



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Winter 2019 (22nd December 2019)



As the winter solstice approaches and Christmas draws near, we offer our winter newsletter along with best wishes for a Happy Christmas and an interesting New Year.

A reminder that membership fees (£6 per person - children free) are due from January 1st 2020. John Kidd on 01283 701991 will be delighted to help you renew.

The ongoing programme:

Our next meeting will be on December 17th in the United Reformed Church Schoolroom and will involve a seasonal buffet and some quizzes.

Future dates: We plan to continue meeting on the third Tuesday in alternate months: January 21st, March 17th, May 19th (AGM), July 21st. We have ideas for an outing for next year but will appreciate any suggestions. The January meeting will be in the small room in the Village Hall. We are in the process of sorting out dates for Rob Davies (metal detectorist who appeared on Cat Jarman's channel 4 programme), Gareth Davies who reported on the archaeology at Repton School sports centre and Adam Bestwick a local detectorist.

Pepel:

In the last newsletter we mentioned Lawrence Gray, the Chef at Repton School's Priory Boarding house who kept a pet monkey named Pepel which was his great companion - more than just a pet. We have discovered a little more and confirmed that they lived in the cottage on Burton Road (No 6) and that Pepel died there. Tony Fisher, a very capable artist who grew up in the village, was commissioned to paint a picture of Pepel and Tony has kindly sent a photograph of the portrait.



Few people remember the monkey and Pepel spent much of her time in the cottage but did venture out on Lawrence's shoulder on a lead from time to time.

We found out more when we identified his third book – published in Dutch. Its title translates as The Return of Pepel. A synopsis of the book, translated from the Dutch, explains that Lawrence and Pepel were together for 10 years and that a decade or more after Pepel's death, Lawrence made pilgrimage to India. There is a hint that he had been a Theosophist but had become a Buddhist. There, in Benares, he was concerned for the fate of a young Hindustani Guide who he realised was the reincarnation of his house monkey Pepel. After some immigration difficulties he became foster father to the youngster and brought him to England.

We know little more. It is possible that Lawrence was born in February 1928 (registered in Leicester) and died in the first quarter of 1996, registered in Milton Keynes.

Literary Festival:

There was quite a strong historical theme this year with Dr Cat Jarman's excellent opening talk on her findings over the years and some new ideas at Repton. There were two different historical tours of the school on offer plus a talk by John Plowright on Churchill and we were asked to give the Simple History of Repton talk again. We were also offered the opportunity to have a bookstall and display. It was an excellent chance to promote our new offering - the St Wystan's Churchyard trail. The festival was well attended by folk not from the village and visitors are less likely to have an interest in our local history. A considerable number of people hours were



required to supervise the stall and sales only amounted to £19, so next year, if invited again, we will probably only provide a display and a talk.

Walter Burdett stone – curiouiser and curiouiser



The stone as we found it



The stone as they found it – from their website.

We mentioned this stone in our last news letter and since then have contacted The Landmark Trust about it and suggested that it ought to be at Knowle Hill – as quirky an item as Knowle itself. The Landmark Trust bought and restored what could be saved of Knowle Hill and offer it for holiday lets.

It's not a grave stone because Walter lived till 1732.

Their historian, Caroline, said that they came across the mystery stone at the time of their restoration of Knowle Hill around 1993 (but not at Knowle) and she passed on what her predecessor, Charlotte, had written about it. This is as we had worked out; that when Walter's brother (the 3rd Baronet) died a few days after his son, Walter probably assumed he would inherit the title and be the 4th Baronet and had the stone carved. Unfortunately for him, the son's wife was pregnant and gave birth to Robert who inherited the title instead.

Charlotte also said that the stone was found in Repton Churchyard at the time of the restoration, but their photograph suggests it had been under cover till that point as it's much dirtier now and would have been so then had it been outdoors for any length of time. A bit of a coincidence that it was discovered here at that time as Walter had no known connection with the place and they were working at Seven Spouts near Ticknall. The historian goes on to say there is no evidence that it was ever at Knowle Hill and that

