



# Repton Village History Group Newsletter

## Summer 2020 (20<sup>th</sup> June 2020)



### The ongoing programme:

We were slightly ahead of the game with the Covid-19 lockdown and instead of meeting in the village hall in March we covered some of the topics by email. And the material has kept flowing to such an extent that a couple of Russell's theories planned for the meeting have still not yet been aired. It has meant that any member can join in the conversation or introduce topics. It also means that our more distant members can join in the conversations no matter where they live.

We do still have items planned for future meetings – and it is our intention to return to proper meetings when we safely can. Perhaps we will continue with more on-line discussions as well – maybe even Zooming or something! Items that we had lined up were Alan Dale talking about Appleby Magna School and Sir Christopher Wren's involvement, a meeting with Rob Davies who has done an awful lot of metal detecting around here and a trip with Richard Stone to St Hardulphs at Breedon on the Hill plus a visit to the Willington and Foremark Churches – to complete the tour of Trent-side Churches we started last year. The visit to Breedon is postponed and a new date will not be set till we have a better idea of how things are progressing.

Our AGM was successfully conducted by email, phone and post, but the accounts still have to be ratified once we have been able to get the books to our auditor.

### Return of Pepel – again.

The monkey that was companion to Lawrence Grey, cook at the Priory school boarding house, has featured repeatedly in newsletters and surprisingly seven more photographs have just emerged from Pat Williamson in Milton. Lawrence had cooked for the boys and had dropped into the Boot Inn for a drink with Pepel.



Pepel on Lawrence's shoulder



and on Pat's shoulder



and now with Jeff – Lawrence with his back to us



Pepel, Jeff, Pat and husband Ken

### **Repton Steam Laundry:**

We discussed the history of the laundry in our last issue and since then Chris P has provided a picture of one of the classic laundry baskets - in amazingly good condition. It will almost certainly have been made in Repton – maybe by the Pearsons who were basket makers working from a shed in the Square



### **Helping with enquiries**

There is a constant trickle of people asking for information or help with family research. Recently there have been two – Sarah Swift and Marian Smithard: Marian is addressed in the item on Christleton (Nat West bank) on page 4.

Ashley from South Carolina contacted us seeking information about Sarah Swift. He stunned us by mentioning that she was grandmother to the Bigsby boys! Robert Bigsby later wrote a substantial history and description of Repton. Ashley had tracked her to being a schoolteacher in Repton in the mid-1800s. He was surprised that ladies could be teachers. We were able to provide information about the schools and the village and some helpful maps and local information on the village, the local area and Derby. It was an interesting tale. The 1841 and 51 censuses had her as a private schoolmistress. So it was likely she provided tutoring or private education. The Village school that we know now, did not then exist.

She was born Sarah Harrison in The Ash near Sutton on the Hill in 1785. It was a tiny hamlet between Sutton and Etwall. She married William Kinder Swift in All Saints, Derby (later the Cathedral) in 1805 and she had three girls before William died 4 years later (in 1809). He was a silk thrower - not that he spun silk, but he was part of the family that ran the Silk Mill in Derby. Robert Bigsby, who had been a pupil at Repton School seems to have stayed on in Repton and, training for the law, married Sarah's daughter Elizabeth in 1827. His mother-in-law, Sarah, joined them in Repton. It seems that she was probably comfortably well off having inherited half the income from her husband's estate. Her three daughters shared the other half. So when she moved in with Robert and Elizabeth, between them they had two thirds of the estate income. This may be why Robert Bigsby gave up training for the law. Elizabeth Bigsby died in 1847 and it is likely that he stayed in Repton with Sarah till she died in 1854. He was in Camberwell in Surry by 1861. There are notes with a lot more detail now in the digital archive.

