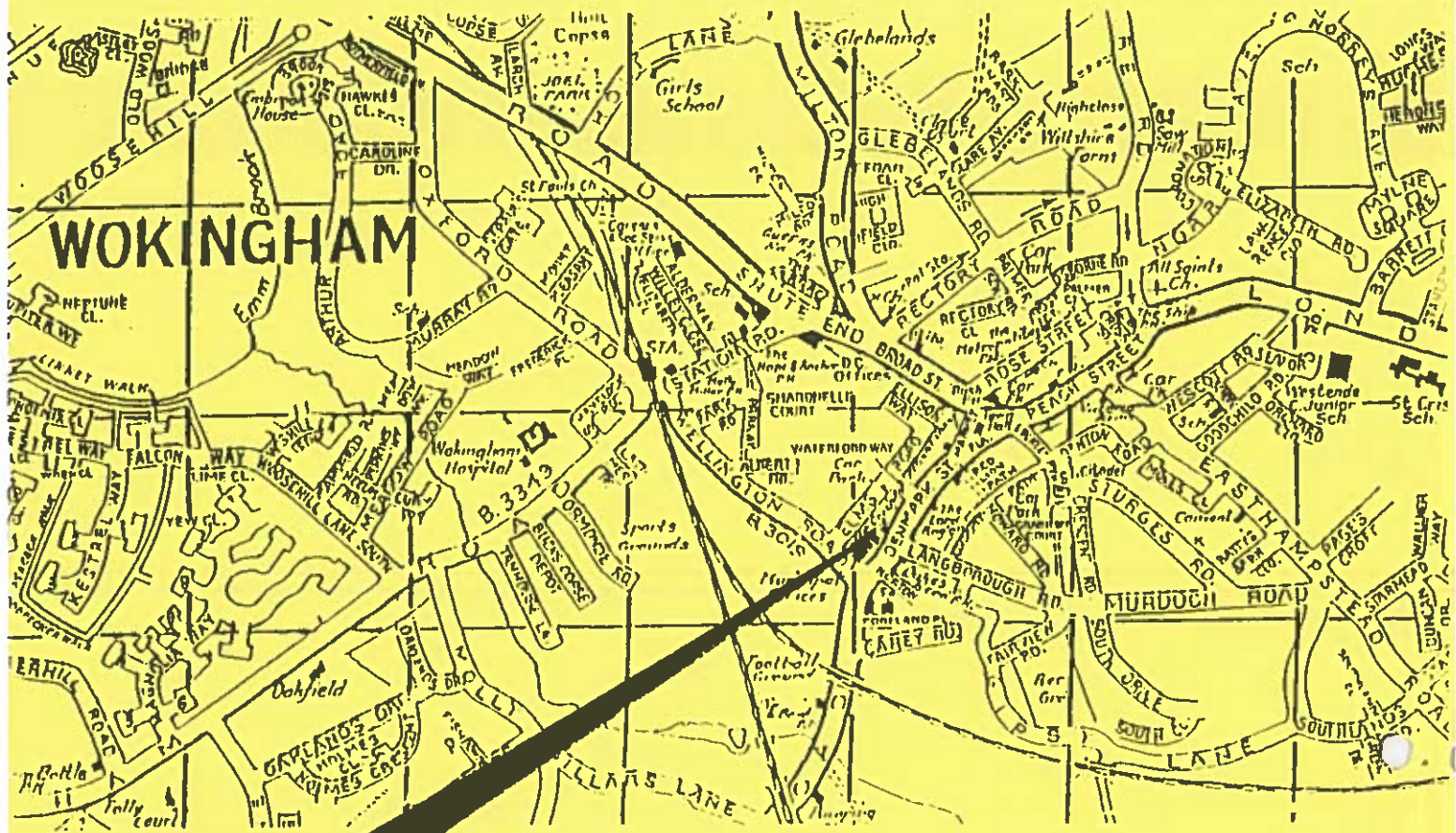


**WOKINGHAM
AND DISTRICT
Annual Report
1990/91**





OFFICE DETAILS

WOKINGHAM

Old Social Club
Elms Road
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG11 2AA

HOURS	Monday	9.00 - 3.00
	Tuesday	9.00 - 3.00
	Wednesday	9.00 - 3.00
	Thursday	9.00 - 3.00
	Friday	9.00 - 1.00

0734 890389

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

WOODLEY

Coronation Hall
Headley Road
Woodley
Reading
Berkshire

HOURS	Monday	10.00 - 2.00
	Tuesday	10.00 - 2.00
	Friday	10.00 - 2.00

0734 699006

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 need effectively.

