



# Repton Village History Group Newsletter

## Autumn 2022



[www.reptonvillage.org.uk](http://www.reptonvillage.org.uk)

### Warning!

There are a number of Oxford Commas in the following texts.

### Membership matters:

It was good to have a face to face meeting in September in the School Room at the United Reformed Church. With an attendance of 16 and with quite a few apologies from members who had other commitments it encourages us to go on with talks. By popular request, Shelagh repeated the talk on Sir John Gell that she gave a year or so ago when the village hall was rebuilding and we were meeting in the Red Lion. The noise from the bar made hearing her so difficult. She dealt with a number of questions and comments and there was lively discussion about the practicalities of crossing the Trent at Newton Solney at the confluence with the River Dove. Experience of those who had tried it, made it clear that, at any time of the year, the Parliamentarians would have got pretty wet. Perhaps it's a case for experimental archaeology next summer. We also took the opportunity to give out a questionnaire and collect responses from people about their involvement with, and preferences for, the History Group. Some years ago we changed direction and dropped the monthly talks and concentrated on research. We do collect and publish a programme of talks from the 5 or 6 other history groups within a few miles so the opportunity for talks is still there. However, we do know that some would like regular talks reintroduced in Repton. So the questionnaire is intended to find out how many people want what and what help is likely to be available in organising things. In addition to those at the meeting, a copy of the questionnaire was delivered to everyone on our membership list.

Our next group meeting is planned for Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November in the URC School Room at 7.00pm. We have another box from Lilwen Guest with books, guides and other items that people might like. Some items are destined for the village archive, and some will be passed onto other organisations. We will also be bringing a couple of boxes down from the archive (it's held on the church balcony) to look through and there is likely to be a short talk on a local topic too. A decision has yet to be taken about an extra social meeting in December.

It is our intention to include a proposal at the next AGM (May 2023) that the constitution be amended to move the AGM to June. At present, with meetings every other month, they fall awkwardly for Christmas.

### Wild Camping at Carvers Rocks circa 1961 by Russell Fisher

(The Past is a different place...)

During this year's hot, dry summer, we paid a visit to Foremark Reservoir (now under National Trust management) and took a steady walk through the woodlands to Carver's Rocks. However, for reasons unknown, when I was young it was always referred to as Dawson's Rocks.

Vague memories of a camping trip to this spot started to materialise and, long before the reservoir was conceived and "wild camping" invented, Carver's Rocks was a fairly inaccessible place. A lift to the top of the lane was gratefully accepted from Peter Matthews (son the Repton High Street butchers) in his Land Rover for me and my friend and all the camping gear.

We made our way down the valley on a long, narrow, arduous track, pulling a two wheeled cart. It seemed never ending until we finally reached our destination.

In the sixties, Carver's Rocks was a lot less overgrown than it is today. Now trees and scrub seem to have taken over the area. In our day it looked more like a disused quarry, not unlike something you would have seen in a television Western film of that date. To a 13 year old it was the perfect adventure playground. Obviously there were no amenities but there was a continuous water supply that came from an outlet pipe exiting from a small brick building (it's still there). We used it for drinking without thought for its purity or where it was actually being pumped from.

We found a suitable spot to pitch our tent. Bearing in mind that "wild camping", now illegal, had not been thought of, we gave no thought to gaining permission and didn't really consider it necessary. Unrolling the borrowed "Pup" tent the first setback came when we discovered a 2 inch burn hole in the roof, just above our heads. We shrugged and carried on. I had heard that you should dig a hole for your hip and shoulder to make

sleeping a lot more comfortable. It was a difficult process to dig these holes with just the aid of a sheath knife. We used homemade sleeping bags although my friend had the foresight to bring along a canvas camp bed. We explored our camping area and climbed the cliffs completely unsupervised, not seeing a soul and expecting this to be the great adventure we had read about in all our comics.

Exhausted, we settled down for the night after making a cup of tea (I don't remember tea bags being available). We awoke in the early hours to water dripping on our heads from the hole in the roof of the tent. The rain was heavy and it had crept under the side of the tent, filling the hole made for my shoulder and hip with water. My change of clothes, that I was using as a pillow, were soaked so a shirt was used to plug up the hole in the roof. It didn't help much. After a miserable night, a miserable day started to unfold as it was still raining! Everything, including ourselves were soaking wet. We couldn't get a fire going (not having collected any dry wood beforehand) and to make a drink we had to heat water over firelighters in a billy can, which took forever, as did the tin of beans that were going to be our breakfast.

