant presence, although their importance is perhaps distorted in Garbet's account by the eminence of Sir Thomas Adams (1586–1668) the founder of Wem grammar school, where Garbet was a schoolmaster. Randle Adams,

¹⁸³ 'Wem Moss', <https://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/wem-moss>

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.ses-equine.co.uk/> (accessed, 21 June 2021).

¹⁸⁵ S. Austin, 'Cattery near Wem to help rescue centre', *Shropshire Star*, 24 Jul. 2019.

¹⁸⁶ *Wem Rural Community Plan*, 20.

perhaps a younger son of William Adams of the Woodhouses (Tilley),¹⁸⁷ was allocated one of the original 15 a. Northwood tenancies before 1561.¹⁸⁸ The Arundel map of 1631 shows the tenement of Randle's grandson, Richard, as the largest in Northwood, corresponding to Northwood Farm. By 1648 Richard Adams held 105 a. with one of the largest houses in the township.¹⁸⁹ Around 1650 Richard's cousin, Sir Thomas Adams, purchased the freehold of the Adams farm along with seven other Northwood tenements. Having built up such a large estate in Northwood, however, Sir Thomas established his country seat in Norfolk and his descendants had no further interest in the township. Richard Adams and his sons continued as tenants of Northwood Farm, but by 1700 the tenancy had passed to John Huntbach, Richard's grandson,¹⁹⁰ and by c.1750 to Nathaniel Minshall.¹⁹¹

Instead, the Wilkinson family were the dominant family locally, accruing a growing estate from the 17th century and finally building The Lawns, conspicuously the best house in Northwood.¹⁹² From the early 19th century to the mid 20th, the Maddocks family also established themselves as a resident elite family, albeit resident at The Woodlands just across the township boundary in Wolverley.¹⁹³

Communal Life

Wems Northwood Dividend Friendly Society was established in 1864.¹⁹⁴

Northwood generally lacks civic amenities. The Horse and Jockey inn, in existence by the mid 18th century, is not large enough to host public events but has been used for auction sales and was traditionally the starting point where community gatherings would assemble.¹⁹⁵

Since the mid 19th century, Newtown parish church and school have been central to Northwood social life. The two venues could work together: at the consecration of Newtown

¹⁸⁷ *Survey 1561*, 148–9; TNA, LR2/225 (1589, Richard Addams).

¹⁸⁸ *Survey 1561*, 164–5; TNA, LR2/225 (1589, Roger Adams).

¹⁸⁹ Above, Buildings.

¹⁹⁰ SA, P295/B/3/11, church rates for Horton quarter from 1684; Wem Parish Registers; Garbet, 333–4. Richard Adams's daughter Anne married Andrew Huntbach; their son John was born in 1668: Wem Parish Registers; Garbet, 333.

¹⁹¹ Garbet, 334; SA, QS/6/3/435SA: 1760, Nathaniel Minshall; SA, P295/B/3/1/2: Church rates, 1775: John Minshall.

¹⁹² See above, Landownership.

¹⁹³ See 'Newtown' and 'Wolverley'.

¹⁹⁴ *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 7 July 1865, 10

¹⁹⁵ e.g., *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 7 July 1865, 10.

church in 1869, the dignitaries took luncheon in the school room, ‘prettily decorated for the occasion with evergreens and appropriate mottoes’, with catering supplied by the landlord of the Horse and Jockey.¹⁹⁶

In 1957 a community hall was built by the Pool Head chapel trustees, on land opposite the chapel, donated by Richard Jeffries. The wooden building, on brick footings, ‘finer than many more prosperous churches possess’, was hired out for meetings, dances and other social events.¹⁹⁷ The hall has since been sold and in 2003 planning permission was granted for its change of use to business/light industrial, but in 2019 the premises remained vacant.¹⁹⁸

Northwood Methodist chapel, having been thoroughly renovated and re-opened in 2019, is at the time of writing developing a role as community centre and venue for public meetings.

