

Churches and pubs

Many people have heard the comment that Norwich had “a church for every week of the year and a public house for every day”. We can only presume that the person who made this statement had tried to visit each place and no doubt befuddled with alcohol and Christian virtue, didn't get too far and was left to make a calculated but unfortunately an exaggerated guess.

The comment, however, does emphasise the point that in the past the community used and supported many more churches and alehouses than it does today and Reepham, like Norwich, is a prime example in this emphasis.

Reepham is perhaps, unique in housing three churches in one churchyard. Reepham comprises of four parishes – Reepham, Hackford, Whitwell and Kerdiston – and each parish (excluding Kerdiston) had its own church.

The church of All Saints Hackford was burnt down in 1544 and was demolished sometime later although a small portion still remains and can be seen in the churchyard just to the north of the Town Hall. The two remaining churches are St. Mary's and St. Michael's. They can be easily remembered as St. Mary's is the larger of the two but has the smaller tower and St. Michael's is the church with the clock.

Reepham has in the past had thirteen inns or alehouses; it is said that beer was the common drink when tea was a luxury and a place like Reepham needed this number to support its thirsty residents. Many of these have gone and have mostly been turned into private houses.

The definitive list of inns, alehouses or drinking places is:

The Crown

The Kings Arms

The Duke of York

The Lamb

The Greyhound

The Swan

The Sun

The Star

The George and Dragon

The Black Lion

The Lord Nelson

The Farmers Arms

The Folgate

Only two from the above list remain today, the Kings Arms and The Crown, although of course the town has a third, the Old Brewery House. As a hotel and current popular “drinking place”, the Old Brewery is a recent addition to the town. Reepham could boast its own brewery which was situated in what was formerly the garden of the Old Brewery House and was in existence for about 100 years until the late 1870s. The house was a private residence until it was purchased and turned into a hotel and licensed premises in the early 1970s. In 1820 Mr. William Bircham, the owner of the brewery, built “The Ollands”, a fine residence which was pulled down in the early 1970s to make way for the residential development now known as Ollands Park.

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