FEBRUARY 2026
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Datchet Village Society

NEWSLETTER

***Above**: Datchet in spring, Adrian Giddins*

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Welcome to the latest edition of your DVS newsletter

Now that the days are getting longer and lighter, spring will soon be on its way and, hopefully, the bulbs planted by Wild About Datchet and DVS members in November will begin to bloom on the Sabatini Land.

We've had a busy few weeks. Lots of people used the Christmas break to research their family trees and sent us questions about their Datchet ancestors. We've included some of our findings in this issue.

There's also a run-down of recent DVS visits and activities plus a report about the archaeological dig at 'AL39' on London Road; an investigation into dubious claims about the sealing of the Magna Carta; the story of a Datchet resident who recorded every Royal engagement; and a tale of inpromptu entertainment by Gilbert and Sullivan at a house in the High Street.

You can also read about the history of a pioneering social-housing scheme in Ditton Road, and take a peek inside the Victorian Barrel Arch drain under The Green.

We hope you enjoy your newsletter and we look forward to seeing you very soon. We're starting to make plans for this year's AGM in April and will send out details in due course. Thank you for your continued support.

Your DVS Committee

Email: info@datchetvillagesociety.org.uk
www.datchetvillagesociety.org.uk

RECENT VISITS





Windsor is one of the very few theatres still operating rope-system flies for moving scenery, ***above****. The system was similar to that used to hoist a ship's sails so, in the past, the job was often done by sailors who would whistle commands to each other. (This is said to explain why people in theatres don't whistle; in case a piece of scenery comes flying down!) As part of our visit, we also had a look beneath the stage, peeked inside the dressing rooms backstage,* ***below,*** *and visited the Top Wardrobe on the uppermost floor where costumes were being made. We also learned about two ghosts said to haunt the theatre!*





THE THEATRE ROYAL WINDSOR

On a rainy day in November, a group of DVS members visited the Theatre Royal for a behind-the-scenes tour. We were particularly lucky with our timing as the production team and cast were away at panto rehearsals which meant we had access to areas not normally included on a tour.
We took our seats in the front row of the Royal Circle while our guide, David, told us about the history of the theatre. With the curtain raised and no scenery in place, we had a rare view of the entire stage. (Interestingly, before a fire destroyed the theatre in 1908, the seats faced the other way, towards a stage on the Castle side of the building.)
John Counsell, whose statue is in the foyer, started working at the theatre in the 1930s when it was being run, briefly, as a cinema. He made several attempts to form a repertory company with very little money. Finally, in 1938, he succeeded: from the moment King George VI and Queen Elizabeth attended a performance of *The Rose Without A Thorn*, the Theatre Royal and its company were accepted again as an essential part of the Windsor scene.
David told us that there used to be a Royal Box (stage right) but the Queen Mother preferred to sit in the front row of the Circle because the view was better. A box on the other side of the stage is named after John Counsell's daughter, Jenny. As a child, she was allowed to sit there to watch her very first play, Joan of Arc, in which her mother, Mary Kerridge, played the title role. When Joan was burned at the stake, Jenny screamed the house down and the performance had to be stopped. Ever since then, it's been known as the Jenny Counsell Box.
Read more about the history of the theatre in Windsor from 1706 on the Theatre Royal's website



RECENT EVENTS



CRUCIFIX WAR MEMORIAL

Datchet Parish Council recently established a Heritage Monuments and Memorials Working Group to oversee, safeguard, and promote the parish's heritage assets, including the WWI Crucifix Memorial on London Road. The purpose of the group is to provide recommendations to the Parish Council to ensure that these assets are appropriately conserved, maintained, and celebrated as part of the village's heritage. DVS committee members have been invited to join the group.



WILD ABOUT DATCHET

Look out for pretty spring flowers on the Sabatini Land (between Horton Road and the Recreation Ground). In late November, more than 20 Wild About Datchet volunteers, including Cubs and Beavers, helped to plant 1360 spring bulbs! More projects are planned for early 2026 to support re-naturing areas of the Recreation Ground, working alongside the Parish Council.



REMEMBRANCE DAY

On Remembrance Sunday, Marjorie Clasper, DVS secretary, ***above,*** laid a wreath at the war memorial on Memorial Green on behalf of the Society. Another member of our DVS committee, Glenda Croft, added new plants and tidied up the area around the WWI Crucifix Memorial on London Road which is sadly neglected. The Parish Council placed two planters there in 2018 for the centenary of the end of WWI but, since then, one has disappeared.

