



# Repton Village History Group Newsletter

## Autumn 2019 (23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019)



For one reason or another it's been a quiet summer with less activity than expected. A lot of folk disappeared on holiday and the weather certainly didn't help with rain waterlogging the fields more than once. This plus an unresolved question over the resistivity equipment meant that some planned geophysics wasn't done.

### The ongoing programme:

Our next meeting will be on September the 17<sup>th</sup> in the United Reformed Church Schoolroom and may include (finally) a talk on Rev William Bagshaw Stevens the Headmaster of Repton School from 1779 – 1800. We will bring another box from the archive and we need to discuss and plan how we will tackle the Test Pit survey next year plus anything else folk wish to talk about.

Future dates: November 19<sup>th</sup>, December 17<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Buffet), January 21<sup>st</sup>, March 17<sup>th</sup>, May 19<sup>th</sup> (AGM), July 21<sup>st</sup>

Meetings this year will be in the URC School room. We have been offered a slot in the Village Hall in the small meeting room for next year, but there will be a brass band practice in the main hall – we will go and sound it out. The Village Hall is slightly cheaper and there is assured parking.

### Pepel:

Does anyone remember Pepel the monkey? He was the companion of Lawrence Gray who was the chef for the Priory School House on High Street until the mid-1970s. He lived in the Hall Cottage and Pepel was more than just a pet to him and the subject of three books that Lawrence wrote about him. It seems that Pepel spent much time in the cottage but Russell remembers that he did venture out on a lead. Lawrence's nephew visited Repton to find places where their family had lived and to try to find out more about Lawrence and Pepel. Enquiries are still in progress.

Two of the books were *Pepel and People* (published in 1970) and *Simian Horizons* (1983). There was a third planned. Lawrence had been chief steward on a British merchant navy oil tanker and spent one evening in Pepel - a port in Sierra Leone in West Africa. In order to save its life, he exchanged a packet of cigarettes for a baby female monkey which he named Pepel. They formed a strong bond, were together for many years and shared many escapades all over the world. At one point however, Pepel's temperament changed and she had to have brain surgery, but did recover. If anyone has memories of Pepel or knows where Lawrence moved to or what became of the monkey, please do let us know and we will pass on any information.

### A Fives Cup:

Fives is a game that developed in many schools where pupils batted a ball around the corners of a building – like squash but a gloved hand instead of rackets. One version was formalised at Eton and played in many public schools including Repton.

We recently had an email from Tracy James in Australia who had found a Repton School Fives trophy from 1918 in an Op Shop (like a charity shop). We explained what Fives is and its origins and a bit of research identified three boys who played Fives for the school in 1918. However we found no Australian connection for them. Paul Stevens (School Archivist and librarian) looked in the *Reptonian* (magazine) and



Photos: Tracy James

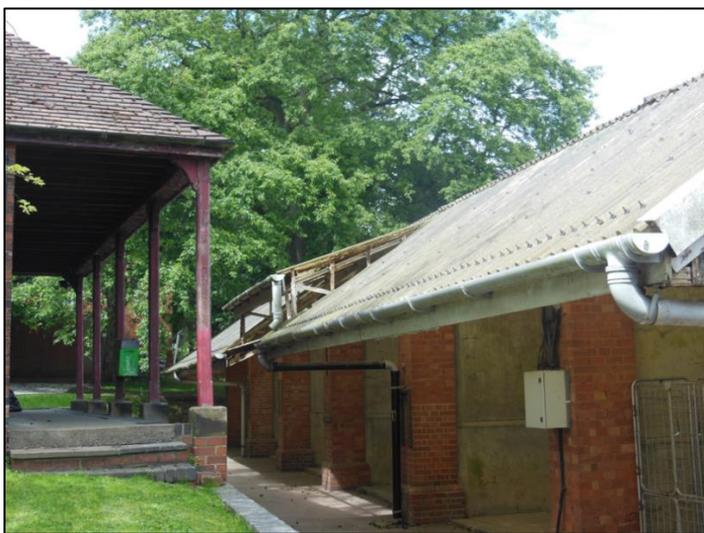
found who had won the Senior Fives knockout competition that year. It is often a pair's game and the winners were Kenneth Dewey and Douglas Briault. Douglas moved to Australia in 1946 and so it is assumed that the cup was his. Born in 1901, Douglas was the son of a dental surgeon in London and one of four children. The family were very

