**Tysoe Heritage Research Group\***

*Annual Report to Tysoe Parish Council for 2021/22*

Despite 2021 being a second pandemic year of constraints the Group managed to continue its work in identifying, recording, securing and researching evidence for Tysoe’s past from various sources. It also managed to maintain regular group meetings using Zoom. Working within the Covid guidelines the Group finished the task of exploring the memorials of the several hundred graves in both St Mary’s churchyards, each memorial now having a detailed record of design, inscription and decoration, as well as a photograph. These have now been entered into a database to allow for future genealogical study and analysis. Unfortunately it was not possible to record the few remaining memorials inside the church as a result of Covid restrictions. This, together with detailed photography of the internal sculptured stone will need to be carried out before the Group can produce an updated guide to the building. This guide will also include evidence of early graffiti which has been documented and photographed throughout the church.

Ancillary to the memorial recording, the Group benefitted from two instructive field sessions by external speakers, one on the geology of the memorial stones by Dr Nina Morgan, and one on the churchyard lichens by Dr Diana Napier.

One unexpected bonus during the year, however, was the need for the church to carry out restoration work on the tower involving the erection of scaffolding on all four faces. The Group was written into the Diocese Faculty to record the stonework during removal of the old mortar. A stone-by-stone scale plan of all four faces was produced to assess factors of rebuilding and alteration, differing quarry sources and reworked stone. The scaffolding also gave the opportunity to photograph the late 12th/early 13th century carved heads high up the tower (of which no records existed) as well as the late 15th century gargoyles at the top. This took several weeks of activity but was an opportunity not to be missed even though it detracted from other planned projects.

Other ventures included continued collection of fieldnames from various sources. There are some 400 fields in the Parish of which the Group has identified names for over 300. Some of these have multiple names depending on period. Work is now continuing to correlate name change with the growth of the field system. The Group has also started to collect and scan old photographs of Tysoe. These include local scenes and features, group photographs and community events. Over 200 images are now digitized with many more to follow. Documentary research continues in local record offices and although much of this relates to Tysoe’s medieval past, it also includes transcription of later Vestry Books

One highlight of the year was the weekend ‘open day’ in the Old Schoolhouse in July in co-ordination with the Council for British Archaeology’s national ‘Archaeology Fortnight’. This attracted well over 200 visitors who were able to inspect a display of archaeological finds from the area, albums of old photographs, posters on geophysical surveys, new work on field names and a preliminary analysis of graveyard recording.

During the year the Group has been building its own website to host these various records and findings. It is anticipated that the website will be open to the public during 2022.

*Professor John Hunter, April 2022*

***\*This is a community group open to anyone interested in the history and archaeology of Tysoe. No knowledge or experience is necessary.***