



Repton Village History Group Newsletter

Autumn 2021 (22nd September 2021 – 7.21pm GMT)



Membership:

Our membership stands at 49 individuals which is slightly higher than it has been for some time, but as the constraints of the pandemic relax, folk may find other interests and other uses for their time. Meanwhile it is good to have so many people actively interested in the locality and its history.

We are just beginning to indulge in face to face meetings again but there seems to be a fairly universal keenness to continue the emails we used during the lockdowns as well. These on-line “conversations” have waned somewhat as more social and recreational activities have become possible and the finer weather has encouraged outdoor activity. So not only will we need material for the “conversations”, but there are these newsletters to fill and monthly items for the Village News (Parish Magazine) and the bi-monthly meetings.

The ongoing programme:

Finally, 20 months since our last meeting in January 2020, twenty two of us met up in the URC Schoolroom for a social gathering, some food and a discussion about how to proceed from here. Many of us had met outdoors in July at Breedon on the Hill church for a talk by Richard Stone, but this was the first indoors. The Schoolroom gave us space to sit around small tables, can be ventilated to a certain extent and the kitchen is convenient and well equipped. Thank you to the URC Elders for allowing us to use it and sanitizing it for us.

We decided we would like to continue with the emailed conversations and to bring back the bi-monthly meetings. The plan is to offer talks of a very local and historical nature but covering all periods from recent decades to the stone age. Hopefully members will again give many of these talks. We also plan a survey to see if there are clusters of interests that could be used to form small research/activity groups and these are likely to be a source for talks and discussions at the meetings.

As the winter draws nearer, it should be possible to put more effort into the email conversations which have rather dried up during the summer due to the relaxation of the pandemic constraints and finer weather.

All being well, our next meeting will be on Tuesday 9th November at 7.00pm.

We will have to decide soon whether to renew our BALH insurance policy at the year-end or to take out the much more expensive archaeological cover. We can do geophysical surveys under the current policy but not test-pits.

St Hardulphs at Breedon on the Hill.

On 9th July, we managed to visit Breedon on the Hill and St Bardulph's Church. Originally planned for June last year, we were finally able to meet together outside for a talk by Richard Stone and then, masked and in groups of 6, were able to go into the church to understand more about its role in the Anglo Saxon monastery and the medieval Priory and as the parish church. There are considerable parallels with Repton – including the provision of a grammar school.

The hill stands spectacularly in the landscape and will have been a special place since humans arrived after the last ice age. A stone axe head indicates Neolithic or early Bronze Age settlements close by. Earthworks in the form of ditches and banks with palisades secured an Iron Age fort. The size of post holes suggest a palisade height of up to 12 feet.

It may have had religious significance from the earliest times and there is some evidence that there could have been a Roman temple up there. As the Roman influence waned in the 400s AD, the pagan Anglo Saxons moved in. In 653 however, Peada, son of Penda, king of Mercia, and his new Northumbrian bride brought 4 Christian missionary priests to Royal Repton. As a result, in 675 Breedon's Saxon monastery was founded - ten years after the one at Repton. The current building is endowed with many Saxon carved stones and



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friezes - including the Breedon Angel which is one of the finest surviving Saxon sculptures and the earliest known carved angel.

The Viking attack on Repton of 873/4 led to the destruction of the monastery at Breedon but, unlike Repton, it does seem to have recovered to some extent. After the Norman Conquest, Robert de Ferrers gained the lands and passed the remains of the church to Nostell Priory. By 1122, five Augustinian Canons from Nostell had arrived to build the medieval Priory - 50 years before Maud, wife of the earl of Chester, founded the Augustinian Priory in Repton. Always a small establishment, Breedon degenerated somewhat and became quite dilapidated and at dissolution in 1539 (a year after Repton), there was only the Prior.

At this point Francis Shirley purchased the site as a burial place for his family and it became the parish church. The tower was central then but the northern part - ruinous by the 1700s - was demolished. By the end of the century the whole building was unsafe but subsequent repair and restoration work has secured a wonderful place for us to appreciate. Inside there are many intriguing features including the huge Shirley pew and the family monuments. The six bells in the tower accompany the angel carving and are a delight to ring and, now the tower restoration work is finishing, should be back in action soon.

A delightful afternoon in glorious sunshine and an opportunity to meet face to face after 18 months.

The Mount Pleasant:

Charles has been continuing with research into some of Repton's buildings and families and offers this story.

The history of the Mill Hill site & Mount Pleasant Inn is closely bound up with the Smithard family, indeed the area was at one time known as Smithards Hill as evidenced by Mary Kent's burial entry of November 22nd 1843.

