

# Newbold Verdon Parish Archive



## Presentation Paper

on the

## History of Newbold Verdon Hall

1623 – 1767

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## A brief history of the Hall and Manor and of the people who owned it from 1623-1767



### Part 1: Introduction

This paper is the result of a talk given to members of the U3A at St James' Church Hall on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The talk and accompanying PowerPoint presentation<sup>1</sup> could only briefly detail what had happened to the Hall and manor during the 144 years; this document is intended to expand on the talk and to provide references for any future research a reader would care to undertake.

### Why 1623 to 1767

The Domesday Book of 1089 records a manor at Newbold (de Verdun came later) during the Saxon period of history. Archaeological research<sup>2</sup> shows that the area defined by the manor had been inhabited or visited in every period of history, and pre-history, since the last ice-age some 12,000 years ago.

After the Norman Conquest of 1066, William I shared out the spoils of victory to those who had fought alongside him, and Hugh de Grandmesnil was granted the manor of Newbold. For the next 600 years it passed through the hands of a number of families including the De Verdun, hence its complete name of Newbold de Verdon.

Archaeological surveys<sup>3</sup> undertaken by a variety of reliable sources, provide evidence of the site of the manor house being in the grounds of Hall Farm, the place once known as Newbold Verdon Hall. The hall we see today in 2025 is set to the north of where the original building or buildings were erected both prior to, and after, 1066, right up to about 1700.

The talk, and this accompanying paper, focuses on the time when three related families had ownership of the manor: the Crewe, Montagu and Wortley Montagu families. Not only were they responsible for the house being built in about 1700, but between them they each made an impact during their lives on the world around them both locally and, in several cases, nationally.

### What Prompted the Talk?

The author was intrigued by the fact that Newbold Hall was a Historic England Grade 1 listed building. The highest grading that can be awarded out of the 380,000 listed heritage assets, accounts for only 2.5% of that total, equating to 9,320.

Historic England<sup>4</sup> states that to be given a Grade 1 status they have to be buildings of national or international importance. The listing for Newbold Verdon Hall by Historic England, makes mention of the person who had the hall built, Nathaniel Lord Crewe Bishop of Durham, and then it goes on to describing the features of the building. It does not specify in any detail why this 'small country house' qualifies as of being of national or international importance – the talk attempted to shine some light on this, focusing on the period of history leading up to, and then after, its erection circa 1700.

## Part 2: The Crewe Family

### 2a: Sir Thomas Crewe. 1565 – 1634

Thomas Crewe purchased the house and manor from a Nicholas Hearne in 1623<sup>1</sup>. As far as is known, there does not appear to have been any link between Thomas and Newbold Verdon prior to the purchase.

He was a member of the wealthy Crewe family from Cheshire. His father, John Crewe, had been a tanner with sufficient wealth to provide his two sons, Ranulf and Thomas, with a very good education, such that they both became wealthy lawyers in London, and by their arranged marriages obtained access to the upper echelons of the landed gentry.

By 1623, Thomas had been married for twenty-five years to Temperance Bray, joint heiress of Steane Hall and Estate in Northamptonshire. Two years later he would have sufficient wealth to have Steane Hall completely rebuilt.



History does not currently tell us why he purchased Newbold Verdon's relatively small estate of approximately 1,000 acres together with an accompanying hall, but it may have been because of one or several of the following:

- Land equalled **wealth and status** in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The wealthy purchasing parcels of land across the country was not unknown during these time.
- **Legacy:** It would contribute to providing for his children upon his death and helping to maintain the family status and position in society.
- **Convenience:** Journeys around the country took a long time, often days, and Newbold as a stopping-off point between the family home in Crewe and onward toward Steane and London may well have been attractive.
- **A Bolthole:** By 1623, Thomas was, as both a lawyer and politician, operating in the very highest ranks of government and judiciary. These were turbulent times, where falling out of favour with the great and good could be life-threatening. A quiet, unassuming bolthole may well have come in handy.
- **Plague:** In 1621 a smallpox plague had struck London, this was the third since 1604, there would be a fourth devastating plague of bubonic fever in 1625<sup>2</sup>. As with Covid in 2020, many people sought safety in the countryside. Thomas was in a financially comfortable position to be able to do this if he so wished.

