

RECREATION AND LEISURE

INTRODUCTION

In her book *American Affair: The Americanisation of Britain* Susan Marling writes of Milton Keynes in 1993, 'Sadly, if you want to see a play or hear a classical music concert you'll have to go elsewhere'. In 1970 the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) guaranteed £500 against loss for a performance by Yehudi Menuhin at St. George's Church Wolverton. A guarantee was also given for a performance by the Alberni String Quartet in 1971, the resident quartet in Harlow new town, to mark the restoration of Willen Church.

The provision made in the early seventies of theatres and sports halls, was capable of housing large national orchestras and the MK Chamber Orchestra, and companies like the Royal Shakespeare, Hull Truck and Shared Experience. Amateur performances by the Bletchco Players, the Stantonbury and Open University Drama Groups and the Sherwood Symphonia, now Milton Keynes Symphonia, show the extent of Marling's ignorance of Milton Keynes and in particular of the strenuous efforts that were made in those early days to provide for residents leisure needs, and facilities to house their own initiatives.

In 1974 Fred Roche asked SD to put the needs for events and happenings high on its agenda. Tod Cody, an events entrepreneur, who also put on the City Shows underwritten by MKDC, produced *Milton Keynes Social Recreation Consultancy Report* in September 1976. It listed all the recreational venues, events and organizations, both in and immediately outside the designated area, commercial, local authority and voluntary. It included activities for specific groups, such as children, youth and older people. Tod also gathered the views and opinions on recreation from a cross section of residents and recommended numerous events that could be held.

His most important discovery was the lack of public awareness of what was happening and available. Some of the facilities were underused and there were difficulties in traveling to them. MKDC was successful in providing facilities with the local authorities in advance of the population. The report advised that more attention needed to be given to make all means of communication efficient, despite the huge efforts MKDC already made to inform residents.

THE MASTER PLAN (MP)

The Board of MKDC considered leisure and recreation early in March 1968. A presentation by Professor G. Wibberley on Leisure and Agriculture advised that recreation was the responsibility of the local authorities (LAA) but because the UK was not adjusting to increasing leisure in a post industrial society there was unlikely to be more than adequate provision for sometime. He also advised that lakes for appearance and use were vital for new towns and that fixed open space standards were nonsensical. The presentation by the Llewelyn-Davies team a few days later advised in more detail. Recreation was closely related to two of the Master Plan goals, Choice and Variety, and would be achieved by a combination of both private and public provision. There was a need for a lead department in MKDC.

Six main points were made:

1. leisure was becoming more capital intensive and revenue earning and was connected with investment in the infrastructure,
2. people living in the town should be involved with provision of their own facilities,
3. cultural and indoor spaces should be in the commercial centre,
4. local facilities should either be grouped with schools or spread out among the houses. Larger packages of amenities might conflict with community leadership, effort and enthusiasm. It would be better for schools to use city facilities rather than vice-versa,
5. growing demand for individual pursuits would include home based recreation,
6. the quality of leisure and a prestige facility might have great impact and enhance the city image.

Professor David Donnison, the specialist on social development in the team of consultants used by the master planners, added that early community recreation was vital.

When the MP was published two years later in 1970 it amplified and detailed the points made in these two seminars, and added how important opportunities for leisure would be to urban newcomers, many of whom would have individual preferences and would seek what was fashionable. Sport, which would require more land, was more quantifiable but should not be more important than culture and entertainment. The importance of participation and active involvement was emphasised. Between the lines one can read how different things must be for urban newcomers moving into an under provided largely rural area. Reference is made to the importance of the regional dimension.

The Sports Council founded in 1964, and its Regional Bodies formed in 1966, were identifying locations for better provision for sport. The designated area contained the boundary between the Southern and the Eastern Councils, but the former had no planned locations which would serve MK and the latter programmed projects for golf and swimming but not in the designated area. MK could have a role as a suitable location for regional provision. The Southern Sports Council's recommended standards were adopted in the MP. Large sports grounds were more efficient and should not be less than 8-10 hectares (20-25 acres). Three hundred acres were needed in the first 10 years based on 2 ½ acres per 1000 population but all-weather surfaces were becoming more viable. In 1970 there were 170 acres of playing fields in MK but in very scattered and small areas. Sports and Leisure Centres should be for catchments of 40 – 50,000 people and six should be programmed and four provided by 1979. The city centre should include a stadium. Golf received special emphasis as a necessity for more affluent newcomers, and there should be five courses in the designated area of which one should be attached to a conference centre.

The linear parks should have a more general function which was not clear at present but they should not be dominated by sport. All space should be linked by cycleways and footpaths. The three school campus with a scarce resources component would be essential for recreation and leisure use and should include libraries. The central theatre should seat 1500.

The needs of the individual and families would be met by garden privacy and house design and young peoples' needs would require particular attention.

How a programme for recreation and leisure would be implemented and the amenities managed and monitored was vital. Co-ordination would be helped by the appointment of a recreation officer, and a technical panel should be set up, which should include a major role for the LAA and employers. Such a panel might grow into an Arts and Recreational Trust to direct resources, and own and lease specific amenities. Jointly provided amenities and dual-use of educational resources were essential for both sport and culture.

A strategy was required of co-operation to achieve wide public use and the combination of publicly subsidised amenities and private revenue earning facilities. As was usual in new towns commercial interests did not invest until their ventures were profitable. Public provision was thwarted by factors both inside and outside MKDC. Co-operation was lacking between MKDC and its partners, particularly the local authorities who were intent on making central government pay through MKDC.

INHERANT PROBLEMS IN NORTH BUCKS

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

One problem was the current low level of activities and facilities in both sports and the arts. A minute of Newport Pagnell Rural District Council (NPRDC) of 18th February 1970 reads 'need now for a considerable improvement in the facilities available for the present resident population'. This council covered most of the designated area (DA) identified for the first 10 year building programme. The Clerk to the Council, Bob Dunbabin, who was the outstanding local authority officer in North Bucks, took his members to visit the new towns of Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead

and Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. He also presented the report *The Needs of New Communities* to his members.

Wolverton Urban District Council had a different outlook, not least because it was the only large local Council without representation on the Board of MKDC and felt side-lined. Its attitude was that existing amenities were perfectly adequate. A minute of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting 21st April 1970 responding to the Master Plan reads 'such information as there is leads to the conclusion that a contribution by the corporation ought to be made, not only to stop putting any excessive (i.e. enormous, undue, outrageous) burden on the ratepayers, but to stop putting on them for the cost of any services that are now adequate and that, aside from the building of a new town would not have been necessary'. The Council was facing a decline in its rateable income and the negative view is understandable; there was however no recognition that with the building of new homes income from rates would grow. The tone of the minute is very aggressive. A meeting of the Recreation Public Services Committee 9th June 1970 delayed any decision on a contribution to projects, such as sports grounds in Wolverton and Stony Stratford, a riverside path and children's play; a contribution of between £5 and £9000 was considered for the golf course at Kiln Farm. The outlook of this council is well described by a decision in 1972 to delete and refer back to main council, a grant of £60 to the Milton Keynes Summer Play Schemes, because there was no scheme in Wolverton, only in Stony Stratford and New Bradwell, although these were both in the urban district area.

Bletchley Urban District Council with a rapidly growing population was well aware of the dearth of amenities but was anxious to secure contributions from MKDC for its Bletchley based provision. The Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) with the highest rateable value in the country was not a spender on recreation. It was the only county authority in the country not affiliated to its regional arts organisation for the reason, said Sir Ralph Verney, County Councillor and member of MKDC Board, 'that it was bureaucratic' but that decision deprived Bucks of any grants towards arts facilities and events.

In April 1976 it was reported to the Board of MKDC from the recent liaison meeting that 'BMK said MKDC take middle class views of people's needs'. It was further indication of a narrow approach to recreational needs by LAA, ignoring the social mix of the incoming population and changes in types of activity that were likely to be needed.

STATE OF PLAY

The strength of local clubs and organisations is vital to a high level of performance and for individuals to realise their potential, both in sports and the arts. North Bucks and adjacent areas in Bedfordshire and Northants lacked not only facilities but a structure of good clubs to nurture local talents. In sport, for example, the Bedford and England rugby player Budge Rogers told us that the Bedford Club had to recruit promising players from all over East Anglia and was in competition with the Northampton Club. The Northamptonshire County Cricket Club had to recruit many players, like Colin Milburn and Peter Willey, who both played for England, from the north-east and particularly Durham before it became a first class county. Hockey was similarly lacking in good clubs. The Northamptonshire County Hockey Association had a membership of only four clubs, which included the North Bucks Club at Wolverton. It is indicative of the isolation of North Bucks from the rest of the county that this club, as did many local groups across a broad spectrum of activity, social, cultural and economic, feel closer to Northants. In 1975 when Social Development (SD) convinced a reluctant Lord Campbell to partner Embassy cigarettes in sponsoring a professional Basket Ball team, the coach Miles Aitken, who was also the sport's BBC commentator, advised us that the sports structure in the East Midlands was insufficient to build up a pool of local players. The Wolverton Rugby Club which had been formed at the beginning of the twentieth century had been but was no longer a leading club in the area.

The Arts were not so reliant on purpose built amenities and could use churches and civic halls, like Wilton Hall in Bletchley. Bletchley also had a music centre run by BCC, a summer music festival and Arts Workshop started in the early seventies. Elsewhere cultural activities were non-existent or

declining. Although Ruth Finnegan in *Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town (1989)* wrote of the local roots which flourished as Milton Keynes grew, she does not fully acknowledge that many roots had already died and MKDC was active in reviving those that were dying through its SD programme. The Wolverton and New Bradwell Silver Band, for example was revived to blow on instruments purchased with MKDC grants.

The cinemas in Wolverton and Stony Stratford had closed in the sixties. Apart from Loughton and Shenley Church End, village populations in 1961 had declined since 1951, as had the number of residents in Stony Stratford and New Bradwell. Many of the villages and hamlets, like Great Linford, no longer had any village organisations apart from the Church, and their village halls were in a very poor physical condition and received early grants from MKDC to keep them functioning. Pubs were closing or were run as a second job or by people well beyond retiring age.

THE FINANCING OF THE RECREATION PROGRAMME

MILTON KEYNES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The new towns had been provided with amenity funds in the mid-sixties after the first eight towns around London had experienced many problems with local authorities determined, quite understandably, not to provide for new comers. The Major Amenity Fund was based upon £4 per head of incoming population, which for MK amounted to £840,000 and an annual Minor Amenity Fund provided £2000 plus £100 for each additional 1000 new residents. MKDC was faced with several policy issues;

1. to spend quickly to make up for the dearth of existing amenities and provide a reasonable quality of life for new arrivals,
2. to find a balance between expenditure in existing and new areas,
3. to concentrate on one major amenity in a central location which would attract good publicity or spread thinly throughout the area.

It was also recognised that the fund was meagre in the context of the size of the project on a 'greenfield' site compared with Northampton and Peterborough, designated as new towns at the same time but with a rich mix of inherited amenities. A strategy to spend the fund quickly would be the only way of persuading the government to release additional money. Lord Campbell was to learn at a meeting of new town chairman in 1975 that no new town had spent these amenity funds. 1971 was the year when MKDC began to concentrate on amenity funding asking the Chief Administration and Finance Officer (CAFO), Kenneth Wren, to build up funds. The April meeting of new town chairmen discussed the fund when the Department of the Environment (DOE) refused to raise the per capita sum, and how it might be used in the dual use of schools by increasing space for community recreation. In May the Board agreed to spend 50% of the fund in the early days.

The first grants were made in 1971; £1000 to the District Scouts HQ, £5000 for building and £2500 for technical services for the Church of England Day Nursery in Bletchley, and £1000 to the Wolverton Old Peoples Workshop, a Robert Maxwell project. In the context of this expenditure the Board agreed to spend £25000 per annum on grants to voluntary/charitable projects, which was later increased to £50000. Board minute 219/71 reads 'care must be taken to ensure that the needs of all eligible organisations were considered'. The first grants from the Minor Amenity Fund included £250 towards the conversion of Old Wolverton School for a play group run by Sheila Kellett, and similar sums to St. John Ambulance, York House Youth Club, run by Barbara Brown, play groups at Derwent Drive and Loughton; in sport, to North Bucks Netball League, Milton Keynes village cricket club and Stacey Hill putting green, and in the arts to Wolverton and New Bradwell Silver Band, the Wolverton Orchestral Society, Bletchley and District Gilbert and Sullivan Society, and the Bletchley Arts Workshop. These were grants to mainly existing voluntary activities which had not received public funds before but in the context of poor or non-existent services were essential. Contact with these groups and with individuals with ideas for new initiatives was the responsibility of SD staff.

Not all MKDC decision making went through the formal mechanism of Chief Officer and Board meetings. The General Manager had instituted regular morning 'mail' meetings, which he had used in Runcorn Development Corporation, where senior officers jointly considered a variety of issues and made decisions. On July 25th 1972 at such a meeting SD was asked to recommend a flexible % figure to guide MKDC on grants to these voluntary projects. In recommending 25% we noted the % of grants already made; Church of England Day Nursery – 21%, York House – 17%, Wolverton Rugby Club 34%, Wolverton Sports Club – 27%, Red Cross Short Stay Home 26 %. A paper was also requested on the pricing of land for rent to voluntary organisations for which a 'peppercorn' was normally charged. By November 1973 Brian Brookman of the Estates Department and I recommended a sliding scale starting at a peppercorn for those organisations which offered a public service with no strings attached, while those with closed membership were charged more. In 1973 the lobbying by the New Towns Chairmen produced an increase in the formula. NT Circular 339 November 1973 raised from £4 to £6.50 the per capita allowance for the population increase from that at designation to the target and a further £4.50 per head for the difference between the current population and the target figure. The MAF was now £2.265.000 minus £977.000 committed, leaving £1.288.000 towards a programme costing £2.750.000. Meeting places were to be funded from this source not the Housing Revenue Account. By 1975 EMC paper 941/75 reported that £1.266 million of the MAF was committed, £339000 had been spent, £4.46 million was required, the increase being caused by rising prices and new projects in the programme like the meeting places. The question was raised about amenities in the 'flanks', the area either side of the 'crescent' of the initial development, in the eighties? By 1976 it was reported that the MAF would be depleted by 1978.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Statutorily the LAA were responsible for public recreation but it was not a mandatory service. In 1972 it was noted by MKDC that it was unlikely that the LAA could fund both capital and revenue. The LAA were keen both to provide amenities in the existing populated areas and to argue for a large MKDC contribution. On one hand was the DOE which would not approve any move by the MKDC to assume the LAA role, and on the other hand the LAA which challenged any expectation that their income from the rates should be spent on newcomers. Yet the LAA were also very ambitious and particularly so when the existing urban and district councils were merged in 1974 as the Borough of Milton Keynes (BMK). Even before this event in October 1972 MKDC paper 751/72 reported that the LAA wanted to provide and manage profitable recreation before commercial concerns were approached. The LAA also requested in 1974 that MKDC should transfer to them on completion meeting places and similar publicly provided amenities, though this had never been requested in other new towns. MKDC insisted that leasehold terms should include its intentions for community use in providing the amenity knowing full well how hostile Bletchley Urban District Council was to management by community groups. NPRDC on the other hand had said leases to users should require only a modest rent. In 1974 the DOE's advice was sought on the leasing agreement which was to start in 1977 whereupon BMK withdrew without discussion from the negotiations. The danger of BMK's attitude to community buildings was revealed later when premises in west Bletchley, to which MKDC had contributed 50%, were disposed of to an ex-services club without any consultation.

