Wythenshawe Central Library: an exercise in community development

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Wythenshawe Central Library: an exercise in community development

by

Michael Walter Moss, F.L.A.

A Master's Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts of the Loughborough University of Technology
October 1976.

Supervisor: K.A. Stockham, F.L.A.
Department of Library Studies

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Statement of responsibility

I certify that I alone am responsible for the work here submitted which with the exception of source material acknowledged in the table of references is all original research.
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Chapter One

History of the Wythenshawe Project

Wythenshawe, that part of Manchester south of the river Mersey was until 1930 in the county of Cheshire. For centuries Wythenshawe was in the possession of the Tatton Family. The Tattons, a branch of the De Masci or Massey Family who came to Cheshire as supporters of William the Conqueror, were known to be Lords of Wythenshawe in 1370, and were to remain so for five hundred years.

The history of Wythenshawe under the Tattons was one of a purely agricultural community administered by a family who through accident or design confined themselves to affairs of the locality. Apart from one episode, during the Civil War, when Wythenshawe Hall, the Tatton family seat, was besieged by Parliamentary forces, the Tattons never concerned themselves with national affairs.

The influence of the Tattons was such that until well into the present century a complete locality was preserved essentially unchanged throughout five centuries, on the door-step of one of the largest and most highly developed conurbations in Great Britain.

At the close of the First World War, the phrase "homes fit for heroes" typified both Government attitude and the needs of the large urban areas. Within one month of the Armistice local authorities were being urged to construct new houses. (1) Manchester's priorities were urban renewal and expansion. The industrial revolution had transformed Manchester from a small town to a great centre of population. A century later it was faced with a massive problem of slum clearance and with an inability to provide accommodation within the city.
for its massive population. It was estimated that the city would require 27,000 homes in the first four post war years. (2)

The eastern and western borders of the City provided no opportunity for expansion since they were already built up. To the north the land was bleak, hilly and consequently difficult to develop. It was therefore to the south, in Cheshire that the possibilities lay. The City Surveyor reported on the Tatton estate "The estate generally is admirably suited for building development and undoubtedly ranks as one of the finest sites within the county of Cheshire. It is beautifully wooded, and lies in a unique position on the southerly border of the city. If laid out on sound and broad town planning lines it would form one of the finest garden cities in the United Kingdom, affording a residential district for the working classes of Manchester sufficiently removed from the smoky atmosphere of a large industrial centre." (3) An independent report by Professor Abercrombie, endorsed this view. (4) It was pointed out that building land at the city centre would cost £400 per acre as opposed to £80 per acre at agricultural prices in Wythenshawe.

The city accordingly resolved to purchase the Tatton estate of 2,500 acres. (5) The owner of the estate, T.B. Tatton, reflecting perhaps an age old apathy between town and county, declined to sell. It was not until his death in 1926 that the purchase was completed. (6) The delay was to prove crucial.

In order to consider development plans the Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee was set up. (7) In its aims of a comprehensive development, the Corporation gained considerable advantages in the purchase of a complete estate. Most important they acquired landlord's rights over an undeveloped area. It has been pointed out that a local authority has power to do only that
which is specified by statute whereas a landlord may do anything not forbidden by statute.

Manchester was not, in fact, the local authority for Wythenshawe. Plans for preliminary development and drainage schemes needed submission to Bucklow Rural District Council. Proposals for the necessary roadworks needed the approval of the Cheshire County Council. The local authorities, with no immediate prospect of recouping the costs through the rates, were in no position to comply. The City Council resolved to seek Parliamentary sanction for the amalgamation of Wythenshawe with the City. (8) The application, opposed by the Cheshire County Council which had fought off similar proposals concerning Birkenhead and Wallasey, failed. An alternative scheme proposed by the County Council proved incompatible with the City's aims and three years later a further application was made. A revised estimate by the City that by 1936 it would require 37,528 houses at a cost of five million pounds (9) finally tipped the balance, and Wythenshawe was incorporated. (10)

Opposition to the Wythenshawe enterprise had come not only from the county interest. A Conservative faction in the City had viewed, with considerable misgiving, this massive extension of Corporation activity in the housing field. It was largely due to the political acumen of three individuals that this opposition was overcome.

W.T. Jackson was the first chairman of the Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee and was well known for his interest in town planning. B.D. Simon was chairman of the City Housing Committee and was to become one of Manchester's Members of Parliament. Shena Simon, his wife was an inaugural member of the Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee and was to become its
chairman. The Simons had made both an act of faith and a shrewd political move when in 1926 they presented Wythenshawe Hall and Park to the City of Manchester. What motivated these three was a commitment to the socialistic ideals of William Morris, John Ruskin and Ebenezer Howard.

Barry Parker, the town planner, had by his work at Letchworth and the Hampstead Garden Suburb demonstrated his affinity with the ideas of Jackson and the Simons, and was accordingly entrusted with the Wythenshawe project which was to concern him for the remainder of his life.

An indirect and often unacknowledged influence on the work of Barry Parker was Sir Tudor Walters. A parliamentary commission was appointed in June 1917 under the chairmanship of Walters to investigate "the questions of building construction in connection with the provision of dwellings for the working classes in England, Wales and Scotland." The committee reported in October 1918. (11) Amongst its recommendations were maximum densities per acre for housing, roads graduated according to usage and minimum standards of accommodation in houses. These were all to feature in Parker's plan. A member of this committee was Raymond Unwin, colleague and brother-in-law of Parker.

Parker reported to the Wythenshawe Special Committee in May 1928. His plan covered an area of 5,500 acres. 3,000 acres were reserved for housing and at a maximum of 12 houses per acre this provided for 25,000 houses and a population of 100,000. A permanent green belt of agricultural land was to take up 1,000 acres and another 1,000 acres was to be devoted to open spaces such as Wythenshawe Park. Sites were allocated for schools, a civic centre and for preservation of existing farms. An area was set aside for industrial
development. Roads were to be on the parkway principle. Basically an American idea, parkways were main roads for through traffic. Houses were situated at least 150 feet from the roadway and were served by subsidiary roads parallel to the main one. Ribbon development was thus effectively prevented, and, it was hoped, accidents would be reduced.

With a comprehensive development plan backed by the necessary statutory powers, the way became clear. By 1932 the basic drainage and road schemes were complete. In that year 411 houses were built, the number rose to 3,363 in 1933 but dropped dramatically to 690 in 1934. (12) This "recession" in the house building programme was related to events affecting the country as a whole. The financial collapse of 1931 had an inevitable effect on both national and local government expenditure, and in the course of time this affected the programme of Wythenshawe. Perhaps more significant was the fact that between 1930 and 1936 there were no less than four Housing Acts enacted, each of which necessitated an adjustment in local housing policy. In spite of Government vacillation, Wythenshawe continued to grow, albeit more slowly than had been hoped. Bold experiments, unthinkable on a private development, were instituted. All electric houses were included on the estate and blocks of flats with integral shops and community facilities were planned.

On the outbreak of war in 1939 Manchester Corporation had completed 8,145 houses in Wythenshawe and the resident population was approaching 40,000. (13)

House building was not to be resumed until 1947 and by this time ideas were changing and new guidelines were being laid down for Wythenshawe.

The City Surveyor, in viewing the needs of the City as a whole, wrote
"while Manchester can justly be proud of what it has already accomplished at Wythenshawe we should recognise that the estate reflects the general trends in housing development since 1919 and suffers accordingly from a number of defects characteristic of the new dormitory suburbs. Like most large housing estates it has a somewhat anaemic social atmosphere - a lack of robust community life - attributable in part to its newness, but more particularly to the absence of good communal facilities. Responsible local citizens have complained with justice of the lack of libraries, cinemas, dance halls and other social necessities, of the inadequacy or inconvenience of the shops and medical services, and the paucity of schools in view of the predominance of young families. It should be realised that most of these deficiencies would by now have been remedied but for the outbreak of war, which postponed the execution of plans already prepared for a civic centre and a number of other amenities."

Wythenshawe was now seen as the only large area within the city still available for development, and was expected to accommodate most of Manchester's housing programme for the first three years. Wythenshawe, it was hoped, would be completed in four years.

Four principles were laid down for the further development of the estate. There was to be a planned road system, and adoption of the neighbourhood principle in residential development to counteract and to forestall the tendency towards social disintegration. A full urban life was to be fostered by the provision of workplaces, medical services and opportunities for recreation, education and cultural pursuits. The harmony between structure and setting was to be preserved by landscaping. In brief, Barry Parker's ideas were to be
adjusted to the requirements of a new generation.

Most important amongst the community facilities was the creation of a civic centre. Planned on a new site, and on a much larger scale than the original civic centre of the Barry Parker plan, it was to occupy an area of seventy two acres. Spaces for 130 shop units were allocated. A bank and professional and commercial accommodation were planned. Housed in separate buildings were to be a public hall, public offices, a health centre, public library, baths, community centre, fire station, hotel, parish church, bus station, cinemas and repertory theatre.

It was in this plan that the present concept of a civic centre as a unifying element in the huge Wythenshawe community, was born.

The first post war priority was, of course, housing. Aided by the 1946 Housing Act, house building proceeded briskly and to this end central government discouraged other municipal building schemes. It was not until 1954 that development of a civic centre could be considered. By mid 1954, 9752 houses had been completed under the 1946 Act and municipal housing in Wythenshawe was approaching 20,000. (15) In an estate of this size, neighbourhood shopping units were clearly inadequate. As a preliminary to development, it was proposed to begin roadworks to link the civic centre site to other parts of the estate. (16) It was observed that a shopping area was "unlikely to be developed until reasonable access is provided for customers as well as traders."

As the demands of the housing programme began to ease, various committees within the Corporation turned their attention to other needs which were becoming manifest in Wythenshawe. There was a growing realisation
that the neighbourhood communities of 10,000 people were not economically viable for the provision of certain amenities.

In a report, (17) the City Librarian suggested a revision of the existing plans for the library service in the area. Of the original plans for a branch library in each neighbourhood community, only one, Hollyhedge, had already been built. Borrowing powers for the others had been refused. Adequate provision of services to a population of 100,000 people could only, he argued, be offered from a large library with adequate stock facilities and specialised staff. Four of the neighbourhood community units had ready access to the civic centre site, namely Woodhouse Park, Peel Hall, Sharston-Benchill, and Newall Green. It was suggested that one large library as part of the civic centre development stood a much greater chance of being built than did several neighbourhood libraries. Manchester Public Libraries were pioneers in the field of civic theatre, and it was proposed that Wythenshawe should be the home of the second such theatre in the city.

At the same time the Estates Management Committee were considering the development, on the civic centre site of six shops, a food store, a dance hall and cinema. (18) This imaginative scheme to provide shopping and recreational facilities in the same project was to come to nothing. In the following year, the Rank Organisation, who were to lease the dance hall and cinema, decided that the arrangement was, in view of a nation wide decline in cinema going, no longer a viable proposition. (19)

The City Surveyor reported (20) that after considering developments in other "new towns", Crawley, Basildon, Cwmbran, Harlow, Welwyn, Hatfield, and Hemel Hampstead, an eventual development of 64 shops on the civic centre
site would be appropriate.

It was proposed by yet another Committee that a public hall should be built as part of the site development. (21) The need to coordinate the interests of the various committees was obvious and a joint conference was called. (22) No conflict was seen to exist between the various schemes. The City Architect suggested that a joint library theatre project could be prepared to the tendering stage in twenty one months. The public hall scheme would take eighteen months to reach the same stage. A joint development of the two schemes was advised by the representative of the Finance Committee.

It is interesting to note that at a meeting of the Libraries Committee (23) reference was made to a suggestion by the Town Hall Committee that "some or all of the cultural projects might be integrated in a composite scheme."

It was from this suggestion that the concept of a complex was to grow. The Libraries Committee, however, were thinking in terms of a joint library and theatre building. The City Architect submitted a draft scheme which was approved at a later meeting. (24)

In 1960 a further joint conference was convened. (25) It was reported that the Libraries Committee had approved a library and theatre project costing £397,000. The Estates Management Committee had, by this time, gained full Council approval for the capital expenditure of £314,850 on its scheme for the provision of shops, market, offices and flats on the civic centre site. Work had in fact started. With this scheme already financed, the problem of priorities for the remaining two schemes became apparent. The Finance Committee representative pointed out that since the Corporation's capital fund was already entirely devoted to the Wythenshawe (Sharston) swimming pool, an
entirely separate project, money for the outstanding civic centre schemes would have to be raised by borrowing. It was unlikely that two such schemes could proceed at the same time.

The next three years were to see continued revision and expansion of the projects in question. The library and theatre scheme was finalised at a new cost of £493,904. (26) The Baths and Laundries Committee now proposed to erect a swimming pool on the site. The next joint conference (27) directed the City Architect to prepare working drawings for a joint public hall and swimming pool, a joint library and theatre, and phase two of the shopping centre.

The same conference met again, (28) when the City Architect submitted his plans as required and also submitted an alternative proposal for a composite scheme consisting of library, theatre, public hall and baths. This scheme demonstrated a saving of £63,000 by the use of common services such as heating and car parking facilities, and was approved.

At the request of the Baths and Laundries Committee, the City Architect submitted a plan for the addition of a sports hall (29) and at the request of the Town Hall Committee, a plan for the addition of manager's office, band-room, workshop and piano lift. (30)

A Wythenshawe Civic Centre Committee, consisting of the representatives of the committees concerned had been set up (31) and it was resolved (32) subject to Council approval, that the Town Clerk be authorised to make application to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for loan sanction for £1,203,241 for the project.

Loan sanction was initially refused (33) on the grounds that no national
priority could be established for Wythenshawe. In a report by the Town
Clerk (34) it was stated that the Ministry could make "no promise of the
early issue of loan sanction ........ the Ministry accepts that Wythenshawe
has a pressing need for more public amenities ........ proposes to review
the situation in the early part of the summer."

In a later report (35) it was noted that "provided no unforseen
circumstances arise, a first loan sanction will be available in April 1968."
Receipt of this sanction was subsequently reported to the Committee (36) and
work commenced with the laying of the foundation stone on September 23rd
1969. The Wythenshawe Forum, so named as a result of a competition amongst
local schools, (37) opened to the public in October 1971. Wythenshawe could
be said to be substantially complete.
Chapter Two
Problems of the new community

All new communities tend to face similar problems. Many of those in Wythenshawe can be related to the inordinate time span of the estate’s development, one which is unparalleled elsewhere in Britain. To consider these problems it is essential to look at this period of development in some detail.

The idea of a satellite town at Wythenshawe was conceived in 1919. It can be claimed that Wythenshawe became substantially complete when the Wythenshawe Forum opened in 1971. In human terms this means that two generations of Wythenshawe inhabitants were born and reached adulthood in a development which consisted of houses rather than those facilities, commercial, social, recreational and cultural which are considered to be essential to a modern community.

The history of the development of Wythenshawe is one of delay. The circumstances which caused this delay, local, national, political and economic were largely beyond the control of the originators of the scheme.

The selection by Manchester Corporation, of the Tatton estate as the most suitable site for development and the subsequent decision to purchase the estate in 1921, presupposed that the owner, T.B. Tatton, would be willing to sell. In the event it was not until 1926, two years after the owner’s death, that purchase was completed. The subsequent decision by the Corporation to seek the incorporation of Wythenshawe into the City of Manchester involved a further four years of legislative activity. It was not until 1930 that the Corporation, now both landlord and local authority, felt themselves able to
commence building activities. The first houses were completed in 1932, and by then the country was in the middle of a financial slump.

An interesting parallel to the development of Wythenshawe exists. In 1920, the London County Council, faced with a similar shortage of building land, purchased estates in the county of Essex, at Becontree and Dagenham. Incorporation was not sought and these communities were to remain in Essex until the reorganisation following the London Government Act of 1964.

Manchester, by comparison, met opposition to its plans by both Cheshire County Council and Bucklow Rural District Council. As has already been noted, opposition was on the grounds that these authorities would be required to finance drainage and roadwork schemes for which there was no immediate prospect of rate revenue nor was there any guarantee that the estate would be satisfactorily completed by Manchester.

It seems probable that these were the outward manifestations of the deep seated disquiet with which a predominantly agricultural and rural community viewed the demands which an urban and industrial society was to make on their way of life. It seems likely that the same argument prompted T.E. Tatton to refuse to sell his estate. The opposition of the "county" interest to the Wythenshawe scheme was facilitated by the provisions of the 1919 Town Planning Act.

To return to the parallel development in London at Becontree and Dagenham, the London County Council were to build over 3,000 houses in the first three years after purchase. Between 1927 and 1930, at the time when Manchester had hoped to start operations at Wythenshawe, nearly 9,000 houses were built at Becontree and Dagenham. (1) Building at a similar rate in Wythenshawe, if it
had commenced in 1921, or even in 1927, would have comfortably completed the target of 25,000 houses by the outbreak of war in 1939.

In 1932 conditions were not favourable for a concerted house building programme. The Housing Act of 1924, the "Wheatley Act", had provided a subsidy for corporation financed housing. Manchester, in common with other authorities had exploited this subsidy to the full. Statistics for Corporation housing show that Manchester as a whole, shortage of land notwithstanding, completed more houses under the 1924 Act than under all the other pre-war Housing Acts put together. (2) The Wheatley subsidy was drastically reduced in 1929 (3) and ceased altogether in 1933. (4) Its usefulness on the Wythenshawe development had, therefore, been limited.

The reduction of the Wheatley subsidy in 1929 was the first in a bewildering series of amendments to existing housing legislation. These reflected the uncertain state of the national economy. Each amendment involved the Corporation in a change of course at Wythenshawe and a subsequent decrease in output. Corporation building in Wythenshawe under the various pre-war Housing Acts was as follows: (5)

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<tr>
<td>1930 Act</td>
<td>2,852</td>
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<td>1938 Act</td>
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At the outbreak of war in 1939, Wythenshawe had approximately one third of its housing target fulfilled. Of its plans for amenities there was little to show. In more fortunate circumstances Wythenshawe would by this time have been complete.

At the close of the War in 1945, an elderly Barry Parker declared that
Wythenshawe was, by then, "the most perfect example of a garden city." (6)

A more objective view might have been that the partially completed Wythenshawe was well on its way to becoming a "period piece."

The 1945 City of Manchester Plan (7) recognised that ideas on physical and social planning had altered since the 1928 Barry Parker plan. Indeed, viewed retrospectively, the Parker plan can be seen to have been, in some aspects, rather dated in concept when introduced in 1928. There was a strong element of the "rural atmosphere" in Parker's work, evidenced by his emphasis on open spaces, landscaping and quaint cottage design. "There are echoes of the past in some of the architecture of the 1930's too..... It is easy to recognise in its flared gables, arched doors, contorted window sizes and white walls". (8)

As has been noted already, Parker shared with the protagonists of the Wythenshawe estate a belief in fundamental socialistic principles. A rather idealistic view that fresh air, wholesome surroundings and the virtues of country life would solve the problems of society, can I think be detected in Parker's work, as it was at Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb. It is plain that the protagonists of the Wythenshawe scheme saw the project not just as a slum rehousing scheme but as an opportunity to offer a new life style to people brought up in the slums of Manchester. The whole concept of a return to the simple life, seems even in 1928 to be backward looking.

The City of Manchester Plan, insofar as it related to Wythenshawe, was a compromise between the principles laid down by Barry Parker, already irreversibly developed in the form of 8,000 houses, and more recent developments in social ecology which placed emphasis on community feeling.
To this end the plan embodied the "neighbourhood principle". "The adoption of the neighbourhood principle in residential development is to counteract and forstall the tendency towards social disintegration." (9) In outline there were to be ten residential neighbourhoods. It has been observed that the focal point of these neighbourhoods was the primary school. (10) The idea of the school as a unifying element in community life was based on the North American pattern, and was not at this time applicable to Britain. The principle of community use of school facilities, much encouraged today, may however bring an unwitting relevance to this concept.