### His Political and Judicial Importance

In February 1623 Thomas was appointed by King James I of England as Speaker of the House of Commons<sup>3</sup>, one of the most important political roles of its time, acting as he did as a link between the monarch and his parliament.

The monarch was a much more powerful political figure than we see today. He had the power to initiate a parliamentary session and to close it when he saw fit. Often the reason for the creation of a parliamentary session was so that the King could gain the agreement from Lords and members of the Commons for additional tax rises, often in order to fund military campaigns. This inevitably led to tension between monarch and parliament, and the speaker had to navigate those troubled waters.

The fact that Thomas was a royal appointment and also the monarch's Serjeant-at-Law, the king's legal adviser and representative, potentially placed him at odds with parliamentarians. Those tensions would increase further upon the ascension to the throne of Charles I on his father's death in in March of 1625.

The King demanded of Parliament that it raise taxes to fund his wars with Spain and France. Parliamentarians resisted this and Thomas was unable to resolve the matter, leading to the King dissolving the sitting<sup>4</sup> after only a few months and ending Thomas' role as Speaker.

## Thomas and Newbold 1623 – 1634

Thomas continued in his role of Serjeant-at-Law, and he remained active in political life, but he also focused his attention on his primary estate at Steane, where he was rebuilding the house. There are no records of him visiting Newbold Verdon during those nine years and he probably had a steward in place to manage his interests.

## 2b: John Crewe: 1st Lord Crewe of Steane 1598 – 1679

John Crewe was a well-established lawyer in London at the time of his father's death in 1634; he was also a member of Parliament though for many years from 1629 to 1640, King Charles I refused to hold a parliament and ruled the country alone. The period came to be known as the Personal Rule or *the Eleven Years' Tyranny*.<sup>1</sup>

Parliament was finally called in 1640 and John, a Protestant, sided with other parliamentarians as they pushed for a greater say in how the country should be run. No peaceful resolution was found, and on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1642 Charles I formally raised his royal standard at Nottingham, declaring war on Parliament.

This was not something John and other members of Parliament had wanted, and they tried hard to find a peaceful resolution that would retain the monarchy, but to limit King Charles I's power, secure control over taxation and the army, and protect Protestantism from perceived Catholic influence.



## 1646 – John holds the King in custody

After four years of fighting, the Parliamentary forces began to achieve the upper hand and for the third time laid siege to the King's war-time capital Oxford, where Charles was encamped. Knowing it was only a matter of time before the city fell, and with it the chance of victory, Charles, with a small entourage of soldiers, fled north to Newark where the Scottish Army was stationed<sup>2</sup>.

He believed that he could persuade the Scots to come over to the Royalist side and help him win the war. This did not happen. After a period where he was transferred to Newcastle, the Scots in effect sold him to the Parliamentary forces for £400,000 and in February 1647 he was taken to Holdenby Hall in Northamptonshire and placed in custody.

Whilst he was there, it was the responsibility of a group of parliamentary commissioners to make sure the King did not escape or come to any harm. John was one of those commissioners; chosen because of his local connections (Steane was in Northamptonshire), his legal background and his moderate views.

This situation ended in June of that year when 500 cavalry men of the New Model Army, led by Cornet George Joyce, came to Holdenby<sup>3</sup> and demanded custody of the King. The commissioners protested, insisting Parliament had not ordered this, but eventually Charles agreed to go. John, along with the other commissioners, had stood up against Joyce and this would have repercussions two years later.

## Pride's Purge 1648 and the Repercussions for John

The King spent two years under house arrest in various locations around London. During this time efforts were made to find a solution to the impasse. The problem was the King would not concede to the Parliamentarians and in fact he did the opposite, plotting to raise an army.

Finally, in 1648, Cromwell and others on the Parliamentary side had had enough and they wished to place the King on trial for treason. Many parliamentarians, including John Crewe, opposed the idea of a trial because they knew that the only sentence if found guilty of treason was death.

On Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1648, the crucial vote by members of the House of Commons was due to take place, where the fate of the King would be decided. John Crewe and other moderate parliamentarians found his way blocked by Colonel Thomas Pride<sup>4</sup>, together with a number of his soldiers from the New Model Army. This led to approximately 120 members of the house being unable to vote; some, including John Crewe, were also arrested and detained for a number of days.