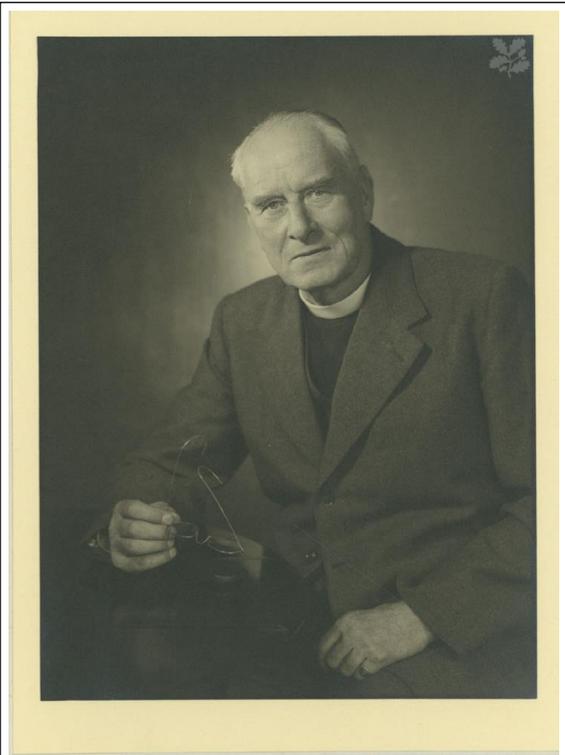
Bigsby is a curious character and now we know more about him, he will no doubt feature in a future article.

### **Scouting in Repton**

We do not have much in the archive on Girl Guiding, but there is quite a bit on Scouting. The editor of the Village News asked each organisation to write about themselves and we were asked to help the Repton Scout Group with their piece. In lockdown and without access to the archive, we had to rely on digital material and the following is the result:

The official Scouting movement is generally reckoned to have started when Baden-Powell held the famous camp on Brownsea Island in 1907 but unofficial Scout "Clubs" and small groups sprang up when Scouting for Boys was published. This may have been the case at Repton School, and there is a photographic archive from about 1922 (now in America) of what claims to be the 1<sup>st</sup> Repton Scout Group. This was probably actually the 1<sup>st</sup> Repton School Group and it seems this was not formally registered until 1928 and then as the 75<sup>th</sup> Derby Group. G F Fisher, the head master (later Archbishop of Canterbury) was "in control".

The real 1<sup>st</sup> Repton Scout Group was a village group and the Scout Master was the Rev L N Hodges who got his warrant on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1910. Melbourne beat us to it with a warranted leader in the August. However there is reference to a Repton Scout bugler in 1909.



Rev N L Hodges – Repton's first Scout Leader.

Scouting waxed and waned over the years. At one time in the 1940s there were 3 groups – the village group (1<sup>st</sup> Repton) the prep school (112th Derby - presumably only a Cub Pack) and Repton School (75<sup>th</sup> Derby). But in the early 50s they more or less disappeared and scouting was only really resurrected in 1954 by Jack Harrison leading youngsters like Dave Beasley, Chris Hawkesworth, Mick Sharratt, Pete Ratcliffe and Vic Bamford. Around 1970, there was also, briefly, a Cub Pack at Foremarke School.

The group had not formally disappeared because as they were setting off for a camp, the Vicar, Rev Harcombe, appeared asking what was going on – no one had told him and he was Group Scout Master! There were numerous breaks in leadership in the next 5 years, but in 1960, after an 18 month gap, Dave Beasley got involved again and gradually the group grew. After the village hall burned down, they used the Court Room in Boot Hill, but acquired 3 workmen's huts from the construction of Willington Power station. After 16 years (in 1982) some grants, fundraising and much physical labour, the current building formally opening. With this level of activity and success, the group became very strong with two Beaver Colonies a 40 strong Cub Pack, 44 Scouts and a thriving Venture Unit (later Explorers). However as is so often the case, leader numbers dwindled and around 2010, the group was very close to

closing having got down to just the Beaver Colony. Mike Knowles became Group Scout leader and later Scout Leader and the Group has grown again with a strong leadership team now under Rebecca Auterson. It now has Beavers, Cubs, two Scout troops and a combined Explorer Unit with Willington.



