

## Reepham Moor

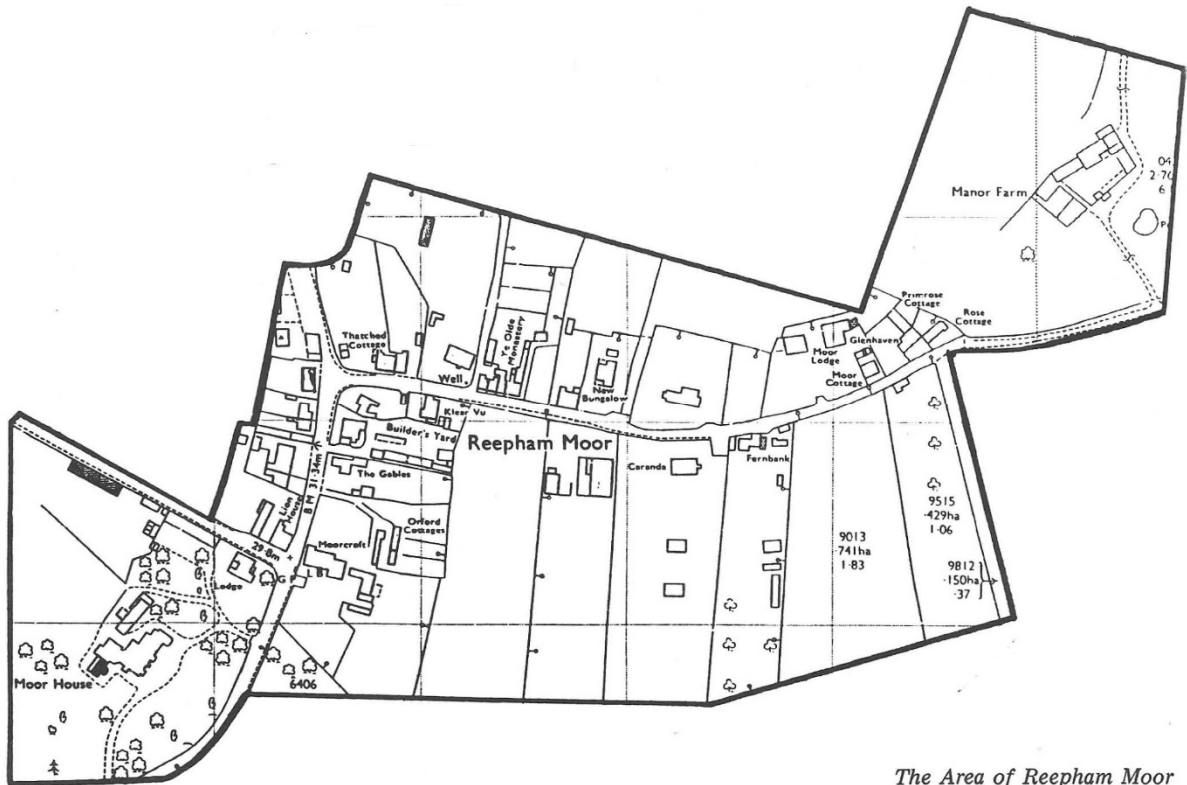
By the County of Norfolk Review Order, 1935, the civil parishes of Hackford, Reepham and Kerdiston, and Whitwell were united to form the new parish of Reepham. Prior to this unification Reepham was always described 'as a small town and parish on the banks of the Eyn'. Reepham Moor is, and always seems to have been, a separate part of the Reepham parish situated to the east of the town. 'Moor' means low wet land and this area was originally the common of Reepham. The river Eyn is the boundary between the parishes of Reepham and Booton and although the low wet land on the Reepham side was long ago drained and cultivated the land on the other side is Booton Common, an area of wetland which remains today as it probably was hundreds of years ago.

It seems likely that the road through the Moor was the original road from Reepham to Cawston; the map shows the present road which finishes at Moor Farm and the route restarts at the Green Lane which proceeds in a reasonably direct line to Cawston. It is accepted that houses have been scattered along this road since Tudor times. The present houses along the Moor display a number of interesting architectural details dating mainly from the sixteenth century at Moor Farm and from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as seen at 'Ye Old Monastery', the Moor Lodge and again, Moor Farm.

