



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

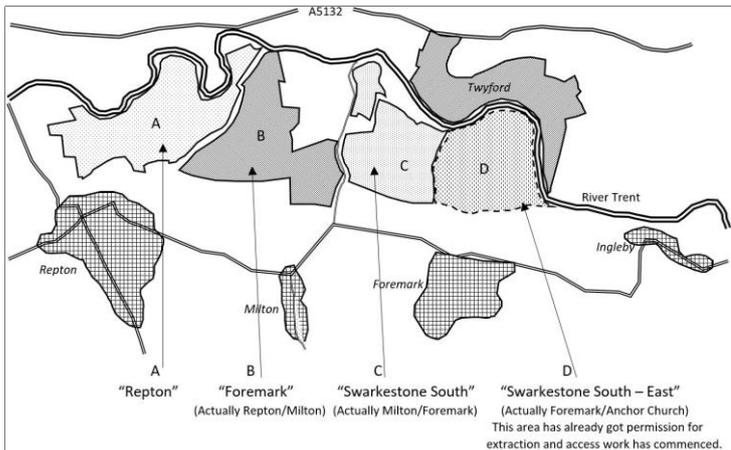
Winter 2020 (21st December 2020 – 10.20am)



The ongoing programme:

With the advent of vaccines to protect us against the virus, and given that most of us are in the higher priority groups, it is likely that we should be able to have our AGM face to face in May. But as soon as truly possible, we ought to have a bit of a knees up to celebrate - perhaps a bean feast at the AGM?

Gravel Extraction:



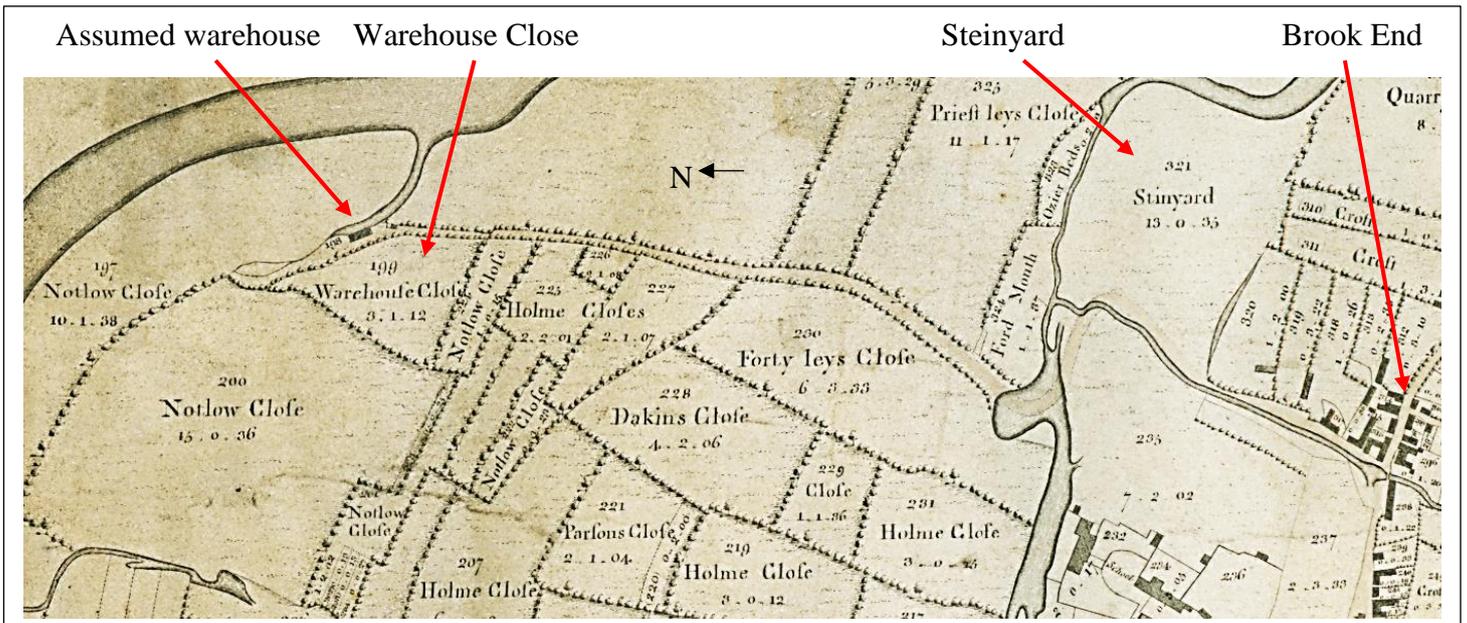
Derbyshire County Council have to plan to meet their nationally established quota for sand and gravel and our part of the Trent valley is being consulted upon. Areas A and B have been eliminated and area D is about to be dug out. Worryingly, area C has been determined as highly appropriate for excavation. Our view is that new knowledge about the role of Repton in the 873/4 Viking attack plus archaeology now confirming the likelihood that Foremark was where the bulk of the soldiery were camped, makes the whole river valley very important. There were 4 leaders to the army at Repton and so there may have been camps all along the high ground

above the adjacent river, from Repton with its burials, to Ingleby with Viking cremations at Heath Wood. So our view is that the valley is as important as Bosworth Field or Battle Abbey or any listed site and this should override all other considerations. More on our website: http://www.reptonvillage.org.uk/history_group/history_group_homepage.htm

