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Above, Mrs. Selkirk on the finely carved stairway of Newbold Hall. Below is Mr. George Statham, rector's warden, and for over 50 years a chorister.



POPULATION DOUBLED IN TEN YEARS

NATHANIEL CREW was presented with the bishopric of Durham, the regalian rights of which, an historian recorded, were worth having, "even for a lord of Parliament".

The Bishop was the last of the Crews, and he bequeathed his estates to his nephew, James Montague.

In time the lordship passed to Edward Wortley Montague, and that possibly introduced to Newbold the famous blue stocking, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Edward's wife.

She was the daughter of the 5th Earl of Kingston, a member of the old Nottinghamshire family of Pierrepont.

Lady Mary was related to William Feilding, the 3rd Earl of Denbigh, and to Henry Fielding, the novelist, who spelt his name differently because, he said, he was the only member of his family who could spell correctly.

Athough some local guides and the older directories state that Lady Mary at one time lived at Newbold, that in itself is not conclusive proof that she ever set foot in the place.

Now Farmhouse

Those gazetteers which were anxious to place her in residence at Newbold were not able to say whether it was at the Hall which still stands and is now a farmhouse, or at the manor house which was pulled down.

Her biographers included Paston—"Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Her Times"—and Lewis Melville on her letters. One would not expect a Newbold Verdon story in these works, there being so much that was more colourful to record.

It was from Constantinople, where she was with her husband when he was ambassador there, that Lady Mary wrote many of her far from dull letters.

On her return in 1718 she introduced from Turkey inoculation against smallpox. she campaigned until she had an Inoculation Hospital set up in London.

Her remedy, suspect as being unnatural, seemed to reduce the ravages of the disease. But, according to Trevelyan, smallpox wiped out a thirteenth of each generation, until Jenner produced his vaccine in 1796.

An old guide to the villages described Newbold as: "a dull brick village with nothing picturesque except its name." Then a directory of 1846 (White's) stated: "A pleasant village on a bold eminence."

Somewhere between these two opinions you could get a better assessment.

Built In Haste ?

A twisting main street has in places rows of cottage property that were built to give miners a roof over their heads, and no doubt built in haste.

In this the pattern is all of a oneness, so very much like the city streets that were rushed up in the days of great industrial expansion.

However here and there in Newbold there is the relief of cottages that are more typical of the Leicestershire scene.

But, after all, this is a village that grew on mining and not agriculture.

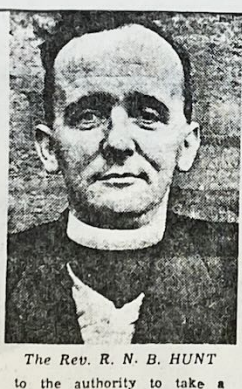
Then there is the modern side of Newbold's architecture. Within the past five years 250 council houses have gone up, and private owners have built about 40. In less than a decade the population has doubled: It is upwards of 3,000 now.

Some of this astonishing growth belongs to a form of stalemate in villages and hamlets nearby. At Bocheston, for instance, building is prohibited owing to subsidence.

A Mining Plan

Newbold hopes it is all on the right side of the fault that runs through the Leicestershire Coalfield. Two years ago it was regarded as the only mining village that was safe from the problems of subsidence: just off the coalmeasure.

But a few months ago the Coal Board sent Bosworth R.D.C. an approach notice concerning Newbold. In plain language this means that the Board intend running seams underneath the village, and the notice was an invitation to the authority to take a look at their plan.



The Rev. R. N. B. HUNT

Nobody in Newbold is prepared to be prematurely worried over this: it doesn't appear to be a talking-point.

At the period of the Doomsday survey (1086) Newbold was recorded as having only five inhabitants—three villeins (free villagers) and two bordars (a villager who had his place at his lord's pleasure).

Mr. M. W. Beresford gave the Leicestershire Archaeological Society a paper on the minute book of the Newbold Verdon enclosure of 1810-11. The Act spoke of about 300 acres of "open fields, meadow and pasture." This phrase Mr. Beresford described as a formula in all private acts, and it did not necessarily mean that the area of strips in the open fields was awaiting re-allocation and fencing.

The three commissioners met at the George and Dragon in Newbold and at inns in Leicester and Bosworth. The care of their task was the calculation and verification of existing rights claimed by proprietors: either rights of common in Newbold Heath, or titles to unenclosed lands.

Over 50 Claims

The claims delivered, numbered 53, and 14 of them were contested, mainly by the lord of the manor.

The Commission held 25 meetings between July, 1810, and August of the following year. The Newbold enclosure was carried out in fewer meetings than any other Leicestershire enclosure, Mr. Beresford recorded.

