



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Autumn 2024



<https://reptonvillage.org.uk/repton-village-history-group/>

Membership matters:

Ten members of the group visited Donington le Heath manor House in July – the sun shone and all went well. Ideas for future outings are always welcome.

The group will be continuing with meetings or outings every other month:

- Tuesday 17th September: The Cromford Canal in old photographs by Hugh Potter. Hugh is the archivist for the society and onetime editor of the Waterways World Journal.
- Tuesday 19th November: South Derbyshire Parks and Gardens – Repton, Calke, Alvaston, Melbourne and Bretby by Phillip Heath. Phillip is the one time Heritage Officer for SDDC and well known and expert local historian and speaker.
- Tuesday 17th December: An extra session with a quiz by John and a talk by Andy and no doubt some festive comestibles.

Derrick Pounds' memories. (from page 68 of his 1960 memoirs part 2)

We are very grateful to Derrick for sending his memories and are particularly interested in the paragraph referring to Viking Graves. We assume that this relates to Heath Wood, but will try to follow it up as their description does not readily match the cremation mounds there. Could this be elsewhere?

“As a small boy, wearing short pants, I used to love riding on the cross bar of Dad’s Policeman’s bicycle, with him peddling, on daily visits to Newton Park house to collect, in two big metal buckets hanging from the handlebars, skimmed milk and kitchen scraps to feed our dogs and ferrets. Dad taught me how to handle ferrets, without getting bitten too often, setting nets, traps and snares for vermin and wild animals providing food for the table, and among several other things the safe use of a rifle or shotgun to hunt wild game and vermin. Dad grew enough potatoes and green vegetables to last us all year and I helped with the digging, planting, weeding and harvesting. He was also very clever using hand tools for repairing things including my shoes, which he taught me how to polish based on his earlier training and in the army. While in the army Dad used to run in competitions in his bare feet until his sergeant arranged to get Dad proper running shoes. During the First World War my father became a decorated soldier being awarded the Military Medal (M.M.), the British Army’s second-highest commendation for valour and he was a special police constable and Sergeant during the Second World War.

In the 1940’s the Chief Constable of Derbyshire Colonel Horatio Rawlings sometimes accompanied by Police Superintendent Hutchison used to visit with my father and other Police volunteer members from the local community around our home near Newton Solney. The Police volunteers and Home guard volunteer soldiers trained in public security to provide resistance should the enemy invade. After the war Colonel Rawlings and Superintendent Hutchison visited our home occasionally to go hunting with my father and other invited guests on the Ratcliff estate. We also boarded for several weeks training the Police Chief’s magnificent Golden Retriever hunting dog. My mother sometimes prepared a meal for these guests and I also met them during shoots for wood pigeons that roosted in the woods during winter and young rooks that were shot as they left their nests in early May.

My father had many friends including the gamekeeper at Foremark where between 1840 and 1885 my great great grandfather Thomas Pound was gamekeeper on the Sir Francis Burdett’s estate for 45 years, and his four sons James, Arthur, John and William, my great grandfather, also worked there.

The Foremark Hall 4 stories high stately home was built in 1760 by Francis Burdett’s (b.1770-d1844) father Robert and in the 1990s became a boarding and day school for 450 boys and girls aged 3-13. Francis’s son Baronet Robert Burdett (b1835-d1895) inherited the estate in 1844 which had been owned by the family for centuries, since 1327 listed as the Burdett game park. St.Saviours Church, built on the Foremark estate in 1662 by the Burdett family, has a large dilapidated Burdett burial site on the right hand side about middle of

the small church graveyard a few feet forward from the gravestone of my 'Pound' ancestors, which on my last visit in 2001 was in pristine condition. The nicely engraved Pound headstone is full with names however Thomas is not listed I suspect because when he died in 1885 there was no more room for my great great grandfather's name to be engraved.

On a visit to Foremark with my father in circa 1980 the gamekeeper walked with us around the estate and among other things showed us about eight Viking graves associated with the arrival of four Viking armies in Repton in 873 AD which brought the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia to an end. The unmarked graves were just mounds of soil a few inches high about six feet long with out of line random spacing of graves pointing in several directions. According to the gamekeeper the soldiers had been buried where they had fallen in full battle gear and it was forbidden to touch the grave sites which were in an area of a wood amongst young growth trees. In 1982 a major archaeological dig around Repton's St. Wystan's Parish Church unearthed a Viking burial mound in the present Vicarage garden. Two hundred Viking warriors were found buried there, together with 49 women of Anglo-Saxon build. It is rather extraordinary that the only known Viking burials in England should be within a few miles of each other.

The gamekeeper also took us to the steep stepped entrance to an underground concrete and brick lined chamber located in a wooded area on a hill about 300 yards from the Hall buildings. There was an extremely strong smell of rotting flesh coming up from the open brick stairwell and the gamekeeper explained that he had thrown the carcasses of dead foxes into the chamber to keep unwelcome visitors away such as schoolchildren intent on hanky-panky. The pungent smell would be a great deterrent as one sniff would make anyone back away. I was questioning the gamekeeper further as we walked along a muddy path in the wood when I heard a noise behind. Turning around my father had fallen forward, was lying flat down with his head up and chin in the mud but he was still smoking his pipe so I knew he was OK. He was helped up and continued walking alone using his walking stick for assistance."

