



# Repton Village History Group Newsletter

## Summer/Autumn 2023



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

### A Massive thank you

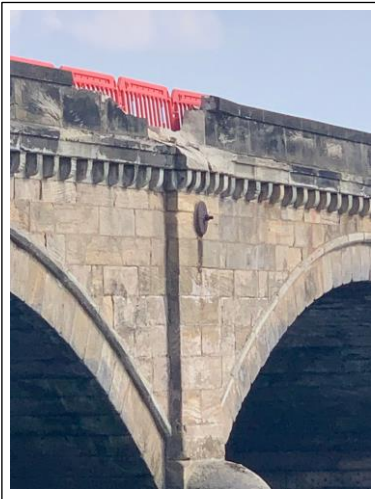
Janet Spavold and Sue Brown have helped us a few times with talks and expert advice and guidance and recently undertook to transcribe the most difficult parts of the Constable's Accounts for Repton from 1651 to 1679. A wonderful piece of work which provides Charles (and thus us) with a magnificent window onto life in Repton at that time. Charles proposes a series of articles using this information – the first is in this newsletter. Many thanks indeed, Sue and Janet.

### Membership matters:

**Tuesday September 19th:** Richard Finch is going to talk to us about the last 250 years of history of St Wystan's Church. **7.00pm in St Wystans church.**

**Tuesday November 21st:** A short talk by Andy on Viking Repton. URC at 7.00pm  
And lastly, perhaps, a Christmas social in December.

### After 184 years!!



Presumably a temporary solution.

### Talk on Anchor Church aggregate excavation

Attended by over 90 in the audience, this was an excellent talk by the York Archaeological Trust's archaeologists Carina Sommerfield-Hill, Kristina Krawiec and Laura Parker. They are keeping an eye on the gravel extraction



opposite Anchor Church. Clearly they cannot offer the same minute searching that happens on conventional digs and so small objects will usually be missed. However they can get a very good idea of things on a larger scale. Here an intriguing line of posts emerged which were, unusually, square ended and carried tool marks – some with edge damage being recognisable on several posts. Unfortunately the detail of the surface vanishes very quickly once uncovered. The posts were tested by dendrochronology and are from the iron age and several were identified as having come from the same tree. They came from a 200 year period but it is not clear yet if this was a running repair process or if the line was being extended. They align with a Bronze Aged barrow towards the north and with the bluff now containing the Anchor Church cave at the other end. The archaeologists believed that a fault in that cliff offering shelter would have existed then. They are not part of a defensive line - no evidence of banking and too far apart to form a barrier. Could be a territorial boundary or, more likely, something symbolic or as way-marking across the river valley.

Also found was an Auroch's skull dating from the early Bronze Age. A type of wild cattle with huge horns that stood nearly 6ft tall and roamed and grazed in small herds but were extinct in Britain by the late Bronze Age. It was predated by two antler picks - one from the Mesolithic period (6,000 - 10,000 years ago) and the other from the Neolithic (5,000 - 6,000 years ago). Pieces of pots from a number of periods Roman times were also found. There is much more come from further research and excavations and we look forward to more talks in due course.

## Visitors

The church and churchyard continue to have lots of visitors and, from time to time, we are asked to provide tours and talks. This summer we have talked to a Scout Troop and a Beaver Scout Colony, the Derbyshire Archaeological Society, Baslow History Group, Ashbourne U3A, Macclesfield Historical Society, two ladies and another couple. There is one more booked for November. It would be very good to be able to share delivering these talks with others - any volunteers? (please).

## In our Churchyard lies...

The grave of Charles Watkins.

His grave stone impressed someone mowing the churchyard and so we investigated further. He died in 1809 aged 62, which would make his date of birth about 1747. He was a surgeon and apothecary in the village for over 40 years. According to the memorial he was very well thought of locally: *"He dispensed with a liberal hand his advice and his medicines gratuitously to the indigent poor - who feel, in his death, a loss irreparable. He lived admired as a scholar and gentleman, he died generally beloved: by his widow and his children deeply and poignantly regretted."*



We can be fairly sure that he was effectively the doctor for Repton School as there is a note in the school archive regarding his licence from the Bishop. The staff at the school were very often clergymen and licensed by the Bishop to practice there. This applied to the surgeon too. In fact his licence could not be traced, but by that time this was not uncommon. To help confirm this role, Charles is noted in headmaster William Prior's will of 1773.

