

Dorney in 1966: A Year of Celebration, Community Engagement, and Emerging Concerns

The *Dorney Parish News* from January to December 1966 paints a vibrant picture of a close-knit community actively participating in church life, social events, and local affairs. The year is marked by celebrations, both local—like the annual Parish Summer Fete—and national—such as the Queen's visit to Burnham Abbey—and ongoing discussions on matters that would shape the future of Dorney.

A Strong Religious Foundation:

The Parish Church of St. James is central to Dorney life, with the *Parish News* offering detailed accounts of:

- **Regular Services:** The publication diligently lists Sunday and weekday services, including Holy Communion, Mattins, Evensong, and Sunday School, emphasising the church's role in the weekly rhythms of the village.
- **Special Events:** The church hosts a variety of events, such as the Dedication of the Stained Glass Window in memory of Isabel Stayner, the Mothering Sunday Family Service, and services during Holy Week and Easter.
- **Christian Stewardship Campaign:** The *Parish News* actively promotes the campaign, aimed at increasing financial contributions and encouraging parishioners to dedicate time and talents to the church. Detailed reports on campaign costs and achievements are provided, highlighting the collective effort to support the church.

An Active Social Scene:

Dorney is home to a thriving network of social organisations catering to a range of interests:

- **Dorney Women's Institute (DWI):** The DWI, with a “surprising number of stalwarts”, holds monthly meetings featuring speakers on topics like dried flower arrangements and wild birds and flowers in Bucks. The group also organises outings, including a proposed trip to Paris.
- **Dorney Horticultural Society (DHS):** The DHS actively promotes gardening within the community, hosting film shows, plant sales, and the annual Garden Competition for the Bulbeck Cup.
- **Dorney Players:** This amateur drama group provides entertainment for the parish, staging plays and organising social evenings.
- **Dorney Locospotters' Club:** This club, unfortunately, had to disband in 1966 due to dwindling membership.

Engaging with Local Concerns:

The *Parish News* serves as a platform for discussing issues impacting Dorney:

- **The Passing of the Blue Bus:** The discontinuation of the beloved Blue Bus service due to declining patronage prompts expressions of gratitude for the service and its staff. The Parish Council also takes up the issue of bus services with Thames Valley, advocating for improvements, particularly for school children.
- **Road Safety:** The Parish Council actively engages with the issue of road safety, raising concerns about accidents at Dent's Corner and Clime's Corner. They plan to meet with the County Council's Divisional Surveyor to discuss solutions.
- **Dorney Common:** The management of Dorney Common, specifically the grazing season, the number of animals allowed, and the proposed use of Cinagro fertiliser, is discussed in detail. The *Parish News* also reports on the Commons Registration Act of 1965, which requires the registration of common land and associated rights.

- **New Village Hall:** The Parish Council reports on the progress towards securing a new village hall. Plans are underway for fundraising and applying for grants, and the council is actively seeking a suitable location.

A Year of Celebration:

Dorney experiences moments of joy and celebration throughout 1966:

- **Burnham Abbey's 700th Anniversary:** The neighbouring Burnham Abbey celebrates its 700th anniversary with a visit from Princess Margaret. The *Parish News* shares a detailed account of the event, highlighting the historical significance of the Abbey to Dorney.
- **Parish Summer Fete:** The annual Parish Summer Fete is a highlight of the year, featuring a range of attractions, including the appearance of Miss London Airport 1965/6.
- **Great Western Society Open Day:** The Great Western Society's Open Day at Taplow Station Goods Yard is a success, drawing crowds and showcasing a restored GWR 2-6-2T No.6106.

Emerging Concerns:

Alongside celebrations and community events, several issues emerge in 1966 that would continue to be debated in the years to come:

- **Litter and Vandalism:** Letters to the editor highlight concerns about littering and vandalism in Dorney, particularly involving young people. These letters spark a debate about the responsibility of adults and the need for community action to address these problems.
- **Preserving Dorney's Rural Character:** As the area experiences development pressures, residents express concerns about maintaining Dorney's rural character. A letter to the editor questions the proposal to host a large music festival on Dorney Common, fearing it would disrupt the village's tranquillity.

Dorney in 1966 emerges as a community deeply rooted in tradition, yet facing emerging challenges. The *Parish News* plays a crucial role in fostering community spirit, informing residents, and providing a platform for engaging with local issues. The year is marked by a blend of celebration, progress, and the early stages of debates that would shape the future of the village.