



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Autumn 2026

Repton Village History Group – reptonvillage.org.uk

Email Reptonvillagehistorygroup@outlook.com

Members updates

Repton Village History Group

We have had a busy time this summer with speakers, archive days and summer visits. Our very next speaker is detailed on the last page of this newsletter which is in October.

The planned speaker for xmas is Ian Morgan on the subject of “**Bolsolver Castle through the ages**”. This is planned for the 16th Dec which is a Wednesday at the village hall starting at 18.30. Please do try and come along as we are trying a different venue following feedback of locations days and times.

It will be followed by non-alcoholic mulled wine and mince pies.

We still plan to use the URC for speakers but more likely on summer nights.

Our archive days were generally well received but would have liked more people through the door to view the vast archive we have. Thank you to the committee for setting up, manning the event and talking to people with their various questions. All monies donated went to the URC for use of their hall, so big Thank you to them.

Our visit to Claymills pumping station in Burton was well attended and we had two great guides who showed their skills and knowledge of the station. We were shown two small Barring engines that were made at Repton, details of which were in the Summer 2026 newsletter.

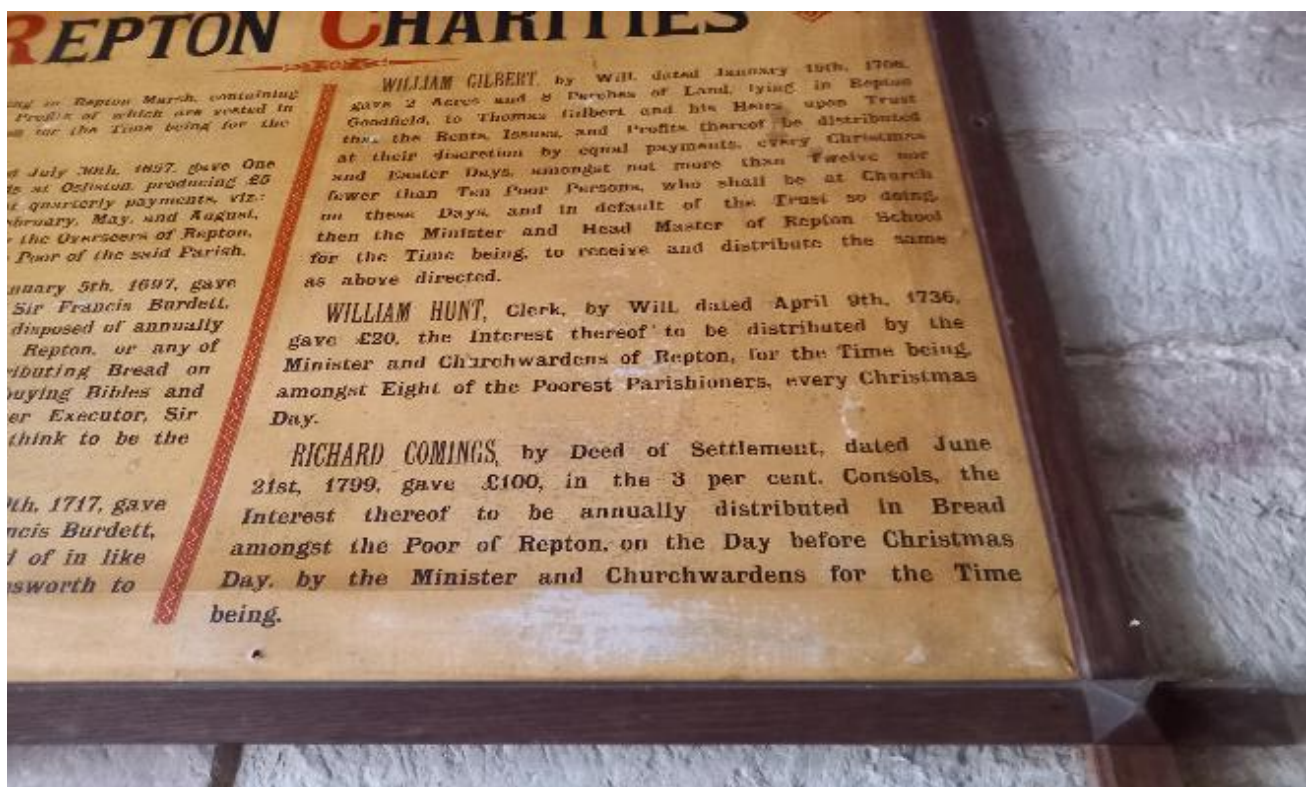
We try nearly every month to place an article within the Village news, and the web pages are updated regularly with new information and newsletters so there is plenty to read.