From 7-12 November, DVS also placed temporary notices beside the WWI and WWII servicemen's graves and memorials in Datchet Cemetery, explaining more about each soldier's life and experience of war.





CHRISTMAS IN DATCHET

Datchet Village Society had a stall at St Nicholas' Fayre at St Mary's Church on 6 December 2025. Thank you to everyone who came along to have a chat, buy books and pick up our latest leaflets, or find out about joining. We're always delighted to welcome new members to the Society. Our stall was next to Wild About Datchet, **far *left***, which was inviting residents to join their mailing list.

If you'd like to be notified of opportunities to volunteer with Wild About Datchet, or would just like to hear progress updates, please email Allen Corcoran at wildaboutdatchet@gmail.com

ARCHAEOLOGY



Right: *The spoil heaps from the archaeological dig are still visible today from Riding Court Road.*
Above: *An aerial view of the trenches dug at the site in 2018.*
All the archaeology reports for AL39 are available from RBWM planning. The Cotswold Archaeology report is also on their website.



THE HISTORY OF BRITAIN: AN AERIAL VIEW

St Laurence's Church in Upton has been given several copies of The History of Britain, An Aerial View *by Christopher Stanley. They have asked if we can help them sell these, at £6 each or two for £10. The book includes 150 aerial images which are brought together to represent Britain from prehistoric times to the 1980s. Images include stone circles and burial mounds, Roman monuments, Iron Age hillforts and mediaeval castles, and a variety of cities, towns, villages, industry and agriculture. Each picture is accompanied by a detailed commentary. If you would like to buy a copy, please email alison_crampin@yahoo.co.uk*



THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AL39

Angus Cameron writes: The remaining part of the Linchfield lying east of Riding Court Road, south of the M4 and north of London Road, is now better known as AL39 as the planning application for housing on it progresses. The field's propensity to flood is a well-discussed issue.

The archaeology of the field in also now better known thanks to the planning process. A desk-based assessment by planning consultants in June 2017, reviewing the Berkshire Historic Environment record and old maps, concluded there was moderate potential for prehistoric evidence. The County Archaeologist agreed and requested an archaeology evaluation study of the site.

Cotswold Archaeology was hired in June 2018 and dug 35 trenches in a zig-zag sampling pattern across the field that summer. The results were few: only 10 trenches contained archaeological deposits which suggested possible prehistoric field systems and parts of a curvilinear feature. The finds included some prehistoric pottery sherds, limited numbers of animal bones, fragments of building materials, and a large bowl from the 16th to 18th Century. Environmental samples were weeds like chamomile, cabbage and meadow grass.

The County Archaeologist decided in November 2022 that the curvilinear feature needed to be fully investigated and a condition was placed on the site. Archaeology South East (ASE), the commercial arm of the London University Institute of Archaeology, won the contract and performed the excavation in December 2024. The results were almost as disappointing as the evaluation study. Whilst the entire 13m diameter ring gully just behind 55 London Road was exposed along with five pits, the finds were sparse. Charred plant remains found included hulled barley, emmer/spelt and wheats and cereals. The spoil heaps from the dig are still visible today from Riding Court Road, ***top***. ASE concluded that a farmstead and field-scape of Iron Age or early Roman date is the most likely interpretation. Given the archaeology richness of the nearby Datchet Quarry and Southlea farm sites, the lack of finds and other structures suggests the land has been locally known to flood for thousands of years, and the site has only ever had limited agricultural use as a consequence.

Angus Cameron is the Treasurer of Datchet Village Society and a Trustee/Director of Cotswold Archaeology.



The Magna Carta Room. The Historic England website refers to Harcourt's table simply as a 'commemorative stone'
Image credit Waterview Properties



The National Trust's Magna Carta Memorial at Runnymede, Surrey



MAGNA CARTA ISLAND

You may have noticed that the Grade II listed Magna Carta House, not far from Ankerwycke on the north bank of the Thames, was for sale recently, for £4.5m. One of the key selling points is that it comes with an ancient stone tablet which is said to be where the Magna Carta was sealed in June 1215. Could that really be true?

In the 13th century, the land was owned by Richard de Montfichet, Lord of the Manor of Wraysbury and Stansted Mountfitchet in Essex. He was one of the original 25 barons who took the lead in enforcing the Great Charter. (His ancestor Gilbert Montfichet, Knight and also Lord of Wraysbury had founded Ankerwycke Priory in 1154.)

