




Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Autumn 2017 (September)



This time, we have adopted the equinox as the arrival of autumn rather than the Meteorologist's start of the month. This gives us a little more time since our extra issue in August.

Apparently, and sadly, it has now been proven that it is no easier to balance an egg upright at this time of the year than at any other. (Source: )

There is a serious bias towards archaeology in this issue – for which apologies are offered. With less hospitable weather closing in, the emphasis will change for the next issue.

The ongoing programme of talks:

- Oct 17th Richard Stone – “The Luttrell Psalter”.
- Nov 21st Colin Stewart – “Calke Park and Estate, the Archaeology”.
- Dec 19th Keith Blood – “Christmas is Coming”.

The Luttrell Psalter is an illuminated book of psalms and other items and dates from around 1330. As well as decorated texts and grotesques, it contains many illustrations of rural life at that time. It is considered by many as the richest source of information on everyday rural life in medieval England.

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.

For a number of reasons we are not planning a programme of talks next year. However we will have talks and visits for members that are of local historical interest as the occasion arises.

No more of these please!



They cease to be legal tender before our next meeting. These are fine



Test pit survey:

The plan is to carefully dig a host of 1m square pits up to 1m deep looking for evidence of early occupation. We know that there was Neolithic (new stone age) activity from flints that have been found and then Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Medieval settlements and through to modern times. But we don't know where the Roman or Anglo-Saxon settlements were nor the extent and rate of growth of the medieval village. Having got 4 pit locations agreed we did a training pit near The Crescent and planned to dig all 4 on 12th August. In the event, it became apparent that we were unlikely to get a number of the participants from outside the village who had expressed interest, so we cut it back to two pits initially with the other two to follow. One pit came to naught - discovering that the small beer garden at the Red Lion is in fact laid on top of the car park surface. 20cm of careful trowelling and judicious use of a mattock (actually an ice-axe) revealed a hard, modern tarmac surface. (Very embarrassing). The other pit was against the east wall of the Old Mitre car park. This was behind the site of the old thatched cottage “Jessamine” and not far from the old village hall. Fortunately the weather held and the team carefully trowelled and mattocked down to 0.9m in 10cm spits finally reaching agreed “natural” (undisturbed ground). Finds were collected for each spit and the soil sieved for artefacts. We didn't have an experienced metal detectorist so may have missed small metallic objects. We did find a large piece of alabaster (or maybe its softer form as Gypsum) which may have come from a monument of some sort and a piece of medieval floor tile which matched extremely well with one in the school Undercroft and known to be medieval and probably produced on the upper paddock. Many fragments of pot and tile plus a layer of coal and some glass and a large chunk of limestone with calcite attached. We are still in the process of washing, photographing and recording the finds and will get an archaeological opinion on dates of pot sherds etc.

We hope to dig more than 40 pits in total with two more “ready to go” - new diggers are welcome.



“careful trowelling and judicious use of a mattock”

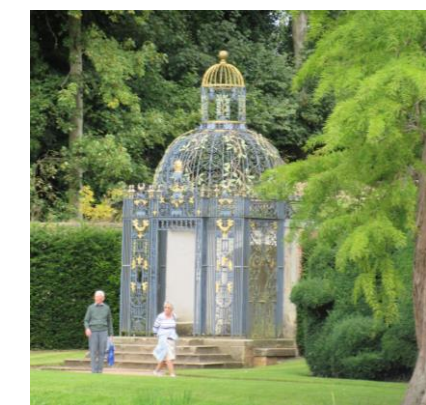


A History of the Derby Telegraph: Ivor Sandars worked for the Telegraph since he was 16 – well over 60 years ago. He outlined the way in which the local paper developed from the Derby Mercury, founded in 1732 as a weekly paper, via a number of publications to the Derby Telegraph published from 1857 on Saturdays by Richard Keene and replaced by the Derby Daily Telegraph in 1879 and published daily by Eliza Pike. There were many editions in a day and the stop press was updated several times – especially when the football results came out. Ivor talked about the developments in printing technology as they moved from fixed letter types to hot metal where the letters were cast in situ and then to phototypesetting via less successful punched paper tape. The industry has specialist skills, specialist equipment and its own vocabulary. The paper moved from building to building over its history but spent a lot of time in Northcliffe House – originally the Palais de Danse. An interesting, informative, and entertaining talk that led to a good question and comment session.