Since our last newsletter we have a couple of new members so welcome, more the merrier so please spread the word. We need people to make it work in the same token if as members you have stories that we can share, please let us know.

Once again thank you to contributors to the newsletter, especially Charles Proud.

We had a request from a lady at Coleorton Heritage group

William Hunt was the subject person, as you can see his name is on a wooden plaque within St Wystan's church (inner porch), it turns out William was a very generous man.



The story begins with the birth of Thomas Hunt in Repton about 1644, father another Thomas Hunt. The Hunts were a well-established Repton family with numerous documentary references dating back to the 15th century. Unfortunately, the Repton Parish registers are very deficient at this period, only three baptisms are recorded in 1644, so there is no record of his baptism but the Repton School Register records a Thomas Hunt of Repton, b1644, at the school c.1654-1659, who went on to St John's College Cambridge.

The St John's records note a Thomas Hunt admitted April 3rd 1659; born Repton; school Repton under Mr Ullock; matriculated 1659; B.A. 1662.

The Clergy Database is very helpful noting:

1662 subscription to the act of uniformity by person already

in office; location Repton

1663 ordained priest at Lichfield Sep 1663

1666 appointed Rector of Kimcote, Leics. Oct 1666

1671 appointed preacher Kimcote, Leics. Aug 1671

1696 death while Rector of Kimcote, Leics Oct 1696

We know that Thomas is father to our William as the Repton School registers record:

William Hunt, son of Thomas Hunt of Kimcote, clerk; 1676 –

Founder of Hunt's Charity. By will dated April 9th, 1736, he bequeathed to

the Vicar & Churchwardens of Repton £20, the interest to go to 8

of the poorest inhabitants every Christmas Day.

We have yet to find William's birth, but he followed his father to St John's where records note:

William Hunt: admitted aged 17 February 1684/5; son of Thomas,

clerk; born Cottingham, Notts.; school Uppingham; matriculated

1685; B.A. 1688/9; M.A. 1695; ordained priest Lincoln September 1690;

Rector of Whitwick 1691-1700; Rector of Coleorton 1700-1727

Returning to Thomas, his first wife was a Catherine who died as 'Mrs Catherine Hunt' in Kimcote in 1684. I have yet to find a record of the marriage. They had at least 8 children of which 4 died young. Thomas married again in 1690 to Anne Lucas and they had two further children. Thomas died in 1696 and administration was granted to his relict Anne. His will has survived and in it he bequeathed 'unto William Hunt my son all my books, papers and my three rings with one silver fork'. It's likely that some of the books in the Coleorton Rector's library donated by William had once belonged to his father.

The one area I haven't been able to elucidate is his property in Repton bequeathed to his brother John in his will. John certainly existed as 'John Hunt my son ten shillings to buy him a silver spoon' is noted in Thomas' will. I had assumed William had inherited the Repton property from Thomas but there is no mention of this in Thomas' will & the residual beneficiaries are his sisters Mary & Catherine. Perhaps he inherited the property from a Hunt relative in Repton.

One possibility is that William's will is referring to Repton properties he held as one of the trustees under the terms of the will of the 1732 will of John Fisher of Foremark. Was the transfer to brother John Hunt as the new trustee? Seems unlikely.

Our William shall we call him was rector at Coleorton for many years thus the interest from Coleorton

Heritage group, later in his will he bequeaths his library of books to the Coleorton rectory. The books, about 700, are in Nottingham Uni Special Collections library.

Whilst viewing his very long Will, one can see how far reaching he was across the country and also entitling the poor in many occasions, so along with his generosity he was very compassionate.

It would be great to see where the Hunt family may have lived in Repton but alas, we still need further research into this. With also the age possibly the Hunt family home could be well gone.

The Birch Portraits.



