Early Days

These images have been cropped from a set of original stereographs. Two images were mounted side by side and viewed through a stereoscope with two eye pieces and a holder placed in front of the lenses creating an illusion of 3D. They gained popularity after the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition. These examples may date from the 1870s but may be earlier as Johnson Cripps the chemist was already in residence by 1861 in what is commonly known as the Bank Building.

Example of an original card, ready to be viewed

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Henry Edward Hawes (1863-1957)

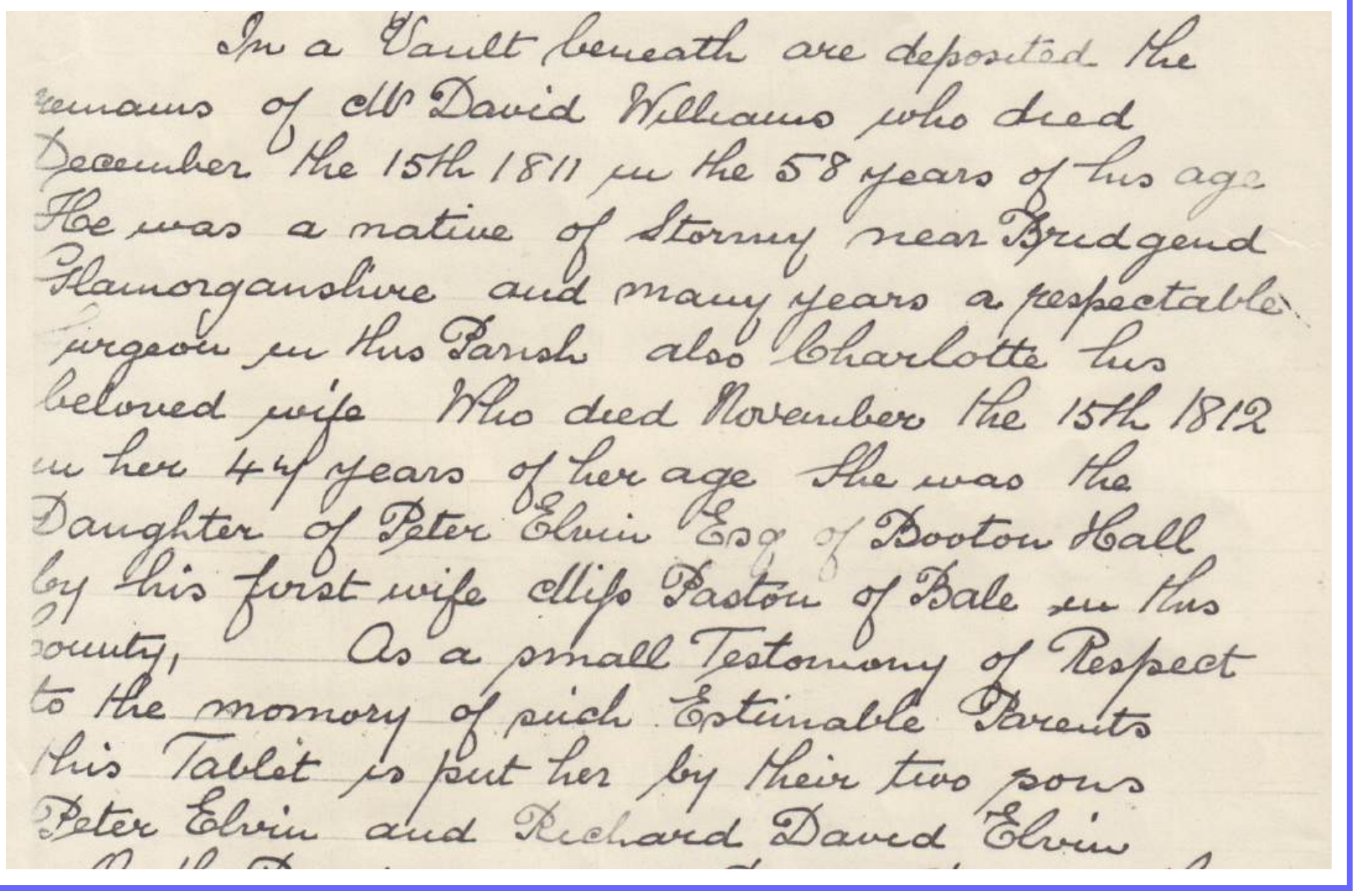
In this photograph published in a local newspaper in 1955 Harry Hawes is pictured on the right pointing at the sun dial with his stick. With him are Mr. R. Harmer and Mr. W. Freeston on the left, and Mr. Joe Piercy, Mr. and Mrs. J. Higton and Mr. E. Barrett on the right. Harry was then 92 and a few years earlier he had written down copious memories of Reepham in exercise books.

Harry Hawes died in 1957 age 94. His widow allowed the Rev. Paul Kelly to transcribe Harry's handwritten notes and they were published in the parish magazine in instalments between Sept 1978 & Jan 1980. The title was "A True Story" and describes the houses, their occupiers and businesses in Reepham Market Place. A further version is entitled "Past News" which begins with details of Reepham Moor and continues into the Market Place.

For each building he first gives the name of the current tenant, i.e. in the 1950s, before going on to his own childhood recollections of previous residents in the 1870s and sometimes later. Short extracts from Harry's writings were used as the basis for the Reepham Society publication "Harry Hawes' Walk".

Harry's descriptions and reminiscences from the 1870s help us to place people and families in particular buildings and, together with other sources, e.g. censuses, commercial directories, electoral rolls, parish registers assist in putting lives and events into chronological order, making the timeline of Reepham more comprehensible.

An example of Harry's longhand script :-



In a Vault beneath are deposited the
remains of Mr David Williams who died
December the 15th 1811 in the 58 years of his age
He was a native of Stormy near Bridgend
Glamorganshire and many years a respectable
Surgeon in this Parish also Charlotte his
beloved wife Who died November the 15th 1812
in her 44 years of her age She was the
Daughter of Peter Elvin Esq of Booton Hall
by his first wife Miss Paston of Bale in this
County, As a small Testimony of Respect
to the memory of such Estimable Parents
this Tablet is put her by their two sons
Peter Elvin and Richard David Elvin

Marjorie Gibbs 1899-1992

Marjorie was the youngest child of Edward and Emma Gibbs. Her memories of her childhood have provided us with valuable information about the people of Reepham, the shops and trades carried on in the Market Place in the years immediately before, during and after the First World War.

Edward & Emma Gibbs with their three children, Edward , known as Ned, Marjorie in the centre and Evelyn on the right.

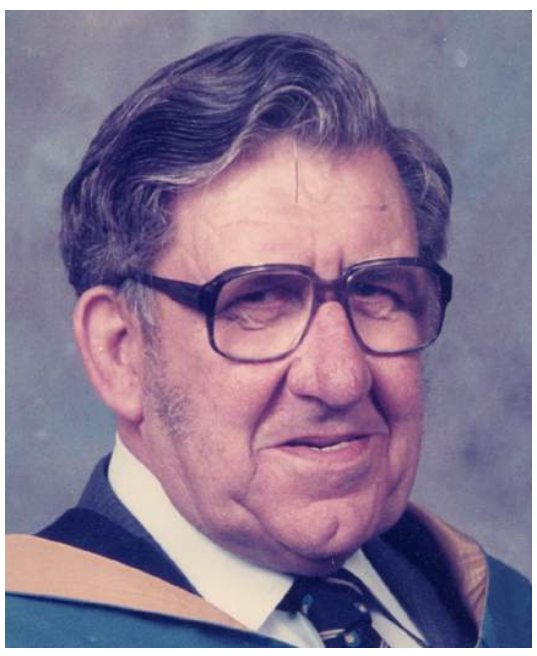
Marjorie's father Edward ran an Ironmonger and seed business from the premises now occupied by Reepham Antiques and Parson's Estate Agents. The Gibbs business in Reepham began in 1888 and closed on December 31st 1967. In 1920 Edward Gibbs took his son Edward into the business and Marjorie herself became a partner in 1955.

Edward and Emma Gibbs with daughters Evelyn and Marjorie - late 1920s

By 1939 Edward and Emma with the two daughters Evelyn an Marjorie were living at The Laurels on Dereham Road. This house was sometimes called Veranda House and had been built by Thomas Lincoln, a relation of Harry Hawes. Marjorie was still living in The Laurels at the time of her death in 1992.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Wesley Piercy (1917-2014)



The Piercy family can be traced back in Reepham to the first part of the eighteenth century and Wesley was related to several other Reepham families, e.g. Timbers, Kiddell..

Wesley had no wish to live anywhere else and apart from his war service lived in Reepham all his life.

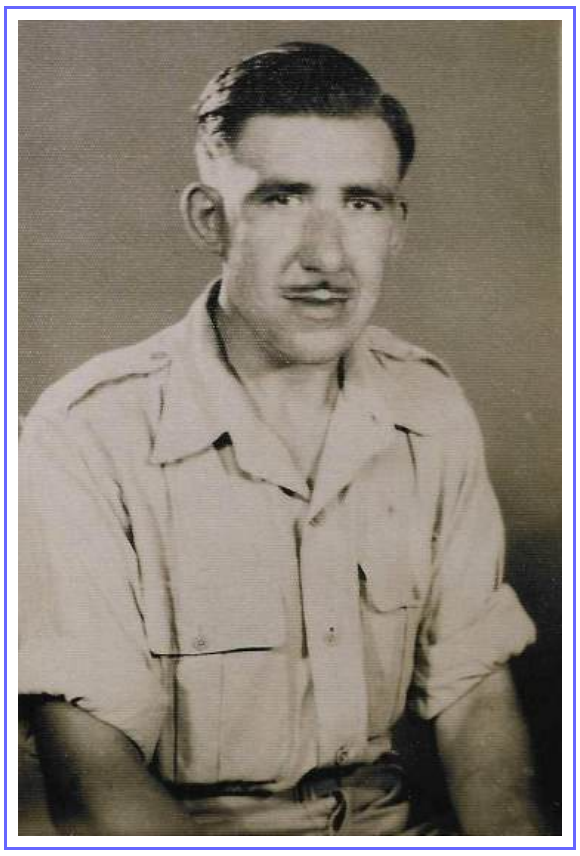
During the 1970's a group of historians and archaeologists interested in Reepham's history, ran a number of Workers' Educational Association courses in the town, led by lecturers David Yaxley, Chris Barringer and Richard Joby.

