



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Summer 2018 (July 26th – St Ann's feast day)



We have ignored both equinox and solstice so far this year – the Spring newsletter being early to catch the March meeting and this summer one delayed to catch the June events.

Membership News: We are about to lose 2 families from Repton as they move away. Richard Finch moves to Mickleover and Brian and Hilary Hazelwood are moving to be with their daughter. Richard is something of an expert on St Wystan's church and in his role as Church Warden has been very supportive of the group. Brian and Hilary have been members from just about the very beginning and Brian has managed the sound system and wired up the speakers (human) for years. Hilary has helped as needed in the kitchen. For their contributions, support and encouragement, we are very grateful.

The ongoing programme:

September 18th - 7.00pm - St Wystan's Church – Joint meeting with Willington History Group:

A talk by Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust on the findings from the Willington Gravel Pits and to be introduced by Bill Newton of CEMEX

December 18th - 7.00pm - Red Lion (unless notified otherwise)

Although we moved to quarterly meetings, we have actually met every month except in April as, each time, something worth discussing has come up. We held our planned meeting in February and St Ann's well was raised as a subject of concern. So we planned to meet again in March to share our findings. We also confirmed that we would go ahead with a Viking themed day in June with the re-enactors linked to Adam Parsons of Blueaxe Reproductions.

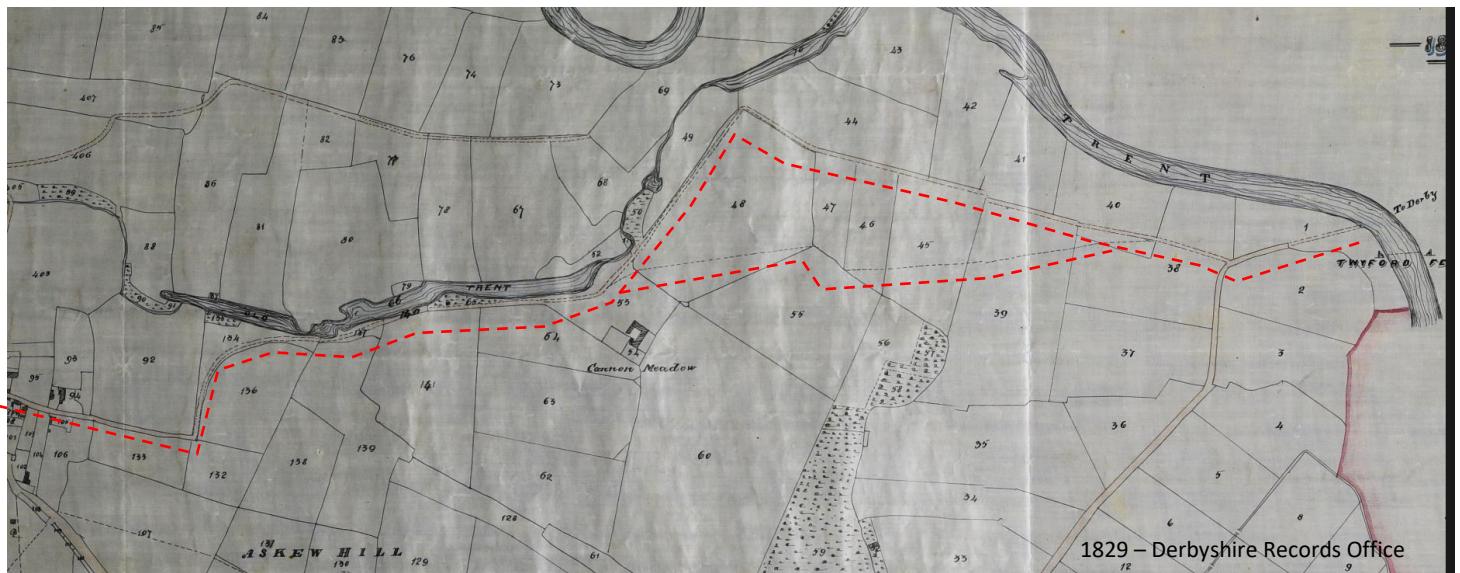
At the March meeting we pooled what we had learned about the well and set out to approach the Parish Council to have it registered as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act. A query on the Medieval Graffiti Survey we helped to carry out in 2017 revealed that some images are on <https://dnmgs.wordpress.com/survey-results-2/> but the supporting documentation is not. We plan to survey the outside of the church in the coming balmy evenings and may have to redo the internal work.

