

TRUMPER'S FIELD

Trumper's Field is a familiar part of Dorney to most of us. Sandwiched between the school and the motorway, providing access to the river, it is used by walkers with dogs or without, and children play there every day after school. Sadly, at the moment it is disfigured by earthworks and fencing for the motorway works. Who knows if the orchids that used to bloom there in the spring will ever reappear?

I was asked recently if I knew where the name Trumper's Field came from. While I don't have cast iron proof, I'm sure it was named after the Trumper family, who were substantial farmers in the neighbourhood for over 100 years, through 4 generations. Although we've no evidence that the family ever farmed the field that now bears their name, we do know that in the 19th century Joseph Trumper rented the large arable field called Oak Stubbs where Dorney Reach now lies. It seems only right that a family which had such a big impact on life in Dorney should be remembered. (Regular readers of this magazine may recall that I have written previously in its pages about the Trumbers. Bear with me, please, as I know more about them now than I did then).

The Trumper family first arrived in the area around 1783. Joseph and Sarah Trumper came from Iver, where most of their children were born, but Joseph died shortly afterwards, leaving his widow with 5 children under the age of 12. She brought them up at West Town Farm, while running the farm business there and at Lake End Farm. At a time when society was male dominated, she clearly held her own, and even served two terms as overseer of the poor for Burnham, very unusually for a woman.

Sarah died in 1799 aged 52. She left two sons, both of whom farmed in Dorney. William, who never married, took on Dorney Farm (later called Manor Farm) about 1802 and remained there until his death in 1854. The tithe apportionment drawn up in the early 1840s shows that he farmed 356 acres spread over Dorney and Boveney, which at that time included much of Eton Wick. In 1851, he employed 27 labourers. As well as growing arable crops, he kept cattle, sheep and pigs; a quarter of his land was grass. Like many of the wider Trumper family, he was a skilled surveyor and valuer, responsible for drawing up plans for local enclosure awards and undertaking valuations for the Great Western Railway. He also worked as a grain dealer. When he died, Henry Palmer of Dorney Court paid a warm tribute to him in the 'Windsor and Eton Express', highlighting his kindness and generosity. This did not stop Henry Palmer from subsequently bringing a court case against William's estate, alleging that William owed him substantial sums of money.

Sarah's eldest son, Joseph II, took over West Town Farm from his mother, and his children were born there. In 1798, he had 9 horses, 2 waggons and 3 carts at his disposal – a sizeable operation. A map believed to date from about 1800 shows Joseph II renting over 250 acres from the Palmers' estate. By 1812, another map shows the two Trumper brothers occupying many fields across Dorney and Boveney – William mainly around the common and across to the southern end of Thames Field beside the river, Joseph II to the north west of the village. Between 1825 and 1837, Joseph II was at Upton Lea Farm near Slough, but was still operating in Dorney, where one of his workers was killed in a rick yard. The unfortunate man's fellow labourers, plus their wives and families, numbered over 100 at his funeral. By 1840, Joseph II was back in Iver, living at Thorney House, but he and his sons still held farms in and around Dorney. A lease for 21 years of 249 acres in Dorney, Boveney,

Burnham and Hitcham had been agreed with landlord John Palmer in September 1840, and the Tithe apportionment shows that almost all of this was arable land. In addition, a farm of 180 acres in Hitcham was rented from year to year from Lady Grenville. Like his brother William, Joseph II was also a land valuer, and he and his sons dealt in grain and flour. Joseph II died at Thorney House in 1845, and at his burial in Iver were ten of his labourers who had worked for him for a total of nearly 300 years.

Joseph II's son Joseph III succeeded his father in Dorney. Living at Dorney Lodge, his children were all born in Dorney. In 1851, he was farming 705 acres and employing 52 labourers. Between him and his uncle William, the Trummers were employing 79 farm workers from the neighbourhood. An enquiry into the employment of women and children in agriculture in 1867 reported that Joseph III employed women in couching and weeding, but not for haymaking. In 1864 Joseph III took out a lease for 14 years on the three farms of Burnham Abbey, Lake End and West Town. He now lived at Lake End Farm, and leased out Burnham Abbey farmhouse. By 1871, the area of his farms had reduced to 580 acres, with 27 labourers.

The year before he died, in 1875 Joseph III divided the remainder of his lease between his two sons. Joseph IV, who was living at Lake End at the time, was assigned Burnham Abbey, while William was to have Lake End and West Town. Joseph IV moved to Burnham Abbey, but then left Dorney around 1879/80 - perhaps at the end of the lease; he gave up farming and moved away. William stayed at Lake End, and in 1881 he was farming 556 acres with 13 men and 4 boys. His children were born there, and in 1878 he was elected onto the Dorney School Board, becoming vice-chairman in 1887. He left Dorney about 1897 and retired to Devon.

As for Trumper's Field itself, the 1812 map shows that it was actually the southern tip of Taplow parish, owned by Lady Orkney, and divided in two from north to south, the western part next to the river being Amerden Marsh, and the eastern part called Dorney Pin. Probably, it formed part of Amerden Farm. Now the field is owned by South Bucks District Council and separated from Taplow by the motorway. It was allocated as open space for local use, and, thanks to some good detective work by another resident, we now know how it came to be called Trumper's Field. That name was chosen from suggestions made in a competition organised by our parish council in 1967. Although it was 70 years since the Trumper family had last lived in Dorney, someone obviously still remembered the contribution they had made to village life.

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