



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Summer 2025

[Repton Village History Group – reptonvillage.org.uk](http://reptonvillage.org.uk)

Members updates

We have had a bit of a shuffle round with the committee and now welcome Russell Fisher to the team. The current structure is Tim Norman as chairman with Aimee Brooks as vice chairwoman, John Kidd continues with his many duties including members secretary, treasure and speaker finder. David Dickson and Ivor Sanders continue with their great work on the committee. We are still looking for new committee members to keep the continuity going. Russell has always looked after our wealth of archive material. People in the background although not on the committee support us greatly with information, stories and knowledge, so thank you to Andy Austin and Charles Proud and all those members who continue to share their memories and expertise. Also a big thank you to Ewan Thompson who support us with our web site.

The Gallery Display

At Repton Gallery (near the cross) hosted a one month display of photographs from yesteryear across January and February along with a display of Repton Schools interesting items.

We were a little unsure of how it would go therefore restricted the open days to two. How wrong were we, the interest was great and on the open days we had many people.

The exhibition contained many photographs and maps relating to Repton and the surrounding villages. As people came in it was clear that the interest levels were high.

Comments like 'I used to live there', 'oh I remember that sweet shop' and 'oh that's my grandad in that photo'. Some people were actually meeting others after a long time and reacquainting old times.

There are many hundreds of photos in the archives, too many to display but we welcomed requests and we said we would try our best to help.

There was also a display of literature and booklets that could be purchased from the RVHG.

We had a comments book and the comments were lovely and made our job feel worthwhile.

Now we know there is an interest we can plan possibly for a similar occasion.

We have to thank Ivor Sanders and Ian Whitfield (Director of Art) for thinking of the idea and also Russell Fisher and Tim Norman for setting up and hosting the open days.

We would also like to thank Paul Stevens for his archive material from the school and Jeremy Bournon for loan of some of his display boards.



The Staffordshire Hoard

Notes from Shelagh Wain

On Wednesday, 4 June, St. Wilfrid's Church, Barrow-on-Trent hosted a talk by Dr. Gareth Williams, a curator at the British Museum, who has been closely involved with the conservation of the finds.

Dr. Williams told us that the find was made in 2009 by a metal detectorist, Terry Herbert, who did the right thing and contacted the authorities so that the hoard could be professionally excavated. Everyone involved then had to keep the secret until the archaeologists were sure that the excavation was complete. Even today, the exact site has not been revealed, but it is near the junction of two ancient route ways, now the A5 and A38.

The sheer quantity of new material made this one of the most important finds ever made from the Anglo-Saxon period, and it has forced a rethink of many previous assumptions, not least about the wealth available in Mercia.

The hoard consists of over 4,000 pieces of gold and silver, all from military equipment. Many of the items are fragments of larger pieces, and have been painstakingly put back with each other. It is now known that there are pieces from over seventy swords, a 'seax', the Anglo-Saxon short blade, as well as decorative extras for belts, sword-hangers and shields, and a single decorative helmet. The largest item type by numbers is the top of a sword hilt. The helmet had the largest number of separate pieces, mainly in the decorative panels which covered it. Most items are worked with great skill, including metal wire-work and garnet inlay. Dr. Williams showed us one sword hilt which showed signs of wear, but from rubbing against the hand or clothing when parading, rather than in battle. The equipment seems to be ceremonial, a display of wealth and power. There are no undamaged artifacts: the destruction was done quite deliberately prior to the burial of the hoard.

For comparison, Dr. Williams showed us complete items from the same approximate period = the Sutton Hoo ship burial and the Taplow burial. The hoard has comparable motifs of birds, animals and dragons – all fierce 'warlike' creatures. The reconstruction of the helmet showed a fine feathered crest with a boar as a protective nose piece – not unlike the Benty Grange Helmet, found in the Peak District.

There is also a large cross with garnet inlays, which may have been attached to a pole for processional use, as well as a finely-worked pectoral cross. The last notable item is a strip of metal with an inscription from the Old Testament: 'Arise up O Lord and may thy enemies be torn apart'. It is not certain what this piece of metal came from, though it could be a book cover. Dr. Williams pointed out that monks and bishops did sometimes take part in battles in this period.

It is not possible to state with precision where the gold came from, because gold, often from various different sources, was melted down and re-used, but most is likely to be from coins of the Eastern Roman Empire, which were in wide circulation in the sixth century. The amber derives from India, which shows the wide scope of trade routes at the time.

Using stylistic analysis of the art style and the materials used, Dr. Williams suggested that the hoard dates from the mid to late sixth century, probably earlier rather than later in that time frame.

We then came to the question of putting the hoard in its historical context. In this regard, Dr. Williams pointed out what was not part of its contents. There is nothing relating to women, nor any personal jewellery for men. There are no coins, and no items of plate or expensive household goods. In this regard it differs from high-status burials, hoards of wealth or even goldsmith's stock. It appears to be something taken from a defeated enemy. The sheer scale of the find suggests an association with Penda of Mercia, the most famous king of the era. It has been suggested that it is tribute exacted from Oswy of Northumbria; however, Dr. Williams pointed out the occasion when that was given was the campaign in which Penda died, and so the treasure would not be brought back to Mercia.

