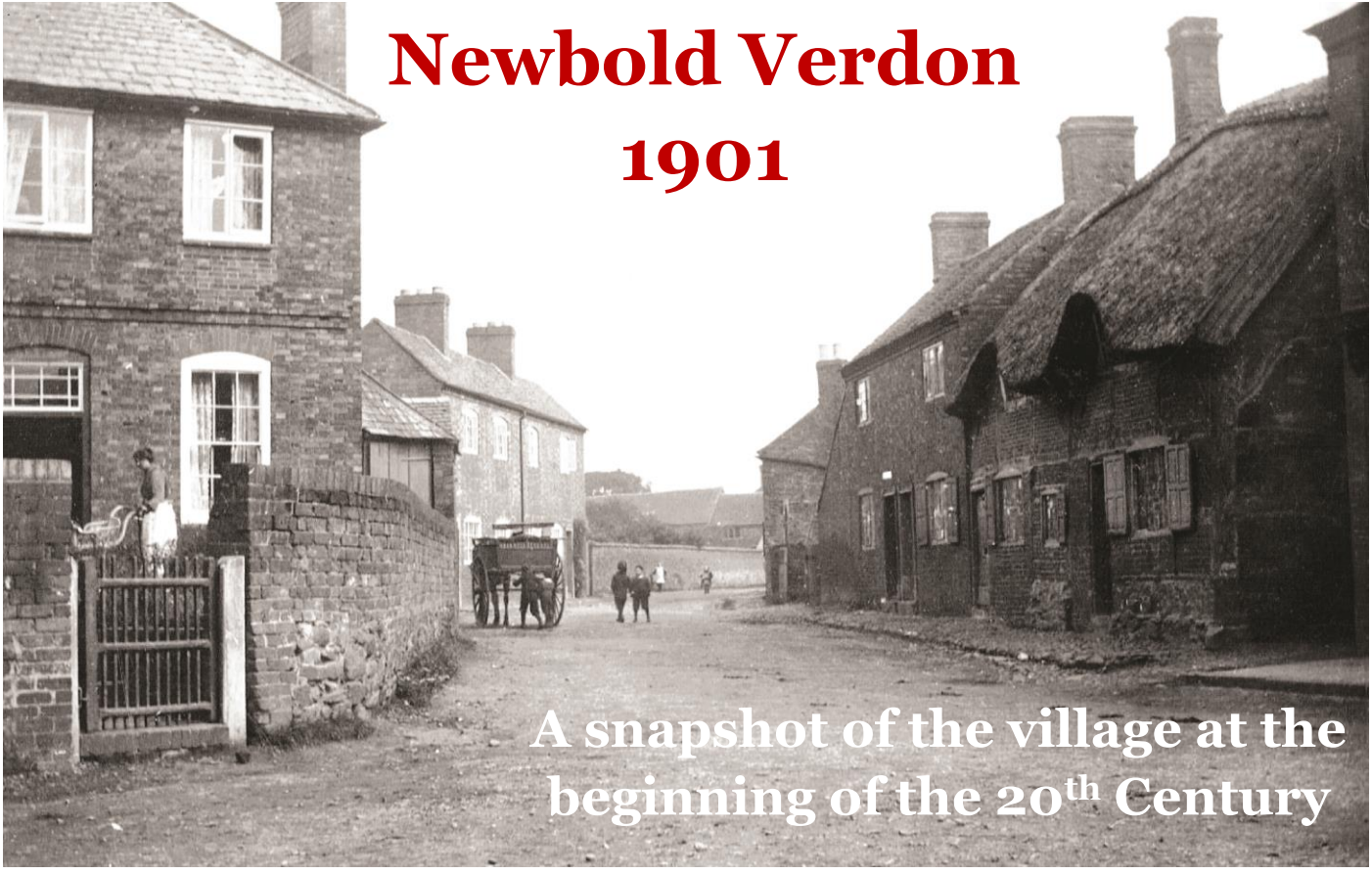

Newbold Verdon
1901
A snapshot of the village at the beginning of the 20th Century

Authors

This book was a joint project undertaken by members of Newbold Verdon Parish Council and Newbold Verdon Community Action Group.

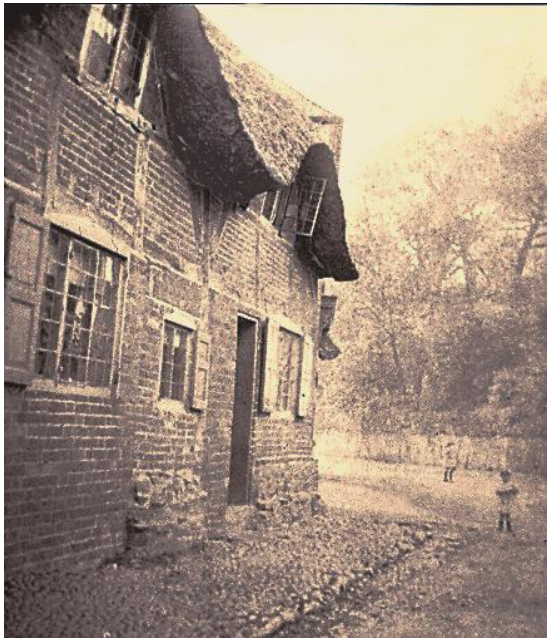
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Main Street, Newbold Verdon

Cover photographs: Front cover (1900s) and rear (2014) are taken from the Baptist Chapel entrance looking back down Main Street.

Newbold Verdon 1901

The history of a village like Newbold Verdon cannot be found in grand houses and ancient monuments; it lies in the lives of the people who have lived here.

This book explores a little of that history by looking at one brief moment in time: Monday 1st April 1901, the day the National Census forms were collected.

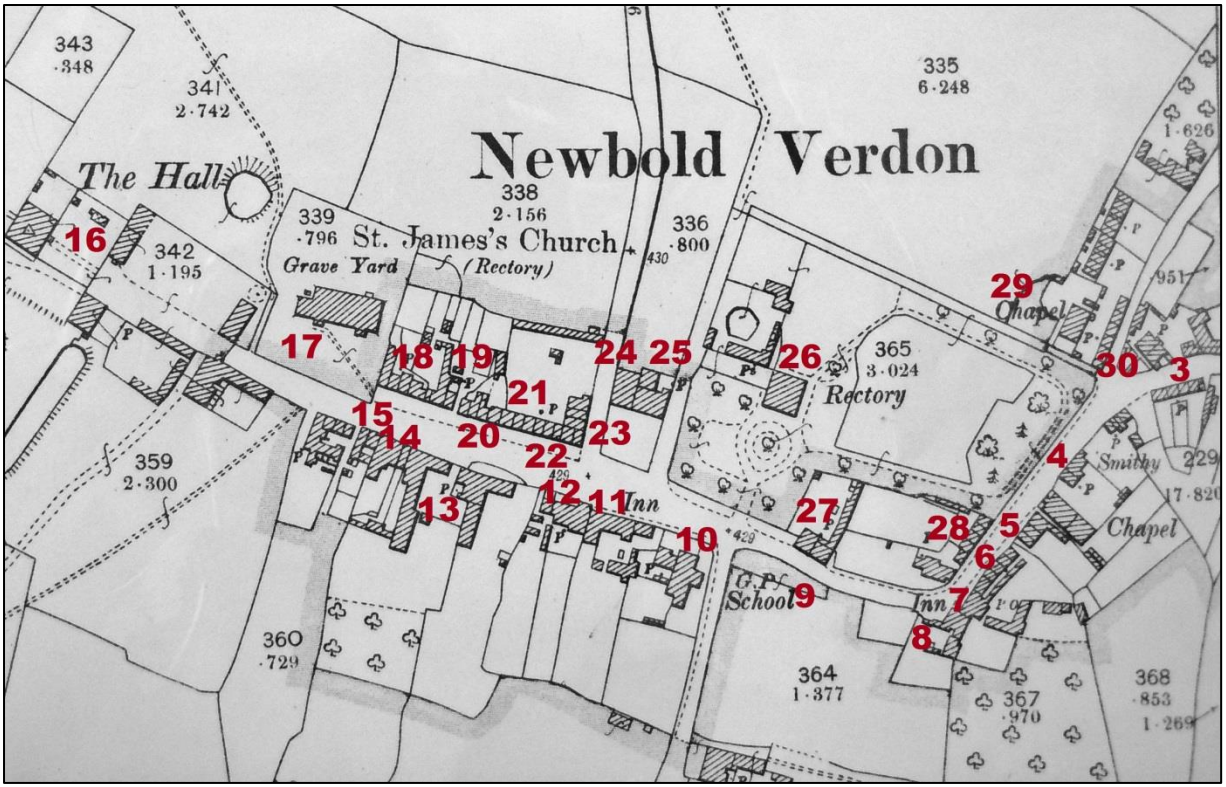
Every ten years the National Census provides a snap-shot of the lives of the people of the United Kingdom and in this case, Newbold Verdon.