Finneys dock

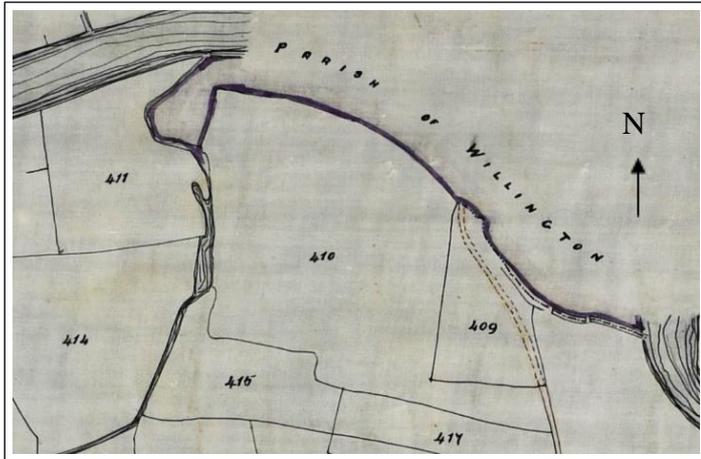
It's really good when two interests coincide. This is the case with the Warehouse Field and the Buries. Russell has been researching the Buries and Adam spent some time last year trying to trace any signs of the building shown on the 1762 map in a field called Warehouse Close. We used resistivity for a very brief survey to try to find its footprint.

The results showed the track that runs from Brook End down to the old ferry site but were inconclusive otherwise. The building is shown close to an inlet from the main course of the river which is still present and in water much of



the time. The remnants of old river channels indicate braided flow in the past - many channels which changed as flooding occurred, but which stabilised into islands as vegetation took hold. This inlet is thought to be the remnants of a channel around a small island which was present until the main course was moved from the Repton side in about 1705. Adam had suspected that there would be a dock there but so far we have found no trace of it.

However, Russell came across this reference in J T Emmott's Handbook to Repton (1909): "*The old road went past the present laundry to the river, which was crossed by a ferry boat, or down the lane from Brook End and the Steinyard to what is known as Finney's Dock*" [and thence to the ford]. He also spotted the following in MacDonald's Short History of Repton (1929): "*Until this bridge was built, the river could be crossed near Repton only by two ferries and a ford. The latter was just below the bridge, and was reached by a lane over the Steinyard, still known as the 'Docks,' because, it is said goods were unladen here from boats.*" The Steinyard is a field just beyond Brook Farm and east of the brook.



The second ferry was presumably at Twyford.

On the 1829 map, Warehouse Close is numbered 409 and on the 1830 and 1842 land tax survey registers, it is named as Finney's close and leased by John Smith from Sir James Burdett. There is also an entry on the 1798 register to a plot owned by a Mr Skinner and leased by Sam Finney of Repton. We cannot relate this entry to a plot on a map, but it seems likely that it is the same one.

We know little about Mr Skinner. He may not have much of a Repton connection other than owning some land.

So, assuming the plot is named after them, who were the Finneys and do their occupations tie in with a dock and warehouse? There was a Samuel Finney, a joiner of Willington born 1765, who married Hannah Cheatham there in 1793. We cannot find other references to either of them, except for their 7 children who were born in Repton, 4 of whom died as infants. The youngest was George Finney born in 1813. Like his father, he was also a joiner. There was one other son John who was a carpenter and we think died in 1871 in Ashbourne.

On the 1841 census, George is single and lodging with the Topliss family (Innkeeper at the Red Lion) and it is likely that both his parents, Sam and Hannah (born 1765 and 1768), had died by then and at some point John Smith had taken on Finney's Close. In 1845 George married Charlotte Roberts and they moved into a cottage at Moorfields - top of Well Lane where it joins the modern Chestnut Way. By 1852 there were 3 daughters and one son, John, who became a sawyer in a cooperage and moved to Burton.

The Trent and Mersey canal was complete in 1777 and traffic officially ceased on this stretch of the river in 1805. There could have been local river traffic after that, but the bridge was opened in 1839 and Willington had good docking facilities, including a cheese warehouse. The bridge and its metalled roads would make transport of goods to Repton easier than up the un-metalled lane from Finney's Dock.