comfortably off and Douglas was at Repton School from 1915 to 1919 and good at sport - playing for the school football and cricket teams and winning the Senior Fives competition in 1918. He seems to have been less able academically and did not go onto university. Exactly what he did after school is unknown but he probably had a private income and married in 1925 - the first of 3 marriages in England – and had two sons 16 years apart. Motor Sports were his thing and around 1935 and 36 he raced frequently at Donnington and at Brooklands with some success and had a supercharged MG Midget. He joined the Royal Navy Reserve Motor Unit during the war and rose to the rank of Commander. In 1946 he moved to Australia and soon married his 4<sup>th</sup> wife in Melbourne where he described himself as a farmer.

They retired to Surfer’s Paradise, a wealthy waterside residential area on the Gold coast of Queensland. Tracy’s local research revealed that he owned Grumpy’s – the best seafood restaurant in the area. Apparently it was his nickname. He also raced cars (in his retirement!) at the local track. He died aged 75 in 1976. His wife was 20 years his junior and died in 2011 and it is likely that the cup ended up in the Op Shop when her affairs were sorted out. More information may yet emerge.



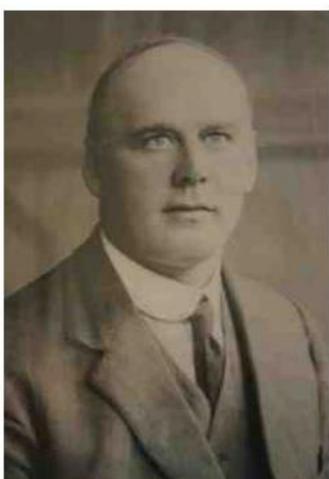
Their memorial in Allambe Memorial Park.



Repton’s old Fives Courts – with John W shown for scale. (Photo Gillian Hartley)

**Goodalls:**

We were approached by a lady who’s father was David Goodall and who died when she was just 23 and he 61. As a result she knew little about her forbears but has traced the direct line back to John Goodall who lived from 1781 to 1863 and farmed Foremark Hall Farm. We were able to provide some information from earlier research including photographs of family members, the garage and Ridgeway Farm. We mentioned the quest to Sue Goodwin who arranged for them to meet relatives of the Goodalls during their visit to Repton in early September. They had seen our



John Goodall

2014 Spring Newsletter and the article on a more recent John Goodall who was a refrigeration engineer sent to Chile by his firm. The first visit we have traced was in 1913 and he travelled 2<sup>nd</sup> class. Clearly did a good job because all subsequent voyages were 1<sup>st</sup> class! He gave his address as Ridgeway Farm, Repton and described himself as an engineer. He was later contracted to build and run a meat freezing facility in the town of Rio Grande in Argentina for the Menendez family. By 1926 he was a manager of Jose Menendez’s huge sheep farm and in 1933 married Clarita Bridges (known as Clara). She had been born on the Falkland Islands in 1902 but the family moved to Tierra del Fuego when she was 1. She was the granddaughter of the first white settler - Thomas Bridges an Anglican missionary. By 1933 John had become British Vice Consul.

John is world famous for introducing the sea trout that Tierra del Fuego is renowned for and there is a memorial to him in a club house out there. On a visit to the UK he organised the supply of 100,000 brown trout eggs and reared them and released them in 1935 into the rivers from which they reached the sea and thrived on the nutrient rich waters - becoming enormous fish. Ironically, these fish are genetically pure Thames brown trout and there is the idea of restocking the near extinct population in the modern Thames from their eggs.

