

Bramham in Millennium Year : a Month by Month Sketch.

For all the hype which preceded the New Year [and the arguments that this was not the start of a new millennium but -- correctly -- the beginning of the last year of the old millennium] , 2000 was not especially auspicious for either England or Bramham . The weather in particular was undistinguished , with a mild late Winter, a mixed though disappointing Spring and early Summer , followed by an Autumn and Winter of record - breaking , almost unremitting dampness . Record rainfalls , not just in Britain but throughout western Europe seemed to confirm the media 's theory of climate change owing to global warming. Certainly Millennium Year so - called was a weather wash - out.

Millennium Eve was celebrated , as everywhere in the World , by parties and group rejoicings -- with everyone able to admire the multi - million pound spectacles of Sydney , Paris and our own major cities on TV without much pause in their own festivities. In Bramham , the Drama Club took over the Village Hall [nothing unusual in that !] while the three pubs [Red Lion , White Horse , Swan] remained open into the night . Most people had parties in their homes or at friends'. There were no street parties or public dances . Amazingly , for the nominal celebration of Christ 's 2000th birthday , neither All Saints nor the Methodist Chapel had planned a service , at midnight or on the day, so that the fact of the Vicar's being ill made no difference. At least the bells were rung , for Paul & Anne Topping had trained a crew who joined the national ringers at noon , to follow up the masses of fireworks which had greeted the new dawn , best admired throughout Lower Wharfedale from the top of Windmill Hill.

January saw the passing of two Bramham residents of note. On Sunday 23rd at Harrogate Hospital the Rev. Derek Shaw , Vicar of All Saints for 36 years , died , aged 67 , after two strokes. You can be sure he was pleased to have lived to celebrate Christ 's special birthday. The Church was packed for his funeral , when

Humphrey , Suffragan Bishop of Selby, and Richard Seed , Archdeacon of York and lately Vicar of Boston Spa, officiated. Derek was laid to rest in the Churchyard under one of the cherry trees at the feet of his much - mourned wife Christine , who had pre - deceased him by six years. A few days later , Billy Kitchen , a resident of Bramham for the whole of his 84 years , also passed away and was interred close by.

Hundreds [it seemed like thousands] of motor tyres were dumped along Heygate , and Milnthorpe Lane , a result of central government ' s imposition of tipping taxes at official tips. Though Leeds promised to move them , it took until well into Autumn before they kept their word --- and dozens were still decorating Heygate in Spring 2001.

February had the usual Valentine ' s Day celebrations , this time led by the Drama Group who presented a ' Valentine ' s Day Massacre ' in the Village Hall --- live jazz , bar and supper for all the " Gangsters and Molls " who had paid their £6 a head. Bramham Park began a new regime , precipitated by the taking over of the administration by Nicholas and Rachel Lane Fox . New brooms swept out old ways , opening the gardens from February onwards , but welcoming visitors to the House only in Summer , in pre - booked groups of at least six.

March was a very mixed month . Bramham Yorkshire Countrywomen produced their splendid tapestry , exhibiting it for the first time on 4th with the intention of permanent display later in the Supper Room of the Village Hall . Its representation of every aspect of village life in a series of cameos to which all members had contributed quite outshone the feeble efforts of the Parish Council , whose signposts at all village entrances failed to make an appearance [and were still awaited well into the next year]. On 11th March the Brownies gave their accustomed Tea & Entertainment to the old folk , this time a rather sad occasion as

three long - serving brownie leaders [Gladys Horsley , Anne Topping , Denise Barton] were about to retire.

The Swan Players ' enactment of ' Black Widow ' towards the month end was a weird precursor of the death of villager Mrs. Butler . A family fight took place in the White Horse , largely between mother and daughter , during which there was said to have been blood everywhere and Mrs. Butler was knocked to the ground . Later , at home , Mrs. Butler was killed at 4 am. in a fall downstairs , after which rumour abounded , though no charges ensued. Around the same time of year , Bramham suffered a rash of mindless vandalism , carried out by village youths who were known and under surveillance until proof was forthcoming.

April , traditionally the month of annual meetings , notably those of the Church , the Parish Council and the Village Hall , led on to some interesting events in the latter. In memory of Pam Nussey , of High Toynton , Vicarage Lane , who had recently died , a jazz evening was held , tickets £20 in aid of the children 's charity she had helped promote in the village over many years. The Hall itself , always in want of money for maintenance and running repairs , was the beneficiary of the Big Screen Race Night , proceeds this time to the Hall roof .