It is difficult to trace him in the records but where we can find him, he is accorded the title of *Mr Charles Watkins* - pretty unique. There are two published family trees for him. They both have his birth as 1745 in Coleshill and his first child in 1762 when he was just 17 which seems a little early for a professional man - though exactly how surgeons and apothecaries were trained is uncertain. It gives his wife as Mary (one tree says Mary Price and another Mary Walker) and one lists 8 children and the other 10 - but the names of several of them are different. Given the differences between the trees, there is some doubt about their accuracy. Published family trees are notorious for their errors. It is very easy to follow the wrong family or mix them up.

However our research does support the Coleshill origins for the family and his father John, was an apothecary. So he may have been trained by him which might allow for an early marriage and a son by age 17.

It is likely the family moved to Repton about 1767/8 (perhaps to support the school) as there is a 1768 newspaper noting that Mr Watkins, surgeon and apothecary, is now settled in Repton and open for business. There is a newspaper reference from 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1769 that a house is to let currently in the occupation of Mr Wodkin, (Watkins?) surgeon. We don't yet know where the family settled in the village. This all fits well as in 1772, John (possibly their 5<sup>th</sup> child) appears to be the first child to be born here – baptised on 21<sup>st</sup> February in St Wystans. There were 3 (or 5) more born here after that but, tragically, according to the grave stone, two pre-deceased him as young adults in their 20s as a result of consumption (TB). Our research show they were both buried in Repton. As a well-respected professional, Charles was well thought of and was a witness to a will (for Richard Mousley) in 1796 and another in 1799.

His daughter Jane died a spinster and is buried here, but daughters Ann and Elizabeth married and Elizabeth may have moved away. He died in 1809 and was buried in the churchyard but his is the only Watkins grave with a memorial. Although his wife, Mary, outlived him, we have no record of her death and once widowed, she might well have moved away from the village – perhaps to be with a daughter. In the Burdett rental records for 1812 (3 years after her husband's death), there is a rental of a house the Burdetts had purchased from Mary for £300 – a substantial sum for a house at that time. This suggests she sold up and probably moved away.

While his gravestone proposes that he generously treated the poor “*gratuitously*”, the accounts from a number of sources record that he was paid handsomely for looking after the medical needs of at least some of the poor:

+ Burdett rentals often include local charitable expenditures & 1771 includes:

paid Mr Watkins for inoculating [against smallpox - variolation ]16 poor children at Ingleby 8<sup>s</sup> 8<sup>d</sup>

+ Overseers of the Poor:

Dec 26<sup>th</sup> 1788 paid Mr Watkin’s bill for Elizabeth Roberts 8<sup>s</sup> 9<sup>d</sup>

Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1792 paid William Watkins for curing Dick Bull 5<sup>s</sup>

Last payment in 1800

+ Constable’s Accounts:

1790 to Mr Watkin, surgeon, for his attendance at inquest 10<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup>

Last mention Dec 1807

Neither his will nor probate have been found, but he must have died a wealthy man.

With thanks to Charles Proud for his research using his database.

## NMA

A number of us have been involved in a resistivity project in the National Monument Arboretum in Alrewas. Dr Mark Knight (Cultural Heritage Officer for the Transforming the Trent Valley Project) had been asked by Historic England if we could locate a Bronze Age monument. Its presence was known and control was exercised during gravel extraction to protect it. It is a scheduled monument but English Heritage had marked its location in the wrong place on the maps.. Actually its location is fairly clear (but imprecisely located) by a slight mound and crop marks photographed some years ago which had indicated 3 concentric rings. So we were asked to pin it down so it could be correctly marked.

The site was big enough for two sets of kit to be used but there were a number of obstacles from trees to monuments to contend with. In the end we surveyed twenty 20x20m grids over three days and then, having located the centre of the circular ditches, we did a 60m pseudo-section (limit of the equipment) centred on the centre of the circles and a 50m section which overlapped by 20m. As well as the two sections, by averaging the values in the overlap, we could also arrive at a 90 m section.

This section cut one side of the ditches but the opposing side had been damaged at some point. So we are about to carry out another section to pick up both sides. Full report next time.

## Foremark church- Richard Finch’s notes for his talk.

The Friends of Repton Parish Church organised a tour and talk at Anchor Church and we decided to make it our summer visit. Recognising some members would not want to go down to the caves, we planned to make a visit to St Saviours an alternative. Kindly, Richard Finch offered to give a talk while we were there and lent us his notes:

St Saviour’s dates from the early 1660s being consecrated by the Bishop of Lichfield on St Matthew’s Day 21 September 1662. It was built and paid for by Sir Francis Burdett, 2nd baronet 1608-1696, resident at the Hall a short distance away. Although officially a parish church it was effectively the family chapel. Outside you will see the Burdett coat of arms over the east window.



