January 1998 Village Car Crash



STEPHEN VANN

MICHAEL STANIFORTH

'THEY WERE LIKE BROTHERS'

IN MEMORY: The flag flies at halfmast on the Newbold Verdon war memorial

by Jeremy Clay

TWO cousins who died in a crash which claimed five lives grew up like brothers, mourners have been told.

Eighteen-year-old Newbold Verdon cousins Michael Staniforth, of Bramble Drive, and Stephen Vann, of Gilberts Drive, were born just weeks apart.

They died alongside pals Matthew Thompson (19), of Sparkenhoe, Newbold Verdon; Anthony Smith (18), of Bramble Drive, Newbold Verdon; and William Annan (18), of Church Street, Market Bosworth, in a crash on a country road near Market Bosworth on Friday night.

Their Ford Escort car was ripped in two in the impact with a Peugeot 306 on the B585 at Wellsborough.

WILLIAM ANNAN MATTHEW THOMPSON ANTHONY SMITH

Yesterday, friends of the five broke down in tears after saying prayers for them at a service at St James's Church, Newbold Verdon, where the funeral will be held. Mourners also said prayers at St Peter's Church, Market Bosworth.

Newbold Verdon vicar the Rev Charles Fox said: "Michael and Stephen were like brothers. They were very close.

"Their parents have lost their only children, and the grandparents have lost their only grandchildren.

"All the families are very upset. They must be feeling it deeply but they are trying their best to keep it going."

St James's Church lay reader Alyn De Casembroot told mourners: "We may not understand why some things happen as they do.

"They may seem cruel and unnecessary. "It is out time to trust in God and to believe He will make all well in the end."

■ Communities mourn, Page 3.



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They went to school together, grew up together, died together

LIVES CUT TRAGICALLY SHORT: Posing in 1991 at Newbold Primary School are (circled from left) victims Stephen Vann, Matthew Thompson, Michael Staniforth and Anthony Smith

CRASH THAT WIPED OUT 5 FRIENDS

By James Harper

A WRECKED car, sliced in two, stands on its end after a head-on crash that killed five teenage friends.

Two people in the other car were left badly hurt.

Police sergeant Stephen Johnson said: "This is the worst accident I have seen in 25 years' service. We had a ready-made morgue."

The five, who had grown up together, were on their final night out of the festive period when tragedy struck on the B585 at Wellsborough, near Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, on Friday.

They were named yesterday as: electrician and rugby player Matthew Thompson, 19, Stephen Vann, 18, Michael Staniforth, 18, Royal Marine Anthony Smith, 18, all from the village of Newbold Verdon, Leics, and university student William Annan, 18, of Market Bosworth.

Yesterday relatives, many in tears, walked up the lane to lay flowers . One message read: "To five great lads who will be sadly missed but never forgotten."

The friends had been for a meal at The Cock in nearby Sibson and were on their way to meet more friends at Ye Olde Red Lion, in Market Bosworth.

A member of staff at the pub said: "Everyone knew the lads and everyone is just too upset to even speak."

A friend of the teenagers said: "They really were a great bunch of lads, who never stopped laughing and joking.

"They had grown up together from playschool and had just started to go their separate ways. They were all together for a last night out."

It is thought their Ford Escort may have crossed the road into the path of an oncoming Peugeot.

Fire crews spent two hours freeing the two men in the Peugeot, thought to be from Nuneaton, Warwicks, and Elmesthorpe, Leics. Both are said to be seriously hurt.



CARNAGE: Five friends died in this Ford Escort



WRECK: Two men were hurt in this Peugeot

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