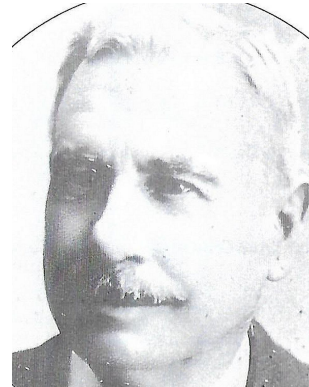


## Roy's of Wroxham

Alfred Roy (1838-1915) was trading in Reepham at least by 1868 and came from Burnham Westgate where his father William was at various times a joiner, builder, grocer and broker. In the 1871 census he is occupying the premises that we currently know, in 2021, as the deli and farm shop. By the next census Alfred has moved across the Market Place to Hewkes House, trading as a grocer and draper. Alfred was a joiner for his father and eventually retired to Aylsham.

The now famous store known as Roy's of Wroxham was established in 1899 by his sons Alfred and Arnold who were both born in Reepham in the 1870s.

Roy's shop in the Hewkes House building



Alfred Roy 1838-1915

The following extract from an interview with Arnold Roy appeared in September 1935 in the weekly magazine Tit-bits and describes his activities as a boy in Reepham.

“My father was the village carpenter in the small market town of Reepham. The only education I ever had was at a National school – twopence a week. At 14 I went round the villages hawking oranges with a donkey and a barrow. I got that donkey for nothing. A farmer challenged me to catch it. It was difficult to capture as it would only come to him. He said that if I did so it was mine. In 20 minutes, after much enticement with corn, considerable exertion, and many cuts and abrasions, it was! I named it William and within a week William was harnessed to my improvised barrow and doing good business.

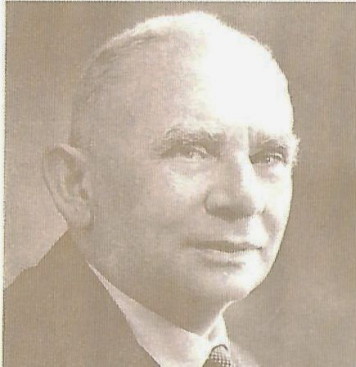
“Ever on the alert for extra coppers, I found work for William in winter. By converting an orange box into a sleigh I was able to give the children of the village a ride round the marketplace for a halfpenny a time.

“Then I went to a Norwich drapery firm at £15 a year, ran errands and swept the floor. But at the age of 16 I felt the call of the gold-paved streets of the metropolis, went to London, worked for a shilling a day as a warehouse boy and supplemented my meagre income with coppers earned by holding horses’ heads and opening cab doors for customers. Many times I tramped the streets without a penny in my pocket.

“I remember standing outside a big Oxford Street store. And telling myself: ‘Some day I’m going to have a shop like that!’ So I started keeping account of everything I spent, entering such items in a pocket book as ‘Bun, 1 penny’. I knew I had to start by being thrifty if I wanted to succeed.”

At 18 he returned to Norfolk and with his brother opened a small general shop in Coltishall. One thing Arnold had resolved in London was that he would practise entirely new methods. He took the shop to the customers, first with his donkey cart then with a swagger horse and van. Success in the business led to a second shop in Dereham and a further shop in Wroxham in 1899 which became the business we now know as Roys of Wroxham, *the world's largest village store*.

Alfred Edward Roy  
1873-1951



Arnold William Roy  
1875-1953



*JDA/Aug2021*

*edited from items prepared for the RS Exhibition in 2003*