

# **THE OXFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

## **A Brief History of the First Sixty Years**

**By Malcolm Leeding**

**President,  
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2007**

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Malcolm Leeding became a Parish Councillor in 1980 and has served on Risinghurst & Sandhills and Forest Hill with Shotover Councils since that date. He joined the OALC Executive Committee in 1985 and became its Chairman in 1987, serving in that capacity to 1991 and as Vice-Chairman from 1991-95. He has represented Oxfordshire on the National Association since 1995 and has been President of the Oxfordshire Association since November 2004.

**THE OXFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**  
**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SIXTY YEARS SINCE THE FOUNDATION**  
**OF THE ASSOCIATION IN 1947**

**PREFACE**

I have been asked to give an account of the last 60 years of the Association. I have not attempted to write a book, but rather to set out some common themes which have occurred and to pick out some of the main subjects discussed within the Association.

I have researched as many records of meetings as are available to try and draw out the main subjects discussed, and significant decisions. I should emphasise that what I have written does not cover all items as space and the tolerance of the readership is limited for any document that is too lengthy.

I feel that broadly speaking, the items dealt with have not changed that much over the past 60 years; what has perhaps changed is that because of hard work at both National and County Association level, there is more consultation with Town and Parish Councils now than before, and on more subjects. It is important that mechanisms are set up to enable them to respond to, and to participate in, organisations or new structures.

For the future, the needs of rural areas remain paramount but are now equalled by those of urban areas which are parished, including the Larger Local Councils. This need for equal treatment will continue to be essential, so that for example Banbury Town Council on the one hand and the 68 Parish Meetings on the other, have their needs met.

**Malcolm Leeding**

**President, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils**

**November 2007**

## **General Background and Trends**

In the following sections, I have tried to provide a number of subject based themes and then to draw some general conclusions.

Over and above the themes I have drawn out, there are a number of linkages/memberships which OALC has created and which are on-going, in particular those organisations to which OALC sends a representative, which are set out below.

All of these relate to the role of Town and Parish Councils (TPCs), and the most significant of which is the affiliation to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). This relationship has been the subject of functional pressures from time to time, partly caused by National Government expectation that NALC can speak for all TPCs, whereas the latter are affiliated to their county associations, who affiliate to NALC. A general view is difficult to achieve therefore. There is also the need to reflect that while there are Larger Local Councils, who employ staff and perhaps have the ability and willingness to take on devolved functions, the great majority of Parish Councils are small with part-time clerks, whose aspirations may well be different. It is important not to overlook Parish Meetings who are in one sense the purest form of democracy and where the Chairman can become significantly involved in any big local issue. There are 68 Parish Meetings in Oxfordshire.

There is also the pressure caused by the different needs of urban and rural areas which are likely to increase as resources available have to be spread more thinly.

The second significant link is with the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) which goes back many years. This involved sharing of staff and accommodation until last year, and liaising over Parish Plans, Rural Transport and general rural issues. There is a need to continue to raise the profile of rural areas, and liaison with ORCC will be vital with this.

Another trend has been the production of an increasing number of documents for consultation, especially by Government and the County and District Councils. This is encouraging but NALC/OALC have had to be able to respond. This trend is also going to continue.

### ***ORIGINS OF THE ASSOCIATION***

Although the earlier files for Association Meetings are no longer available, the origins lie in the Parish Council Act 1894, which did not at the time meet the aspirations of its promoters, particularly Joseph Arch, the first leader of the National Agricultural Labourers Union who had hoped for a broad membership base in Councils and a change in "rulers".

In the 1920's there was a general air of gloom for the future, and in Scotland they were abandoned altogether. However the National Association pressed on and reformed itself in 1947 as the National Association of Parish Councils; in the same year the Oxfordshire Association was formed as an independent body, but provided with support services by the Rural Community Council. Subjects discussed at that time included familiar topics such as footpaths and playing fields with the added "flavouring" of food production. A survey of 12 Oxfordshire parishes at that time showed that country people were under-privileged in comparison with townspeople; they needed better living, better business, better houses and better health services. Have these changed much in 60 years?

The purpose of parish councils was perhaps to become expert in knowing where to send a person with a problem, how to help with finding a way through many possible services, and to make sure that those with urgent problems are properly sought out and to led to a source of help – again has much changed over 60 years!?

### ***CENTENARY OF PARISH COUNCILS***

In 1994, the centenary of Parish Councils, the Association organised a service at Christchurch Oxford which was very well attended and reflected the vital

role being carried out. The notes included in the Order of Service highlighted that of the 300 parishes and hamlets at 1894, 126 were entitled to a parish council by reason of having a population over 300, and in 50 a poll was demanded to form the new councils which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1894. On the whole, the immediate impact of parish councils was apparently less than had been hoped or feared.