Following Penda's death, there was a struggle for power in the Midland region, and one notable event was the Battle of the Trent, which took place somewhere on or near the river, probably in Lincolnshire in 679. King Aethelred of Mercia (whose possible portrait can be seen in the replica stone carving in Repton church porch) defeated the King Ecgfrith of Northumbria. This victory marked the end of Northumbrian power south of the Humber and laid the foundation for Mercian dominance on the eighth century. Dr. Williams suggested that the deliberate damage to the items in the hoard was undertaken as a symbolic destruction of enemy power. The hoard was then buried near the Mercian capital of Lichfield so that it could never be taken back.

All this must remain speculation; Dr. Williams made it clear that we cannot know for sure. It was an excellent talk which the audience felt privileged to hear.

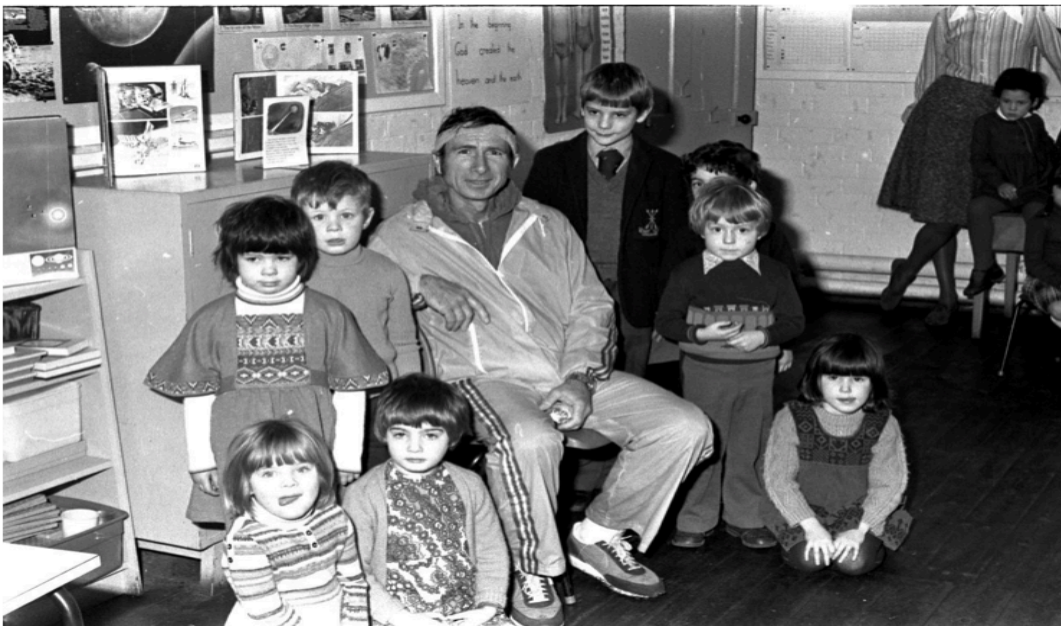
Thank you Shelagh for your interpretation and notes of the talk, which I agree was great but still with many unanswered questions.

Keep an eye of activities at Barrow on Trent Church (St Wilfrid's) stwilfridsbarrow.org as they have some great heritage activities and talks.

James Irwin visits Newton Solney School 1980 (Man of the Moon)



James Irwin and John Holdcroft at Newton Solney Infant School in January 1980 (Image: Burton Mail Archives)



James Irwin and some of the children at Newton Solney Infant School in 1980 (Image: Burton Mail Archives)

James Irwin (famous astronaut) visiting Newton Solney School in January 1980.

Here we can see James talking to John Holdcroft who is still farming in the village. After talking to John he said they were all asked to think of a question for James. John asked if he had ever driven the moon buggy, seems as if James may have not set foot first on the moon but he was the first to drive on the moon. James appearance looks like he was in some trendy shell suit, turns out he had ran from Repton or even Derby, thus the look. John still cherishes his photo and not many people can say they have met someone who's been on the moon.

James was born in 1930 and died in 1991. He suffered in later life with illness. After an heart attack following a bicycle ride he did not survive the resuscitation.

Glorious Bricks

It's only a brick darling. I enjoy walking and every now and then I may stumble on a brick from ditches, skips and even the River Trent. From my wife's view she is not too impressed but I cannot understand why? The

there is opportunity of producing bricks. Due to their inherent weight and bulkiness it's no wonder why we try and locally produce and move them around. Newton Solney had their small cottage industry of brickmaking in the fields behind the current Brickmakers Arms pub. It started out as the Newton Brick then sold off to the Malbrow family some of which stem from farmers in and around Repton and Newton Solney. These are some of the bricks I have and are currently in my man shed/garage as for some reason my wife will not let me display them in the living room??