The pseudo-Norman style house which is for sale, ***above***, can be seen from the riverside parking area at Runnymede. It wasn't built until 1834, more than 600 years after the Magna Carta was sealed, when a politician, George Simon Harcourt, redeveloped a fishing cottage there. The building - part house, part folly - was made from irregular stone with a Welsh slate roof, cylindrical stone chimneys and round-headed windows, and the interior was decorated with imported 17th-century panelling.

To commemorate the Magna Carta, Harcourt commissioned a special room, ***above left,*** featuring a large, octagonal, oak table inlaid with an ancient stone, and 25 shields mounted on the walls. The stone is inscribed with the words, *"Be it remembered that on this Island 25 June 1215 John, King of England signed Magna Carta and in the year 1834 this building was erected in commemoration of that event by George Simon Harcourt Esq. Lord of this Manor and then High Sheriff"*.

Harcourt made the same mistake as many others by claiming the Charter was signed, not sealed. He also gets the date wrong; it should have read 15 June 1215.

Perhaps not wishing to miss out on a money-making opportunity, Harcourt charged a penny for the ferry crossing from Runnymede so that locals and tourists could come to view his stone.

If you're thinking of shelling out £4.5m, you might be interested to learn that no one knows exactly where the Magna Carta was sealed other than "somewhere at Runnymede", between Windsor and Staines. There is some evidence that the Charter was sealed on an island but the Thames has changed course several times since the 13th century. Runnymede and Ankerwycke are now on opposite sides of the navigable Thames but in history they may well have been one island.

DATCHET CHARACTERS

THE COURT CIRCULAR

The daily Court Circular, the official listing of the previous day's royal events, is printed in The Times, The Telegraph *and* The Scotsman *and online at https://www.royal.uk/media-centre/court-circulars. The practice is said to have been started by King George III in 1803 after he became frustrated with the inaccurate reporting of royal events by the national press. It remains the definitive account of official royal events.*



Tim O'Donovan

THE TIMES | Thursday October 30 2025

Monarchist whose diligent analysis of the Court Circular for more than 40 years revealed who were the hardest-working royals

Cutting from The Times*, 30 October 2025*

TIM O'DONOVAN, 1932-2025

In late October 2025, *The Times* and *The Telegraph* were among the national newspapers and magazines which printed an obituary of a Datchet resident, Tim O'Donovan, who has died aged 93.

Many years ago, Tim, a former insurance broker in the City, was looking for a statistical project and thought it would be interesting to find out exactly what the Royal Family did. In 1979, he started taking newspaper cuttings of the Court Circular, the official listing of the previous day's royal events.

He fastidiously pasted these cuttings into his ledgers, then recorded and analysed every engagement to create an annual survey of the workload of each member of the Royal Family.

For more than 40 years, Tim submitted his annual survey in a letter to *The Times.* At first the Palace was concerned that it would be perceived as a league table, which would lead to criticism or unfavourable comparisons of Royals, but Tim believed it showed how hard they worked. As the years progressed, he became regarded as an expert on the subject and the press started to approach him directly for information. He was profiled in many newspapers, at home and abroad.

Tim lived in The Avenue in Datchet and was also active locally. His collection of royal memorabilia meant that his house became something of a museum. He staged numerous exhibitions in Windsor, celebrating milestones in the lives of the Royal Family, including one to mark the Queen's 50th birthday at the Guildhall in Windsor.

The Windsor historian, Derek Hunt, a friend of DVS, met Tim on several occasions and Tim very kindly loaned one of his royalty-related items for Derek's Windsor Victoria Cross Exhibition in 1998.

Tim was appointed a Lay Steward of St George's Chapel in 1978. This is a voluntary role which also involves assisting at services and special occasions, often with Royalty attending. (Marjorie Clasper, secretary of the DVS, is also a Lay Steward.) Tim served as Captain of the Lay Stewards from 2010 but, in 2014 aged 81, he told the 88-year-old Queen that he felt he had reached the age to step down. (*The Telegraph* reported that he enjoyed her look of disapproval at his quitting at such a young age!)

Between 1992 and 2002, Tim was Secretary of the Friends of St George's, launching the Millennium Appeal to restore the chapel organ and the Golden Jubilee appeal. He was Festival Marshal of the Windsor Festival from 1980 to 1995. His funeral was held on 14 November at the Chapel Royal in Windsor Great Park.

