What the Papers Said

Introduction 25/10/2018

Good evening to you and welcome to an evening which I hope will be both informative and entertaining as we delve into the 19th century history of the parish of Newbold-de-Verdon and lives of its parishioners.

Tonight, is about sharing with you several sets of contemporary sources that shed light on what it must have been like to live in 19th century Newbold. By sources I mean the newspapers of the time but also the journal of a resident, the autobiography of a rags to riches child of the village and the letters of one of our clergy.

It won't always be a happy story to tell: poverty and destitution and the outcomes of such circumstances will loom large in the telling. You will hear of the way desperate people were treated for minor infringements of the law and of, what now seems incredible to us, but the way individuals had to bring about their own prosecutions – even for offences as serious as robbery, arson and even murder.

There will also be stories of human endeavour; of impressive self-support systems, of the resilience of the human spirit and of the drive to overcome adversity and to make a better life for themselves and their children.

Let's begin by visiting the parish before the 19th century begins.

Part 2: Newbold Verdon Pre-1800

Have a look at this advertisement. The sale of 303 oak trees in Newbold Verdon in **1769**. The person selling the trees is Thomas Pares, He had recently become joint owner of the Manor of Newbold de Verdun with Joseph Bunney.



The sale of these Oak trees mark for me the end of the use of the house as a family home built by Lord Crewe and later lived in by, amongst others, the Montagues. With its magnificent parkland described by Edward Montague's wife, Elizabeth, as….



Imagine standing there as a buyer on the day of the auction as you walked through the oaks, planted over 100 years earlier. It may also have been a sad day for the villagers as they watched each lot being felled.

Pares and Bunney, or members of their families, never lived in the house but rented it and the lands out to a succession of farmers well into the 20th century.

The loss of an occupying landowner is likely to have a significant impact on the village and parish – possibly for the good but also for the bad. Benevolent landowners living amongst the tenants and workers of their land had a more direct experience of parishioners' lives and could, if they so wished, help alleviate some of the effects of changes to those lives. Absentee landlords perhaps less so. It was certainly the opinion of the Rev Coles later in the 19th C who bemoaned the fact that an absent Lord of the Manor paid little heed to the parish's needs.

In 1810, the sons of Pares and Bunney, William John Pares Esq and the now benighted (Bunney) known as Sir Edmund Craddock Hartropp set about changing the landscape and lives of Newbold and its parishioners for ever.

Part 3: Enclosure



The date is Sunday 15th. July, 1810 and pinned to the door of St James' church is the following notice informing parishioners of the start of the inclosure of the 900 acres of land and inviting all interested parties to the George and Dragon on the 23rd August for the Commissioners to hear any claims to entitlement. The commissioners had held their first meeting the day before at Market Bosworth and had instructed that the notice be given on the following day.

A Brief Description of Enclosure

By the early 1800s the parish of Newbold had been partially enclosed and about half of the landscape of the parish was made up of small fields (closes) that individual landowners would farm or let out to tenants. The offspring of Thomas Pares and Joseph Bunney (Sir Edmund Craddock Hartopp and John Pares) had initiated this process by applying for an act of parliament to be passed. They were the major landowners in the parish and together with other significant landowners, they petitioned for the final inclosure of the waste land and open fields.

There was still over 900 acres not enclosed: open fields (300 acres) and waste or heath land (600 acres).

In 1810 a private act of Parliament for the Enclosure of the Parish of Newbold Verdon, petitioned by the major landowners of the parish, was passed and this started the final act in the enclosure of the parish which had begun several centuries earlier in the early 1500s and continued piecemeal until the passing of the Act and its enforcement three hundred years later.

Within eighteen months, all of the land in the parish that was not already enclosed would be and the rights of villagers from both Barlestone and Newbold to common land would be gone for ever. The nucleated village comprising of most people who farmed living on Main Street would be gone and isolated farm houses would be built around the parish.

Enclosure in its physical sense meant the hedging or fencing of land by individuals to mark out their property and retain it for their sole use. It also meant the removal of the ancient, legal communal rights of pasturage (grazing of cattle), pannage (foraging of pigs), turbary (cutting of peat for fuel) or estover (collection of wood for repairs or fuel).

The enclosure of Newbold Verdon in 1810-11 was the culmination of a process that had begun as early as 1499 when the hamlet of Brascote and a small part of Newbold were enclosed. The church had enclosed the glebe land that it held by 1676 and there were numerous other private actions of enclosure by individuals either formally or informally.

The parish enclosure was the focus of the work of the commissioners. Their job, as set down in Newbold's own Act of Parliament, was to enclose 300 acres of open field and 600 acres of 'waste' or common land known as Newbold Heath.

What did the Parish Look Like prior to Enclosure?



We cannot be certain what the landscape looked like prior to enclosure because we have no maps to show us, but the description of the Commissioners gives us a rough idea.

The land shaded in green is already enclosed – this process started in Brascote in 1499 and then followed, piecemeal, for the next three-hundred years.

The turquoise shading shows where the large open fields may have been. The field north of the toll road was Whisslow Field and there was a field marked south of the village to the west of Brascote Lane.

The purple area is the 600 acres of 'waste'. It was not necessarily poor quality described as Newbold Health and stretching in toward Barlestone. This is where the commoners would have grazed their animals, allowed their pigs to forage and taken wood for the fire.

What did the Parish look like after Enclosure?



The roads are in yellow, and whilst there may well have been tracks in these places already, the C's made them legally binding highways to be maintained to a certain standard by the parish. Footpaths were made public (green) and gave right of access. Only 8 were named.

New drainage ditches had to be dug and existing ones improved. Hedges were planted, fences put up and the land was no longer freely accessible to all other parishioners. The fields are not marked out here but they had been defined and assigned.



All within a space of eighteen months.

This later map of 1835, whilst not showing the full impact of Enclosure on the landscape, does give a better idea of what the village and surrounds looked like.

How did enclosure affect the people and the relationship between each other?

