

## QUINTUPLICATION

Thanks to work on Harry Milford's latest book on farming life post war and mostly in Steeple Gidding, I have been looking back at my own memories of life in our fast-growing village of Sawtry. This is the first of many contributions that I could make, but I hope that readers of SAWTRY EYE find it of interest. Maurice Dybeck. July 2020

### A saga of 1963 – 1993: Thirty years of Growth

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# QUINTUPLICATION THIRTY YEARS OF VILLAGE GROWTH

## EARLY DAYS

In 1963 Sawtry had just 900 inhabitants. Thirty years later the population was over five thousand. We had QUINTUPLICATED in size! No other place grew at this rate and here is an account of those years by one who was in the front line and saw it all.

A national survey described this area as one that had one of the lowest per-capita incomes in the land. Yet it was far from poor in spirit. Being some ten miles from any town meant that self-reliance had always been important. If you wanted things that were not available in a village you often had to make do. And in those thirty years there was much that Sawtry achieved in response to what some might have seen as an existence in a forgotten backwater of old Huntingdon. The result was a place that became the envy of others, even 'townies'. And we still called ourselves a village, and proud of it!

Somebody in County Planning had an eye on us long ago. When I applied for a job here in 1962, I noted something interesting about the local Sewerage works just east of the A1. These are the places that have since been more politely named Water Treatment Facilities. Anyway, recently, its capacity had been increased to five thousand! So, starting at the bottom, so to speak, this told me that Sawtry would not remain a rural backwater for ever. And, thanks to those administrators who saw the place as a focus for educational development, the place was viewed as just right for a Village College..... and I got my job. Almost 40 years earlier Education Chief Henry Morris had seen that such colleges could enhance the lifestyles of villagers of all ages across the county of Cambridge. And, although at that time we were not part of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon was not unaware of what went on next door.

At the College Opening Ceremony, (by Chris Chattaway) the local Parish Council Chairman brought the house down by telling that august gathering that this was "*The greatest thing that had happened to Sawtry since they terminated the Night Soil Collection!*" (For the next 20 years I had my work cut out to live up to that expectation, but that's another story, and mostly not for here. See '*College for All*'.)

From a village point of view one of the first gains for Sawtry was a proper Youth Centre. It already had a thriving Youth Club under Jim Green, meeting in other premises. But here now was a facility just for them! It was the first purpose-built youth centre in the county and the story goes that when the County Architect was asked to design a Village College he automatically included a Youth Wing because "*that was what they had in Cambs!*" Of course, Jim's club did not use it every night and soon it was also the base for the Scouts and others. In the daytime there was a so-called Nursery School, fore-runner of Playgroups, which came later. (But I said I would hold off 'College' History....)

If you like this account there is plenty more where it came from. Next could be THE BUILDING BOOM and then a glimpse at how our local PARISH COUNCIL played a leading part in monitoring developments. Then I could recount THE SAGA OF THE DUMP and how it helped in our do it yourself improvements. And then there is the topic of FOOTPATHS, on which many people had a view. And so on..... Maurice Dybeck. (599 words)

## THE VILLAGE PLAN Being part TWO of my sixties saga: QUINTUPLICATION.

It is hard to believe today but, in 1963, almost the only post-war building had been Council Houses, and that included the Park Road 'Prefabs'. My own house-hunt was so desperate that, after sleeping on other people's sofas I nearly bought a plot to build my own. There were very few private houses going up. Some in Aversley Road and Green End near what was Lane and Westerman's shop. I was lucky to buy half a 'semi' for well under £3,000. The nearby Women's Land Army Hostel Huts had just been vacated by overflow from Sawtry Council School, as its over-elevens prepared to move into the Village College. My first office, until the College was completed, was in those huts: just a stool and a tea chest.

As for public buildings Sawtry had, in Gidding Road, the Women's Institute Hall, and the British Legion Premises, both at that time little more than huts. All Saints Church had a Hall in Church Street. And in Green End there was the Methodist Church and Hall. No Fire Station but I guess they must have had something more than that old Fire Engine Shed on the Green, now a listed building. (Or did we now rely on a Huntingdon Call-out?) We had a Police House, and a Lockup, the latter now also Listed. Three Pubs: Royal Oak, Chequers (on the Green) and The Bell. On the Great North Road, the new carriageways, passing Sawtry, had been laid out pre-war but remained just an unused concrete strip. No flyovers of course. In fact, I recall no flyovers anywhere in England North of London.

As a community we were not aware of any overall Development Plan. In fact not until 1975, two years after it was promised, was any Village Plan released from Huntingdon. Until then it seems that housing was just a matter of direct dealings between developer and field owner, adjudicated by County or District Planners. The parish might be involved when it came to street lighting or road safety concerns but usually only if alerted in time. No special planning conditions for play spaces or green areas seem to be talked about.

But how big were we due to become? Nobody seemed to know. In 1973 the Sawtry Parish Council tried to find out. They met some buck passing. The County Planning Officer reported that nothing could be done since, from next April, this would be a matter for the District Council. So, we asked: *'The (Sawtry) Council is extremely worried about the piecemeal development...and request that a Village Plan be drawn up.'* Their cautious reply was: *'This village was the only one in the area with (plans for) both major and long-term growth.'* So at last, soon after, the Village Plan was out, to put local people in the picture about what was to come. But not a word in it about becoming 5,000!

Maurice Dybeck. 498 words

## THE PARISH COUNCIL Part THREE of my saga on the road to QUINTUPLICATION

Parish Council size is governed by Parish size and, in 1963, this meant thirteen members. It stayed at that size for fifteen years despite population increases from 950 to around 3,000 I recall that elections were a rarity. As long as the usual local worthies were willing to stand each time that was, as they say, *it*. One year two Councillors were booted off for never attending neither giving apologies. But Council was in no hurry to fill the gaps. However, my wife, Fiona, was keen to get involved in parish matters and so she put up and got in because of her interest in Geography and History. She compiled some local notes which were published as a leaflet. When the first housing developments needed road names, she was able to delve into records like the 1805 Enclosure Map to come up with Middlefield Road, Westfield Road, Ermine Way, Devonshire Close and the like. And that former Council Chairman who spoke up about the Night Soil collection, got remembered..... in Newton Road! (1972) Incidentally one road name, Tort Hill was sometimes called Toft Hill on early maps. That could only be a mis-reading of old scripts. Not much literacy in those days.