"Annie remembered Arthur Sullivan or W S Gilbert sitting her on his knee in the large kitchen, singing songs to her."

The Victorian-era duo, WS Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, collaborated on 14 comic operas between 1871 and 1896, including HMS Pinafore, The Mikado, and The Pirates of Penzance.
The advertising posters for their Savoy Theatre productions and opera tours were printed by Waterlow & Sons.
The company was headed by Sir Philip Headley Waterlow, 1847-1931, who leased Park Villas in Datchet. He had become Chairman of Waterlow & Sons, his family's stationery and printing company, in 1876. By 1881, when the Savoy Theatre opened, Waterlow & Sons had around 3000 employees.
This connection explains why Gilbert and/or Sullivan had been in his kitchen at Park Villas, entertaining MP's grandmother.
Philip's father, Sir Sydney Headley Waterlow, 1822-1906, was a philanthropist and Liberal Party politician. He was knighted in 1867, became a Lord Mayor of London in 1872, and was created a Baronet in 1873.

HISTORY OF PARK VILLAS

Park Villas has had some interesting residents over the years, not least Sir Robert Watson Watt who developed radar. Read more about the Villas, their previous owners, and the history of the site on Janet Kennish's Datchet History website.



Park Villas, Datchet High Street, early 20th century

PARK VILLAS

In January, we received an email from Australia. Our correspondent, 'MP', had discovered that her great-grandmother lived in Datchet.
Annie Beauchamp, née Jennings, 1849-1915, was a caretaker at Park Villas. These are the handsome Victorian houses at the bottom of the High Street, near the river.
Annie worked there in the 1880s and 1890s, firstly at number 3 (now 37) and then number 2 (now 35). Her children, Alfred, Frederick, and Annie, MP's grandmother, born in 1883, lived there with her.
In later life, MP's grandmother would recount stories to her own children about her life at Park Villas. She told them how her mother ran the house for a family called Waterlow, and she remembered Arthur Sullivan or W S Gilbert sitting her on his knee in the large kitchen, singing songs to her. She also recalled seeing Queen Victoria's coach driving through the village.
MP visited Datchet some years ago, before she knew exactly where her family had lived. She later found the Beauchamps in the 1881 and 1891 census in Datchet but there was no mention of the Waterlows.
We did a bit of research to add to the information MP already had. Kelly's Local Directories list Philip Waterlow at Park Villas between about 1883 and 1895. Philip was the chairman of a large stationery and printing company *(see panel, **left**)*. The house he leased was advertised "with six bedrooms, three reception rooms, very close to the railway station"; large enough to accommodate the Waterlows and their six children.
At the time, it wasn't unusual for well-to-do families to lease a country house in Datchet while also maintaining a house in London. This would explain why Philip and his family didn't appear in the Datchet census but are recorded, instead, at their home in London.
While researching, we came up with some interesting loose ends for MP to pursue. Philip Waterlow's brother, George, married a Charlotte Beauchamp in 1876, so we wondered if there was a family connection. According to the census, MP's great-grandfather, John Beauchamp, was a printer's assistant. Could he have worked for the Waterlows, too?
MP is now planning another visit to the UK next autumn so we've offered to show her around Datchet, pointing out places which would have been familiar to her grandmother and great-grandmother.



THE LOVE FAMILY

When we were putting out information signs by the soldiers' graves in the cemetery for Remembrance Day, we noticed that the gravestone of Robert and Fanny Love had been professionally cleaned, ***above****.*

It is of particular interest to DVS as it commemorates the death of their sons, Joseph and William, in WWI. The parish council gave us details of the cleaning company so we contacted them. We explained that we had been unable to trace any descendants of the Loves, and asked if they would put us in touch with their client.

We were delighted when the great, great granddaughter of Robert and Fanny Love got in touch. We were able to explain that Joseph's and William's names had not been included on Datchet's war memorial in 1920 but were added in 2018 for the centenary of the end of WWI. We also told her that their names are read out on Remembrance Sundays. Her grandfather Fred Love, born in Datchet, served in WWII. She had not researched the family history and was surprised to discover, from the DVS research, that she had a great, great uncle she didn't know about!



