LEICESTER ADVERTISER

CHANGING FACE OF

# NEWBOLD VERDON

## Commuters have given it a new lease of life

WITH the running down of the once prosperous coal mine at nearby Desford, it seemed certain that Newbold Verdon would become a "ghost town." But the discovery that the village was not affected by subsidence, unlike so many of its neighbours, has saved it from extinction and the village now fulfils an entirely different role.

This major factor added to the village's close proximity to Leicester only 10 miles away, has given Newbold a fresh lease of life as an ideally situated commuter area.

Today, the population is around 2,500 and is expected to grow still further to 3,000 people — trebling the original number of residents in the mid-fifties.

Village coal merchant, Mr. Mick Preston, has served two terms as chairman of the parish council, including the current year, and knows as well as anyone the changes that have swept through Newbold Verdon since the war.

"I'm sure that if it hadn't been for the new housing we would've been a dying village," he told me "and it has helped to provide new shops in the centre of the village as well."

"All the new people in the village either work in Leicester or for the English Electric factories."

The low cost of good quality housing in pleasant rural setting has obviously endeared Newbold to the new residents, most of whom have come from built-up areas, even Leicester itself.

The rapid growth of Newbold Verdon in the sixties has also helped to inject a new lease of life into the village's shops not the least of which is the sub-post office run by **Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hanscomb.**

Mr. and Mrs. Hanscomb moved to Newbold from Leicester — where Arthur had worked for Everards Brewery in Southgate Street — in search of a quieter life.

"As our four children were grown up and three of them living abroad," Mrs. May Hanscombe said, "We thought this was an opportunity to branch out on our own. We bought the old post office up the road when the previous sub-postmaster died, because this seemed like a nice little business to give us an interest."

Three years ago when the new parade of shops was opened on Main Street. Mr. and Mrs. Hanscomb opted to buy bigger premises to expand the general store side of the business.

"At the time we didn't think the village would grow quite so quickly," Mrs. Hanscomb said. "But it's trebled in size since we first came here. We've really got our hands full now with the extra custom."

One of Mr. Hanscomb's four postmen working on a part-time basis is a remarkable gentleman, 70-year-old **Mr. Frank Hill,** a retired coal miner and holder of the British Empire Medal for services rendered to the coal industry.

### *Invaluable work*

There can't be many people who, after an entire life's work at the coal face, would take on a fairly strenuous job in their retirement years.

Mr. Hill started at the mine when he was only 13 years old and moved to nearby Desford Colliery when he was 25—he retired officially in October 1964.

Add this to his considerable length of service on Newbold's Parish Council as well as his invaluable work as local branch secretary for the National Union of Miners and you might have thought that Mr. Hill would be happy to take it easy for the rest of his life.

"I've always been a very active man and when Mr. Hanscomb asked if I would be prepared to help him out over the Christmas rush one year, I jumped at the chance," Mr. Hill told me.

What was a very temporary task turned into a permanent part-time vocation which keeps Mr. Hill in excellent health.

"The money is useful, I will admit, but I do the job because I really like it," he said. "I really enjoy it when all the children in the village see me

by PAUL DALBY

LOCAL STUDIES

12.12.69



Some of the children at the Peter Pan Play Group which is held every morning at St. James' Church Hall and is organised by Mrs. Jill Scott (left). Also in the picture are her partner Mrs. Pam Allen and Mrs. Joyce Taylor (right).

centrating on the very non-theatrical business of raising money for a completely new wooden stage which they are hoping to have ready in time for the next big production on February 6 and 7 of the New Year.

This will be in the form of three one-act plays called "Lights Out", "O.H.M.S." and "The Crimson Coconut", and will involve every single member of the group.

The Players' secretary, **Mrs. Lesley Hodgking**, of Peter's Avenue, who is also in charge of fund raising, told me how they had accumulated over £80 to date.

Our biggest effort so far has been our sponsored walk in which 15 people, myself included, walked a 15-mile course and raised £58. I also held a bring and buy sale and coffee morning and this brought in another £25.

But it doesn't matter how much we raise, it all seems to be swallowed up by all the different things that we need."

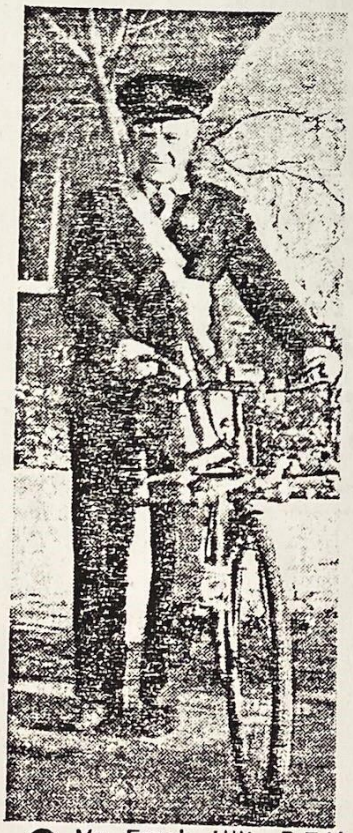
Mrs. Hodgkin thought that a possible reason for the drama group's undoubted success in the village was that it helped people to get to know each other.

This is clearly the basic ingredient for the various other pursuits in Newbold Verdon as well. The Wednesday Club (known in the past as the Friendship Club) exists on this need alone.