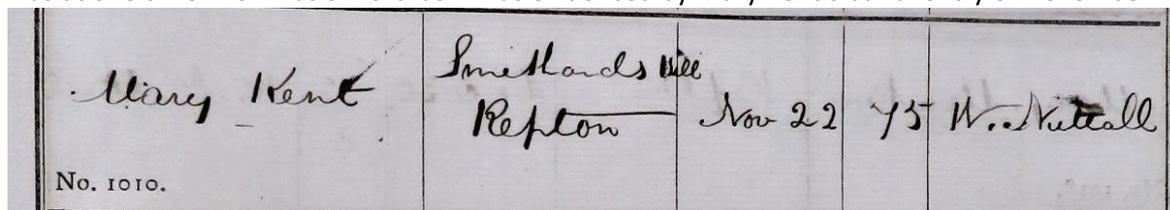


fig 1

The Smithards appear to have arrived in Repton around the time of John Smithard's marriage to Sarah Sylvester in Hartshorne in 1741 as the first mention of the Smithard family in Repton comes in 1742 with the baptism of their daughter Elizabeth. John appears to have prospered as he is recorded as Constable in 1755 and Church Warden in 1757. He is recorded as a tawer, a leather worker, in his brother's will of 1764 but, as was usual in 18th century Repton, he also farmed. He received 8 acres from Ridgeway Field at enclosure in 1767, the area outlined in fig 2, including the farmstead shown. Outlying farmsteads were unusual in Repton which, for the most part, was typical of the nucleated villages of the Midland counties. I have no evidence for the date of the farmstead but it may have been built by John Smithard.

John's grandson William still held the same property, holdings 384-386 in the 1830 Survey (fig 3).



fig 2 (1762 map)

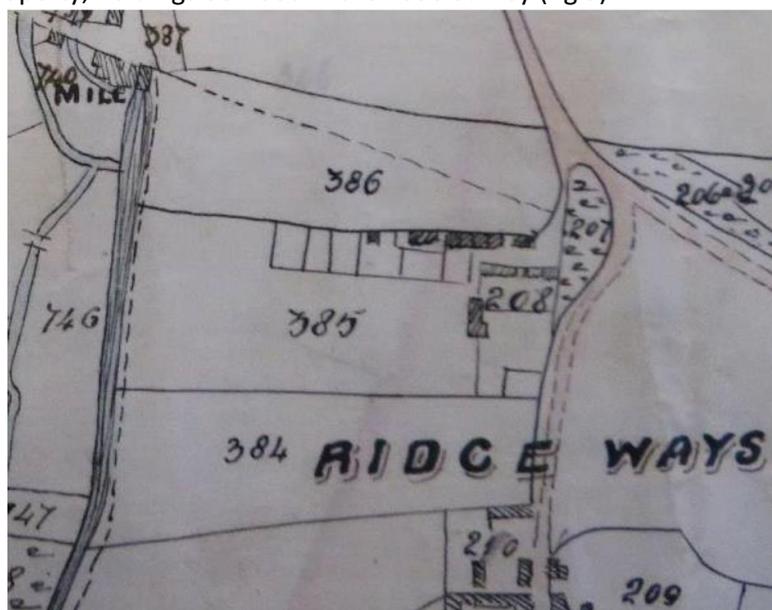


fig 3 (1829 map)

John Smithard died in 1775 and in his will, left his Mill Hill estate to his wife Sarah and, after her death, to his son John. The will lists his properties including Mill Hill Close, ref. 386 on 1829 map, (fig 4).

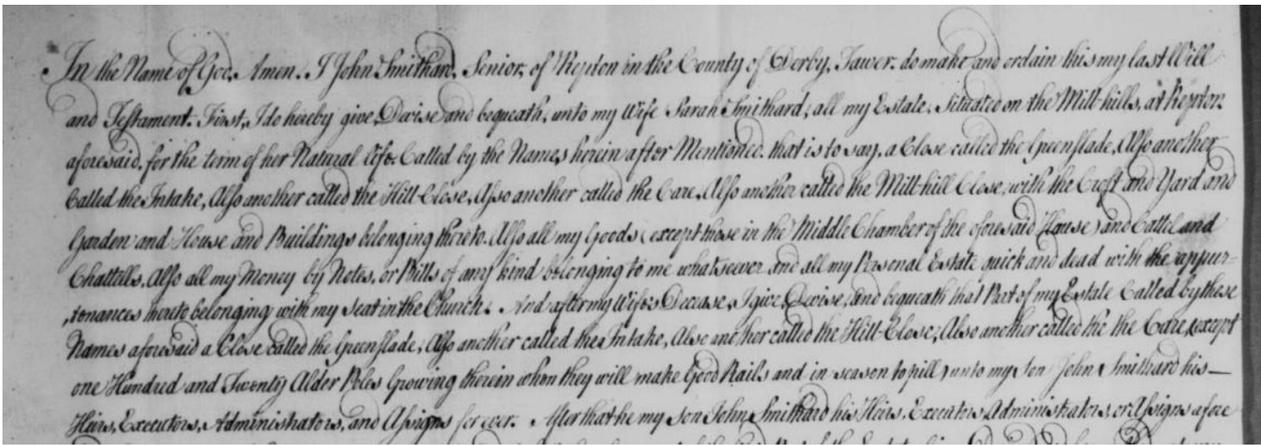


Fig 4

"In the name of God Amen, I John Smithard Senior, of Repton in the County of Derby, Tawer, do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament . First, I do hereby give devise and bequeath unto my wife Sarah Smithard, all my estate situate on the Mill Hills at Repton aforesaid for the time of her natural life called by the names hereinafter mentioned that is to say a close with the croft and yard and garden and house and buildings belonging thereto. Also all my goods (except those in the middle chamber of the aforesaid house) and cattel and chattills. Also my money by notes or bills of any kind belonging to me whatsoever and all my personal estate quick and dead with the appurtenances thereunto belonging with my seat in the church. And after my wifes decease I give , devise and bequeath that part of my estate called by these names aforesaid mentioned a close in the Greenslade, also another called the Intake, also another called the Hill Close, also another called the Case (except one hundred and twenty Alder poles growing therein when they will make good rails and in season to pill) unto my son John Smithard his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever....."