Our AGM was in May and we welcomed two more folk to the committee. We finalised the arrangements for the guided walk in July through parts of Calke Estate not usually accessible, and agreed that we would try to have one really good speaker each year. A talk was presented on the work to locate the medieval (maybe Saxon) mill on the brook in Repton School grounds – leading to discussion on the possibility that there was a mill on the Old Trent.

We met again in July to hear a talk on Repton's tannery by one of our newest members. He had found references to tanning and tanners going back to 1275 – just a few years after the medieval Priory Church was completed.

Footpaths

In our previous issue we discussed the right of way that should probably still exist down Tanners Lane to Ferry Acres. Now there is a query over the track that leads from Monsom Lane to Twyford Ferry. Known as Repton Marsh Road there are plenty of mentions in the Enclosure Award of 1769 and seemingly, from early maps, more than one route in parts. The gate and style at the end of Meadow Lane, Milton, has been blocked and so work is ongoing to try to understand the position of the route. There is still a way through on the other side of the lane that takes you to the ferry post and on to Anchor Church, so it may be simply that the vehicle access is blocked.



St Ann's Well – a summary of our shared findings.

St Ann's well is just off the footpath from Tanners Lane to Newton Solney, at the foot of the escarpment and just slightly higher than the river valley fields. It is one of two named wells – the other being St Thomas's Well named after Thomas a Becket and which had a reputation for curing eye problems, never failing in summer and never freezing in winter. St Ann's well is a spring as old as the hills but with a basin and defining stonework of post-medieval date. It probably gained its dedication in medieval times along with many other wells and churches - most of which were already in existence when dedicated to Ann. So St Ann's well may have had an earlier (even pagan) dedication.



Photo: David Dickson

pits, and Newton Solney had brick works (earliest date found so far being 1758), Overton's brick tower dates from 1438 but, even earlier, there was a tile kiln close to the Priory that would have needed clay - probably dating from the early 1200s.

Originally, the spring drained straight into the Old Trent whose flow at one time formed the escarpment. Much later the spring seems to have been channelled towards Tanner's lane and may have supplied the tannery in medieval times.

Members have found references to the well on maps, legal documents and press advertisements. Ellen Hayward's probate of 1755 leaves Holy Well Close to George Gilbert along with Causeway Close and Allen's Close. All three can be identified on the early maps.

N.B. We have spelt Ann without a terminal "e". Both spellings seem to be acceptable.

Derby Mercury 10th July 1861

Assisting with enquiries...

We were invited to meet a member of the Brown family. For several hundred years, they were notable Repton farmers and publicans (Shakespeare Inn). We are grateful for some new photographs of the village for the archive and hopeful that we may have access to parts of the family tree. Not only are the Brown family an important part of the village's history, but they link together many other old Repton families through marriage.

We have recently had a request from New Zealand for information about (great grandmother) Elizabeth Edmonds who's death certificate says she died in 1897 in the waterworks in Milton. However the 1891 census has only got a 71 year old widower - Joseph Hobson - as the waterworks superintendent lodging with William Pound in Main St, Milton. The 1881 map shows no waterworks down on Meadow Lane and there is no reference on the 1881 census. The works are on the 1901 map and the 1901 census has Arthur Jones as a waterworks engineer living on Twyford Lane which must surely be the lane to Twyford Ferry (now Meadow lane) where the waterworks were till the 1980s. The waterworks must have been pretty new in 1897 – or were there earlier waterworks somewhere about in Milton?

Another trail via a DNA specimen leads to a suggestion that she passed away in Willington in a bungalow called Robin's Nest being nursed by one of her daughters. We now want to find the bungalow which dates from before 1897. Was there a waterworks in Willington and did it have a bungalow we wonder?

REPTON & NEWTON SOLNEY, DERBYSHIRE.

TO be SOLD by AUCTION, by Messrs. MOODY and NEWBOLD, on MONDAY, the 15th day of July, 1861, at the MITRE INN, Repton, in the County of Derby, at Five o'clock in the Afternoon, the undermentioned closes of very valuable FREEHOLD LAND, situate near to the Public Highway from Repton to Newton, and abutting on the River Trent, and consisting of the following

PARTICULARS.

