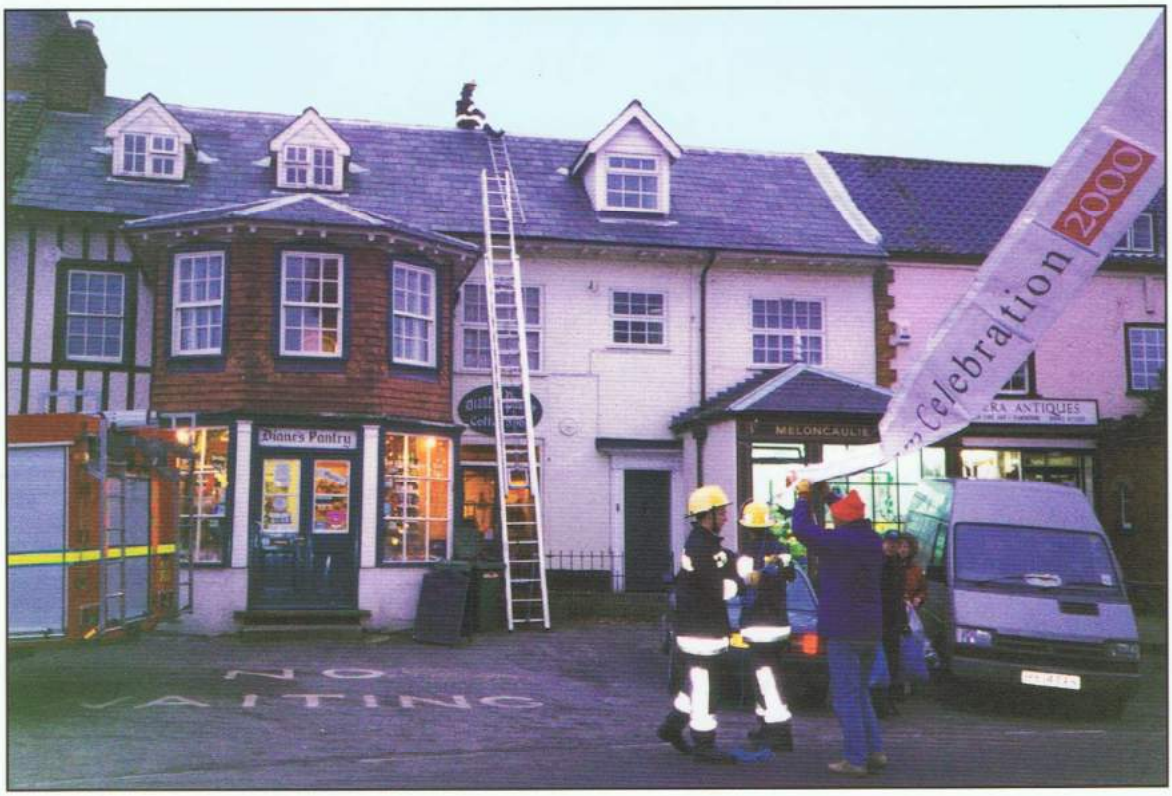
Reepham Society Magazine



Millennium Edition

April 2001

Contents

The Reepham Society is established for the public benefit in the area comprising Reepham, Hackford, Whitwell, Kerdiston, Salle and Booton.

The aims of the Society are:

1. To stimulate public interest in the area.
2. To promote high standards of planning and architecture in the area
3. To secure the protection, preservation, development and improvement of features of historical or public interest in the area

Front cover: Jolyon Booth, Chairman of the Parish Council, with the competent help of the local Fire Brigade, erecting the banner advertising *Celebration 2000* which marked the turn of the Millennium in January 2000.

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Editorial

We have to mark the Millennium Year in some way. The Reepham Society nearly let it pass but, seizing on the fact that arguments have been made for both 2000 and 2001 as the definitive Millennium Year, we have just about squeaked in with a Millennium Edition of the Magazine. Not before time, did I hear someone say? Well, it is true that the last magazine went to print in ... well, quite a time ago. As a result we do have quite a lot of material to draw on. To mark the Millennium, we want to look back at the history of Reepham and our group of parishes. We have included articles on the history of Reepham, Whitwell and Hackford because that is what this magazine has always focused on but we also thought it appropriate to celebrate some of the well-known people who have contributed so much to the work of the Society and to the community.

We had intended to bring out new publications and hold a History Exhibition to mark the Millennium in 2000 but the renovations carried out on St. Michael's and St. Mary's churches made that impractical. Doesn't the tower of St. Michael's look splendid after its renovation? The work on St. Mary's is mostly internal so do go inside and take a look. There is more to come. However, we have decided to bestride the two Millennium years by publishing this magazine and another book, *Poems from Reepham* and by holding the History Exhibition in May 2001. A preview for Reepham Society members will be held on May 10th, and the exhibition will be open to the public on May 11th, 12th and 13th. You may even have bought your copy of this magazine there.

If you have not heard of *Poems from Reepham*, let me tell you that this is a charming collection of poems entered by local people for the Reepham Literature Festival in 1999. They were too good not to have a larger readership than the six judges of the competition so the Reepham Society has published them – with an ISBN number so that a copy will be retained in the British Library and Reepham will have made one more permanent mark on British history! 'Poems' is on sale in Very Nice Things and Echo Antiques.

The Reepham Society is not, however, solely concerned with the past. We are a member of the Norfolk Society (CPRE), we have links with other Amenity Societies in the county and we are also consulted on planning for our area. This is a time of great and rapid change so we must look forward as well as back. Within the limits of our constitution we in the Society are concerned with preserving, protecting, improving and developing features of historical and public interest in our area. We have already embarked on the promotion of environmental awareness in relation to safe and effective waste disposal. These issues affect all of us at a time when we can no longer go on ignoring our individual responsibility for keeping our increasingly crowded planet a safe place in which to live and bring up children. What better time to look forward constructively than during the first year of a new millennium.

Oh, in case you were wondering what Reepham did to mark the Millennium, we should remind you that *Celebration 2000* was held in St. Mary's in January 2000. This was a really effective event in which over 200 children and a smaller number of grow-ups joined together to look back at the last 2000 years – not to mention parents and others from the town who formed their audience on three occasions. This was a very moving event and drew people together in a very appropriate way.

Why Reepham?

Wesley Piercy

One of the older and better known Reepham residents is Wesley Piercy. Now in his eighties, he has lived all his life in Reepham and has always taken an intense interest in the history of the town. He completed the local history course run here by Chris Barringer in the 1970s and, later, went on to receive an Open University degree. Whilst completing his history course he wrote this speculation on the origins of Reepham. Why does Reepham stand where it does? Why is it so different from the surrounding parishes? Perhaps most puzzling of all, why did its churchyard contain three churches, now reduced by fire to two. Read on if you want to know some very believable theories of the origins of this town.

'Reepham is a small market town which extends into four parishes'. So says the White's Norfolk Directory of 1845. Why these four parishes, Reepham St. Mary, Kerdiston, Hackford and Whitwell, should collectively be known as Reepham when Reepham St. Mary is the smallest and least important is a puzzle. People are puzzled, too, by the fact that three of these parishes had churches in the same churchyard, which is said to be unique. This paper is an attempt to give possible answers to some of these questions.

If one looks at the district, either on a map or on the ground, the four parishes, with the addition of Salle, form a compact whole with boundaries following streams for most of the way. Salle has to be included as the boundary with Reepham is so complicated that it seems that they must originally have been one. It seems possible that these parishes formed one large pre-Conquest estate. This, I suggest, would have been called Reepham. The Anglo-Saxon 'ham' ending is generally thought to be earlier than 'ton' and other suffixes.

Reproduction drawing of All Saints Church, Hackford made in 1784 before most of the ruins were pulled down. All that now remains is a fragment of one wall.

The question then arises as to where the original settlement was likely to have been. This, I suggest, was somewhere in the vicinity of the market-place and churches. If we try to put ourselves in the minds of a party of immigrant farmers looking for a place to settle, this area seems to be the one they would be most likely to pick for the following reasons:

1. It is high enough and far enough from the River Eyn (Booton Beck) to be in no danger of flooding and yet is not so exposed to the wind as other parts of the parish.
2. With an underground stream running through, it is easy to sink wells to give an adequate water supply, wells being the only water supply until very recently.
3. The soil in this area is a good medium loam, easily worked and well drained, with a sandy sub-soil under much of it, whereas much of the outer area is stiff clay. A good deal of this land was grazing land and was not ploughed until very recent times.

It can only be surmised where these early settlers came from. Had they come directly from the continent or from a previously settled part of Norfolk? If the former is correct, it is possible that they landed at Caister-by-Yarmouth and followed the Roman road that led inland from Caister and crossed the Eyn at some point in the Reepham area before continuing on towards Bawdeswell. If this was so, they would have passed through many miles of heath and woodland with very poor soil. The same applies if they came from the Norwich direction where much of the ground between Norwich and Reepham grew nothing but bracken until a few years ago. For people approaching from either of these directions, the fertile valley of the River Eyn would have appeared very attractive.

If, as we suppose, Reepham was an early Anglo-Saxon settlement, the original inhabitants would have been pagans. Though no pagan cemetery has been found, it seems possible that the present churches stand on what was originally a site of pagan worship.[1] This we can only surmise but the site does appear to be very old if the height of the churchyard, several feet above the roadway, is anything to go by. It is a fact that when sewer pipes were laid in Church Street a great many human bones, apparently very old and crumbling, were dug up. This seems to indicate that the original churchyard was much larger than now and that the churchyard was originally on the level of the street.

If this is so, it may be supposed that the early burial ground must have been associated with a church. That would mean that there was a church on the site at a very early period, any remains of which would be many feet below the present churches. Who knows what might be found if they could be excavated. The floor levels of the existing churches, being only a little below the level of the churchyard, seem to indicate that the churchyard was a considerable height above the street level even in the fourteenth century. These must be indicators of a very ancient site.[2]

[1] With the development of metal detectors and increasing interest in historical research, further evidence is slowly emerging of early settlements in and around the Reepham area. [Ed.]

[2] It is interesting to note also that instead of stepping up into the chancel of St. Mary's there is a step down to a lower level. Was this the original site of a church?

This was the opinion of the late Rev. H.G.B. Follard, Rector of Bawdeswell and Foxley, who had studied Norfolk churches for many years. A similar situation was discovered at Bawdeswell during the building of the present church there. The previous church was destroyed during the last war when an aeroplane crashed onto it. Under the foundations of the old church were found the base of a Norman tower of flint and the foundations of the body of the church which was apparently built of timber or wattle and daub. There would have been plenty of timber available which, being less durable than flint, may explain why so few Saxon churches remain in Norfolk. The first church in Reepham, then, was probably also of timber and not replaced until, perhaps, the thirteenth century.

This does not, however, explain why there came to be three medieval churches in one churchyard. If, as was suggested above, Reepham was a large Anglo-Saxon estate consisting of the four parishes of present-day Reepham and Salle, and the original settlement was in the present church and market area, it is possible that the other parishes were off-shoots of Reepham. This may explain why four or five parishes are still collectively known as Reepham. Reepham itself was known as Reepham St. Mary with Kerdiston. If these names came into general use for the separate manors, as in similar cases elsewhere in the county, it would be simpler to explain why they are still, and apparently always have been, called Reepham.

Salle, of course, is not called Reepham. If, as suggested, it was part of an original large estate, it may have become a separate parish with its own church at an early date. Hackford and Whitwell, which could have become Reepham All Saints and Reepham St. Michael's, but did not, evidently take their names from topographical features. In the case of Hackford (the ford at the bend), it must be from the ford in Hackford Vale where the bridge now is. This is also the only ford in Hackford. It may seem logical to suppose, then, that this was the original settlement in Hackford. There is another small hamlet in Hackford which is known as Pettywell, another name from a physical feature. This is probably a later date than Hackford, otherwise this could have been the name for the parish.[3] However, Hackford extends into the town itself and includes the whole of the Market Place which must have been part of the original settlement of Reepham. There do seem to be some good grounds for assuming that these settlements were extensions of Reepham by people seeking new land as the population grew.[4]

For Whitwell, the details are rather similar to Hackford. It joins Reepham and Hackford near the churches. The parish boundaries have been arranged so that they meet at a point in the churchyard with each church standing in its own parish. The former Duke of York public house is said to stand in all three parishes. Bar Lane, the former Gracious Street, leads from the church into Whitwell parish. Whitwell Street could be the original Whitwell settlement but a more likely spot seems to be near Whitwell Hall where excavations have revealed traces of an ancient settlement. There is another group of houses on Whitwell Common and the White House, though now showing a Georgian façade, has been identified as on the site of an older manor house. Another small settlement on the outskirts of the parish, Jordan's Green, was probably fairly late as it has grown up on very stiff clay.

Kerdiston appears to have had two centres, one connected with the 'Giant's Moat' near the Old Hall and one with Kerdiston House, a farmhouse now demolished at the other end of the parish. The population was, apparently, never very large and there was never a public house or shop, though there was a blacksmith within the last fifty years and, formerly, a brick and tile works. Much of the parish, it seems was wooded until fairly late. The last remnant of ancient forest, the 26 acres of Haw Wood, was only cleared and ploughed after the Second World War. Much of Kerdiston is also heavy clay and a good proportion of the present arable was grazing ground until the 1940s.

View across the moat into the Kerdiston moated site known locally as the Giant's Moat. The moat itself is now surrounded by trees, but the remains of an old well can be seen inside the moat.

