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**DORNEY  
PARISH AND  
CHURCH**

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*Historical Notes*

COMPILED BY

REV · A · C · ADCOCK

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## Preface

I AM not in a position to write a proper History of Dorney. This would involve two or three years at least of quite complicated historical research. It would take a long time to classify and examine even the local evidence; and it would also be necessary to do much research in the Lincoln Diocesan Archives, the Public Records Office and several other collections. Even a small village like Dorney has had many complicated connections with other places in the course of its long history.

It is, however, possible to collect a certain amount of information which is likely to be interesting to present-day parishioners and visitors. The people of Dorney ought to

know something about the place they live in; they have a goodly heritage which includes a beautiful parish church; and they have a duty to hand on this heritage unspoiled to their successors. One of the aims of historical writing is to make us aware of such gifts and such duties.

Those who are interested in knowing more than these notes can tell them can refer to the authorities on which they are partly based. In particular I am indebted to some typescript notes compiled by a previous Vicar, the Revd. J. Archer, and given to the Parish in 1913. The other principal authorities include:

- Dictionary of National Biography.
- Victoria History of the County of Buckingham, 1907.
- The Architectural and Topographical Record, 1908. Part 2, Vol.I.
- G. Lipscombe : History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham, 1847.
- D. Lyson : Magna Britannia, 1813.
- F. Grose : The Antiquities of England and Wales, 1773.
- Various papers in the proceedings of the Bucks Archaeological Society.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. Bucks. Vol. I. 1912. Murray's Buckinghamshire Architectural Guide (illustration of interior).

**A.C. Adcock Vicar of Dorney**  
**September 1948**



## The Village and the Manor

IT is not certain how Dorney got its name. Several theories have been put forward. Professor Ekwall, probably the world's greatest authority on English Place Names, in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names*, derives the name from the Old English 'dorena ieg' which means 'island of the humble bees'. Another theory derives it from 'dorn' meaning 'thorn' and makes it mean 'thorn island'.

In ancient times the Thames was a much bigger river than it is now. It spread over much of what is now the Thames Valley, forming large lagoons, dotted with small islands which were very marshy. A number of these islands are now riverside towns and villages, but they retain the old names they had when they were still islands. This old word for island is sometimes spelt ea, or ey, or eyot. It forms part of the name of many Thames side villages and towns, Thus Eton is Eaton, or Island-Town. Chelsea is Chesel-ea, or Shingle-Island. Putney is Putten-Ea, or Pond Island. Dorney is 'Island of the Humble Bees', or, perhaps, Thorn Island. It is interesting to note that the old name of the site of Westminster Abbey was also Dorney.

According to one theory the name of the Thames itself means 'Spreading Water'. It may have been made up of the word Thame or Tam, meaning 'broad' or 'spreading' and the word 'Isis' which is the Latin for an old Celtic word 'uisge' meaning 'water'. From about Dorchester, where it began to spread, the river came to be known as the 'Thame-Isis', or 'Spreading Water'.

Thus, the name of our village takes us back to very ancient times when Dorney was a little island among the spreading waters of the Thames valley. Technically, the village is still on an island, though the surrounding waters are little more than a brook, except at flood times when the Thames returns to its ancient habits.

This derivation of the name Dorney fits in better with the facts as a whole than the idea that the name of the place is based on the name of a family. None of the references to a family name seem old enough to provide an adequate explanation. There was an ancient family of that name in Gloucestershire. There was a John Dorney in the 14th century. There were also some Dawneys in Aylesbury in 1771. But there is no reason for supposing that any of them were connected with this village. The other theories suggested would seem to be somewhat fanciful.

It is said that there was a manor at Dorney before the Norman Conquest and that it was held by Aldred, a vassal of Earl Morcar.