Since the Warehouse appears on the 1762 map, and Sam was born in 1765, he either took on an existing building or the lease held by his father. The Repton ferry was capable of taking a coach and six (horses) so carrying goods across the river before the bridge was built would have been fine - and there was the ford of course. But for traffic coming along the river, a dock of some sort must surely have existed somewhere since pre-historic times. However, until about 1705 the main channel was at Repton not Willington and any dock would have been here. So perhaps this dock served river traffic after 1705 and until the canal took the trade about 1805.

John Smith, who was leasing Finney's close in 1831, owned and rented out 4 or 5 houses in Repton and leased much of the land around the Buries and Finney's Close from the Burdett's. He also leased the Hays and surrounding land from Sir George Crewe.

The Buries,

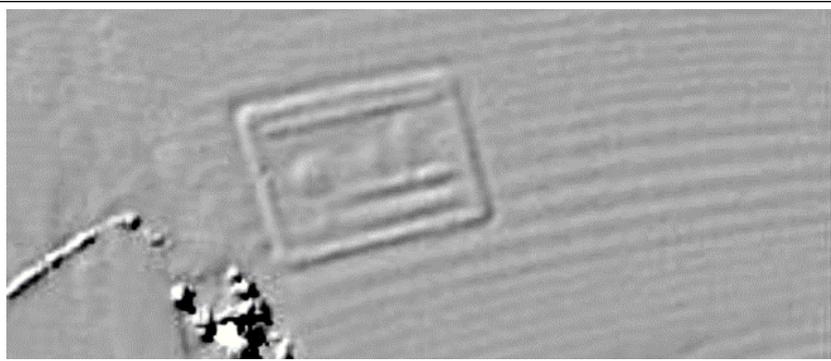
In the last issue of the newsletter, we noted that the purpose and age of the Buries - low earthworks by the Willington Bridge - were still unknown in spite of at least 3 antiquarian excavations and much head scratching. Ideas have ranged through Roman fort, ancient burial site, an Anglo-Saxon, Viking or Medieval refuge for beasts in times of flood, a dock, a pleasure or vegetable plot, the ruins of a fishing family's house and a place for milking sheep or cows.

We concluded at the time, that it was most likely something to do with fishing because of its proximity to the old course of the river and because what few artefacts were found, were dated to the period when the Ryvett fishing family were leasing these waters and fields from the Thacker family. Thomas Thacker had gained the Priory and lands when it was dissolved in 1538.

However:

The Buries consist of a rectangular outer ditch with the soil piled up to form a bank on its inner edge. There is no break to provide an access. Inside are mounds – some rectangular and some circular. Time has obliterated some of the circular mounds which were recorded by Hipkins and others. L shaped stone work was found, but thought to not be the foundations of a wall.

Surprisingly, scrutiny of the Lidar images revealed that the outer ditch of the Buries cuts through the ridge and furrow

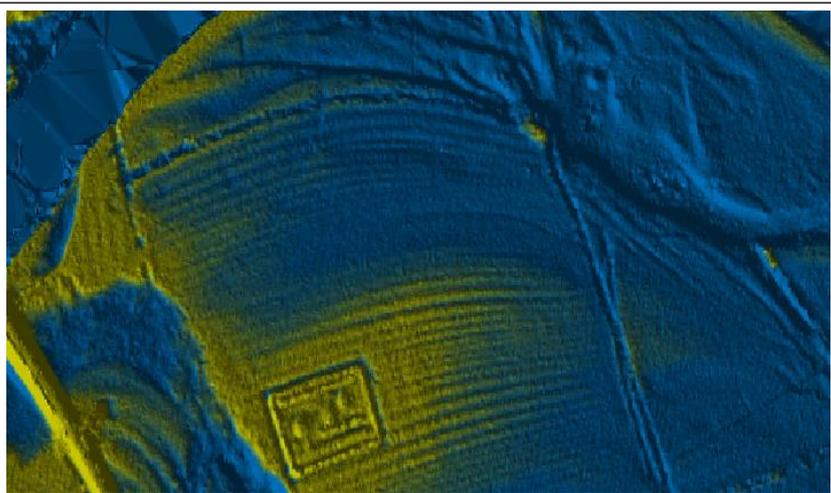


The rectangular mounds look like continuations of the ridge and furrow.

left by strip farming ploughing and the internal rectangular mounds align with the ridge and furrow. So it must post-date the ploughing. The plough strips are narrow, suggesting a relatively late date, and the land may have been given over to pasture after the enclosure award of 1769. However the dates of the artefacts range from 1400s - early 1700s, including a Charles II coin (1660-1685).