Sarah died in 1785 with son John presumably running the estate until his own death in 1795. John's eldest son, William born 1774, appears to have inherited the Mill Hill estate whilst his younger brother, John born 1778, became a shoemaker living at Tudor Lodge on the High Street.

There was considerable new housing development in Repton in the first decades of the 19th Century and the 1829 map shows that the Smithards had built a number of houses on the site but no buildings on the Mount Pleasant Inn site. However, a 1877 document (a recent ebay purchase!) which records the sale of the Mount Pleasant site by Charles Brentnall of Derby, maltster to James Marples of Ridgeway House notes:

'that messuage, dwelling house or tenement erected by William Smithard the younger on the above land & used as an inn or beer house called the Mount Pleasant formerly in the occupation of William Pountain then of Richard Gibson & now or late of late of Messrs Thompson & Son'

William Smithard the younger was born in 1799 to William & his wife Dorothy but predeceased his father, dying in 1855. The Mount Pleasant Inn stayed in Smithard ownership until the death of William senior in 1865. William instructed his executors to sell his property for the benefit of his daughter Mary Bull and the sale is recorded in a Derby Mercury advert in 1866 (fig 5)

VALUABLE FREEHOLD HOUSES, MALT OFFICE AND LAND, SITUATE AT REPTON, IN THE COUNTY OF DERBY.
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
 By Messrs. NEWBOLD and OLIVER,
 At the BULL'S HEAD INN, in Repton aforesaid, on the 17th day of January next, at Six o'clock in the Afternoon, in One, or the following, or such other Lot or Lots as shall be agreed on at the time of sale, and subject to conditions to be then produced;

LOT 1.
ALL that MESSUAGE, DWELLING-HOUSE, or TENEMENT, occupied as a Public-house, called MOUNT PLEASANT INN, situate at Mount Pleasant, in Repton aforesaid, in the occupation of Mr. Richard Gibson. Also, all that 10-quarter MALT OFFICE, situate near to the above, and in the occupation of Mr. Brentnall. Also, all that PIECE of Ground adjoining thereto, as now staked out, containing, with site of the said buildings, half an acre (more or less).

LOT 2.

fig 5

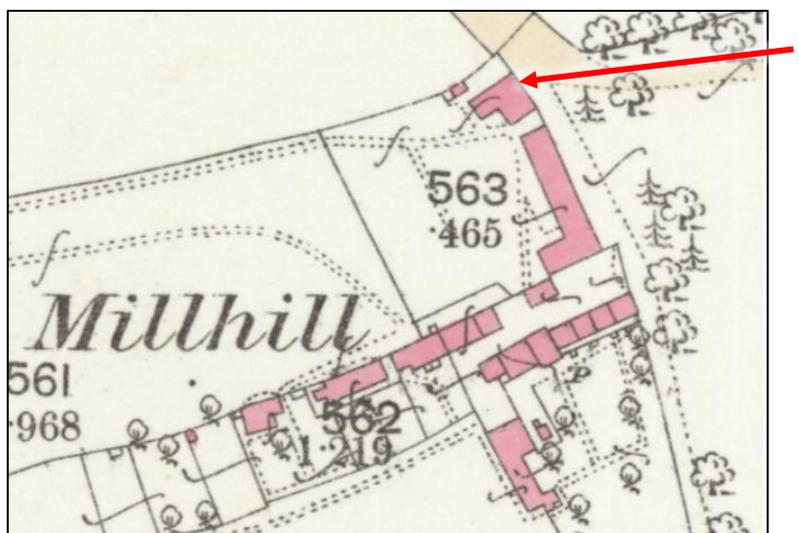
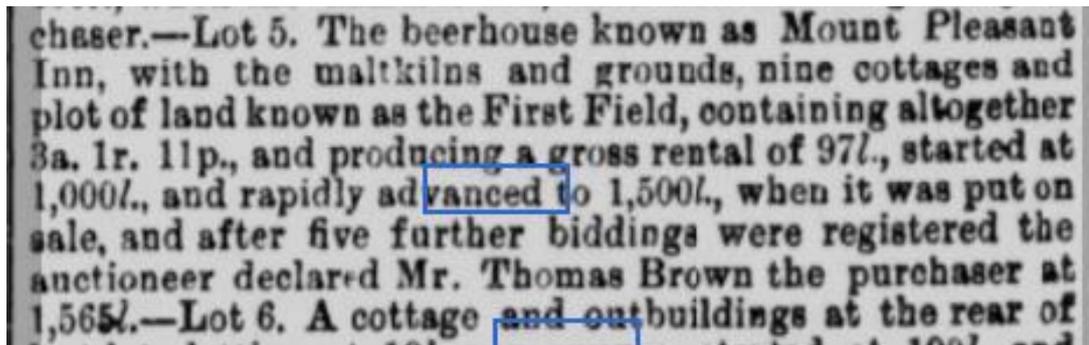


fig 6

It appears Charles Brentnall, who was in occupation of the malt office on the site, had purchased the Mount Pleasant Inn in the 1866 sale but then sold it to James Marples in 1877. James Marples died Nov 21st 1888 and in August 1889 the Mount Pleasant was sold at auction for £1500 to Mr Thomas Brown, possibly the Thomas Brown who owned & ran the Shakespeare Inn (fig 7).