### **Repton Churchyard trail:**

Jane has patiently reworked this publication quite significantly because we decided to include a very recent memorial to Alan Kitching in place of a memorial to a chorister which should really be included in a trail for the inside of the church one day. Alan wrote Antics, the first ever digital animation software and an early digital synthesiser (probably a first too). Alan's parents, Betty and Colin, were key founder members of the History Group.

The trail is now in print. An initial 50 copies were printed to check the suitability of the weight of the paper, our ability to fold them ourselves, and to have some available for the Literary Festival in October.



Henry Cross - 1852.

Although space limitations prevented inclusion, Jane and her husband measured the girth of all the Yew Trees in the Churchyard. There are crude rules of thumb that enable the tree's age to be estimated from this. They concluded that the oldest was the tree by the Quiet Garden and this is between 250 and 350 years old. The ones nearer the vicarage are about 200 years old.

Interestingly there is a picture of St Wystan's from the south west and dated to 1852 that shows none of them - even though, by the most conservative age estimate, they must have existed by that time.

One of the graves on the trail is the "shoe outline" grave which is very much protected by one of the trees. But it is so worn as to have no trace of inscriptions and so is likely to have stood for a century or so before the tree sheltered it.

### **Hello Heritage**

As this newsletter comes out, we will be about to take down the display we put up in St Wystan's Church as part of their contribution to the Hello Heritage fortnight organised by NW Leicestershire and South Derbyshire district councils. We planned to re-use the material from the 2014 Staffordshire Hoard display, but we now know more than then and ended up rewriting most of it. It essentially explains Repton's history from its earliest Neolithic days with an emphasis on the church and its survival through 1400 years to an active church community today.



### **Church crawl**

Thanks to Sheila's suggestion and John K's persistent organisation we had an excellent and much appreciated visit to three churches on the north side of the River Trent – Twyford, Barrow and Swarkestone.

One of the church wardens and another knowledgeable lady met us at Twyford and showed us many interesting aspects. There are "Maltese" crosses from its days with the Knights Templar, remnants of old wall paintings, a Norman chancel arch and tower base. Dating from the 1200s, a number of early carved stones in the walls hint at earlier origins. Although part of the exterior of the church is brick, it is in fact a skin applied over the original stonework. There are 3 bells which are chimed for each service by one man – a foot ringing the treble bell and one hand on each of the second and tenor. An attempt by Andy revealed that coordination requires some serious practise.

Barrow is large and light due to large windows and little coloured glass. Again it dates from the 1200s but much adjusted internally in Victorian times. It was a Church given over to the Knights Templar for many years and contains a small crypt and probably the body of its builder, who is likely to be the subject of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Alabaster figure in a low arched recess in the south aisle. There were a number of unusual openings which were probably squints, and it is believed that one is the result of modifications to the wall of an Anchorite's cell where a nun would have been walled up for life. Nearly £1m has been raised in order to make the church a community space as well as a place of worship.

Swarkestone, dates to the 1200s but has an Anglo-Saxon cross in the church yard which hints at earlier origins. It was heavily restored and extended by the Victorians. Untouched however, is the tower and the chapel containing well preserved monuments to Sir Richard and Sir John Harpur. It was a daughter chapel of the Knights of St John at Barrow until 1219. The 3 bells here have been converted into a manual carillon.

