

REEPHAM

A MARKET TOWN AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

An exhibition organised by

THE REEPHAM BRANCH

OF

THE WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

At ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

RE REEPHAM

on

Thursday 15th, Friday 16th and Saturday 17th

MAY 1975

EXHIBITION NOTES - PRICE - 10 P.

REEPHAM

A MARKET TOWN AND ITS NEIGHBOURS.

J.C. BARRINGER

INTRODUCTION.

This exhibition is really a report of progress made rather than the end of a journey. The Reepham Branch of the Workers Educational Association has studied various aspects of the town and its surrounds over the past five years. A course on the Norfolk House tutored by D.C. Yaxley, Tutor Organiser in Norfolk for the W.E.A. led to further courses on the area tutored by J.C. Barringer, Resident Tutor in Norfolk, Cambridge University Board of Extra Mural Studies. The members of the Branch felt that an exhibition would allow them to show others what they have been doing, what they have found out and perhaps more important what they still want to know. The exhibition concentrates on the visual aspects of the work and it is hoped that it may encourage those who see it to look around and perhaps to join in the search for yet more information on and understanding about this very lovely part of Norfolk.

This Short guide to the exhibits aims to set each section into the total picture: its sections correspond to the various exhibits but are not necessarily in the order in which the visitor will find them.

THE CHURCHES.

A slide-tape sequence.

The existence of two standing and one ruinous church in a common churchyard is unusual. The churches are those of Reepham St. Mary to the east; and that of Whitwell St. Michael's overlooking the market place: the ruins of Hackford All Saints lie in the south west corner of the churchyard. The parish of Kerdiston was amalgamated with that of Reepham in the fourteenth century and Hackford was amalgamated with Whitwell in 1543 after Hackford church was burnt down. A fuller historical account of the churches by Michael Sayer is on sale in Reepham Church.

The origins of the three churches are not known: were there once parish churches in Whitwell, Kerdiston and possibly even Hackford? It is known that there was a chapel in Kerdiston and there is reference to a Chapel of St. Nicholas in Whitwell. Maps in the exhibition show the odd arrangement of the three parishes: Hackford, in which most of "Reepham" town lies, Whitwell and Reepham.

The churches have no obviously early features, Whitwell's font is the only Norman survival. Guestwick church, 3 miles north north west of Reepham, has a Saxon tower (not round to give some idea of the appearance of the original churches. None of the three churches was fully rebuilt in the fourteenth or fifteenth century to give a building on the scale of their neighbours at Salle or Cawston. No great family in the Reepham area endowed the churches as the Briggs did Salle or the de la Poles Cawston though the latter had the gift of Reepham church in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The great architectural glory of St. Mary's is the Kerdiston monument of the early fourteenth century. Some of the tracery in St. Mary's east window which was restored in the nineteenth century is decorated in style and implies either initial building or more likely rebuilding in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Many later changes have taken place and the slides and tape comment on some of these and on some of the interior decoration. St. Michael's has now a happy second function as a public meeting place and gives a sympathetic setting for this exhibition.

The ecclesiastical and civil records of a parish, accumulated from the sixteenth century onwards, provide a major source of information for the study of the history of a parish. Much remains to be told of the record

from these manuscripts but the kindness of the Reverend W.F.P.Kelly, Rectopr of Reepham with Kerdiston in encouraging this work, must be recorded with thanks.

THE MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF THE AREA.

A DOMESDAY

Celts, Romans and Saxons left their marks on the face of England. The river Eyn, giving its name to the Saxon hundred of Eynsford, is probably a Celtic name. The Romans built an important road from the Fens to Caister-by-Yarmouth of which sections at Brompton near Aylsham, Marsham and Billingford are well established. Recent aerial photographs show its line well in Booton but its route across the four parishes is still not established: so far no conclusive archaeological evidence has been found. The ham, ton, well and ford place name endings of the four parishes imply that the Saxon settlers established their farming settlements in the eighth and ninth centuries: Scandinavinn settlers probably filled in some of the spaces as at Themelthorpe and Guestwick, Wood Dalling and Foxley and Salle (willow wood=salh-leah) suggest that woodland clearance may have been necessary in places in Saxon times.