In comparison with this ambition was the failure of BMK to keep to any agreed programme or decisions. As an example there was the fate of two attempts to formulate an agreed programme. In 1976 EMC minute 2245 described a BMK package of £140.000 to be used for small facilities; the all-weather pitches at Radcliffe School, allotments, local parks, and grants to village halls, sports grounds and play parks. Much of this was not implemented as the fate described below of the athletics track. It was noted that BMK was very sensitive that it should not involve them in running costs. In 1977 a £1.2 million package for a capital programme was created by MKDC for BMK by a variety of financing arrangements. Later in the year MKDC paper 590/77 reported a 'considerable shortfall in the programme; 'no comparison with what had been agreed, 'no consultation', and 'the report boded ill for the current standards discussions'. Two projects in the programme initiated by NPRDC, a large allotment and a 25 acre sports ground, both at Woughton, were abandoned at a meeting of SD with Peter Jones, BMK's Director of Recreation in 1975. Later BMK withdrew from

managing the public space in the Wolverton Agora provided by MKDC. It is not insignificant that these projects were all outside the previous area of BUDC. Recreation was one of the few responsibilities the LAA retained unhampered by the statutory powers of MKDC, like planning and housing, yet it failed to exercise the leadership required. These schemes might have proceeded under BMK if a strategy of consultation and negotiation had been adopted, but it frequently retired without discussion. No new professionals were appointed as Directors and Bob Dunbabin, who had shown great initiative at NPRDC, only lasted one year as the Deputy Chief Executive of BMK.

BCC was a competent authority when it made statutory provision but there was no ambition for non mandatory functions, recreation, youth services, libraries, museums and archaeology for example. In August 1972 at the liaison meeting of members and Chief Officers BCC asked that the DOE 'be informed of the need for ancillary educational facilities, such as youth and community, for which Circular 2/70 was inadequate'.

The House of Commons Expenditure Committee had clear views on the solution to the provision of amenities by LAA. New Towns Volume 1 Report to the House of Commons 6 16-1 paragraphs 80-81; 'we recommend the DOE should assess the capital expenditure requirements of local authorities for projects within the NT area separately from their requirements outside the NT area and should base their allocation accordingly' and 'the appropriate part of the cost of the provision of local services in NT areas in advance of their being required should be met through the DOE by specific grant to the LAA'. The MAF disappeared later when the conservative government after 1979 decided it would control MKDC expenditure by approving projects to be funded and no longer allowing MKDC to make the decision. MKDC was also allowed to pass over considerable amounts in millions each year for expenditure on services agreed between MKDC and the LAA, thereby responding to the LAA case of 'the undue burden' and the re-naming of MK by one County Councillor as 'Mill stone Keynes'. It would have opened up a 'Pandora's Box' for the Treasury to have made additional money available only to LAA with NT within their boundaries. This leaves the needs of areas like MK, now to receive an even greater population, with a new form of the 'undue burden'. Cuts and frozen budgets for non-mandatory activities will produce a reduction of the relatively high standards MK has experienced, and the long term effects of low expenditure by BCC in earlier days, in social services and amenities like a museum, will continue.

SPORTS COUNCIL, EMPLOYERS AND LOCAL TRUSTS

The existence of the Sports Council and its regional counterparts held out the possibility of finance for major sports facilities in MK. The Council had contributed its advice to the MP and became involved in seven projects which had a more than local use, for example the Bletchley and Stantonbury Leisure Centres and the ski-slope near the latter. There were also grants available for more local projects that included an experimental character; for example Wolverton Sports Club and the all-weather athletics track at Radcliff School which contained the space for two hockey pitches. Circular 2/70 then raised its head by withdrawing from the regional councils the ability to make grants. Minute 1237/72 of the Chief Officers meeting (EMC) in January reported that the Southern Sports Council grant of £10000 for Wolverton Sports Pavilion, already designed, had dropped to £4750 and MKDC would be expected to make up the difference. One of the first liaison jobs I undertook when I joined MKDC as SD manager in May 1972 was to visit the Sports Council to make the case that there was space for sports like table tennis in this experimental building at Wolverton which was to fail so spectacularly in 1977.

The role of employers in providing recreational facilities had been mentioned in the MP. MKDC had led the way with non-staff being allowed to use the squash courts and bar at Wavendon and was followed by the OU at Walton with its sports areas and the Film Club and other societies. One of the major sports grounds intended to meet the quota in the MP was an area near Bletchley called Denbigh. In April 1972 only four firms showed any interest and eventually only Scots Meats remained which meant the project had to be abandoned. Half of the area was kept and BMK eventually managed the rather poor facility that resulted. The site is now occupied by MK Dons and the nearby retail buildings. At Kiln Farm there were nine firms interested in the recreational use of

the farm buildings but Tesco the largest employer was not one of them. It barely functioned until MKDC left Wavendon in 1979 and relocated its employers' provision.

North Bucks had never contained the affluence that in richer areas of the UK supports well-endowed charitable trusts. The Radcliffe Trustees were wooed with some success. The Ancell Trust in Stony Stratford had land as well as the existing sports fields. It was MKDC's hope that the whole area could be developed as one of the larger sports grounds. The plan was that MKDC would purchase land for £23000 which would be invested in the extension of the facilities on the understanding that the Ancell Trust would contribute £16000. Negotiations failed in 1973.

PRIVATE HOUSING

MKDC identified developers as providers of local recreation and it was labelled 'second tier facilities' in the early days. The MP did not envisage any of the grid squares as totally given over to public housing. A variety of housing tenure and type was considered to be essential at the local level and it was expected that developers would contribute to local leisure amenities. Rising costs, the caution of private house builders and the control the MKDC architects tried to impose on developers all militated against a significant proportion of private housing in the early seventies. First of all private house builders were not accustomed to up-front provision, preferring to wait until demand for their houses was in evidence; then it was not unusual for leisure projects to appear in sales brochures as certainties when decisions on how they were to be managed had not been made. The Bovis scheme in Eaglestone provides an example of the problems of this type of provision. The scheme in 1972 was for children's play to include a kickabout area and adventure playground, there was to be a meeting place and a social/sports centre including squash courts. The cost would be set against MKDC's share of revenue from house sales and a contribution made to the dual use of school playing fields. The LA was to be given a capital sum by the developer for long term maintenance and community management was to be encouraged. Some of these facilities did appear but the management of them was a constant problem. Developer contributions were not significant until large private housing schemes appeared in the early 1980s and then they were modest.

PROBLEMS IN THE PROGRAMME

RISING BUILDING COSTS

The start of a large building programme was in itself a factor in rising construction costs and in 1972 there were national strikes in the industry; but the oil crisis of 1973 and its affect on the economy was the greatest problem. A few examples of the impact on recreational projects are sufficient to make the point. Water Eaton Community Centre lowest tender was £94000 compared to the budget of £55000. Stantonbury Theatre's lowest tender was £117000 and the budget was £59000 and it was necessary to make substantial cuts, for example the 'green room' was omitted, before the building went ahead. The management committee of York House Youth Club applied for a further grant to meet a high tender but MKDC would only make an interest free loan available.

DELAYS IN PROVISION

The aim of MKDC was to provide recreational facilities in time with the arrival of newcomers. The official minutes in the early seventies are full of references to the programme not being met. In July 1971 the Chief Social Development and Housing Officer (CSDHO) Ben Affleck was urged to 'push' for the policy of shops and other facilities to be provided from the 'first day of occupation' and when site works were completed in the area. In 1973 delays were reported on many projects, they were 'not in step'. In 1974 a minute reads 'local facilities are not given the highest priority and they must be'. The EMC minute 814/74 itemised what were **essential** – grocer/newsagent/tobacconist, sub-post office, chemist/dispensing service, small meeting place/community house, First and Middle Schools, and laundrette; and **necessary** – community centre, social/sports club, community workshop, youth centre, day nursery, library, adventure play ground, playing fields, swimming pool, public house. In those heady days such amenities should have 'as much priority as housing, 'even temporary is late and relied on too long', and 'walking distance too great'. Minutes of 19th August 1971 however reveal some tensions between the architects and SD over Stanton High. CSDHO's queries or 'push' had not been resolved or had it been ignored? There was no provision for play

areas. Chief Architect and Planning Officer (CAPO) said good houses are more important, amenities should be left for later. Social Development Officer (SDO) Jeremy Leighton pointed out that the policy, provision with housing paid for by the Housing Revenue Account, was being ignored. The clash of attitudes is illustrated further by issues over Wylie Cottage, the meeting place for Stanton High. A building had been designed without storage space, which would cost £950 in addition to the budget of £14990. A further cost was car parking, which BCC, as the highway authority, refused to allow in the lay-by. Not only would costs increase considerably but an 'on-site car park would be aesthetically undesirable'. The meeting place at Tinkers Bridge was given a minimal heating system as it would only be used once a week. Fortunately the BCC architects produced schools on time; a local wag said they looked like houses compared to the MKDC houses which looked like factories.

ARCHITECTURAL SHORTCOMINGS

CLIENT

One of my earliest meetings with Derek Walker was a discussion on the client role to represent the use and users of the building and the holder of the budget to pay for the building. It was a role which I had experienced; a youth centre built on to a church in Hatfield, an annex to a school in the Lakes Estate, and the repair and restoration of several churches including St Mary's Willen. I had been advised and learnt that a client needed a named architect to do business with, one who was prepared to learn how the building was to be used. I discovered a situation in MKDC where the architect always knew best and was eager to seek a special form, nearly always with a flat roof, and without traditional materials such as brick and tile. One of the early meeting places at Tinkers Bridge had a succession of fourteen architects. The need for speed prevented the much needed discussion between architect and client. Designs were frequently presented for the first time at EMC. Later SD perfected briefs for community buildings, detailed descriptions of function and the spaces assigned in the building for particular purposes, systems for heating and the types of surfaces most suitable for heavy use. SD also became accustomed to working with a particular architect.

EXPERIMENT

A number of early recreational buildings designed by MKDC did not have a long life, for example the Bucks Association of Youth Clubs Centre at Woughton and the adventure play ground building in Stony Stratford designed by Archigram, a concrete bunker with awnings. It would be an exaggeration to claim that much of the early building programme was experimental; but in the case of recreational buildings there is some evidence for that conclusion. Only one example need be considered of buildings badly designed where the existence of a substantial grant by MKDC was accompanied by the demand to design it. CAPO was an opponent of too many grants to outside bodies which potentially lost a design brief in-house. The Wolverton Sports Pavilion was a much needed facility in the centre of the town and was intended for tennis, cricket and hockey. The design was a new build system of yellow glass reinforced panels moulded in tetrahedrons – four sides, which it was intended to repeat elsewhere if it worked. When the high tender was considered on July 21st 1972 and savings discussed CAPO is minuted as saying 'the size could not be reduced without spoiling this first example of a **bombe surprise**' (curved). MKDC bore the extra cost of the high tender and the £5250 of reduced grant from the Sports Council. The proportion of the MKDC contribution was almost 50% compared with the guideline of 25%. This decision reflects the dominance of the architectural profession. Unfortunately the building when it opened proved to be unsatisfactory. Players coming off a muddy field had to remove their boots before entering on the purple carpet inside the door. Barrels and crates of beer had to be lifted up the narrow spiral staircase that led to the bar. Here the warm beer was drunk in summer by players gasping for air and bathed in sweat. In 1976 £3000 was spent on ventilation for the bar that was, the minute reads 'untenable in summer'. The misery only lasted another two years when the glass reinforced panels began to spring apart and let in the rain. In 1978 the building was described as 'unsatisfactory' in the minutes and there was 'a moral obligation to replace'. A traditional sports pavilion now occupies the site. The 'yellow peril' as the **bombe surprise** was called was last heard of as a home for chicken in the depths of the West Country.

There was an attempt by CAPO to claim much of the MAF for a City Club and Stadium in CMK. The Board turned it down emphatically at its meeting on April 5th 1974. The problems of crowd control had made the original concept of a complete integration of club and stadium impossible. The stadium was to be suitable for sport, shows and greyhound racing. A huge sports hall would be for all residents but EMC had expressed its concern whether this would really be what residents wanted. Derek Walker claimed it would give the city a soul and do for Milton Keynes what the cathedral did for Coventry. The Board decided the concept was on too large a scale and was likely to become a 'white elephant' and present a plastic vulgar image. The concentration of activities would make it impossible to separate quiet and noisy pursuits. A theatre must be separate. It would kill the district leisure centres. A more piecemeal approach was necessary with more than one organization involved. Enormous problems were foreseen on the roof, parking, fire and health regulations. CAPO's response to the Board's criticism was 'members to remember that their reactions might not perhaps be typical of the majority of present and future residents'.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECREATION

The need for a lead department for recreation as recommended in the MP was filled by SD from 1968 to 1977. In 1969 Mike Barron was appointed as Recreation Officer and later Cynthia Hargate became the Arts Officer, both reporting to the Social Development Officer (SDO) Jeremy Leighton. In order to explore both the wide range of the SD recreation programme from 1968 – 1978, and the success and failure of projects against the varying factors described above, separate accounts follow for the three major programme areas, sport, arts and social, but there was an immediate need for events in all three areas.