Now that we had adequate sewerage, housing expansion could begin and, after Aversley Road, it was, I think, Westfield that came next. Although County and District Councils decreed on Planning matters, Sawtry Parish Council also had a right to be consulted. In the years ahead, their role became quite significant. Local knowhow is vital especially when it comes to relating housing to ancient Rights of Way and the feelings of neighbours who might be affected by changes.

Here's an interesting glimpse into Councillors' getting worried about expansion. In 1971 a certain Development Company wanted to purchase a derelict site. The property was not under a 'closing order' but was nevertheless condemned. Councillor Hall, the School Headmaster and a stickler for precision, pointed out that there was a difference between condemned and a closing order. You could develop a *condemned* property but not one with a *closing order*. The Minutes dourly record: *The discussion became very animated....*

As the village grew so did the role of our Parish Council. The limit to what they actually do is flexible. Some councils might do little beyond maintaining bus shelters and street lighting. But the way lies open for much more. They have powers to raise a Rate (Precept) which can be small or large depending on parish needs and the willingness of the people to support it. The amount is collected for them by the District.

So, in its new role as leaders in a fast-growing village, Sawtry Parish Council sat ready to take on some interesting challenges. Instead of waiting for others to provide everything, they now had the opportunity, and the strength, to ride this new growth. Read on!

Maurice Dybeck 497 words

## THE SAGA OF THE DUMP This is PART FOUR of my QUINTUPLICATION\* saga.

Historically the Parish Council owned few properties. One was the reservoir behind the 'Legion Hut'. This was opened in 1905 and was where people came to draw their water. But, when mains water was installed, mostly in years after the Second War, this reservoir became redundant and the site became the Legion's car park. Another property up Gidding Road, was known as The Dump, or Claypits. In the days before rubbish collections this was where people brought many of their larger and less degradable items. Again, as public services became established, this became less used, although there were always those who regarded it as their right to drop in their junk.

My wife, who was now Vice Chairman, recalled debates on *what to do with the dump*. If people were to be banned from using it, what should they do with their junk? (Or *large items of rubbish*, to put it politely). Being ten miles from any other 'dump', since Recycling Centres had not yet been invented, it was unreasonable to expect people, mostly sans cars, to cart stuff a long distance. So, in steps the Parish Council, with its 'Large Rubbish Collection' policy. They decreed that on a prescribed day if you left your large rubbish by the road, they would collect it. In fact, 'they' would be a local contractor (Rag and Bone man or the like) who would take the lot. And in many cases, they would do it for nothing. This was parish initiative at its best, and it still continues, somewhat modified, to this day. The only other place that I have seen a similar initiative is in Sydney, Australia. There, they go even one better: items stay out for two days and anybody can come along and help themselves. The ultimate recycle turn-around.

And what happened to The Dump? It lay waste for some years. At some stage a local youth took it on and, I think, hoped to do some 'mining' in it for goodies. (I think the original frame roof of the swimming pool ended up there.) But that stalled. Then along came a gentleman from London (who, coincidentally, I knew) and who made the Council a reasonable offer for it. With a little landscaping I guess he reckoned he could use it as a smallholding (and perhaps build on it later?). And, from the money that the Parish now gained, and without jacking up the local rates, they bought what became, off Aversley Road, the first Parish Recreation Field! So, winners all round.

\* QUINTUPLICATION? In case new readers are puzzled by the title, it was the name of a local campaign in 1988 to protest that Sawtry growth, while welcomed, was getting out of hand. The 1963 population of under a thousand was going to be QUINTUPLICATED to 5,000 by 1993! And where are you now?

Maurice Dybeck 493 words

## FOOTPATHS This is PART FIVE of my QUINTUPLICATION

Like many country places Sawtry has a network of ancient paths – routes usually determined naturally by the handiest route in the direction people wanted to go. Paths led to markets, to water supplies or to church. Often, these paths were more important than roads, which were either very muddy and rutted, or non-existent. In time, as needs changed, some paths would fall into disuse. In 1966 the '*path adjoining Belgrave Square*' became impassable. The Parish Council '*reported same*' to Huntingdon District but there is no record on whether it was cleared. However, rather than asking others to clear it, the handiest response was a volunteer Working Party to clear such overgrown paths so that our increasing population could enjoy local strolls. The mantra in Sawtry was often that if you wanted something done you set to yourselves! And it was often the hard-working Councillors themselves who rolled up their sleeves! This was how, in 1977, you got JUBILEE WALK.

With the village expansion the Parish Council got legally involved whenever new housing crossed an ancient Right of Way. Usually, the issue was straight-forward and the legalities were handled and paid for by the Developer. As councillors (and I was one) we wanted to ensure that routes remained as pleasant as possible, even within a housing estate. But what about all the other paths which straddled the village and fields? Some of them ran diagonally across cultivated fields. No problem through grassland or fallow fields. But people like the Ramblers' Association often expect us to hold on to such rights whereas here we might side with the farmers and press for a sensible field-side diversion. One councillor, who was also a farmer, had a simple solution: he just erected his *Beware of the Bull* sign! By now we had a Parish Footpaths Committee, but actually getting farm routes altered was another matter. Again, d.i.y. was best. In 1974 one farmer offered to provide a stile across one of his boundaries, and another did so later that year. Nobody really wanted to face the legal jungle of authorising diversions. In the end, after eight years of county prevarication, we settled for some jolly leaflets which encouraged our growing population to enjoy the best of what we had.

