

RIPLEY & DISTRICT
HERITAGE TRUST
DERBYSHIRE

Newsletter



Ripley fair in 1956

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www.rdht.org.uk

Covid Update

It looks like our meetings will have to continue online for the moment, not because we can't meet face to face, but because of the lack of a suitable venue.

Meanwhile Amber Valley are doing extensive works on the old Town Hall, which we are told will mean moving everything in the shed away from the external wall. The situation isn't clear, but it doesn't look as though we will be able to use the room properly for a while.

BIT/RDHT Talk

Finally, we're back with a live talk. It will be on Wednesday October 21st at Marehay Welfare, when both the Ironworks Trust and RDHT will present "What We've Been Doing During Lockdown." As always, admission is free, and there will be the usual raffle. Please note, this may change in the event of another lockdown!

Ripley's Big Day Out

The event itself was wildly successful, but for us it was, to put it mildly, quiet. It seems that it attracted families with kids, and most older people (those who



Tim's BIT display in the "Tin Church".

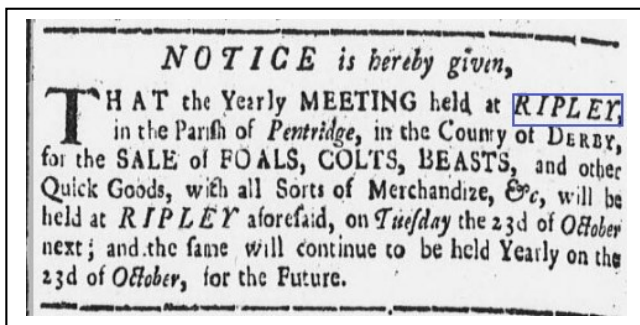
might be more interested in heritage) stayed away. Nevertheless, Tim had a good display in the Tin Church, and we also had a breezy gazebo on the Green.

The Early Days of Ripley Fair

In 1251, King Henry III, whilst visiting his hunting park in the area, met with the abbot of Darley Abbey, and confirmed the Abbey's dominion over the manors of "Ryppeleg, Pentriz and Wystantum" (Wessington). He also granted a charter permitting a market each Wednesday in Ripley and an annual fair on the "eve, day and morrow of the feast of the Virtuous Elene the Queen" (Saint Helen or Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine). This was on 17th, 18th and 19th August.

The fair, according to Frank Mansey's summary, was "a commercial occasion, with travelling merchants bringing their wares, better quality materials and garments, spices and wines, salts, jewellery etc from places outside the local area. The event inevitably attracted the street performers of the day, the jugglers, acrobats, musicians, performing animals, dentists and quack-doctors with cure-alls."

The fair was almost certainly held on the village green, on the site of the present Market Place. The Abbott of Darley, as the King's representative and owner of the town, collected fees and taxes from merchants attending the fair, and this continued until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. After that, the land, and the rights that went with it, was sold to local gentry, but in the case of Ripley it was later broken up into smaller parcels, until in 1751 there were 15 or 16 people who could claim the title of Lord of the Manor, and the right to income from the fair. In such a chaotic situation it seems unlikely much income was raised.



The first mention of the fair in the Derby Mercury (founded 1727) was in September 1753.

The fair by then had moved to October. The reason for the notice in the Mercury was that in 1752 England had adopted the Gregorian calendar. The authors of “A History of Ripley” tell the story: “eleven days of the year were missed to make matters right....The Lords of the Manor quarrelled about the date of the fair. Was it to be on October 23rd New Stile or on the old October 23rd, which would now be November 2nd?... It was at this point that Belper took advantage of the quarrel and attempted to divert the Fair into its own annual fair.” They published a long advert in the Mercury praising Belper and describing Ripley Green as “such a strait, dirty place that both the breeders of foals and the chapmen” (travelling merchants) “have long been weary of it” and suggesting that the fair should be given up in favour of Belper.

At this point the Lords of the Manor stopped arguing and settled on October 23rd, and Ripley Fair went ahead. Only in 1880 was it decided to hold the fair on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday nearest the 23rd.

The Horse Fair

It was largely a horse and animal fair, with a reputation for being a good fair for foals, attracting dealers from the Peak and Yorkshire, and by the mid 19th century it was reported that “nearly one thousand head of cattle” were shown and that the show of foals was “better and larger than any other fair in Derbyshire.”



A rare picture of the Horse Fair around 1900

Fred Miles in “Ripley Recollections” remembered that : “Grosvenor Road was completely closed off. A series of five bar wooden gates were brought in to provide cattle pens and these totally occupied the street, except for a narrow walkway in the middle. At the end of the day the residents were most pleased when it was over. The mess from the cattle had been roughly cleaned up but the smell lingered for several days.”

It was one of many fairs: all the local towns had one, staggered from July to early November, so that traders and dealers could move between, say, Denby (September 7th) Matlock (October 4th), Crich (October 11th) Wirksworth (2nd Tuesday in October), on to Ripley on the 23rd October and then Belper on the 31st.

A second horse and animal fair on the Wednesday of Easter Week had been started by the early 19th century, and became a show run by the Ripley Agricultural Society, with prizes for the best animal in each class and a public dinner in the Cock Inn. The show didn't last into the 20th century, however, becoming a poultry and pigeon show in the 1880s.

The Statutes

On the first weekday after the October fair, the annual Statutes, or hiring fair, was held, when farmers would secure the services of farmhands and servants for the following year. Before the 1860s, the hiring fair was held in early November, but the newly elected Local Board moved it to coincide with the Fair. Miss Turner, one of the authors of “A History of Ripley” wrote: “My mother remembers a large family of buxom girls who annually appeared at the hirings and were bound to the next year's service at some farm by the customary shilling which no doubt soon vanished at the fair.”