Our guide in this exploration will be John Brown, Parish Clerk and Census Enumerator for 1901.

We follow John on part of his walk through the village from the Jubilee Inn to Hall Farm, returning to Freeman's Lane (todays Mill Lane) and meeting along the way some of the villagers recorded in the census and through them we hope to gain a little understanding of what it was like to live in Newbold at that time.

We hope you will use the book as a guide and walk his route or take the journey in the comfort of your armchair.

John Brown's Walk (using 1903 OS map)



Featured stopping points of John Brown (Points 1 and 2 are on page 6)

Stopping Points of John Brown

Stopping Points	Place	No	Place
1	The Jubilee Inn	16	Hall Farm – Absent Landlord
2	Abell's Row	17	St James's Church
3	Mary Ball's Cottage	18	Church Row - Familiar Family Village Names
4	Marston West – Blacksmith	19	Workington Yard
5	Framework Knitters' Cottages	20	Noah Smith- not quite Noah's Ark but close
6	Hell Fire Terrace	21	Mary Bacon and her son, Charles
7	Cob Cottage- home of John Gilliver	22	The Penny Bazaar
8	The Engine Inn	23	Hargrave Lane
9	The Old School	24	The Sun Inn and Village Stocks
10	Church of England School's Headmaster, Thomas Carter	25	Caroline Bell and her Lane
11	The Swan Inn	26	The Rectory and the Reverend William Gordon Cole
12	The Grocer's, Baker's and Draper's	27	The Three Cottages
13	Church Farm	28	Joseph Roberts
14	Alma Cottages	29	Baptist Chapel
15	The Blacksmith's that was and would be	30	Freeman's Lane Cottages

Please Note: These are not house numbers, there were none in 1901 Newbold Verdon

Meet John Brown - Census Enumerator



On the morning of the 1st April 1901 John Brown, Parish Clerk and Census Enumerator for Newbold Verdon, left his house at the end of Main Street and began walking down towards the centre of the village. Historical records show the weather for the day was set to be one of blustery winds and spring showers but John could not allow the weather to deter him from his duty. His job that day was to call at every house in the parish, all 186.

Two days earlier, in his capacity of census enumerator for the parish, he had delivered a census form to each household for the head of each to complete on the coming Sunday, 31st March and now he was collecting each one.

Since 1841 a National Census was undertaken once every ten years to collect information on all those living in the country. This information was used to inform successive governments of the size of population; where people lived; what they did for a living and what kind of housing conditions they lived in.

By law every household had to complete a form and on collection the enumerator would collate and summarise the information which in turn was forwarded on to the government in London.

Who Was John Brown (1840 – 1916)?

John was Newbold born and bred. He was the second child of John Brown Snr. and Elizabeth Brown: his father was from Newbold but his mother came from Normanton.

John's father was a cordwainer; a skilled craftsman making fine leather shoes. In the 1851 census there were eleven such craftsmen working in the village and John Jnr.) would later join his father in the trade.

In 1861 John (Jnr.) was twenty-one, living at home and next-door-but-one to his future wife, Mary Ann Lord, (see picture) whom he would marry in the spring of 1862. By the time of the census in 1891 he and Mary had raised five children and he had changed his occupation to grocer.



Mary Ann Brown

From a very early age John would appear to have taken on several civic roles. At seventeen he followed on from his father as Parish Clerk, a role he would retain for fifty-three years! He also played a significant role at St. James's as church warden and for a number of years he was the Poor Law Assistant Overseer – the person responsible for collecting money from each of the villagers in order to support the poor of the parish. All this knowledge of the villagers and his experience in public office made him the ideal person to undertake the highly responsible role of Census Enumerator.

John begins his Walk

Exactly what direction John took on the 1st April is not known. Living as he did at the end of Main Street close to the Desford Road, it could be reasonable to assume that he walked back toward the centre of the village, calling at the forty or so houses lining Main Street stretching from today's Red Lion Lane to the Jubilee Inn.



You can see from the 1903 map of the village that all of the houses up to the Jubilee were on the south side of the road with just a farm and open fields opposite, where Sparkenhoe and Hornbeam Road are today.

1 The Jubilee Inn



The photograph taken at around this time is of Main Street looking back towards Red Lion Lane.

The road and footpath are virtually indistinguishable. Made only of rolled stone like all of Newbold's byways, and with little in the way of drainage, they were regarded with disdain by the parishioners and the roads' poor condition, judging from Parish Council minutes of the time, was a constant source of discussion.

The Jubilee would have been the second pub of the day for John (the Red Lion being the first) as he called on the recently arrived landlord, Thomas Smith. The Jubilee Inn was the most recent pub in the village, having only been built in 1878 and so named in recognition of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of that year.

2 Abell's Row



After the Jubilee, John called in on the four cottages known as Abell's Row where he would have met a long-established resident, seventy-three year old Rebecca Abell. Rebecca, who was originally from Narborough, had married into a Newbold family that could trace its ancestry in the village back at least as far as the 1750s. Next door lived her fifty-four year old son, John, and they would both still be living on 'their' row in ten years' time when the 1911 census was next gathered.

The picture is taken at the rear of Abell's Row at a later date though little is likely to have changed since the time of the 1901 census. The building in the background is the side of the Jubilee Inn.

Housing conditions were generally poor in most of the village. Water was drawn from communal pumps. Toilets were nothing more than an enclosed bench (privy) with a hole and the waste collected beneath in a bucket. Lighting was by candle or oil lamps. Coal or wood fires provided for heating and cooking. Piped gas and cabled electricity were many years away. Life was not easy.

3 Mary Ball's Cottage

Next to Abell's Row was a set of cottages that could also easily have been named after their residents, the Ball family. Mrs Mary Ball owned a carting and carrier business and was supported by her son, Harry. Their house is opposite the cart in the picture.



Carters transported goods by horse and cart but on certain days of the week some also carried people. Each Saturday Mrs Ball's cart was used to transport fare-paying villagers into Leicester, a journey often taking three hours – one way.

The cart terminated at The Golden Lion Inn situated on Highcross Street, Leicester, before returning later that day. Carriers were in effect the first bus service, but the cost, distance and time taken for any journey would undoubtedly have limited those using it to only a few.

Mary described herself in the census as being of 'independent means'; meaning she worked for herself. Though she may not have earned a great deal she had undoubtedly progressed from her days as a charwoman taking in other people's washing for a living, something she had been doing twenty years earlier.

4 Marston West – Blacksmith



As John approached what today is the car park of the Methodist Chapel he would have called upon the village blacksmith, Marston West.

Originally from Thurlaston, Marston was living and working at the smithy with his daughter, Amy, and his two sons, Phillip and Marston Junior - both blacksmiths.

The blacksmith was a key figure in a country village. He, along with the wheelwright, kept the village mobile and the fields cultivated. Horse and cart provided the main source of transport and carriage of goods and these needed wheels and the wheels required iron rims - fitted by the blacksmith. Out in the fields farm implements such as scythes, hoes, and ploughs all required making and from time to time repairing and the blacksmith provided that service.

The accounts of the village rector, Reverend William G. Cole, for the year 1900-1901 show that he paid £14.75p (£1581.93 in today's money) for work undertaken by Mr West for the repair of farm equipment.

Marston West – Village Constable

The picture of Mr West shows, as one would expect, a stout, sturdy fellow, well capable of undertaking his chosen trade. He must also have been regarded as being someone capable of keeping others in order because he was also employed as the village constable for a number of years.