The City of Manchester Plan accepted that three of the proposed neighbourhoods were already developed in the form of pre-war housing. The unifying element for the ten neighbourhood units was to be the Wythenshawe Civic Centre, the location of those amenities, recreational, cultural and commercial which could not be provided at a neighbourhood level. These amenities, whilst mentioned in the Barry Parker plan, were treated as adjuncts to the virtues of "open air" rather than as a vital element in the plan as a whole.

In the words of the Manchester Town Plan, the civic centre was to "constitute the shopping and commercial hub of a town of 80,000 inhabitants - equal in population to Oxford and certainly larger than Altrincham." (11) This was a recognition of the fact that Wythenshawe needed a corporate life which was distinct from the parent Manchester, a corporate life which depended on community facilities which were to take a further twenty-five years to be built.

The relationship between Wythenshawe and Manchester is one which has
never been resolved and the result of this ambiguity can be seen today. The original intention for Wythenshawe was plain, it was to be inextricably linked with the City of Manchester. After the trauma of the incorporation struggle this was only to be expected. Speaking in 1933, Shena Simon summarised the relationship as follows: "It will be a satellite garden town, not a garden city, and as such will be closely knit with Manchester by more than financial ties.

Even when factories on the spot give employment to those living around, many of the residents will continue to travel to Manchester every day, and although junior, senior and secondary schools will be provided on the estate, those who want to go to the university, the college of technology, school of art or similar institutions will go into Manchester. The chief hospitals will also be in Manchester. (12) It is interesting to note that to facilitate the journey an express bus was provided with subsidised fares, so that the Wythenshawe service was cheaper than any other route in the city. (13)

To a large degree this pattern of dependence has continued up to the present time. Wythenshawe has been unable to provide the facilities required by its huge population, and inevitably it has been to their place of origin, Manchester, that the residents of Wythenshawe have turned for their needs.

Perhaps the most important factor in the relationship has been that Wythenshawe has been unable to provide sufficient jobs for its inhabitants. The Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee, in its brief to Barry Parker, instructed him to include in his plans "a substantial industrial area." (14) One industrial area of 110 acres was opened in 1933 but it was not until the Manchester Town Plan of 1945 that further industrial development was considered. "In order to make the township in a large measure self contained, and thereby to
obviate the long daily journeys that are an all too common feature of life in new residential areas, it is necessary to provide for local industrial employment."

It was proposed to develop two new sites for light industrial development which, it was concluded, would provide jobs for nearly 31,000 people out of a projected population of 80,000. The three industrial estates were developed according to plan, but in reality this development did not provide the jobs expected. In 1965 some 72 concerns were operating and providing 10,112 jobs, the population by this time was 95,000. A little over half of those employed on the industrial estates actually lived in Wythenshawe. There seems little reason to doubt the assertion made that "only fifteen per cent of the labour force work locally." By 1969 the City Planning Department was quoted as saying that the target figure for jobs in Wythenshawe as a whole was 20,000.

Wythenshawe is frequently described as a one class community. Like all generalisations, this needs some qualification. Statistically seventy-four per cent of the Wythenshawe population come within class three and four as defined in the General Register Office classification of occupations. Some applications of this definition are: Class three, skilled - including miners, electricians, carpenters, printing workers, railway engine drivers and salesmen. Class four, semi skilled - including electrical assembly workers, machine tool operators, bricklayers, street vendors, bus conductors and postmen. Classes one and two - professional and intermediate make up fifteen per cent, and class five - unskilled, ten per cent.

This preponderance of "manual" workers in the Wythenshawe community
relates directly to the low proportion of private houses in relation to Corporation houses in Wythenshawe. Whilst "lip service" has, in the interests of overall social structure always been paid to the principle of allowing private housing in Wythenshawe, in fact circumstances have discouraged this action.

The pre-war situation can be summarised by the following quotation: "Private enterprise has been building many thousands of houses in areas surrounding Wythenshawe but for some reason has not yet taken up building on the estate with any vigour. One interesting point is however to be noted: the city is widely using its power as landlord to control the amenity of the private enterprise houses. Generally speaking, private enterprise is building quite good houses, but the speculative builder rarely employs a good architect, with the result that the appearance of these estates is frequently deplorable. The City Council has tackled this problem by itself planning the estates which are to be used for private development ....... and by insisting on the elevations and designs being approved by Mr. Barry Parker." (21) In point of fact, Parker's standards, influenced by his political and social outlook, were such that few private builders could satisfy requirements and make a profit. It was obviously felt that house ownership was best vested in the Corporation. A proposal to spend £58,000 on the building of houses by the Corporation, presumably to "Barry Parker" standards, for sale to the public, was blocked by the Finance Committee in 1933. (22)

Corporation house building ceased in 1962 when the Peel Hall estate was complete. Such building as has taken place since has been "infilling", and land shortage is such that no private development can now redress the
preponderance of Corporation owned housing. In 1969 there were 23,480 Corporation houses in Wythenshawe and 3,897 private houses. This indicates an overall ratio of private to Corporation houses of 1:5.94. This situation is by no means uniform throughout the various Wythenshawe neighbourhoods. The ratio at Northenden, already privately developed before Wythenshawe as a whole was built, is 1:2.6 whereas at Woodhouse Park the ratio is 1:141. This breakdown indicates that private housing tends to be highly concentrated in a few areas, a situation not conducive to feelings of harmony between private and council occupiers. The two private developments which are now taking place in the North Western and South Eastern extremities of the estate will tend to emphasise this private "ghetto" effect whilst at the same time it will be insufficient to significantly affect the ratio of private to Corporation housing.

The preponderance of Corporation housing has generated two situations which are unfortunate from a community point of view. Corporation housing, unlike its private counterpart, is not usually occupied by successive generations of the same family. As tenancies become vacant they are passed on to those on top of the housing list, and since there is no building land available, children of the first generation Wythenshawe inhabitants are forced to seek houses outside the area.

This is borne out by the following data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% of Wythenshawe pop.</th>
<th>% of Manchester pop.</th>
<th>% of National pop.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The disparity between Wythenshawe and the National picture is much less marked in the age ranges below and above the quoted figures.

This situation has generated considerable editorial comment in the local press. "If Wythenshawe is to have an identity, If Wythenshawe is to mature as a friendly, neighbourly place, then not only must its young people be allowed to live here when they marry, but the hundreds of exiled young couples must be brought back." (25)

In this situation the influence of the Corporation looms large, and indeed the same might be said of almost every facet of Wythenshawe life. For historical reasons which have already been investigated, the Corporation found it necessary to make itself landlord, local authority and sole developer of the estate. By virtue of its landlord rights the Corporation controls, to a large degree, the type of employment available, and since the main shopping centre and the neighbourhood shopping areas are Corporation developments, the range of shops and services available are in effect Corporation controlled. As a local authority, the Corporation also controls schools and transport. Whilst the power of any local authority is considerable, that of the Corporation in Wythenshawe is monolithic.

There are frequently expressed views that Wythenshawe is "controlled from afar" and in the physical sense this is true since Wythenshawe is some eight miles from Manchester City Centre, considerably more than any other Manchester district. Whilst Wythenshawe is represented through the elected councillors of its four local government electoral wards, there is evidence that some greater measure of representation is called for. Wythenshawe is something of an anachronism, a community larger than many towns and
cities, planned to function as a community in its own right, yet denied the degree of representation which many smaller communities traditionally enjoy. The local government re-organisation of 1974 has effectively stripped many former independent local government areas of their powers and has substituted consultative "community councils" to cope with the situation. It remains to be seen whether these new bodies satisfy the requirements of the Wythenshawe community.

The same local government reorganisation has forstalled the idea of independence for Wythenshawe, one carefully nurtured by the local press. "It's quite a thought - a council for Wythenshawe ........ If only we could have a local council which could get things done at the suggestion of the residents - from tree planting to making car parks - and which would encourage the citizens to make some of their own decisions." (26)

It seems possible that concerted efforts by the community as a whole might have produced a more satisfactory representation of its interests, but community action in Wythenshawe has tended to be on a neighbourhood basis. Given the size of Wythenshawe, in geographical and population terms, and the length of time over which it has developed, it is not surprising that the inhabitants of Lawton Moor, for example, many of whom came out to Wythenshawe voluntarily in the "pioneering days" of 1933, should feel little in common with the inhabitants of Peel Hall, some four miles away, who were compulsorily rehoused out at Wythenshawe in 1962. Such attempts as have been made by voluntary bodies to represent the interests of the estate as a whole have been short lived.

In 1961, J.H. Nicholson called Wythenshawe a "garden city without a
and this was a fitting description in two ways. Wythenshawe was, for reasons which can be traced to the political dogma of its instigators and the inordinate time span of its development, lacking a balanced social structure. Wythenshawe was without a heart in the physical sense that it lacked the unifying element which the Civic Centre was intended to provide. The Wythenshawe Forum, a large component in this plan, will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Three

The Wythenshawe Forum

The Wythenshawe Forum, which contains in one building a library, swimming pool, sports hall, public hall, restaurant and theatre, forms two sides of a raised civic square which has been paved and landscaped, and forms a focal point in the town centre.

The building itself is steel framed and is based on a 12ft grid. It is faced with white mosaic covered panels hung from the frame at first floor level, below are areas of glazing and of rustic faced brick. The library, at right angles to the main body of the building is faced at both floor levels with the same mosaic covered panels which are relieved by narrow bands of horizontal glazing accompanied by vertical windows to floor level.

The main entrance to the building leads from the square, named Leningrad Square after Manchester's twin city, into a large concourse from which radiate the library, theatre, restaurant and large hall. Interconnected, but still segregated at the far end of the building is the sports centre, consisting of swimming pools and sports hall.

The concourse, measuring 95ft by 70ft acts as a "centre of gravity" for the building and provides an area where crowds from various parts of the Forum, perhaps 2,000 strong at busy times of the year, can mingle in comfort. Wall finishes are in white fibrous plaster panels with rustic faced brick below and a ceiling of slatted afrormosia timber. The ceiling arrangement conceals power and loudspeaker points which facilitate use of the concourse as a general exhibition area. In addition the concourse area houses various "support" facilities, booking offices, cloakrooms, toilets, refreshment rooms and bars.
which are necessary in a building of this size and complexity.

The Forum, although not unique as a recreational and cultural complex, is the only building of its type to house a resident repertory theatre company. It is noteworthy that this repertory theatre is sited away from the centre of a major city. The Forum theatre has been claimed as "the first civic theatre - in the provinces at least - to be planned for the suburbs rather than the centre of a major city." (1) To explain how it has been possible to bring this added dimension to the Wythenshawe Forum it is necessary to look at the pattern of professional theatre in this country and to consider the special circumstances that exist in Manchester.

Professional theatre exists in two ways, "commercial" theatre is financed from its box office receipts and is, in the main, limited to those productions: plays, musicals and variety, which are likely to show a profit. Whilst a financial success can also be an artistic success, artistic success alone is not sufficient in the commercial theatre.

Repertory theatre, however, is not a profit making venture, and currently no repertory company in this country is making a profit. Finance comes in the form of subsidies, from Central Government through the Arts Council and from Local Government through grants and also from industrial concerns. Repertory theatre, freed from the necessity of making box office profits, can stage plays which are artistically successful. These include experimental theatre, the work of new playwrights and new actors. As in every other art form, to survive and develop it is necessary that this experimentation goes on, indeed not only the commercial theatre, but the film and television industries rely in this way on the repertory theatres.
Since repertory theatres rely on subsidies from various sources they are required, in return, to give not only artistic quality but to make this quality available to the largest potential audience. They are traditionally sited, therefore, in large centres of population with good transport communications. New repertory theatres opened in the last decade, such as Coventry, Nottingham and Leicester are all centred in cities of at least 225,000 population. (2) Since financial resources for building a repertory theatre are found from the same sources that subsidise operating costs, it would be unlikely that support could be gained for siting a repertory theatre away from the city centres. The population of Wythenshawe, 100,000 people, even allowing for the addition of a substantial "catchment area" around, would not normally be considered sufficient to justify support from traditional sources.

Local authority involvement in the theatre takes a unique form in Manchester. The Manchester Central Library opened in 1935 contained a basement lecture theatre which was intended to stimulate cultural activities. In 1946, seeking ways to extend the use of the theatre, and using clauses of special legislation (3) to permit this, Manchester Public Libraries, with Arts Council help, were instrumental in the formation of a repertory company. From 1947 to 1952 a succession of companies occupied the theatre and despite subsidies from Manchester Corporation and Arts Council grants, substantial deficits were incurred. In 1952 an artistic director was employed under the direct control and responsibility of the City Librarian. A company was formed whose members became Corporation employees. "The Library Theatre became part of a corporation department providing a public service within a budget recommended by the employing committee and sanctioned by the Finance
Committee and the City Council. " (4) This action, unique amongst library authorities in this country was in line with the long standing policy of the Libraries Department "to exploit to the fullest extent, the resources of the department in buildings, staff, material and finance, in the advancement of art, education, drama, science, music and literature". (5)

It was the original intention of the City Librarian that three theatres, one in the Central Library, one in North Manchester and one in South Manchester should work on a circuit basis. (6) The North Manchester project has now been shelved, but the Forum theatre remains true to this plan.

The original Library Theatre Company was substantially expanded and now plays both houses simultaneously, separate productions alternating between the two theatres. In this way it is possible, using common sets, costumes and cast to operate the two theatres much more cheaply than would be possible with two separate concerns. The geography of Manchester, a long narrow area, makes it possible to stage the plays at separate venues at each end of the city to quite separate audience catchment areas.

The Central Library theatre, adapted rather than purpose built, has certain drawbacks; it is restricted to 318 seats, it has severely limited height above stage and is short of workroom and wardrobe space. The new Forum theatre is, therefore, an attempt to recreate the "intimate" plan of its central counterpart, to be compatible with the Central Library theatre in the sense that it stages the same productions, and yet to embody more recent technical developments and larger workshop facilities.

The Forum theatre has a proscenium stage with a fly tower and a counterweighted suspension. Seating accommodation is 492, tiered in 16 rows
consisting of 3 blocks with 4 gangways. The proscenium is 36ft wide and is 17ft 6ins high. Depth is 30ft to which is added an apron depth of 8ft. Access to the stage is through arches with "Juliet" balconies above. 

Backstage the workshops build sets for both theatres and the wardrobe caters in the same way. Since facilities are so much better at the Forum it seems likely that the company will eventually base itself here. Because of these advantages certain productions will be staged at Wythenshawe only, giving the Central Library theatre the opportunity to stage an occasional "one-off" production there.

The siting of a repertory company at Wythenshawe has, in artistic terms, enhanced the resources of the Forum as a cultural and recreational centre. In purely physical terms it has made available to theatre patrons certain ancillary services, a large car park, a restaurant, licensed bars and a coffee bar, on a scale which would have been impossible in a traditional theatre. The Forum has gained in that further accommodation is available, outside normal theatre performances, which can be utilized for concerts, television work, conferences and lectures. The theatre can be used as a cinema and is equipped to the highest standards of commercial cinemas. In an area which is without a commercial cinema this is proving a great advantage. The way this advantage is being exploited will be discussed elsewhere.

The sports centre at the Forum consists of a multi purpose sports hall and two swimming pools. A separate entrance is provided to this area of the building and a cash desk and booking office acts as a control point for the centre. From this area a closed circuit television monitors all public areas. An additional function of the television is to publicise the activities taking place and
is a source of entertainment for those waiting for admission.

The sports hall, at first floor level was the first of three purpose built sports halls in the city. It measures 108ft by 60ft and is equipped for five-a-side football and basket ball. A unique system of netting partitions allows sub division of the floor area to accommodate four cricket lanes or archery bays, or eight golf driving bays, or four badminton courts. The system uses curved rails with different coloured curtains to provide background contrast and the requisite mesh size for cricket, golf and archery. Apparatus is provided for trampolining, weightlifting and table tennis.

To ensure continuity of use, the hall can be booked for group use on a seasonal basis. Use during the day tends to be by school parties and in the evening local groups take over. Individuals use the facilities subject to availability. General community use is encouraged by the formation of clubs for ladies and for children of various age ranges. Tuition is available in certain activities and equipment for the various sports is available for hire.

In addition to the normal opening hours, arrangements can be made for tournaments and special events. Spectator sports are normally accommodated in the larger multi purpose hall elsewhere in the Forum.

Swimming facilities consist of two pools. The main pool is 82ft 6ins long, 39ft wide and the depth is between 3ft and 6ft. The small pool, intended for teaching purposes is 34ft 9ins long and 30ft wide. The depth is 3ft. The main pool is based on a design used for the 1972 Olympics and embodies several advanced features. Unlike the traditional pool, a "top-deck" system of filtration is in use.

Fresh water is pumped in from the floor of the pool and the water
overflows the side of the pool and drains away through grilles set flush into the surround. The advantages of the system are numerous. The greatest incidence of pollution occurs on or near the surface of the water and it is from this area that water is drawn off, filtered and treated. As the water is level with the pool surround, entry and exit from the water is much easier. In diving instruction, a swimmer has no height to combat in this type of pool. For competitive swimming the system is particularly useful in that there is no "splash-back" from the pool walls and consequently each swimmer competes in similar conditions. From a constructional point of view, building costs are reduced since a smaller excavation is required to achieve the necessary water depth.

This particular pool is not intended for competition work and no diving boards are installed. The pool was envisaged as a recreation facility and since running costs are related to utilisation, maximum usage has been aimed at. Competitive swimming and diving do not promote maximum utilisation of the available pool space. Competitive requirements can, however, be catered for in the Wythenshawe area since a national championship sized pool exists at Sharston, some two miles from the Forum.

The teaching pool employs the same filtration system and the pool surround is equipped with an observation "trench" from which an instructor can give eye level coaching to the swimmers.

Parties from many surrounding schools use these facilities and full time swimming instructors, employed by the City Education Committee are based at the Forum. It is policy that school parties use these facilities side by side with members of the public, and the presence of a school party does not
preclude the public from admission. Sole use of the pool is granted to local clubs and organisations but this is arranged outside the extensive public opening times.

In order to facilitate maximum usage, the "flow" of users has been assisted by the provision of an unusually high number of changing cubicles. The ratio of cubicles to the accommodation capacity of the pool is 1:2, which at the time of construction was the highest of any new pool in the country.

The usual method of baskets and hangers for the storage of clothes has been superseded in this instance, again in the interests of speed, by a system of individual lockers. Each swimmer is issued with a key and wrist band which ensures the maximum security for personal valuables. (9) Group changing rooms for school and other parties are provided and can be reached direct from the outside of the building.

The Forum large hall, with seating space of 1,000 people has internal dimensions of 120ft by 70ft inclusive of a stage area. The auditorium is 88ft by 70ft with a ceiling height of 22ft 6ins. The stage is 32ft deep and 70ft wide, the clearance overstage is 18ft 6ins and the stage stands 4ft above auditorium level.

Since halls of this size are rare, great care has been taken to make it suitable for multi purpose use. The floor is semi sprung using maple strips. The stage is of afromosia timber slates and the walls are covered with fibrous plaster panels. Acoustic requirements have called for non parallel wall surfaces with sound absorption. This has been achieved by faceting these surfaces and introducing slots backed by glass fibre slabs. A sophisticated lighting system is installed, operating from a control room which can also be
used as a cinema projection box. The stage is equipped with a piano lift, dressing rooms and bandroom. In this way the hall is equipped for a wide variety of functions. As a concert hall it can accommodate a full orchestra on stage and the stage itself can be used as a curtained off area suitable for intimate musical events. The floor of the auditorium is equally suitable as a sports area, dance hall or exhibition room. To demonstrate the full flexibility of this hall it is only necessary to list some of the activities which it has housed. Amongst these are wrestling matches, religious revival meetings, TV quiz games, pop music concerts, business conferences, stage musicals, film shows, basketball tournaments and trade exhibitions.