Events

Recreational events were an important part of the programme. In January 1974 EMC minute 3032 requested a draft paper for the Board on Happenings in MK, events and fiestas. In response to the paper EMC asked for more emphasis on spectator sports, entertainment and informal outdoor events. The amalgamation of the LAA in April 1974 as BMK made it easier to plan events jointly although it was more difficult to keep a capital programme, as projects like Woughton playing fields and allotments planned by NPRDC were handed back to MKDC to implement by the new LA. A Recreation Department was set up with Peter Jones, ex. NPRDC engineer, as Director and an Arts Officer, Teresa Collard, was appointed. Monthly meetings were held with SD, which was now a separate unit from the Housing department. A first jointly funded programme of £4000 for events was carried out with BMK, and MKDC paid the fee for BMK to join the East Midlands Regional Arts Association which began to grant aid events like the visit of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to Bletchley Leisure Centre which had opened in February. Joan Baez performed at a concert in Stantonbury Leisure Centre. In 1974/75 there was a county cricket match between Northants and Lancashire at Manor Fields. Many sporting events were sponsored. Northants County Cricket team played the West Indies touring side at Manor Field Bletchley. The events otherwise tended to take advantage of the excellent playing conditions in the two leisure centres in Bletchley and at Stantonbury; the latter was the location for the World Race Walk Championship September 24/25 1977. The growing availability of the linear park system and its water surfaces came into use. The poor quality of new grass pitches on recently disturbed ground designated as local parks or sports fields was difficult for new clubs and it was the older sports grounds that attracted mature players. One particular sport was encouraged by SD as being especially appropriate for the sports centres and school sports halls – basketball. In 1976 MKDC agreed to jointly sponsor the Embassy Milton Keynes Basketball Team for three years at a cost of £50000. Lord Campbell needed some persuading because of the increasing concern about cigarette industry sponsorship. SD did not want to assume the moral high ground in such matters when sport, nationally and locally, was so reliant on such sponsorship, the Player Cup for example in cricket. Some in MKDC also felt that the economic climate raised questions about this type of expenditure. However the project went ahead, and a very successful club resulted under the management of Miles Aitken, getting to the

national final at Crystal Palace in 1977. Part of the arrangement was that the team would provide coaching in the schools, making use of the leisure centres and school sports halls. The games were enthusiastically attended at Bletchley Leisure Centre where some international games were also played.

The growth of the events programme can be shown in the details of the following years. The figures do not quite add up because there is a community events budget missing. The figures against specific items are MKDC funding only, for example 'All Change', the drama documentary at Stantonbury and the Chamber Orchestra. The point is the growth of the budgets particularly by BMK, the leading role of MKDC, the variety of events, and the higher funding for arts and entertainment compared with sport.

	MKDC	BMK	ARTS/ ENTERTAINMENT	SPORTS	CHILDRENS PLAY
1975/76	£28550	£16000	£22300 WAP (The Stables) Brass Band Festival Community artist Neighbourhood Festival Touring Theatre City Show Drama 'All Change' £3.500 Chamber Orchestra £500	£10000 Snooker Bowls Festival Morocco v Britain	£7250 Stantonbury £3.800
1976/77	£29400 MAF Publicity £11.400	£23725	£21000	£11475	£8450
1977/78	£38320				

POLICY AND PROGRAMME FOR SPORT AND OPEN AIR RECREATION

A Technical Panel made up of staff from MKDC, the LAA and the Sports Council met in 1970 with Mike Barron in the chair. It was supported by research based on likely future recreational activities and produced a **Recreation Plan for Milton Keynes** in 1971. The report was a document for discussion not a blueprint and considered and modified the proposals in the MP. It covered the following amenities: Sports Centres, Golf Courses, Sports Grounds, Swimming Pools, Water Based Recreation, Open Space and Children's Play Areas, Provision of Formal Gardens, and there was a miscellaneous section covering for example horse riding, cycling, noisy sports and dry ski-slopes.

The policy it followed was that sport and physical recreation were a vital part of a community's total social and physical planning and followed a recent Sports Council document **Planning for Sport** which stated.

1. Increasing affluence and car ownership would have impact on the countryside and especially water surfaces.
2. Although traditional team games still existed there would be more individual sports in smaller groups requiring specialist facilities and equally enjoyed by men and women.
3. There was a range of motives for these activities; contest/competition, achievement/skills, tactics/mind, and creativity.

A social dimension was always present and such recreation was a vital part of community life. In a new town it would help to establish community, attract newcomers and must coincide with arrivals in Milton Keynes. The level of provision should be above average and reflect growing demand and aspirations for quality of life.

Among the amenities listed above was a comparatively unknown resource, now very well known, the Sports or Leisure Centre which had been a national innovation in 1964 in Harlow New Town. The concept was still evolving. Squash and sauna had recently been added to the Harlow Centre. Indoor surfaces were attracting use as grass pitches were decreasing. The response of Bob Dunbabin and NPRDC to the Recreation Plan is minuted on 1st April 1970 'resolved to seek meeting on major sports centre'; and BUDC followed suit. Centres at Bletchley and Stantonbury became live projects and were due to open in 1974; the latter having the advantage of relating to school facilities and the MP concept of the district centre for a catchment population of 30000.

Three other centres were envisaged at district level and one in the city centre.

Five golf courses were programmed; one at Windmill Hill by BUDC was already a live project, and another public course at Brickkiln was adopted by WUDC, two others were designated for the Ouzel Linear Park and near the city centre with hotel and conference centre, and a fifth at Oak Hill Woods, the most attractive site of all. At this stage Bedford Estates was seeking planning consent for two courses at Brickhill but there was local opposition.

Sports Grounds were sited at existing sports fields that could be expanded; Ancell at Stony Stratford, three in Wolverton, including the athletics track near Wolverton station where the schools district sports day used to be held, Manor Fields at Fenny Stratford, and new grounds at Stantonbury, Woughton and Denbigh. Water sports were to be at Willen and Caldecote. Swimming pools were considered appropriate for the six districts in the MP and linked to schools. By 1974 300 acres of the linear park would be open, and before 1979 a further 100 acres, and in the 1980s another 300 acres.

The Report referred to a Sports Council recommendation that there should be a Recreation Officer with comprehensive powers for all recreation, ensuring fullest use of private, public and commercial interests, planning new facilities and maintaining them, ensuring close links with all recreational interests, providing opportunity and new initiatives and responsible for non vocational classes. It was hoped that the existing authorities would be prepared to delegate 'sufficient powers' in anticipation of a single local authority to form the nucleus of a recreation department. The Report ended by saying that similar work should be done on provision for the arts and general provision of meeting places.

The Social Policy Committee of the Board minute 18.2 reads 'imaginative proposals but need better presentation and finance section'. A programme for 1972 – 77 was quickly put together with 151 projects costing £7.634 million including £1.1 from the MAF. Professor Roy Parker, Board member, was reported as saying that this should be spent at once as there would be no commercial provision until sufficient population arrived. The recreation staff were to liaise with the Linear Park Team, which should concentrate on design and landscape. SD had already sought delay in the design of Willen Lake so that recreational use could be included. A comparison of the shore lines of Willen and Caldecote shows how over engineered the former is.

SD was also involved in the formulation of policy in areas not normally part of public provision.

Horse riding was to have three centres linked to the bridal way system, one at Loughton and a second possibly at Great Linford. Marinas on the Grand Union Canal had to be approved by the British Inland Waterways Authority. MKDC decided to have three marinas rather than the four recommended, because it did not want to encourage excessive use of the canal, and they were all to be associated with commercial activity. The proposed site at Great Linford was considered a threat to the character of the village, and the sites agreed were at Central Milton Keynes, Fenny Stratford and Woughton, where a local cruising club, the Lionhearts, had a small berth, opposite the tow path near Peartree Bridge, on land rented to them by Wilfred Shirley a local farmer. The Lionhearts were persuaded to move near Great Linford.

SPORT 1968 - 1977

SPORTS CLUBS

This section concentrates on facilities and the many separate areas of sport. Grants were made to clubs but because they largely exist for their members it was considered they should raise a significant proportion of capital themselves. One of the strings tied to grants given to sports clubs was that they should promote sections for youth and children if appropriate. Most clubs accepted

this role enthusiastically and recognised that the continuation of their sport depended upon the younger generation becoming involved. Clubs was especially important in Milton Keynes because the attitude towards sport in education changed in the sixties and seventies as competitive sports were not encouraged. The new schools had no tradition of excellence in any particular sport. At Stantonbury, for example, the pupils were introduced to a wide variety of equipment without gaining any concentrated tuition in how to use it. It was left to many girls and boys to pursue an interest outside the school curriculum.

SWIMMING POOLS

SD produced a paper in December 1974 recommending a further three swimming pools, in addition to those at the two leisure centres and at Wolverton, which was open air; at CMK, and in the east and west flanks. The pools should be suitable for water polo, diving competition, augmented by dual use by schools, and one should have access for the disabled. Small pools were provided at Watling Way and Simpson schools with grants of £500. The next year SD produced a joint paper with Planning which reported that a possible commercial pool at Willen was uncertain and recommended priorities at Coffee Hall and CMK.

GOLF

Golf was considered to be a major attraction in the MP paragraph 263iii, where three courses were proposed in addition to the course at Windmill Hill, promoted by BUDC. There was also to be a more prestigious course with a conference centre near Central Milton Keynes. In 1971 SD was asked for a summary of progress, which mentions a steering committee for a course at Greenleys promoted by WUDC, on which Mike Barron, the Recreation Officer, represented MKDC. By 1973 there was concern about the amount of land that would be required by two more courses and policy was to include negotiating for land outside the designated area (DA) but for courses to remain public. In 1977 the CMK project was abandoned and it was agreed that there would be no additional courses to the two existing at Windmill Hill and Kiln Farm. The courses at Woburn having received planning approval were going ahead and any further courses would have to be on the rural fringe of the DA.

NOISY SPORTS

In March 1974 a Noisy Sports area was sited on twenty acres, between the A5D and the railway but its feasibility and viability were to be tested. In August of the same year the following uses were recommended; motor cycling, model cars, 'trials' racing, bangers, car building, and storage for which there should be an association of clubs. Access was poor and the style of management for such uses critical. It was agreed that initially it would be low-key use. Consequently there was considerable concern about noise before the mixed use gave way to a single model car circuit.

SPORTS FIELDS

There was a mixture of success and failure in the programme of sports facilities. The partnership for increasing the sports fields at Stony Stratford failed when the Ancell Trust lost interest. Apart from the new pavilion and the athletics track at Radcliffe, the other schemes at Wolverton were not implemented. In May 1973 WUDC was to contribute a major share of the costs, providing changing rooms and squash courts. In 1975 the all-weather surface was added with a doubling of the Sports Council grant. In 1977 the Sports Council grant was reduced by £6000 as BMK was no longer contributing and the changing rooms and squash courts were therefore omitted. The track was eventually funded by the Sports Council and MKDC and designed by BCC but the material used was far from satisfactory and it was badly maintained. The Denbigh Hall sports fields received no interest from employers and half of the area was laid out by MKDC at a cost of £20000, and the pitches, without a pavilion, managed by BMK. The Stantonbury Ski slope, which the Sports Council agreed to grant aid and BCC to design, was eventually abandoned when it was discovered that the site in the south-west corner of the grid square was not large enough. The undulating area remains, partially landscaped, but its original role unknown to most people. The NPRDC playing fields at Woughton were handed back to MKDC by the newly formed BMK. MKDC was determined to provide the amenity, and many hours were spent trying to establish an association of clubs

managing the grounds. It was discovered that the National Institute of Groundsmen was looking for a site where they could train staff on good quality surfaces. An alliance of the Institute and the joint clubs, football, hockey, tennis and cricket was attempted. Unfortunately the Institute proved to be a weak and under resourced organisation. MKDC laid out the grounds as part of the linear park and built the excellent pavilion and ancillary buildings designed by Peter Howard at a cost of £366.750. Many individuals representing their sport and MKDC staff after several years of endeavour created a successful sports ground. For more than ten years BMK failed to assume any leadership or responsibility for new sports projects; taking the easy political option of laying the task at the feet of MKDC. In the eighties with more experienced professionals and a greater commitment BMK began to provide new amenities such as the sports ground at Stantonbury.

POLICY AND PROGRAMME FOR THE ARTS

In **A SOCIAL HISTORY OF MILTON KEYNES** 2004 by Mark Clapson, he writes 'The provision for outdoor and indoor sports was generally good, and it evolved and grew with the size and diversity of the city's population. But if sports were generally well served, the arts and cultural facilities fared more poorly'. He goes on to describe Susan Marling, whose comment opens this chapter, as 'erudite and objective' which shows his lack of awareness of the early days of Milton Keynes and MKDC policy.

The policy for the arts shows a very different approach to that on sport, not project lead and not, appropriately, involved with land use planning. **Towards a Policy for the arts** SD paper 54/ 70 concentrated on a community approach. The difference between MKDC policy on the arts and sports was that the former received more revenue funding while the latter was based upon capital provision. The arts policy was based on three objectives; relating to MKDC goals - variety and choice, a community approach, and taking opportunities to achieve an image of the city by acquiring important works. The latter was to differ from some of the earlier new towns where expensive works of art were imposed. In Milton Keynes for example the Schottlanders, large structural works in metal, were borrowed until 1986 when they were purchased for £6000. The strategy was to provide facilities and events in liaison with others, to work with local organisations and individuals, backing ideas, and encouraging community based participation. Four issues received particular attention;

1. Attracting artists to new towns had difficulties of earning a living and lack of work space. The process of encouraging others was not necessarily part of the artist's role. Part-time teaching posts could not be relied on, though perhaps the OU might found fellowships.
2. Housing the arts raised a number of issues, the degree of specialisation, use of multi-purpose buildings, the role of education, and the use of old buildings could not be relied on if they were in the wrong place and required high maintenance.
3. Arts and the city at large required a balance between the arts centre approach which could be seen as elitist and escapist, and arts closer to people, for example poetry/pictures in pubs and post offices, folk concerts in a sports stadium, coloured food experiments in cafes and canteens, which might be patronising or alien to peoples tastes; and children's play.
4. Local history recorded through the support of local organisations and old peoples clubs.

A seven year implementation plan CO 128/71 from SD listed some initial elements; the restoration of Rectory Cottages in old Bletchley, a role for Inter-Action, a community arts organisation from London led by Ed Berman, support for the Wavendon All-music Plan (WAP), the initiative of John Dankworth and Cleo Lane for performance of and education in a wide range of musical forms, arts and crafts workshops and a City Arts Trust.

Recommendations were:

1. balanced development with sport, play, meeting places and other social facilities,
2. attraction of commercial leisure and entertainment,
3. flexible covered space as opposed to status buildings,
 - improving and expanding existing buildings

- implementation of a capital programme for example workshops
 - wide range of facilities local, district and centre
 - dual-use and joint provision
- 4 promoting new clubs and organisations,
 - 5 advice and assistance to groups and individuals,
 - 6 encourage artists and craftsmen to live, work and teach in Milton Keynes

The work would be done by a co-ordinated approach with LAA and other outside bodies and by the formation of an Arts Study Group chaired by the SDO.