Though there was a national police force by 1900 there was an expectation that parishes would police themselves by the use of a parish constable. Employed at twenty-five shillings a year (£112 in today's money), Mr West would have been called upon from time to time to keep the peace in the village, the nearest police station being Market Bosworth.

He did not have any police training and most of his time would have been spent helping to keep good order in and around the six public houses. It was said that the only uniform village constables had was their truncheon.

Many villages in Leicestershire had purpose-built lock-ups for detaining drunks but it would appear that Newbold compromised and instead of building one, used a small room that is between the Swan Inn and the village shop. No doubt Marston would have had a key for this door.



The Lock-up

5 Framework Knitters' Cottages



Walking past the Methodist Chapel John Brown called next at three cottages, two of which were occupied by miners and their families and the third by Samuel Booton, pensioner, but they were all once occupied earlier in the century by families earning a living framework knitting.

This occupation had flourished in Newbold in the early 19th century and at one time there were over one hundred machines similar to the one in this picture providing employment and a livelihood for many of the villagers. Framework knitters created mainly worsted hosiery that was very popular at the time.

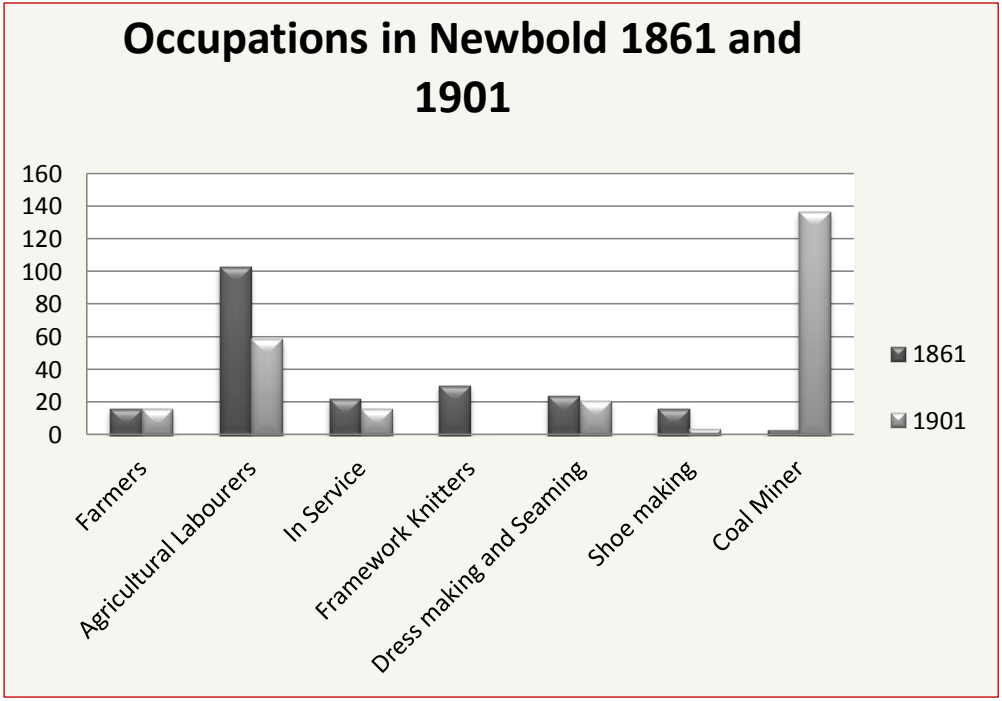
The machines were large and took up a lot of space in small cottages such as these, making conditions for the families even more cramped. In 1841, when John Brown was aged one, the number of framework knitters in Newbold had reduced to thirty-eight from over a hundred.

Though framework knitting had disappeared by 1901 there were still a number of villagers earning a living supporting hosiery manufacturing through stitching, seaming and Griswold work.

Occupations in Newbold Verdon in John Brown's Lifetime.

In 1861 working on the land dominated the village but by 1901 'Coal was King.'

The cottage industry jobs based primarily on needlework skills including hosiery seaming, dressmaking and stitching shirts still persisted, though they would soon be overtaken by the industrialisation of the processes in the factories of Hinckley, Earl Shilton, Barwell and Leicester.



Framework knitting had disappeared well before 1901 but there were still one or two makers of shoes and women still went into service on the local farms and the large houses but this too was on the decline.

6 Hell Fire Terrace

Just down from the framework knitters' cottages were a group of five, two-up and two-down cottages. It was known as Hell Fire Terrace in the 1930s because of the poor condition the houses were in and its nickname may have only originated as far back as the First World War and the notorious 'Hell Fire Corner' in Belgium on the Western Front.

At the 1901 census we cannot be sure what the conditions were like in this row of cottages but they would not have been particularly good, especially as three of the four houses were occupied by large families. Arthur Prime, for example, was one of the householders and he and his wife had seven children, four boys and three girls, all below the age of sixteen and living in a house with only two bedrooms.

The terrace may have been more appropriately named 'Coal Fire Terrace', given that all the heads of household were hewers of coal in the local mines: probably Bagworth or Nailstone.

The miners would walk to work each day covering the two mile journey on foot in all weathers to and from either Bagworth or Nailstone pits along the public footpaths that head north of the village.

Desford Colliery was soon to open providing more employment for the village and leading to the building of most of the housing at Newbold Health.

Looking down Main Street towards today's Mill Lane



This photograph was taken looking back down Main Street toward today's Mill Lane (then known as Freeman's Lane). The wall in the foreground on the right of the picture marks the perimeter of the front garden of Cob Cottage which in 1901 was the house of the wheelwright, John Gilliver.

The next row of cottages on the right was later known as Hellfire Terrace and just after them stood the three framework knitters' cottages. Adjacent to the cottages it is just possible to see the roof of the Methodist Chapel.

7 Cob Cottage - home of John Gilliver



Cob Cottage Engine Inn

In this mid-20th century picture the Engine Inn had been converted into a butcher's shop.

The thatch-roofed house known today as Cob Cottage housed the Gilliver family: at its head, John Gilliver, wheelwright and carpenter. John had been born in the village and he had been taught his trade from his father, George, who had also been a wheelwright.

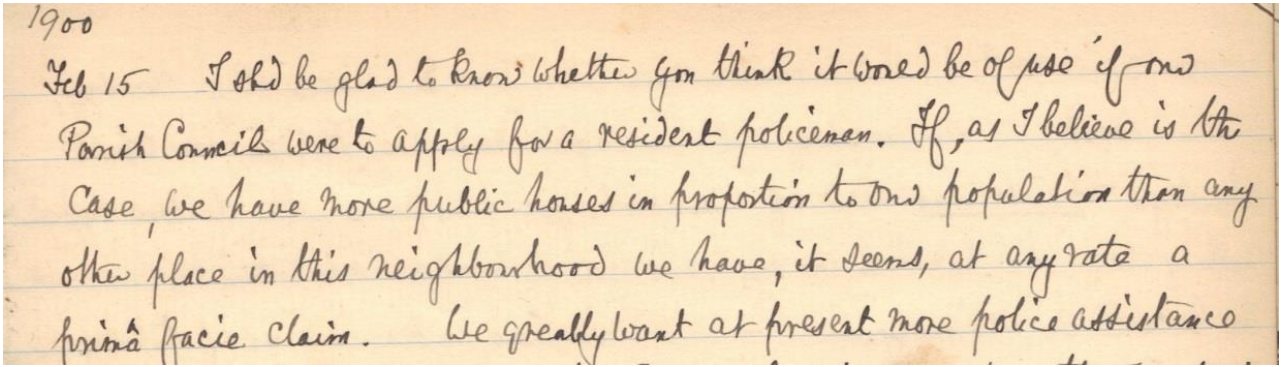
John Brown would have known Mr Gilliver and his family well, having lived just across the road from Cob Cottage for some years when he and his wife ran a grocer's shop.

Even though Newbold was turning away from being a village based on agriculture it still needed its wheelwrights to make and mend the wooden wheels of the carts, wagons and traps which still acted as the main form of transport and movement of goods. Mr Gilliver also undertook a range of more general carpentry work.

8 The Engine Inn

The Engine was another one of Newbold's six public houses and it was being run by sixty-seven year old William Statham and his seventy-one year old wife, Emma.