	A. R. P.
IN REPTON.—Little Holy Wells	- 1 0 26 }
Middle Holy Wells	- 3 0 24 }
Plantation -	- 0 0 33
Far Holy Wells -	- 1 2 11 }
Holy Wells Meadow -	3 3 18 } Grass

9 3 32

Occupied by Mr. William Morley.

Lot 2.

IN NEWTON SOLNEY.—Withy Close 4 3 0 Arable

Lot 3.

Black Sitch 4 1 30 Arable

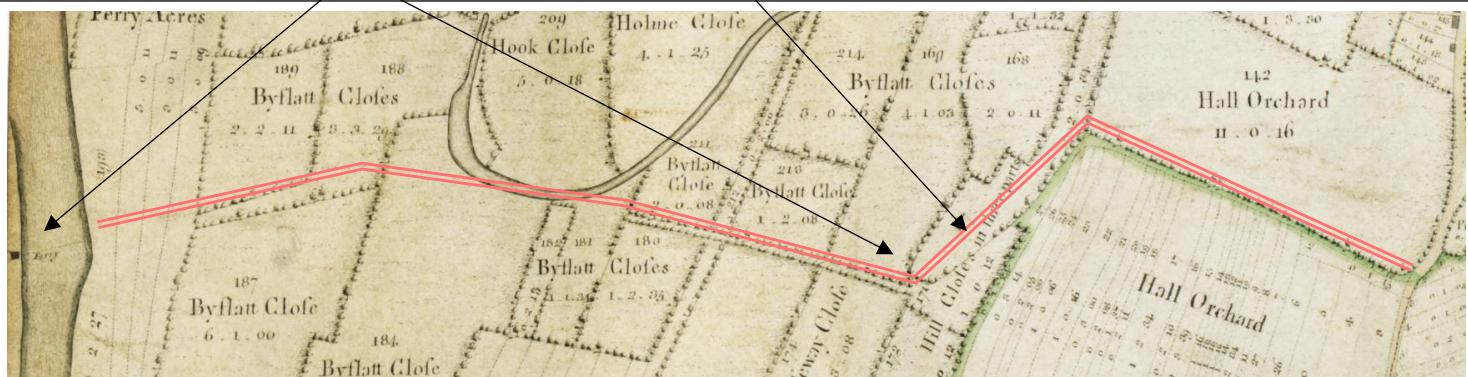
Lots 2 and 3 are occupied by Mr. Robert Morley.
For further particulars apply to Messrs. RICHARDSON
and SMALL, Solicitors, Burton-on-Trent.

Tanning in Repton (based on the slide show by Adam Bestwick)

It is not clear when hides cured by a tanning process first came to this island, but leather has been a key material for thousands of years. As the plastic of its day, it would have been important to the occupants of the royal Anglo-Saxon Monastery in Repton (c660- 873) and the Royal place for Mercian Kings as well as the later medieval priory and villagers. The Priory Church was completed in 1254 and there is a reference to Henry the Tanner witnessing a deed in 1275. We cannot be certain of the location of his tannery but are assuming, for a start, that it was at the bottom of Tanner's lane where the Tan-Yard is. Tanner's lane led to the ferry to Willington and is sometimes referred to as Ferry Lane. It was the main route to Derby – unless you used the ford or rode to Twyford. But we don't know which came first – tannery or ferry. Whichever, in the enclosure award, this is a significant road 60' (18m) between ditches and equal in status to Milton Road or Burton Road.

William de Hondesaker grants to John Baker (*pistor*), of Repton, and Edith his wife, one plot, with the buildings standing thereon, in the town of Repton, together with the adjoining smithy (*fabricernum*) which Nicholas the smith (*faber*) sometime held, near to the common furnace (*furnum*), at an annual rent of 2s. 4d., subject to his court rights and the rights of mill and bakery (*pistrinem*). Witnesses: William Pychard, Henry the **Tanner** of Repton, Geoffrey le Clavers of the same, Simon de Ingleby, and others. Wednesday after the feast of St. John at the Latin Gate, 1275. Given at Hondesaker

N.B. Hondesaker=Handsacre



1762 map from Staffordshire Record Office.

