



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Winter 2017 (December)



Membership Matters:

This is the last newsletter before the new membership year starts in January. We are not planning monthly talks next year but intend to undertake more research activities both historical and archaeological. We do hope you will stay as members and participate, at your own pace, in some of our projects. The cost remains at £4 per person (children free). Renewal at our December meeting will be easy!

The ongoing programme:

At the time when you receive this newsletter, we will have just one more talk organised:

Dec 19th Keith Blood - "Christmas is Coming" - in the Village Hall (DE65 6GR) at 7.30pm as usual.

That does not mean that there will be no more talks for the Repton History Group, but they will be less frequent, less regular, and part of forum style meetings to catch up on projects and discuss future plans. We will be using smaller venues and so they will usually be limited to members and invitees. We do have our first 3 meetings pencilled in - dates and venues yet to be determined.

January - A talk "A simple History of Repton" - for members plus an invitation to people in the new housing.

March - A catch up of recent activity, our finances and budget, and making plans for the year.

May - Our AGM, activity catch-up and maybe a member's talk or two.

We are likely to take up Colin Stewart's invitation for a guided tour of archaeologically interesting parts of the Calke Estate and have a trip to Knowle Hill in mind as well.

At the end of this newsletter, you will find a list of talks at other groups that may be of interest. You should find more in the Tourist Information booklet - "What's on".

Recent talks:

In October, Richard Stone took us through parts of the Luttrell Psalter - an illuminated book of psalms, prayers and music dating from around 1330. The lovely illustrations were amusing, sometimes fabulous, very informative about medieval life and a great lesson that human nature doesn't change much. This was much enhanced by Richard's explanation of the background of the book, the conditions and circumstances and habits and practices of the times. As well as the decorated texts and grotesque (or fabulous) creatures, its illustrations are considered by many as the richest source of information on everyday rural life in medieval England.

This link will take you to the British Library site and a selection of some 30 pages from the full 300:

<http://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=a0f935d0-a678-11db-83e4-0050c2490048&type=book>.

You can see all 309 pages plus covers and flysheets on:

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_42130_fs001ar#

In November, Colin Stewart, a volunteer at Calke Abbey, spoke about Calke's archaeology. He was commissioned - in a voluntary capacity - to assess the state of all archaeology on the estate. There are an astounding 400 or so buildings, earthworks and features ranging from abandoned small barns built by Sir Vauncey and fitted out with partitions and racking for animals, to tunnels and largely invisible Ha-Has. There is the deer house and the water supply system as well as the remains of brickworks and at least 42 known lime kilns. Associated with them are hundreds of bell-pit coal mines and the trackways and tunnels to get lime out and coal in. New items are found each year and there is a children's archaeology club which has an ongoing dig exploring the remains of a summerhouse. Some archaeologically interesting areas of the estate are out of bounds except by guided tour.

The Hanson Grave: Some time ago we researched the Hanson family for a passing antipodean. Samuel Hanson, born in 1784, died in 1867 aged 83 and has a handsome memorial headstone in St Wystan's Churchyard.

As Parish Clerk for over 60 years and for some time, Sexton, he holds a special place in our 19th century heritage. Sadly this stone is now flaking and concern that frost damage this winter might obliterate parts of it, led us to try to get it fixed. Meanwhile, it is wrapped in green horticultural fleece to protect it.

Samuel was also a founder member of the Royal Sussex Lodge of Freemasons in Burton and their Tyler for 49 years. In this role, he stood guard with a sword at their ceremonies to prevent strangers entering and ensuring that those taking part were properly prepared.

The Lodge treasures the memory of their founders of 200 years ago and has agreed to meet the cost of the repairs.



It is now just a matter of going through the ecclesiastical procedures needed for this sort of work.

Samuel's main employment was as a weaver and we believe he worked in one of the watermills in Winshill but lived in one of the thatched cottages near the church. The Parish Clerk was appointed by the parish Priest and held the position for life - an intervention by an Archbishop being required to remove him. He was one of the Vestry officials and the only one to be paid, although the stipend was small. His duties were defined by the Vicar and might include reading the lessons and epistles, singing in the choir, giving out the hymns, leading the responses, serving at the altar, opening up the church, ringing the bell and digging graves if there were no sexton.

He had to be "known to the parson as a man of honest conversation

and sufficient for his reading, writing and competent skill in singing" He usually maintained the church and Vestry records.