Above*, Ernest Clifford's wife, Louisa Jane (seated centre), with children Ruby Louisa and George Ernest. The identity of the lady at the back is not known.*
Below, *Ernest Alfred Clifford*

ERNEST ALFRED CLIFFORD



On Remembrance Day 2025, we received an email from a great grandson of Ernest Alfred Clifford, a WWI serviceman who is remembered on Datchet's war memorial. It said simply, "I have been sent a link to your record *[on the DVS website]* for Ernest Alfred Clifford by my nephew. I am his great grandson.

"I can confirm that Ernest and his wife, Louisa, had two children: my grandfather, George Ernest, and my great aunt, Ruby Louisa. If you would like more information, please contact me."

We always like the chance to discover something new, so we replied by return.

We explained how Datchet still remembers Ernest Clifford every year when the names of all the servicemen commemorated on the war memorial are read out at the Remembrance parade on the village green, and the Last Post is played before two minutes' silence. We sent a photograph of this year's event.

Our correspondent kindly sent us photographs of Ernest and his family, ***above*****,** to add to the record on the DVS website. He told us how our research had given him a greater insight into the role Ernest played during WWI and an understanding of what he was doing in Gallipoli. Although he lives in Yorkshire, some of his family live closer to Datchet and they are planning to visit the memorial in the near future and see the cottage, set back off Horton Road, where Ernest lived.

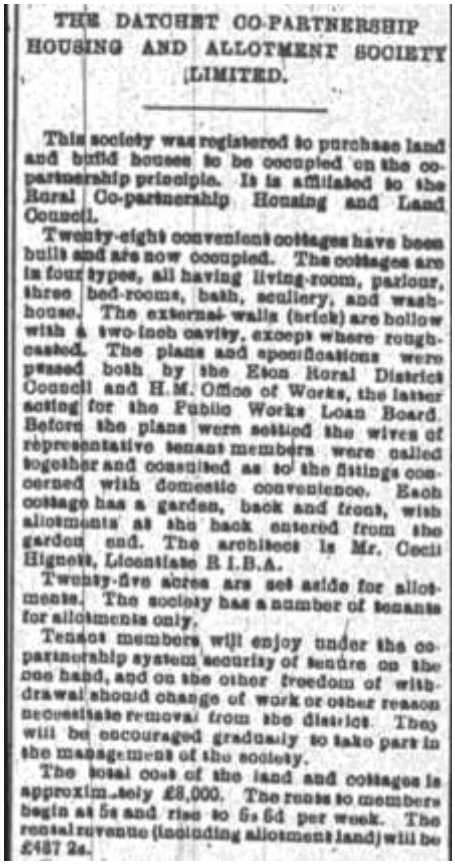


DATCHET CO-PARTNERSHIP HOUSING AND ALLOTMENT SOCIETY.

ESTATE - - - SITTON ROAD, DATCHET.

Capital Required - £9,000.

***Above**: Prospectus for the Datchet Co-Partnership Housing and Allotment Society*



THE DATCHET CO-PARTNERSHIP HOUSING AND ALLOTMENT SOCIETY (LIMITED.

This society was registered to purchase land and build houses to be occupied on the co-partnership principle. It is affiliated to the Rural Co-partnership Housing and Land Council.

Twenty-eight convenient cottages have been built and are now occupied. The cottages are in four types, all having living-room, parlour, three bed-rooms, bath, scullery, and wash-house. The external walls (brick) are hollow with a two-inch cavity, except where rough-casted. The plans and specifications were passed both by the Eton Rural District Council and H.M. Office of Works, the latter acting for the Public Works Loan Board. Before the plans were settled the wives of representative tenant members were called together and consulted as to the fittings concerned with domestic convenience. Each cottage has a garden, back and front, with allotments at the back entered from the garden end. The architect is Mr. Cecil Hignett, Licentiate R.I.B.A.

Twenty-five acres are set aside for allotments. The society has a number of tenants for allotments only.

Tenant members will enjoy under the co-partnership system security of tenure on the one hand, and on the other freedom of withdrawal should change of work or other reason necessitate removal from the district. They will be encouraged gradually to take part in the management of the society.

The total cost of the land and cottages is approximately £8,000. The rents to members begin at 5s and rise to 6s 6d per week. The rental revenue (including allotment land) will be £487 2s.

***Above,** The Slough, Eton and Windsor Observer reported the Society's progress on 28 March 1914*



VIEW OVER ALLOTMENTS.

PAIR OF COTTAGES (FRONT VIEW) TYPE C.