Whichever way you choose, they appear to be late medieval or post medieval in date.

Adrian Farnsworth and Paula Whirrity are two local amateur archaeologists and historians who specialise in the interpretation of Lidar images. They processed and studied the data and concluded that the Buries are situated on slightly higher ground and confirmed our view that the internal rectangular mounds were perhaps just enhanced plough ridges.



Yellow indicates a higher level. (Adrian Farnsworth and Paula Whirrity)

Further, they referred us to “Rabbits, Warrens and Archaeology” by Tom Williamson (2007). This explains that until about 1920, rabbit warrens were largely forgotten by archaeologists and more often than not mistaken as burial mounds or similar features. All the known excavations of the Buries, including the last by Auden and Simpson in 1910, presumed that it was a defensive structure or for burials. But the evidence they found did not support that.

However, it does fit with the idea that it was a Clapper – an enclosure containing an artificially constructed rabbit warren for the

protection of breeding does and youngsters. The land around would provide the extended open warren and often artificial “Pillow Mounds” were constructed there to provide burrows. Being on an island would prevent the rabbits from straying and damaging crops and would protect them from predators. On the higher ground they would be less susceptible to flooding – though it’s difficult to see how it could be avoided altogether. The term Buries or Berryes was often used for these enclosures. Maybe it’s a corruption of *burrow* or maybe our earlier etymological research was correct with roots back into old Norse – a hidden or secure place.

Indigenous rabbits did not survive the last ice age, but rabbit fur and meat was valued by the Romans and there is evidence that they re-introduced them. Being continental creatures not well suited to Britain’s weather or countryside, this was not very successful and they did not become part of the wild fauna of the country. The Normans did reintroduce them - the earliest documentary reference being when Drake’s Island in Plymouth Sound was granted to Plympton Priory “with the rabbits” in 1135. These would be domesticated creatures and susceptible to disease and with many predators, it would be some time before they became established in the wild.

Rabbits (coney actually - the term rabbit was originally reserved for juveniles) were an important part of the early economy and prized by the wealthy to the point where rabbit meat was unaffordable to the peasantry. The fur was prized for trimming clothes, and the meat for the pot. Later, the fur was separated from the skin to make “wool” which was felted for the hat trade.

Warrens became status symbols and every priory or notable country house would have one prominently placed. Chatsworth’s was clearly visible from the house and its approach. Lodges were often provided for the Warrener and

sometimes used as hunting lodges too. We know that there was a lodge on Cannon's Meadow which Thacker owned and presumably gained from the priory on its dissolution. So it is possible that the Buries were created by the priory as a food source just as they had built the fish ponds. If so, the artefacts tell us it was quite late in the priory's life.

Rabbits burrow into banks and the main purpose of the pillow mound was to provide an artificial bank of soft soil in which rabbits might dwell. It meant that when they were to be caught, their probable location was known. They were sometimes circular mounds but usually rectangular and often topped by gravel, turfs or stones, or layers of cut



FIG. 2. REMAINS OF STONWORK, LOOKING EAST.
From Auden and Simpson's report.

vegetation to prevent the rabbits escaping that way when "harvested" using ferrets and nets or spring traps. The ridges within our Buries were topped with gravel from the layer just below the normal surface. Often, channels were scooped out of the soil at ground level before the mound was built but since ours seem to be using enhanced plough ridges it is unlikely to be the case here. Sometimes stones were added to provide internal runs and to control exits. An L shaped line of stones were found in the Buries.

We have now also found an item in the Derbyshire Archaeology Journal – volume 124, pages 147 & 8 by G Guilbert (2004) which comes to much the same conclusion about the Buries. Try:

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/daj/volumes/cfm>

So while we do not have a clear date for the Buries, it does seem that they were the breeding enclosure for a wider rabbit warren on the island possibly belonging to the medieval priory but possibly later. We have spotted no evidence of other pillow mounds on the island and usually there would be several. It is possible that since the soil is of silty sands overlaying a layer of gravels, the plough ridges were simply enhanced in places to make pillow mounds and are now difficult to spot.

