

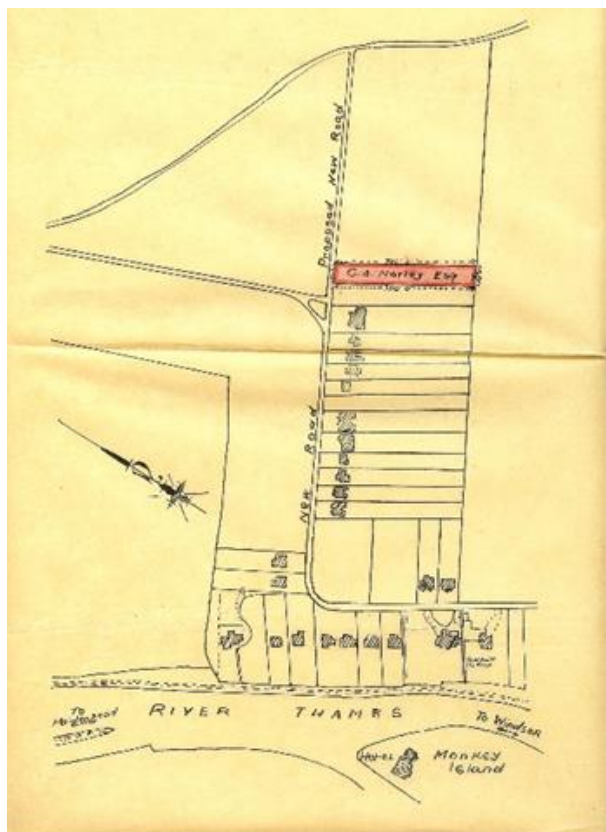
HAPPY 100th ANNIVERSARY!

This year Dorney Reach celebrates a special milestone. It is one hundred years since the building and occupation of the first houses on the south side of Harcourt Road.

Before this development took place, there were only eleven houses in Dorney Reach – nine on the riverbank and two at the northwest end of what was to become Harcourt Road. The road at that time did not join Marsh Lane where it now does; rather, it curved up what is now Meadow Way. In 1919, 33 acres of farmland between Marsh Lane and the houses on the river were sold as building land. Some or all of this area was acquired by a London firm of developers, the Honest Housing Company, who later changed their name to Dorney Estates Company Ltd.

Building began in 1923 towards the river end of Harcourt Road and gradually spread eastwards along the south side of the road. Two houses were also built on the east side of Dorney Reach Road. In 1924, it was proposed to extend Harcourt Road as far as Marsh Lane. By April 1927, 33 new houses had been completed.

Newspaper advertisements in 1924 offered houses ready for occupation for between £1,150 and £1,650, or built to order from £900.



The developer provided a booklet *“with full particulars, photographs and plans”*. One of the earliest houses to be occupied was later described as having been *“built to the present owner’s requirements in 1923 under the supervision of an architect”*. There was an architect associated with the developers – John Edwin Sterrett FRIBA, known mainly for designing religious buildings including a church in Slough. Looking at the houses today, it’s clear that each is individual but with recognisably similar features. Perhaps prospective buyers had the choice of square or rounded bay windows, inset porches or a small porch roof, optional sunlounge, interior door style. Inside, it’s the same; some houses were fitted with washbasins in the bedrooms, some had corner fireplaces. One was built as a chalet bungalow and only four initially had garages.

Almost all the new houses were owner occupied. They were detached and built on long narrow plots

backing on to the remainder of Oak Stubbs field. Typically, about half an acre in size, these gardens offered scope to the new residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables and keep chickens. The owners named their houses; there were no house numbers in Dorney Reach then and indeed Harcourt Road did not receive a name initially, being known as the “New Road”.

By the end of 1923, seven of the new houses were occupied. Who were the people who first made their homes on this new housing estate? The earliest residents were young couples with young children or slightly older childless couples. At least five of the husbands had fought during World War I and most, if not all, worked in London, presumably using the train from Taplow which was a key selling point for the estate. Let’s take a look at each of these households.

Trevose in Dorney Reach Road was occupied from Christmas 1923 by a couple in their thirties, Norman and Dorothy Kyte. Norman had begun his military service as an Army private but then became a sapper in the Royal Engineers and finally a 2nd lieutenant in the Machine Gun Corps. From June 1916 he was in France before marrying Dorothy early in 1918. They lived in North London before moving to Dorney Reach and Norman continued to work for a stockbroker in the City. We can guess they named their house after the place on the north Cornish coast; the 1921 census found them holidaying in Barnstaple in north Devon. They do not appear to have had any children and moved away to Sussex in the early 1930s.

