

Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Autumn 2016 (22 Sept 2016)



The Autumn Equinox is on 22nd September and so this newsletter is about due. For various technical reasons this is not quite when day and night are of equal length. For that we need the Equilux which is just a little later. But, recognising that Meteorologists are miles out by choosing to use 1st September, this small discrepancy isn't worth worrying about.

The ongoing programme of talks:

September 20 th	Members evening – Chris Pegg – “Wooden box part II “and Paul Heapy – “Two Fields”.
October 18 th	Richard Stone - “The River Trent” a water transport route.
November 15 th	Alan Hiley – “History of the Trent Motor Traction company”.
December 20 th	Colin Stewart “Calke from Medieval Priory to Elizabethan Mansion” followed by seasonal refreshments.
<u>2017</u>	
January 17 th	Shirley Horton – “Street Names and Chimney Pots”
February 21 st	Lee Timmins – “The English Highwayman”
March 21 st	Member’s 10 minute talks
April 18 th	Arnold Burston “Robert Sherbourne, Bishop and Diplomat” local boy made good
May 16 th	Robert Mee “Bradshaw’s and an early railway tour” and our AGM
June 20 th	Archive evening/archaeology catch-up
July	Visit – to be planned
August	Visit – to be planned
September 19 th	TBA
October 17 th	TBA
November 21 st	Colin Stewart – “Calke Park and estate - the archaeology”.
December 19 th	TBA

Meetings take place in the Village Hall (DE65 6GR) at 7.30pm.
All are welcome. Members £2.00, Visitors £3.00. Tea, coffee and biscuits included.

Catrine Jarman’s talk on the Viking Burial mound.

In June, we were fortunate to have Catrine Jarman directing the archaeological dig in the vicarage garden in Repton and she generously gave us a talk on her research work on the bones and teeth found in Prof. Biddle’s excavation of the Vicarage Burial Mound in 1982.

Silver coins found in the mound very closely dated the placing of the bones to the Viking presence in 873/4 AD, but carbon dating of the bones revealed two principle date groups – one dated to about the 873/4 time but others quite a lot earlier. In part, her aim was to establish if all the bodies were contemporary with the Viking presence that winter. Another was to determine if they were locals or Vikings and where they were likely to have come from.

Catrine’s isotope analysis of the teeth revealed that some were on a high marine diet, and it turns out that fish absorb carbon that may have been in the sea for a very long time while plants and animals absorb carbon that is relatively fresh. So a correction of about 400 years has to be made. This then brought the dates of both groups into line with 873/4. We build up a signature in our teeth and bones that reveal the minerals associated with the source of our drinking water. Through the isotope analyses, Catrine was able to find locations where the geology matched the minerals identified and built up a picture of where the people had originated. The vast majority came from Viking territory, but not one location. They came from a whole range of Viking countries. This may imply that there were different customs and cultures among members of the Great Heathen Army and could explain why some funerals were burials (at Repton) and others were cremations (at Heath Wood).

Sadly there is no longer any evidence of the 9 feet tall giant found by Thomas Walker around 1690 who, it is speculated, is the famous Viking leader Ivar the Boneless. However, now that we know that the occupants of the mound were almost all Viking, the suggestion gains more credibility.



*Parts of the coins found
& now in Derby Museum
King Burgred 852 - 874*

Our Summer Visits:

In July we visited Sinai Park House. With Roman and Saxon origins, there was a 13th century fortified medieval manor of the De Schobenhales which was given to Burton Abbey, probably as a house of respite for the Monks. It may well have been used for purposes such as recuperation from illness or recovery after procedures such as blood-letting. It was replaced by a second-hand, timbered building probably from Burton and then

augmented by another second-hand building placed parallel to it. It was gained by William Paget when the abbey was closed by Henry 8th. A central building was added to make it into a pseudo Elizabethan House and hunting lodge.

Nearly 400 years later, an infamous cross-dressing descendent later sold it to pay off debts and it had a chequered life as a war time billet for the RAF, a farm, 6 cottages and lastly was used as a chicken run upstairs and a piggery downstairs.

Acquired by the Murphys in the 1970s, one wing was restored and is now their home. The others are steadily deteriorating and for safety's sake, the roof timbers have had to be dismantled and stored, but a feasibility study for its total restoration is under way.

