

**GUIDE TO THE
OLD CEMETERY
REEPHAM WITH KERDISTON
Revised Version October 2012**

In 1856 the churchyard at the centre of the town of Reepham, in which the dead of the three parishes of Reepham-with-Kerdiston, Whitwell and Hackford had been buried for a thousand years or so, was closed. (Kerdiston church, out towards Themelthorpe, had been downgraded to a chapel as early as the 14th century and its burials took place within the Reepham area of the triple churchyard). Two new cemeteries were now laid out; that for Reepham-with-Kerdiston was in Norwich Road, that serving both Whitwell and Hackford was in Whitwell Road.

In 1935 the Reepham cemetery was closed; burials of Reepham folk had already begun to take place in the Whitwell Road cemetery as early as 1922, but now the dead of all three parishes were laid to rest there. It is still in use and sometimes inaccurately called the New Cemetery.

At the 1856 Reepham cemetery, an area of unconsecrated land was provided for non-Anglican burials. The vicar of the day refused to enter these in the church register, stating they were “non-Christian” interments, so a separate cemetery register was kept. However there are some burials present that are recorded in neither of these.

Those buried here in the Old Cemetery, in addition to residents of Reepham, include a number from Aylsham Union Workhouse (to which they would have been taken in indigence) and several from Thorpe Lunatic Asylum and the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. There are quite a number from Hackford and Whitwell despite the fact that those parishes had their own cemetery. It is interesting to see how Reepham Moor is always distinguished in the records, perhaps to differentiate from Reepham Market which lay in Hackford parish. In addition there are burials from Cawston, Norwich, Bawdeswell, Booton, Oulton, Great Ryburgh, Weston Longville, Sall, Necton, Ringland, Wood Norton, Wood Dalling, Coltishall, “Briston/Melton Constable”, (probably meaning that part of the “new” Melton Constable town in Briston parish), Cambridge, Thornton in Buckinghamshire, and Forest Gate in London. These are probably all widows and children or others related to families formerly living in the parish

Stonemasons whose names occur on memorials include Hall of Aylsham; J B Childs of Norwich; C H Rust; W Field of Burgh Road, Aylsham; A Brewster of Norwich; T J Holman of Lynn; J Stanley of St Stephens Norwich

Visitors may wander (with care, both for their own safety and for respect to the graves) where they please. A complete record of all the inscriptions and monuments, by the Norfolk Family History Society, is kept at Reepham Library in the Bircham Centre, Market Place (although there have had to be corrections and additions to the original version due to more monuments being uncovered during clearance work). This guide is intended to point out the more interesting examples.

Many of the inscriptions are the standard pattern-book quotations which could be chosen by the relatives from the stonemason's catalogue, and which may be found in many burial grounds of the time. There are some however which are unusual.

The entrance to Reepham-with-Kerdiston Old Cemetery is formed by iron gates in the roadside wall; the latter consists of iron railings on a brick base, now mostly obscured by a yew hedge in front of trees of wild cherry, a laburnum, a red hawthorn and a sycamore. Within, an avenue of yews leads away. Halfway down on the left is a magnificent Corsican pine; beside the path next to this you will see the headstone of Catherine Brady, 1861. It is typical of the older stones in the cemetery, low and with an ornately scrolled top. The pine tree seems to have been one of a number of large trees spaced at intervals, some of which remain only as stumps. You may also notice a large rowan (mountain ash or wiggen) tree with red berries in season, and a large holly bush, both traditional species for graveyards

A little further on, on the left, there is a seat (an alteration of recent years) and around this are some monuments which, one is sad to say, have been damaged by vandals, necessitating that they now be laid flat or reset.

One to the right of the seat is a small white cross, now laid on the ground; its base has only the words

**Joan
And Jesus called a little child to Him.**

It is known from the cemetery register that this is the grave of Joan Beck who was buried 10 February 1896 aged one year.

Then to the left one may see, reset standing upright but not on the original base to which it is adjacent, an "old rugged cross" formed of logs with floral entwining, to Mary Catherine Reeve, 20 January 1892 aged 28 years.