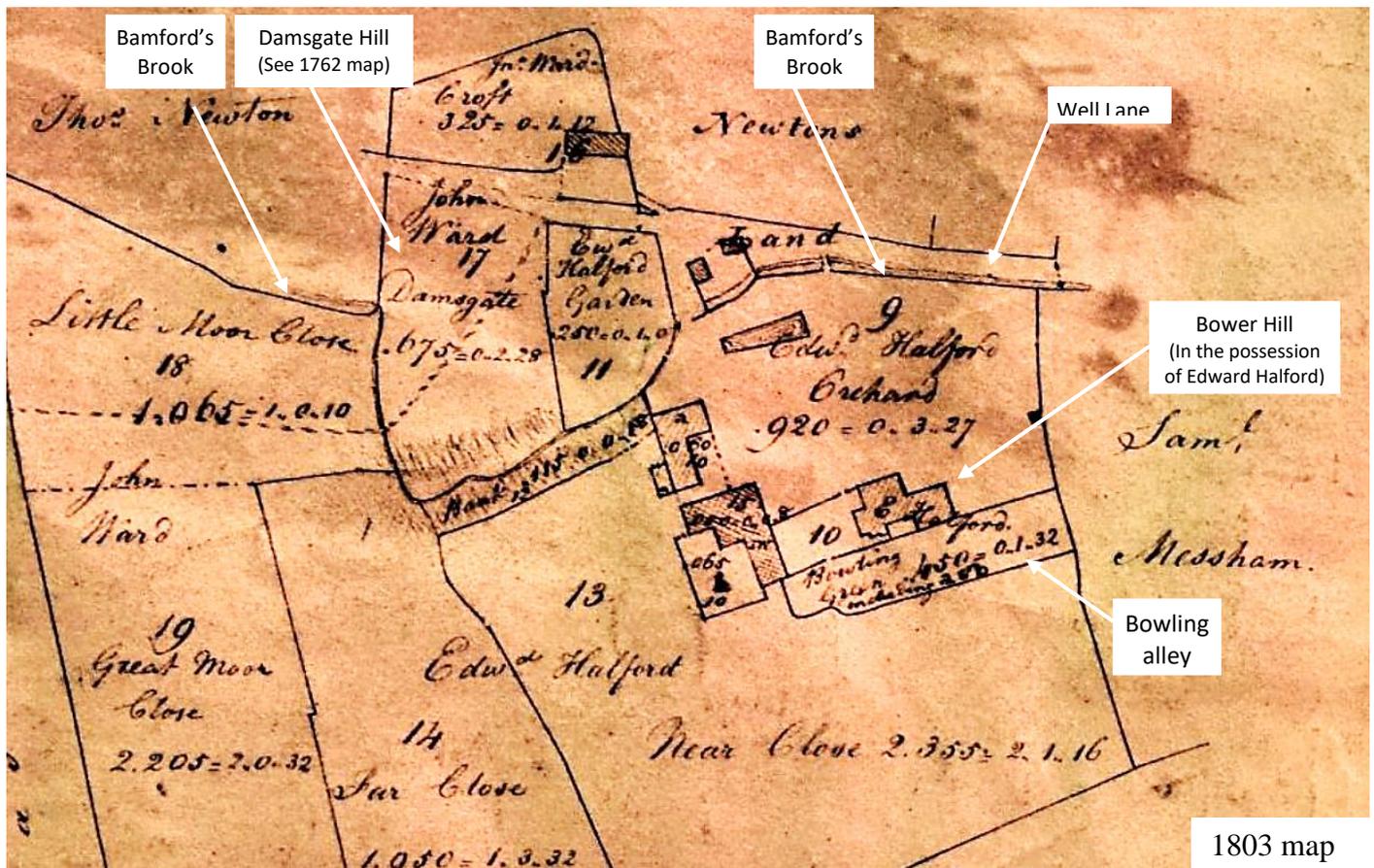
Bower Hill:

A year ago the newsletter included an article about Laura Scraton who was Grandmother to one of our members and who had been in service at Bower Hill. More recently, Charles was researching the Bower family and made the link between the house and a lease from 1654 that referred to a house at that location.

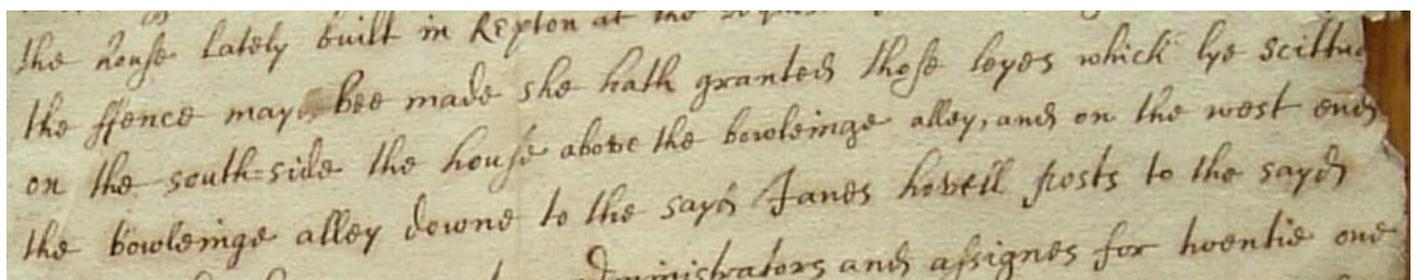
So an effort was made to work out the history of this house and its occupants.



