

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The earliest surviving Rate Books date from 1848. They show that the Overseers of the Poor levied a rate of 1s. in the £, the greater part of the proceeds being devoted to the relief of the poor and destitute. The Enclosure Award drawn up in 1819 by William Trumper is keyed to a large plan of Upton-cum-Chalvey. Both are preserved at the Town Hall, and give many interesting details of the parish.

Slough was constituted a Local Government district in 1863, and the twelve original members of the Slough Local Board of Health, which 31 years later became the Slough Urban District Council were: W.G. Nixey (339 votes); C. Turner (338); H.J. Luff (282); W. Bonsey (279); John Whitehouse (234); E.A. Layton (234); T.W. Harris (226); William Ford (216); John Deverill (188); George Kershaw (167); W. Clark (164); G.W. Harley (162). There were 25 unsuccessful candidates. The population of Upton-cum-Chalvey at the 1861 census was over 4,600.

The first records in connection with the raising of money for municipal services, such as highways, sewers and other necessary improvements, as distinct from Poor Rates, are dated 1864, when a rate of 9d. in the £ was levied, which yielded £527.

Slough was constituted a Civil Parish in 1894, and became an Urban District in the same year, the population of Upton-cum-Chalvey having risen to nearly 8,000.

The first enlargement of the boundaries of the Urban District of Slough took place in 1900, when the Stoke Road, as far as the Canal, Chalvey with Salt Hill, as far as Montem Mound, and part of Langley were brought within the boundaries, but 'Agar's Plough' was handed over to Eton to be developed as Playing Fields for the College. The total increase of area was 1,684 acres, and the extension also brought Baylis House within the Slough boundary.

In 1904 the Slough Urban District Council bought 'The Cedars' (the old Slough Farmhouse) in William Street, for use as Council Offices. Meetings had been held previously in Mr. Charsley's offices over Headington's shop, then No. 79 (now 137) High Street, Headington's later removed to the opposite side of Mackenzie Street (No. 77) on the site now occupied by Nos. 129 and 131, High Street. 'The Cedars' was demolished in 1938. It stood on the site of the Public Library, due to be demolished on completion of the new Library in High Street.

The Town Hall at Salt Hill (see p. 121) was opened in March, 1937, but the ever increasing population of Slough has resulted in an overflow of the staff into other buildings, and Professor Sir Basil Spence has been commissioned to prepare plans for new and more spacious Civic Offices.

The modern boundaries of Slough came into being between 1930 and 1931. The area was increased from 1,684 acres to 6,202 acres, by the inclusion of parts of the parishes of Burnham, Dorney, Farnham Royal, Horton, Langley Marish and Stoke Poges. The population increased from just over 16,000 (1921 census) to over 28,000.

In 1934, under the Bucks Review Order, 1934, further adjustments of boundaries were made to simplify administration. It dealt with narrow tongues of land from one parish jutting into another, and with 'islands' completely detached from a parish, such as Upton Wood, which had been a detached portion of Upton-cum-Chalvey for centuries.

The members of the last Slough Urban District Council (1937-38) which secured the status of incorporation for Slough were: Councillors A.J. Frenchum (Chairman), E.T. Bowyer, C.C., C.M. White, C.C., R. Taylor, C.C., Miss R. Harrison, C. Ford, J.M. Costello, F.R. Whiteman, A.G. Trevener, Mrs. F.E. Sargeant, J.H. Burnett, A.C. Millard, H.B. Brown, A.S. Dixon, A.E. Ward, W.G. Dunstall, J.E. Taylor, E.W. Lobjoit, C.F. Harvey, R.C. Abbott and E.C. Lewis.

When Slough received its Charter in September, 1938 the estimated population was over 50,000. Since the granting of the Charter, Slough has progressed by leaps and bounds, and its population at the 1971 census was 87,075.

THE FUTURE

Under the reorganization of Local Government the Borough of Slough as we know it today will cease to exist and together with parts of the Parishes of Burnham and Wexham will become The Slough District of Berkshire. It will have two additional wards, Britwell and Wexham Court, making a total of thirteen wards which will be represented by forty Councillors, as follows:-

<i>Ward</i>	<i>Number of Councillors</i>
Burnham North	4
Burnham South	3
Central North	3
Central South	2
Upton	2
Chalvey	3
Farnham North	3
Farnham South	2
Langley	9
Stoke North	2
Stoke South	2
Britwell	3
Wexham Court	2
	40

The members of the last Slough Borough Council are: Councillor R. Frankl (Mayor), Councillor D.R. Peters (Deputy Mayor), Aldermen A.J. Bloom, (Mrs.) N.B. Denman, (Mrs.) J. McK.B. Gibson, C.C., J.H.P.L. Goodman, E. Lewis, J.B. McSweeney, H.J. Newman, G.H. Odds, J. Rigby, C.C., R. Taylor, C.A., W.C. West; and Councillors A. Brand, G. Brooker, T.C. Chambers, D. Clackett, (Mrs.) E.M. Coleman, J. Connolly, W.B. Cranston, D.E. Cryer, R.F. Everett, A.G. Fisher, P.W.F. Fox, (Mrs.) M.J. Hooker, T.J.C. Hurley, M.H. Jones, (Mrs.) R. Jones, F.G. Keenan, K. Kershaw, P. Kershaw, L.J. Lawless, C.D. Merrills, C.C., (Mrs.) V.E. Merrills, (Mrs.) E.M. Morgan, R. Park, W.J. Park, G. Pell, A.W.J. Pusey, C.C., (Miss) K.A.V. Sheehy, H.G. Short, C.C., W.J.K. White, and G.W. Williams. Of these, only Alderman Robert Taylor, C.A., was also on the last Urban District Council of Slough.

Slough is on the threshold of many further changes when it joins the County of Berkshire and severs its connection with the County of Buckinghamshire, which has lasted for nearly a thousand years. The 'Slough Plan' is nearing completion, with a number of shops already open in Queensmere, and the Fulcrum Leisure Centre under construction, and the names of the Theatre and Assembly Halls have been decided. As mentioned earlier, Planet Theatre is named in recognition of the association of Sir William Herschel, the discoverer of Uranus, with Slough, and also of the exploits of modern cosmonauts. The name of Thames Hall signifies Slough's future commitment to Berkshire; and Berry Hall is named in tribute to the services to Slough of Mr. Norman T. Berry, the Town Clerk.

Set as it is midway between the Chiltern Hills and the River Thames, with such tourist attractions as Burnham Beeches, Stoke Poges, The Chalfonts, Jordans, Eton College, Windsor Castle, and innumerable interesting churches and manor-houses within easy reach, it could become once more a popular touring centre, as it was in the 19th century, before its proximity to London and Reading attracted so many industries.

As the Slough District, it will become a part of the 'new Berkshire' on 1 April, 1974. It is to be hoped the future will hold the same happy story of quiet but steady progress, which has transformed it over the centuries from a group of obscure hamlets to the most populous town in Buckinghamshire.