

'Goodbye to Gibbs'

A small booklet about Reepham, printed in 1967, included the following poem by Maggie Pye, which lamented the closure of Gibbs & Son:

Now Gibbs's shop is closing,
And Reepham must repine.
For here it was we bought our nails,
Our crockery, paint, and twine.

The shop-floor, bare and boarded,
We reached by several steps.
Above us, from the ceiling,
Hung shears and pails and skeps.

The long old wooden counter,
All worn and scratched with use,
Bore stains of oil and plaster,
And varnishes sold loose.

A hundred years or so ago
It stood in garish pride,
When all those shelves were hard and new,
Ranged on its other side.

Now still the drawers and boxes
Are marked in bold black "CAPS":
COLD CHISELS, TURNSCREWS, PUNCHES;
SHAVE HOOKS, ARCH DRILLS, BRASS TAPS.

CHEESEWIRES, SMALL STAPLES, PLANE IRONS;
LINE-PINS and APPLE CORERS;
TACK HAMMERS, KNOBS, AND FARRIERS' KNIVES;
TWIST-BITS, SWISS-BITS, and BORERS.

HOSE-FITTINGS, PULLEYS, WHEEL-VALVES;
DOOR-PLATES, PAD-BOLTS, BIB-COCKS;
BRASS CABIN HOOKS, FLY-CATCHERS;
COLANDERS, CLASPS, RIM-LOCKS...

And what, we wonder, were all these?
And who the folk who sold them?
Only the empty drawers remain
For cobwebs to enfold them.

But we remember, clean and bright,
The pleasant place we knew.
And Reepham folk will not forget
The shop in white and blue.

Maggie Pye

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