

Mike Preston: A local History Man (1932 - 2018)

If you have lived in Newbold Verdon for a few years you will know of Mike Preston: Parish Councillor, Church Warden, Poppy Appeal Organiser and tender of the parish war memorial, to name but a few ways in which he contributed toward the community in recent years.

Mike died recently, aged eighty-six. This article shines a light on another passion of his - local history - and pays tribute to the contribution he and his relatives have made over the years to bringing Newbold's past into the present.

Newbold born and bred, Mike learned from his parents how important it was to collect and retain artefacts that told the history of the parish. His mother, for example, was a member of the Women's Voluntary Service during World War 2. One of her responsibilities was to collect information on the capacity of the villagers to take in evacuees. The forms people completed were retained by Mrs Preston at the end of the War and they provide an almost unique picture of the social circumstances of a generation of villagers. Mike's father was the chief air-raid warden for the parish and he retained his log book of enemy air attacks over those years: providing a day-by-day account of Newbold Verdon during the Blitz and beyond.

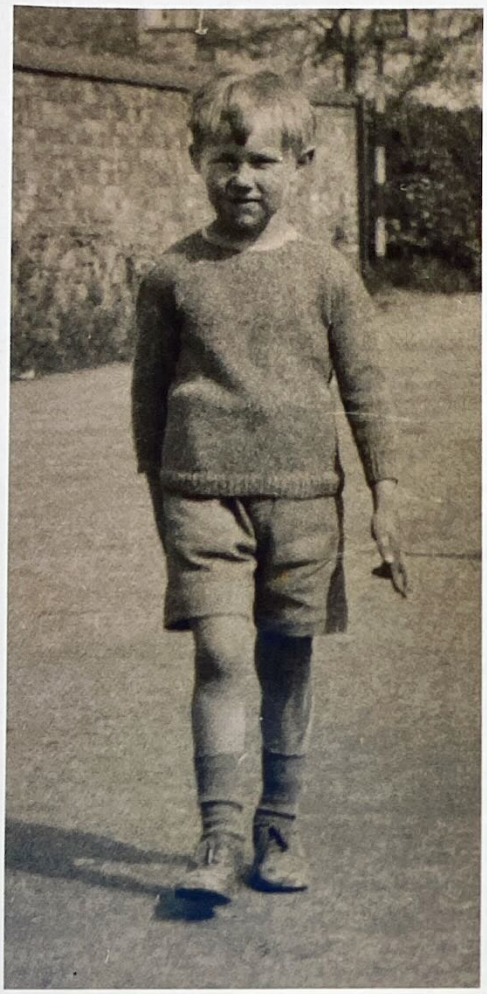
Earlier generations of the Preston family also had the history habit and Mike was able to accrue a collection of old maps, photographs, paintings and objects; each piece adding to the village's history, akin to a mini-museum. One of his most impressive heirlooms was a journal written by his great grandfather, Thomas Hargrave, who had kept a daily record of his life during the years 1858 to 1861.

During the past five years Mike has worked alongside others to help bring the heritage of the parish to today's parishioners. This culminated in the production of two books: Newbold Verdon 1901 and Newbold Verdon 1920 – 1950. His archive and his extensive local knowledge formed the backbone to these publications. Just before his death Mike had provided many sources in support of a talk about the history of 19th century Newbold Verdon, including the incredibly detailed 3m² 1878 Ordinance Survey map of the parish.

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To really understand a place and to feel you belong it is said that a person needs to know something of its history. Mike and his family before him had the presence of mind to realise that the everyday records of events in people's lives would have a value in years to come. He helped to provide a bridge from the present to the past and for that the parish owes him and his family a debt of gratitude.

Roger King





Tributes Paid to Mike Preston

TRIBUTES have been paid to Mike, a former Mayor of Hinckley and Bosworth and long-serving Newbold Verdon Councillor who sadly died in November.

Mike Preston served as a Conservative Councillor for Newbold Verdon ward for 10 years from 1977 to 1987 and was Mayor of Hinckley & Bosworth between 1979 and 1980. Mr Preston also served on the former Market Bosworth Rural District Council before the Borough Council was formed in 1974 and was a member of Newbold Verdon Parish Council for many years, serving as Chairman for more than 15 years.

Friend, Newbold Verdon Parish Councillor and former Borough Councillor Joyce Crooks paid tribute to the former Mayor. She said: "Mike was very well respected and I always had great respect for his love of the village and his dedication to all things Newbold Verdon. He was a conscientious Chairman and as Mayor he carried out his duties with great dignity and charm. Mike will be very sadly missed and the Parish Council will look in the future to dedicating a Memorial to remember the years of service Mike gave to the village."

His funeral service took place at St. James' Church, Newbold Verdon on Tuesday 4th December 2018. Donations are being raised in memory of Mike, payable to St. James' PCC c/o G. Seller Independent Funeral Directors, 70 Main Street, Newbold Verdon, LE9 9NP. Tel: 01455 822222.