**Walter Burdett stone**

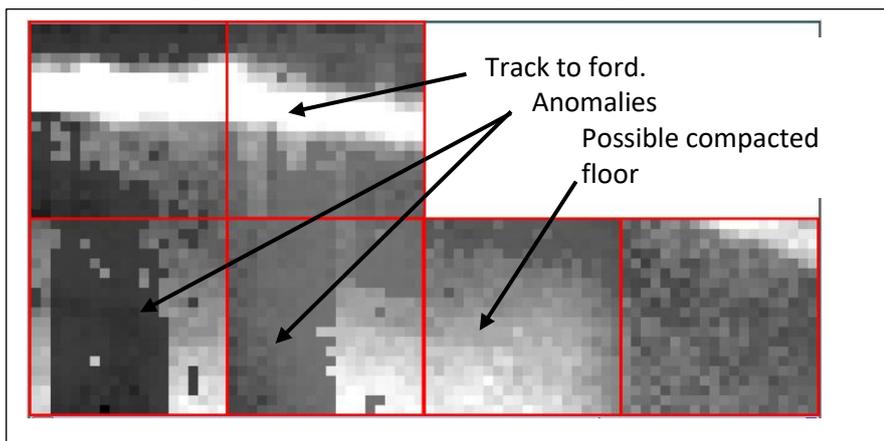


Russel is our expert on Knowle Hill and found a reference to this stone having appeared in St Wystan's Churchyard. A search located it and it reads 1715 / S' Walter Burdett / Baronet. It is not a grave stone - Walter didn't die till 1732. It is assumed that when Walter's brother, Robert (3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet), and his only son, both died in January 1715, he expected to inherit the title and become the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet and he must have had a stone carved to mount on a wall somewhere at Knowle. Unfortunately for Walter, Robert's son's wife was already pregnant and in May gave birth to a son (also Robert) who became the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet instead. How the stone came to be in our churchyard remains a

mystery. We are investigating the possibility of it being mounted on a wall at Knowle which is where it was probably intended to go in the first place.

**Warehouse Field.**

Adam, Andy and Russell carried out a resistivity survey on a field named on the 1762 map where it appears to contain a building close to an old channel of the river which is still a lake in wet periods. We surveyed 6 grids, each 20mx20m (2,400 measurements) and detected what is very likely to be the lane to the ford from Brook End. There was also a higher resistance area that might just have been a compressed soil floor of a building. However we did have some curious measurements while setting up for the later grids and got some suspicious results when plotting the data. In the plots below there are sudden changes in the colour with very straight edges and one of them



coincides exactly with the edge of a grid. This might be coincidence, but is suspiciously like some false readings.

Initial tests of the equipment revealed no issues but we are planning more testing later in September. Heavy rain saturated these low lying riverside fields on a couple of occasions and we could not geophys until they returned to normal.

**Graffiti re-survey**

We did meet to make a start on this and introduce folk to the techniques and examples. More graffiti were spotted this time and we were only working around the tower area. It became clear that we need a detailed map that included every surface so that people can photograph the marks and record where they are. That way anyone can have ago in a spare moment or two and we will gradually build up a full record. At one stage we had planned to use John K's scaffolding tower, but nothing is going to be out of reach of a pair of steps.

It is useful to have a camera mounted on a tripod and to take several photographs of the graffiti with the light coming in different directions. The images can then be overlaid and digitally traced to give a clear record to go with a photograph, location details and description.

**Milton Saw Mill:**

The application by agents on behalf of the Church Commissioners to build 3 big houses on this site was withdrawn following objections from the Parish Council, the History Group and many individuals. However, it will undoubtedly come back. Our objection was that the one brick building was to be demolished even though it could be re-used and with its rare sawpit, it represents the last parts of industrial activity in Milton and the Foremark Estate