Thinking about the early 1660s, the monarchy was restored in 1660 ending the revolutionary period of Cromwell’s protectorate. St Saviour’s if not the first, was one of the first churches built under the new order. Staunton Harold not far away is the only surviving church built during the Commonwealth period, 1653 by Sir Robert Shirley. It’s a much bigger church but the same Gothic style with perpendicular windows.

St Saviour’s was built to replace two earlier chapels – Foremark probably on this site, and Ingleby a mile or so away. In a letter of February 1662 Henry Archbold the registrar of Lichfield diocese on behalf of the bishop writes to Sir Francis Burdett authorising the demolition of the “ruinous Ingleby chapel and re-use of stones, wood and other materials to other sacred uses”. It’s tempting to suggest that material from Ingleby was used here but given this letter is dated February the church here must have been more or less completed given that it was dedicated in September. It’s more likely that elements of the previous Foremark chapel were used in the new building to the extent that rather than being a new building the present St Saviour’s is a rebuilding or remodelling

of the previous chapel. Outside there's a sundial on the south east corner of the tower dated 1650. The font at the back on the south side is reckoned to be 13<sup>th</sup> century so pre-dates the building. It was given a new cover though that's dated 1662.

Looking around the interior we have box pews, three decker pulpit [with sounding board], screen, and possibly the altar all pretty much as they were in 1662, though a lot of work was done in the 1950s repairing and restoring. The pews have been re-arranged in places – at the front and also in the north west corner at the back where for about 130 years or so there were stairs to a gallery.



The pulpit is the three decker set up – the lessons were read from the lowest level, the prayer book service was read from the middle, and the sermon preached from the top. The altar is a wooden frame with a marble top and it matches the description of the one in place at the dedication in 1662 so is likely to be the same.



The arrangement around the altar reflects a return to the pre-Civil War set up where the sanctuary area was regarded as sacred and needed to be protected. The rails are reckoned to be by Robert Bakewell 1710. They are early work of his as he was born in 1682 so would have been in his late '20s when he made these.

There are four bells in the tower at the west end. One dated 1660 so in place from the beginning. Two dated



1668 so added later and one with no date. They are all by a local bell founder, George Oldfield of Nottingham. They are later work of his as from his other bells we know he was working 1620 – 1678.

What about St Saviour's parish community? The combined population of Foremark and Ingleby for most of the life of the building has been around 200. The 1801 census recorded 201 and 1891 192. The earliest parish register survives and is in the Record Office at Matlock. The first baptism was on 24 Sept 1662 Thomas Clews son of John Clews of Ingleby. In 1663 there were 10 baptisms and 5 burials. We can see the history of the community in the Burdett memorials in the church, floor slabs and wall tablets, and the parishioners' graves outside. The oldest graves are on the south side and more recent on the north side. The churchyard was extended in 1905. Originally the boundary on the north side was roughly where the gravel path running alongside the church is now, so the wall and gateway where you came in were built then, probably a rebuilding of the original wall using the same materials.

Given how much of the interior is original there hasn't been much change over the years. Clearly memorials were added. The east window is Victorian showing Jesus with the four gospel writers, donated by the 7<sup>th</sup> baronet as a tribute to his wife and children 1891. The dedication wording records the "great affection he has invariably received from his dearest wife and darling children."

Also, as already mentioned, there was a gallery across the west end put in 1819. This would either have been to accommodate musicians or simply to increase the seating. The pews seat about 100. It was thought at the time that as the established church a parish church should be able to accommodate the entire parish population. Also you'll see there a skylight at the west end. Was this because the gallery was too dark not getting any light from the windows? The gallery was taken down during the restoration work in the 1950s.



The only other building change to notice is the brick built vestry on the south side added sometime late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Probably when services began to be taken by clergy coming from Melbourne, Ticknall or Repton rather than a man acting as the Burdett's chaplain and simply walking across from the Hall and entering the church by the priest's door on the south side.

Right up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War the church was supported by the Burdett family. If there was any major work needed they would provide the money. There's lots of correspondence in the Burdett archives in the Matlock Record Office, particularly letters to and from Mr Picton the agent who ran the estate in the early 1900s. All this stopped when the Burdetts sold the estate and moved away to their Wiltshire property. By the early 1950s the

church was in a poor state, hardly used with services mostly only in the summer because there was no proper heating or electric lighting.