The vote went ahead with the remaining members, and they voted for King Charles to stand trial for treason. Subsequently, he was found guilty and executed on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1649<sup>5</sup>.

### **1648 – 1661: From Mr to Lord**

At the time of the purge John had no title, except that of mister, and yet by 1661 he was 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Crewe of Steane; how did this happen?

John's objection to the trial of the king and his subsequent regicide, placed him out of favour with those taking over the reins of power. He did continue to practice law and act as a member of Parliament, but he was not brought into the confidence of the leadership, including Cromwell.



However, following Cromwell's death in 1658, there was a groundswell of opinion throughout the country that the restoration of a monarchy should take place. In Holland, King Charles I's son, Charles, was the natural successor, and a commission of Parliamentarians, including John Crewe, was formed to bring about his return and restoration.

On Friday, 25 May 1660, Charles landed in Dover, having agreed terms with Parliament, put together by the group including John Crewe<sup>6</sup>. Later that year, Charles rewarded John for these efforts and for refusing to be part of the process of regicide by awarding him a baroncy and with it the title of 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Crewe of Steane.

### **John 1634 – 1679 and Newbold Verdon Hall and Manor**

For the forty-five years that John owned the Newbold Verdon land and hall, there are currently no records to show if and when he visited the manor. In 1649 he could have left London for a while, given the likely animosity there was to him and his fellow objecting members of Parliament. It would certainly be an attractive place to reside for a while, being somewhat out of the way. There is a possibility that he had a steward looking after his interests including the collecting of rents during the year.

Upon his death in 1679, John left Newbold Verdon to his second-eldest son, John. To his eldest son Thomas, he bequeathed Steane and the baroncy.

John only survived his father by two years before his death, upon which he left Newbold to Nathaniel his younger brother. There had been other brothers between John and Nathaniel, but they had died. John stated that he would leave Newbold to Nathaniel because; 'He would make the chimnies smoke'. This suggested that the house had not been a place inhabited for some time and that it would benefit from Nathaniel's presence.

The manor was described at the time as, 'well-wooded and watered with a fine park and all the conveniences and ornaments of a good seat.'<sup>7</sup>

No estate maps appear to have survived from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century but by 1765, prior to the manor being sold in 1767, the independent assessor totalled the size of the estate to be 1,000 acres<sup>8</sup> and we know from the 1712-1720 Rent Book<sup>9</sup> that rents were being collected from tenants in the parish of Barlestone and the Liberty of Osbaston, as well as the hamlets of Cadeby and Brascote.

## 2c: Nathaniel Lord Crewe Bishop of Durham (1633 – 1721)

Nathaniel Crewe would be the third owner of Newbold Verdon to have reached high offices of church and state, but unlike his grandfather, Thomas, and father, John, we do know that he invested a great deal into the parish, both in terms of time and money.

He inherited the manor aged forty-eight and already having attained the see of Durham some seven years earlier. He would not inherit Steane until his elder brother, Thomas, died in 1697, some sixteen years after taking on Newbold Verdon<sup>1</sup>.



### Rising up the Ecclesiastical Ladder

Nathaniel attended Lincoln College Oxford from 1652 to 1656<sup>1</sup>. By all accounts he was regarded as an exceptionally able student. After graduating, he became the sub-rector at the college chapel and by 1665 he was its rector, aged thirty-two. Some six years later he was made Bishop of Oxford and then Prince Bishop of Durham in 1674. At the relatively young age of forty-one for a bishop, Nathaniel had been promoted to the third highest ecclesiastical position in the Church of England.

His rapid rise through the Church of England can be attributed to his friendship first with King Charles II and then with his brother James Duke of York, later to become King James II. Nathaniel had met King Charles II in 1663, where they struck up a lasting friendship. He also became friends with James who persuaded King Charles to promote Nathaniel first to the Bishopric of Oxford and then three years later to Bishop of Durham.

From 1669 until 1688, Nathaniel was also Clerk of the Closet<sup>2</sup>, the monarch's chief support in all ecclesiastical administrative and religious matters. It was a post requiring a high degree of trust by the monarch. It symbolised the close link between the monarchy and the Church of England, reinforcing the sovereign's religious authority. Even today, the Clerk of the Closet remains part of the Royal Household, though largely ceremonial in modern times.