We don't know directly exactly how for NV but evidence from other sources tells us that there were definitely winners and losers.

- Messr Pares and Sir Edmund Craddock who were able to put to use the 'waste and Heath' for farming.
- One or two larger landowners, for the same reason,
- The Church, gaining Halifax Farm (300 acres) in lieu of tithes

The losers

- Smaller landowners who may have had to sell their land off to pay for the roads, ditches and hedging (mainly of Messr Pares and Craddock). Some being in so much debt they may have had to see their land to the larger farmers. £4,000 bill. (£300,000 in today's money)
- The majority of the villagers. They lost their right to access the common land. They lost access to their field strips. If they continued working on the land it had to be as agricultural workers. Wages were poor and employment was often seasonal.
- The enclosing of the land also meant that people who had been able to roam their own parish were confined to the newly defined public footpaths, and roads. The toll road already made payment a necessity if people were to travel on them.

The agricultural revolution, especially enclosure, upset traditional rural society. There was a shift from the self-sufficient, open field villages to farms rented by tenant farmers employing labourers.

Hiring was on a casual basis and no payment was given if no work was done. After enclosure it became more common for labourers to be paid by the day or week or by results, and to be employed for short periods for harvesting, hedging, ditching, threshing, and so on. 'Living in' disappeared. Farmhands were transformed into casual labourers with no guarantee of work. Pay declined because of the surplus of labour.

How did this change the way the community functioned?

- Becoming paid workers meant the people in the parish were more dependent on the landowners and tenant farmers than before.
- These men also ran the public bodies – the Vestry a forerunner of the parish council.
- They decided who received poor relief and who didn't.
- They had control over all housing in the village.
- The laws passed controlled wages and the laws of control were punitive and focused on the protection of property.
- Add to this the fact that it was hard for individuals to just up and move because they were legally tied to their parish.

Some of these elements existed before full enclosure but they would have been aggravated after this occurred.

The effect on the cottager can best be described by saying that before enclosure the cottager was a labourer with land, after enclosure he was a labourer without land. The economic basis of his independence was destroyed. in the first place, he lost a great many rights for which he received no compensation.



Contrast his story with what the wealthy Victorians wanted to believe it was like in the countryside.

This was a painting by Miles Birkett Foster, one of the most famous artists of the day. Reassuringly portraying the agricultural worker, for they were no longer farmers, as living a good life with roses round the door, food in abundance: well dressed, relaxed and with seemingly not a care in the world – when the reality was far removed from this.

Part 4: Thomas Babbington

Enclosure throughout the country and especially the Midlands caused a great deal of unrest and in the east of England riots had broken out. The now, agricultural workers protesting by damaging crops, uprooting hedges and burning ricks.

This slide shows a sketch of the time depicting the house of the Rickburner. Well more a hovel than a house. You can see the poor, destitute children and what looks like an old woman lying dying in bed – probably his wife. The cupboard is bare – they are at their wits end. The only form of light is the torch that will soon be used to burn the farmers rick down.

If you think this is an exaggeration, then hear the story of Newbold Verdon's very own rick burner (or so it was claimed), Thomas Babbington.



Read the story of Babbington



Part 5: Population and FRW

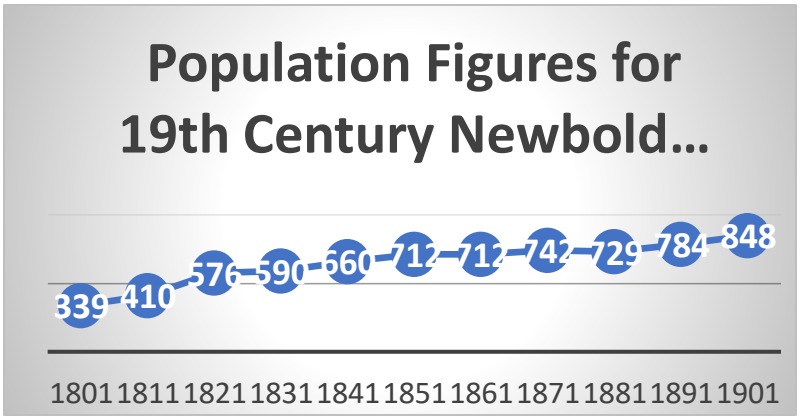
Many communities did not survive full enclosure. Farmers needed fewer people to work on the land and this led sometimes to whole villages being abandoned. Brascote was a good early example, it was fully enclosed in 1499 and it went from being a community of some 8 farms (approximately 40 people) to just one by the end of the 17th C.

Why didn't NV's number's drop?

Let's look at the population numbers for the 19th century.

You can see that the population actually increased by 166 from the start of the final enclosure in 1811 to 1820, - the biggest jump in any of the decades of the 19th C - when one might have expected it to decrease.

Why was that? Well, there must have had to have been some form of additional employment to keep people in the village and perhaps even to attract some.



The answer – Worsted Stocking

Enclosure drove many off the land and into the quickly developing towns and cities of the midlands and north, to work in the factories, but Newbold like many other villages and towns in SW Leicestershire produced worsted stockings by the process of Framework Knitting.



Framework Knitting



This had been established in the east midland for well over a century (in 1750) there were estimated to be 1,800 frames in Leicester and surrounding villages, especially the south-west and north.

At this time, and leading up to the early 1800's, most of the FWK would have worked from home, often supplementing their living as agricultural labourers. It was an occupation mainly done by the men of the village. It may well have been the reason why numbers in the village did not drop in the early 1800s

This picture is of a framework knitters' machine (there were smaller ones).

Thread would be brought to FWK cottages on the Monday and collected by the **bagman** on the Friday. The finished hose (woollen in NV case) would then be weighed to make sure no thread had been stolen and the FWK would be paid according to the number of pieces he produced.

For the early part of the 19th C FWK became a great supplement, if not full-time job for parishioners. It was mainly the men who worked the frames but the women and children also played a part in the process.