According to the Domesday Survey, made in 1086, at Dornei on the Thames there was a manor assessed at three hides, with a meadow for the horses and land for three plough who in turn sold it to Richard Hyll. This Richard Hyll was Lord of the Manor at the date of the first Court Roll extant, 1514. James Hyll sold it to Sir William Garrard, Knight, together with 1600 acres of land, for £600 in 1537. Sir William

Garrard was Lord Mayor of London. He may have built the Garrard Chapel in the Church. He left his lands to his son, Sir William Garrard, who passed on the estate to his wife for her lifetime, to pass after her death to her eldest surviving son, Thomas, in male tail. But there were complicated and bitter family quarrels inside the Garrard family. These seem to have produced confusion in the arrangement of the property. And in 1628 the Manor passed into the hands of Sir James Palmer, third son of Sir Thomas Palmer, of Wingham, Kent, who had married Martha Garrard, Thomas Garrard's sister, in 1613. Since 1628 it has remained with the Palmer family. In the Garrard Chapel there is the tomb of Sir William Garrard, who died in 1607, and his wife Elizabeth. (See illustration and also further description below). The main structure of Dorney Court itself dates from the days of the Lyttons. The internal panelling was probably the work of the Garrards. During the Georgian period much of the 16th century structure was obscured by a new East front; but this has since been removed and the 16th century work has been restored.



The Palmers who succeeded the Garrards were an old family. According to Gibbs's *Worthies of Buckinghamshire*, "all the adventurers in the Holy War (as Fuller and other have it) were called pilgrims or palmers, and therefore several Christian champions after this expedition retained this devout appellation; so that there have been above sixty considerable families at a time in England of this very surname, differing in their arms and noways related but by marriage. The first mentioned under the assumed name of Palmer was the founder and first Prior of Dublin Priory, founded in 1188. He was of Danish origin, and of that family who were afterwards

Earls of Castlemaine. "There is an original record in Dorney Court, which states that the Palmers of Sussex are reputed, in that county, one of the ancient families before the Conquest, and that they served in the Holy War. From a pedigree of the family since the reign of Edward I with whom ended the Crusades. it appears that from 1307 to 1670, the Palmers have matched with four noble families the Lords Sands, Audley, Powis and Cirandison ; have married ten heiresses, viz., Seddinghouse, Hopman, Bilton, Clement, Wisse, Audley, Verney, Villiers and Ferrers. Besides, by Clement, they quarter the arms of Tewder Maur, Prince of Wales in the time of William Rufus. The chief houses of this family were at Angmering and Parham in Sussex, Wingham in Kent, and Dorney in Bucks." (Robert Gibbs, op. cit. p314).

Sir James Palmer (1584-1657) acquired Dorney in 1628. His father was Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to James 1 who made him a Baronet in 1621. Sir James himself was a personal friend of Charles I before his accession to the throne and it was he who established the close connection between Dorney Court and the Stuarts. He was of the Bedchamber of James I and fell sick of the ague at the same time as the King. The Duke and Duchess of Buckingham prescribed plasters for them both and Sir James thought he owed his recovery to this prescription, though the King himself died.

Sir James Palmer was a miniaturist of considerable merit. Two miniatures attributed to Isaac Oliver after the 300th Anniversary Exhibition of Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1947 are now attributed to Sir James Palmer.

Sir James was knighted by Charles I; he became Gentleman Usher of the Privy Chamber and afterwards Chancellor of the Order of the Garter. He remained a close friend of Charles and helped him to build up his great collection of pictures. He was a strong supporter of the King in the Civil War, maintaining a troop of horse at his own cost. Much of his plate, jewels and furniture were plundered and two-thirds of the Court was dismantled, probably on account of the expenses incurred in the war. In 1646 the Court was seized by the Parliamentarians but was rescued by a contingent of soldiers from Windsor Castle. Sir James himself fought in Wales and other theatres of war; in the Manuscript Room of the British Museum there is a letter in his own handwriting, addressed to Prince Rupert, giving an account of the military situation in central Wales where he was then serving.

Sir James was succeeded by his son, Colonel Philip Palmer (1615-83) who was knighted by Charles II and who lived very extravagantly. His estate was once seized by the Crown because he had stood security for a friend who eventually failed to meet his obligations. His half-brother, Robert Palmer , Earl of Castlemaine, helped to get him out of the difficulty and the estate was conveyed to him. Later on the Earl of Castlemaine resettled the estate in mail tail and exercised considerable control over the manor until his death in 1705.