As a business making an important commodity requiring considerable knowledge and skill to produce and needing significant capital to set up and to support its long product lead-time, Henry would have been a man of some standing in the community. Much later, Francis Holbrooke was the tanner and there is a report of a case brought by him in 1835

Mr. DREWRY, **DERBY, Sept. 3, 1783.**
THE Mortality amongst the Horned Cattle in this Neighbourhood, having spread a general Alarm through the County, I shall be obliged to you to give the following Account of the Circumstances of it, a Place in your Paper, with the subsequent Observations.

Sir, Yours, &c.

E. D A R W I N.

"About a Fortnight ago Francis Kinsey, of Melborne, lost a Cow, as was supposed, by a Quinsey. The Flesh of this Cow was taken to the Kennels at Caulk, except the Head, and a Dog there was observed to carry a large Piece of it amongst the Cows, who, were seen to smell of it in a Circle, as is the Custom of those Animals, when they see raw Flesh, or Blood on the Ground.

Two or three of these Cows of Sir H. HARPUR, became ill in three or four Days, and died in about 24 or 27 Hours from the Time they were observed to abate in the Quantity of their Milk, or to appear drooping. Sir H. Harpur was unfortunately advised to have all his other Cattle bled and purged; these have drop'd off Day after Day since that Time; sixteen of them are dead; the last was bury'd whole on Tuesday Morning.

The Hides of the two or three first which died, (before the Disease was suspected to be infectious) were carried to a Tan-Yard at Repton: Mr. William Bryant of Ticknall, had two Cows in a Piece of Ground through which these Hides were carried; one of them is since dead, and one is ill. The same happen'd to Mr. Taylor of Repton, who had also two Cows in a Close through which these Hides were carried, and one is since dead; and Mr. Whiting of the Tan-Yard has also lost a Cow in the Close adjoining to his Vats.

The Head of the first-mentioned Cow, of Mr. Kinsey, was carried in a Lime-Cart to the Orchard of Mr. Richard Foreman at Chellaston, where four Calves were observed to smell of it, and even to lick it; and several Pigs; of these, three out of the four Calves are dead, and three of the Pigs.

Besides these, Mr. Woodward of Repton has lost one Cow; Mr. Robinson of Melborne has lost two Cows; and Mr. Erpe of Melborne one Cow: But it does not so distinctly appear, that these were infected from the same Source.

against one of his customers for non-payment of £148. 6s. 2d. Interestingly, this shoemaker was based in Matlock but sold his wares as far away as Manchester. It is not yet clear when the tannery closed, but Francis Holbrooke (born 1801) was still in business in 1851 but by 1871, he was describing himself as a farming landowner of 20 acres and proprietor of land and houses. He had retired by 1881 and died in 1882. By 1898, the Repton Steam Laundry had been built on the site. There is more of this story to investigate because Francis's son lived at Bladon Castle, Newton Solney, died a few months after his father and left £66,000 in his will compared to his father leaving £800.

Tanners had a monopoly on the purchase of hides and the butchers would usually leave the horns and hooves attached. In 1783 there was quite a serious event when a hide from a cow owned by Francis Kinsey of Melbourne was taken across country to Repton. The cow had died of a Quinsey (possibly anthrax) and everywhere the hide or parts of the carcase went, death to livestock followed – including to a cow belonging to Mr Whiting of the tan-yard in Repton.

There were several processes in the production of leather. The first thing the tanner had to do was remove the horns and hooves and this is usually one of the forms of evidence that identify the locations of old tanneries. The horn cores were sometimes used to line the processing pits. The hides were then washed to remove blood, dung and dirt. For this a good supply of clean spring water was preferred – suggesting that St Ann's well and St Thomas's well would have been much prized water sources.

Next the hair, flesh and fat had to be removed. This could be done by immersing the hide in a lime or urine solution or by sprinkling with urine and folding the hides hair side in and leaving them in a warm environment till the follicles had rotted sufficiently for them to be scraped off with a blunt knife. A double edged sharp knife would be used to remove the flesh. After washing, the hides had to be de-limed either by immersing in warm dog dung or treating in a solution of barley or rye with either stale beer or urine.

Following another washing, tanning could start. The hides were soaked in vats of crushed oak bark and water and moved from pit to pit in gradually stronger solutions. Finally they were piled in layers separate by crushed oak bark in a tanning solution. In all, tanning would take at least a year.