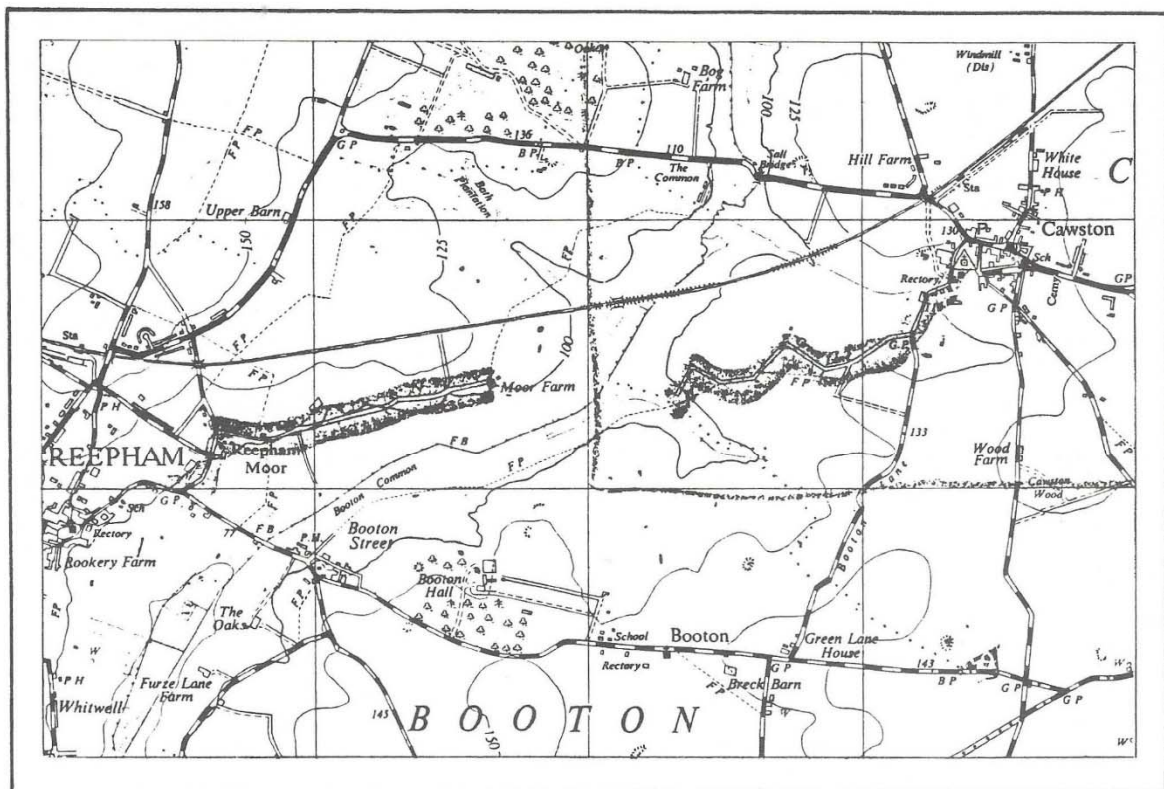
Whilst in recent years the town area of Reepham parish has grown and commercially prospered the Moor has declined in a commercial sense and today this leaves the Moor as a much quieter almost totally residential area. During the 19th and early part of the 20th century however the Moor was commercially prosperous and the residents living in this area formed up to half the population included in the census returns for the parish of Reepham. The population level was about 400 during the period 1851–1931 (with up to 200 living at Reepham Moor). In 1883 the commercial side of the Moor included William Baker, chimney sweep; Thomas Dewing, shopkeeper; William Gillingwater, bootmaker and shopkeeper; Henry Porter, landlord of the Black Lion; and at least three farmers.

All of Reepham Moor is contained within the Reepham Conservation Area, the main objectives of conservation include the resistance of development which would be out of keeping with the character of the area or detrimental to its appearance and to ensure that new development is of a type and design which will blend with the appearance of the area and add to its interest and attraction. Future changes at the Moor will be strictly controlled.

However, changes to Reepham Moor in the past have been minimal, but with two main exceptions during the past 100 years. The first change in the period 1850–1890 and the second between 1910 and the late 1980s.