By the early 1950s the Repton prep school was established in the Hall and fortunately an energetic member of staff Francis Tullo and his wife Betty took the lead in planning the restoration of the church and the fund raising to pay for it. Louis Osman, a London architect, who had worked on the restoration of Staunton Harold church was commissioned to report on what was needed. He came up with a list of work costing at least £3000 (say £60/£70,000 at current prices. In the event more than twice as much was spent over the next 10 years on lighting, heating, plastering the interior walls, taking down the gallery, repairing all the wood work and cleaning the memorials.

There was a lot of energetic fund raising. A summer fete in 1955 was opened by the Duke of Devonshire assisted by John Betjeman. This raised £300, say £6,000 or £7,000 today. You may remember a Radio 4 Sunday morning slot called “The week’s good cause”. John Betjeman did this on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1955 in aid of St Saviour’s.

Notes left by Mr & Mrs Tullo record in 1960 “shortly after Christmas the church was closed for 3 months whilst all the pews and the pulpit were removed, repaired, returned and re-set in position.” By the time of the tercentenary in 1962 restoration work was complete and the church was pretty much as we see it today. Mr and Mrs Tullo left Foremark in 1965 – he went to be Head of Westminster Choir School and died in 2010.

By this time the church was linked with Repton, with two services a month taken by the vicar from there. Congregation made up of people connected with the School and from Ingleby and Milton. Given the isolated situation there have been problems with theft of lead from the roof but otherwise the church is open a quiet place every day.

Whatever the future of the building as a parish church it’s clearly a special place that needs looking after and maintaining.



*There were a number of questions following the talk and an interesting discussion with the ecclesiastical architect who suggested that the roof beams looked very much as though they might have come from the earlier church and re-used here.*

### **Life in Repton as the Civil war ended.**

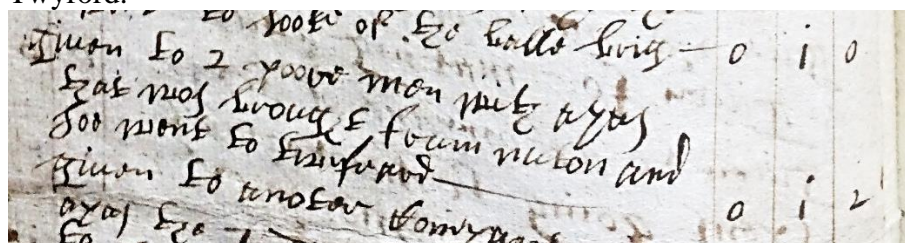
Until the advent of Parish Councils, the affairs of small communities like Repton were managed by the Vestry Meeting. Chaired by the Vicar and usually held in the church vestry, all ratepayers (householders and landowners) were entitled - indeed, expected - to attend and to contribute to the village in one of the roles for a year from time to time. The meeting annually appointed the Overseer of the Poor, the Village Constable and the Surveyor (responsible for road repairs) and others according to need. Minutes were taken by the Parish Clerk who was the only one paid for his services. Charles has provided modern translations to the more difficult texts.

#### **Charles writes:**

Repton is very fortunate and rather unusual in having an extant Constables’ Account Book covering the years 1651 to 1679. It has been in the Repton School archives for the past 100 years and is in excellent condition, if difficult to read and interpret in parts. It has now been expertly transcribed by Janet Spavold & Sue Brown and I will be looking at the various functions of the Repton Constables in what (as the Civil War ended) was a fairly tumultuous period in English history in this newsletter, starting with their role in managing the itinerant poor, such a feature on the roads in the 1650s & 1660s.

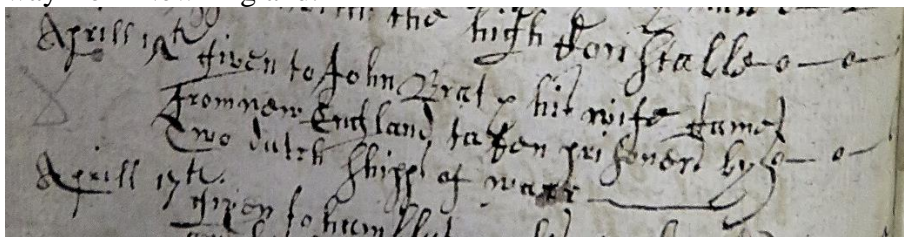
The Repton Overseers of the Poor were responsible for supporting those in need who had the right to settlement in the parish but it was the Constable who was responsible for dealing with the large numbers of itinerant poor travelling through Repton on their way back to their own parish. The numbers were large, several hundred a year in Repton at this time; a legacy of the impact of civil & foreign wars & economic dislocation.