## **OALC STRUCTURES, MEETINGS AND PERSONALITIES**

### ***EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS***

- 1958 Chairman Dr Batt – Meetings in Hadow House, Beaumont Street, Oxford.  
Executive had 18 Members.
- 1960 Ambitious but unsuccessful attempt to get Lord Denning and Lord Bridges to address a residential conference.  
AGM devoted to Parish Meetings and their needs and functions.
- 1960 Peter McGregor elected to Executive Committee.
1962. Surplus on OALC Accounts loaned to Bullingdon RDC at 1¾% above bank rate.
- 1962 Agree to purchase a separate filing cabinet for parish council records. Members invited to inspect it.
- 1965 Agree to co-opt W.I./CPRE and Footpaths Society to the Executive Committee.
- 1969 First Revision of Constitution of OALC.
- 1974 Revised Constitution of OALC.
- 1992 First successful seminar held for Chairman of PC's.
- 1992 Further review of Constitution.
- 1993 Agree to hold area based meetings of TPC's – 66 Parishes attended – had to be dropped in 1994 – Pressure of other work.

## **MEETINGS & ORGANISATION**

- 1995 First meetings of Larger Council Forum. 18 attended.
- 1995 Agreed to a proposal to have a constituency-based system for each member of the Executive Committee to be reviewed in 1998. This lapsed owing to pressures of time involved in attending all the meetings.
- 1999 Peter McGregor retires from Parish Council work after 50 years. Committee acknowledge his distinguished service both locally, countywide and at national level.

***Peter has remained a member of the Committee, and is now a Vice-President. He was awarded the British Empire Medal. He was also Chairman of the National Association for a number of years and is now a Vice-President of that also.***

- 2003 OALC review staffing structure and agree with ORCC, as the employer, to split of roles with OALC having a "dedicated" Secretary from now on. John Hardwicke leaves this role after 25 years to work full time in his role as ORCC Chief Executive. Brian Spragg appointed Secretary 28 April 2003.
- 2004 OALC agree to join the Oxfordshire Consortium to develop the DEFRA Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Development Programme, whose aim is to strengthen support for voluntary and community organisations.

2004 John Francis, President for thirty years dies.

***John Francis was elected President of the Association in 1974. He remained President until his death in 2004. Before then he was President for several years of the Berkshire Association of Parish Councils until local government reorganisation in 1974.***

***In total, John was gave fifty years of service supporting and promoting the work of local councils, starting in 1953 when he first became a member of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council. He remained a member of that Council and was its Chairman from 1962.***

2005 Agreed to affiliate to the Oxfordshire Rural Social and Community Programme.

2005 Analysis of issues referred by member councils.

<i>Composition of Meetings</i>	12%
<i>Data and Records</i>	4%
<i>Employment Issues</i>	27%
<i>Finance</i>	14%
<i>Land and Development</i>	13%
<i>Members</i>	6%
<i>Legislative</i>	10%
<i>Other</i>	15%

***Mrs Rosalind Brain was a Vice-President of OALC until her death in 2004. A holder of the British Empire Medal, she worked for our Association and its membership for over forty years.***

***Mrs. Brain was first elected to the OALC Executive Committee in 1963, representing Ploughley Rural District Council and became its Vice-Chairman in 1983.***

***She also represented the Association on many county-wide organisations, such as the County Advisory Council for Community Education.***

- 2006 OALC decide to relocate to accommodation at SODC offices, because of space issues in shared offices at ORCC. This ends an arrangement which had operated since 1947. Liaison meetings to be held with ORCC and TOE to maintain essential contacts.
- 2006 Agree to establish a Management Sub-Committee especially for issues related to the office move, and as a sounding board for the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 1958 OALC accounts: Receipts and Payments £86.11p  
Surplus £8-14s-10d  
Balances at end of 1957/58 of £119.12.6d
- 1959 Agency Fee to ORCC - £100.
- 1963 Inland Revenue refuse Charitable Status to OALC as objectives were too broad.
- 1963 Local Government Financial Provisions Act enables TPCs to spend 1/5 of product of a penny rate on items of their choosing (Forerunner of Section 137 provisions of LG Act 1972).
- 1971 Additional staff agreed for OALC work subject to finance being available – NALC's permission was required at that time.
- 1974 Budget for OALC – Income £5,000 – payment to ORCC £1,000, payment to NALC £1250. Affiliation fee between £10 and £30.
- 1985 Government Green Paper "Paying for Local Government, including non-domestic rate – no objection but parishes must get their fair share. Supported in principle the Community Charge, but system was wrong; capital values rather than rental values should be used.
- 1985 Seek liberalisation of loan sanction approval system – give general power to TPCs to borrow, or base it on a multiplier of penny rate product.
- 1991 Government replaces loan sanctions with credit approval – view that this would mean more rather than less control from the Centre.
- 1991/1992 Expenditure of OALC estimated at £25,000 – 81% of income was from affiliation fees.