In the grounds is a plunge pool and the house is surrounded on two sides by a moat. Given that it is on top of a hill, it is surprising that the water is available up there - indeed the cellars are wet enough to need pumps to keep them useable. It seems that aquifers follow the underlying geological strata. Kate was a very good and knowledgeable guide and it is good to see part of the house restored for use as a comfortable home.

In August, sixteen of us visited Catton Hall near Walton on Trent. Before the Conquest, it was owned by Sinward, but was given to Nigel d'Albini by William the Conqueror and held by him till it was sold to the Horton family whose descendants have owned it and lived there ever since.

Robin and Katie Nielson are the descendants of the Horton's who bought the house in 1405 and it has been in the family since then. Katie was our guide and very good too. She met us at the front door and took us into the dining room to explain the history of the house and the families who have owned it. Ownership passed sometimes by marriage and so the surname has changed several times over the years. At one point, Catton passed to a niece (Anne-Beatrix Horton) who married Robert Wilmot of Osmaston in Derby and they adopted the name of Wilmot-Horton – from which the Derby suburb of Wilmorton is named.

The house was rebuilt in the 1740s and has not been much changed since then. Internal changes have taken place over the years including the ambitious removal in the 1820s of the pillars in the original entrance hall which necessitated the suspension of the upper floor on cables.

We were given a tour of the ground floor of the house and of the gardens which are beside the River Trent and which look out over the ha-ha across the estate. It is very much a family home and in fact, has been shared by two generations of the family for many years. To comfortably accommodate two families, part of the service wing (built in 1907) has been reorganised and the library partitioned to provide another kitchen. Robin and Katie's son was married in the little chapel just a couple of weeks ago and during our visit were on their honeymoon, but will be living in part of the house. The house contains many pictures by important artists and pieces of antique furniture - including a chair used by Napoleon on St Helena. There are also fascinating family connections with Lord Byron and the Duke of Cumberland, George III's brother. Robert Wilmot-Horton introduced Anne-Beatrix to his cousin Byron who, after meeting her at a Ball wearing a black dress covered in silver sequins, wrote his well-known poem: "She walks in beauty, like the night" and they have a copy of the manuscript in Byron's own hand.

We finished in the small Victorian Chapel of Ease which replaced an earlier Norman chapel. This was followed by very nice afternoon tea and cakes. Agriculture will no longer sustain the estate, and so the grounds are used extensively for a variety of events. It is good to see the house has a secure future as a family home which we had been privileged to look around.

Try <http://catton-hall.com/> for further information.

Medieval Tithe Barn:

Milton Road is where our researches into the Medieval Tithe Barn led us, but an archaeological test pit placed over a resistivity hot-spot didn't find any evidence of it. This wasn't entirely surprising since on the compacted gravels there, foundations would have been minimal and the stone lower level robbed out for re-use. However there were areas of a hard surface just under the grass but with such high resistances due to the very dry weather,



they had to be dropped out of the analysis. A bit of firkling around had turned up a small lump of a weak mortar

and now that the house has been demolished and is being re-built, we have had an opportunity to go and have another look. Once the scaffolding is removed, the back garden will be landscaped and we will have an even better opportunity to see what was there.

A small 1ft square test pit landed on clay – which shouldn't be on the site at all. Extending the pit in stages to, eventually, a 6ft by 4ft trench revealed that under the turf was loose soil and then a layer of pebbles and then the clay in which there were no stones. We found the edge of the clay at the south of the hole. About 25 cm deep, as we extended the trench northwards, a patch of slightly bigger pebbles were identified set in the clay and further extension found very large pebbles and one rogue sandstone rock set in the surface of the clay. Just possibly this is a working surface set in clay.

Martin had also been hunting for a remembered area in the middle of the garden where he had hit on a hard object underground during the resistivity survey, and probing again we found some good sized sandstone pieces which may be in a line. There were also a number of pieces of glass, a couple of nails and other similar finds. Opening up this small pit by stages, revealed no clay at all, but a lot of demolition rubble. Some broken brick, one or two pieces of quarry tile and lots of sandstone rocks – most

of which had mortar on them. They were sitting on the natural untouched soil – or each other. Mixed in was a lot of small pieces of charcoal and a number of nails of various sizes. There were a lot of sherds of glass – mostly from bottles. Some very thick with a clear indication of a steeply concave bottom and some from smaller beer type bottles. A few fragments of thinner glass were found and one or two pieces of clear glass.

Mixed into the soils above the rocks were the end of an electrical plug, a piece of heavy duty hose and just south of the rocks, a nail file!