One path which, I guess, was only born in 1963, when the Village College opened, was the link between Fen Lane and Green End Road. People needed a handy route not only to schools but also the Youth Club, Tennis, Gymnastics, Playgroups, the Agricultural Centre and the Library. What started as a handy way through soon became a route of choice and, to my knowledge, has remained so ever since. I don't think it was ever 'designated' as the legal boys say but, as it remained unchallenged for over 20 years, I think that was enough to give it status. That's the way most of our paths originated, anyway.

Maurice Dybeck 496 words

## BEATING THE BOUNDS being Part SIX of my QUINTUPLICATION saga

It was once an ancient custom for parishes annually to walk their legal boundaries. Although there is no record of this happening in Sawtry, we newcomers did just this for a number of years. Nowadays parish boundaries mean little to anyone except the adjoining owners, the map-makers ...and Rating Assessors. But it was felt it would be a good way to help people become aware of the lovely land they were living in. Not all these boundaries are Rights of Way but, thanks to the cooperation of landowners, we were allowed to walk the route and do it as a sponsored charity walk. In the 1970s such larks were just coming into vogue. Lots turned up, and even the local volunteer St John Ambulance were willing to back it.

Being a large parish the perimeter is extensive; 13 miles and quite a challenge. Starting from North East of the village in what was once a bend in the Great North Road but now a quiet layby, our long line of people set off North West across a dyke. Thanks to the current excavations of the Sawtry Internal Drainage Board this meant walking a narrow plank. Then along field edges to cross the Sawtry-Glatton road. Then, going West beside a wood (Sawtry Gorse) on to higher ground reaching the ancient Bullock Road. This was the route for animals from the North being driven South maybe all the way to London. Much of it is just a track but originally it was wider and much of it hedged. From here the walk was a long straight journey South with splendid views East across to the Fens.

As we travelled we passed many fields but, before the 1805 Enclosure Act, there would have been just a few vast areas on which the annual crop rotations were based. Each field was divided into strips (look for the furrows) allocated for each person in the parish to cultivate. The first one, which we passed was the Far Field (hence Farfield Close) and then Middle Field. As we joined the Gidding Road for a short distance we passed above Wood Field, which extended as far as Aversley Wood, about which more later. As we turned East we bounded St Judith's Field since this area used to be St Judith Parish but now part of Sawtry. So, long ago, there were two churches in Sawtry. To our left is marked, on maps: *Manorial Earthworks* but sadly these are now ploughed over. But thanks to local vigilance there was a 1979 rescue dig by Sawtry people before it was too late.

This Bounds walk now heads down towards the Great North Road. At one time there was talk of a footbridge across but just imagine that today! So here we pause, not on our walk (we *did* get across!) but until a continuation in Part seven.

Maurice Dybeck. 492 words.

## **MORE BOUNDS BEATING** being Part SEVEN of QUINTUPLICATION

Last time we beat just over half the parish which was to be a 13 mile walk in all. Once over the A1 (not a Motorway in those days and cross-able with care) the route took us along fields up Stangate Hill to Monks Wood, the National Nature Conservancy Reserve and Research Station. We could, I suppose, proudly look upon these as our most academic neighbours. Their Director, Dr Mellanby, more than once visited the College to give talks. The route then reached the main line railway which, since 1850, has barred walkers from a sliver of Sawtry parish which lies to the East. So, we skirted its large embankment, walking North for about two miles passing the remains of Sawtry Cistercian Abbey on the left. Much of that stone must have ended up in local dwellings, and I know I had my share. The walk continued with a long trudge beside a fen drain showing the weary walkers that very rich peat farmland which is so different to the land we started in. Then, the Bounds do a dog leg round what was once the mediaeval Great Meadow, probably our ancestors' first attempt at draining these lower acres. Then on, nipping carefully across the A1 again, and back to the start point.

For those with interest in this route (though please do not try it all these days!) I have produced a rough 15-minute picture montage DVD of our exploits and it now rests with the Sawtry Historical Society. Similarly, one about the following walk in Aversley Wood:

## **THE WOODLAND TRUST**

We are very lucky to have Aversley Wood (once private) available as a local amenity. This was because the Woodland Trust purchased it in 1984 to preserve what is a valuable natural site with rare trees (Service Trees) and butterflies and many bluebells. They say the wood grew after the last Ice Age and the ground has never been farmed. The Parish Council welcomed their action and it, and local landowners, the YFC and many volunteers have helped to maintain it properly. There are many walks (rides) within the wood and at the top end there is an Armed Pond. No, there are no guns up there but *armed* means that this is a small pond with many branches or arms. It was designed so that a great many animals could drink from it at the same time. Animals? Well, this pond is at the very top of the wood and adjoins the ancient Bullock Road along which animals passed on their way to the big markets of the South. This was such a successful purchase that later, the Woodland Trust also bought the nearby Archers Wood, also in our parish and that became open as a public amenity.

Maurice Dybeck 474 words



## RECREATION being Part EIGHT of QUINTUPLICATION

QUINTUPLICATION covers the years between 1963 and 1993 when the population of Sawtry quintuplicated from under a thousand to over five thousand. Many fields disappeared – places where the residents could wander and relax and kick around. The village football field was, like all fields, part of a farm but use of it was, I guess, sometimes shared with the cow pats. Though some woods were marked PRIVATE, I guess they came in useful for poaching. And roads, such as they were, must have been regular playgrounds. Cycling probably never caught on particularly when the A1 became a no-go area. At the Village College, the authorities gave us a bike shed but, with all non-Sawtry pupils living over three miles away (and coming by bus) they were only used for canoes. With increasing youngsters football took off with plenty of out of hours unofficial use tolerated. In fact I recall that, to ease the pressure, the schools asked the Parish Council to provide a ‘*practice goal*’ – where small groups could kick around without mashing up the main pitches.

As the village grew developers sometimes provided recreation spaces. But kids know best. I recall one large plain brick wall that, to the ire of the resident, became the youngsters’ selected target. Then it was d-i-y in one field corner.... for an *Adventure Playground*.

One sport that started in 1963 was Judo. The College welcomed them and gave space for their mats. This helped many lads (including mine) and it thrives to this day. The other local recreation that could benefit from the College playground: Tennis; the village’s first-ever hard courts.