Repton Women's institute: Congratulations are imminently due for their centenary next year – and also for maintaining a photographic and documentary archive. We look forward to helping them celebrate this event.

Summer visits:

Since the August newsletter, 24 of us visited Melbourne hall for a guided tour of the ground floor of the house and then a visit to the gardens. The Hall was built as a Bishop's palace and its origins can be traced to 1133 when Henry I founded the Bishopric of Carlisle and appointed Adeluff, Prior of Nostell in Yorkshire, as its first bishop. It was used as a residence for various Bishops who wished to live away from the troubles on the northern border. Later, once these conflicts were resolved, it was leased out (including to Thomas Cromwell) but allowed to fall into serious disrepair.



Around 1600, it was largely replaced by Francis Needham

which was how the Coke family found it when they bought it in 1629 and further developed it. Lord Kerr is a descendent of Sir John Coke, the name having changed 4 times as it passed down the female line. It contains many excellent portraits including some of the family by Lady Kerr and many beautiful pieces of classic furniture.

We were fortunate with the weather and enjoyed the extensive gardens and Robert Bakewell's celebrated "Bird Cage" structure.

Family History Enquiries: We finally managed to get up to the Record Office in Matlock to hunt for Dawn Poxon's grandparents. She wanted to know their dates for a memorial plaque for a tree she has had planted in the village memorial arboretum. It did mean we were also able to tap into a digital resource which will be valuable for future use by the group. While collating the parish Magazine, we met 3 folk searching for graves of the Gaskin family. Their family came from Birmingham, but many of their forebears were in Willington. We helped them find several graves in St Wystan's Church Yard using the monuments and inscriptions booklet. Our documentary research found that they all originated in Repton (going back as far as 1774) but their branch moved out about 1850. The current Repton branch stems from their great, great, great uncle Herbert. We found 44 Gaskin baptisms in Repton and many of them were also in the admissions registers of the village school. The Gaskins were at Holly Bush Farm on High Street (Health Centre and Village Hall there now). They ran a coal and haulage business from there until the early 70's

The other name they were interested in was Orchard so we are now hunting for Orchard family members in Repton. More recently, we had an approach from the folk at Kirby Holt in Milton seeking information on the house. We were able to provide extracts from early maps and references to it as The Grange – which we understand was its original name. It was where John Edmund Harpur-Crewe moved after being evicted from Repton Park by Vauncey Harpur-Crewe (which he then demolished).

We recently received an enquiry about the Hawsworth family and the Repton Casuals and now, David Stanier, an expert on the Blue Buses, is seeking a good quality photograph of a particular bus on the cover of one of our publications. Hopefully it will enable it to be properly identified at last.

Derby Museum Volunteering: Shelagh continues researching items for the museum for a major forthcoming display but the work on the Repton Dig artefacts from the 70s and 80s has switched to resolving anomalies. This involves looking at the items themselves to sort out listing errors. This is likely to take us to the end of the year.