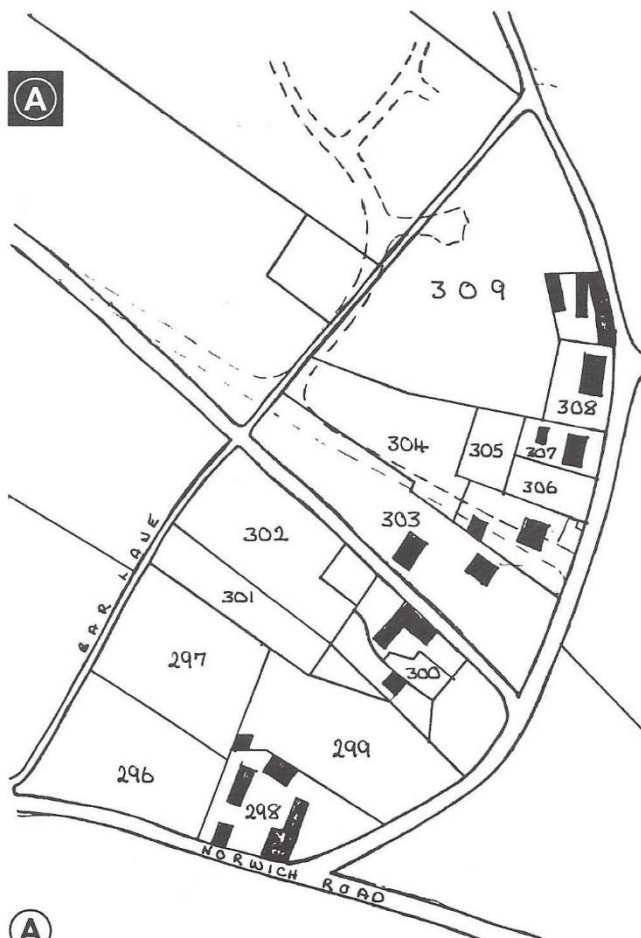
The Area of Reepham Moor



The shading shows the road along Reepham Moor and the Green Lane to Cawston. Originally this was the main route between Reepham and Cawston.

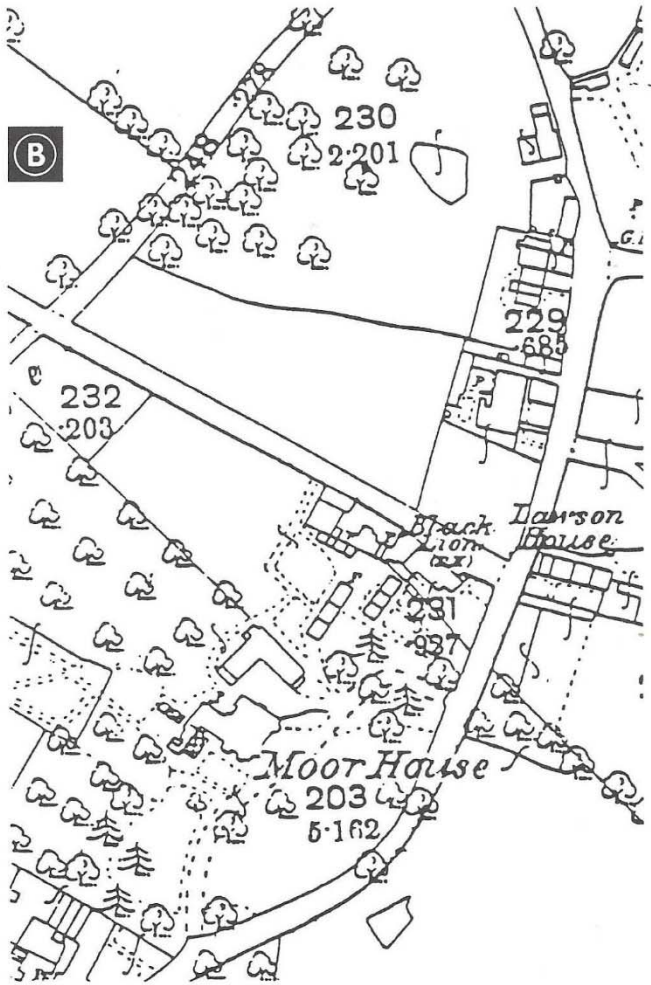
## The Moor House

The first change concerns the area now occupied by the Moor House and its grounds. The tithe map of 1846 (A) shows the area as a general collection of farm buildings and other dwellings; the next map of the area (B) is the detailed work carried out by the Ordnance Survey of 1885. This detail shows quite clearly that in the intervening years a large house had been built in the middle of the site and that a road shown in the 1846 map had been moved further to the north. In the 1885 map the straight line which reaches to the northwest from the back of the house is the line of the original road.



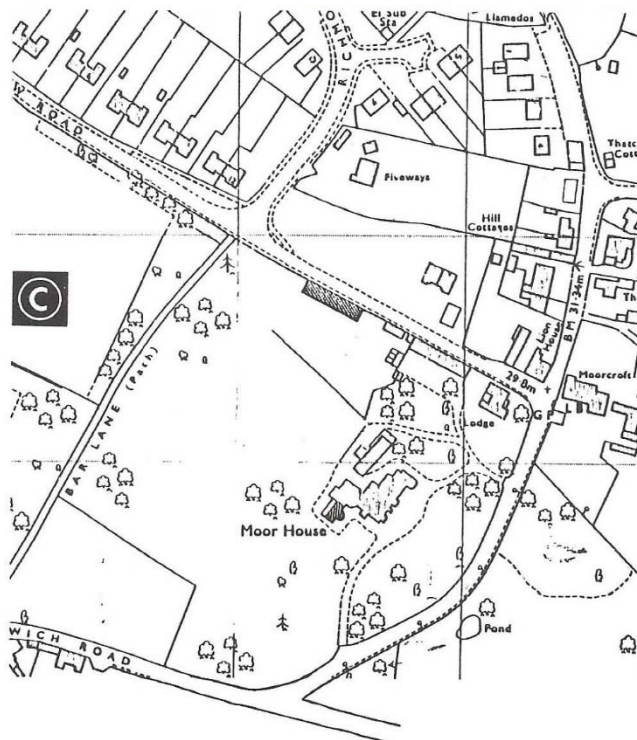
(A)