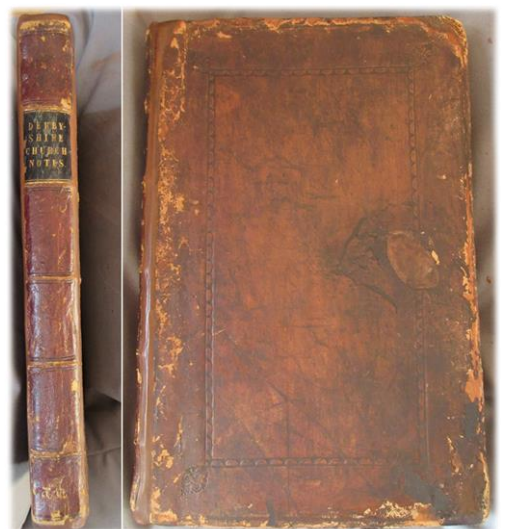
it ought to remain in Repton Churchyard "where it has always been historically". However we know it is a fairly recent arrival - not on photos of the dig in the 1980s. Tradition has it that there was bad feeling between Walter and the rest of the family - could this be a cruel joke played by the rest of the family - the "burial" of Walter the baronet? Not impossible because the last of the Thackers willed the remains of the Priory lands to the Burdetts who may thus have had responsibility for the church. So was it here inside a building all along?

One good outcome is access to the excellent Landmark Trust Album – which has some 93 pages on Knowle Hill:

<https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/about-us/history-albums/#A>

Bassano and the date of the Tower and Spire.

In 1710 Francis Bassano (a Derby resident) visited many Derbyshire Churches and wrote a book "Derbyshire Church Notes" and a copy is in the archive of the College Of Arms in London. In about 1915, the Chester Herald, Arthur Cochrane, copied the notes on Repton and sent them to Henry Vassall then Bursar at Repton School. It is very clear that they were about St Wystan's, though there have been many changes since then. In one note Bassano says that "Anº 1320 the Tower Steple belonging to the Priors Church of this town was finished and built up as appears by a scrole in lead having on it these words ..." (the following being in Latin). The reference to the Prior's church is odd, but the Priory church had been demolished some 150 years earlier and there were but ruins. It has generally been assumed that he was being a bit casual or mistaken, but Dr Harold Taylor who studied the history of the structure of St Wystan's dated the tower and spire stylistically as early perpendicular – early 1400s. He was not completely confident of this and it is understood that there was serious strengthening of the tower in the 1400s with buttresses added and stylistic changes could well have been made at that time. This bit of Cochrane's notes are strangely laid out and so a visit to London to photograph the book is planned. More news in next issue hopefully.



Unofficial Grave.

Just a month or so ago a pile of cremation ashes were found deposited beside a yew tree in Repton churchyard together with a written note giving some information about the deceased and a brass plaque screwed to the tree saying "Dave's Corner". The note was quite poignant, finishing up "home again - this time for ever". There are strict laws about graveyards and burials and this is just not allowed. So David's ashes were collected up and we got involved in trying to track the family down so that something allowable could be facilitated. We knew his age and name and where he had once lived on High Street. We found that the family moved to Havenbault Lane in Derby and we believe that he was finally in Selby, Yorkshire. We found that he had died in 2018, that his mother was buried in Spondon and his Grandmother in St Wystan's churchyard. We did eventually get in touch with his nephew who got in touch with David's son who had brought the ashes here. The result was a proper interment of the ashes in his grandmother's grave with Martin conducting the prayers supported by Andy and Margaret.

Christmas Tree Festival:

We have again contributed a tree to this festival and, as well as lights and tinsel, we have bauble shaped photographs of snow scenes in Repton – including skating on the Old Trent and the Cross piled high with snow. Thanks to John K and Aimee for decorating the tree – the photos are from the archive. Special thanks to Aimee's daughter who put the baubles together.



Photo: Aimee Brooks

Annie Norman:

Charles Proud has been doing more research in the Record Offices and one item that he found was a diary from 1914 for Annie Elizabeth Norman. Margaret has transcribed the diary and researched Annie's life. It starts with she and a friend in Scotland on the first of January and mentions her return to Repton where she was in service with the Singletons in the Pastures. Mr Singleton was a teacher at Repton School who subsequently (1916) went to Colwall, Malvern where he bought the Elms School and became its head master. Annie was born in Branston on 21st January 1893 and baptised at St Saviours, Branston on 15th February. Her parents, David and Jane (née Williams), had been married there in 1889. Annie was the eldest of 9 and had 7 brothers and a sister though one brother died in infancy. She attended Uxbridge School (girls) from 1899 and by 1901 (aged 8) the family were in 306 Blackpool Street, Burton. At this time her father was an assistant in a furniture shop but later became a labourer in a maltings. A decade later the family has moved to 85 Broadway Street, Burton but Annie, aged 18, has left home and we have not yet found her on the 1911 census.