### The Glorious Revolution and its Impact on Nathaniel

In 1688, just three years after becoming the monarch, King James II was deposed in what would come to be known as the Glorious Revolution. James' open Catholicism, together with his attempts to promote religious tolerance for Catholics, and his push for royal absolutism, alarmed Protestant elites in England. They feared a Catholic dynasty after the birth of James' son in 1688. This led nobles to invite William of Orange, the husband of James II's Protestant daughter Mary, to intervene. William arrived in England with an army, prompting James to flee to France without resistance. The following year, William and Mary were crowned joint monarchs. Soon after, Parliament passed the Bill of Rights, which curtailed royal authority and ensured a Protestant succession.

Nathaniel's loyalty to the King had made him many enemies and he was in danger of losing his bishopric. Being fleet of political foot, he withdrew from public life for several months. One newspaper report claiming he had fled to France, but he had actually travelled to Newbold Verdon. At some point he travelled to Holland, returning to England only when he felt it safe to do so, just before William and Mary were crowned and in time to sign the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to the new monarchs in 1689.

Though he retained his bishopric, Nathaniel no longer retained the influential religious position held under James. He did eventually re-establish his political career and royal favour under Queen Anne.

## Marriages

Nathaniel, aged 58, married for the first time in 1691. His bride was Penelope Frowde, aged 54, and whose family-owned land in Wiltshire and Berkshire. The marriage lasted eight years until Penelope's death in 1699.

Within a year Nathaniel was married again, this time to Dorothy Forster, joint heiress to Bamburgh Castle and estate as well as several other estates in Northumberland. At the time of the marriage Nathaniel was sixty-seven and Dorothy twenty-seven.

At first Dorothy's father had refused Nathaniel's request to marry his daughter, but the Forster's were much in debt and close to bankruptcy. Nathaniel promised to clear these debts and her father retracted his objection. Once married, Nathaniel did as he had promised and the Forster estates became his property.

The large age gap between the two pointed to a marriage of convenience. However, by all accounts the couple had a happy and affectionate marriage. Sadly, Dorothy died in 1716 aged only forty-three, leaving her eighty-three-year-old husband in deep mourning.

## 2d The Crewe family and Newbold Verdon Hall: The Old and the New

### The Old

Though this part of Newbold Hall's history begins in 1623, it does not begin with the hall we see today in 2025. That building was erected in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Prior to this, there is evidence that an earlier hall stood immediately to the south-west of today's building<sup>2</sup>.

The early history of the manor of Newbold goes back to Saxon times and probably before that - there is evidence of Roman, Iron Age and Bronze Age settlement<sup>3</sup>. After the Norman Conquest in 1066 the land was taken from the Saxon lord and given to Hugh de Grandmesnil as reward for his service in the Conquest. From that time onward, it passed through a succession of Norman family hands including the de Verdun family, hence Newbold de Verdun<sup>4</sup>.

By the time of the sale in 1623, it is believed that a house stood in the area described and was surrounded by a moat. Historians do not believe this was for defensive purposes, rather as an impressive setting for the house or hall. In 1980 the Newbold Verdon and District Archaeology group was given permission to excavate the one side of the moat that had been filled in. This revealed several roof tiles which may have been part of the original house<sup>5</sup>.

### The New

For most of the first seventy-five years from 1625 to 1700 the old house stood and the likes of Thomas Crewe, John Crewe Senior and Junior, as well as Nathaniel, would have occupied it at times.

There are no known documents to accurately date when the Hall was constructed but the English Heritage Study of the Hall in 2004 dates it as being in the 1690s. Given that Nathaniel inherited the baroncy on his brother's death in 1681, we could assume that he must have spent some years visiting the original hall, presumed to be on the site surrounded by the moat. There has also been some speculation that it was possibly built after his marriage to Dorothy Forster, perhaps as some form of gift to her, but this is supposition.

Nathaniel commissioned sometime during this period the building of the Hall, much as we see it today. In comparison with the family home at Steane, his Bishop's Palace in Auckland and large house in London, Newbold could be described as small fry. It did, however, serve as a very convenient stopping point on the fourteen-day journey between London, Steane and county Durham.

Full details of the Hall built by Nathaniel Crewe are contained in the Architectural Investigation Report by English Heritage in 2003. It describes the building as follows:

*It is a small double-pile country house with an entrance court flanked originally by four pavilions, three of which survive (Grade II listed)*<sup>6</sup>.