The portraits above are those of Charles Birch and his wife Christina who, with their three children, lived briefly in Repton in the 1760's. Charles Birch was born in 1729 in Bakewell, the son of Jonathan Birch, Vicar of Bakewell and his wife Elizabeth. Nothing is known of his education or medical training but by 1756 he was a doctor on St Kitts in the West Indies, and while there met & married Christina Frye, the daughter of the Governor of Montserrat. Two sons, John Edward & Thomas Erskine were born on St Kitts but the family returned to England about 1764 settling in Repton, living at Bower Hill House in Well Lane. The family already had Repton connections with Charles' two brothers, John Neville & Thomas both attending Repton School. Charles & Christina's third child Christina Ann was baptised in St Wystan's in August 1765. The portraits were probably painted whilst Charles and Christina lived in Repton but the artist is unknown.

It appears the family's years in Repton were not happy ones & Christina returned to her parents on St Kitts leaving Charles & the children in Repton. Charles died in Repton in 1768 a broken man. His grandson, William Charles Macready, Christina Ann's son, noted the following in his diary on a visit to St Wystan's in 1846.

At last I have visited the church where she was baptised, and looked upon the trees, the fields, the river, and the houses that her infant eyes looked on. I descended to the crypt, a very curious round-arched vault, with a sort of Doric or Etruscan-looking pillars, entwined with a roll, and supporting round arches, the centre space seeming loftier than those at the four angles. And she was an infant here, and here her father died in a state of derangement from the ruin of his property, through the treachery or misfortune of the agent to whom his savings were entrusted, at least thus I understood from my dear mother.

Charles had arranged for his young children to be brought up by his brother the Rev John Neville Birch of Leasingham, Lincs. Little is known of the life of Charles' son John Edward Birch but his brother

Thomas Erskine Birch led an adventurous life joining the revolutionary navy in the War of American Independence and becoming an American citizen. He died in Kentucky in 1821 after a varied career as teacher, clergyman and author.



The Birch family's stay in Repton may have been brief but the daughter born there was to become a successful actor and the mother of one of the greatest actors of the 19th century stage. She was only 3 when her father died and there is no record of her life in the house of her uncle John Neville Birch. She reappears in the records in Manchester in 1786 as a 21-year-old playing opposite an older Irish actor William Macready in Sheridan's *The Rivals* and the pair were married later that year in that city. Christina's career flourished, that of her actor manager husband's less so, but she died at only 38 in 1803. She had eight children and her son William Charles Macready born in 1793 had a long and hugely successful stage career, as both actor and manager, playing to packed houses all over Britain and the United States.

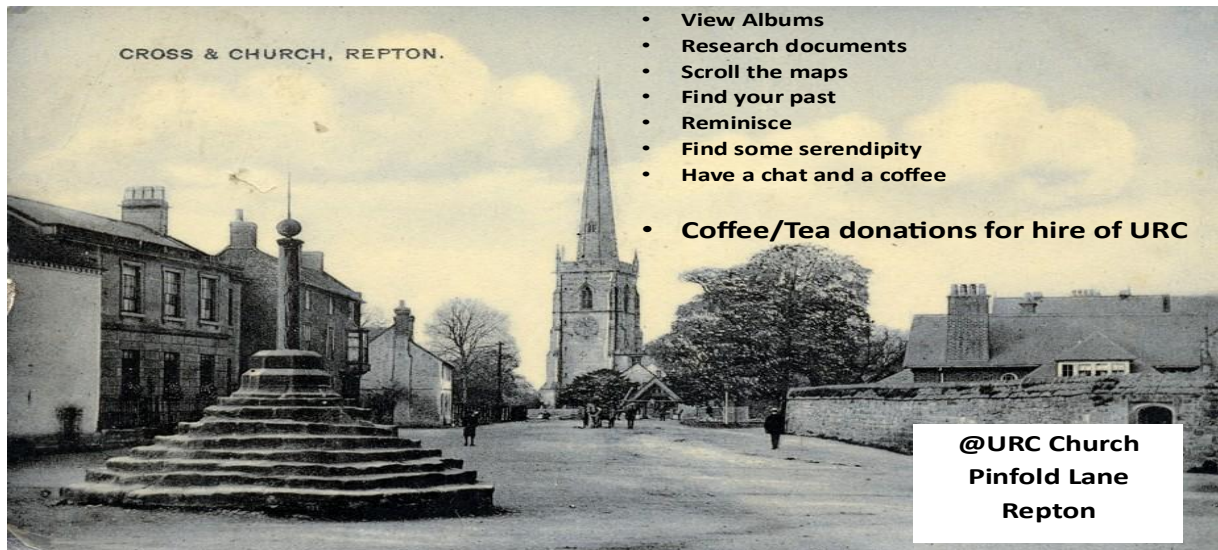
Christina Ann Macready

Mr Bernard O'Neil of Florida has written a detailed history of the Birch & Macready families, published in 1998, and much of the material in this article is drawn from that volume. The three family portraits are still held by the Macready family and my special thanks to Mr Nicholas Macready for providing excellent photographs of the originals.