It is obvious that the appeal of this hall lies in the fact that physically and acoustically it has facilities normally only available in large city centres. The Forum hall suffers from none of the disadvantages of city centre sites, for it has generous parking space and is situated within half a mile of the M56 motorway.

Whilst the Forum as a whole is designed with the needs of Wythenshawe in mind, it is undoubtedly true that for certain functions, for example a music concert, a larger audience than even Wythenshawe can provide is required if the event is to be financially viable. That Wythenshawe, an area with little tradition of cultural activity, should be emerging as a cultural centre, is in part a vindication of the decision to concentrate large sums of public money on one building.

Catering facilities in the Forum, consisting of restaurant, coffee bar and two public bars have two functions. The various departments of the Forum, library, theatre, sports centre and public halls are freed from the necessity of
making catering facilities available to the large number of people who visit these departments, often for considerable periods of time. Since some events staged at the Forum, particularly musical and sporting events are of international standard, patrons travel considerable distances to attend and therefore require substantial catering facilities. In addition the multi purpose nature of the Forum, catering facilities included, makes it ideal for business conferences. The second function of these facilities is to foster the use of the Forum as a focal point for the people of Wythenshawe.

The administration of the Forum is in the hands of no single individual, nor is its control the responsibility of any single committee within the Corporation. To explain how the Forum administration works it is necessary to re-examine the history of the project.

In the first comprehensive plan for post war Wythenshawe (10) it was proposed that a library, theatre, swimming baths and public hall should be erected on the Civic Centre site. The demands of the post war housing programme were such that it was not until 1958 that firm proposals were put forward for those projects. (11) By 1963 it was recognised that the most economic way of providing these services was in the form of a composite building. (12) It is plain that the Forum was seen by the committees concerned as the most economical method of discharging departmental responsibilities in Wythenshawe.

When it opened in 1971, the Forum was under the control of three separate departments. The baths and sports hall was run by the Town Hall Committee and the library and theatre by the recently renamed Cultural Committee. The catering services were sub contracted to an outside catering group. Each
department was under the control of a departmental head directly responsible to his own chief officer and Committee. At first glance this might appear to be a bureaucratic absurdity, especially as the Forum was designed on a basis of joint use of common facilities, such as heating and ventilation plant and car parking space. A cursory examination of alternative forms of control make it obvious that the existing system was the only practicable solution in Manchester.

As has already been pointed out, the Forum was seen by the committees concerned as a location for the Wythenshawe "branch" of their department, rather than as a multi-media approach to the cultural and recreational needs of the Wythenshawe community. The library, enormous though it was by existing district library standards, was seen as being complementary to the Manchester Central Library in its provision of certain services. The swimming pool was seen as complementary to the existing larger pool situated elsewhere in Wythenshawe. The theatre was specifically designed to work "in tandem" with the Central Library theatre. From the point of view of the Forum administration it might have been more appropriate to have a "Forum Director" to control the whole complex under his own committee in order that the various departments used the available accommodation to the best possible advantage. In the context of Manchester Corporation as a whole, no committee would have been willing, especially after the trauma of a fifteen year struggle to obtain adequate premises, to relinquish control of its functions in an area covering one fifth of the whole of Manchester. Such a solution would in any event create a situation whereby identical functions were being carried out by two separate committees within the same city. This would have been expensive both in
terms of administrative costs and technical expertise. In the same way, no single existing committee could undertake control of functions which more properly related to another committee. Other solutions to the problem of overall control exist outside Manchester, and will be considered later.

In practice the system of responsibility to "parent" departments works quite well. A system was evolved in which each department undertook responsibility for certain functions common to all departments, and operated these functions on an agency basis. The Baths and Laundries Department assumed responsibility for the heating and ventilation plant and all electrical systems in the building, and appointed a chief engineer to supervise the plant. The Baths and Laundries Department were made responsible for all cleaning activities and for matters of security. The Libraries Department, appropriately, undertook responsibility for communications, staffing and operating the telephone switchboard and delivering the mail. The catering services, sub contracted to a specialised commercial concern were responsible for the operation of the restaurant and bars and for making special catering arrangements as required by the other departments for specific functions. Common services were recharged on a pro-rata basis to individual committees.

Following on from the Local Government Reorganisation of 1974, certain events affecting Manchester Corporation as a whole resulted in a rationalisation of the Forum administration. Geographically the City of Manchester was not affected by the reorganisation, for with small exceptions the old City of Manchester became one of ten District Councils in the Greater Manchester Metropolitan area. With the setting up of the Greater Manchester Council,
many of the senior employees of the old City of Manchester joined the staff of the Greater Manchester Council and certain large scale functions passed out of "District" control and became the responsibility of the Greater Manchester Council. The new District Council took this opportunity to rationalise its departmental and committee structure, with the result that a smaller number of "super" departments replaced a large number of old departments some of which had outlived their original purpose. The Baths and Laundries Department together with the Town Hall Department and the Parks Department were combined to form a Recreational Services Department. Since both the Town Hall Department and the Parks Department had been responsible for certain catering functions within the city, it was decided that on the subsequent expiry of the lease of the catering facilities at the Forum, the Recreational Services Department should run these facilities direct. Libraries, Theatres and Art Galleries were amalgamated into a Cultural Services Department. The Forum, formerly under the control of three committees and a commercial catering organisation, became therefore the responsibility of the two departments whose functions, recreation and culture, were complementary.

The Wythenshawe Forum has received, in addition to architectural acclaim, considerable criticism of the facilities offered. In general terms these are that the sports centre is unable to cope with the demands made on it, that the Forum hall is not sufficiently used to justify its upkeep and that the Forum theatre does not attract large audiences. In addition it is claimed that the division of responsibility for running the Forum results in a lack of coordination.

Criticism of the Corporation and its enterprises tends in Wythenshawe
to be an emotive rather than rational exercise. Given the inordinate influence which the Corporation wields in the area, and the length of time that Wythenshawe existed without facilities which the Forum provides, this criticism is understandable. How far the criticism is justified is perhaps best determined by considering a similar complex elsewhere in the country.

The Billingham Forum, situated in Cleveland in North East England, was opened in July 1967. It consists of a theatre, ice rink, swimming pools, sports hall, squash courts, indoor bowls hall, projectile range, restaurant, public bar, sauna bath, creche and residential hostel. As can be seen this complex is recreation orientated, the theatre represents the only cultural facility in the building. The Billingham Forum is better equipped both in terms of space and variety than is the sports centre at Wythenshawe. An obvious shortcoming at Wythenshawe, brought out by this comparison, is the lack of squash courts and sauna baths, both provided at Billingham which was built four years earlier. "Dry sports" at Wythenshawe are concentrated largely on the multi purpose sports hall and this obviously limits both numbers and activities when compared with Billingham.

The reason for this minimal provision can be traced to the planning stages of the Forum project. "In 1963 with severe loan sanction restrictions there was no hope of obtaining consent for the construction of a large comprehensive sports centre. Furthermore, the City Council had only envisaged providing a district swimming pool. Consequently the General Manager produced a brief aimed at providing a sports centre at the cost of a swimming pool .... considerable restrictions were imposed for economy reasons. The main casualties being the length, width and height of the sports
hall ..... and the complete elimination of squash courts." (14)

The Billingham Forum concentrates on "organised participation" in the sense that for virtually all sports and activities, coaching is available. Annual memberships, which encourage use of all the facilities are available for individuals and for families, and the provision of a creche obviously encourages the use of the Forum as a family activity. This type of provision encourages maximum utilisation of facilities. By contrast the Wythenshawe Forum places less emphasis on organised activities. The great variety of meeting rooms available, ranging from the smallest public room seating 60 people to the large hall seating 1,000 people, gives the local inhabitants the opportunity to develop their particular interests and organise their own entertainment in the form of local groups, clubs and societies. In addition, the variety of meeting rooms, linked with the available catering facilities enables the Forum to accommodate large scale events, both cultural and sporting. At Billingham this would only be possible by disrupting the day to day running of the various facilities.

The Wythenshawe Forum large hall requires an audience of several hundred people to fill it. Events which can attract an audience of this size tend to occur in the evenings and at weekends, and tend to occur more frequently at certain seasons of the year. Consequently there are substantial periods of time when it is not in use for large scale events. In economic terms this is difficult to justify, a point frequently made in criticism of this aspect of the Forum complex. The availability of this hall however resulted in the provision of numerous events, sporting and cultural, which were simply not available in the area before the Forum was built.
In somewhat similar terms, the Wythenshawe Forum theatre is criticised for the size of audience it attracts, and by implication for the type of production staged. The attendance figures should however be viewed in the context of the objectives of a resident repertory company, which are to provide a full range of productions of artistic merit on a continuous basis. Attendance figures over the whole year bear comparison with those achieved by similar repertory companies situated in larger centres of population. (15)

The theatre at Billingham Forum, by contrast, does not retain a resident company but relies on visiting productions. A temporary company is however formed to produce the occasional short season of plays. In the 1972-3 season there was a total of 35 weeks of production (16) ranging from repertory material to musicals. This greater variety of material, with emphasis on the "commercial" type of production, does not however ensure success in terms of attendance. "While the public response remains unpredictable, and often, frankly disappointing, the theatre continues its policy of presenting the highest quality productions. The standards will remain high, while the struggle to win the public's wholehearted support goes on." (17)

To return to Wythenshawe Forum theatre, judged by the yardstick of support for repertory companies elsewhere, it would appear to be successful. By virtue of its being, outside London, the only suburban repertory company, the Forum theatre makes a unique contribution to the cultural life of the area.

Of the criticism that the Wythenshawe Forum lacks co-ordination, it should be said that with the existing division of responsibility, this is to some degree both true and inevitable. Whilst the departments concerned see the recreational and cultural services to be complementary, it is obvious that
first loyalties are to the "parent" departments. This is manifested particularly in matters of publicity and advertising in that facilities are publicised on a departmental basis. A "global sum" for the Forum as a whole might prove more economical and indeed more helpful to the customer.

This situation does not occur at Billingham where the Forum is under the control of a single director. How this is possible in the context of local government is worth explanation. The Billingham Forum is run by an independent trust although the trust is almost entirely financed from local government funds. This was a device by the existing local authority, the Billingham Urban District Council to see that the rate product from large industrial premises in the area was spent for the benefit of the immediate locality rather than being dispersed throughout the area of the Teesside County Borough Council, a new authority which was scheduled to take over from Billingham and other similar authorities in a regional local government reorganisation. As a result the Billingham Forum Trust, largely composed of representatives nominated by the Billingham Urban District Council, worked outside the normal local government framework and was able to appoint a director and staff responsible for all activities within the Forum. The Wythenshawe Forum, for the reasons already stated, has been organised along more traditional local government lines.

From this comparison it would appear that those aspects of the Wythenshawe Forum which can be fairly criticised are a result of financial constraints during the planning period. In addition the unique combination of major library, repertory theatre, public halls and sports centre has engendered certain administrative problems which in the local government context have been inevitable.
The Forum is however uniquely equipped to make its contribution to the community of the Wythenshawe new town.
Chapter Four

Wythenshawe Central Library

The Wythenshawe Central Library, opened as part of the Wythenshawe Forum in October 1971, was for a branch library, of unprecedented size. Speaking before the building opened, the City Librarian said "Our Hulme Library is the largest branch library in the country - the Wythenshawe one will be larger than that. It will be a central library for a population of 100,000, serving the whole of Wythenshawe." (1) The use of the term central library implied that adequate provision for Wythenshawe, in many ways a town in its own right, could not be achieved by the normal district library pattern which served elsewhere in Manchester.

Attempts at providing a library service had been made since the incorporation of Wythenshawe into the City of Manchester, indeed the problems of provision in the area were identified well before World War 2. Speaking in 1935, the City Librarian said "The Wythenshawe estate, here in Manchester for example presents a difficult problem in municipal service. It measures approximately four miles long by two and a half miles wide. Its nearest point is more than five miles from the centre of the city by road. The population already housed in this satellite garden city amounts to over 20,000 and the plan provides for an ultimate population of round about 100,000 people. A county borough in size, Wythenshawe has to be served as a branch library system." (2)

It is interesting to note that the lack of an adequate library service was a source of discontent even in the earliest days of the new community. A spokesman for the Wythenshawe Residents Association, protesting against a
proposed adjustment of the rateable value in 1934 said "As for ordinary amenities, they exist only on paper. We have no library ... no baths and indeed, you might say no anything." (3) That a library should be considered an ordinary amenity in 1934 on a new estate is a reflection of the fact that all the early Wythenshawe inhabitants "migrated" from the city centre, a city with a long established and highly developed municipal library service.

Sites for two libraries had been selected (4) and temporary arrangements were made. The travelling library service, introduced in the city in 1931 was extended to Wythenshawe and two stops, Northenden and Moss Nook, shared a total of seven hours opening time. Envisaged as a temporary measure, "for they can only be regarded as stop gaps until such time as permanent library buildings are provided to take their place" (5) they had severe drawbacks "the readers change their books under quite unsatisfactory conditions, particularly in wet weather, for the vehicle has of course a very limited standing room and no shelter can be provided for the queues which regularly form at most of the centres." (6) Inadequate though the service was, issues of 47,000 per year were being recorded in Wythenshawe. (7) "Constant complaints of the inadequacy of this service for such a wide area, however, let the Committee to explore the possibilities of evening branch libraries in schools and they were happy to come to an arrangement with the Education Committee, by which a room in the Benchill school was made available on three evenings each week for use as a library. Library furniture (book cases and service counter) specially designed for the purpose, was installed ... a maximum daily issue of 300 had been estimated for this temporary evening branch library, but the highest issue (during the period under review) of 651,
with an average issue for the month of March of 523, completely upset the
estimates for staff and books. The March issue amounted in all to 6,804
volumes, a figure which compares very favourably indeed with such an old
established library as Cheetham (the issues from which in the same month
were 5,281) which is open every weekday." (8) By 1939 three such
libraries in schools were operating in Wythenshawe. Issues from these
centres and the travelling library stops in the area totalled 215,449 in 2,000
opening hours. (9)

The pattern of post war library provision in the area was one of
comprehensive plans deferred by financial stringency. The City of Manchester
Plan (10) proposed a branch library for each of Wythenshawe's constituent
neighbourhoods, with a more comprehensive library on the Civic Centre Site.
The first of the proposed libraries opened at Hollyedge in 1952. As the first
purpose built branch library built in Manchester since 1934 it attracted great
attention. "Police in Wythenshawe have had to control queues of up to 200
children each evening outside the eighteen day old Hollyedge library at
Crossacres. Inside were another 100 choosing books. The library staff has
had to be doubled to cope with the demand - from adults too. Already nearly
10,000 out of the library's 16,000 books are out." (11) Issues for the first
year amounted to 311,435. (12)

Applications for borrowing powers to construct similar buildings
elsewhere in Wythenshawe were refused and by 1958 plans for projected
libraries at Brooklands, Newall Green, Northenden, Northern Moor and
Woodhouse Park were either abandoned or shelved. In a report (13) which
was to set the pattern for present day library provision, the City Librarian
suggested that a large library on the Civic Centre Site, within easy reach of
four of the neighbourhoods would stand a much greater chance of gaining loan
sanction than would several smaller branch libraries.

In the years before the opening of Wythenshawe Central Library in 1971,
temporary expedients were tried: libraries were opened and closed in various
places and in various forms, libraries in houses, pubs, schools, shops,
caravans and travelling libraries. Service points in 1971 were, in addition to
the new Wythenshawe Central Library, the Hollyhedge branch library, two
shop libraries, two stationary caravans and the mobile library service. One
caravan and two of the mobile library stops closed immediately and the
Hollyhedge library was scheduled to follow. Situated within one mile of the
new central library, it was felt that Hollyhedge would quickly "lose out" in
terms of borrowers and issues. This was to prove the case. Issues in the
last complete year before Wythenshawe Central Library began operations were
163,401. (14) In the first complete year afterwards issues had slumped to
87,560. (15)

There was, however, fierce local opposition to the closure of Hollyhedge,
opposition based on the twin arguments of convenience to the immediate locality
and reluctance to see the closure of the one and only purpose built library to
emerge from the two comprehensive plans for the Wythenshawe estate. An
energetic campaign was given prominent press coverage. "Save our library
...... have a library at the new centre by all means, for this massive estate,
but please leave ours alone. I know everything costs money, but I fail to see
why such a lovely building should be scrapped .... the building wouldn't be
good for anything else." (16)
A survey conducted to assess patterns of use at Hollybedge library revealed that following the opening of the Wythenshawe Central Library, 90% of the remaining users of the Hollybedge library came from within a radius of \( \frac{3}{4} \) mile of that building and that 65% of the users were under the age of 12 or over the age of 55. In a subsequent report, drawing on these findings the City Librarian indicated that the Hollybedge library still served a useful purpose especially for the less mobile age group. Hollybedge remained open, and as a temporary measure, continued to act as a group centre for the existing small libraries in the area, Wythenshawe Central Library operating on its own. In November 1974, as part of the reorganisation following the creation of a Cultural Services Department in Manchester, an overall Wythenshawe area was created with Wythenshawe Central Library fulfilling its name and becoming the central library for Wythenshawe as a whole. The functions of the existing libraries were adjusted. The branch libraries concentrated, in accordance with the findings of the Hollybedge Survey, on recreational reading with a bias towards the requirements of younger children and pensioners. More specialised reading material and a wide range of additional services for the area were concentrated at the Wythenshawe Central Library.

Some gaps remain to be filled. Two purpose built libraries, the remnants of the six planned for the Wythenshawe neighbourhoods, are still to be built. One at Northenden, on the Northern perimeter of Wythenshawe, will be a medium sized "district" library to replace the existing static caravan. The other will be a smaller library at Brooklands, on the North West fringe of the estate, to replace a shop premises library.
The new Wythenshawe Central Library was constructed on two floors. The ground floor consists of the adult lending library, the children's library, two workrooms and two offices. At first floor level are the reference library, gramophone record library, lecture room, stack and staff room. An electric book hoist connects the stack with the workroom below.

The library totals some 18,000 square feet. As a result of the library forming part of the Forum complex, this 18,000ft is devoted purely to library provision since space for heating plant, cloakrooms, toilets and catering facilities is allocated elsewhere.

Internal finishes, in common with other areas of the Forum, consist of plaster and rustic brick. Ceilings are in plaster or afromosia timber slats. The lighting is by fluorescent tubes set in ceiling troughs. Floor finishes are rubber, carpet or granwood tile according to usage.

Determined efforts have been made, throughout the library to break away from an "institutional" appearance and atmosphere. The lending and children's libraries are both situated in the main body of the ground floor. Lounge areas are provided for both adults and children and the ground floor is treated not just as a library but as an informal meeting area. For historical reasons there is no traditional pattern of library use in Wythenshawe and the inhabitants in no way feel constrained by habits of "silence in the library" which exist elsewhere.

A library with a basic bookstock of 100,000 volumes and a considerable variety of specialised services, requires both a large staff and a high proportion of professional librarians. A full time staff of nine librarians and seventeen assistants augmented by part-time assistants, porters and telephonists operate the library on a departmental basis. Staff, both professional and otherwise
operate their own department rather in the manner of a traditional branch library. A departmental librarian and his deputy assume responsibility for the day to day running of the department, book selection, stock control, timetabling, staff training and welfare. The administrative framework of the whole building is operated by the chief librarian and his deputy.

Initial bookstock in the adult lending library was 50,000 and shelf capacity was around 33,000 volumes. A completely new bookstock was provided for the department and the fiction collection is the largest of any library in the city including the Manchester Central Library. As befits a library catering for a population of over 100,000 the wide range of general fiction and non fiction is augmented by collections of large print books, ordnance survey maps, car manuals, sheet music and other specialised collections.

A picture loan scheme is in operation. Pioneered in the Manchester system at Wythenshawe and Manchester Central Library on a pilot-scheme basis, the collection, a free service, has been expanded to around 350 available reproductions. The widest possible range of schools and subjects has been covered. Demand for reproductions perpetually outstrips available resources.