The question remains, why three churches? And stranger, why are they all in the same churchyard? The old story of three warring sisters is nothing but a legend though it may contain a grain of truth. It is natural, when the original manor split, that each lord should wish to have a church on his manor or estate. Unless some pre-Conquest documentary evidence turns up we shall never know the truth. If, as seems likely, there was already a church on what may have been an ancient sacred site, what can be more likely than that all the daughter settlements should wish to worship on the same site as their forefathers, and be buried there, leaving us with the puzzle of our three churches.

[3] Apparently the original name was Petter's Well which seems to include a name, perhaps of the owner.

[4] We should not forget, however, that there is also a suggestion that Reepham Moor was the site of the original settlement which could offer another explanation for the development of the town.

Public Access and Right of Way

Kate Nightingale

Reepham has many footpaths and lokes in the centre of the town which are public rights of way. There are also many other footpaths and green lanes around the town which have been there, as they say, 'for time out of mind'. Having a public right of way on your doorstep makes you wonder what the phrase, 'right of way', actually means. It also gives you some insight into why some landowners should be so keen to resist the use of rights of way by the general public! After all, the general public does include some people you might prefer not to walk over, through or along the side of your property for a number of reasons.

Having started this article, I was going to wait until the new Access to the Countryside Bill had passed through Parliament but, having waited some months, I decided that we could not afford to hold back a new edition of the Reepham Society Magazine *any longer. As a result I must remind readers that some legal details on access and rights of way may have changed by the time they read this article.*

What is a right of way?

It is one of those phrases which people use freely without really understanding what it means. When rights of way were first granted, they were granted by owners of land to others in their own local community who wished to cross their land, perhaps to access their own land or to work in the fields. They knew the people who would use this access, personally, and both the community and the landowner, however large or small their holdings, respected each others' rights.

Respecting others' rights was taken for granted in a small community where everyone knew everyone else. After all, living in community depends on mutual give and take. In our modern world, as communities grow in size, we do not all know each other. Different groups have different values and aspirations. It is much easier to infringe other's rights and liberties if you do not know them or have some lack of respect for those who belong to different social groups or are in a different age group from yourself, even if you do not mean to do so. There is also a tendency, in these days of consumerism, to put more emphasis on rights and rather less on those responsibilities which are the other face of rights.

One reason that there has always been such contention over access and right of way over open land is due to the fact that the public right of 'way' across land and the rights of those who own the land on and around a road or path are not the same. You can only expect your right of way to be respected if you act responsibly in respecting the rights of the owner or owners of land and property around the road.

Some people will know of the celebrated case in the 1930s when the Manchester Ramblers made a mass trespass onto the grouse moors of the Duke of Devonshire in Derbyshire. Seventy years later, a *modus vivendi* has been worked out between those wishing for access to beautiful areas of countryside and large landowners. Not least was the initiative of the National Trust in buying up large areas of land to allow public access. However, we should remember that it is the preservation of moors and coverts for game by landowners which has preserved much of the countryside now available for access by the public. It seems only fair, in the circumstances, to respect the landowners' rights to close areas when needed to prevent disturbance to game or stock. It is this care and seclusion which keeps the land undisturbed for other wildlife and, we have to admit, not all members of the public exercise their responsibilities effectively.

At the other end of the scale we could consider those rights of way in a small market town such as Reepham. Those who live on lokes and narrow paths and roads are all too aware of how intrusive the passage of others can be. People passing late at night, despite the lack of street lighting, chat loudly under bedroom windows. (You would be amazed at what can be overheard!) We will not embarrass them by recounting some of the late-night activities or describing the debris left behind. During the day people look over fences into gardens; a young man stops to smoke an illicit cigarette whose smoke drifts into garden or sitting room, passing dogs make resident dogs bark or leave less pleasant evidence of their passing! Others sometimes park blocking the road, usually when a resident is late for an appointment or when there are several cars behind as you want to drive in.

In this context it is also appropriate to mention the new European legislation on Human Rights which states that a person has the right to 'peaceful enjoyment of his personal property'. That would also include noise being created outside someone's property on any right of way, including a metalled road. This can include thoughtless noise and litter created by children who often have no idea of how disruptive to others their play can be.

All of this makes you have some sympathy with farmers and landowners who discourage walkers from using rights of way on their land, especially when a path goes right across a growing crop. Is it too much of a disadvantage to walk round the edge of the field? It is far more difficult for the farmer to keep that path clear when he is sowing the crop. He did not cover the path with malice aforethought and the law makes allowances for this as the farmer does have a duty to indicate and clear the course of a right of way, even if it does go across the middle of a field. I, for one, can never understand why anyone wants to walk across the middle of a field with a standing crop just because there is an old right of way there. Why wilfully damage a crop? And if you are looking for interesting wildlife it is going to be in the hedge, not in the middle of the field.

Another aspect of this issue is that of 'common rights'. Until very recently, land always belonged to somebody, ultimately, of course, to the Crown. In feudal times anyone who owned land held it of someone else. Although the feudal system and its associated communal agriculture was replaced by money rents for tenancies and personal ownership of farms and land, the question of common land and rights of access has taken much longer to resolve. In the manorial system common rights did not mean that common land was open to all and sundry. A common belonged to the 'commoners', a group of specifically designated people who held specific rights, in common, to a piece of ground. Those rights of access were for prescribed purposes which may originally have been to graze beasts, gather kindling, dig turves and so on. The 'fen tigers' were particularly notorious for their riotous defence of their common rights when Charles I enclosed and sold off tracts of the Fens to outside landlords. This led to drainage and loss of their common rights on that fenland.

Commons were the last flicker of the age-old style of communal farming and were retained for the very purpose of ensuring that villagers did retain a place to graze their beasts and to gather wood for their fires. In this area they comprised the heathland and marshy land along the streams. Much common land has, of course, been sold off or enclosed. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries some common land became 'poor allotments', which were used either directly or indirectly to provide for the poor, and other commons have been opened to public access by a variety of means.

During the last two hundred years the concept of a common has changed and commons have been defined under a series of parliamentary acts. The Commons Registration Act 1965 defined a common as follows:

> Land which has been allotted under any Act for the exercise or recreation of inhabitants of any locality or on which the inhabitants ... have a customary right to indulge in lawful sports or pastimes ... or have indulged for not less than twenty years. [5]

This demonstrates very clearly how attitudes to and ideas about common land have changed since enclosure of commons and the demise of communal farming practices. The only registered common in the Reepham area is Whitwell Low Common though there are other remnants of former common land indicated on old maps.

Since 1981 Public Rights of Way in the County of Norfolk, as elsewhere, have been defined under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Any changes had to be obtained under a Modification Order from the surveying authority, the County Council. This involved taking evidence that included a description of the path or road and local statements of the traditional use of the right of way before the Modification Order could be confirmed, published and marked on the map. Local authorities have a duty to protect rights of way and must record them. They also hold a register of commons and village greens. It is to them that you should report any problems.

In the 1990s, 'green' elements in the population have been much more insistent on the rights of access to the countryside for all. At time of writing (March 2001) the new Act confirming unlimited access rights to specified areas of open land is to become law. My own feeling is that there is already considerable access to open country and to extend this will mean disturbing land which not only needs to be undisturbed for farming but to protect the way of life of the animals and plants which live there. One aspect of unlimited access that is only now becoming clear is that farmers and landowners will have the right to close areas temporarily if necessary and that areas with unlimited access will be mapped. The Act will not be effective until the maps are complete and this could take one or two years

However, in 1992, the Countryside Commission published the Countryside Access Charter which defined rights of way but also gave information on the responsibilities of those making use of rights of way over land belonging to others. This is particularly relevant for town dwellers (and some country dwellers) who may have limited understanding of the disturbances, not only to farmland and farm animals but to wildlife, from the irresponsible exercise of any rights to roam uncontrolled over our countryside. The Countryside Access Charter defines both rights and responsibilities in relation to rights of way:

Countryside Access Charter

1. You have a right of way on:
   a] footpaths – on foot only
   b] bridleways – on foot, horseback and pedal cycle
   c] byways – on public roads designated as byways (see also below).

   NB. Public rights of way are marked as such on Ordnance Survey maps. Public rights of way have been closed in the past around reservoirs or if land was sold to the Forestry Commission though many of these paths are now being opened up again.

   On a Right of Way you are allowed to:
   a] take a pram or pushchair or wheelchair (if practicable)
   b] take a dog on a lead or under close control (this means within ten feet of you)
   c] circumvent or remove an obstacle sufficiently to allow you to pass.
2. You have a right for recreation on:
   a] public parks and open spaces – on foot!
   b] most commons near older towns and cities – on foot, sometimes on horseback
   c] private land if the owner has a formal agreement with the local authority.
3. Some areas are open to the public by custom or consent.
   a] open mountain, fell or moorland and coastline. (Much of this belongs to the National Trust whose aim was to open the countryside for general recreational and aesthetic use, especially to town dwellers.)
   b] most commons
   c] some woods and forests (This includes those owned by the Forestry Commission.)
   d] country parks and picnic sites
   e] most beaches
   f] towpaths on canals and rivers.

In addition:

- Land being rested from agricultural use may be temporarily open to public access – notices will display the fact. This may include use by horses and pedal cycles.
- Some private tracks and paths may be opened to the public by the owner on a **concessionary basis**. This means you can use the footpath as normal but that the owner is reserving his rights to close the footpath, usually in response to some abuse by users.

We have to remember that it is those who live and who have lived in and used the countryside who maintain it. It is they who have made the English landscape the beautiful place it is. This is not a natural, totally unspoiled environment. It is because it has been managed and developed over centuries by farmers and other landowners, great and small, that the countryside is as we see it today. If it is made uneconomic for them to continue their way of life, the land will lapse back, not to its previous state, but to overgrown scrub. Without our protection and sympathetic use of our rights of access to our fragile countryside it will be

[5] I am indebted to Sara Birtles for the information on commons in 'The impact of commons registration: a Norfolk study', 'Landscape History' and 'Common land, poor relief and enclosure'. *Past & Present*, No. 165. November 1999.

irrevocably damaged. This is a particular risk at a time such as this when farming is depressed and there is little money to spare for conservation, even as more and more people come into the countryside.

You should always remember that the OS map that you are using could be out of date. Surveys are only done at lengthy intervals and reprints have, in the past, been based on surveys which could have been carried out some time previously. In this age of IT the whole process is being speeded up and the national map is available on-line. This allows the sale of up-to-date maps through authorised agents. These maps can be centred on your own home or other specified site and you obviously have to pay the agent to cover the copyright fee. Needless to say, Norfolk has been one of the last areas to be computerised in this way.

Further information about rights of way and countryside access can be obtained from:

Countryside Commission
Postal Sales
PO Box 124
Walgrave,
Northampton, NN6 9TL

For a ***Rights of Way Action Pack*** (CCP 375P) please contact:

Countryside Commission Publications
Printworks Lane
Levenshulme. Manchester
M19 3IP

The Country Code

In return for your right to enter or cross someone else's land you have responsibilities that the Countryside Commission has enshrined in the Country Code:

1. Apart from main roads, motor vehicles are only allowed on byways and roads used as public paths (RUPP), which were indicated on the OS map. RUPPs are, however, in the process of being re-categorised as bridleways.
2. Respect the work and life of those whose living is earned from the land.
3. Close all gates and do not damage locks and catches on them.
4. Guard against all risk of fire. This is a very real risk as global warming results in hotter summers with tinder dry grass and undergrowth – even quite early in the year.
5. Keep dogs under control, especially in lambing time. In sheep farming areas the farmers can shoot a dog seen in the field and off the lead, however well behaved or just having fun. And there may be young birds and animals or pheasant poults in the undergrowth in any part of the country. Untrained dogs can do much damage quite unintentionally.
6. Do keep to the public paths, especially in farmland. Not all paths are open to the public. You can check this on the OS map.
7. Always use stiles and gates to cross fences, walls and hedges.
8. Never interfere with crops, farm machinery or livestock. Protect wildlife – plants, animals and birds.
9. Keep water clean.
10. Take your litter home with you.
11. Take care on country roads. The road may be empty but there is no pavement, the road is narrow and what is round the next bend?
12. Make no unnecessary noise!

Tony Ivins on Whitwell

Part 1

Tony Ivins was a founder member, and remains the President of the Reepham Society for his life-time. This article is based on a recorded talk on the history of the parish of Whitwell, where he lived for many years. Unfortunately, the beginning of the transcript had some damage but I think we have recovered most of it. The talk began by acknowledging a debt to two well-known local historians, Chris Barringer and David Yaxley, both of whom have, in the past, carried out a great deal of research in the area. At least two tapes of the original presentation are held in the Reepham Society Archives. Anyone who wishes to listen to or copy the tape should contact the Chairman or Secretary of the Society.

A good place to begin the history of this parish is to consider its name. Whitwell is said to mean 'clear spring'. There are a number of live springs in Whitwell. In particular, there is a good clear spring near the southern boundary of the park of Whitwell Hall. This was embanked in 1842 to provide the water supply for the Hall itself. It has never failed and, coming from deep underground, it maintains a constant temperature for its population of frogs, toads and small fishes.

Possibly, that old Roman Road, after the Roman's went home, was an access route for various Saxon groups who came looking for land to settle in. That really brings us to the earliest Whitwell village records. In the north-eastern corner of Whitwell Hall there are the remains of an old village. We knew through oral tradition that there was a village there but it was not until the early 1970s that an archaeologist came along called Helen Supermeister. Sadly, she is no longer with us but she spent that summer, with a group of friends, excavating there. They found the footings of medieval brick walls, quite a number of them. Underneath those she found staining in the soil that could indicate a possible Saxon settlement. The last mention of that village that we know of is on Fayden's 1797 map of Norfolk and on the site of this village he has marked 'Whitwell demolished'. And we think that the last few, possibly empty, cottages were pulled down so that the owner of Whitwell at that time could enlarge his park.