## **Newbold Hall Self-Service Station: The Welcome Break of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

It is difficult to be exact in saying how much time Nathaniel Crewe spent at Newbold Verdon Hall, but the Rent Book of 1712-1721 gives us some idea<sup>7</sup>.

For example, between June and September 1714, £35 5s 5d was paid to hire waggons and horses to travel from Newbold to Steane and from Steane to Durham and from Durham to London. That charge is equivalent to £10,500 in today's (2025) money.

The journey (approximately 260miles) from Durham to London would have taken between 10 to 14 days, depending on weather conditions, the terrain and the type of load being carried; wagons could travel between 15 to 25 miles a day, stopping at inns or coach houses over night; or in the case of Lord Crewe, using Newbold and Steane and possibly other houses along the way.

This would have been an arduous journey for anyone but Lord Crewe at eighty-one in 1714 must have found it taxing to say the least. He stopped travelling to Newbold from 1715, and probably anywhere else except possibly London. We know because the Rent Book record<sup>9</sup> states where it was signed by Lord Crewe, and from that year onward it was always Steane. This is also confirmed by Nichols<sup>8</sup>.

The person responsible for collecting the rent was his trusty servant, Ralph Trotter<sup>9</sup>. A man so close to Lord Crewe that he was at his bedside on his death and signed the papers to say that he had been buried in a woollen shroud; a legal requirement at the time and one in which usually it was only close family who could witness the deed.

Ralph was an interesting person. Born in 1689 to a wealthy merchant family, he began as a teenager in service to Lady Dorothy Crewe and by the age of twenty he was employed by the Bishop as Registrar of the Diocese of Durham. A role that entailed overseeing all the administrative matters of the diocese and one of the most important non-ecumenical positions, which he did for the next sixty-one years.

He also looked after the landed interests of Lord Crewe and that is how he came to be recording the rents and expenses in the Rent book in 1712 until 1720, just before Lord Crewe died. This did not stop Ralph's association with Newbold because in 1723 he married a local girl, Ann Bevan, and they had seven children in the next eleven years.

How he did this whilst holding down such a demanding job in Durham is a mystery. There is no record of Ann ever living up there, and it would appear the children were born in Newbold, though some moved to Durham later in their life. Ann died in 1766 and was buried at Newbold Verdon. Ralph was living in Durham on his death in 1768 and it is believed that he too was buried in Newbold<sup>10</sup> though there is no sign of a grave.

### **2e: Lord Crewe's Legacy**

Apart from Crew Lane and Lord Crewe Close, to this day the village has a connection to Lord Crewe. Upon his death Lord Crewe's Last Will and Testimony<sup>1</sup> specified that much of his wealth should be used to support a number of causes, especially those situated in the likes of Durham and Oxford his old university town. He did not forget Newbold Verdon.

He directed that a sum of £30 be given for the erection of a school and a further £20 for the employment of a school master. A school was built on what is now the site of the war memorial and gardens. A very narrow plot that housed the school for approximately 40 children and a schoolhouse for the master.

The school operated for about 150 years until it fell into disrepair; the schoolmasters having to pay for any repairs to the school out of their annual salary.

A new school was built in 1875 after a long fight to acquire funding by the rector at that time, the Reverend Cole<sup>2</sup>. He had hoped to open it sooner but the monies from Lord Crewe's Trust had to contribute toward the

erection and upkeep of the school and this was problematic because the larger Lord Crewe National Charity had been taken to court for illegal actions and whilst the case was being heard, no monies could be released. All was settled in the end and even to this day there is in the village the Lord Crewe Trust Fund that is overseen by a group of four trustees who, in consultation with the headteacher, make financial contributions to support the education of the children.

### **Part 3: 1721 A New Owner: James Montagu (1687–1748)**

Upon his death in 1721, Lord Crewe bequeathed in his will the hall and manor of Newbold Verdon to his great-nephew, James Montagu<sup>1</sup>. Lord Crewe's sister Jemima had married Edward Montagu (1602–1671), 1st Earl of Sandwich and their eldest son, Charles, had married Elizabeth Forster, their fifth son being James.