*The Western end of Reepham Moor (around the Moor House) as it was in 1846, the dotted lines indicate the road alignment carried out when the original house was built and the roads built into Richmond Rise in the 1970s.*



**B**

*The same area in 1885, shortly before the house was extended and the Black Lion Public House moved to the other side of the road.*



*The same area in 1990.*

The present house and Lion House (the old Black Lion Public House) are dated 1888 and 1889 respectively and it is widely believed that they and the New Road were all built at this time. This is not so and I will elaborate in greater detail the building carried on around these dates later on in this article.

It is difficult to detail when the Moor House was built but I assume it to be between 1846 and 1865, probably nearer the later date.

Kelly's Directory of Norfolk specifically lists the 'private' residents of Reepham and someone who could afford to live in a house of this size would surely be listed. The first listing is in 1865 when the person recorded as living here is a Mrs Dalrymple.

In his reminiscences of Reepham, Harry Hawes recorded that "Mrs Dalrymple lived there, she was aunt to Mr Sam Bircham, a very nice old lady, generous to the poor. She would ride about in a donkey chaise fitted with a glass front and whenever she went out she was always accompanied by her nurse. After her death Mr Frank Parmeter of Booton Hall came to live here." The Kelly's Directory of 1883 lists Miss Bircham and Francis Parmeter as residing at the Moor House.

Mary Anne Dalrymple was born in 1798 and died in Reepham in 1875. She was married in 1826 to 'Surgeon Dalrymple of Norwich' and it is believed that after her husband's death she came to Reepham to live. She was survived by two daughters. I am informed that in 1837 Catherine Dalrymple married Francis Thomas Bircham and

their son was Samuel Bircham who eventually inherited the Moor House. I assume that Catherine was related to 'Surgeon Dalrymple', a sister or possibly daughter from an earlier marriage.

The various tithes, area 296–303 inclusive, were all owned by William Bircham (who lived at The Ollands) and he was probably the person who built the Moor House and at the same time changed the road to the layout we know today.

Prior to this building the tithes supported the livelihood of a number of tenants. The tithes 296, 297, 301 and 302 were used as pasture and arable land. Tithe 298 was occupied by Thomas Springall who was a bricklayer and farmer of some 27 acres, the buildings on this tithe were a farm house with a barn, stables, cart sheds, cow house and a par yard. (I am informed that a par yard was a yard in which cattle were kept during the winter months – Editor.) There were also five cottages occupied in 1870 by the following tenants:

- Nurse McLean who was the parish nurse.
- William Huson, a bootmaker.
- Jerry Hall, a labourer.
- Widow Hall, who had two sons and two daughters (one of whom married Morris the hay trusser).
- Broughter Hart, a harness maker by trade who was also employed by the Post Office. Every weekday he would walk from Reepham to the Saxthorpe Post Office delivering as he went the letters to Sall Street. He would then walk to and leave the Wood Dalling and Heydon post bags at Heydon Post Office; he carried on through Heydon Park to leave the Corpusty and Saxthorpe bags at Saxthorpe Post Office. He then turned around and walked back bringing the various letter bags which were to catch the horse-drawn Norwich Mail Van which left Reepham at 5 p.m. each day.

The tithe area 299 was an orchard and area 300 contained yards and agricultural buildings and four cottages. In 1870 the tenants were:

- William Self, he worked the steam striker in the local Whitwell tannery owned by Mr Leaman.
- Mr Watchman, he was a maltster (the malthouse in which he worked was situated next to the Norwich Road opposite Virginia's Workbox – Editor).
- Mr Kemp, a gardener.
- G. Hall, to encourage this tenant to leave Samuel Bircham told him he could have a cottage in Worlds End Lane for himself and his family, free from all rents for his lifetime. Needless to say, Mr Hall accepted.

In the area 303 stood the 'old' Black Lion Public House, this had a thatched roof and attached were several farm premises which included a barn, stable, piggeries, par yard and a skittle alley. On the gable end a large board was affixed, this was nine feet long and had a large black lion painted on it.