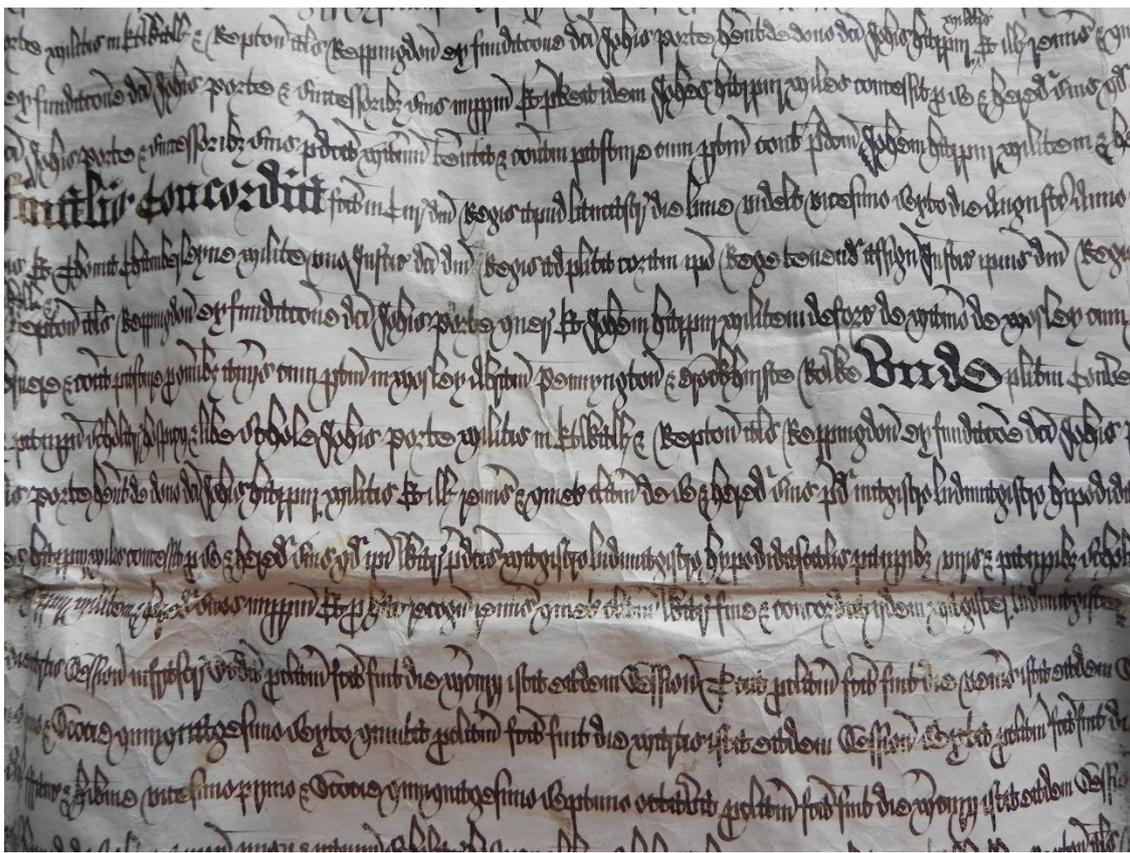
**Repton School Archive:**

We managed one visit to the archive before the school broke up for the summer and took several hundred photographs of pages of documents. Charles Proud and Barbara Foster have started to transcribe some of them and Keith Foster did the lion's share of the work of scanning and OCRing the 1914 list of documents that we found. This document is useful as a means of searching for information, but only covers a portion of the archive so we need to check everything off against it as we go. School is back in session, but we needed to discuss how we store the thousands of high resolution photographs that we are likely to generate in a way that is compatible with their systems and provide the structure and searchability of transcripts that we need. This has not yet been possible due to staff changes, IT issues and the very busy schedule of sorting out pupils with their modern IT needs at the beginning on the new academic year. Hopefully we will be back at work soon.

In the work to date we have encountered some lovely wax seals and a sample is below:



Most documents are legible if not readily readable, but a few may need some restoration first.



To make comments or for more information, please contact Andy Austen on [rvhg@reptonvillage.org.uk](mailto:rvhg@reptonvillage.org.uk) or 01283 702448  
We are always pleased to receive information about the locality and the people that lived and worked near here.

### **Published programmes for some other Local History Groups:**

We no longer offer a programme of monthly talks

#### **Willington History Group**

(7.30pm, The Old School Willington – second Thursday in the month)

OCT 10<sup>th</sup> – AGM followed by “The Weaker Sex”- six remarkable 19<sup>th</sup> Cent women by John Redfern

NOV 14<sup>th</sup> – “Mystery of Crop Circles, Ley Lines etc” by Paul Newsham

DEC 12<sup>th</sup> – “The Shorthose Pottery of Willington” Jodie Williams` and Alan Gifford’s photographs of Willington

JAN 9<sup>th</sup> – “Pentrich Martyrs” by Richard Stone. The last planned uprising in British history – so far!