Archive days summary.

Repton archive days Saturday 12th Sept 2026

10.30am - 1.30pm Free Entry



Repton Village History Group Archive Days

RVHG conducted three archive days at the URC church at Pinfold lane this summer. We had lovely support from the URC not just by using their facilities but on the last day we had the pleasure of Cakes and Coffee made by the ladies.

The first day was well attended with one man coming from Northumberland and another couple coming from Matlock to investigate some of their relatives, they were very pleased when I walked them over to the old cottage where the ladies grandmother possibly lived.

The second day wasn't so well attended as it was in the middle of the summer holidays so maybe many people away. This time we had a couple from St Albans.

The third and last occasion was combined with the URC members, this was quite well attended and hopefully some monies from teas/cakes towards the upkeep of the URC.

The displays and boxes of material are only a small proportion of our vast archive, so feel free to ask questions and we would love to help, even better become a member and view our website at Reptonvillage.org.uk or contact us on reptonvillagehistorygroup@outlook.com

Regards

Tim Norman

Here is a Sestina poem from Shelagh Waine one of our members, you may have seen it before in Friends of Parish church newsletter, but still interesting and complex, thank you Shelagh

Formal Poem (Sestina)

39 lines

The **sestina** is a complicated poetic form of six verses of six lines each, plus a final one of three lines. The same six words must be used in each six-line verse, but in a different specified order. (I had to write out the pattern carefully before I started). All six key words must be used in the final verse.

In my poem, the first verse simply describes the church.

Verse two refers to the first Christian missionary, a monk named Cedd, who arrived in the seventh century after the Mercian King married a Christian princess from Northumbria. He was soon replaced by his brother, the better-known St. Chad, but Cedd was the first.

Verse three refers to the Vikings and the mass burial in the vicarage garden. (I know that the warriors' bones are actually in a lab somewhere, but I allowed myself a little poetic licence!).

Verse four refers to the arrival of the Augustinian canons of Repton Priory in the twelfth century, followed by the closing of the Abbey under Henry VIII and its subsequent destruction by Gilbert Thatcher.

Verse five refers in general terms to e.g. the Black Death and the Civil War, as well as all the other plagues and wars which affected people in Repton.

Verse six is about Covid and the lockdown.

Verse seven simply sums it all up.

Witness (St. Wystan's Church, Repton)

The rough touch of the ancient, weathered stone
The spire a prayer, piercing the wide blue sky
The silent river churns its mud-brown way
Around the graveyard - flowers over bone.
Fourteen centuries of dead here lie
For just as long, the living came to pray.

Monks from the far North settled here to pray
Carved a symbolic cross, first wood, then stone.
Set upright, it was there to give the lie
To pagan worship of the earth and sky.
The sacred oaks cut down, idols of bone
Destroyed, Cedd preached the Christian way.

Norsemen in beak-prowed longships beat their way
Upriver. These men did not come to pray
But conquer: axes cleaved the living bone.
No veneration of the ancient stone
Burnt, roofless hovels open to the sky.
Beneath the soil, the warriors' bones still lie.

More holy men came, died, and overlie
Those who preceded them upon their way.
Till their church too lay open to the sky.
Another faith no longer let them pray.
One man took down the abbey, stone by stone
As if to drain its life, its blood and bone.

The parish church remained as if, like bone
It framed life in the village – those who lie
Beneath the earth, marked only by a stone,
Those facing pain and hardship on their way.
Through plague and wars, the people came to pray
Under the spire, still reaching to the sky.

Plague came to us: from air beneath the sky
Breathed in: a cough which seemed to reach the bone.
A wooden churchyard cross let people pray
When doors were closed. The new plague's dead here lie
Ashes among the trees the modern way.
Our lives are measured out in wood and stone.