Not everyone was happy with the number of public houses in the village. A year earlier the Reverend Cole had written to the Inspector of Police at Market Bosworth requesting a full-time police constable be deployed to Newbold. His main concern being the problems caused by the excessive number of pubs compared with other local villages: ***'there were only three in Barlestone'*** he declared.


1900
Feb 15 I shd be glad to know whether you think it would be of use if our Parish Council were to apply for a resident policeman. If, as I believe is the case, we have more public houses in proportion to our population than any other place in this neighbourhood we have, it seems, at any rate a prima facie claim. We greatly want at present more police assistance

Part of a drafted letter by the Rector to the Inspector of Police, Market Bosworth

9 The Old School

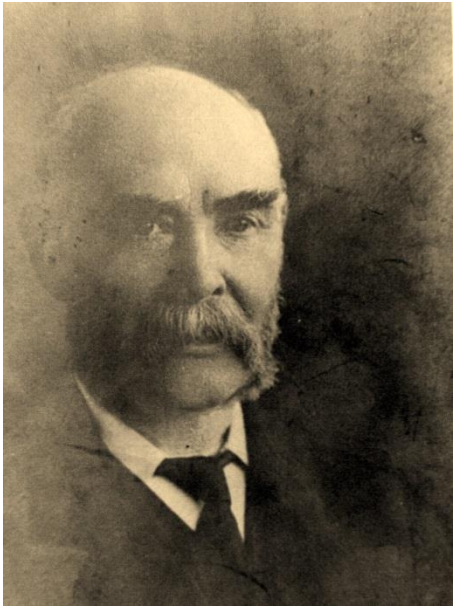


As John continued his walk down Main Street towards the top of Brascote Lane he would have passed the site of his old school which today is the site of the war memorial.

Since 1720, this tiny plot of land had been the site of the village school and schoolmaster's house. Parents paid 3d a week for their children's education. By the late 1860s, due to insufficient funds, it had fallen into disrepair and was eventually knocked down to be replaced in 1876 by the school across Brascote Lane, now St James's church hall.

John no doubt would have been familiar with the sight of children playing in the street. Traffic consisted mainly of slow moving farm wagons with perhaps the occasional horse and trap emerging from the rectory. The age of the motorised vehicle was still a number of years away.

10 Church of England School's Headmaster, Thomas Carter



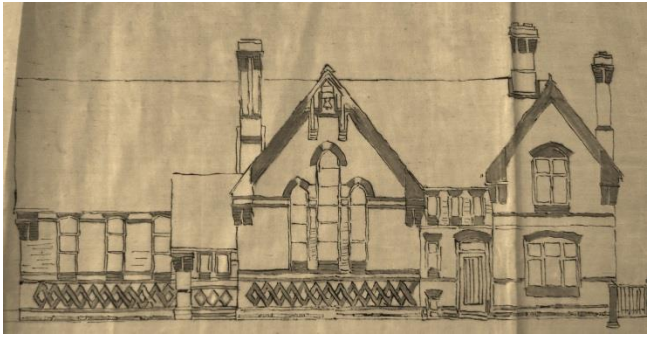
It being a school day, John may well have collected the census form from the headmaster's wife, Eliza. Thomas Carter would have been busy teaching, along with his two grown up children Charles (26) and Annie (23). Mr. Carter had already been headmaster for seventeen years in 1901 and would continue in this role until 1914. He was in charge of a school with over 190 registered pupils and it was bursting at the seams.

The curriculum of the school did not stray far from what was known as the three Rs of Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic, but also with needlework for the girls and Religious Instruction for all.

Limited as it was, this informal national curriculum had led to the United Kingdom being one of the most literate countries in the world by 1900. Therefore it was not surprising that the headmaster would have been a highly respected member of the village.

On retirement Mr Carter researched the history of the village and set it down in a document entitled, 'Notes on Newbold de Verdun', some of which we have drawn upon for this booklet.

The Church of England School – Then and Now



Original architect's drawing



2014: The Church Hall

The building from this angle has changed little over the past 140 years when the architect first drew up its design based on Cosby School, eleven miles away. The right of the building was the headmaster's house, the centre the senior children (8-13) and left the infant class.

Since the 1870 Education Act children aged between five and thirteen had to attend school. In addition to day school, the rector also recorded an average of 85 children per week attending Sunday school; a number similar to the combined Baptist and Methodist Sunday Schools. By 1910 the village would have a new school to accommodate the large numbers - the present day primary school on Dragon Lane.

11 The Swan Inn

Built in the early 19th century, the Swan Inn was one of the oldest pubs in the village. In its time it had served not only as a beer house but also as a meeting place for the parish council and the local magistrates. In the 1890s it had also contained a butcher's and before this housed a lock-up for the local drunks.



Its central location made the pub a popular hostelry for the locals but not the rector who mused on the moral corruption the Swan and the other public houses posed for the village.

In 1899 he was asked by the Bishop to report on a number of matters, one being the state of the ***'general moral condition of the Parish and District'.***

The rector's response was somewhat upbeat, replying:

'There is certainly an improvement as far as drinking is concerned.'

One can only assume from this that he thought consumption had reduced not increased.

12 The Grocer's, Baker's and Draper's



The house next to the Swan had been a shop for many years prior to 1901. On this morning John Brown called on the current shop keeper, Vincent Shepherd. He recorded on his census form that he was both a grocer and baker whilst his wife, Edith, was a draper, selling cloth and linen for clothes.

It would have certainly been a lively place, the Shepherds having three children under the age of five, plus a shop assistant and a general servant, not to mention customers. There was also room at the rear for horses to be stabled and carts stored so that goods could be delivered to the outlying farms and houses, pre-dating on-line shopping by at least a hundred years.

This shop was in the centre of the village shopping area which had a further five within a short walking distance of Mr Shepherd's. The picture shows the shop at a later date but little would have changed by the time this picture was taken.

When the Horse Was King

Though the motorised vehicle had been invented by this time, it was a rarity and continued to be so for many years.

Laurie Lee in his autobiographical book, 'Cider with Rosie', describes village life before the car: Newbold would have echoed this description.

'The horse was king, and almost everything grew around him: fodder, smithies, stables, paddocks, distances and the rhythm of our days. His eight miles an hour was the limit of our movements, as it had been since the days of the Romans. That eight miles an hour was life and death, the size of our world, our prison...'



John Barratt: grocer, baker and a man dependent on his horse for a living

The word 'prison' sounds very harsh but many villagers would have seen little of the world other than their village and perhaps other nearby villages. A visit to Leicester would have been very rare.

13 Church Farm



Social gathering of the Wildman family who once owned Church Farm

Church Farm was farmed by Walter Orton. The farm was one of several farms or small holdings that were strung along Main Street. They represented what the village had once been founded on, agriculture, but this was now on the decline. There were still the same number of farmers as there had been in 1811, fifteen, but field enclosure, mechanisation and the improvement in farming technology had led to a major reduction in the number of people earning their living off the land.

Newbold farmers also had competition for workers in the form of coal mining. The Reverend Cole writing almost thirty years earlier complained to his solicitor that it was hard to get someone to rent the church-owned Halifax Farm because prospective tenants:

'hear that labour (costs) is high owing to the neighbourhood of the coal pits'. (March 6th. 1873)

14 Alma Cottages



Moving on down Main Street John came to the recently built Alma Cottages. Erected only two years earlier, the cottages consisted of one house and a house and shop. The shopkeeper was Sarah Prime. Her husband Frank was recorded as a coalminer, though in the trade directory entry of 1899 the shop was described as a general store and Frank as the owner.

The Primes appeared to be a very industrious family; they not only owned the shop but also had a small holding with a number of cows which they milked at the rear of the cottages, having driven them up from the fields where Laburnum Avenue is now situated and through the passageway (black doors) between the neighbouring cottage and their shop and cottage.

The shop was to remain for many years to come but by the 1930s it was a haberdasher's known as 'Aunt Polly's'. It later became the first Heathbrook Pharmacy, serving the first doctor's surgery in the village sited at 1 Main Street next to the church entrance.

15

The Blacksmith's that was and would be



Next to Alma Cottage lived Thomas Poole and his family. Thomas recorded his occupation as coalminer but the house he was living in had been for many years a blacksmith's and it would return to that function by 1911 at the next census. In 1881 Marston West was living in this blacksmith's with his wife and children.