After the fire in the village hall and a period of meeting in the Court Room, these 3 workmen's huts provided a permanent meeting place. Note the pioneering poles stored under the building.



Trek cart en-route to camp.



All packed up and waiting for transport home – with Dave Beasley at the far end. Note the mugs hanging on the tree.

## Christleton: Numbers 3 & 5 The Cross, NatWest Bank and Marian Smithard.

On our website is an article regretting the closure of the Repton Branch of the National Westminster Bank which is just by The Cross. It was only open a few days each week and run by two lovely lady cashiers who came out from the main branch in Derby. In its later days, you had to ring and be buzzed in but, once in, it was all very friendly – to the point of customers being offered a mince pie and glass of sherry at Christmas. Being still a rural area with local farmers using the branch, there were occasions when the ladies would hurry round from behind their security screens with a squirt of air freshener after some customers had gone.

The article mentions the Measham family running a confectioner's shop there in the 1860s and comments that in the 1920s it was occupied by the Tailby family and, later, the Wild family. There is some evidence that a forerunner of the bank moved into what had been the shop about 1909.

Now (in 2020) we have researched and learned more about the occupiers of the building through a serendipitous enquiry from Helen in a firmly locked down rural village in Italy. They were searching for Marian Smithard who the family knew as Aunt Pol and who had been born around 1832 in Repton but whose birth and other details they could not trace. On the 1891 census she is a confectioner near The Cross and tracing the census enumerators steps, it is definitely the building that later housed the bank.



Helping them with their research led us to find out more about the building.

In the process, we found that the Measham family were still there in 1871 but Emma, the mother had died in 1864 and was buried in Repton. In 1861 there had been Robert – head of the household and describing himself as a farmer of 60 acres, his wife Emma (confectioner), children Emma, Mary and George and his sister-in-law Mary Anne Muggleston plus two servants.

Robert died in 1872, Mary Ann Muggleston died in 1875, George in 1897 (all buried in Repton) and it seems that Emma and Mary gave up the confectioners and took on Brook Farm where they are farmers on the 1881 census - a big undertaking for two women.

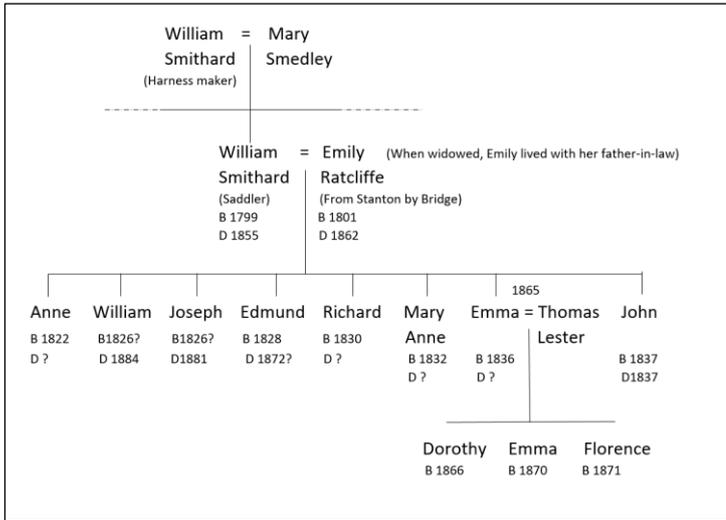
Searching through newspaper clippings, there is reference to William C Lowe, a confectioner, in Repton. Sure enough on the 1881 census he is at the shop by the Cross and described as Cook and Confectioner. However, by 1885 he is in financial difficulties and, having run up debts of £916, was being examined by the Official Receiver. He is described as a pastry cook and confectioner of Repton and also of 26 Osmaston Road, Derby and was declared bankrupt on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1885. However, it seems he was still in Repton because in 1888 there is a charge of theft from him in Repton against a Celia Neville of all sorts of small items valued at 40/- and in 1889 he advertises as Ornamental Confectioner, Repton, Burton on Trent: Dinner parties, Wedding breakfasts, Ball Suppers &c prepared at the Residences of his Patrons. However, it clearly did not work out because by 1891, Marian Smithard is there.