Book issues in the department are handled by the reverse-Browne system in use throughout the Manchester libraries. This system, adequate for branch libraries of medium size is not really capable of coping with issues on the scale encountered at Wythenshawe. Issues from Wythenshawe Central Library are currently running at 600,000 per year. (19) An issue of 3,000 made over eight hours on a Saturday is commonplace. This would present no problem with an automated charging system. It is hoped to have some such system in operation in the foreseeable future.
The children's library, whilst operating as a separate department in terms of staff, stock and issue procedures is not physically divided from the adult lending library. Apart from purely aesthetic considerations of "open planning", the social aspects of library use were considered when the building was planned. A physical division between adult and junior services was not considered conducive to the use of the library as a family activity and since the age when a child becomes ready to use the adult library and accept the attendant responsibilities varies from individual to individual, it was felt inappropriate to place any barrier, physical or in terms of library regulations between the use of the two departments. Tickets are completely interchangeable and only in the case of a completely unsuitable choice being made by a child would the staff intervene. Surprisingly perhaps, adults make extensive use of the children's library, not always on behalf of their children. The only unfavourable comments on this arrangement have come from adults, frequently old age pensioners, who object to the resultant noise level. Whilst it seems reasonable that a member of the public should be able to find "peace and quiet" in a library, as indeed they can on the reference floor, it is not felt right that this should be to the exclusion of other legitimate groups of users.

The children's library has a stock of 20,000 volumes. Initial reaction to the opening of this department has been overwhelming. Issues average 120,000 per year (20) and single daily issues of 800 are not uncommon. Approaches were made to all primary schools within reasonable travelling distance and as a result the majority visit the library on a class basis. In 1974 some 30 schools were doing so regularly. (21)

Certain contributory factors account for this success: library provision
in Manchester schools tends to be minimal and consequently greater demands fall on the public libraries. The other facilities in the Forum, particularly the sports centre, tend to attract school parties and individuals who make use of the various facilities available at the Forum in the same visit. The existence of a professional theatre company within the Forum enables the activities of the children's library staff especially in the area of extension activities to be augmented by the expertise of trained actors. The theatre company, in cooperation with the library run a winter series of "theatre-related" activities for children. This is seen not as a "lead-in" to the use of books but as a worthwhile activity in itself.

On the first floor is the reference library. Accommodating some 18,000 volumes and a substantial periodicals collection, the reference library is much larger than provided in any other area of the city. The reasoning behind this level of provision is worth explanation. It has been claimed that Manchester's largest industry is education. The great variety of educational establishments within the City, universities, teaching hospitals, colleges of technology, colleges of education, art schools and music colleges tend to support this view. The Manchester Central Library, a scholarly and commercial reference library of national reputation exists in part to cope with the demands of the many educational establishments which are Manchester based. Built in 1935, the Central Library is now hard put to cope with the demand not only for information but for accommodation for the student population.

The creation of a new library at the far south of Manchester provided an opportunity not only to cope with the reference demands of Wythenshawe but to provide a south Manchester alternative to the Manchester Central Library.
Accordingly, provision was made to seat 100 students, and 8 study carrels were provided for postgraduate research. The existence of the Manchester Central Library some eight miles away, with its incomparable resources, has meant that Wythenshawe has been left to cater for some more popular aspects of reference provision. Selection policy has been to cater for student requirements up to first degree level and to provide material appropriate to a township of 100,000 people with growing light industrial and commercial interests. Certain material, expensive in terms of provision and storage, such as Parliamentary Papers and Patent Specifications have been left entirely to the specialised departments of the Manchester Central Library.

Attempts have been made to ensure that the reference library is not regarded as the preserve of students. The reference floor is a quiet area where anyone can read or work without interruption. An extensive periodicals collection, some 160 strong, is housed here. A large number of these periodicals are recreational rather than scholastic in content.

The local history collection forms a part of the reference library. As has been pointed out, Wythenshawe was until the 1930's a purely agricultural community. As such it created very little in the way of written records and the local history collection is devoted largely to the “Wythenshawe new town.” The history of the “new town”, one of the first in the United Kingdom has been recorded almost entirely in press articles rather than books. An extensive press cuttings collection has been prepared and both local and national newspapers were scanned for several years before the library opened. Wythenshawe attracts much attention from students of architecture, town planning
and sociology. Its collection on the "new town" is unique. It is obvious that the history of the "new town" is being made now and the library, aware of its responsibilities in chronicling this history, is collecting local printed ephemera and in the medium of tape recording is collecting reminiscences of the older members of the new community.

Back copies of newspapers are gradually being recorded on microfilm and use of a microfilm reader is an important aspect of the departments work. A photocopier is available for use with library or private material. On the same floor is the gramophone record library. The first record library in the Manchester system, it consists of a record collection of 4,500 records. The Manchester Public Libraries first investigated the possibilities of a record collection in 1949 when it was proposed to open this service in the Manchester Central Library. (22) It was felt that the only economically viable basic for a record collection was to make this a service available on subscription and subsequent doubts that the Corporation had the necessary statutory powers to introduce a subscription service led to the project being shelved on several occasions. (23) The planning of Wythenshawe Central Library, seen as a prototype which would set the standard for library services in other areas of the city, gave the opportunity to test public reaction. It was decided to create an "in depth" collection of classical music with some provision for spoken word, jazz and folk music. "Pop" music was excluded until such time as more funds became available. As a result of pressure from the Finance Committee that the record library "should be more self supporting" (24) subscription rates were set at £3 per year for Manchester residents and £6 per year for non-residents. The local press noted that these
subscription rates were "the highest anywhere in the country." After an initial opening period the City Librarian reported on disappointing issue figures and proposed lower subscription rates of £1 for residents and £3 for non-residents. These were accepted and issues increased dramatically. Issues are currently running at 24,481 per year. Three playing decks are provided and users of the library may listen to records through ear-phones without formality. No charge is made for listening to records on the premises. In addition to records the department offers foreign language courses on cassette tapes. These are for use on the premises and users who enrol for a course of lessons are provided with cassette tape, player and instruction manual and are allocated a study carrel to work in.

Completing the public provision on the first floor is the library lecture room. With seating for 100 people the room is equipped with a small stage, a loudspeaker system and adjustable lighting. Facilities include stereo record equipment, 16mm movie projector, automatic slide projector, screen, blackboard and piano.

The room acts first of all as a useful adjunct to work of other departments, where visiting parties may be addressed, where groups may use special material or listen to gramophone records, where children's activities may be staged. Secondly it provides a meeting place for the local community where groups take part in activities organised by the library: lectures, record recitals, and the like. Local groups organise events for themselves: chess meetings, music groups and related activities.

Library involvement in the work of local societies and groups is worthy of more detailed examination elsewhere. It should suffice at this point to outline
the policy of the Cultural Services Department in providing this local activities room.

An advantage of the delay in the provision of a Central Library for Wythenshawe, and indeed the whole Forum, has been that adequate provision for existing needs and those of the immediate future have been included. A typical pattern elsewhere is that adequate services and accommodation lag behind the demand for them. The tradition of the Cultural Services Department and its forerunner the Manchester Public Libraries has always been that of a wider interpretation of the role of a public library as a broadly based cultural centre. A policy statement that has been in use for many years is that the department exists for "the advancement of art, education, drama, science, music and literature." (28) To achieve these ends requires a suitable building, a building not only to house the bookstock but to make possible the exploitation of art, drama and music in their respective media. Few traditional libraries are so equipped, and the cost of making them so is prohibitive. By siting the Wythenshawe Central Library in a cultural and recreational complex this objective can be more easily achieved.

The proposed exploitation of the resources being planned was outlined in a letter from the chairman of the Manchester Libraries Committee. (29) This letter written six years before the Forum was opened, at a time when its whole future was in doubt as a result of the economic climate, is worth repetition in its complete form.

"Well done, the Wythenshawe Express! The greatest need for the Civic Centre is not bricks, mortar and money. It is preparation among the people who will want it and use it." This is an extract from a thoughtful and timely
article which appeared in your issue of 18th November 1965.

How right you are! You might have added .... "and in the Committees who will control it," and as the Libraries Committee, aided by able Wythenshawe Councillors, have given considerable thought to their share in this bold, imaginative scheme, you may wish to add the following as a postscript:

For many years the Libraries Committee have talked, campaigned and worked hard to give Wythenshawe the facilities appropriate to a township of nearly a hundred thousand people. No one is more critical of their limited achievements than the members of the Committee themselves. Seven years ago they seized the opportunity presented by the proposed development of the Civic Centre to suggest a central library for Wythenshawe which would include library theatre no. 2. The suggestion was accepted by the City Council and from that time detailed planning and preparation have been in hand.

Why was the suggestion accepted? Do the people of Wythenshawe need a library and a library theatre? At the moment perhaps or perhaps not: but they will do. Your elected representatives have a dual function, to satisfy immediate needs and to anticipate the needs of the future. Great forces are at work both social and economic. The technological age is bringing in its wake a higher standard of living and longer hours of leisure. A rapidly expanding education system catering for children, young people and adults too, is opening to everyone new and vastly rewarding prospects of fuller, wider and more satisfying lives. In ten years time Wythenshawe without its library and library theatre will be inconceivable.

But what of the near future, the days immediately following the official
opening of the centre? The object of the Libraries Committee is simple and easy to state: the facilities under their control, both library and theatre, must be fully used for the greatest benefit of the greatest number of Wythenshawe citizens. The methods used to attain this object will be flexible, reflecting the developing nature of the community it is intended to serve.

You may think of a library solely as a place where you can get books. This is not as we see it. It is true that books will predominate, and with a library of the size we have planned, we can cover the widest possible range of literature for both adults and children and employ a full complement of professional staff to exploit them for your benefit. But we want this library also to be a veritable dynamo of ideas for the community. You can borrow books or study them in congenial surroundings on the premises, you can also learn a language or borrow a gramophone record or a picture. You will be able to listen to a lecture, attend a gramophone record recital or see a film or take part in a course of study conducted by the W.E.A. or Manchester University's Extra-mural Department. When the National University of the Air is established, the library will be your base - where you will meet your tutors and fellow students - perhaps over a cup of coffee in the restaurant. Indeed, it may well be that it is in the library that you will watch the Television Education Programme. The Library Theatre will complement and extend the services of the Library. Initially the programme may well cover a wide field of music, drama and ballet of both professional and amateur origin, but as the people of Wythenshawe indicate by their patronage on which lines they wish the programme to develop, so we will follow them. Here are a few of our ideas, Christmas is the Children's Festival, let us have a professional production of
a good, clean, straight play for children. Library Theatre no. 1 has proved that parents enjoy it too. But even with matinees this leaves Christmas Saturday mornings free. Why not use this time for the communal singing of Christmas Carols led by a choir of standing? There should be more for the children. English literature can be a dreary subject unless it can be illuminated by a visit to a professional production of the play whose text you must examine in such detail. Here is an item for the programme with an assured audience. Isn't there a place in Library Theatre no. 2 for a Schools Festival of Drama? Moreover wouldn't the more promising youngsters join a Youth Theatre Club to put on a production under professional direction and guidance?

There must be the occasional professional production of a play to stimulate thought, to excite and for pure entertainment: but the Amateur Theatre too has a contribution to make. Let us select the best that the Amateur Dramatic Societies can produce and see how they blossom in a building ideally designed and equipped for this purpose.

Do you like ballet? Not the full-scale productions requiring an opera house and a £50,000 subsidy, but "intimate" ballet, "Murder in the Gorbals", "Check-mate", "Mods and Rockers", and so on. No? but the daughters you send to dancing classes will. Moreover, when the dancing schools put on their displays featuring your daughters, you will want to be in the audience.

Music? the large hall for the Halle Orchestra, but what about the smaller ensemble? Surely there is an audience in Wythenshawe for every type of music from a Haydn quartet to the Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street. Singing? How many churches are there in Wythenshawe? What about a Twelve
Choirs Festival at an appropriate time of year?

Do you remember all the first rate films we used to see which are now mouldering in storage? A time and an audience can be found for them too.

There will be times when Wythenshawe will want to be entertained and there will be times when Wythenshawe will want to provide its own entertainment. On both counts Library Theatre 2 will be the place they turn to. The criterion will be how close to five hundred people can we get into it every night of the week, Wednesday afternoons, every lunch time, Saturday mornings, afternoons and evenings.

We are short neither of ideas nor of the ability to put them into practice but if we were, I would have no hesitation in continuing the project - a powerhouse in Wythenshawe will be self charging."

Nearly ten years later, with several years of operating experience to draw on, Wythenshawe Central Library has fulfilled many of these outline aims. Circumstances change, as do priorities. Community development has become both a resource in the development of services at Wythenshawe Central Library and an objective in itself. The concept of community development will be discussed in detail.
Chapter Five

The concept of community development

In order to discuss the concept of community development and its relevance to Wythenshawe, it is necessary to give some definition to the much used term "community". The difficulties of doing so have been noted by many sociologists "Community is an excellent example of Humpty-Dumpty's portmanteau words: almost any meaning can be stuffed into it." (1) The classic and often quoted definition is now some forty years old. "Any circle of people who live together, who belong together, so that they share not this or that particular interest, but a whole set of interests wide enough and complete enough to include their lives, is a community. Thus, we may designate as a community a tribe, a village, a pioneer settlement, a city or a nation. The mark of a community is that one's life may be lived wholly within it". (2)

Other sociologists have recognised the characteristics of community in relation to "primary groups", that is "people who meet face to face ..... They work together and also play and pray together". (3) The relevance of community to "secondary groups", that is groups whose size make face to face contact less likely, is a more complex consideration. One view is that community in a secondary group, the Wythenshawe new town for example, is more symbolic than factual. "The unity of these secondary or individually related groups is mediated by symbolic means ..... The secondary group is, in a sense, purely a figment of the imagination". (4) It should be recognised, however, that any large town contains an almost infinite number of primary groups within it. These primary groups may be geographical, as in
neighbourhoods, recreational, as in societies and clubs, or occupational as in employees of a particular industry. Inevitably an individual will be a member of several primary groups. Any definition of community should, therefore, take account of the complex relationships which relate individuals to primary groups, and primary groups to secondary groups. "We are dealing with a continuum stretching from clear cases of secondary groups at one end to clear cases of small primary groups at the other, with a vague area somewhere in between them." (5)

Wythenshawe, like all "new towns" is clearly an artificial community and when town planners, architects and social workers talk of "creating a sense of community" they imply the need to invest this artificial community with certain qualities which have enabled traditional communities to function well. "Communities approximating to the ideal type do occasionally exist .... It is not difficult to discover rural villages where most of the inhabitants are related to one another and do the same kind of work and in which for nearly everyone work is close to home." (6) There is however a danger of viewing these traditional "primary group" communities with what has been called "a great deal of Rousseau derived sentimentality". (7)

What have these traditional communities and an artificial community like Wythenshawe in common? As has been pointed out earlier in this thesis, Wythenshawe is, for historical reasons, notably deficient in those attributes: kinship patterns, continuity of occupation, common sources of employment, geographical compactness, which are characteristic of our ideal community as outlined above. It can be argued that these same characteristics engender social conditions which would be plainly unacceptable in Wythenshawe, and
Indeed unacceptable to the great majority throughout the country. "Close identification with one's immediate neighbours is psychologically rewarding. But as this sense of solidarity is inevitably balanced by hostility against those who live rather further away, the overall social advantage of community feeling is an open question." (6) Other constraints exist. "Individuals had little opportunity to change their place of work or their position in the social/economic class hierarchy." (9) It might be added that a close-knit community makes possible the opportunity for tremendous social censure on those failing to conform.

These less acceptable characteristics need weighing against the advantages. "Social theorists of the last 200 years have never understood that if you want liberty and equality, you can't have fraternity as well. It's possible that a lot of people would like fraternity rather than either of the other two. We could try to provide the option, and see how many did. I suspect it would not be a great number. (10)

Clearly then, community development in our context cannot be the adoption of the successful elements of a traditional "primary group" community to an alien artificial community. The way of life which engenders these successful elements, is as a result of economic pressures, fast declining. To resurrect them elsewhere would be absurd.

Community development in Wythenshawe can perhaps be best described as an attempt to speed up the processes of integration which in a traditional community are achieved by evolution. "Since a well functioning community furthers cultural achievements and improves living conditions, we seem justified in attributing a positive value to integration." (11)
As we have seen, there are grave difficulties in arriving at a
definition of community. Equally the dividing line between community
development and social and welfare work generally is almost impossible to
define. To do so would be to consider community development outside its
proper context. In order to discuss the role of a public library in community
development it is necessary to consider the work done by other agencies,
both official and voluntary, in this field. The intention is to indicate areas
of involvement rather than to enumerate specific cases.

The Community Associations (12) were, in Wythenshawe and elsewhere,
created to provide both a mouth piece for the expression of local community
needs and a centre for social activities. The associations, widespread
between the wars, were nurtured by and affiliated to the National Council for
Social Service. This organisation, now re-titled the National Federation of
Community Associations is still in existence, and a branch is active in
Manchester.

Two pieces of legislation, the Housing Act (13) and the Physical Training
and Recreation Act (14) empowered local authorities to provide financial
assistance for the building and maintenance of centres for these associations.
In Manchester the Housing Committee assumed this responsibility until the
provisions of the Education Act (15) superseded the relevant clauses of the
earlier legislation, and responsibility for the centres passed to the Education
Committee. In all, five community centres were opened, two in purpose built
premises and three in old houses which were of an earlier date than the new
estate. Currently, only two remain: (16) the Royal Oak Centre, purpose built
in 1937 and presented by Timpson's, the shoe manufacturers, and Woodhouse
Park built by the Corporation in 1961 and staffed by a full time warden. Inadequate premises and redevelopment plans are said to be the main reason for the closure of the other centres. It could be argued that alternative facilities in schools, evening centres and registered clubs resulted in a falling demand for the centres.

The Education Committee, on assuming responsibility for the Community Associations, made funds available, in close co-operation with responsible voluntary bodies, for the creation of a new post of Community Centre Organiser. In order to cope with the administrative aspects of its responsibility, the Education Committee also created a Community Centre liaison official. This officer was to have special responsibility for the new development areas in Wythenshawe, but for a variety of reasons this post was utilised as a general purpose liaison job for the whole of Manchester. By 1957 the Education Committee had concluded that these two posts were not justified and the administrative responsibilities for the centres were subsequently vested in the newly created Area Principals for Further Education, one of whom had responsibility for the whole of Wythenshawe. The relationship between the Community Associations and the Area Principal will be described later in the chapter.

To return to the early days of the Community Associations, during the first stages of the development of the Wythenshawe estate, three Community Associations were set up at The Cedars, Rackhouse Farm and Royal Oak. These were to become constituent members of the Wythenshawe Residents Association. This Association was intended to give corporate voice to the needs of the new community. During the Second World War the Residents
Association acquired a new role when it was much involved in the provision of comforts funds, Forces canteens and similar ventures. In 1944, under the new name of the Wythenshawe Community Council, the Community Associations were joined by various other bodies to provide a more broadly based and effective organisation. With the return to peacetime came the realisation that many organisations, with their own channels of communication to parent bodies outside Wythenshawe, had a stake in the development of the community.

Accordingly the Wythenshawe Federal Council was set up in 1947. The following decade represented the peak of interest in community affairs. The Federal Council was active in bringing the needs of Wythenshawe to the attention of the Corporation. These representatives were treated with some reserve by the Corporation who felt that such matters could more properly be channelled through elected representatives. In 1951 the Manchester Evening News published a report "How Wythenshawe lives" which outlined many of the problems, social and economic, encountered on the new estate. The background work and research for this report was carried out by the Federal Council. On the cultural front, an annual civic week was produced from 1948 to 1960. Events included a fair, dramatic productions, pageants and a "Miss Wythenshawe" coronation. It was, ironically, financial mismanagement of this annual event and the debts incurred which lead to the demise of the Federal Council in 1961.