Promotion of arts events was a major activity and the objectives outlined in a SD paper 478/72 EMC minute 2166 were;

1. increased access to the arts,
2. improving standards and appreciation,
3. including amateur performances,
4. increasing participation,
5. a wide range of popular and minority activities.

ARTS 1968 – 1977

The growth of the arts in Milton Keynes owes much to the initiatives of numerous people, some of whom appear in the following section. Their ideas were supported by grants towards running organisations and events and where necessary capital grants towards building costs. There was a limited programme of purpose built facilities for arts and crafts, like theatres and the workshops which are described in the Local Recreation section.

Arts Centre

There were mixed views in MKDC about Arts Centres as described above. MKDC was taken by surprise at the sudden availability in 1977 of Great Linford Manor, when the tenant surrendered his long term lease to the owner Miss Stella Uthwatt, and the building was offered to MKDC. In 1971 the tenant had not been successful in seeking planning permission for offices, restaurant and gallery. A year later the alms houses were purchased from the trustees for £1350. The same year EMC asked the architects and estates officers for a report on the future of the House and barns but no recommendation was made until 1976 when it was considered appropriate long term as a museum for fine and decorative arts, and in the short term as an art gallery and SD was asked for a report. In theory the setting and character of the House lent itself to an arts use but there was one grave problem, the house did not contain a space large enough for performances. EMC agreed the paper 191/77 presented by SD proposing an arts centre, as 'satisfactory', but asked for alternative ideas to be considered and there was concern about the capital costs of repairing a building which, like most of the historic buildings in Milton Keynes, had long been neglected. No alternative uses emerged and so the unsuccessful venture of the Great Linford Arts Centre was launched. In 1978. John English was asked to carry out a feasibility study. The Centre lasted for two years before the building was let for commercial purposes as a recording studio. Although it did not attract sufficient income to be viable, for a short period it offered some exhibitions and the sculpture walk. The ballroom in the house could only seat fifty or so people, and a proposal to build a small 300 seater auditorium in the grounds was not accepted by those MKDC thought might be interested. The failure left repercussions and was perhaps remembered in the DOE as grounds for refusing the application for expenditure at Bradwell Abbey for the City Discovery Centre; although the work was eventually done there it gave the project a difficult beginning.

Theatres

Bletchley Leisure Centre contained proposals for a theatre/workshop. Stantonbury also included a theatre, although NPRDC could make no immediate contribution, MKDC ended up paying almost half the cost. The dramatic rise in building costs in the early seventies caused both schemes huge problems in finding the extra capital and making decisions on reduced quality in finish and space.

At Stantonbury cuts of £21107 were made to the theatre reducing the workshop and greenroom elements. Some details in the theatre were far from satisfactory and in 1978 a grant from Major Amenity of £1700 was made to improve the lighting. BUDC asked for financial help with the theatre in the Bletchley Leisure Centre and although MKDC had doubts about its location, it agreed on the condition changes were made. Substantial grants of six figure sums were made to both Centres and loans as well, and it is uncertain whether these were ever repaid by BMK. It is important to note that the sports halls in both centres were used for performances both musical and dramatic in the early days. The theatre at Bletchley made very meagre contributions to performances but Stantonbury will always remain in the minds of early residents as a place offering wonderful performances of music and theatre. Roy Nevitt, the campus Director of Drama, who launched the series of drama documentaries about the area's history, was appointed in January 1st 1975 by BCC but MKDC met his salary from September 1st 1974 out of the SD consultancy budget in order to provide extra time for developing community use. One of the results was 'All Change', the drama documentary of the arrival of the canal and railway in North Bucks. MKDC assisted with a grant of £3000 to pay for the research, and the expertise in workshops led by Ewan McColl and Penny Seager, the folk musicians, and Peter Cheeseman of the Victoria Theatre Stoke. Hilary Davan-Wetton, the campus Director of Music, founded the MK Chamber Orchestra and the Chorale, and the former received a grant of £500 to support the first performances.

The impact of these two men on the arts scene has been enormous. Folk music in particular benefited and became the style of succeeding drama documentaries. The local musicians involved became the nucleus for Folk on the Green in Stony Stratford founded by Bob Adams with initial funding from MKDC. Behind the scenes at Stantonbury management affairs were far from calm. NPRDC in September 1971 had wanted the manager of the Centre to report to the Director of Recreation in the new Council when it started. MKDC favoured the manager reporting to the Director of the campus, eventually a compromise was found in March 1973 but relations were always difficult. Geoff Cooksey with his wonderfully relaxed style of leadership was an ideal Director of the campus in those early stormy days.

The three small theatres at Bletchley, Stantonbury and the OU provided spaces for amateur productions and professional touring companies. Two more theatres attached to schools were built by the mid eighties at Woughton and Loughton. Two further SD initiatives were the 'big top' in 1974 and what became The Madcap Theatre in Wolverton in the late eighties. The big top was a Mobile Theatre, another of Nick Waterlow's ideas. We went to see it in action in Plymouth in 1974 in a howling gale and we thought as it remained rooted there it would do for CMK, where the Royal Ballet touring company appeared in 1975. The Madcap Theatre was provided in the redundant St. George's Church Hall in Wolverton as part of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP). At last, after many abortive attempts, a large theatre was built in CMK. It provides a traditional mixed programme for the region but local performance is less than it was a generation ago.

In 1974 there was a small opportunity to build a more indigenous culture of theatre and drama. Gordon Vallins, a lecturer at the Bletchley College of Education, wrote a report ***The Use of Theatre as an Integral Part of Life in the New City of Milton Keynes***. The concept was to join various drama interests of groups and individuals, together with resources in schools, into a partnership led by a professional Director. When up and running two further appointments would be made of an actor/designer and an actor/musician. The object would be a programme of productions and workshops at all levels culminating in an annual performance of mixed amateur and professional forces. The project would grow at the pace determined by its participants and public support, and would make use of the variety of spaces on offer in schools, community buildings, open space as well as the theatres such as Stantonbury when they became available. The concept was presented to the Arts Council which had recently identified a budget for community arts. The team, Gordon Vallins, Roy Nevitt, Peter Jones of BMK, Cynthia Hargate and me, was joined by Tony Church, actor/manager of the Northcote Theatre in Exeter, and the Arts Council showed interest. MKDC approved the philosophy and asked for more details but decided that the support of BMK was essential. Although some Councillors, like Cecil Bowden, were keen, it did not gain the commitment required. MKDC frequently stated how important the arts were but showed too great an element of caution when innovation was on the agenda as will be shown in the description of the visual arts. In recreation in particular MKDC was over sensitive to the nature

of BMK, which was hardly sympathetic to the arts despite the hard work of Teresa Collard. Gordon Vallins concept was modest in terms of the money required initially. It would have brought together a lot of local talent and interest and been a community building enterprise that if successful would have contributed to a positive image of the city. Now that efforts are being made to achieve another theatre better designed for drama it might be possible to revisit Gordon's concept. The expansion of Milton Keynes calls for a new generation of innovation in the arts.

INTERACTION

An earlier theatre initiative was for street theatre by Interaction, which among other community ventures had started a city farm in London. The quality of their street theatre was questioned and their programme was suspended in 1973 and £2500 was left unspent. A less flamboyant project was negotiated for a programme for young people and MKDC agreed that Interaction could be a tenant of the old Rectory at Woughton which had become vacant. EMC asked for assurance that Interaction was a serious organisation. The details of their successful work in MK will be described elsewhere. Their activities can be broadly described as community arts. In a consultancy report dated 1987 ***Community Arts at Inter-Action*** by Gerri Moriarty he advised on the organisation's role and its future development. In writing his report he seemed unaware of the community centred arts policy of MKDC, and writes of the original contract between Interaction and MKDC for work with young people as 'social engineering'. He also claimed that sport benefited more from MKDC than the arts.

COMMUNITY ARTS

What Moriarty's report raises is the nature of community arts and whether they existed in MK. In a meeting I had with Shaun Hennessy on May 24th 1995, shortly before his early death, a grievous loss to arts development in MK where he had worked for MKDC, BCC and was working for BMK, he distinguished between community arts and arts in the community. The former is the means of a community finding an arts form to express its needs; the latter includes the former but is about participation in the arts, and can include both amateur and professional activity. Gerri Moriarty was writing of the former, and Shaun told me that the argument between these two versions had died down.

He thought that the MKDC approach of investing in people rather than buildings had been right, and in 1995 the number of arts organisations supported by BMK and BCC was much higher than other towns of the same size. The policy of MKDC had influenced both BCC and BMK. Through the lead taken by Graham Jones, Senior Education Officer BCC and Sir Edward Tomkins and the protests of Aylesbury and High Wycombe, BCC had been persuaded to follow MKDC's approach. The newly formed BMK in 1974, Shaun said, had not been against a community approach but it had been over zealous in pursuing its own prestige. The problem in MK in 1995 was the impact of the 50% cut in arts funding by Milton Keynes Council (MKC), now a unitary authority, having to choose between mandatory and discretionary services. The outcome of a survey conducted in 1992/3 asking residents to choose between services had shown arts expenditure as a low priority, but who would not asked to choose between a local orchestra and refuse collection? The facts were that attendance at events was 5% higher in MK than the average for the south-east, and in the same survey 58% had attended an arts event in the last year.

GALLERIES

When we discussed the visual arts Shaun compared the absence of gallery space with the vibrant local visual arts community. There was a lack of gallery space in MK compared with Leicester for example, which had 8 small galleries. In 1977 BCC had announced, at the Chief Officers six monthly meeting with MKDC, that it was bringing forward by one year the CMK library. We asked if there was an opportunity to add extra space provided by MKDC, and had been told two months. SD put together a successful bid for space, for a gallery and the Urban Studies Centre, and with the Oxford Diocese a church space for liturgy and social use.

Earlier in 1974 when it appeared that the Shopping Building might not be fully let SD had attempted to put together a bid to which EMC was sympathetic to for a BCC library and museum/gallery, and a 'one-stop' information service as an attempt to get social and cultural amenities into CMK. When BCC decided that it could not respond and Alan Ashton advised EMC

that there was growing interest in the shopping building the idea was abandoned but SD had remained alert to any possibility of getting a toe in the door of CMK. The library became the entry point. The church space became the stepping stone to the City Church. Our hope was that the gallery would act similarly for the second stage of the BCC building of the museum and permanent gallery. Unfortunately BCC year after year delayed the second stage of the building even though MKDC promised funding for items such as a Registry Office for the archives. The gallery run by Wendy Hitchmough provided several years of successful exhibitions for example; Sir Matthew Smith paintings, Picasso drawings, Nigerian art and the archaeological finds in MK. Eventually BCC also refused to take over the funding of the curator which MKDC had met. Even now with the gallery near the theatre MK is more poorly off than a generation ago. The Midsummer Arts Shows in unlet space in the Central Business Exchange also offered a richer experience than is available now in CMK. Edna Reid became a consultant to MKDC on the visual arts in 1975 and has remained a determined and inspired entrepreneur ever since. She ran the print loan scheme for MKDC which was established in the CMK library and was involved in numerous schemes to promote visual art.

There is no permanent collection of the visual arts in Milton Keynes. There are works commissioned or bought by private concerns such as the Boyd and Evans mural in The OU uses its campus for artistic works which are seldom seen by the public although there is a policy of public entry to the open space. The largest and most varied display of art on walls is in the General Hospital, a project which Edna Reid initiated in the 1980s. An attempt was made by SD in the late seventies to persuade Lord Campbell to back a scheme to commission a well-known artist every year to produce a work recording the growth of MK. The result could have been a varied collection as a base for a public gallery. MK is surrounded by galleries in Northampton, Aylesbury and Bedford which have interesting collections. Unfortunately the idea did not appeal to Lord Campbell and there remains a big gap in the MK not filled by a gallery with temporary exhibitions. A patron is needed in the next generation of growth to endow a collection for a Museum and Gallery in CMK.

RESIDENT ARTISTS

Cynthia Hargate was a keen advocate of bringing in resident artists. Liz Leyh, the maker of the famous concrete cows, arrived in 1973 to work with children for two years on play areas, for example 'the owl and pussy cat' on Netherfield. MKDC provided accommodation for her at Stacey Hill Farm and half her salary, the other half being paid by the Arts Council. Before the concrete cows Liz had shown us drawings of a large cauliflower and a group of leeks which could be placed on the side of a grid road and which could have been a real aid to navigation but the Highway Department of BCC would not approve. I remember, about this time, seeing a group of giraffes in a housing area in Glenrothes new town. The idea for cows came apparently from Jack Trevor Storey. Liz's gift of the 'cows' to mark the end of her residence was never taken to EMC for approval; the site was found by the NMK team and SD paid for the materials; and we thought it was a generous personal contribution without any special significance. Nobody foresaw the extraordinary public response, largely led by a hostile media, accusing MKDC of a cynical attitude to the loss of real cows. At a public meeting in Bancroft IN 1986 to consult residents after the completion of the housing development I reported that MKDC would like to transfer the Cows to the City Discovery Centre. The idea was totally opposed; the Cows now belonged to Milton Keynes not MKDC.

A craftsman in residence was also approved in June 1973, with a rent free studio as part of a Craft Fellowship by the Crafts Advisory Council. In May 1974 the CAC contributed £2000 which with a grant from the MAF paid for the conversion of a workshop for a jeweller at Great Linford. The most notorious residence, with the Arts Council paying half, was for a writer, who turned out to be Jack Trevor Storey. Chosen by Nick Waterlow of SD and a representative of the Arts Council he was, Nick told me, not the first choice and might prove to be difficult. A fellow director David Crewe later told me that it was a most damaging appointment as far as publicity for MK was concerned. In a TV film Jack was seen bouncing off one of the wire netting fences in Norman Foster's Bean Hill scheme. It is difficult now to see any particular major benefit of his work. He held workshops and

readings and no doubt helped individuals but he did not write anything important about the building of MK not even a satire. He was a spent force by the time he reached MK. He remained critical of MKDC but did not want to leave MK and his residence at Stacey Hill after his appointment ended. It was still his home when he died in 1991. The Guardian obituary reads 'He never moved out. There weren't many places he could afford to move to'. Shaun Hennessey said this way of achieving resident artists was really a bit of top down social engineering. An artist who emerged as a new resident in Milton Keynes was Bill Billings, sculptor and poet, whose work was much appreciated by a cross section of residents. His Triceratops, near Peartree Bridge, was obscured by grid road landscaping required by BCC Highways engineers. Bill the poet was helped by Jack Trevor Story and became an influential personality in the local arts scene.