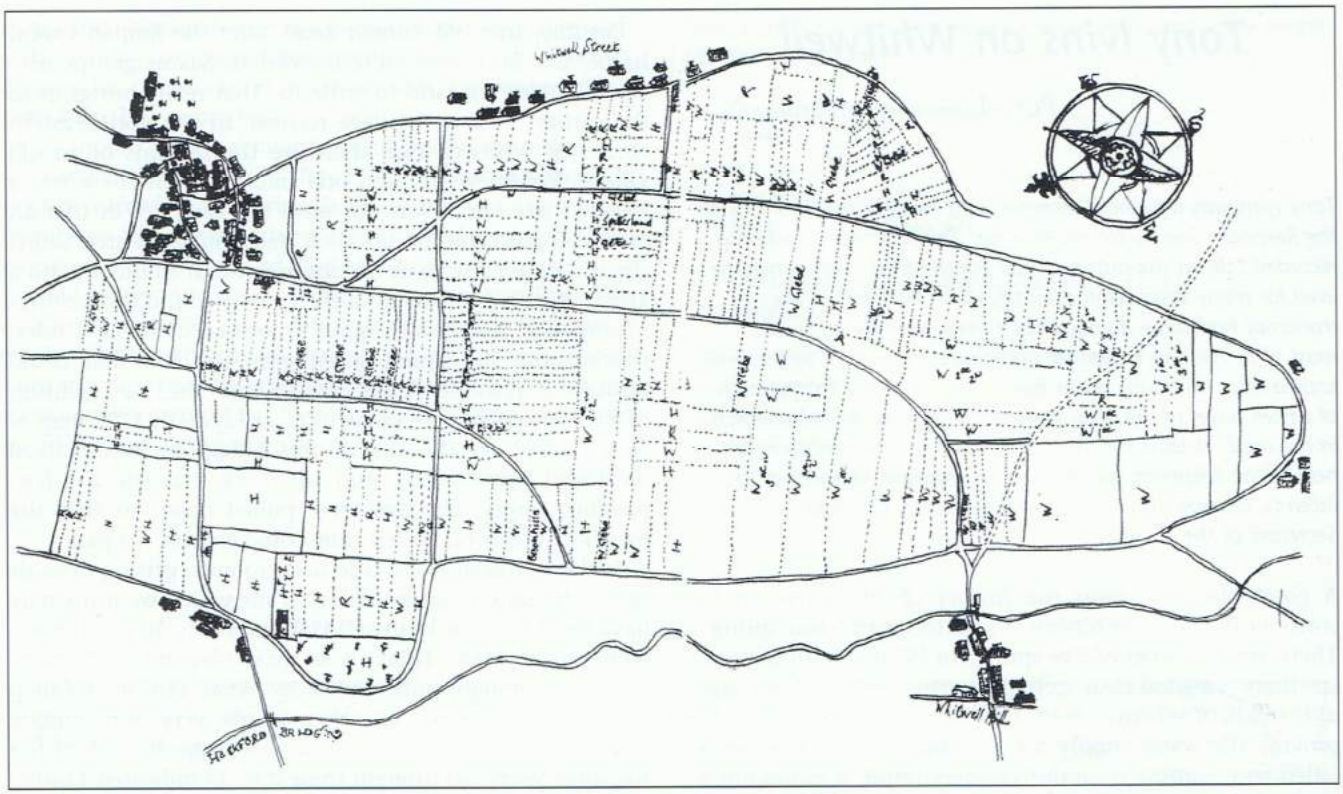
At the southern end of the hall grounds, getting towards the south-eastern corner, there's a site which we think may have been the first Whitwell Hall, probably an old timber-built Saxon Hall. There is a little clearing, still clear, strangely enough, surrounded by what our man called 'bottomless ditches', in other words very soft muddy ditches. An archaeologist friend who came to look at the site some years ago thought these ditches indicated a moat, possibly a drainage moat around the old hall. Of course, it would have had the advantage of being quite close to the springs I mentioned earlier on so it would have had a good water supply.

Whitwell Hall when it was opened before the last war as the Forest School.

The earliest history of the parish can be traced back to Roman times with the presence of the Roman Road which runs from Billingford and Bawdeswell, through Booton and on to Caistor-by-Yarmouth. The actual route of the road is not clear across Whitwell but in Whitwell Hall grounds it can be seen as a sort of small curved embankment. It goes on through Jordan's Green to Bawdeswell along Common Lane. [6]

Getting away from Whitwell Hall and back to the parish, there is a seventeenth century map, of which I have a copy, which shows the Whitwell Field with its cultivated strips. That Whitwell field lay between the present Whitwell Street and what is now called Whitwell Road, with Mill Road in the middle. That made quite a big cultivated field, one of the common fields of the Whitwell village. This map seems to be a copy of an earlier map, copied later to show which of the strips paid tithes to which of the three churches in Reepham because the various strips are marked 'W', 'R' or 'H'.

[6] One indication of the site of a Roman road is the use of the term 'Street' in a village name. We should remember this when considering the route of the road through Whitwell even though the OS map marks it differently and the word 'Street' is common in Norfolk villages with no evidence of Roman presence.



This map of 'Whitwell Field' was probably used in the eighteenth century to establish to which church tithes should be paid. It is almost certainly copied from an earlier map as it still shows all three churches. The railway line now cuts across the west end of the field.

The buildings of Leeds Farm are dilapidated today but they occupy the site of the Leeds Tannery. In the field behind here it is possible to see the remains of at least one of the tannery pits.

The other piece of common ground in the village is still there. Whitwell Low Common, some 40 acres of rather wet common has no ownership as far as the Commons Commissioners know. Their feeling is that it was a piece of manorial waste but, among the early Enclosure Awards, is an early nineteenth century one that says that this bit of ground should be set aside for the poor of Whitwell to gather fuel and, possibly, to dig peat as well. Such rights are known as the rights of *turbary*.

One little bit of medieval history that is quite interesting is that there has been a long tradition of a chapel of St. Nicolas in Whitwell. We think this may have been sited on the Whitwell Hall grounds, just south of what we call the New Wood because there is an acre of ground there which, until 1880, belonged to the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral. This might possibly indicate that this was the site of the chapel of St. Nicolas. However, there have been no excavations there but we should note the site as a possible site of interest for the future.

There was also, near the village, an old water mill that worked from the little stream that rises near Themelthorpe and runs through the Hall Farm grounds and then through Whitwell Hall grounds, eventually running into the Blackwater River and, thence, to the Wensum. This mill possibly ground the corn for the old Whitwell village. After the village became derelict, the mill itself was probably abandoned but was rebuilt in the 1830s to break up the tan bark for the Whitwell tannery, of which I will say a bit more later and it did that sort of work until the 1870s when it was replaced by a steam engine.

Coming right along now to the nineteenth century, the principal landowners then were the Leamons of Whitwell Hall. They came to Whitwell in the early nineteenth century and left by the end of that century, three generations of them. They had a tannery. The Leeds of Whitwell Green Tannery were tan owners and farmers, too, whilst the Collyers of Hackford Hall also owned quite a lot of land in Whitwell.[7] There is a map of 1824 that shows interesting road changes in the parish. It shows how the first Robert Leamon, like many another landowner of the time, pushed the road away from the Hall because he felt it ran too near his house so he had it moved about 50 yards farther to the north.

Several other little tracks were cleared out and a riding alley was opened – that is the little lane and a bit of footpath that runs between Whitwell Street and Mill Lane, crossing Mill Road and through to the Whitwell Road. It is still called Riding Alley. Fiddlers Alley runs from the top road above the Hall down to the bottom road through Whitwell. Bar Lane is an interesting road that runs out from Back Street in Reepham as a little footpath but until 1816 it was a cart road. A good many years ago now, I was given a bit of a notice board that had been used as a shelf in a cottage when one of the corners was cut off. It was a white painted board, and on it in black lettering were words to the affect that this road had been shut up 'By Order' at a certain session. The date was 1816. As it was found in a cottage on the corner of Bar Lane we are pretty sure it referred to the shutting up of Bar Lane. Another interesting little fact that one of my local friends told me is that when Bar Lane was open as a cart road it was called Gracious Street. I cannot tell you any more about how it should get that name but that is how it was.

Nineteenth century people

Some years ago I was able to get a copy of the census returns for Norfolk and I thought it might be interesting to look at what Whitwell parish looked like, the people who lived and worked there, what sort of work they did and how many of them there were. And it goes rather like this.

The biggest group of people was those whom the census called 'agricultural labourers'. Whitwell parish comprises just over 1500 acres so it is about the area of a reasonably sized modern farm. In this parish the Whitwell farmers employed 69 men, 30 boys and four women on 1500 acres. Now, those of you who farm or have connections with farming will contrast that with what happens today – perhaps at the most half-a-dozen chaps. There were ten farmers. Interestingly, eight men and two women were farming then. Most of the farms were fairly small. I will go through them because quite a lot of the names keep going over the years and are still known now.

Mark Eglington farmed 270 acres and employed nine men and five boys.

John Billham – now that's interesting because a number of people will know that at the end of Whitwell Street is an area known as Billham's Hill and that is where he farmed. He only farmed 22 acres, but to do that he had three men and a boy.[8]

Peter Wilkin, his acreage is not recorded.

Sarah Barrett farmed 40 acres and she employed one man to help her.

Stephen Leeds I mentioned earlier on he was one of the principal landowners in Whitwell, farmed 880 acres and employed 30 men and 16 boys. He also had his tan yard, those buildings near Whitwell Common, just beyond the White House. That was Leeds Tannery which, incidentally, finished work about 1903. As a tanner he also employed ten men, three boys, three carpenters and a blacksmith.

Thomas Dunger farmed 332 acres up by Jordans Green and he had seven men and three boys to do the work of that.

Elizabeth Neil farmed 50 acres with 'one man and two sons', whether they were hers or the man's it doesn't say.

Marianne Secker we would really call a smallholder now. She farmed an acre and a quarter.

Robert Leamon of Whitwell Hall farmed 340 acres on which he employed 21 men and ten boys. As I said earlier, he was also a tanner employing 17 men and five boys.

John Bacon farmed 22 acres. I don't know where he farmed.

If you have added up all those acreages, you will find that it comes to a lot more than the 1500 acres in Whitwell parish. The answer to that is that Stephen Leeds, who farmed that 880 acres, had a lot of land in other parishes.

In total there were 89 farm workers, men and women. I will not list all those, although, here again, you find names that have persisted through to the present. There were three pages of farm workers then we come to the blacksmiths – there were two blacksmiths in the parish.

John Smith, who was a qualified tradesman, aged 46, and **John Rudd**. Rudd must have just come out of his apprenticeship because he was aged 16, born in Reepham as a journeyman blacksmith. The name of Rudd goes on in Reepham today.

There was one brewer – **Mark Brett**, a man who combined the job of being a bricklayer and an inn-keeper. That happened quite often, I found, especially with the little beer houses. Very often the man followed a trade and his wife looked after the beer house.

William Springell kept the pub called the Cock Inn which was in Whitwell Street and is now the house called 'The Old Star'.

There was another inn-keeper at the Foldgate on Whitwell Common – **Samuel Vile**.

A high proportion of these villagers were born in Whitwell, Reepham or the surrounding parishes. Hardly anyone comes from very far away. Well, one chap came from Cawston – that's a long journey. He was one of the three bricklayers. In a lot of Norfolk villages there was a brickmaker and bricks were made. I don't think bricks were ever made in Whitwell, but I suspect he worked at the Reepham brickyard which is just up where the road turns sharp right by Reepham Station.

Now carpenters – there were lot of those. It is interesting to reflect for a minute that in these early records one never finds the term 'builder' – they're all of a named trade. If you wanted a job done you didn't send for a building firm, you sent for the tradesman you wanted to do the job – carpenter, bricklayer, mason if it was stone work, and so on. As a result, you never find 'builder' listed. As for carpenters, I see there were a lot, about ten of them living in Whitwell, not necessarily all working there. One of them, **Thomas Sawyer** – good name for a carpenter – was also a wheelwright.

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[7] Most villages used to tan the hides of their own beasts in the past so it is possible that these tanneries are on much older sites.

[8] He is also named as a 'machine owner' in one census so he probably had a horse-drawn threshing machine which would be hired out to others. [Ed.]

Now, cattle dealers and shop-keepers – four of those. Three of them seem to be related – they all named **Neil**; and then dealers in fish – two of them – **William Guymer** and **Peter Wilkin**, both born at Whitwell. This again shows the big variety in trades and tradesmen.

There were seven dressmakers, so it seems quite obvious that no one went and got something ready to wear – you called in someone to make it for you. The seven dressmakers were **Jane Warr**, **Franklins**, **Galimer**, **Roland**, **Vile**, **Vone**, **Secker**. There was one washer-woman, **Elizabeth Hunt** and one char woman, **Deborah Wilson**.

In the parish there were two grooms. They would probably have worked either at the White House on the common or at the hall.

Shoemakers – again you see no buying of the ready-made things. Three shoe makers working here – **Guymers** again and a **Rudd**.