This entry from 1655 provides a typical example of the poor on the road from Newton through Repton to Twyford.



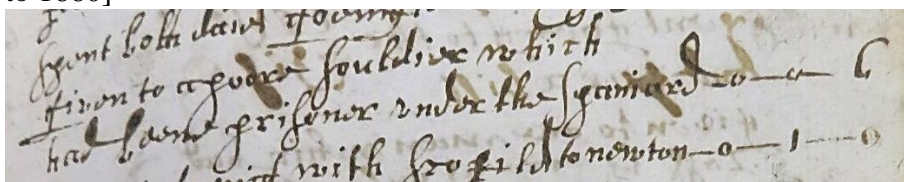
Given to 2 poor men with a pas that was brought from Nuton and so went to Twyford – 1s 2d

The wars against the Spanish & Dutch gave rise to a number of demobbed soldiers, seamen & others passing through Repton. This 1668 entry notes John Brat & his wife having been taken prisoner by the Dutch on their way from New England.



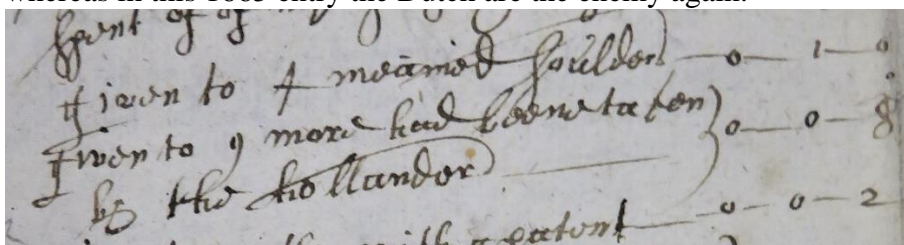
April 19<sup>th</sup> given to John Brat & his wife sum of 1d from New England taken prisoner by two Dutch ship of war

This poor soldier from 1659 'had been prisoner under the Spaniard', [England & Spain were at war from 1654 to 1660]



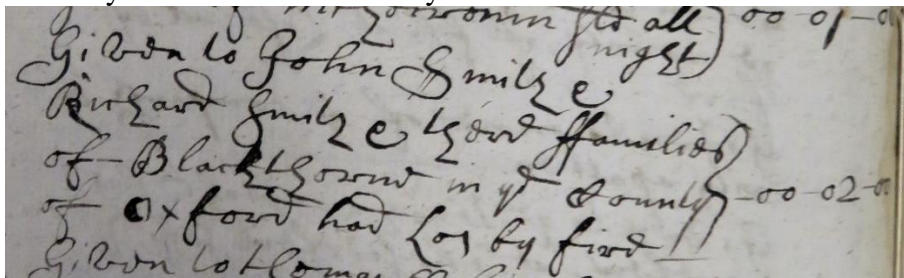
Given to a poor soldier which had been prisoner under the Spaniard - 1s

whereas in this 1665 entry the Dutch are the enemy again.



Given to ye man had been taken by the Hollander - 8d

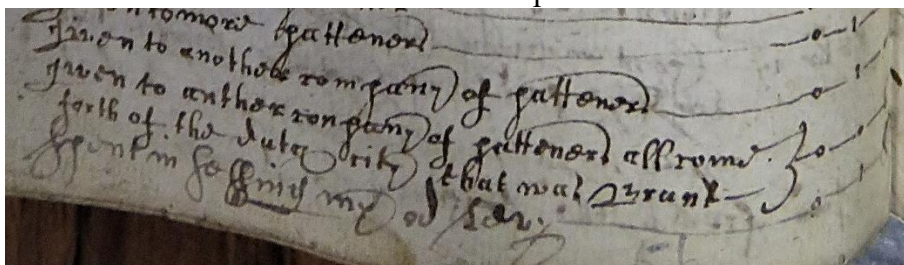
Many of those passing through Repton had sad tales explaining their destitution. There were many who had losses by fire as in this 1674 entry.



