

Wokingham and District

Annual Report

1988/89

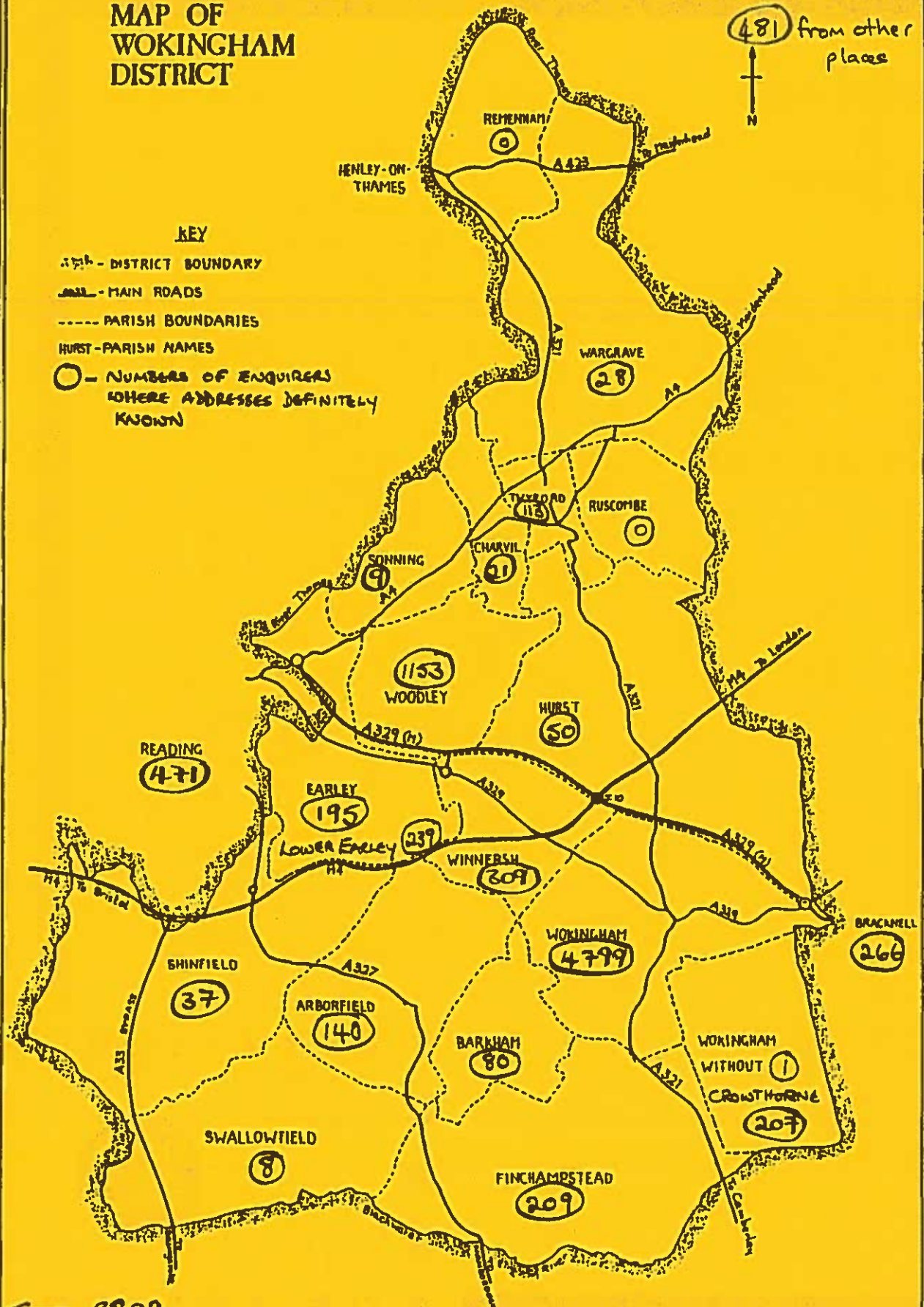


MAP OF WOKINGHAM DISTRICT

481 from other places
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KEY

- DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- MAIN ROADS
- PARISH BOUNDARIES
- HURST - PARISH NAMES
- - NUMBERS OF ENQUIRERS WHERE ADDRESSES DEFINITELY KNOWN



The aims of the Citizens' Advice Bureau are:-

- To ensure that individuals do not suffer through ignorance of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available; or through an inability to express their needs effectively.

- To exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services both locally and nationally.

The Citizens' Advice Bureau therefore provides to all citizens an impartial and confidential service of information guidance and support, which is completely independant and makes responsible use of the experience so gained.

A POSITIVE INFLUENCE

C.A.B. is impartial politically and in advising clients. Impartiality is a carefully guarded principle of the C.A.B. service. But we do monitor our clients' problems and pass on this information to government, local authorities and relevant organisations.