Although a member of the Reepham Bircham family, Samuel Bircham was a solicitor who lived in Surrey and practiced in London. He obviously yearned for life in Reepham because he purchased at auction in 1879 the Old Brewery House. This 'superior residence' and various other lots in Reepham were sold by Messrs Spelman and Co., these lots were certain parts of what was previously known as the Bircham Brewery estate sold by William Bircham. With the encroachment of the railways the Bircham Brewery monopoly in this area was put under fierce competition particularly from the Norwich breweries and the family were in turn placed under severe financial pressure.

It was ironic and perhaps satisfying to William Bircham that Samuel should purchase the [Old] Brewery House and he further extended Samuel's estate in Reepham when after William's death in 1886 he left in his will the area in, around and including the Moor House. However, Samuel had to purchase his holding.

Due to his financial difficulties William had mortgaged the Moor House and the surrounding area to Samuel Bignold in 1876, To inherit the property Samuel paid £2,250 to clear the mortgage.

As Samuel now owned all this area, he now decided in 1888 to clear the whole site and to make the house larger and generally to turn it into a house of some magnificence. All the dwellings, farm buildings and other buildings were demolished and the whole area turned into gardens and grounds to compliment the new house. The Black Lion Public House was demolished and a new one was built on the opposite side of the road to a new house which was built as a gardener's cottage. The only early building which survived and is still there today is a small barn-like structure behind the house which was probably used as outhouses and stables to serve the original smaller Moor House.

I have been unable to find out who carried out the extensive rebuilding of the Moor House but Harry Hawes wrote in 1949 that the Black Lion was built by John Hever and Son, builders of Norwich, and that his father Thomas Hawes was given the order to demolish and clear away all the cottages, farm houses and buildings which were on the site; he was also given the order to build about 50 yards of flint wall which encloses part of the grounds.

After the house was completed (at a cost of £19,000) Samuel Bircham lived there for part of the year although working in London. He also lived in Surrey where he built three further houses to live in. It is said that his wife did not like to live in the Moor

House and they spent time living in their various homes. Samuel Bircham lived here until the turn of the century when it was then rented to Ernest Hudson who was here from about 1903 until his death in August 1931. Whilst living at the Moor House his son Sydney died, aged 27 in 1909 and his wife Helen and second son Eric both died in the influenza epidemic in April 1919; all four members of the family are buried in the Norwich Road cemetery almost opposite the grounds of the house where they lived.

He was fond of horses and kept a number of fine animals in the stables which still back along New Road. When the First World War came the horses were all requisitioned and taken away by the Army. Like so many other animals none of his horses came back; it is said the grief of losing them caused him never to have any more.

Ernest Hudson is still remembered today by some residents of Reepham who recall him as a large and kind elderly man. He had a north country accent and he was reputed to be part of the family that owned Hudson's Soap; whether or not this is true he was always referred to in Reepham as 'Soapy Hudson'.

Local people who knew the House during this period remember the grounds and front gardens as always being meticulously kept. With similar attention by full-time gardeners being paid to the nearby grounds of The Ollands this area of Reepham must, during the summer months, have been wonderful to walk round and look at.

After Ernest Hudson's death in 1931 the house remained empty until the Second World War. It was kept windproof and watertight during these years until it was used by the Army during the war years.

There were many serving members of the armed forces based in and around Reepham during this time and it seems that those based at the Moor House constantly changed. Their general role was not believed to be of any great or secret importance.

In 1947 the Bircham family sold the Moor House to Dr Eglington who used it as a nursing home until the late 1980s. During the later years the house was used by numerous film and television companies to provide settings both inside and outside for various films and programmes. The most notable being the extensive use by Anglia Television in connection with the film adaptations of a number of P D James novels. The Moor House was sold again in 1989.

### **Tithe area 270 (formerly Collison's Yard)**

The second area within Reepham Moor which has seen the greatest change was originally the tithe number 270. The change is probably now complete but this has been achieved over a 70-year period to the late 1980s.



In 1844 this tithe was owned by John Eacher; he also owned a block of four cottages of clay lump and thatch which were situated on the north side of the site:

- No. 1 was occupied by C Baker – chimney sweep.
- No. 2 was occupied by James Wyer – agricultural labourer.
- No. 3 was occupied by Vertrae Fuller – pauper
- No. 4 was occupied by James Harrison – pauper.

There was another group of four cottages of clay lump and thatch on the site which were owned by Stephen Leeds – the tithe does not detail the occupants of these dwellings but later in the 19th century Harry Hawes recalled all the cottages as being in a very bad condition.