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

The Citizens' Advice Bureau therefore provides free 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.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MRS J LE PATOUREL	-	CHAIR
MR J WATSON	-	VICE-CHAIR
MR B BOYD	-	TREASURER
MRS S JACKSON	-	BUREAU MANAGER/SECRETARY
MR D EYRIEY	-	LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
MRS A POTTS	-	TRUSTEE
MR D LEWIS	-	HONORARY PRESIDENT
MRS J TOMLIN	-	DEPUTY MANAGER (WOKINGHAM)
MRS G DEAN	-	DEPUTY MANAGER (WOODLEY)
MRS S GOOK	-	BUREAU REPRESENTATIVE
MR B BOYD	}	PREMISES SUB COMMITTEE
MR D EYRIEY		
MR P HENESEY		
MR G NEWMAN		
MR J WEST	-	FIRST MEMBER
MR P HENESY	-	ELECTED
MR R WYATT	-	WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL
MR W DICKSON	-	WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL
MRS A WATSON	-	WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL
MRS G FLANAGAN	-	SOCIAL SERVICES
MR L SOUTHGATE	-	WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL
MR R C'AMBELL	-	ELECTED MEMBER
MRS S TOMLINSON	-	ELECTED MEMBER
MR G NEWMAN	-	ELECTED MEMBER

CHAIR'S REPORT

This report marks the end of our first full year at the Old Social Club premises in Elms Road. These were officially opened by Major Douglas Goddard, the then Chairman of Wokingham District Council, on 5 April last in a ceremony at which Stuart Errington, Chair of N.A.C.A.B., was also present. Despite a number of problems, not least with the roof, our move of premises has brought enormous improvements for both clients and workers alike. Last autumn we had an additional unexpected pleasure when our Woodley base at Coronation Hall underwent an extensive facelift. These are significant steps forward. Nevertheless premises remains an item right at the top of our agenda. Our Elms Road home is a temporary one and hence our search for a permanent base for the Wokingham bureau must continue. Our service in Woodley, too, could be enhanced if we had more space.

Every year reports such as this one tell of greatly increased pressures on our service as a result of a continuing acceleration in both the number and complexity of the enquiries brought to Bureaux. This year has been no exception to that trend with the attendant problems of the recession and the Gulf War in particular taxing our available resources to the limit and placing severe strains on our staff and volunteers alike. Redundancy, multiple debt, housing repossession and eventual marriage breakdown taken together represent a classic downward spiral which is repeating itself with ever increasing frequency in the outwardly prosperous Wokingham area. It is a great tribute to the resilience and dedication of our Manager, Sue Jackson, and her team that they continue to cope so competently with these pressures. Nevertheless, we have to ask ourselves how long the service can carry on absorbing what is seemingly an ever-rising tide of demand.