I can only say that things got worse. Though wet, we attempted to climb the cliff but it proved to be far too slippery. Still it rained. We lay in our wet tent, fed up, filling our time shooting our air rifle at matches placed in the ground outside the tent flaps. The rifle having being brought to enhance our great adventure.

We endured 4 days of constant rain and black, sooty food tasting of fire lighter without seeing anyone else. We were thoroughly dejected.

To our relief, our rescue came when Pete Matthews arrived right outside our tent in his Land Rover. He had found a better route down the valley to the rocks and had come to see how we were fairing due to the rain. We dismantled our tent and left immediately!

We tried again 18 months later with further mixed results.

**Note:**

Russell says that the rocks looked like a disused quarry and that is probably what it was. Early British pottery found at Repton was tempered with Millstone Grit which is likely to have come from this outcrop at Carver's Rocks.

**Archaeological proceedings:**

**1 Test pits:**

Sadly we had no responses at all to our proposal that folk might like to dig a test pit in their garden. We had a notice board erected in the village hall and an article in the Village News and posters up at the village party (fete). We have tried a couple of different approaches to this over recent years and a number of people have excitedly told me about the notices that they had seen, but none volunteered a square metre of lawn - except Hugh and Mark Lowther up on Tanners lane. So we have abandoned all hope of a comprehensive test pit survey in the foreseeable future and so will be going for insurance via BALH next year. This doesn't cover test pits, but is about a 3<sup>rd</sup> of the price and does cover geophysics.

**However,**

The test pit that Mark and Hugh dug revealed a couple of interesting bits and pieces and a major change in soil type 19" (c50 cm) deep. We know that the hillside running down from beyond Latham House to the school



chapel has been seriously terraced (to turn Hall Orchard into a cricket ground - around 1890) but we don't know what its profile might have been before that. If we assume the highest point was where it is now and the



lowest where the chapel is, then Jeremiah's Walk might well give us a clue. In the terracing process, part of the original slope will have been dug out and deposited lower down to create level areas. So it seems that 19" of soil was moved down to this point to make a level area. Since it is adjacent to Tanner's lane, the lane must have been raised by around 19" too. Maybe the school would allow us to do a survey using core samples and possibly it would be covered by our proposed insurance. Also in the pit was the remnants of a post which has been replaced at some point without removing the original mortar. A possible floor level was noticed as can be seen in the picture. One side of the top of the pit contained a lot of broken and burnt items and may have been the site of a rubbish tip up against a fence for the building there which was probably built in connection with a stable located there in the 1880's.

**2 Via Devana:**

There is a general agreement that a Roman Road (named Via Devana by antiquarians), crossed the Trent near Drakelow. As reported in the last two newsletters, we may have evidence of the agger and one of the ditches in our resistivity survey but it is far from conclusive. However, in a field on the other side of the river, aerial photos taken in the 1980s and again in a millennium project, showed a number of crop marks including two rectangular features - one with what might be a double ditch. So under the auspices of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the Transforming the Trent Valley project, permission was gained to carry out a resistivity survey to try to find them in the ground and RVHG were invited to participate. We had to wait for the crop to be harvested and people to be available and then get it done before the land changed hands on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

It was decided to go for the feature with double lines and it was big enough for us to use two sets of equipment. Six of us from the History Group took part and on the first day we did find clear evidence of low resistance along the lines of the crop marks and were able to pinpoint them on the ground. It was a slow process because we were under high voltage power lines which were inducing currents in the ground. So we had to set the meter to maximum filtering. As a result, each of the 400 points in each of the 20m x 20m grids took about 2.5 seconds to log and so we only covered part of the area.