- 1996 Committee agree to support ADC in persuading Government to protect the sparsity factor in Standard Spending assessments for Local Authorities – London Boroughs want factor reduced – All DCs would lose a percentage of their present budget.
- 1996 60 attended an OALC Seminar on the use of Section 137 of LG Act 1972 and further seminars held on new Accounts and Audits Regulations – well attended.
- 1997 Loan Sanctions levels £6.525m nationally – Oxfordshire received £68,056.
- 1999 Committee note decision of Government to replace Compulsory Competitive Tendering with Best Value, and await details of how far this might affect TPCs.
- 2002 Loan Sanction borrowing limit removed – NALC's role ceased.

## **NALC - COUNTY ASSOCIATION LINKS**

- 1973 Agreed to change name from OAPC to OALC at request of NALC.
- 1973 Affiliation Fee to NALC £26.25.
- 1974 NALC propose new relationship with County Associations of Local Councils (CALCs) whereby the latter would affiliate to the NALC not individual TPCs as was the position existing at that time. Affiliation would be based on penny rate product of the County; CALCs could then decide how much to levy individual TPCs as long as these were based on penny rate product.
- 1980 Support for NALC paper on future of Local Government from point of view of the Parishes.
- 1991 Concern at further plan of NALC to review structure/relationships with CALCs.
- 1993 Further discussion about this – what is the nature of the link? *Either* TPCs are members of a national body organised for practical purposes around county associations *or* members of an autonomous County Association which may choose or not to join a National Association (this debate is still continuing today).
- 1992 Affiliation fees to NALC to be based on number of electors not Community Charge payers.
- 1994 NALC having rejected an earlier reorganisation – a further paper was received suggesting an arrangement on regions – little enthusiasm.
- 1998 Agreed a response to a joint statement from NALC/ADC entitled "Securing effective District/Parish Relationships".
- 1998 Agree with other CALCs in South East Region to join SERCAF, which would work on behalf of TPCs in those counties especially in relations with NALC.

2002. NALC submits another Corporate Plan to CALCs for comment. OALC were against adoption, as there was no attempt to estimate the financial implications.

### **TRAINING**

There are some references to this in the Annexes but it has really been ongoing over the past 60 years. It has ranged from residential courses in the early days, to whole day and half days. Attendance levels have been high and there has been good feedback. The Association has always aimed to meet day to day needs, and while there is a charge for those attending, this is kept at a reasonable level, and any surplus is used to boost the Association's overall funds. This all works towards the development of Councils and their Clerks.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

- 1958 Litter Act gave power to TPCs to prosecute.
- 1965 Passing of Commons Registrations Act.
- 1965 TPCs encouraged to appoint Civil Defence Liaison Officers – approximately 77 had done so by the following year.
- 1966 Concern expressed at Vandalism in villages – Chief Constable came to address a meeting of TPCs.
- 1968 Discussion about noise complaints at Oxford Airport.
- 1968 Long discussions about loss of Lengthmen to maintain roadsides.
- 1968 Deputy Clerk of County Council gives a talk on all significant legislation affecting TPCs and explains that in relation to maintenance of roads, that OCC had a cut of £250,000 in Government funding; there was a relatively small population but a large mileage of roads (perhaps nothing has changed 40 years on!).
- 1968 Agreed to express total opposition to proposed third London Airport at Silverstone.
- 1969 Sub-Committee set up to discuss car parking in villages.

- 1969 OCC offer to produce wooden road signs which TPCs could acquire at 30s each.
- 1970 First mention of M40 feasibility study available at £1 per copy.
- 1970 Concern at condition of minor County roads.
- 1971 Discussion about outcome of a study which expressed the view that TPCs should accept broad responsibility for their areas.
- 1973 Consultation on Definitive Footpath Map by OCC – complain that insufficient time had been allowed for consulting TPCs – OCC suggested responses be sent direct to them.
- 1973 OCC provides detail of criteria for imposition of speed limits, viz, Accident rate and speed below which 85% of vehicles using a particular road, travel. OALC wanted greater emphasis on environmental issues.
- 1974 All TPCs were asked for information about vulnerable groups and/or premises that might be affected by the fuel crisis.
- 1974 Concern at "overwhelming tide of visitors" to Swyncombe by car.
- 1979 Discussion and speaker on impact of microchip on rural communities and related concern about whether planning system could manage the pressure from people to live and work in the countryside.
- 1990 Concern at lack of progress in finding sites for gypsies/travellers – should there be a tighter definition? Actions needed were finance, clear responsibilities and consultation processes.
- 1990 DOE produce code of practice for litter abatement – residents could make orders against District Councils.
- 1991 Discussion of mink and their impact on the countryside.
- 1992 Discussion about proposed reform of Caravan Sites Act 1968 – duty to provide sites by principal authorities was removed as was designation system, as only 38 Local Authorities had "signed up".
- 1994 Earlier proposal for large new airport in Vale of White Horse, known as LOX was later dropped by proposer.