As has been pointed out, the Manchester Education Committee had assumed responsibility for the community centres in 1944. Under the same legislation Manchester commenced its provision of evening centres. Planned to cater for "activities which require organisation in groups under informed
and experienced leaders", these centres were to run parallel to the community centres. The first Wythenshawe evening centre opened at Yew Tree in 1951 and currently five are in operation. Based on Secondary Schools, the evening centres have full time heads who maintain administrative offices in the schools concerned. These heads arrange evening classes in non-vocational subjects using the facilities of the schools in which they are based. In many cases teachers from the schools run evening centre courses at night. Subjects promoted range from the traditional dressmaking and pottery to mountain climbing and coastal navigation, but the pattern remains the same.

In many cases, teachers from the schools run evening centre courses at night. Subjects promoted range from the traditional dressmaking and pottery to mountain climbing and coastal navigation, but the pattern remains the same.

Formal study under the direction of a teacher. It is interesting to note that the Yew Tree centre, set up at Yew Tree School bore a marked and officially acknowledged similarity to the Norwerthen Guild, an association pre dating the statutory provision, which promoted recreational evening classes in the years preceding the Second World War.

The evening centres came under the control of the Area Principal for Further Education in 1957 and their work was coordinated with the new Further Education Centre which opened on the Civic Centre Site in 1965. The new centre provides both daytime and evening classes in a wide range of non-vocational subjects. Being purpose built it is equipped with social, canteen and nursery facilities which emphasise its community related functions. The great demand for class provision, however, meant that little accommodation was available for community purposes. In 1968, as a result of a Government decision to disband the Civil Defence Association, an almost new building was acquired at the Civic Centre site and was converted into a social centre.

Staffed by a warden responsible to the Area Principal, the centre makes
accommodation available for hire by local groups and societies at nominal rates.

In 1961 responsibility for the provision of youth clubs passed to the Area Principal and currently he coordinates the work of two full time youth clubs and three part time clubs on school premises. In addition, the Principal is charged with the responsibility of advising and providing assistance to the voluntary youth clubs which exist side by side with those of the local authority.

In consequence of the wide and far reaching responsibilities which the Manchester Education Committee has acquired over the years, and in recognition of the inter relationhip between these areas of responsibility, it was decided in 1974 to set up a community education department within the framework of the Education Committee with responsibility for further education, the evening centres, community associations, youth clubs, play centres and career advice centre. This in itself has been a significant development in the field of community development work.

The Education Committee is not the only Corporation department discharging statutory responsibilities in the community development field, and two other departments warrant consideration. As was mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, several innovations were incorporated in the planning of the new estate, one was the provision, as part of a block of flats, of a meeting room with kitchen facilities. The Housing Committee, as landlord, makes these premises available to a tenants association from the flats. Using the Housing Act legislation already cited, the Committee provides this accommodation at a nominal rent, and in return the tenants association are responsible for cleaning and maintenance of equipment. The association
provides a series of activities of a social nature.

A similar arrangement is made in blocks of flats for the elderly. Four such blocks have an integral community hall which is used for the benefit of the inhabitants and by elderly residents of the neighbourhood. In addition to the usual activities, classes for the able bodied elderly are organised as part of the adult education provision in the area. Resident caretakers run the blocks of flats and inevitably acquire a responsibility for running community activities. A responsibility which, it has been pointed out, is one of a whole range of responsibilities in the welfare and community field which is unrecognised in the rates of pay and conditions of employment of the caretakers.

The Social Services Committee, using the same series of legislation, organises non residential clubs attached to its houses for the incapacitated and elderly. Facilities offered follow the pattern described above. The same Committee makes provision for mid day meal facilities for pensioners. These "luncheon clubs" operate both from Social Service department premises and elsewhere in Wythenshawe, at the Forum for example, where large scale catering facilities exist.

The Social Services Committee also operate in the formal community development area. In 1972, four residential community development officers were appointed in Manchester, one with responsibility for Wythenshawe. This number has now increased to nine. The community development officers operate as part of the research, planning and publicity unit of the Social Services department. The brief of these officers is "to respond to the needs of the community as the community identifies them", terms of reference which, perhaps appropriately, are as indeterminate as the statutory provision under
which they operate.

In addition to the activities of the Corporation, a wide range of voluntary organisations, both Wythenshawe based branches of national organisations and purely local societies, make their contribution to the community. The extent of local activity by such bodies is difficult to assess since many neither seek nor obtain publicity for their activities. An attempt in 1973 to make a comprehensive listing revealed almost two hundred active voluntary organisations and undoubtedly many more exist. For the purposes of this thesis these organisations fall into two categories. The first consists of voluntary welfare bodies, such as the many over sixties clubs or the Wythenshawe Disabled Persons Association. The second category consists of groups with sectional interests such as horticultural societies, drama groups, brass bands, co-operative guilds and angling clubs. Several of these, the horticultural societies for example, date from the earliest days of the estate. The voluntary bodies have certain common characteristics. The publicity they receive bears no relation to the wide scope of their activities, a point which will be investigated elsewhere. They receive no direct support from the Corporation. They meet in private premises, schools and community centres. The contribution of these bodies is at the "grass roots" of community development.

Mention should be made of the work of the churches. All the major denominations are represented at Wythenshawe and in addition are the Plymouth Bretheren, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and various Spiritualist Churches. All promote social activities and work in the welfare field, primarily for their own congregation. Many are members of associations of churches and promote
activities on a non-denominational basis. Beyond this the role of the churches in the community is so well known that no further explanation is needed.

Less well known, but in many ways significant is the contribution of the registered clubs. Their influence in the Wythenshawe community is such that they deserve closer examination. A registered club is one which is established and governed by its membership and is permitted to run bar facilities for their benefit. This should not be confused with a licensed club which is one operated by a commercial organisation for profit.

The registered clubs in Wythenshawe were all founded in the mid 50's and the pattern of provision is identical throughout the country. Breweries finance the building of the clubs by low interest loans and in return gain a monopoly for the provision of alcoholic drinks. The brewers thus gain the benefits of a "tied-house" without the responsibility for maintaining the premises and providing a manager.

To the casual observer the registered clubs might appear to be social drinking centres. Whilst the sale of alcohol is of great importance it would be a mistake to view this outside the wide range of facilities which the clubs provide. Clubs have various affiliations: political, ex-service, religious etc. and their activities are accordingly orientated, but they all share common qualities.

The clubs are organised and governed by the members and since broadly speaking, membership is open to anyone even nominally in sympathy with the particular club's affiliations, political, for example the Wythenshawe Labour Club, religious, St. John's Catholic Working Men's Club etc., are good examples of "grass roots" democracy.
Social activities, not only for members but their families as well are an important feature of that work and holiday outings and children’s parties are regularly staged. The clubs have a welfare function in that some exist largely to look after the interests of certain sections of the community, ex-servicemen for example. Most have welfare groups which organise over-sixties clubs, visit disabled people and raise funds for the disadvantaged.

The clubs themselves, through their provision of sporting activities make up a complex network throughout Wythenshawe. Local leagues for darts, bowling, billiards and match fishing are supported and financed by the clubs.

On the entertainment side all the clubs hold regular popular entertainment and employ paid professional artists. The clubs are regarded as a training ground for commercial theatre, radio and television.

To provide a range of facilities at this level, suitable accommodation is essential. Purpose built premises conform to high standards, far higher than is possible, for example, in the community centres. The clubs are managed by stewards, paid professional managers who through their National organisation, the Working Men's Club and Institute Union (C.I.U.), receive courses of training and are awarded certificates of competence.

In summary, the registered clubs demonstrate many attributes which are conducive to community development. They are democratically organised, they have a social and welfare function, they enjoy premises of a high standard and their management is of an equally high standard. Perhaps most important in practical terms, they are self financing and need no support from the rates.

The necessary finance is achieved entirely from bar profits. As far back as 1953, the newly formed Sharston Community Association, quick to see
the financial benefits which would accrue, sought a bar licence. After considerable altercation this was refused. No statement was made on the reasons for this decision but local opinion suggested that the sale of alcohol on premises frequented by young people was considered unacceptable.

In the light of the continued success of the registered clubs, it might seem appropriate to review this decision. Attitudes towards "demon drink" have become modified in the ensuing twenty years and viewed dispassionately, the moral dilemma appears similar to the possibilities of financing hospital building from the proceeds of public lotteries.

In view of the considerable provision already made in the community development field in Wythenshawe it is worth considering the "qualification" of a public library to operate in the field as well. Community development, as has been pointed out, is difficult to define and many organisations, rate financed and otherwise, make a contribution which is not immediately obvious. A public library has no statutory responsibility for community development, yet in discharging its own statutory responsibility to provide an efficient library service, it brings together members of the community in pursuit of common interest; information and recreation in the most appropriate medium.

In the case of the Wythenshawe Central Library, whose facilities, interrelated with those of the Forum as a whole, reach beyond the resources of the traditional public library, community contact is much enhanced. Before Wythenshawe Central Library opened, an unofficial survey conducted on a random sample basis, concluded that 43% of the Wythenshawe population were members of the public library and 26% used it regularly. (19) The unrealistically high membership percentage was acknowledged as such by the author of the survey.
who attributed it to the inadequacy of his questionnaire. The percentage for regular use accords much more closely with an acceptable membership figure bearing in mind the poor library provision in the area at the time. It is evident that the additional facilities provided in the new Wythenshawe Central Library have improved this percentage, as a detailed analysis in a future chapter will show. It is unlikely that any other organisation in Wythenshawe, official or otherwise, offers a service which one third of the population use on a purely voluntary basis. There is no evidence that figures for library use in Wythenshawe vary greatly from the national average, and on this basis, all public libraries are substantially involved in community development, by design or otherwise.

In Wythenshawe the traditional and committed users of the public library service have been taken as a starting point for community development in the more widely accepted sense.

Corporation activities in Wythenshawe are for reasons which have been outlined in an earlier chapter, regarded with mistrust and hostility. Subjective evidence suggests that this creates problems for those Corporation departments with statutory responsibilities for community development. The library, no less a Corporation undertaking than Social Services, Housing or Education Departments, has however been able to escape this element of mistrust. There are several reasons for this. Use of the library service is entirely voluntary in the sense that circumstances do not "force" individuals to use the service as they are forced to approach the Council for housing accommodation or are required to go to school. By the nature of the services it offers, a library is relatively free from bureaucratic procedures,
in a way that other departments, for equally good reasons, cannot be. A public library, again by the nature of the services it offers, invites the public into its premises where the day to day activities of the staff can be seen and understood. This is in direct contrast to most local government departments whose everyday procedures, conducted outside public view, are often held to be bureaucratic, secretive and exclusive.

Public libraries have an important function of providing impartial information, and in discharging this function, for example in the provision of inspection copies of planning applications, a more acceptable image is created than in the case of the "town hall" where the same applications are considered "behind closed doors".

The public library as an information centre places it in a favourable community development situation in another way. Community development is inextricably linked with community participation. "The process of participation is dependent upon an adequate supply of information to the public." (20)

It has often been suggested that public libraries attempt to be "all things to all men", and by implication, fail to do so. This ambiguity of purpose, is I feel, a positive advantage in the community development field. Well defined objectives encourage those in favour and discourage the rest. As has been pointed out, perhaps the greatest statutory responsibility in the community development field is vested in the Corporation Education Committee, and through it to the Area Principal for Further Education. Inevitably any attempt to discharge this responsibility carries with it implications of a classroom situation and undertones of compulsion. "My fears as a community development worker are that adult education is of necessity formal and instructional when it
could so easily reach out to the community in informal ways to assist in the process of the development of local initiative, leadership and responsibility". (21)

Community development relies to a very great extent on the availability of suitable premises for community activity. As has been pointed out, the failure or success of community associations in Wythenshawe has been decided by the standard of the premises. By the same token the success of the registered clubs in Wythenshawe has been a result, to a large degree, of their ability to provide acceptable premises. In the Forum generally and the library specifically this need is met, meeting rooms are available as are associated catering facilities.

Wythenshawe is not devoid of accommodation for community purposes, the shortage is of suitable accommodation. As material standards rise in the home, so must the standards of accommodation for community purposes. Suitable premises imply not only accommodation but the associated "hardware": audio equipment, loudspeakers, projectors etc. These are now commonplace in many homes. In this aspect, the facilities of the Wythenshawe Central Library should prove adequate.

All local government departments are subject to constraints, and some of these have been outlined in relation to those doing community development work in Wythenshawe. It would be unrealistic to suggest that the library is any exception. Community development activities which take place on library premises need to be consistent with the cultural aims of the department, although the term "cultural" is capable of a very wide interpretation. Provision of "cultural activities" and the objectives of community development provide adequate common ground for the programme which has been undertaken.
Having attempted to justify the involvement of Wythenshawe Central Library in community development work, it is appropriate to consider briefly the techniques which have been employed. In Wythenshawe interest has been aroused in a way which is well known in community development work. "The aim is to encourage and support the growth of local initiative, leadership and responsibility and the formation of strong local groups which are the basis of democratic society". (22)

It was concluded earlier in this chapter that community is only effectively based on "primary groups". It is on the basis of the creation of primary groups in the form of local societies, supported, guided and encouraged by the library, but developed by society members themselves that Wythenshawe Central Library has centred its community development operations.
Chapter Six

An examination of local society activity

The first local Society to be formed at the Wythenshawe Central Library was the Wythenshawe branch of the Workers Educational Association. In the strictest sense this is not a local Society but the local branch of a national organisation. As will emerge later, the Wythenshawe branch has in fact developed similar characteristics to our other local societies.

Several attempts had already been made to promote the work of the W.E.A. in Wythenshawe. Two short courses had been organised by the Manchester branch of this organisation in 1966 and 1967. (1) The Extra Mural Department of Manchester University, a body with similar aims to the W.E.A., and one which works in close liaison, first operated in Wythenshawe in 1950 and again in 1952. (2) An experimental series of six assorted lectures was held in 1966 and a further four meetings in 1967. This handful of courses spread over a period of twenty years before the Wythenshawe Forum opened indicates a failure to sustain interest in Wythenshawe.

When the Forum opened in 1971, the resources of the library lecture room were made available to the W.E.A. and the Extra Mural Department. Three concurrent five week series, on local history, music and drama were jointly promoted by the two bodies. The average weekly attendance at these three courses was in excess of 150. (3) The most popular subjects, local history and music were the subjects of two further courses. (4)

In June 1972 at a public meeting it was decided to form a Wythenshawe branch of the W.E.A. based in the Wythenshawe Central Library, and a committee was formed to take over responsibility for organising courses.
The library was invited to nominate a representative to serve on the committee. (5)

The new branch resolved to promote courses on the most popular subjects, music and local history, on a twenty four week basis. New courses, such as art appreciation were to be tried out on the basis of a five week course. A measure of the success of this provision is that for the music course, 68 students enrolled and out of a maximum possible total of 1662 attendances over twenty four weeks, 1257 were recorded. (6) Two further developments were recorded during the first year. A one day school was organised at the West Wythenshawe College of Further Education, which was attended by 106 students. Three social outings were also arranged. (7)

The pattern over the ensuing two seasons has been one of consolidation. Three long courses were arranged to run concurrently and short courses on new subjects were fitted around these. One day schools and residential weekends were organised and several social events took place, at Christmas and at the end of each long course. (8)

The success of this provision at the Wythenshawe Central Library, in contrast to the failure of earlier efforts, is worthy of examination. The Wythenshawe branch is primarily a locally governed body, albeit with national affiliations, which caters for local needs. By contrast the early W.E.A. efforts were "governed from afar". It is noteworthy that the first courses at Wythenshawe Central Library were similarly organised but within six months there was a movement towards local control.

An advantage of local control is that local needs can be quickly identified and acted upon. Subjects have been continued or dropped, and the tutors
likewise, purely on the basis of acceptability to members. One is tempted to conclude that the traditional pattern of W.E.A. provision is more closely related to the educational objectives of the Association than to the requirements of the members.

Freed from outside control the Wythenshawe branch has been able to develop a social side to its activities which are at least as important to the members as the more formal educational objectives. As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, overtones of formal education are not always conducive to community activity. It has been observed, in relation to W.E.A. activity before Wythenshawe Central Library opened, that "the W.E.A. classes at West Wythenshawe, both in their enrolment and teaching, are of the same kind as is provided in the evening centres .... the differences created are only institutional and financial". (9)

It could be argued that in view of the well established pattern of Adult Education in Wythenshawe today, those seeking educational opportunities only are unlikely to patronise the W.E.A. By implication, what does attract people must therefore be the social atmosphere of the local branch. As has been pointed out, the social activities currently provided are varied and substantial.

The early W.E.A. activities in Wythenshawe were not well supported by local residents. "At a lecture to launch the W.E.A. local history class in Summer 1966, attended only by teachers in Wythenshawe schools, 75% gave home addresses from other areas. (10) By contrast, an attendance register for the Wythenshawe Branch course on local history reveals that 83% of those attending lived in Wythenshawe. (11)

The relationship between the Wythenshawe branch and its parent body
is interesting. It has already been submitted that the strength of the local branch has been its ability to tailor the overall educational function of the W.E.A. to fit the needs and expectations of the local members. The expressed aims of the W.E.A., to bring the benefits of further education to those who were unable to obtain them through formal channels have, as a result of the development of formal education brought about by the 1944 Education Act, less relevance than they had at an earlier period. Consequently the W.E.A. has less appeal to the younger age group. There is a danger that unless the W.E.A. re-defines its functions in the light of the present pattern of formal education, its membership will literally "die out".

In the Wythenshawe branch the preponderance of middle aged and elderly members is marked. There are however, certain advantages in this situation. Many of these middle aged and elderly members have a lifelong commitment to the aims of the W.E.A., and are consequently able to offer enthusiasm, expertise and leadership to the local body.

The problem of lack of leadership is one which bedevils community development work, and this point will be further investigated elsewhere. If then, this leadership and expertise has been available in Wythenshawe for years, why has the W.E.A. failed to develop until recently? The lack of certain resources, only resolved by the opening of the Wythenshawe Forum, is a possible explanation.

The traditional aspects of W.E.A. membership have, in my view, placed a constraint on the type of courses which might otherwise be offered. Whilst local pressure in Wythenshawe has selected or rejected certain subjects, the range of those tried out has been limited to those subjects traditional to the
W.E.A.: music, art, literature, local history, comparative religion etc. It appears unlikely that these subjects alone will attract sufficient young people to ensure the long term future of the organisation.

The Wythenshawe Film Society has its roots as much in the shortage of cinema amenities in Wythenshawe as in the spontaneous desire of the community to form a film society. The proposals for Wythenshawe's post war amenities as laid down in the overall plan for Manchester, (12) called for a cinema on the Civic Centre site. Overriding demands for housing delayed any plans for the development of the Civic Centre until 1958 when it was planned to build a cinema as part of a shop development scheme. (13) The cinema was to be leased to the Rank Organisation, but the project fell through when the nationwide decline in cinema audiences caused this organisation to have second thoughts. (14) Cinema going in Wythenshawe was confined to a cinema operating in Northenden, on the Northern fringe of the area. This was neither convenient of access nor of adequate size to serve the whole of Wythenshawe. There were no plans to incorporate a cinema in the Forum complex, probably because of the obvious decline in audiences. The Libraries Committee accordingly ensured that the Forum theatre was designed to "double" as a cinema and committed themselves to the exploitation of these facilities. "Do you remember all the first rate films we used to see which are now mouldering in storage? A time and an audience can be found for them too". (15)

Since the Forum theatre was to be primarily engaged in the production of a full-time repertory season, it was not practicable to show films on a regular commercial basis, and indeed the powers of the Corporation to do so were open to question. The possibilities of community participation became evident in
the form of a film society to operate on the Corporation's premises.