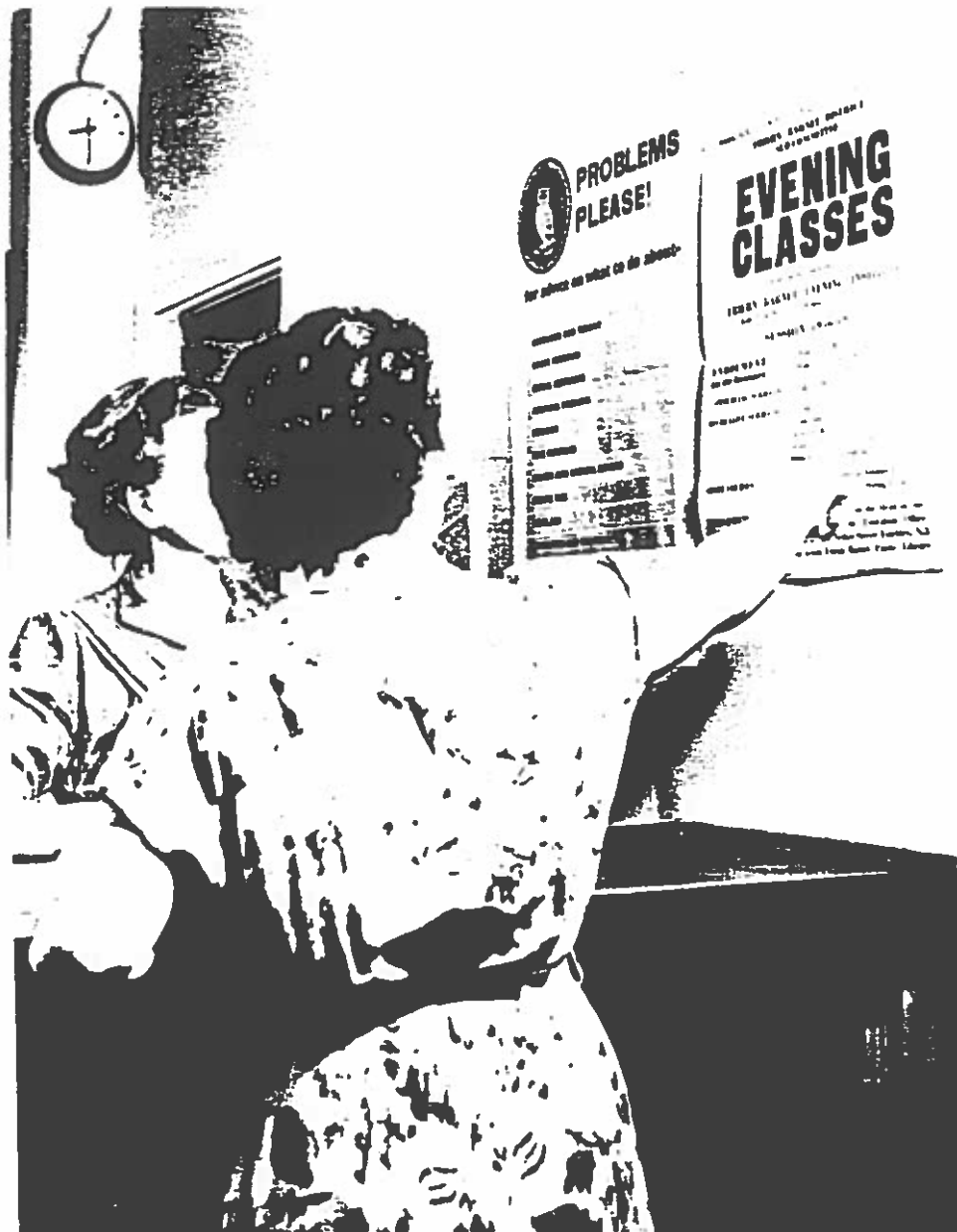
Councillors, MPs and Ministers all draw on C.A.B. evidence to gauge public feeling on a wide range of issues.

"Many people wouldn't know where to go for advice if it wasn't for the work of the C.A.B. Government supports the National Association and is glad to do so. And many local authorities support the local C.A.B. I'd like to pay tribute to the volunteers. They do a wonderful job of work."
RT. HON. MARGARET THATCHER MP (THE PRIME MINISTER)

"Without the C.A.B. a lot of basic rights would remain dormant and completely unknown to the people who need to exercise them."
RT. HON. NEIL KINNOCK MP (LEADER OF THE LABOUR PARTY)

"The open door of the Citizens' Advice Bureau is essential if uncertain and troubled consumers or claimants are to have access to the best specialist advice. Throughout the United Kingdom the Citizens' Advice Bureaux are a vital safeguard for the exercise of basic citizens' rights."
RT. HON. PADDY ASHDOWN MP (LEADER OF THE SOCIAL AND LIBERAL DEMOCRATS)

"The C.A.B. over 50 years has been explaining to people their rights and also their responsibilities and enriching democracy in the process."
RT. HON. DAVID OWEN MP (LEADER OF THE S.D.P.)