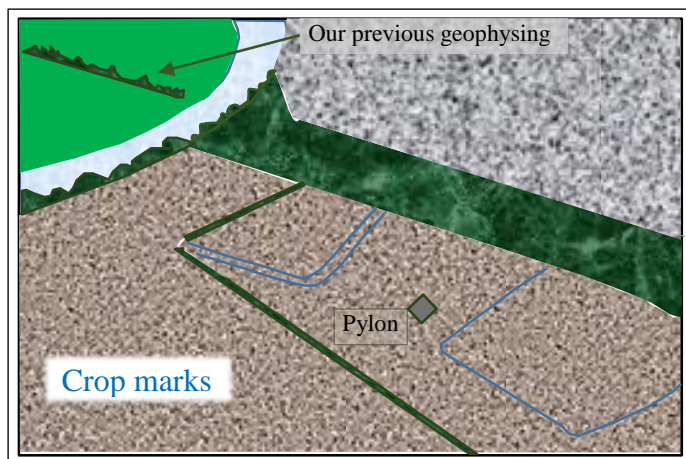


Fig 1

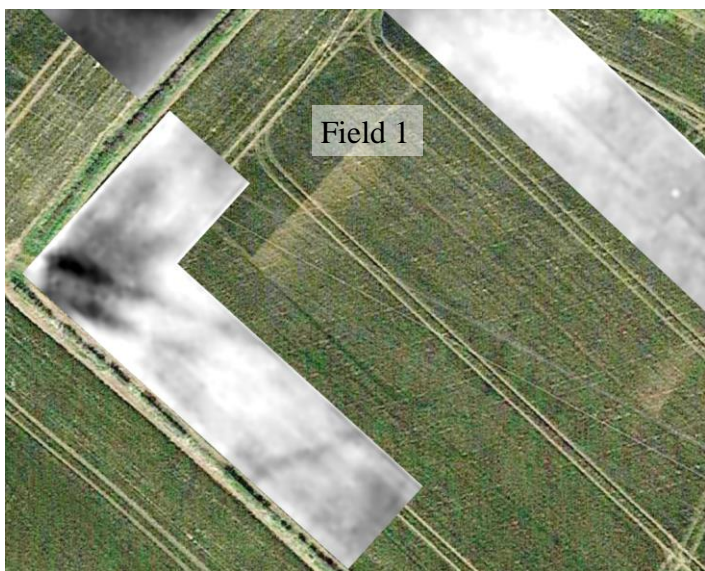
Overlays by Paula Whirity and Adrian Farnsworth.



Having confirmed and located the crop marks, we moved to the next field because, although the crop mark in field 1 implied there would be ditches in field 2, they did not show up in the photo. Again it was a slow process but we successfully located the ditches.

Dropping the images onto Google Earth suddenly meant that we could see the un-surveyed field 1 crop mark in the ground on the Google Earth image – not otherwise noticeable. So were able to estimate the spacing between ditches and since there is also an indication of a corner at the westerly extreme, we are able to estimate the size of the feature at almost 200m east/west and nearly 80m north/south. Permission may be sought from the new owner to do more surveying along this line to see if we can find a central entrance. Also a pseudo-section across the ditches should determine their depth. However this may have to wait till after the next harvest

Whilst it is assumed that the feature is Roman and relates to the nearby Via Devana (red line in Fig 1 above), it is not well aligned with it. A closer alignment is with the edge of the higher gravel terrace beside the river (partly eroded). Field walking revealed one small piece of well-worn Samian Ware and pieces of grey ware - surprisingly little. So could this be an earlier feature pre-dating the Roman road or a later medieval feature - perhaps a Hay surrounding a small park? If the latter, then the ditches might not be deep and the low resistances might indicate humus accumulated in shallow, hedged ditches. A pseudo-section would test this.



The un-surveyed crop marks can now be spotted



Hard working Jacob



Grey Ware and well-worn Samian Ware from field walking.

Photo: Dr Mark Knight.



Some stopped for lunch.

### **Friends of Repton Parish Church lecture** by Professor Martin Biddle CBE, MA, FBA and FSA.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October, Professor Martin Biddle (one of our members) came back to Repton to deliver the first Annual Lecture for the Friends of Repton Parish Church. He has a long association with the village having lived here as a boy during the war and then, with his wife Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, leading over a decade of archaeological digs around the church in the 1970s and 1980s. Preparing for this lecture had given him the opportunity to think through what was learned then and since, and he presented his latest thinking as a formal lecture followed by speaking to a dozen small groups in the crypt itself.

He pointed out that the eight flat pillars against the walls in the crypt were not bonded in and must therefore have been added later together with the four round spiralled pillars and corbelled ceiling. The quality of construction of the original structure and the fact that it is partially subterranean led him to conclude that it had started life as a mausoleum that must have been for kings and he pointed out that we know of three of them – Merewahl, Æthalbald and Wiglaff. Archaeological evidence of a drain outside the north eastern corner led him to the conclusion that it was open to the sky, or at least partially so, with no access other than from above. Access would not have been necessary save for another interment. He was clear that the spiral design of the four central pillars was heavily influenced by pillars in Rome, citing Trajan's column and other churches as examples. He noted that there was no evidence of a twisted rope effect on the spirals at Repton. He had concluded that the mausoleum was separate from the earliest church and in line with it to the east. He noted that there is another small mausoleum to the west, but not quite in line with the church and crypt, which had later been re-used as a charnel house and covered by a burial mound.

