

Beaver Family

We are grateful to Heather Normand, granddaughter of Arnold George Beaver, who now lives in Surrey for these reminiscences of her grandparents who owned a shop and house in Norwich Road now known as Beaver House.



Beaver House

Arnold George Beaver was the eldest son of George and Pleasance Beaver at Syderstone, Norfolk. In 1861 the family lived in East Rudham. From there, Arnold left home to study in Yorkshire for the ministry, and became a Baptist Minister in Birmingham before moving to another ministry in Liverpool in 1881. During his incumbency in Liverpool, Arnold came to Reepham and married Catherine Richardson Gooch, the daughter of Robert Parker Gooch, a veterinary surgeon and later publican. In 1891, they left Liverpool and came to live with Catherine's parents in Reepham following the death of their infant daughter from whooping cough and problems with the future of his church in Liverpool.



Beaver House

With help from Catherine's parents, the couple acquired a property of their own in Norwich Road. As there was no Baptist living in the area, Arnold opened a grocery

and drapery shop, perhaps a logical move as his brother had just become a tea planter in India. Arnold was a generous and public spirited man, though the profits of the business were affected by his propensity to give away goods to those he saw as needy. He became a much loved and well remembered member of the Reepham community. In the 1901 census, aged 48, he was described as 'a grocer and draper'. He lived with his wife, Catherine, then aged 41, and their three sons, with a sixteen year old live in servant, Ethel Lambert. The shop was closed around about the time of the First World War and the shop room was then known as 'the Big Office' as it housed Arnold's desk. From 1905 to 1931 he was the Assessor and Collector of Taxes for the Reepham District, and in 1922 he became a Justice of the Peace for Reepham Bench, Eynsford Division of Norfolk.

Arnold George Beaver died in January 1941 and is buried in Whitwell Cemetery. Catherine survived her husband by 15 years until 1956. She was buried by the side of her husband. Their three sons were born between 1892 and 1897. The youngest, Leslie Arnold was killed in France on September 18th 1918. Reginald and George both married and moved away from Reepham but retained connections with Reepham. The house was not sold until 1983.

We know that the shop front and fittings were constructed by Harry Hawes the local builder and carpenter. The shop front remains in situ with its windows filled with many perlagoniums. Heather Normand also tells us that,

"At the time it was sold, Beaver House was almost in a time warp, having been largely unchanged since it was first acquired in 1891. Plumbing was only introduced into the house after the death of Catherine Beaver, and water was still drawn from the well in the 1970s. The (mahogany) shop-fittings, which had been covered over with hessian, then wall-papered, were still in their original condition when exposed in 1983 – some of the drawers had spices, such as peppercorns, still in them and there were seven black lacquered tea caddies in excellent condition after being hidden all t