FWK rarely owned the machines but rented then from the Bag Men. This meant they had to pay the weekly rental of 1 shilling regardless of how much work was put their way.

For a time, FWK was very lucrative and the skilled FWK labour much sort after but there then ensued a gradual decline in the cottage industry as the work moved from villages to factories in ES and H, where bigger and faster machines were used, but before yet further suffering had been placed at the door of Newbold's knitters.

In 1845 a Parliamentary Commissioner visited Leicester and asked FWK for testimony on their living conditions. He had been instructed to find out just how bad things were for the FWK and so he went throughout the area asking for people to come and express their opinions on the demise of FWK and its effects.

Two men from NV, Thomas Ball and Thomas Priestnall, gave evidence on behalf of all FWK in the village

Poorly paid as the work was, it may well have stemmed the flow of people from the village after enclosure. In fact the population rose slowly but steadily until 1830 before levelling out for the next twenty years or so, rising to 848 by 1901 – an increase of 509 on the 1801 figure of 339.

Were you deputed to come here and give evidence on behalf of the frame-work knitters of Newbold?
(Priestnell) We were
How many frames are there at Newbold?
Not above 20 or 25 in the town.
And how many used there to be?
I have known as many as 100; and they have all gone out of the trade now.
What is the average net earnings in those frames?
I know I work very hard for 1s a day first hand, and that would be an average of the place.
What is the principle work made?
Mostly three-and-ninepenny and four shilling worsted. We have very little cotton work in Newbold.
What are the points you have come to speak to particularly?
(Ball) We heard that the Commissioner was come, and we thought that we would come and state the case generally of the place. The rest of the hands wished us to come> we think the cut-up work is the greatest evil.
Has that thrown a number of frames out of employment?
It has. The hands are not able to compete with them; I mean the cut-ups. (Priestnell) Those that have families of four or five children cannot keep them.

Life did not get any easier and whilst there was almost throughout the 19th C some form of hosiery going on, it had died out by the mid-century. A person we will meet later, Charles Bacon, writes in his autobiography of helping his mother in the evenings as she finished off the hosiery by stitching the tops of the garments.

Part 6: Newspapers



Up until now I have only shared with you a couple of newspaper articles. My research has been done primarily by accessing the National Newspaper Archives on line and up until about 1830 only a few articles relating to NV

Why so few entries before the mid-19th C?

Cost – 4p stamp duty on each paper

Not writing about parochial issues for a small, elite audience

Lack of literacy amongst general population – no need to cater for them

The focus of the newspapers was on what mattered to their readers: national politics, major world events, crime and punishment, notifications and sales.

By the mid-19th C when the stamp duty was first reduced and then abolished altogether, newspapers began to be available to a wider audience

What insights do newspaper cuttings give us?

They provide an insight into how:

- the law worked;
- it was set up to protect some more than others;
- people literally took the law, or at least the solving of crimes and disputes, into their own hands;
- what the draconian system of punishments were all about

From the day to day events described we see how:

- life and death was looked upon;
- national and world events impacted upon people's lives
- people looked to entertain themselves
- and the very precarious nature of life itself.

We shall cover all of these during the evening. Let's begin by continuing looking at how the law worked and then at the way it was set up to protect some more than others. We have seen already how, even with a case of arson which led to someone's death, the case was brought by individuals first and foremost, and it also provided us with a brief insight into what the laws protected and how people might be punished for such indiscretions.

Part 7: How they Settled disputes

At Kirkby Mallory Petty Sessions: Reported in the Leicester Mercury (weekly) Sat 23/09/1837

John Vernon of Newbold Verdon was charged by his neighbour, John Gilliver, with damaging his ladder to extent of 2d.

Mr Gilliver had borrowed the ladder, but on returning it Mr Vernon found it to be damaged. The two men continued to argue in court, so the magistrate dismissed the case and made both men pay costs stating:

'they have repeatedly refused to come to an amicable arrangement.'

A petty session for a petty dispute. This was the lowest court of law at the time and dealt with most of the misdemeanours and civil disputes.

Most prosecutions were not carried out by the police, but by private individuals, normally the victims of the crime. Anyone who was thought to have committed a crime, was taken to the parish constable or magistrate by the person who caught them. Even in places where there was a proper police force, most prosecutions were still started by private citizens. **vcp.e2bn.org**

John Vernon appears again five years later. Leicester Chronicle Sat. 5th March 1842. This time he is bringing the prosecution.

John Elverson (36) was charged with stealing on or about 10th January, a fork, the property of John Vernon. The prisoner made no defence. The evidence was of a presumptive character. Prisoner's uncle gave him good character: he had worked for him for 22 years and had never given reason to suspect him of dishonesty. Verdict: **Guilty – 12 months hard labour**

Leicester Chronicle: Sat 17th March 1838

John Reynolds, of Newbold Verdon, framework knitter, charged by his employer, George Hill, with neglect of work.

Verdict: Guilty **Sentence 6 weeks hard labour**

Part 8: How they were treated by the law – punishments



Stabbing: Leic Merc: Sat 5th Aug 1843 – George Barrs (25) charged with stabbing on 29th April last, at NV, Robert Cave with intent to disfigure and do some grievous bodily harm. Guilty of common assault. **Sentence 1 month hard labour**

Concealing birth of a child: Leic Chron 22nd July 1854 - at Summer assizes Leics. – Mary Beresford (on bail) was charged with endeavouring to conceal the birth of which she had delivered on the 9th June. She pleaded not guilty, Mr Hayes, on behalf of the prisoner, wished to withdraw the plea of NG and plead guilty. His Lordship consented, and said, on looking over the disposition, he found there was no suspicion of the prisoner having committed a more serious offence and sentenced her to **six weeks hard labour**.