chaser.—Lot 5. The beerhouse known as Mount Pleasant Inn, with the malkilns and grounds, nine cottages and plot of land known as the First Field, containing altogether 3a. 1r. 11p., and producing a gross rental of 97l., started at 1,000l., and rapidly advanced to 1,500l., when it was put on sale, and after five further biddings were registered the auctioneer declared Mr. Thomas Brown the purchaser at 1,565l.—Lot 6. A cottage and outbuildings at the rear of

fig 7

The earliest direct evidence of the Mount Pleasant Inn comes from Astbury's Diary from 1843 but the 1841 Census records 'William Pountain, publican', at Mill Hill so it appears likely that it was constructed at some time during the 1830's given that it does not appear on the 1829 map. The 1871 O.S. map is the first to show the Mount Pleasant Inn, (fig 6). William Pountain was landlord until his death in 1851 with his wife Susannah taking charge as she appears as 'beer house keeper of Mill Hill' in the 1861 Census. By 1864 Richard Gibson was publican, being listed in Kelly's 1864 Trade Directory. He had been publican of the Mitre since 1848 but it was sold in 1861 so he may have moved to the Mount Pleasant. The next publican recorded was Joseph Dalby, noted as beer retailer & joiner in the 1870 Harrod & Co. Directory, and he was still there as publican of the Mount Pleasant in the 1874 Wrights Directory. However the 1877 indenture of sale would appear to suggest that he was the under tenant of Messrs. Thompson & Son, brewers from Horninglow.

Following the change of ownership in 1877 the new publican is recorded as Thomas Kinsey in the 1881 Census but by 1891 Richard Sarson & his wife Mary are at the Mount Pleasant Inn. Richard Sarson died in 1910 but Mary continued as publican, probably until her death in 1920. I have not investigated the 20th Century history of the Mount Pleasant Inn but I'm sure members will know much of the story. Happily it was still open the last time I was in Repton.

Two Books:

Zac has kindly passed on his copy of Cat Jarman's book "River Kings" and it will go in the archive for anyone who wants to borrow it. He comments "Its a funny book, fact, fiction and theory!! I enjoyed it as a read and it was a good idea I thought".

It starts with a bead found in the Viking mass grave under the mound in the vicarage garden, but really draws on Cat's impressive knowledge of the broader Viking story and information gained from developments in modern technology such as ancient DNA, isotope analysis and osteology to reveal a much more complex situation than is traditionally expected. She presents arguments about the scale and cause of the Viking expansion, and suggests that there was much greater mobility and re-settlement rather than just trading and raiding. She also explores the role of women and their importance and mobility and the range of occupations that they performed both domestic, as traders and in the fighting forces. We usually think of the Vikings in terms of their westward movement to Britain, Ireland, Iceland and the Americas, but in fact she demonstrates that they were much more active eastwards of Scandinavia. It is not a difficult learned paper but very readable and it is referenced with sources as well for anyone wanting to look further.

The copy of the "Corpus of Anglo Saxon Stone Sculpture Vol 13 - Derbyshire and Staffordshire" was borrowed from the Derbyshire Archaeological Society Library and is superb (if that period interests you). Chapter 4 is an excellent account of the early medieval history of the area from the end of the Roman period through to Domesday and is surprisingly detailed as well as readable and well referenced.

Chapter 5 is an excellent, readable, detailed and referenced paper on the stones found here in Repton. Written by our own Martin B (Prof Martin Biddle) it includes a section on the written evidence for Anglo-Saxon Repton and a section on the Architectural History – the study of which led to the digs he led in the 1970s and 80s. The book discusses, location by location, all known stones in detail - with drawings and photographs.

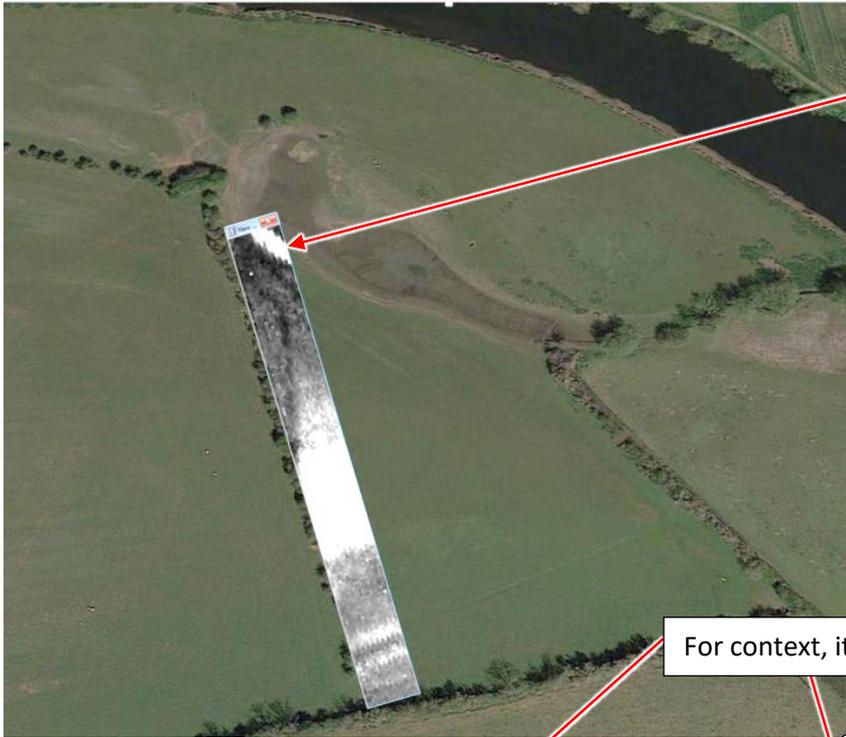
The dating of the church is debatable and Martin comes down on the idea that the pillars in the crypt and the church above (now the chancel) were not built by Wiglaf as previously believed, but later to accommodate the remains of his grandson Wigston (St Wystan).

