

Key Events and Issues in Dorney Parish During 1996

The *Dorney Parish News* offers a fascinating record of life in Dorney Parish throughout 1996. The year was characterised by the early stages of major construction projects, community initiatives, and evolving local concerns.

Looming Infrastructure Projects and Growing Concerns

The shadow of two significant projects cast itself over the parish in 1996, sparking community discussions and anxieties:

1. Eton College Rowing Trench

- **Contract Awarded, Work Begins:** Eton College awarded the £10 million contract for its controversial rowing lake project to Eton Aggregates Ltd., a local consortium. Work commenced in October, marking the beginning of a long and contentious process.
- **Parish Council Opposition:** The Dorney Parish Council consistently opposed the rowing trench project, citing concerns about its impact on the environment, the increase in heavy lorry traffic, and the lack of consideration shown by Eton College toward the community's interests.
- **Traffic Mitigation Efforts:** Despite its opposition, the Parish Council actively sought to mitigate the project's negative impacts, advocating for a higher percentage of gravel to be transported by conveyor belt over a new bridge rather than by road.

2. Flood Relief Channel/DEEP (Dorney Eton Environmental Panel)

- **Initial Stages and Disruptions:** The early phases of the flood relief channel project led to disruptions for residents, including road closures and concerns about damage to verges along Lake End Road and Court Lane.
- **Community Engagement:** DEEP (Dorney Eton Environmental Panel) facilitated communication between Eton College, the Environment Agency, and the local community. The *Dorney Parish News* regularly published updates on the project's progress and DEEP meetings, providing a platform for residents to voice their concerns and receive information.
- **Archaeological Discoveries:** The initial excavation work for the flood relief channel unearthed significant archaeological finds, including Bronze Age structures, revealing a rich history beneath the Dorney landscape and sparking public interest in the area's past.

Community Life and Celebrations

Beyond the looming infrastructure projects, the *Dorney Parish News* captured a community actively engaged in various aspects of village life:

- **Village Organisations and Events:** A wide array of community organisations, including the Dorney Women's Institute, the Dorney & District Horticultural Society, the Eton Wick History Society, and the Thames Valley Adventure Playground Association, contributed to the vibrancy of village life. These groups organised events like the Annual Horticultural Show, garden competitions, talks, fundraising activities, and outings, fostering social connections and shared interests among residents.
- **Church Activities:** The Parish Churches of St. James the Less (Dorney), St. John the Baptist (Eton Wick), and St. John the Evangelist (Eton) played a central role in the

spiritual life of the community. The *Dorney Parish News* provided detailed information on church services, events, fundraising efforts, and pastoral care initiatives. The appointment of Revd. Paul Reynolds as the Team Vicar for the three parishes marked a new chapter in their shared ministry.

- **Dorney School Milestones:** Dorney County Combined School, celebrating its 25th anniversary at Dorney Reach, was a vital part of the community. The *Dorney Parish News* reported on school events, student achievements, and fundraising efforts by the PTA.
- **Village Hall as a Community Hub:** The Dorney Village Hall, celebrating its 21st anniversary, served as a central gathering place for various activities, including dance classes, badminton, bowls, aerobics, and meetings. The Hall's management committee played an active role in organising events and seeking financial support for its operations.

Emerging and Persistent Local Issues

Throughout 1996, several local issues emerged or persisted, reflecting residents' concerns about their quality of life:

1. Traffic and Road Safety

- **Speeding Vehicles:** Concerns about speeding, particularly on Marsh Lane and through the village, were raised by residents.
- **Road Closures and Damage:** Road closures and damage to verges caused by construction work related to the rowing trench and flood relief channel projects were sources of frustration.

2. Environmental Concerns

- **Tree Preservation:** The Parish Council sought to protect the village's trees, applying for new Tree Preservation Orders for trees along Court Lane.
- **Litter and Dog Fouling:** Concerns about litter, dog fouling, and the need for more bins were voiced by residents.
- **Maintenance and Cleanup:** Calls for greater efforts to maintain a clean and appealing village environment, including the tidying of verges, were expressed.

3. Community Facilities

- **Village Hall Noise:** The need for acoustic improvements to reduce noise disturbance from the Village Hall, especially for nearby residents, was discussed.

Signs of Community Advocacy and Engagement

The *Dorney Parish News* revealed a community actively engaged in advocating for its interests and shaping its future:

- **Parish Council Responsiveness:** The Parish Council consistently responded to resident concerns, seeking solutions to traffic and environmental issues, advocating for responsible development, and providing a platform for community dialogue.
- **Resident Participation:** Residents actively voiced their views through letters to the editor, participation in Parish Council meetings, and involvement in various village organisations.

Conclusion

In 1996, Dorney Parish was on the cusp of significant changes, with major infrastructure projects underway and local concerns gaining momentum. The *Dorney Parish News*

provides a valuable record of this pivotal year, showcasing a community grappling with challenges while simultaneously celebrating its heritage, fostering social connections, and actively shaping its future.