As manorial courts declined, the church was increasingly charged with taking control of civil matters within the parish. The Vestry was where the meetings, chaired by the Vicar, took place. Initially their main concerns were with church affairs and charitable bequests but, with time, legislation heaped more responsibility upon them. Male property owners could attend to approve accounts and elect Vestry officials – unpaid roles taken on rota but to be avoided if possible! The Vestry administered justice and appointed a constable to enforce rulings. They were responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the church and its services, the burial grounds, mending the roads, keeping of the peace, the repression of nuisance, suppression of vermin (including urchins - hedgehogs) and the billeting of soldiers A lock-up was provided near the top of Brook End and there would have been stocks too.



Derby Museum Volunteering:

Derby museum is a self-financing trust and relies heavily on volunteers guided by a very capable core team. Shelagh continues researching items for the museum for a major forthcoming display and can do much of this from home. The work of listing the Repton dig finds from the 1970s and 80s has moved



Part of a harness?

into a new phase. Boxes that have not been listed at all are being carefully opened and the scores of items studied to determine what they are and what they are made of and

then the details of when and where found and the X-ray numbers and other information is added to the record. Some really fascinating objects, but a lot of entries such as "iron lump" or "iron object" as well. The Museum needs volunteers, are very good at making you welcome, are very flexible, and make good use of your time.



Artefacts team: Margaret - organiser, Chris Wardle - archaeologist, Andy - scribe

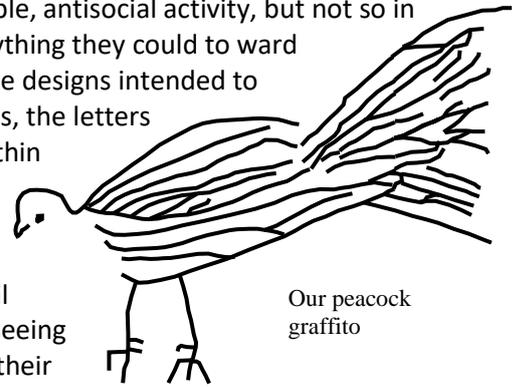
Repton Dig Documentation:

The documentation of the archaeological digs undertaken in the 1970s and 80s by Professor Martin and Birthe Biddle is to be in 3 volumes. One on the anthropology has been written by Dr Stoddart - a pathologist at Manchester University - and is essentially complete. We have just heard that Cat Jarman has started the task of writing the volume covering the artefacts. She has now received several boxes of the working papers to enable her to do this (and more artefacts). Cat will need to acquire more funding for the work but the History Group has committed £500 to help with initial expenses and there are private commitments too. She has compared the listing work in the museum with the records she now has and, so far, they match. Her records contain additional stratification data which we hope to capture at some point.

Graffiti Survey:

We were invited to send a small number of people along to St Wystan's in November for instruction by the Involve Heritage Group in graffiti hunting. They are running an HLF funded pilot project to identify, survey and record examples of medieval graffiti in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Seven members volunteered and we spent the best part of two days there learning about medieval beliefs, typical symbols and the techniques for finding them, photographing them and recording them. Then we worked with them to survey the church. There are still some parts of the interior to be explored and we will tackle the exterior one balmy summer evening as the sun sets – so our lamps will reveal the markings.

The word 'graffiti' is a Victorian invention. Today we regard it as an unacceptable, antisocial activity, but not so in medieval times when people believed in the power of evil, and would do everything they could to ward off the ill forces that lurked outside the church door, including drawing intricate designs intended to trap evil spirits within their interlocking circles and shapes. So we found crosses, the letters INRI or IHS, and circles, sometimes concentric and sometimes with 6 petals within them, as well as the ubiquitous 'witch mark' of a pair of interlocked letters 'V'. Of particular interest is the scratched peacock. The ancient Greeks believed the peacock's flesh to be incorruptible and it is recorded that St Augustine confirmed this by personal experiment. The shedding and regrowth of their tail feathers hints at resurrection, the multitude of eyes in the tail suggest the all-seeing eye of God and the bird's reputation for killing serpents and being immune to their venom made them powerful protective symbols. Peacocks are also believed to eat poisonous plants with no ill effects, another reason why they are a symbol of incorruptibility and immortality.