ALLOTMENT COTTAGES, DITTON ROAD



In the early 20th-century, a pioneering form of social housing known as tenant co-partnership was being developed alongside the Garden City movement in Britain. The aim was to provide cottages with land, giving the tenants an interest in the property they occupied and the land they cultivated, and at the same time providing a reasonable interest for the outside investor.

To this end, in 1911 a Rural Co-Partnership Housing Trust was set up. Several local societies became affiliated to this Trust including the Datchet Co-Partnership Housing and Allotment Society (DCHAS), founded in 1912 by Sir Lionel Cust, ***above***, who lived at Datchet House, next to St Mary's Church. He was an eminent art historian, Keeper of the National Portrait Gallery, and Surveyor of the King's Pictures, who also played an active part in the village as Treasurer for St Mary's Church and designer of the War Memorial in 1920.

Lionel Cust was chair of the DCHAS Board of Management and ex-officio members included Samuel Hawes, chairman of the Tenant Members' Committee, (a retired baker who lived at 1 Temple Cottages, now Horler's), and Mr Charles Ward, Secretary, who lived at 10 Penn Road. (The Ward family still owns one of the DCHAS houses in Ditton Road.)

The Board intended to purchase 30 acres near Ditton Park, including the old allotments which, owing to the late owner's sale of the freehold, would otherwise have been lost to the tenants. At that time, the whole area from Ditton Road eastwards, was a warren of allotments, sheds, pigsties, orchards, open grassland, and two bigger pig farms.

The capital required was £9000, two-thirds of which could be obtained from the Treasury once an initial £3000 had been raised through investment by tenant-members and the public in shares and loan stock. The security for these was the land and cottages. By the time the prospectus was published, applications had been received from 28 families. ***Continued overleaf.***

LOCAL BUILDINGS

***Right**, Sir Lionel Cust was a personal friend of the Royal family and in 1919, he brought King George and Queen Mary, who had taken a interest in the pioneering society, to visit the allotment cottages in Datchet and meet some of the tenants. They were photographed with Susan Lewin, in the white apron, and Ted Mount, in the flat cap. Susan had 14 children including five sons who had safely returned from the war. Private Mount spoke to the Queen about having enlisted along with his four sons even though he was 62. See Janet Kennish's Datchet History*











ALLOTMENT COTTAGES, DITTON ROAD *(continued)*

Under the co-partnership scheme, tenants took up three £1 shares, paid for by instalments of a penny a week, with a preliminary payment of one shilling a share.

The tenants were given security of tenure which could be passed on to their descendants, so long as the conditions of membership were fulfilled. (The Society reserved the power to deal with any cases of defaulting tenancy or bad neighbourship.) Tenants also had the freedom to withdraw if a change of work or other reason necessitated leaving the district. This gave them similar security to owning a house outright but without requiring the capital outlay.

By 1913, 28 cottages were nearly complete and some of the tenant members had already moved in. All the land was under cultivation, with around 70 allotment tenants in addition to the house tenants.

There were four types of cottages, running north and south of the cemetery and its chapel. They were designed by architect Cecil H Hignett and had an attractive, slightly Arts and Crafts appearance, unlike anything else in Datchet. They were built as semi-detached houses or small terraces of three and four houses, some with hipped roofs upswept at the eaves, others with gable ends and windows set into the roofline. Some had criss-cross decorative brickwork at first-floor level while others were finished in pebbledash which was becoming widely popular in Britain, especially during the Arts and Crafts movement, as a cost-effective way to provide durable, weatherproof exteriors.

All had a living room, parlour, three bedrooms, bath, scullery and wash house. (The wives of the tenant members were even consulted about the domestic fittings.) Each cottage had a garden, back and front, with allotments at the back (which were lost when the reservoir was built). Rents to members were between 5s and 6s 6d per week.

Although some of the cottages have been extended and developed over time, and some have lost distinctive original characteristics, the four different types of cottages in the original prospectus are still recognisable today; compare the images in the prospectus on the previous page with the present-day images ***left***.

The advent of the war and the development of council housing meant that the co-partnership movement lost momentum, but the DCHAS continued until it was wound up voluntarily in March 1992.

FLOODING & DRAINAGE



Above: *Detail of map showing the watercourse and pool in the village centre, surveyed c1810*
***Below**: This 1870s' photo shows the newly-created Green, about 30 years after becoming dry land*





DATCHET.