New at around £100, we will look for a second hand copy for the archive!

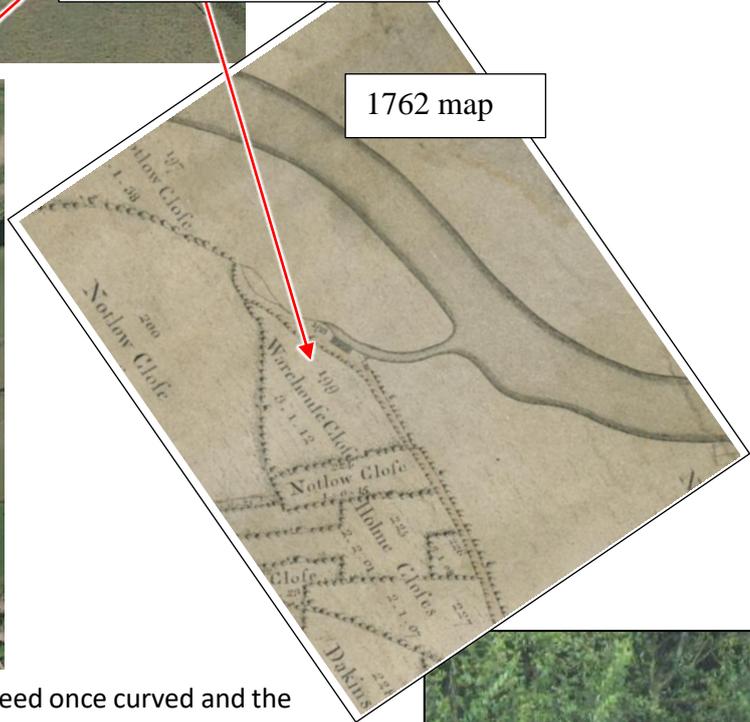
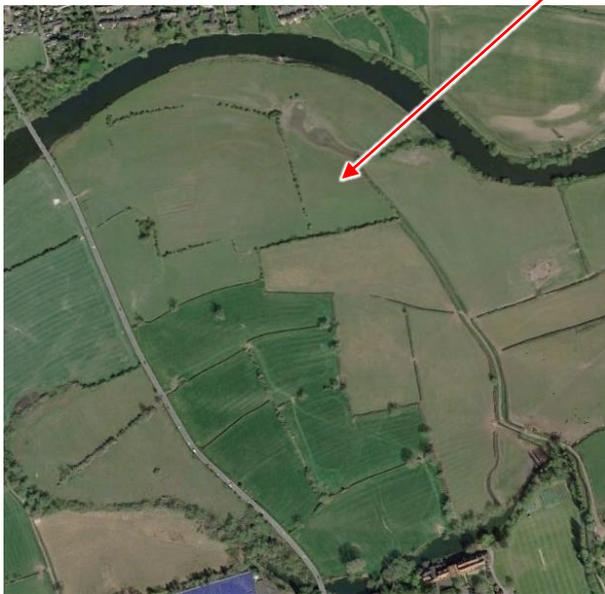
Our Archaeological activity 1):

We have confirmed that our resistivity surveying is covered by the non-archaeological insurance cover we have via BALH and so we were able to start work on the fields near Finney's Dock and the Buries. A walk over them does indicate considerable activity over the years but so far we have only managed to carry out one days surveying. We did nine 20x20m grids at 1m resolution (which is a lot) and we found nothing unexpected. Many of the features we did find

can also be seen on the ground as shallow ditches, but it is surprising just how narrow the path to the ford seems to have been bearing in mind that it would have been used by horses and horse drawn vehicles. This impression may change as a bigger area is covered but may require a resistivity pseudo-section or a proper archaeological trench to investigate it. The hedge line on the left does seem to have moved as indicated by the darker (low resistance) curved line, and the big, light (high resistance) area needs some consideration. However when the next strips are done, it may all become clearer.



For context, it's this field.



1762 map

The 1762 map suggests that the hedge line was indeed once curved and the high resistance (light) lines near the bottom of the plot are probably the field boundary between Warehouse Close and Notlow Close.



Pink flamingo umbrellas are an archaeologists must have!