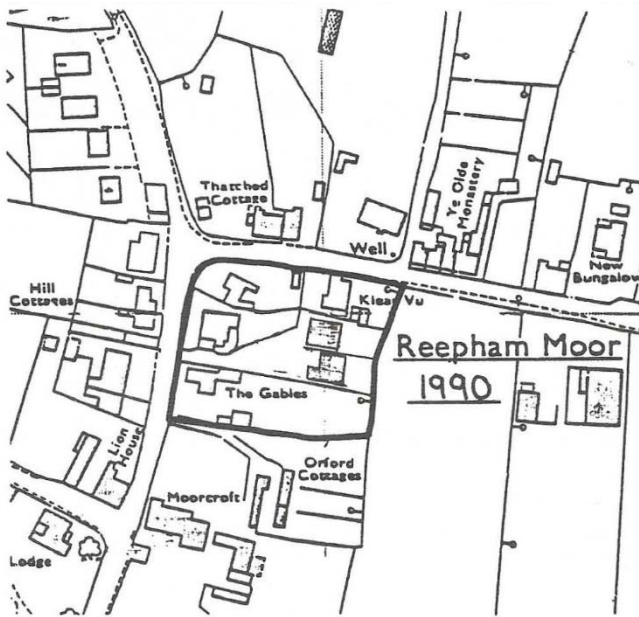
In the early part of this century the area was owned by Mr William Harrison who in September 1910 sold the site to Mrs Eliza Betsy Collison. It is not clear at what date the clay lump houses were demolished but houses appear in the same place on the O.S. map of 1906 as in the tithe map of 1846. On the area today the house known as 'Klear Vu' and an old wall between the new dwellings and 'The Gables' both show example of local-made clay brickwork and it is possible that they were the remains of Victorian dwellings built to replace the clay lump cottages or that the early described 'clay lump' is in fact 'clay brickwork' and the remains today are in fact from the original dwellings shown in 1846.

It is known that when Mrs Collison bought the site in 1910 there were a number of subdivided dwellings with tenants on the site, there was also an orchard in the northwest corner of the site.

The site was then split into two and on the southern part a house subsequently known as 'The Gables' was built and was sold in July 1920 to Mr Leslie Heron. The other half of the site was turned into a builders' yard for Collison Bros. An entrance to the site was created and a bungalow and builders' office was built, the exact date of this is unknown but it is believed to be in the early 1920s.

The site was split again in 1933 when a house was built on the area originally covered by the orchard. This house was sold in 1945 to Sir Dymock White (of Salle Hall) who wanted it as a house for his estate forester.

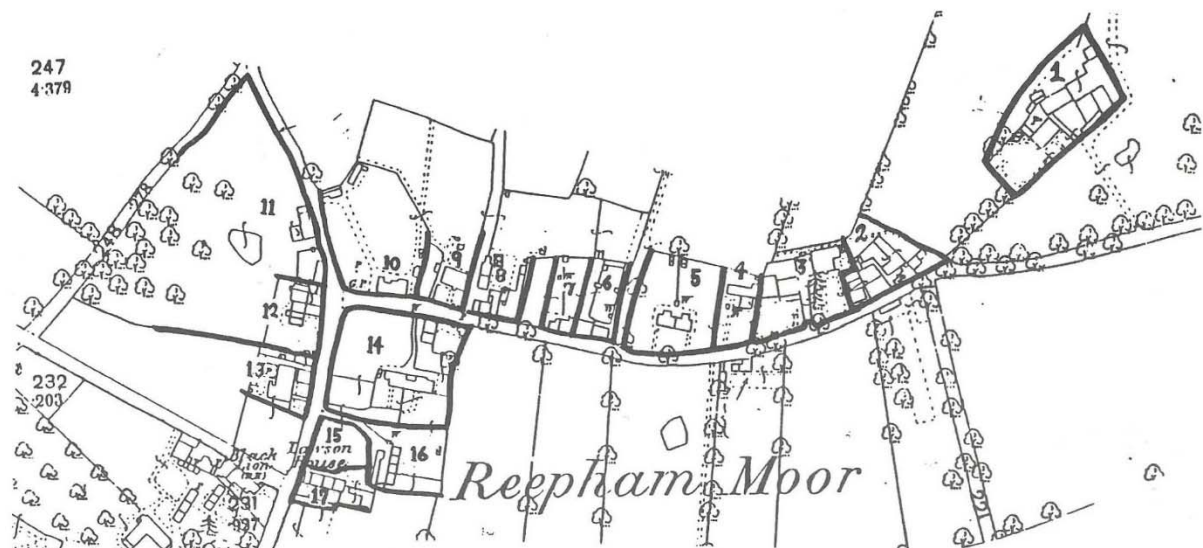
The cottage in the north east corner (which was believed to be built on the side of one of the original dwellings) was sold in 1954. The builders' yard remained but was by now almost surrounded by dwellings, this use remained until Collison Bros. closed down in 1986 and the area was sold with planning permission for two new dwellings, these were subsequently built and the original half acre of tithe 270 is now split into an area of six dwellings and gardens.