We know she started with the Singletons in 1913, but not when she left. She cooked and washed and ironed for them and helped to look after their two young boys. She seems to have had enough spare time to socialise with friends and there are plenty of names for us to try to identify plus mentions of established Repton families such as the Perrys and the Warners. She did like the Electric Pictures and cycled to Burton and Willington and took tea with her friends. She took her summer holiday in East Ham where she had relatives and enjoyed the London sights. She also had relatives in Derby that she visited by train. She did not appear on our Voluntary Aid Detachment list when we were researching WWI but did knit socks for "our poor soldiers" at a Red Cross working party and received a certificate for it. She attended church services in St Wystan's and at Willington Church and confirmation classes in the Repton Vicarage. She was confirmed that year by Bishop Abrahams who subsequently moved from Bakewell to Bower Hill in Well lane. Annie records that "there were 34 done at the same time"

We don't know when she left the Singletons but probably when they left the village in 1916. She married (aged 36) to Frederick Cyril Dent in the last quarter of 1929 in All Saints, Burton. He had fought in WWI and become a sergeant and in the 1939 register he is a woodworking machinist and they are living at 63 Dover Road, Burton and Annie is a housewife.

They seem not to have had children and Annie died in Bournemouth in the summer of 1976 aged 83. Frederick died in East Staffordshire in 1988 aged 91.

Occupants of Bower Hill:

One of our members turned up a postcard sent to her grandmother Laura who was in service at Bower Hill in Well Lane about 1915. She asked if we could work out who the families were who lived there and we were able to find some of them but have a critical gap that we need help with please.

Laura was born in Southwell in the last quarter of 1897 and still there aged 3 on the 1901 census and again when aged 13 in 1911. They lived in Holy Trinity Cottage, Westhorpe, Southwell. Around the age of 14 she would probably have left school and entered into service somewhere. We do not know how she came to Repton, but she married Harry Vincent Charles Massey (a Repton lad) in April 1929 in Southwell. Presumably she had met Harry while in

service at Bower Hill. He was born in Repton and in 1901 was living with his grandmother, mother, sister and grown up cousin. In 1911 aged 12 he was boarding with William Hooton who was a Repton Schoolmaster.

It is unlikely that Laura would have gone into service before 1912 so the period for Bower Hill in this context is from 1912 to 1929 when she married Harry.

We do know that Richard Sales and family were there on the 1901 census and still there when their daughter married in 1906. They had moved to The Pastures by 1911 and in 1918 Charles Abraham, Bishop of Derby, moved to Bower Hill when he retired as Vicar of Bakewell. He was actually a suffragen Bishop for Southwell and in 1928 moved on to Astbury in Cheshire as a vicar when the Derby Diocese was formed.

So we have a gap from early 1906 to October 1918. In theory it should be easy to find Bower Hill as a large house on the 1911 census but in fact it is not. It may have been empty at the time. There is a small newspaper advertisement dated May 1912 for an H Meakin who was selling Highland Terrier pups at Bower Hill but he may not have been the householder. There is another cutting from September 1915 in which Mr Meakin (still of Repton) relates the death of his brother at Gallipoli but Bower Hill isn't mentioned. They seem to have been a well to do family with malting interests in Ashby and the boys went to Uppingham School. So its not impossible that he was at Bower Hill till the bishop arrived.

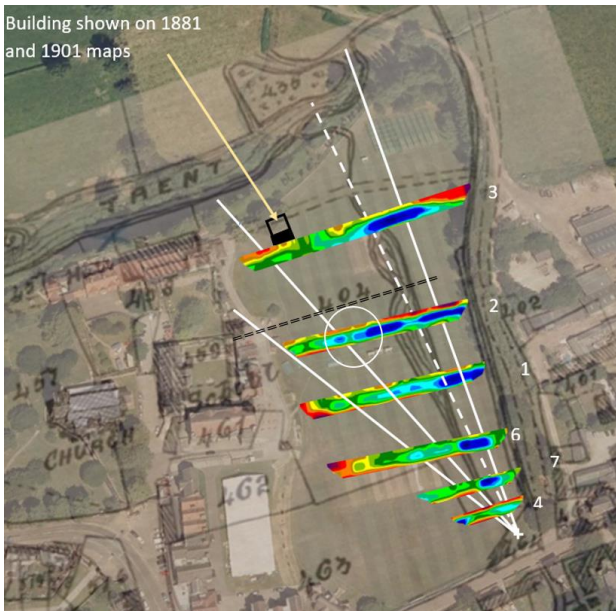
So it is most likely that Laura joined the Bishop's household after he moved there in 1918 - he was a Suffragen Bishop of Southwell and she lived within a mile of Southwell Minster and a strong possibility is that she was known to, or recommended to, the Bishop of Derby when he moved to Bowerhill in Repton in 1918.