Also a turf maker and fowl dealer. Quite how he made his turf I don't know but I imagine he would be drying the turf for burning, possibly turf gathered on Whitwell Common.

paupers lived with their grown-up children – their families. I didn't find one in Whitwell who was living alone. They were all in their seventies. One man was 84. The census gives the professions of some of them. **Rebecca Whur**, was formerly a stay maker, **Thomas Barker** a carpenter, the others were all agricultural labourers.

In the parish at that time there were a 106 dwellings occupied and three empty. That includes the two listed as big houses, Whitwell Hall and the White House, but they were mostly cottages or very small farm houses. Listed in the census was a total of 477 people including children, 224 males and 253 females. Of that total, 173 were in jobs, leaving 304 not working.

That is what the parish looked like in the middle of the nineteenth century. I think that there is one really significant thing. That is how occupations and jobs were very local because they are pretty well all working in the parish or in the neighbouring parishes of Hackford, Reepham and Kerdiston. As I mentioned earlier, their ancestry, too, was local. Most of them were born in Whitwell and I think

Whitwell Low Common is the only piece of registered common left in the modern parish of Reepham. It is no longer used as grazing land but is an important area for wild life.

Finally, there was one wheelwright and then the house servants – nine of them. That is not very many compared with the other parishes. Admittedly, Hackford parish is a lot bigger than Whitwell and Reepham is about the same size. Though there were not many houses in the parish at that time who would keep servants, or keep many of them, there were nine of them living in the parish at the time.

The directory shows another interesting fact about what happened when people got too old to carry on with their job. The only pensioners you find are men who've been in the armed services, and here we had two Chelsea pensioners, **Henry Rudd** and **John Right**. Henry Rudd was aged 73, born at Whitwell and at the time of the census he was blind. John Right was aged only 45, also born at Whitwell, and he was a pensioner of the 77th Regiment of Foot.

Then we turn to the tanners, of course, **Robert Leamon** and **Steven Leeds**, plus the number of men working for the tanneries. The two tanneries employed between them 27 men and eight boys. There's one woman listed working in the tannery and she was called the 'bark cleaner' – **Lydia Wilson**, aged 36, and she was born in Reepham.

The other group of people listed are the paupers and, in all the cases I've looked at in the census returns, those practically none, in this particular census, were born outside Norfolk.

The other place I have mentioned is Whitwell Common. We thought that it would be a sensible thing to make it into a local nature reserve because of local interest at the time. This then happened – with a management group made up of a number from the parish council plus myself, as a trustee under the old Parish Commissioners who managed the common from the beginning of this century, and representatives from Nature Conservancy and from the County. Two other people, John Barkham, Environmental Scientist, who advised us on the management of the common and Lyn Garland, who lives in Whitwell and was very enthusiastic about enrolling groups of volunteers to do necessary clearing work on the common, made up the numbers.

This article comprises about half of the content of Tony Ivins' presentation to a meeting of the Reepham Society. The second half, which considers some different aspects of Whitwell parish, will be printed in a further Reepham Society Magazine *which we hope to publish later in the year.*

A Brief History of Hackford Parish through the Last Millennium

Jennifer Roberts

Jennifer Roberts lives in Pettywell and has been there now for several years. She is a qualified archaeologist. Though no longer practising that discipline she has a deep interest in local history. She is another of our authors who has completed a local history course under the aegis of Chris Barringer. This article is the result of the research carried out on her course and since. The view from a slightly different standpoint, that of Hackford, gives new details about the history of Reepham and its satellite villages.

Hackford-by-Reepham is one of the three parishes sharing the communal churchyard in Reepham. The parish includes most of the town of Reepham and land on either side of the Eyn Brook. It is possible that the boundaries of the parish were determined by the heath and common on either side but this is by no means certain. It is possible that the name Hackford was derived from *haca*, a hook or *haecc*, a flood or sluice gate. 'Ford' is Anglo-Saxon for river crossing. The name then could either mean a 'ford at the bend of the river', or 'the sluice gate (for catching fish) at the ford'.

At the turn of the last millennium, just before the Norman Conquest the principal lordship of *Hackforda* was held by a freeman called **Wither**. It is possible that Reepham was at the centre of a large Anglo-Saxon estate. After the Norman Conquest it was given to **Earl William de Warrene**, just one of the 139 manors he held. Although William de Warrene resided frequently at nearby Castle Acre, at the time of the Domesday survey the manor of Hackford was held by a person called **Turold**. There were few inhabitants, probably only 17 or 18 families lived in the area. The land was farmed, some was put down as meadow but cereals must have been grown as there was a mill. Honey and wax were important products. Beeswax was used for church candles,[9] and it was the tradition for beekeepers to supply their local church. Hackford at that time had five skeps of bees. It had woodland able to support 30 swine. Sheep, rounceys (horses) and cattle were also kept. There was a church supported by 11 acres of land. It was valued at 15 marks. The manor passed through William de Warrene's heirs for the next 200 years.

In 1276/7 a Saturday market and annual fair charter was granted to **Sir John de Vaux**, who owned both the manors of Hackford and Reepham. An unofficial market had existed in the 'cemetery of Reepham' for many years before the Bishop of Norwich, in 1240, ordered the Sheriff of Norfolk to ensure that a new market place was found. The market was held on Saturdays, with a fair on the 'eve, day and morrow' of the feast of SS. Peter and Paul (29th June). The present market-place lies in the parish of Hackford, but it is not known if this was the site decided on in the thirteenth century.

By the following century the **de Roos** family held land in Hackford, probably as tenants of the de Warrenes. A few years later they are mentioned as being the holders of the knight's fees and paying returns to the Duchy of Lancaster.

[9] It is interesting to note that a former name for the Cardinal's Hat in Back Street was Candle Court.

Some of the local inhabitants during medieval times must have been fairly rich for the church of All Saints had a collection of rich vestments, communion ware and church ornaments, including silver chalices, a portable cross and a holy oil vessel. The vestments included some made from worsted, fusteyn (fustian) and velvet and silk. **Margaret** and **Ralph Vernon**, Hackford landowners, were possibly some of the major benefactors, during the later part of the fourteenth century.

During that century several of the Hackford residents stood surety, along with citizens of other parishes, to locals who were in trouble with the law. **Brice of Hackford** stood surety when **Agnes Renandgo** and her sister Emma were released on bail after being arrested for the murder of **Richard Brightman** at Billingford. A **Richard of Hackford** also stood surety in a murder case, when **Robert of Holden** was accused of robbing and killing **Henry of Clermont**. Other fourteenth century crimes include robbery. One night **William Rillo** had one quarter-and-a-half of barley, worth 5/–, stolen from him. A **Roger Willok** was charged but acquitted for the offence.

Some information about the medieval inhabitants of Reepham and Hackford parish can be gleaned from the old wills. For instance in 1429 **Robert Baxter**, a citizen of Norwich is mentioned as owning lands in Hackford. Fifty years later **Hugh atte Fenn** made a will leaving 6/8d. towards the upkeep of the church. He also left money, to be obtained from the sale of his lands and manors in Hackford to help scholars at Cambridge and Oxford as long as they were not wasters and haunters of alehouses.

William Cubit, the Rector, in a will dated 1505, gave to the town and the church of Hackford a drinking house with two acres of land to have a yearly obituary kept in the church. He also mentioned that the guilds and 'drinkings' of all the four parishes i.e. Hackford, Whitwell, Reepham and Kerdiston be kept there if they desired it. In a will dated a few years later **John Goddying** gave 6/8d towards the making of a chapel in the south part of the church if one happened to be erected there. If not, the money was to go to the upkeep of the church.

In 1543 a fire burnt down most of All Saints, the parish church of Hackford, along with its church goods, ornaments and jewels. The fire also destroyed most of the town. The tower and parts of the west gable were the only parts of the church that survived. They were pulled down in 1790/6. It is, however, possible that a part of the gable can be seen in the tower of St. Michaels. A drawing in 1784 by E.F. Boon shows that the surviving tower had a chequer-board parapet and diagonal buttresses. The south wall of the tower had a square sound hole and the porch an elaborate doorway.

As a result of the fire, Hackford parish lost its independence and was joined with Whitwell. On the 18th April 1544 an agreement was made between **Robert Coke**, owner of the fee simple of the church of Whitwell, **Christopher Lockwode**, clerk, parson of Hackford and vicar of Whitwell, and **Thomas Bayfield**, **William Brese**, **John Blofield** parishioners of Hackford, that the church and rectory of Hackford was to be consolidated with Whitwell by William, Bishop of Norwich. According to this indenture all the parties were in agreement. However, some of the parishioners obviously intended that the church should be rebuilt. One, **Anthony Sugate**, bequeathed 20 marks (1 mark = 13/4d or 66.6p) towards its rebuilding. Some of the surviving church plate was sold in 1547 for £20, probably to stop the ministers of Edward VI getting their hands on it. Some of the church materials were used to

repair roads in the parish and some were used to build the transept in Whitwell church.

During the reign of Elizabeth I each parish had to provide a militia. The parish was involved in a muster in 1577. An inventory was taken of 'of all Common Armor, Artelery munition and weponne and every ptecular pson shewed' It was found that the town had 'one Corselet, one peke, too Curreors et Dom furnished'(!) Three people were also able to support arms. **Vynse Hawude**, **Thomas Crotche** and **Roger Hase** were able to furnish a few bows and arrows, pikes and helmets between them.

The Bishops court had some dealings with local drunks. **John Twithney** and **Henry Bagrave** were brought before the Bishops representative on a charge of being common drunks. Henry Bagrave who swore and resisted arrest later confessed to being drunk every day of the week and was ordered to do penance.

Around this time the inhabitants were having problems with a person called **Robert Kirk**. It seems he was extracting money from the people as fines and then keeping it for his own use. The parishioners paid him 6/– as payment for a fine for not planting hemp. A **Thomas Croche** then paid him 2/6d and then swore on 'his book' to make a payment of 5/– yearly. **Mr Berte**, 'Gent,' also agreed to pay Kirk 5/– a year for all years to come. **Nathaniel Bacon** set up an enquiry into Kirk's misdeeds but the outcome of this appears to be lost.

Hackford gained some notoriety during the Commonwealth when the parish refused to billet a party of troops because the commanding officer referred to the parish as Reepham instead of Hackford. At the same time the parish was paying £3.3s.10d per month towards the upkeep of troops and the furnishing of ammunition for the Royalist cause. As in Elizabeth's time, the inhabitants were expected to attend musters. Hackford men formed a Foot Militia under **Sir W. Doylys**, which mustered at Heydon Ollands on September 24th 1661 to be inspected.

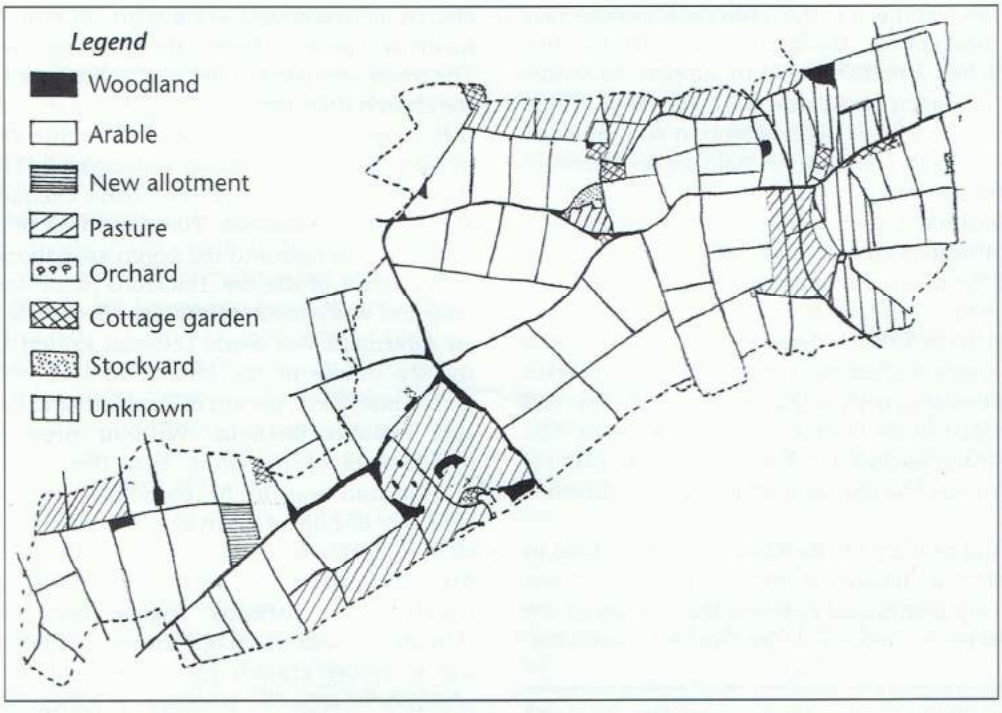
During the seventeenth century, weavers in Hackford, as in many of the local parishes supplied worsted. During 1657 **Henry Juby** a local worsted weaver must have been having a period of prosperity. Surviving records show that he took on several apprentices; **Matthew Bale**, **Roger Hammond** and **John Humfrey** were indented for seven years whilst a **John Crotch** was indented for eight years.

The social make-up of the parish changed during the next hundred years. The worsted weavers gradually disappeared, a result of cheap products from Yorkshire, and tanning became important as a local industry. The tanners were wealthy enough as a group to make wills. There was also an increase in the number of shops and professionals in the parish. Grocers, bakers, brewers, a surgeon and an excise officer were all wealthy enough to make wills.

