

## Reepham Old Burial Ground Wild-Life Garden part 2

At the end of last winter it was suggested that the Reepham Society should take over the management of the old Reepham and Kerdiston Cemetery on the Norwich Road as a wild-life garden. At that time, although aware of its position almost adjoining the former St Mary's Church School, most of us had never ventured through the iron gates that guarded the old burial ground. In fact it took some research to discover its history, even the date of opening varied in different accounts, but it seems to have been in 1855 on half an acre of ground given by Mr Parke. The cost of the iron railings and gates along the road boundary and possibly the planting of the avenue of yew trees edging the central path amounted to £150. The cemetery was to be managed by a Burial Board of four members.

The Parish Council agreed in principle to the management of the cemetery by the Reepham Society and asked for a management plan to be submitted. Dr John Barkham of Whitwell agreed to survey the old cemetery, last used for a burial in the early 30s, and to make a plan of management as a wild-life garden. It may be of interest to the reader to set out the aims and plans of management as proposed by Dr Barkham.

### *Aims:*

- To maintain it as a wild garden for quiet enjoyment.
- To manage it with a minimum input of resources.
- To maintain the existing good features and add new ones when and where practical.

### *Some existing good features:*

- At the road end of the ground a line of wild cherry (*Prunus avium* 'Flora Plena'). Given and planted by the Reepham Women's Institute.
- Two bird cherry (*Prunus padus*).
- Two Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra*). One is an exceptionally fine specimen of a mature tree.
- Two white spruce (*Picea glauca*).
- A line of red horse chestnut (*Aesculus X carrea*) along the field boundary.
- A double line of yews (*Taxus baccata*) flanking the central path.

### *Regular management:*

- The headstones are not to be disturbed; the Society plans to complete the work of recording the inscriptions on the headstones begun by the Reepham W.I. some years ago.
- A perimeter path and also the central path between the yews to be mown and kept short.

- The hedge on the west side to be cut and laid and planted up with quickthorn where necessary.
- The ground, apart from the paths, to be mown only twice each year in late August and October and mowings cleared and heaped. Some dead wood on the trees to be left for the birds and insects. Suitable planting to be carried out to enhance the wild-life aspect.

As soon as the Society knew that the Parish Council approved the management scheme, work began on the necessary clearance after the winter gales. Members and friends came along and worked with enthusiasm and skill to get the new wild-life garden into good shape. Gifts have been made to the Society of two rowans, three buddleias, honeysuckle, primroses and daffodils.

The Parish Council planned a handing-over ceremony for Saturday April 25th at the Old Cemetery. It was a sunny morning when some sixty people came along to hear the Chairman of the Parish Council formally hand over the management to the Chairman of the Reepham Society. The gathering was honoured by the presence of the Chairman of the Norfolk County Council and the Chairman of the Norfolk Society Amenities Committee. Canon Wilkinson was rector of Reepham-cum-Kerdiston from 1867 to 1917, and so it was a very happy beginning for the Wildlife Garden that his grand-daughter, Miss Barbara Owen, agreed to plant a rowan tree for the birds. The proceedings were blessed by our present Canon Gordon Dodson, and it can be truthfully said that all present felt the sense of community strengthened.

The Civic Trust had nominated the last week of April 1986 as Environment Week and throughout the country more than 1,000 different projects were planned. The Reepham Society contributed to this by officially taking over the management of the old burial ground to turn it into a wild-life garden.

The handing over ceremony was carried out on Saturday 25th April and amongst those present were Mr Rex Haney, who is well known for his regular nature spots on Radio Norfolk and his contributions in the *Eastern Daily Press*.

In the last newsletter I wrote about the history of the burial grounds in Reepham, admittedly my information came from a number of sources, but it would appear that some of this was wrong. It pays not to make a mistake in writing about Reepham as any mistake will soon be corrected. I am indebted to Mr Wesley Piercy who sent me the following notes.

The Norwich Road burial ground was created in the 1850s at the same time as the Hackford and Whitwell cemetery was formed on the Whitwell Road. Burials were still taking place at the Norwich Road in the 1920s and they probably ceased in the early 30s, these were no doubt where plots had been reserved.

In the mid-1920s, the Whitwell Road cemetery was doubled in size and was extended to Park Lane and the present gates were erected. In this new extended cemetery all the right-hand side belonged to Hackford, and the left-hand side is divided into two, one area for Reepham and Kerdiston and the rest belonged to Whitwell.

Until the last war, the Norwich Road cemetery was always kept locked and anyone wishing to visit a grave had to obtain the key from Mr A Beaver, the Clerk to Reepham-cum-Kerdiston Parish Council, who lived nearby.

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