Subsequently Wesley passed on his researches into the town's history to local organisations, including the Reepham Society. Some of those talks are included in "My Town", published by the Reepham Society in 2007.

Wesley was a lifelong Methodist and also wrote "The Story of Reepham Methodist Chapel", a comprehensive history of the Methodist Chapel which stands on Station Road at the Kerdiston Road turning.

An account of Wesley's war experiences is included in the BBC2 People's War Website under parts 1-4, A Baker at War.

Wesley started work at the Old Bakery in 1934; the proprietor then being Mr. Albert Reeder and his son Walter. Neither father nor son had been long in the baking trade. Mr. Reeder senior had been manager of a shoe shop in Cromer and Walter had been a grocery assistant.
The most experienced person working there was Mr. Alfred Burrage, a pensioner who worked part time to supplement his pension. He was the son of a master baker and knew the baking trade thoroughly.
In the eighteenth century the bakery was run by the Scurll family who figure in Woodforde's *"Diary of a Country Parson"* The servant whom the parson calls Briton – Brettingham Scurll - was the son of the baker.



Photograph taken when Wesley was stationed in Alexandria during World War II

Wesley's mother Lucy with her younger sister Elsie

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Changes on the West Side of the Market Place

Before 1903
Hall the Saddlers & George Fisher's Grocery & Drapery
The flat front on the saddler's building became unsafe and was replaced by the stepped roof we see today.

Above :-
Hall the Saddlers with its altered roof, railings & the cottage next door with a white picket fence.

Left :-
The cottage in the 1870s with its fence & gate.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Late 1920s - Early 1930s
John Ebenezer Hall outside his shop.
The saddlers shop now has a central entrance. The railings have been replaced with guard rails.
Although it is still named as a saddlers a notice board on the left advertises resources for motorised transport - Rigid Screens, Motor Hoods, Celluloid Panels.
When John Hall retired he moved into the cottage next door until he died in 1955.

Late 1920s - Early 1930s
View showing the projection on the right hand side of the 'Bank Building'
Harry Hawes writes about building this new door & window to house a bank. It was a branch of Gurney's until the merger in 1896. Barclay's eventually set up in the shop on the corner.

Gurneys Bank in the early 1920s

Barclays Bank in the 1930s

RA/JDA/Nov2025

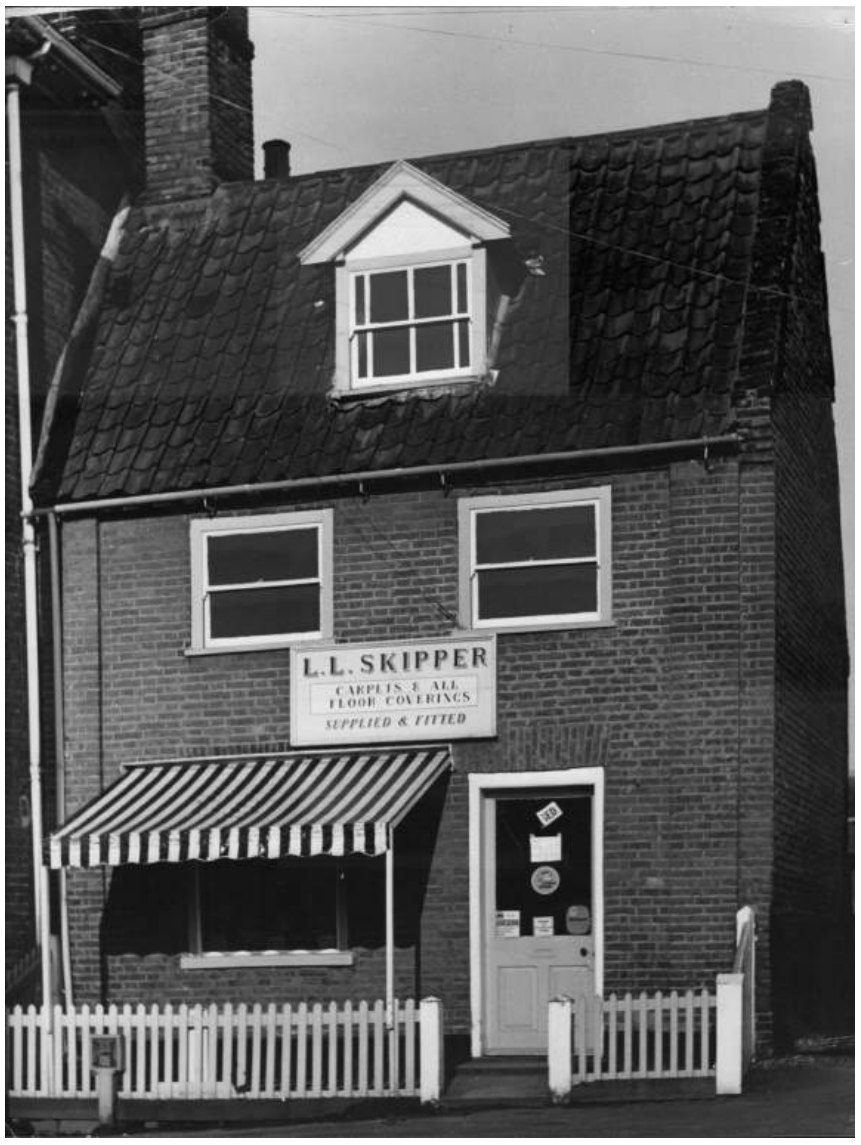
Left :-
Barclays Bank in 1957. By 1991/2 the branch had moved into the cottage but finally closed in 2000 and was replaced by a branch of HSBC.

Below :-
Two aerial views from the 1990s.
The first shows Barclays still in the corner premises but the old 'bank projection' has been removed.

The lower colour image shows that Barclays has moved into the cottage premises.

The dormer on the cottage was removed sometime in the 1980s.

RA/JDA/Nov2025



1980s

L. L. Skipper
Advertising carpets & floor coverings

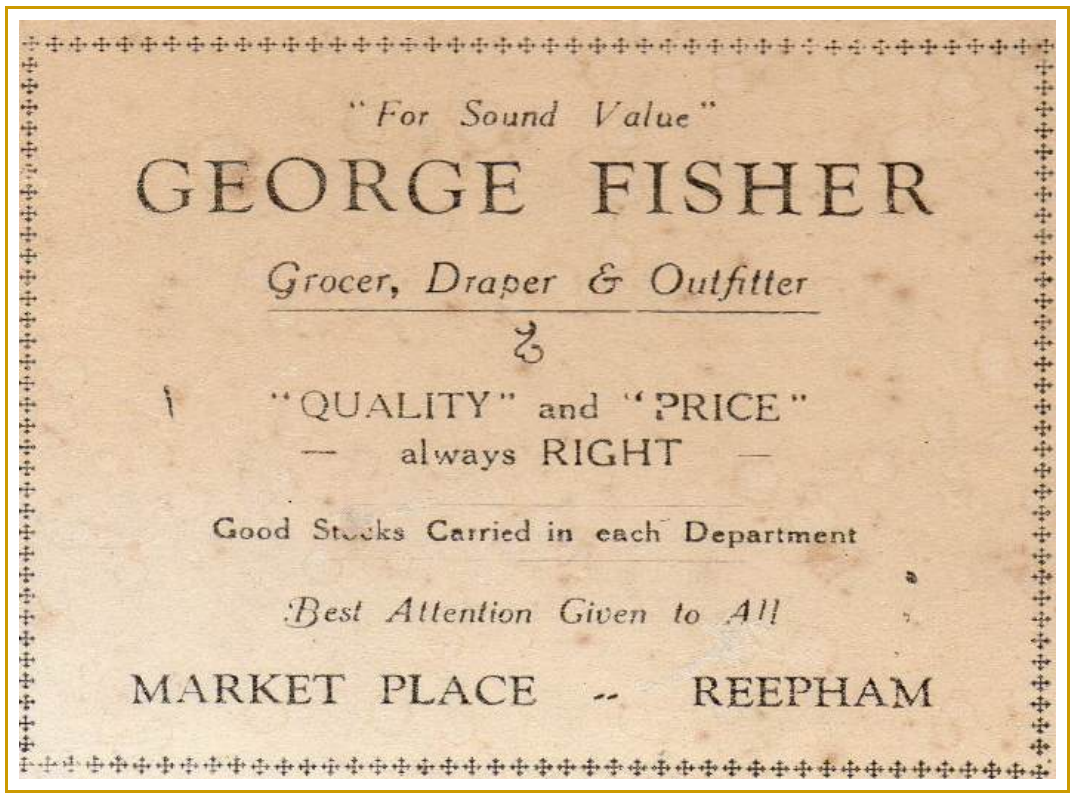
D. B. Attfield
Family Butcher offering bulk buying of meat for your 'deep freeze'

The branch of HSBC opened in 2000

Left :- Scene after the ram-raid and theft of the ATM in 2012. It resulted in the branch closing for several months.

The HSBC in Reepham finally closed in October 2015.