The provision of services increased rapidly so by the middle of the next century the inhabitants of Reepham and Hackford were well provided for. The town of Reepham had all the services that would be expected from a local market town. All needs were catered for, ranging from the people supplying the local brewing and malting industry with barrels, to those who made hats and dresses for the local female population. The town was well served by bakers, butchers, grocers, confectioners, cabinetmakers, gardeners and drapers. There was even a hairdresser. The parish was also served by a number of inns and taverns, most in the town but at least one, the Lamb Beer House, stood in the countryside. Links with Norwich, and thence the outside world, were maintained by a coach and carrier service.

Local people believed it was the purity of the water which led to the excellence of the local ales. Although there were several brewers and maltsters in the parish, the **Birchams** were the major producers, so much so that when they were bought out in 1878 they had fifty associated pubs. In the parish generally though there was very little industrial activity. Like the worsted weavers of previous centuries, tanning also seemed to have disappeared from the parish, although there were tanneries in the local area.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the poor children of Hackford were reported to have been receiving a sufficient education. They attended a mix of Sunday school, evening school and day school. In 1837, however, the



Land use in Hackford 1846 (based on the Tithe Apportionment Map).

Rev. Holley established a school in the Old Poor House consisting of a boys' school and a girls' school and a house where the schoolmasters and mistresses could live. By 1844 the rector's daughter had begun to hold a Sunday school in the school building. These were church schools for the children of Hackford and Whitwell. The children of Reepham parish had to wait until 1847 when St. Mary's School was set up. An inspector's report in 1869 said the National School was conducted in a highly satisfactory manner. The Methodists had also set up a schoolroom when they built the chapel in 1817.

Mr Goodwin Kilburn had run a day and boarding school in Reepham since 1836, when in 1846 he decided to sell up and emigrate. A **Mrs Woolmer** also ran a school for girls. The pauper children received an education in the workhouse. The poor Hackford children at this time went to Buxton. Their education must have been a somewhat patchy one for there seems to have been a problem in keeping and finding suitable mistresses.

A Poor House had existed in Reepham for the inhabitants of Hackford for many years, but, by the 1840s, the poor of Reepham and Hackford were sent to the Aylsham Union Workhouse, [10] which also included the old Gilbert Union workhouses at Buxton and Oulton until the new workhouse was built in 1849. Hackford parish paid around £100 annually towards the cost of housing its paupers. Some of the older inhabitants were receiving outdoor relief, which allowed them to live in their own homes. This came to around 2/6d per week. There were also several charities, which provided relief by paying out money for emigration and for people who had sudden illnesses and accidents. Most of the charity payouts were under the control of **William Bircham**.

REEPHAM

To Be Sold By Auction
By Mr J VERDON
Wed 21 Oct 1846

Neat and modern Household
Furniture and other effects of
Mr G Kilburn who is removing
to a distant country.

Catalogues had on the premises
and of the auctioneer,
Great Witchingham.

TO SCHOOL MASTERS

The house and premises where
a profitable school has been
carried on for the last 10 years
are now to be let
with immediate possession.

Enquire of Mr Kilburn on premises.

In April 1846 smallpox made its appearance in Hackford and the workhouse medical officer was asked to vaccinate the inhabitants. They protested. The outbreak continued and by October it had been decided to give extra money so all in the Reepham area could be vaccinated.

Life must have been miserable for the poor of Reepham and Hackford, with the majority living in little more than hovels. However, the more able poor and the lower-middle classes were able to emigrate to a better life in the colonies. **Mr Goodwin Kilburn**, the schoolmaster, is an example of this trend. He was 36, married with two small children, when he put the above advert in the Norfolk Chronicle. He was not the only local to emigrate between 1836–1842. The St. Stephen's charity had paid for some people in Reepham to go to America and it also paid for a **Widow Beales** to go to Ireland.

In common with the rest of Norfolk, by the nineteenth century Hackford was celebrated for the growth of its barley. Other crops grown included turnips, peas and beans, clover and wheat. A certain amount was kept under grass, especially by the river and stream margins. Stock keeping was also important and provided some local employment in the form of drovers, tanners and cattle dealers. The annual stock fair continued to take place on 29th June. In 1804 William Bircham who farmed 840 acres of the parish was the major landowner. He improved his soil by marling and liming, used a six-year rotation but did not have any of the new threshing or drill machines. By 1846 the major landowners included the **Rev. J. Bedingfeld Collyer** who owned 182 acres and resided at Hackford Hall, the **Rev. J. Humphrey** who owned 144 acres and **John Sewell** who farmed 108 acres. Most of the land seemed to be farmed by small tenant farmers. Hackford escaped the wholesale destruction of machinery and property, which the rest of Norfolk suffered during the Swing Riots. Maybe this was because the small tenant farmers could only afford to farm in the traditional way.

By the nineteenth century around 23% of the local population were employed in agriculture on a permanent basis, although many more were employed doing seasonal work. Children were able to earn as much as 5d a day bird scaring, while gangs of women were employed hoeing, planting beans and thinning turnips. Many of the local clergymen were concerned for the morality and welfare of the field-working women especially as the gang masters were 'rough bullying fellows who would bluster and swear'. A number of Hackford women, once the fieldwork was done, earned a few more pence by weaving straw hats. In 1804 a farm labourer would earn 1/6d daily rising to 4/6d at harvest.

During the last millennium Hackford has been an essentially rural parish dependent on the small market town of Reepham for its infrastructure. This has remained largely unchanged although recent changes in mobility have brought Norwich and the wider world into commuting distance, thereby bringing new sources of money into the parish.

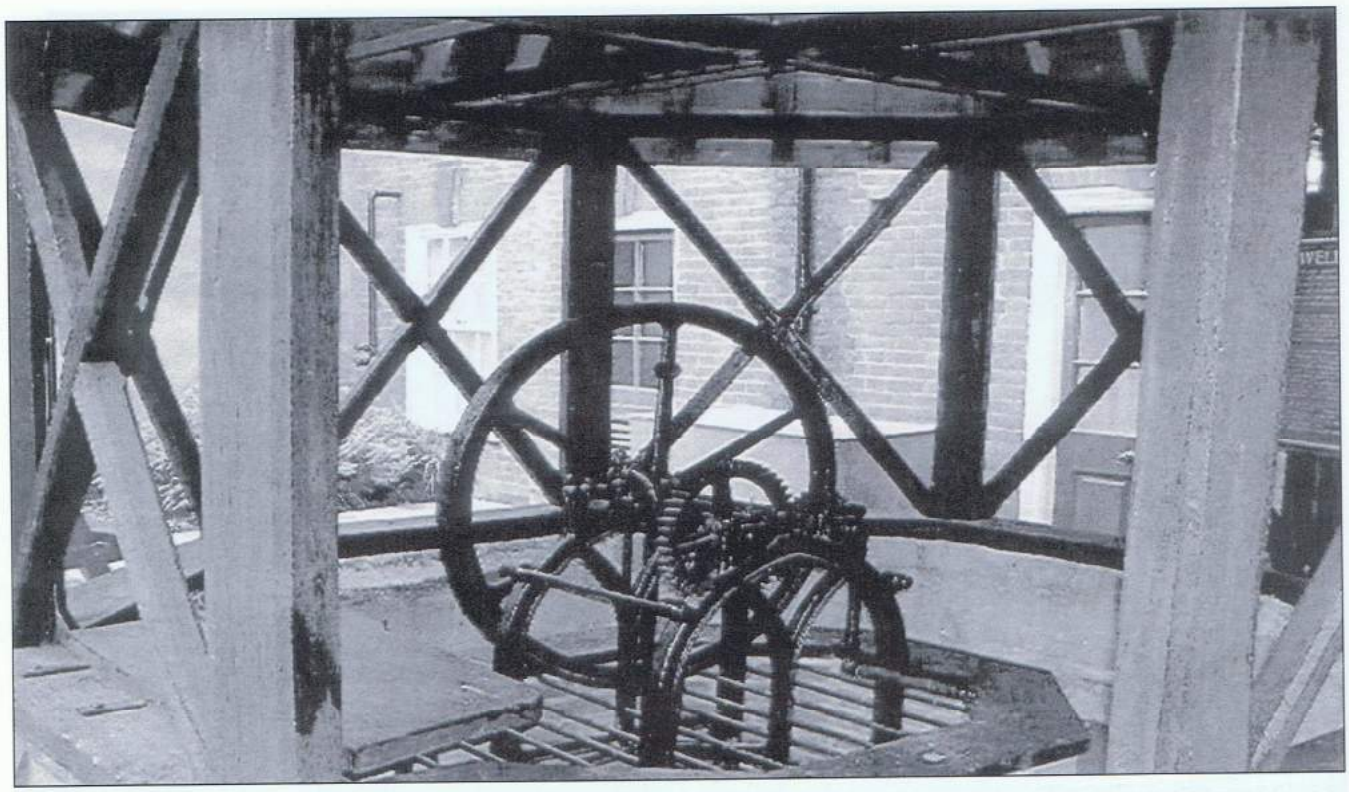
[10] Union Workhouses served a 'union' of parishes and these larger workhouses replaced the smaller parish workhouses.

An aerial view of Reepham's three churches. The last remnant of Hackford church can just be seen at the right of the clump of yews. The photograph can be dated by some differences from a present-day view. For instance, York House (top left) can be seen in the process of restoration in the background.

Hackford Hall. In 1846, at the time of the Tithe Apportionments, this was home to the Venerable John Bedingfield Collyer, Archdeacon of Norwich.

Pettywell Place now lived in by Howard and Margaret Blandford-Baker was formerly owned by the Eglington family. In 1846 it was owned by John Sewell but occupied by Margaret Rodham.

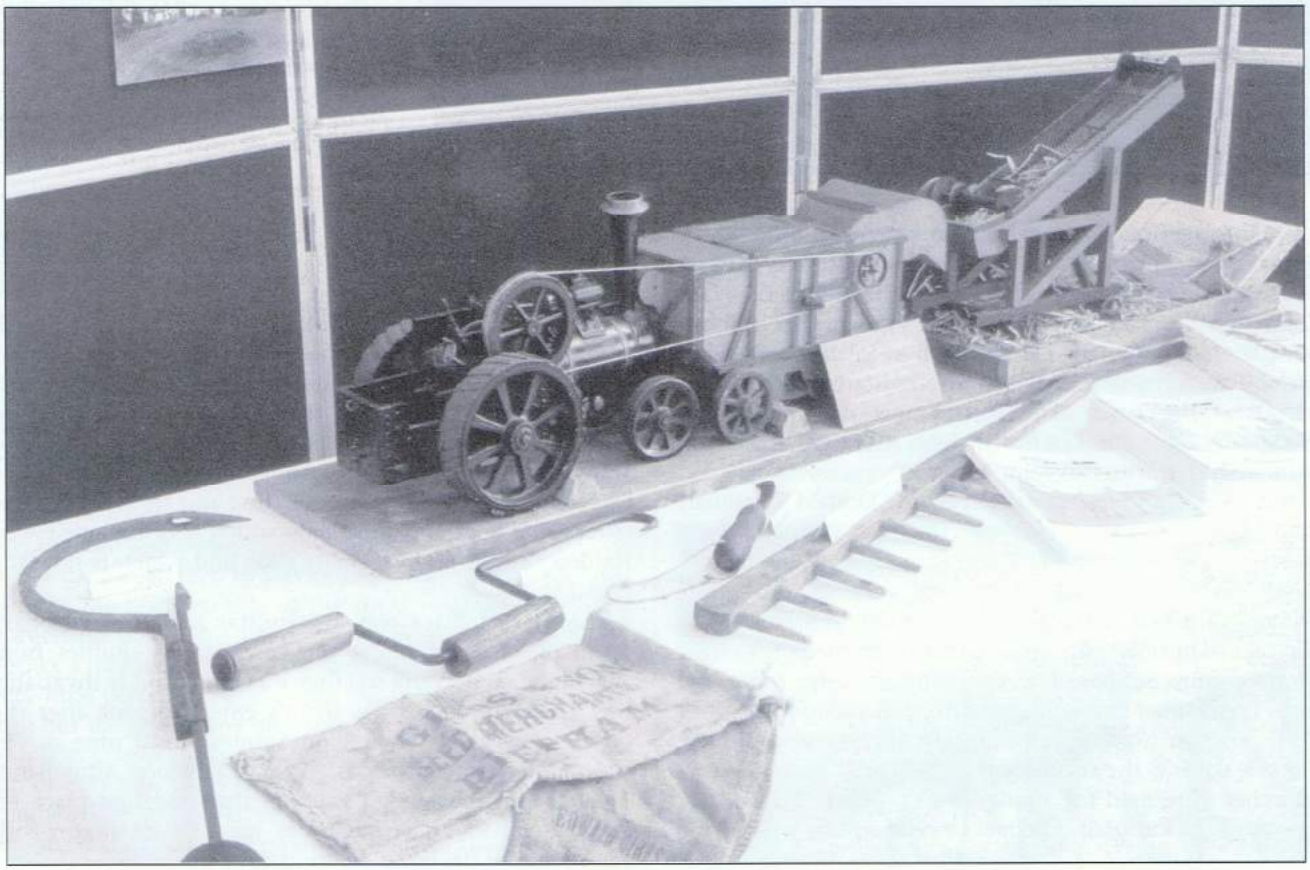
This plaque adorns the wall in the yard of the Old Brewery. It marks the site of the former Bircham's Brewery erected by William Bircham in 1839.



There was no piped water supply to Reepham until the 1950s. This well which has now been restored, also in the Old Brewery yard, was the source of water for the brewing of Reepham Ale until 1876.