Charles found a map from 1803 showing what has to be Bower Hill (with a bowling green) and also a deed dated 1654 leasing land to Godfrey Thacker from his mother Jane. It refers to land downhill from a point south and above and west of a bowling alley. This fits well with the topography of Bower Hill and the mention of the bowling alley more or less clinches it.



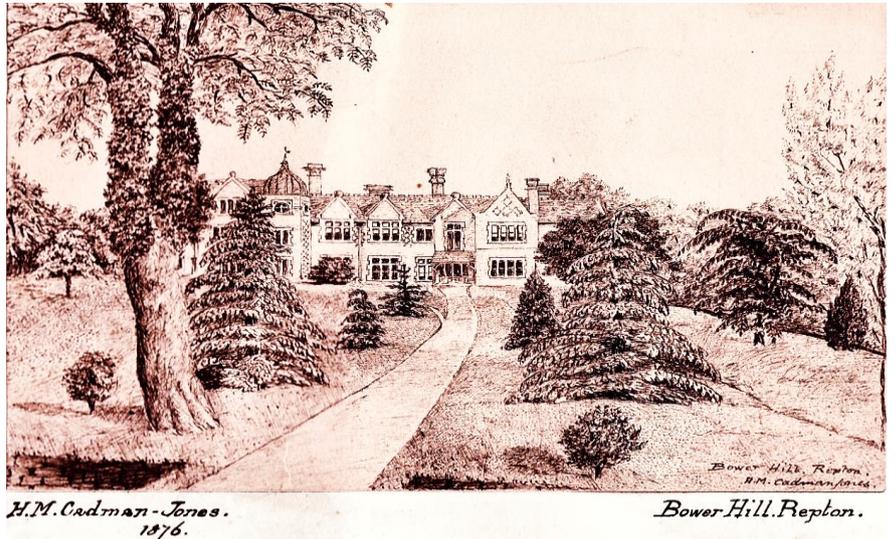
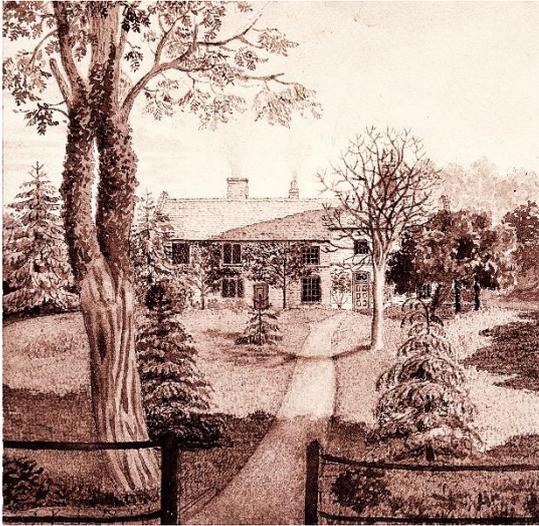
The deed records she was leasing to him, for 25 years, "...grounds lying about the house lately built in Repton at the request of the sayd Godfrey..." at a rate of 6/8d per year payable in two instalments.



"...she hath granted those leyes which lye scitting on the south side the house above the bowling alley and on the west end the bowling alley down to the sayd Janes..."

Godfrey was baptised in Repton in 1624, married Mabel Thomas in Westminster in 1651 so this house was probably built as their marital home. There is a 4 year gap between marriage and their first child, Dorothy, so there may have been others who did not survive. They had 2 other daughters, Mary and Barbara, but there is only a record of Barbara marrying. She married John Salter of Turville in Buckinghamshire in 1692 and they settled there. We have not found a will for Godfrey or Mabel and with no male heirs it is not clear to whom the house would have passed. A common practice was for property to be held in trust by a male relative for the wife and daughters during their life time. Godfrey died in Repton in 1695. Mabel died in Repton in 1705.