- 1998 Mink discussed again.
- 1999 Committee noted setting up of Trust for Oxfordshire Environment, which might be able to assist with appropriate projects in parish.
- 2000 Discussion on problem of high hedges – agree to support two non-legislative options – persuasion rather than compulsion should be the aim.
- 2000 Concern at suggestions of permitted development rights for Telecommunication Masts – Government were consulting on requiring a full planning application.
- 2000 OCC organised a forum on fly tipping – OALC discuss issues.
- 2003 Discuss issues around sale of fireworks – in particular what is definition of "organised community event".
- 2006 High Hedges – OALC agreed to press NALC that if a complainant's complaint is upheld, then their fees should be refunded.
- 2006 Received a report that TPCs were being urged by the Land Registry to register their property to protect their interests and simplify any queries to them or their successors.

#### **VILLAGE GREENS AND OPEN SPACES**

- 1982 Presentation to OALC on the many issues.

#### **VILLAGE HALL - AMENITIES**

- 1959 County Council reported a decision to give grants to Village Halls.
- 1973 OCC annual Amenities Budget of £45,000 for such items as footpaths and lay-bys.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE**

- 1958 Discussion of a possible reorganisation of Local Government.
- 1962 Discussion about setting up Berinsfield Parish Council, particular emphasis on Deacons Garage a highly rated property between Dorchester and Berinsfield – public inquiry 7<sup>th</sup> August 1963.
- 1963 Creation of Berinsfield Parish Council approved.
- 1966 Local Government Commission was established. Views were submitted by TPCs including a suggestion that smaller councils should be able to get together for some functions e.g. grass mowing.
- 1969 Committee discuss the unitary concept for local government – suggested population 386,000. Concern at short timetable for consultation. Majority of Committee against co-opted members on the new authorities. After adjourning discussion, the Committee voted against that unitary concept but was in favour of second tier retention but with larger areas. This was confirmed at an Annual General Meeting of OALC with added encouragement for grouping of smaller councils.
- 1973 Meeting arranged to welcome 65 Parishes and 60 Parish Meetings from Berkshire after reorganisation due to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1974.
- 1973 Conference arranged to discuss successor Councils following L.G. Reorganisation; viz Banbury which had its request for successor status turned down at that time.
- 1973 Re-emphasis that there were and would be *three* tiers of Local Government after 1974 changes.
- 1974 Agreed to support former Berkshire parishes on boundary of Reading who wished to stay in Oxfordshire.

- 1974 Committee express further concern at references to two tier local government; there are three tiers.
- 1991 Parish Councils created in the Oxford City Area – namely Littlemore, Marston, Blackbird Leys and Risinghurst & Sandhills.
- 1992 Discussion about double rating danger for parishes in Oxford City.
- 1992 Review of Local Government Structure. Consultation paper on role of Town/Parish Councils. Committee set up District based meetings and 228 parishes attended.
- 1994. First proposal for Charters between TPCs and County and District Councils
- 1995 Another Government White Paper – this time on Rural areas – suggesting possible delegation to TPCs of rights of way, transport and crime prevention.
- 1995 OCC starts discussion about Charters.
- 1996 OCC says Charter must apply across the County but some Districts have their own.
- 1998 Reiterate support for Banbury to have Town Council Status (subsequently agreed in 1999 with the Council established on 1 April 2000).
- 1998 Government propose Regional Chamber for the South East – Committee agree to press for representation.
- 1999 Another Local Government White Paper for discussion.
- 2000 Support a single code of conduct for all local councillors in all three tiers.
- 2000 Noted ideas for neighbourhood forums – agreed to emphasise that TPCs are already an effective means of delivering community government – don't need another layer.
- 2000 Agree to respond to Green Paper on "Modernising Local Government" but noted the accompanying comment that "the future

role of TPCs in contributing to effective local government in rural communities would be considered further in a Rural White Paper”.

- 2001 NALC Conference on Rural White Paper. OCC consults on new political management arrangements. Response sent.
- 2001. Proposals for Parish Boundary Review process – OALC wished to change legislation to avoid judicial review procedures as being impractical and expensive.
- 2002 Discuss L.G. White Paper – express concern at letter from Minister classifying TPCs as "active" or "sleeping". This concern was reflected nationally.
- 2003 General discussion about Regional Assemblies Preparations Bill – no time to consult individual member Councils so only general comments made.