Another quick dig at the same depth a metre further up the garden revealed only natural soil.

So our optimistic conclusion is that the rubble that we found is from the collapse or demolition of wall or building of mortared sandstone and a small amount of brick, where timbers have burned - releasing nails. The only building known to have been in the area is the Tithe Barn. It is possible that the stones set in clay in the first pit were part of a hard floor or barnyard. The area was fields until Askew Grove was built and footpaths passed right by the site, so it would not be surprising if it became a bit of a dump – or somewhere for a surreptitious beer or two.



That nail file



The first test pit showing the stones set in clay at the north end. The clay finishes just near the bottom of the picture



Some of the sandstone – mostly with mortar on them



The last piece to come out - 55cm long.

Walks n Talks:

There is just one more historical 'walk n talk' to do – it's as a raffle prize for the RYA sailability scheme at Swarkestone Sailing Club. They offer unbelievable opportunities for the most handicapped of folk to sail (and race) dinghies. There are still two talks to give during September - to the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and to Etwall and Burnaston History Group. If anyone would like to get involved in giving talks, please let a committee member know.

Family History Enquiries:

- Dawn Poxon had asked about her family and we have done some research for her. There is still some confusion over her grandfather - who was undoubtedly Frank Poxon, but in the CE school admissions register the contact was given as Edward in Mount Pleasant. However there was no one named Edward on the census in Mount Pleasant. If anyone can shed light on this we would love to hear from you.

Dawn also wanted to know her grandparent's dates of death for a tree in the memorial arboretum and a memorial vase with their dates on by their grave in St Wystan's churchyard has disappeared. So far we have been unable to find records of their deaths. A planned trip to the DRO at Matlock may help us.

- Some time ago, we had a phone call from Margaret Clamp who, in her 80s lives near Chesterfield. Her Mother's maiden name was Catherine Sabine and her Grandmother's was Elizabeth Smedley. Margaret knew that 4 of Elizabeth's sisters (of the total of 12 children) retired in Repton. Three - Emily, Edith and Maud - lived at Spring Cottage (with the curved railing around the window on Main St, opposite Broomhills Lane) and Kitty lived at Tudor Lodge – all into the 1960s. Ivor Sandars lived next door in Morley's yard in a cottage owned by Edith and remembers, as a boy, taking the rent round to her.

Margaret's great great grandfather Thomas, was a butcher in Newhall, and her grandfather John followed in his footsteps - later moving to Coppiceside, Swadlincote. He brought the family to Spring Cottage in Repton before the 1891 census but it's assumed the shop was still in Coppiceside.

As well as tracing back to the great grandparents, we were able to trace all Elizabeth Smedley's brothers and sisters - including two who died very early - and follow them through their lives, locate many of their graves, and finding a few newspaper articles featuring them.

There was another group of Smedley families living in Simney Lane (Burton Rd) not far from the Red Lion, but we cannot at present link them to Margaret's family. Margaret has made a few corrections to dates and addresses, and when finished, it will all be included in the village archive.

- The view over Burton from Sinai Park House, reminded one of our members of when she was a young girl and, with her mother, was introduced, in Burton, to Edmund Nelson. He was a bit glamorous and she was much taken with him at the time. He was reputedly related to Admiral Horatio Nelson of Trafalgar fame. She knew he came from Holme in Norfolk and he was a Group Captain with a smart sports car in which she had a ride. So we did some digging around and found it all to be true. He was born in 1913, joined the RAF before the war and rose to become a Group Captain, gained the DFC, stood for parliament and later lived in Zimbabwe where he married and stood for their parliament. He died in 1992 in Harare.
- More recently, we were approached by Jim Gardner visiting from New Zealand who noticed the yellow road sign to Hanson's Reach. Given that Samuel Hanson (who was parish clerk in Repton for about 60 years) was one of his forebears, he wondered if there was a connection. Hanson's Reach is the housing and medical centre development in Willington and with Alan Gifford's help it was established that it was simply named by the Developer after the company who had owned the land. In 1964, Yorkshire businessmen James Hanson and Gordon White (later both Lords) formed the Hanson Trust and built one of the largest companies in the world with major interest in aggregates. Jim suspects there is no connection.