As always, we accept the content at face value but cannot guarantee its accuracy. The Ingleby and Repton Viking Burials are the only ones known in Derbyshire, but a dozen other English counties also have Viking burials. According to our Memorials and Inscription booklet, the Pound grave at Foremark is D7 and a visit confirmed this. However, it only records Thomas's wife Matilda (died Feb 1871) and a grandson, Arthur, who died in 1871 aged 9 months – probably not long after the family had moved from Wiltshire. Arthur's father (also Arthur) died in 1870. There may also be some confusion about generations. It is likely that his GGG Grandfather was the Thomas who worked at Foremark from 1840 and it was his son (his GG Grandfather) who had the four sons mentioned..

41 High Street.

Tim was approached by a lady living at 41 High Street - between Brook House and the British Legion. She was interested to know how old it was and if there had been anything there before.

Charles did solid research with maps, rentals and land surveys and anticipates that it was a Harpur property from the early 17thC – possibly into the 16thC . However, the 1910 survey notes that it was "rebuilt since 1909" but its appearance implies that it was restored rather than replaced. It has had at least one later refit - due to a serious fire.. Charles provided a mass of information about the characters involved – too much to include here, but in the digital archive should anyone want a copy.

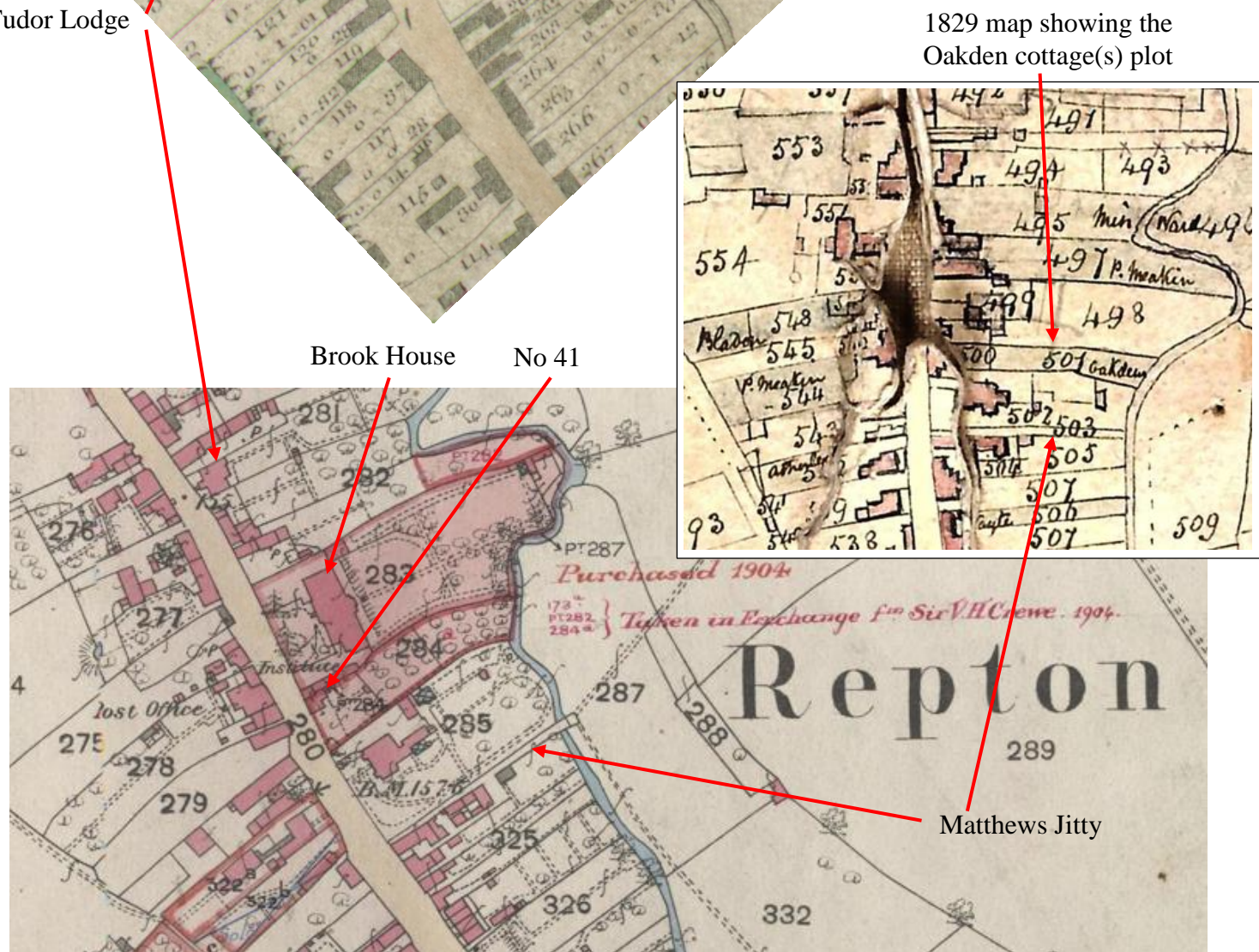
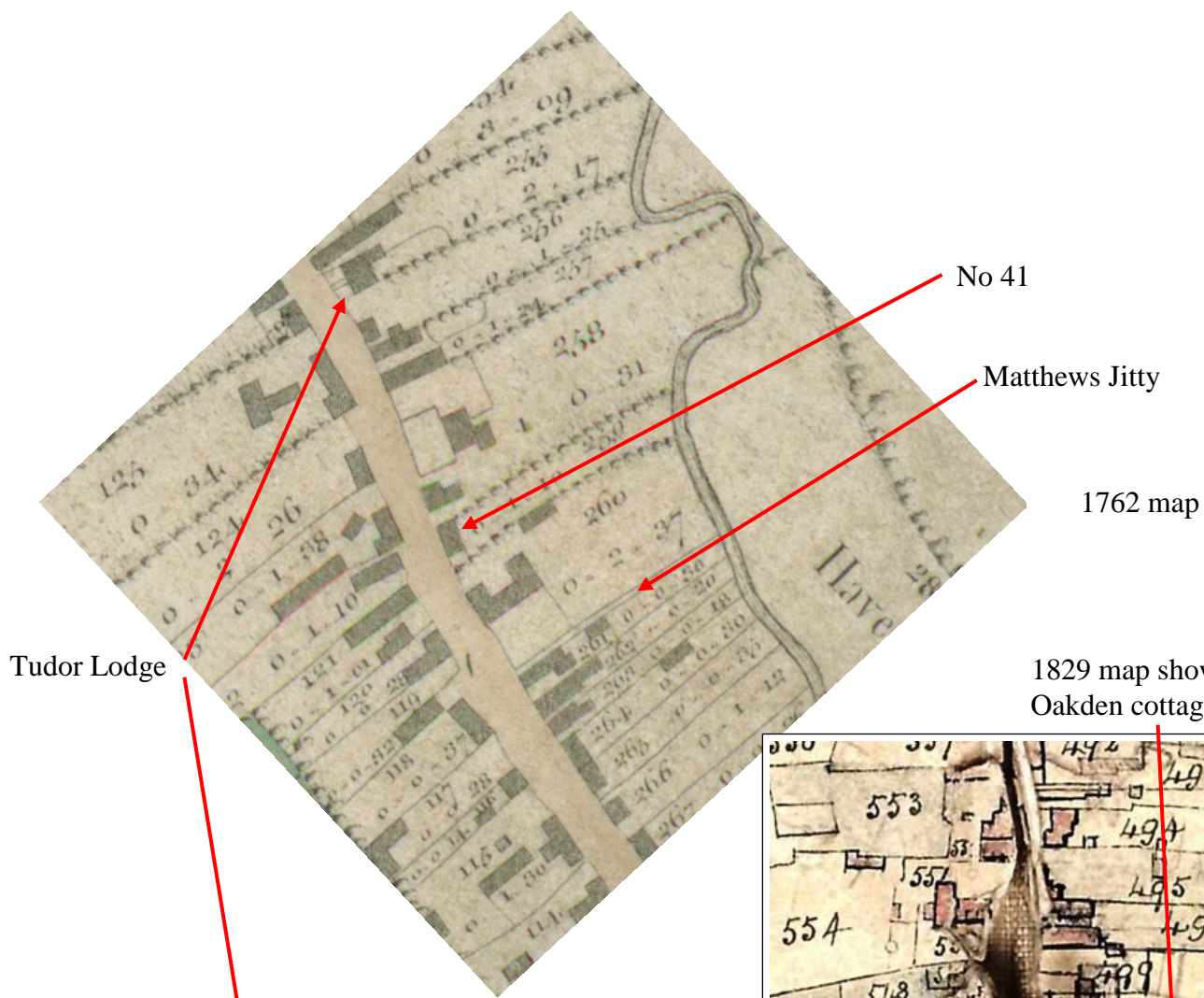
Charles' Summary:

Probably a Harpur property since the early 17thC but first definite reference in rentals comes in 1681 with tenant William Thurston.

The Wood family are tenants from at least 1703 until Benjamin Oakden takes over in 1772 & the Oakdens are tenants until death of Mary Oakden in 1906; the year after cottage ownership passes to Repton School. Oakden spellings in Repton include: Oakton, Oakdon, Oaktin, Oaktain, Octon, Oackton, Oacton & Oaklin!

It looks from the Harpur rentals as though there was another cottage on what is now the British Legion car park which was tenanted by William Oakden until 1877 when Levi Nettle became tenant but the cottage pulled down <1881. Henry Oakden paid £1 for 'garden of Levi Nettles cottage' hence £2 10s paid by Mary Oakden in 1905. There is only one cottage in the 1830 Survey but two adjacent Oakden families in census from 1841 to 1871. The footprint of the cottage in the 1881 O.S. Map looks smaller than in the 1829 map but 1920 Map shows larger footprint. 1910 Survey notes 'rebuilt since 1909'.