#### ***ACTVaR (Association of Councils in the Thames Valley Region)***

- 1997 Committee appoint Ray Everitt to represent OALC – he has served to this day. The Association received reports on and discussed issues affecting Local Councils in Thames Valley Region

#### ***RATES LEVELS***

- 1974 Protest in AGM about level of rate demands – view expressed that water, sewage, education, fire service and police should be funded by national rather than local taxation, but administered locally.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES**

OALC has actively engaged with the other tiers of local government or other public authorities to press for changes, improvements, or the greater involvement of TPCs. This is shown below.

### ***PLANNING***

- 1962 Discussion with OCC, who were then the planning authority, about role of parish councils in planning applications.
- 1965 Further discussion with OCC on processes. Agreed that Parish Meetings should be included.
- 1968 Agree to press MHLG to make it statutory to consult TPC's on planning applications.
- 1971 Deputation agreed to meet OCC about continuing dissatisfaction with planning consultation processes – inadequate information being supplied to TPCs.
- 1973 Agree to press new District Councils to continue OCC scheme of consultation on planning applications. All TPCs had to make a written request at that time

### ***EDUCATION ISSUES***

- 1979 Discussion of Community use of schools – not just use but integration of them with their communities. Population described at the time as more affluent and educated than previously.
- 1974 Pressure for TPC representation on Secondary School Governing bodies – CALC wanted to make our own appointments, not pass them through County Council as there was no guarantee they would be appointed.
- 1980 Concern at discussion in Education Act 1980 to reduce the right of TPC's to appoint Primary School Governors.
- 1992 OCC consult on review of primary school provision.
- 2007 OCC set up a Board to look at the future of Primary School provision in the County. OALC ask for and get a place on the Board.

## **HIGHWAY ISSUES**

- 1994 Agreed to exert pressure for cleaning of road signs.
- 1995 Agreement that income from speed cameras should be partly retained locally.
- 1998 Seminars organised on Traffic Calming following powers being given to TPCs to spend money on Traffic Calming.

## **RURAL TRANSPORT PROVISION**

- 1958 Discussion of reasons for decline in availability of transport in rural areas.
- 1972 General discussion especially about Community car schemes.
- 1974 Support a suggestion that District Councils should meet together to provide a uniform system of concessionary fares.
- 1980 Discussion about impact of Transport Act 1980 and its impact on OCC policies; the Act envisaged "Encouragement, Evaluation and Enterprise".
- 1982 Concessionary Fare Scheme discussed again. Also discussion of Rural Bus Services and report the appointment of a Transport Officer by ORCC.
- 1997 Discussion about Government Green Paper, 'Developing an Integrated Transport Policy'.
- 1994 ORCC set up Rural Transport Partnership and OALC appoint a representative. The Partnership is to encourage and help with community transport schemes especially where bus services do not exist.
- 2003 Receive details of OCC Bus Shelter Procurement policy and proposals for real time information at Bus Stops on premium routes.
- 2005 Discussion on OCC Bus Strategy and report on Access to Transport in Rural Areas.

TPCs urged to appoint PTRs (Panel Transport Representatives).  
Approximately 60% have done so and they meet regularly with OCC.

### ***HOUSING***

2003 OALC attend an affordable housing summit organised by OCC – well attended.

### ***FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE***

2004 OALC receive and discuss a report on the future of the Oxfordshire service.

### ***POLICE ISSUES***

1982 Discussion about changes in rural policing and consequent decline in number of village constables who were needed elsewhere

### ***HEALTH ISSUES***

1994 Concern expressed at withdrawal of doctors surgeries in villages into Health Centres.

1997 Discussion of changes proposed in Chemists dispensing arrangements in rural areas.

### ***FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE***

1998 Discussion of the issues arising and of what TPCs could do.

### ***PROVISION OF POST OFFICES***

1970 Report received that the Post Office Consumer Consultative Committee would be serviced by P.O. not by Pressed Steel Fisher which was the case. (Loss of independence of outlook was the concern).

1974 Agree that TPCs should be automatically consulted of any changes in post office provision.

2006 Concern expressed at Government decision to remove from the Post Office the account card system in 2010 – effect on rural post offices.

2007 Information received on Royal Mail proposals for post office closures, particularly timescales. Respond to consultations and alert, with ORCC, member councils.