The problems of setting up a film society are chiefly financial. Basic equipment in the form of projector and screen, of the quality required for public viewing, cost in excess of £1,000. Accommodation suitable for public viewing, is, because of its size and specialised nature, expensive to hire. At the Wythenshawe Forum these problems were easily solved. The theatre, built with a dual use in mind, was equipped to the highest standards of a commercial cinema, with a tiered seating, air conditioning, built in sound equipment, and box office facilities. A projector and screen of suitable quality were installed by the Corporation.

A public meeting was called on 7th August 1972 (16) when use of these facilities, initially free of charge, was offered if a responsible society could be formed. No film society existed in South Manchester and several "unaffiliated" film enthusiasts offered to serve on an initial steering committee. The Librarian of Wythenshawe Central Library was appointed to the committee as a representative of the Corporation, and agreed on a short term basis to act as secretary.

Provision had been made in the theatre production schedules to leave the theatre free on Monday evenings and accordingly a preliminary programme of films was organised. Meetings were held at three weekly intervals throughout the Winter.

The Society is affiliated to the British Federation of Film Societies, a move which is almost mandatory since through this body favourable hire conditions are negotiated with the Kinematographic Renters Association. The policy of the British Federation of Film Societies is to avoid a clash of
interests with the commercial cinemas, and accordingly the Wythenshawe Film Society framed its regulations to ensure that admission to meetings was on the basis of membership to the Society and that finance was arranged through membership fees rather than by "on the door" payments. Quite apart from this consideration, a financial problem existed. Whilst the theatre had been made available free of charge, the hire of films was the responsibility of the Society. The hire charges on a whole seasons films were considerable, and plainly the Society was in no position to risk recouping this money "on the door".

A problem of all film societies is that of the selection policy of films to be shown. An audience can always be found for films which have proved successful on the commercial circuits, but to provide a programme purely on the basis of proven success merely duplicates the efforts of the commercial cinema. To provide films of "minority interest" which have never appeared on the commercial circuit would meet with the approval of committed film society members but would have little interest for outsiders from whom new members must be drawn. The Wythenshawe Film Society decided, for its first season, to adopt a compromise. Films were selected which had proved to be a commercial success and which at the same time were acknowledged as good in the artistic and technical sense. This policy has to a large extent continued in the ensuing seasons although there is evidence that the membership of the Society increasingly favours more "specialist" films, not generally available on the commercial circuits.

Over three seasons, society membership has grown from an initial ninety (17) to over two hundred. (18) It is interesting to note that in accordance
with the recommendations of the British Federation of Film Societies, in order to avoid a clash with the commercial cinemas, it is necessary to strictly limit the publicity which can be given to the programme of the Society. This publicity problem, which will be returned to elsewhere, has undoubtedly been a limiting factor in the growth of the Society.

One problem from a "community development" point of view is that the act of watching a film is not, in itself, a social activity, and there is no element of participation. To a degree this problem is solved by the more recent activities of the Society, which secure on a sound financial basis as a result of its substantial membership, has moved into the "celebrity lecture" field. Freed from the publicity restrictions which only apply to films and not to lectures accompanied by "clips", the Society attracted an audience of over three hundred, many of whom had been unaware of the Society's activities.

The Forum Music Society was created in the knowledge that interest in serious music had manifested itself in several ways during the first year of the Wythenshawe Forum. An initial short course on music, organised by the University Extra Mural Department and the W.E.A. had attracted an average audience of eighty. Interest in the gramophone record library, the first in the Manchester system, had been such that an introductory series of lunchtime record recitals had attracted an average audience of thirty.

A public meeting was held in the library when seventy two members of the public resolved to form a society. Officers and a committee were elected. The intention of the committee was to run a series of "club nights", small scale social events to which visiting speakers, young
recitalists and the members themselves could provide the entertainment. To plan a programme of this nature required funds and it was resolved to stage a public concert as a fund raising venture. The Libraries Department obtained use of the Forum large hall and a local professional pianist gave her services free of charge. An audience of over two hundred attended. Sufficient funds were obtained to arrange a series of seven "club nights". These attracted an average audience of seventy. Encouraged by the success of the first concert, a further seven were promoted drawing average attendances of one hundred and eighty. During this initial season membership of the Society reached one hundred and fifteen.

In making plans for its second season, the Society faced a problem common to many performing arts societies. In order to engage first rate artists it is necessary to pay high fees, and in order to gain revenue to pay these fees it is necessary to attract large audiences. The Society had completed its first season with a tiny deficit and estimated that a deficit of £1,000 would accrue from a series of six concerts featuring international celebrities. Manchester Corporation and other responsible bodies were approached for grants and guarantees and on the basis of these grants the series was booked. Audiences averaged seven hundred and fifty with the best single attendance of 1,150. In parallel a "club night" series of nine events was held.

The next season followed a similar pattern with an expanded programme of twelve concerts and ten "club nights". Developments during the season included a "multi-media" event involving a specially commissioned piece of music and an associated art exhibition.
The very success of the Society has engendered certain community development problems. In order to succeed as a concert giving body, the Society has had to rely on an audience drawn from a much larger area than Wythenshawe itself. Membership of the Society was "broken down" in the first year of operations into sixty Wythenshawe residents out of a total one hundred and fifteen members.\(^{(31)}\) By 1975, residents of the City of Manchester, of which Wythenshawe is a part, accounted for ninety nine out of a total of two hundred and seventy eight members.\(^{(32)}\)

The contribution which a society operating throughout the Greater Manchester conurbation, and indeed further afield, can make to the community of Wythenshawe, is debatable. What is incontrovertable however, is the fact that an international celebrity series is available in Wythenshawe. This would be financially impracticable if the membership was drawn only from Wythenshawe.

The "club night" series conforms more closely with the objectives of community development. Low cost events and meetings limited by the size of the library lecture room, create an informal and social atmosphere where members can meet each other. Whilst the audience is drawn from a large radius for the concert series, the "club night" events draw heavily on the immediate locality for their patronage. The high reputation of the Society attracts an appropriate response from invited speakers and recitalists. Arrangements are made for non-members to attend these "club nights" on a casual basis.

The most recent, and arguably the most spontaneous society to be formed at the Wythenshawe Central Library was the Wythenshawe Chess Club.
A large demand for books on chess, and numerous requests in the reference library for information on chess clubs led the staff to consider the possibility of creation of such a body. No chess club existed in Wythenshawe, and keen players had been forced to travel some distance to experience regular competition chess.

As an alternative to the pattern employed with earlier local societies, it was decided that instead of calling a formal public meeting, the library lecture room should be set out with chess boards and a display of books on chess mounted. The facilities were advertised and members of the public were invited in. There were several reasons for this approach. It was felt that a public meeting provided little incentive to those primarily concerned with the practical side of chess. Young people seemed unlikely to be willing to sit through a formal business meeting. The presence of people actually playing chess appeared to be the best opportunity for attracting public interest.

The reactions of one member of the public, later to become the first Chairman of the Club, are perhaps the best indication of the effectiveness of this approach. "A few short months ago, on Tuesday 15th March 1974 to be precise, I decided on my retirement to seek a quiet game of chess, so in response to the notice which read "come along and play chess, talk chess or just watch chess", I wandered into the library lecture room to do just this. Instead of the expected two or three chess players, I found an unprecedented number of keen and enthusiastic players "asking to be organised into a chess club". (33)

There were in fact, thirty five players present, and by common consent the same facilities were made available on three subsequent meetings. (34)
A steering committee and officers were then elected in order that subscriptions could be levied and admission sought to competitive chess leagues. At the end of the first years operations, membership stood at seventy. The Club fielded five teams in local leagues, two of the teams gaining promotion to superior leagues. One player reached county status. (35)

Whilst the Club has developed a strong competitive side to its activities, it is worth noting the community aspects of its work. Two large scale events were staged in the concourse exhibition area of the Forum. A simultaneous chess match was arranged in which one "celebrity" player opposed twenty five club members. A lightening chess tournament took place in which nearly one hundred players took part. A sum of £350 was raised by these two events which the Club donated to charity. (36)

A most encouraging feature of the Club, both in terms of its future and of its community function, has been the high incidence of junior membership. In addition to the regular club meetings in the lecture room, coaching sessions for juniors are held regularly at a local boys club and at the local social centre. (37)

A recent development has been afternoon chess sessions for senior citizens which the Club organises and supervises. Senior citizens are invited along to these sessions which are advertised by posters distributed to appropriate clubs and welfare departments throughout Wythenshawe. (38) It is appropriate to note the low cost factor of the considerable range of activities organised by the Club. Such expenditure as is required being raised from members subscriptions.

Whilst the local society approach has been adopted as the best method of
organising community activities, some have been operated directly by the library. One such activity has been exhibitions of the work of local artists. As was noted in an earlier chapter, certain local organisations have a history stretching back to the early days of the new estate. One such organisation, an art group, has a considerable reputation in Wythenshawe and beyond. Members and ex members of this group together with "graduates" of many local further education classes on art, have established a vigorous local tradition. The opening of the Wythenshawe Forum created a focal point for Wythenshawe, and as such has proved a suitable exhibition venue. The library lecture room has been equipped to act as a small scale exhibition area and local artists have been quick to request its use.

Local artists are given the opportunity to exhibit their work for a two week period. These exhibitions take place throughout the year on the basis of a two week show followed by a two week gap. The artist takes responsibility for "hanging" the exhibition, drawing up a catalogue and manning the exhibition as he sees fit. The library undertakes publicity for the event and provides security cover. The library lecture room has, of course, a multi purpose function. For much of the year it is in use on each weekday evening by local societies and the room is thrown open to the public at all times when it is free. Since the other local society events attract large audiences into the room, the artist is assured of a large viewing public.

The object of staging these exhibitions is two-fold. The exhibitions widen the scope of cultural activities available in the library and introduce an element of community participation into the activities of the library. Local artists are able, through these facilities, to supplement the more formal
functions of the library. This willingness to contribute to the output of cultural activities is considered more important than the technical standards which the artists have reached. In point of fact the work of local artists who have exhibited is of high standard and this is testified by the considerable volume of sales which artists achieve as a result of their exhibitions in the library. No paintings are removed during the exhibition and no sales take place through the library staff. Artists are however permitted to price their exhibits for disposal at the close of the show. The overwhelming response by local artists has resulted in a steady waiting list of one year for allocation of an exhibition. (39)

The Forum concourse is also utilised, to a smaller extent, for group art shows. Local groups hold annual exhibitions. Members of the groups not only steward these events but use the occasion to publicise their activities and recruit new members.

The element of participation has been introduced into the field of library lectures. A preliminary "Forum Lecture" as the series later became known, was staged soon after the library opened. An audience of one hundred and two was attracted. (40) By 1975 an average audience of one hundred and forty had attended a series of six lectures. (41) Emphasis has always been placed on subjects of local relevance, introduced if possible by local residents. An example of this was a lecture on "Highways and transportation in the Manchester Area". (42) This seemingly mundane subject was in fact a highly emotive issue in Wythenshawe because of local developments. The participation element in the form of question, comment and criticism, was high.

Not all lectures are "provocative" and subjects such as travel, rambling,
local history, all with a local bias, are well received. Careful note is taken of attendance and audience reaction. This information added to suggestions made during the lecture series, ensures that subjects and indeed the lectures, are in effect chosen by the audience, many of whom attend on a regular basis.

Public reaction has, throughout the first three years of operation, been used as a guide to the type of community related activities which have been undertaken. It is felt to be important that these programmes shall be seen to be promoted by popular demand rather than as something imposed on the community irrespective of their views. Early experiments with a poetry group (43) and lunchtime lectures (44) were clearly not attracting local support and were therefore not repeated.
Chapter Seven

"Servicing" local societies

It has been noted elsewhere that accommodation has been an important factor in the development of community activity in Wythenshawe. The failure of three community associations has been attributed to the lack of suitable premises. By contrast, the success of the registered clubs may, in part, be accounted for by their premises.

The provision, at the Wythenshawe Forum, of accommodation ranging from a sixty seat meeting room to the thousand seat large hall, with additional provision for sport, drama, music, films and large scale display accommodation, has obviously created a favourable climate for community development through the creation of local societies.

Whilst one objective of the Forum is to promote cultural and recreational services appropriate to a community of Wythenshawe's size, it would be misleading to suggest that the resources of the building are available without charge to any community group which wishes to take advantage of them. The facilities offered by the Recreational Services Department: the sports centre, large hall, small hall, and three meeting rooms are available to any community group, commercial organisation or individual with the funds to hire them.

Whilst the hire charges are heavily rate subsidised and do not represent the total cost of the provision, they still represent a major expenditure for any local group wishing to meet there. The Cultural Services Department, which controls the library and theatre, sees its "meeting rooms" in the library and theatre in a somewhat different light. These are resources to be used in support of its cultural objectives. The Forum theatre is primarily concerned in the
production of a full time repertory season, although provision is made in the production schedules for cultural activities of a more general nature. When the theatre is not in use for these activities, it can be commercially hired. The facilities are such that the theatre is in great demand. The library lecture room has never been made available for hire. The reasons for this are worth fuller explanation. The lecture room is used for three areas of activity. It is used for internal purposes, that is, staff training sessions, staff meetings etc. It is used to extend the range of cultural activities promoted by the library; lectures and art exhibitions. It is used as a meeting place for local societies and groups. The number of occasions when the room is not in use is so small that it would prove impracticable to offer it for hire. To do so would inevitably create a demand which could only be satisfied at the expense of the local societies who use it free of charge. Rooms of similar size exist elsewhere in the Forum and enquirers are directed to these.

The situation whereby certain rooms in the Forum are available primarily on a hire basis, and others are available without charge may appear to be inconsistent and confusing to the public. To a degree this situation is engendered by the existence of two separate local authority departments, side by side in the same building. In fact the system works well. The meeting room facilities of the Cultural Services Department make it possible for newly formed societies, which are inevitably short of funds, to get "off the ground". As societies gain experience in the control of their affairs, and as they acquire funds they become able to extend their activities in the larger premises available elsewhere in the Forum. This in turn makes accommodation available in the library for new societies. An advantage of this situation is
that the Cultural and Recreational Departments are not involved in competition to hire out their accommodation. It has been suggested that in making accommodation available free of charge to suitable bodies, the library is undercutting the Recreational Services Department who charge for their accommodation. In point of fact this arrangement is mutually beneficial. The Forum Music Society used the library lecture room free of charge, and indeed staged its early concerts in the Forum large hall at the library's expense. As a result of this encouragement it is now a thriving society with several sources of income. The Society is now in a position to hire the Forum large hall for a full season of concerts. The Recreational Services Department are gaining revenue in this, and the large hall is regularly in use for musical functions in a way which would have been impossible without the Forum Music Society.

A problem anticipated when the Societies were first formed, that once installed in premises which cost nothing to use there would be a reluctance to make way for more needy societies, has proved to be unfounded. The Forum Music Society, (1) the Wythenshawe Chess Club (2) and the W.E.A. (3) have all arranged events from venues elsewhere in Wythenshawe. A move which is indicative of growing self-sufficiency.

The standards of accommodation in the Forum are such that even for events for which local societies felt able to pay, they normally prefer to take rooms at the Forum rather than go to alternative accommodation elsewhere in the area. The availability of restaurant, bar and coffee bar is an obvious attraction. Another is that the library normally makes its equipment: piano, stereo record player, projector, screen and blackboard, available to
local societies even if they choose to meet elsewhere in the Forum. As has been pointed out before, accommodation needs not only to be suitable but to be suitably equipped. Some aspects of the Forum provision are simply unavailable elsewhere in Wythenshawe, and conceivably not available in Manchester itself. Examples of this are the Forum large hall and the concourse exhibition area. It is worth noting that the Wythenshawe Civic Week, sponsored by Wythenshawe Federal Council, which "folded up" in 1961, has been revived under the title of Impact: Wythenshawe Festival of the Arts and is based on the Forum building. (4) The week long festival consists of exhibitions and live events. The Forum has proved an ideal base for this enterprise. The Recreational and Cultural Departments make their facilities available and departmental staff take part in the organisation of events. The local societies created at Wythenshawe Central Library are in the forefront of this activity.

It has been pointed out earlier that the amount of publicity received by local societies in the Wythenshawe area has borne no relation to the scope of their activities. By contrast, communities of comparable size elsewhere tend to bring local society activity to public notice, as reference to almost any provincial weekly newspaper will indicate. The disparity where Wythenshawe is concerned is worth investigation. The reasons, I suggest, are related to the fact that Wythenshawe is a new and artificial community. Local societies publicise their activities in two ways. Public attention is drawn to the end product of their activities, the annual play of a dramatic group for example. Attention is also drawn to the activities of a society by a planned publicity campaign, in the form of advertising or of newsworthy items appearing in the local press.

The building of the Wythenshawe Forum fulfilled the need for suitable
premises for staging public performances. Prior to the opening of the Forum, local dramatic groups, operatic groups, silver bands and art groups were forced to stage their activities in unsuitable premises, unsuitable in the sense that church halls, school gymnasiums and community centres are not the best settings for productions which were designed to draw audiences from the whole of Wythenshawe. A feature of the public transport system in Wythenshawe, in common with areas on the periphery of large conurbations elsewhere, is that transport to and from the city centre is usually well organised but transport within the suburb itself is much less satisfactory. The building of the Forum, and indeed of the Civic Centre as a whole has at least created an identifiable focal point for Wythenshawe and a hub for the public transport system.

Prior to the creation of local radio, the provincial press was virtually the only effective medium open to local societies for publicising their events. Wythenshawe’s local paper, the Wythenshawe Express, is a relatively new publication, having started life as the Wythenshawe Recorder in 1948. The Wythenshawe Express is one of a group of South Manchester newspapers which under various titles publishes the same feature items and advertisements through much of the South Manchester area. Truly local news appears in the form of a small number of pages which are inserted. Circulation for this newspaper is around 8,000 per week. Thus, in the formative years of the new estate no local newspaper existed, and at present the local paper is limited both in content and circulation.

It is arguable that because the most effective modes of publicity have not been readily available in Wythenshawe, local societies have been slow to acquire an expertise in these matters. It is evident that lack of expertise has been a
limiting factor in the growth of local societies. It is worth noting however that many of the early local societies in Wythenshawe had strong links with the community associations and centres and shared certain common characteristics in that these societies were seen primarily by the members as community activities. Ideas of development and expansion were therefore of limited importance. This being the case, little virtue was seen in seeking publicity. By contrast, the local societies created at the Wythenshawe Central Library were important not only for their community value but for the cultural activities which they generated. It was recognised that to be effective in both areas publicity was of prime importance. It was on the publicity techniques which the library staff had evolved that the publicity effort for the local societies was to be based.

The problem faced by the library staff in the months immediately before and after the opening of the Wythenshawe Central Library was to make the community of Wythenshawe aware of the facilities of a modern library service, facilities for which there had been no precedent in the area. Initial publicity followed traditional lines: posters, handouts, press releases, visits to schools, societies and commercial concerns. It was felt, however, that a sustained publicity effort through the appropriate media was also necessary. It was decided that the visual side of the publicity effort, posters, handouts and displays mounted throughout the area, and indeed all introductory leaflet material should be professionally designed and executed. The resources of the City Publicity Department were called upon. It was resolved that as soon as possible a trained display artist with a knowledge of typography should be employed for the Wythenshawe Central Library.
Arrangements were made with the editorial staff of the local newspaper that in addition to the traditional items which local newspapers carry on library matters, new additions, book reviews and the like, coverage should be given to news items concerning the library and the Forum. As with many new prestige buildings, the Wythenshawe Forum has been visited by a large number of prominent people. The local newspaper has willingly covered these events and the library has received much useful publicity.