OFFICE DETAILS

WOKINGHAM:



Town Hall
Market Place
Wokingham
Berks.
RG11 2SS

Tel: 781883

Hours:	Monday	9.30 - 3.00
	Tuesday	9.30 - 2.00
	Wednesday	9.30 - 2.00
	Thursday	9.30 - 2.00
	Friday	9.30 - 3.00

Legal Advice Sessions:
Every Tuesday afternoon
(By appointment only)

Financial Advice Sessions:
First Tuesday of month
(By appointment only)

WOODLEY



Coronation Hall (rear)
Headley Road
Woodley
Reading
Berks.

Tel: 699006

Hours:	Monday	10.00 - 2.00
	Wednesday	10.00 - 2.00
	Friday	9.30 - 1.30

JUBILEE BRIEFING

Charting 50 years of advice

ORIGINS OF THE CAB SERVICE

The idea of a national information and advice service in the U.K. developed in the years between the two World Wars. The emergence of more widespread forms of welfare assistance highlighted the need for advice about entitlements. In 1924 an Inter-Departmental Committee on Public Assistance Administration commented on the need for "provision of better facilities for giving advice to persons in need of it as to the circumstances in which assistance is obtainable" and that an official should be appointed in every large centre of population "to give reliable information and assistance".

But the idea was not taken up until the imminence of war in 1939 concentrated minds. It was clear that a major war would bring extensive disruption and that members of the public would need guidance on the provision and restrictions that would result. A series of meetings took place in 1938 between the National Council for Social Services (N.C.S.S.) (now the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) and various other national and local voluntary bodies to establish a plan for war-time local advice centres. The plan was rapidly put into effect when war broke out in September 1939. Within a month, some 200 bureaux had been set up and by 1943 the figure had reached 1,060, dispensing free advice on any matter any member of the public cared to raise.

A wide range of existing organisations played a role in establishing the early C.A.B.x. These included the Charity Organisation Society (now the Family Welfare Association), Toc H, and the Rotary Club. In the big cities social services societies played an important role - for example, the Birmingham Citizens' Society (now the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council). The N.C.S.S. played a vital role by providing a national headquarters capable of co-ordinating and producing a flow of information to bureaux.

War-time contingencies saw bureaux being established in unusual places - one worked for long in the Chislehurst Caves serving shelters, while in

Sheffield the cathedral cloisters were used after the original premises were bombed.

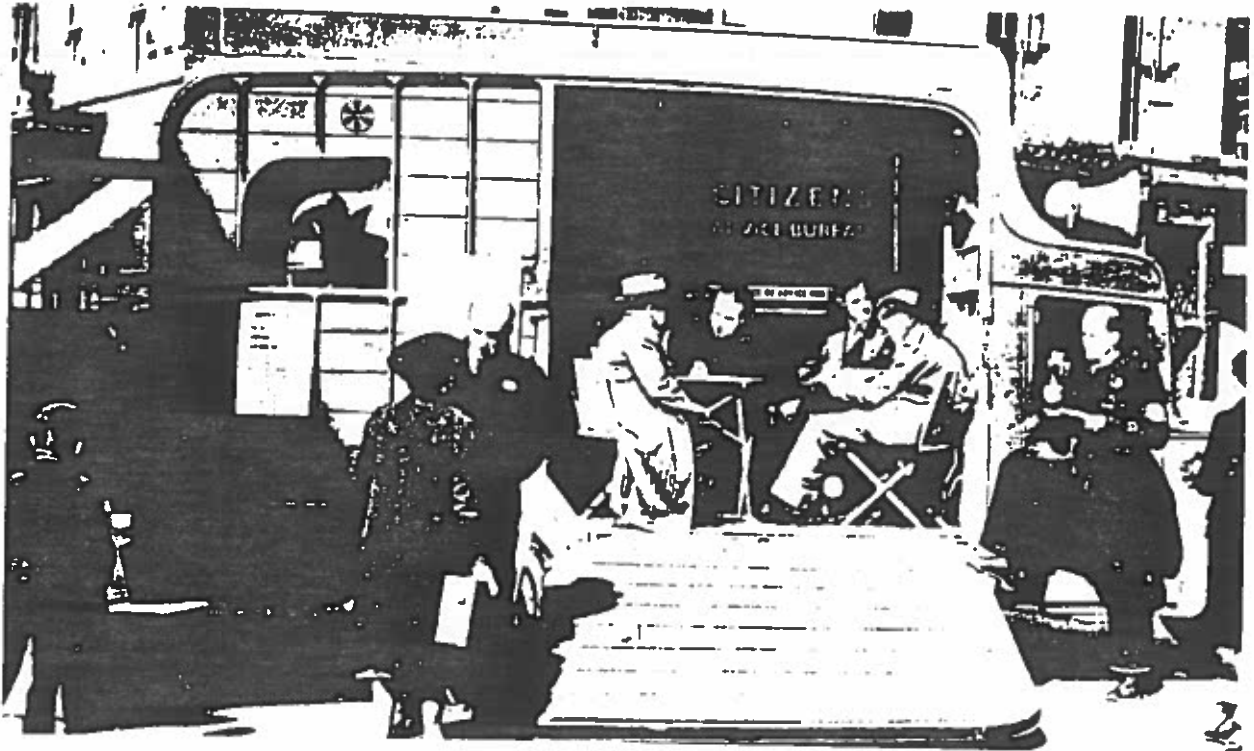


Photo by courtesy of Bath & Wiltshire Evening Chronicle

WAR-TIME: Horse-box used as mobile CAB

WAR-TIME PROBLEMS

Typical war-time enquiries to C.A.B.x included:

- * the rationing of clothes and other material, outnumbering every other question throughout the war and after
- * sending letters and parcels to prisoners of war, civilian internees abroad
- * compensation claims for bomb damage

But, while the majority of problems in these early years were the direct result of war, these were not the overwhelming majority. Other problems of the time included many that remain familiar today, including:

- * new laws introducing changes in pension provision
- * accident victims enquiring about compensation
- * people hit by changed conditions facing rent arrears and other debts.

AFTER THE WAR

The post war years brought a new wave of enquiries, including rationing, the problem of resettlement, enquiries about nationality, and difficulties with employment. The legislation that introduced the welfare state also needed explaining. But top of the list of problems was housing - an issue that dominated C.A.B. caseloads into the 1950s and 1960s and remains prominent today.

Despite the range of problems, the future of the C.A.B. Service was far from secure after the war. The Government funding was channelled away from C.A.B.x and into Government operated Resettlement Advice Offices, run by civil servants. However, the demand for independent advice, coupled with the familiarity of C.A.B.x, meant that the public continued to turn to C.A.B.x for help.

Reflecting the particular identity which had grown up around the C.A.B. concept, the Service adopted a formal constitution and co-ordinating committee, still operating within the N.C.S.S., but known as the National Citizens' Advice Bureaux Committee. Representatives of bureaux predominated on the committee providing a decentralised structure which has been retained in modern-day arrangements.

By the end of the 1950s, despite having to manage with a skeletal central service and a network that had been reduced to 416 bureaux, the C.A.B. Service was nonetheless dealing with more than one million enquiries per year.

MEETING MODERN ADVICE NEEDS

The demand for C.A.B. advice rose from under 2 million enquiries in 1972 to

more than 7 million at the end of the 1980s. The value of this key public service was increasingly recognised by both central and local government. By 1987/88 there were 774 main C.A.B.x throughout the U.K. In addition, there are numerous extension and out-reach services which bring the total number of outlets to 1,244. Around 15,000 people work in the C.A.B. Service - 90 per cent of them as volunteers. A key part of delivering a high quality service is this mixture of paid and voluntary effort. Our paid staff provide the foundation upon which voluntary input can flourish.

SUCCESSSES AND STRAINS

The C.A.B. Service has come a long way from its war-time origins. It has evolved into a modern network offering a high quality service of professional standards to meet today's advice needs. Despite its many successes, though, funding remains a major challenge for C.A.B.x. Many areas remain without a C.A.B. and even where funding is relatively high, bureaux often face serious stress with packed waiting rooms, telephones which cannot be answered, and queues in the street.

RECORD ADVICE DEMANDS

C.A.B. Jubilee Year comes at a time when demand for advice is running at record levels. In 1987/88 C.A.B.x dealt with nearly 7.2 million enquiries - nearly double the volume handled at the beginning of the 1980s. The C.A.B. Service has come a long way since its war-time origins. It has evolved into modern network offering a high quality service of professional standards to meet today's advice needs.

ADVICE BOOM OFFICE CRISIS

WOKINGHAM'S Citizens Advice Bureau is under immense pressure to move out of its town centre office due to a "phenomenal increase" in the number of local inquiries.

Report

SALLY HEADING

The rise in the amount of advice needed by the local community over the last few months has left CAB counsellors working in extremely cramped conditions.

CAB's manager Sue Jackson told the News, especially in the areas of marital break-up, consumer debt and, since April, benefit queries from the Social

CAB faces crisis over office space

WOKINGHAM'S Citizens Advice Bureau is facing a crisis and may be forced to close its new premises

By JO HAYNES

CABs because of the lack of space. She said: "We could reach a crisis point at any moment."

pleading for more space for the CAB offices in the town hall.

Mrs Jackson asked if one could be found.

to provide office space but behind the scenes the council is discussing the possibility of...

"There has been a most phenomenal increase in the amount of advice needed by the local community over the last few months has left CAB counsellors working in extremely cramped conditions."

No sign of bureau

WOKINGHAM council has left the town's citizens feeling braced for the worst. The council has ruled the ground must be used to put up a plastic sign on the hall until 1984 when the CAB was left signless as the group decided the cost of a brass plaque could not be justified.

many people do not know where it is based and want to put up a plastic sign on the hall until 1984 when the CAB was left signless as the group decided the cost of a brass plaque could not be justified. "We could reach a crisis point at any moment."