At the time of the making of Domesday Book in 1086 A.D. the four settlements of Kerdiston, Reepham, Whitwell and Hackford existed: the king held manors in Foulsham and Cawston: two small outliers of the Cawston estate lay in Booton and Whitwell. William de Warrenne held the bulk of the lands in the area, both Kerdiston and Hackford were in his hands. Rolf Bainard also held land in Kerdiston, Berner the Arblaster had an estate in Hackford and the greater part of Whitwell was held by Rolf de Bellofago. Whether a small hamlet such as Pettywell in Hackford might represent Berner's holding as a separate settlement it is still not possible to say. Reepham was only mentioned in Domesday Book obliquely in that Rolf Bainard had some men in Reiffham. The Domesday display shows some of the items listed: these give some form of comparison between the places as they were in the eleventh century.

B ABBEYS

The Normans having divided England into a system of great estates, each with its subsidiary lordships, began to endow many monastic foundations with lands in order to provide them with an income. In many cases Norman lords gave a church and the tithes to an abbey. Churches so given had vicars appointed to look after them by the abbeys. The exhibit of the church and its lands in the area attempts to show some of the links that the region had with various monastic houses. The reason why Parson Woodforde had so much to do with New College Oxford or why St. Mary's Reepham has connections with Trinity College Cambridge thus becomes clear. In all probability Abbots Close in Kerdiston was also a reminder of earlier connections.

KERDISTON

The family of de Kerdeston was an important Norfolk family during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but their main residence seems to have become Claxton Castle in the mid fourteenth century. Two other families, the Calthorpes and Bergulions, held manors, subdivisions of the original de Warenne lands, by the end of the fourteenth century. The manors of Kerdiston/Reiffham, Kerdiston/Calthorpes and Reiffham/Burgliions survived until copyhold disappeared in 1926.

The early map of Kerdiston circa 1600 survives in the Norfolk Record Office and it shows many features of interest including several manor 'sites', The 'Giants Hall' moated site shows up very well both on the map and on the large air photograph as does that of a second manor house and perhaps the early church or chapel. The moated site has brickwork and a well within it (see plan). On the early map this site is described as the parsonage of Kerdiston which raises the interesting questions of how it took on that function and when. The pottery was dredged from the Giants Moat and has kindly been loaned by Lt. Commander T.H.Maxted D.S.O. It is thought to be sixteenth and seventeenth century in date.

Various seventeenth century wills show something of the complexity of the land transactions of the period.

It is interesting to compare the seventeenth century map and the air photograph and to notice that many features have survived three hundred years of change.

FARMING IN THE AREA

The Kerdiston map has also provided a base for the story of agricultural change in Norfolk. The drawings and comments show how the steps of the 'field' of Kerdiston and its 'furlongs' were gradually amalgamated into the closes and fields of today,

The development of new methods of plowing, sowing, stock improvement, manuring and crop rotation which combined to produce the Agricultural Revolution are all illustrated.

The great changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are also well illustrated by the collection of scenes on Norfolk farms taken since the invention of photography.

The model of a steam engine and threshing machine reminds us that whole technologies have come and gone within very short periods of time.

WHITWELL

Four interesting maps of Whitwell have survived that give us some idea of the way the parish has evolved.

The earliest map redrawn in 1772, was probably drawn in the early eighteenth century. It is a map of Whitwell Field; the present Reepham road bisects the area. Why it was drawn is not certain but it shows, like the Kerdiston map, the many furlongs of the 'field'. It also shows pieces of Reepham, Hackford and Whitwell glebe. The glebe was the land with which the rectory or vicarage was endowed.

The capital letters presumably signify which land paid tithes to which parish. This shows just how intermixed the lands of the churches (and perhaps originally the manors) were in this area.

A second map of Whitwell shows the parish circa 1824 at a stage midway between the Enclosure Award of 1802 and the Tithe map of 1844. The changes on the Whitwell Hall estate are especially interesting between 1824 and 1844: the stream was diverted and the tannery pool was made after 1825.

The plan of road changes in Whitwell dated 1824 shows how the roads have been altered. Note how the Reepham road was diverted away to the north of Whitwell Hall and that Fiddler Alley did not exist until 1824.

The Tithe Map of Whitwell dated 1844 shows which fields were arable and which pasture in that year and the Schedule also tells us who the main landowners and tenants were: the Leamons had the Whitwell estate and tannery, the Leeds had the Whitwell Common tannery and estate and the Collyers much of the west of the parish. The area shown on the eighteenth century map was divided amongst many small farmers in 1844.

The Census Returns of 1851 show the wide range of craftsmen who worked in Whitwell at that time. The small figures show how the various craftsmen and labourers dressed.

Whitwell Low Common has survived from medieval times. It was the wet common where cows would graze in summer and perhaps where turf was cut for fuel. By the Enclosure Act of 1812 the common was reserved for the use of the poor of Whitwell, as late as the early twentieth century new regulations (copy on table) specified that each commoner with property worth less than £10.0.0 per annum could put two cattle and one horse on it. A plan shows how many people still lived around the Low Common in the 1890s.

