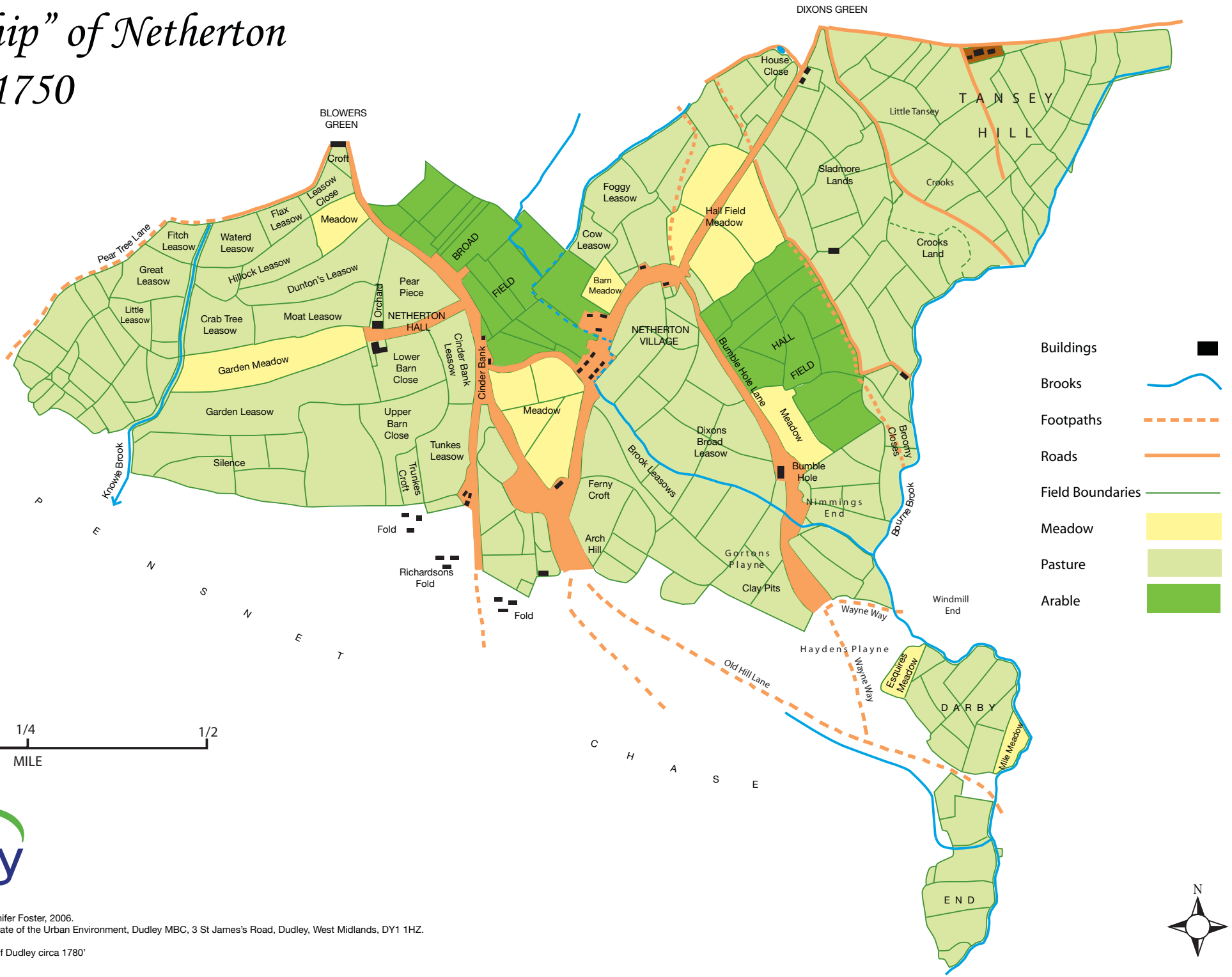
"Township" of Netherton 1750



Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Map based on 'Henry Courts Map of Dudley circa 1780'

Netherton 'Township'

Netherton is in the Parish of Dudley and within the County of Worcester. The place-name is derived from two Early English (Anglo-Saxon) elements: *Nether* (lower) and *Ton*, (a farm estate). For there to have been a lower farm there had to be an upper and it is possible that the Anglo-Saxon name for the settlement of Dudley was *Overton*. The bounds of the Township are: Mousesweet Brook in the east, Blackbrook Road in the south, Peartree lane in the west and Dixon's Green in the north. The geology of Netherton is the productive coal measures.

Netherton was strictly speaking not a township but it did exist as a medieval manor and is so named in various documents. It had a normal medieval open field system: Hall Field to the east, Broad Field to the north and a small 'South Field'. These were surrounded by pasture land and meadow land, close to the stream. To the west across the stream were the waste lands of Pensnett Chase. The occupation of Chase lands probably began in the 13th and 14th centuries when there are records of assarting. That is taking in waste land for agricultural purposes.

The settlement of Netherton was focussed on what is now called Baptist End, at the point that an unknown named stream flowed into Bumble Hole. The land between Pear Tree Lane and Cinder Bank was originally part of the Chase. It was enclosed in the 16th century by Baron Dudley and made into a park. The first occupier that we have records of was one of his sons; Geoffrey Dudley and his house was called Netherton Hall.

A Will of Oliver Shaw in 1559 recorded that he was a *naylor* of *Nederton*. This is the earliest record of a person engaged in metal work but he was soon followed by others. As the population started to increase it is probable that new places to live were needed. The movement away from Baptist End started in this period and is called 'settlement drift'. This movement towards the high road from Dudley to Lye and occupation of the Chase lands led to the present day Netherton. A Baptist Chapel was built in 1654 near the White Swan and Baptist End became the name of the community that lived there.

In1684 a Market Charter was given to *Nederton* and it was held in the Market Square on the last week in October. Agriculture was still the main industry as late as the end of the 18th century but in 1779 the Dudley Canal was completed and ran from north to south right across the Township. Very quickly wharfs were built alongside it and coal pits were opened up. In the early 19th century iron works joined them, like the Blowers Green Blast Furnace (The beam engine that blew air into the furnaces survived until 1964 when it was moved to Dartmouth Circus above the Aston Expressway in Birmingham where it still stands on display.)

Coal mining was a very dangerous activity and in 1808 John Ryan worked out a system of ventilating the Thick Coal at No.16 Pit, Netherton. This technique eventually was used in collieries through-out Britain. Colliery work intensified until by mid century most of the southern and central area had coal workings of the Netherton Colliery upon it. Mineral railways criss-crossed the area from the collieries either to the canal or the iron works. By the 1884 map nearly every field was under

spoil heaps and waste, only between the Hall and Cinder Bank were the boundaries still observable.

In 1856 the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway was built through Blowers Green. A hall, the residence of John Bradley was taken down at the junction of Peartree Lane and Blowers Green to make way for it. Netherton Hall fell down a few years later in 1860 due to mining operations in the vicinity. In 1855-60 tap water came to Netherton, laid on by South Staffordshire Waterworks Company.

By the 1938 map Netherton Hall had succumbed to being called Hall Lane Farm, most of Netherton Old Colliery was now abandoned except for Simms's Lane coal and a fireclay colliery close to Blackbrook Road. Colliery waste was still tipped in the area around Hall Lane Farm. As the mines were worked out and the furnaces were blown out a great deal of land became developable. The development of these began after the Second World War and by the end of the 20th century a great part of Netherton had become residential.

John Hemingway, 23rd February 2005.

Notes: The base material for the composition of the 1750 map is the parish map of circa 1780, with other material gathered from local histories and documentary research.

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