May also saw the introduction in the parish of one of the more controversial , both locally and nationally , of innovations. Genetically Modified [GM] crops were to be planted at the University Farm , largely selected for national trials because of the eminence in this field of one of the University of Leeds professors. Opinions , as elsewhere , were divided , with do gooding bodies as well as Government keeping a close eye on the results. Much sympathy was , nevertheless , felt for the local farmer whose pig farm had gone under owing to recent swine fever , and who had switched his efforts to producing licensed organic crops. With the experiments so close , he was in danger of losing that licence.

June saw the 25th anniversary Bramham Horse Trials , a milestone for those closely involved in the event , and especially for George Lane Fox , who had begun and guided the Trials to their position of national and international eminence in the calendar of three day eventing. It was supported by most of the World 's top riders as usual , and attracted people and side events from all over. Bramham House , where some of George Lane Fox 's predecessors had lived during the C19 when the Park was a burnt-out shell , was at last to be sold --- though its present owner , Leeds M.D.C., was particularly cagey about the deal . The House, until a few years before a children 's home , had been allowed to fall into desperate ill repair , so that news of its possible renovation was to be welcomed. More good news followed , with the announcement of a new priest , the Rev. Hugh Lawrance. Sadly , this marked the end of Bramham 's having its own vicar , for Mr. Lawrance 's flock was to include both Bramham and Clifford . Further , he was to be only priest in charge rather than vicar , so that future changes would be easier for the Church at York to achieve. His licensing in fact came to herald not only Bramham 's loss of its own vicar , but also of its vicarage which was to follow in 2001.

July , with everyone geared up for Summer holidays , saw the visit of an American choir , the Youth Choir of the Second Congregational Church of Greenwich , Connecticut , on tour in Britain and singing on behalf of All Saints , Bramham [in which they also performed] on 7th July at Lotherton Hall. Another quiet month followed , when even the Children ' s Fun Day to be held in mid - **August** at Bramham Park in aid of All Saints was cancelled.

In **September** came the licensing of the new priest in charge in a ceremony described in detail in the All Saints volume of the village Archive -- a notable , interesting and amusing affair , that most people would agree was much more significant than the arrival of new dustbins in the village centre --- though in

these days neither priests nor bins were easily come by. The Drama Group was back on stage, and the village was intrigued by the rare news of a kidnap, which turned out to be rather less thrilling than at first rumoured. What was both sad and significant was the passing of David Heaton of Bramham Lodge, a former man of the wool trade, and a considerable character in Bramham for over thirty years.

Whether the Drama Group's presentation of 'Sand Castles' in **October** was one temptation too many for the Gods we shall never know. Suffice it to say that it immediately preceded one of the wettest periods in the country's, and therefore Bramham's, history. Floods were everywhere until the year end, though oddly, the Beck never quite burst its banks, as it had been wont to do in previous times of incessant rain. Perhaps the River Authority had got it right at last? Fortunately, before the land became bogged down, the now annual ploughing match took place in the fields along Aberford Road.

November began the long run up to Christmas [though shops everywhere would have had us celebrating as soon as we returned from Summer holidays]. Towards month end All Saints held its Christmas Bazaar in the Village Hall, with all the usual culprits making their annual pilgrimage to buy from the usual hard-working stall holders. A popular [with some] local jazz group, the Space Cats, performed at a dance at the Village Hall, where, on yet another Saturday, the Village Archive was put on display. The morning, and the Supper Room space, proved insufficient for the upwards of 200 visitors, whose interest in the Village's history proved so strong that a further, bigger, longer display was promised for the following late Spring.

Sadly, and for the first time, commemorative poppies were not readily on sale in Bramham as Remembrance Sunday approached. Elizabeth Bustard, for so long the organiser of all things commemorative of our forebears in war, had retired

and no one felt able to take up the baton.

December , wet and miserable , provided no fitting end to a special year of celebration , nor indeed an appropriate start if your Millennium calculations were more precise. All the Christmas things went off , of course , with jollies for the marginally Christian , and , one would hope , serious consideration by the faithful . One generous and unexpected event brought the year to an end . Melvin Wood , a Leeds man brought to Bramham by his hobby ; metal detecting , decided to present to the village each artefact he found within the parish . As he had already a notable collection ranging from Roman coins to items of C20 interest , and was set on finding much more , this was the start of an invaluable section of the Bramham Archive to be carried forward into the new millennium.

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