However, Samuel Hanson was born in Repton in 1785 and married Elizabeth Thorp in 1813. He was a founder member of the Royal Sussex Lodge of the Freemasons and was their Tyler for 49 years and was Repton's (St Wystan's) Parish Clerk for over 60 years and for some time the Sexton. Widowed, he remarried to Elizabeth Tatham in Repton in 1821 and died and was buried in Repton in 1867 aged 82.

- Even more recently we were contacted by another New Zealander who was seeking information on his Draper ancestors who were at Park Farm. We have found records about him and family graves in the church yard. But it is still very much a work in progress. Although the parents – Jane Elizabeth and John Draper of Park Farm are remembered on a grave stone, there is a sad reminder of the perils of those days as two of the other stones that can be found are memorials to 3 of their 10 children who died aged 3 years 10 months, 38 weeks and 10 months.

Archive listing:

We have made very little progress with this - maybe more of a job for winter's evenings. If anyone is prepared to help, they will be very welcome. You just need a PC with Word for Windows or similar.

Derby Museum:

The museum was very helpful when, in 2014, we were putting together the display to go with the Staffordshire Hoard exhibition. It turns out that although all Repton finds are stored and their locations known, the listing is minimal or non-existent and there simply are not the funds to correct this. So a group of us have volunteered to go on a regular basis to try to complete the work and have just had our initial education. At the time of writing, the first session has yet to come but will include the inevitable H&S induction.

The Vicarage Garden:

The dig by Bristol University was seriously hampered by sudden very heavy showers and very difficult going due to the pebbly soils. However they did get down a good 500cm and did make some interesting finds. These are still being processed, analysed and identified but include probable metallic Viking artefacts and medieval and Anglo-Saxon items. The radar images that looked like a wall were eventually revealed as parts of quern stones piled up. Amongst them was another stone which could have been a marker of some sort and around the site were a number of clear post holes. In all some 40 tons of soil were scraped out, searched by metal detector and, at times, sieved. At the end of the dig, a membrane was put down and the 40 tons put back and re-turfed. There is a good chance that they will be back next year.



Possibly part of an Anglo-Saxon cross.

Chancel Loft:

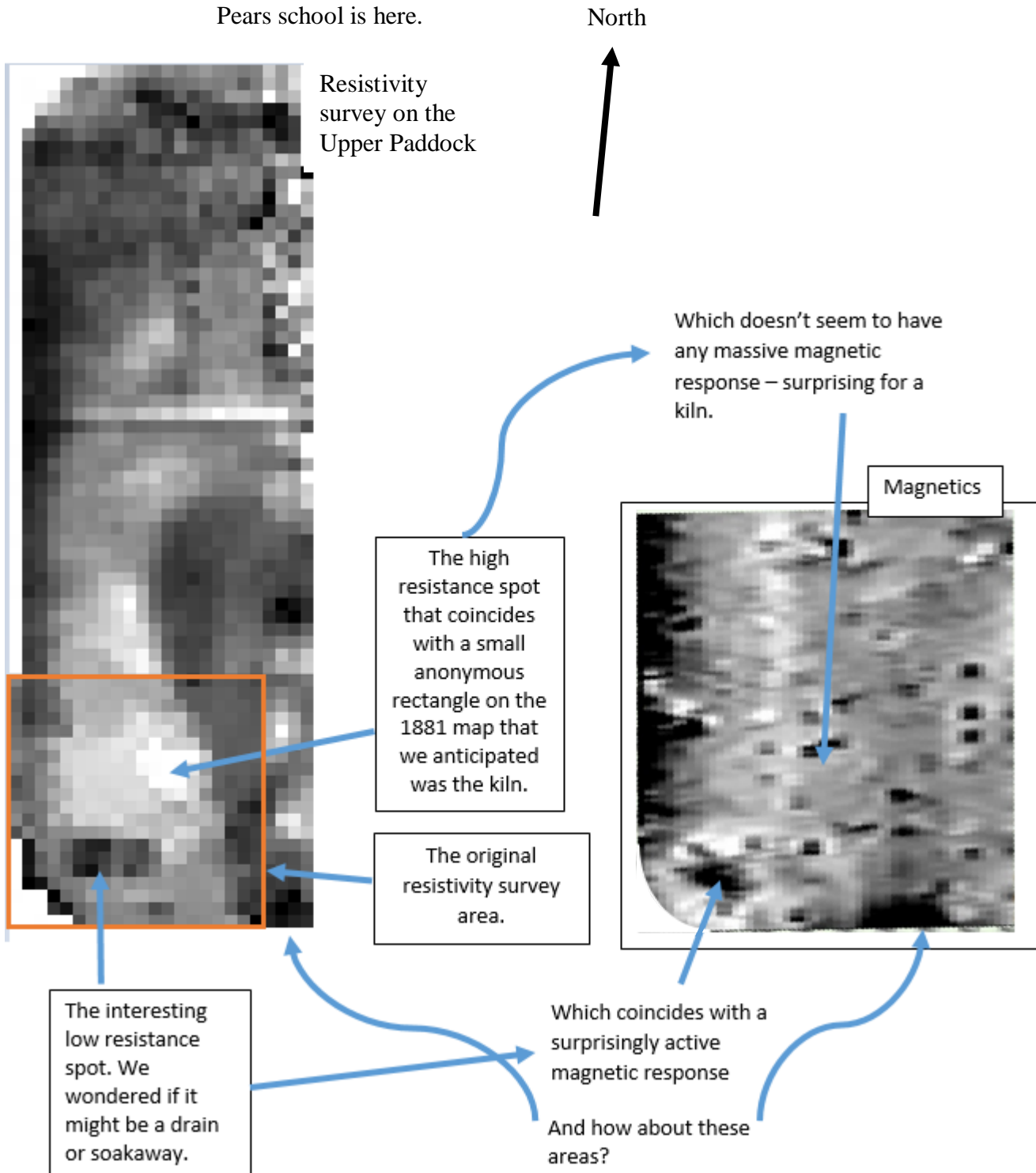
Rusty nails in the chancel roof threaten the integrity of the tiles and so the laths are being replaced. In the process, and thanks to the foreman and church wardens, it gave us access to the area that is behind the