RA/JDA/Nov2025



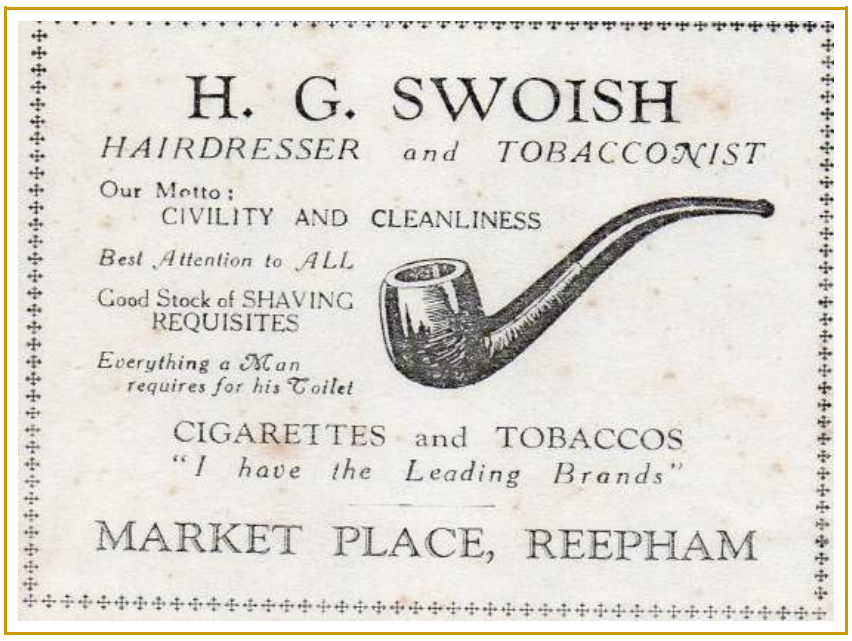
Harry Hawes says that In the 1870s a James Kirby ran the shop in these premises. After a few months closure for re-fitting the new tenant was Alfred Roy, father to the Roy brothers who set up Roys of Wroxham. HIs tenancy was brief - Samuel Barnes was made bankrupt in July 1871 and Alfred Roy moved across the Market Place to the shop where Kings the optician is now. James Kirby continued in the re-fitted shop and was still there in 1881.

n the 1950s a Mr. Carman had the shop. It later became "The Chimes" which dealt in antiques and had a tea shop as well.

In the 1920s Harry Swoish had a barber shop in the end part of Fisher's building. A haircut cost 6d for a man and 4d for a boy. Harry had had a colourful life in the army, joining when he was 18. He served in Mesopotamia and India and later in the First World War.

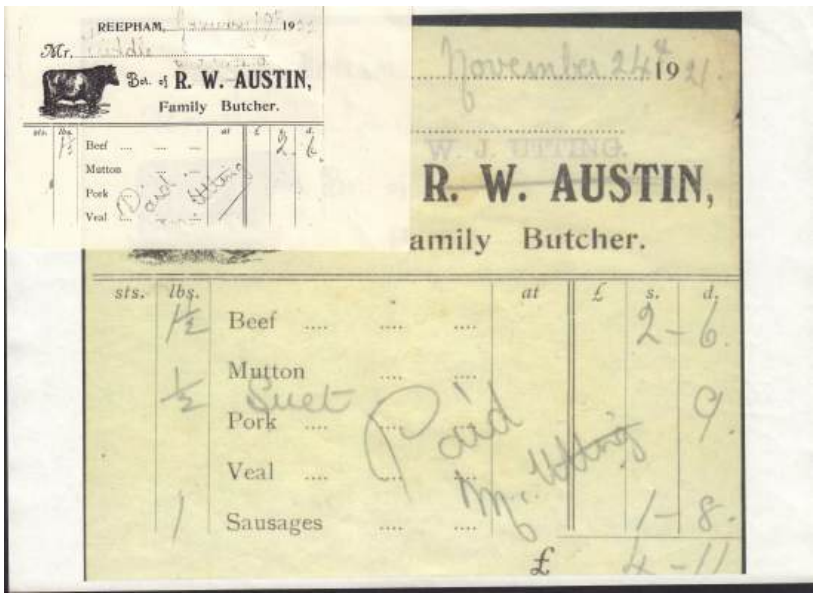
Marjorie Gibbs recalls *:-* "The last house facing east was the barber's, complete with gay striped pole. This was kept by Mr. Arthur Fowle, a prominent member of the local branch of the Plymouth Brethren. This business was later taken by Mr. Harry Swoish who remained there for many years."

Arthur Fowle came from West Barsham. In 1901 he was living in Bawdeswell with his parents and brother and working as a farm labourer. By 1921 he had moved away from Reepham to Harpenden, Herts, still with a hairdressing business.



RA/JDA/Nov2025

William Utting took over the premises from Richard Watts Austin in the early 1920s, shown by these receipts from 1921/2


REEPHAM, 19

Mr.

Bt. of R. W. AUSTIN,
Family Butcher.

sts.	lbs.		at	£	s.	d.
	½	Beef			2	6
	½	Mutton				9
		Pork				
		Veal				
	1	Sausages			1	8
				£	4	11

November 24th 1921

W. J. UTTING.

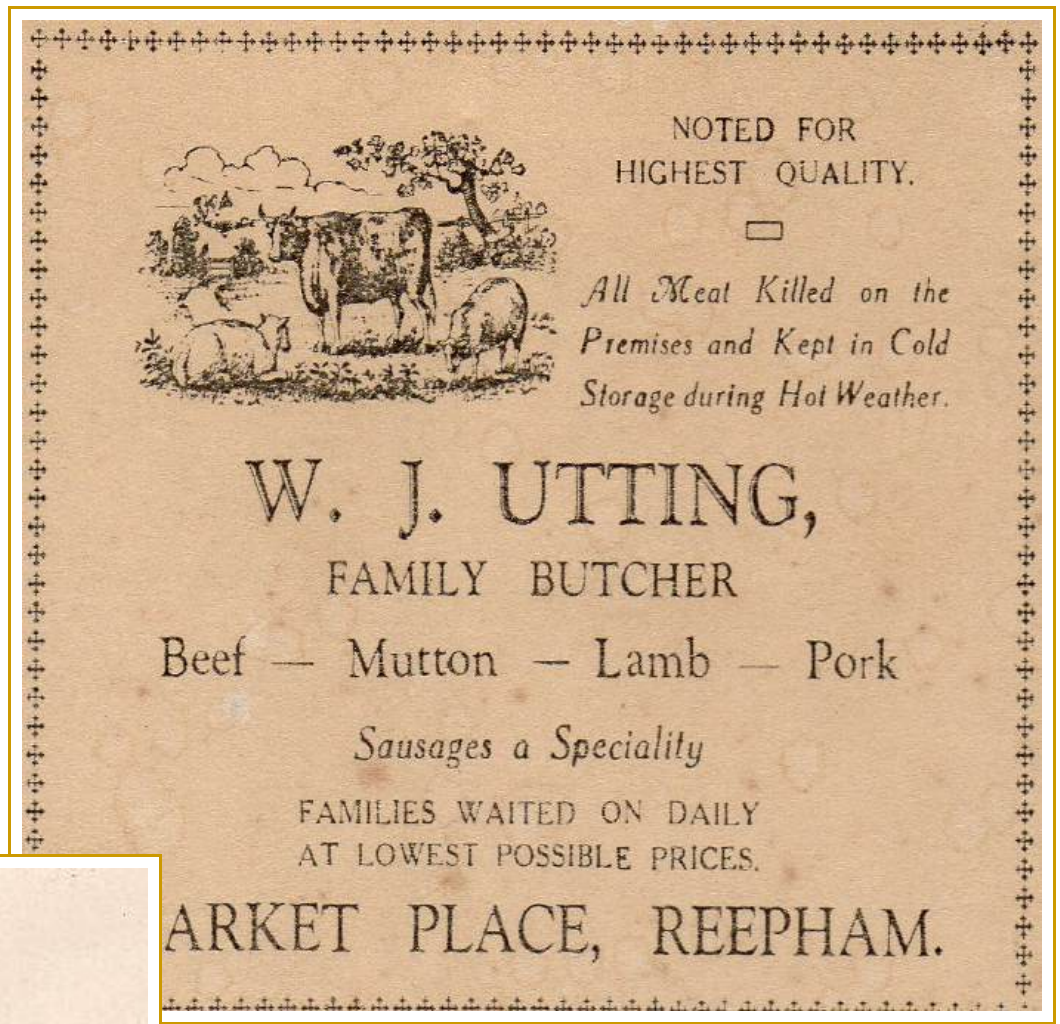
R. W. AUSTIN,

amily Butcher.

Suet

Paid

Mr. Utting


NOTED FOR
HIGHEST QUALITY.

All Meat Killed on the Premises and Kept in Cold Storage during Hot Weather.

W. J. UTTING,

FAMILY BUTCHER

Beef — Mutton — Lamb — Pork

Sausages a Speciality

FAMILIES WAITED ON DAILY
AT LOWEST POSSIBLE PRICES.

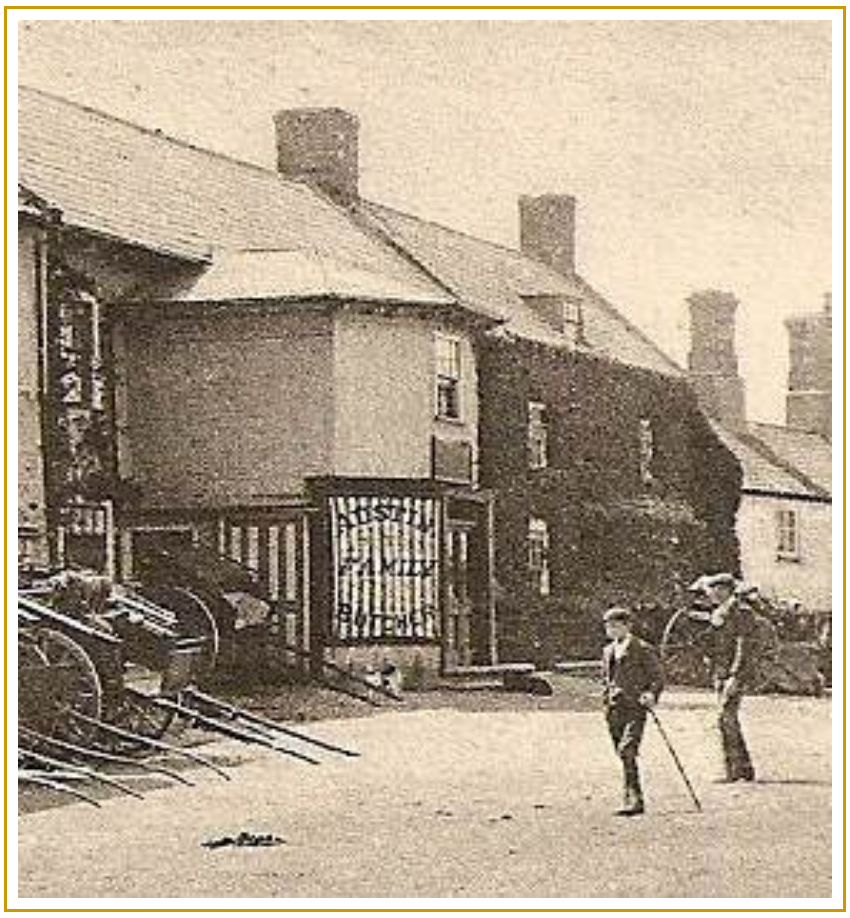
ARKET PLACE, REEPHAM.

