

A Year of Transition: Dorney Parish in 1981

The *Dorney Parish News* from 1981 captures a year marked by change and community engagement. The departure of the Vicar, concerns about youth activities, and discussions about the future of the Parish News itself weave through a tapestry of social events and dedicated efforts by local organisations.

A Fond Farewell

The Vicar, Rev. Paul Hawkins, announced his departure from Dorney in the December issue of the *Parish News*. He and his family moved to Cambridge on January 1, 1982. The community expressed gratitude for his service and wished him well in his new role.

Searching for a New Vicar

The search for a new Vicar and Warden was underway at the end of 1981. The Churchwardens took temporary responsibility for parish matters during this period.

Community Life and Activities

Despite the looming transition, Dorney's community spirit remained strong. Numerous organisations contributed to the village's vibrancy.

- **Dorney Players:** The Dorney Players delighted audiences with productions of "A Home for Stray Cats" in February and "Midsummer Mink" in November. Their commitment to providing local entertainment is evident throughout the year.
- **Dorney Women's Institute (DWI):** The DWI held monthly meetings, featuring speakers and demonstrations on a variety of topics. Their activities included crafting, fundraising for charities, and contributing to the Child Welfare Clinic. The DWI played a significant role in both community service and women's social lives.
- **Dorney Women's Social Club (DWSC):** The DWSC hosted engaging events, including a panel discussion with Eton masters and a talk about antique clocks. They also organised theatre outings, demonstrating their commitment to providing varied social and cultural experiences for members.
- **Dorney & District Horticultural Society (DDHS):** The DDHS organised a range of events focused on gardening, including talks, competitions, a bring & buy sale, and a barbecue/dance.
- **Youth Groups:** Brownie Guides, Cub Scouts, and Guides were active in the village, participating in fundraising, camping trips, skill-building activities, and community service projects.
- **Other Social Events:** The community enjoyed various social gatherings, including jumble sales, dances, whist drives, a "Vicarage Happening," a Royal Wedding celebration picnic, and a Christmas Party for children.

Concerns About Youth Activities

In the March issue, Rev. Hawkins raised concerns about the lack of suitable spaces for teenagers to socialise in the evenings. He noted that while younger children had organised activities, there was a gap for older youth who might benefit from a dedicated space to connect with their peers.

Parish Council and Local Governance

The Parish Council actively addressed local issues, demonstrating its commitment to serving the community. Key topics included:

- **Parish Magazine:** The future of the *Parish News* was a recurring theme in 1981. Rising printing costs and uncertainty about reader support for a price increase created anxiety about the publication's sustainability. The Council explored various cost-saving measures, including format changes and appeals for donations.
- **Road Safety:** The Council advocated for road safety improvements, particularly regarding the speed of traffic through the village. They also requested a pedestrian crossing at the A4 junction with Marsh Lane, recognising the need to enhance pedestrian safety.
- **Bus Service:** The Council sought solutions to maintain a reliable bus service for residents, highlighting the importance of public transportation to the community.
- **Planning Applications:** The Council carefully reviewed planning applications, weighing the potential impacts of proposed developments on the village's character and residents' quality of life.
- **Village Amenities:** The Council oversaw the maintenance and improvement of village amenities, including the playground, footpaths, the War Memorial Garden, and street lighting.

The *Parish News* as a Platform for Community Dialogue

The pages of the *Parish News* served as a forum for discussion on a range of topics beyond local governance. Residents contributed letters expressing their views on:

- **"Trick or Treat"** : Concerns were raised about the appropriateness of the American Halloween tradition of "trick or treat," with some residents viewing it as a potential nuisance or even a form of intimidation.
- **Nuclear War:** The potential threat of nuclear war, heightened by Dr. Nicholas Humphrey's "Four Minutes to Midnight" lecture, sparked anxiety and calls for action to address this global danger.

A Year of Reflection

1981 was a year of transition for Dorney Parish. The departure of the Vicar and the ongoing discussions about the *Parish News* signalled shifts in the community landscape. Despite these changes, the village's commitment to preserving its traditions, supporting local organisations, and engaging in constructive dialogue about its future remained strong. The *Dorney Parish News* offers a window into a resilient community navigating a year of both farewells and new beginnings.