Lying on the ground nearby and reassembled from broken fragments is a headstone:

**In loving memory of MARY ANN the beloved wife
of THOMAS JAMES BARBER
Who departed this life 15th of April 1896
aged 39 years.
Also of four children who died in their infancy
Fear Not dear friends and children all
I cannot longer stay with you
I take my staff and travel on
Till I a better world can view.**

This poem is not one commonly found but also occurs on the headstone of Elizabeth Coe 1863 which we will see later on. The monument is signed by C H Rust

At the foot of this gravestone you may see a smaller stone marked M B1896 ; this was originally a footstone that marked the end of the grave. You will see around you a number of these which have been reset against the main headstone in the mid 20th century, no doubt to make maintenance more

easy

Behind these graves, looking towards the road, is a tall headstone

**Sacred to the Memory of THOMAS DOUGHTY who died
Octr 16th 1879 aged 67 years**

**Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord
also ANN his wife who died Feby 17th 1884 aged 72 years**

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow

For what is your life, even a vapour that appeareth for little time and then vanishes away.

These last two lines are in a recessed panel, which may suggest that the original inscription was removed, and replaced by them. If so, the removal could be due to a mistake on the part of the stonemason, or a change of heart by those who paid for the memorial.

Continue down the avenue to the bottom of the cemetery, where you will see red horse chestnuts, a cultivated species. Here turn left, and come back along the hedge towards the road. As you approach the top you will find a group of three headstones, two of which face the road, but the third, amongst them, is facing you. It reads:

**In loving memory of GEORGE beloved husband of SOPHIA BARNES
born 7th January 1863, Entered into rest 21st November 1917**

Thy Will Be Done

**Also of WILLIAM JAMES son of the above born 2nd November 1888
Entered into rest 28th December 1918 at Kantara Egypt**

Peace perfect peace

It is a melancholy thought that the father died during the time of the Great War and the son, very probably in a military hospital, soon after the Armistice. One wonders if the final line is a reflection on this. An oddity about this memorial is that the cemetery register states that George was buried on 1st November, although recorded here as dying on the 21st. One presumes this is a slip for 1st December.

The path then turns left, parallel with the road; immediately on the left you will see a headstone

In Memory of WILLIAM HUBBARD who died Sepr 24th 1857 aged 50 years

Time swept by his o'erwhelming Tide My faithful partner from my side

And you of yours deprived may be as unrepentantly as me

Set then your heart on things above, death soon will end all mortal love.

This is a most unusual inscription, and certainly not one from a catalogue. What does "unrepentantly" mean here? It sounds as if the writer is saying she is glad to be rid of her husband. Or does it mean, before the writer had chance to repent of her sins, for which she blames the loss of her husband? But the final line seems to indicate she felt their separation was eternal. It really is an extraordinary case.

But not far away is one equally strange; the second headstone to the right of the path has an inscription, facing the road, that is now very hard to read

Sacred to the Memory of ELIZA the daughter of SAMUEL and (*illegible*) BISHOP

(Illegible)...ye young, ye proud, you must die and wear the shroud
Time will rob you of your bloom, death will drag you to the tomb
Then you cry and want to be happy in eternity.

The cemetery register shows that the date is 5th April 1861 and that Eliza was aged 20

This is another very unusual inscription. One can only speculate the motives that led the parents to place words like these on the tomb of their daughter.

Looking towards the central avenue again, to the left, in the shade of a fallen branch of the flowering cherry that is still growing, you will find a low headstone of early type:

**Sacred to the memory of ELIZA MAUD the infant daughter of JOHN AND MARIANNE
MARGETSON MARNER
Died 5th Febry 1867 aged 5 months.**

This is the youngest person to be commemorated by a memorial in the cemetery although it is known there were other infant burials to which no memorial is extant. Note how the top of the stone bears the representation of ears of corn wilting before they are harvested.

As you reach the central avenue, turn right then immediately left. At the far end of this row, you will find, in striking contrast to the other monuments around, a medieval-style recumbent grave. The inscription, now hidden by moss, reads

The Rev William Smith MA Rector of Reepham with Kerdiston 1864

The style was therefore probably chosen for its ecclesiastical associations

It will be seen that several monuments, particularly the crosses, have fallen over in this area. In most cases this is not due to vandalism but to sinkage of the ground under the weight of the heavy granite - the stones may have been erected too soon after burial, before the ground had time to compact. Some have been reset upright, but others have been laid down so that the inscription on the base remains visible.

