

## Population, Now and Then

The most recent details of Hook Norton's population came in the 2011 Census. At that time there were 2,596 of us, with slightly more women than men (52%-48%). Sixty per cent of us were married; 103 people (4%) were widowed. Our average age was 43. Over ninety percent of us were born in England, and over 99 percent spoke English. Two-thirds of us considered ourselves Christian, a quarter claimed to have no religion, and nine said they were Jedi knights. More details are given at the end of this article – but if only we had earlier censuses that were so detailed!

The first count of the population of Hook Norton parish came in 1086 with the William the Conqueror's Domesday survey of England (see our entry on the Domesday Book). The parish then probably had about 400 people, which was more than Chipping Norton. Over the next 600 years the population, so far as we can tell, slowly grew to around 600 people, though there must have been periods of decline from a higher figure, as during the Black Death, which first struck in 1349.

By 1800 the population had passed 1,000, and reached 1,500 about 1830. After 1850 it tended to decline, as any growth in population was cancelled out by the process of out-migration to the cities and abroad. Only after 1971 did in-migration begin to increase the population: after a burst of expansion in the seventies, by 2001 Hooky had grown by 640 in thirty years, and then another 595 were added in only ten more years—with more to come after 2011!

It is easy to calculate Hook Norton's population after 1800 because a new census was taken every ten years from 1801 onwards. Those figures follow after the next section.

Before 1801, everything is based on guesswork. Although enumerations were taken from time to time, it is not always clear which people were being counted. Commonly the count was restricted to adult males, adult meaning over the age of twenty-one. Conventionally, British population historians assume that the population

was made up of roughly equal thirds of adult males, adult females, and children (who of course covered a shorter age range, many of them dying before adulthood). On that basis, a count of adult males has to be multiplied by three to learn the likely total population.

### **Before 1801**

We have no estimates for the Anglo-Saxon period or before. What follow are random counts that have survived, which are usually vague about who was actually being counted; this makes it difficult to extrapolate the total population of the parish from them.

Domesday Book in 1086 found 84 landholders of various kinds, which older local historians translated into a total population of between 350 and 450; that can be averaged out at Margaret Dickins's suggested figure of about 400. Percy Hackling found various counts for the Middle Ages but their meaning is not clear enough to allow a calculation of total population. They are the Lincoln Farthing Quota of 1200 (= 360), and two counts for 1278 (= 260) and 1449 (= 570), but who was being counted? A further survey in 1548 claimed there were just 60 people in Hook Norton parish old enough to take communion, that is, over 16 years of age, which is puzzling unless it implies many were boycotting the newly Reformed Anglican church.<sup>1</sup>

The most usable counts were taken in the mid-seventeenth century when demographic historians think the English population was static, and so the counts should be comparable. In 1642 all persons over the age of 18 were required to take an oath in support of the Protestant religion; only "men" took it in Hook Norton, where every man in the parish was said to have sworn it. There were 197 of them, suggesting there were about 400 men and women over 18 and a total population of about 600.<sup>2</sup> In 1676 an ecclesiastical census found 434 people old enough to take Communion (i.e., over the age of 16), which, after allowing for those aged 16-18, is

---

<sup>1</sup> Rose Graham, ed., *The Chantry Certificates for Oxfordshire* (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1920), pages 39, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher S.A. Dobson, ed., "Oxfordshire Protestation Returns, 1641-1642", *Oxfordshire Record Society*, vol. 36 (1955), pages 58-60; Dickins,

compatible with the 1642 figure, and again suggests a total population of just over 600.<sup>3</sup>

Demographic historians suggest that the English population as a whole doubled between 1676 and 1801. Hook Norton reached only 1,032 by 1801, which suggests that the parish grew more slowly than the national average in the eighteenth century. The Bishop's Visitation in 1738 reported that there were "160 houses and upwards" in the parish, which, at the national average of 4.5 persons per household, would give Hook Norton a population of 720 "and upwards". That would suggest that population growth accelerated significantly in the last sixty years of the century.<sup>4</sup>

### Since 1801

The national census has given the following totals for Hook Norton's population, though it is not clear that the area was always defined in the same way or restricted just to Hook Norton parish:

1801	1,032
1811	1,129
1821	1,351
1831	1,506
1841	1,525 (includes 103 in the lunatic asylum, including staff).
1851	1,496

---

<sup>3</sup> Anne Whiteman with Mary Clapinson, eds., *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Collection* (London; Oxford University Press, 1986), pages 421. Historians have worked out a formula for checking these figures from the Hearth Tax returns for the 1660s. Unfortunately when applied to Hook Norton, these returns seem to suggest that that either our households were on average unusually large (5.4 persons) or, if they approximated the national average of 4.5 or even 4.25 persons each, our population numbered only 400. Whiteman, pages lx-lxxiii; Maureen B. Weinstock, ed., "Hearth Tax Returns: Oxfordshire, 1665", *Oxfordshire Record Series*, vol. 21 (1940), pages 163-164. Using these figures, Kate Tiller calculated the population in 1676 at around 720. Tiller, "Hook Norton, Oxfordshire: An Open Village", in Joan Thirsk, ed., *The English Rural Landscape* (Oxford, 2000), page 287.