Wesley Piercy *:-*

"Next a butchers shop which Mr. W. Utting took over from Mr. Watts Austin about 1923. Mr. Utting bought his bullocks and pigs at Reepham cattle market and with other local butchers slaughtered them himself in the slaughter house on Station Road, opposite the Methodist Chapel. His slaughter man was Mr. Albert Fowle."

Marjorie Gibbs *:-*

"Next came the butcher's shop, kept by Mr. R. W. Austin. He had a tenor voice and sang in the choir and he was another tradesman who was a member of the parish council."



Harry Hawes *:-*

"In the 1870s this shop was occupied by William Hannant who carried on business as a corn chandler & also sold coal by the hundred weights (at 1/- per hundred weight)."

In modern times it was a fish shop run by Mr. Wright & is now Diane's Pantry.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

John Symonds (1734?-1815)

John Symonds, clock and watchmaker is the earliest resident found of the cottage that is now Motts Pharmacy. He was the clockmaker to the diarist Parson Woodforde who lived at Weston Longville from 1776 until his death in 1803 and who made numerous interesting entries regarding Symonds over a period of time including, on the 31st August 1776:
"Mr Symonds at Reepham brought home my new clock today and put the same up, for which I paid him £6.6.0. It is a very neat clock and I like it very much." *(See Norfolk and Norwich Clocks & Clockmakers, edited by Clifford & Yvonne Bird for further information)*.

Parson Woodforde's Reepham Connections

Parson James Woodforde was resident in Weston Longville from 1774 until his death in 1803. He had several connections to Reepham, notably his long case clock made by John Symonds.

Visits to Reepham were made for the 'Generals' which were regular ecclesiastical meetings, consisting of a church service followed by meals at the Kings Arms (host Mr. Bell).

Woodforde's servant Briton was a Brettingham Scurll from Reepham. Brettingham had relatives who were bakers, notably his younger sister Lydia, recorded as a baker & flour seller in the premises on Church Street once known as Echo Antiques and a Thomas Scurll on Back Street.

Parson Woodforde also records family dinners with the Priest family in Reepham. Richard Priest was rector of Reepham from 1757 until his death in 1799. Richard and his brother Robert often exchanged hospitality with Parson Woodforde.
www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk

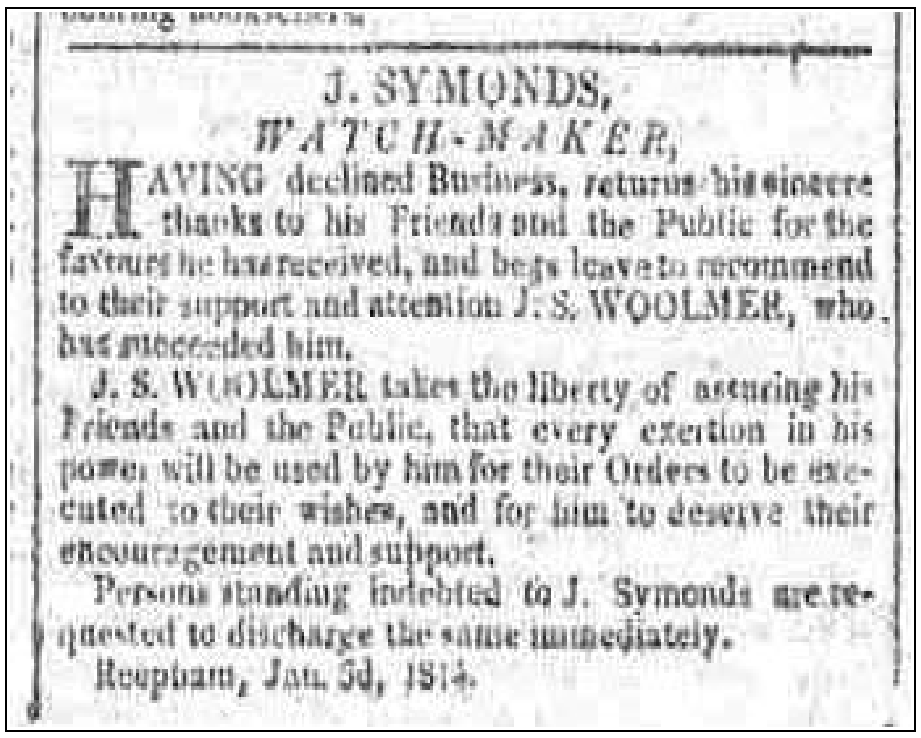
Right :-
A Symonds oak long case clock offered in a Fine Art Sale in July 2015 at Bearnes Hampton & Littlewood salerooms in Exeter, Devon.

The face of a Symonds long case clock showing the maker's name.
Found on a Spanish website.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

James Shreeve Woolmer (1789-1879)

The second clockmaker in the Market Place cottage is James Shreeve Woolmer who was also an auctioneer and spent most of his life in Reepham, Norfolk. He was born in Yarmouth in 1789, married Marianne Hunt, fathered 9 children, and passed away on 17th November 1879.



J. SYMONDS,
WATCH-MAKER,

HAVING declined Business, returns his sincere thanks to his Friends and the Public for the favours he has received, and begs leave to recommend to their support and attention J. S. WOOLMER, who has succeeded him.

J. S. WOOLMER takes the liberty of assuring his Friends and the Public, that every exertion in his power will be used by him for their Orders to be executed to their wishes, and for him to deserve their encouragement and support.

Persons standing indebted to J. Symonds are requested to discharge the same immediately.

Reepham, Jan. 3d, 1814.

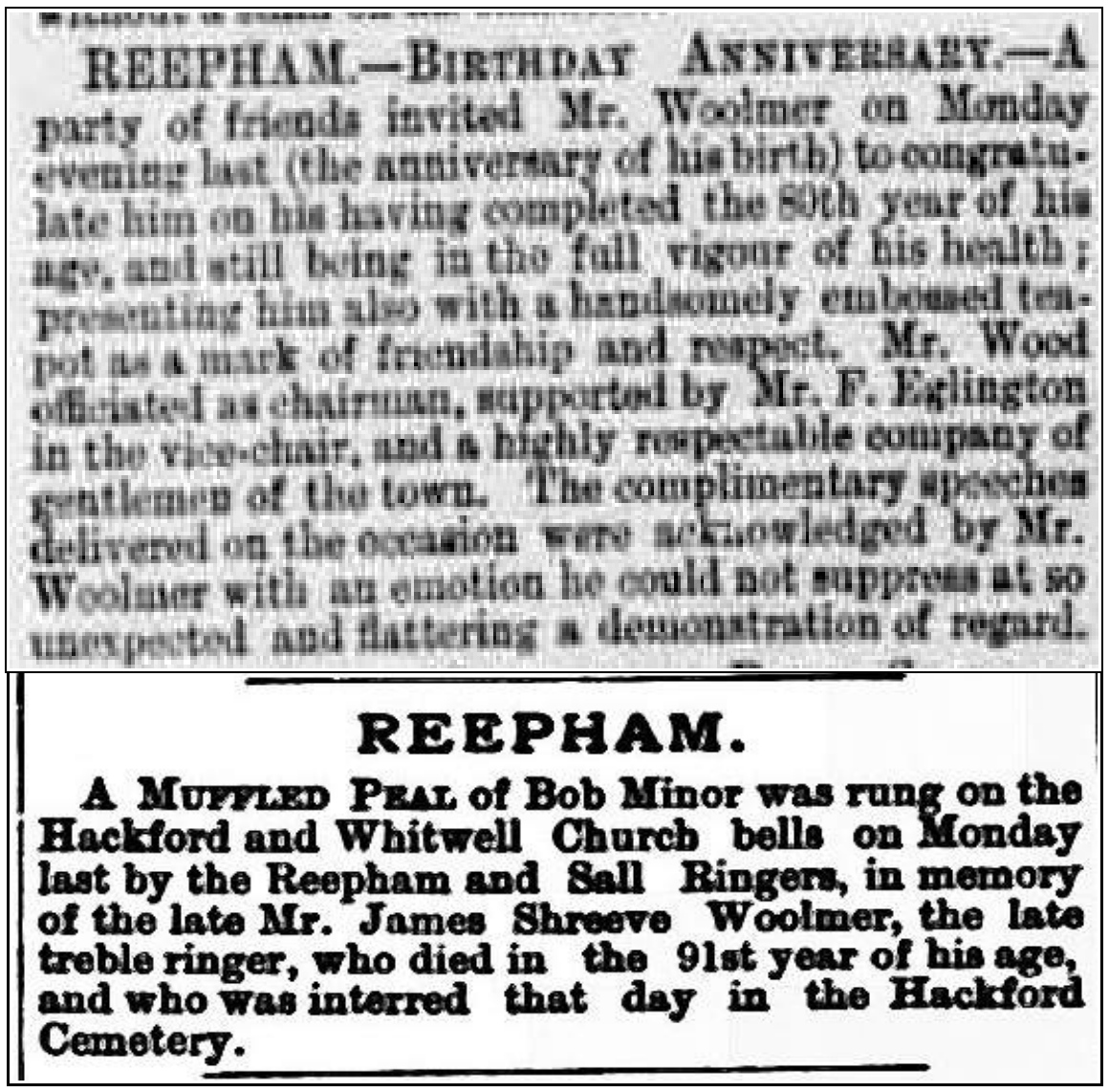
Courtesy of Holt Antique Furniture

In 1814 John Symonds retired from business & handed over his trade to James Woolmer.