In the picture is a later blacksmith, Tommy Rowbottom. Tommy ran the blacksmith's in the 1920s and into the 1940s.

Miners and Farm Workers

This photograph is of haymaking at Halifax Farm a little later in the 20th century but still very recognisable to the village residents of 1901 Newbold.



The movement away from the countryside by the people of the village was a gradual one. Many of the miners themselves had begun their working lives on the farms and some still helped the farmers during harvest.

In this extract from Charles Bacon's autobiography (**see point 21**) he describes the following:

> *'…the colliers would help the farmers at harvest time and get some home brewed ale every second load, often a good tea in the field. ……Then for supper, some homemade bread, cheese and beer. Then when all the harvest was gathered in a grand harvest supper, when all were friends.'*

16

Hall Farm – Absent Landlord

Walking up to Hall Farm John Brown looked upon a building that was only a third of its original size. In its heyday, in the 17th and early 18th century the Hall, as it then was named, was the residence of the Lords of the Manor and remained so until the turn of the 19th century when it became primarily a farm.

The Lord of the Manor and owners of much of the parish land lived elsewhere and this was still the case in 1901 when it was owned but not lived in by A.W. Hartopp who resided in Bath.

Having an absentee lord of the manor was not ideal. It meant at least for Newbold Verdon that the patronage that was often bestowed on parishes in the form of gifts of money was not forthcoming.

Reverend Cole, for example, wrote to the then current absentee, A.W. Hartopp, just a few months earlier complaining that he had yet to receive the £30 (£3217.50 in today's money) promised by him for the church rebuild; and for good measure he also complained in the same letter that no money had been given to the upkeep of the school for several years despite a promise to the contrary.

Hall Farm – Faded Grandeur

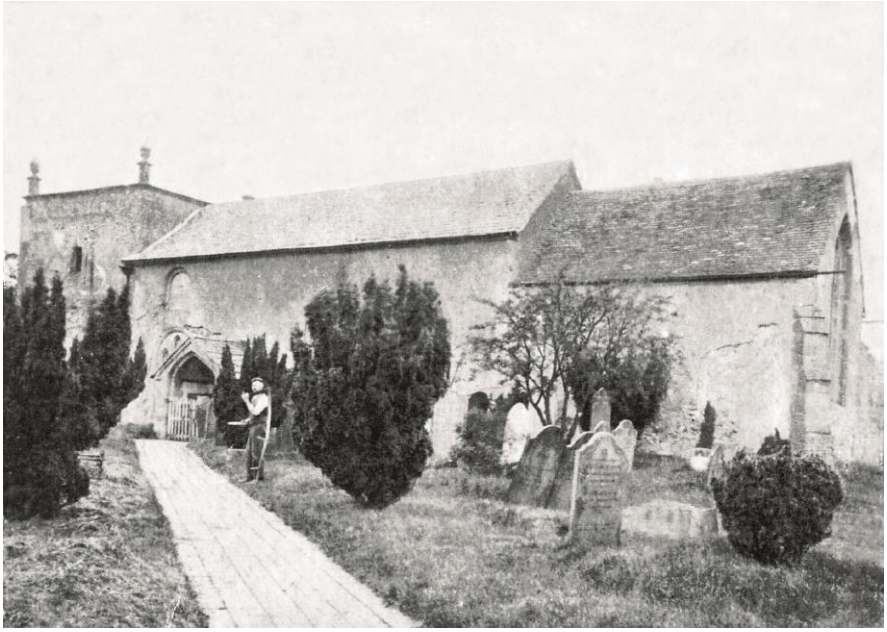


The Hall in 1901 remained an important part of the village despite its absentee owner. As the largest farm in the parish it provided employment for a number of the villagers.

This picture was taken in 1944 when the farm was up for sale. It shows the west and north elevations of the hall with steps on the western side leading to the main entrance. Originally the Hall was approached from this direction, coming off the Bosworth Road: today's front was once the rear of the building.

A grand avenue of trees led the way from the road to the house, cutting between ornamental ponds and landscaped gardens. By 1901 virtually all of that grandeur had disappeared, but even to this day it is possible to see the remnants of the ornamental ponds close to the Bosworth Road.

17 St James's Church



Though no-one was living in the church John may have stood a while and admired the building or even his handiwork because he was known to have looked after the churchyard.

He was a member of the church and someone well-known to the rector who must have thought highly of John for he once acted as a referee for him when John applied for the post of clerk at the Cathedral Church of St Martin in Leicester; describing John as**: *'sober, intelligent and well conducted…* and*…he has a good bass voice and can read music.'***

The gentleman in the picture is John Brown: equipped with scythe and keeping the churchyard in good order. The photograph was taken before the church was rebuilt in 1899.

The Wretched Tower

The church rebuild in 1899 was an almost completely new building. Only the old tower was left standing and had the Reverend Cole had his way this would also have been knocked down and started again.

No doubt the rector would have expressed his frustrations to John and the congregation about this fact. He certainly expressed it to his superior the Bishop of Peterborough. A substantial sum of £2,900 (£330,000 in 2014) had been found for the rebuilding but it just hadn't been enough for the rector.



'For want of sufficient means we have been obliged to leave the wretched Tower untouched but with regards to the rest it has been rebuilding rather than restoration and only a portion of the old walls remains as was.' *24th July 1899*

It would be almost sixty years before the tower was rebuilt and a spire added at a cost of £4000.

18 Church Row – Familiar Village Family Names



John now began his return journey back down Main Street calling at the seventeen cottages on Church Row.

The first five cottages had as their head of household: James Ball, Henry Statham, Tom Shaw, William Bevins and Thomas Prime – three coal miners and two agricultural labourers.

All five men had been born and bred in Newbold Verdon and this was fairly typical of the village as a whole. The census tells us 70% of villagers had been born there and a further 23% came from other parts of Leicestershire and mainly the villages of Desford, Barlestone, Kirkby Mallory and Market Bosworth. The 7% coming from out of the village were often single men or women who had married into a Newbold family.

It is hard to imagine today how it must have felt to have been born and raised in one small village and to have rarely ventured from it over a whole life time. Today's Newbold is in some ways almost the opposite, with many people having moved to the village only to commute out daily to their jobs.

Familiar Family Names

With so many villagers being born and staying in the village it was not surprising that the same family names occurred again and again in the census returns as you can see from the wordcloud.



The 'Statham' family name, for example, occurs in eighteen of the dwellings in Newbold as head of house.

The wordcloud illustrates this by increasing the size of a name depending on the number of times it occurs as head of a household in the census. 'Statham' with eighteen returns is by far the most common surname in the village; followed by Ball and Prime each with eight, continuing down to the likes of Finney, Trotter, and Biddle with only two census entries.

Many of these family names are familiar to us today.

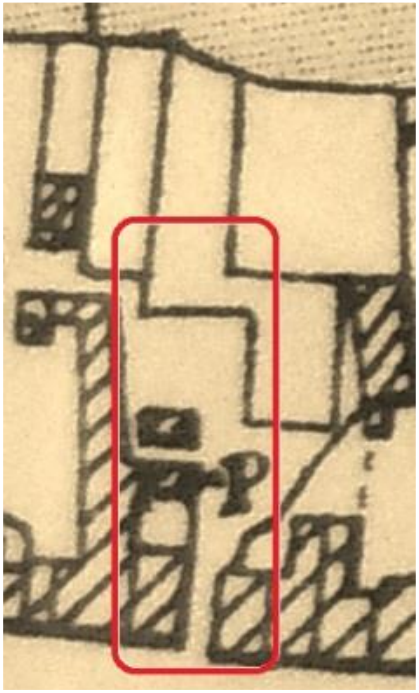
19 Workington Yard

John had to record the dwellings that were not in use either because people were away, the dwelling was being built or there was no-one living there at that time. There were five such dwellings in the whole parish and four of them were here at Workington Yard, just down from the church.

Each dwelling in Workington Yard only had two rooms and would probably have housed in its time the poorest of the poor. By 1901 the houses look to have been abandoned. Today's older residents of the village cannot recall any such yard from their childhood and the place was not recorded on the later 1911 census.