The Statutes seem to have been abandoned in the mid-1870s after a vociferous campaign, mainly led by the church, to abolish them as encouraging immorality and profligacy, presumably because servants tended to spend their shilling immediately at the stalls remaining from the fair. However, they continued in other towns, like Ashbourne and Heanor, up to the First World War.

The animal fair, gradually diminishing in size and becoming restricted to horses, went on until the 1930s, eventually being confined to Crossley Street as the Pleasure fair grew and took over the Market Place.

The Expansion of the Pleasure Fair

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the pleasure fair began to gradually change. The impetus for this was the creation of the turnpike roads. When the road was opened from Cromford to Belper and from that road to Ripley and Nottingham in 1818, it was described as a “magnificent new road” along which “every hill of any consequence is avoided.” Along this and other roads increasingly heavy carts pulled by horses and later by traction engines could travel, allowing the showmen to move from fair to fair with larger and more complicated rides, shows and other attractions, as well as living wagons for themselves and their families.

The move from individual hawkers and chapmen travelling on foot to whole groups of showpeople following a circuit around the country with caravans of wagons laid the basis for the modern fair.

Marshall Advertising Hoarding Sold



John Marshall's zoo advertising sign has recently been sold at auction. Ripley Town Council wanted to buy the sign, but were outbid by an unknown purchaser.

What's in a name?

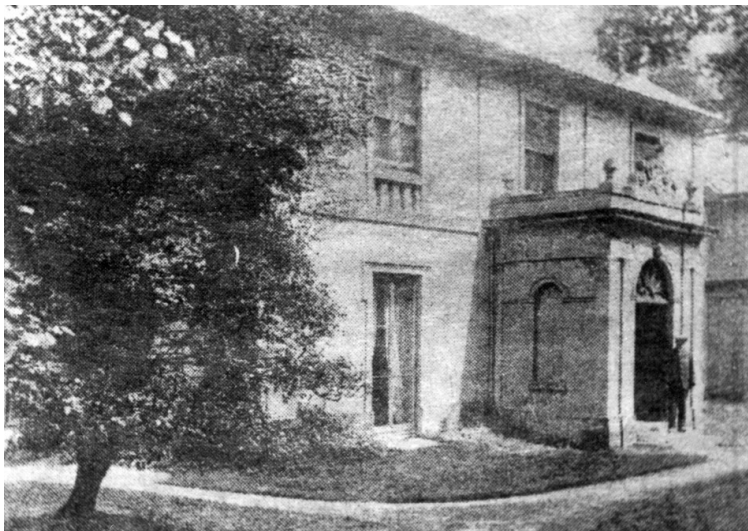
We recently had an enquiry about the origin of the name Greenwich for the part of Ripley now the Southern part of Nottingham Road.

The first mention of the name that I can find is in an agreement to sell land at Greenwich in 1802, which suggests that it was known by this name by the mid 18th century.

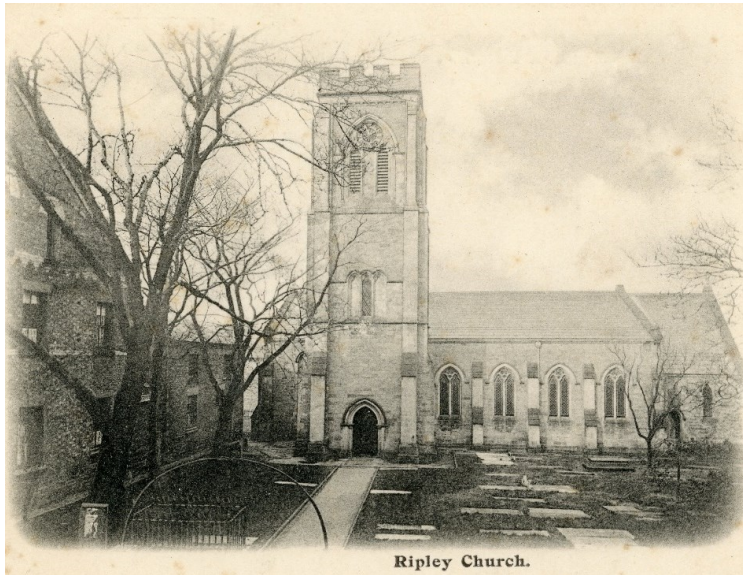
It may well have had some connection with the Fletcher family: W.H. Fletcher, one of Ripley's earliest doctors, and also the proprietor of the Greenwich Brewery, lived in Greenwich House (see picture below) in the 1820s and it's possible his father, coalmaster James (1766-1822) also lived there. In the 1841 census 42 households were listed as being in Greenwich.

Even more intriguing is the possibility that it was named after John Flamsteed's home, Greenwich House, at the Royal Observatory in London. Flamsteed died in 1719, but his fame grew in the middle of the 18th century.

If anyone has any further information, please do pass it on.



All Saints Church 1821-2021



All Saints Church begin their celebration of 200 years since the consecration of the church on 27th July 1821 with a service on the 19th September 2021 at 10am.

The church was erected in 1820, at a cost of £1600, raised by voluntary subscription, aided by gifts from the Duke of Devonshire of £210, the Rev John Wood (who also gifted the land) of £100 and a grant of £375 from the Incorporated Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches and Chapels.

There was a stipulation that 400 seats in the church were to remain “free and unappropriated for ever”, that is, not reserved for wealthier members of the congregation.

The impetus for building the church came about because of the growth in Ripley’s population, and the limited capacity of Pentrich Church, which had only 300 pews, many of which were reserved.

Two National (Anglican) schools were also built at the same time, supported by the Butterley Company.