Now turn back towards the avenue along the third row of monuments away from the road. Towards the avenue you will find the headstone of

“WILLIAM the beloved husband of CHARLOTTE HALL”

but we do *not* see the headstone of Charlotte herself which stood to its left- or rather we see only its base. We know she was buried 3 September 1895; the surviving base of the headstone has J B Ch...Norw... which must be part of the name of the stonemason, J B Childs of Norwich. But what has happened to the memorial is a mystery. The grave has not been disturbed, so the body has not been removed elsewhere

Next to this we find

**In Loving Memory of MARIANNE MARGETSON MARNER
daughter of THOMAS FREEMAN EGLINGTON of Kerdiston
who died 27th February 1892 aged 53 years.
The Weary are at Rest.**

What is special about this example is its style. The inscription is contained in a sort of imitation scroll set askew to the upright plane of the monument, which has a shaped top with ornate floral decoration. It is the only example in this cemetery and this style is more common in the burial

grounds of the affluent areas of cities.

The next memorial, now broken in two pieces through vandalism, is a very interesting case. A cross on steps bears the inscription, on the side towards the road,

In Loving memory of ANNA LIVICK who died 1 Novr 1933 aged 78 years

This inscription faces the same direction as the other memorials in this row, although the memorial itself is set somewhat further back. But on the other side, which one might therefore think was the less important but which has much more elaborate carved decoration, is a longer inscription

In affectionate memory of THOMAS FREEMAN EGLINGTON who departed

March 4 1890 aged 47

also EMILY EGLINGTON

The devoted wife of the above who passed away 28 June 1931 aged 82

Thanks to information received in 2016, the writer now understands that Anna was the unmarried sister of Emily.

Behind this memorial (I.e. away from the road) you will see a slab in front of a tree

In Memory of HENRY BISHOP

who died May Vth MDCCCLVIII aged LXXVI years

He was XLVI years Clerk of the Parishes.

And very proud that he knew Latin, no doubt. For those that do not, he died on May 5th 1858 aged 76 years and had been clerk for 46 years.

Now turn to your right to find a group of marble fragments consisting of crosses, plinths and footstones.. These mark the graves of Sydney Hudson, Priest 1909 and Eric Hudson 1919; the sets of footstones have slight differences. Both crosses bear the words JESU MERCY; this also occurs on the nearby cross of Helen Hudson, showing that it is a family tradition and not a reference to a clergyman.

Looking to your left from here you will see the most conspicuous memorial in the cemetery, a chest tomb inscribed on top and on the side panels to members of the Leeds family, the earliest being June 1875, the latest October 1910. The monument may cover a family vault. Just in front of this tomb is a white headstone, the inscription almost illegible, but at the top is a relief of a woman holding two babies in one hand and a bunch of grapes in the other. The inscription read

To the memory of ELIZABETH beloved wife of HENRY COE

who departed this life in childbirth November 1sr 1863 aged 43 years

followed by the rhyming epitaph we have seen on the grave of Mary Ann Barber

Beside the chest tomb an unusual recumbent coped stone tomb with its footstone still in place but the headstone fallen and smashed. It reads

In affectionate remembrance of JOSEPH LEEDS

who died Octr 19th 1865 aged 68 years,

also HANNAH wife of the above who died March 7th 1886 aged 85 years.

Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord

Now either return to the central avenue, or continue along the right-hand boundary, passing on either side of the huge holly bush, to reach the far right-hand corner of the cemetery. Here are two headstones in the unconsecrated area.

One has the inscription:

**In Memory of SAMUEL DEW
who departed this life the 18th Sepr 1872
aged 57 years.
Trusting in the Blood of Christ**

the other has

**In memory of MARY
the daughter of Samuel and Ann Dew
who departed this life the 1st Sept 1866
aged 21 years
A sinner saved by grace.**

Neither of these are recorded in the church register or the cemetery register. The final sentence of each suggests these are Nonconformist burials, and among those the vicar of the time refused to record. At various times there were three Methodist chapels in the town - Primitive, Wesleyan and New Connection, and possibly a Baptist chapel as well, yet these were all thought to be in Hackford parish, which had an unconsecrated area of its own cemetery.

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