Finding Marian took real detective work.

The family tale handed down to Helen was that she was born in Repton, was a superb gourmet cook who had been in France, had an illegitimate child which was “adopted” and was Helen’s great grandmother. If so, Marian was Helen’s GG grandmother. She carved a career for herself as lecturer, demonstrator, author and national expert on butter making. She was spotted on the 1891 census in Repton as an unmarried 46 year old confectioner at The Cross and with her is 21 year old niece Emma Lester. Tracing the census enumerator’s steps, it is clear that they were in the building later occupied by the bank.

She appears on the 1881 census in Brighton as an Instructress of Cookery and living with her is Emma Lester, then eleven. However Marian could not be traced earlier than that.



Assembling the Smithard family tree for the generations before and after her birth, we notice a Mary Anne Smithard who was baptised in March 1832 in Repton and her next youngest sister is Emma baptised in 1836. Emma married Thomas Lester and had a daughter (who would be Mary Anne's niece) also named Emma (Lester) in 1869. Mary Anne and her sister Emma were the youngest in the family – they had a younger brother John who died when Mary Anne was 5 and Emma just 1 so the sisters were likely to be close. We have not researched Emma's married life to work out why her daughter might have gone to live with her sister Mary Ann, but Thomas was a brewer's labourer and money might have been short.

Further evidence that Mary Anne is Marian: Polly is a pet name for girls named Mary and she was known to the family as Aunt Pol. In France, Marianne is a bit of a special name, so perhaps turning Mary Anne into Marianne while abroad and adopting the anglicised version Marian when back home makes sense.

So where was she before that? In 1851, aged 19 there is a Mary Smithard of the right age (19) in service with the Birch household in Rugeley - two sisters (school mistresses), a niece from Repton (boarding) and another boarder and Mary as a house servant. Not far from Repton and a genteel place of work and a Repton connection. Her family have moved to Hartshorne. Before that in 1841 she is aged 9 at home in Repton with her siblings

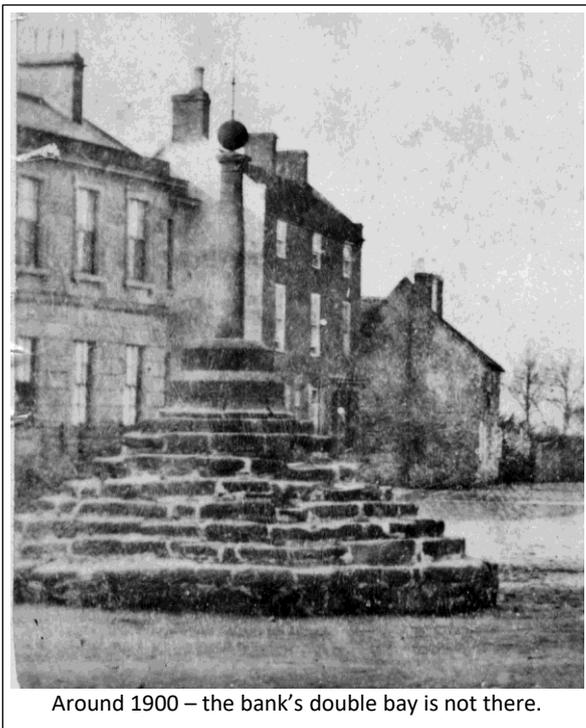
In 1857, aged 25, Marian had her illegitimate daughter and the family have some tentative evidence that the father may have been of French origin – possibly Theodore Dumas from Paris who is linked to a Dumas family with a cheese business in Derby. Some members of the family taught French at Derby School and at Repton School.