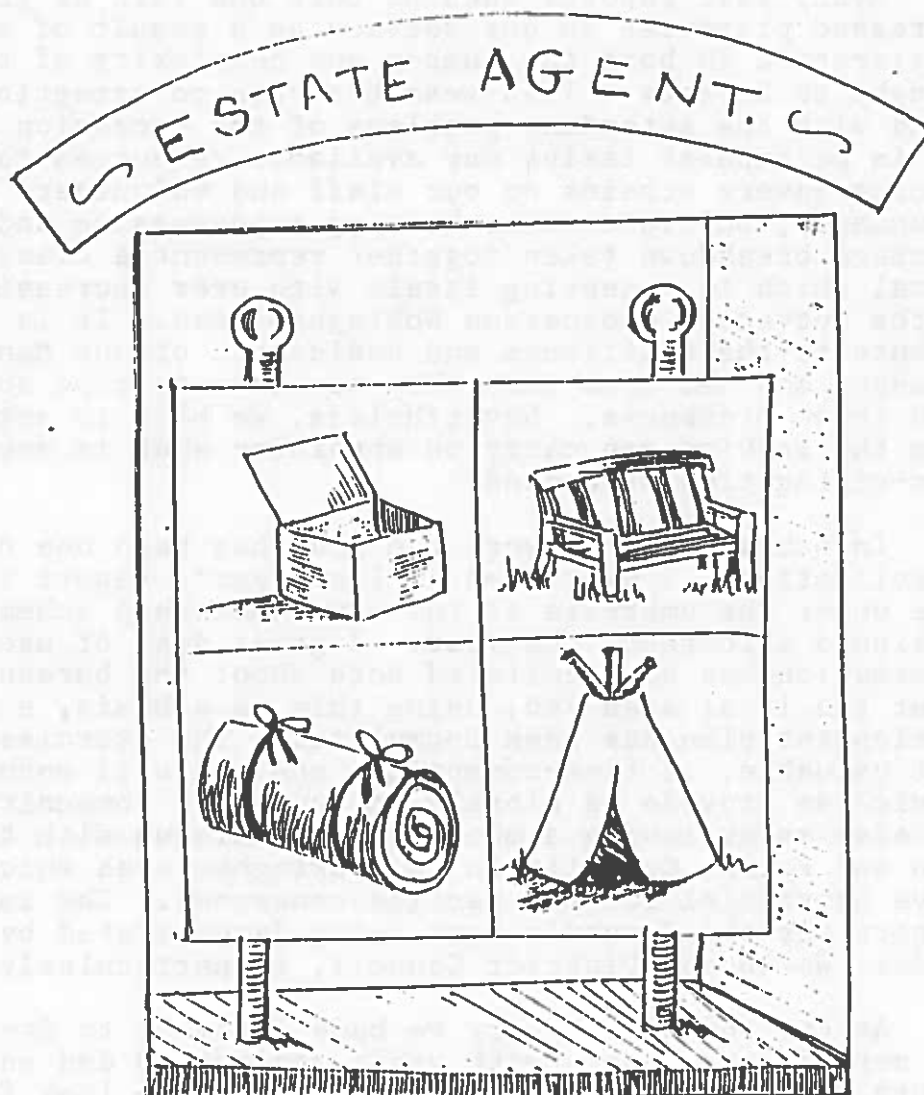
In other areas of work the year has been one of consolidation. I mentioned in last year's report the work being done under the umbrella of the new Membership scheme. This has continued throughout the year. A great deal of useful information has been collated both about the bureau itself and about the local area and, using this as a basis, a three-year development plan has been formulated. The exercise is proving a most valuable, if time-consuming, one and will ensure that the service we provide is closely in tune with community needs. We are also establishing a much closer dialogue with the District, Town and Parish Councils in the Wokingham area which we hope will prove beneficial for all parties concerned. The increasing support for the Bureau's work being demonstrated by our major funder, Wokingham District Council, is particularly gratifying.

At the end of February we bade farewell to Gwen Dean, who had served for 4 years with great dedication and enthusiasm as Deputy Manager at the Woodley extension. We look forward to

welcoming Charlotte Lloyd-Williams who has been appointed as her successor.

I end with thanks to all those who help to maintain a service which is both high quality and exacting: with thanks to the staff and volunteers, to the Honorary Officers, to all members of the Management Committee and to all others who give so freely of their time and skills in the Bureau's support.

Janet Le Patourel



There is little, or no, accommodation for the rising number of homeless.

MP 'shocked' as debt crisis hits Wokingham

By NICOLA WHATMORE

LABOUR MP Michael Meacher said he was shocked to discover that affluent Wokingham has been hit by debt and bankruptcy.

He made the comments when he toured Wokingham, Woodley, Finchampstead and Twyford on a fact-finding visit.

