



Owing to the need to get this missive written a little earlier in the month to help our magazine editors hit the necessary deadlines, this one will be a little shorter than usual although apart from some typo's I hope the quality is maintained. At the end of February I had an arthroscopy in my right knee which slowed me down a little, for a few days! But I was able to make the visit to the Anglia Water Treatment Plant in Pitsford on the 24th February. You may recall that the *Cryptosporidium oocysts* were found in Pitsford Treatment plant which provides water to parts of Mears Ashby, Sywell and Overstone and other parts of the County. The Drinking Water Inspectorate reported with a sometime critical review of part of the business and made the following final comments:

"I am very critical of the company for the failings in its basic water supply hygiene arrangements provisions which this incident revealed. In particular these arrangements did not prevent small animal access because of the lack of mesh on vents and a damaged access cover, in respect of the GAC backwash water tank. These matters had not been noticed and reported for attention during the regular routine checks that the Company claims were in place at the Works. I conclude that the location of the GAC backwash water tank – it is within a secure gated compound but it is situated outside of the main secure operational Works site – contributed to the failure by personnel to recognise the tank as an operational unit requiring the same water supply hygiene arrangements and checks as all other treated water storage units."

During the site visit the AWA Chief Operating Officer Mr Peter Simpson accepted the criticism and vowed to ensure it could not happen again. He also invited questions, after the initial presentation on how the site "produces the clean water" and there were "no holds barred" as they say in political circles. There were no parts of the site ruled out of the visit and in viewing the redesigned area of the back wash filters I am still struggling to understand how this young rabbit managed to jump about 18" into a swan neck pipe of some 6 inches diameter, I have to conclude that it must have been chased!

Other Council Activities.

No-one is more acutely aware of the dramatic downturn in the economy than Wellingborough Borough Council, for our part we have kept our Council Tax increase to 0%. This of course means that we will be using Reserves to cover any shortfall in this financial year and in my view that is absolutely correct. Unfortunately this Government is spending like there is no tomorrow with the result that we have no idea how much we will be in debt before the Recession is over or how long we will be in Recession. I have been through a number of Recessions but I have never witnessed anything like this.

The Council has launched an initiative called "From Recession to Recovery", and on the 16th March a meeting of the Wellingborough Partnership and a large number of interested parties from a broad spectrum of organisations totalling around 100 people kicked-off the event. The process was to create as many ideas as possible to either help survive or create new products / services. In the words of Councillor Paul Bell who is chairing the group "nothing is ruled out". It is very early days but our Officers are collating all of the ideas and will be producing a paper shortly. The Council will then review the document and set down a program of actions. In principle we believe that the Council can act as a signpost or link centre to all known facilities to support local businesses.

In addition the Leader of the Council has created a working group entitled Zero Based Budgeting Group. I will be a part of this group. The aim is to review all of the costs of running the Council, evaluate the performance of all areas and provide a plan on how to deploy the Councils resources to the best effect for the local people

Education

I finally managed to complete the Education Paper I had been working on since December, for the Partnership Review Committee and one of our Officers will no doubt "knock it into shape and make it fit for purpose" to present to the Committee later this month. The goal is to see how we as a Council can "Help improve the level of attainment of our young people". Currently only one of our secondary schools achieves the national average standards for 5 GCSEs A*-C including Maths and English. We have to do everything we can to support the schools staff and students to improve beyond the national average.

Sywell Aerodrome

In the last Missive I mentioned that we would be meeting with the DfT to discuss when the facilities for the Joint Consultative Committee will be finally made available by the Company. We duly met with the DfT in late February, I would like to report that it was a good and productive meeting, unfortunately that was not the case and I now know why this company has managed to evade any legal action for the past 38 years. The fact is that the DfT are absolutely impotent to enforce the law. But interestingly a few days before the meeting, the Company contacted the DfT and informed them there would be no JC Committee as long as Jim Bass was involved. They were told in no uncertain terms that Sywell Aerodrome Ltd had no influence over the membership of the Committee.

We have just received a letter from DfT and whilst some think it is "constructive", I see no real lead to enforcement clearly we as the Local Authority will have to take action to enforce the law and the DfT have agreed to support us. That being the case I have asked the Leader of the Council to meet with me in the next few days to produce the necessary instructions to the Officers.

In the meantime I have arranged a meeting with Blades and hope to make progress in resolving, fairly soon, the many complaints I receive regarding noise problem.

This month there have been yet more complaints about mud on Holcot Lane as a result of the lorries leaving the Bellman Gate entrance. The Company has, under duress now installed a "wheelwasher" but it is apparently ineffectual, so much so that as the trucks leave the washing tank they immediately drive through more mud to reach the tarmac surface thus depositing mud all over the exit and the highway! We now find that landfill trucks are arriving and departing outside the specified hours. Yet another formal complaint has been lodged with NCC.

As ever if you have any queries please contact me and remember, I cannot help you if I do not know of your problem.

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ECTON BOWLS CLUB.

On March 5th Ecton played their annual home fixture against Rushden Wayfarers. For the first time Ecton won on both mats with scores of 20-15 and 27-6...a fairly comprehensive victory!

The players for Ecton were Peter and Margaret Scott, Mick and Pauline Cook and Maurice and Dorothy Creed.

It is appropriate at this time to pay tribute to Geoff Harlott who died recently. Geoff was a founder member of the Bowls Club and was a keen and loyal member. He served on the Committee for many years and when ill-health forced him to quit playing he was elected President. He will be greatly missed.