

Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Autumn 2015



Its feeling autumnal so it must be time for the seasonal newsletter...

The programme now runs up to September 2016:

- October 20th Arnold Burston - "The Mosleys and Rolleston on Dove".
- November 17th Richard Stone - "Folk Tales & Festivities"
- December 15th Social with buffet and Bob Neill's "Box of Bits".
- January 19th Shirley Horton - "Just another one for the road - part II"
- February 16th Richard Stone - "The River Trent"
- March 15th Robert Mee - "Derbyshire Castles"
- April 19th Keith Blood - St Oswald's, Ashbourne. Oswald was killed by our King Penda. His brother, King Oswy, got his own back 10 years later.
- May 17th Members 10 minute talks followed by our AGM.
- June 21st Archive and display evening.
- July/August Visits: Suggestions so far are Papplewick Pumping Station and Sion House (Burton)
- September 20th Alan Hiley - History of the Trent Motor Traction company.

All meetings are at 7.30pm prompt in Repton Village Hall Askew Grove, Repton (DE65 6GR)

A Thank You to Richard Wain, Chris Pegg and Gillian Hartley for their excellent contributions to our recent members evening. Richard discussed the Old Trent Water and some riverside structures, Chris gave us Part I of a talk on Woodville and Gillian's photographs made an excellent slide show. Thank you.

This year's summer visits:

In July, John Kidd led our visit to the Church of The Holy Angels at Hoar Cross. It is a very high Anglican Church completed in 1876 by the Hon. Emily Meynell Ingram as a memorial to her husband, it sits on a wooded ridge close by Hoar Cross Hall, overlooking the local countryside. It is built in a very traditional style, but because it is relatively young, its fabric is in immaculate condition and presents an idea of what many of our much older churches might once have looked like. John Betjeman described it as "great architecture; original, well massed, well sited, well detailed; very English".

Beautifully detailed and elaborate inside, it has a wonderful set of carvings of the stations of the cross, an organ originally built for Bangor Cathedral in 1779 and 6 heavy bells. Our guide - aged 97 - provided an excellent tour and was supported by other members of the church who provided very welcome tea and biscuits.

Our August visit was to Stoneywell - a new National Trust property in Leicestershire opened in February this year. Built to the design of Ernest Gimson in 1899 it was one of 3 Arts and Crafts cottages built close by in the Charnwood Forest for members of the Gimson family. Stoneywell remained in the family for over 100 years and was acquired - complete with furniture, gardens and woodlands by the National Trust in 2013.

As proponents of the Arts and Crafts style, Gimson and his project manager Detmar Dole created a solid and comfortable looking house nestling into the steep and craggy granite hillside. Surrounded behind by steep slopes, it achieves a remarkably light and airy feel, in spite of necessarily small windows, by being whitewashed throughout. Following a serious fire, the thatched roof was replaced by graduated local slates and more large pieces of rough hewn slate form lintels of most of the downstairs doors and windows and some of the internal stair steps. The staircase to the second floor main bedroom is a steep and narrow, left-handed spiral staircase. Intended as a summer residence for Sydney Gimson, water was pumped up from a sump fed by a stream and into buckets which were then carried up to the house. When Basil eventually inherited the house, electricity was installed with an electric pump. It lacks the heating and insulation to make it comfortable in winter, but it has 5 bedrooms and there is much evidence of younger members of the family living there. All of the furniture bears the hallmarks of the Arts and Crafts movement and is beautiful to look at, practical in use and extremely well made. It is decorated and furnished as in the 1950s but still with William Morris fabrics throughout.



Photo by Chris Colbourne

Walks n Talks:

We have now completed the series of 5 walks and talks around the historic core of the village for Village Hall funds with an extra one in July to accommodate a specific booking. They have all been full or thereabouts with some being significantly oversubscribed. We did the walk and talk, the church provided and operated the projector and the WI served up tea, coffee and excellent cake.

We have had a surprising number of additional requests for these walks - Hilton and Marston History Group, Derby Photographic Society and, yet to come, the 41 Club and Swarkestone Sailability,

The Cross: Although it might not result in anything happening very quickly in terms of restoration, it does seem that it now has an official owner in the council. This means that resources can be allocated and grants sought for its repair.