His tour took in Wokingham Citizens' Advice Bureau, Aldington Special School, Woodley, and elderly people's flats in Finchampstead.

During his visit Mr Meacher said: "The amount of debt in this area is quite remarkable along with the number of bankruptcies."

"I am surprised that one of the 100 richest constituencies in the country is now feeling the full effects of recession."

Mr Meacher, who is Labour's



■ Michael Meacher

Social Security spokesman, said a Labour Government would lower interest rates and introduce credit controls.

Labour district councillor Nelson Bland, who hopes to become Wokingham's MP at the next election, accompanied Mr Meacher on the visit.

Mr Bland said: "Mr Meacher was very shocked to find out about the number of people in

Hi-tech gift boosts the town's CAB

By SHELLEY RISTER

The staff of the Citizens' Advice Bureau will be able to work even more efficiently thanks to a hi-tech gift from Wokingham Lions.

A new microfiche reader will enable the CAB staff at Wokingham to extract material from their ever-increasing information system and carry it around.

This will mean easy access to notes when on call to places such as the Westmead



JOBLESS SOARS AS RECESSION OPENS

By MATT RODDA and SARA CARRIE

WOKINGHAM is fast becoming an employment black-spot — with Blackwell at the head of the recession bites hard in the South, where unemployment rates are high. Wokingham has been labelled the worst hit area in Berkshire.

Figures from the regional Hampshire Intelligence Unit show a 10 per cent increase in unemployment in the last six months.

Labour's group manager, Linda Shaw said: "Blackwell has also seen a significant increase in unemployment during the same period. Unemployment is now running at more than 15 per cent in Blackwell and more than 12 per cent in Wokingham."

as they try to weather the storm. Wokingham's unemployment rate is 12 per cent, but it is expected to rise to 15 per cent by the end of the year. And staff at Blackwell's 1,200 shops are desperate to be paid after their jobs are cut.

Local business leaders are also concerned. The Wokingham Chamber of Commerce said: "The recession has hit the town hard. The high interest rates and the uncertainty of the future are making it difficult for businesses to survive."

They are also concerned about the high unemployment rate. The Chamber said: "The high unemployment rate is a major problem for the town. It is causing a lot of hardship for people and is making it difficult for businesses to survive."

SLUMP

Businesses are struggling as the economic climate worsens and high interest rates bite hard.

The building industry is one of the hardest hit, as high interest rates cause a slump in the property market, depressing the usual winter building boom.

John Turner, owner of Asot House Improvements, said: "It is a real struggle for us. We are not getting any work for our brickwork and roofing work."

He was not of work for three weeks before Christmas, and there are not many orders at all. "I am not getting any work at all," he said.

PAINFUL

Queries about mortgage banks have been made by the Citizens' Advice Bureau, which has reported that the number of enquiries has risen in the last few months.

The Citizens' Advice Bureau is providing advice on unemployment benefits and is also providing advice on mortgage problems.



The ribbon at the new CAB office Major Douglas Goddard, with L to R, Stewart Ellington, chairman of local CAB and Sue Jackson, manager of the new office.

CAB does its bit to help with war problems

ILIAN organisation set up during World War to help families of personnel has swung into action.

Citizens Advice Bureau was formed in 1945 after the war continued to help with war problems.

Staff are at work again, and workers at Wokingham branch are already helping out. Mrs Garrison has been in touch with the Elm Road office, to see what help is given should Gulf casualties occur.

And the bureau's manager, Sue Jackson, confirmed that staff have seen people who have come in needing help with Gulf-related problems.

"Nothing major has come up as yet," she said, "but we can always be of specific help with Gulf problems — for example, sorting out counselling or benefits."

"I think quite a few different problems will no doubt become more obvious as time goes on."

"We can help friends and families of those

Sue said she was pleased people felt able to visit the CAB for help in the present crisis; other CABs in the area have also pledged support and advice to any who may have been affected by the war.

Wokingham CAB has just finished its busiest month, with a staggering 1,270 enquiries — but more volunteers are desperately needed.