enigmatic door above the chancel arch. Oddly, as the left hand picture shows, the bottom of that door is a couple of feet below the level of the stonework behind it. It is a smaller door in a larger opening now filled in. The builders and architect wonder if it was there for access for maintenance purposes. Once the tiles were on the chancel roof, they were sealed to the laths with lime mortar on the inside of the roof and the workmen would have needed an exit after completing that. However the position of the door argues that the chancel ceiling may have been lower once and the stone work behind the door raised when the ceiling was raised. The roof beams are of oak and are pegged together. They were probably made off-site and brought for reassembly here as each joint is numbered. The Heritage Architect thought they were probably put in place in the 1700s. The floor joists are massive and could easily have supported a floor.

Medieval Tile Kiln:

In the previous issue of our newsletter we revealed that the resistivity hotspot seemed to indicate that there might still be a void under Repton School's upper paddock where we think the medieval 'tile kiln' was. Dr Pears, recording the find in 1866, decided it wasn't a kiln, but drying tunnels for the tiles before firing and that the kiln would be elsewhere – but probably nearby. Not a view shared by modern historians. However, Henry Webber from the Bristol University Dig in June, ran their magnetometry kit over the paddock and found no magnetic anomaly at that point. This was surprising as burnt and fired materials have a significant magnetic signature. So probably, Dr Pears was right. Henry did find a magnetic hotspot at another nearby location where we had found a low resistance feature. Could this be the site of the kiln?



Medieval Priory Mill:

Henry Webber also helped by running their ground penetrating radar over our best guess site for the Medieval Priory mill on the lower paddock. It is buried under several feet of power station ash and the radar should penetrate it much better than our resistance surveys. Capturing the radar images is quick and simple, interpreting them is not and it will be surprising if Henry (a busy Phd student) will find time to do this processing. He did note, from the readout, that there are foundation-like images down there, but we do know there was a 'modern' building there until the 1950s. Our proposition is that it is built on the site of a much earlier accommodation building, dating from the 1300s, beside the medieval mill and we were hoping for earlier foundations to appear.

Thanks to Barbara and Keith Foster, we have continued with resistance surveys during the school holidays. We pencilled in 6 dates with the school which looked OK to them and fitted around our and the Foster's availability. However we were only able to use 3 of them due to weather and sports ground preparation work. We did two pseudo-sections right across the paddock - west to east - and think we can see three distinct water channels.

