

Historic Towns & Villages

Bletchley

The early years



Aerial view of Mellish Court with Abbeyes school construction in the background



Councillors presented to the Queen on her visit to Bletchley in 1966



Handing over keys for the first residents of the Lakes Estate



Council offices Bletchley Road

Shops on Castles Estate

Before Milton Keynes, responsibility for local government in the area was shared between Buckinghamshire County Council and a number of Urban and Rural District Councils.

The 80 year story of the Bletchley Urban District Council – which began as the Fenny Stratford UDC – is that of a town which during that period increased its population ten times over, three-quarters of the increase having been achieved in its last 25 years.

The men elected to the first Council were Messrs. J. Baisley, T.G. Kirby, J. Siphthorpe, J. Tregenza, J. Garner, W. Alderman, A. Whitney, C. Merry, G. Mead, S. Wootton, G. Sear and A. Bramley.

The inaugural meeting was held at the Board Schools and the council's first chairman was elected – but only after three votes - Mr. Baisley finally beating Mr. Kirby to the post. Mr. Kirby was to have his turn ten years later.

In 1911 the council saw fit to become 'Bletchley'.

In 1931 the population had been 6,169. A later census in 1951 showed it to be 10,916.

The first of the 'London' estates, the Saints Estate was begun in 1951. The Castles, Rivers, Counties and Abbeyes estates followed. The council saw that they would also have to provide jobs and implemented a policy of buying land for industrial estates and building factories to let. Subsequent sales provided much of the finance for the leisure centre, the golf course and other amenities.

By 1963 further and much bigger development for North Bucks was in the wind. The county council brought forward the 'Pooley Plan' – so nicknamed after county planning officer, Mr. F. Pooley. This proposed a town of 120,000 between Bletchley and Wolverton, but independent of them.

Bletchley objected furiously. The council immediately produced a counter-plan for 150,000 within its own borders. In the upshot, Minister Richard Crossman approved another plan and drafted an order for the Milton Keynes New Town, much as we now know it.

In the years 1951 to 1961 the population grew from 10,916 to 17,093 and at mid-1972 it was estimated at 31,990.

This text is based on an article by H S Hepworth, Bletchley Gazette 5 April 1974