MP gets some good advice

LOCAL MP John Redwood went to town last week when he visited the Wokingham offices of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

He spent an hour with CAB manager, Sue Jackson, who demonstrated the work of the Market Place based agency. They also discussed many local issues, including the rise in the number of inquiries over 1987.



John Redwood at the Wokingham CAB.

Call CAB

Wokingham's Citizens Advice Bureau will be open all day Monday and Friday. The town hall based CAB will open longer to cope with 17.6 per cent more inquiries over 1987.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MR. D. LEVIS	-	CHAIRMAN
MR. J. WATSON	-	VICE-CHAIRMAN
MR. C. KING	-	TREASURER
MRS. P. ROBINS	-	SECRETARY
MR. D. EYRIEY	-	LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
MRS. A. POTTS	-	TRUSTEE
MRS. S. JACKSON	-	BUREAU MANAGER
MRS. J. TOMLIN	-	DEPUTY MANAGER (WOKINGHAM)
MRS. G. DEAN	-	DEPUTY MANAGER (WOODLEY)
MR. A. CUNNINGHAM	-	BUREAU REPRESENTATIVE
MR. B. BOYD)		
MR. D. EYRIEY)	-	PREMISES SUB-COMMITTEE
MR. P. HENESEY)		
MR. G. NEWMAN)		
MR. J. WEST	-	FIRST MEMBER
MR. P. HENESEY	-	WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL
MR. J.W. PARKER	-	WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL
MRS. V. WATERS	-	WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL
MRS. G. FLANAGAN	-	SOCIAL SERVICES
MRS. J. LE PATOUREL	-	COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOR BERKSHIRE
MR. R. CAMPBELL	-	ELECTED MEMBER
MRS. S. TOMLINSON	-	ELECTED MEMBER
MR. G. NEWMAN	-	ELECTED MEMBER

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

This past year has been the first full year of the new Management Team referred to in my predecessor's report presented at last year's A.G.M. Sue Jackson is now well established as Manager and has worked throughout the year with tireless devotion, ably supported by her Deputies, Judy Tomlin at Wokingham and Gwen Dean at Woodley. Under their leadership enquiries have escalated both at Wokingham and at Woodley, and, at one point, the Wokingham Bureau was handling enquiries at the rate of 1,000 per month.

An experiment was made with a three month trial period at Lower Earley but the response did not justify the additional effort. Possibly the location had some part to play but it is thought that most people from Lower Earley needing the advice of the Bureau would come into Wokingham. However, we give thanks to Pat Seeley for her efforts with this trial period.

When this ended Wokingham Bureau opened on the first and third Saturday mornings of each month. The response, although initially encouraging, soon faded and Saturday opening has also ceased. The demand would appear to be for longer hours in Wokingham, Mondays to Fridays, but this is hampered by lack of facilities.

The increasing demand at Wokingham and Woodley clearly shows that the standard of advice given by the voluntary workers is high and they are clearly well liked by the public at large. I cannot speak too highly of the efforts of these men and women who devote their spare time to assisting those who need help and also undergo the lengthy periods of training that are necessary, with such cheery faces. This is all the more noticeable when one considers the working conditions that prevail.

I must comment on the premises. It should be realised that the premises both at Woodley and at Wokingham do not meet the criteria that are demanded by the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux. Soon the standards will be rigorously enforced and it is clear that if better premises cannot be found both Wokingham and Woodley will be forced to close. Quite apart from the fact

that in Wokingham there are often seven people in one small room, there is a lack of privacy for telephone enquiries, there is no waiting space for clients to wait their turn and the interview rooms are hardly sound-proof, as well as being unventilated and claustrophobic. Our volunteers deserve better.

Negotiations are now proceeding with the Wokingham Town Council and the District Council, but if these negotiations are to prove successful it should be realised that all Councils and supporters must be prepared to make generous contributions to enable the Bureau to rehouse itself. The Wokingham District Council has been generous over the last few years in its increased grant, and I ask all Councils to save the Bureau with increased generosity in the next year or so. At Woodley the position is no better and, indeed, possibly worse with no alternative in sight to the present inadequate premises.

The business community should also bear in mind its responsibility as its heavy commercial outlook plays a large part in the ever increasing debt-counselling service at the Bureau. Businessmen, if you value the Bureau's attempts to enable your debtors to settle their accounts, then respond with more generosity than has been shown in the past, thus ensuring that the Bureau remains open.

Finally, may I thank the Management Committee for the quality of the support the Bureau has received in this past year.