## **QUALITY PARISH COUNCILS - PARTNERSHIPS - MEETINGS WITH COUNTY and DISTRICT COUNCILS**

- 2002 NALC produce a consultation paper on this proposal. OALC broadly welcome it, together with proposed charters, where they were in place. They also sought more flexibility over timescales for publication of annual reports and newsletters.
- 2002 Agreed to set up a County Training Partnership for Clerks and Councillors as envisaged in the White Paper.
- 2002 LSPs (Local Strategic Partnerships) launched with Cherwell as the first. OALC agree to take up or seek representation on all of them.
- 2003 Launch of Certificate in Local Council Administration, for Clerks.
- 2003 Establish County Accreditation Panel for those Councils making application for Quality Parish status.
- 2004 Meeting held with OCC/DC to discuss the extent to which services could be devolved to TPCs, and/or support be given e.g. ICT.
- 2004 Didcot Town Council becomes first local council in Oxfordshire to gain Quality Status, followed by Carterton Town Council
- 2005 Report made on first liaison meeting OALC/OCC Chief Executive links established through OCC Communications Team.
- 2005 Barford St. John & St Michael Council becomes first small parish in Oxfordshire to gain Quality Status.
- 2006 Bicester Town Council achieves Quality status.

## **PUBLICITY FOR WORK OF TPCs**

1968 Campaign to publicise work especially need for Annual Parish Meetings. Use of "Village Government" leaflet which was perceived as useful.

## **CLERKS TO PARISH COUNCILS**

1965 No full time Clerks in post at this time.

1974 Discuss proposal to establish a Society of Local Council Clerks. The Committee hoped it would not disturb the existing good relationships.

1997 Committee discussed impact of Information Technology on role of Town/Parish Clerks.

2004 ICT Survey of TPCs – 70% of Councillors who responded had access to e-mail. Most Clerks were using ICT, either their own or supplied by the Council.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

From this material and chronology the reader will see that many issues and themes have remained constant throughout the 60 years of OALC's life – e.g. local government reorganisation, lobbying to ensure 'a place at the table' for TPCs, relationships with NALC, and local government structure. It is clear that many of the issues which were discussed over the last sixty years remain current.

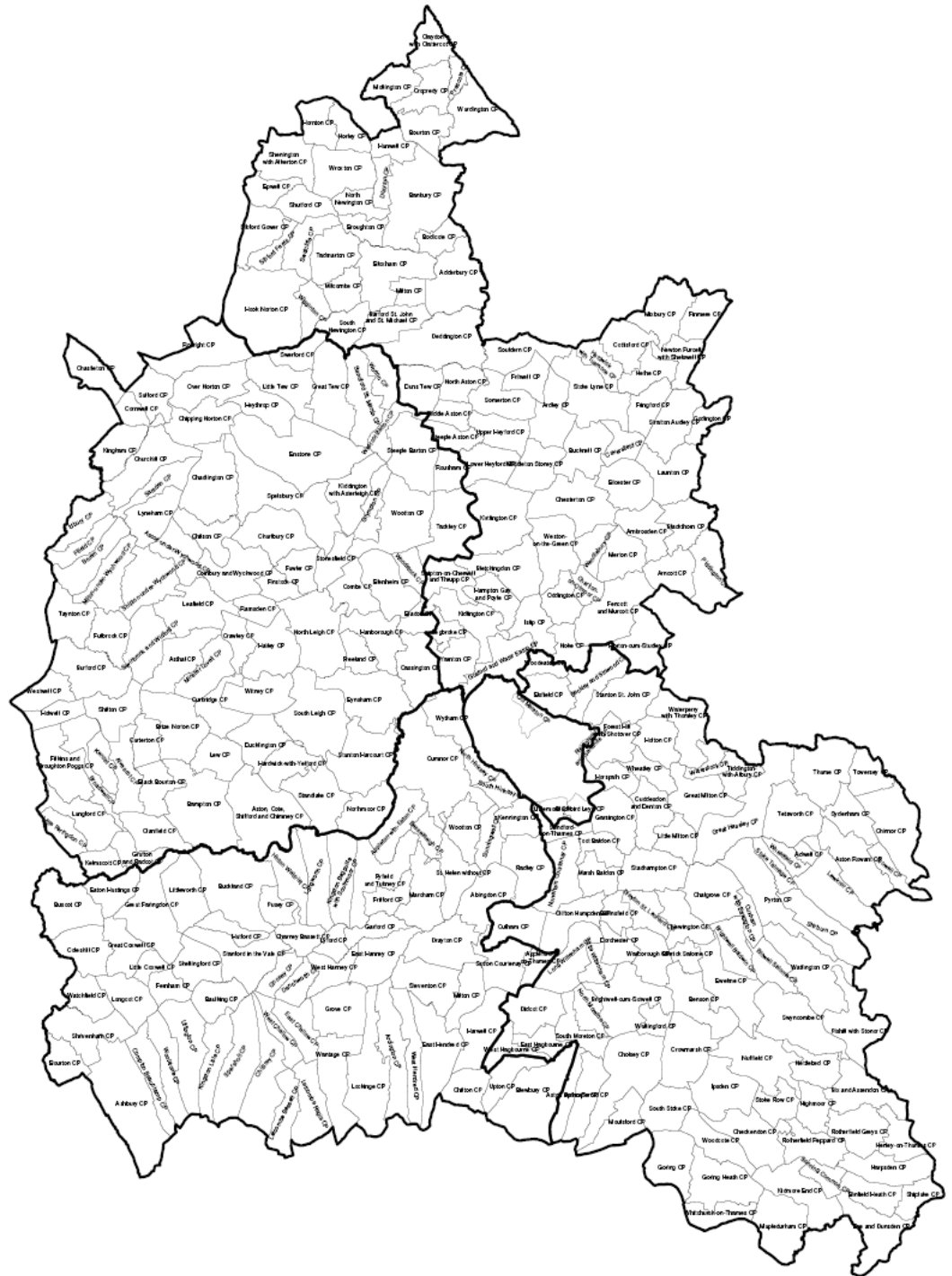
For the future seems that TPCs will need to be seen as 'engaging' with their communities by such means as newsletters, websites, and parish plans, and this likely to increase the time commitment. However, from my own knowledge, I believe that TPCs are already doing this in many ways although we do not necessarily see this as 'engaging', which seems to be popular moment at the time of writing. The other word currently in vogue is 'community empowerment'. Finally, there is the ever present mention of 'partnerships' at many levels. All these are reflected in the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which will be of some significance for all TPCs.