High in the sky the cloud-flocks peaceful lie.
Far above blood and bone, they make their way
Below, we mortals pray in ancient stone.

Henry Robert Crewe married at St Mary's Church Newton Solney

I found an extract from Colin Kitchen book of "The Squire of Calke Abbey" The journals of Sir George Crewe 1815-1834 and interesting wedding only that it happened at St Mary's Newton Solney rather than at Calke.
Apparently, the church at Calke Abbey was undergoing refurbishment so it was not available, so Newton Solney had the delight of holding a quite prestigious wedding for the Crewe family.

On Tuesday 25th September 1827

Eldest brother of Sir George Crewe, Henry Robert Crewe married Miss Frances Caroline Jenney
Daughter of William Jenney (The married couple were cousins)

It was a happy day to us all- very happy in as much as the union was not only approved of all parties related to us on both sides, but because it was formed upon grounds which gave us every reason to hope the blessing of God will attend it.

100 sovs in specie.— —(10 subs.) 4 yrs (Arthur) .. 1 old, 6 yrs..... 2 half-a-neck. 10 sovs added, for e heats.—(4 subs.) fansfield, 6 ... (Farlow) 3 1 1 1 2 dr yrs..... 2 dr	JAMES GOWIN, ESQ. OF CULSTON. On the 18th inst. at Aston, Birmingham, John Booth, M.D. to Adele, daughter of Samuel Galton, Esq. On the 13th inst. at the Friends' Meeting House, Kendal, Charles Fox, Esq. of Wellington, to Miss Sarah Crewdson, daughter of William D. Crewdson, Esq. banker. On the 25th inst. at Newton Solney, by the Rev. P. French, M.A. the Rev. Henry Robert Crewe, second son of the late Sir Henry Crewe, bart. of Calke Abbey, Derbyshire, to Frances Caroline, eldest daughter of Wm. Jenney, esq. of Bladon Wood, near Burton-on-Trent. On the 24th instant, at Ashbourn, Derbyshire, by the Rev. Samuel Shipley, Mr. James Morris, draper, to Miss Mary Ann Whiting, both of that place. DIED. Yesterday morning, at his residentiary house, in the Close, Lichfield, the Venerable Chas. Buckeridge, D.D. Canon Residentiary of Lichfield, and Archdeacon of Coventry. aged 74.	CHEADLE 8 <i>Freehold Commercial</i> <i>Market House, situ</i> <i>half way between L</i> <i>ter,</i> TO B BY PRIVATE C (Lately occup LOT 1. A I.L. that o CIAL IN ket-House, known as t the town of Cheadle : extensive stabling, loc entire yard, with gatev warehouses, and all oth buildings belonging to The above Premises i in good repair, and accommodation fo
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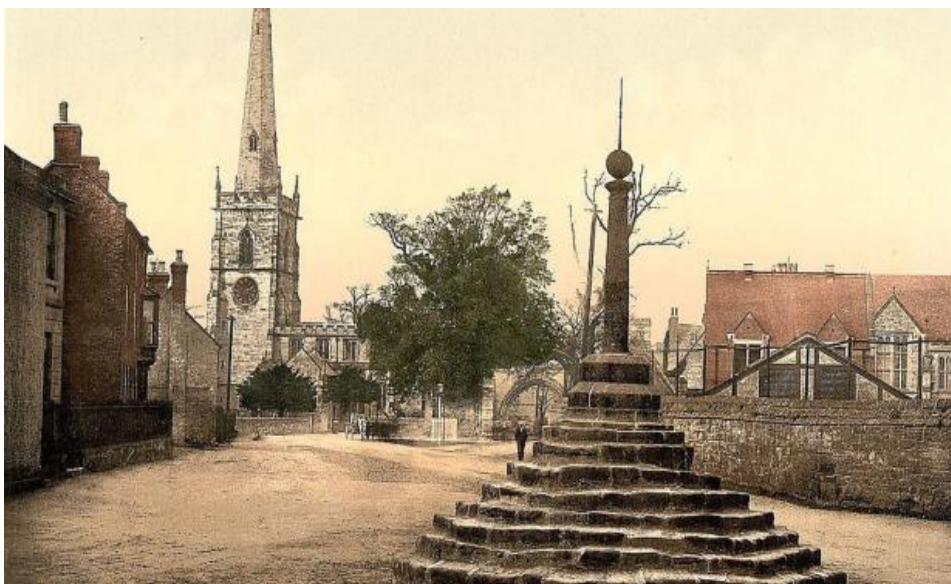
The Repton Cross

For hundreds of years the Repton cross has been and still is one of the main focal points around the village and indeed the local area. This article is not about trying to prove its use or its birth date but one of a few facts, stories, and possibly myths, all of which are most interesting.