The parish church (exclusive of its tower) was rebuilt at the beginning of the century at a cost of £3,000.

The ancient tower is on a Norman base. The church has a memorial window to the Rev. William Cole (41 years rector), who worked for the rebuilding of the old church.

The rector now is the Rev. R. N. B. Hunt. He has not long settled into a new rectory, of a size more attractive to a rector's wife than the mansion-sized parsons' home of other days.

The new rectory is built on part of the garden of the old one, and both still have big gardens.

'Noe Conventicles'

In 1669, when Archbishop Sheldon was preparing to press for more action against Nonconformists, he wanted evidence to support his case.

In Leicester, the archdeacon summoned the clergy to St. Martins, and on the Leicestershire list there appears against Newbold Verdun: "Noe conventicles in this parish. Jo: Pole, Rector." The answer was probably given verbally.

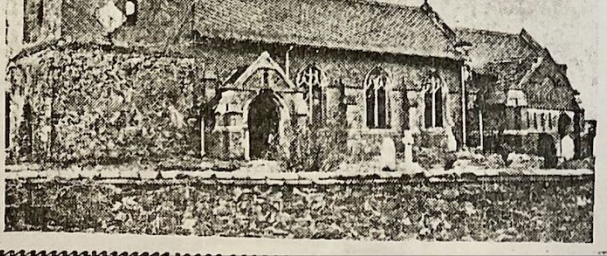
If Nonconformity had no footing in the 1669, it has considerable hold now. The Methodists have a church, and the Baptists built their chapel in 1833.

The residence of interest in Newbold is the Hall, a plain square brick house of the first quarter of the 18th century and on an older site. The original house went back to the 1000's.

The British Archaeological Society, when meeting in Leicester in 1900, hailed to look at the Hall on their way to Bosworth Field in horsed brakes and carriages.

The Hall and its moat, now on the Ancient Monuments list, is the home of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Selkirk, two particularly busy people this year.

Mr. Selkirk is chairman of the Leicestershire Farmers' Union, and Mrs. Selkirk is chairman of Leicester Inner Wheel.



Newbold Verdon Parish Church, pictured here, was rebuilt over 40 years ago with the exception of the ancient tower. The cost of the rebuilding came to £3,000. The church never had a steeple.

Statham is an old name in the village. When Mr. George Statham was born, the population of Newbold was 729, according to the directory record, and coal had not been discovered there then.

Rector's Warden

Mr. Statham, who lives at 39, Dragon Lane, is rector's warden. He is 77 now, and had been associated with the church since he was a choirboy. Fifty years in the choir, he finished as choirmaster.

"We never had a steeple," said Mr. Statham, speaking of the Church rebuilding, "but we want a new tower. A tower is a big order."

"I have seen some changes here. I remember the carriers, Chapman and Ensor from Bosworth. Wardle from Osbarton Toll Gate, went through here, and there was Ross and Smith from this village.

"The first motor affair was owned by a man named Jones. He had been a miner, and he ran the bus to Leicester three or four times a day. It was a big thing then."

Mr. Statham was a miner for 46 years. He smiled when asked if he had walked to the pit. "Ah, but motor cars now."

"When I started, I walked. I worked at both Nailstone and Bagworth, and I had a penny-farthing at one time, then the cushion tyre. There was once a horse brake that picked us up at the old Toll Gate at the top of Dragon Lane, twenty of us, sometimes thirty, and we could go four and a half miles for twopence."

Next week: RATBY

* * *

Gaddesby Methodists

IN our feature on Gaddesby in this series last week, we made no reference to the Methodist Chapel, where, we are informed, a very small band of people, as it were, keep the flag flying. This small place of worship was founded as long ago as 1777, after Mr. John Reeves had walked to Leicester, a matter of 10 miles, to hear John Wesley preach at Millstone Lane. He was so inspired by him that when he returned home he began holding meetings in the front room of his small cottage, now demolished. The chapel was built in 1837, by the hard labour and harder expense of those departed long ago and enlarged in 1846.

The seats were narrow and straight backed, and very uncomfortable for the present-day worshipper, but evidently unnoticed in the ardour of long ago. The pulpit stood high on raised supports.

Now a remarkable change has come over the place. There was woodworm and dry rot, so at considerable expense and labour the chapel has been re-seated and a new look given to it.

And next Saturday it is to be re-opened by Mrs. Harris, of Burton Overy a descendant of Mr. Reeves.

A view of the main street at Newbold Verdon. The picture below is of Newbold Hall, which has a moat.

HOW OUR VILLAGES GOT THEIR NAMES . . . No. 20



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