Norfolk Chronicle 8 January 1814

James Woolmer was well regarded in the town and in 1869 a special party was given to celebrate his 80th birthday.

Norfolk News 20 March 1869



REEPHAM.—BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY.—A party of friends invited Mr. Woolmer on Monday evening last (the anniversary of his birth) to congratulate him on his having completed the 80th year of his age, and still being in the full vigour of his health; presenting him also with a handsomely embossed tea-pot as a mark of friendship and respect. Mr. Wood officiated as chairman, supported by Mr. F. Eglington in the vice-chair, and a highly respectable company of gentlemen of the town. The complimentary speeches delivered on the occasion were acknowledged by Mr. Woolmer with an emotion he could not suppress at so unexpected and flattering a demonstration of regard.

In November 1879 when James died, a muffled peal of bells was a reminder that he had been a bell ringer for many years

Norwich Mercury 22 November 1879

REEPHAM.

A MUFFLED PEAL of Bob Minor was rung on the Hackford and Whitwell Church bells on Monday last by the Reepham and Sall Ringers, in memory of the late Mr. James Shreeve Woolmer, the late treble ringer, who died in the 91st year of his age, and who was interred that day in the Hackford Cemetery.

A memory from Harry Hawes:-

"Mr. Woolmer wore a tall hat and black frock coat. Every night at about four o'clock you could see him on his way to the church to wind up the clock. One of the weights was made of iron the other was made of lead. Each was suspended on 15 or 16 feet of rope. They each worked up and down a long box. One day the ratchet of one of the weights got out of repair. The crank knocked the poor old man and hurt him.

My mother with my help did the clock winding for a few months.

I remember seeing one of the brass weights the date 1760."

RA/JDA/Nov2025

We have been provided with images of James Woolmer and his wife Marianne by Nick Gribble of Norfolk, a direct descendant of the clock maker himself .

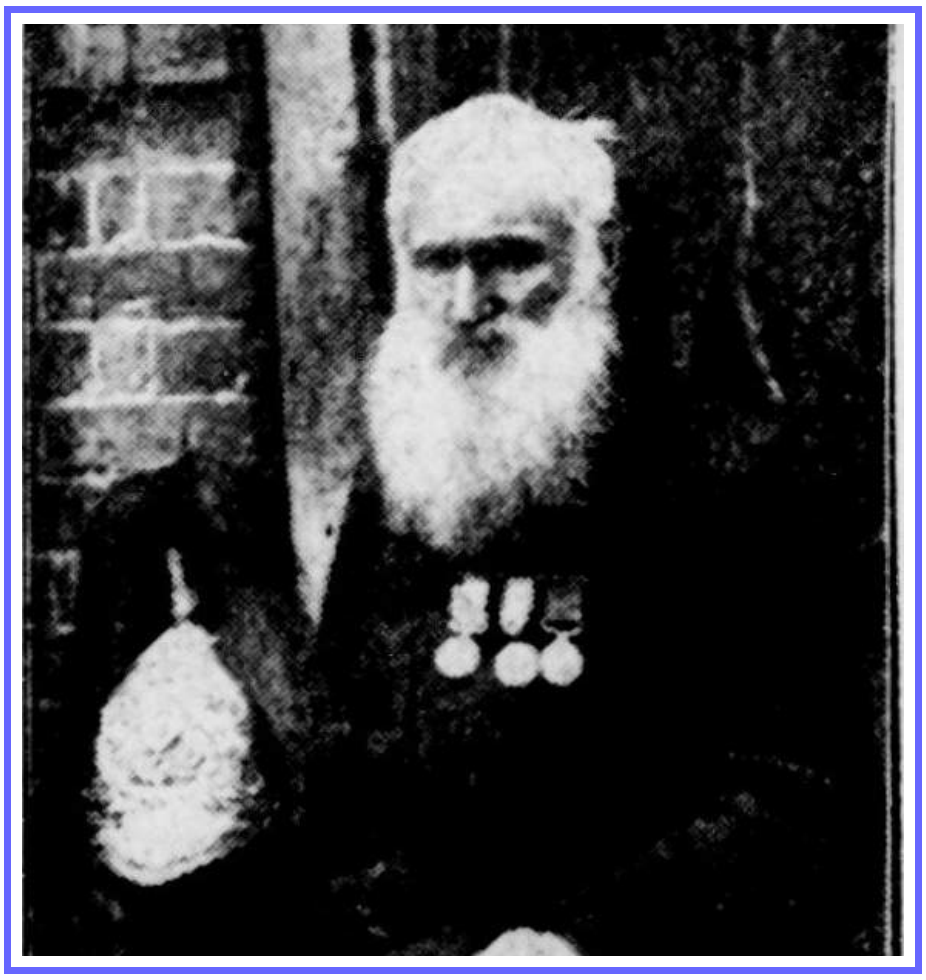
The first image shows the couple in about 1875 and may have been taken to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. The second at the gate of their Market Place property in Reepham, Norfolk in about 1878.

Beautiful example of a Woolmer long case clock

Courtesy of Rose Barnes

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Robert Barber (1824-1913)



Downham Market Gazette 3 May 1913

Photo and Block] [Norwich Mercury.

REEPHAM CRIMEAN VETERAN.

Mr. Robert Barber, of Reepham, who is in his 89th year, has been officially notified that he is the oldest survivor of the rank and file of the 1st Royal Dragoons, with which regiment he fought in the Crimean War. He wears the Crimean, Turkish, and good conduct medals. Our photo, which was taken on Monday, shows the veteran with the helmet which he wore during the Crimean campaign.

Marjorie Gibbs recalls :-

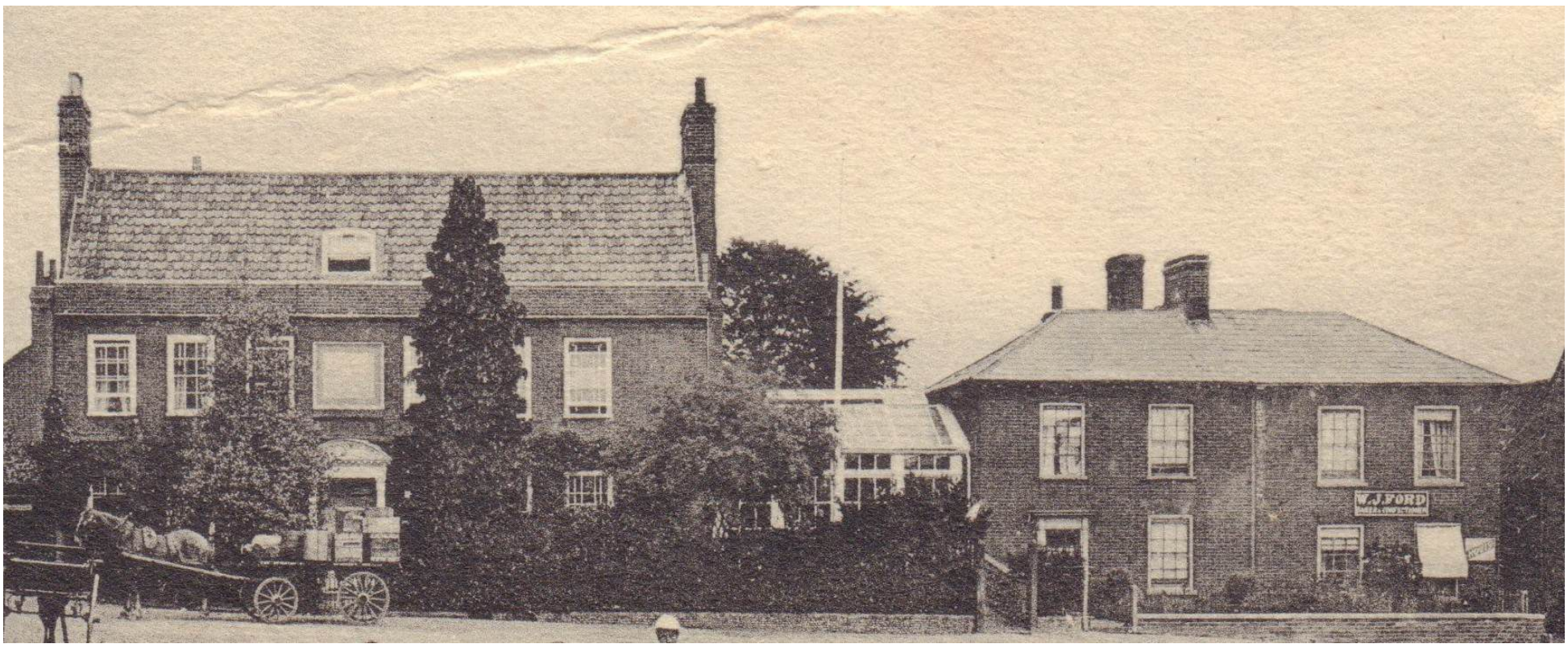
"Next to the bank was Mr. Robert Barber, a watchmaker, a Crimean veteran, and a man to be revered since he had been in "furrin' parts". He was a gentle, quiet man having a white beard almost to his waist. My first recollection in connection with him is of a string of watches hung across the centre of the sash window and of being taken to the house to see his war medals and old shako."

"Advice to Young Men" from Robert Barber's interview for the Diss Express in 1913

"The days I spent in the Army were the happiest days of my life," he declared, "and I only wish I were young enough to begin again. I would advise any young man to join his Majesty's forces. The prospects are now better than when I was a soldier—better pay and food—and it is a fine life. In my opinion, there is nothing like it."

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Old Bakery



This image shows the Old Bakery in the early 1900s before the Brewery House's frontage was extended. William J Ford's name can be seen as well as an advert for Hovis.