A number of William Thurstans paid a cottage rent of 6s 8d from at least 1538 until at least 1647 but alas [only circumstantial evidence] that this is the same cottage a William Thurston paid 10s for in 1681.





What is now No 41 is big enough to have once been more than one cottage but, clearly, windows and doors would have to be different. Perhaps two chimneys suggest it may have been two cottages.

House numbers did not come into Repton until much later than in most areas so the Legion is No 43

Historic find by Repton Sisters.

The Scout Association do not have an Archaeology Badge, but it was agreed that Derbyshire Scouts could develop one. The team developing and delivering it also run hands-on digs for the youngsters and even though its just in Leicestershire, took scouts to the Willesley Woodlands Scout campsite last year. The village is recorded in Domesday and there was an early manor house on the site which was developed repeatedly and was home to some notable families. The youngsters carried out a resistivity grid survey and successfully located the footings of the Victorian version of the hall..

Having found it and got it accurately located, they went back this year for 2 days with 50 scouts per day and opened a trench close to the front door. The youngsters did 5 activities - digging, finds processing, geophysics, a site history talk and tour, and metal detecting. Needless to say the metal detecting was very popular. ITV came to film on the second day and were actually filming when two girls from Repton made a stunning find. A square headed Anglo Saxon bronze brooch dating to 520 to 575 according to the British Museum experts.

Our geophysics did pretty well too. The youngsters found an unknown underground void - probably a family mausoleum. Going to investigate further next year with a couple of test pits to see if we come down onto a brick (or similar) surface as the ceiling. If so we will ask HE for a licence to drill through and put a camera into the hole.



Russell's photos.

Russell has made an excellent study of the Brook End and Boot hill area using photos, maps and the



antiquarian's books and has come up with what is a new (to us) photo of Boot Hill. The pub has a roof level hoarding which is, frustratingly, not quite readable. Not only was it a pub but there was also a horse-drawn taxi business run from there (via the side door). Dating the photo is difficult – and suggestions will be very welcome.

Another photo that Russell has been contemplating is the opening of the Rifle Range as part of the 1911 celebrations of the coronation of George V.



The question this time is where was it?

Russell thinks that it is on the site where the British Legion is now - The gas lamp suggests it was High Street and a photo taken from Homelands has one in roughly the right spot.

On the other hand, the Legion plot is fairly narrow and bordered by the cottage (No 41) on the left and Hazeldyne on the right which were both there in 1911.

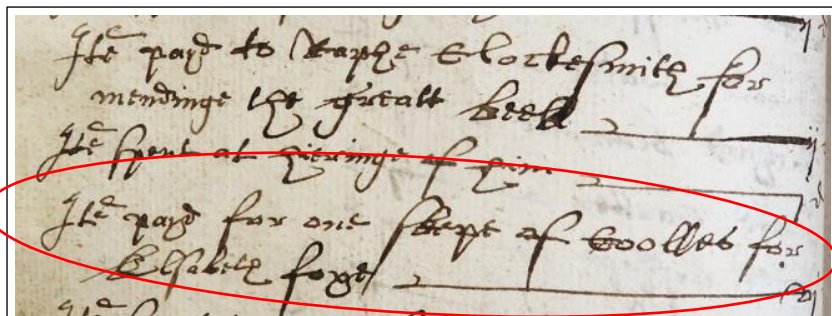
One other possibility is where Askew Grove is now – then it would have been Hollybush farm. Russell points out that the right hand boundary in the photo is a stone wall which is not apparent in the aerial photo of Holly Bush farm. However that would have been taken much later than 1911 – more like mid 1950s.

A third possibility is where the bungalow is at 35 High Street. Originally a half-timbered thatched cottage, then an open space, then in 1927 a billiard hall, then John Spencer had his Chemist's shop there and now its a private bungalow. However, the site is a bit narrow.

All suggestions and comments welcome.

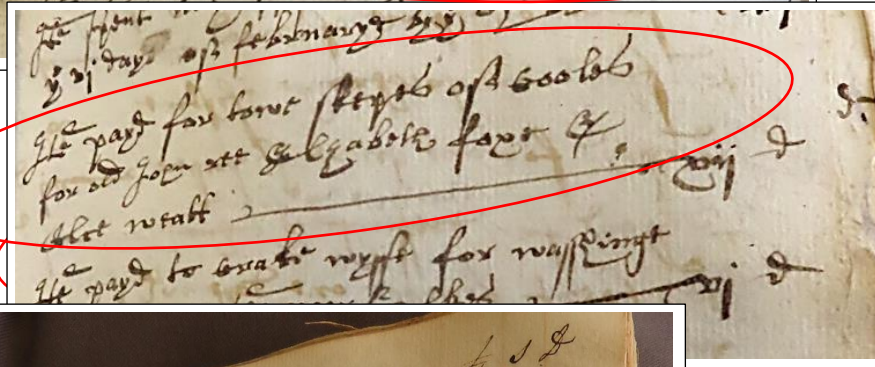
Winter Fuel Allowances

Charles' work on copying and transcribing Repton's early documents is incredibly powerful as a research tool and provides many insights to life in Repton in the early days. He has provided the following highly topical excerpts of the locally run benefit system:



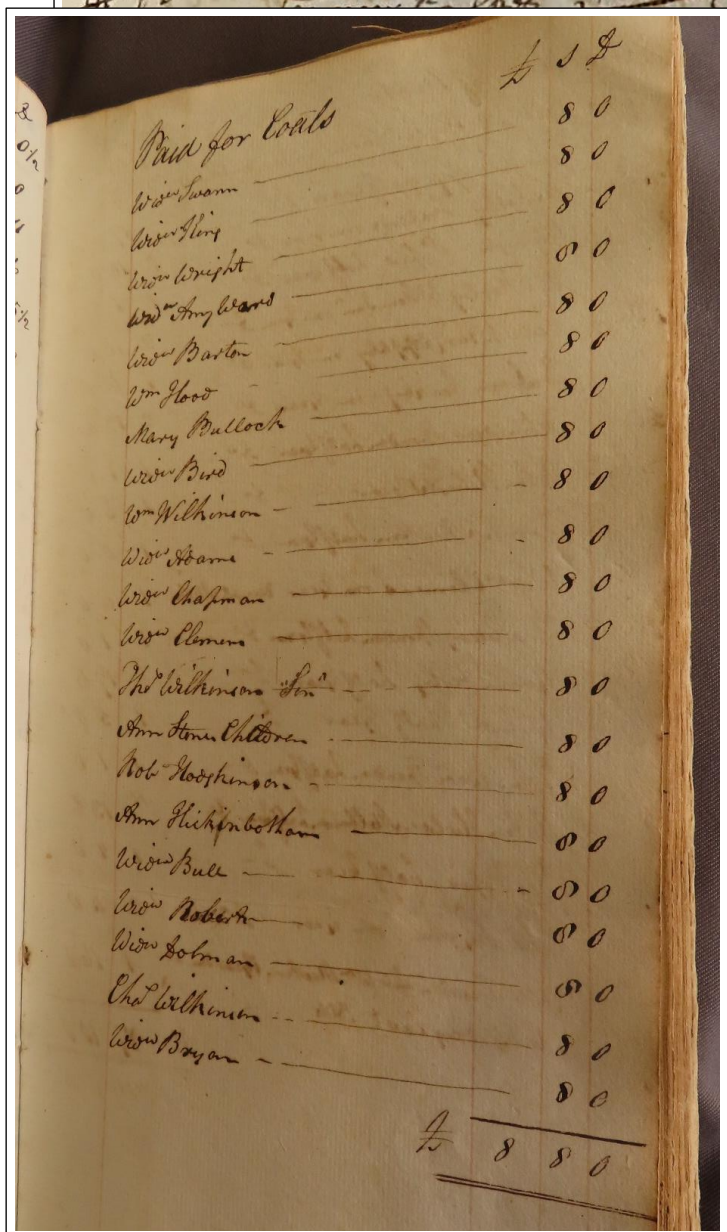
The earliest record we have of those in need in Repton receiving a Winter Fuel Allowance comes from the Churchwardens' Accounts of 1600 when Elizabeth Foxe received 'one skepe of coals'.

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	£	s	d
Paid for Coals		8	0
Widow Swann		8	0
Widow Hing		8	0
Widow Wright		0	0
Widow Anglars		8	0
Widow Barton		8	0
Wm Flood		8	0
Mary Bullock		8	0
Widow Bird		8	0
Wm Wilkinson		8	0
Widow Stame		8	0
Widow Chapman		8	0
Widow Clowes		8	0
Thos Wilkinson Senr		8	0
Ann Anne Chittenden		8	0
Robt Hooshinson		8	0
Ann Hickinbotham		0	0
Widow Bull		0	0
Widow Roberts		0	0
Widow Solman		0	0
Chas Wilkinson		0	0
Widow Bayan		8	0
		8	0
	£	8	8

The extant Repton Overseers of the Poor Accounts from 1752 to 1830 record a standard yearly allowance of 8s for coal, given mainly to widows. The example here is from 1806.

MEMORIES OF REPTON MEDICAL PRACTICE

Dr Brian Hands' memories of the General Practice in Repton - augmented by Dr Johnathan Sheldon whose father held the fort for many years.

I have been asked to write a few words on my time in the Repton Medical Practice and my memories of what I have been told of its history. As I look back, I realise that I had been there for almost exactly two-thirds of the existence of the NHS. One thinks of the NHS as having been around forever but it is really only quite a recent innovation.