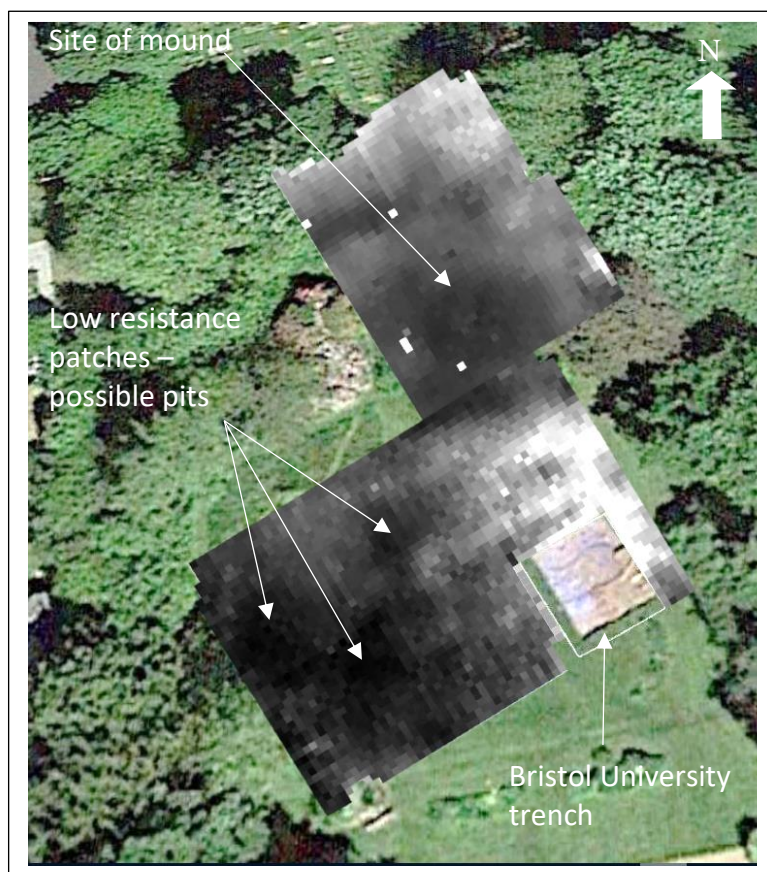
Medieval Priory Mill: Geophysics work has concentrated on Catton Hall and the Vicarage Garden (see below) so there has been no progress on this.

Medieval Tithe Barn: We have still to find time to do a resistivity survey of the lawn at 18 Milton Road.

Council for Independent Archaeology: This national organisation holds an annual conference and this year its in Sharpes pottery in Swadlincote. As a result a few members are planning to attend. Philip Heath is one of the speakers and there is also a talk by Tony Brooks on the history of Littleover - archaeology without digging. Another is a talk entitled Monks, Murder and Myths: An archaeological journey through Mercia from Repton to Peakirk (Dr Avril Lumley Prior) plus lots more stuff. We are producing a small display of our work on the Priory Mill.

The Vicarage Garden: Bristol University carried out radar and magnetometry surveys of the garden to guide them in their excavations in 2016 and this year. Now we have just completed a resistivity survey which will augment their earlier surveys. It revealed that the pre-medieval gravelled area found by the university dig probably extends farther north up to the edge of Professor Biddle's trench from the 1980s. We also found some low resistance areas that might well be pits and possibly full of Anglo-Saxon or medieval rubbish. The mound over the mass Viking grave was levelled during the 1980s dig and we found that there seems to be about 10 inches of the spoil from that dig spread over that area. We need to try different resistivity techniques on order to see through it.

Graffiti survey: We have been invited to send a small number of people along to St Wyan's in November for instruction by the Involve Heritage group in graffiti hunting. We know there is early graffiti in the church and we will be able to join them in surveying the fabric for more examples. Hopefully there we will be able to share the findings with members in the new year.



Catton Park: This resistivity survey covers the whole of the 26 acre field in front of Catton Hall. It is run by Keith and Barbara Foster of Derbyshire Archaeological Society and supports a wider project organised by Adrian Farnsworth and Paula Whirrity. We have been helping them with our equipment in order to complete it by their deadline of end of September.

It is now done, and well over 100,000 readings were taken to build up the picture. At the moment it is a mosaic of some 275 grids, each 20m square, which have yet to be individually adjusted to make a seamless whole. We have found a lake, moated enclosure, double ditched tracks, ditched field boundaries, likely house platforms and what is probably the foundations of the medieval house. It is good to have been able to support this work given the time the Fosters have put into supporting our researches at Repton.

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.