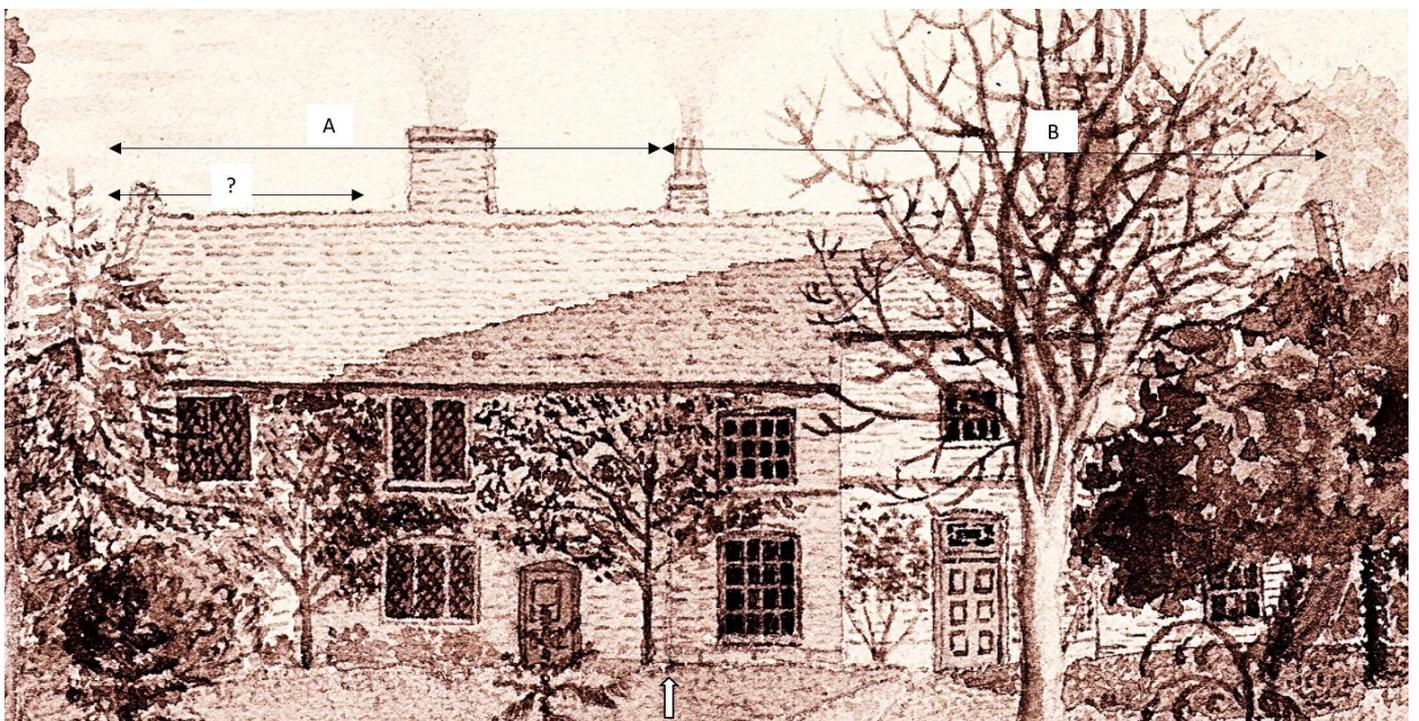
There are two pictures in our archive provided by Peter Plant who was brought up there and now lives at the Walled Garden next door. Lilwen cast her artistic eye over them and confirmed that they are both likely to be by Henry Cadman Jones and we believe they are before and after pictures of two buildings on the same site.



The gardens are very similar and the central pathway up to the house is still visible in the ground today although the modern drive goes around the edge of the garden and in front of the house. The trees in the picture of the newer building look much as in the older one, but are slightly more mature. The top of the drive curves right in the older picture and left in the newer one - the front door is in a different position - but there is a small path off to the left in both versions. It seems that these are of the same site.

So one question is could the earlier one be the original house built for Godfrey Thacker about 1651 and Gothicised about 1876? And another is to wonder if any of it survives in the later building.

Barbara and Keith Foster and Janet Spavold and Sue Brown very kindly accompanied us to visit Bower Hill to guide us in working out just what had been done, when and by whom. Andy and Melissa Cook were very generous with access to the house and with their time showing us around.



Barbara concluded that the early house was probably built in two or possibly 3 phases. Section A, with its diamond paned, stone mullioned windows might date from the 16th or early 17th century. If this was a stand-alone building then it makes sense of the "extra" front door. Fashions emanating from London could take some years to arrive in Derbyshire but the date of this building could easily fit with Godfrey's marriage in 1651.

At the junction with section B (where the arrow is) there is an apparent join in the building. This could be a

downpipe from a gutter, but in that case it would be lead and dark and probably more obvious. Also, above the lower windows is a brick string course that only applies to section B. So Barbara concludes that this is a later 3 bay extension with the centre bay protruding forwards. The windows may be sashed so probably mid - late 17th or early 18th century. She felt the front door with its straight lintel and half light is classic 18th century, but this drawing was produced in the 19th century. Godfrey died in 1695 so it is just possible that he added this extension.

The third section (labelled “?”) with an un-mullioned window above a blank wall might just be part of an earlier long house with labourer’s accommodation above and beasts below.

So it is very likely that this was the house built for Godfrey and later extended as shown.

But does any of it exist within the current structure?