There is a bit of an uncertain gap till 1873 when she enrolled on a cookery course at the National Training School in South Kensington and came out with a first class diploma and a gold medal for her puff pastry, pies and rissoles. She moved to Brighton and her niece joined her. She taught cookery at the new Aquarium in Brighton and ran courses and gave demonstrations all over the country. The courses were well advertised and spread from the Home Counties, to Newcastle upon Tyne and across to Dublin. Locally, she came to Long Eaton and Burton. She endorsed products –

notably an "Oxygenic Gas Cooking Stove", a beef extract and "Myer's Borough Ketchup".

In 1878 she published a recipe book "Cooking for the Artisan and Others" and by 1886 was also judging butter making competitions as the "Chief Dairymaid to the R.A.S.E". She seems to have changed course about 1888 as there were no more advertisements after that. Maybe that was when she and niece Emma came to Repton to run the confectioners shop and they were certainly there in 1891. Whether it was the official tuck shop for the school is uncertain, but it was popular with the scholars.

In 1895, her niece Emma married a Repton Farmer, William Meakin. Marian died in 1899 and is buried in Repton. It seems Emma carried on with the business because on the 1901 census William and Emma and 2 children, a live-in assistant confectioner and a domestic nurse are there. By 1911 they are farming on Monsom Farm on Monsom Lane and there is no trace of a confectioners by the Cross. However there is a possibility that the shop has become a book and stationery store. One possibility is that



Around 1900 – the bank's double bay is not there.

the Cross. However there is a possibility that the shop has become a book and stationery store. One possibility is that

by 1911 the school shop next to the Post Office (nowadays an art gallery) was a tuck shop and athletic outfitters and had replaced the confectioners business.

The first reference to the bank being in Repton is with an advertisement in the 1909 Handbook to Repton actually the Union of London and Smith's bank Ltd – a forerunner of the National Westminster Bank. At that point the bank was presumably only using part of the building and the house was a dwelling.

Percy and Mabel Tailby were there in the 1920s having married in 1921 and Joan Elizabeth (Bunty) was born in 1922. Percy was a butcher in those days but in 1924 joined forces with Jack Dean to form the Blue Bus Services. Many will remember Joan Elizabeth as Bunty Marshall and a past President of our group. Frederick Wild and his wife Marion and two grown up sons were in Christleton (number 3) by 1939. They were all engineers. The Tailbys were on Burton Road. The Betteridges were in the other half - The Bank House. Harold was a Riding Instructor with Mary his wife and they had one son Harold born in 1928, another, John, in 1930 and a daughter Angela in 1935. The Hollis family were in one of the cottages behind the bank. Brian, who was born in 1938 still lives in the village. Its history after that is uncertain. A bit more research is needed and access to the deeds or the land registry should help.

### Our ongoing proceedings:

At our March meeting we had planned to discuss some deeds that we had been lent by Zac from when they lived by Matthews Jitty. The Matthews family had an excellent farm, butchers and abattoir there until the 1960s. The documents had been water damaged and were almost unreadable but we set out to try to work out when they were dated, who were involved and what they were transacting. Fortuitously it turned out that Charles from Saffron Walden who has photographed a thousand or more old documents, had got the counterpart copies of some of them from the Harpur-Crewe Archive in the DRO at Matlock. These are in pristine condition so it was just a matter of decoding a clerk's writing from the 1820s.

There are 8 indentures dealing with property exchanges and sales plus a map (which originated as part of one of the exchange documents), a bill for legal services and a press cutting. The earliest document involves a Richard Smith but is otherwise just about unreadable. Parts of its date are discernible as 7<sup>th</sup> April in a 37<sup>th</sup> regnal year and probably "thirty seventh year of the King..." That means 1797 in the reign of George III. We know no more. There was a Smith family in Repton with Richard Smith begetting a Richard Smith in each of 3 generations, but which one is our man is undetermined.