## APPENDICES

- (i) Map showing parishes in Oxfordshire in 2007.
- (ii) Map showing numbers of Councils in membership of County Associations prior to 1974.
- iii) Extract from a book entitled "*Discovering Parish Boundaries*" by Angus Winchester, 2nd ed., 2000, 96pp., £2.50 (ISBN 0 7478 0470 2), referring to the creation of the parishes of Westcott Barton and Steeple Barton, published with the agreement and cooperation of the author to whom many thanks are due.

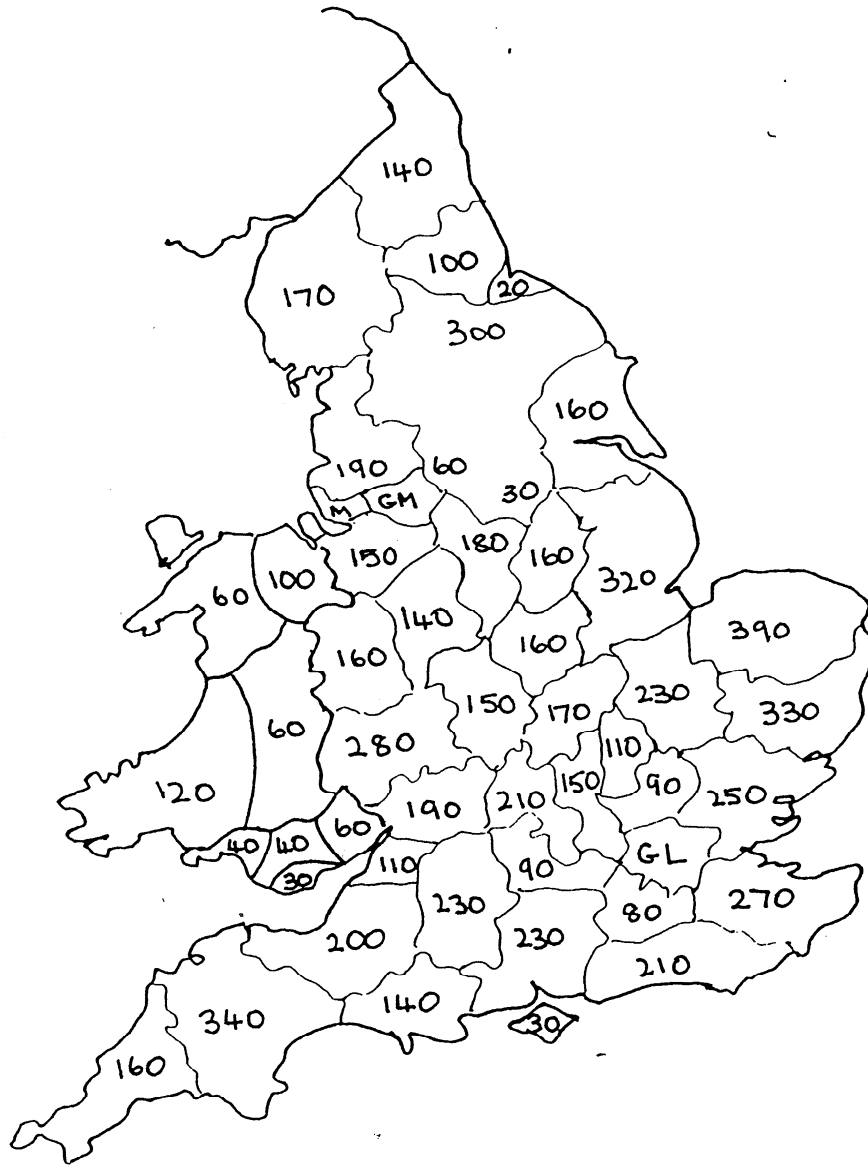
The book itself is worth reading by those interested in Parish Boundaries and is published by *Shire Publications Ltd, Cromwell House, Church Street, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9AA.*