Henry died in March 1952 aged 53 and Laura died in the Manor Hospital in May 1969 aged 71.

The Medieval Mill on the lower paddock:

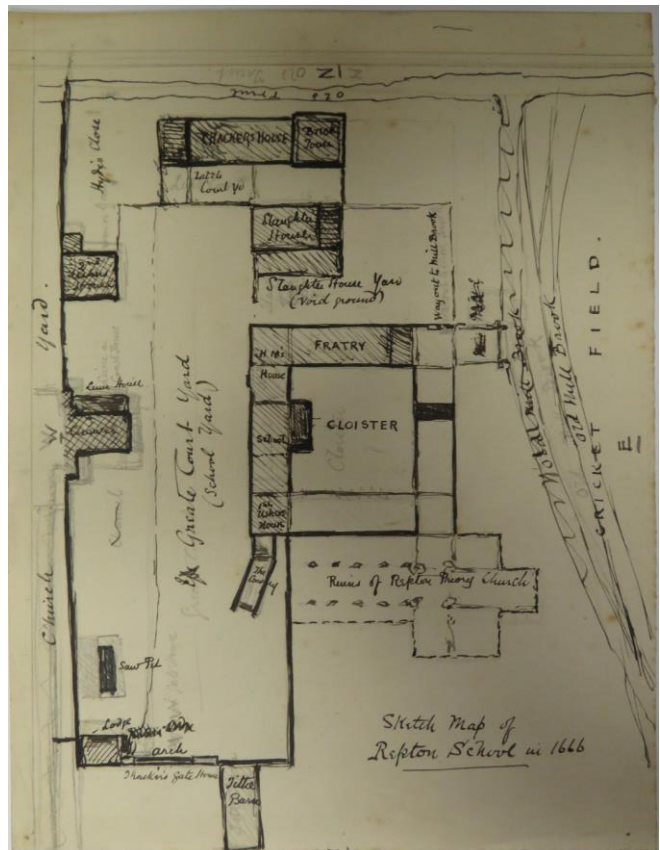
We have been searching for the site of this mill for a couple of years. It was probably built to service the Norman Motte and Bailey castle in the early 1100s. Just possibly, it could be earlier and survived the Viking raid.

Documentary evidence and the results of our resistivity surveys led us to believe that it was either half way down the paddock or close to the Hall. This is because we know that there was a way from the School site to the mill stream for getting water and washing which was north of the mill and there are two possible accesses that would fit. Now a sketch map of the Priory in 1666 has emerged from the Repton School Archive (though it was not necessarily drawn in 1666). It makes it clear that the access was half way down the field This suggests that our favoured location in the circle shown on the map is probably correct - although the map suggests that the mill leet was closer to the buildings than we thought.



However, by 1666, the Mill may well have been out of use for some time due to the shannanigans of John Harpur up-stream and what is referred to as the Mill Stream may actually be the water supply channel for the old Priory domestic use and then for flushing out the latrines. We know that a culvert for this purpose was found, but do not know where it was.

We also now know that by the Brook End road was a sizeable mill pond which we think had three channels running from it – one for the domestic supply, one for the mill and the third for the fishponds.



Trees – churchyard Yews and the Copper Beech.

In the course of creating the churchyard trail, Jane and her husband measured the girth of the Yew trees and were able to make a rough estimate of their age. They are notoriously difficult to age but the oldest is the one in the NE of the churchyard by the Quiet Garden and is between 255 to 380 years old - time of King Charles the 2nd. The ones nearer the vicarage are more likely to average about 240 years old - about 1780 when William Bagshaw Stevens had become head master and George III was on the throne. One of the older ones overhangs the “shoe outline” chest grave and will have offered it some protection for maybe a couple of centuries. Since it is so worn it is likely to predate the tree by a fair margin and so is probably one of the oldest memorials in the churchyard.

Sadly the Copper Beech beside the School Chapel which, although still vigorous, is infected with fungi which will cause it to die and lose branches. It may be possible to take off some of the height without killing it, but that doesn't sufficiently reduce the risk of a branch falling on the nearby road. So it is very likely that it will have to come down. It has reached full maturity after 200 - 250 years. It is likely to be replaced by a different species.