It has been pointed out that the local newspaper suffers from certain limitations. It is clear that the press, not only in Wythenshawe but countrywide as well, no longer has a monopoly as the only news medium. The importance of T.V. and radio is obvious. The opening of the Wythenshawe Central Library coincided with the creation of local radio in Manchester. The opening of "Radio Manchester" and its commercial counterpart "Piccadilly Radio" has had a substantial impact, to the extent that in Wythenshawe it is probably a more important medium than the local press.

Two factors worked in favour of the library. Local radio, being an innovation in Manchester, was initially short of news and consequently was happy to use any material which the library provided. The competition created between the B.B.C. local radio and its commercial counterpart was again a useful factor in gaining news coverage. Not only were news items accepted, but members of the library staff were interviewed on several programmes. To a much smaller extent, the "local news" programme of the B.B.C. and commercial T.V. companies were used in the same way.

The experience gained in the first years of the Wythenshawe Central Library has been made available to our associated local societies, and indeed the local
press and radio have if anything, seen more of the human interest angle in the activities of our local societies than in the library itself.

A substantial mailing list for posters and display material has been built up by the library, and outlets such as other libraries, art galleries, museums, adult education centres and large industrial centres are regularly supplied with publicity posters. The local societies have been given access to these outlets.

It is certain that at no time in the past has there been such competition for the leisure time of the individual. Competition from commercial entertainment organisations, sporting events, cinema, television and the local government recreational sector, is such that local societies and organisations cannot automatically rely on the support of their local community. Regrettable though it may be from a community development standpoint, local societies need to "sell themselves" through the appropriate media.

To return to the question of display work, an important part of this "selling" is through posters, handouts and displays. In order to make the necessary impact it is important that local societies can produce this material to a standard comparable to that employed by other leisure time agencies. The library, as resolved, recruited a trained display artist with responsibility for all graphic work and printing operations. Few local societies, in their formative years at least, have the necessary expertise to undertake this type of work, or indeed the financial resources to pay for it. At Wythenshawe Central Library the local societies are offered the services of the display artist who designs posters, letter headings and general graphic requirements on their behalf.

In order to operate a local society on any scale it is desirable to have
secretarial assistance and office machinery. Whilst in the long term, local societies might acquire their own assistance and equipment, to do so initially would be expensive. It has been the policy of the library to make available its own equipment: duplicator, photocopier etc. for the use of local societies. In the same way initial typing services, mailing lists and even mailing expenses are handled by the library secretarial and clerical staff, and the costs absorbed. The object of this exercise is to enable the societies concerned to operate and gain new members whilst those running the societies gain expertise. There is no evidence that this provision encourages the societies to remain dependent on the library resources. The Forum Music Society, for example owns its own office equipment and now employs a paid administrative officer. (5)

As can be seen, help to associated local societies has always been in the form of "support services". The library itself has never been concerned with cash grants. In practical terms the provision of support services means that such funds as the local societies can raise through subscriptions are free of encumbrance and can be spent in the way the society thinks best. The reasons for providing services instead of cash will be discussed more fully elsewhere.

As the activities of local societies expand, a point frequently arrives when cash flow becomes a major problem. When this occurs sources of income need further investigation. The Cultural Committee of Manchester Corporation have the responsibility for making grants to local cultural organisations. Such organisations are invited annually to apply for a grant. The local societies at Wythenshawe Central Library are free to apply, alongside other local societies not associated in the same way. The fact that a local society has a special
relationship with the Wythenshawe Central Library, and that the library is
controlled by the Cultural Committee, does not mean that our associated
societies receive preferential treatment.

There are certain advantages in this situation. It can be demonstrated
that the library and its staff do not seek to control the societies by "holding
the purse strings". Other local societies cannot claim that special treatment
is accorded by the library to its associated societies.

The policy of the Cultural Committee in considering grants is that
societies and organisations should be encouraged to become self sufficient.
Grants to societies are therefore to aid cash flow problems usually for a
limited period. To support a local society on a permanent basis would be to
encourage the dependence of that society to that extent that it was effectively
operated by the Corporation. By the same token, the Cultural Committee has
usually preferred to give guarantees against loss for a particular undertaking
rather than providing an unconditional grant.

The extent to which the associated local societies have sought financial
aid from the Cultural Committee has tended to vary according to the activities
undertaken. The Forum Music Society, on planning its first Celebrity Concert
series pointed out (6) that whilst "the Libraries department as part of the
general aim to foster an appreciation of the arts and more particularly to
generate the usage of the Forum as a cultural centre" had met the cost of the
hire of the Forum large hall for the first season, financial assistance would
be required if the society were to promote a subsequent season of celebrity
concerts. The society further submitted that the financial loss on promoting
an event featuring an international artist was likely to be proportionately less
than in putting on comparatively unknown artists to which audiences would not come. Acknowledging that the society were unable, from their own resources to plan a series of the kind suggested, the Cultural Committee undertook to pay for the hire of halls and in addition made a grant of £500. This undertaking was consolidated into a cash grant of £1,000 for the subsequent season.

The fact that a local society receives a grant from Manchester Corporation in no way precludes grants from other responsible bodies. In the same season that it received the first Corporation grant, the Forum Music Society were able to obtain grants and guarantees from the National Federation of Music Societies, the North West Arts Association and from various industrial sponsors.

The recent local government reorganisation which has absorbed the old City of Manchester into the Metropolitan County of Greater Manchester has created a favourable situation for bodies such as the Forum Music Society, whose support is now drawn from the whole of Greater Manchester. The two tier system of local government created in Manchester has resulted in both the Manchester District Council and the Greater Manchester Council having the statutory responsibility for supporting the Arts. The Forum Music Society have been quick to take advantage of the situation and have secured support from the Greater Manchester Council, initially for the promotion of one celebrity concert.

The grant aid received by the Forum Music Society provides an interesting example of the complexity of support for the Arts in this country. The Greater Manchester Council draws its funds largely from a rate precept on its constituent District Councils, Manchester amongst them. Manchester District Council and the Greater Manchester Council both support the North West Arts Association.
The National Federation of Music Societies is in turn supported from Arts Council funds which are drawn from central government. It would appear that this complicated system can work to the advantage of enterprising arts societies.

The Wythenshawe Film Society has, secure in the Corporation's provision of accommodation and equipment, required little in the way of cash grants. At the beginning of the 1974/75 season, with most of its funds committed to the hire of films for the forthcoming season, the Society approached the Cultural Committee for a cash grant to enable it to secure an increased membership through a concerted publicity campaign. A sum of £200 was granted as a once only "priming" operation. Membership rose from 134 to 204. Consequent upon this rise in membership, at the end of the season, this sum had been recouped.

The Wythenshawe branch of the Workers Educational Association, in common with other branches throughout the country, receives support from its parent body which in turn obtains funds from central government. The low cost factor of running a chess club has already been noted in an earlier chapter, as indeed has the ability of the club to raise £350 which is donated to charity. There seems little doubt that the same enterprise could, if necessary, make the Club completely self sufficient.

In providing "support services" as outlined in this chapter, the library is seeking to act as a catalyst in encouraging members of the community to operate their particular local societies at a level which in normal circumstances would take several years of operating experience to reach. It would appear that the most effective way of producing this effect is to free the societies from the
constraints which are normally encountered in the form of accommodation, equipment, expertise and financial resources. Since these problems could be resolved by generous cash grants, it is worth pointing out why this is not done.

Local government tends to lurch from one financial crisis to the next and in times of financial stringency, Cultural Services tend to be the most vulnerable sector. Work with local societies, even in pursuit of cultural objectives would obviously be the most vulnerable of all. If however, aid to local societies is in the form of support services these tend to be hidden costs which are less vulnerable. In the situation at the Forum, where the library is part of a complex, most of the necessary resources are already available for local societies, since they are required by the departments in order to discharge formal responsibilities. Thus the dual use of accommodation, publicity, display and secretarial services and equipment is a good example of greater utilisation of existing resources. This utilisation makes sound financial sense.

A problem touched on earlier is that the handling of financial resources involves a certain expertise, one unlikely to be found in a newly formed society. In view of the fact that any such funds would need to come from the ratepayers, a responsibility would exist to ensure that these funds were spent to the best possible effect and in accordance with strict conditions of accountability.

The problem of accountability for public funds, and the way in which independence and self determination can be achieved by local societies who have an initial dependence on the library, will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Eight

Self determination and library representation

Having invested its resources: accommodation, expertise and 'support services' in an effort to stimulate local society activity, the library has inevitably been involved in the policy decisions of the societies concerned. The form in which the library is represented on the governing body of the various societies is worth investigation. The societies have been involved, even in their short life span, in an evolutionary process. In some cases the objectives of the societies are substantially different from the ones resolved at their creation. In line with these evolutionary changes have been changes in the form of library representation.

The objective of the library has always been clear: to give such assistance as is required to enable groups of people to follow common interests through the creation of local societies. Further, to encourage these local societies to self sufficiency. In the normal course of events this development takes place over a considerable period of time. In its effort to speed up this process the library has injected certain elements. Perhaps the most significant is that of leadership.

Being an "artificial" community, and a recent one at that, Wythenshawe has no tradition of community leadership. In common with other new communities, the hereditary element of leadership, that of the squire or resident local gentry, is plainly inappropriate. It might be argued that the element of hereditary leadership is no longer appropriate to a long established community either. From what sources then, might community leadership come? "In the absence of any positive and deliberate means of training for the managerial tasks of voluntary
service it is possible only to wait for leaders to "turn up." It is an article of faith among many professional workers that they do". (1)

Two types of leader, well known in community development work "turn up". There are "experienced indigenous leaders", those who have been trained by their previous experience. "This kind of leader can often bring knowledge of how things are done, of committee procedure and an understanding of organisational matters, as well as an extremely valuable initiative - ability to get people to do things together". (2) A community of over 100,000 people might be assumed to have produced a considerable volume of leaders of this type. This has not proved to be the case. The reasons, I feel lie in the ambiguous relationship between Wythenshawe and Manchester. The most obvious source of experience, as defined above, is in local politics. The community of Wythenshawe might, until the local government reorganisation of 1974 at least be considered to be an appropriate basis for an independent local government unit. Communities on the periphery of Wythenshawe: Sale, Altrincham, Cheadle and Gatley, were all independent local government units, yet all were smaller.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population per Councillor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheadle and Gatley U.D.C.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>2,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough of Sale</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>2,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough of Altrincham</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>1,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Borough of Rochdale</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>93,000</td>
<td>2,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wythenshawe</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>103,000</td>
<td>6,866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the above data shows, (3) the opportunities for developing leadership
expertise through local government participation, as an elected councillor, are considerably less than in surrounding areas.

Allied to this lack of opportunity is the fact that local councillors are not highly regarded in the local community and there is, therefore, little prestige in seeking election. Not only are there insufficient numbers of councillors to represent the interests of 103,000 people, but circumstances dictate a lack of effective power for Wythenshawe Councillors. Having been elected, the fifteen Wythenshawe Councillors, unlike their counterparts in surrounding areas, do not form the decision making body of their local authority. The Wythenshawe Councillors comprise less than 15% of the Manchester City Council. Inevitably this lack of effective power undermines the confidence which the electors place in them. The system of poor numerical representation outlined has to some degree been altered by the 1974 local government reorganisation. Altered not in the sense that Wythenshawe now has greater representation, rather that the smaller surrounding authorities have been absorbed into larger units and their representation adjusted accordingly.

It is worth mentioning that leadership expertise falls not only on the elected councillors but also on unsuccessful candidates and party workers generally. Wythenshawe, for obvious historical reasons, tends to be a "one party" area. With occasional exceptions, the fifteen Wythenshawe seats all fall to the Labour Party. Since other parties feel they have little chance of making inroads into this majority, they tend to contest seats intermittently or not at all. This means that there is no effective opposition to the Labour Party and there is a consequent diminution of the type of party rivalry which might be expected to provide leadership expertise. Whilst the Labour Party "machine"
is well organised and active, the leadership expertise which it engenders tends to be devoted to the activities of the "Labour Clubs" in the area, rather than to the wider community. These clubs, however, make perhaps the most effective contribution of all to community development in Wythenshawe.

It might be thought that the general disinterest in local politics, as indicated by one survey which revealed "only 27 of the author's survey knew the name of at least one local councillor, yet many of the latter frequently had correspondence printed in the Wythenshawe Express as leaders of the local community", (5) might lead to movements for community participation outside the local government representation system. Moves of this type have occurred, but it has been suggested that the Corporation has tended to discourage any community leadership which sought to operate outside the elected representatives. An example cited was the Corporation's attitude towards the Community Associations in 1947, when, "the Community Associations were not recognised by the Special Committee [of Manchester Corporation] either as representatives or in themselves competent to have a part in the democratic processes of consultation on planning and amenity matters, or in the building up of a sense of communal responsibility". (6)

Given that the experienced "indigenous leader" is, for the reasons outlined, not to be found in the expected numbers in Wythenshawe, it is necessary to look for other types of leader. During the last thirty years great stress has been placed on the acquisition of leadership qualities, not by experience, but by training. "The art and science of administering the social groups, large and small, which are increasingly characteristic of our civilisation, has emerged during the past quarter of a century as a technical skill. Today, prolonged
experience of a particular kind of group is of substantially less importance as a qualification than ability to administer per se. And such ability is to a decreasing degree a question of empirical skill, of experience in the sense of use and work, and increasingly a matter of personal and intellectual equipment. Such equipment includes, besides the obvious qualities of personality and temperament which mark the individual as suited to a position of leadership among his fellows, a mind well versed in the underlying sciences on which the art of administration rests and thoroughly instructed in the principles of the art itself. (7)

Training and experience in leadership are an increasingly important element in qualification for the professions, irrespective of the discipline in which these are acquired. It is therefore to people with professional or technical training that those involved in community work can look to for leadership material. The phenomenon of the professional classes who give their expertise to the community is so well known as to make further comment unnecessary.

Wythenshawe, as in so many other things, is an exception to the normal pattern in this matter. The reasons, as in so many other things can be traced to the dogma of the protagonists of the new estate. Wythenshawe lacks a balanced social structure and has an unnaturally low proportion of residents with professional skills. The somewhat complex reasons for this imbalance have been investigated more fully earlier in this thesis. The pertinent facts will however be mentioned here. Wythenshawe has a preponderance of "manual" workers, a pattern which is consistent with the low incidence of private housing on the estate. Whilst the Corporation theoretically encouraged private
development, in practise very little was allowed. Consequently, professional workers, who traditionally sought private housing, were unable to find suitable houses in an otherwise desirable area. The adjoining areas of Heald Green, Wilmslow, Sale and Altrincham, where private housing is available, are well known commuter areas for professional people employed in Manchester.

The policy of the Corporation on local employment was that trading estates should be set up to encourage the growth of light industry. Whilst this policy has created local employment it has been almost entirely in the manual skilled and semi skilled categories. Very few professional and technical posts have been created. In recent years there has been evidence of efforts by the Corporation to promote Wythenshawe as a suitable location for commercial concerns. The tendency for national organisations to de-centralise from London, and to some extent from Manchester town centre, has resulted in the siting of two computer centres and several laboratory premises on or near the Wythenshawe town centre site. In other circumstances this might have brought an influx of professional workers into the Wythenshawe community. Two factors have prevented this, Wythenshawe now has a "reputation" as the largest council housing estate in the United Kingdom, and even if these professional workers wished to buy a house in Wythenshawe, very few are available. The only private housing developments are small scale "infilling" between Corporation sites. These are in no way large enough to alter the imbalance of private and Corporation housing.

The low incidence of professional and technical workers resident in Wythenshawe begs the question of how a community of over 100,000 people functions without a "professional" class. The answer lies in the overwhelming
Influence of Manchester Corporation in Wythenshawe. As the appropriate authority it employs teachers, social workers, housing officials, transport officials, recreational services staff and indeed librarians. In practical terms the Corporation through its individual departments, employs almost the whole "executive" of the Wythenshawe community. Given this corpus of specialised knowledge and leadership expertise, why does leadership come from this source? Like other professional workers, this "executive" tends to seek private housing available only elsewhere. It is to the place of residence rather than employment that individuals make their community contribution.

Undoubtedly a considerable contribution to community development is made by these officers in their day to day work. Certain factors militate against a closer involvement. The mistrust of the Corporation, manifested frequently by Wythenshawe residents, must inevitably apply in some degree to its officials. It is an article of faith amongst community development workers that leadership must, to be effective in the long term, be voluntary and unpaid leadership. In these days when so many "leisure activities" are effectively organised, directed and led by professionals, commercial or rate supported, this "article of faith" warrants in the view of some observers, careful re-consideration, "these are traditions of voluntary service standing in the way of progress". (3)

In the hope that leadership would at some stage emerge from the ranks of the local societies, it was decided that initially the Wythenshawe Central Library should offer members of its own senior staff as officers and committee members. At no time was it suggested that this should be any other than a
short term expedient.

It is interesting to note the differing degrees of participation required of the library staff by the various local societies. The Wythenshawe branch of the W.E.A., as has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, was able to call on considerable expertise from its own long term supporters, and consequently a member of the library staff was elected as an ordinary committee member at the inaugural meeting. Less favourably placed was the Wythenshawe Film Society which whilst able to call on several members with a considerable knowledge of the film as an art form, had no one with administrative expertise. The librarian of the Wythenshawe Central Library undertook to act as secretary and the general manager of the theatre company undertook to act as treasurer. The latter was a particularly good example of appropriate expertise, since in his capacity as theatre manager he was well versed in the techniques of public performances, seating arrangements, pricing policies and general accountancy. In a somewhat similar vein, at the inaugural meeting of the Forum Music Society, the gramophone record librarian from Wythenshawe Central Library agreed to act as secretary to the new society. In this instance one of the inaugural members of the society with financial expertise was elected as treasurer. A further member of the library staff was elected on to the steering committee. The Wythenshawe Chess Club, the least formal society to grow up at the Forum, was also fortunate in that several inaugural members of the club had "management" experience at other chess clubs. A member of the library staff was asked to join the committee.

In the ensuing years, and it should be noted that none of these societies
were formed earlier than 1972, the role of the library staff has changed rapidly from that of elected officer or committee member responsible to the membership at large, to that of representative of the Cultural Department responsible to the Cultural Committee of Manchester Corporation and adopting a liaison role with the local society concerned. The mechanics of this alteration of roles is worth explanation. It was a firm decision by the Cultural Services staff at Wythenshawe that as members of staff left to take up appointments elsewhere, their posts with the local societies should go to members of the society rather than become hereditary. The position of members of the Cultural Services staff was however complicated by the fact that they had also become official representatives of that department on the committee of certain local societies.

The policy of the Manchester Cultural Services Committee has been, in relation to the associated local societies at Wythenshawe, and to other bodies elsewhere, that in return for cash grants and equivalent services, it acquired the right to nominate representatives to serve on the committee of the body concerned. It has been this policy which has shaped the pattern of departmental representation with local societies.

The Wythenshawe branch of the W.E.A. has never sought, or indeed needed a cash grant from the Corporation. As a branch of a national organisation, the Wythenshawe W.E.A. is bound by a model constitution adopted by all branches. This constitution would not easily accommodate special representation of the Corporation. In accord with its ability, outlined elsewhere, to adopt a national organisation to local needs, the Wythenshawe branch has appointed the librarian of Wythenshawe Central Library as its branch president. This is a post which
carries full voting powers at branch committee meetings and yet is not subject to re-election at the annual general meeting. This post has been held in turn by two librarians, both of whom have had an interest in the work of the W.E.A. It is understood, however, by both the branch and the Cultural Services staff, that the post is not an appointment "as of right".

The Wythenshawe Film Society, by contrast, has a rather more formal arrangement. In consequence of its receipt not only of large scale accommodation but also of cash grants, the Society has made provision on its governing body, for two representatives of the Cultural Services Committee. This representation is specified by the Cultural Committee as "one elected member [i.e. a local councillor] and one officer". As the librarian and theatre general manager left to take up other posts, office holders from within the Society were appointed. The librarian had, in addition to his post as secretary, acted as the officer representing the Cultural Services Committee. His successor as librarian also succeeded to the Cultural Services Committee nomination and serves on the governing committee of the society purely in that capacity. The elected Chairman of the Wythenshawe Film Society happened to be a Manchester City Councillor, and at present serves as the other Cultural Committee representative. This dual function is by accident rather than by design.