Milton Blacksmiths: Work to tidy up an area opposite the village hall resulted in finding the old blacksmiths shop. With some tenacity they got through a modern concrete layer to unearth the original floor. Later it was used as a stable with, reputedly, a horse in one half and a donkey in the other. One suggestion is that the replacement WWI memorial could go there. The part of the original memorial bearing the names broke up when being moved many years ago, but a press article revealed that it was identical to the one at Ingleby. However an additional name - J L Malpass - was added later to the Ingleby memorial so a decision has to be made whether to add him to the new Milton one.

Late news: Local Archaeologists Janet Spavold and Sue Brown came and looked at the site and concluded that it was late medieval and probably originally a cottage with a hearth - still visible as a hole in the floor full of burned material

Family History enquiries: We continue to receive requests for help with family history research. For those people who have already got back a long way, there is little we can add except locating graves and some birth, death and marriage information. However we are currently working with the Compton family who are researching the Woods, Smithards, Thorps and Bartons. Joseph Barton was the steeplejack who had to be rescued by his little daughter Bessie after showing off by changing into a new suit of clothes at the top of the steeple. His access rope slipped and he was stuck till she came to his rescue. We are also looking into the Smedley family and the Poxons.

Archaeology: Using the DCC granted PC and some clever software, we had confirmed the likely location of the Tithe Barn. Keith and Barbara Foster of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society brought resistivity survey kit and we surveyed a grid of the entire area. We were expecting (hoping) to find traces of the foundation ditches left from robbing out the stone walls - they get filled with topsoil which has different electrical characteristics to the natural ground. In fact there were areas of very high resistance and when Keith had processed the results on his PC it became clear that we had probably found a hard floor. Barbara pointed out that this was typical of the centre sections of tithe barns - where the wagons came in and where the winnowing would take place. What is needed now is two more resistance surveys - pseudo sections - and then perhaps even a couple of test pits if the owner is happy about that.