"Before the recession we were losing people to paid employment," said Sue Jackson, "but we haven't replaced people who have left in the last

moment, which puts us under a lot of pressure. We can cope, but we are now getting so many in-depth inquiries about redundancies and related problems, as well as poll tax queries, we need more help," she added.

"There are 24 workers at the Wokingham CAB, where ideally there should be 30, and at Woodley where staff would like to see nine."

If anyone needs help with Gulf-related

BUREAU STAFF

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

VOLUNTARY STAFF - WOKINGHAM

MRS W BENNET
MRS M BURT
MRS S COLWILL
MR E COX
MRS S GOOK
MRS B HAMILTON
MRS A HARMON
MR D HARRINGTON
MRS E HARVEY
MRS E HILTON
MISS C HOLLAND
MRS C LLOYD-WILLIAMS
MR B MACHIN
MRS C MAKINGS
MISS L MARTIN
MRS S RABBETT
MRS E RAMSEY
MRS M ROSENBERG
MRS N SAVAGE
MRS A SMITH
MR H SMITH
MRS M STEWART (TRAINING)
MRS J THOMPSON
MRS M TROTT

VOLUNTARY STAFF - WOODLEY

MRS S ALBUM
MRS E HYAMS
MRS J JENNINGS
MR D LEE
MR D WHITE
MRS E COOMBS (TRAINING)
MR H MARSHALL (TRAINING)
MRS J POOLE (TRAINING)

VOLUNTARY STAFF LEFT 1990/91

MRS A DE GENNARRO
MRS B GIFFORD
MRS T MCADDEN
MRS A SHEPSTONE

ADDITIONAL HELPERS

MR K KIRKWOOD
MR J HARVEY
MRS A OXLEY
MRS M SUTTIE (LEFT)

MANAGER'S REPORT

We have completed our first year in our new premises and our statistics bear witness to the fact that we are still available and that we can still be found. We have increased our availability by installing an auxiliary telephone line, although this involved changing our number. However this has not deterred callers. The emphasis of our enquiries has changed throughout the year, although divorce and debt have always been the forerunners. Since the end of last year we have seen an enormous increase in employment problems, many of them redundancies and, as a direct result of this, our benefit related enquiries have also soared. Debt, however, is a major part of the work of the Bureau and involves many of the Bureau man hours, in terms of administration and, also, face to face interviews.

Our enquiries have increased quite dramatically from 11,058 last year to 13,968 this year. It is worth bearing in mind that Woodley extension was closed for 6 weeks during the refurbishment of Coronation Hall and, had it remained open during this time, the total enquiries for the year would have been well in excess of 14,000.

Every adviser in the Bureau has received basic Money Advice training. We decided on this course of action because we were seeing such an alarming increase in these enquiries. So, in order to neither overburden our Money Advice specialists nor to have to turn away those in need, every adviser is now able to take their client through the initial stages involved in helping them. We are also anxious, where at all possible, to act as an enabling agent and to support the client in resolving their own financial problems. If we continue to see debt as an increasing problem we shall have to consider other alternatives.

We have had a fairly stable year as regards the volunteer advisers. However, we were very sad to lose one of our two remaining 'originals' - Betty Gifford, who retired from the Bureau at Christmas after thirteen years. We now have 31 volunteers, each of whom give a minimum of six hours per week for approximately 46 weeks of the year, and most give a great deal more, especially those involved with Money Advice. Recently we launched a campaign to try to increase our numbers and we have several potential volunteers in the pipeline, but, with the current economic climate, we need to have a continuous cycle of recruitment. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to each of the volunteers for their loyalty and, above all, the professionalism with which they perform their duties.

We also have a need for volunteer clerical helpers, who have the vital responsibility for updating our comprehensive

information system. I am extremely grateful to all those who perform this unenviable task which is vital to the Bureau.

Earlier this year we said good-bye to Gwen Dean, who retired as Deputy Manager of the Woodley Extension after four years. During her time there she built up the Extension so that it is able to offer a very professional level of service. I know that everyone would like to join with me to thank Gwen for everything that she has done for the Service. Since Gwen's retirement, one of the volunteers from Wokingham, Charlotte Lloyd-Williams, has been acting as Deputy in Woodley. She decided to apply for the job along with about thirty other highly qualified applicants and I am very happy to say that, after a very stringent selection process, she succeeded and is now Local Manager of the Woodley Extension. I am looking forward to a long and successful working relationship with her.