Given to John Smily & Richard Smily & their families of Bla??? in ye county of Oxford had los by fire - 2s

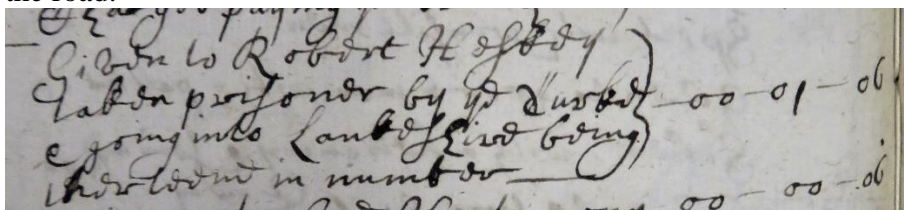
The 'Dutch city that was brunt [burnt]' in this 1668 entry may have been West Terschelling where a thousand homes were destroyed by fire in an English naval raid known as Homes Bonfire.

Patteners were travellers with a 'letter of patent'.



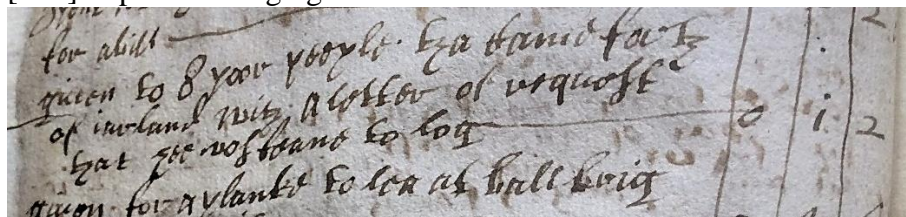
Given to another company of patteners 1s  
Given to another company of patteners 1s  
all come forth of the Dutch city that was brunt.

This 1674 entry is a good example of both an interesting storyline & the large numbers in any one company on the road.



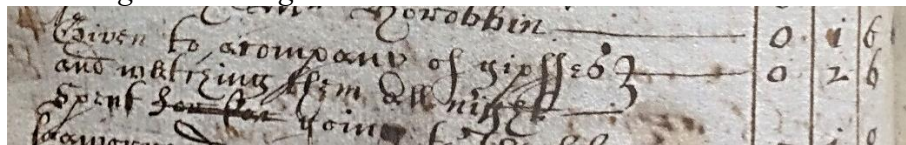
Given to Robert Hesley taken prisoner by ye Dutch & going into ??? and being thirteen in number. - 1s 6d

Many arrived from Ireland where war, religious conflict & economic crisis generated large numbers of homeless migrants. This entry from 1652 records a group 'that came forth from Ireland' that the Constable was 'feane' [fain] to provide lodgings for.



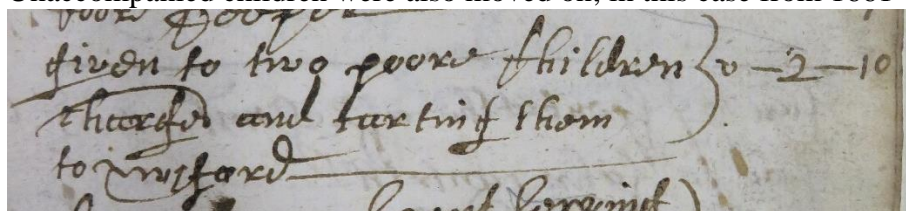
Given to 8 poor people that came forth from Ireland with a letter of request that I was feane to log - 1s 2d

Gypsies were another group on the road that the Constable was keen to move on. In this case 'watching them all night'.



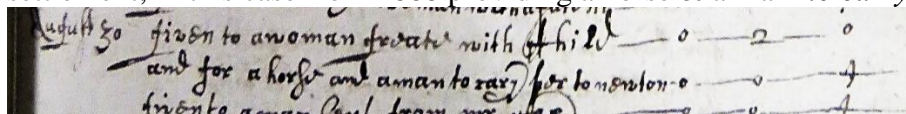
Given to a company of gipsses and watching them all night - 2s 6d

Unaccompanied children were also moved on; in this case from 1661 'carting them to Twyford'.



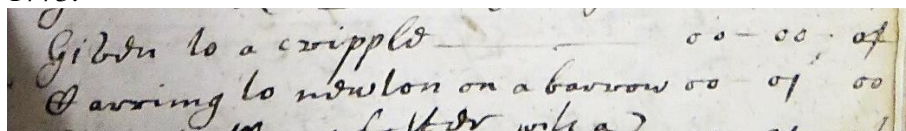
Given to two poor children and carting them to Twyford

Constables were particularly keen to remove pregnant women to prevent any child born in Repton from gaining settlement; in this case from 1668 providing a horse & a man 'to carry her to Newton'.