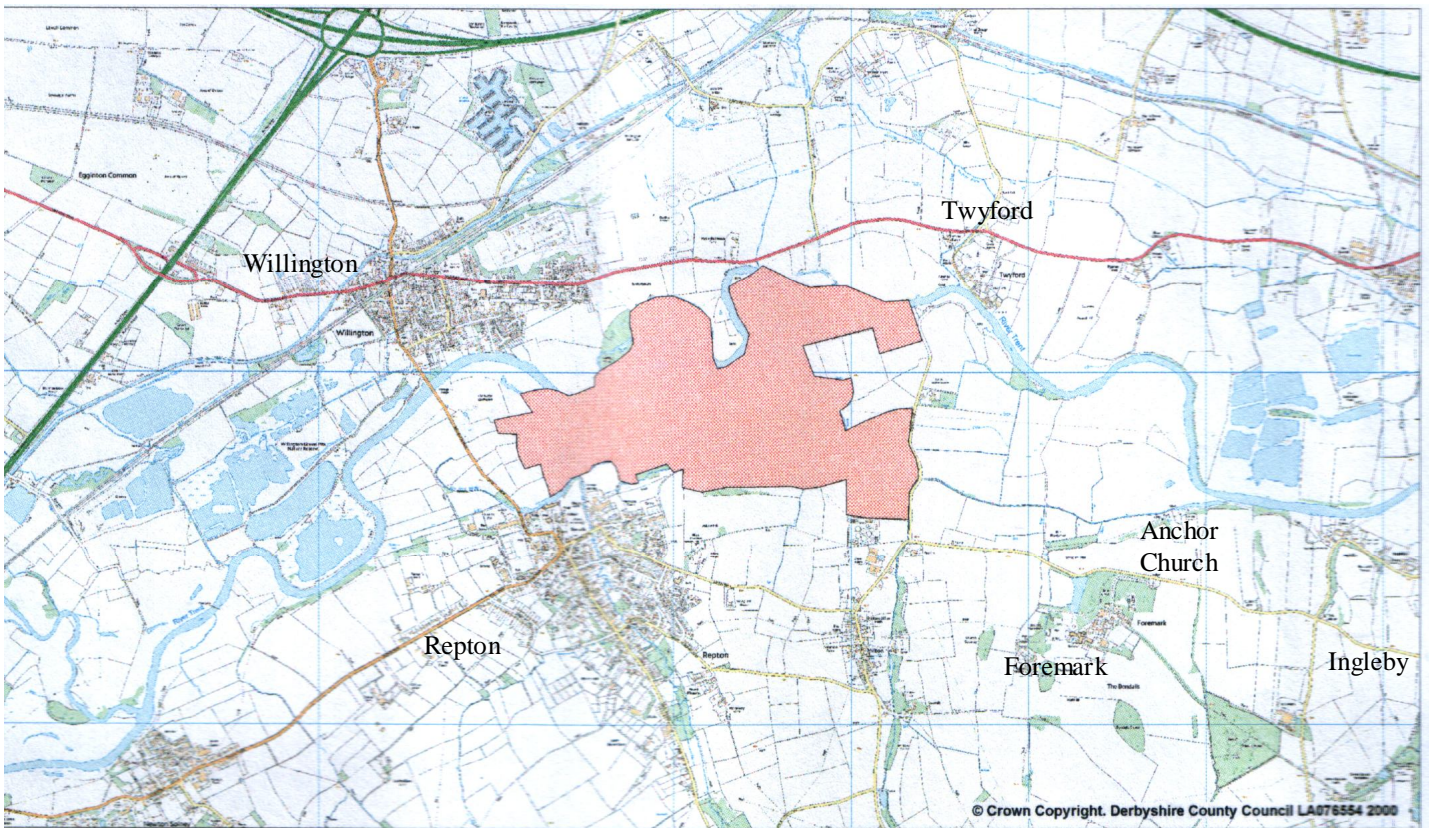
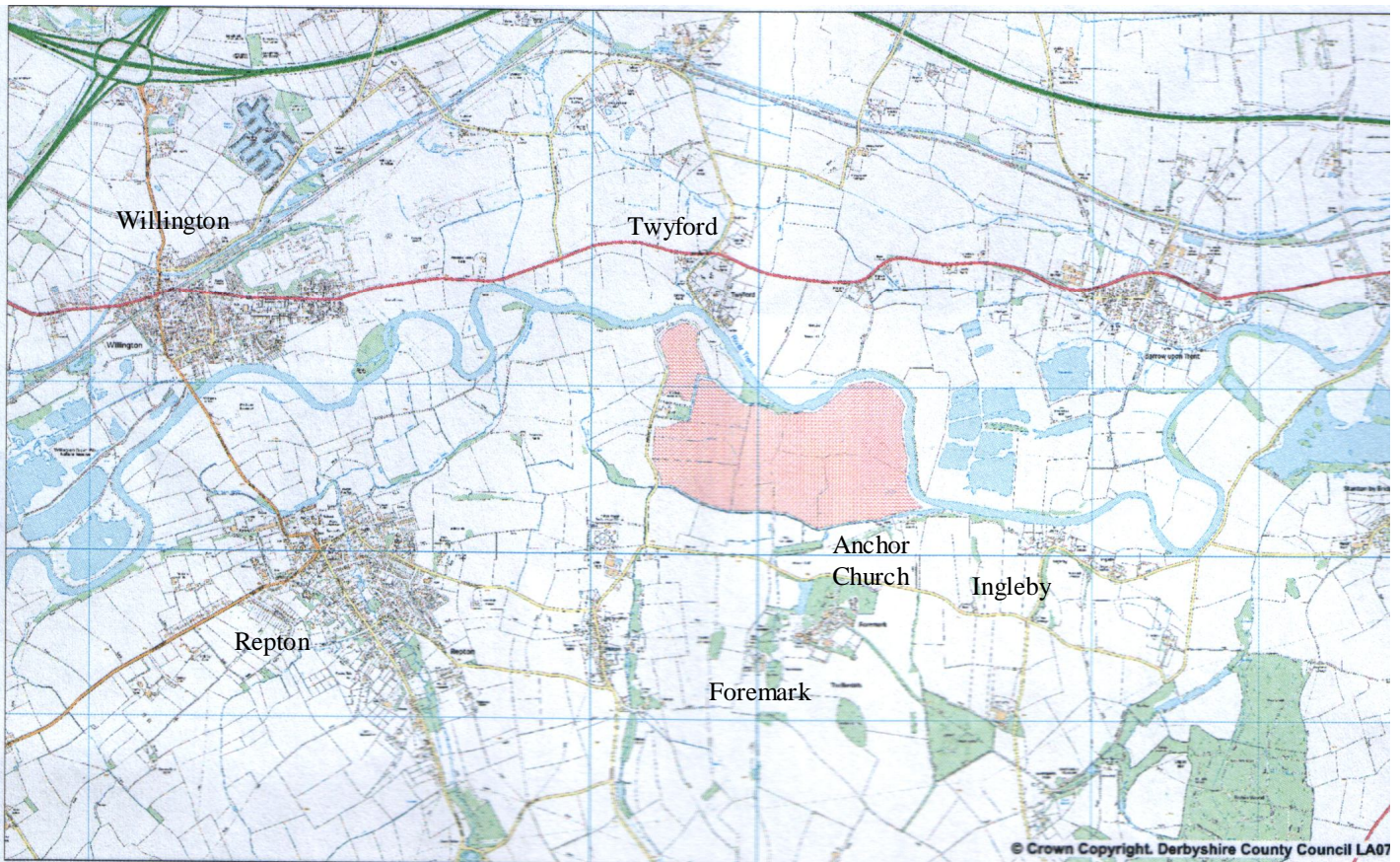
Setting out the grid