James' grandfather was one of the key figures in the country during the restoration period. He was one of the commissioners sent across to Holland to bring King Charles II back to England. Such was his standing at the time of his death that he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

James led a much quieter life than his grandfather. He had been MP for Camelford, Cornwall but on the death of his great uncle, Lord Crewe, he came to live in Newbold Verdon for the rest of his life, some twenty-seven years.

An obituary written about James on his death described what happened when Newbold Verdon was left to him.

*'...where he spent the remainder of his days with such cheerfulness, freedom and hospitality to the rich, and charity to the poor, that he was generally beloved; but coming to town, fell sick, whereof he died; and November 8, 1748, he was carried to be buried in the church belonging to his seat at Newbold Verdon.'*<sup>2</sup>

It is fair to say the James did have a significant impact both on the Hall and especially the grounds, but also upon the poorer members of the community.

#### **The Hall and Grounds**

For the six years before his death Lord Crewe did not visit Newbold Verdon and judging from a letter written by James' sister-in-law, Elizabeth Montagu, the queen of the Bluestockings, not much had been done in those years to the upkeep of hall and grounds.

*'It was a very bad place when Lord Crewe left it to him and had no ornament but fine wood. Now there is water in great beauty, grand avenues from every point, fine young plantations, and in short, everything that can please the eye.'*<sup>3</sup>

Certain changes to the Hall can be attributed to James, and indeed it would appear that he had started to look at adding an additional two wings to the house, one south-west toward the moat and the other on the opposite side<sup>5</sup>.

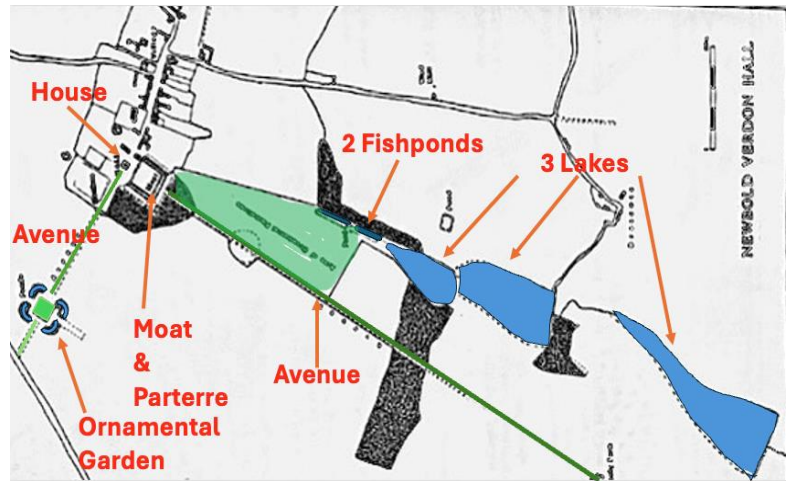
It was once assumed that there was evidence of a larger house that had been demolished, but later research concluded the opposite, citing the premature death of James or his rising debt in the latter years as two possible reasons for the cancellation of the extensions<sup>4</sup>.

## The Gardens

James is credited with the commissioning of the landscaped gardens. Starting from the moated site south-west of the house, what looks to be a parterre was created: a formal, flat-laid garden design with characteristic symmetrical compartments or beds, typically outlined by low boxwood hedging. Ornamental gravel pathways link up the compartments, with the overall pattern designed to be appreciated from an elevated position such as an upstairs window.

You will see from the drawing that leading from the parterre is an avenue running out toward Naneby and Cadeby. This would be one of the grand avenues mentioned by Lady Mary, part of a number of avenues in what has been described as an ornamental plantation, that also features a sunken garden with possibly two ponds and two long narrow fishponds.

Here you can see that three more large ponds, one of which runs out past Brascote, can be seen, and also a grand avenue leading to and from the Bosworth Lane, it also had several small ponds.



Whilst not the largest estate and country pile, James had invested a great deal of time, energy and money into it over those twenty-seven years. And if his obituary can be believed, he also had a care for those in and around the village. This was exemplified in his will.

## The Montague Charity

James left £100 (£19,000 in 2025) in his will for what he described as the Industrious Poor. This was to be achieved by trustees of the fund purchasing land in the parish that would then be rented out, and the proceeds would be distributed annually at Michaelmas, at the end of September when the harvest had been brought in. Some parishes used it as a moment to distribute “outdoor relief” — food, clothing, or small sums of money — to those in need. The ‘dole’, as it was known, would only be given to the deserving poor, and there were strict rules that defined who should or shouldn’t receive it.