He mentioned the Viking warrior found in Grave 511 outside the north east corner of the crypt and the younger man close by who had shared a monument. He acknowledged that the Viking Great Heathen Army was now thought to be numbered in the low thousands rather than the hundreds originally accepted and that the main camp may have been at Foremark. He speculated on the area above the 45m contour that it might have occupied.

At some point, the early church had been extended eastwards until it covered the mausoleum which became the crypt and included the part of the building which is now the chancel. At some point the pair of stairs were cut through the existing masonry giving access from the church.

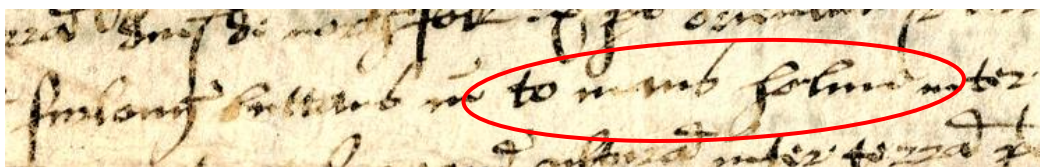
It was fascinating, a considerable feat of stamina and greatly appreciated by the more than 150 people who came. Professor Mark Horton had introduced Professor Biddle as a vastly experienced, highly respected and most knowledgeable archaeologist, noting his full titles included CBE, MA, FBA and FSA. As an Emeritus Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford and Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College Cambridge and archaeological consultant to several cathedrals, we are very pleased to have him as an active History Group member.

### **Repton Studies:**

As reported previously, we have been trying to establish who inherited the copyright of the 3 booklets about the architectural development of St Wystans written and privately published by Dr Harold Taylor in the 1970s and 80s. The plan is that they should be reprinted. We did a lot of hunting for information about the family, and from the institutions he had been involved with and his publishers, but drew a blank. Eventually, from a footnote on an obituary, Richard Finch traced Taylor's manuscript notes to the archive of the National Monuments Record at Swindon. An exchange of emails confirmed they had no claim to copyright but, more exciting, was the opinion of their archivist and their copyright specialist that we had done enough to satisfy a due diligence requirement. So the Friends of Repton Parish Church are about to re-set and re-print them.

### **Monsom Farm:** - by Charles Proud

Monsom Farm & the lane it lies on derive their name from a furlong on Haskey Field, one of the Repton open fields prior to enclosure. Mansholme or Monsholme Shoot appear on the 1762 open fields map but the earliest reference to it is in a terrier of Richard Bornish's lands dated 1506. Holme indicates a water meadow and it does run alongside the Old Trent, but the derivation of Man or Mon is unclear.



Earliest Mans Holme reference – terrier of lands of Richard Bornish 1506



*Item in haskey field one rigg shooting to man holme*

Another early reference to Man Holme from a 1616 Rental – “Item in haskey field one rigg shooting to man holme”



1762 Open Fields Map

The farm’s owners during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century are not recorded but it was part of the Harpur estate from the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century to its sale in 1921.

Lot 8.

## MONSOM FARM,

comprising House, Premises, and Croft situate in MONSOM LANE, together with Lands adjoining the NEWTON ROAD, now occupied by Mr. W. Meakin, together with other Lands as the Monsom Farm.

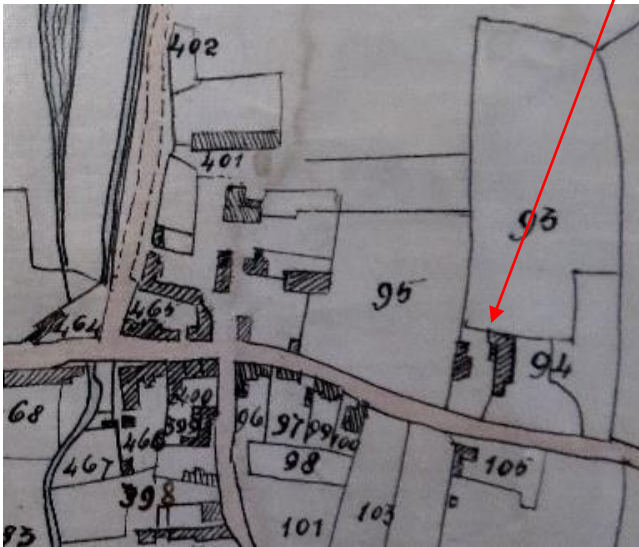
The House contains Parlour, Houseplace, Kitchen, Dairy, and Covered Yard, and Five Bedrooms, and there is a good Cowshed for 16 cows, with Chophouse and Grainhole, a Stable for three horses, with Loose Box, Cartshed of three bays, Piggery, and Coal and Fowl-places.

