

## Key Events and Issues in Dorney Parish During 1998

The *Dorney Parish News* for 1998 provides a fascinating snapshot of life in this quaint English village, highlighting a strong sense of community spirit, ongoing infrastructure projects, and persistent local concerns.

### Construction Projects and Developments

Several major construction projects shaped the landscape and daily life in Dorney Parish:

- **Jubilee River/Thames Flood Relief Scheme:** The ambitious Jubilee River flood relief channel was a dominant theme throughout the year. Progress updates and discussions about the project's potential impact on the environment and residents' lives were recurring topics. Key developments included:
  - The completion of the M4 bridge over the channel.
  - The diversion of the A4 to allow for the construction of another bridge.
  - The completion of the Chalvey rail bridge and ongoing work on the Dorney rail bridge.
  - The planned opening of the Information Centre at Boveney Court Farm to provide residents with updates on the project.
  - The anticipation of the channel's operational status by the winter of 2000-2001.
- **Eton College Rowing Lake:** The construction of Eton College's rowing lake continued to generate mixed reactions. While some appreciated the visual improvement resulting from the completion of gravel extraction, anxieties persisted about the project's long-term implications:
  - **Noise Pollution:** Residents raised concerns about noise from the rowing facility, particularly during competitions.
  - **Traffic Congestion:** Traffic issues related to events at the rowing lake, especially on Marsh Lane, were a source of frustration for residents.
  - **Environmental Impact:** The project's overall environmental impact, including the effects of dredging on wildlife, was a point of contention.
- **New Tennis Court:** Plans for a new tennis court in the Picnic Park at Dorney Reach progressed with the expectation of construction starting in April.

### Community Life and Events

Beyond the large-scale construction projects, the *Dorney Parish News* revealed a vibrant community life:

- **Religious Observances and Activities:** The various churches in the area offered a range of services and activities, including Holy Week observances, Lent lunches, special services for events like the Riverside Team's 25th anniversary, and a planned outreach program ("Outreach '99").
- **Dorney & District Horticultural Society (DDHS):** The DDHS remained a cornerstone of community life, hosting various events throughout the year. These included a steak pie supper and quiz, the Spring and Summer Gardens Competitions, a coach trip, a barbecue and dance, and the grand Annual Show.
- **Eton Wick History Group:** The History Group provided a platform for residents to connect with their local heritage, featuring talks on topics such as "Salters Steamers", local bridges, and "Village Shopkeepers: Past and Present".

- **Dorney School:** The school's 40th anniversary celebration at Dorney Reach was a significant community event.
- **Entertainment and Leisure:** The parish enjoyed a variety of entertainment options, including productions by the Pentabus Theatre Company ("The Biker King" in 1997 and "The Heart of the Woods" in 1998), the Maidenhead Operatic Society's performances, and various concerts.

### Prevailing Local Concerns

The *Dorney Parish News* also served as a forum for residents to voice their concerns about recurring issues:

- **Traffic and Road Safety:** Traffic issues remained a primary concern for residents. Specific problems included:
  - **Speeding:** Excessive speeding on Marsh Lane, Lake End Road, and other areas was a constant worry.
  - **Damage to Verges:** Vehicles driving on grass verges caused damage and aesthetic issues.
  - **Proposed Speed Limit Increase:** A proposed speed limit increase on Lake End Road generated opposition from residents.
  - **Marsh Lane Closure:** The planned six-week closure of Marsh Lane for culvert installation caused significant disruption and inconvenience.
- **M4 Motorway Noise:** Noise pollution from the M4 motorway remained a persistent issue. Residents continued to advocate for noise-reducing measures, such as fencing and sound-absorbing surfaces.
- **Environmental Matters:** Concerns about vandalism of daffodils, excessive tree culling, littering, and the need for a parish-wide environmental cleanup were frequently expressed.
- **Neighbourhood Watch:** The effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme was called into question following the police's new "sectoring" system. This new system reduced direct contact with local police familiar with the parish, raising concerns about crime prevention and response times.
- **Bus Service Changes:** The diversion of the No. 64 bus route from the parish was a significant inconvenience for residents without private transportation, limiting their access to essential services and amenities.

### Community Engagement and Local Governance

Despite these challenges, the *Dorney Parish News* paints a picture of a community actively engaged in shaping its future:

- **Parish Council's Role:** The Parish Council played a crucial role in addressing local concerns, responding to resident inquiries, seeking solutions to traffic and environmental problems, and advocating for improvements to services like the bus route. They also organised community events, such as the Annual Parish Meeting, to foster dialogue and transparency.
- **Resident Participation:** Residents actively participated in community life by:
  - Writing letters to the *Dorney Parish News* to express their views and concerns.
  - Attending Parish Council meetings to raise issues and engage in discussions.
  - Contributing to local organisations and initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

In 1998, Dorney Parish navigated a period of significant change marked by large infrastructure projects and ongoing local issues. The *Dorney Parish News* offers a unique glimpse into the life of this community, highlighting its resilience, its commitment to preserving its character, and its active engagement in shaping its future.