In the 1840s and 1850s James Davidson was the baker & confectioner occupying the bakery house with his wife and daughter and employing two more bakers.

By 1871, and continuing into the 1890s, Alexander Ormiston, baker, confectioner and Wesleyan preacher, was resident in the bakery house and James Davidson had retired to the adjoining house.

Harry Hawes remembers the Ormiston family in the 1870s *:-*

Now came the premises of *Messrs. Ford* this was tenanted by Mr. Ormiston, Baker and Confectioner. .....On Sunday mornings at 10.45 all the family could be seen going to church, Mr. Ormiston with tall silk hat and kid gloves, Mrs. Ormiston with her claret coloured silk dress. (She had some lovely curls.)

Before 1894 William John Ford and his first wife Ellen with three children moved from Hampshire into Reepham. A fourth child, Gladys, was baptised in Hackford Parish in November 1894. Sadly Ellen died two years later but William was married again in 1897 to Eliza Holt and they had five more children. The youngest child was Walter Ford (1905-1980) who eventually took over the bakery business.

Marjorie Gibbs *1900-1920*

Mrs. Clitheroe, an elderly lady with a lace cap worn at an angle, lived in the next house.
Her granddaughter lived there also and was a friend of my sister.
Miss Shingles followed Mrs. Clitheroe, a lady very fond of children, often entertaining some of them for tea.
Miss Kezia Scotton followed on. She was a popular Red Cross nurse at the local war hospital during the War.

Adjoining was the bakery owned by Mr. Ford. He was twice married and had a large family. His bread was renowned far and wide as the best bread in the district, with a real home-made texture.

Wesley Piercy *1920s-30s*

The next house was occupied by Mrs. Knights and her son Jack and later by Mr. and Mrs. Dick Ford.

Ford's bakery was next. Mrs. Ford senior was a native but Mr. Ford, I believe, came from Somerset. On Wednesdays (Market day) they did teas. The Fords were often delivering late at night after people were in bed.

The bread was sometimes left in peculiar places. Dick and Walter Ford were both bell ringers at St. Michael's.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Old Bakery

Walter Ford with his brother Richard and sister Elsie outside the bakery (1940s?)

But it is as a baker of superlative bread that he is remembered by older people in Reepham & District, he & his brother Richard delivering the bread, in the old days in a horse-drawn van, & if you were little you might get a miniature loaf for yourself! Of the nine in his family he is survived by a half-sister, Gladys, now 85 & living in Plymouth, brother Ben, now 80, in Aldershot, & Miss Dorothy Ford in Reepham.
Mrs.James, daughter of his late sister, Elsie, & her husband, came up from Ipswich for the funeral.

from Walter's obituary in the parish magazine in 1980

Walter was a bell ringer for sixty years and tower captain from 1944 after William Wasey's death.

In the Snow 1947

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Old Bakery

In 1969 Winnie Rogers and her husband John arrived in The Old Bakery and embarked on serious alterations.

Below : The flour store before alterations began.

Above : One of the huge ovens in the yard. The much smaller muffin oven was inside the working part of the house.

Shop entrance

Stabling for two horses
Shed on right demolished - replaced by garden

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Post Office

Left :- The Blue House Above :- Bevan House

The Blue House, Market Place

Harry Hawes :- This was occupied by Miss Sands, a middle aged lady, she kept the Post Office and she kept two clerks, Miss Eliza Rudd (D. Chapman's Aunt), and John Hill. There was no entering the Post Office. There was a small door in the wall between the door and the window. Customers gave a tap on the small door and waited outside to be waited on. Amelia Sands lived in this house with her father Alexander Sands, relieving officer and registrar for the town.

By 1881 Amelia Sands had retired. Her clerk Eliza Rudd moved into Bevan House on Dereham Road with her parents and family and set up the post office there. The house had previously been occupied by a cabinet maker

Father Frederick Rudd died in 1883 and the daughter Eliza Rudd died in 1884. At some date before 1901 Eliza's sister Lydia took over the postmistress role. By 1891 Lydia had become the postmistress with siblings Herbert and Emma assisting in the 'Iona House' premises.

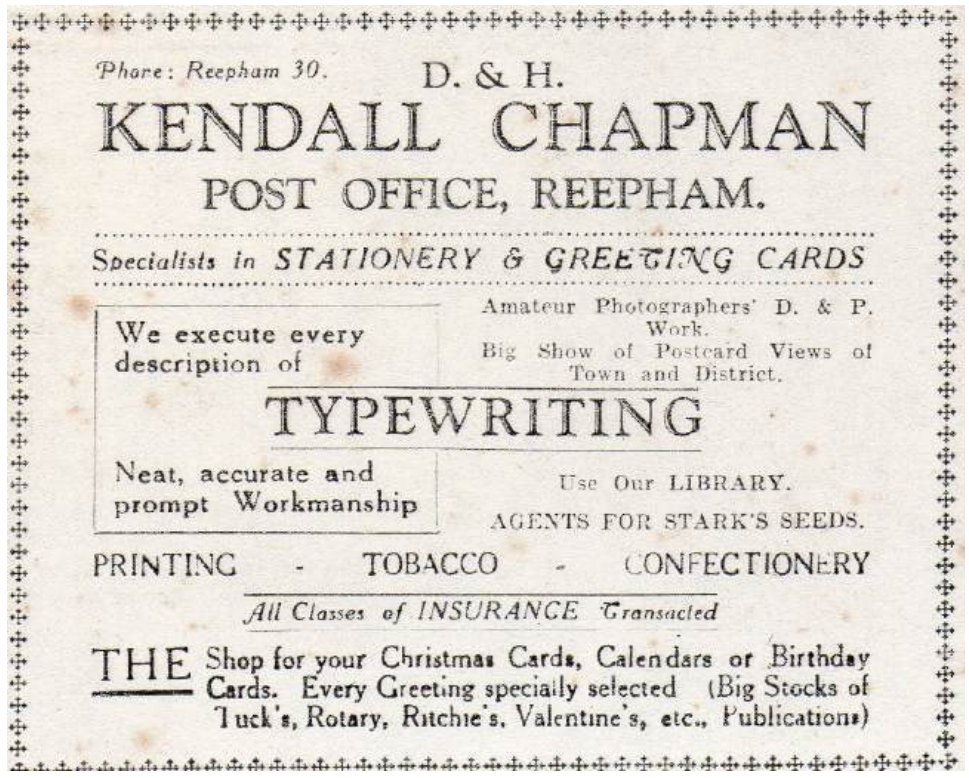
In 1893 Emma married Frederick Kendall Chapman, uncle to Donald Kendall Chapman.

Lydia died in 1909 and this image from 1912 shows the new postmaster Herbert Rudd, in the boater, with his postmen and messenger boy Donald Kendall Chapman. In 1915 Donald later became the postmaster assisted by his sisters Olive and Hilary.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Post Office 2

This advert from a 1920s guide shows how Donald has expanded the business from simply being a post office. In 1921 he is named as a sub-postmaster with his sisters as assistants. His parents are also living there.
He is advertising Stark's Seeds, a library, printing, typewriting, developing and processing rolls of film.
(Amateur Photographers' D & P work)


Phone: Reepham 30. D. & H.

KENDALL CHAPMAN

POST OFFICE, REEPHAM.

Specialists in STATIONERY & GREETING CARDS

We execute every description of TYPEWRITING

Amateur Photographers' D. & P. Work.
Big Show of Postcard Views of Town and District.

Neat, accurate and prompt Workmanship

Use Our LIBRARY.
AGENTS FOR STARK'S SEEDS.

PRINTING - TOBACCO - CONFECTIONERY

All Classes of INSURANCE Transacted

THE Shop for your Christmas Cards, Calendars or Birthday Cards. Every Greeting specially selected (Big Stocks of Tuck's, Rotary, Ritchie's, Valentine's, etc., Publications)

By this time the frontage has been painted white. The signs are still the same : Reepham Post Office, Telegraph Office, Savings Bank And Money Order Office.

After Donald retired as sub-postmaster in 1946 he and his sister continued to run the shop for many more years. They both died in 1959.

Images below show changes in the shop front

Meloncaulie Rose the greengrocer, with a very smart roof.

© pam fray

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Post Office 3

Above :-

The post office in 1954, run by Miss Bushell and her mother. A close-up of the George VI letter box. The box to the right was a stamp dispenser.

Below :-

The post office in 1969. The cottage next door was once home to a watchmaker, William Bishop. Harry Hawes remembers it as a barber shop. The door to the cottage is now a window.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

The Post Office 4

The current post office is contained on the very corner of Johnson's shop. It used to be a lock-up shop used for many years by tailors.