SCHEDULE.

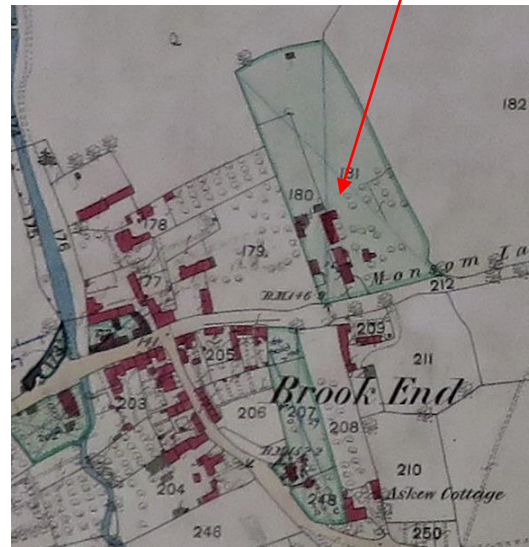
Tenant.	No. on Plan.	Description.	Cultivation.	Quantity.		
				A.	R.	P.
Meakin, Wm.	138	Croft	Pasture	1	1	0
	Pt. 180	House, Buildings, Yards and Garden	Homestead	1	1	34
	Pt. 330	Part River Trent	Water	1	2	12
	344	Dole Meadow	Pasture	7	2	8
	350	Cliffs	Do.	7	0	38
	360	Second Close	Arable	6	1	27
	Pt. 361	Part Holloway Side	Do.	5	0	38
	Pt. 361	Ditto	Pasture	0	3	5
				A.31	2	2

1921 Sale Catalogue

Its layout appears similar on the 1762, 1829 & 1881 maps but it likely that the old timber framed structure was rebuilt in brick at some point in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Astbury's Diary from 1843 notes that "Mr. Marbrow introduced me for the first time to Mrs. Marbrow, the old lady was very hearty in her invitations for me to call often. The house & locality are most rural & picturesque. Mr. Marbrow, about 80 years of age, could not tell how old the house is but said his father remembered it when there was not a brick in it, but merely timber & mud."



1829 Parish Map



1871 Map of Harpur-Crewe properties

It was farmed by the Meakin family for a century from the 1870s but for most of the previous 200 years the Marbrow family were the tenants. The Marbrows were an old established Repton family, first appearing in a 1543 tax return. Charting their family history is complicated both by lack of variety in first names, the eldest son was always Richard, and by the huge variety of surname spellings. I have recorded 36 so far: Knarborough, Marbarrow, Marbearie, Marbery, Marberye Marborough, Marbroe, Marbrough Marbrow, Marborrow, Marborow, Marborowe, Marborrow, Marborrowes, Marburie, Marburroes, Marbury, Marburye, Marbyre, Marlborough, Marlbrow, Narbery, Narberry, Narborow, Narborrow, Narborough, Narbroo, Narbrough, Narbrow, Norbrow, Narburie, Narbury, Narburye, Narburyroo, Norburie & Norbury.

The Harpur rentals, extant from the late 16<sup>th</sup>C & fairly complete, show successive Richard Marburys paying £4 per year from 1655 to 1716. A indenture of lease from 1665 records a lease by John Harpur of Swarkestone to Richard Marbury of a cottage and land at Repton; to be held for a term of 21 years at an annual rent of £4. By 1717 Richard Marbury had added part of Quarry Close (adjacent to Monsom Farm, see 1762 map above) & 6½ acres 'late Lambs' to his farm, paying £7 3s 4d, and on his death in 1738 his widow, Elizabeth, paid the same until her death in 1755. Her unmarried daughter, Elizabeth, paid the same £7 3s 4d until 1764, and £7 1s post Repton enclosure, until her death in 1777.