The cast and audience of Celebration 2000 *in St. Mary's at the end of the last performance in January 2000. This was Reepham's Millennium Event.*

This was the site of the shop formerly run by Mr and Mrs Ron Gibbs at Towns End Corner.
It has now been pulled down and replaced by the new development containing the hairdresser, DIY shop and electrical shop.



This model combine harvester was made by Ron Gibbs and was later presented to the Reepham Society.
In this photograph it was on display with other agricultural implements at our previous Historical Exhibition.

Childhood Memories of Reepham

Ann Dickinson

This account of life in Reepham in the 1920s and 1930s was handed to the Chairman recently. Mrs Ann Dickinson now lives in Hunstanton but she was born in Reepham, a member of the Gibbs family who have contributed so much to the records of the recent past of the town. Ann's parents were married in 1918 and she was born in 1923. She looks back on her childhood in Reepham with great affection.

After receiving a copy of the *Reepham Society Magazine* from my life-long friend Peggy Hurn, I began to reflect on my wealth of memories of Reepham. To begin . . .

At the age of three years, we attended Miss Bull's Kindergarten, situated at the back of the Brewery House. There was me and Peggy and her brother John, Pat Hall, Kenneth Hilton and Joyce Wagg. A year or two later we were attending dancing classes at Miss Holah's at Rookery Farm. The dancing school put on shows for parents and friends at the Town Hall. I remember dancing in *The Wedding of the Painted Doll* with John Kerridge, son of the bank manager, who was Jumping Jack.

Sunday school was conducted by Mr Donald Chapman who, with his sister Olive, ran the Post Office at Iona House.[11] Donald ran a flourishing and well-attended Sunday school. We had wonderful outings and prize-givings. Miss Wasey taught the senior children and, when we reached her class, she insisted that we learned the Collect for the coming Sunday off by heart and we had to recite it in turn. I remember her with great affection and appreciation.

My mother was organist at St. Michael's when the Rev. Geake was the incumbent at Whitwell Rectory. Both churches were used for Sunday worship then. Frequently, the congregation of St. Michael's would still be waiting for the sermon to end when we could hear the congregation in St. Mary's singing their last hymn. The Rev. Moore, in charge of St. Mary's, invariably finished his service first! With the retirement of the Rev. Moore, and when the Rev. Geake left the parish in the early 1930s, the parishes of Reepham with Kerdiston and Whitwell with Hackford were finally united into one parish. The Rev. B.P.Lipscombe was installed and the present communicating door constructed between St. Mary's vestry and the chancel of St. Michael's.

Often I had to pump the organ for my mother, watching a lead weight rise and fall, paying attention so that it should not fall below a certain mark otherwise the organ let out a tremendous sigh and faded out. Mother had played a church organ from the age of fourteen and she later took over St. Mary's from a Miss Jewel. The Rev. Lipscombe was extremely musical and could coax ability from the least able. Under his jurisdiction my mother became an excellent organist.

The Reepham Post Office and postmen in 1913. In those days it occupied what is now Meloncaulie Rose. It is possible to recognise the door into the café at Diane's Pantry on the left.

We had a fantastic choir under his leadership, singing oratorios at special church festivals – the *Messiah, Elijah, Olivet to Calvary*, to mention just a few. Occasionally we incorporated the voice of Mr Broad from Heydon although Donald Chapman did very well in solos, supported by his fellow tenors, Fred Alford among them. Apart from church music, various members of the choir founded a group to entertain during the year, putting on many Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. This group included Donald and Olive Chapman, Elsie Varley, Mabel Utting and Mr Cocking. The latter ran a boot and shoe shop which later became Gwen Hardesty's fruit and vegetable shop and which is now the Bridal Shop.

The Market Place was a grandstand for the Reepham Town Silver Band under the baton of Mr Ruffles from Fakenham. When the weather was kind, and it invariably was, they played for the town's entertainment after the evening service at church on Sundays until nine or ten o'clock. Reepham also boasted a fine Salvation Army Band. They shared the Market Place as their meeting place on alternate weeks. I have memories, too, of carol singing with the choir and the hand-bell ringers in the snow.

In those days, the seasons seemed more seasonable! In the spring we would pick primroses at Broomhill; snowdrops

[11] Iona House is in the Market Place and is now 'Diane's Pantry'. The post-office was where 'Meloncaulie Rose' now trades.

Rev. Geakes with members of his choir outside the porch of St. Michael's.

grew like a carpet at Catchback and the perfume from the violets at Reepham Moor was unbelievable.

Father, who was invalided out of the Navy with tuberculosis, put his talents to good effect when he settled in Reepham. My mother loved to tell of when motor cars became the 'in thing'. My father built one around an engine and chassis and, so anxious to try it out was he, that one Sunday afternoon he drove mother and an aunt and uncle to Cromer and back. Father, being the driver, sat on the kitchen chair and his passengers on upturned orange boxes. The sides of the car consisted of chicken wire draped with old curtains but when they reached 10 mph the curtains flapped alarmingly and had to be removed!

In between bouts of illness, Father dabbled in photography, watch and clock mending, garage and battery charging and, when confined to bed, built models, two of which, a ship and traction engine, drum and elevator (threshing machine) were housed with the Reepham Society.[12]

Mother started a business making hats, which flourished and this eventually became a fully-fledged drapery, millinery, tobacco and confectionery shop.

The garage, erected to service the growing car trade, was built at the rear and side of the shop, over an old Baptist immersion pool. This site has now been rebuilt as Lesley Tooley's hairdressers and Reepham DIY. I am sure it needed very little demolishing as it was built chiefly of corrugated iron but the side facing our garden was all glass, consisting of photographic plates of almost every photograph my father ever took. Part of the garage was given over to the engine room where Father had a generator from which he produced electricity and proudly wired our house – the first

[12] We still have the threshing machine but does anyone know what has happened to the ship?

Ron Gibbs. He was a man of energy and imagination who refused to give in to illness.

in Reepham to have electric light. This was in 1928 or thereabouts. He also made me a doll's house and fitted that with battery-powered electric light.

Towards the end of my Father's life I remember that the trees in our orchard had to be felled as they were old and barren. They had given shelter to the goats and bantams that we kept there. Mother's ambition of having a tennis court built in the old orchard began to take shape. Father wanted to oversee the project and make sure the ground was quite level. This proved a problem because he was now on constant oxygen. Not to be thwarted, he asked Dick Hatley, who worked with him, to get an inner tube from a car wheel and inflate it with oxygen, added a piece of rubber tube to connect with the valve and, by slinging the tube over his shoulder with a clip to control the flow of oxygen, he was able to walk up the garden and inspect the new tennis court for himself, returning before the tube was deflated.

We were now able to have tennis parties, comprising Donald and Olive Chapman, Jean Hawes, Evan Symonds, Ricky and John Lambert, Ruby Barnes, Len Wilkinson, mother and myself. My great friend, Peggy Hurn, and I had other delights in common. Her father, and both of my uncles, Edward Gibbs senior and junior, were among the company which formed the 'Black Minstrel Troupe'.

We look back with such affection to our childhood in our beloved Reepham.

A tennis party at Towns End Corner. Ann Gibbs (now Dickinson) is seated on the right next to her mother.

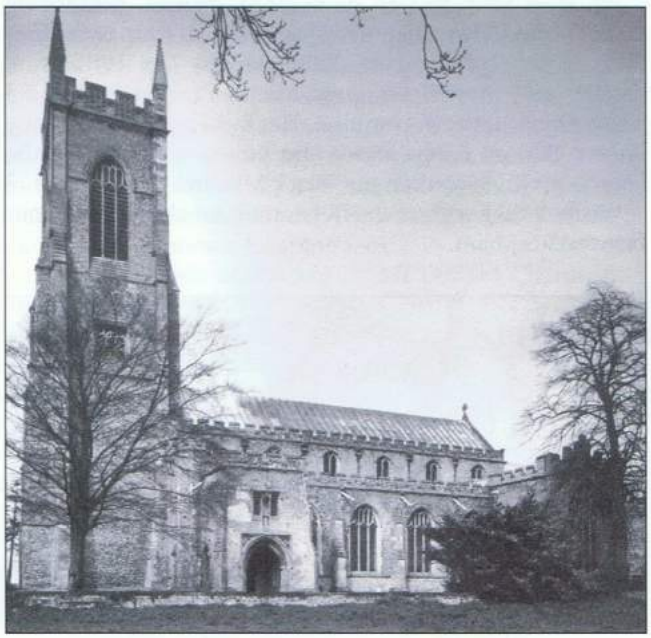
A Thousand Years of Salle

During the Millennium Year, Salle village, church and estate celebrated the history of Salle on a beautiful June day. Morning service was attended by most of the villagers, followed by drinks at the hall with Sir John White before everyone joined in a barbeque at the Village Institute. The afternoon was spent in watching a cricket match or climbing the church tower for a glimpse of the splendid view from the top. This was a real traditional village event made all the better by the blessing of good weather. To bring memories of the past into the present, Claire Buxton, Chairman of the Parish Meeting, with help from long-time inhabitants of the village, such as Ben Stimpson, had organised an exhibition in the church. This included archive material and a fascinating display of metal detector finds dating back across most of the last two millennia and collected by Richard Saunders who lives and works in Salle. This article is based on a brief history of Salle which was available as a handout on the day.

Origins

Salle lies on the top of the Norfolk watershed between the Bure and Wensum rivers. It is, in very many ways, a typical Norfolk village. Its history from before the beginning of this millennium illustrates what was and is happening in many other Norfolk villages. The name 'Salle' is usually taken to derive from sallows, the old name for willows but other suggestions have been put forward. Is it a corruption of 'aul' the old English word for hall? One of the manors in the village was once known as Kingshall which could easily lend itself to shortening as 'Sall'. Or perhaps it is related to an old northern word describing a high, windy place that appears in the Cumberland name – Black Sail Pass. Salle is high and windy – for Norfolk.

The land of the village has always belonged to one or other of the manors in the parish. Now, it is almost entirely part of the Salle Farms estate. Before the improvements of recent centuries this would have been regarded as poor soil and used for sheep, much perhaps remaining as common land which was important also for the poorer villagers. In the past, those with common rights not only grazed their animals on the common but also collected wood and kindling and wild fruit. This left their own small plots, or 'pightles', to be cultivated to feed the family. As in the rest of the county, enclosure started quite early in Salle to meet the changing needs of the farms. Commons and small pightles and closes have now long been enclosed and those old open fields, themselves, have been changed to meet the needs of modern farming practices.



Salle church from the south on a winter's day in January. This huge and beautiful church dominates the skyline.

A small landowner in the village is the church but it is the large and beautiful church itself which is the jewel in Salle's crown and perhaps the best known building in this part of Norfolk. Salle church has recently figured in *England's Thousand Best Churches* by Simon Jenkins (1999). No one should leave the village without making a tour of this unique church. Built on the wealth of the wool grown on the sheep which grazed the local heaths, its presence emphasises the change from stock farming to arable which has taken place over the centuries as the farming families who built it grew wealthier. Heath, pasture and woodland have now largely given place to open arable fields. The building of Salle church by a group of leading sheep farmers in the fifteenth century and its maintenance, since, by leading local families shows how such families have always been important in supporting the life and people of a village and its surroundings.

The families and manors of Salle

Perhaps the most important historian of Salle is Rev. Walter Parsons who was the parson here for over 30 years. As a former scholar of Pembroke College and Dean of Selwyn College, Cambridge, he took great interest in researching the history of his parish. His book *Salle* saves all of us much time and effort when researching the early history of the village, the manors and the church. It provides invaluable information on the history of the village and is available from Reepham Library.

Salle also figures in the *Paston Letters*. One of the Salle manors belonged to the Mauteby family, one of whose daughters married into the Paston family. Although litigious and concerned about keeping a grip on their lands, like so many medieval Norfolk farmers and lords, the letters concerning Salle directly are often concerned with the promotion of a courtship between John Paston and Margery Brewes. The Pastons remained closely associated with Salle for the next 100 years.

Salle itself is mentioned in *Doomsday Book* when it was said to have four manors. The history of the manors is well testified. Today, Salle Moor Hall and Stinton Manor House probably represent the site of two of the manors whilst a third was probably finally destroyed when Salle Hall was built. Parsons speculates that the fourth manor house was sited on the Wood Dalling side of Gatehouse Farm near the bridge over the stream.

Salle Moor Hall was a Bullen (Boleyn) possession from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Yes, that is the family of Anne Boleyn! But there is no evidence that she ever lived in Norfolk! More recently in the hands of the Stimpson family, Salle Moor Hall now belongs to Mr Ardisher Naghshineh who is farming this land organically. Ben Stimpson is now the only member of the Stimpson family still living in Salle. Though now past his ninetieth birthday, he remains a forceful member of the community and was,

until very recently, still a churchwarden. His knowledge of the past and present of Salle village and its church and people is unsurpassed.

Stinton Manor is the manor which was formerly a royal manor but that was before the Conquest. *Doomsday Book* tells us that this 'Kings Manor' belonged to Godwin – the father of King Harold. Harold, himself, held Cawston. By the time of Doomsday, both were held by one Ralph who was made Earl of Norfolk. He rebelled, and his lands were given to the new Earl, William de Warenne, one of William's major lords who built Castle Acre. Stinton House, having passed through the hands of the Townsends of Raynham and Bulwer Longs of neighbouring Heydon, is now part of the Salle estate and is, at present, the home of Paol Hovesen, the Salle Farms estate manager who came here from Denmark some 13 years ago.