If keeping caged birds is a recreation I must mention this one. In 1974 Andrew Swales founded a Cage Bird Society and later went on to do great things with living creatures, starting what became Hamerton Wild Life Centre!

Culturally we should note that staff member Peter Davies founded the Choral Society (1982) and it was Deputy Warden Peter Jones who started Winemakers.

As the Village College grew there was always a need for adequate sports fields. There was a constant battle with the Developers, and the County who had to stick to their space allocations. At one time we were able to compromise and get extra space thanks to local financial input. Hence what became the Dual-Use Field, providing for both school and village. Some of it got swallowed up by housing and expansion, but one joint enterprise survived: the Bowling Green. I was always rather proud of the fact that whereas, in a nearby town, a Bowling Green got swallowed up for housing. Here, in Sawtry, we could give birth to a new one!

Lastly, but this comes at the end of our QUINTUPLICATION, is the acquisition by the Parish Council of those wonderful acres across the A1. But this could never have happened until we had that 1987 safe crossing over the A1. So, growth has its benefits!

Maurice Dybeck 499 words

## CELEBRATIONS being Part NINE of QUINTUPLICATION

There is one annual celebration that pre-dates 1963 by a long way – SAWTRY FEAST, which takes place every summer. Until 1965 the week included a Fun Fair on the Green. The Church Parade featured a band, village institutions, and of course the Oddfellows with their magnificent banner. The largest and most continuing event was Feast Supper. This showed local welfare at its best and everybody, but everybody, over a certain age was invited to this free slap-up supper. As the village (and the number of older people) grew the venue became the Village College, with pupils assisting serving. On the evening all would be brought in by car. Then there was the entertaining. All the money for Feast Supper was raised by its committee with events through the year.

In 1971, St Mary's Church held Sawtry Harvest Weekend, or *SaHaWe* for short. It was a fund-raiser but it brought together no end of historical artefacts at the College. This event, and the **Old Sawtry** Exhibition of 1973, were eye-openers to the many new people. We had the large Board of Charges that once stood at Toll Bar, a very long wooden baker's paddle and ironwork galore from farms. One item was the 1805 Enclosure Map, about a metre square and detailing all that happened to everybody's land at that traumatic time. I guess much of this then became archived with the formation of our Historical Society

At the Village College, through its Community Association, we started the SAWTRY SHOW in 1972. Dick Tuplin will correct me that it was more of a FAIR than a Show since we did not (as later) bring in the competition classes, which have since become so popular. Sawtry Show always had a parade and a procession through the village, and Organisations competed for the best float. In 1987 the Parish Council's own float won with a huge model of the impending Flyover complete with model cars going over the top. (Snappy caption: *'Soon be Over'*.)

In the 1960s, nationally, everybody let off their own fireworks and this hazard was becoming a worry. The Rev Mr Lancaster from Kimbolton had a firework business for festival use. (*The journalists loved this link with his Calling!*) So, in 1971, the College bought a bulk supply and so began our annual FOLK AND FIREWORKS. The draw was to be a fun folk dance in the hall for kiddies (under *The Occasional Few*; a local group). Then a Guy competition, with the victims offered to the bonfire. One year I recall also seeing redundant (pre-fibreglass) canvas canoes of our Canoe Club going up in flames! Twenty minutes of whizz and bang and then in again for more dancing. It was a huge success and kept everybody safe. Since then, everybody does events this way and all credit to them. This celebratory event made a lot of money for the PTAs of both Primary and Secondary schools.

Maurice Dybeck 496 words

## **AGRICULTURAL CENTRE** being Part TEN of QUINTUPLICATION

It was always known as the AG CENTRE and its presence in Sawtry indicated the importance of that activity. Between 1964 and 1993 (the years of population QUINTUPLICATION) were exactly the years that saw its birth, life and end. Thankfully, much of its premises remain standing and are again useful.

Farming was, in 1963, still an important local source of employment and the County Council provided skills training. Sometimes this happened in the evenings in the (Council) School with Headmaster Bill Hall keeping a friendly eye on *Account Keeping* or *Farm Safety*. Classes such as *Farm Welding* would be at the farms themselves.

The Ag Centre itself opened as a parallel development to the Village College. Although independent, classes were jointly promoted and, in daytime, older school pupils could benefit from their courses, particularly if they were intending to work in farming. Now, with its own base, farm training could greatly expand particularly with tractors and machinery. (As an aside, I was always intrigued to note the oh-so-appropriate names of the staff: Messrs Lawn, Barter, Grocock and Frost.)

In 1966 the Centre expanded to take in Rural Domestic Economy in an adjoining Mobile Classroom called the Homecraft Centre and run by specialist teacher Mrs Robinson. This became a thriving place, both in daytime and evenings.

With the decline in agriculture as a large employer the Centre became uneconomic and closed. With it went the Homecraft Centre but, fortunately for Sawtry, not their Mobile classroom. 1983 was a time of serious national unemployment and, thanks to a grant from the Cambridgeshire Community Council, the College Community Association set up a Printshop therein for unemployed youngsters. This provided a valuable service for local groups. Although this did not outlive the Recession the place became the foundation for another caring local enterprise, our Care and Resource Centre.

CARESCO had at that time been starting up in venues within the Village College and elsewhere. But, in 1986, it was only too glad now to move into this Mobile, at first sharing it with the Print Shop. Their work in the Centre used volunteers running a weekly Lunch Club, and a Nearly New Clothing shop. Also a drop-in advice centre, taken over from the former Homecraft Centre's work. When the Printshop, as a Job Scheme, closed, CARESCO took it over, learning the ropes and involving volunteers of all ages doing the collating. So this printer became the birthplace of SAWTRY EYE. (The booklet THE STORY OF CARESCO, covering their years from foundation in 1982 and up to 1998, is available from the present CARESCO office.)

Now, what about the AG CENTRE building itself? The County threatened demolition and selling the site, but the Parish Council were keen to retain it for Youth work and promoting the building of much needed low cost or sheltered housing. But the county dithered and for a while it remained empty. Now, I understand, it's back in full use.