At Valhalla in Harcourt Road, nearest to the river, were Frank and Ada Pound. Frank was 28 years old and was born in Portsmouth, where he became an apprentice in the naval dockyard. Early in the 1914-18 war, he had won a scholarship to Greenwich Naval College and joined the Royal Corps of Naval Constructors in April 1917, spending a year at sea on HMS Renown from June 1918. He married Ada in 1920 and they lived in Portsmouth where their son was born in 1922. Promotion in 1923 saw him posted to the Admiralty in London and he brought his wife and baby son to live in Dorney Reach. A second son was born in 1926, but Frank's career as a naval shipbuilder took the family away by 1930. It seems likely that their house was named for HMS Valhalla, a destroyer built in 1916-7, which perhaps was the first ship Frank had been involved with.



- 1918 -
F. A. POUND, CONSTRUCTOR LIEUTENANT

Next door lived another young family. Claude Bloor was 26 and born in Chiswick, although he and his parents did live in Maidenhead for a time. During the First World War he served as a junior officer in the Royal Field Artillery and was treated for a gunshot wound in his right arm in 1917. An only child, he followed his father in becoming a chartered accountant and joined the same firm in the City of London. In 1919 he married Maude Grantham and their daughter Jeanne was born in 1921 while they were living in East Molesley. Claude became a partner in the firm in 1923 and the family moved to their new home in Dorney Reach, which they called Jeanne Lodge after their little girl. The Bloors did not however stay long and by 1926 were living in Bedford Park where their son was born. A later owner renamed the house White Lodge.

The next house, a chalet bungalow, was the home of a Scottish couple, Arthur and Lily Turnbull, from the end of December 1923. The house was called Sunnyside, perhaps after the street of that name in Edinburgh. In their early forties, the Turnbells had been married since 1910 and previously lived in South London. They do not appear to have had any children. Lily had been a shorthand typist before her marriage and Arthur worked as a clerk and commercial traveller. He served in the RAF as an aircraftsman during the 1914-18 war and spent a year of that in France. In the late 1930s Lily's elderly parents came to live with them in Dorney Reach. Then tragedy struck. A casualty of the Great Depression, Arthur was made redundant by the woollen merchant who had employed him for eleven years – effectively from the end of his RAF service. He became very depressed and committed suicide on 10 November 1930 by throwing himself under a Bakerloo line train at Paddington. Lily's parents returned to Edinburgh where two months later her father died. Lily probably went with them as the house was recorded as unoccupied in April 1931. But she did return to Sunnyside, where in 1939 she was housekeeper to the occupiers – a widower and his late wife's brother and sister.



The fourth house in this group, Dorincourt, was bought on 10 October 1923 by Leslie Moss and his wife Ethel. Married since 1909, they were in their mid-thirties. They came from north London and Leslie worked as a marine claims settler at Lloyds Insurance. Apparently childless, they took a leading part in arranging social activities to raise funds for the first Dorney village hall – “*whist drives, dances, concerts and sales*”. Leslie’s father had been an actor and theatre manager and there were other family theatrical

connections. At home they laid out the garden. The front was screened with a yew hedge which still survives, as does the ornamental fishpond in the centre of the back lawn. Beyond, an avenue of filbert nut trees led to an area where fruit and vegetables were grown. Having designed the house the way they wanted it, this couple remained much longer than most residents and it was not until 1951 that they moved away.

Jumping over the next plot, which was still vacant, the house called Taroba was owned and occupied by John and Winifred Malin. John worked as a patents’ clerk and came from Sunningdale, completing the purchase on 5 October 1923. Newly married and aged in their twenties, the Malins had a son born in 1926 and stayed in Dorney Reach until 1934. Their reason for naming the house is unknown, but they called a later home, in Chorleywood, “Dorney End”.

The final one of this first group of houses to be occupied was Longfield, where Walter Carter moved in on 26 November 1923. Walter had joined the army as a private early in the First World War and went to fight in France in January 1915. He was commissioned as an officer at the end of the year and the following year married Esme. Before they came to Dorney Reach, Walter and Esme lived in Wandsworth where their son was born in 1920. Walter worked as a jeweller specialising in restoring antique jewellery, in Gerrard Street in Soho. Walter and Esme were in their early thirties when they moved in and a second child, a daughter, was born in 1926. The Carter family was still living in Longfield at the start of the Second World War and probably still in 1949, but later moved to Sussex.

As the Dorney Reach estate grew, another developer became involved. L Walter & Sons, a London based firm of draughtsmen and builders, announced in March 1926 that they had acquired building rights as part of the estate and offered to build standard bungalows to purchasers’ own requirements for £595. Meanwhile the Dorney Estates Company branched out to build a Dorney Estate in Banstead in Surrey. The company ceased trading by September 1931, by which time the new estate in Dorney Reach comprised 34 houses. Harcourt Road was named after an 18th century bride of Sir Charles Palmer.



Our houses have for the most part stood the test of time. Often extended and modernised, they continue to shelter us today. May they long continue to do so.

Virginia Silvester