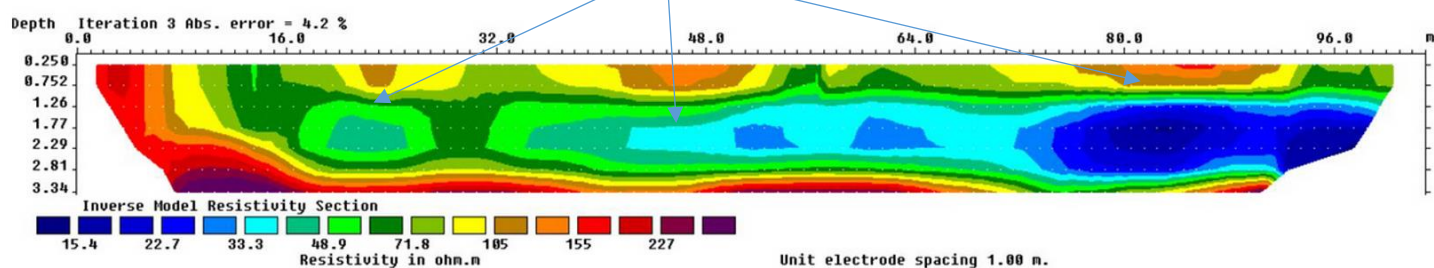
Taking a line from where we believe the brook entered the Priory precincts, the west channel heads for the Priory 'accommodation' facilities – dormitory, refectory, kitchens and the Necesarium (Lavatory). The eastern channel is much wider and is probably the fishponds – although in the first pseudo-section, it is a bit farther east than expected from the 1829 map. The middle channel heads for the place where we feel the mill may have been. The channels appear to have been filled in with soils but finally with hard core - which has a similar resistance to the bedrock at the bottom of the section.



The all-weather Keith Foster. Rain is only a problem for the electronics.

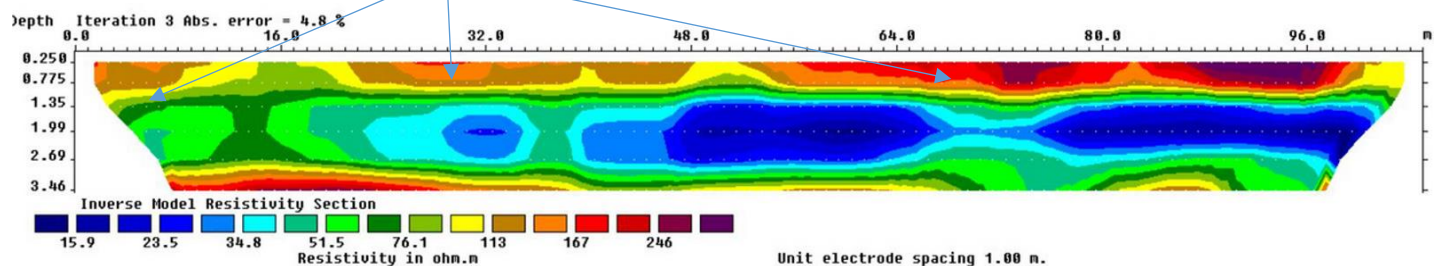
Below are the two pseudo-sections across the paddock. They represent what you would see if you dug a trench across the field and looked at the side of it – not showing the geological or archaeological strata but the resistance to electricity. From this we can guess at what is down there. At the bottom is very high resistance – reds and purples – probably the sandstone bedrock. Then the layers go up through decreasing resistances which probably represent soils with 2 or 3 channels filled in and pretty wet but getting drier near the top. We assume that there were several infillings of the brook and fishponds over time as they settled. The last infill seems to be of rubble as it is orange and similar to the bedrock. We do know that in the 1850s – before Pears School was built, an archaeological study of the old Priory Church ruin was made and a lot of rubble cleared away, probably into the ponds and channels.

