

THE MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS
of the CHURCHES OF ST MARY & ST MICHAEL
& THEIR CHURCHYARD at REEPHAM, NORFOLK

CONTENTS

The Churchyard Memorials and Their Inscriptions	3
Plan of the Churchyard Showing the Recording Areas and Approximate Location of Memorials	5
The Memorials Inside Reepham's Churches and Their Inscriptions	22
Index to Names, Places and Occupations Recorded on the Memorials	32
A Selection of Terms used to Describe the Memorials	inside rear cover

INTRODUCTION

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

The small Norfolk market town of Reepham is situated approximately ten miles NE of Dereham on the B1145, Bawdeswell to Aylsham Road. The churches and churchyard are off the Market Place, a short walk from the town's free car park.

Reepham Churchyard is unique, in that it sits on the boundaries of four parishes and originally housed three churches each with its own designated burial area. A list of Rectors/Vicars displayed in St Mary's church (Memorial No.ic1) confirms that the parishes of Reepham & Kerdiston have been 'joined' since earliest times, sharing St Mary's church and burial ground (Area A). Hackford's church (All Saints) burnt down in 1543 and was never rebuilt. The only surviving evidence of the buildings existence is a very small portion of wall ruin. Hackford subsequently 'joined' Whitwell, sharing St Michael's church but retaining its own Parish Registers. It was not until 1935 that the parishes were brought together under a single benefice. St Michael's church is now redundant and being converted into a church hall, with 'state of the art' thermal heating.

In 1856 the churchyard was closed. The Reepham & Kerdiston Authorities built a cemetery on Norwich Road, while Whitwell with Hackford developed a cemetery on Whitwell Road. The former closed around 1922 and over the years the Whitwell Road site has been enlarged and become the cemetery we see today, used by all the parishes. Family history research is complicated by the existence of separate church and cemetery registers for each of the three parishes.

Although the Mid-Norfolk Family History Society's (MNFHS) main aim is to record churchyard memorials, for completeness, those inside the churches have been included. In this work the memorials in St Mary's are identified by the prefix 'ic' and those in St Michaels by 'Mic'. Location plans have not been

included but the memorials in both churches have been recorded 'as seen' i.e. starting at the church entrance, proceeding to the rear (tower) wall, down the north wall and into the chancel, returning to entrance via the south wall.

St Mary's has the oldest memorials - a decorated tomb and floor brass to the Kerdiston family (neither carrying inscriptions). The former carries an effigy of a Sir William, who died at the battle of Crecy in 1361, lying in full armour upon a bed of cobbles with his feet resting on a lion. The brass beneath a carpet by the altar rails, features another William (now missing a leg) with his wife Cecily. A very ornate wall memorial, incorporating a 'likeness' of the Rev Sir Edward Repps Joddrell, whose family donated the stained glass windows in the chancel, creates a contrast of tastes between the 14th and 19th centuries.

Next door, in St Michaels, despite the refurbishment all the wall memorials have been retained. These include a Roll of Honour (Mic12) listing the 30 men of Hackford and Whitwell who gave their lives in World War One and a further 150 who served - virtually providing a census of parishioner men of military age.

Members of the MNFHS recorded the memorials during the winter of 2010/11. To simplify the work, the churchyard was divided into three areas A, B and C using the footpaths as dividers (see churchyard plan on page 5). Researchers should note that this identification system is unique and does not cross-refer to Church Registers or any previous work.

As a further finding aid, the type of memorial and shape of the top of headstones, using simple terms, (some illustrated inside rear cover) has been included. In addition, for readers whose interests may extend beyond the primary inscription, most of the secondary prose and bible quotations have been deciphered and

included. The existence of any decoration, such as cherubs, urns or skulls has also been recorded (but not cleaned). In the past, it has not been the practice for church authorities to record actual burial places and the memorials tend to be "tidied up" from time to time. In some cases footstones are put 'in line' with headstones, but more often they are repositioned against the relevant headstone. Footstones usually follow the same shape as the corresponding headstone but are inscribed with the initials of the deceased and date of death only. Generally speaking, in this work footstones have not been recorded.

Some of the headstones, especially those made of limestone, have heavy lichen deposits on them. In these cases, only the minimum necessary to reveal the inscription was removed, using brush and water, for according to the British Lichen Association, churchyards provide a prime habitat for its growth. Sandstone headstones tend to be of a softer material, which wears, erodes, and tends to delaminate, whereby the inscription face detaches itself and flakes away.

The churchyard has the appearance of being well cared for, there are few fallen memorials and the grass is regularly cut. It contains approximately 250 memorials however, as already mentioned, the churchyard closed in 1856, in consequence all the memorials are more than 150 years old and many are well-weathered and difficult to decipher, but the recording team managed to make some sense of the majority of the inscriptions, whilst taking care not to damage the monuments

further in the process This was greatly assisted by reference to the MNFHS's Burial Registers Transcription, which is part of the society's contribution to an on-going National Burial Index. The MIs have been recorded in lower case letters with names in capitals, any punctuation within the inscriptions being added by the author. Unreadable, *best guess* and details reconstructed from the Burial Registers are shown in square brackets ([...])

The record of MIs is completed by the inclusion of indexes to Names, Places and Occupations appearing on the memorials. The former gives the year of death and age of the deceased, a hash sign (#) indicating that the information is not included, or not applicable, to that inscription and a question mark (?) is used where it has not been possible to make a realistic suggestion.

The index reveals that the most *common* surname recorded on the MIs is *Bircham*, with 30 hits, followed by *Breese* (20), *Frankland* (19), *Neale* and *Scurll*, with eighteen each. Amongst the many members of the clergy recorded, we find the local ironmonger, a Hackford Tanner, carpenters, doctors, an MP and military men. Every memorial will be of interest to someone and it is hoped that this booklet will provide a prime source of information. It identifies to the family history researcher what is recorded, giving them ammunition to make their own individual family discoveries and perhaps, encourage them to visit Reepham's interesting churches and churchyard..

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The churchyard plan (see page 5) is an adaption of an original plan produced, by persons unknown, for church use

The Mid Norfolk Family History Society (MNFHS) would like to thank Churchwarden Elizabeth Rachid for her interest and support, and the St Michael's church renovation builders for their understanding in allowing us access whilst the churchyard was closed to the public.

Although the actual memorial recording task was carried out by Society members - Tom Garland, Don McLean, Shirley Moulton, Denise and Roderick Woodhouse and local resident Bill Green, we would like to formally thank all other society members who assisted in the project by checking details, helping with the Latin translations, or in any other way, contributing to the production and sale of this publication.

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

© MNFHS Mar 2011

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

The Mid Norfolk Family History Society,

Mrs Kate Easdown, 47 Greengate, Swanton Morley, Dereham, NR20 4LX