Chapels of ease:

We had a recent enquiry from a retired archaeologist about a couple of local chapels.

One was about the location of the Chapel in Milton - one of eight Chapels of Ease of St Wystan's Church - and we were able to point him to the entry in the Heritage Register where Avril Skipper notes: *A charter of 1271 reveals that one of the eight chapels of St Wystan's Church was situated at Milton. The presumption is that the site of this medieval chapel is Common Farm, the Orchard of which stands adjacent to the floor of the demolished 'Smithy'.* This is opposite the current village hall which also started life as a chapel.

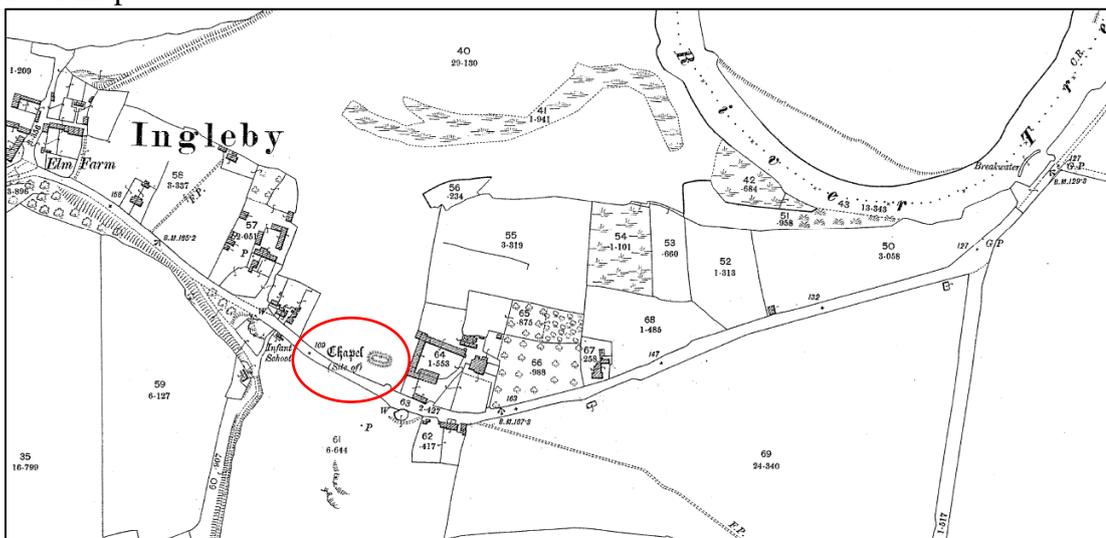
The other enquiry was about the location of Ingleby Chapel. The charter of 1271 also identified it as another of the Chapels of Ease but by 1650 it had fallen into ruin and the villagers were unwilling or too poor to pay for its repair. Similarly, the Chapel of Ease at Foremark was in an unusable condition so the local inhabitants had nowhere to worship and, additionally, neither church had authority to bury people. So the report of 1650 concluded that Foremark should be the Church for the parish of Foremark cum Ingleby and by 1662, Sir Frances Burdett (2nd Baronet) had built St Saviours which remains largely unchanged and is an absolute delight. One condition was that the remaining timbers and stone from Ingleby should be re-used in the tower and churchyard wall. Our archaeological enquirer has carried out a visual survey of the stone and concluded that this was probably done. In fact, it is claimed that the Baronet offered to rebuild the Ingleby chapel wherever the villagers wanted if they would dig up/collect the stone. They didn't, so he built it where it was convenient for Foremark Hall (the earlier house of course).

The original Ingleby Chapel was located on the north side of the lane through Ingleby, in the grounds of Ash Farm. In 1897 the mounded over foundations were quite clear and still discernible in 1966. Two early stone carvings were found there and relocated to the porch at St Wystan's in Repton.

There is a good entry on the Derbyshire Historic Environment Record. Try:

<https://her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR4384>

1901 map:



So it does look as though the site may now be under, or partially under, the barns.

There seems to be little visible on the ground or on the LIDAR images.

At a neighbouring property, the construction of underground parking revealed what is taken to be two quern stones – used for grinding grains to make flour. However they were found about 3m underground in a very sandy soil and, unless there has been a building up of soil levels, this is unexpectedly deep. They have currently gone away to be looked at but we hope to be able to follow this up.

Spring cottage and Morley's Yard.

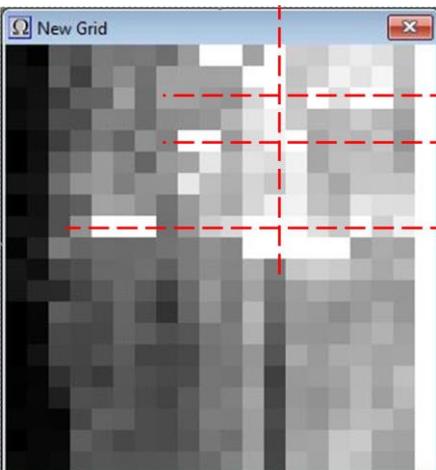


In the last issue we discussed Morley's Yard on Main Street, opposite Broomhills Lane. Since then, Jenny and David Jones have kindly allowed us to photograph their deeds and there was a bit of surprise in that we had found from the land tax registers for 1830 and 1842 that the properties were owned by Thomas Morley but it appears that before 1861 it had passed into Harpur Crewe hands. It was owned by several people after the Morleys but in an abstract of title for Miss Edith Smedley when she sold it to George Smedley in 1948, it refers to an indenture of settlement made on 18th September 1861 "*between Caroline Louisa Harpur Crewe (1st part), James Turner (2nd part), Ion Turner (3rd part) and Rev Henry Harpur Crewe and Arther Need (of the 4th part) being a settlement made prior to and in contemplation of the marriage and afterwards solemnised between the said Ion Turner and the said Caroline Louisa Harpur Crewe.....*" It is phenomenally complicated and difficult to follow after that, but finishes up