Finally the hides would be washed and smoothed and passed to a currier for finishing before being sold on to make the final products.

Given that the washing would have resulted in noxious fluids draining into the Old Trent Water, it is curious that it is upstream of the medieval priory. Repton is not well endowed with oak trees and presumably the oak bark was a by-product of sawyers and imported as needed. Repton is well provided with willows (osier beds everywhere) which is also rich in tannins. So was it possible that these were used for tanning?

The 1762 map does not show the tannery but then there are a number of other features not shown either. The 1829 map has a T shaped building where we suspect the tannery was and a channel running from nearby into the Old Trent water.

The 1901 map has the same building with the Steam Laundry adjacent. Using QGIS to overlay the maps and Google earth, it is clear that this building is now under the corner of the modern sports hall and St Thomas's well is under the artificial sports field. Boyhood memories remember a series of disused pits in this area. This is while the laundry was still in use, so it is unlikely that they were settling tanks or the like. However the pits do not show on maps until the 1950s.

Walsall is a town famous for medieval and later leather products but there were tanneries too. The leather Museum may be a good place to try for more information and advice.



1881 map on Google Earth

The Vikings were back.

On June 29th, a small Viking settlement appeared on the Mitre Field and the next day, they set about their day to day lives, grinding cereals and baking flat-breads, spit roasting beef, dyeing yarn for weaving, making Viking furniture and wooden plates and bowls, weaving braid to decorate their clothes and making metalwork ornaments, knives, gaming pieces and so on. They also sorted out a small legal dispute with some hand to hand fighting.

These people are re-enactors and as well as having fun dressing up and playing the part, they have the serious archaeological objective of trying to make and use really accurate replicas of artefacts dug up on Viking sites or described in the literature. Some concessions to modern life have to be made – for example, casting gaming pieces is done with lead free pewter rather than lead, but being ruthlessly authentic in all details they can add a lot to knowledge about Vikings. This applies not only to clothes, tools and artefacts, but to the method and detail of their manufacture. This even extends to practical experimentation with methods of transportation and some of these Vikings had recently been in Scandinavia rowing a replica longboat. The tents too were authentic reconstructions, but are still quite new and so a bit cleaner than when the Vikings were last here in 874 AD.

The re-enactors were most impressed by the level of interest and the quality of questions and discussion and, based on other events, estimated that there were 400-500 visitors during the day.

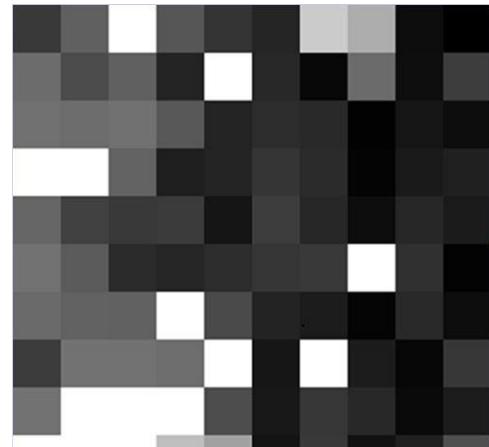
The History Group added a couple of test-pits (which tended to be monopolised by children) some geophysics, a guided tour, an explanation and activity with runes plus sales of old books from David and Lilwen Guest and our own publications. We also offered refreshments in the Den.

The event seems to have been much enjoyed by both the Vikings and the visitors and we learned a lot about organising it. There is a strong possibility that we will repeat it with a slightly larger event in 2020.

The event finished with a talk in St Wystan's by Dr Cat Jarman on her ongoing research work into the mass Viking grave in the vicarage garden excavated in the 1980s and on this year's dig by Bristol University.

We are grateful to Cat and to the re-enactors, to St Wystan's, to JOGS for the use of the Den and to the Parish Council for the use of the Mitre Field.

The rather small resistivity survey revealed some surprisingly high variations in resistance and although the very dry and hard ground limited the test pits, there was a surprising amount of ceramic building material and a piece of clay pipe stem in a field believed to have been used only for agriculture. So we are about to approach the parish Council for their approval for a full survey, when the ground is softer, and some more test pits and metal detecting. The latter is likely to find countless bottle tops and bits of loose change given the number of fêtes and field days that have been held there.