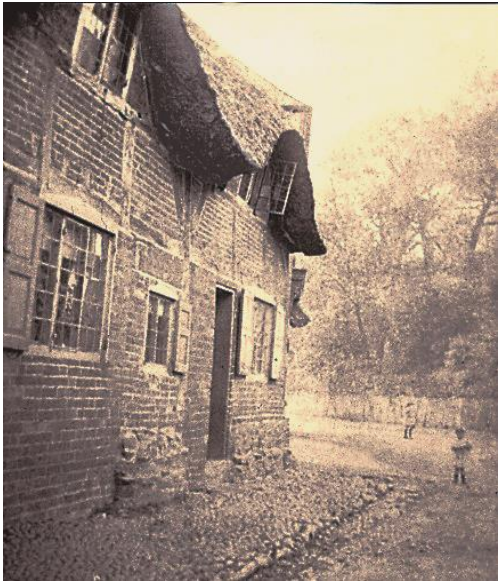
The diagram shows in red what we believe to be the yard's boundary but it is difficult to ascertain exactly where each cottage was placed. Each shaded block normally denotes a separate dwelling.

The letter 'P' on the map identifies where the water pump was situated. It was common in the village for four to five houses at a time to share the use of a communal pump.



Workington Yard: its entrance today is between houses 7 and 11

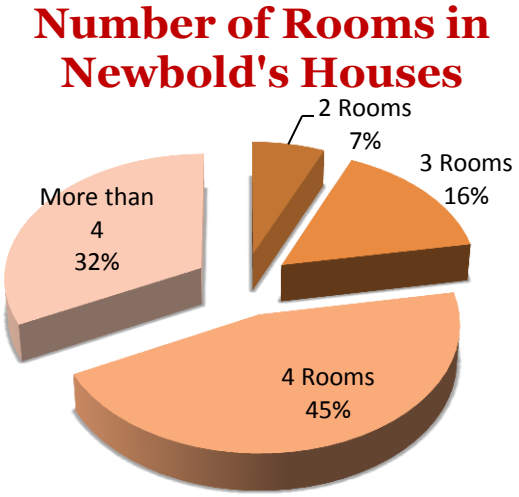
Housing Conditions



Workington Yard provided living accommodation of the most basic kind but it was not the only place in the village like this. Out of a housing stock of 196, fourteen of the houses only had two rooms and seventeen more had just three. The predominant housing in the village was the two-up, two-down terraced house, which we see on Church Row.

The house in the picture above is on Main Street facing Mill Lane and is presently a shop selling pet food.

Most of the accommodation was rented and a typical rent would be about £4 to £8 per year (£350-£700 2013 equivalent).



20 Noah Smith's House – not quite Noah's Ark but close



Noah's House Today

Double the size of 1901

Turning out of Workington Yard and back down Church Row John may well have met with a noisy welcome as he knocked on Noah Smith's door (number 15 today). Noah would have been out working at the pit leaving the handing over of his form to his wife, Harriet.

Harriet was aged thirty-seven and was the mother of Ernest (14), Sidney (12), Harriet (10), Jack (9), Thomas (7), George (5), Sarah (4), Ida (3), and Elsie who was just coming up to her first birthday. Even by Newbold's standards this was a very full house and apart from Ernest who was a colliery labourer, only Noah brought in any income.

How the family coped in such a small house with two adults and nine children it is hard to imagine, especially as they had none of the things we take for granted every day: electricity, gas, running water, or drains for sewage.

To supplement his income and keep the family's head above water, Noah rented a field from the rector and probably had an allotment for growing vegetables as well as a pig in the backyard.

21 Mary Bacon and her son, Charles



Mary Bacon lived in today's 25 Church Row, Plumb Cottage.

She had lived in this row of cottages for over forty years and had managed to bring up eleven children. Mary was aged seventy and recorded as shop keeper 'own means' on the census, meaning she was self-employed. Living with her was her daughter, Amelia, and her family. All the rest of her children had left home and one in particular, Charles, was showing great enterprise.

Born in 1871, Charles began his working life as a thirteen year-old farm boy at Osbaston paid £3 for the year. After six years of working on the land he moved to Leicester and worked in a variety jobs but progressing ever upwards. By 1911 he owned his own company, a general carrier of goods, and such was his high reputation that the company was employed to carry the 6' (nearly 2m) diameter Gents Company station clock to St. Pancras Station, London.

He died in 1947 leaving an estate worth £11,197, which is equivalent to £420,176 in today's money. A small fortune and a long way from his humble beginnings on Church Row. In later life Charles wrote his autobiography which offers a wonderful insight into his childhood in Newbold Verdon (see Appendix ii and iii).

22 The Penny Bazaar

The picture shows a Penny Bazaar taking place along Church Row. Penny Bazaars were a small open market where people would sell their goods on the street.

We don't know if John Brown walked past one on his round that day but it would have been a fairly common event and one which acted as much as a social gathering as well as a chance to purchase inexpensive goods. The number of women in the photograph suggest it was something occupying the women of the village more than the men.

Of the 252 women of working age in Newbold at the time of the census, 66% did not have an occupation, though some recorded it as 'housewife' or 'housekeeper' on the census. This contrasted considerably with a few decades earlier when many women also held down jobs as well as bringing up a family.

The house where the lady and old man are standing in the doorway is part of today's extended number 21. It is quite possible that the two people are Thomas Hargrave, aged seventy, a woodman on a farm and his wife, Mary, aged sixty-four.

The Penny Bazaar outside today's Church Row



23 Hargrave Lane



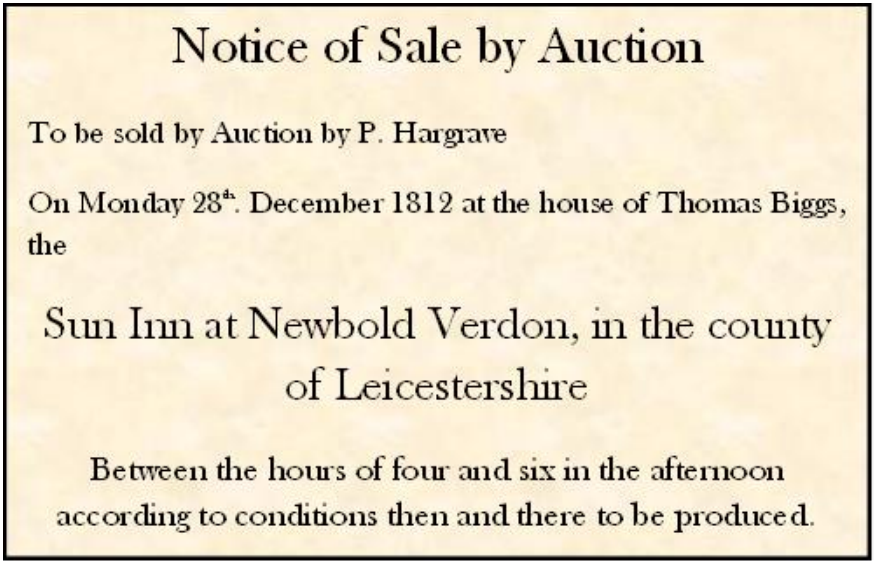
Having completed his walk along Church Row, John turned briefly left to visit the three cottages on what we now know as Dragon Lane. In fact the top end was listed as Dragon Lane in the census but somewhere along the road the name changed to Hargrave Lane at this end of the village.

When it first became known as Hargrave Lane is not clear but it is likely to be because a member of the Hargrave family lived here or, more likely, rented out cottages on the lane. As far back as 1810 Thomas Hargrave owned ten houses in the village and rented nine of them out. These houses date from this time.

In the 1861 census his son, Thomas, described his occupation as a ***'proprietor of houses'*** – 'landlord' in today's language. By 1901 there does not appear to be any wealthy Hargraves living in the village anymore and in 1911 the full length was known as Dragon Lane.

24 The Sun Inn and Village Stocks

Crossing over the road John called at the cottages of John Bromage and George Patchett, a wagoner and a farm labourer. Ninety years earlier their cottages had been one dwelling, The Sun Inn. It was sold at auction in 1812 and the pub became the two cottages we see today.