During this last year we have been especially involved with the Wokingham and District Accommodation Scheme, of which we are a member, and also with the newly formed Wokingham Housing Forum. This consists of representatives from local statutory and voluntary agencies with a common aim of looking at different ways of tackling and resolving the growing homeless problem in the Wokingham District. There are several projects under way at the present time in which Wokingham C.A.B. is very instrumental and I look forward to reporting on them next year.

Finally I would like to thank Janet Le Patourel, Bureau Chair, for all her help and support and also Judy Tomlin, Deputy Manager at Wokingham, for her unerring patience and loyalty during the last year.

Sue Jackson



Sue and the volunteers are under pressure from the increasing number of clients.

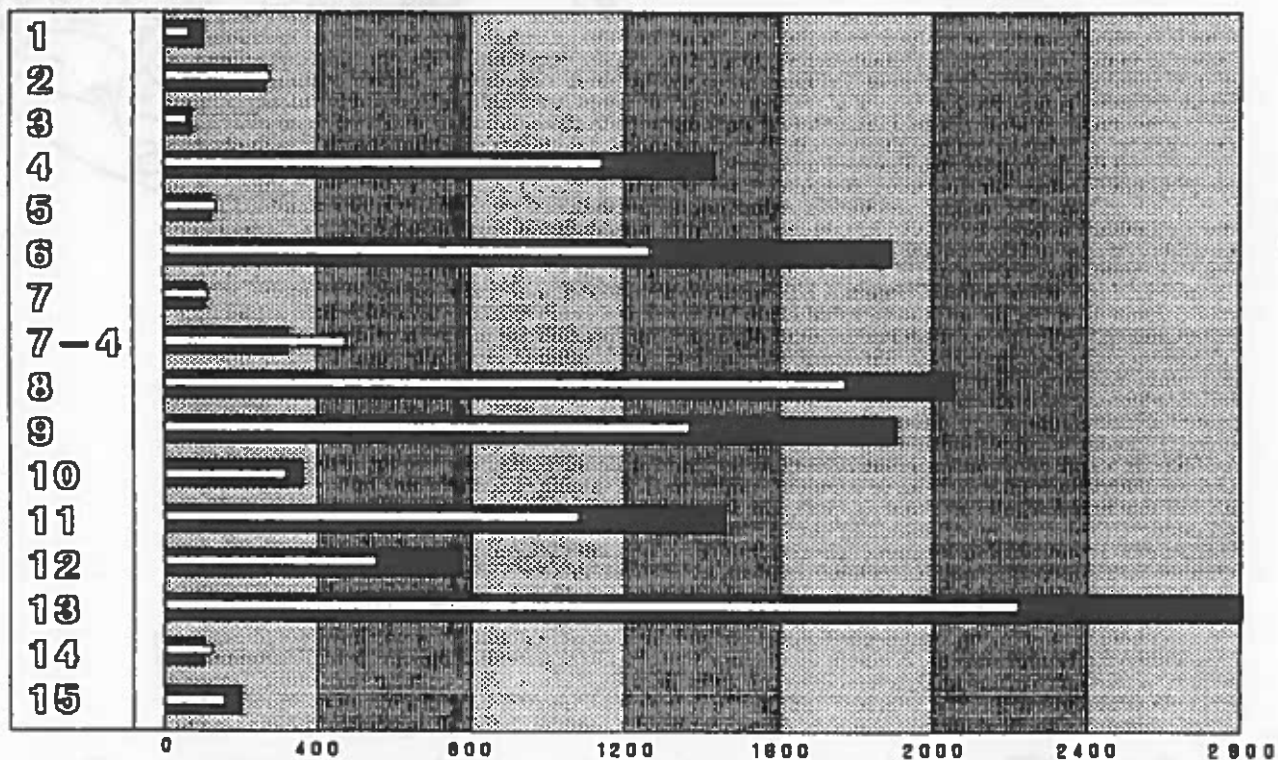
ENQUIRIES BY CATEGORY

CAT No.	CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	% + or -	TOTAL ENQS.
1	COMMUNICATION	+ 36.11	98
2	TRAVEL, TRANSPORT & HOLIDAYS	- 4.74	261
3	IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY	+ 37.50	77
4	ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE	+ 25.74	1438
5	EDUCATION	- 2.50	120
6	EMPLOYMENT	+ 49.60	1891
7	NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL	- 7.55	98
7-4	LOCAL INFORMATION ENQUIRIES	- 48.58	317
8	FAMILY & PERSONAL	+ 16.73	2058
9	SOCIAL SECURITY	+ 39.72	1903
10	HEALTH	+ 15.33	361
11	HOUSING, PROPERTY & LAND	+ 34.68	1460
12	TAXES & DUTIES	+ 42.04	777
13	CONSUMER, TRADE & BUSINESS	+ 26.21	2807
14	LEISURE	- 4.58	104
15	ENQUIRIES ABOUT C.A.B.	+ 35.13	200

