

THE MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS OF THE REEPHAM (WHITWELL ROAD) CEMETERY NORFOLK

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INTRODUCTION

Made of stone, to last for eternity, cemetery memorials can provide an important link for the family historian. Some are erected to the rich and famous but most to the memory of the loved ones of ordinary people. Unfortunately, memories fade; people move on and the memorials are forgotten and deteriorate. They wear, break and fall, are moved for safety reasons, to facilitate ground maintenance, or they simply become covered in lichen, their messages becoming unreadable. The primary purpose of this publication therefore, is to record Reepham's Cemetery memorial inscriptions (MIs) before age and/or vandalism, intentional or otherwise cause this unique source of family history to be lost forever

Reepham is a Parish and small Norfolk market town situated 10 miles NE of Dereham on the B1145 Bawdeswell to Aylsham Road. The town is unique in that it sits on the boundaries of four parishes, Reepham, Kerdiston, Hackford and Whitwell and the churchyard originally housed three churches each with its own designated burial area. St Mary's served Reepham & Kerdiston and St Michael's (now used as a church hall) served Whitwell. Hackford's church (All Saints) burnt down in 1543 and was never rebuilt, subsequently Hackford 'joined' Whitwell' sharing St Michael's church.

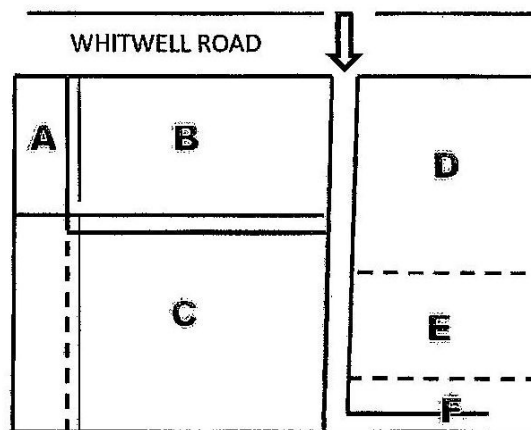
When the churchyard closed in 1856 each parish acquired its own cemetery burial ground. The Reepham & Kerdiston Authorities built a cemetery on Norwich Road and Whitwell with Hackford developed a cemetery on Whitwell Road but retained separate designated burial areas for each parish. The Whitwell Road site was subsequently extended, and when the Reepham & Kerdiston cemetery became full (around 1922) an area at the Whitwell Road site was set aside for their parishioners. Family history research is complicated by the existence of separate church and cemetery registers for each of the three parishes, although today, there are no parish 'boundaries' in the cemetery and cemetery burials are controlled by Reepham Town Council, using one register.

The Mid-Norfolk Family History Society (MNFHS) recorded the inscriptions on surviving memorials at both cemeteries and Reepham churchyard between autumn 2010 and spring 2011. This work only deals with the Whitwell Road Cemetery Memorials but similar booklets are being produced for the Churchyard and the 'old' Norwich Road cemetery.

The Whitwell Road Cemetery is to be found by taking *School Road* (signposted Whitwell 1½) at the Reepham cross roads. The Primary School is approximately 300

yards on the left hand side and the cemetery, behind a high hedge, a little further on the right.

The cemetery has a central drive (shown by the arrow below). For recording purposes the cemetery has been divided into 'Areas' A, B & C to the right of the drive and D, E & F to the left. Originally each of the parishes used their own numbering system to identify burial plots. In this work we have attempted to retain their numbering systems but preceded them with 'our' Area letters.



*Outline Plan of the Cemetery
Showing Recording Areas*

Area A is the unconsecrated ground
 Area B is the original Hackford Burial Ground
 Area C is the churchyard extension and incorporates an extension to the unconsecrated strip
 Area D is the original Whitwell Burial Ground
 Area E is the original Reepham & Kerdiston Burial Ground and currently the *in-use* part of the cemetery
 Area F is a 'Garden of Remembrance' for the burial of ashes.

Unfortunately, apart from a few row markers at the lower end of area C, there are no ground markers to give the visiting researcher a clue to Areas or memorial location within them. However, further plans and details of the method of identifying individual burial plots are included on pages 5, 21 & 49 and at the commencement of each Area list. As a further finding aid the shape of the top of headstones using simple terms (some illustrated inside the rear cover), have been included.

Some of the headstones, especially those made of limestone, have lichen deposits on them. In these cases only the minimum necessary to reveal the inscription was removed, without the use of chemicals, for according to the British Lichen Association, church and cemetery memorials provide a prime habitat for its growth. Sandstone headstones tend to be of a softer material which erodes more readily and tends to delaminate, allowing the inscription face to flake away. Those headstones that have fallen inscription face down, were lifted and read (except D18N), before being re-laid, as found. Whatever the problem, the recording team managed to make sense of most of the inscriptions, whilst taking care not to damage the monuments further in the process.

Most MIs are engraved in capital letters but in this work the inscriptions have been recorded in lower case letters, with only names in capitals, any punctuation being added by the author. Unreadable, *best guess*, and details reconstructed from the burial registers are shown in -square brackets ([...]). The work is

completed by an index to names, places and occupations appearing on the memorials. The former shows the year of death and age of the deceased, a hash sign (#) indicating that the information is not recorded, or not applicable to that inscription. The local place names – Hackford, Kerdiston, Reepham and Whitwell have been omitted from the *Index to places*

There are 750 memorials in the cemetery, mentioning almost 1300 people. The oldest surviving inscription is to *Mary Anne Harris* (B171) who died in 1856 aged 27. The oldest person recorded is *Florence Woods* who was 103 and is commemorated on a pink stone vase (C20S). The index suggests that the most *common* surname is *Frankland*, with 25 occurrences on memorials spread throughout the cemetery from 1870, but none for the second half of the 20th century. This is closely followed by *Eglington* with 24, also dispersed but none in the first half of the 20th century. The most impressive memorial is an obelisk (D19H) to the *Leamon* family of Whitwell Hall which carries details of deaths in the family over a forty year period, including some who died further afield. Another compact family group (Collyer) covering 60 years are to be found on the coped stone memorial (B70).

Undoubtedly, every inscription will be of interest to somebody and it is the Society's hope that this booklet will provide the family history researcher with information enabling them to make their own discoveries. Also for those able to visit the cemetery, it should provide a means of locating memorials of interest with relative ease.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mid-Norfolk Family History Society (MNFHS) would like to thank the Reepham Town Council for their interest and giving us access to the Cemetery plans, especially Councillor Anne Woollett whose help in interpreting them was invaluable.

The actual memorial recording task was carried out by Society members Tom Garland, Don McLean, Shirley Moulton and Denise and Roderic Woodhouse, and local resident Bill Green. We would also like to formally thank all other society members who assisted in the recording task, checking details, or in any other way, contributing to the production and sale of this publication.

Finally, although we have endeavoured to be as accurate as possible in compiling this booklet, the Mid-Norfolk Family History Society would appreciate notification of any errors found.

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Further copies of this publication and others in the series (see society website) may be obtained from:

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