# APPENDIX I: Parishes in Oxfordshire, 2007



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**APPENDIX II: Councils in Membership of County Associations Prior to 1974.**  
*(Numbers rounded up to the nearest ten)*



### ***APPENDIX III: Creation of the Parishes of Westcott Barton and Steeple Barton***

The parishes of Westcott Barton and Steeple Barton in Oxfordshire (figure 5) are an example of the division of a single village into two parishes. The division had occurred before 1066 but the two parishes continued to share a single field system. The pattern of parish boundaries illustrated in figure 5 appears to be a rationalisation of an even more complex earlier pattern. The enclosure award of 1796 confirmed the existence of six detached pieces of Steeple Barton parish in Westcott Barton but thirty years earlier there had been 48 such detached portions in Westcott Barton which paid tithe to the neighbouring parish (*VCH Oxfordshire*, volume XI). The Bartons appear to be an example of a fairly common phenomenon in parts of southern England, where two parishes, probably originating in seigniorial church foundations in the tenth or eleventh centuries, shared the tithes from a single field system.

Perhaps the most extreme cases of such village sharing are found in East Anglia. Peter Warner has shown that, in Norfolk alone, there are 37 known examples of two or more parish churches sharing one churchyard. He suggests that this proliferation of churches was the result not only of church foundation by lords of the manor but of church building by communities of freemen during the eleventh century (Warner, 1986). The parishes thus created often consisted of scattered pieces in the open fields and, as in the Bartons in Oxfordshire, consolidation and rationalisation of the parochial boundary pattern in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has often reduced the complexity of earlier arrangements.

PARISH SHAPE AND SIZE

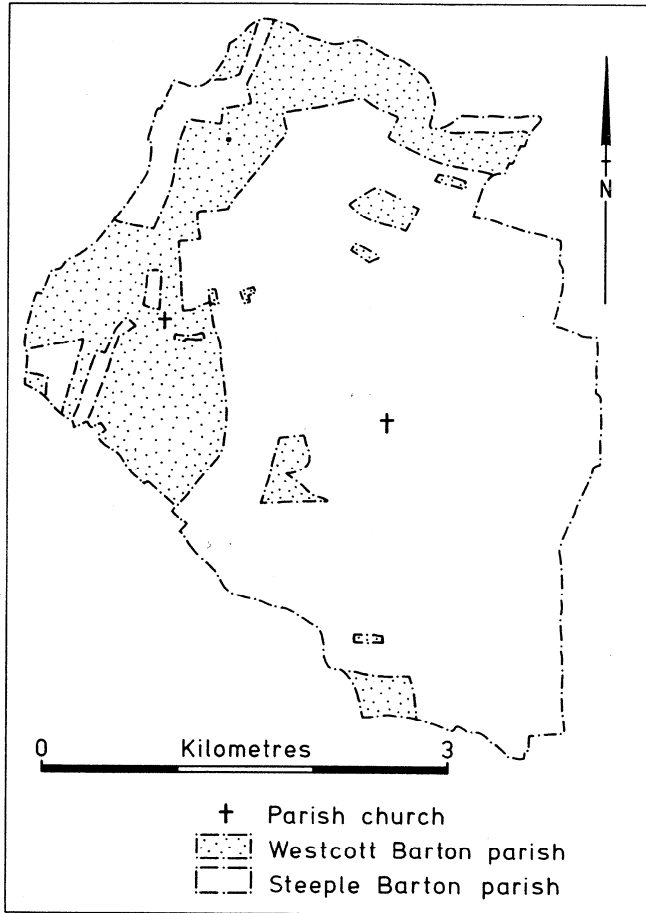


Figure 5. Westcott Barton and Steeple Barton parishes, Oxfordshire (SP 42). (After VCH Oxfordshire, volume XI.)