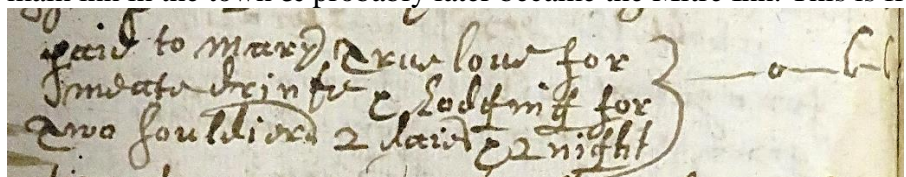
August 30 Given to a woman great with child - 2s and for a horse and a man to carry her to newton - 4d

Some travellers required help to move & the Constable paid. Again to Newton but this time 'on a barrow' in 1773.



Given to a cripple - 4d  
Carrying to Newton on a barrow - 1s

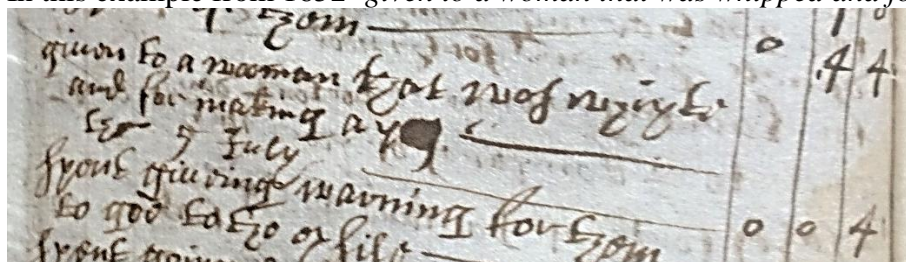
Many of the travellers were lodged on the Constable's expenses, often at Truelove's which was certainly the main inn in the town & probably later became the Mitre Inn. This is from 1659.



Paid to Mary Truelove for food and drink & lodging for two souldiers 2 days & 2 night - 6s 6d

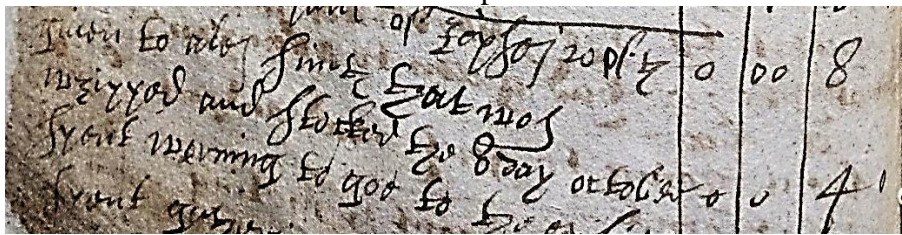
Those arriving without a pass could be treated as criminals & were liable to be whipped or sent to the local House of Correction in Derby. However the Constable still needed to move them out of Repton so a local JP would be asked provide a pass to their place of settlement.

In this example from 1652 'given to a woman that was whipped and for making a pass'.



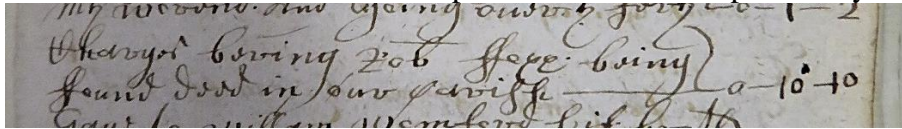
Given to a woman who was whipped and for making a pass the 9<sup>th</sup> July - 4d.

And in this case Alice Smith ended up in the stocks as well.



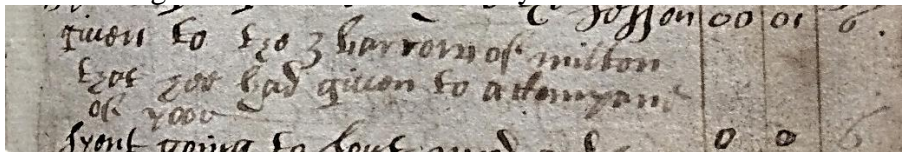
Given to Alice Smith that was whipped and stocked the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Oct – 4d

Travellers who died en-route in Repton were also the responsibility of the Constable as in this case from 1677.



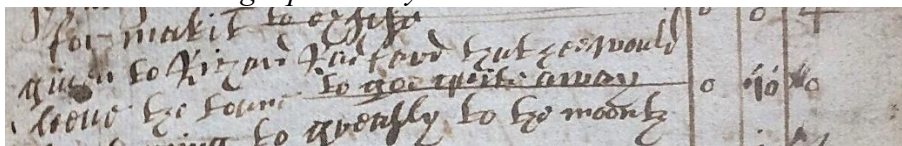
Charges for burying Robert Foxe being found dead in our parish - 10s 10d

Travellers arrived in Milton were dealt with by the Constable's deputy there called the Headborough, Thirdborough or as recorded in this entry from 1652 '3 barrow'.