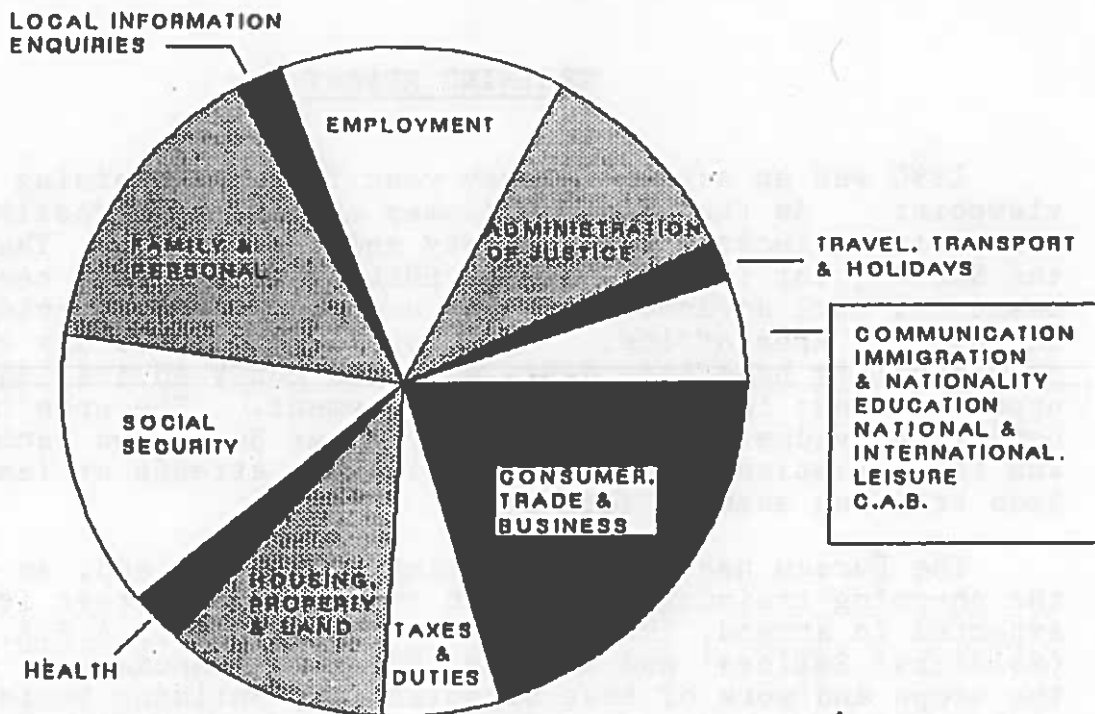
TOTAL ENQUIRIES FOR 1990/91

= 13,968

PERCENTAGE INCREASE ON 1989/90 = 26.31



1989/90
 1990/91



CATEGORIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL

1	COMMUNICATION	0.70
2	TRAVEL, TRANSPORT & HOLIDAYS	1.87
3	IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY	0.55
4	ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE	10.28
5	EDUCATION	0.86
6	EMPLOYMENT	13.54
7	NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL	0.70
7 - 4	LOCAL INFORMATION ENQUIRIES	2.27
8	FAMILY & PERSONAL	14.73
9	SOCIAL SECURITY	13.62
10	HEALTH	2.59
11	HOUSING, PROPERTY & LAND	10.46
12	TAXES & DUTIES	5.58
13	CONSUMER, TRADE & BUSINESS	20.10
14	LEISURE	0.75
15	ENQUIRIES ABOUT C.A.B.	1.43

TRAINING REPORT

1990 was an extremely busy year from the training viewpoint. As the Service becomes even more professional so the training increases in variety and complexity. Thanks to the NACAB joint initiative with SHELTER, there have been both basic and more advanced training on homelessness provided through the Area office. Area has also provided day courses on disability benefits; debt; advanced money advice; equal opportunities; immigration and employment. The Area training usually provides two or three places per Bureau on each course and the intention is that each volunteer attends at least one Area training session each year.

The Bureau has a Staff Meeting each month and, as part of the on-going training which each and every volunteer is expected to attend, there have been talks on S.S.A.F.A. (Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmens' Families Association) about the scope and work of that organisation; Building Society repossession procedures; child abuse; and the Magistrates Court. The Bureau also closed for one day recently for a days training on basic debt advice. This was to ensure that all volunteers are able to cope with the ever increasing numbers of financial problems that come into the Bureau. Also, there have been training visits to the County and Magistrates Courts and the Employment Office.

All this training is in addition to the volunteers weekly commitment of a minimum of 6 hours on the Rota in the Bureau.