confirming that in 1925, Edith Smedley bought the whole yard for £550. She later sold it to George Smedley in 1948 and he sold Spring Cottage on its own to the Quintons in 1965 by which time it was worth £4,250. This did not include the cottages attached to it nor those on the other side of the yard.

Our archaeological Activity 2) - Spring Cottage resistivity survey:

During our study of their deeds, Jenny and David mentioned that they thought there was a well in their garden although the maps only show a pump in Morley's yard proper. David was also aware of a crop mark appearing in his lawn and wondered if there was an earlier building or, perhaps, a bomb shelter. So a team of 6 of us plus Keith, our resistivity mentor, descended on Spring Cottage's lovely garden one recent Monday morning and carried out two grid surveys and a pseudosection looking for the well and for the cause of a parch mark on the lawn.



First came a grid survey on the lawn. We measured the resistance of the soil about half a metre underground in every half metre square of 10m grid. Those values are interpreted as a shade of grey and plotted here.

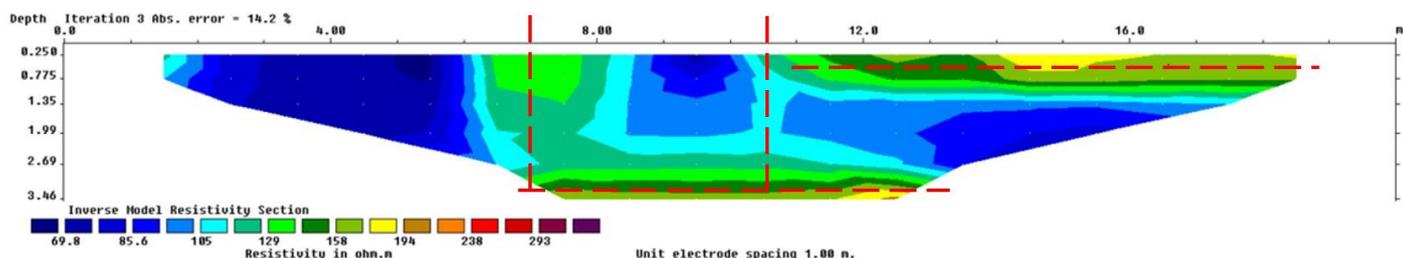
The red lines indicate features that may be walls and the lighter area in the top quarter may represent a spread of demolition rubble. A probe pushed into the ground here hit something solid about a foot down.



We followed this up with a pseudo-section. This mimics a trench and gives you a view of the strata in the section - but in resistivity terms. So some interpretation is necessary.

We put metal probes a few inches into the ground every metre along a 20 metre line. We then connected the first 4 probes to the resistivity meter and took a reading. We moved them along by one probe and took another reading and repeated this till we got to the end. Then we did it again with the connections separated by 2 metres and then by 3 metres and so on until we had 57 readings.

The rest is up to some complex mathematics and modelling in the computer but it produced the following result.



House end

Brook end.

We notice vertical, higher resistance areas at about 7m and 10.5m (dotted lines) with a possible floor at nearly 3m depth. There is also a higher resistance layer near the surface from about 11m onwards. This would fit with a bomb shelter that is about 12 feet across and partially underground and covered by a mound of soil. The layer near the surface could be a spread of demolition rubble.

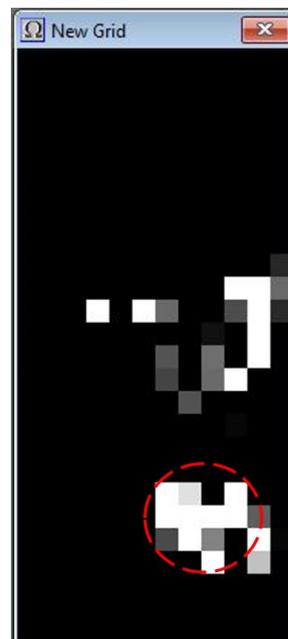


A 20m pseudo-section traverse in progress.

The last grid sought the well. We expected a cluster of light squares on the grid representing a void for the well. Alternatively there could be a cluster of dark squares if the well had been filled in and topped off with fairly deep topsoil. In fact neither appeared, but by adjusting the contrast, a cluster of light (high resistance) squares appeared, Unfortunately they are some 8m farther west than David's memory of 30 years ago.



Grid survey looking for the well.



Tricky for some....



but not for others!

Helping with enquiries:

Some time ago we helped Lilian in Australia with some family history. She is one of Russell's cousins and related to the Harrisons. She has sent through some photos and would like some help please.