Our peacock graffito

Of course there are later markings; on the alabaster knight there is the stick-man of Lesley Charteris's 'Saint' (created in 1928) plus the word Togo, a name which may still be familiar to older Repton residents. Togo was the nickname of Frank Atherley, a postman who was also 'chauffeur' to Dr Cronk. He couldn't drive but wore a chauffeur's cap and rode in the dicky seat. His job was to open the gates. In those days, not only did the big houses have gates but the public roads were also gated. One gate, just outside the village at Park End (also known as Wood End), beyond the new farm turning, was still there in the 1930s; the Wood End lads used to earn a few coppers by opening it for passing traffic. There is a tale of Cronk's car standing in Green Lane in Derby where the doctor was in the Conservative Club and Togo trying to explain to the police that even though he was the chauffeur – with a chauffeur's hat – he couldn't move the car for them.

Local Social History:

We were delighted that Majorie Boddice was generous with her time and memories recently and told us much about her life and her childhood at "Bottom Repton" (Wood End - later Park End). Born to Theodore and Ida Pett, at 126 Main Street she rarely came to Top Repton as a child except for the village school. Wood End was self-sufficient with a butchers, bakers, blacksmith, pub, chapel, a market garden for green grocery and a grocers shop next door that her family ran. She described a childhood of considerable freedom in the fields and the brook and remembers a game called Washington which was played like the game called Lurkey that modern children play. She remembers watercress from the brook feeding both the family and their chickens. She had mixed feelings about school. Not particularly academic, she enjoyed more practical aspects, especially nature walks which was where she developed her love and knowledge of flowers. Leaving school, she and a friend became nannies to London families and, on their eventual return, Marjorie went to work at Bretby Nurseries where she met Maurice and a whole new chapter of her life began. Her story – with much more detail – has been written up and put in the archive for future generations.

We need to talk with many more Repton folk.

Meet the Author:

Repton was visited by Annie Whitehead recently. A history graduate and member of the Royal Historical Society with an interest in the Dark Ages, she has written 3 novels about Anglo-Saxon Mercia and has now been commissioned to write a non-fiction history of Mercia which will be published by Amberley books in September 2018. She was here to photograph the Crypt and other features of St Wystans and we were able to put the building in the context of its Anglo-Saxon origins, the Viking attack and later developments.

Her first two novels, To Be a Queen and Alvar the Kingmaker are set in the 9th and 10th centuries and the third, Cometh the Hour is set in the 7th century. She has also contributed to collaborative publications.

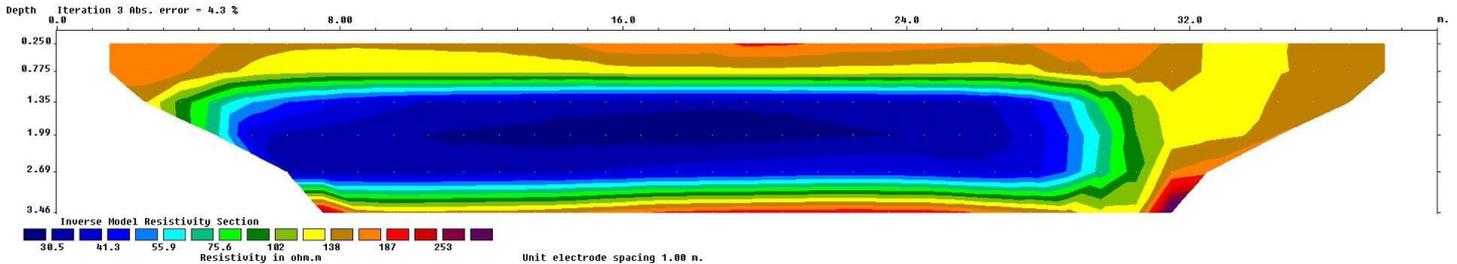


Medieval Tithe Barn:

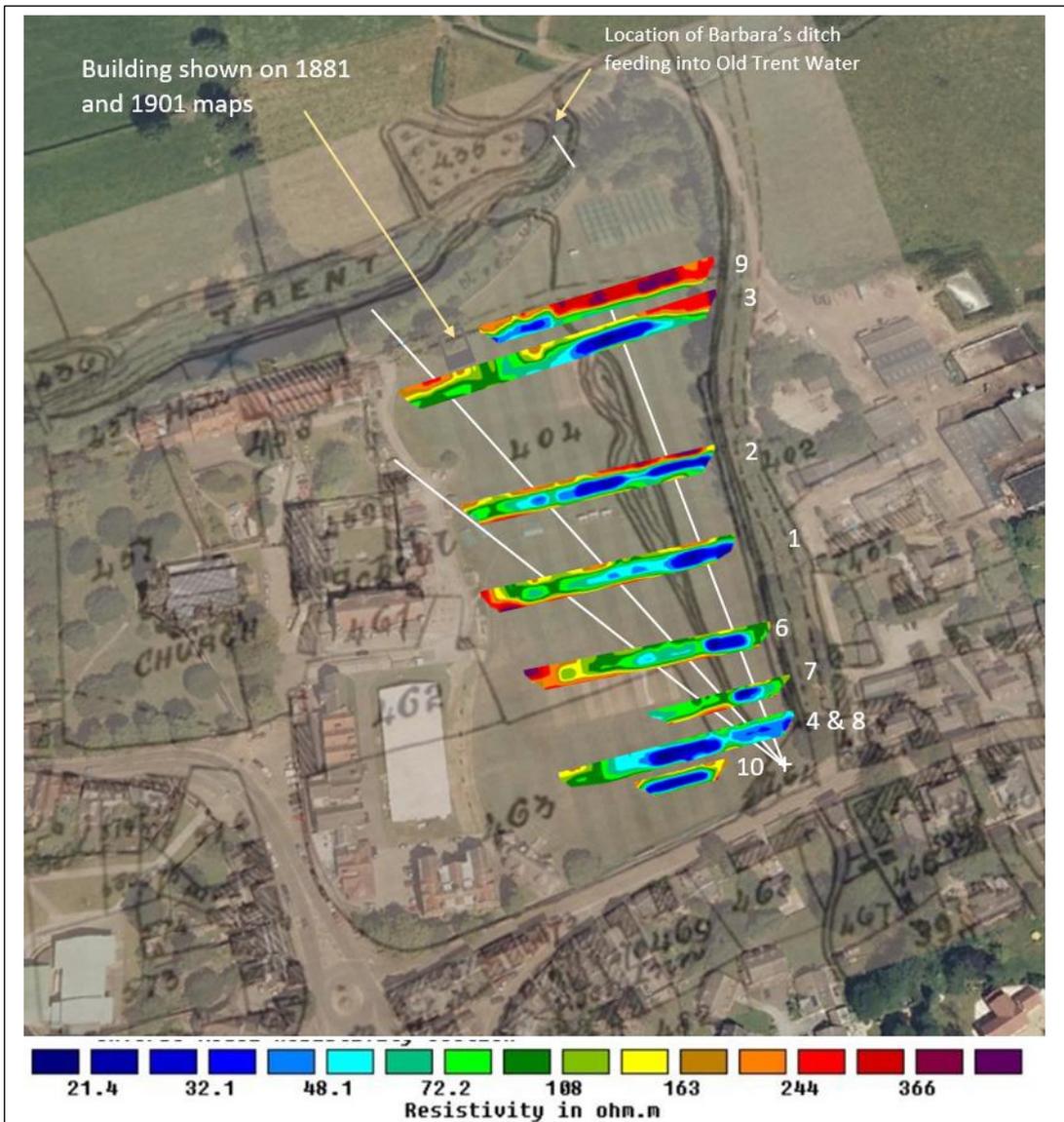
In 2015 at 22 Milton Rd, our test-pits found no archaeological evidence to back up the map evidence and our tenuous resistivity results, but we do wonder about the higher, flatter land at number 18 (next door). We have agreement in principle to do a grid survey there but, meanwhile, Michael Hall was at a book fair and came across an old book which had a mention of Repton Village Tythe Barn – it said that the barn was formerly known as 'The Old Priory Mill' which would suggest that its location would be near the brook.... He regrets not buying the book and the dealer remains elusive. Actually, Michael and Susan's house is very close to the field entrance of a right of way mentioned in the Enclosure Awards which ran close to what we currently think was the barn. At one time we wondered if the building was on the site of their house. We have to be mindful of the possibility of more than one Priory Barn.

Medieval Priory Mill:

Over half term, we managed another pseudo section on the lower paddock looking for further evidence of the mill-pond between the 1st team cricket pitch and the southern Priory wall. To do this we put 40 probes into the ground at 1metre intervals along a straight line. Then we connected 4 wires to the first 4 probes and the magic box recorded the resistance a little way underground between the middle two probes. Then we moved everything along one probe again measuring the resistance between the new position of the middle two probes. This was repeated to the end of the line. Then we started again, separating the wires by two metres ie. leaving a probe between each connection. This does the same thing, but measures the resistance deeper in the ground. Next time we left 2 probes between connections and so on until there were 5 probes left between connections. That enabled us to get a picture of the soil underground - like looking at the wall of a trench – but in terms of its resistance. This gives us a good clue as to what is down there.