Through Roger Palmer, Earl of Castlemaine, Dorney continued its connection with the Stuart Court. Roger married Barbara Villiers, very much against the wishes of his father, Sir James. Barbara Palmer was the chief mistress of Charles II from the Restoration until 1672.

In the seventeenth century, when Dorney Court was so closely connected with State affairs and so heavily committed to the Royalist cause, a clergyman born at Dorney Vicarage ....

Before leaving the seventeenth century it is worth noting the tradition that the first pineapple grown in England was grown at Dorney Court by Sir Philip's gardener, Rose, and was presented to Charles II. Investigation of this tradition is still in progress. There is a picture by Dankaerts which shows the presentation. The house in the background is certainly not Dorney Court and some people have disputed Dorney's claims on this ground. On the other hand, the Dorney tradition does not claim that the presentation took place at Dorney and it might be argued that the pineapple would more appropriately be taken to the King than the King to the Pineapple. It is possible that the picture has a purely imaginary house in the background. Alternatively, it is possible that the picture is not a picture of the presentation of the first pineapple grown in England, but rather of one of the first pineapples imported from Barbados about this time. In favour of Dorney's claim to have produced the first English pineapple is the fact that there certainly was a gardener called Rose. He may well have been the Rose who was described elsewhere as a Royal Gardener; Charles may have employed him on account of his skill, which included the growing of pineapples. Pineapple culture may have started in England from suckers of the fruit tasted by Evelyn at a State banquet in August 1668. Evelyn claims that a pineapple was brought from Barbados in 1661. This is the first reference to the pineapple in England.

At Dorney Court there is a model of a pineapple in solid stone. The tablet attached to the model says " Made to commemorate the fact that the first pineapple grown in England was cultivated at Dorney Court by Rose, gardener to Sir Philip Palmer Kt. The original picture of King Charles accepting the Pineapple is now at Ham House, circa 1665."

## The History of the Benefice of Dorney

THE name of the first known Rector was Rowland who was presented by the patron, Sir Ralph Danvers and instituted in 1265. About this time Sir Ralph died and it was probably before his son came of age that the Bishop of Lincoln presented in 1270. It is also recorded that at the foundation of the Abbey of Burnham for one Abbess and nine nuns by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, King of the Romans, confirmed by Robert

Gravesend, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1266, the Abbey was endowed with tithes of corn and hay from Dorney and Boveney. By 1274 the patronage seems to have been in the hands of the Bishop of Lincoln who instituted Thomas de Radington. This seems to have been due to the failure of William Danvers to present. The Prioress of Little Marlow complained about this time that William Danvers was failing to present. In 1306 the patronage was in dispute; John de la ....

One of the Vicars of Dorney was thus temporarily deprived on account of the religious changes in the Reformation period. It is also worth noting here that in 1521 Robert Rowe of Dorney is said to have been executed for Protestant opinions. Thomas Scott, a London Draper, born in Dorney, was also executed for heresy rather earlier.

There were some complicated transactions connected with the advowson in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. But Sir James Palmer presented William Flood in 1633. Mr Flood seems to have been turned out by the Cromwellians and replaced by one of their ministers. But in 1667 a priest was again presented by Sir Philip Palmer. But in 1667 a priest was once again presented by Sir Philip Palmer. Apart from the fact that the presentation lapsed to the Crown once under William III in 1693, it has remained with the Palmer family ever since.



## The Vicarage and Glebe

THERE is mention of a house for the priest in the second year of Edward VI. It was worth 10/- a year. The unfortunate chantry priest found difficulty in collecting his fees and the churchwardens made protests. His stipend seems to have been £6.13.4 per annum.

The present vicarage house dates in part from the age of Elizabeth. It was added to in 1688 and again in the 18th century. Some less strong and less attractive building was added by the Rev. Sir Henry Palmer in the early part of the 19th century. It is recorded that when in 1840 the foundations were being dug for some of these additions some weapons of war were found, probably belonging to Cromwell's army, which had once been encamped at Windsor. What happened to these has not, however, been recorded.