Notice of Sale by Auction

To be sold by Auction by P. Hargrave

On Monday 28th. December 1812 at the house of Thomas Biggs, the

Sun Inn at Newbold Verdon, in the county of Leicestershire

Between the hours of four and six in the afternoon according to conditions then and there to be produced.

Mr Carter, the headmaster, in his notes on the history of Newbold Verdon, records that the village stocks were once sited outside the cottages and,

'Many of the older parishioners recollect them in their youthful days.'

We can deduce from this that they were still in use in the middle of the 19th century, only to be replaced later by the 'lock-up' at The Swan.

25 Caroline Bell and her Lane



Standing now on the site of Sunshine Cottage this three storey house was being used in 1901 as a shop by Mrs Caroline Bell, a fifty-two year old widow.

She recorded her occupation as 'provisions merchant' which suggests possibly some form of wholesale business.

She certainly had plenty of family support. Her two sons who lived on the premises were in the trade as was Caroline's other son, Frederick, who lived just down the street. Her eldest son, William, was running a grocer's shop in Chapel Yard, Barlestone.

It is very likely that Bell's Lane was named after the family shop even though she and her family were 'outsiders' originating from Raunds in Northamptonshire.

Childhood Recollections of Charles Bacon

Charles Bacon had much to say about his early life in Newbold and what he got up to as a child, and although it was a little earlier than 1901 it would have changed little in those twenty or so years. There seemed to be no time for him to play. He wrote the following about his years aged seven to ten.

I helped in turn a Grocer, a Baker and a small Farmer. I also had plenty of interesting work to do in taking horses to the fields and to the blacksmiths, feeding our pig in the lanes, getting manure for the allotment and drying grass for the pig's winter bed.

When it was dark we helped Mother to do seaming to the tops of hosiery from Leicester.

When he got home there was always food on the table.

I always had plenty of plain food, often a change. Sometimes hot wheat with a few currants for breakfast. Dinner, often a sheep's head in a pot for soup, with plenty of home-grown turnips and carrots, homemade ketchup and when in season mushrooms and home fed bacon for breakfast….

As I see it all now, I was well off as a youngster.

26 The Rectory and the Reverend William Gordon Cole



No grand entrance for John Brown through the wrought iron gates at the front of the Rectory but a walk up Bell's Lane to the rear of the building to collect the census form from the rector, William Gordon Cole.

The Reverend Cole was one of the most important people in the village. Not just because of his responsibility for the spiritual well-being of many parishioners which at that time saw congregations numbering 250 at St James's each Sunday evening, but also because of his pastoral works. In 1876 he had almost single-handedly been responsible for ensuring the building of a new school and eight years later lent the money from his own pocket for it to be extended: something he achieved in the space of three months. The rebuilt St James's was also testament to his hard work.

He was also, on behalf of the church, the second largest landowner in the village, farming 287 acres of land, most of it being at Halifax Farm north of the village. The church also owned a number of cottages that were rented out and he oversaw who lived in those cottages. The church also rented out allotments of land and fields to parishioners which he controlled.

The Reverend Cole and Newbold Verdon's Coal Mine



What John Brown would not have known as he left the rectory that day was that the Reverend Cole was in negotiations with two mining companies concerning the possibility of mining for coal under the fields of Halifax Farm.

The rector had been approached by the owners of the Ibstock Mining Company to see if he could be persuaded to sell the mining rights to the minerals under the farm. He was also being wooed by the Desford Mining Company for the same reason.

A mine shaft had been sunk on land at Lindridge by the Ibstock Company and they were keen to explore further west, exploiting any coal deposits between Desford and Newbold. At one point in the proceedings it was proposed to sink a shaft close to Desford Road. The rector was concerned about this possible development. Writing to a fellow rector he explained.

'It will convert Desford and Newbold Verdon into a colliery district and entirely alter the character of the villages**.'* A little later, in a submission to his superiors at the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in London he wrote: ***'I would prefer it if I had the power to put a stop to both of the collieries but as this is impossible it only remains to make the best of it.' In the end none of this came to pass because coal deposits were poor and some seams had already burnt out naturally.

27 The Three Cottages

John's next stop after leaving the rectory would have been the three cottages opposite the old school and today standing as one house, 49 Main Street. The first person he called upon was Mary Jordan, sixty-six and a widow. Mary stitched shirts together for a living and had been the wife of the local butcher, Benjamin Jordan, now deceased. The cottage had once been her husband's butcher's shop and the wheel where the carcases of the dead animals were hung is still in the house to this day.

Living in the house with her on the day of the census was her grandson, Albert Preston, and the rest of his family was living next door with his father, William Preston, and mother Sarah. This second cottage had once been the local post office but that was now next door at William Barrs.

The sub-postmaster for the village, William Thomas Barrs was born in 1855 in Brascote where his father, John Barrs, was the miller. William had followed his father into milling but had eventually given it up and in 1901, as well as running the post-office, he also farmed sixty acres of land.

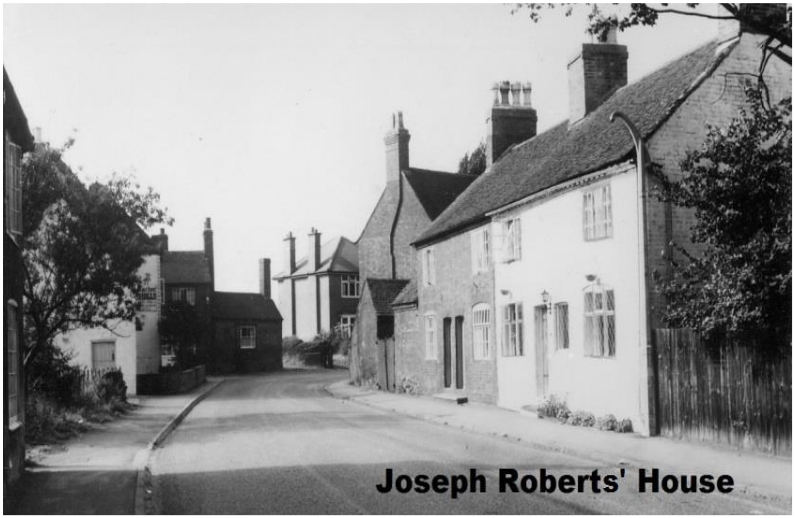
One could imagine as a rural postmaster Mr Barrs having a fairly quiet life in a village of only 850 people; the number of letters and parcels a day was likely to be quite small. Possibly not, because the statistics for the number of letters sent by people in Great Britain in 1901 show that for each person in the country there were 67 letters sent each year.

William Barrs' Cottage.



This photograph shows William's cottage though it may be somewhat later in the century, possibly the 1920's.

28 Joseph Roberts



Leaving the post office behind, John rounded the tight bend back towards the Baptist Chapel passing a large house on the corner then occupied by Caroline Bell's son, Frederick, and on towards the two cottages shown on the right of this picture.

John had once lived in the first cottage (with two doors) for several years; initially plying his trade as a shoemaker and then running a grocer's shop from it with his wife, Mary.

His next door neighbour for many years had been Joseph Roberts and he was still living in the same house in 1901. Both cottages were owned by St James's church and the rent for Joseph Roberts was £7 per year.

Mr Roberts recorded his occupation on the census as a coal miner but for at least the previous ten years he had been the farm bailiff running Halifax Farm on behalf of the rector whose 'living' (income) was somewhat reliant on the farm being profitable.

Joseph Roberts loses his house

John and Joseph knew each other well and on that day John may well have chatted to Mr Roberts about his pending eviction from the cottage.

The cottage was tied to Mr Roberts' job as farm bailiff but because he had left it for a job at the pit in late September 1900 the rector needed him and his daughter, her husband and their new born baby to leave.

The rector was not happy about the situation and he wrote to a fellow rector saying he did not want to, ***'disturb them'.*** Finally though, his patience ran out and on the 30th January 1901 he issued a notice for Mr Roberts and his family to quit with immediate effect. ***'Five months after he left off working for me'*** – the rector noted to a fellow landlord. Mr Roberts still hadn't left by the 1st April but he did eventually later that year.

What prompted Joseph's departure to the pit we do not know but there was, years later, a story told by older village residents about the sacking of 'Roberts' by the rector after he had discovered the carcass of his missing cow hanging in the local butcher's, courtesy of his bailiff!