Let's just discuss crosses in general then concentrate on our cross.

In very early times probably early man people would often lay two sticks of wood in a criss cross shape on the ground, ie X marks the spot. Often used as a marker for direction, a meeting point or to say you've been there. This is the simplest and oldest symbols used by man. When we want to mark a spot on a map, we often use an X on it, sometimes people who are unable to write their names put their mark in the form of an X. Very often the sticks could be replaced by stones in the same format and maybe these stones grew as more folk passed through.

Crosses could be grouped into many categories one of religious crosses, preaching crosses, market crosses, commemorative crosses, travelling crosses and Eleanor crosses. Of course, many of our crosses serve more than one function. These functions are complex and too detailed for this article, but I will try and give some examples of each.



I think most people would agree that the cross is one of the most photographed or drawn focal points within the village and appears in many articles, postcards, pictures, drawings and historian articles.

Around the country there are many hundreds of types of crosses, almost certainly thousands in the earlier days, many of the disappeared crosses have been removed, repositioned, eroded or destroyed.

In this postcard above, the Repton cross has no extended roundabout as it only had to cater for the odd horse and cart but nowadays it is a thoroughfare for much traffic, trucks often damaging the fabrication through vibration or indeed impact. If you've ever visited Bonsall village you will find a market cross that looks like the Repton cross in design (worth a visit).



The Bonsall cross looks very similar however it has more steps the remains of what looks like the original shaft and cross with a very eroded face below the cross, like Repton it is fairly central within in the village and almost certainly catered for the same functions as a market cross and religious gathering, it is also neighbored by a public house and would have been a wonderful gathering/meeting point. The local church is just up the hill. Some of the stones are most certainly replacements but they don't seem to suffer with so much traffic as the Repton's cross. As you can see from the photo some of the cross seems to be now covered as the road grows in height due resurfacing and it looks like they have resisted building a larger roundabout around it.

Here below is an example where a cross has been repositioned and reduced in size, to keep it for prosperity and of the villages past and it is not far from Repton as in Ticknall churchyard.

We probably can only guess as to where the original cross would have been but almost certainly around the main street of Ticknall, it's a wonderful little cross and very nice that it has not disappeared or been lost. The shaft and top are very weather eroded but very tactile and there always seems a luring feeling to sit about it. Not all crosses have a circular base, maybe square, octagonal and even have a covering like a roof like that of Abbott Bromley. Or one with two stories and an external staircase like the one at Wymondham in Norfolk.



Whatever you read on the web or through books and articles no one can quite agree with the date of the Repton Cross, they are very educated guesses using information we already have, design uses and archeological remains found around them. If only we could pick it up like a giant chess piece and dig down to see if there are any archeological clues, maybe the odd coin or a bone fragment to carry out DNA analysis.



Here is one with two stories and an external staircase, it is at Wymondham in Norfolk. Built in 1617–1618 to replace an earlier structure destroyed in the Great Fire of Wymondham in 1615. Now used as a Tourist centre, I could have used a more modern photo, but I think this is great in black and white with the coverage being used for parking one's bike. I need to visit it as it looks wonderful, but we do have one similar but not so tall in Abbots Bromley.

If you look into some name places and street names there is sometimes clues to its name, I'm originally from Leicester and we had a cross before my time at High cross street, now just marked with an X marks the spot in the ground and a more modern but old cross at the bottom of High Street.

There is no such thing as a typical cross, it is very rare to find two crosses which are alike. The basic pattern is a block which is at times set on steps, from which a shaft leads up to the knop, above which is the head. Each of these features could be varied in many ways to suit the site, the use for which the cross was intended or the plans of the designer. Crosses erected for the same purpose may differ in design.

Preaching Crosses

These crosses were used to preach over many centuries. The early Christian missionaries spread their message at simple crosses before the erection of churches. There is a very large cross at Hereford.