When William Flood was Vicar in the 17th Century a Terrier recorded that " The Vicaridge howse consisteth of Two bayes covered with Tyle and lofted over, And there are belonging to it Outhouses viz. a little barne an Hayhowse and a Cowhowse consisting of about two bayes and an halfe and somewhat more with an Orchard Garden and Hayse containing by estimation an acre." It goes on to describe the glebe land around it and sums up by saying that " the whole quantity of Glebeland Meddow and Arable amounteth to 25 acres and one Roods " The naming of fields

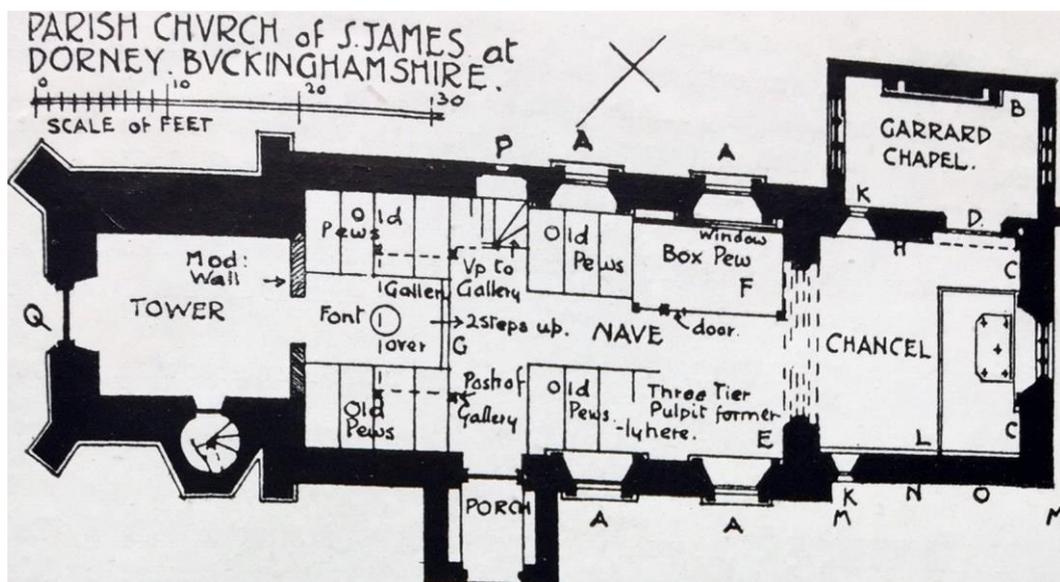
adjoining the Vicarage and garden clearly identifies the 17th century vicarage with the present one.

It is interesting also to note that in 1657 it was ordered that the parishes of Hitcham and Dorney be united as a means of augmenting clerical stipends. In the same year, however, the order was suspended because objections had been raised and the survey was thought to have been defective. The scheme was then abandoned. The Vicarage House seems to have been let during the 18th century at least. The Palmers seem to have been letting to other people. At the end of the 18th century there was some confusion about ownership, especially of the boundaries of the Vicarage garden. Litigation occurred between the Palmers and the Church. Also the Vicar needed to go to court to get an eviction order against the Hon. George Pomeroy in 1804.

## Parish Registers

PARISH Registers appear to have been introduced into England in the reign of Henry VIII, on the advice of his Vicar General, Thomas Cromwell. Cromwell is thought to have got the idea of ordering the keeping of parish registers from the records kept by priests in the Low Countries, where he lived in his youth. The Archbishop of Toledo instituted the system in Spain in 1497, and the system spread to the Netherlands. The oldest registers at Dorney are written on parchment and begin in the year 1538. Until 1586 the Baptisms are in Latin. From 1590 and for several years they are again in Latin. Registration lapsed in the Cromwellian period and there are no entries from 1647. There are no records of either baptisms or burials extant till 1726, nor of marriages till 1733. From 1748 there are no baptism entries till 1760, nor of marriages from 1746 till 1755, nor of burials from 1751 till 1760. In 1813 it was ordered by authority that new registers should be provided and be more orderly kept in books ruled with columns for the various particulars and the signature of the officiating minister.

It is regrettable that hardly any of the old vestry books and other parochial records have been kept. Much valuable evidence of the life of the parish in the past has thus been lost or destroyed.



