

Location of 'Datchet Common' and the post-war Travellers' Site

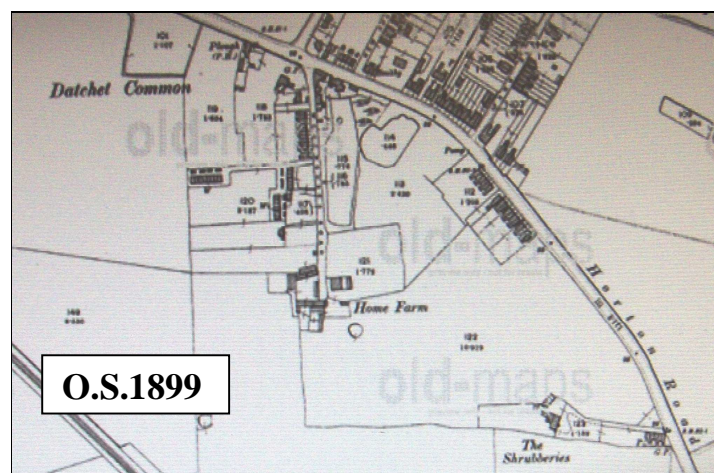
Datchet Common ceased to exist in any public access rights sense soon after 1810 (see previous article). However, the name has persisted as a general description for the eastern end of Datchet, including both the community and the land formerly within the boundaries of the common (see previous article).

By the late 1800s 'Datchet Common' was the name of a secondary settlement east of the village, which was then developing rapidly; a parallel would be Eton Wick. In around 1900 Datchet Common almost became an official separate community with its own local councillors, and although that did not happen it was self-contained with a range of shops and services through much of the 20th century.

'On the Common' was a loosely applied term to mean anywhere in this area, and crucially not any specific plot of open or accessible grassland. The cemetery and its chapel were 'on the common' as was the mission chapel and the shops. Going 'up the common' meant walking from Datchet Village to Datchet Common, rather than to an open grassy place. The Datchet Common label on the 1881 map makes it clear that the whole area of the sub-settlement was what was being referred to. As building development has filled in the gap between and around the two settlements, the O.S. map label has been moved to fit into any convenient space on the map near to its previous place, without regard to its meaning.



Screen-grabs from <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html>



In 1899 the map label has been placed at the east end of what is now the Rec in order not to obscure the newly built-up area of Datchet Common to the north of Horton Road. It in no way implies that the open land to the south of the label had become the Common, but that area was within the Datchet Common settlement.



screen-grab as above

During the late 19th and early 20th century the Guards' Polo Ground was at Datchet Common, north of Horton Road, in an area now lost to the reservoir. In WWII an anti-aircraft base occupied the ground and afterwards it became a traveller's site, the barrack huts at first also being used. On the right edge of the map the Guards' Pavilion can just be seen. The label 'Datchet Common' has been moved to the triangle of land under current discussion, but that does not mean it has become the Common, just a convenient empty place to put it, and applying equally to the other side of Horton Road and to the area in general (as it still does).

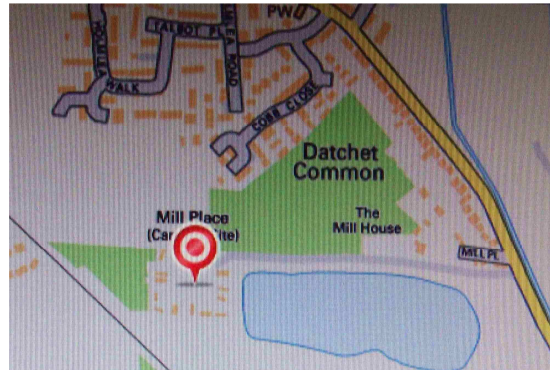


Kathleen Wingfield's mother was photographed on the Polo Ground site in 1947, on the day Kathleen left for Canada. (One of several similar photos.)

This was an established and official site for caravans. If later on there were caravans on the land now owned by the Loveridge family, their presence would have been temporary and unofficial; I have found no evidence for such use of the land.

My understanding is that once planning for the reservoir was under way the travellers would be required to move and that this was the reason for the official provision at Mill Place instead. There was a gap of some years (?) before the new site was available so the move would not have been a direct one.

Without understanding the background, a modern map can be very misleading indeed. This one is from the old-maps website's homepage, used to locate relevant historic maps. By happening to be the most recent place the label has landed, and one of the last plots of vacant land, this image suggests that there is still a patch of green 'common' land behind Horton Road, which is not so.



These last two maps (below) are included just as part of the development sequence in case they may be of interest. Do contact me if there is anything you'd like to discuss about them or anything else in this account.

