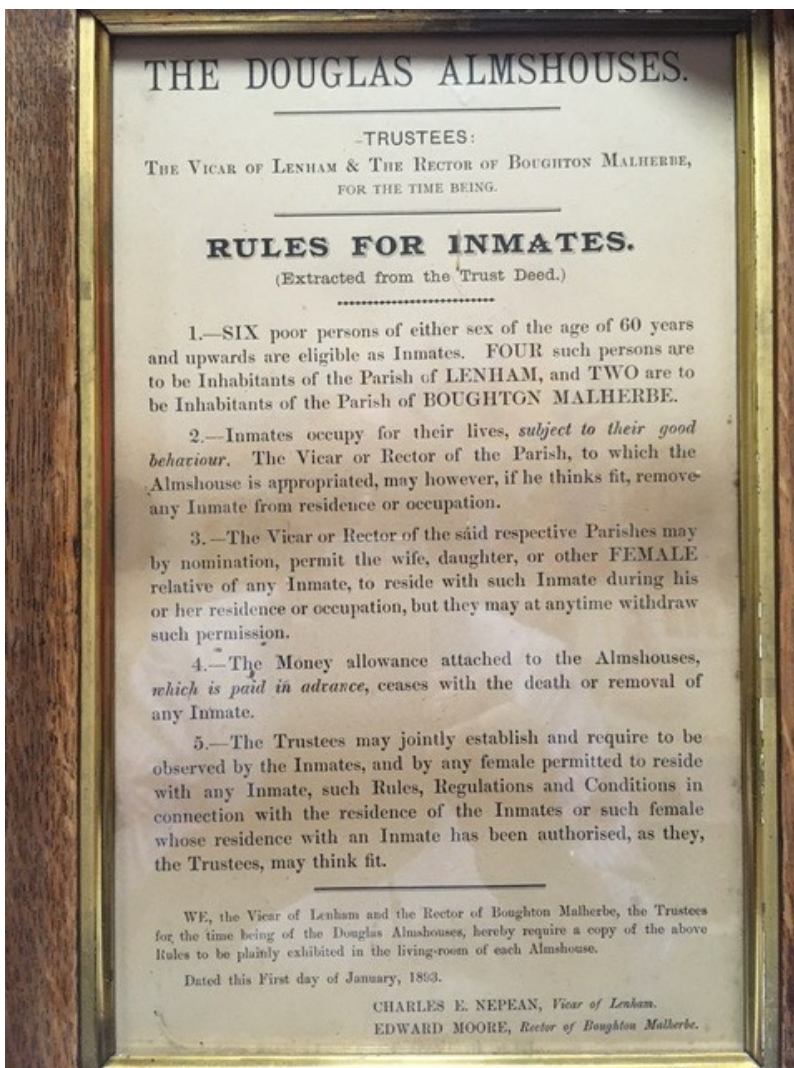


Why the name Douglas Road?

by Amy Myers

Meet Mr James Stoddart Douglas and the Douglas charity

James Stoddart Douglas, born in 1793, was a distant relation of the George Douglas of Chilston Park and a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. George was a bachelor, but he had adopted a daughter, Margaret, who married James in 1830. Twenty-eight years later on George's death, James inherited Chilston Park, and that same year he set up the first of two indentures (the second in 1866) for the foundation of the Douglas Charity. That name however, was an umbrella for two separate charities, the Douglas Charity in the Ancient Parish of Lenham and the Douglas Charity in the parish of Boughton Malherbe.¹



Their charitable objects were the same: providing almshouses for the poor, originally four in the case of Lenham and two for Boughton Malherbe. These 'poor persons' were to be of 'good character, of not less than 60 years of age, who in the case of the Lenham Charity, have resided in the Ancient Parish of Lenham, and in the case of the Boughton Charity, have resided in the Parish of Boughton Malherbe, in each case for not less than two years next preceding the time of their appointment, who have not during the latter of such years received Poor-law relief, and who from age, ill-health, accident, or infirmity, are, wholly or in part, unable to maintain themselves by their own exertions.'

¹ Charity Commission approval order 1908

As will be seen from the photograph, which is dated 1893, the rules for the residents were originally tough by our standards. Even by 1908 the Charity Commission's order demanded that 'no Almsperson shall be absent from the Almshouse buildings for a period exceeding 24 hours without the consent in writing of the Trustees or their Clerk.' Fortunately in special cases this was waived – albeit only retrospectively after the absence had occurred.

The Lenham almshouses were constructed on the site of the former Lenham workhouse.² That had been disposed of before 1839 after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1835 for the sum of £333 but its position side by side with the mortuary-cum-gaol was somewhat grim.

Owing to their similar missions, the Douglas Charity had worked closely with the Honywood Charity³ for some time before they finally joined forces in 1996 to continue providing homes and support for elderly local residents.

² Lenham parish records; Overseers Workhouse, Kent History and Library Centre, p.224/18

³ See under Honywood Road