The most successful residency was of the partnership Boyd and Evans who arrived in 1978 after encouragement by Cynthia Hargate. Their mural in the Central Library is a major arts feature in MK but their bleaker city landscape in the Woughton Leisure Centre is less well known. They remain to benefit the local arts scene. An artist who lived here before MKDC was John Watson, a regular contributor to the RA Summer Show. He approached SD with the idea of producing murals with three local schools. The first two were at Galley Hill, now renamed Queen Eleanor Street, and at Stantonbury. The aim was to involve the pupils in the design and firing of the tiles. The response of the MKDC Board was hostile to the one at Stantonbury, and one opinion expressed was that the tiles were likely to fall off the wall. SD was required to carry out a consultation with various services and users of the Centre, fortunately they were mostly enthusiastic. It is still there as is that at Queen Eleanor School. John's next idea was even more controversial a mural on the long wall of the Wolverton Railway works. The scenes were to be of the various workshops inside. The idea came from John himself and although a former works manager Geoffrey Tew thought it 'a marvellous idea', his successor Mr Dungworth, refused permission, 'I am unwilling to agree—because the amount of money involved—it would invite graffiti'. Daphne Jones, a local reporter for the MK Express was all in favour, 'John Watson's proposed mural would not only improve Wolverton's dreary old wall, it would do the town a power of good as well'. An exhibition of the cartoons John had drawn over three months in the works proved popular but the Railway works owned the wall and Dungworth won the day. In 1988 when John was leaving the area and was selling the cartoons they were bought by MKDC and given to BMK. They now hang in the Bath House Community Centre and the Wolverton Library. This story raises the whole question of public art in MK.

SCULPTURE

At a formal reception at BMK Offices in 1986 a Danish visitor asked me where the public sculpture was. Although some good sculpture exists in MK, much more could have been achieved if MKDC had been more bold and imaginative. This said it has to be acknowledged that public sculpture in Great Britain faces both a tendency to be vandalised by criminals and insulted by the 'man in the street,' represented by the press. Visits to Scandinavian capital cities makes clear the reasons for the visitor's question. The difficulties arose initially when MKDC tried to place a sculpture at the Brunel Centre in Bletchley to complete the offices it had provided in the town. It was described by the editor of the Bletchley Gazette as 'pretentious ironmongery' and BMK's criticism was based only on a photograph. The Board minute 196/75 reads, 'a brush with the press might set back attempts to include examples of the visual arts in building contracts' but hoped the policy would continue. The Board decided that a panel should decide on proposals for public sculpture, known as 'the three wise men'; the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the General Manager. Such was the nervousness of MKDC faced with the reality of British taste. Cynthia Hargate remained alert to opportunities and in 1977 she and Nick Waterlow revived the idea of including in the budget for all capital projects a Special Feature; 0.1% housing, 0.4% industrial/office, 1% commercial and 0.6% of grid road contracts. The minute reads 'provision of a 'feature' to be added to contract check lists, and the sum available to be reported to EMC when the contract let'. Although approved it depended on MKDC's architects who failed to take up the baton and eventually an annual budget was agreed and an architect scoured the country for a few sculptures he found pleasing. The most ambitious proposal was from Derek Walker, originally inside MKDC, but continued after he left to return to private practice. The idea was for the CMK Park, later named Campbell Park, to contain a sculpture walk and gallery. The agency was to be the MK Foundation set up in May 1973

for the general promotion of arts and culture with a grant of £5000, a bit of top down decision making in stark contrast with the SD strategy. Despite its notable patronage, Lord Goodman and Sir Hugh Willatt mentioned in Board Minute 78/75, it played a very minor role. It failed to support the Sculpture Park, although MKDC had approved a grant of £50000. Derek Walker claims in his Architectural Monograph No 43 *The View from Great Linford* that 'the sculpture park, together with the adjacent city park, were both victims of the savage cuts administered in the first term of the Thatcher government'. The magnificence of Campbell Park proves that he is incorrect in this assertion. The sculpture park was the victim of the weakness of the Arts Foundation as an institution and the fact that Derek Walker once he had left MKDC was not given major projects.

MUSIC

Wavendon All-music Plan (WAP) at The Stables was an exciting venture which MKDC was anxious to support for its potential role in MK and it was also next door to Wavendon Tower, the Corporation's HQ, which provided car parking for the concerts. The first mention of support was 7th April 1970 of a modest contribution and administrative support, and of the promotional value of the connection. In an account of the history of WAP published in 2010 it reads 'There was always a feeling that the Corporation could have done more for the Stables if it had been operating within the boundary and that prompted trustees to consider alternative sites for the Stables operation.' MKDC's records show that MKDC gave substantial capital and revenue funding over more than ten years. The successful application to extend The Stables in November 1971 was one of the first capital grants made by MKDC, £5000 towards building costs and the design fees of £2190. The Bank of England Financial Calculator (BoEFC) for year 2010 estimates the former figure's current value is £55.119 and the fees £24.142. EMC minute 1123/71 reads that 'Mr Dankworth had given an assurance that the extension would not delay a permanent location in the linear park'. The growing programme for concerts and the Easter education courses for children meant that the administration could no longer be met by voluntary work. MKDC agreed to meet all the costs of employing an Administrative Director and WAP would change its name to be identified with the city, Board minute 198/1973. Manor Farm Wolverton and Stantonbury Theatre were also suggested as venues for WAP events in MK. The grant for running costs was about £10000 per annum (BoEFC estimate for 2010 is £94.321) and was given for many years. Although there was an opportunity for a concert hall at Great Linford it was not taken, and it remains a mystery why WAP never met the requests attached to the grants it received. It is doubtful whether anything was ever agreed in writing. Despite the excellence of the organization it remains inaccessible to many of MK's residents and caters to a privileged clientele.

Music making has not been described in detail for the reason that after the initial funding of WAP, the Chamber Orchestra, the Chorale, support for Folk on the Green and workshops in connection with All Change, the founding of a Brass Band Festival in Wolverton and the provision of indoor spaces for rehearsals and concerts at Stantonbury and Woughton; the music scene has been so lively that MKDC funding was not needed. Hilary Davan- Wetton was an advisor to the MKDC in 1977 for MK Makes Music as part of the promotion of the shopping building and there were other projects which MKDC promoted but they were all to do with publicity not arts development. BMK by then was assuming a larger role in arts promotion.

WOUGHTON LEISURE CENTRE

This project is presented here because it was intended for both indoor sport and recreation, including performance, and illustrates the complexity of achieving facilities in the face of the difficulties BMK and BCC had in working together. It is doubtful whether this building would have been built without SD initiative. BCC and BMK would not have sought an alliance after the experience of Stantonbury despite its undoubted success as far as community use was concerned. It was to try and repeat that success that SD took the advantage of the comprehensive school programme starting on site in Coffee Hall in June 1976. The other reason for the action was the emerging character of the Woughton area which was becoming socially unbalanced and the housing for rent showing the need for remedial work. EMC Minute 2096 states that the centre would be 'a focus for community participation in the Woughton area'. The programme of leisure centres was for three more in district centres so the case for a third in Woughton was clear. Eventually there would be 4000 students on campus including 1000 in a Roman Catholic school.

The brief had to be ready by April 1975. Chairing the working party was not the easiest of jobs, with BMK resolutely opposed to joint management; it would manage the 25 metre 6 lane pool alone. The multi-purpose hall with projection equipment and stage lighting, and the enlarged gym would be managed by BCC. After the brief was approved, it was costed at £678,000; BMK £140,000, BCC £344,000 and MKDC £194,000, but neither of MKDC's partners could manage those sums. MKDC's contribution was finally £387,580. The cost of running the Centre also proved expensive to MKDC who met 50% of the cost of the initial period. The issues were the responsibility for the shared areas, such as the reception, the cost of running the Centre for seven days a week, and the balance of use between groups and individuals. The recommendation to the MKDC Board was that it should go forward as long as the costs of separate management could be reduced. Eventually we were able to report back that economies had been made by rationalising the management structure. The struggle was not quite over as the tenders were well over budget but EMC concluded that the facility was essential for Woughton. Lord Campbell complimented SD at the Board for the successful conclusion of a most complicated negotiation. MKDC also paid for the cost of employing key staff early to work in the local community as it had done at Stantonbury. It was very fortunate that Fernley Rose, Sports Officer in SD and after 1978 in the RU, was appointed to the post of Manager. SD had got the agreement of its partners to an element of community involvement and an excellent chairman, John Morris, was found. The role of the Centre now provides a unique venue for music. In the early days there were performances by Benjamin Zephaniah and Milton Keynes Opera performed 'Peter Grimes' on two grand pianos with a mixed caste of amateurs and young professionals on an imaginatively designed set.

This account of arts development in MK is a mixture of success and failure but it represents a comparable expenditure of resources to that in sports development but with a different strategy. The SD recreation team led at first by Mike Barron and subsequently by Cynthia Hargate was not only creative but persistent in the face of LAA lack of vision mainly by the politicians; officers like Graham Jones BCC and Teresa Collard BMK were more enterprising. It was however the enthusiasm of so many individuals and organisations that gave recreation such an excellent start.

JOINT WORKING PARTY ON COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Seven years after the Recreation Study Group chaired by Mike Barron, a Joint Working Group of MKDC and BMK, chaired by Peter Jones, Director of Recreation for BMK, reported in 1978. It recommended the way to achieve standards of provision and the allocation of financial and managerial responsibilities. The facilities included were children's play in housing areas, adventure playgrounds and play parks, playing fields, local parks, allotments, small meeting places and community centres, community workshops and indoor sports/multi-purpose halls and swimming pools. In 1978 MKDC decided to form a Recreation Unit (RU) managed by Brian Salter as part of a large department responsible for facilities management. The linear park had become a rapidly growing responsibility; for example in 1977 MKDC had to manage the use of Willen Lake as no commercial entrepreneur was interested. BMK had reneged on its agreement to manage the Wolverton Agora which contained a substantial space for recreational use which the RU had to manage. The lead on recreation passed from SD to the new unit, with the former remaining responsible as client for the local facilities such as meeting places, local parks, children's play and allotments. In some ways I regretted the loss of the social aspects of sport and the arts, but on the other hand SD did not have any expertise in large scale management and it would be alien to its prime purpose of encouraging community management and the independent sector and the provision of statutory services appropriate to MK

LOCAL RECREATION 1967 -1992

This section describes the process of implementing the facilities which SD was responsible for from 1967 to 1992. The RU continued the policies and financial support for the arts and sports initiated by SD from 1967 to 1978. SDs neighbourhood and community role included the following amenities, children's' play, allotments, local parks, workshops, meeting places, local schools with or without jointly provided space, and churches, many of which received capital grants for community use; these were the basic components for local recreation apart from pubs and clubs the responsibility of the Commercial Department. It was recognised that many people did not have the income, the freedom, the time or the personal transport to use the specialist amenities at city or district level except occasionally. In a SD policy paper written by Di Tolan in 1981 it was estimated that 60% of the MK population might be in this category, which could include the elderly, disabled, young people, those on low income, and those, particularly women, who were responsible for the home and family. It was also known that individuals, through changes in their life cycle, would not necessarily be permanently in this category. Unfortunately a SD proposal to carry out a survey of users of Stantonbury and Woughton Leisure Centres was vetoed by the MKBC and there was no way of confirming this figure. Local recreation has been seen by some commentators on the contemporary scene as the 'main way of fostering community life'. The decline in Christian religious affiliation and influence and the growth of sects and non Christian buildings more likely to serve their followers rather than the population surrounding their building supports this opinion. Local recreation in MK depended on a varied use of what facilities were available, flexible objectives and regular programmes. It was also important that local organizations should not be elitist or over directive in what people should experience. Community life depends on people having a network of acquaintanceship, mutual support and common experience; local recreation/leisure has a social meaning different from the individual pursuit of fitness and achievement in physical, artistic and mental activity. BMK adopted a policy of controlling parish councils and limiting their role. Many new areas were without them until MKC adopted a positive policy towards civil parishes in the late 1990's.

Children's Play

It is necessary to make a distinction between play, and education and care of children, which is unnatural in considering children in MK. Play refers both to facilities which were MKDC's responsibility for providing alongside its housing programmes and work with community organisations which SD nurtured like the MK Play Association. The SD role in care and education will be described in a chapter on Community Services.

In 1972 the DOE published a directive 78/72 on standards to be met in providing play areas in housing. A hierarchy of play was recommended; toddlers were to have small spaces near their homes with one or two pieces of equipment, areas for juniors would be further from housing with a wide range of equipment serving 250 house, and kick-about adventurous play would be large and for children from an area within a radius of 1.2km. At the beginning it proved most difficult to achieve the agreed strategy of completing play areas on time for the arrival of the first residents. The reference above to problems of play facilities at Stanton High shows that architects put play at a low priority; adherence to the standards varied and the identification of suitable sites had no common set of criteria, frequently being found on useless pieces of land left over from the formal structure of the grid square. Some designers also wanted to experiment with unproved prototypes of equipment. Unfortunately this was a period when health and safety standards came to the fore and the equipment and the materials used proved unacceptable. Regular inspection and repair of equipment is an absolute priority. Many of the small sites were not marked on plans. The sites near to housing were often used by older children in the evenings and annoyed residents close by. Staff in SD frequently met residents to listen to complaints and promising to move the play areas further away. Another threat to play areas was the result of some new arrivals believing themselves to be in the countryside and taking the opportunity to own a dog but finding it irksome, letting it roam, which it increasingly did in a packs, leaving excrement and posing a threat. After some years the policy was reinforced by the approval of EMC 66.78 with some minor adjustments but many of the same problems remained.

Adventure Play Centres were a popular national initiative in the 1960's and MKDC sought to gain BMK's involvement by providing four, two in areas where BMK had responsibility, Lakes Estate and Stony Stratford, and two in MKDC housing, in Netherfield and Stantonbury. The objective was for BMK to assume responsibility after they had proved their worth. They had a similar fate to the workshops and were overwhelmed by new health and safety legislation which reduced their adventurous nature. The only one that survives as part of a provision for children is the one in Stony Stratford but it is in a replacement building as the one designed by Archigram proved to be inadequate.