D. Lewis

Management Committee

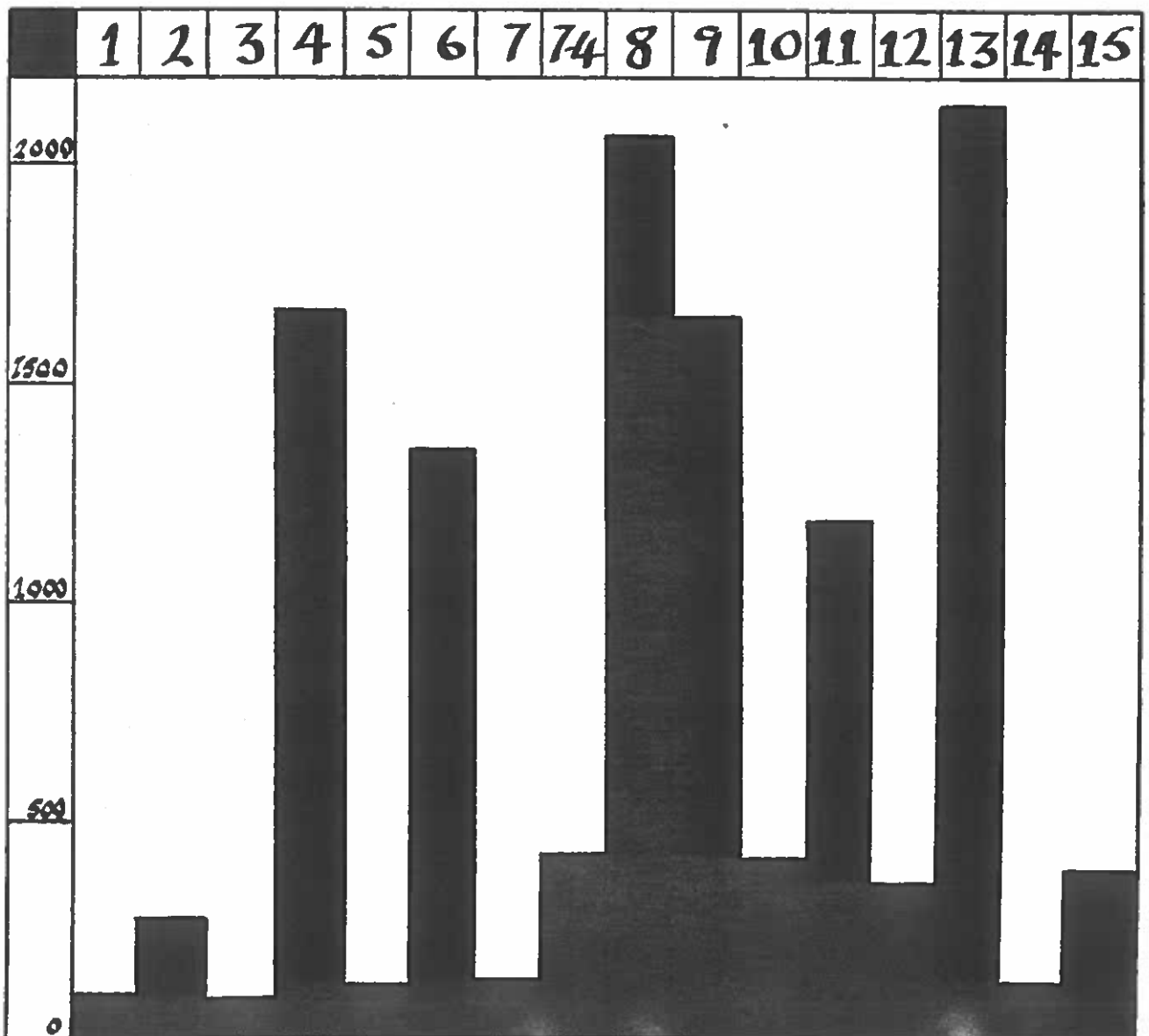


ENQUIRIES BY CATEGORY

1987/88 8,661 : 1988/89. 12,557 : 45% INCREASE

1	Communication	109
2	Travel, Transport	272
3	Immigration	91
4	Admin. of Justice	1677
5	Education	124
6	Employment	1358
7	National/International/43	
7-4	Local Enquiries	436

8	Family & Personal	2082
9	Social Security	1672
10	Health	408
11	Housing	1200
12	Taxes	350
13	Consumer/DEBT	2138
14	Leisure	117
15	About C.A.B.	380



BUREAU STAFF

MRS. S. JACKSON	MANAGER
MRS. J. TOMLIN	DEPUTY MANAGER (WOKINGHAM)
MRS. G. DEAN	DEPUTY MANAGER (WOODLEY)

VOLUNTARY STAFF - WOKINGHAM

MRS. M. BURT
MRS. S. COLWILL
MR. E. COX
MRS. J. CRAWFORD
MR. A. CUNNINGHAM
MRS. B. GIFFORD
MRS. S. GOOK
MRS. A. HARMON
MRS. E. HARVEY
MRS. E. HILTON
MR. B. MACHIN
MRS. C. MAKINGS
MISS L. MARTIN
MRS. S. RABBETT
MRS. E. RAMSAY
MRS. M. ROSENBERG
MRS. N. SAVAGE
MRS. P. SEELEY
MR. H. SMITH
MRS. J. THOMPSON
MRS. M. TROTT