Harry Hawes *:-*

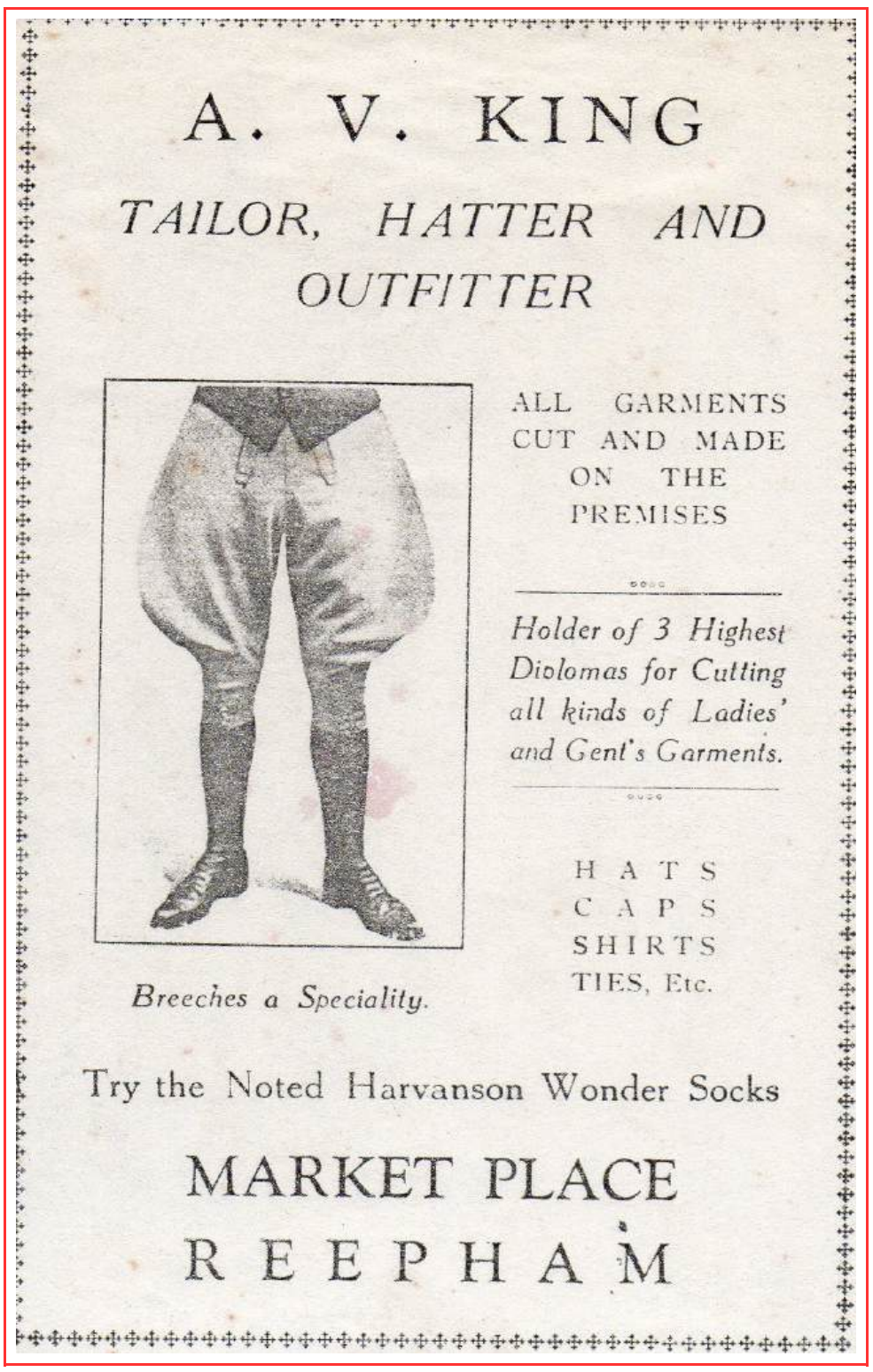
"The tailor's shop was run by Thomas Bircham with several workman W. A. Pask was one of them." *(Thomas lived with Hannah, his wife, in the pharmacy on Norwich Road).*

Marjorie Gibbs *:-*

"The corner shop was a tailors and outfitters kept by George Alfred Juby, who did a fair business. Mr. Juby was a violinist and assisted in the local string band. He emigrated and the business was taken over by Mr. A. V. King."

Wesley Piercy *:-*

"The corner shop, now the Post Office, was occupied by A V King, tailor. Mr. King was a son of a former landlord of the King's Arms, his wife a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cornall, the last master and mistress of St. Mary's school. Mr. King died quite young and Mrs. King carried on the business as an outfitters."


A. V. KING

TAILOR, HATTER AND OUTFITTER

ALL GARMENTS CUT AND MADE ON THE PREMISES

Holder of 3 Highest Diplomas for Cutting all kinds of Ladies' and Gent's Garments.

HATS
CAPS
SHIRTS
TIES, Etc.

Breeches a Speciality.

Try the Noted Harvanson Wonder Socks

MARKET PLACE
REEPHAM

When Albert Valentine KIng was a tailor in these premises the family lived in Church Hill House. Albert was a son of William King, licensee of the King's Arms from 1900 to 1913, and previously of The Greyhound on Back Street.
In 1911 Albert was learning his trade as a tailor's cutter in Huddersfield.
In 1912 he married Katherine, daughter of Richard Cornall, schoolmaster at St. Mary's school on Norwich Road.

In 1939 his widow Katherine King was still running the draper's and outfitters shop with her son William. The business was later taken over by Henry Pratt.

Two examples of letter/post boxes
Left-: George VIth box outside Reepham Post Office- still in place
Right :- Victorian letter box in the wall at Pettywell

RA/JDA/Nov2025

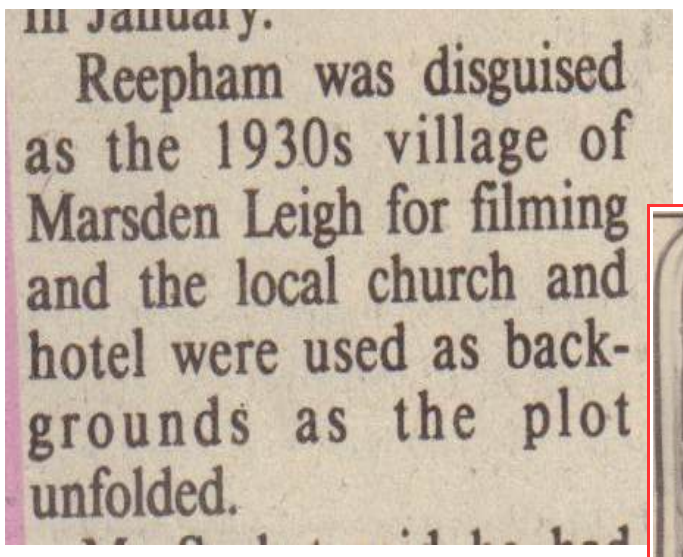
The Post Office 5

Henry Maurice Pratt carried on his tailoring business in what is now Reepham's Post Office.

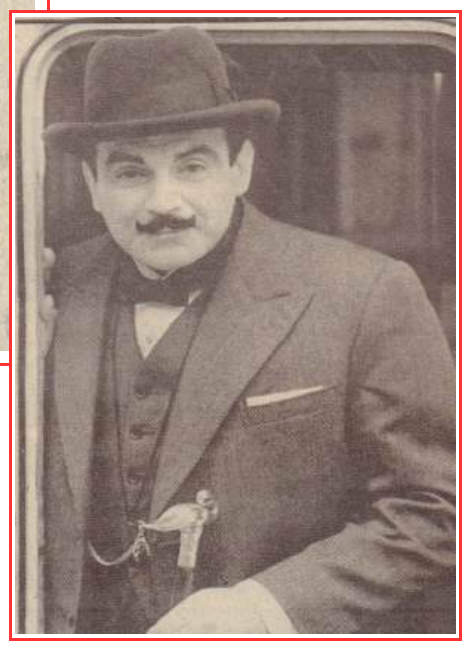
Like Albert King Henry Pratt lived in Church Hill House.

It had been a tailor's for some years and was advertised as "The Little Shop with the Big Stock".

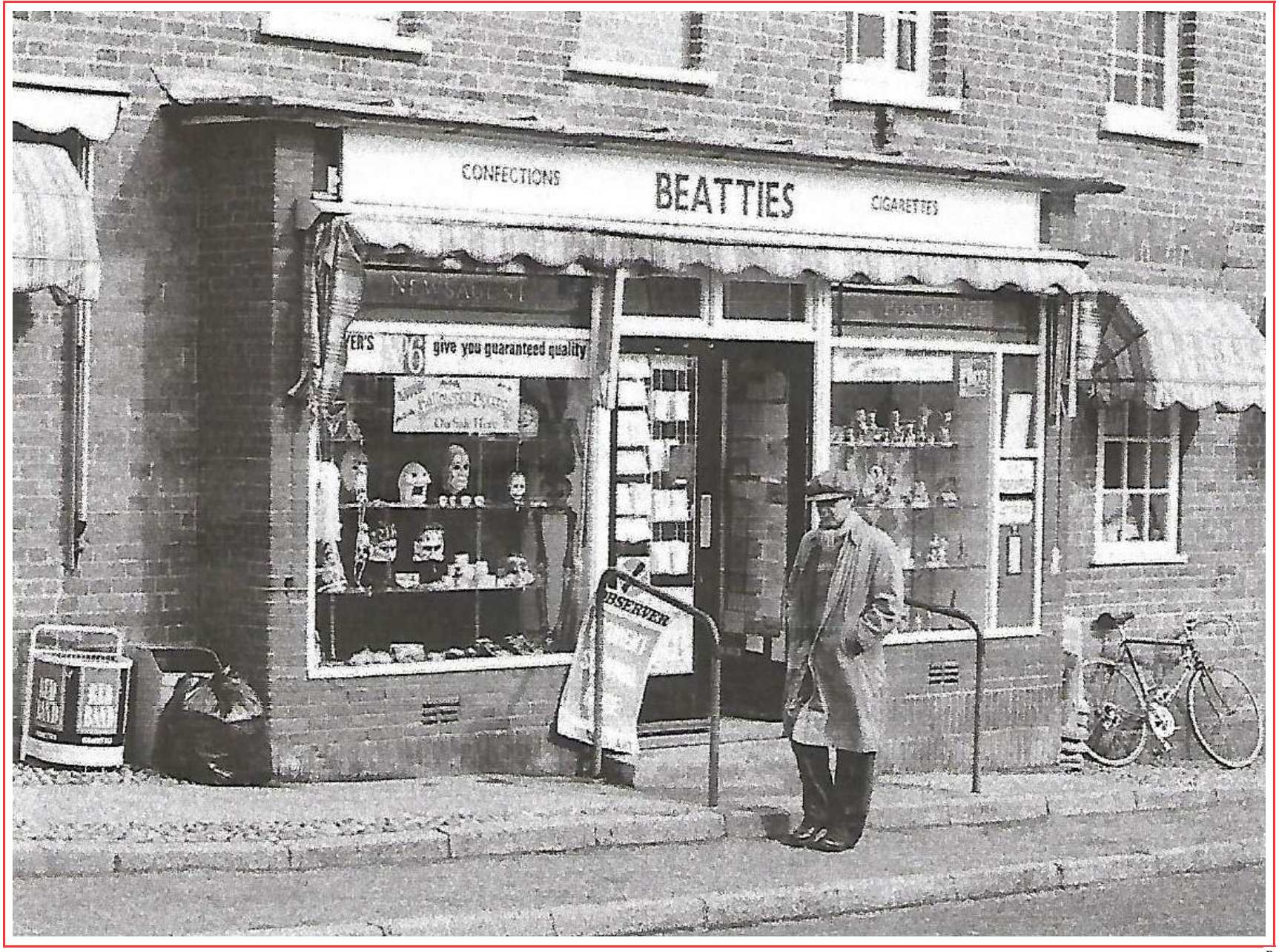
The lady in the photograph is Amy Hall who worked in the shop for many years.



