

# JIM'S JAUNT

## Newbold Verdon & Brascote

by Jim Reay

It was a Saturday morning when I boarded the 11.22 Arriva 153, leaving from St Margaret's Bus Station Stand SM. I got off outside The Swan pub at Newbold Verdon at 12.04, which was convenient, as the pub opens at 12 noon.

**Newbold Verdon** region has a very long history of continuous human habitation dating back to the Neolithic period. Locally found historical artifacts verify human occupancy hereabouts from as far back as the Iron and Bronze Ages. Furthermore, a crown of ancient earth-works have been identified on the outskirts of the village. Citizens of the ancient Roman Empire are known to have lived in these parts and finds in the fields near the Windmill Inn on Brascote Lane suggest Roman occupation somewhere nearby. Newbold Verdon is recorded in The Domesday Book of 1086 as the settlement of Niwebold, literally meaning New Build. The name Niwebold evolved with many variables before eventually adopting its present

form. It acquired the suffix Verdun in the 13th century after possession of the manor passed to a Frenchman called Nicholas de Verdun, who was bestowed title to the village by the then owner, Robert de Ferrars (Earl of Derby) when he married Robert's daughter Maud. Whilst the civil parish is now known as Newbold Verdon, the ecclesiastical parish retains the erstwhile form of Newbold de Verdun. The village would have originally been an agricultural centre although it is recorded that framework knitters were operating in the village in 1812, and by 1845 over 60 frames were in existence. The village grew in size during the 1850s, with the expansion of coal mining in the area, and many inhabitants abandoned their frames and drifted into the mines. At one time the village was almost self-sufficient having its own blacksmiths, wheelwrights, shoemakers, tailors, butchers and bakers, for whom it certainly wasn't a problem to obtain flour, with three windmills in the village.

**The Swan** emanates from the early 19th century, although there is conflicting evidence as to exactly when. It is said to have been built in 1823, although there is some evidence to suggest that a certain Richard Flamson was the publican as early as 1818 and a large banner hanging outside the front of the pub adds further uncertainty as it proclaims they have been serving Newbold Verdon since 1816. At one time in its past, the premises housed a butchery as well as an inn. The pub was initially known as The Swan, although at various times since it has been identified as The Swan Inn, The Old Swan, The White Swan and The Old White Swan, before reverting back to its original title of The Swan when it was refurbished in 2013. The pub has traded as part of Everards estate since 1862. Entering the front door takes one into the public bar, with an annex to the left housing a pool table, whilst to the right is the snug, to the rear of which is a function room. With the exception of the carpeted snug and a small paved area near the front door, floors throughout consist of uncovered oak floor-boards. To the rear is a huge enclosed lawned garden with picnic tables, a childrens' timber climbing frame and a smokers' shelter. Three real ales were available; Everards Tiger, Old Original and Morland Old Speckled Hen.



*The Swan, Newbold Verdon*

Leaving The Swan I turned right, past a traditional Victorian school building which is now St. James Church Hall, then immediately right again into Brascote Lane. A half mile walk took me out of the built up area to Brascote and The Windmill Inn.

**Brascote** is a very small hamlet, which actually lies within the civil parish of Newbold Verdon. It was mentioned in the Domesday Book as Brocardscote, literally meaning Brocard's cottage. It is known that the settlement of Brascote was abandoned during the Middle-Ages, possibly due to having been laid waste by the Black Death. In 1812 a windmill was obtained from Syston and was erected on a site near to what is now the Windmill Inn. The windmill was still in working order when it ceased to mill grain sometime between 1908 and 1912, when a certain Mr. Scot of Market Bosworth demolished it and recycled the timbers. Today there is nothing left in Brascote of the windmill, except for the pub's name.

**The Windmill Inn** was established sometime during the 1850s, as a beer house known as The Mill Inn, deriving its name from the adjacent windmill. The then miller, a Mr. John Barrs, was for some forty years both a corn miller and purveyor of beer. The once basic country pub was fully refurbished in 2012 and nowadays consists of a large L-shaped room sub-divided into a small public bar and lounge bar. In the older part of the building, to front of house, it has exposed ceiling joists and a log burning stove set in a brick



*The Windmill Inn, Brascote*

fire-place. The comparatively newer section to the rear comprises of the restaurant area with unplastered brick walls, chunky beams, bare timber floors and irregularly trowelled ceiling plaster, all serving to enhance a rural ambiance. Out the back are a paved patio with garden furniture, an octagonal summer house/smoke room and a lawn furnished with picnic tables. Three real ales were available, being Greene King IPA, Abbot and St. Edmonds Fresh Golden Beer.

Leaving The Windmill Inn I retraced my footsteps back towards Newbold Verdon village. As I entered the 30 mile an hour speed zone, the road bridged a brook and I took the short footpath almost immediately to my right. I emerged and turned left to the end of Arnolds Crescent, where I turned right for a short distance along Gilberts Drive, and first left into Jubilee Road. At the end of Jubilee Road I could see The Jubilee Inn straight ahead along a short walkway.

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*Newbold Verdon sports & social club*



*The jubilee, Newbold Verdon*

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**The Jubilee** was built at around the same time as Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, and so named in commemoration. The pub featured on a 1903 Ordnance Survey map subsequent to appearing in a trade directory for 1889/90 with a Thomas Cope named as the landlord. Coincidentally, during Thomas Cope's time as landlord, a Thomas Cope was Lord of the manor at Osbaston Hall, in the nearby small village of Osbaston. He acquired the seat of Osbaston Hall in 1827 and in due course went on to become High Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1856. In 1918 a succeeding Thomas Cope was created the first of the Cope baronets of Osbaston. It's somewhat fanciful to suspect a member of the landed

gentry actually ran a pub but possible that he could have been a landlord in the literal sense of the owner who let the pub. It is a two-roomed wet trade only pub for locals, consisting of a public bar containing a pool table and a lounge bar with a darts board. A side door from the public bar leads to a partially covered decked patio area with garden furniture and, to the rear, across the car park is a lawned garden furnished with picnic tables. This Marston's pub serves 2 regular beers (Marston's Burton Bitter & Pedigree) plus one guest beer, which on this occasion was Marston's Old Empire.

On leaving The Jubilee I turned right and fairly soon saw the Newbold Verdon Sports & Social Club across the road just past the co-operative shop.

**Newbold Verdon Sports & Social Club** was formerly known as Newbold Verdon Working Mens Club. The club was originally founded in the early 1930's, in premises up a driveway across the road, now occupied by Statham Shoe Warehouse, but before very long it relocated to its present position. I have noticed of late, that there is a movement among many clubs, to revise their restrictive trading procedures, enabling them to lawfully serve non-members, as indeed does this club. On entering the front door, I found myself in the large public bar. Towards the rear of the club is a large concert room, to the side of which is a skittles long-alley, which doubles as a function room. Outside, to one side, is a partially covered smokers' courtyard, whilst to the back of the club is a big lawned garden with picnic tables. The club sells two regular real ales in the form of Greene King Abbot and Morland Old Speckled Hen. Sometimes (but not on this occasion) a third is available, sourced from the Greene King guest list. With the probable exception of my above literatures, this jaunt has no rambling, but is more akin to an agreeable short saunter, visiting three pubs and one club. Between the four venues a total of nine different real ales were on offer. To begin my journey home I caught an Arriva 153 from the bus stop just outside Newbold Verdon Sports & Social Club.

Cheers,

*Jim Reay*