Areas marked 5 are 20th century additions. Areas 2, 3 and 4 are definitely of Victorian date and have bricks 3” x 4 ½” x 9”, possibly machine made and laid in English Bond. It is possible that they were not all built at the exactly same time and there is an interesting parallel with Swarkestone Hall’s pavilion which has Cupola topped towers and a bowling green – but 300 years earlier.

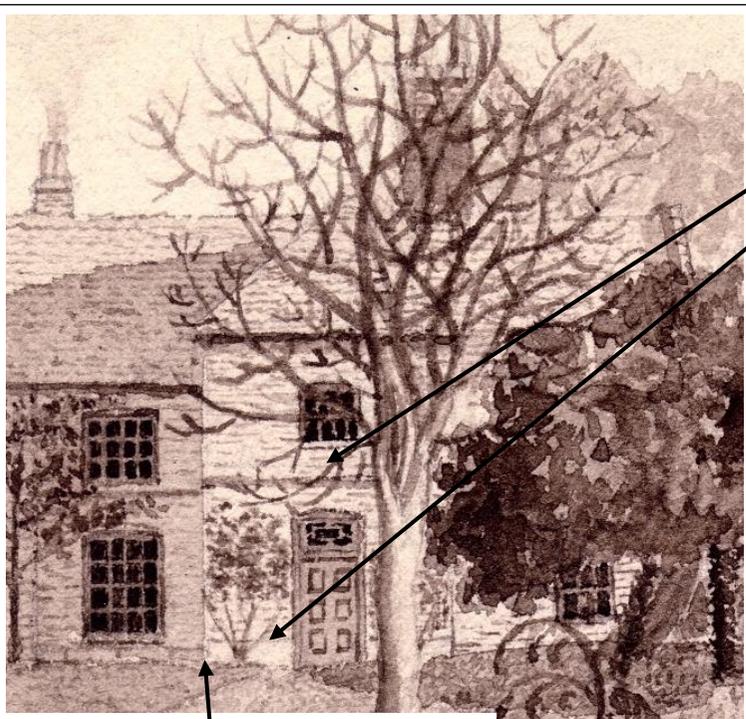
Area 1 is of hand-made bricks of variable sizes some being slightly mis-shapen. Mainly 9” x 2 ¼” thick laid in stretcher bond. This suggests they predate the 1776 Brick and Tile Act although this strictly applied to London and might have taken some time to affect Derbyshire. But it fits with Barbara’s estimate of late 17th century for the 3 bay extension of the original house. Further, there are marked similarities between that bit of the old house and this wing of the new house. (see overleaf).

So it is concluded that the older picture includes the house built for Godfrey and his wife about 1651, that it had a 3 bay extension added a few decades later and this extension remains as part of the house we see today.

We have managed to create a fairly thorough list of owners/occupiers of the house up to the present day from a study of Bower family wills and other documents. When Mabel Thacker died in 1705, the house was bought by Joseph Wilmott of Repton (he married in 1704/5) and then by John Bower who left it to his brother William and it stayed in the family until at least 1803 (but leased out) and seems finally to have been sold in 1829 along with the Bulls Head. In 1841 Rev Joseph Jones was there and his surviving son Henry - a wealthy London Lawyer - inherited it and by 1876 had completely changed its appearance. There is much more we can say and we may cover the history in terms of its occupants in another issue.

Section 1 on the front elevation of the present house is a good match with section B on the earlier house.

The gables were added and the windows changed when the Victorian work was done. The new relieving arch over the lower window has been truncated to fit under the string course and the front door has been moved. The gables are built using the later bricks in English Bond. The string course runs under the porch roof and the central, protruding, bay brickwork is tied into the other two bays indicating they were built as one.



They both consist of a T shape with a protruding centre section. The bays have similar proportions.

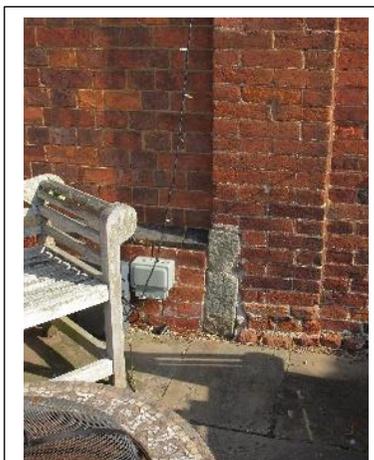
Both have a 3 brick string course and both sit on a stone plinth.

The plinth is missing where the new front door is, but does continue under the east (LH) wall.

It may continue under the west wall and behind the modern extension which seems to have cut into it. It reappears in the west elevation but appears to be more of a facing than a foundation.



Plinth continues under east wall.



Plinth is visible in the west elevation.



Plinth cut into by modern extension.

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 01283 702448 or rvhg@reptonvillage.org.uk or visit our website.