Stealing two rabbits: Leicester Mercury Sat. 19th July 1856 (Leicester Assizes)

William Reynolds (labourer 29) pleaded guilty to breaking and entering a building within the curtilage of the dwelling house of John Cope, at NV on 29th June, stealing two live, tame rabbits. Prisoner had been previously committed of robbing an orchard. **Sentence 6 months hard labour.**

Theft of Wheat Bushel – ***Leicester Journal (23rd Oct 1846)*** William Kirkland (46) charged with stealing a bushel of wheat, the property of William Jordan, at NV on 19th Sep. 1846 **Sentence: 9 months hard labour.**

Theft of Stockings: Leics Chronicle, 5th August 1837 (County Assizes 31/07/37)

William Martin was charged with burglariously entering the house of Thomas Priestnall, at NV, and stealing there some stockings on 10th March. The charge was clearly proved against the prisoner, sentence of **Death** was recorded against him.

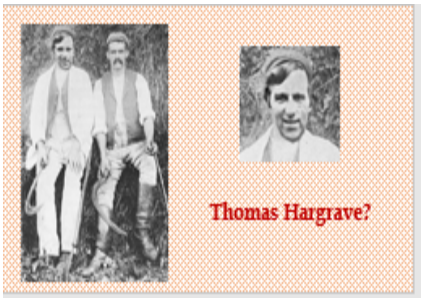
Part 9: Thomas Hargrave (1831 – 1911)

Thomas 1831 kept a journal for a short time (show title page) from the 18th April 1858 to 10th May 1860. It says it is his journal 'continued' but we don't have any others.

We know a little about Thomas because he was Mike Preston's great grandfather and here's a family tree to prove it.



As to what he looked like – I have managed to dig out this old photo – have a look at the man on the left?



Though only two years, it gives us a window into mid- 19th century NV and, in particular his and his family's life. First a bit of background.

- He was 28 when he started the diary and was married in 1856 to Mary Ann Geary. However, for the whole of this journal it would appear he was not living with her but instead with his father TH (1806) and his 2nd wife, Sarah. A little boy had been born to our diarist and his name was also Thomas – we shall call him Thomas 1856.

- It has to be said that Thomas 1831's relationship with his father was very tense and that for most of the entries over the two years he could only write disparaging things about his father and occasionally 'his father's wife'. He could never bring himself to call her mother or even by her first name.

- They lived on Church Row, his father quite possibly owned the house he lived in and several of those close by, but this can't be confirmed. In the 1861 census his father recorded his occupation as **proprietor of houses.** His son, our diarist, recoded his occupation in 1851 as gardener and in 1861 wood feller. During the time of his diary writing he seemed to hold down no permanent job but was casually employed. Here is a fairly typical week's entry.

Sunday 16th January 1859

Fine day. Sermon afternoon. NO E.D., C.N.L. They were too short to burn. I had no food.

Mon. 17th. Fine day. I got drunk.

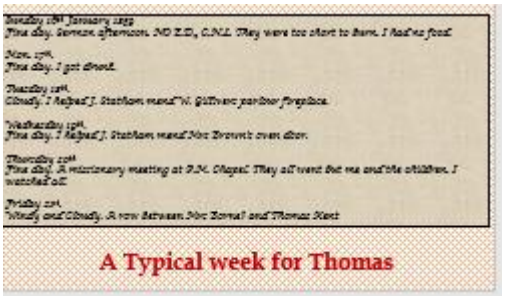
Tuesday 18th. Cloudy. I helped J. Statham mend W. Gillivers parlour fireplace.

Wednesday 19th. Fine day. I helped J. Statham mend Mrs Brown's oven door.

Thursday 20th Fine day. A missionary meeting at P.M. Chapel. They all went but me and the children. I watched all.

Friday 21st. Windy and Cloudy. A row between Mrs Borme? and Thomas Kent

Saturday 22nd. Rain. An organ man went playing through the town.


A Typical week for Thomas

These and other entries tell us that he had a responsibility at the church services

- he always recorded whether the candles were lit and if he had any extra duties.
- He was often hungry – his father and step-mother would only occasionally give him food. They also locked him out. Would not set a fire, and on occasions he was beaten by his father.
- He got drunk a lot. Often on a Monday but virtually every other day he could, except Sunday. Even when he was hungry he would turn to drink rather than eat.
- He was an odd-job man. He helped the plumber, the farmers, the blacksmith the glazier, the decorator and he also wrote letters for people -he was, as you can see, literate.
- He recorded the comings and goings in the village
- He did child-minding
- He was a bit of a weather man.

Life and Death

Thomas' links with the church meant he had an interest in the deaths and births of the parish. In the 25 months he is recording his journal, he notes 46 births and 28 deaths. All the dead, including non-conformists, would more than likely have been buried in the churchyard. So, this could be quite an accurate record of the deaths. With Christenings, not so, because non-conformists could, by this time, Christen their children.



Life and Death

Nevertheless, his records show on average of one person dying in the parish every month, whilst births work out at an average 1 birth every 2 week

Within those statistics of death, we can see much about not only how people died but also what felt like a very cursory, almost dismissive attitude to deaths and their reasons. Examples

Poverty



Poverty knocked on the door of many houses in Newbold Verdon during the 19th Century.

Back in April 1830 the Leicester Chronicle reported the following:

Emigration: Six families, 31 in number, have within the last fortnight quitted Newbold Verdon for America. They are going at the expense of the parish. They were conveyed from Newbold to Hornlow near Burton on Trent in three carts, and on their arrival at Hornlow went on board a canal boat for Liverpool.

The Parish paid for them to go rather than continue to support them through the poor rate.

Alcohol

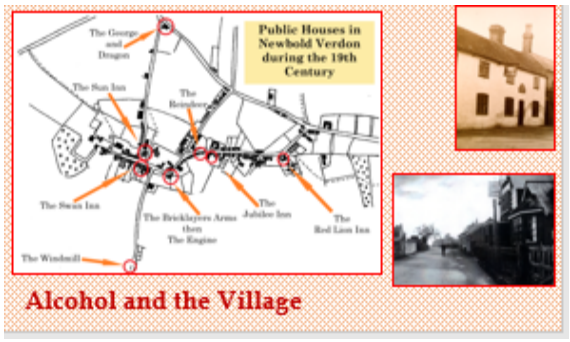
The diary entries would suggest Thomas was obsessed with alcohol. Either its consumption or lack of, or the repercussion of being drunk.