A FISH IN A PIANO.—A curious remnant of the flood at Datchet is reported. A piano was sent to a firm at Windsor for renovation, and in the interior was found a fish three inches long.

On 12 January 1895, The Bucks Herald *reported 'a curious remnant of the flood in Datchet. A piano was sent to a firm in Windsor for renovation, and in the interior was found a fish three inches long.'*

FLOOD DEFENCES

The Environment Agency's Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures project team recently presented two shortlisted options: Option Purple, a series of flood walls and embankments; and Option Orange, a flood relief channel. In assessing the preferred option, the EA must ensure that it makes best use of public funding and can achieve the long-term goal of sustainably reducing flood risk. They intend to provide an update on the next steps for the project early in 2026. Click here for details



The Barrel Arch stormwater drainage system beneath the village greens

THE BARREL ARCH

Before the Greens were built, an open watercourse ran through the village, centre, widening to a pool in front of the Manor Houses (see map, ***left***). It was crossed via a road bridge, from the top of the High Street to the site of the present-day pharmacy, which was in constant need of repair.

In Elizabethan times, it was common for charities to be set up to provide funds to maintain roads and bridges. The house we know as The Royal Stag was designated as the 'Bridge House' and set up as a Trust in 1570. The income from leasing out the pub was used to repair, among other things, the bridge over the watercourse. (The printer, Robert Barker, was a trustee from 1604 and it later became known as the Barker Bridge House Trust.)

The high cost of repairs led the trustees to a radical solution. In the 1830s, they employed Daniel Boulter, a local builder, to culvert the watercourse. By 1838 he had built a cylindrical brick drain, or 'barrel arch', 3 feet in diameter and 182 yards long, from the middle of the village to somewhere near the school (which was built in 1843). The space over and around it was then filled with rubbish, bushes, road scrapings and soil. This created a level space which became a village green.

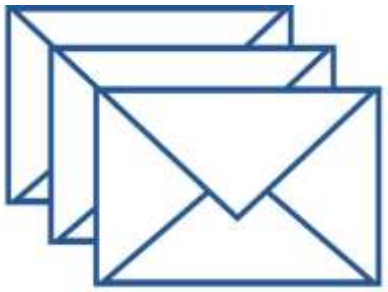
In 1847, Daniel Boulter was paid to extend the culvert westwards. Then, in 1850, it was extended eastwards to the ditch near the present-day Health Centre. As the middle section was built first and each end added separately, there was no means of adjusting the angle to ensure a smooth flow from west to east; the barrel arch rises and falls along its length.

Nowadays, the Royal Borough is responsible for its maintenance. The culvert was inspected and cleaned in 2020 when a series of photographs, including the one above, was taken. (The report is available in the parish council office.)

In summer 2023, silt was cleared from the barrel arch as part of the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures. This was intended to increase its capacity to aid the dispersal of water from the village centre via the barrel arch to the ditch at the Recreation Ground, then under Horton Road, via the Linchfield Brook culvert, to Penn Road where it joins the Datchet Common Brook and, from there, on to the River Thames.

For more information, see *The Royal Stag at Datchet & The Robert Barker Bridge House Trust* by Janet Kennish, and the Datchet History website.

POSTBAG



IRISH CONNECTION

In November, we had an email from Ireland, from someone researching the history of the Townland of Cavestown and Rosmead in the Barony of Delvin, County Westmeath. Rosmead House is the ancestral home of Lord Rosmead, Hercules Robinson, who lived in Eton Road, Datchet, in the 1910s. Hercules's son, also Hercules, is remembered on the WWI memorial on The Green.

Our correspondent is writing a history of the Townland for local use and asked if they could include information from the DVS website about Hercules, his sister Norah, and her husband John Lachlan Cope who had been a member of Ernest Shackleton's Expedition to the South Pole.

We were very happy for the information to be used, provided the source was credited.

We were unable to help with any photographs of Rosmead House in Ireland but we have been in contact with the person currently living at the Robinsons' former family home in Datchet, who is also researching the family and looking for photographs, in case they come across something.

We look forward to seeing a copy of the guide when it's finished.



Burnham Beeches, painted by Fred Avis

A SELECTION FROM OUR INBOX

The DVS is often the first port of call for anyone wanting to find or share information about the history of the village. A steady flow of emails and questions keeps us busy making new discoveries.