The bricks/tiles below are:

Central tile is from Newton Solney which is most probably a kiln tile used in the brewing industry. It was found in my garden along with about 3 others in broken bits.

1 o'clock position below a Grey heavy brick, King George V 1910 commemorative type.

3 o'clock Grey Diamond Jubilee Victoria brick 1837-1897 commemorative type.

5 o'clock Orange brick, Whitwick Colery Co Ltd Brickworks, Coalville.

6 o'clock Bretby Brick Co, Newhall(Found in the Trent)

7 o'clock Newton Brick

9 o'clock Leeds Co Fireclay Ltd

11 o'clock Oakwell Brick, Ilkeston

If you ever look on the web pages you will find many hundreds of bricks in alphabetical order with very interesting reading. Locally there are bricks on display at Derby museum and a great collection at Ashby de la Zouch museum on North Street.



Newton Solney history day

This is an early advert in anticipation of an event being organised by myself under the Repton History group team.

If you have any photos, maps or other items of local industries, farming, brewing, brick making, war times, basically anything goes that you can loan for the day please let me know.

The current plan is to have a gazebo type tent within St Mary's Church ground displaying all the items and photos I can muster. If there are enough people I may try a couple of tours around the graveyard pointing out some of the graves of interest. If this is successful I may do a later one of the inside of the church and its history.

I am planning Sunday, 3 August between 1pm and 4.30pm. This is a free event however there will be a small charge for teas/cakes purchased in the church. The takings will go to the church for improvements. Parking will be available in the School car park, Church lane. Anyone who wishes to make and donate a cake would be welcome. Contact Tim Norman 07792 459484 or TJNorman4@yahoo.co.uk



Foremarke Preparatory School 85th Anniversary update

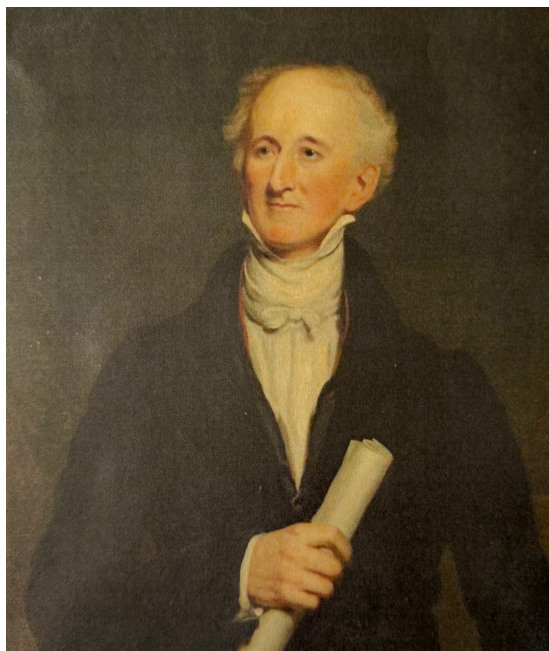
Repton village history group was approached by Foremarke school history department to see if we could help them do something similar to the Repton gallery display to celebrate their 85th anniversary as a school this September.

We agreed and sent out a request for helpers, we had a few and with Tom Markham the history teacher we have made a plan, implemented some ideas, provided him with a power-point presentation and ideas for photo displays. One of the biggest issues they had was the many portraits of the Burdett family. Some were labeled with a simple name and date with no real context and some were missing names altogether. Russell Fisher has done some absolute sterling work in writing up short biographies of each person, now the school can display and understand the people they have on display.

Here is an example below of just one person. The aim is for the school to display these portraits in September 2025 for their students and parents that will be celebrating with them. We had the chance to have a tour around the school and some of its hidden areas. We rummaged through some old photographs and memorabilia not on the display. The hope is to now for the school to display some of these items better.

I will give a more comprehensive summary after the celebrations in the winter newsletter.

SIR FRANCIS BURDETT, born in 1770, was a brave and passionate politician in England. He believed in freedom and fairness for everyone. He fought for political reforms and even went to jail for speaking out against the government. In 1810, he was locked up in the Tower of London because of a speech he made about the House of Commons! He also supported the Catholic Emancipation Act, which gave more rights to Catholics. Later, he joined the Conservative Party. He passed away in 1844, but his daughter, Angela Burdett-Coutts, became famous for her charitable work.



As this Newsletter goes out to all members please feel free to contribute articles for others to view, just send to myself or the history group email and we can review for insertion.

Tjnorman4@yahoo.co.uk or reptonvillagehistorygroup@outlook.com

Please keep an eye out in the villages news booklet and local posters for regular speakers we have, free for members and £3 for guests.

So far this year we have had speakers on the subjects of:

Old local parks and gardens - Philip Heath
Stoneywell House National Trust – Michael Elliott
It must be true because it official - Angela Nightingale
Almshouses past and present - Robert Mee

The next speaker will be on the 16 September 2025 at 19.30hrs, subject to be decided.

Many thanks to Ewan Thompson for refreshing the webpages and please feel free to view all previous newsletters for your bedtime reading.