We do know that Thomas Thorpe (the elder - who was a butcher) along with Henry Goodall, acquired land in 1791 probably by inheritance ("indenture of feoffment") from Thomas Taylor the elder. There is a lovely phrase "with Livery of seizin duly executed". This was the custom of physically taking possession of land. A square of turf would be lifted and handed to the new owner, sometimes with a twig stuck in it. There were variations of course, some involving putting money under the turf first. In 1826 Thomas Thorpe the younger bought the property from his father (Henry had by now died) for £40. In this document we are introduced to William Eyre the elder of Newton Solney – a cordwainer. He is Thomas junior's trustee and probably there to keep an eye on things. The solicitor's bill for this exists and the land in question is noted as "Every yard 1<sup>a</sup> 1' 35<sup>00</sup>". Across the brook from Matthew's Jitty is a field - Havery Yard on the 1762 map - and, after subdivision, its acreage on the 1881 map is 1.467 acres. Now, 1 acre, 1 rood and 35 perches work out at 1.468 acres so this Every must relate to this field.

Then in 1827 there are two documents of exchange of property between Thomas Thorpe the younger (a butcher) and Sir George Burdett of two neighbouring properties. This seems to be where the map fits in and looking at the Land Tax Register transcript provided by Charles, it is clear that this was Thomas Thorpe the younger consolidating property to give him more space for his butchers business. We can relate the map to this exchange by one of the residents mentioned on the map being Francis Sylvester who is also mentioned in the deeds of exchange. The Thorpe family ran the butchers



A Jitty is a footpath



1829 map

business after Thomas Thorpe the younger's death in 1852 until Ann, his wife, died when it was put up for sale and William James Matthews bought it. He then passed it (or sold it) to his sons James and Harry Matthews. Harry probably bought James out because on 1910 he mortgaged it – clearing the debt in 1933. They obviously bought or rented more land because the 1941-43 National Farm Survey provided by Richard (F) recorded them as farming 27 ½ acres – 17 acres of grass and 10 acres of cereals and vegetables with some cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry and a couple of horses. There is an immense amount more detail and the modern history needs more work.

This subject prompted many member's memories from Jenny sneaking over the brook bridge to scrump apples to Russell's recollections of sledging down the hill from the Crescent (before the sheltered accommodation) was built and rummaging in the loft of the building and finding a cigarette making machine – and packets ready to be filled with Old Rep cigarettes. Mr Kenny the chemist sold them and in the archive is an advertisement for them – as health giving products!

Tim offered photographs of two cannon balls found under a wall in Newton Solney. Knowing that the parliamentarians had crossed the Trent at Newton Solney on their way to attack Bretby Castle during the civil war, we did quite a bit of research into weaponry of the time and the casting process that left internal voids and thus caused them to weigh "wrong" compared to their size and material. The size of one of them fitted very well with the standard of one of the regular guns, but not the other one. However, when finally weighed they were exactly 3Kg and 5Kg so it is now doubtful if they have great age.



He had also found a flint arrow head on a walk near Newton Solney but was doubtful because it was only knapped on one side, Dr Cat Jarman reassured us that it looked genuine and was likely to be a work in progress. Photographs have been sent to the new Portable Antiquities officer but Shelagh, using her experience from volunteering at Derby Museum, suggested it was small enough to be a microlith and possibly Mesolithic – perhaps 7,000 years old. This prompted a response from Russell that several such arrow heads had been found when the foundations of the bungalow on the bend of Tanners Lane were being dug.

Zac queried the purpose of some stone or porcelain multisided numbered dice he had found in the Brook and we could only conclude that they were for some sort of garden game.



He also told us about a grandfather clock his father had bought in the 70s and thought to have been made in the 1840s. He bought it from a house close to the old NatWest Bank at the Cross and it bears the name of William Parker, Repton. This was new. We had no idea that there had been a clockmaker here. The census did not help much but the Monument and Inscriptions book did reveal a number of William Parkers. Most were too old or too young, but two did fit. One was a farm labourer who lived in or near Dale Cottages and was an unlikely clockmaker, but the other turned out to be an Ironmonger who lived in what is now the Repton School Art gallery by the Cross. According to George Auden's notes on Repton in the later 1800s, he was nicknamed Currier Parker (that was his original occupation) and the shop there was also used by his cousin Tinny Parker - a brazier and tinsmith. It had a fine bow window in those days. From the photographs we wondered if William had bought the mechanism and built the clock around it. Research by Charles revealed an internet auction where another clock by William Parker of Repton was for sale. Surprisingly this line of study revealed several clockmakers who included Repton on the dials of their clocks: William Porter, Jonathan Jackson, Herbert Margerison, William Newstead and George Whitehurst. George Whitehurst was the brother of the famous clock and instrument maker John Whitehurst and ran his works on Irongate in Derby for him but eventually left, married a Ticknall girl, and settled in Repton making clocks on his own account for a few years