Maurice Dybeck 500 words

## IN THE SWIM being Part 11 of QUINTUPLICATION

In those years 1963 to 1968, when Sawtry grew five times in size, the story of our swimming pool lies parallel to this growth. Like so many Sawtry projects this was very much a village enterprise.

I put *schools* in plural because it all began in the vision of Bill Hall, Head of the all-age Council School. He it was who put in for a small 'Purley' pool to go inside one of his classrooms. Come the Village College, and its equal enthusiasm and, Bingo, we got together to see if *one plus one* could make a very big TWO. We both thought it best to go for an indoor facility so that swimming and water safety could take place all year round.

At that time neither Peterborough or Huntingdon had an indoor pool and neither, of course, did any school. The County Education Dept were keen to help fund the pool itself but, beyond that, we were on our own. Sawtry was farming country and so constructing a barn over it was no problem. Just the job for the Young Farmers Club and some resourceful adults. Money? Soon the parents of both schools formed a Fund-raising committee and a WORKS committee. The latter came at weekends and holidays in old clothes to piece it all together. As a project manager/designer I had an Oundle staff connection who kept us all on track. So, by 1965, we had built our pool!

It wasn't just the school that used it: Sawtry soon formed its own Swimming Pool committee who organised a regular programme for open or Club use. What diligent workers they were! Response was tremendous and swimming soon became one of the chief recreations for many local youngsters. In fact, as some parents put it: '*We no longer needed to go to the seaside in the summer!*' Lifesavers? Always present and school-trained.

Development didn't stop with the first build. Our basic shed (big enough for both the learner pool and the big one, with its deep end, good enough for diving) needed boxing in. So, thanks to the school Craft Department and the lads from a local Borstal, (who came to swim) it was walled in and toilets and changing rooms were added. For winter warmth, a Sawtry engineer, whose wife ran Dressmaking evening classes, installed, in 1966, a huge loop, tapping the school boilers! Then, a 1978 local 'first', we added solar panels!

As pioneers we had a few teething problems. You learned that if something needed adding or repairing or re-painting you just got on with it rather than pleading to the authorities. Nevertheless, it was those Councils that, in the end, kept us going. Set against all the enormous benefits, both educational and social, it was worth all the pain. But ultimately it needed the 'big boys' to take over. (For the full story read *College for All* and the booklet: *We Built Our Pool*)

Maurice Dybeck 500 words

## COMMUNICATION being Part 12 of QUINTUPLICATION

With that five-fold population growth (1963-1993) newcomers needed to know what was going on. Many must have come from towns and we did not want them to feel that Sawtry was *the back of beyond!*

The newly-opened Village College was a hub for much community activity and we *lubricated* this hub by issuing EVENTSHEET from 1971 five times a year to all comers and for anyone who ran events around the area. We have to thank George Chaney (the College Community Tutor) for banding people together for mutual support in the 1969 Community Association. Over 50 organisations became involved and had a voice in affairs.

In 1975 the Parish Council brought out the PARISH DIRECTORY, for every household, listing local organisations and telling people where to get help and support. The Directory included our very first street map which, with continuing growth, soon needed extra roads drawn in. Interest grew and others, particularly advertisers, wanted a look-in. So, there were regular updates. Then, the Parish Church produced a WELCOME PACK to be dropped into newcomers' homes.

*Village Voice* was a 1975 trial at a regular village magazine. Then a firm start was made when the Community Printshop opened, issuing SAWTRY EYE. This began as a Job Creation Project in the former Homecraft Building at the County Agricultural Centre. When that Project folded, thanks to a national employment revival, Sawtry volunteers, under CARESCO, took over. Distribution to all homes was undertaken by various groups including the Scouts. (No internet in those days)

As any newspaper shows us COMMUNICATION needs to be two ways. People need a say in things. In Fenland, drainage is always a challenge and in Sawtry, perched on a hillside, rapid runoff from rain could be a serious worry. New villagers soon found this out, and they had a champion in George Chaney. Between retiring from the College and becoming Parish Council Chairman, he spoke up strongly for public participation, particularly on this, his favourite subject. His mantra: '*The Creative use of Conflict*' enraged many. But it got things done.

A growing village has to meet many needs besides adequate housing, and people are right to point out those needs. The Parish Council sought to establish strong links around which people could voice their concerns. They produced ANNUAL REPORTS, from 1977, long before these became commonplace elsewhere, so that people could know what the Council was doing. Each committee (Planning, Allotments, Rural Amenities, Church & State, Feast, Health, Directory, and Major Emergency) gave account of itself as did the District and County representatives. Our local M.P. John Major, a regular and supportive visitor, also contributed a page each year. And all were welcomed to the Annual Meeting to ask questions and participate.

And, when issues got pressing, like the need for sports fields or a slow-down on housing, there would be a well-attended Public Meeting!

So, it was not only drainage that brought us together!

Maurice Dybeck 497 words

## DIVERSIFICATION being Part 13 of QUINTUPLICATION

In early days there were plenty of pubs. Over seven I'm told. But, by 1963, it was down to three. The Chequers on the Green was real old style: just a dark room and you sat round on benches. It was next door to Sigger's stores, equally old style, and Trevor Garratt's petrol pumps. (Five bob a gallon.) To reach the Royal Oak you had to walk across the North Road. With the village growth, both these pubs went, but then, thanks to local enterprise, Greystones, the house became Greystones, the pub.

Pubs may have been declining but village expansion saw growth in a wide range of facilities. As noted in earlier articles Youth had thriving clubs. Scouts (1968) grew and flourished, as did Cubs, Guides and Brownies. There was a branch of Army Cadets (1975) and the A.T.C.. Football teams expanded and there was a lively Tennis Club. Soon, the Nursery School (1967) was joined by a Play Group (1973), housed in the redundant telephone exchange. All this at a time when we were still only about two thousand people. So, newcomers did not need to think of Sawtry as the '*Back of Beyond*'!

