

Reepham (Kelly's Directory) 1875

Many people have lamented the loss of Kelly's county directories, they, like no other series (except perhaps White's directories, which preceded them) give us a comprehensive view of our local society. A series which at the height of its circulation covered the whole of the county, Kelly's were founded in 1799 and according to Phillip Hepworth in a recent copy of *Norfolk Fair*, their prosperity depended on the now discredited philosophy of the Victorian hymn writer, Mrs. C.F. Alexander (1815-1895): "The rich man in his castle; The poor man at his gate. God made them, high or lowly, and ordered their estate."

The first Norfolk directory was issued in 1846 and the final volume appeared in 1937. It is interesting to compare volumes of different years and as a full set of volumes is held in the Colman Rye library it is easy to obtain copies showing the changes over the years that have occurred in Reepham. As we turn in 1985 it is interesting to consider Reepham as it was 100 years ago, 110 years in fact as the nearest copy that I have is 1875.

The entry in 1875 begins "Reepham is a small market town and polling-place in the Northern division of the county. The town is split into four rateable areas, Reepham with a population of 343, Hackford-next-Reepham (733), Kerdiston (188) and Whitwell (482). The four separate villages for administrative and religious purposes etc. were paired off and known as Reepham-cum-Kerdiston and Hackford-cum-Whitwell. The two pairs each had their own church and vicarage, school and cemetery."

Kelly's inform us that a market for corn and cattle is held every Wednesday and an annual fair is held for the sale of stock and horses. Petty sessions were held every alternate Monday at the police station and there were also a well-supported reading room and library in the Market Place.

Miss Amelia Sands was the postmistress, and she dispatched at 4.35 pm each day (to Norwich) all letters posted in Reepham. The post box closed at 4.15 pm but letters could be posted until 4.30 pm on payment of 1d. extra. Letters arrived from Norwich at 6.15 am.

Reepham cannot consider itself a vital link in Norfolk's public transport system and looking at Kelly's of 110 years ago, I wonder if we have progressed very far in that time.

Conveyance to Norwich was the only regular journey available, Henry Mainford with his van left his house (The Black Lion) every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at 8 am and carried his passengers to the Duke's Palace, Norwich, returning the same days at 5 pm. Also, Richard Badcock left the Greyhound at the same time on the same days and conveyed his passengers to the Moon and Stars also returning home

at 5 pm (with journeys starting from public houses at both Reepham and Norwich on the three days a week it must have been a welcome service to the travellers).

Reepham boasted seven public houses – Black Man [Black Lion?], King's Arms, Greyhound, Sun, George and Dragon, Star and Fall Gate, of these only the King's Arms is still open but the other six are all still standing and identifiable. Although we have lost six, we have gained two, The Crown and Old Brewery House.

From the list of commercial occupations, it would seem that a large output was needed to quench the thirst of the tipplers in Reepham. Apart from the seven public houses, Bircham and Sons are listed as brewers, maltsters and spirit merchants and there are two retailers supplying beer. Other people also acted as beer retailers in connection with their main business. These included the blacksmith, the watchmaker and the veterinary surgeon!

The other commercial interests and services available in Reepham in 1875 were 26 Farmers, 7 Grocers, 5 Shopkeepers, 5 Shoemakers, 5 Tailors, 3 Plumbers, 3 Dressmakers, 3 Bakers, 3 Blacksmiths, 2 Butchers, 2 Chemists, 2 Saddlers and one each of the following - Chimney Sweep, Draper and Tea Dealer, Surgeon, Wheelwright, Attorney and Solicitor, Ironmonger, Cabinet Maker, Banker, Fishmonger, Corn Dealer, Carpenter, Accountant, Inland Revenue Officer, Stationer, Basket and Sieve Maker, Hairdresser, Builder, Printer, Boot and Shoe Dealer, Laundress, Watchmaker, Colt Breaker, General Dealer and Scripture Reader – a comprehensive and somewhat evocative list of services that the residents of 1875 could avail themselves of, in comparison are we worse or better off in 1985?

From an article published in the Reepham Society Newsletter, January 1985