Many other well-known Norfolk families have held land in Salle, the Briggs, Fountaines, Pastons, Townsends and Earles, to name but a few. After Edward Hase created the Park and built the hall in 1765 it passed to the Jodrell family after Richard Paul Jodrell of Lewknor in Oxfordshire married his daughter. She had inherited the right to a baronetcy from her uncle, John Lombe, which now passed to the Jodrells. The Jodrells were squires here until Major Timothy White, who owned the chain of chemist shops, now absorbed by Boots, bought the estate in 1890. Both these families have done a great deal to both preserve and to develop the estate and parish of Salle.

Farms and farmers of Salle

One interesting point emerging from early history is a suggestion that this was an area with many 'freemen' in the Middle Ages. Their counterparts, after the sixteenth century, were the yeomen farmers, tenants of the remaining farms in the village, all of which now belong in one capacity or another to the estate. These were the successful men who prospered by buying up and enclosing land after the collapse of the feudal system. A number of their old farmhouses have been sold off as private houses though some remain as part of the estate.

A typical example of an old farmhouse is Park Farm, formerly Bog Farm, standing on the edge of old water meadows which lie between Salle and the former royal manor of Cawston. This is now the home of Andrew and Claire Buxton. Andrew farmed with his brothers in Heydon and now works for himself whilst Claire is Chairman of Salle Parish meeting. Park Farm stood empty for some years until it was used as a film set for the television production of *Mill on the Floss* which was filmed largely on location around mid-Norfolk. Since then, it has been restored with a considerable degree of sympathy to retain much of its original character. The date 1770 can be discerned in the brickwork on the front of the house but the house is older than this. Like many Norfolk houses it has been refurbished or rebuilt repeatedly over the years.

Manor Farm, which may have been closely associated with Dorothy Repps, mother-in-law of the builder of Salle Hall, remains an integral part of the estate as the farm office. It probably started life as a common-edge manor house in the Middle Ages. The late eighteenth century estate maps indicate that the area that is now Bluestone Wood was then common land as was an area near the bridge on the way to Cawston. The name 'Brake Pasture' of a field next to the park, also indicates common. A 'brake' was a field cut out of common or heath.

The insertion of an older staircase into Manor Farm may have been carried out because Edward Hase lived in Manor Farm after the destruction of the former manor house. The date on Park Farm also seems to link the improvements to these two farms with the creation of the park and building of the hall in the late eighteenth century.

Practically next door to Manor Farm lies Cherry Tree Farm. This still belongs to the Bulwer Longs of Heydon and illustrates how closely inter-linked all the villages, manors and farms of this group of villages are. This probably stems from the old manorial system when strips of land were held in a variety of open fields, not always close together or even in the same parish. Later, we find farmers owning strips belonging to different manors. This is shown particularly clearly on the 1864 Tithe Map where the few remaining strips still held by individuals show where the old open fields existed. This intermix also affected the parish boundaries. Until very recently a long strip of Reepham parish cut right across Salle Park, balanced by a strip of Salle, which reached down to Reepham Moor. The parish boundary has now been changed to adjust this anomaly which had been perpetuated over time, possibly due to old land ownership

Manor Farm as it is today when it is in use as the Salle Farms estate office.

boundaries, perhaps to allow a manor or tenant to have a mix of arable land and water meadow.

Salle Village

The village itself is not large, consisting of a scatter of houses leading down past the cricket pitch from the church. It comprises cottages probably built on the sites of the old 'tofts and crofts', formerly worked by tenants who may also have been craftsmen and whose family would have spun and woven woollen cloth in the time between all their other tasks. Even in the past the number of brick built or stone houses would not have been much more than now. There would, however, have been many more residents, working the land, carrying out their trades in the village or working as servants on the farms. Families were also much larger, and expectations lower, until well into this century, so each house supported more people.

The old school house still stands opposite the church. The school was originally a 'non-provided school', that is to say, it belonged to the estate and was administered under an agreement with the Board of Education, as a church school. As owner, the squire was, therefore, Chairman of the Board of Managers and appointed several of them. Surviving correspondence in the White family archives gives interesting insights into the running of the school around the turn of the century. Education was already fairly closely controlled and inspected and the school developed over time to include examinations and scholarships as opportunities opened up. The staff consisted of a head-mistress, most of whom seem to have come from southern counties and were required to have musical skills and to be able to teach physical education as well as the other more usual attributes of any teacher. The headmistress was supported by one assistant teacher and/or a 'monitress' who was a senior pupil of promise. The letters of these women, written when applying for the job, indicate that they had very little money. Shades of Jane Eyre!

Before the First World War children would have finished their education by 12 years of age. In such a rural area, holidays were taken to allow the children to help with the harvest and these had to be specifically requested from the Education authorities. Mrs Williamson, the last teacher is buried in the churchyard.

Next door is the Lynton White Institute, built by the White family, which provides a home for the Parish Meeting and a site for social events, not least cricket teas, as the Institute stands on the edge of a splendid cricket field. On the other side of the field is the forge, owned by the church and still a fully fitted working forge, though no longer regularly used. The first of the houses in the village is the former 'White Horse' public house now converted to a dwelling house since its closure in the late 1960s. The Street continues down to Gatehouse Farm between two rows of cottages, some of which are occupied by estate workers.

There were more cottages around the eastern fringe of the park and a dairy farm in the park but there is very little more than a few bricks left from these buildings. More interesting are the houses in the park itself and the picturesque style lodge cottages at the four entrances to the park. These have one unique feature as lodges; they are on the opposite side of the road from the Hall. Most of them have now been adapted or enlarged by the estate to meet the needs of their inhabitants.

The village is, obviously, dominated by its magnificent church but nothing has been included here, as booklets on the history of the church are available in the church. Suffice to say that the church of St. Peter and St. Paul continues to attract visitors to view its architectural splendour and music lovers who wish to take advantage of its excellent acoustics to perform and listen to concerts and to make recordings.

Salle Park

By far the largest house in the village is Salle House. Edward Hase created the park itself in the late eighteenth century before he built the house. A map, still in existence, shows how Edward Hase bought up small closes and strips to make the park, processes know to historians as 'engrossment' and 'emparkment'. When Edward Hase died he fortunately, left a *Memorandum Book* which Sir Richard Jodrell continued to use after he succeeded in 1804 so we can date and follow some of the early developments in the park. Gardens and trees were planted, a beautiful walled garden still remains in use and there is an icehouse in the shrubbery. Work continues to maintain house and gardens in their present good order. Pat Dennis, who has now returned to the village of his birth, keeps the gardens in order without the army of under-gardeners and boys of former days. He still lives in the old gardener's house next to the walled garden. Fortunately, pleasure gardens were not fashionable when the house was built and were never planned to be very large though extended across the South Lawn as far as an ornamental ha-ha before 1846.

One particularly happy aspect of the park is the number of magnificent trees it contains. Of course, creators of parks, following the ideas of Humphrey Repton (now buried in Aylsham church yard) and Capability Brown, looked for a natural effect in their new parks. Trees were often planted in clumps or as shelter belts but also in 'rows'. One way of achieving a rapid mature effect was to retain the trees which had formerly stood in hedgerows along field boundaries. It is possible to identify these former hedge lines from aerial photographs and old maps even though, in their more mature state, the lines are not always obvious as trees succumb to old age or storms. Many trees have been felled during the 200 years of the park's existence. However, one major oak tree, which must predate the park by some considerable time, still remains. It is now a huge and venerable veteran supporting considerable amounts of wild life. The park trees have always been well cared for and a new avenue of horse chestnut trees is now beginning to grow up along the main drive across the park. New plantings of park trees also include turkey, evergreen, red and English oaks

Salle House

Salle House was built in 1763. It is a mid-Georgian neo-classical building influenced by the emerging forces of romanticism. It consists of a two-and-a-half storey central wing of seven bays, built in red brick with a stone Ionic pediment on both north and south elevations and a hipped roof surrounded by a balustrade. The architraves of the principal doors are also of stone. A single-storey wing extends to both east and west where two courts were converted to an orangery on the east and a billiard room on the west in Major White's time. The Victorian upper storey, added over the billiard room, has since been demolished. Beyond the wings, low two-storied buildings extend on either side – to the coach house and stables on the east. The appearance of Salle House is now almost identical to a

Salle village street looking west from the church. The larger house on the left was formerly the White Horse public house.

Salle Hall from the southern garden. The park is so thickly planted with trees that there is only one sight line from which the hall can be seen

drawing on an estate map of 1807. This, however, is due to work carried out by Sir John White who has now restored the house both inside and outside whilst retaining its original character extremely well.

Salle Farms Estate

Salle Farms is now entirely arable. Crops include large-scale cultivation of barley, beet, beans, peas and wheat on land which, before the improvements of recent centuries, would have been regarded as poor soil and used for sheep, The estate also remains conscious of its stewardship of the countryside. Successful modern farming is contract farming to meet the needs of large-scale food suppliers. Output is constantly monitored by the use of satellite technology. In addition to the large-scale production of grain, pulses and sugar beet, a recent addition has been the appearance of plantations of Christmas trees which provide work during quieter periods of the year. Areas of set-aside supplement other conservation innovations that are now possible.

Attitudes to the countryside have changed in recent years and many who formerly knew little about it are able to get out and about and have demanded access to a countryside which they regard as a common heritage. This can be a two-edged sword. Unlimited access can be disruptive to wildlife habitat, to game birds and to growing crops alike. However, many footpaths and green lanes marked on the OS maps are maintained to provide walks across the estate. Some paths have been diverted round the edges of fields rather than cutting through the middle. Those who wish to quibble at this should remind themselves that walking along the hedge is much more interesting as this is where the greatest variety of flora and fauna is to be seen.

In addition to the more conspicuous pheasants and partridges reared on the estate, and the ever-present rabbits, there are less evident denizens of this land. Stoats, weasels and other small mammals are much shyer but are still in abundance where there is a large rabbit population. Though many small birds have disappeared in recent years there are a number of larger birds to be seen. Herons and kestrels are regular hunters in the area. Barn owls are becoming re-established and three are nesting on the estate. Recently, a group of Canada geese have settled near one of the ponds. These birds can be a mixed blessing and have become a nuisance on some farms elsewhere. The more remote part of the estate is hare country and numbers of mad March hares are to be seen every spring.

Yes, there are large fields but many new hedges have been planted and old hedges preserved. Other conservation measures are being undertaken. These include the planting of broad-leaf trees along the old railway line near the Cawston boundary and maintenance of existing patches of woodland on the estate. One important conservation measure now being implemented is the scheme whereby 4-metre strips along watercourses are left as permanent set-aside to reduce the risk of contamination of ground water by pesticides and so forth. The watercourse, which crosses the estate from beyond Wood Dalling, winding round past Cawston to Booton, is a case in point.

Anyone who walks down the road by the side of Wood Dalling church should note the ditch on the right-hand side which is full of wild flowers, especially primroses and orchids in springtime. This ditch now has a preservation order on it. Yet, it was dug very recently, showing that modern farming activity is not always destructive.

Much of the information in this article was obtained from the White papers and Bullen papers now held in the Norfolk Record Office.

Reepham Personalities and Institutions

At the beginning of this century Reepham was a small Norfolk market town with long-established families living in a smaller community than today. They all knew each other very well, often being related by marriage, mostly working locally in the town or on the surrounding farms and estates. Some of the older families still remain and have contributed immensely to the records of the recent past of Reepham.

As Reepham has grown and new houses are constantly built, new people have increasingly moved into the town. Many of them will be unaware of the contributions to the community made by former inhabitants and the origins of some Reepham institutions. Following the long gap since the publication of the last Reepham Society Magazine, *this seems an appropriate time to record a little about some of those who have contributed to the life of the town and who have helped to make Reepham the lively and caring community that it is.*

One message which comes over very strongly, even in these short profiles, is just how much people's lives were disrupted by the effects of the two World Wars of the last century.

Miss Jessie Brown MBE

Jessie Vera Lawford Brown died on 14th April, 1983 at the age of 95. She had a remarkable career, one achievement being the foundation of the Reepham Housing Trust – eight bungalows for the elderly or disabled known as Sunbarn Walk. 'My hope is that there will be accommodation of this kind in every village in the country,' said Jessie.

Jessie was the only daughter among the seven children of Colonel F.D.M. Brown VC. Her early education was directed by a series of governesses but, later, she studied history at the Oxford Home Students, now St. Anne's College. Her academic career was discarded when she joined her friend, Olive Sankey, and answered an appeal from Agnes Hunt, [13] the founder of a new hospital at Baschurch in Shropshire, to train as an orthopaedic nurse. After two years, Jessie went on to pass the examination for the Society of Trained Masseuses, later to become the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Agnes Hunt and Jessie went to France but were very soon frustrated with conditions over there and returned to Baschurch which had then become a military hospital. It soon became obvious that after-care clinics had to be established in the main market towns in Shropshire but transport was a problem. Undaunted, Jessie acquired a second-hand motor bike, learned to ride it and, by 1917, 13 orthopaedic clinics had been established throughout Shropshire. In 1918 Mr G.R. Girlestone asked Jessie to help set up clinics in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. He could offer no salary but arranged a small sum from a special Red Cross fund if a survey of all disabled people could be carried out – just the sort of challenge Jessie enjoyed.

In 1924 Sir Robert Jones, the prominent orthopaedic pioneer, received a call from Nepal. Princess Mani, the five-year-old niece of the King of Nepal, was ill with poliomyelitis and it was decided to send Jessie to help. Within three days she had set off by sea to Bombay, then overland to Kathmandu. There was no road from India into Nepal in those days so Jessie was carried or rode on the back of an elephant for the three-day journey. During the next ten years Jessie visited this brave little girl several times and after Mani's death in 1935 a ward was built in the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre as a gift from her grateful parents.