From 1965 there was an indoor swimming pool, open to all. By 1980, inter agency co-operation enabled the development of a Dual-Use Sports Field, and a Bowling Green. Thanks to the Parish Council, there was St Judith's recreation field, allotments, play areas for different ages, and a network of footpaths. Less well known was their Major Emergency Committee. In this time of '*Cold War*' they quietly trained up, ready for the worst. (*Cruise Missiles at Molesworth?*) Later, this team work was kept on so as to be alert for serious flooding or any major trouble on the A1. John Major commended us for this wise move, setting a national example. Beating our swords into ploughshares, so to speak.

Councils don't have to limit themselves to street lighting and bus shelters. Ours formed a *Church and State* Committee to organise festivities like Feast Parade and Carols on the Green and the development of a new Burial Ground. Then there was a *Health and Welfare* Committee that supported the Doctors and campaigned for good facilities including '*Hospital at Home*' (1980, 40 years ahead of its time?) Then, while the village steadily QUINTUPLICATED, the Council purchased the Old School Hall to become another busy centre for activity. Towards the end of this 30 years (1963-1993) they developed its outdoor partner: the massive (across the A1) Sports Field, Pavilion and Lake, all being very much the product of local labour and initiative.

So, how DIVERSE can you get?

Maurice Dybeck 447 words

## **UNDER YOUR FEET** being Part 14 of QUINTUPLICATION

In the years in Question, 1963 to 1993, when the village quintuplicated, land was forever being dug up and sometimes this revealed interesting history. In 1977, Harry Milford wrote the following for our Parish Directory:

'It is known that an ancient tribe called Hirstina, who liked to live in wooded districts, inhabited the Woodwalton and Upwood area. Sawtry had a Romano-British settlement South East of Tort Hill and the area is full of the possibility of interesting finds.

Some old maps show a roadway running across fields where is now Newton Road and Manor Drive. It was exposed about two feet below the present ground. After a lot of searching and digging I found several different types of pottery and half of a polished slate axe-head of the Neolithic Period, about six or seven thousand years ago. It would be nice to think that this was dropped by a Sawtry Neolithic man and not carted there with stones brought for that road.

Under the soil I also found, 2 ½ feet down, a large pot jar. Inside it were some bits of bone, shells and two flint tools. A pot like this, found in Castor, is known to be of Roman origin. The only coin I found here was an Elizabeth I sixpence. These coins were used by shepherd boys as engagement rings since they were so thin they could be wrapped round a girl's finger

At the side of a pond at the East end of the field I found many clay pipes, stems and bowls. This was a rubbish dump belonging to a 17<sup>th</sup> Century dwelling whose foundation and cobbled yard I traced close by.

While the foundations for the Infants School were being dug I had a look round. I found some glass pottery and some rusty metal but nothing of any worth. Down in the newer part of Louth Way I found an old button of the type that was used on Red Coat Soldiers' tunics.

Before the Chequers pub (on the Green) closed, and much to the amusement of the customers and passers-by, I dug that garden from end to end. I found two coins. One was a lead cast Greek token, at one time coated with silver. On the obverse was the Goddess Diana with her hounds, and the reverse had two men shooting snakes with bows and arrows. The other coin was a Roman tetradacma, minted in Alexandria for use in Egypt 283-5 A.D.

And in my own garden I have dug up some green and brown glazed pottery which is 12<sup>th</sup> Century. There are many other interesting finds by others and these are (or were) on show.'

Maurice Dybeck 457 words.

## PUTTING ON THE BRAKES being Part FIFTEEN of QUINTUPLICATION

In 1986 there was issued, for all to see, the CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY STRUCTURE PLAN. In response, the parish was invited to comment on the kind of village (yes, village) that they wanted in the coming years. Sawtry was being described by many people as *just one vast building site!* New roads were added to the map every year and there seemed to be no end to this expansion. Developers would seek to get as many houses as possible on to their sites. Roads both within the village and on the A1 were congested. We had done our best to try and keep up with all the supporting facilities that should follow new housing but many felt that it was all becoming too much. Schools were bursting out and, in 1977, the three schools had many mobile overflow classrooms. And, when the field that had been reserved for an expanding Junior School was sold off *for housing* people got worried. At the recreation level the local football club, with ten teams and only one proper pitch of its own, were pleading for help. Owners were reluctant to sell unless housing was part of the deal. There was very little sheltered housing for the elderly. An expected Health Centre never appeared. We had a modest industrial estate but it was only partly developed, and 92% of working people commuted elsewhere. Traffic on and off the A1 was a headache and drainage of low-lying land became an increasing problem.

Quite simply that SAWTRY had grown far, far faster than anywhere else! Over these years while other places might grow twice as big, Sawtry's growth has been FIVE TIMES! And now the County wanted us to grow even more. So, in 1987, the Parish Council responded with a campaign called QUINTUPLICATION IS ENOUGH!!! Here's how much the village had grown:

Up to 1971: 626 houses. Up to 1976: 969 houses. Up to 1981: 1211 houses. Up to 1986: 1704 houses  
And now, on top of these, another 300 – 420 houses were proposed. (This would look best as a diagram)

Thus the 1963 population of 1000 was now approaching 5,000! And in 1988 the Council opened up debates around a paper entitled WHAT SORT OF SAWTRY? and held some well supported public meetings.

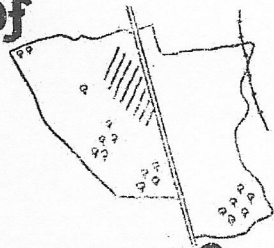
The outcome? It is good to note that the authorities did listen to our concerns and there was, in the coming years, a levelling off in growth. Had it all been worth it? That is for the present inhabitants to say. Personally, I am no longer a VILLAGER! I now live in a TOWN... of two thousand!