You can read more on the SDDC planning site –

<https://southderbyshirepr.force.com/s/planning-application/a0b4J000000HoVSQA0/dmot20191333?tabset-ba98d=2>

Climate change

There is no doubt that the climate does change over the years and there were winters with skating on the Old Trent and many will remember sledging at Robin's Cross and Mount Pleasant. These photos from our photo archive were some of those that we used for the Christmas Tree Festival baubles.



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.

Published programmes for some other Local History Groups: (We no longer offer a programme of monthly talks)

Willington History Group

(7.30pm, The Old School Willington – second Thursday in the month)

- JAN 9th – “Pentrich Martyrs” by Richard Stone. The last planned uprising in British history – so far!
FEB 13th – “Murder at Staunton Harold” by Gay Evans. Earl Ferrers, the last nobleman to be convicted of murder
MAR 12th – “Beside the Seaside” English love of seaside holidays, sticks of rock and saucy postcards! – Bob Massey
APR 9th – “Derbyshire in the Jacobite Rebellion” Brian Stone. How Bonnie Prince Charlie’s invasion failed at Swarkestone.
MAY 14th – Visit to Rolls-Royce Museum. Please note - this will be an afternoon visit starting at 2.15p.m.

Melbourne Civic Society

(7.30pm, Assembly Rooms High St Melbourne, 01332 865760, Guests welcome. Members £1, non-members £2. pamadams56@yahoo.co.uk)

- Mon Jan 27th - Robert Bruce Napoleon Walker by Stephen Finders
Mon Feb 24th - The Butterley Company’s Greatest 19th century Engineers. Timothy Castledine
Mon Mar 30th - A.G.M. followed by a talk on Derbyshire Castles by Robert Mee

Etwall and Burnaston History Group

(7.30pm, Chapel School Room, 01283 730287) Unless otherwise stated, meetings are held in the Methodist Chapel Schoolroom, Willington Road, Etwall DE65 6HX and commence at 7.30 pm. Visitors welcome at all meetings (admission £3.00) Further details: or Pam Kerby (01283 730287) sandypits.kerby@btinternet.com

- 21st January - History of Melbourne – by Philip Heath
18th February - Unusual finds at Hanson’s Auctioneers, by Jim Spencer
17th March - Saints in History by Dr Trevor James
21st April - Ladybird Books by Paul Newsham
19th May - A.G.M. followed by talk on Markeaton Park by Linda Proud

Hilton and Marston History Group

(hiltonhistory@gmail.com, Methodist chapel, Main St. Hilton DE65 5FF 7.30pm £3.00 - 01283 733069)

- 2nd January No Meeting
6th February Walker Lane, 19th century Derby's Whitechapel. Jane Whitaker
5th March AGM
2nd April Transportation and beyond. John Barnett
7th May No meeting due to the VE day 75th anniversary the following day
4th June Mary Queen of Scots - The road to Fotheringhay - The final instalment 1584-1587
David Templeman
2nd July Catherine Cromptons diary. Stephen Flinders
6th August No meeting
3rd September Local residents talk
1st October Abbots Bromley Horn Dance. Abbots Bromley Nostalgia Group
5th November Robert Bakewell Ironsmith – the man who created the birdcage arbour at Melbourne Hall and his craft. Richard Stone
3rd December Christmas Quiz with a difference 2. Paul Newsham

Aston on Trent Local History Group

(astonontrenthistory@gmail.com £2 over 18s. Children free 7.30pm in the War memorial Hall)

- January 28th Stephen Flinders: Terror from the Skies - the Zeppelin Raids
February 25th Mick Appleby: Protecting the House from Foul Spirits - Medieval finger crossing!
March 24th Rev'nd Tony Luke: Parson, Preacher, Priest - Church and Society 1700-1900
April 28th Vaughan Wheatley: This is Elvaston Castle
May 26th To be Announced :
June 23rd Nigel Heldreich: The History of the Memory Box - A mix of traditional craft and stories
July 28th John Whitfield: New Light on Edward and Mrs Simpson
August: NO MEETING
Sept 22nd Peter Liddle: Houses of the Hastings - an archaeological tale or two
October 27th Steve Aynsley: Alvaston Old Hall - little known local history
November 24th Bob Neill's Bits and Bobs - back by popular demand - but what are they?
December: NO MEETING