Everyone who knew Jessie Brown was constantly reminded of her aims – that every patient must be instilled with the joy of life, irrespective of their handicap and that one must work until each disabled person is as independent as possible and able to contribute to their community. It became necessary for Jessie to return home to Yateley to look after her ageing mother but she soon had the outbuildings of her home converted to be a unit where physically handicapped people could learn hand-block printing. Grace Finch, a patient at the Henley Clinic, was persuaded to go to Yateley to help and, together, they soon had money raised and a training scheme for handicapped girls was launched. New buildings were opened in 1952 and bungalows in 1956. Yateley Industries is a successful residential sheltered industry and employs more than 40 men and women.

Jessie placed little importance on personal possessions and was able to move on without regret, always full of enthusiasm for a new venture. In 1952 her work was recognised by the award of an MBE. But she was always far more interested in the success of her many projects.

In 1968 Jessie 'retired' to Reepham. It was during her retirement that she became the inspiration behind the building of the eight bungalows on Sun Barn Walk which formed the core of the Reepham Housing Trust. Today, the Trust is managed as a charity by local trustees, sharing a warden with the Wherry Housing in Ewing Close. Many in the town feel privileged that she touched our lives and hope to pass on her enthusiasm and joy of living to the full.

We are grateful to Jan Henry for this piece on Jessie Brown.

Ben Stimpson

Ben Stimpson was born at Salle Moor Farm in 1910, a member of a well-known local family here in Mid-Norfolk. He is a forceful and well-respected character in both Salle and Reepham and has given much service to the two

Ben Stimpson

[13] Agnes Brown and Sir Robert Jones, a pioneer orthopaedic surgeon, were responsible for the foundation of the orthopaedic hospital in Oswestry which carries their names and remains one of the leading orthopaedic hospitals in the country.

communities both as an active member of a number of organisations and as a benefactor to the communities. The Stimpson family farmed at Salle Moor for several generations as well as running the family business based in Reepham. It was Ben's grandfather who opened the Salle Coal Company at Reepham Station, a company that continued in business as a general agricultural merchant under several names until 1980.

Some of you will have read the book on 'Salle' written by the Rev. Parsons who was Vicar of Salle from the early 1920s until after the Second World War. It was Rev. Parsons who married Ben and his wife Margaret in 1937. They came to live in Salle House, the house in which they still live and Ben gradually took on the management of the family business as well as his other work in the community. For many years he was chairman of the Salle Parish Meeting and succeeded his father as churchwarden there, a post which he held for over 40 years. Added to his father's tenure of 50 years this gives nearly a century of continuous service to Salle church by the Stimpson family. To this can be added the tireless work of Margaret who was also a member of the PCC. The role of churchwarden was not a sinecure as there have been a number of major problems, including a lightning strike, in keeping up the fabric of Salle church – one of the medieval gems of rural Norfolk – as well as the day-to-day routine of the church. It is largely due to Ben's efforts that Salle church has been able to maintain itself so successfully in recent years. A tribute for this work for the church was published in the November 2000 issue of *Town and Country* when Ben retired as churchwarden and was given a tremendous send-off by the congregation. Needless to say he remains a member of the PCC.

During the war Ben played his part in the local Home Guard as well as helping his father with the family businesses. The activities of the Salle and Reepham platoon are well documented in *Standing up to Hitler'*[14] which tells the tale of the Home Guard in Norfolk. It was Ben Stimpson who provided the comprehensive records of the local units which now form a considerable portion of that book. Ben had led the local platoon since May 1940 but by the latter part of the war the 17th Battalion Norfolk Home Guard was based in Reepham with its HQ at 'The Bays' in Norwich Road, and led by Lt Colonel G.E. Gurney with Ben as his second-in-command. Duties included airfield defence, defence of bridges and liaison with other units backed up by weekly training and regular battle exercises.

Stimpson's Piece

Perhaps the most memorable mention of the Stimpson name to present-day Reepham residents is in reference to Stimpson's Piece. This piece of land was originally six acres, leased to the parish of Reepham by the Stimpson family for use as a playing field. Following the Second World War a pavilion was built as a war memorial and in thanksgiving for victory. The pavilion has been rebuilt since then but the memorial plaque remains in the present pavilion built in 1995. In 1987 the land was gifted to Reepham and extended by the parish council with a further seven acres to form the present Stimpson's Piece.

Despite all he has contributed to Reepham, Salle remains Ben's first love and he has become closely identified with that village and, as you can imagine, he knows a very great deal about Salle, its past, its present and its people.

Wesley Piercey

Wesley Piercy is the man we all turn to when we want to find some elusive detail of the past of Reepham. Wesley was born in Reepham in 1917, in a farmhouse on Saleyard Hill. For those who are comparitive newcomers to Reepham, this was the old road going up from Town's End Corner towards the old sale yard and curving up behind the cottages which presently look down onto Station Road. Later, the family moved to 'Cabbage Court' – Railway Cottages on the New Road – before moving back to the farm until 1940. After leaving the Hackford and Whitwell School, now the site of Reepham Primary School, Wesley first of all worked in

[14] 1997. A. Hoare: *Standing up to Hitler.* The Story of the Norfolk Home Guard. Published by Geo. R. Reeve, Wymondham. ISBN 0 900616 50 4.

Ben Stimpson leading the local Home Guard contigent at a parade in Reepham.

Wesley Piercy

Cawston before going as apprentice to Reeder's, the baker in Back Street. The premises were known as 'house and baking office' and are now represented by the house known as The Old Bakery.

Although he had moved just before the war to work in Wells, as a member of the Supplementary Reserve, Wesley was called up immediately. He had quite an interesting war! He went out with the British Expeditionary Force to France in 1939. In the confusion of the retreat from France, Wesley was separated from his unit when he had a brief spell in hospital. He was discharged from hospital to the base depot near St. Nazaire which was then being readied for a division of Canadian troops who were, at this stage, the only available unit still fully equipped to fight. However, it became necessary to evacuate all troops following the capitulation of France.

Wesley then spent the next six months out in England before embarking for the Middle East and the Western Desert in 1941. His unit was now with an army group later known as the Desert Rats (the Eighth Army) which then crossed to Sicily and fought its way up Italy. In 1944 'time expired' men were replaced by new recruits and Wesley returned to the UK. He then returned to Aldershot where he found that all the bakehouse jobs had been taken over by the women of the ATS. After the end of the war Wesley was demobbed in 1946.

As you can imagine, returning to civilian life was somewhat of a culture shock and Wesley left baking for more active jobs. He eventually found his way into the Eastern Electricity Board, for whom he worked for 23 years until he retired in 1982. His love for history and the past of the Reepham area was never lost. A number of historians and archaeologists had an interest in the local history and ran a number of WEA courses in Reepham during the 1970s. Wesley enthusiastically joined to expand his knowledge of the past.

Following his retirement in 1982 he was able to follow up his great interest in history. He started an Open University course, wherever possible completing history units, to qualify for his BA. His life also changed in another way around this time when he met his wife Olive on holiday. By this time the Pierceys were living in the bungalow where Wesley and Olive still live in Park Lane. As a result of his encyclopaedic knowledge of Reepham and its people Wesley has spoken to many organisations in the town over the years. He remains an active member of the Reepham Society – and still the fount of knowledge on the past of the town.

Tony Ivins

Tony Ivins remains the President of the Reepham Society to this day though increasing age and frailty prevent his active involvement. He was also a founder member and, with Susie his wife, a driving force in the development of the Society. Born in South London in 1915, Tony gained a diploma in animal husbandry at an agricultural college in the south of England. In the late 1930s, he joined the staff of the Forest School in Hampshire. The school was a progressive co-educational boarding school in the New Forest. Its ethos was to teach children how to respect the countryside and make use of natural resources. In 1938 the school had to move to new premises and an educational trust was set up to enable the purchase of Whitwell Hall and grounds. This is where Tony met Susie Dommen who became the Matron at the new Forest School where Tony was now the bursar. Not long after the move the Second World War broke out, the school was evacuated and the army requisitioned the Hall.

Tony Ivins

Tony enlisted in the Air Force where he became a navigator. His war years were spent in Africa where his squadron's role was to reinforce the British role by ferrying diplomats and heads of state around that country. From this he acquired an abiding love of Africa and has many albums of photographs from that time, especially aerial views. Meanwhile, Susie joined the Land Army and worked as a farm secretary at Sparham Hall. At the end of the war Tony and Susie were married and returned to Whitwell in 1946. Due to the financial costs involved, a decision was made not to re-open the school. Instead, Tony set up a pig farm at Whitwell Hall which brought in sufficient finance to enable Tony to set up a Country Centre offering school-children an opportunity to enjoy a week under canvas, or in the house, and to experience the country, the wildlife and the natural resources. Tony and Susie's children, Sally and Hugh, were born here and Hugh still lives with his family in one of the cottages which was bought from the estate.

Tony came to love Whitwell as well as the educational trust which had always been dear to his heart. It was his interest in finding out about Whitwell and its past which stimulated Tony's broader interest in history. With Susie's drive and enthusiasm, they not only developed the Country Centre at Whitwell but gave a great deal to the village and to Reepham. It is largely due to them and several other early members of the Reepham Society that we have been able to develop such comprehensive archives for the Society. Tony's work at Whitwell Hall enabled him to meet numerous well-known Norfolk folk. His friends included Ted Ellis, Dick Joyce and Philip Wayre of the Norfolk Wildlife Centre who shared many of his interests. Tony was also Chairman of the Norfolk Deaf Children's Society and one year he was able to show the Queen Mother round the NDCS stand at the Royal Norfolk Show.

As Wardens of Whitwell Hall, Tony and Susie had lived in the Hall itself but when he retired they moved to Hillside Cottage on Whitwell Hill. Tony now became Chairman of the Country Centre and continued his life-long work for Whitwell Hall and its 40-acre estate.

Whitwell Hall Educational Trust

A great many people are unaware of the existence of Whitwell Hall Country Centre, its unique history and unusual development. We think it is worth telling a little more about one more interesting aspect of the Reepham group of parishes. Whitwell Hall itself was, of course, a private house. The previous history of the hall, park and deserted medieval village has been described elsewhere in earlier Reepham Society magazines, often relying on information from Tony Ivins himself.

Forest School was started in 1928 near Godshill in the New Forest and consisted of 100 acres of woodland overlooking the Avon valley in Hampshire. It was bought by Earnest Westlake, the son of a Quaker and wealthy industrialist from Fordingbridge. He became a humanist and educationalist and, as a result, founded the order of Woodcraft Chivalry – the Woodcraft Folk – where families met together under canvas, later in huts, and learned to live in and appreciate the natural environment. Loosely built on the ideas and culture of the North American Indians, its aim was to enable children to find out about themselves by offering opportunities for development and self-discipline rather than by imposing learning and discipline. Other schools, such as Dartington and Summerhill, developed from similar roots as did organisations like the Guides and Scouts.

After the war, it was decided by Tony and Susie and the school secretary, who lived in Cambridge, not to re-open as a school as such a large financial investment would be required to renovate and repair the buildings. Instead, Tony set about earning an income for the trust by utilising his training in animal husbandry and set up the pig farm in the existing outbuildings on the site. Each summer, former pupils of Forest School continued the tradition of camping activities with their families until the late 1950s when the Forest School was set up again to continue elsewhere.

A young Tony Ivins working with older boys in the kitchen garden.

In the early 1960s contacts were established with teachers and education authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk at a time when such bodies were keen to encourage children to spend time out-of-doors. From this grew a thriving Country Centre which continues to provide opportunities for many groups of children to spend a week or weekend camping in the grounds, or living in dormitories, whilst undertaking country activities which are totally new for some city children.

Tony Ivins, the original Warden of Whitwell Hall, was assisted by Susie as House Mother until the 1970s. By this time, it was necessary to take on more staff. Sue and Brian Evans joined the staff and later took over the running of the Centre which they continue to manage down to the present. On his retirement, Tony became Chairman of the trust and worked tirelessly for the Centre, a role which his son, Hugh, has now taken on after him. The Country Centre is always looking for ways to broaden its activities and a number of local groups and pupils from Reepham High School use the house and grounds for a variety of activities. Any group can contact Brian and Sue Evans to see if the Centre can accommodate their requirements – always bearing in mind that it is limited by its status as an educational trust.

Our grateful thanks to Hugh Ivins for his help in preparing this profile of his father and the outline of the development of the Whitwell Hall Country Centre.

Reepham Society

History Exhibition

Friday, Saturday and Sunday
11th, 12th & 13th May, 2001

Friday: 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
Saturday: 10.00 am to 6.00 pm
Sunday: 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

Local history of Reepham and the surrounding villages

Members preview
7.30 pm
Thursday 10th May

The editor is very aware that the articles in this magazine talk about footpaths and access to the countryside in some detail. At time of publication the country is ravaged by Foot and Mouth Disease. Fortunately, this part of the country has remained free of infection. We would like to remind visitors to the area to observe footpath restrictions. Whilst this is a largely arable farming area there are numbers of animals in many places.

Please only use those footpaths, like the Marriott's Way, which you are sure are open and do not venture into farmland.

BONHAMS &BROOKS

Thinking of selling?

This small oil on panel by John Moore of Ipswich was sold in our June 2000 sale of East Anglian related Works of Art **'The East Anglian View'** for £8,500.

For valuations for probate, insurance or sale and general enquiries contact:

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