Education

In the 1840s Thomas Roe ‘schoolmaster’ resided in Northwood, perhaps operating a short-lived private school.¹⁹⁹ In 1853 it was declared that there was no educational charity in the district and the only school was at Foxholes, held in a small cottage with a female teacher and an average attendance of no more than 12 children.²⁰⁰ As the teacher was said sometimes to attend the Primitive Methodist chapel, this school may have originated with the Foxholes meeting house. A Sunday school was later held at the Pool Head chapel.

Newtown National School opened in 1857, providing elementary education to the children of the soon-to-be constituted Newtown parish, including Northwood; it remains open at the time of writing. Since the opening of the County Senior School in Wem in 1931, most Northwood children have travelled to Wem for secondary education.²⁰¹ At the time of writing, most attended Thomas Adams School in Wem, for which a school bus service was provided.²⁰²

¹⁹⁶ *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 23 Apr. 1869, 6.

¹⁹⁷ Photographs and souvenir programme of opening, 2 Oct. 1957, in private possession; *Wellington Jnl*, 5 June 1964.

¹⁹⁸ Shropshire Council, planning application NS/03/00449/FUL, 4 Dec. 2003.

¹⁹⁹ Census 1841; baptisms of Roe’s children in 1843 and 1844: ‘Newtown Parish Register’. Roe had moved to Welshampton by 1851 and by 1861 to Ellesmere, giving his occupation as ‘Secretary to Benefit Societys’ (*sic*) or ‘writing clerk’: Census, 1851, 1861.

²⁰⁰ TNA, ED 103/56/5, p. 91.

²⁰¹ SA, ED2782/29, and see *VCH Wem*, Social History.

²⁰² *Wem Rural Community Plan*, 18.

Northwood House is a school for small numbers of adolescents with special educational needs.²⁰³

Social Welfare

Charities for the Poor

Northwood residents might benefit from charities established for the whole parish of Wem or for Newtown chapelry/parish. An estate in Newtown, probably Newtown Villa Farm, was charged by a former owner, whose identity was unknown by 1830, with £2 10s. per annum to be distributed to the poor attending Newtown chapel. Harper's charity was established by the will of Arthur Harper in 1787 for the annual distribution on St Thomas's day (29 December) of the interest on £50 to selected poor, industrious residents of Wolverley, Newtown and Northwood who were not in receipt of parish relief.²⁰⁴

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Northwood was within the medieval parish of Wem. From the mid 16th century to the mid 17th, the population grew from possibly no permanent residents to around 140. Remote from the parish church in Wem, the existence of this new community must have increased the need for a chapel of ease in the north west of the parish. The chapel (now parish church of King Charles the Martyr) in Newtown, founded c.1655, is about halfway between Northwood hamlet and Wem parish church, and situated near where the township boundaries of Newtown, Wolverley and Northwood met.

A dwelling house was licensed for Nonconformist worship in 1814 (John Huxley) and 1818 (Aaron Huxley).²⁰⁵ Officially in Northwood, Aaron Huxley's property was at Foxholes, in the south east tip of the township, well placed to serve a congregation from the part of

²⁰³ Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust: <https://www.nhs.uk/>.

²⁰⁴ *Charity Commissioners Report*, 336.

²⁰⁵ *Quarter Sessions Orders*, III, 189, 263. See assignment by Aaron Huxley to his sons, Moses and John Huxley, 30 July 1832: SA, 1416 unnumbered box, 'Bygott (Wem)' containing Bennion and Richards deeds. 1805 Survey, 96; Tithe apportionment, lots 3285, 3288–91.

