



We bought Riches Stores from Ben Riches in 1971. It had been in the Riches family for 65 years. When we started decorating the place under old wallpaper we found newspaper on the wall telling of Napoleon's troop movement, so the place has been around for a good few years. We think it was originally three cottages.

We heard from the Riches family that Ben had a brother Dick who went to live in Jersey where he got a job in a shop called "The Riches", no relation, just an amazing coincidence. Dick did very well in Jersey, eventually buying into the Jersey shipping line. But he was interned in Germany for one year during the war for spying during the occupation. He supplied the German army on Jersey with goods and could guess troop movements and numbers by how the orders altered.

We came to Reepham from a fancy goods shop on Southend's Golden Mile. When we took over the shop there were some customs that had to change and some we were happy to keep. A local farmer was used to having his goods delivered on account, an account he would settle every three months, but only if he could have 7% discount. We didn't need too many customers like that if we were to stay in business.

We were delighted to see Mrs.Ford from the Old Rectory at Gt. Witchingham arrive in her pony and trap and tether the pony to the railings at the front of the shop. Mr.Carman had a small shop on the Moor. He bought a lot of his stock from us and then resold it half a mile down the road.

At that time it was all counter service - cheese was cut with a wire [and everyone liked our cheese] and a lot of staff time was taken serving customers, fetching goods for them and packing up orders for the deliveries. When we said we were going to try self service the staff were horrified. Mrs.Soames thought our customers would never stand for that. But we pushed on and became the first of the Reepham shops to be self service. Mrs. Booth round the corner was next.

Mr Leonard Riches, Ben's father would make most of his deliveries by horse and cart and the stables where he kept his horses are still there at the rear of the building, as is a large hayloft. Over the years the house and shop has been changed many times - in our time there were 21 doors, but the biscuit room on the first floor holds a secret all of it's own. Many of our visitors sleeping in the room next door reported hearing bumps in the night. Riches Stores has long been famous for it's wines and spirits - maybe not all of them are in a bottle!

Mr.and Mrs.Harrison  
Richmond Rise

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