## Biggest effort

"Our club helps women at home and newcomers to the village to get acquainted and we make it easier for people to come by always meeting in the evening," secretary **Mrs. Joan Field**, of Gilbert's Drive said.

The Club, which has 50 members meets at St James Church Hall



Mr. Frank Hill, B.E.M., Newbold Verdon's 70-year-old part-time postman. About to set off on his cycle on his daily rounds.

treasurer, and helps to supervise the numerous events which raise cash for this wonderful cause.

Most of the money each year comes from the fund's weekly

been running, demand for places at the play group has even taken the organisers by surprise.

The group accommodates 49 children - although numbers never exceed 20 in any one session and there is a waiting list of 27 children.

"We are only holding morning play groups five days a week at the moment,' said Mrs. Scott "But because of the pressure of numbers we are going to hold two afternoon sessions a week as well in the New Year."

Mrs. Scott is assisted at the play group by her co-organiser **Mrs. Pamela Allen** and two helpers, **Mrs. Joyce Taylor** and **Mrs. Hilary Barnes**.

The play group has to operate on very set lines laid down by the County Council health authorities, who also had to give their approval before the group could be set up.

## Own equipment

"We have to charge two shillings an hour which seems like rather a lot, but our rent at the hall comes to quite a bit and over the year we have had to buy all our own equipment, toys and teaching aids," Mrs. Scott said.

"We have to get the local authority's approval to start a group but we don't get a penny from them towards setting up."

I asked Mrs. Scott why the play group was so popular with families in the village.

"Well, not many mothers go to work, so it isn't a question of getting rid of their children," she said. "But coming to the group and mixing with other children does give them tremendous confidence and gets them ready for infants' school."

"It isn't so much a question of what they learn with us in

"The money is useful, I will admit, but I do the job because I really like it," he said. "I really enjoy it when all the children in the village see me coming and call out 'Hello, Mr. Postman'.

"It was quite a challenge at first when I came face to face with a great stack of parcels and letters. I didn't think I would manage, but I find it quite easy now."

And working at 70 has brought its own belated bonus for Mr. Hill — until his 70th. birthday he was limited to the amount of money he could earn which made overtime at Christmas almost an "unpaid" period. Now he has passed the age barrier he can tot up as much pocket money as he likes.

The newcomers to Newbold Verdon have in a very short space of time made a valuable contribution to the village's activities.

Formed in January of this year, the village's drama group which is called the Newbold Players has proved itself to be enthusiastic, vigorous and ambitious.

Membership numbers around 36 people and the Players have already put on one presentation at the village's school hall in front of an invited audience — two one-act plays "The Patient" and "Outpatients".

At present the Players are concentrating on rehearsals for a three-act play which they hope to present in the autumn.

"We have found it much easier for people to come by always meeting in the evening," secretary **Mrs. Joan Field,** of Gilbert's Drive said.

The Club, which has 50 members meets at St. James Church Hall and covers a wide range of subjects, including flower arranging, bring and buy sales, fashion shows, lectures by visiting experts, tours to outside places of interest and more topically, a Christmas dinner.

Mrs. Field typifies the sort of person who belongs to the Wednesday Club — she moved to Newbold Verdon with her family four years ago without knowing a single person in the village.

"I found that my neighbour was going to what was then called the Friendship Club, so I went along, too, just to see what it was like, and I've been a member ever since," she said.

In a village like Newbold Verdon, where there is a predominance of younger people, the senior citizens are by no means forgotten. The community's Old People's Fund, which has been running now for nearly five years, ensures that every year the elderly retired folk of Newbold receive a very welcome Christmas bonus — the last two years running it has been £4 cash per person.

**Mr. Henry (Jock) Mitchelson,** of Mill Lane, who works for Ratby Engineering Co., is the fund's treasurer, and helps to supervise the numerous events which raise cash for this wonderful cause.

Most of the money each year comes from the fund's weekly tote competition which brings in about £30 a week from selling the one-shilling tickets.

Of this sum the winner of the "kitty" each week receives half and the other half goes directly to the fund.

But there are many other events held during the year which help to boost the final amount to be distributed at Christmas, including darts competitions, rummage sales, raffles and even ladies' charity football matches.

The extent of the fund's good work can be measured by the fact that 220 old people benefited from last year's Christmas handout — a magnificent achievement for the village.

From the older generation to the youngsters of the village — many of Newbold's under-fives are now receiving the expert guidance and tuition of the village's newly-established Peter Pan Play Group.

The group was started in February of this year by **Mrs. Jill Scott,** (36), of Barbara Avenue, who holds a Nursery Nurses Examination Board certificate and has a wealth of experience in child nursing.

In the first 10 months that it has been in existence, the group has had a total of 30 children on its books, and has had to turn away many more because of lack of space.

"Children benefit tremendously from coming to the group," she said. "But coming to the group and mixing with other children does give them tremendous confidence and gets them ready for infants' school."

"It isn't so much a question of what they learn with us in terms of knowledge, but they learn reponsibilities and how to look after themselves."

**Next Week**

**Burbage**




Mr. and Mrs. A. Hanscomb pictured behind the counter of their busy sub-post office with Mrs. Joy Brearley (centre), daughter of postman Mr. Frank Hill