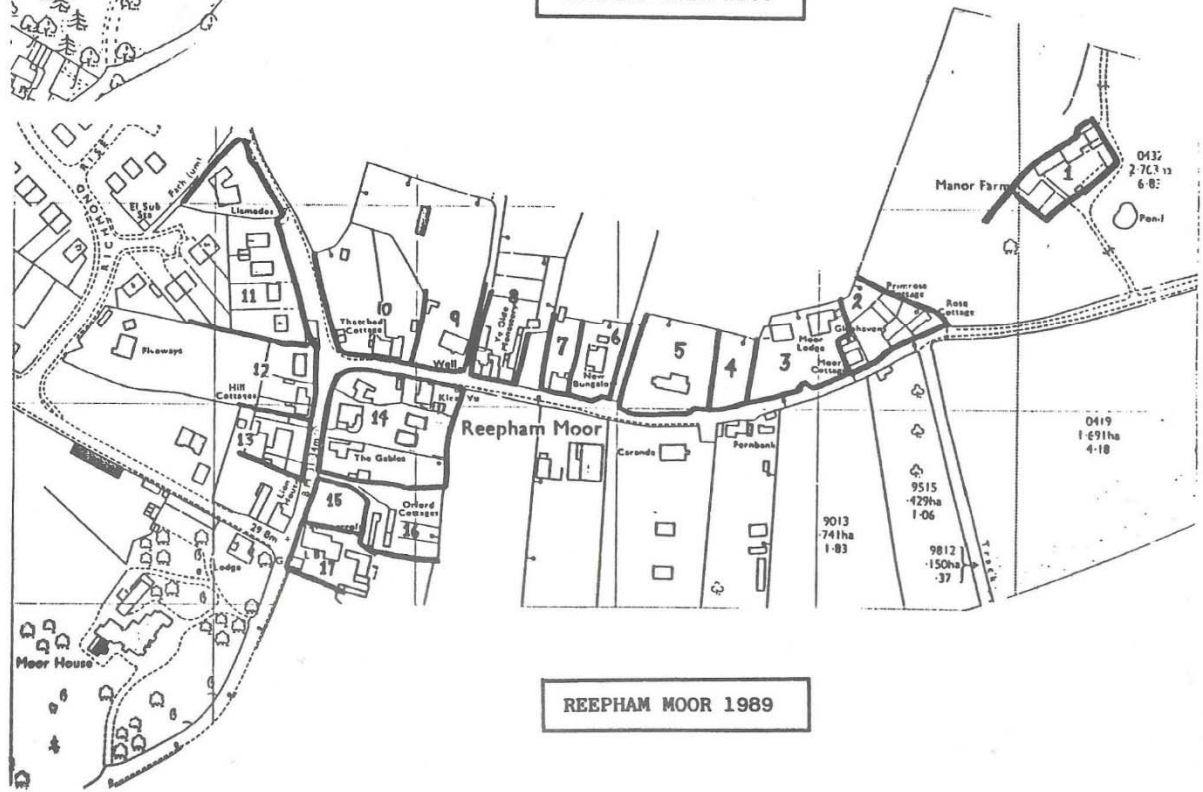
### **Reepham Moor (excluding the Moor House and tithe area 270)**

The remaining area of the Moor (from the Moor House corner to Manor Farm) has changed very little during the past 100 years, with the exception of building on the old tithe area 270 there are only two or three dwellings that have been built since 1885. Many of the cottages have however been modernised and in some cases extensively altered. When many of them were built the roofs were thatched but over the years these roofs have been replaced by tiles. A typical Moor dwelling would have looked like the cottages at Stocks Hill (as shown in photograph 12) or the only remaining thatched cottage today, which today stands on the junction with Orchard Lane.

Harry Hawes recalled the Moor and its residents as it was at the end of the 19th century, I have rewritten his notes and the individual dwellings mentioned are numbered against maps of the area of 1885 and 1989 the account starts at Manor Farm.



REEPHAM MOOR 1885



REEPHAM MOOR 1989

1. "This farm belonged to Mr W Parke – listed in Kelly’s Directory from 1846–1875 as a farmer – he had this for many years. He was a church warden for St Mary’s Church with Mr Dye of Kerdiston. He had a niece, Jane Gray, who lived with him and who, after his death, married Mr Ben Wyand."

2. Today this group includes Primrose Cottage, Rose Cottage and Haven Cottage – "My grandmother, Mary Crane Amiss, was given the block of four cottages whilst she was a child, she owned them all her life. The single cottage adjoining belonged to

Samuel Eglington who paid her 2/6d a year for a right of way to get water from the pump, she always spent the money on bottles of gin.”

3. The Moor Lodge – “was occupied by a Mr Stearman, he was Registrar of Births and Deaths. He took a great part in the Reepham String Band. Unfortunately, Mr Stearman ended his days in the Asylum.”