Plan of Dorney Church in 1912

## Notes on the Fabric and Furniture of the Parish Church of St. James

### CHANCEL

In the south wall of the chancel there is a stone cut out of solid chalk, in the shape of an inverted J, which is believed to be part of a Saxon circular-headed window. This is the oldest stone in the Church as far as can be seen. The whole of the outside of this wall which is of flint mixed with chalk has been cut back and plastered at some time, and later re-faced with chalk, and no other relics of this date can be seen. Immediately below this is a door, also blocked up, probably 13th cent. This also has been cut back on the outside but has pointed arch with small label. Inside it is covered by segmental pointed arch. To the east of the door are two trefoil pointed windows, probably of the same date, divided by a mullion and contained internally under a segmental pointed arch. It is said that there was once an altar tomb in a recess under this arch, and that it was defaced by the Parliamentary soldiers during the Civil War.

The East Window is 19th century work It is said that the east window formerly contained ancient stained glass, with a small figure of a man praying in the middle. The chancel arch dates from the 14th century.

The Altar dates from 20th cent. It is made of old oak from the Court.

The Choir Stalls etc. were made out of old oak between 1913 and 1918. The screen is the lower part of a 15th century screen.

The candelabra is probably 17th century; it came from Huntercombe, Manor, being presented to Dorney in 1916 by Mr. E. T. Bartlett.

### WALL PAINTINGS

The wall paintings were first noticed in 1926 by Col. C. H. D. Palmer and were examined and treated by Mr. E. C. Rouse in 1932. In Vol. XII —No. 7 (1933) of "Records of Bucks" Mr. Rouse writes:

"The subject is tolerably complete. The figures are placed one on each side of the arch opening into the north chapel, which is mentioned by the Commission as being probably of the 14th century, though altered. The treatment of the subject is interesting. It is not unusual for the figures of the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin in the Annunciation to be separated and placed one in each splay of a window . . . But the placing of the two on each side of an arch or doorway is less common. . . At Dorney, the arch can never have been a window, and the evidence is interesting as confirming the existence of a chapel in the 14th century, though it was completely rebuilt . . . the stone jambs of the earlier arch being at the same time slightly cut back, and screen doors inserted.

The figure of the Angel . . . is on the west side . . . in red outline against a simple ogee canopy, quite plain except for a fleur de lis finial. He wears a draped flowing robe of white and a cloak of deep red lined with black. . . . The hands have perished by the cutting back of the arch for enlargement . . . The Virgin stands facing the Angel on the

east side of the arch, her right hand raised as if in wonder at the message, her left holding a closed book with clasp. . . . The Virgin has a white robe over a dark red or black garment. There is some evidence of a nimbus and her canopy is more elaborate than that of the angel.”

Mr. Rouse considers that the work is simple, but characterised by a wonderful sense of line and dignity. He thinks the work was probably executed in the second quarter of the 14th century.

There is also some fragmentary painting on the south side of the tower arch, east face and also on the north side of it.

#### **NAVE**

In the main the nave dates from the end of the 12th century. Near the W. end of the S. wall there is a small door, now blocked, with a pointed arch. Further east are two later doors opposite each other and of the same design. That on the north side is partly blocked up but the outside and inside are both visible. Externally it has a plain pointed chamfered arch, and outside a pointed segmental arch, also chamfered. The inner arch of the south door is similar, but the outer one has been raised on account of the rising of the ground. The door is a good three panel 17th century door. West of the door is the original level of the floor.

#### **PULPIT**

There was a three-decker pulpit until about 1890. It was then replaced by a Victorian one in order to make room for more pews. This in turn was replaced in 1910 by the present one. It was made up locally out of panels bought from Somerset probably 17th century Dutch work.

#### **PEWS**

There was formerly a high family pew but three of the sides have been cut away. Seven of the other pews are 17th century work.

#### **FONT**

The late Norman font is large, with columnar compartments sculptured with a cross flory and rose cinquefoil within a lozenge fleur de lis. The Revd. J. Archer thinks that it may have been placed in the church by Ralph de Alvin, mindful of the font in his paternal house. At any rate it dates from the age of the Danvers family's tenure of Dorney.