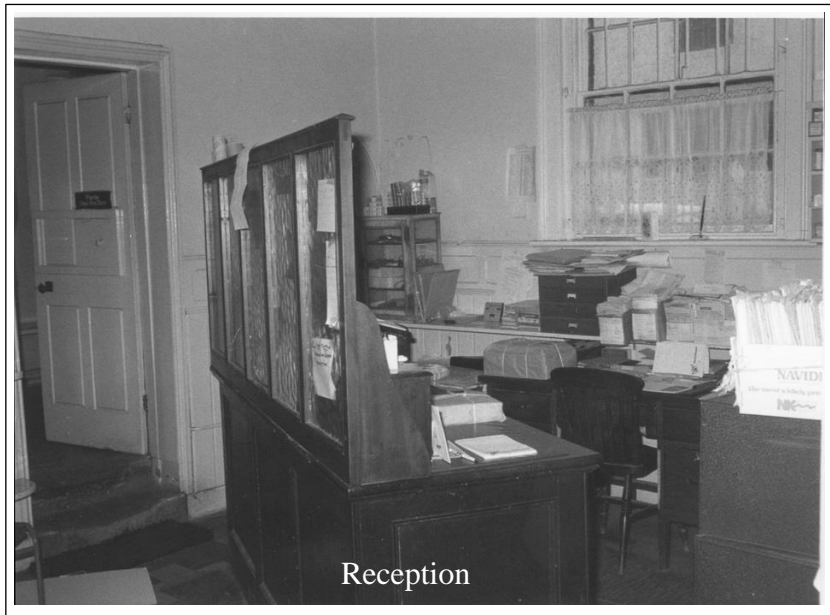
At the end of the 19th century the practice had one doctor, Dr Cronk, looking after Repton School and the villagers. There is a photograph (undated) of him holding his bicycle and looking elegant in his bowler hat. As far as I am aware there was no doctor specifically for Willington. Dr Lindsey joined sometime around WW1 and I do not know when Dr Cronk retired.

In the years before WW2 and up to 1948 and the advent of the NHS doctors lived close to each other in the High Street. Dr Lindsey lived at No. 76 and this house had the consulting room and Dr Hodson ("Hodder") who joined the practice in the 1930s lived at No 45. It appears that the main tasks were Dr Lindsey looking after the villagers as Dr Hodson was the Repton School medical officer. Raoul Dahl wrote home to his mother when a pupil at Repton 1933-73 and refers a few times to "Hodder" and how he kept boys in the San to play cards and billiards – for money.

In the late 1940s the surgery was moved from Dr Lindsey's house to rented premises consisting of a consulting room, reception area, waiting room and an outside lavatory that is now part of St Wystans School along the High Street nearer to The Cross. It was pretty grim!



Outside Loo



Reception

"St Wystans" Surgery



Consulting room

Dennis Sheldon joined them in 1952. He had been to Oundle School, and then an organ and choral scholar at Magdelene College Cambridge followed by clinical studies at St Thomas's Hospital London. Lynam Thomas, headmaster of Repton School, had been told by the governors that they needed a new doctor as Hodder was coming up to retirement, so he phoned a friend at St Thomas's who told Dennis Sheldon to come up for an interview. He started in 1952 and lived all his working life in The Grange, Main Street.

With the increasing withdrawal of Drs Lindsey and Hodson from practice, Dennis Sheldon bore the brunt of the workload and indeed was single-handed for about 4 years until Ken Robinson was recruited in about 1959. Ken was educated at Charterhouse School and then went to Cambridge for his pre-clinical course and ended up at Guy's Hospital London for his clinical studies. He then had 2 years National Service in the RAF. He originally lived in Applegarth on High Street but soon built a house (Cornergates) in The Pastures on land bought from Repton School.

In October 1960 a small surgery in a shed on Hall Lane in Willington was set up to save Willington residents having to travel by infrequent buses to Repton. The rent was £130 per annum. The Willington Branch surgery (a grandiose title) was so damp that any papers kept there either merged and became cardboard or the edges went slightly mouldy. The shed was about 5 yds long by 4 wide with a thin partition down the middle lengthways. The door was at one end on the Waiting Room side with a door at end of the partition into the Consulting Room. The patients sat on an unpadded bench along the wall. The acoustics were also so good that the partition acted as an amplifier so any conversation in one room was louder in the other. It was knocked down when Ferry Green was built off Hall Lane. There was no receptionist and we just got up and called the next patient in and either started a new card or found one with space.

The practice was run by Drs Sheldon and Robinson for the next 20 years and by the early 1970s it looked after just under 6000 patients including Repton School.

Both of the premises used were both considered inadequate – indeed even in my time in the Winter the Repton surgery had no running water as it was frozen and I used to sit on a convector heater to keep warm. It was also a very brave patient who would bare any flesh for an examination outside the Summer months. I remember a Drug Rep saying that Repton had the worst premises in the Midlands being even worse than in Yoxall at that time! There were several small steps scattered between the rooms. There was at least one inside the front door where there was small room with a table on which we left scripts for collection. There were then a step or two into the reception area which had a bench with a tall glass partition. There was a wooden bench opposite. Behind the partition was a table with the note files. Off this was a smaller room with chairs around the edge which was the Waiting Room. To get to the consulting room the patient had to drop down a step then turn right, go up 2 steps into the single consulting room. There was opposite this an outside lavatory with a sink and this was the only running water.