SD with Andy Wilson-Chalon in the lead, working with other MKDC professionals, produced a radical new policy in **Local Play Study 1980** which EMC approved. It was based on a thorough investigation which revealed that the hierarchy of play facilities based on age groups did not work. Equipment intended for younger or older children was irrelevant to the social use of the space. The frequent relocation of areas in response to residents objections produced not a planned facility 'but the piecemeal resolution of conflicts'. The abundance of toddler areas with one piece of equipment did not provide the variety of play which they needed. Swings, slides and climbing frames were popular for all age groups. Children tended to want to play close to housing but a very attractive distant area could be popular with all ages. Children's views had been collected during the investigation and their use of play areas observed. The results showed that informal play in suitable unequipped spaces was popular and that what had been provided was not what children wanted. Badly maintained play areas were avoided. BMK normally became the inspecting and repairing agency and it had advised that equipment below the minimum BSI standards would not be accepted when facilities were transferred.

The recommendations were that unequipped space should be designed for under fours where they could use their own, often wheeled, toys. There should be a two tier system not based on age groups, although recognizing that eight to nine year olds tend to widen their range of activities; the first tier should be near housing, large, with a variety of equipment and its attractiveness should outweigh its convenience, so that location was all important. The second tier should be normally part of the local park and of an adventurous character with a kick-about an essential component. The dominant importance of location for both tiers required inclusion in the structure plan. The recommendations included proposals for an inter-professional team to oversee the implementation which would include a full time inspector. The make up of the housing programme now consisted of a mixture of sale, rent and shared ownership, and it was recommended that the allowances for play attached to a number of frequently small schemes, should be amalgamated in a Play Trust Fund. The new policy was successful. In 1985 the experience gained resulted in an MKDC document **Guidelines – for Play Area Designers and Approved Play Equipment and Safety Surfaces**. The team consisted of SD responsible for policy and play value, the Central Landscape Unit for design and implementation, maintenance and safety by the Recreation Unit, and adoption by a Landscape Officer in BMK.

Allotments

In April 1974 EMC minute 2118 noted an increase in the demand for allotments and called for a strategic report. In May a standard of 0.4 hectares per 1000 was approved in contrast with the MP's 0.2 hectares. An even distribution of allotments among the housing was preferred to very large sites as had been proposed at Woughton. A factor was the architects' distaste for the normal make-shift character of allotments and at one stage they proposed designed uniform sheds. The intention was to provide allotments on fertile land and to avoid siting them near grid roads where the top soil would have been drastically disturbed. There was then a period in which little provision was made. Demand was now falling. The responsibility for the capital cost could not be determined, although it was a limited amount for water supplies, toilets, some car parking and the laying out of plots. In 1976 MKDC minute 2293 states that BMK and parish councils were the statutory providers but that they were unwilling to do so. It was noted that the DOE was not likely to agree assistance from MKDC. In 1977 the result of a meeting with BMK and the local association of parish councils was reported at which it had been agreed that MKDC and BMK would share the costs 50/50% and that parish councils should be asked to manage new allotments and that the standard should be 1.7 acres per 1000 population. SD became responsible as the client. In Two Mile Ash problems with statutory provision led to the formation of an Allotment Association. It

involved a complicated piece of community development undertaken by Nigel Cooper, who worked on open space briefs for SD.

Local Parks

In the early grid squares to be developed, such as Netherfield and Beanhill, the dominant design form of a specific house type and the perimeter of housing drawn tightly for the purpose of manipulating the housing cost yardstick, meant open space tended to be fragmented and for visual effect rather than social use. Allotments were sited next to grid roads where the top soil was more likely to have been disturbed. SD was instrumental in a change in open space policy in 1976; a standard of 0.6 hectares for a local park per 1000 people was approved. A local park was described as small, formal or semi-formal public area providing recreational, social and amenity focus for the local community. It was intended that they should be attractive and welcoming to less mobile residents, the elderly, parents with young children and the disabled. At first there were problems for local residents recognizing the area as a park without the normal features such as seating and play which were being provided in a more general way. The change in the strategy of providing children's play in 1980, described above, meant that there was now an opportunity within the variety of house types and the distribution of smaller public and sale residential areas, for a central position for a local park including a variety of formal and informal recreational spaces. A comparison of the early grid squares with those planned later like Neath Hill and Two Mile Ash makes the change clear. The development of identifiable local parks led to a programme organized by Margaret Groom in 1983 with Bob Adams, to demonstrate how they might be used. The programme concentrated on the early grid squares where open space and landscaping had been used as a frame for the houses, Fullers Slade, Bradville, Coffee Hall, Eaglestone and Netherfield, where modifications had been carried out by the Central Landscape Unit to make an area more identifiable as a small park despite its limiting features. The object of the exercise was to demonstrate how the park could be used in the future and required the complete involvement of residents and their organizations, and the participation of RU and BMK and specialist groups in the city like the Play Association and there was some sponsorship by commercial organizations. Over 4000 people were estimated to have attended the 69 events. The outcome was some modifications to the brief for local parks to improve their use and a further exercise in 1984 when more time was to be given for the build up of resident involvement.

Workshops

One of the new facilities built by MKDC was a local arts and crafts workshop initiated by Cynthia Hargate in SD, expanding the idea of the Bletchley Arts Workshop grant aided in 1971. The initial programme was for five buildings; the first at Galley Hill, followed by locations in Greenleys, Coffee Hall, Fishermead, and the use of buildings purchased by MKDC in the grounds of Great Linford Manor, which included the Alms Houses. The first problem was the budget to pay for them. Originally the Housing Revenue account was to meet the cost, but it proved to be inadequate and the Major Amenity Fund paid for them. The second problem was the cost of running them. Originally BCC was to pay for the manager's salary but decided they could not do so and the posts was placed in SD as an employee of MKDC. In March 1974 EMC decided that its support was justifiable but that the policy must be re-thought because of the uncertainty of BCC's position over the revenue costs. The minute reads 'There should be no more workshops in the programme until Galley Hill had run for a year.' The Galley Hill Workshop offered thirteen sessions of three hours a week but income did not reach the level hoped for. The third problem raised its head when more stringent health and safety rules came into operation, requiring both restrictions on machinery and the qualifications of the manager. Eventually in 1975 the workshops were given particular activities and clients; Greenleys for retired people, Great Linford specialist, Coffee Hall general and although BCC was still discussing the possibility of taking them over, staff were to remain in MKDC. A new body the Workshop Trust was formed in 1978 to manage all the workshops and eventually to take over all the revenue costs with grant aid, initially by MKDC and ultimately by BCC. The use of Greenleys workshop for the retired did not work. Those that remain are in active use and offer a valuable amenity citywide for a variety of courses in arts and crafts. The workshop programme can

only be considered a partial success, never achieving the local resource that was intended for a range of different interests.

A completely different type of workshop was built at Peartree Bridge. It was a Motorists Co-operative and the outcome of an initiative taken by Michael Young, the famous social entrepreneur, of the National Consumer Council. CD who was first approached handed it over to SD who commissioned a study into its feasibility in April 1975. In Sweden there were 400 such co-operatives where the running costs were subsidized by profits from the sale of fuel. Despite opposition from one local Board member whose interest could have been considered not entirely objective, it was approved and a grant of £20,000 made and a loan of £25,000 to recognize the DIY element. It ran for several years with difficulty and was eventually closed when the whole site at Peartree, including the Youth Centre building which had design faults, was cleared to make way for the marina and hotel.

Meeting Places

Capital costs

The early experience of providing community meeting places is well told in *Harlow; the Story of a New Town* (pages 126 – 133). The reluctance of local authorities to use their powers to provide amenities for newcomers, the Government Ministry's insistence that provision should be left to the education authorities, the requirement of the Treasury that commercial rent should be charged to users, compelled Corporation staff to search for ingenious solutions. For example the use of the powers of the 1936 Housing Act to build small meeting rooms whose costs could be met from tenant rents. The device of the Housing Revenue Account was used by MKDC for the very first meeting place at Galley Hill where the capital costs were shared with the workshop below, but with drawback that the small balcony on the upper floor was perceived as dangerous for play-group use.

The small meeting rooms in the Mark 1 new towns proved to be too small and the scale of village halls which was desired proved unacceptable to the Ministry except in rare cases. In Hatfield one community centre was provided with a temporary use by the Church of England, and another provided by a brewer. The latter became unavailable to many community organizations when it began to charge commercial rents in the mid-sixties and would not allow self-catering. Two reports, *The First Hundred Families 1965* (paragraphs 16 – 21) and *The Needs of New Communities 1967* (paragraphs 158 – 162) set out the case for meeting places which was adopted by MKDC. The Social Policy Committee of the Corporation Board however accepted a paper in June 1970 which argued against previous new town experience and in favour of small meeting places managed immediately by residents, the public housing model using income from tenant rents, a view which ignored the implication of the policy of 50% housing for sale. Larger spaces for community use it was thought would be available in the schools. The Master Plan had dealt superficially with this issue by assuming that 'dual-use' (use of school space out of school time for community purposes) and 'joint provision' (two or more organization contributing to capital costs) would be easy to implement. Paragraph 510 of the *Master Plan* reads 'It will not be the function of the Corporation itself to provide the majority of social facilities but rather act as a catalyst in ensuring their provision.'

The creation of the Major and Minor Amenity Funds in the mid 60's made possible a fairly straightforward process of amenity provision, and the removal of the power of the DES to make grants to community halls made the process of putting grants together less complicated. Local authorities in MK did not fund meeting places. The MAF ceased to function in the 1980s when the Conservative government from 1981 onwards chose to approve each project rather than allowing MKDC to make the decision. Housing developers could not be relied on during this period for funding as the problem of ownership and revenue support could not be solved BMK required the facility to be financially self sufficient before assuming ownership. Developers also could not be relied upon to build the meeting place on time.

Evolution of the Brief

The early meeting places were far from satisfactory, and did not meet the criteria for opening less than a year after its catchment area began to be occupied. Heating systems and storage were regular problems. Not until 1977 was order brought to the process of building them. A detailed

EMC paper 54/77 described the current situation. The paper reported the high use of meeting places supplemented by the effectiveness of community houses which were always available for the very first residents. Standards of design and cost control had been disappointing. The client role was not fulfilled or identified and deficits were high. The playgroup took up 50% of available sessions compared with the figure of 25% which had been projected. The elderly used 20% of sessions; there were more elderly new residents than expected. There was a request from some residents for meeting places to have bars as pubs and social clubs were not opening at the anticipated rate. Mobility was affected by low car ownership and inadequate public transport. Future responsibility for meeting places was uncertain and the role of management by local people should be maximized. A meeting place of 175 sq. metres at a cost of £53499 (July 1976 figures) would be provided for 1000 houses by MKDC. A jointly provided community centre of 250 sq. metres for a population of 10,000 could be built at an appropriate stage with MKDC contributing 25%. The client role was given to SD.

By 1980 the continuing uncertainty about the future of meeting places and the wide variation of grid square populations led to further refinement of the brief. The standard size of 114 sq. metres per 700 dwellings was approved with a built in possibility of extension or conversion should the meeting place prove to be redundant long term. In 1982 the new model brief included a larger meeting place of 140 – 165 sq. metres for an area containing from 875 -1030 houses. By 1987 the catchment areas ranged from Hodge Lea 450 houses to Springfield with 1600. In 1972 it was decided, probably in favour of the view of the Post Office, to name the grid squares and not the activity centres, as proposed in the MP. This decision, in some cases, led to a misleading sense of identity and an unfortunate labeling of residents on the grid squares with unpopular house types. A name was interpreted as sufficient to warrant very local facilities. The first residents of Hodge Lea, for example, fought MKDC over the need for a meeting place of their own. MKDC thought the meeting place in Stacey Bushes would serve both areas of housing. MKDC gave way in the mid 80s but the use and effort to run it declined and the building eventually closed. A new standard was approved in the mid-eighties of 190 sq. metres for a population of 3500. Through this process the detailed brief was perfected as much as possible with adequate storage, specific requirements for heating and insulation regimes, floor surfaces, kitchen and toilet details and a secure outdoor area and doors and windows and made as resistant as possible to vandalism. The requirements of a playgroup space and ancillaries for registration by Social Services dominated the brief. The 1987 refinement of the brief had been initiated by SD commissioning a report on Meeting Places by Social Policy Advice and Research Associates (SPARA) directed by Roger Else. Meeting places were shown to be well used, the average for the 28 sessions available (3 sessions per day) being 49%, with the highest 78% at Oldbrook and the lowest 31% in Bradville. The report also contained recommendations on two issues that need specific attention; community management and running costs.

Community Management

When the first meeting places became available and SD was part of the Housing Department the opinion of the Director was that the keys should be handed over at a public meeting, this never happened. At the other extreme the Borough Council was only interested in running buildings without revenue costs. SD sat in the middle, believing that it was both possible and desirable that local people should have control, but it would take time for a satisfactory handover. A joint Board paper by SD and PMID in 1982 recommended that a probationary period of successful management was required before formal handover and a constitution safeguarding the amenity for the local community.

The early meeting places were all in predominantly rental housing areas and proved to be poorly designed. As Roger Else's report showed these meeting places also had the largest deficits, and in 1980s were areas of high unemployment. The conclusion was that local management was not an option; in fact the provision should be seen as a welfare service. The report expressed the view that in areas with 60% or more rental housing meeting places might never be financially viable. There was a different conclusion for meeting places in areas with a large % of sale housing, which also served a wide catchment area requiring the maximum size of building. Here the use of the building was greater and more varied. Local management was more likely in these areas. In 1987 eight meeting places were community managed. The subjective opinion was given that these

showed more initiative and community involvement. They had lower deficits helped by the charitable status of the organization which made it eligible for rent rebates. The report urged a greater effort towards training for management committee members and the continuance of professional support indefinitely. MKDC policy was to charge only a nominal rent for buildings meeting a community need. Before I left MKDC in 1988 the issue of the ownership of meeting places was raised. I tried in vain to make the case for Parish Councils, where they existed, to inherit ownership as they are able contribute revenue support if needed. I found when I worked in Suffolk that ownership of village halls by parish councils, leased to permanent management committees is quite the healthiest arrangement. In MKDC the responsibility for meeting places was divided between SD and the Property Management Department. The former was the client and nurtured community use and management, the latter the day to day manager of the building if it was not managed by a local committee. When MKDC closed in 1992 MKBC owned and managed sixteen buildings, the BCC fourteen and local community groups twenty-seven.

Running Costs

In 1987 it was established that no meeting place, for which data was available, produced a surplus. Centrecom in CMK and Oldbrook had the lowest deficits. The average deficit was £4730, and six community managed and six MKDC managed meeting places were at or below this figure. Community management average deficit was 33% below the direct management figure but the former benefited as charities from rate relief. The lack of surplus meant no income could be built up for long term maintenance and repair. Availability for commercial lettings subsidizing uses with little or no income is worthwhile only where there is competent management to deal with careless use by the hirer. Good practice of community management requires an annual review of rents against rising costs. SD convinced Property management that no favour is given by keeping rents low and then increasing them substantially.