Reepham was disguised as the 1930s village of Marsden Leigh for filming and the local church and hotel were used as back-grounds as the plot unfolded.



And finally! Johnson's shop 'dressed' for an episode of Poirot in the 1990s.

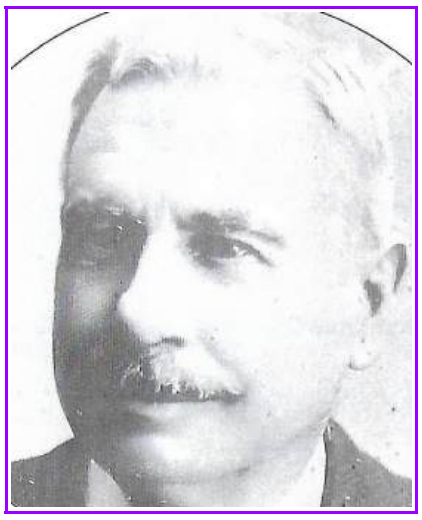


RA/JDA/Nov2025

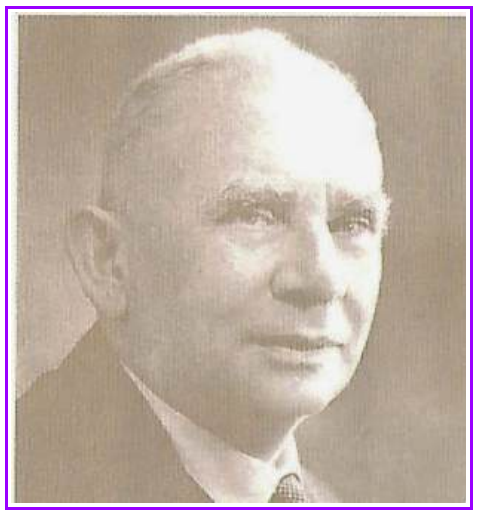
Roys of Wroxham

Alfred Roy (1838-1915) was trading in Reepham at least by 1868 and came from Burnham Westgate where his father William was at various times a joiner, builder, grocer and broker. In the 1871 census he is occupying the premises that we currently know, in 2021, as the deli and farm shop. By the next census Alfred has moved across the Market Place to Hewkes House, trading as a grocer and draper. Alfred was a joiner for his father and eventually retired to Aylsham. The now famous store known as Roys of Wroxham was established in 1899 by his sons Alfred and Arnold who were both born in Reepham in the 1870s.

Alfred Roy 1838-1915



Alfred Edward Roy 1873-1951



Arnold William Roy 1875-1953

An interview with Arnold Roy appeared in September 1935 in the weekly magazine Tit-bits and describes his activities as a boy in Reepham.

“My father was the village carpenter in the small market town of Reepham. The only education I ever had was at a National school – twopence a week. At 14 I went round the villages hawking oranges with a donkey and a barrow. I got that donkey for nothing. A farmer challenged me to catch it. It was difficult to capture as it would only come to him. He said that if I did so it was mine. In 20 minutes, after much enticement with corn, considerable exertion, and many cuts and abrasions, it was! I named it William and within a week William was harnessed to my improvised barrow and doing good business. “Ever on the alert for extra coppers, I found work for William in winter. By converting an orange box into a sleigh I was able to give the children of the village a ride round the marketplace for a halfpenny a time.

“Then I went to a Norwich drapery firm at £15 a year, ran errands and swept the floor. But at the age of 16 I felt the call of the gold-paved streets of the metropolis, went to London, worked for a shilling a day as a warehouse boy and supplemented my meagre income with coppers earned by holding horses’ heads and opening cab doors for customers. Many times I tramped the streets without a penny in my pocket.

“I remember standing outside a big Oxford Street store. And telling myself: ‘Some day I’m going to have a shop like that!’ So I started keeping account of everything I spent, entering such items in a pocket book as ‘Bun, 1 penny’. I knew I had to start by being thrifty if I wanted to succeed.”

At 18 he returned to Norfolk and with his brother opened a small general shop in Coltishall. One thing Arnold had resolved in London was that he would practise entirely new methods. He took the shop to the customers, first with his donkey cart then with a swagger horse and van. Success in the business led to a second shop in Dereham and a further shop in Wroxham in 1899 which became the business we now know as Roys of Wroxham, *the world's largest village*

JDA/Aug2021
edited from items prepared for the RS Exhibition in 2003

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Thomas Grounds Hart, Samuel King Barnes & Alfred Roy

This image, taken before 1871, is the earliest copy we have of this view of Reepham Market Place. The sign says "Hart" and refers to Thomas Grounds Hart, grocer & draper. After Thomas's death in 1868 Elizabeth, his wife, moved away leaving her son Samuel King Barnes to run the business.

Harry Hawes :- "The shop now occupied by Hardiments was occupied by Mr. Hart. I slightly remember him. Then come Charles *(Samuel)* Barnes. He had two apprentices. They lodged with my grandmother Hawes. Charles *(Samuel)* Barnes had high ideas. He soon got himself into the Bankruptcy Court. A large Marquee was erected in the market place and all his goods and shackles were sold by auction. This gave Mr. A. Roy a chance to move out of Carmans shop into the one recently occupied by Charles *(Samuel)* Barnes. The oldest Miss Roy opened up a school for girls. The entrance to the same was by the side door facing the post office. "

Alfred Roy, father to the Roy brothers who set up Roys of Wroxham. Samuel Barnes was made bankrupt in July 1871 and Alfred Roy moved across the Market Place to the shop where Kings the optician is now.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Harry Charles Peck

By 1891 Harry Charles Peck was running a grocery & drapery business on the premises, with the help of his brother and sister. Ten years later he was making a success, judging by the number of assistants :- two milliners, two draper's assistants and one grocer's assistant.
This image was taken in 1914. Newsboards report the disappearance of Gustav Hamel in May 1914. Hamel was a famous pioneering aviator and was flying from Paris to Hendon when his plane disappeared over the Channel after leaving Boulogne. Shop windows display drapery on the left and groceries on the right.

Marjorie Gibbs :-
Round the corner on the square and facing west was another grocery and drapery store, kept by Mr. and Mrs. Peck. He was a cheery but rather pompous, round little man with pale sandy, curly hair but very good in helping with parochial affairs. It was his boast that he had the first pianola in the district, and I remember him remarking to my father on the occasion of his birthday that he was “half a century old today”. Mrs. Peck managed the drapery side and would go to the warehouse (London, I think) to buy for her customers. A note would come for my mother that the hats for “best” wear for her daughters were now in for selection. Mrs. Peck also catered for the teas for the cricket team on Saturday afternoons

The name Peck's is painted on every space between the upstairs windows

The crowd have gathered to listen to the army band during WWI.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Percy Hilton

Wesley Piercy :-

This shop had earlier been occupied by Mr. H. Peck who was followed by Reeve and then Sidney Stangroom. About 1923 Mr. Percy Hilton took it. This was another good business, employing two or three assistants besides Mr. and Mrs. Hilton. Mr. Arthur Sydney Hardiment was an assistant with Mr. Hilton and took over the business when the Hiltons moved away.

Percival John Hilton
with his wife & son

Percy and his brother Bertie were both grocers. The family came from Swanton Morley where they had a bakery and a milling business. The brothers bought the Reepham property in 1923 and Percy managed the Reepham business, while Bertie ran a grocery in Fakenham from at least 1911.

In 1921 Arthur Sydney Hardiment was already working in the shop as a grocer's assistant to Sidney Stangroom and remained working for Percy Hilton. Percy sold his share of the business to Bertie in 1933. Arthur continued to run the shop and in 1948 finally bought the property.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

A. S. Hardiment

Arthur Hardiment (nephew of Arthur Sidney Hardiment) recalls :-

I left school at 14 in 1941 and went to work for Uncle Arthur for 10/- a week. The second week there he gave me 12/6 - he must have thought I was worth a bit more.

We opened the shop at 8.30 until 6, six days a week with halfday on Thursday. It was hard graft those days, but something we enjoyed. Raisins, sultanas, currants, flour even tea all had to be weighed up. It all came in from Copelands in Norwich, sometimes twice a week. The bacon came by train to Whitwell station, it was wrapped in sacking. Even Palethorpe's pork pies came by rail. We had to cut up the sides of bacon, back, streaky, shoulder whatever - the gammons and hams were cut up and cooked at the back of the shop.

Arthur worked there for 30 years, staying to help the Booths for a time until they bought the shop from his uncle.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Booth's


Member of the MACE Group of Independent Grocers

B. A. BOOTH
Grocer & Provision Merchant
MARKET PLACE, REEPHAM
NORWICH Nor. 69 X
Telephone: REEPHAM 218
Date 28 11 73

04176

Part of a grocery bill from Booth's with the Mace trademark.

In 1966 Arthur Hardiment sold the shop and fittings to the Booths who ran the shop until 1973 when It was sold to the Jones. In 1976 the shop was bought by George Johnson.

RA/JDA/Nov2025

Johnson's & the Police Station

Left :- Johnson's shop after closure

Below :- The property as Reepham's Police Station

Johnson's shop dressed for The Tragedy of Marsdon Manor ; a Poirot episode filmed in 1991.

RA/JDA/Nov2025