#### **TOWER**

The embattled tower is of brick with dressings round the windows, and buttresses, which are of freestone; the plinth is composed of rough flints covered with a coarse stucco of flint gravel. On the south side is an hexagonal stair turret finishing in battlements which are well above the parapet. In the belfry stage there are four two-light windows with good mouldings. Over the west door there is a three-light window. On the south wall is a fret pattern of large size in vitrified headers.

## **BELLS**

There are four bells in the tower and they are inscribed as follows in raised letters :—

1st or Treble Bell - " William Eldridge made mee. 1698."

2<sup>nd</sup> - Prayse the Lord. 1631.-

3rd Bell - " Blessed be the name of the Lorde. 1582."

4th Bell - " Richard Sidding, Thomas Martin. Church Wardens. 1771."

William Eldridge cast the treble in the reign of William III and died in 1718. Henry Knight of Reading made the second in the reign of Charles I. The third is Elizabethan and bears the trade stamp of Roger Landon of Wokingham. The tenor bell was made in the reign of George III; it has the medallion of Thomas Swaine. He formerly lived at Taplow.

(Further information about the makers of these bells can be found in *The Church Bells of Buckinghamshire*, by A. H. Cocks. 1897).

In the eighteenth century these bells were not appreciated. In 1750 a faculty was granted to Sir Charles Palmer, Bart, and the Churchwardens to remove the three old bells and sell them to raise the money for a large church clock and dial. They had represented to the Archdeaconry that "in the said parish Church of Dorney aforesaid there are four bells and the three smallest of them very bad ton'd, and that a large church clock and Dial is very much wanting in the parish of Dorney aforesaid and would be very usefull and convenient to the inhabitants of the said parish."

## **PORCH**

The porch is of brick with flint panels. It is ornamented with brick bands and keystones which were once stuccoed. One of the stones inset has the date, 1661, and the initial W, which may be the initial of the contemporary churchwarden.

## **GALLERY**

There is a 17th century gallery, inscribed on the centre panel " HENRY FELO, 1634." It is ballustraded and is of excellent though simple workmanship.

## **NORTH CHAPEL (Garrard Chapel)**

A mortuary chapel built late in the 16th or early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As we have seen, when considering the wall paintings, there was almost certainly a chapel there in the 14th century, however. There is a good 17th century wooden gate at the entrance of the present chapel.

## **THE GARRARD TOMB**

The tomb of Sir William Garrard, who died in 1607, and his wife Elizabeth, is typical of the period. The use of skulls as part of the design is, however, curious. Some of the children are carrying skulls in their hands. This apparently indicates which of them were dead at the time the monument was erected.

### **BLACK LETTER BIBLE**

In a case in the Garrard Chapel. The date of this Bible, 1617, is determined by the fact that in II ,Samuel XII, 20, ' anointed ' is written 'annoined' In Jeremiah XVIII, 3 ' wheels ' becomes 'whelles ' . Owing to a flaw in the Dorney Bible the double l looks like li. The initial letter of Psalm 122 has a representation of St. John the Divine. Frontispieces, Genealogies etc, have been lost.

### **GLASS**

South Window in Sanctuary contains glass which is said to have come from St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The design is of Rose, Shamrock and Thistle.

In the S.W. Corner of chancel there is a panel of St. Paul, found in Dorney Court in 1920, possibly forming a pair with that of St. Philip in the old north door.

The small window in S.W. Corner of Nave was inserted in accordance with the will of Lieut. J. H. Moriarty, R.G.A. It contains a figure of St. Charles, King and Martyr. Dedicated 1920.

The East Window was inserted in memory of the Revd. Sir Henry Palmer who died in 1865.

### **PLATE**

Though Dorney was well supplied with plate and vestments in the reign of Edward VI, there is little plate now. There is, however, an Elizabethan silver chalice with the date mark 1569. Other communion plate is uninteresting. The terriers of the 18th century and some early 19th century records refer to pewter chalice and paten but there is no evidence as to what happened to these.

### **TABLETS, PLAQUES, ETC.**

In the Tower, on the South Wall, there are tablets recording the benefactions of Mrs. Elizabeth Sedding, who died in 1810, and Mrs. Parker Sedding, who made a gift in 1835. (In the Churchyard there is the tomb of Mr. Thomas Sedding and Mrs. Elizabeth Sedding).