Martin F found a coin in a vicarage flower bed that turned out to be a “His Half Penny” token produced in 1663 for William Lathropp of Uttoxeter. Much research was done, including transcribing his immensely detailed will, to try to work out how it might have arrived in the vicarage garden. Then Martin F wondered where the vicarage (parsonage) was in 1663 and that opened up new lines of research and mentioned the map of the school in 1666 (actually drawn by Hipkins in 1896 but based on a sketch map found on a legal document from 1666). This shows the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ushers House close to the church and the “lyme house” lean-to against the church wall.

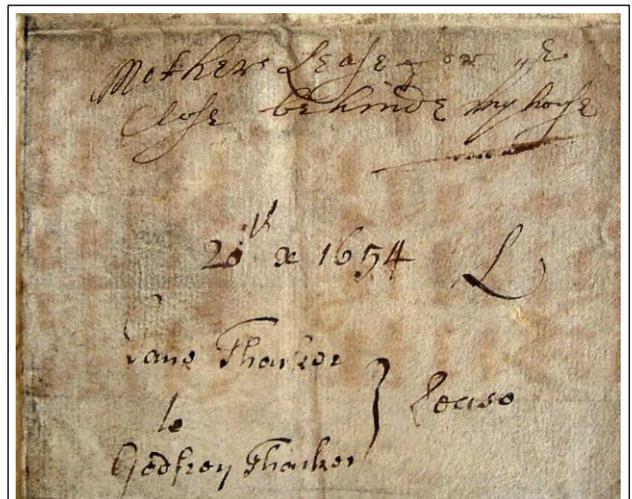


Martin B pointed out that 1665/6 were the dates of the second instance of the plague and maybe the lime was needed to manage problems in the graveyard. However Charles researched mortality rates around then and found that there was nothing untoward at that time, but there were other spikes which we assume were down to failed harvests. Further research by Martin B suggested that we were more troubled by the earlier outbreak in the 1300s. More work is needed on the various locations of incumbents over the years.

Pop bottles had been found of the type sealed with marbles and this led to discussion on local carbonated drinks manufacturers – and revealed some secret sarsaparilla drinkers.

A query by Charles about locations of Bower family property in Repton revealed that Bower Hill was originally built by Godfrey Thacker c1650 and has started a new line of research into the history of the premises – which, from the first, had a bowling green. This then led to a query about the Holbrooke family who owned land around Bower Hill. There is a village belief that Francis Holbrooke, Lord Mayor of London, built The Grange (16 Main Street, Repton) but he does not appear on any mayoral listings and the house was built in 1703 - quite a time before the Holbrookes came to Repton around 1772.

The Bower Family went bankrupt around 1774 and there is evidence of a *recent 3 storey house with 15 sash windows on the front* being sold. So as Charles asks, if the Holbrookes didn't build the Grange, who did? And which is the *recent 15 windowed, 3 storey house* that was up for sale? Neither the Grange nor Bower Hill can be described as recent in 1774.



Lease between Godfrey Thacker and his mother regarding land beside the house that what became Bower Hill

All suggestions warmly received.

And so it goes on....

We normally include the programme of talks at other local history societies and the Derbyshire Archaeological Society - because we don't offer them ourselves. However due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there are none planned for the foreseeable future.

To make comments or for more information, please contact Andy Austen on [rvhg@reptonvillage.org.uk](mailto: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.