THE MARKET PLACE

This large display shows something of what is known of the more recent occupants of the various properties round the market and the photographs show the details of many of the buildings.

The houses on the Moor show many very interesting architectural details dating in the main from the sixteenth century at Moor Farm to the present day. Several buildings such as those at Manor Farm, the Priory and Moor Lodge have attractive late seventeenth or eighteenth century features.

The records of the Tithe Map of 1844 and of the 1851 census have been used to reconstruct something of the more recent story of some of these buildings.

BOOTON

The parish of Booton lay in the hundred of South Erpingham and was a part of the Royal Manor of Cawston at the time of Domesday Book 1086.

The material shown stems from three sources: the church, deeds of the Oaks and maps of the Grove. Booton Church as the print shows was a medieval one like those of many Norfolk parishes but the Rev. Whitwell Elwin rebuilt it 1875-1891 to produce one of the very few nineteenth century churches in rural Norfolk. The old terriers (land records) of the church show how scattered the glebe was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was reorganized into one unit in the early nineteenth century.

The Elwins bought Booton Hall in 1713 from the Layers who had owned it from 1573. They were the major landowning family in the parish during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The deeds of the Oaks are a very interesting set. They show how the land was originally scattered in many pieces and later in small fields. Several of those show up well on the air photograph. Some of the land was still manorial and so copies of the Manor Court Rolls of Guton (in Brandiston) were also part of the deeds. The tithe map shows the names of fields in 1844.

Two maps show how the Grove Farm has changed over the past two hundred years. An interesting point is that the common extended from Brandiston back into Booton. A new road from near the Church to the Grove is also shown.

THE RAILWAYS

Reepham's role as the market centre for the country of some five miles radius around it was changed by the arrival within a year or two of one another of the two railway lines. The Norwich- Fakenham line passing through Whitwell was opened in 1882: that from Aylsham built by the Eastern Counties Railway arrived a year or so earlier. It seems extraordinary now to visualise that there were two choices of railway from Reepham. Unlike industrial England the building of the railway did not lead to any rapid growth of Reepham, indeed it seems that people left the area faster than before and the population fell in the 1880s. The stock market prospered initially after the railways' arrival but almost certainly it did not help either the tanneries or the brewery once cheaper products from larger works elsewhere could reach the area.

SUMMARY

Our enquiries may appear somewhat disjointed and this is inevitable because the sources for this work are scattered in place and time. It is surprising how quickly material is lost and very little has as yet come to light on the story of the brewery and the tanneries. We hope that those visiting the exhibition will be encouraged to look for any information in terms of papers, deeds, objects or memories and to let those of us engaged in this work know of this material or join us in discovering more.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

The churches: Slide-tape sequence.
chief technicians

Mr. G. Anderson

D. Greaves

M. Kirk

The medieval origins of the area

C. Barringer

Kerdiston

Mr. and Mrs. G. Fenner

Farming

Mrs. Sally Aitchison

Whitwell

A. Ivins

S. Hickson

The market place

Miss M. Glbbs

Mrs. A. Ivins

Photographs

Mrs. S. Hickson

D. Greaves and M. Kirk

The shop

Mrs. V. Tyler

Miss M. Gibbs

Miss B. Owen

Mrs. S. Hickson

Reepham moor

Mrs. V. Tyler

Miss B. Owen

Photographs

C. Barringer

Booton

Mrs. M. Reid

The railways

J. Garrick

Loans of the following are gratefully acknowledged:

Steam and. threshing engine

Mrs. Ann Dickinson

Pottery from Giants Moat, Kerdiston

Lt. Cmdr. Maxted D.S.O.

Grandfather Clock

Mr. and Mrs. Tailor

Many items for the shop kindly loaned by many others than the four listed.

The design and layout of many of the exhibits and publicity was kindly undertaken by Mr. Stanley Hickson.

Help with the construction of the exhibits was given by Mr. Leslie Moy, Mr. Piercy and Mr. Hardiment.

The use of Whitwell Church and help with access to the Parish manuscripts were both kindly given by the Reverend. W.F.P. Kelly, Rector of Reepham with Kerdiston.

Reepham Branch of the Workers Educational Association.

Chairman Mr. A. Ivins Whitwell Hall.

Secretary Mr. J. Carrick School House, Booton.

Thanks to the University of East Anglia for the loan of Audio-Visual Equipment.