Resistivity results



The Vikings
were back!
30th June
2018



Runic name badges

Test pits

The Bristol University dig.

Cat Jarman and Prof Mark Horton from Bristol University came back in June for another 3 week dig in the Vicarage garden. Our resistivity survey had suggested there were pits to be explored but their radar survey had seen much more exciting possibilities with a ring feature and possible track lines. The trench they opened was a large 8 m square and once the turf and the adjacent loam was removed, some finds started to emerge. Almost immediately some bracket like objects appeared- similar to those found on the other side of the garden two years before. Later investigation determined that they were the markers for the corners of a tennis court. But only a little below that were found musket balls and a worked flint. So clearly the garden has been landscaped over the years. By the mid-point of the dig, they were down to the Anglo-Saxon and Viking levels. Gravelled areas were found plus an interesting array of stones that offered some exciting possibilities, but remain to be explained. The usual range of small, and mostly anonymous, metallic finds appeared together with bits of pot and occasional fragments of bone – probably animal. One metallic item might be interpreted as a blade and another as part of an axe, but more research is needed to work out what many of them are.

The History Group provided a rota of members (Mud Monkeys) who moved the spoil and metal detected it and riddled it to find anything the archaeologists have missed, and another team (The Scrubbers) who washed all the finds and the pieces of stone that were removed. Traces of a pit were found where we expected, but while we had hoped it would be a midden and full of interesting bits and pieces, it was mostly full of soft clayey mud which was difficult to sieve.



De-turfing



Worked flint



The spoil heap



It rained.



Washing finds



Signs of things to come or Victorian landscaping?

Derby Museum Volunteering:

We have now completed the listing work of the small finds found during the Biddle's digs – just a couple of anomalies to sort out and then it's on with the database updating. TMS is a newly installed relational database system that replaces the painfully slow Modes system. Fortunately it is likely that we can have remote access to it and can do the updates from home.

We are conscious that archaeologists come and explore historically important parts of the village and take away the finds – and we never get to see them. So whilst we listed the Repton metallic finds in Derby Museum, we did take a few photographs of things that looked interesting. Apart from hundreds of "coffin nails" or "coffin fittings" or "iron objects" (even "iron blobs") there are some more interesting items. The photographs are simple snapshots and mostly we did not take the items from their protective packing. We do not have access to the records of the dig, so while we do know the trench and the context number we usually cannot date them. So items that look interesting might well be Victorian rather than Anglo-Saxon, Viking or medieval.

Each quarter we will include a few more photographs.



Spearhead



Part of a bridle?



Hinge



Scramasax knife



Iron object (blade?) attached to a piece of bone.



Knife

These last 3 items came from the mass grave in the Vicarage garden mound and so are very likely to be Viking

WW1 survivors

Margaret has finished her first pass in her research into those that we can identify as serving and surviving WWI. She has identified well over 100 men who served in the forces and 65 ladies and 4 men who served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment – civilians who helped with nursing or making and providing items for the injured in hospital. A few of the Repton VAD served overseas.

Now starts the painstaking process of checking and assembling what we know and putting together the story for each person. This is all to be presented as a display in the British Legion in November to help celebrate the centenary of the end of the war.

Walks n talks

We led Willington History Group through the village from the Main Street Mill to the Church. It is not a particularly interesting talk compared with the much earlier history and the pavements are narrow and the traffic noisy. However, we learned a lot because several members are ex Repton and had stories to tell. They seemed appreciative.

Priory Mill:

Work is still ongoing and, if we get any rain this summer, we will seek permission and a suitable team of pseudo-sectionists to do more surveys across the field to try to better locate the leet and tail race. We are now confident there was a mill pond between the 1st team's cricket pitch and the wall. The very simple and rather primitive mill built at Guédelon in France during the filming of the BBC 2 programme "Secrets of the castle" (13th century – so it's a reasonable match) ran and ground corn using a mill pond that gave a head of only about 1 metre for the 8 feet diameter undershot wheel. We have considerably more than that available at our favoured location opposite the Priory Cloisters.

Amy Pannell is one of the Bristol Students who has been on the Vicarage Garden dig for all 3 seasons, starting in her first year. She graduated this summer. (Got a 1st! – congratulations Amy). Her (as yet unpublished) dissertation was on the 90 or so fragments of querns found in the first season. Among them is one fragment potentially large enough to be a mill stone and bearing the harped grinding surface recognised as the most effective dressing.