AVIS PAINTING OF BURNHAM BEECHES

Last summer, we were contacted by a descendant of Fred Avis who remembered the model village which Fred built on Slough Road. In December, he got in touch again to tell us he had Fred's painting of Burnham Beeches, ***top***, which had hung in his late mother's living room for as long as he could remember. He asked if DVS would like it or if we could help him find a home for it, somewhere it would be appreciated. By coincidence, a few months previously, we had been sent a photo of Fred Avis's butcher's shop at Gable End Stores by another descendant. At the time, we were able to share information about Fred with her, about how he trained as a coach-painter and sign-writer during WWI and how he had painted the temporary arch, ***right***, which spanned the High Street for George VI's coronation. We contacted her again to ask if she would like the Burnham Beeches painting. She jumped at the chance, and we were able to pass it on before Christmas. We've also been able to put the two descendants in contact with one another as they are quite closely related but didn't know each other.



HOUSE HISTORIES

A resident in one of the Allotment Cottages on Ditton Road asked where to find information about a person whose name was on the deeds of their house between the wars. We were able to direct the enquirer to the 1921 census return and 1939 Register, as well as Kelly's Local Directories, and the free version of the Ancestry genealogy website which can be accessed free of charge at RBWM libraries.

Datchet Village Society

ABOUT THE DVS

In 1995, the Datchet Village Society was formed to help preserve the special character of Datchet and to encourage interest in its history and environment. Our focus is primarily on Datchet but also includes its locality and historical connections. The DVS organises talks, exhibitions, guided walks and visits to places of interest for members and publishes Datchet-related books, leaflets and cards. We're the first port of call for anyone wanting to know more about their family history in Datchet, or about the history of the village generally. The Society also monitors local planning policy, conservation and development issues and has contributed to Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan and the Datchet Design Guide. Regular updates about our work and events are posted on the DVS website. New members are always welcome.

WHAT NEXT?

If you have ideas for events, visits or guest speakers; suggestions for the newsletter; or if there is a visit, walk, or talk that you missed and would like us to repeat, please let us know

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Very many thanks to everyone who has renewed their membership this year or made a 'top-up' donation. If you would like to continue to receive newsletters and invitations to DVS events, please make sure your membership is up to date. Annual membership runs from 1 April to 31 March the following year. **The fee remains £10 per adult. Junior membership is £1. Donations, too, are always welcome.**
HOW TO PAY: Bank transfer: Please note, we now bank with Metro Bank, Account Name: Datchet Village Society. Sort Code: 23-05-80. Account Number: 56817441. Reference: MEMBER and your surname.
By cheque payable to "Datchet Village Society" and sent to Marjorie Clasper, 3 Riverbank, 9 Southlea Road, Datchet SL3 9BY.
By cash at a DVS stall at local events or at our AGM.
If you have any queries, please call Marjorie on 01753 545110.

MEMBERS' NEWS

We were very sad to learn that Pam Curry died in September. She had been a social worker and was a fierce campaigner for services to older people and the sick. She was well-known to DVS members.
Also, Barbara Street, who was a founder member and was on the DVS committee in the 1990s and a great supporter of the Society, passed away just after Christmas. We send our sincere condolences to their families.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEES?

We are extremely grateful for your continued support. Membership fees help to keep the Society going, contributing to the cost of the website and research, insurance and admin, our AGM and other events, and towards unique purchases for the village such as two 1850s paintings of Datchet, a medal given to schoolchildren for Queen Victoria's Jubilee, a WWI memorial plaque, the original artwork for the rose window in the listed Cemetery Chapel, the new pavement plaque to mark the original site of Datchet's milestone, and the unveiling ceremony of Datchet's first Blue Plaque. We are currently investigating what can be done to restore the WWI crucifix memorial on London Road. The funds also allow us to publish cards, leaflets and booklets, and pay for stalls at local events.
We couldn't do all this without your support, thank you.

DVS MAIN CONTACTS

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Secretary: Marjorie Clasper Tel 01753 545110, marjorieclasper@gmail.com
www.datchetvillagesociety.org.uk, **www.datchethistory.org.uk**
Current committee 2025/26: President, Janet Kennish; Chair/Sales and Marketing, Alison Crampin; Secretary and temporary Membership Secretary, Marjorie Clasper; Treasurer, Angus Cameron; Photography and Archive, Adrian Giddins. Committee Members, Glenda Croft, Lesley Giddins, Sandra Needham. ***If you would like to join the Committee, please get in touch.***