Maurice Dybeck 450 words plus diags



# What Sort

# Of

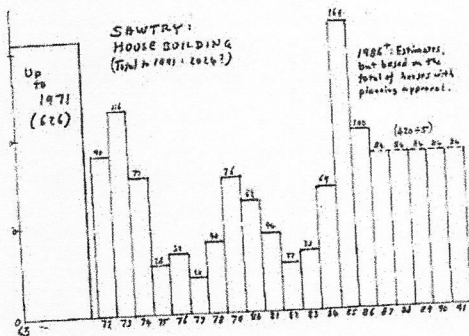


# SAWTRY ?

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

THE LOCAL VIEW

1982-1983



## QUINTUPLICATION IS ENOUGH

Sawtry has expanded almost FIVE TIMES in 25 years. Our population growth-rate has been far greater than anyone else's (Newborough and Huntington are only twice their former size).

Our growth has been largely unplanned. And, although we have done great things to "look after ourselves", WE NEED A BREAK.

The Village Plan (1970) promised us a whole range of facilities to go with a village of 5,000. We still await many of these facilities.

The Structure Plan (1980) confirmed that we were a RURAL VILLAGE. But we still await essentials like: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT, a BANK, ADEQUATE DRAINAGE, SUFFICIENT RECREATION SPACE, SCHOOL PLACES and SHELTERED HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.

The New Structure Plan (1982) proposes FURTHER GROWTH to OVER SIX THOUSAND! It is our view that, once the present (300) houses are complete, there should be a period of NO GROWTH to allow facilities to catch up.

YES, SAWTRY WILL TAKE ITS SHARE  
BUT SAWTRY HAS ALREADY HAD ITS SHARE THANKYOU  
QUINTUPLICATION IS ENOUGH.

Published by your Local Councillors.

## 16 Appendix (1)

### LANDMARKS IN THE QUINTUPLICATION YEARS 1963 – 1993

- 1963 Village population under 1,000. Opening of Sawtry Village College
- 1964 Opening of County Agricultural Centre
- 1965 Two indoor Swimming Pools open
- 1966 Homecraft Centre opens
- 1967 Nursery School in Youth Centre
- 1968 Summer floods. (Canoeing down Tinkers Lane) Scouts started.
- 1969 Community Association formed. '*Adventure Playground*' (in school field corner)
- 1970 Start of transition to Comprehensive Education
- 1971 Sawtry Infant School opens. EVENTSHEET published 5 times a year. Fire Station built?
- 1972 First Sawtry Show. 1200 attended.
- 1973 Sawtry History Society. Children's Play Area opposite old school. Playgroup starts in old telephone exchange.
- 1974 Playground floodlit for Youth Clubs. First Carols on the Green. d.i.y. Pool changing rooms.
- 1975 1st Parish Directory. Army Cadets. SVC fully Comprehensive to age 16. Dual-Use Field.
- 1976 VILLAGE PLAN published. Ladies Hockey Club. Archaeological Society. Bowling Green.
- 1977 Silver Jubilee. Seven classes in (overflow) mobiles. Mellors Court sheltered housing.
- 1978 Joint Library opens. 10,000 books. Population 3,000. Motor Cycle Club.
- 1979 Woodland Trust purchase Aversley Wood. First '*Beat the Bounds*' walk. No Health Centre but Drs go it alone. Industrial site 'At last'. Summer Playscheme. Rescue Dig at St Judith Manor Site.
- 1980 Village College capacity 750. 1000+ involved in Youth work. 60 Allotments on Judith's fields. Swim Pool refurbishment by District Council.
- 1981 Restoration of St Andrew's Church site. Sports Hall opens. Closure of Homecraft Centre. Second Play Group ('*Sunshine*')
- 1982 Sawtry Junior School moves to new premises. Choral Society formed. CARESCO begins.
- 1983 Parish Council buys old Junior School. Print Training Workshop. Pool: Swimming Club makes many d.i.y. improvements.

- 1984 Summer Playscheme includes Disabled. Industrial Estate: (only) 10 businesses.  
Locally: 9 garages/services. Population 4,500
- 1985 End of stubble burning. Village Sign. Health/Welfare Committee set up.
- 1986 EEC 'Butter Mountain' distributed.
- 1987 Structure Plan presented. FLYOVER on A1. Old School Hall purchased by Parish Council.
- 1988 QUINTUPLICATION IS ENOUGH! Campaign
- 1989 WHAT SORT OF SAWTRY? Meetings. Start of a Village Newsletter: SAWTRY EYE.
- 1990 Sports Field Development. New Cemetery?  
Structure Plan Outcome: *'We are spared further development during the remainder of this century'* (DC Joyce Day)
- 1991 Sawtry EYE, every two months, edited by Hazel Cooper, Parish Clerk.
- 1992 Opening of Pavilion & Playing Fields. Named GREENFIELDS thanks to work by Cclr Green  
Dick Tuplin becomes Parish Council Chairman
- 1993ff A1 upgraded to MOTORWAY

384 words So, room for more.