Joint Provision

Apart from the facilities wholly provided by MKDC, scores of independent projects were grant aided through partnerships initiated by SD

Village Halls

In the early 70's, grants were given to many existing village halls, although their size could not possibly serve the population moving to Milton Keynes. There was a dearth of social activity in many of the villages, more hamlets in most cases, and MKDC was eager to support efforts to revive these communities. Grants were made, for example, to Simpson village hall in June 1972, to Bradwell Memorial Hall in June 1973, and £11500 grant in 1975 towards a total of £16,000 for Milton Keynes and Broughton Community Centre, BCC gave £5000, was justified even though it was 63% above the 25% rule for capital grants on the grounds that a meeting place might not be needed later when newcomers arrived. The MKDC architects spoke against any contribution to village hall car parks as they were aesthetically undesirable. In 1974 Great Linford's hall was a wooden building in very poor condition. Peter Oakley, one of the community work managers, spent almost three years building up the small management committee of existing residents to take on responsibility for the new building. The purchase by the Corporation of the site of the old building enabled the management committee to make a financial contribution towards the total cost which was made up by MKDC. At the formal opening in July 1978 Lord Campbell paid a compliment to the architect, Paul Woodfield and, quite rightly, there was no reference to SD or Peter Oakley without whose work behind the scenes the building would not have existed; but continuous community management had been achieved between the old and the new.

Churches

The other village buildings for which Social Development acted as a catalyst were a few of the churches. Two of them, St. Andrew's, Great Linford and St. Mary's Woughton on the Green, had been identified for re-ordering in the programme adopted by the Oxford Diocese in 1972. Re-ordering is a re-arrangement of the interior by removal of the pews for wider social use and the addition of toilets and kitchen. The Team Rectors, Robin Baker and Chris Drummonds who had

taken on these expanded parishes in 1972 followed this plan. When the time came to implement it, St. Mary's in 1974 and St. Andrew's in 1978, MKDC made a grant on the condition that secular use of the buildings would be allowed. The third church, Holy Trinity Little Woolstone was made redundant in 1971. The building was too small and poorly located for an important role for the new population. When development reached the Woolstones, where the size of the new population was too small to justify a new meeting place, MKDC bought the building on the recommendation of SD. It was completely re-ordered, and the chancel was leased back to the Diocese so that services could continue to be held.

Advantage was taken of the building plans of the churches in some of the new areas to provide a larger space by granting the budgeted money for a meeting place to the church project. The Trinity Centre, Fishermead, The Cross and Stable, Downs Barn, Two Mile Ash Church and the Servant King, Furzton, all received major grants, over £100,000 in total, on the condition that the building was used for community purposes. Grants were also made to churches offering community use, Stantonbury Pastoral Centre (£9000 1975), Baptist Church Bletchley (£3000 1974), Water Eaton Church Centre (£5000 1976). Not only the Anglican Church and Ecumenical buildings were grant aided, the Roman Catholic Church in Heelands, St. Augustine's (£30,000 1978) and the Christian Centre in Oldbrook also received grants on the agreement the building was used for community as well as membership activities.

Schools

The community function of some of the schools was fulfilled later. In 1971 MKDC gave grants of £2040, for storage for non-school activities, to six of the first schools which were built; Simpson Combined, in Bletchley Water Hall and Water Eaton RC, in Woughton, Netherfield, Coffee Hall and Eaglestone. The Head teachers had to be told of the provision by MKDC, and the storage had no visible location. The grant had disappeared into the building costs and there was no effect on community use by this attempt to encourage dual use. The year before the Social Policy committee of the Board had expressed its dissatisfaction that BCC had revealed no policy on use of schools or given assurance that if MKDC contributed that time and space would be available. In 1974 when public expenditure was cut by 25% the case for dual use emerged again but with little effect. Bradwell Village School and St. Monica's Neath Hill, the capital grant in 1976 was £19,900 for enhanced amenities. In Two Mile Ash and Giffard Park the meeting place budget was used to provide both a community annex and a larger main hall that could be used for indoor sport. Joint provision became the only way to widen the use of schools. Discussions on dual use of schools foundered on the impossibility of increasing the salary of caretakers and the lack of concessions on hiring charges for valid community services.

Pubs and Social Clubs

Combining community space with a pub failed in Great Linford when the brewer lost interest, but on Oldbrook a meeting place and pavilion were built with Greene King. Early on there was an increased demand for sites for social clubs which, like pubs, were the responsibility of CD. Five sites were identified at Stacey Hill, Old Bradwell, Neath Hill, Coffee Hall and Conniburrow, where a meeting place with changing rooms was located with a playing field. The Stacey Hill club was the only one built and its existence was so marked by gross mismanagement that no others were built. Building club facilities before there is a strong client group to run it is almost always a mistake. The unfortunate fate of the sports field and pavilion, vandalized and burnt down, on Hodge Lea is an example of an ill considered pre-planned facility without a client.

Redundant buildings - a case study

Two other projects in old buildings are worth recording as examples of SD being a catalyst. In Stony Stratford, the redundant church of St Mary's, and the old redundant school in New Bradwell. They are particularly useful models of how existing buildings can take on new uses and how their management requires special care. St. Mary's designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, was made redundant in 1968, when the two parishes in the town were united, and remained unused. As the Bishop's Planning Officer I had become a member of the Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work. Lydia Lambert was commissioned by the Council to investigate the role of the Church in social work in the Milton Keynes/North Bucks area, and the use of St. Mary's Church building in Stony

Stratford as a potential base for it. The Revd C. Cavell-Northam, the Parish Vicar, had suggested a use for voluntary social uses; three areas in the church were identified for small offices, small committee room and the nave for a variety of activities from playgroup to film shows. John Wells-Thorpe, who had been appointed as the consultant architect for the Churches in Milton Keynes drew up plans which were costed at £25000 plus professional fees. The scheme was not put out to tender because the Parochial Church Council was also faced with raising money for the repair of St. Mary and St. Gile's (the combined name of the mid 18th century church which served the new parish) and the question of who was to be responsible for the new use of the building. Lydia Lambert was helped by ten individuals to carry out a survey of residents' views of the use of the building and their attitude to the Church being involved in social work. Although there was a doubt among those interviewed that a building with a religious appearance could function as a community/social service centre there was a strong view that the building should be used and Stony Stratford had 'no large meeting places' 'a concern to local residents and to MKDC'. The varied uses proposed both community centre and social service base meant a complicated route to achieving a result which deterred the interested parties. Meanwhile MKDC included a community centre as part of the Cofferidge Close project consisting of shops, restaurants and offices. This was in response to the re-formation of the Stony Stratford Community Association by Peter Cosford in October 1971 and his request for a community hall. EMC called for a paper on how the hall could be financed: any grant from MKDC would reduce the grant from BCC and DES, WUDC would be asked for £9000. In April 1973 the delayed decision from DES and BCC threatened postponement of the project unless £50,000 could be found elsewhere. In December 1973 EMC was advised costs would rise if the construction was delayed any further, grants were fixed, and the Cofferidge Close project could not subsidize a non-commercial element; a new site would have to be found. At this point in the meeting I suggested that St. Mary's could be converted and it was agreed that it should be considered. Later in the month a financial statement was requested and it was felt the Association should be asked for a contribution. In March 1974 David Sim was appointed to survey the building and it was reported that the Association and the Church had agreed. This statement does not reflect the difficulty SD, as catalyst, had in getting Peter Cosford and Cavell Northam to meet round the table. In May the cost of conversion was reported as £50,000 and it was agreed that the Association should appoint the architect. In 1975 the final cost of £55,900 was approved, the largest grant was from MKDC. Finally a further £3900 for Quantity Surveyors work came from the MAF and the extra £2400 in the lowest tender came from MKDC conservation budget. St. James School and Community Centre in New Bradwell was straightforward in comparison with the saga of Stony Stratford's Community Centre. It included low cost workshops. EMC minutes of 1977 described it as 'very imaginative' and would 'preserve some good buildings'. The conversion was carried out by BCC architects. After a generation of use the New Bradwell buildings are in such bad repair that their use may cease. The fate of the Stony Stratford Centre is as tortuous as its making and is now the centre for the Greek Orthodox Church, an appropriate use but most unfortunate for Stony Stratford. Fortunately York House has now become the community centre. The building remained in the ownership of the Oxford Diocese which was the wish of Cavell Northam. It was let to the local Community Association on a twenty-five year lease and they released it a year early in 2004. The Community Association gave little warning to the town despite the fact that a Town Council came into existence in 2001. The Community Association proved to have no long term expertise to manage and let the centre and it fell into the real control of the bridge club. The Oxford Diocese put the sale out to tender and although the Town Council put in a bid the Greek Orthodox bid was higher. The Diocese did not respond to overtures to keep the building in local community use.

Management

This case study raises some important issues for community centres and halls.

1. Money must be set aside for maintenance and repair, and hiring charges regularly reviewed.
2. The ownership of the building must be safeguarded by charitable status or a public body.
3. The management body, and it need not be the owner, must be expert and made up of users and representatives of the owning body.

4. The owner must be accountable either through a Parish/ Town Council or Trustees, including some appointed by the local council.
5. The local council, which has the powers, should be prepared to play a financially supportive role both towards capital and revenue needs, recognizing that some uses will need to be subsidized, for the elderly and children for example.
6. Both old and new buildings require a periodic survey of a least five years
7. Ownership by non local agencies should be avoided, including public bodies like a Borough Council. The sale of school playing fields is a warning to local communities that a local amenity and its uses can be victimized by a rapacious policy of central or local government.

Summary

When MKDC finished in 1992 there were at least eighty-four premises wholly or partly serving a local community. Forty were fully funded by MKDC, forty-one grant aided and three provided by developers. The type of provision varied enormously as a result of policy and opportunities being taken: seventeen community churches, seven community centres, thirteen free standing buildings, ten linked to shops, eight combined with sports facilities, five major school annexes, and eight small ones, eight village halls extended or replaced, and eight specialist premises with local community use. MKDC managed sixteen premises and took over fourteen from BCC in 1997 when the unitary authority came into existence. Churches of all denominations managed seventeen, local community groups twenty-seven, and ten were controlled by specialist organizations. If the cost of temporary community houses, some of which were doubled in size to act as temporary meeting places if the permanent building was delayed, and demountable structures is included, the programme's expenditure was in the order of £5-6 million pounds and the equivalent of the cost of a grid road programme for 1.5 years at mid 1980s figures. The value in terms of services and recreation, the realization of local identity, and investment in social capital in helping to create networks of mutual support is incalculable.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND MUSEUMS

Introduction

SD agreed to manage the Rescue Archaeology Unit led by Denis Mynard in 1981 when MKDC architects abandoned it. This responsibility led to more work for SD on a museum strategy which included the partnership with the Stacey Hill Collection and Bradwell Abbey Field Centre. The MP paragraph 238 reads 'A museum will be provided in the new city centre and special areas of the new city will be set aside for field studies and for the establishment of a suggested archaeological centre'. Behind the failure to achieve these objectives lie two factors. The first is the undoubted enthusiasm among local people for the areas history and archaeology which existed before the designation of Milton Keynes. In 1967 the membership of the Wolverton and District Archaeological Society doubled to 338; and in 1968 it organized an important exhibition in the Radcliffe School; ***An Introduction to the History of North Bucks and the Exhibition of Works***. Although the Society objected to the designation of Milton Keynes at the Public Inquiry, the Minister responded to the Society's concern about listed buildings of special and archaeological interest by promising a sensitive integration of such buildings. MKDC failed to involve and sustain this local interest. The second factor is the astonishing lack of initiative by BCC to undertake any responsibility in this field. In 1995 I interviewed Margaret Durbridge, member of the MKDC Board 1967 – 1977 and independent County Councillor, who told me that the BCC archaeologist had insisted there was 'nothing' in North Bucks. The two factors are not unrelated. People in North Bucks did not feel the rest of the county was concerned with their interests and needs. Faced with the enthusiasm of local people and the apathy of BCC, MKDC had a difficult course to steer which was not helped by the decision in 1971 to place the archaeological staff with the architects.

Master Plan

Volume 2 contains eight references to specific actions to be taken in the area of 'Heritage'. Two of them were affected by failures in implementation. Local activity centres never contained the variety of facilities which could have provided 'flexible exhibition space' (paragraph 935). The loss of the Higher Education campus between Wolverton and Stony Stratford in 1977 meant that the deserted village and motte and bailey at Old Wolverton did not realise their potential for educational use (paragraph 1367). Two actions have been fulfilled. The Stacey Hill Collection, now the Milton Keynes Museum, can be identified with the folk museum (paragraph 935). Most of the archaeological sites were identified and interpreted both in the linear park and the rescued sites now covered by housing. As part of SD the Archaeological Unit began to write up the excavations and place interpretive panels on or near significant sites. Four actions are left which are still possible apart from the museum in CMK, which was expected (1) to contain the records of Milton Keynes, provide (2) a museum service involved with the community, and (3) make loans to schools. Paragraph 1035 says the museum would require considerable capital and it was necessary to (4) prepare plans and building programmes 'well before the population has reached a size that will give it viable support'.

Early Initiatives

North Bucks had two archaeology societies at Bletchley and Wolverton which held a special joint meeting in 1966, to consider a response to the designation of Milton Keynes. They decided to form a North Bucks Historical Committee, sponsored by the Museums sub-committee of BCC and the Bucks Archaeological Committee, to co-ordinate the study of archaeology and history, to make a comprehensive photographic survey and surveys of the area's flora and fauna. This committee lasted only two years before it was replaced by a Milton Keynes Research Committee at the end of 1967. Although both the local societies had a place on this new body they were not given any resources to play a larger role. BCC did not have a policy of grant aiding voluntary bodies in this field and MKDC was looking to BCC to provide the professional expertise needed. The result was a huge hole into which the Milton Keynes Research Committee was buried without really having been alive.

Dennis Mynard was the most significant person in North Bucks archaeology, the general secretary of the Wolverton Society until he joined the Ministry of Works in 1966, although he remained the Hon. Secretary for archaeology. In the Wolverton Society's Journal of 1968 he reported that he and a few others had 'field walked' to collect and identify surface finds and had located 'fifty new sites' which 'have added considerably to our knowledge, particularly of the new town area'. He reported in the 1970 Journal that a Field Archaeologist had been appointed by BCC for the whole county and added 'it is to be hoped that he spends as much of his time as possible in the field and is a regular visitor to North Bucks'. Unfortunately the Field Archaeologist resigned the following year and his post was not refilled. In the same Journal, Dr. Oliver Brown, the Editor, commented on MKDC's choice of the Minoan double-axe motif for its logo. 'It is to be hoped that the second empire of the axe will not like its forbear beget and transmit to posterity a similar tradition of oppression by an ogre entrenched in its labyrinth'. It was how MKDC in Wavendon Tower was viewed by many people in the early days.