Up to 1973 the practice did its own drug dispensing and Florrie Sears came a few years after WW2 and mixed the linctuses and rolled the pills. With her departure, the practice ceased to dispense medications as then John Spencer set up as a chemist in premises on High Street (next to Tudor Lodge) and the rules only allowed dispensing for patients over 2 miles from a pharmacy. Flo lived in the bungalow next to The Lodge in the Pastures. John was a huge asset for the villages and was always a tremendous help to the medical staff

I (Brian Hands) replaced Dennis Sheldon who had retired on 1st January 1974. In those days it was similar to how things are now (2024) with General Practice unpopular compared with hospital medicine and I believe there were only 2 applicants. I had followed my father, training at The London [now Royal London] Hospital in the East End and doing junior jobs in Essex and Halifax. For the first fortnight or so Joanna and I had a room in the Willington House Hotel (now where Messiter Mews/Riverbank are) and in the evening if I was on-call patients would ring the bar/reception and I would be called down.

Ken Robinson and I had one part-time receptionist – Jean Bennett – who came as a temp in 1973 replacing Flo Sears and that was the team. In about 1978, Jean was struggling with the book-keeping and so we took on Dorothy (surname forgotten – she lived in Willington off Canal Bridge) who came in once a month to do the accounts. We had no appointment system and surgeries were 9.30 to about 11.00 and then we closed up whilst we did visits – usually about 6/day but in winter far more - until 5.00pm when we reopened and saw patients until the last – often 9.00pm.

Jean was part-time: she would come on the 8.45am bus from Willington. Ken Robinson did a School San surgery at 8.30 and came to the surgery when finished. I arrived at 9.00 and opened the post, did some prescriptions until Ken came and we would chat and then one of us would start at Repton and the other drive to Willington. On completion of the surgeries we would divide up the visits (we each had our “own” patients usually) and off we would go and I would do a surgery at Foremarke Hall. Whoever took Willington visits

took Jean home. There was no appointment system and patients came, queued, were given their notes to bring in to the doctor and seen.

The Repton School Sanatorium with lots of beds was closed down by Dennis Sheldon and each house had a few beds and the matrons looked after any ill children that could not go home. The San was used almost solely for doing surgeries although even up until about 1980 there was an Xray machine and I remember seeing sports injuries there with Tony Henry who was an Orthopaedic consultant in Derby and we put various limbs into plaster of Paris without referring them to the DRI.

In 1979 we bought the end ground floor property (Plot 5) in the shop development at the end of Beech Avenue in Willington for £4000 and this replaced the Hall Lane shed. We only did morning surgeries here but we needed another part time receptionist and this was Pearl Bednall. She lived in Willington too. She remained with us for many years, moving into new premises as they arose.

Before I arrived in 1974, Ken Robinson had asked the precursor to the Health Authority (called the Executive Committee at the time) if they would consider building a Health Centre in Repton as the premises were so poor and property so expensive for GPs to build their own surgery. They did buy the builders yard and house on the corner of High Street and Askew Grove and in 1979 we moved from the St Wystan's surgery into the newly built Health Authority Health Centre. Here we originally had 3 consulting rooms, 2 with examination rooms, a reception room, a treatment room and a share of a staff room. Compared with our previous premises, this was luxury. It also meant that we could poach our district nurse, Pat Townsend, and she became our first practice nurse in about 1981. Pat lived in Church Close, Willington.