Keith, Andy, Barbara & Martin

Mineral extraction plans:

DCC have started consultation on their next mineral plan - a statutory requirement. Derbyshire provides way above its proportional share of aggregates: limestone from massive - but well hidden - quarries in the north and sand and gravel from the Trent Valley. They are now seeking responses to their planning approach and on the possible extraction areas. Two of the areas affect us directly. Adjacent, they run from Anchor Church right through nearly to Willington bridge. They are on the south (our) side of the river and access via the local roads is unthinkable. But even more important perhaps is the heritage that would be lost. This is the area where the Vikings came up the old Trent Water, passing Anchor Church to Repton in 873 and, some historians think, wintered in part on the islands here. Anchor Church was a hermitage where St Hardolph lived and prayed and it is down that channel that St Guthlac would have set off and eventually settled in a rude hermitage in a robbed-out barrow where Crowland Abbey was subsequently built. He had been tonsured here in Repton. The Vikings had a cremation cemetery at Heath Wood near Ingleby and it is believed that there will have been a route across this area between it and their Repton encampment. In 1788, Repton headmaster William Stevens wrote "Three Idyls" describing a romantic boat trip down the Old Trent to Anchor Church and back.



The proposed area of extraction would obliterate this whole area right up to the Old Trent Water and the bluff that the church sits on.

Extensive Mesolithic, Neolithic and later occupation was identified on the Willington side of the river and it is entirely possible that this was the same on our side. Anglo Saxon, Viking and Medieval items have been found here. There is much, much more to understand about the river's movements and its paleochannels which would be lost.

Apparently the information, including maps, will eventually be available on the council website - but the only maps we have at the moment are paper copies too small to read without a magnifying glass.

They are reproduced above and are from the material handed out at the last Parish Council Meeting. Since it is freely available for discussion and consultation purposes, it is assumed that it is ok to reproduce them here. It has not yet been possible so far to find anyone at DCC who deals with such issues.

Christmas Tree Festival:

Every alternate year there is a festival in St Wystan's church with decorated Christmas trees. Many village organisations decorate a tree and we are doing so again this year. The theme is Carols and Christmas Songs so we need ideas for including a historical dimension to this - local if possible. Any ideas will be very welcome indeed.

The Priory Mill:

There is an inscription on the Priory wall at Brook End that says that the filled in arch in the wall below it was moved a few yards from the north in 1905 and that through it once flowed the stream to the Priory Mill. In Gillian Hartley's recent slide show, this plaque was shown together with a map from 1830 showing what appears to be the mill leat flowing from Repton Brook in a separate channel to the Old Trent. Thinking that some more resistivity surveying might reveal the site of the mill if we only knew where to start, we approached Alan Gifford in Willington. There are few people alive who know more about England's mills

However, Alan was concerned that the sharp left and right 90° bends would take energy from the stream and result in high rates of erosion.

