

The Dorney Millennium Show Displays: June 2000

Dorney Lake Pre-construction and DROPET

In the early 1990's, Dorney residents were united as probably never before, in opposition to Eton College's plans for an Olympic-size rowing lake at Dorney Meadow. The conduit for the village's protest was 'DROPET'- Dorney Residents Opposed to the Eton Rowing Trench.

The Provost of Eton first appraised residents of the College's plans at the Annual Parish Meeting in 1987. He claimed that the lake would be essentially for the use of Eton boys. Only later did it emerge that in reality, Eton's plans were far more ambitious, and DROPET was formed in Spring 1991 as a result of the growing concern over the sheer size and scale of the proposals. Successive chairmen of the group were Michael Armstrong, Roger Aldridge and latterly, Ces Shaw and Jan Bowman as co-chairmen.

In summer 1991, 636 people signed a petition against the project. In November, a public meeting in the Village Hall, passed three resolutions against the trench by 175 votes to nil with just two abstentions. DROPET received a healthy injection of funds from a sell-out fund-raising dinner dance at Monkey Island Hotel in early 1993.

The run-up to the College's appeal against the earlier rejection of their proposals saw DROPET posters in virtually every window in the village, large road-side posters and sympathetic coverage in the national press and on national and local TV.

DROPET opposed the scheme on three grounds when the appeal opened in May 1993. We objected to the ten-year period of construction, with the constant passage of gravel lorries, and the necessary 'improvements' to local roads like Court Lane and Lake End Road. We feared the impact on the Village of the events that would eventually take place at the trench. Finally, we felt that such a scheme that had been presented as for the benefit of pupils, in fact was to serve a national rowing need, which villagers felt was no justification for changing the whole character of the area and their way of life.

DROPET and others vigorously pursued these arguments at the appeal which opened in May 1993, yet the College was successful and construction began a year later.