As I mentioned in my report last year, the implementation of the new common core training is scheduled to take place in Spring 1992 and the training of in-bureau tutors in the use and preparation of the new material has already begun. The purpose of the change in training is to provide a standard format, countrywide, for all new bureau volunteers. This will help to ensure that the quality of the service will be the same in every bureau in the country, and is something which will maintain and improve on the present high standards of service which the Citizens Advice Bureau provides.

Judy Tomlin

We need to attract more new volunteers.



WOODLEY REPORT

During the past year there have been many changes at the Woodley Bureau. Three volunteers have left, either to take up full time employment or move away from the area, and one clerical worker has taken up other employment and is unable to work at the Bureau.

We are fortunate to have three trainee volunteers involved in Part 11 of their training, one of whom should be on Woodley Rota at the end of March. Also, clerical help has recently been offered.

Due to staff shortages, the bureau hours of opening have been reduced to 12 hours per week, opening on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

On the first Saturday in September, Woodley Bureau again organised and manned a stand at the Woodley Show. A C.A.B. display was mounted in Woodley Library for two weeks, starting on the same day.

Due to the complete refurbishment of Coronation Hall, Woodley Bureau was closed for the whole of October and re-opened 12th November. During the closure, Woodley volunteers worked in the Wokingham Bureau.

The refurbishment has created a pleasant work environment. The one room which is for C.A.B. sole use is now used as an office, and houses the information files, telephone, photocopier etc. This enables telephone enquiries, and workers discussions, to be confidential.

As with other Bureaux, there has been a marked increase in Employment and Debt enquiries in the past three months.

May I wish all the staff at Woodley Bureau every success in the future.

Gwen Dean.

THE AMAZING MR CREDIT.



"TAKE A CARD - ANY CARD - THEN I'LL TELL YOU THE A.P.R.!"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEGAL ROTA SOLICITORS:-

Messrs Biggs & Co.

Messrs Clifton Ingram & Co.

Messrs C J Giles & Co.

Messrs Haye & Reid

Messrs Ratcliffe Duce & Gammer

Messrs T S Roberts & Co.

Messrs Southorns

M Stroud Esq.



"Action stations! Sebastian Cox and Steve Owell back from lunch."

Daily Express, October 4th, 1979

Registered Charity No:- 274254

Enquiries by Parish



TOTAL 13,968

