

Account of Purley on Thames

Bradfield Rural District Council

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Formation

Bradfield Rural District Council was formed in 1894. It was created under the Local Government Act 1894 from the Bradfield Rural Sanitary District, except for the three parishes in Oxfordshire which formed the Goring Rural District.

It continued in existence until 1974 when it merged with other districts to form a new Newbury District of Berkshire.

Members

Powers and Authority

Organisation

The Council met at their offices at 26 Bath Road in Reading (now hospital)

The 1974 Reforms

When the Redcliffe-Maud report on local government re-organisation in 1968 it postulated first that there was no advantage to be gained by having all new councils the same size or a minimal size and second that local government should be organised with a central urban area surrounded by its rural hinterland. It also proposed that County Councils should not be considered as administrative areas needed to be pragmatic for today's conditions rather than reflect situations 100 years ago.

As a result for our area the proposal was that the central urban area be Reading Borough and the surrounding hinterland made up of Wokingham RDC and town, Henley RDC and Bradfield RDC. Then in 1970 a change of government brought in the Conservatives led by Edward Heath and with Michael Heseltine, the MP for Henley as a member of cabinet. Michael was incensed that his constituency should be a satellite of Reading and together with fellow 'Grandees of the Shires' (as they became known insisted that County Councils be retained with responsibilities for Social Services, Education and Highways and a few other areas which were declared as needing a minimal size on the grounds of efficiency.

The outcome was the 1972 Local Government Act which retained County Councils and introduced District Councils with many powers overlapping. Bradfield RDC was lumped in with Newbury Borough and RDC, Hungerford Town and RDC and Henley RDC became part of South Oxfordshire which extended over the river around Didcot and with northern Berkshire hived off as the Vale and transferred to the jurisdiction of Oxfordshire CC creating what became known as 'occupied Berkshire'

It was a disaster waiting to happen.

Abolition

Bradfield RDC ceased to exist in April 1974 and the premises on Bath Road were sold off. Bernard Theobald who had been Purley's member of Bradfield RDC became our member for Newbury DC.

See the article on Newbury DC for what happened next.