VOLUNTARY STAFF - WOODLEY

MRS. S. ALBUM
MRS. E. HYAMS
MRS. J. JENNINGS
MR. D. LEE
MRS. T. MCADDEN
MRS. S. MONCUR
MRS. A. SHEPSTONE

VOLUNTARY STAFF - LEFT 1988/89

MRS. A. DAILEY
MRS. J. HARRIS
Mrs. L. REASEY

ADDITIONAL HELPERS

MRS. M. CHATTING
MRS. M. JONES
MR. J. HARVEY
MR. K. KIRKWOOD
MRS. B. OLIVER
MRS. P. ROBINS
MRS. M. SUTTIE

MANAGER'S REPORT

This year sees the 50th anniversary of the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, and Bureaux throughout the country have been involved in celebrations. In Wokingham we are a comparatively young branch having only our 12th anniversary this year. In our first year we received 1423 enquiries and this year we have answered 12,557 enquiries. During these years the service has changed considerably and so have the type of enquiries that we now receive. The enquiries in 1988/89 have become increasingly more complex and require a great deal of time and expertise from our hard-worked volunteers. In order to try to become more available we have increased our opening hours so that we are now open at 9.30 a.m. every morning and, since the beginning of this year, we were also open on alternate Saturday mornings for 2 hours. This has been discontinued for the time being because of staffing problems and lack of response.

STAFF

During this past year, we have recruited nine new volunteers and only three have left. We were sorry to say goodbye to Liz Reasey, who moved to the West Country after several years with us. I would like to give my personal thanks to all the volunteers for their committment and support to me over the past year. They have had to work in very cramped and overcrowded conditions and have done so without complaint. We now have two volunteers who also have full-time jobs; these are a social worker and an air-hostess.

SPECIALIST SERVICES

There has been a marked increase in the number of debt enquiries we receive and our clients have been referred to us for help from their banks and also from employers, as well as by the media. Andrew Cunningham has become a debt counsellor for us and receives back-up help and support from Judy and myself. We have all had training in various aspects of money advice. In the first quarter of this year we have 20 current multiple debt cases, and specialist welfare benefit cases for whom I give limited tribunal representation. All

these clients are seen on an appointment basis, generally on a Wednesday afternoon.

LEGAL ROTA

We had a meeting in the Bureau with representatives from all the local Solicitors who participate in our legal advice rota. It was agreed at this meeting that they would increase their service from fortnightly to weekly, and three new firms of Solicitors joined the Rota. We are very grateful to all these Solicitors who give such valuable help to our Clients.

FINANCIAL ADVICE ROTA

Our financial rota also continues but unfortunately is only available once a month. My thanks to the firms of Accountants who provide this service.

LOWER EARLEY

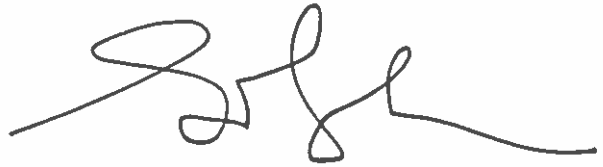
In October we started up a pilot advice service for a limited period of 3 months in Lower Earley in order to establish the need for our services on the estate. We were only able to 'man' it for 2 hours per week and I would like to thank Pat Seeley and the Woodley volunteers for providing this cover.

Despite publicity the service was not used during this period, although we still receive many of our enquiries at both Wokingham and Woodley from the Lower Earley estate. We were able to borrow a microfiche information system from the Area Office in order to provide this service and thank them for their support.

TRAINING

All our volunteers continue to receive training in the Bureau, some organised by the Area and some take place during our staff meetings. In order to accommodate all our volunteers we are now holding alternate monthly staff meetings in the evenings as attendance of these meetings is essential. Pat Seeley has been the Bureau Tutor and has been responsible for the initial training of our new volunteers. We would like to thank her for all her hard work. Our training this year has included the new Social Security Act and the new Housing Act, and also training in the new Membership Scheme.

Finally I would like to thank Judy and Gwen for their unfailing loyalty and support to me over the past year, and for all their hard work which helps towards providing this invaluable service to the District.



WOODLEY BUREAU

<u>ENQUIRIES</u>	<u>1987/88</u>	<u>1988/89</u>
Communication	8	25
Travel, etc.	26	35
Immigration	14	28
Administration of Justice	87	163
Education	14	18
Employment	133	235
National and International	11	14
Local Information	10	12
Family and Personal	226	342
Social Security	180	290
Health	45	63
Housing	108	195
Tax	20	50
Consumer	212	358
Leisure	7	11
<u>C. A. B. Enquiries</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>66</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1138</u>	<u>1905</u>

It may be seen from the above figures that there was an approximate increase of 60% on last year's figures. Consumer, Family and Personal, Social Security and Employment still proved to be the predominant categories for enquiries at Woodley.

FRIDAY OPENING

Since opening on Fridays from the 1st April 1988 this Bureau has become increasingly busy on all opening days.

STAFF

Three day opening has made staffing this Bureau very difficult. Difficulties arise when volunteers take holidays. The level of staff on duty each day is two volunteers and the deputy manager.