Out of 864 diary entries Thomas, mentions either directly or indirectly the consumption of alcohol. On one occasion he was called a drunk by a villager.

Was Thomas the parish drunkard or was he in good company? Certainly, there were many examples in the newspaper cuttings of drink related incidents.

There was plenty of opportunity to drink. In 1861 there were six pubs: The Swan, The George and Dragon, The Windmill, Bricklayer's Arms (Cramps as Thomas called it), The Red Lion and The Reindeer. There were 712 people in the parish comprising 198 males and 214 women above the age of 15: a total of 412. Not all of these would have been using the public houses.



Statistically, it meant there were 68 people of drinking age for each public house.

If we were just considering the men, it would be 33 men per pub.

The pubs were not like those of today. Often, they were just one or two rooms in a person's house. The Swan and the George and Dragon were the biggest with 'club' rooms at the rear of the establishments, but the Bricklayer's Arms also had a similar set up.

Pubs were the only form of external entertainment and men like Thomas Hargrave frequented all too often, sometimes getting so drunk they could not control themselves.

What can the papers tell us?

With alcohol comes problems. Amusing as these drunken events might be, there is a serious side to the mis-use of alcohol. Other reports in the papers are of domestic abuse fuelled by alcohol; brawls in the street. Here are just a few.

Leicester Journal 12th May 1843 – Petty Sessions

George Barrs, of Cadeby, Machine Gate, was charged by Robert Cave of stabbing him in various places in NV on Saturday 29th April. It seems that the affair rose out of a drunken quarrel at the Bricklayer's Arms, in that place, when several of the parties got fighting together. George Barrs was committed to the Assizes on a charge of felony but was bailed out on Wednesday.

5th August 1843 (Leicester Journal)

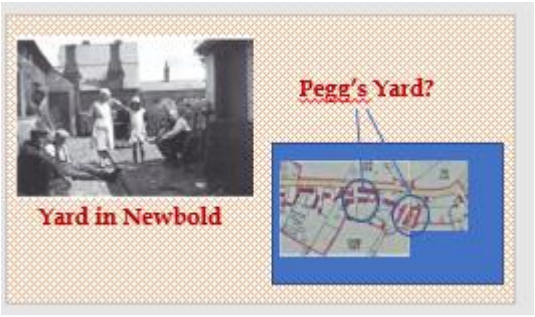
George Barrs, (25) charged with stabbing on 29th April last at NV, Robert Cave with intent to disfigure him and do some grievous bodily harm. Guilty of common assault – 3 months hard labour.

10th June 1864 (Leicester Journal)

Charles and Joseph Statham being drunk and disorderly at Thorneloe's drinking establishment. Charles Statham was also waving his private parts at females. This was on top of a number of similar convictions.

Alcohol leads to Killing in the Village

Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury: Saturday 6th Nov 1880



Report from the Leicestershire Winter Assizes of the 31st October.

William Arnold, 22, of Newbold Verdon, indicted for murder of Elijah Statham of NV. on Sunday 16th September.

William Arnold was boarding at Elijah Statham's home in Peg's Yard in the village, together with Arthur Statham (the brother of Elijah) and Mrs Elizabeth Statham, their mother.

William, Arthur and Elijah had been in the Yard drinking beer during the afternoon, together with six other friends. Elijah went into the house to ask Mrs Statham is there was clean collar for him. Mrs S was sitting with her next-door-neighbour, Mrs Elizabeth Cave, who was later to provide crucial evidence at the trial. Mrs S. said that there was no clean collar, which caused William to complain about the fact he had not received a clean collar since Whitsuntide.

The commotion caused Arthur to come in and challenge Elijah about speaking to his mother in such a manner. A fight ensued, and this led to Elijah coming into the room.

It would appear that both brothers then went for William who, having backed up to the fireplace, grabbed a hammer used for smashing coal and swung it, hitting Elijah a single blow on the side of the head.

The fight continued for a little longer before Elijah collapsed. A doctor was called, and Elijah was taken to the infirmary. He lasted a few more days and died on the 1st October.

The question the jury had to answer was – did William swing the blow with the intention of killing Elijah, (if so, guilty of murder). Did he do it out of angry passion but without intention to kill (manslaughter) or did he do it for fear of his life –

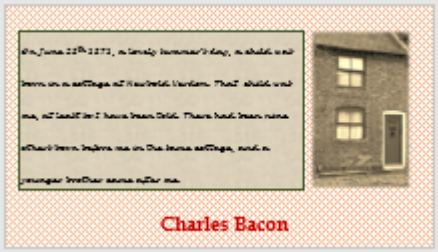
if so, not guilty. The testimony of the one independent witness, Mrs Cave, strongly indicated a manslaughter decision, which the judge steered the grand jury toward. You can imagine how difficult it must have been for the next door neighbours after this, but they were still living in Pegg's yard at the time of the census in 1881.

Alcohol and its ease of availability must have been a source of many problems. That was certainly the opinion of the Rector of NV in the 1890's, the Reverend Cole. On the 12th December 1890, the Reverend wrote on behalf of the church wardens, the Guardian of the Parish and the Waywarden to all the local magistrates asking that they do not grant any more licenses to a village that already has six drinking establishments. He points out the number of people on the 1881 census and the number of men and women Male (210) women (196) 406 for 6 public houses. He also pointed that Leicester has 1 licensed pub to every 190 people compared to NV where that is 1 pub for 130 people.

Part 10 Charles Bacon: a child's view



These are the introductory sentences to the autobiography of Charles Bacon who, as you can see, was born in 1871, the 10th child of an eleven-year-old child family. Here on Church Row at numb25, Plumtree Cottage. He wrote is autobiography as the 2nd World War was ending at in his mid—sixties. By this time, he had long moved away from Newbold and the poverty he had experienced and was now living in Leicester, a successful business man. He would die in 1947 leaving an estate worth close on ½ a million pounds in today's money. But more of that later.