The Archive has in its possession the ‘Town Book’<sup>5</sup> dated 1851 – 1919, the first 100 years we have no record of, but this book and a second from 1919 to 2017 provides a fascinating insight into Charity, a key element of village and parish life. Not only what was available to the poor, but how the poor received charity, whether it be monies or in kind; and who made those decisions and by what authority and how did it bare on the relationship between the haves and the have-nots.

## The Montague Charity Today

The Trust is still operating today, overseen by a group of trustees who manage the two sets of allotments on Brascote Lane. Those closer to the village have been known as the Bog allotments, and prior to them becoming the allotments we see today, were once the site of a row of ‘Poor Houses’ constructed on behalf of the Montagu Trust<sup>6</sup> approximately 200 years ago and demolished in the early 1900s.

The allotments just beyond the Windmill are on land first purchased by the Montagu Trust in the mid-1700s. At the time it was land that was part of the large open field known as Brascote Field.

The charity has recently undergone significant changes and as well as overseeing the allotments and collecting the rents, it’s trustees are beginning the process of using some of this income to support charitable organisations in the village and parish.

## Part 4

### Sir Edward Wortley Montagu 1678 – 1761



Upon James' death in 1748, the Hall and Manor of Newbold Verdon were inherited by his cousin, Sir Edward Wortley Montagu. Following Sir Edward's death in 1761, Lady Mary inherited the estate.

Sir Edward's grandparent were Sir Edward Montagu (1532-1602) and Jemima Crewe (1625-1674) sister of Lord Nathaniel Crewe. Their second son Sydney Montagu and his wife, Ann Wortley, were the parents of Edward Wortley Montagu Snr.<sup>1</sup>

### Lady Mary Wortley Montagu 1689 -1762



Prior to her marriage, Lady Mary was Lady Mary Pierrepont<sup>2</sup> a member of the wealthy Pierrepont family of Nottinghamshire. Her story is one of national importance and it owed much to her and her husband's unconventional life. Firstly, their marriage was the result of an elopement, something highly unconventional at a time of arranged marriages for the 17<sup>th</sup> century aristocracy.

A loveless marriage was not for Mary, and after meeting Edward and finding they had a shared love of literature and other intellectual pursuits, their relationship blossomed, much to the chagrin of Mary's father who had plans for her to marry a wealthy, but dull suitor named Clotworthy Skeffington. Mary and Edward had other ideas and in 1712 they eloped, defying her father's wishes and the rigid social norms of the era.

Things must have settled down because by 1716, only four years after their elopement, they were travelling to Constantinople where Edward was to take up his role of ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Her experiences there inspired her famous *Turkish Embassy Letters*<sup>3</sup>, which offered rare insights into Ottoman society from a woman's perspective.

### Smallpox

She was instantly intrigued with all of the new and bustling sites and activities around her. One of the most interesting events that she and her husband encountered was a Turkish custom to guard against smallpox. This procedure was called 'ingrafting'. Ingrafting was usually for the wealthy and privileged, who had the procedure whilst attending a "smallpox party". The Wortley Montagu's attended such a party and were amazed at what they saw. In a letter to a friend back in England Lady Mary described what happened.

An old, poorly dressed woman was ushered into the room full of guests.

*She approached one of the guests, inquired about which vein he wanted opened, and scratched it with a needle til the blood came. She then brought out a nutshell from beneath her skirts inside which was pus from an open smallpox pustule. The old woman dipped the needle into the pus and then pressed it into the scratches; she bound this with a piece of hollow nutshell.*<sup>4</sup>

Lady Mary was incredulous at this strange event. It looked as if the procedure would give the people the disease instead of guarding them against it. She kept in close contact with those who had been ingrafted and found that they experienced a very mild reaction, but all recovered. Lady Mary then talked to other Turks who had been ingrafted and subsequently survived several smallpox epidemics without contracting the disease. Lady Mary was convinced she'd witnessed a miracle. Being an avid letter writer, she quickly spread the word of this Oriental practice to friends. She was so convinced of the value of her new-found discovery that she "[intended] to try it on my dear little Son [Edward]", which she did in March of 1718<sup>5</sup>. He became the first Britain to be inoculated against smallpox.