We were very pleased to welcome Anne Shepstone and Linda Martin, new volunteers, who work partly at Woodley Bureau and partly at Wokingham Bureau.

Sandra Album and Joan Jennings have attended a Fuel Debts course. Sandra Moncur, David Lee and I attended a seminar on Individual Voluntary Arrangements.

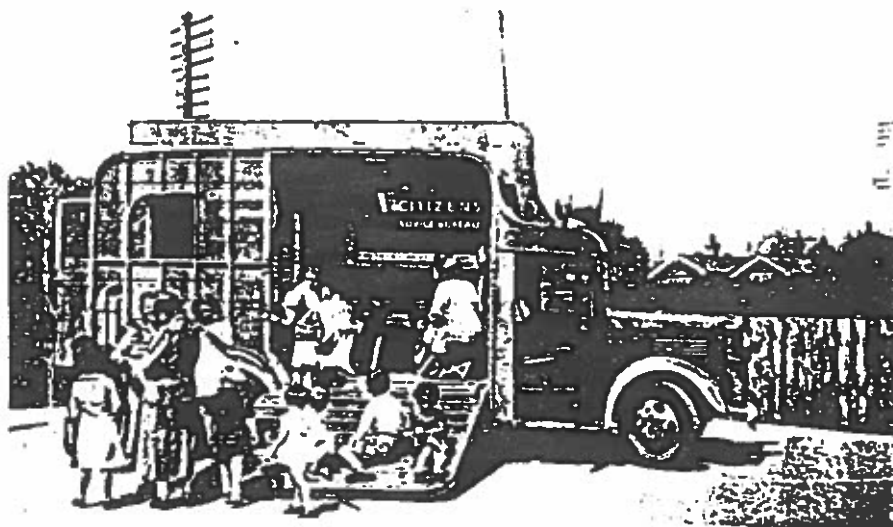
I have attended a Deputy Manager's course on Monitoring Quality.

ACCOMMODATION

The Bureau has been the recipient of two gifts during the past year. Firstly, a photocopier, from Harris 3M through Ian Shaw. Secondly, an Amstrad Wordprocessor, from the Woodley Lions. Both gifts have made a considerable difference to the service we can give and are very much appreciated by the staff at this Bureau.

During the past year investigations into ways of obtaining new premises have been carried out but no satisfactory result has been obtained. Investigations are still being pursued, the aim being to achieve five day opening for the Woodley Bureau in the future.

Joan Joan



TREASURER'S REPORT

Since the last report, Jack Harvey has resigned as Treasurer, having passed the reins to Sally Tomlinson. It is regretted that after some months, she was obliged to stand down due to work commitments. Thus I became Treasurer and, regrettably, it was only to last for a short while as I am obliged to move Branch following recent promotion.

It is, therefore, with some difficulty that I write this report, and I must apologise for any errors or omissions which may occur.

It is pleasing to note that following the generosity of a number of Businesses and Organisations in response to the Chairman's letter, we are solvent at the end of the financial year. That being said, we would have been unable to survive without the substantial support by Wokingham District Council who have Grant Aided the Bureau by quite a substantial amount.

The bulk of this Grant Aid goes towards covering salaries, which are the major expense. Other areas of high expenditure are telephones and travel costs in respect of duty and training. We express our thanks to Wokingham Town and Woodley Town Councils for their generosity in the provision of accommodation, which subject has formed a major part of recent Management Committee meetings.

Donations are, therefore, a major source of income to provide much needed equipment and stationery, and our thanks go to those on the attached list.

I would like to thank members of the Management Committee and the full-time staff at the Bureau for making my job so easy, and I wish them all every success in the future.

CHRIS KING.

DONATIONS

	£.p
Wokingham Rotary	262.20
Reading Solicitors	200.00
R.E.M.E.	100.00
Wokingham Lions	100.00
All Saints Parish Council	100.00
Finchampstead Parish Council	100.00
Barkham Parish Council	100.00
Shinfield Parish Council	50.00
R.P. Huggins & Co.	50.00
Wokingham Ladies Circle	50.00
Inner Wheel	50.00
Plint & Partners	50.00
R.J. Chan	25.00
Arborfield & Newlands Parish Council	22.20
Waitrose (Woodley)	20.00
National Westminster Bank PLC	20.00
Intercare Products Ltd.	15.00

Plus many small donations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEGAL ROTA SOLICITORS:

Messrs. Clifton Ingram & Co.
Messrs. C.J. Giles & Co.
Messrs. Haye & Reid
Messrs. Neale Evans & Co.
Messrs. Ratcliffe Duce & Gammer
Messrs. T.S. Roberts & Co.
Messrs. Southorns
M. Stroud, Esq.

FINANCIAL ROTA ACCOUNTANTS:

Messrs. Browning Hotchkiss & Co.
Messrs. Owen West & McGregor
Messrs. Peter Raphael & Co.
M. A. Straker, Esq.