Charles' recollections of his life in NV were generally very positive, though he recognised that this was borne out of his ignorance of his predicament (no comparison with others other than those living in the same set of circumstances) and the warmth and support of his parents.

His descriptions provide a child's-eye view of late 19th C Newbold Verdon.

Church Row



It was the middle cottage of a row of eleven. A pump outside the cottage served the whole row, and a washhouse with a large copper installed was situated at the end. 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 was a lavatory for the use of all tenants. The tenants at the time I was born were either miners or labourers.

In front of the row of cottages was a gravel path of 6 or 7 feet wide which led to the church. We had all the excitement of seeing the weddings, funerals and bands at the club feasts coming to and from the Church.

My mother kept four long silk top hats with long crepe hat bands. She lent them out to neighbours at funerals. She also attended many at sickness and death.

The Village – Community tensions

Charles's writes fondly of the people in the village, but he was acutely aware of the relationship between those attending St James's and those attending the Baptists or Methodists.



In our village there was a Church, two chapels and four public houses, there was no other recreation or amusement indoors unless they made it themselves, and as we belonged to the chapel we often found pleasure that way.

Church and chapels, Baptist and Primitive Methodist, were very much apart those days, my parents thought it very rude to have our doors either open or even ajar when the Church

people were passing. When my father and brothers and myself met the vicar or his wife we always touched our caps, whilst me mother and sisters always curtsied. I had a feeling then that we were inferior to them.

…we might have been much happier had there not been the difference in religion.

The church parson had his pony and carriage whilst most of the local preachers at our chapel walked miles, and often the gardener at the vicarage would resent us chapel lads looking through the iron rails and he would soon shout 'If you are not off I will clout you. I dare not tell my parents for they would have said we had no business to look in.



On Sundays most of the villagers seemed strangers to anyone not belonging to their church or chapel. But on Whit Tuesday they all seemed to thaw out and most of them followed the bands and the different flags of the Sick Clubs, marching to the vicarage then on to the church, then after service to the White Swan and the Engine Inn to have a good dinner and beer. A general meeting followed by dancing and all seemed to forget their class and be happy together.

The letters of the Rev. Cole and the entries of our old friend Thomas Hargrave support this view of the World. The Rev Cole had to keep a tally of the number of non-conformists v CofE attendees and send them off to the Bishop of Peterborough. Burials took place in the church yard, regardless of which church was attended and on one occasion non-conformist attendees attempted to begin singing at the graveside.

Thomas Hargrave recorded what happened.

May 2nd, 1858: Showery. Sermon in the afternoon C.N.T. and N.E.D. Ann Jackson died aged ?. Buried at night. The Ranters attempted to sing at the grave but Mr Greenaway would not allow it.

The term Ranters first appeared in the mid- 17th century to describe to dissenting groups from the established church. By the mid-19th C it was a rather disparaging term used to refer to non-conformists in general

Loose Women

Charles' family were undoubtedly very devout Christians and they, along with others in the village, projected those strong Victorian moral standards.

I remember our school mistress was the first lady we saw ride a bicycle and my mother and other neighbours called her a brassy cat and she should be ashamed to teach their children.

When the Hunt came through the village some of the ladies rode straddle legged – then my mother wondered what the world was coming to. Soon after, father told her he had seen a gipsy woman smoking a pipe and she had asked him for a bit of bacca. That made mum disgusted.

The dangers of childhood.

Charles busied himself as a child and was always looking to earn some money by helping the grocer or blacksmith and the farmers, using the wheelbarrow his father had had made by the wheelwright. On at least two occasions helping on the farm nearly led to his death.

It was a very hot June day and I was leading a horse that had been put between shafts in a horse rake. When we stopped for lunch, the wagoner asked me to go to the shed and fetch his bottle, telling me at the same time to have a good drink out of it.

This I did, and then found out it was the wrong bottle, the same type of stone bottle but with poison in it. It was the bottle the shepherd used to dress the feet of the sheep. I had taken a good swallow before I realised what it was.

This made me ill and giddy, but we thought it would work off and started to rake the field again. I soon fell down and the young horse galloped off and dragged me under the rake until he stopped at the field gate.

Later on, giddy and ill, I was able to get home when my mother gave me mustard to drink and put her fingers down my throat. This made me violently sick, and a few days afterwards I was quite well again.

Sheep Dip

Another Saturday was sheep washing. The sheep were driven down to Brook meadow. The sheep wash was a brick made tank with a tub in the corner for the shepherd to stand in. It was 5' deep and full of running water. We would roll the sheep into the bath and the shepherd would sprinkle some Coopers Sheep Dip powder over each one to give them a good wash.

I well remember a large ram butting me into the water. I was very ill after that and was deaf for a long time until one day we saw an old gypsy and she told father to get a hedgehog, roast it and put some warm fat into my ear. That did it. I was glad to hear again.

This rather casual attitude toward H&S was echoed in many of the newspaper cuttings of the time as well – often children would come off very badly. There appeared an almost fatalistic view that childhood was a very precarious time of a person's life and that 'accidents happened'. Here is a good example from Friday 13th March 1868 and the Leicester Journal. There are several other press cuttings of a similar nature.

FATAL ACCIDENT AT NEWBOLD VERDON.—On Thursday week an inquest was held at Newbold Verdon, before J. Gregory, Esq., coroner, on the body of John Cox, a little boy, 8 years of age, who was killed by falling out of a cart. Deceased was the son of John Cox, labourer. On Wednesday week, he in company with some other boys, followed a cart which was being driven from the allotment ground at Newbold Verdon, and asked the boy who was driving to give them a ride. The boy gave them permission, and one of them got on the back of the horse, and deceased and another boy got into the cart. As the horses were proceeding at a sharp walk the boy who was riding the fore horse struck it with a stick, and both animals set off at a galop. Deceased got alarmed, and tried to get over the front of the cart to jump off, but he had no sooner got his feet on the shaft, when the cart suddenly jerked, and he was thrown down, the wheel passing over his cheek and head. The horses were stopped some distance from the place where the accident happened by a man on the road, and on returning to where deceased lay he was found to be dead. He was picked up and conveyed home in the cart.—Verdict: "Accidental Death."

