

**Moor House and the Victorian Glasshouse.**

The early history of Moor House is a little confused. The first recorded resident was a Mrs. Dalrymple, a Bircham daughter married to 'Surgeon Dalrymple' of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. It appears that they had a daughter who married William Bircham who owned the house. It was he who was responsible for the extension of the site to include a large kitchen garden and glasshouse. As the house moved out of Bircham family occupation it was rented by Ernest Hudson, stood empty for some years, was used by the army during WW2 and from 1947 to the 1980s was a nursing home. During later years it was used by TV companies to provide settings for a variety of films. Eventually, the present owners, Derek and Maureen Leonard, bought the house and obtained planning permission to return it to its original purpose as a family home.

It was the Leonards, their son Kirby and their gardener, David Wright, who battled successfully to return the garden to some semblance of its former glory. David Wright regularly won the vegetable prize in the annual gardening competition. Sadly, he has recently died. Future winners of this class will be the proud holders of the David Wright Cup. Along the northern wall was a large glasshouse, last used commercially in the 1930s to produce peaches. The peaches were sent post haste from Reepham Station to arrive in London within hours. By the 1990s it was a sorry sight with smashed windows, rusted and paintless with nettles and brambles running wild. There was one survivor from its glory days – a large vine.

To restore this 100 foot long glasshouse was a major project. Care and expense was lavished on it. The original Victorian ironwork needed cleaning and repainting; much of the woodwork needed replacing; 1500 panes of glass had to be installed. Surprisingly, the structure seemed to be remarkable sound. Even the underground water tank and the hand pump were able to be restored to working order. It is wonderful to see the building restored to its original state and producing a supply of fruit for the house.

*We must acknowledge the research on Reepham Moor, carried out by Michael Black, a past editor of the Reepham Society magazine.*

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*This text prepared by Isobel Williamson in the early 2000 as part of the Reepham Society's contribution to the Norfolk Heritage Exploration project.*

*Recent research has clarified some of the early Moor House history, its owners and various tenants.*