MKDC fills the vacuum

The failure of BCC to replace their Field Archaeologist was the first sign of their unwillingness to take any responsibility for archaeology. Instead MKDC made the first of many decisions to make things happen. The CO meeting received a paper 128/71 about a Field Centre and recommended the appointment of a fulltime field archaeologist who would have a community approach. In ***Archaeology in North Bucks 1970/71*** Dennis Mynard wrote: 'Work on the construction of Milton Keynes began in earnest in 1970. Development sites for roads, drains etc appeared over night and new sites were found immediately and recorded by members of the Society. By the early months of 1971 it became apparent that there were no adequate arrangements for the watching of development and the recording of sites. In May members of our committee and the committee of Bletchley Society were invited to meet MKDC to discuss the problem. The outcome of this meeting was that MKDC decided to appoint an archaeologist to their staff and after consideration appointed two, of which I am one.' Unfortunately, although SD had taken the lead on this subject, the posts

were placed in Architecture. No doubt it was considered at the time that this would facilitate a programme of excavation in time with site work but unfortunately it meant the community dimension, particularly the growth of the local societies, was neglected and the potential relationship to a Museum forgotten. A draft Board paper considered at the new Executive body, EMC, recommended the use of Bradwell Abbey but it was not to be open to the public.

Bradwell Abbey Field Centre

The Field Centre staffed with MKDC archaeologists and ecologists was seen as the replacement of the Research Committee and a Trust was formed in 1972. Six years later when the Board considered a paper by SD 89/78 **Museums – future arrangements** it was considered that the Trust had made little progress in establishing financial self-sufficiency. The reality, which I could not reveal, was that Bradwell Abbey was dominated by MKDC staff which included the ecologists, the Trust left without any professional help to develop its function, indeed there was little harmony between its members and MKDC staff, and no realistic funding. The Archaeologists had grown into a Unit of six fulltime personnel and with part-time help carried out an enormous rescue programme. The process of writing up research, relating the process to the need for a museum, helping the Trust to evolve was put aside. Dennis Mynard produced annual reports, newsletters and organized public open days on excavated sites but could do no more.

The Museum comes on an Agenda

In June 1979 at Chief Officers' meeting with BCC, we were suddenly told the CMK library was being brought forward a year, a quite extraordinary event. My own view is that BCC were not to be outdone by the new Civic Offices of BMK on the neighbouring site, a political move and probably architect inspired; the Library service was far from influential. I have described above under Galleries how MKDC managed to add space to the Library. As the second stage of the Library was to include the Museum it became possible to put it on an agenda. SD established a working party which included a representative from the South-Eastern Museums Service which providentially had opened offices in Milton Keynes. A report was commissioned surveying the current museum type activities serving local people and advising on what steps could be taken to strengthen them; Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Stacey Hill Collection and the Urban Studies Centre, and for first thoughts on the role of the Museum in CMK.

Urban Studies Centre (USC)

Pat Mortimer had set up this project when he was a lecturer at the Milton Keynes College of Education. The object was to record the growth of Milton Keynes for educational purposes. The Job Creation programme, described in more detail in the chapter on Youth, was used to employ staff, supplemented with a grant from MKDC. When the College was closed by the Secretary of State for Education, Shirley Williams, in 1977, a space was found for USC in the Exhibition area in the Library provided by MKDC.

MKDC Board Decisions

The report on Museums and the advice of the working party enabled me to report to the Board in November 1978 and the policy was approved of supporting the three local organizations, mentioned above, with grants for professional and administrative staff, the principle of long leases of the properties at a nominal rent when the organizations were well established, and grants to Trust Funds for their future when MKDC were satisfied with their structure and progress. It was also noted that the museum material owned by MKDC would be loaned to BCC for display in Milton Keynes in storage provided by BCC. It was reported that discussions would take place on professional appointments by BCC, including a Museum Officer, paid for initially by MKDC, to prepare for the Museum and support local Organizations. SD contained no Heritage development staff and I arranged that MKDC became a member of the Association of Independent Museums, and attended some seminars and made contacts which enabled me to pick some brains. It was a difficult position. Roger Parker-Jervis, Chairman of BCC and Board member from 1975, often lectured me at Board meetings about letting BCC get on with its job, unfortunately in some important areas it failed to do anything.

BCC Failures

After this promising beginning, between 1978 and 1981 BCC failed to make any appointments and turned down an offer from MKDC to pay for a Museums Officer through the 'undue Burden' mechanism, the annual budget allowed by the DOE for MKDC to pass over money for local authority services considered to be necessary for Milton Keynes. This post would also have attracted a grant from the Area Museums Service. All BCC were prepared to do was to pay for the storage of museum material once it had been leased to them. The prospect of no Museum or service provided by BCC and the pressure from government for MKDC to shed jobs forced MKDC to try another tactic by transferring the Archaeology Unit to BCC. This mechanism involved BCC in no expenditure whatsoever; the cost of the work continued to be met by MKDC. The transfers of staff effected by MKDC was a political cosmetic required by the Conservative government to show a reduction in the number of MKDC employees; it also caused much hard work for managers who had to cope with dissatisfied staff, but it was hoped that BCC with archaeology to run might grow more concerned about a permanent home for the finds. The Unit became part of BCC on April 1st 1984 but SD remained responsible for its programme. The prospect of MKDC being closed down also caused anxiety about the future of its archives. I was able to make an offer that MKDC would pay for a Records Office as part of the Museum as long as the records were kept in Milton Keynes. MKDC also made a contribution to the salary of an Archives officer employed by BCC. A Museum was programmed by BCC for a start in 1986.

In 1985 BCC reported a cash crisis and the 1986 start was abandoned. It was no surprise as BCC had not appointed any museum staff to plan its role. On February 13th 1986 at the meeting of Chief Officers BCC told us that the Museum was not a priority in the capital review to be undertaken. When the dangerously poor condition of the Aylesbury Museum was suddenly revealed at this time any hope for a Museum in Milton Keynes vanished. BCC was incapable of putting its own house in order, let alone build a new Museum in CMK. It had to rely on public subscription to repair Aylesbury Museum, but as the rateable value of property in Buckinghamshire was the highest in the country there were enough wealthy people to pay up.

The offer of material help to BCC remained on hold in case BCC changed but MKDC turned to the local voluntary societies as more likely to provide a service. BCC was asked directly to re-consider their policy of not grant aiding independent museums. They did so and decided that only professional advice would be available through the Curator, Chris Gowing, of Aylesbury Museum. BCC's policy was in marked contrast to many local authorities, as I learnt from AIM and found out when I worked in Suffolk, where the County Council offered not advice but grants.

Problems in the Local Societies

The very nature of local enthusiasm is sometimes accompanied by a total lack of awareness of the context and conditions under which things can happen. MKDC had failed to develop Bradwell Abbey Field Centre Trust into an important organisation for all local societies. These societies had therefore not broadened their horizons to include partnerships and develop their organizational skills. At Stacey Hill, for example, each volunteer member had some special interest to pursue which usually meant collecting objects voraciously. The result was that in the farm buildings there were numerous objects whose interesting story remained in the heads of the collectors and there was no attempt to relate them to a whole theme which would give the Collection a clear role. CD which was responsible for the use of the buildings had little respect for the ability of the Society as a whole to organize itself. Another difficult situation was the role of Ray Bellchambers, a Board member from 1967 to 1984, who was Chairman of the Society and kept his contact with the highest level in MKDC. The reputation of the Ironbridge Museum at Telford and Neil Cousins its Director were known to the Society and I persuaded Ray to appoint Neil as a consultant paid for by SD. His conclusion was that the site and concept was worth pursuing but that professional help and a collecting policy, to sharpen the specific role of a museum, was essential if progress was to be made. The difficulties between the volunteers and any professional venturing on the scene at Stacey Hill remained a problem for years. The result was that MKDC was very sceptical about the ability of the Society to manage the site, develop new buildings and secure income in the future after MKDC.

Crisis

The economic situation that developed in 1976 caused the first flutter in the role of archaeology and eight temporary staff were made redundant. Pressure built up on the architectural profession in MKDC and in 1979 the new conservative ministers thought archaeology to be a luxury. Architecture Department surrendered the Unit and SD was the only MKDC department prepared to keep it and so enabling a more community approach to be adopted. The approach was no different than that used elsewhere; the establishment of voluntary/independent organisations, the provision of services, and the encouragement of statutory services to work together. An attempt was also made to open up the Unit, which had become quite isolated, to involve the public more in their discoveries and not just their fellow professionals. SD gained approval for a policy of working with metal detectors, which some of the archaeologists had strongly opposed. In the 1981 September Newsletter Dennis Mynard reported the discovery of an Iron Age Gold Coin, a Quarter Stater of Cunobelin, by a metal detector, which the Coroner's inquest declared not to be Treasure Trove. Fortunately the finder was a member of Bedfordshire Historical Search Society and handed the find to MKDC and received an award. Dennis continued 'it is certain that a great deal of the city's history is being looted in this way', but added that the new policy involved the unit giving information to metal detecting clubs in return for handing over important finds for the future Museum. North Bucks history prior to Milton Keynes was considered important in contributing to a sense of identity and continuity. The best attended exhibition in the gallery attached to the Library was of the Unit's discoveries laid out in an attractively illustrated walk through the historical periods of the area. There were over 6000 visitors to this event in 1982, with a series of lectures and school and local groups' involvement.

Alternative Museums

In October 1981 SD presented a Review of the Statutory and Voluntary Museums and related services to the Board MK 114/81. Recognizing at this stage the political reality of BCC's lack of intentions, it suggested a different model for an alternative project that might prove attractive to potential funders and the public. Borrowing from the successful dispersed nature of the Ironbridge Museum at Telford, it recommended that the area of linear park between Wolverton and New and Old Bradwell should be the setting for a connected series of sites of historic interest; Stacey Hill, the Roman Villa in Bancroft, Bradwell windmill and Bradwell Abbey, though these sites hardly reached the significance of those at Telford. The concept also required that the voluntary organizations involved should be encouraged to merge to form a single Trust to achieve economies of scale and maximise their impact. Corporation staff would be transferred and if successful the Trust could take over this section of the linear park. The concept was tested for MKDC by Ventures Consultancy Ltd which reported to the Steering Committee in June 1983 that the concept 'is not practical and should not be pursued'. The individual historic elements were not of sufficient interest and the success of a rebuilt Roman Villa would be likely to reduce the success of Stacey Hill and Bradwell Abbey and might even cause their failure. The consultants recommended instead the development of the two existing sites in tandem under the same Trust as a 'Market Town' museum and 'Land and Farming' respectively. There was considerable doubt about the idea and Stacey Hill Society rejected it. The rebuilt Roman Villa appealed to MKDC as it had the potential of providing a special attraction. The South-east Area Museum's Service described it as 'challenging, exciting and unique in national terms'. When the site in Bancroft was appraised within the existing commitment to housing there, it was realized the number of potential visitors would conflict with the character of the grid square and the project was dropped.

An alternative way forward for Stacey Hill

The eventual strategy adopted was to allow Stacey Hill to be independent, and to assist it by Commissioning Niall Phillips Associates to manage an MSC Community Programme on the condition that Stacey Hill employed a museum professional with a salary topped up by MKDC. I had met Niall Phillips, who had successfully managed MSC schemes in Bristol, through AIM. The South-east area Museums Service made a grant of £7500 otherwise MKDC met all the costs apart from the salaries funded by MSC. Stacey Hill's management committee was strengthened by

professional people nominated by MKDC. The outstanding problem, which was not solved until MKDC was wound up, was ownership of the site and buildings. There were considerable doubts about the competence of Stacey Hill Society. BMK, having powers to fund museums refused to take a lease with the prospect of eventual ownership. Stacey Hill Society has changed its name to Milton Keynes Museum and is open at weekends.

An alternative way forward for Bradwell Abbey

The future of the Abbey remained uncertain, although MKDC had funded the administrator, Barbara Brown for three years in the hope that the Trust would become more effective. In 1984 a joint working party, which I chaired, was set up to develop the concept of an Environmental Studies Centre. Its members were MKDC officers, Di Tolan from SD and John Hilton from PD, Sir Philip Duncombe and Barbara Brown of the Bradwell Abbey Field Centre Trust, David Lock and Pat Mortimer from USC, John Whitter, and Ian Parkin our consultant professionals. The report was presented in 1986 and its recommendations approved by all the parties, including a package of capital and revenue funding from various budget heads in MKDC. Needless to say BCC refused to honour an original promise to fund a half-time education post. Within MKDC there was an understandable reluctance to see a centre interpreting the record of building Milton Keynes elsewhere than CMK. After a Director had been appointed, in line with the time-table, the DOE delayed and then refused the £120,000 for up-grading the buildings at Bradwell Abbey and the newly appointed Director resigned. It was thought at the time that the failure of the Arts Centre at Great Linford influenced the DOE decision. Pat Mortimer stepped into the breach as the first Director of the City Discovery Centre, a name found by the Steering Committee at Barbara Brown's house in Calverton on July 14th 1986. The building work was all done in the rush to close down MKDC in 1992. The Centre now has its third Director and has a full programme.

Summary

I would argue that if MKDC had used a social development approach from the beginning for these organizations, as it did in the fields of recreation and welfare, they would have matured earlier as opportunities were given them. What is certain is that the lack of BCC action led to a vacuum which nobody could properly fill as long as they prevaricated; a classic case of 'dog in the manger'. MKDC could not employ a museum professional, although the services and networks supplied by AIM and the Area Museums Service were invaluable. BMK showed a typical 'wait and see' attitude when they could have taken the lead over from BCC. Unfortunately the eighties were a period when the conservative government wanted to close down the new towns as soon as it could and some things were done too hurriedly. Although Milton Keynes has had a unitary authority for several years and many people want a museum and many committees meet to discuss it, the need remains unfulfilled. A large resource was expended on rescue archaeology. No comparable rural area in this country has ever been so skilfully and consistently excavated. The quality of the written records and the objects recovered need to be interpreted and displayed as an important part of our local culture.

MKDC archives which were earlier considered essential to a museum are now incarcerated under the most inappropriate use of the thirty year rule. The archives also include records from the other new towns so what is a vital component of local history for over thirty towns is inaccessible to them. It is the ultimate step in the neglect by central government over more than fifty years of the importance of research into the failures and successes of the new town programme.