Missing the co-operation of the early days

Charles' father worked on the land as a wagoner and Charles followed him into the agricultural life before moving into Leicester to seek his fortune in what eventually became the haulage business. He described living on Church Row and the mixture of land workers and miners and at one stage he bemoans the fact that village life in the 1940's is not the same as when he was a child.

I find that there is not the co-operation there used to be amongst the villagers as there was years ago when 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. I know for I used to bring it back in empty wagons. Then for supper, some homemade bread and cheese and beer. Then when the harvest was in, a grand harvest supper, when all were friends.

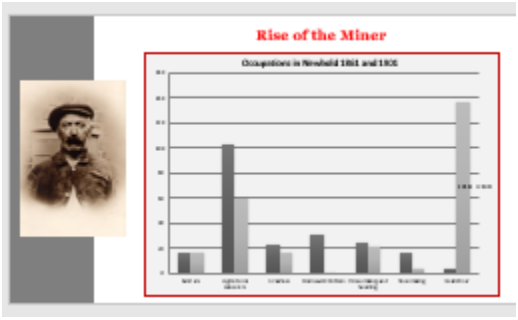


One could describe this as 'rose tinted' and that it would not have been quite so idyllic. Possibly so but seeing as most of the miners either had been ag labourers at one time or were sons of ag labourers, it is not surprising.

Part 11 Mining

We are quite a way into the evening and I have yet to touch upon what the papers said about mining in and around the parish. Coal mining as an occupation was a mid to late 19th century occupation.

Look at this graph. It contrasts the occupation of the men and women in the 1861 census compared to that of the 1901. You will see that in 1861, 88 men were working on the land whilst 33 were FWK and only 3 were miners. By 1901, 52 men were working on the land there were no FWK and 137 were down the pits. You can see the almost inverse relationship between land workers and miners. What is also interesting is that there did not appear to be an influx of families into the village to work at the coal fields- rather a conversion from one to the other.



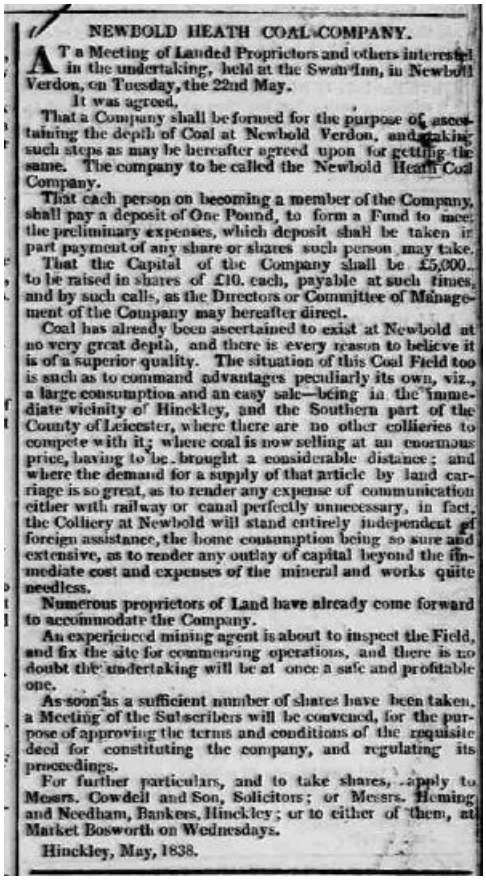
The mines had been working since 1828 when Bagworth was sunk. Nailstone in 1866 and Desford in 1875.

There is evidence from the newspaper reports and advertisements and also the Rev Cole's letters, that Newbold could have also have very easily become a mining village, as far back as the 1830's.



Leicester Chronicle - 10th April 1830 – Boring for coal on NV Heath.

8th June 1838 – Advertisement to join the Newbold Heath Coal Company



NEWBOLD HEATH COAL COMPANY.

At a Meeting of Landed Proprietors and others interested in the undertaking, held at the Swan Inn, in Newbold Verdon, on Tuesday, the 22nd May.

It was agreed,

That a Company shall be formed for the purpose of ascertaining the depth of Coal at Newbold Verdon, and taking such steps as may be hereafter agreed upon for getting the same. The company to be called the Newbold Heath Coal Company.

That each person on becoming a member of the Company, shall pay a deposit of One Pound, to form a Fund to meet the preliminary expenses, which deposit shall be taken in part payment of any share or shares such person may take.

That the Capital of the Company shall be £5,000, to be raised in shares of £10. each, payable at such times, and by such calls, as the Directors or Committee of Management of the Company may hereafter direct.

Coal has already been ascertained to exist at Newbold at no very great depth, and there is every reason to believe it is of a superior quality. The situation of this Coal Field too is such as to command advantages peculiarly its own, viz., a large consumption and an easy sale—being in the immediate vicinity of Hinckley, and the Southern part of the County of Leicester, where there are no other collieries to compete with it; where coal is now selling at an enormous price, having to be brought a considerable distance; and where the demand for a supply of that article by land carriage is so great, as to render any expense of communication either with railway or canal perfectly unnecessary, in fact, the Colliery at Newbold will stand entirely independent of foreign assistance, the home consumption being so sure and extensive, as to render any outlay of capital beyond the immediate cost and expenses of the mineral and works quite needless.

Numerous proprietors of Land have already come forward to accommodate the Company.

An experienced mining agent is about to inspect the Field, and fix the site for commencing operations, and there is no doubt the undertaking will be at once a safe and profitable one.