Another Richard Marbrow, who had been paying rent for a 'messuage & tenement late Cantrell' since 1734, took over Elizabeth's tenancy in addition to his own & paid the £7 1s until his own death in 1780, with his son Richard paying the same until 1797. The £4 rent for the messuage had stayed constant for about 150 years. Richard died in 1805 & in his will bequeathed all his 'messuage, lands & tenements' to his son Richard. This Richard, the old Mr Marbrow of Astbury's Diary, died in 1852, leaving his farming stock & tenancy to his son Richard. In 1849 this Richard had married, at age 58, Elizabeth Pegg aged 22. Richard died in 1856 leaving the farm in the hands of two local farmers as trustees to manage the business until his son Richard, then only 4, came of age. In 1859 the widowed Elizabeth Marbury married George Wayte, one of the executors, and they lived at the farm until his death in 1872 when the tenancy passed to the aforementioned Richard, now aged 20. Unfortunately Richard failed to make a success of the farm, falling into arrears with his rent, going bankrupt in 1876 and leaving Repton for good. He is recorded as a rent agent in Derby in 1891. His mother Elizabeth also left the farm to live with her sister Eliza Pegg, confectioner, in her house at Brook End.

The 17<sup>th</sup>C Marburys were small scale husbandmen, Richard Marbury was assessed for only one hearth in the 1662 Hearth Tax returns when many of the tenant farmers had at least two, but by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup>C they were more prominent in the village, filling the roles of Churchwarden, Constable & Overseer of the Poor



on several occasions. On Richard Marbrow's death in 1852 he was prosperous enough to leave several houses in Repton, including the Red Lion Inn, & farmland to his 3 sons.

In 1877 the tenancy passed to George Meakin who ran the farm until he retired, aged 85, in 1907 when his son William & wife Emma took over. The Meakin family ran the farm until the death of their son Thomas Lester Meakin in 1978.

Editor's notes:

1. Monsom Lane was once Meadow Lane since it led to the Meadows Farm and Cannons Meadow. It is thought that the access to Monsom Farm was known as Monsom Lane but was then adopted for the whole road.
2. In a conversation with Marion Lipp who lives on Monsom Lane, she said that opposite the bungalow where she lives was the Meakin's farm. Tom Meakin and his sister Olive never married. They had an orchard that went up toward the cemetery. When Old Mrs Meakin had a cow calve, she would stand in the orchard and shout across to them "Do you want any beastings?" - the milk (Colostrum) from a newly calved cow which is very rich and full of antibodies. She would also call across offering apples. According to Ivor's father (Baden Sandars), she kept a bull in the parlour at one time. John Rowland lives there now.

**Thomas Gayfere:** - Thanks to Tim Norman

Tim has been doing a lot of work, with others, in the churchyard at St Mary's in Newton Solney and we had extensive membership email correspondence recently about Thomas Cave Brown Cave who was part of an illustrious family and who's memorial had been uncovered there. The reason for his burial in Newton is still unclear.

However, another area was cleared this summer and the grave of Thomas Gayfere emerged. Not exactly lost - just buried.

He was the eldest son of Thomas Gayfere (Snr.) a stone mason who was the Westminster Abbey mason from 1762 and is buried in the west cloister. Thomas (Jnr.) had a "joint patent" with him from 1802 and together, under the supervision of James Wyatt, were responsible for the restoration of the exterior of Henry VII's chapel. Thomas (Jnr) carried on after his father's death in 1812 and reconstructed the north front of Westminster Hall from 1819 - 1822. He retired in 1823 and died in 1827 and was buried in Newton Solney. The inscription reads: *Sacred to the Memory of / THOMAS GAYFERE / late of Abingdon Street / Westminster, / who departed this life / Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> 1827, / Aged 72. / His qualities as a Man / will find their best Memorial / in the Affection of his / Survivors: while the / Restoration of King Henry / The Seventh's Chapel and the / Hall at Westminster will / prove a lasting Monument / of his Abilities as an / Architect.* Again, we do not yet know why he is in Newton Solney.



**Programmes of talks:** Historical talks from other local societies that we are aware of:

**Chellaston History Group - St Peter's Church hall, 7.30pm**

25<sup>th</sup> October A History of Melbourne - Philip Heath  
29<sup>th</sup> November World War One - Ashley Waterhouse.

**Hilton History Group - Hilton House Hotel 7.30pm £3.00 - hiltonhistory@gmail.com**

3<sup>rd</sup> November Sudbury gasworks

**Aston On Trent History Group - Memorial Hall 7.30 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday.**

25<sup>th</sup> October Regenerating Aston Hall Lake - Steve Deakin  
22<sup>nd</sup> November The Mummer's Play - Tony Razzell.

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](mailto:rvhg@reptonvillage.org.uk) or visit our website.