4. “Past the Moor Lodge stood two cottages built of clay lump and thatch and known as White Hall, in the 1840s they were owned by Mrs Ward and occupied by Simmons and Porter, both agricultural labourers.” The cottages were later demolished and Mr Owen, who later lived at the Moor Lodge, had them demolished and the land was incorporated into the garden of Moor Lodge.

5. The Cottage – “Next came two cottages roofed with thatch, they belonged to the Rev Wilkinson. These my father re-roofed with pantiles.”



6. Modern Bungalow – “In 1840 this was owned by Will Edwards and later it was occupied as a farm cottage for Thomas Springall’s farm.” In 1892 and 1904 it is listed in Kelly’s as being occupied by Owen Hardingham who was a horse slaughterer and a dealer in skins, the cottage was demolished in 1947.

7. Old Cottage – “This was originally one cottage which was re-built in the late 19th century as two cottages, it has recently been turned back into one cottage again.”

8. Block of three cottages including Ye Old Monastery – “These cottages belonged to William Baley Baker who was a chimney sweep. The middle property was a grocer’s shop run by Thomas Dewing, he also did tailoring. The tenant of the larger cottage was Betsy Coe the midwife, she did mangling of linen at a penny a dozen, items could be any size. The cottages were all thatched, I bought them for £160 and had them re-roofed with tiles.”



9. Anniversary Cottage – “These cottages belonged to Mr Richard Rodham who sold them to Priscilla (?) and she at once sold them to Martin Dewing.” Between 1885 and 1904, Martin Dewing is listed in Kelly’s as a shopkeeper at The Moor.

10. Thatched Cottage – “The property owned by Mr Neale was originally owned by the farmer William Parke.”

11. Now occupied by modern chalets at the start of Orchard Lane, this area included a farm and various farm buildings, from 1840–1870 it was occupied by Thomas Springall who is listed in Kelly’s as a farmer and bricklayer. “The farm house was built of clay lump and thatch and was very small and the roof eaves were only six feet from the ground.” All the buildings are long since demolished although the barn survived until 1974, the barn was used just after the Second World War by Collison Bros., builders, in which to make roof tiles. These were used to tile the roofs of the houses along the Wood Dalling Road. For many years the area was used as a smallholding by Mr and Mrs Neale, the farm house had been demolished and from 1928 onwards they lived on site in a redundant railway carriage.

12. Kirriemuir, Hill House and Hillside – “This property had a block of four cottages, all built of clay lump and thatch, they were known as Stocks Hill Cottages as they adjoined the site of the old stocks. In the 1840s they were owned by R W Brady and later by the Rev E Holley who sold them to my father, Thomas Hawes.”



13. “This property was owned by my grandfather Job Henry Watson who was a grocer and coal dealer and he also sold pork and sausages. He is listed in Kelly’s from 1846 until 1875 as a grocer. Mr Barnabas Seeley (who was a carter and farmer from Hatchford) used to cart coal for him from the riverside at Norwich. I have been at dinner with him on Saturday and have known him to be disturbed from his meal by

someone at the back door who wanted a stone of coal, or a screw of tobacco for a penny or a ¼oz of snuff which was a penny farthing.”

14. An area owned by John Eacher, then Steven Leeds and purchased in 1910 by Elizabeth Collison – all relevant detail is recorded in the separate note about tithe 270.

15. Now the north garden of Moorcroft – in the 1840s this was owned by Sir R Jodrell. There were two cottages. one was occupied by Luke Coe who was a shoemaker and the other was occupied by Hannah Matthews who ran it as a common lodging house and took in pedlars, labourers and paupers. Both dwellings are long since demolished and the land is now incorporated in the garden of Moorcroft. “The walled in garden now used by the Reepham Fire Brigade contained the ruins of an old house. My grandfather (Job Henry Watson who kept the shop opposite) remembered Mrs Matthews who lived there and who gained a living by taking roadsters. These roadsters used to call at the shop and would buy a pennyworth of tea or a pennyworth of sugar.”

16. Orford Cottages – “Bit further on were four more clay walled and thatched cottages owned by a man known as big Stephen Leeds. I remember the tenants being Mary Hardingham, Betty Larkman and Billy Mungay who had a fireplace with pavement corners wide enough for myself and another boy to sit on. The other tenant was a Mr Reynolds who had a smart horse and trap and got his living by pig dealing.”

17. Moorcroft – “The tenants of the next three cottages were Joe Hastings who was a sack mender and kept a donkey which he used to visit the farmers to carry out repairs. The new tenant was William Hendry and the third tenant was Sam Drew who was a ginger beer maker, he had a donkey and cart which he used to deliver his beer.”

*From an article published in the Reepham Society Magazine, Spring 1990*