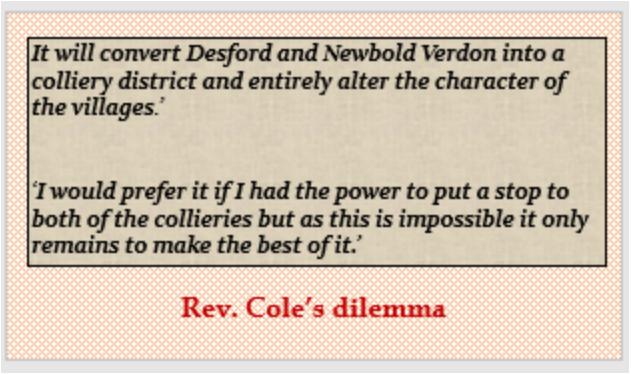
As soon as a sufficient number of shares have been taken, a Meeting of the Subscribers will be convened, for the purpose of approving the terms and conditions of the requisite deed for constituting the company, and regulating its proceedings.

For further particulars, and to take shares, apply to Messrs. Cowdell and Son, Solicitors; or Messrs. Heming and Needham, Bankers, Hinckley; or to either of them, at Market Bosworth on Wednesdays.

Hinckley, May, 1838.

8th Aug 1870 – Land for sale with mineral rights (coal)

1901 – Reverend Cole negotiating with two mining companies to sell Halifax Farm for a pit to be created.



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.

Part 12 The Reverend William Gordon Cole: Rector – 1869 – 1910

It is fitting that we conclude the look at 19th C NV with a visit to the letters of the Rev William Gordon Cole: Rector from 1869 to 1910. Born in Devonport in 1836 and educated at Oxford, he was aged 33 on achieving his living at Newbold Verdon and in the next 41 years made a significant impact on the parish.

For the sake of tonight's talk I would like to focus on his achievements in getting this school built.


1875: Architect Drawing of School

His appointment in 1868 was just a few months ahead of the 1870 Elementary Education Act (7th August) which established the expectation of education for all children aged 5 – 13 and placed the responsibility f local parishes to provide that education through existing schools or by building new ones.

Newbold had a school – where the war memorial is now. But on a plot so narrow it could only accommodate 40 pupils and the master's house was dilapidated and beyond repair. The Rector had no choice but to try and raise enough money to have a new school built and on a different plot of land. Money was available – the Government offered to match fund up to 50% the cost of the new build, the rest had to come from other contributors.

The application for funding from the Government (with guarantees of funding assured from locals) would have to be in by 31st December that year. If not the full cost would lie at the door of the ratepayers of the parish.

The book of letters begins on the 5th October 1870 (only 2 months after the Act was passed) with him writing to Sir J.W. Hartropp, the main land owner, encouraging him to make a contribution.

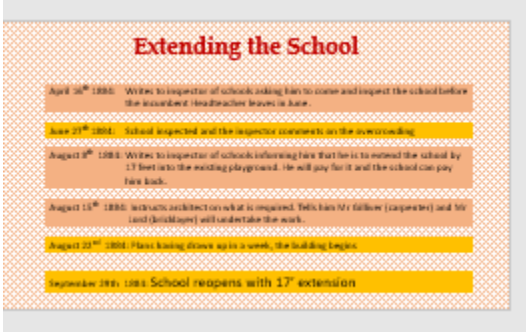
Read: *The passing of the Act…*

And thus began a five year battle for the Rector to raise what would become £600 (£41,000) toward the £1200 (£82000) school. He would have battle with the Lord Crewe Trust, Durham University, Oxford University, local landowners to achieve the building of a new school All the more urgent because the old school was shut in 1871 and there was no universal educational provision.

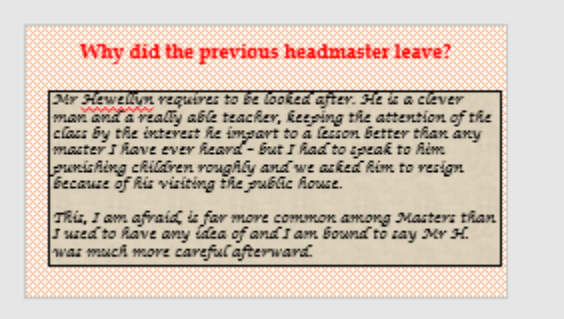

Final School Costs

His letters are a testament to his efforts and on the 2nd December 1875 the new school was opened for 120 pupils aged from 5 to 13 and you are sitting in his legacy.

More than that, a few years later he paid out of his own pocket to have the school extended. This in itself is a remarkable story as you can see.



Footnote: Why did the previous headmaster leave?



He then went on to lead in the virtual rebuilding of St James by 1899 (aged 63) in celebration of Queen Victoria's 60 years on the throne. The money having run out before they could rebuild, what he called, the wretched tower.



His letters and accounts show him to be a very busy, conscientious man. Overseeing Halifax farm and other church lands. Negotiating with mining companies keen to sink a shaft on the Glebe land. Chairing the school governors; trying, but failing, to stem the number of public houses in the village; chairing the Vestry Committee (original Parish Council) and many other tasks throughout his time at Newbold Verdon. Someone who even today is deserving of our respect and gratitude for his pastoral as well as his spiritual work.

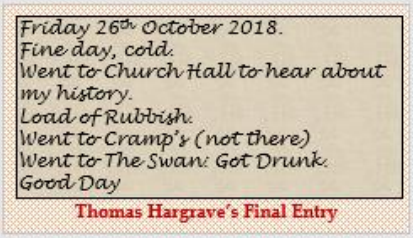
Conclusion

I began the evening expressing my desire that you will by its end be a little wiser about the parish of Newbold Verdon and of some of the people who inhabited it in the 19th Century.



I think; however, we should leave the last word to one of our contributors, Thomas Hargrave. What would Thomas have entered into his journal at the end of the evening had he been sitting with us in this audience tonight.

Friday 26th October 2018. Fine day, cold. Went to Church Hall to hear about my history. Load of Rubbish. Went to Cramp's (not there) went to The Swan, got drunk.



Thanks to Mike Preston