

Key Events and Issues in Dorney Parish During 1999

The *Dorney Parish News* from 1999 offers a rich tapestry of community life, local concerns, and the anticipation of the impending millennium. The sources provide a glimpse into a parish grappling with change while striving to maintain its identity.

The Looming Millennium and Preparations

The year 1999 was imbued with a sense of anticipation for the approaching millennium, as residents and the Parish Council engaged in planning and preparations:

- **Millennium Projects:** Discussions centred around potential millennium projects for the parish. Suggestions included planting trees, improving the M4 motorway with sound-absorbing surfaces and fencing, and creating a comprehensive photographic record of Dorney during the year 2000.
- **Dorney Millennium Week:** The Parish Council designated June 17th-24th, 2000, as "**Dorney Millennium Week**" to encourage a concentrated period of events and celebrations. They aimed to facilitate community involvement without directly managing the events.
- **Outreach Initiative:** The Parish of Eton, Eton Wick, and Boveney planned a special outreach program called "**The Big Invitation**" for November 1999. This initiative aimed to engage people with the Christian faith through various social events and activities.

Community Life and Activities

The *Dorney Parish News* showcases a vibrant community life, with various organisations and events contributing to the social fabric of Dorney:

- **Dorney & District Horticultural Society (DDHS):** The DDHS hosted a range of events, including a steak pie supper, garden competitions, a cheese and wine evening, a coach trip, a summer barbecue, and their annual show. These events fostered community spirit and highlighted local talent in gardening and related areas.
- **St. James' Church:** The church served as a spiritual and social hub for the parish, offering regular services, children's activities, and special events like Lent lunches, a Parish Weekend at Lee Abbey, and the upcoming "The Big Invitation".
- **Eton Wick History Group:** This group held meetings featuring speakers on local history topics, such as Burnham Beeches and the history of Eton as viewed through old slides.
- **Dorney School:** The school celebrated its 40th anniversary at Dorney Reach. News also included updates on student activities and fundraising efforts.

Infrastructure Projects and Developments

Several infrastructure projects impacted the daily lives of Dorney residents:

- **Jubilee River/Thames Flood Relief Scheme:** The construction of the Jubilee River flood relief channel was underway, with plans for a culvert installation and road closures on Marsh Lane. The project involved extensive work, including gravel extraction and transport across the river to Bray.
- **Eton College Rowing Lake:** The development of Eton College's rowing lake continued, generating mixed reactions from residents. While some appreciated the improved skyline after the gravel extraction for the channel was completed, concerns remained about noise and traffic associated with the rowing facility.

- **Tennis Court Construction:** Construction of a new tennis court on the Picnic Park in Dorney Reach was scheduled to begin in April.

Persistent Local Concerns

The *Dorney Parish News* reveals a number of recurring concerns that occupied residents and the Parish Council:

- **Traffic and Road Safety:** Concerns about traffic issues persisted, including speeding vehicles, particularly on Marsh Lane and Lake End Road, where a speed limit increase was proposed; damage to grass verges caused by vehicles; and traffic congestion related to events at the rowing lake.
- **M4 Motorway Noise:** Noise pollution from the M4 motorway remained a significant problem, with residents calling for screening and noise-reducing surfaces.
- **Environmental Issues:** Residents voiced concerns about vandalism of daffodils, tree culling, litter, and the need for environmental cleanup.
- **Neighbourhood Watch:** The effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme was questioned after the police implemented a new "sectoring" system. Residents raised concerns about reduced contact with local police officers familiar with the area.
- **Bus Service Diversion:** Residents expressed frustration over the diversion of the No. 64 bus route from the parish, impacting those without personal transportation.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

Despite these challenges, the *Dorney Parish News* highlights a community actively engaged in addressing local issues:

- **Parish Council Responsiveness:** The Parish Council consistently engaged with resident concerns, responding to letters, pursuing solutions to traffic and environmental issues, and advocating for improvements to the bus service. They also organised events like the Annual Parish Meeting to facilitate community dialogue and provide updates on local projects.
- **Resident Participation:** Residents actively participated in shaping their community by voicing concerns through letters to the editor, attending Parish Council meetings, and participating in community organisations like the DDHS and the Eton Wick History Group.

Conclusion

In 1999, Dorney Parish stood on the threshold of a new millennium, balancing the excitement of upcoming celebrations with the realities of ongoing local concerns. The *Dorney Parish News* provides a valuable window into the dynamics of this community, showcasing its vibrant social life, its commitment to preserving its character, and the persistent challenges it faced.