Given to the 3 barrow of Milton that he had given to a company of poor – 6d

I think this last entry from 1657 sums up the general approach quite well. Richard Radford was offered 10s to 'leave the town to go quite away'.



Might work better than an ASBO?

### Programmes of talks from other organisations.

Most make a small entry charge.

#### Chellaston History group:

7.30pm St Peter's Church Hall, Chellaston - [chellastonhistorygroup@gmail.com](mailto:chellastonhistorygroup@gmail.com)

31<sup>st</sup> October: Objects of curiosity – Mick Appleby

28<sup>th</sup> November: Kinder Transport – Julie Whitehouse

30<sup>th</sup> January; Crich Tramway Museum

#### Etwall and Burnaston Historical Society: Methodist Chapel Schoolroom 7.30pm. 01283 730287

17<sup>th</sup> October: Pestilence, intrigue and murder – Ian Morgan

21<sup>st</sup> November: The overseers of the poor and their work – John Barnett

#### Ticknall Preservation and Historical Society. [celia.sanger@btinternet.com](mailto:celia.sanger@btinternet.com) Tuesdays at 2.00pm

26<sup>th</sup> September: Jed Jaggard – re-enactor – Arctic Explorers - A member of "Past Presents" Jed will give us a talk on the Heroic Age of Arctic Exploration.

31<sup>st</sup> October: Dr Mark Knight - Transforming the Trent Valley - Cultural Heritage along the Rivers Trent, Tame and Dove

28<sup>th</sup> November: Jo Golby – Costumed Talk - Christmas True Victorian Style

In this talk we discover just how people of all classes in England used to celebrate Christmas. Before Singing Santas, outdoor lights and Cellotape. Back in time when all the trees were real and candles the main form of lighting, we look at the origins of well known Seasonal Customs, Food, Cards and Gifts.

30<sup>th</sup> January: Kevin Reynolds - Love and War - how we created our garden birds. A look back at how and why our relationship with the birds in our garden has changed over the last 150 years. When did we start to feed the birds, put up bird boxes and decide that some species were "garden birds"?

27<sup>th</sup> February: David Bell - Murder Cases in Leicestershire - from Earl Ferrers to the first ever use of DNA



26<sup>th</sup> March: Ashley Franklin - My Derbyshire Journey - Sir John Betjeman once said that 'Derbyshire has every kind of scenery except the sea.' In this revealing presentation, Ashley will take you on a visual journey across our rich, diverse and beautiful county, showing the many photos he has taken of towns and villages over 15 years of writing for *Derbyshire Life* magazine, with a special focus on his documenting of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

30 April: Dot Morson - Historical view of the Outer Hebrides with references to herring fishing, Iron Age Brochs and of course Callanish Standing Stones, the wreck of SS Politician and Flora MacDonald.

28 May: Peter Liddle - Burying the Dead A look at methods of burying the dead from the Egyptians to the present day and what this has taught archaeologists.

Hilton and Marston History Group. Hilton House Hotel 7.30pm. [hiltonhistory@gmail.com](mailto:hiltonhistory@gmail.com)

5<sup>th</sup> October: History of Sinai House, Burton – Kate Murphy

2<sup>nd</sup> November: A stretcher bearer in WW1 – William Coltman VC. DCM & bar, MM & bar – Tim Coltman

7<sup>th</sup> December: Paul Newsham Christmas Quiz part 2.

Aston on Trent History Group. Aston on Trent Memorial Hall [astonontrenthistory@gmail.com](mailto:astonontrenthistory@gmail.com)

24<sup>th</sup> October: Time gentlemen please – Steve Aynsley

28<sup>th</sup> November: The history of bank notes – Ian McKay

Melbourne Historical Research group – Civic Society talks. Wesley Hall, Potter St. 7.30

30<sup>th</sup> October: Breedon Priory – Rachel Askew

27<sup>th</sup> November: Demolished Melbourne – Philip Heath – talk and social.

Philip Heath is giving another talk in December but we don't have details yet.

Willington have no meetings till October -- awaiting information.

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  
[reptonvillagehistorygroup@gmail.com](mailto:reptonvillagehistorygroup@gmail.com) or visit our website:  
<https://reptonvillage.org.uk/repton-village-history-group/>