## Lady Mary Spreads the Word

The family returned to London in 1718, and in 1721 a serious outbreak of smallpox began in the capital. Mary tried to persuade her friends that they and their children should be inoculated using what was described as variolation - Vari being the Latin for smallpox.

She did this by holding a smallpox party for members of the aristocracy, including members of the royal family, and to prove the procedures safety, Lady Mary instructed the attending doctor to inoculate her daughter Mary, who subsequently was shown to have experienced no serious reaction.

Following on from this, further trials were conducted on prisoners and orphaned children, which also proved successful.<sup>6</sup> This led to an inoculation campaign.

Thomas Frewen<sup>7</sup> reported that between 1721 and 1728 there were records of just under 900 people being inoculated by variolation. Of those, seventeen people died – approximately 1 in 50. Those who contracted smallpox without being inoculated had a 1 in 3 chance of dying, and even if they survived many would be left scarred or blind.

The medical profession at the time dismissed variolation as an effective procedure. They criticised Lady Mary for having no medical training and for bringing a 'foreign' practice to the country. She in turn, accused them of being more interested in making money from the disease with their ineffective cures than saving lives.

Despite the medical profession's objections, variolation was performed in the country for the next seventy-five years, paving the way for Edward Jenner's breakthrough in 1796 by his use of cowpox to stimulate the immune system in readiness for smallpox. He called this vaccination – vacca being Latin for cow.

In 1980, the World Health Organisation declared that the deadly disease of smallpox had been eradicated from the earth. One of those people acknowledged as doing much to promote mass inoculation was Lady Mary Wortley, two-hundred years earlier.

## Lady Mary Inherits Newbold Verdon

On the 21<sup>st</sup>. January 1761 Sir Edward died, leaving, amongst other bequests, the house and manor of Newbold Verdon to Lady Mary. At the time of Sir Edwards death, Lady Mary was living in Venice, and the couple had been leading separate lives for some time. She returned to England, also in failing health, settling in London. It would be only a matter of twenty-one months before she would also die. During that time there is no indication that she returned to Newbold Verdon.

## Part 5

### Edward Wortley Montagu (Jnr) 1713–1776 The Wayward Son



Edward Wortley inherited Newbold Verdon from his mother along with £1,200 per year. His father had also left him an allowance of £1,000 per year. The combined sum of £2,200 was a handsome sum of money, together with annual rent of £600 from Newbold Verdon – approximately £500,000 a year in today's money<sup>1</sup>. However, Edward was something of a wayward son and he did not inherit Wortley Hall in Yorkshire. That was left to his sister, Mary, and was worth £800,000, about £150,000,000 today.

Aged forty-nine when his mother died, Edward had led what could be described as a colourful life. Even as a child he did not conform to the expectations of the time. This exert from the Dictionary of National Biography, gives a little flavour of the boy.

*On the return of his parents to England in 1718 he was placed at Westminster School, from which he ran away more than once. On the first occasion, July 1726, he was traced to Oxford and was with difficulty 'reduced to the humble condition of a school-boy.' He decamped again in August 1727 and was not recovered for some months. Two similar escapades are mentioned by his tutor, Forster, chaplain to the Duchess of Kingston, but without dates. The first ended in his discovery, after a year's absence, crying fish in Blackwall; on the second occasion he worked his passage out to Oporto, deserted, went up country, and found employment in the vineyards, but returning to Oporto in charge of some asses, was arrested at the instance of the British consul, brought back to his ship, identified and restored to his parents by the master. <sup>2</sup>*

He continued in this non-conformist vein for the rest of his life, being described in various sources as a womaniser, fraudster, polygamist and gambler. This was not the complete Edward, he was also described as a polyglot, travel writer, archaeologist, cartographer, soldier and, after he had settled in Venice in 1773 dressing in the manner of an Ottoman noble, a man with the manners, habit and magnificence of a Turk.

This lifestyle must have been an expensive one, especially his gambling, for he was forced to sell Newbold Hall and manor in 1767 for £19,655<sup>3</sup> (£2.8 million today) to pay off his debts. Severing the 144-year link between the Crewe, Montague and Wortley families, and the end of the hall as a country house. It was purchased by Joseph Bunney and Thomas Pares, two Leicester bankers, neither of whom lived at the hall and eventually it was let as a farmhouse and farm.

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