Lilian was told that these photographs are of a celebration of the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935. This seems likely to her as her aunt, Beryl Harrison - born 1926, is the young lady with the white hat looking at the camera and pushing her bike.

Can anyone add to this please? And, assuming it is Repton where is that high wall?

She recently asked about people in other photographs. Roger Salt was able to help with his family members and to fill in details of the coach outings they organised.



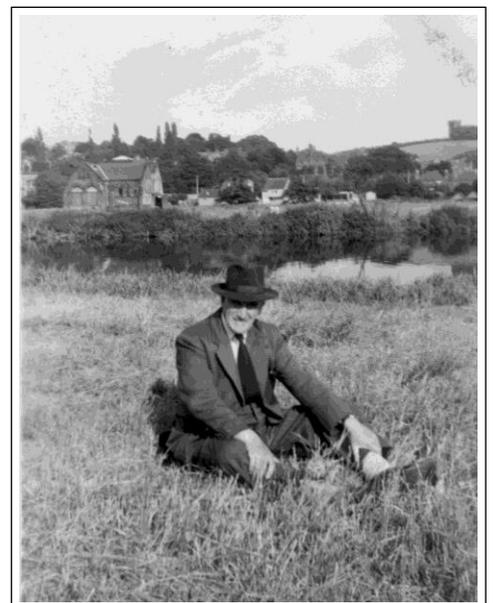
Clara Salt, Dorothy Salt, Lydia Harrison.



Dorothy Salt, Lydia, John Salt and Clara Salt

Roger recalls that his Aunt May and Dorothy Salt carried on organising coach trips after Clara died and used Hanfords of Barton. He thinks they had a personal connection with Ted Hanford which may explain why the Blue Bus wasn't used.

Another photo is of her father, Oliver Jeffries, sitting beside the Trent in the 1950s. She is trying to identify the building. The Winshill water tower on the right skyline makes it clear that Oliver is on the north bank. Roger Salt thought it was probably a pump house. Does anyone know anything about it? Is it still there?



Anchor Church:

A connection between Prof. Mark Horton and Edmund Simons through both Bristol University and the Royal Agricultural University led to a brief but astonishing world-wide interest in a paper produced by Edmund. He is based in Kinver which is famous for rock-house dwellings and was conducting a study into rock-cut buildings in the midlands when Mark put him onto Anchor Church.

According to the press (supposedly quoting Mark) this important Anglo-Saxon hermitage had been here undiscovered for over 1000 years.

It is an old story with nothing much new to offer.

The media interest stems from skilful promotion of a paper (comprehensively researched but not peer reviewed) recently presented to the Bristol University caving club. It is the latest of a number of surveys of Anchor Church that have been conducted over the years. We know that the caves pre-date the Burdett's use of them as a place to have their pudding on a summer's evening because in April 1658 "Ye foole at Anchorchurch" was buried at Repton. This does not sound like the burial of a revered and holy person so we must assume the cave was a dwelling at that time. It has always been understood locally that the cave is old and mostly man-made and had religious uses in its past – although there is actually scant evidence for this. In 1789 William Bagshaw Stevens (Head Master at Repton School) wrote a three Stanza poem describing a boating outing from Repton to Anchor Church and he was clearly in the belief that he is going from one very holy place to another.

There is a suggestion that St Hardulph was the deposed King Eardwulf of Northumbria and came and prayed here. There is a theory that he is buried at Breedon but this seems to be based largely on the fact it's the only church dedicated to him. However, it is a possibility because there is archaeological evidence for a hermit's cell there.

There is a fragmentary paper reference to Hardulph having a cell in a cliff a little from the Trent. But Breedon is a rocky outcrop only two miles from the Trent at Kings Mills and, with remains of a much earlier iron age camp, might just as well have furnished his cell.

Another theory is that Anchor Church was an Anchorites cell - where a holy person would be walled in for a whole life of prayer. Geographically, Anchor Church is much closer to the religious house that was at Repton, and the logistics of feeding and supporting an incarcerated Anchorite would be an important consideration. So the link to Breedon is tenuous.

Christianity was brought to pagan Mercia by 4 missionary priests in 653AD and would have been in the Ionian (Irish) tradition (some call it Celtic) and the idea of hermits and solitary lives devoted to prayer was part of their culture. It was not until the Synod of Whitby in 664 that the Roman traditions were adopted. So the famous, royal, Benedictine monastery at Repton was of that earlier culture and about 697, St Guthlac, a bad lad who reformed, became a Benedictine monk at the monastery at Repton. Two years later he set off down the Trent to seek somewhere for a hermitage. He ended up at Crowland. So the notion that Anchor Church is an early hermitage site connected with Repton is very plausible.

As to dates, there is little new argument in the latest paper. Suggestions that they must be early because the doors and windows are narrow, ignores the fact that hewing sandstone is hard work and the suggested similarity between the remaining rock carved pillar and the pillars in Repton Church's crypt is dubious.

However, some other studies have also proposed an early date and Foremark's name in the Domesday Book of 1086 is Fornewerke a Norse (Viking) word and interpreted as old fortifications or works. With the River Trent flowing right below the caves, the Great Heathen Army would have rowed past within yards and the caves may be the reason for the name. That would date them to before 873 at the latest.