FEB 13<sup>th</sup> – “Murder at Staunton Harold” by Gay Evans. Earl Ferrers, the last nobleman to be convicted of murder

MAR 12<sup>th</sup> – “Beside the Seaside” English love of seaside holidays, sticks of rock and saucy postcards! – Bob Massey

APR 9<sup>th</sup> – “Derbyshire in the Jacobite Rebellion” Brian Stone. How Bonnie Prince Charlie’s invasion failed at Swarkestone.

MAY 14<sup>th</sup> – Visit to Rolls-Royce Museum. Please note- this will be an afternoon visit starting at 2.15p.m.

#### **Melbourne Civic Society**

(7.30pm, Assembly Rooms High St Melbourne, 01332 865760, Guests welcome. Members £1, non-members £2. pamadams56@yahoo.co.uk)

Mon Sept 30<sup>th</sup> - The Arkwrights: Spinners of Fortune by an Arkwright Society Speaker

Mon Oct 28<sup>th</sup> - Derby and Sandiacre Canal by Chris ReesFitzpatrick

Mon Nov 25<sup>th</sup> - Bats by Kevin Reynolds followed by the Annual Winter Social

Mon Jan 27<sup>th</sup> - Robert Bruce Napoleon Walker by Stephen Finders

Mon Feb 24<sup>th</sup> - The Butterley Company’s Greatest 19th century Engineers. Timothy Castledine

Mon Mar 30<sup>th</sup> - A.G.M. followed by a talk on Derbyshire Castles by Robert Mee

#### **Etwall and Burnaston History Group**

(7.30pm, Chapel School Room, 01283 730287) Unless otherwise stated, meetings are held in the Methodist Chapel Schoolroom, Willington Road, Etwall DE65 6HX and commence at 7.30 pm. Visitors welcome at all meetings (admission £3.00) Further details: [www.etwallhistory.org](http://www.etwallhistory.org) or Pam Kerby (01283 730287)

[sandypits.kerby@btinternet.com](mailto:sandypits.kerby@btinternet.com)

17<sup>th</sup> Sept - Bradshaw’s & an English Railway Tour, by Robert Mee

15<sup>th</sup> October - Recent Archaeological finds in Dovedale and at Calke Abbey by Rachael Hall (National Trust)

19<sup>th</sup> Nov - History of Cheese Making by Alan Salt

17<sup>th</sup> Dec - Social Evening – Burnaston Village Hall – members only

21<sup>st</sup> January - History of Melbourne – by Philip Heath

18<sup>th</sup> February - Unusual finds at Hanson’s Auctioneers, by Jim Spencer

17<sup>th</sup> March - Saints in History by Dr Trevor James

21<sup>st</sup> April - Ladybird Books by Paul Newsham

19<sup>th</sup> May - A.G.M. followed by talk on Markeaton Park by Linda Proud

#### **Hilton and Marston History Group**

([hiltonhistory@gmail.com](mailto:hiltonhistory@gmail.com), Methodist chapel, Main St. Hilton DE65 5FF 7.30pm £3.00)

3rd October The Burton and Ashby Light Railway - Alan Hiley

7th November A Christmas Quiz with a difference - Paul Newsham

5th December Seasonal Social evening - 10 years since the HMHG was formed

#### **Aston on Trent Local History Group**

([astonontrenthistory@gmail.com](mailto:astonontrenthistory@gmail.com) £2 over 18s. Children free)

September 24th Tony Luke: Church & State from the Black Death to the Reformation

October 22nd The History Group: Finding Photographs

November 26th Peter Castle: Derbyshire Songs and Stories

December: NO MEETING