Whatever happened between the two men did not appear to sully the rector's relationship with Joseph's son, John, who was living at Halifax Farm as the second bailiff. He continued in this role for several more years before leaving to go down the pit like his father.

29 Baptist Chapel



By 1901 a Baptist Chapel had already stood on this site for sixty-eight years, it having been erected in 1833 at a cost of £220.

The church owed its existence to the evangelical Barton Fabis Baptist movement originating in Barton-in-the-Beans (Fabis is Latin for bean) which had formed in 1745. So successful was the evangelical Baptist movement of Barton that over a hundred churches were established in Leicestershire through its influence, Newbold being one of them.

By 1901 both the Baptist and Methodist churches were well established and their combined congregations were beginning to equal those of St James's.

The rise of non-conformist churches was not something particularly welcomed by the established church and they were often referred to as Dissenters – those who had turned away from the true Church. Charles Bacon in his autobiography writes,

'Church and Chapels, both Baptist and Primitive Methodists, were very much apart those days...'

30 Freeman's Lane Cottages



John's final stop on this part of his walk was the five cottages at the beginning of Freeman's Lane, so named after the farming and milling family who had lived on the lane for many years. All four of the occupied cottages were headed by a coal miner.

In one row of cottages so much of the village was exemplified, especially at the very end cottage of Amos Statham. His was one of the eighteen Statham families in the village: he was a coal miner who, twenty years earlier, had worked the land and who was now being followed down the pit by two of his sons, Henry and Arthur, whilst a third son, Walter, remained an agricultural labourer.

For the next fifty years mining and miners would dominate the village. Farming and agricultural labour would never completely go away but it would continue to diminish in its impact on village life and with it would go the old trades and occupations: wheelwright, blacksmith, carter, wagoner, shepherd and plough boy.

Finally, in the late 20th century coalmining would have also had its day and the village would take on a role of providing a place from which people commuted to their work.

John's Journey Home

The walk John undertook that day would have been one he had taken many, many times either as Parish Clerk, Poor Law Assistant Overseer or Prudential Insurance Agent. The difference this day was that he was capturing, through the census report, a moment in time not just for his employers in London but also for later generations.

What he thought about this moment and the information he had gathered is impossible to know. Undoubtedly he had seen many things change in the village over his lifetime but also much that had remained the same.

Did he feel Newbold was a better place to live in now than before or did he have similar misgivings as the Reverend Cole concerning the poor moral standing of the villagers, fuelled by their easy access to alcohol from any one of the six public houses? Was he happy to see the movement away from the land to the mines or the loss of skilled trades such as his and his father's? As an Anglican did he welcome the dissenters of the Baptist and Methodist Chapels and acknowledge their right to worship as they saw fit? Did he bemoan the state of the village and its poor housing, unkempt roads, lack of basic hygiene and services such as running water in the houses?

Perhaps he gave none of these things any thought and just dutifully transposed the information from each form on to the summary sheets. Maybe he decided he would let posterity form its own views.

Appendices

Pages

i. A Village Tribute to John Brown
ii. Charles Bacon describes Church Row
iii. Charles Bacon describes the inventory of his home

i. A Village's Tribute to John Brown?

John was to live for another fifteen years and on his death in 1916 he was buried in St James's churchyard alongside his wife, Mary, who had died twenty-two years earlier. The epitaph on his gravestone is a fitting tribute to someone who contributed so much to his village over much of his lifetime.



In Loving Memory Of

John Brown

For 53 Years Parish Clerk of

Newbold-Verdon

Aged 77 Years

Died June 19th. 1916

'Well done good and faithful servant.'

ii. Charles Bacon describes Church Row

The Life Story of Charles Bacon

(as told by himself)

The cottage in which I was born consisted of one living room 12ft. x 14ft. and a kitchen 8ft. x 6ft. and two bedrooms the same size. It was the middle cottage in a row of eleven. A pump outside the cottage served the whole row, and a wash-house with a large copper installed was situated at the end. This also served all the families, and it was quite a business for them all to agree as to the times they should use it. There was a small strip of land to each cottage and at the bottom of each strip was a pigsty and a coal-house. At each end of the row of cottages was a lavatory for the use of all the tenants. The inclusive rent for these cottages was 1/9d. per week

The tenants at the time I was born were either miners or farm labourers, but all good friends. My father was a wagoner and had to do a Sunday service and extra time during Harvest for a weekly wage of 16/- a week.

iii. Charles Bacon describes the inventory of his home

It is with pride I set out an inventory of my early home furniture.

Living Room – Square deal table, oak side table, 1 long case clock, armchair, easy chair, 4 small chairs, 1 stool and a homemade couch, 4 pictures and a small book case. On the table was the family Bible, Pilgrims Progress and Sankeys Hymns and others. On the floors were homemade rugs. The floors downstairs were common bricks whilst upstairs were of plaster and straw covered with homemade mats.

Kitchen – Small brick wash stand, shelves and pantry under the stairs.

Front Bedroom – two beds, 1 wooden box. In one corner was a clean sheet hanging up for a wardrobe. In this were 4 long silk top hats with crepe hat bands. My mother lent these to neighbours at Funerals. She also attended many at sickness and death.

Back bedroom – One three quarter bed, one stand, two small wooden barrels for keeping wine and homemade herb beer.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for their support in the creation of this booklet.

Mr Robert Freeman for his contribution of photographs and his information regarding Charles Bacon's autobiography.

The villagers who attended our consultation evening and who provided much valued information.

Nicky and Dean Yates-Smith for access to their photographic archive of the village.

David Preston for his photograph of Mr Carter

Alyn De Casembroot and Liam King for proof-reading the booklet

Amanda and Steve Worth for their permission to publish the photograph of Marston West.

Baptist and Methodist Churches for access to their historical accounts

Kate and Gianni de Fraya for use of the photograph of the Rectory

References

Pages

2, 6, 34	1903 Ordinance Survey Map – Leicestershire County Record Collection
9, 25	Mary Ball's occupation as a carter was recorded in Kelly's Directory of Leicester 1899 see also page 25 reference for Mr Prime
10	The accounts book of the Reverend Cole is held in a private collection.
13	The data from the 1901 and 1861 census returns was gathered by scrutiny of the Ancestry.co.uk web site. This site was used many times in support of factual details throughout this booklet.
17	From a private collection of drafted letters written by the Reverend Cole. See also pages: 21, 24, 28, 30, 31 and 45
19, 41	Thomas Carter's 'Notes on Newbold de Verdun' are held in a private collection
20	The architect drawing is taken from a collection held at Leicestershire County Council Record's Office.
23	Laurie Lee, 'Cider with Rosie' p216 Penguin Classics

27 Charles Bacon. Autobiography can be seen at the University of Leicester Manuscripts Collections MS 88 (see also page 44, 51 and Appendices ii and iii.)

Money Calculations: Taken from the Bank of England on-line Inflation Calculator: 1901 compared to 2113

More General Reading

As well as acquiring specific items from sources, we also accessed several other sources for background information.

- The Parish Council Minutes held at Leicestershire County Councils' Records Office
- A Range of 19th Century Trade Directories available for viewing at http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16445coll4
- Vision of Britain Web Site: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/11182 which contains a range of statistical information about Newbold Verdon
- The History of the Church and Parish of Newbold De Verdun by Dorothy Fox
- Anniversary 175 Years 'I Remember When' Newbold Verdon Baptist Church
- http://www.healeyhero.co.uk/ A highly informative web site describing the history of mining in the region
- Leicestershire Villages Web Site: http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/newboldverdon/newboldverdonhistory.html Contains a range of interesting articles about the village
- http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/assets/education-newbold-verdon-1700-2013 A well-researched paper on the history of education in our village.

Want to know more?

This booklet only scratches the surface of the village's history at this time. For more information about John Brown's walk and the rest of the village go to.

www.leicestershirevillages.com/newboldverdon

Click on the title **'Newbold Verdon 1901'** on the right of the screen

This will include:

- Information on other people who lived in the village at that time
- Additional maps of the whole of the parish
- Photographs not included in the booklet
- Further articles on the occupations of the villagers

This book printed by Central Print Services, County Hall, Leicester


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