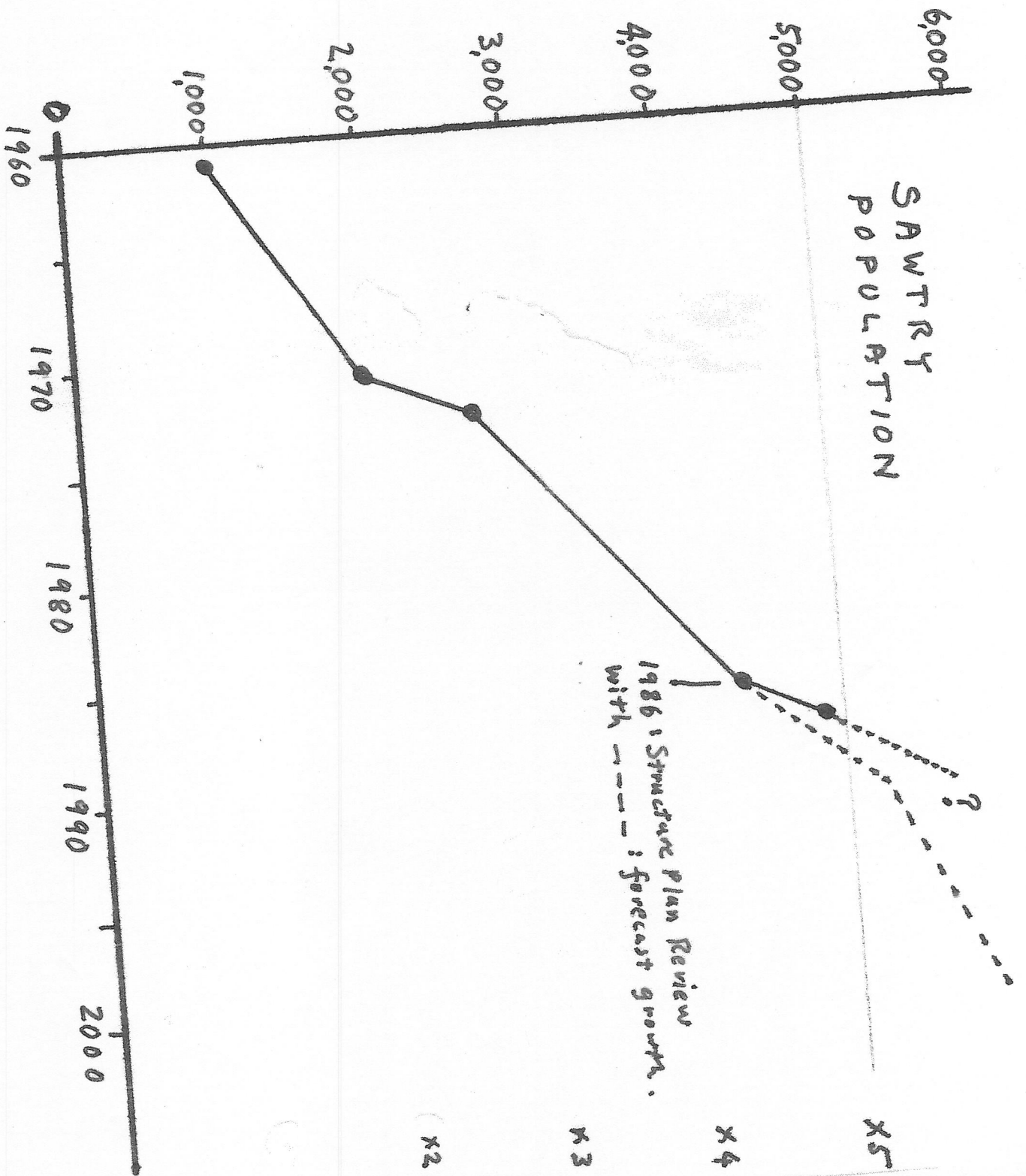
## 17 Appendix (2)

### Snippets from published Sawtry Parish Council Minutes 1963 - 1993

- Dec 1971 Road Mud. The Police were keeping an eye on this.
- May 1972 Drainage Board: Include £200 for *slubbing out Black Horse Drain*
- Dec 1972 Sawtry Fire Service asking for recruits. (For new Fire Stn?)
- March 1973 Children's Corner needs a fence. 3 mtgs later along comes an assessor. He reports:  
*"Something must be done"*
- Plant-a-tree year. Chairman suggested that the Council should buy a typewriter.
- August 1973 Legal ruling that *all* of the Green belongs to the Parish Council
- Dec 1973 Mrs B. tripped over a stop cock
- May 1974 Police stopped ball games on grass area, Deer Park Rd
- Dec 1974 Carols on the Green (Annually). Splendid community teamwork: Mrs North gave tree, Farcet Salvation Army played, Vill.Coll available if wet. Collection for SA and Feast Supper.
- April 1975 Council unlikely to allow footbridge over A1
- Nov 1975 Young Farmers to build footbridge by Aversley Wood.
- Jan 1976 Attention of PC Smith will be drawn to *the hazards presented by geese on the A1*
- March 1976 Parish Hall Survey. 1200 issued, 66 returned, 46 in favour, 20 against
- May 1976 On Drainage, *'protracted discussion and concern...'*
- Sept 1976 A1 Signs: *'Mr Dybeck noted that the lettering for Sawtry was smaller than all other villages including Denton'*
- Oct 1976 Village Plan: Recreation space: 2 designated sites owners refused offer to purchase
- Nov 1976 Jubilee: Some bunting & flags will be provided. Mr Marshall pointed to possibility of economising by using coloured fertiliser bags.
- Oct 1979 Mr Milford reports on excavations at Sawtry Judith Manor.
- Rubbish: Mrs Custance reported on the episode of the dead pig: *which had, at last, been suitably interred in a ditch by St Andrew's churchyard....*  
Mr Duncan to give the Christmas tree. Different donors every year.
- Sept 1980 NUCLEAR Emergency Plan – (Siting of Cruise Missiles at Molesworth ?)
- Oct 1980 Amenities. An old well uncovered by Huntings. Mr H. diverts wall to preserve it.

- April 1981 Church & State: Mr Milford offers to restore St Andrew's Churchyard as an amenity.
- Oct 1981 Official (RE) opening of (Re-roofed) Swimming Pool. Mr  
Wick's History of Sawtry. (Where is it now?)
- May 1983 The Clerk to look into powers to ban smoking at PC Mtgs
- April 1984 Annual Report: *"21 years since I was elected. Then: just 4 meetings a year. Last year I attended almost forty"* Harold Parker, Chairman.  
  
'Control of Nuclear Emergency Siren is In police hands'
- Sept 1984 Purchase of Computer: *'Not clear what use Council would be likely to make...'*
- Jan 1985 Rural Amenities. Some of the smallest trees are in the way of the toboggan run.  
Mr Tuplin will try & remove them.
- June 1985 CARESCO gets £500 from *Children in Need*
- July 1985 Sewage Pumping station *'Now on Full capacity'* (Built 1963, for pop 5,000)
- Dec 1990 *'Possibility of skips for cans, paper & plastics'* (Scouts already collecting paper & cans for years)

Maurice Dybeck 499 words



**QUINTUPLICATION IS ENOUGH**