<sup>4</sup> If Hook Norton had more persons in its average household, as considered in the previous note, its population in 1738 could have been as high as 864. A. Lloyd Jukes, ed., "Articles of Enquiry Addressed to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford at the Primary Visitation of Dr Thomas Secker, 1738", *Oxfordshire Record Society*, vol. 38 (1957), pages 83-84. Using the same source, Percy Hackling and Reginald Dand calculated the 1738 population at near 700. See their papers in the Village Archive.

## H o o k N o r t o n L o c a l H i s t o r y G r o u p

1861	1,393	
1871	1,259	
1881	1,232	
1891	1,265	
1901	1,386	
1911	1,349	
1921	1,236	Average household size: 3.73 persons
1931	1,153	Average household size: 3.38 persons
1941	No census during the war	
1951	1,249	
1961	1,198	
1971	1,361	
1981	1,856	
1991		
2001	2,001	Average household size: 2.46 persons
2011	2,596	Average household size: 2.42 persons

This schedule reveals a 46 per cent increase in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, followed by a long slow decline that reflected the departure of many both for the cities and abroad. The process went into reverse only after 1961. The greatest proportionate increase in population came in the 1970s, when the 1,361 of 1971 increased by over 36 per cent, compared with just under 30 per cent in the first decade of this century.

### **Hooky's Population in 2011**

The census of 2011 put Hook Norton in a ward somewhat larger than the parish by including Wigginton and South Newington. Thus the figures it records exaggerated the size of Hook Norton's population, though it would be surprising if it distorted markedly the make-up of the population.

In the 2011 census the population of Hook Norton of 2,596, 52% of whom were female and 48% male. The average (mean) age was 43, while the median age was higher at 46. Nearly one in five of the population were aged 65 or over, twelve per cent were under 10 and another ten per cent were between 10 and 18. Of those

between the ages of 16 and 74, one in six were retired and only 1.7% unemployed; eight per cent of the population were over the age of 74 and presumed “economically inactive”. Virtually 87% of the population enjoyed good or very good health.

Nine out of ten of us were born in England, and about 4% in other parts of the UK or Ireland. Other birthplaces included South Africa, Australia and the United States – with about twelve people each – and half that for Pakistan and Hong Kong. Over 99% of people living in Hook Norton spoke English. The other languages reported included French, German, Japanese and Afrikaans.

Two-thirds of us considered ourselves Christian, and 0.5% were Buddhist. About a quarter declared “No Religion”, only a handful described themselves as Agnostic or Humanist, and 184 people did not mention religion at all. Nine people identified themselves as Jedi Knights.

Sixty per cent of adults were married, eight per cent cohabited with a member of the opposite sex, and under one per cent lived with a partner of the same sex. Seventeen per cent were single and had never married or been in a registered same sex partnership; six and a half per cent were separated or divorced. There were 103 widowed people living in Hook Norton (4%). On average, about two and a half people resided in each of the 1,071 households.

Of the 1,154 dwellings in the ward, just over 7% of them were owned by “non-usual residents”. Of the 2,596 residents, about 100 had a second address in the UK and fifty outside it. Over ninety per cent of households had a car or van, forty per cent had two, and nearly twenty per cent had more than two. Thirty-three households had no central heating.

Detailed information is available on many other subjects, not all of it easy to understand, but including categories of employment, numbers on benefits of various kinds, and living conditions. It may be found most conveniently on the Office of National Statistics website, at [www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination).

© Donald Ratcliffe

## References

Great Britain Historical Database: Census Data : Parish-Level Population Statistics, 1801-1951

GB Historical GIS, University of Portsmouth, *A Vision of Britain Through Time*, at:  
[www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10343471/cube/TOT\\_POP](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10343471/cube/TOT_POP) .

The details for 2011 come from <http://localstats.qpzm.co.uk/stats/england/south-east/cherwell/hook-norton> and [www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination).

Percy Hackling's Notes in Village Archive.