In 1068, the Domesday Book records that Repton has two mills. The Priory wasn't founded (by Maud, Countess of Chester) until after 1153- more probably by 1172 - by which time both mills would be over 100 years old.

At the moment we are unaware of the evidence that there was a Priory mill. It would be surprising if there weren't one but if there was, maybe the priory simply inherited one of the two existing mills. And there is no reason to assume that either mill was where the Priory was subsequently built.

It is possible that one of the Mills was the one on Main Street that we know about.

Alan points out that there are bends in the brook that might indicate a leat starting higher up the stream. Also the 1762 map has a bit of a pool that might be the remnants of a mill pond roughly where the modern road bridge is.



Photo by Gillian Hartley

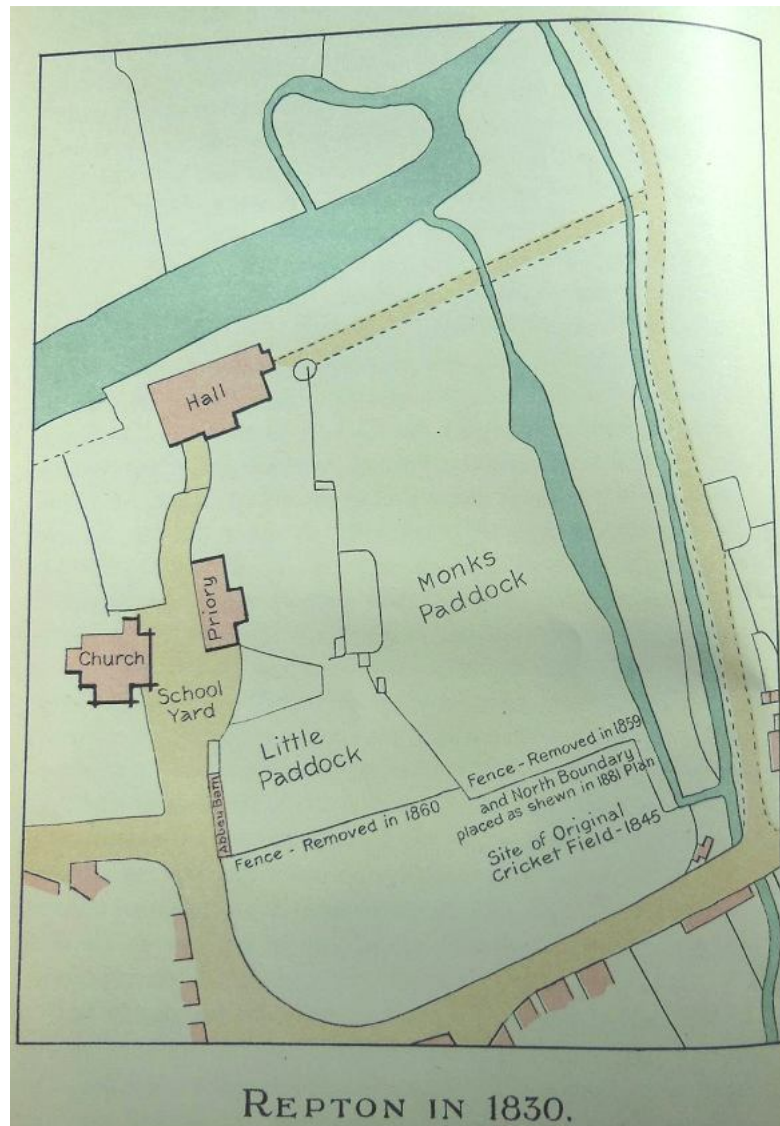


Photo by Gillian Hartley

Or the mill could have been anywhere on the Brook. There is an intriguing, serious jiggle farther upstream which may be indicative of artificial redirection at some time prior to 1762.

Definitely a subject for a lot more research.

For comments or 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 around here.