Although incomplete, from her photographs, it is reasonable to estimate the diameter of the fragment as up to 50 cm and, as Amy points out, the perimeter is missing. So the criteria of an external diameter > 57 cm that she notes for distinguishing a millstone from a hand quern could apply to this stone. She also notes that the larger than usual central hole might also indicate a mill stone.

If so, and assuming that the dating of the assemblage is early medieval (Anglo-Saxon/Viking) then it argues for a very early mill close by. It could have been a horse mill, but if a stone from a water mill, it must have been brought to the garden from a mill not on that elevated position. This would support the notion that the site of the Norman/medieval mill on Repton Brook that we seek, was originally the site of an even earlier mill supporting the monastery and royal establishment. Highly speculative and amateurishly full of wishful thinking.



Photo: Amy Pannell 2018

Wrestling in Repton

In the Spring 2018 newsletter, we mentioned a wrestling match in Repton which took place around 1715 between Richard Trubshaw and Allin Green. A copy of the book one member remembered has surfaced but adds nothing to the detail. The American researcher did find a rather splendid cartoon apparently held by Calke Abbey and we have approached them to see if there are more.



One of four sepia ink caricatures with inscriptions. Shows two men wrestling on the floor, inscribed; 'Bit him well old Lancashire/Beat and thump his ribs as if thou'd got a kettle drum/keep him down old Derbyshire and shake his headpiece till he turns dizzy.'

Collection

Calke Abbey, Derbyshire (Accredited Museum)

The published programmes for some local history groups:

Willington History Group

Thursday 11th October
Thursday 8th November
Thursday 13th December

(7.30pm The Old School Willington)

Victorian Fairs – Dr Ann Featherstone.
History of Rolls-Royce – Alec Collins.
Family Trees Revisited

Ticknall Preservation and Historical Society (7.30pm, Ticknall Village Hall, 01530 810266/01283 762064/ 01332 862116)

Friday 29th September

Nottingham Green Spaces with Professor John Beckett who explores the history of Municipal public parks, cemeteries and other public green spaces which are one of the greatest legacies of Victorian Nottingham.

Friday 27th October

2500 Years of the Horse with Lois Edwards. Lois examines the relationship of man with the horse throughout history.

Friday 24th November

Highway Men with Leigh Timmins. Lee tells us about the highway robbery and the charismatic characters involved.

Melbourne Civic Society

September 15th and 16th:

(7.30pm, Assembly Rooms High St Melbourne, 01332 865760)

Exhibition at Melbourne Arts Festival See interesting old photographs from the archive at the Senior Citizens Centre, Church Street.

Monday September 24th:

The Wreck of the Winterton & What happened to the Crew. Jean Hood tells of a shipwreck and the adventures of the crew as they attempt to reach home.

Monday October 29th:

The Canary Girls of Chilwell by Maureen Rushton. An account of the women who did the dangerous job of filling shells during the First World War. A SPECIAL EVENT TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENARY OF THE END OF WW1

Monday November 26th:

Sir William Turville by Kate Bridger. The story of a Leicestershire knight – “accomplished troublemaker and hunter” This will be followed by our WINTER SOCIAL EVENING

Etwall and Burnaston History Group

(7.30pm, Chapel School Room, 01283 730287)

Tuesday 18th September

40 years of Railway Clangers – Bill Devitt

Tuesday 16th October

History of cheese making – Alan Salt

Tuesday 20th November

A Happy Russian Christmas – Cathy McAteer

Tuesday 18th December

Seasonal gathering.

Hilton and Marston History Group

(hiltonhistory@gmail.com Methodist chapel, Main St)

Thursday 4th October

Uttoxeter Canal - Dave Marriott

Thursday 1st November

Marston on Dove Church Renovation - Piet Walton Knight

Saturday 8th December

Seasonal Social evening.

Aston on Trent local History Group

(7.30pm, astonontre nthistory@gmail.com, War Memorial Hall, DE72 2AX)

Tuesday September 25th

Robert Mee “Inn Signs and their Stories”

Tuesday October 23rd

Peter Liddle “Time Team at Groby Old Hall”

Tuesday November 27th

Patrick Ashcroft “Myths and Legends Seasonal Festivities”