This preaching cross at Hereford stands behind the almshouse originally known as Coningsby hospital. The cross was used by the Black Friars who went to Hereford about 1280 and built the Priory of which remains stand nearby. It has a roof supported by six pillars forming arches which are now railed in but are believed to have been open before restoration in the nineteenth century. A central shaft has a bench within the shelter and then rises to support the roof and continues to bear a simple cross head – the upper shaft and cross head are nineteenth century restoration.



Market Crosses

For many centuries the weekly or fortnightly market was one of the most important events of the countryside, because it provided the main opportunity for farmers and others to sell their produce and to buy articles they needed.

Often Tolls were collected as this was a convenient location within the village.

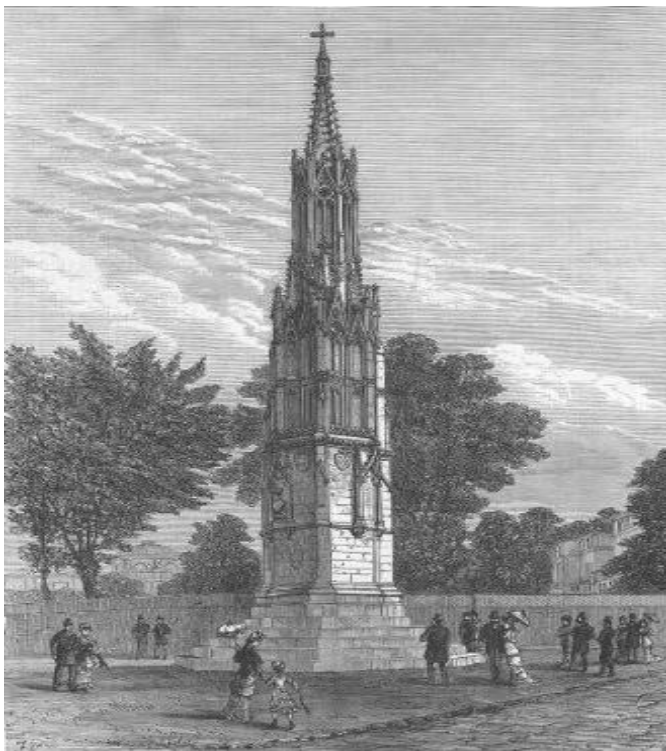
The first crosses were of the shaft on steps variety, but in time the advantages of some protection from the weather for the market folk and for the toll collectors became evident and canopies were built, this led to many variations in design although the name Market cross was used some large crosses with a canopy were sometimes named as a market hall.

Repton certainly had its market around the cross area and spilled towards the church end utilizing the space, often the Statutes fair were held there to bring joy and merriment to the local people.

Commemorative crosses

The erection of memorial stones can be traced back to the earliest times. A few of the early crosses covered with carvings are believed to have been erected as memorials and some have inscriptions confirming this.

There is a large memorial cross at Ashby de la Zouch, near Bath Street, it is referred to as the Loundon Monument, it was designed in 1877 (so not so old) and is designed in the style of an Eleanor cross.



Travelling crosses

Often a cross look like a permanent feature but in fact there are several crosses which have travelled about quite a lot. Many crosses in churchyards were preserved when threatened with demolition. Town crosses were particularly liable to demolition when improvements were being made, especially for road and traffic management, some found a haven elsewhere, but many were lost. Often information also about these crosses could have been lost.

Eleanor crosses

Some of the best-known crosses in England are the Eleanor crosses, partly because of their romantic associations and because they were built almost regardless of expense.

Queen Eleanor died at Harby in Nottinghamshire on 28th November 1290, and King Edward 1st decided to erect a series of memorial crosses along the route of the funeral procession to London, one at each place the coffin halted for the night. It is believed that there were twelve of these crosses at Lincoln, Grantham, Stamford, Geddington, Hardingstone, Stony Stratford, Woburn, Dunstable, St Albans, Waltham, West Cheap, and Charing London. If you line up some of these places up on a map, they are not a direct route to London, but I believe the idea was also to build in important and populated towns. Unfortunately, now many of these crosses have disappeared.

Summary, so we have looked at types of crosses and their uses, in the next newsletter of Winter 2026, I will look more deeply into the Repton cross and endeavor to place some dates, its uses, the stories and possibly myths around it.

Our next talk has slightly changed as it is in a different location on a different day and different start time. Herbs , Plants and Protection in the Medieval Period.