Northwood east of Redfellis Brook, as well as Edstaston and Lowe. Nonconformist meetings were also being held at Northwood Green by 1827, when a licence was issued for the dwelling house occupied by Thomas Hotchkiss (*alias* Hodgkiss),²⁰⁶ and from 1839 Samuelus Wilkinson and later his widow, Sarah, held Primitive Methodist meetings at their home, The Lawns.²⁰⁷ A Primitive Methodist chapel was erected at Pool Head in 1841, perhaps by the Foxholes congregation.²⁰⁸ On Census Sunday in 1851, attendance at the Pool Head chapel averaged 90; at the home of Thomas Williams at Northwood Green, 16 plus a Sunday School with around 12 scholars; and at The Lawns there was an average attendance of about 50.²⁰⁹

The Church of England parish of Newtown was constituted out of Wem parish in 1861, comprising Northwood township, with Newtown and Wolverley.²¹⁰ Around the same time, the Nonconformist places of worship were upgraded. The Pool Head chapel was then substantially rebuilt and re-opened in 1864,²¹¹ and the Northwood Green congregation established a chapel at the edge of the hamlet.²¹² The foundation stones of this chapel were laid in July 1860 and it opened November of that year.²¹³

Initially within the Prees Green Primitive Methodist Circuit, both chapels became part of the Wem Primitive Methodist Circuit in 1878.

The Northwood Green chapel underwent renovations in 1931 and in 1932 it became Northwood Methodist Chapel.²¹⁴ A strip of land adjoining the chapel was purchased in 1950, enabling access to the rear. An extension to the chapel was then built to house a Sunday school which opened in the chapel's centenary of 1960, coinciding with closure of the Sunday school at the Pool Head chapel.²¹⁵ From 1962 the two chapels belonged to the Wem and Prees Green Methodist Circuit.²¹⁶ The Pool Head chapel closed in 1983; it was sold and

²⁰⁶ *Quarter Sessions Orders*, III, 263; Tithe apportionment, lot 3017.

²⁰⁷ SA, 2775/1, minute of 23 (or 29) Sept. 1839.

²⁰⁸ *Church and Chapel*, 107; *Wellington Jnl*, 5 June 1964; J. Cox, '[former] Pool Head Primitive Methodist Chapel', *Shropshire's Nonconformist Chapels*: <http://www.users.waitrose.com/~coxfamily/paddolgr.htm> (accessed 21 June 2021).

²⁰⁹ SA, 2775/1, minute of 18 Mar. 1850; *Church and Chapel*, 107–8; Census 1841, 1851.

²¹⁰ SA, P295/F/1/1/1. See *Newtown*.

²¹¹ SA, 2775/3, minutes 12 Dec. 1864. See 'Built character', above.

²¹² SA, 2775/3, minutes 14 June 1860. See 'Built character', above.

²¹³ See above, 'Built character'.

²¹⁴ *Wellington Jnl*, 12 Sept. 1931; 23 Aug. 1947, 3.

²¹⁵ *Northwood Methodist Chapel, Centenary Handbook, 1960* (in possession of Tom Edwards); *Wellington Jnl*, 5 June 1964.

²¹⁶ 1960 centenary: SA, NM4627/5/E1.

converted to a residential property.²¹⁷ At the time of writing the Northwood Methodist Chapel is still active.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The North Wood was a demesne property of the lord of the manor. According to a purported charter of William le Boteler III, by 1356 there was a hereditary office of forester for the demesne woodlands in the northern part of the manor, including the North Wood. The office was salaried, rather than farmed, including rights to free woodland grazing and wood.²¹⁸ The source may be questionable, but the existence of such an office is plausible as there was a forester for Aston Brockhurst by 1290.²¹⁹

Northwood appears to have been constituted as a township (*villata*) within the manor of Wem around the mid 16th century. Prior to 1561, the few copyhold tenements there were accounted for in Newtown, and the survey of Northwood in 1561 was appended to the survey of Wem manor, where it is referred to as ‘the township called Northwood’, as though a novelty. By the 1570s the township had been incorporated into the manorial organisation, with a constable and jury of presentment at the manor court. For parish administration, Northwood was within Horton Quarter.

²¹⁷ Cox, ‘[former] Pool Head Primitive Methodist Chapel’.

²¹⁸ *Survey, 1561*, 112–13.

²¹⁹ ‘ballia forest[ur]e’; TNA, E 149/1, *Cal. Inq.*, ii, p. 470, no. 774.