3 possible channels

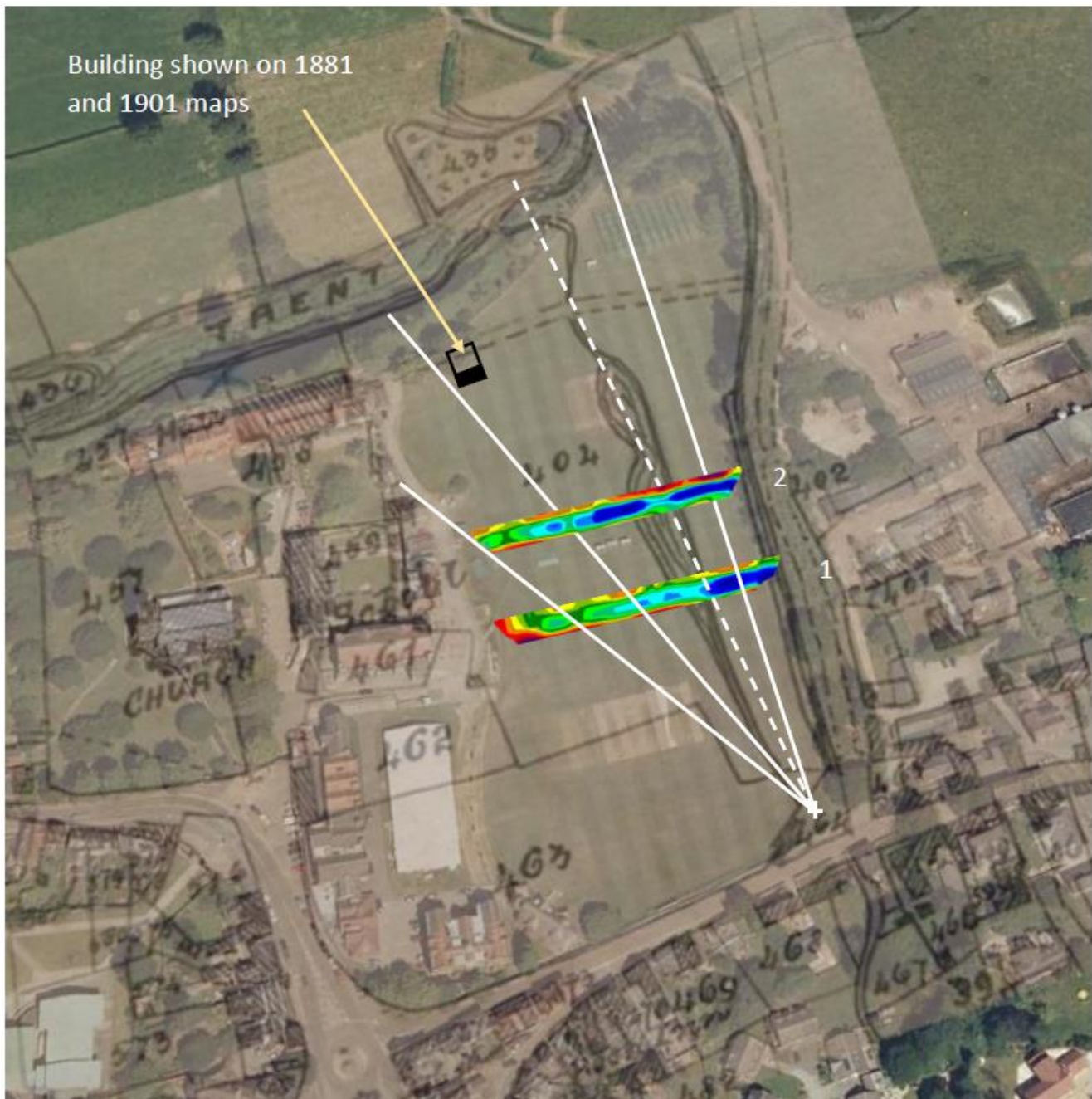


The section nearest the pavilion (the first we did).

The channels have moved in the second section



The section nearer the Old Trent (the second section we did).



This shows the 1829 map superimposed on Google Earth. The fish ponds can be clearly seen. The pseudo sections are shown with the top surface in the correct positions.

From the plaque on the priory wall we know where the brook entered the paddock before 1905 (X on the figure) and if we draw possible channel lines from there through the possible channels on the pseudo-sections we can see that they line up pretty well. For the fishponds the solid line is not a brilliant fit. The left (west) channel heads for the Priory service area, the centre channel is probably the leet and heads close towards the building that might be on foundations of an earlier mill-related building and the right hand is the fishponds. The dotted line is based on the second section. Location X was once in an area referred to by Bigsby as Dam Garden and the 1762 map shows a bit of a pool there.

Further work was done to establish the level of the paddock above the Repton Brook on the assumption that the channels running across the lower paddock would have been about the same depth since they too would have drained into the Old Trent Water. The infill on the field appears to be 2.6 metres deep in the channels and 1.3 metres at the wall - making the wall on the paddock side half the height of the wall on the brook side. This accords very well with the depth of the bottom of the low resistance areas on the pseudo-sections which is probably the depth of the channels.

Another section farther north and another farther south will help.