The red (high resistance) at the bottom is probably the bunter sandstone bedrock about 3½m below the current surface and the orange at the top is probably infill from the terracing in the 1800s and the red, a final infill of rubble rich soils from the old Priory Church when Pears School was built. But the blues (low resistance) indicate wet, humus rich soils – just what might be expected of an old pond. It seems to be 2m deep and, at this point, about 23 m wide.



More sections are needed, at both ends of the field, but it needs 5 people to do them which makes it harder to organise. We would like to know if this wet (blue) area extends under the Priory wall. We know that a mill on this site was given to the Cannons at Calke in about 1135 and thus predated the Priory by at least 50 years. While it is likely that the mill will have been rebuilt several times, its location probably did not change. Did the wall run round the southern edge of the pool or cut across it?

The sections in position on Google Earth and the 1829 map. Section 10 was the latest one.

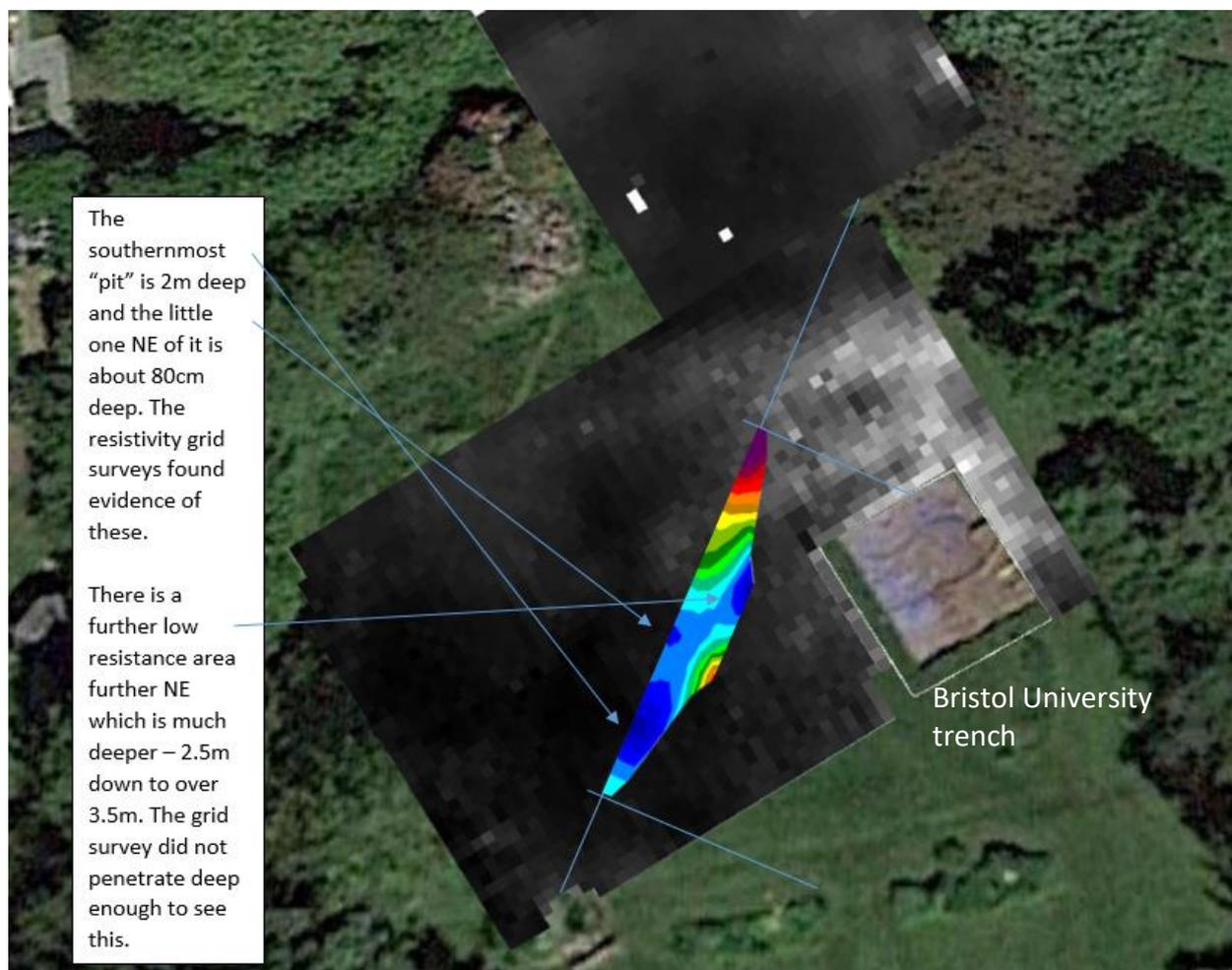
Council for Independent Archaeology:

This national organisation held its annual AGM and conference in Sharpes pottery in Swadlincote this year and we were invited to provide a display of the activities of the History Group – with an emphasis on archaeology. We were able to outline the work on the tithe barn, the Vicarage garden, the medieval tile kiln, our test-pit survey and the Priory Mill site. A comment by one of those attending has raised another possibility for the arrangements of the various water channels associated with the mill.



The Vicarage Garden:

We managed a pseudo-section across part of the Vicarage Garden to explore the possible pits we had spotted with the grid survey. It did confirm that they are of a different consistency to the surrounding ground and have a lower resistance – suggesting that they may indeed have been pits which later filled with topsoil. The significance is that pits may have been associated with the neighbouring working area, for example as saw-pits, or were used for waste disposal – in which case they could contain interesting bits and pieces.



To make comments or for more information, please contact Andy Austen on 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.

The published programmes for some local history groups:

Willington History Group

- 11th January "The English Highwayman" By Lee Timmins. Romantic gentlemen of the road or murderous thugs and villains?
- 8th February "History of Melbourne" By Philip Heath. No one knows more about Melbourne and its environs
- 8th March "Bess of Hardwick" By John Hawkins. How to become the most powerful woman in England (after Good Queen Bess)
- 12th April "Klondike Gold Rush" By Colin Bagshaw. Gold fever! Men make fortunes or die in misery as towns rise up and vanish.
- 10th May - "A Guided Tour of Repton" By Andy Austen, hopefully including a look at Church and School.

Ticknall Preservation and Historical Society

- Friday 26th January History of Maps with Richard Stone Richard reviews maps from the earliest times to today's ordinance surveys.
- Friday 23rd February Robert Bakewell and Dishley Grange with Ernie Miller. A most important figure in the British Agricultural Revolution.
- Friday 23rd March Bess of Hardwick with Julie Ede. Julie tells us the life story of this fascinating local Elizabethan woman.
- Friday 26th April Herblore with Christina Smee. Re-enacting the role of the Medieval wise woman of Rouen explaining the use of herbs.
- Friday 18th May Medieval War Bow with Mark Stretton. An expert arrowsmith tells us about this formidable weapon.
- Friday 29th June Visit to Donington le Heath Manor Gardens. Join Michael Arkle head gardener to see the gardens as they were in 1620.

Melbourne Civic Society

- Monday January 29th Biometrics: there will never be another you! By Paul Newshan How our unique personal characteristics are measured.
- Monday February 26th Sir Frank Brangwyn by Richard Stone. The life and work of a multi-talented artist and painter of murals.
- Monday March 26^h A.G.M. followed by The Ecclesbourne Railway by Eric Boulton. Learn about this successful working heritage railway.

Etwall and Burnaston History Group

- 16th January St Pancras Station - Nigel Lowey
- 20th February Mary Queen of Scots - Part 2 - David Templeman
- 20th March Bayeux Tapestry - Julia Hickey
- 17th April Darley Abbey and the Evans Family - Alan Bradwell
- 15th May AGM followed by 'The English Highwayman' - Lee Timmins

Hilton and Marston History Group

- 1ST February TG Green Pottery – Dr Iain Hambling
- 1st March AGM
- 5th April The blushing brides of Calke - the families of the girls who married the Baronets -Celia Sanger
- 3rd May A Grand Day out in the 1950s - Alan Hiley
- 7th June British Traditions and Customs - Paul Newsham
- 5th July Visit to Tutbury Church
- 4th October Uttoxeter Canal - Dave Marriott
- 1st November Marston on Dove Church Renovation - Piet Walton Knight
- 8th December Seasonal Social evening.

Ashby History Society

- 8th January The River Lin – Bradgate Park – Ernie Miller
- 12th February Excavations at Bradgate – Peter Liddle
- 12th March The origins and Growth of Rolls-Royce – Roy Hirst.
- 9th April Coco Chanel – Julie Edge
- 14th May Made in Leicestershire - Brian Johnson