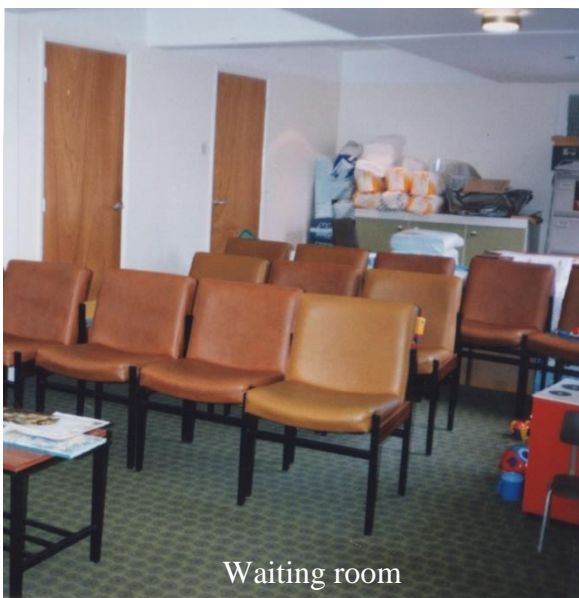


Consulting room

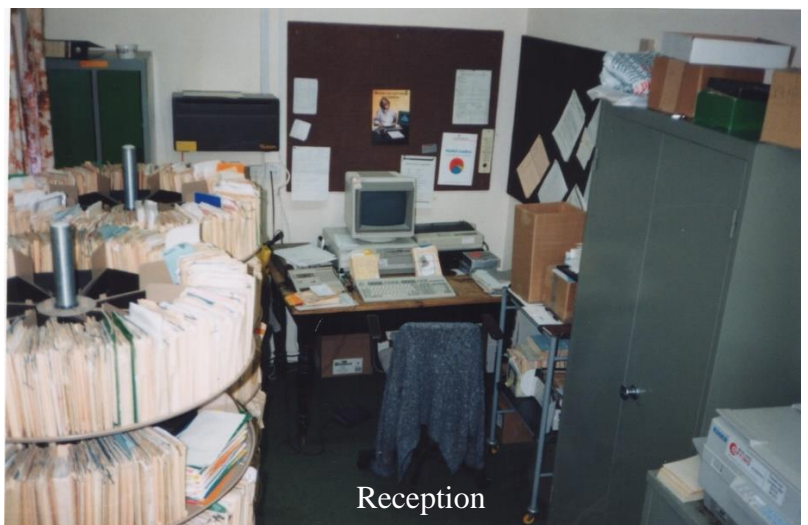


Consulting room

Health Centre



Waiting room



Reception

I remember too the system of Jean ringing around our visit list to pass on any urgent new call that had come in. Doctors' wives rarely worked in those days and stayed at home "minding the phone" and relaying messages. This was replaced by an enormous portable telephone initially and then by a succession of increasingly efficient mobiles. We also carried around a bag of maternity equipment including a pair of forceps

and initially an Entonox machine as we did do home deliveries.. My father had given me his forceps. We also had a bag for “emergency” suturing of minor lacerations complete with anaesthetic. I remember too the arrival of our first appointment system in about 1981-2.

Around this time (about 1980), a patient of ours [Nigel Trow] in Willington who was Head of Photography in what was Derby Technical College told me that he was taking on a mature student whose wife was a doctor who was looking for a post locally. I persuaded Ken Robinson to see her and Jackie Abrahams became a part-time partner in 1981. She was highly qualified in Cardiology from Glasgow and we were both rather in awe of her. We offered to buy her an ECG machine but she, quite rightly at that time, said GPs should rely on clinical signs and symptoms and not machines! She said she would come for 2 years but did stay for 5. She then became head of Family Planning services in Derby City.

When she left, we appointed Kyran Farrell as her replacement and so we were 3 fulltime partners with about 6900 patients.

In 1990 Ken Robinson retired so we asked Rosemary Poston who had been a partner in Melbourne to come and join us. She did this as a part time partner. With 2.5WTE [whole time equivalents] partners the workload was still too great and in 1992 we appointed Liam O’Hara as an additional F/T partner.

With the increasing work that was even then being diverted from hospitals we needed more nursing help so when Pat Townsend retired we appointed Carol Spence who was soon joined by Kate Jemison and Elaine Topliss and when Carol left she was replaced by Sue Brown.

The reception staff had also increased in number with Coral Parker, who seemed to always be having leaving parties, Gill Malpass, Janette Padmore and Claire Williamson. As we went into Fundholding we had a succession of Practice/Fundholding managers (Des Silcox was our first and only Reptonian), all of whom wrestled with our poor admin skills. Mike (surname forgotten), Derek (also surname forgotten) and Lisa Smith followed Des and we finally appointed Louise Sheck, who lived in Egginton, She had started as a receptionist some years before and eventually had left to be manager of a practice in Swadlincote. We lured her back. and she stayed until I retired in 2015.

Life was increasingly difficult as we had ridiculously little space and so we were always on the lookout for premises to expand into.

Eventually I saw a house on Repton Road in Willington in 1992 which was very run down with a large overgrown garden and this became the main surgery in 1994 and as soon as this was working we sold the small premises on Beech Avenue. We eventually closed our rooms in Repton Health Centre as the splitting of the support staff (nurses, receptionists and admin) between 2 sites became unmanageable.

And that was the end of the Repton Medical Practice as we just had the one surgery in Willington.

“Digs suggest leafy village once saw Viking Horrors” (BBC East Midlands News)

Journalist Grieg Watson titled an article on Repton in a lurid fashion that implies that Repton was attacked in a bloody assault on the monastery and royal buildings in a way similar to the attack on Lindisfarne. But surely this is unlikely. There was no standing army in Mercia and there is no record of a battle at Repton so little resistance if any. The Vikings had come down the Ouse and Trent in 872 and wintered at Torksey (near Lincoln) and it would have been very obvious to the Repton Monastery that they would be coming their way next – en-route to Tamworth to depose King Burghred. Surely they must have evacuated the monastery and removed the valuables and religious artefacts - we know they removed St Wystan’s remains from the crypt because they later came back. Whether the Royal remains (Merewalh Aethalbald, Wiglaff and possibly others) were removed for safe keeping we don’t know. For the Monastery, Wystan would have been the key one.

Having provided him with an outline of Repton’s history, Grieg was advised that Martin B, Cat Jarman and Mark Horton were the experts and he was recommended to talk to Steve Baker the county archaeologist who had just completed an application to Historic England for the site to be scheduled as an ancient monument. At present, it has absolutely no protection whatsoever. This was a point Grieg made in his article and hopefully will have been read by those with the authority for scheduling.

Comments and more information about Repton and its occupants are always welcomed.
For more information on the newsletter content or the History Group please contact us on
tjnorman4@yahoo.co.uk or visit our website:
<https://reptonvillage.org.uk/repton-village-history-group>