The Forum Music Society, with two library staff already serving on its committee, one as the secretary, were asked to accept an elected member of the City Council on to its governing body in return for a cash grant and services. As the two members of the library staff left to take up other posts, they were replaced from within the Society. In consequence of the close liaison over the Music Society "Club Nights", a member of the library staff
staff was invited by the Society to serve on its club night sub-committee on a co-opted basis. (12) This arrangement lasted until the Society achieved the status of a "company limited by guarantee". (13) The Cultural Committee continue to nominate, on a year to year basis, an elected member to serve on this body.

The Wythenshawe Chess Club, not so far in need of a cash grant, has as a matter of form made provision in its constitution for a representative of the Cultural Committee to serve on the governing body. (14) The Cultural Committee have so far appointed a senior member of the Wythenshawe library staff in this capacity.

What then is the function of a library representative? Whilst the objectives of the Cultural Services Department and the local societies were initially identical, and it is to be hoped that they will always be compatible, it is obvious that in the long term the same individual cannot safeguard the interests of the two bodies. If the concept of self determination for a local society is to be a reality, its policy must be formulated and acted upon according to the wishes of the members. The role of the library representative therefore is to make the policy of the Cultural Services Department clear and to ensure that the resources of the department: accommodation and services, are being used by the society in a way which is compatible with the statutory responsibilities and policy decisions of the Cultural Services Committee.

It should be stressed however that the change in function which the library representatives have undertaken, is not a sudden one. It is rather one of changing emphasis and as has been pointed out this change in role works at different speeds in different societies. The presence of a non elected committee member on the
governing body of a local society is not however only in the interests of the Cultural Services Department. There are advantages to the societies beyond the provision of physical resources which this representation offers. The library representative can offer unobtrusive assistance in "oiling the wheels" of committee procedure. The presence of a committee member with no personal "stake" in the society can prove beneficial in averting personality clashes which frequently hinder committee work. In the same way the authority of a newly elected and possibly inexperienced society official can be unobtrusively bolstered. Whilst it is possible for any experienced committee member to adopt this supportive role, the nominated representative may do so free from suspicion of personal advancement since it is clearly understood that these representatives will neither seek nor accept any other office within the society. In contrast to the initial situation, no employee of the Cultural Services Department now serves in any elected capacity, either as committee member or officer to any associated local society.

It is appropriate at this stage to outline the extent to which self determination has been achieved by the societies. In practice, the societies are dependent on the library only insofar as they receive free accommodation. Each society has its own governing body and elected officers. All the societies associated with the library accept a representative of the Cultural Services Committee on to their governing body. In practice these representatives abstain from the exercise of their voting powers. In view of the fact that the representatives are in a minority on the governing bodies of the societies, they could at any time be outvoted. The role is one of liaison rather than effective power. It was pointed out earlier that all the associated
local societies, with the exception of the Wythenshawe Film Society which has very specialised accommodation requirements, have used accommodation outside the Forum on occasion. As the activities of individual societies expand it is inevitable that they use more outside accommodation. At this dependence on library accommodation lessens, so does the influence of the library on the society.

Some of the societies have from time to time been in receipt of Cultural Committee grants, but these are in no way under the control of the Cultural Services staff. Nor are the grants automatically awarded to "associated" local societies at Wythenshawe. Any representation sought by the Cultural Committee can only effectively last whilst the grant is in force, and since the policy of this committee is to avoid permanent subsidy, any influence which it may have is purely transitional.

In practice, neither the receipt of grants nor the use of accommodation and services have inhibited the actions of the societies in pursuit of what they considered to be their best interests. The use of the local press and radio, a public relations exercise largely acquired as a result of library expertise, has on occasion been employed by the local societies in order to secure a better deal from the Corporation. "Cash threatens society," A music society said today that it may have to close because its grant from Manchester City Council is likely to be halved next year. The Forum Music Society which has attracted artists of international reputation at the Forum had hoped for a long term financial guarantee .... the society's chairman and artistic director called the effects of the reduction 'extremely serious'. "If £500 is the only support we are going to get there is a possibility that we might have to close down". (15)
Leaving aside the merits or otherwise of this particular campaign, the fact that both the societies and the Corporation accept these tactics is the best indication that the societies are responsible independent bodies rather than a convenient device for the activities of the Corporation's Cultural Services Department.
Chapter Nine

Benefits to the traditional library service

Throughout the preceding chapters two closely related aspects of the Wythenshawe Central Library have been investigated in detail: the development of the library as a cultural centre, and community involvement both as a resource and as an objective in itself. The relationship between these activities and the traditional "book based" library services is worth investigation.

The apparent clash of interests between the two aspects of library work is perhaps the most emotive issue in the public library service today. It is interesting to note how rapidly views have changed by reference to the statement of the Library Association some fifteen years ago. "The first duty of the Public Library is to satisfy the reading needs of the individual .... It is not considered a proper extension of library functions for the librarian to initiate such activities as amateur dramatics, art exhibitions, pageants, concerts, formal instruction classes. In the small community he may well be called on to help in such activities, but his function is not that of a curator, concert manager or entertainments manager". (1)

Whilst this was far from a unanimous view, it is clear that this represented the majority view of senior Public Librarians at the time. It is perhaps fair comment that these views were moulded by years of post war austerity and fears that such activities could only flourish at the expense of already inadequate book funds. One view of the objections raised to cultural activities was "most of these discussions, it must be said, missed the point that Public Libraries can be and ought to be different things in different places. In practice the amount of extension work undertaken tended to be determined less by theoretical
considerations than by the needs of the area and the extent of provision by other organisations. (2)

Whilst it would appear that in the ensuing years the majority view of these theoretical considerations is changing, the chief practical factors, availability of additional funds rather than reallocation of existing funds, and the extent of cultural provision by existing agencies, remain the same.

At Wythenshawe neither of these factors have created an insuperable problem. The tradition of the Manchester Public Libraries has been one of the co-existence of a "book based" library provision with the concept of the library as a broadly cultural service. This co-existence is exemplified by the provision of one of the best known scholarly public reference libraries in the United Kingdom, the Manchester Central Library, alongside the provision of the only professional theatrical repertory company in the United Kingdom to be operated by a library authority. This view is best summed up in a policy statement by the Cultural Committee "to exploit to the fullest extent, the resources of the department in buildings, staff, material and finance in the advancement of art, education, drama, science, music and literature". (3)

Wythenshawe, being a relatively new community has never been endowed with, nor has it developed cultural agencies which might have effectively served the needs of the community. The Wythenshawe Central Library has, consequently, acquired this role unchallenged. As this form of provision was anticipated, the library has been designed to fulfil both a traditional library function and a broadly cultural one. It is true to say that the clash of interest between these two areas of library provision is in many cases engendered by the lack of adequate premises to fulfil both objectives. To function adequately
as a cultural centre, a library needs additional resources of accommodation and equipment. To attempt to function without these resources can only be done to the detriment of the more traditional library functions. At Wythenshawe both areas of provision take place in purpose built accommodation which exist side by side.

The problems of financing cultural activities to the detriment of the book fund, again, does not occur at Wythenshawe. The low cost factor of cultural activities organised by local groups and societies has already been alluded to and will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. In fairness it should be stated that this low cost provision is only possible because of the existence of accommodation for local society activities. This provision has necessitated extensive capital investment by the Corporation.

The provision of book based activities and of more general cultural activities is seen at Wythenshawe as being complementary. The dangers of attempting a cultural activities programme when the book based service is inadequate, are well known. "It seems hardly necessary to mention that all extension work must be supported by an adequate library service, which means a first class book stock served by a good staff in at least reasonable accommodation. Indeed, without these prerequisites, it would not only be wrong to embark on an ambitious extension programme, but, moreover, it would in many ways be useless, for deficiencies in book stock, to take one instance only, would quickly become apparent and the library, instead of benefitting from its extra activities, would be discredited. In the same way, over preoccupation with the organisation of activities at the expense of normal library work cannot fail to affect adversely the whole of library work and it is
important, therefore, that extension activity be treated as a function of the library just as are assistance to readers, the book reservation service, etc. 

The criteria of adequate stock, staff and accommodation having been satisfied to the extent that cultural activities are not detrimental to their provision, it is appropriate to examine the tangible benefits which have been brought to the library user by the application of community development techniques to the cultural activities undertaken. In quantitative terms, taking the last complete year as an example, some 250 evenings of cultural activities and 126 days of exhibitions have been provided by community involvement in the activities of the library. These figures are best viewed in the context of the library being open to the public on 304 days in the same period.

It should be stressed that this range of activities, covering art shows, concerts, films, chess matches and a wide range of educational classes is only practicable in the context of community participation. Such a wide range of activities would, without question, be beyond the resources of the Cultural Services Department in terms of available expertise, staff time and financial resources.

In point of fact the administrative burden of this range of activities is borne by the governing bodies of the local societies concerned, who by virtue of the terms of their individual society constitutions work in an unpaid and voluntary capacity. Given that it might be possible for a paid administrative team to organise this range of activities more quickly and possibly more efficiently, it is inconceivable that it could be done at the same low cost factor.

In a purely hypothetical situation that the Cultural Services Committee
felt it desirable that a similar range of events be professionally promoted by
its own staff, and problems of increased establishments and additional costs
will ensure that the situation remains hypothetical. It would be impossible to
match the operating costs of the various local societies. Reference has been
made to the grants received from such bodies as the National Federation of
Music Societies and the North West Arts Association. These grants are of
course made only to bona-fide cultural organisations and could not be made to
a local government department. The Library Theatre Company, whose
contribution to the cultural life of the region is incontestable, is in the same
way disbarred from the receipt of North West Arts Association funds. A
further example of low operating costs is the preferential rates at which the
Wythenshawe Film Society is able to secure its films. By virtue of
membership of the British Federation of Film Societies it is possible to hire
films at a fraction of the cost which a commercial organisation would be
charged. This concession is only available to genuine film societies. The
Cultural Services Department as such would be considered a commercial
organisation.

The problems in the Cultural Services Department operating these
activities professionally are not only financial. The possibilities of the
department running film shows at the Forum were investigated, and in view
of the dubious legality of the operation, (7) the idea was shelved. Leaving
aside the legalities of the situation, local authorities are traditionally
sensitive to suggestions that they are setting up in unfair competition to
commercial organisations. Undoubtedly this would be a factor in "direct
promotions" of both film and musical events.
Whilst the most tangible benefits of the Wythenshawe Central Library provision have been the wide range of non bibliographical activities made available in addition to the book based services rather than at their expense, certain other benefits accrue.

Some attention has already been given to the feeling of alienation by the inhabitants of Wythenshawe in relation to their local authority, Manchester Corporation. Whilst apathy towards the local authority is perhaps a national phenomenon; local circumstances, chiefly historical, make it a major issue in Wythenshawe. The inhabitants feel that they are excluded from participation in issues which affect their way of life and welfare. There is, of course, a built in participatory element in the operation of a public library in so far as the customers tend to dictate the kind of bookstock maintained purely by demanding the types of books they wish to read and rejecting those they feel to be inappropriate. This is however "low key" participation which is unrecognised by most customers. In general the element of participation in decisions affecting the services of a book based public library tends to be low. This is, however, not the case with the broader cultural activities at Wythenshawe, where a large participatory element flourishes, and from which the library benefits greatly. Whilst this participation is of small significance against the type of participation being sought in planning and environmental matters, it at least has a beneficial effect on the public image of the library and perhaps diminishes the bureaucratic image which all local authority services tend to acquire.

Allied to participation is the question of communication between library and borrower. The move towards larger libraries with specialised services,
and away from small "uneconomical" service points, as manifested in Wythenshawe and indeed throughout much of the country, tends to reduce personal contact between borrower and staff. Automated issue systems and other mechanisation will further continue this trend. Lacking face to face contact with the consumer, library staff tend to fall back on "negative" methods as outlined above: discovering what people do not want by a process of rejection and therefore deducing what they might want.

The process of working with local groups towards cultural objectives does however re-introduce this face to face contact with the consumer. Since in the Wythenshawe situation most senior members of the library staff liaise with local groups both to carry out the "business" of the group concerned and in the context of the growing number of purely social events which are promoted, valuable information on many aspects of the library's work, bibliographical and otherwise, is gleaned through these extra-mural contacts.

"How does one ascertain needs of the local community, or, I would prefer to say, the potentialities of the local community? There is a theory, not tested, that the elected representatives have their finger on the pulse of the local community; they know the needs, the potentialities of the local community. This could once have been true, though I doubt if it is true now, and may be even less true when local government is reorganised. True, local associations and local societies may express certain demands, but there may be other needs which have never managed to secure recognition by local societies and which may continue to be ignored. Is ascertainment of needs a function of the public librarian?" (8) On one point raised by this quotation it is only necessary to say that local societies and groups comprise of individuals and that information is
gained on individual needs as well as on the corporate needs of the societies which individuals represent.

The value of communication in the Wythenshawe context is perhaps best demonstrated in the report of an experimental series of lectures organised in Wythenshawe by the Extra Mural Department of Manchester University in 1966. "Not one of Wythenshawe's Citizens was asked if they wanted to have the lectures or if they would like to help organise them". It was concluded that "if voluntary students vote with their feet, this was a verdict of non concern". (9)

Apart from the issues of communication and participation can the book based library service be seen to have benefitted in quantifiable terms from its close association with cultural activities generally? Since no direct parallel to Wythenshawe Central Library exists elsewhere, direct comparisons are not possible. It is possible however to use the yardstick of national patterns of library use. Surveys of library use made on different samples and in different geographical areas tend to produce common results. "Provincial surveys also confirmed the increasingly middle class character of library membership .... we see very clearly the low percentage of library use amongst those of elementary education and those engaged in semi skilled or unskilled employments". (10)

The most comprehensive survey of library use and users, (11) provides, quite incidentally, useful comparisons for Wythenshawe since Chester and Eccles, two library services in the proximity of Manchester were used as a basis for the survey. In terms of a national yardstick, "North country library members seem very like those in other parts of Britain and also the United States. On such aspects, the claim of this survey to have wider relevance is in part based". (12)
This survey pinpoints the proportionately high incidence of public library membership amongst those from the younger age group, from those with non-manual occupations and from those occupying private as opposed to council housing. (13)

The proportionately low incidence of precisely these characteristics amongst Wythenshawe inhabitants was examined in some detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. It might be expected, therefore, that library membership in Wythenshawe would be substantially below the national average. In point of fact this is not so. Using as the criterion for assessment "members of all ages are usually shown as a proportion of total resident population", (14) the following figures are reached.

Wythenshawe 30.06% (15) National Average 28.8% (16)

In terms of issues it should be noted that the national trend of recent years has been a steady reduction of issues. (17) On a local basis, only the increasing issues of the Wythenshawe Central Library have arrested a similar decline in the issues of the Manchester Public Libraries as a whole. Excluding the issues recorded at Wythenshawe Central Library, a decline in issues has been recorded each year for the past four years. (18) By contrast the Wythenshawe Central Library has recorded steadily increasing issues over the same period (19) and is now in terms of lending issues, the busiest service point in the whole Manchester system, including the Manchester Central Library which in addition to its "indigenous" membership, benefits from issues made to an even larger number of members from outside the City. (20)

It would be convenient to conclude that the issues recorded at the Wythenshawe Central Library are being enhanced by the relationship between
book-based services and cultural activities, but on present information this cannot be proven. It would seem reasonable to conclude, however, that as issues and membership are higher than might have been expected having regard to national and local trends and purely local socio-economic factors, special circumstances exist to engender this situation. It would seem equally reasonable to discount the "curiosity" value of a new building and bookstock, since the library is now in its fifth year of operation. The obvious special circumstance at Wythenshawe is the siting of a major district library in a cultural and recreational complex with the result that a wide range of activities, many "community" orientated, is made available. This range of activities has greater "pulling power" than the traditional library building, however well stocked.

It is submitted that the close association between traditional library services and broadly cultural activities has proved mutually beneficial.
Chapter Ten

The Wythenshawe experience and its wider relevance

In order to discuss the relevance of the Wythenshawe Central Library to problems of library provision encountered elsewhere, it is necessary to consider how far Wythenshawe is typical of new developments generally. The circumstances of Wythenshawe's creation are such that in some ways it is unique.

The term "New Town" frequently used to describe new developments generally, has in fact a strict definition which excludes the Wythenshawe development. A "New Town" is one sanctioned by a specific Act of Parliament (1) and developed by a Development Corporation as created by this Act. In its more generally understood context the New Town movement is a continuum with its roots in the philosophical speculation of More, Swift and Butler, stretching through the "enlightened" housing developments of the nineteenth century at Bournville and Port Sunlight, the "garden city" movement of Sir Ebenezer Howard as exemplified by Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City, to the much lauded Cumbernauld New Town of the seventies.

Wythenshawe, although linked to the "garden city" movement by the work of Barry Parker who had worked on the Letchworth project, can more properly be grouped with the developments at Becontree and Dagenham in Essex. In common with these developments, Wythenshawe sprang from the housing needs of an industrial community which lacked the available space to satisfy them. In the case of the London County Council, estates were purchased in Essex. In the case of Manchester an estate was purchased in Cheshire. Special circumstances which existed in Manchester at the time and which have been
examined in detail elsewhere in this thesis, dictated the development of Wythenshawe as a "satellite garden town" (2) and as such is unique in the "New Town" spectrum.

The problems of the Wythenshawe community today have, in my view, three root causes: the monolithic influence of Manchester Corporation, the special relationship which exists between the community of Wythenshawe and the City of Manchester, and the political attitudes of the protagonists of the Wythenshawe scheme.

To these root causes which, viewed retrospectively, could have been avoided, must be added problems of timing which hindered the development of Wythenshawe, and in my view could not have been avoided. Plans for Wythenshawe's development were held up by both the owner of the estate, who was reluctant to sell and then the existing local authority which felt unable to work in conjunction with the City of Manchester and was unwilling to relinquish its powers in Manchester's favour. The delay engendered by this situation, allied to the 1930's recession and the interruption of the Second World War resulted in a development period which was unequalled by its contemporary projects at Becontree and Dagenham and which succeeded in creating problems for the Wythenshawe community faster than they were being solved.

Many of these early problems have not however been repeated in later developments elsewhere. The problems of post war reconstruction and a long term policy underlying the creation of New Towns were formulated by two Royal Commissions (3) from which sprang the New Towns Act authorising the creation of Development Corporations to be responsible for the construction of New Towns. In summary the procedure is that the Minister of Housing and
and Local Government designates a suitable area for development and has the right to buy land compulsorily, to freeze land values and to use Exchequer money to this end. The Minister then appoints a chairman and members of the Development Corporation who have the power to build houses and roads and to provide water and sewerage. This is not a "crown body" nor is it a local authority. A Development Corporation exists side by side with the local authority which carries out its normal responsibilities in respect of the New Town area.

In considering in detail the powers and responsibilities of a Development Corporation it is useful to observe how far the inherent problems of the Wythenshawe development could have been solved by such a body. As has been pointed out, the early delays at Wythenshawe were caused by the reluctance of the owner of the estate to sell and this having been achieved, the reluctance of the existing local authorities, Bucklow Rural District Council and Cheshire County Council to undertake sewerage and road work schemes which Manchester was unable to execute until it became the local authority by Act of Parliament. A Development Corporation has these powers.

Reference has been made to the many problems in Wythenshawe which have been engendered by the situation whereby Manchester Corporation was both landlord and local authority. The Commission which preceded the New Town Act was aware of this type of problem "a large majority thought that it would be unwise to combine in a single body the functions of a landowner of practically a whole town and the functions of the local authority." The provisions of the Act reflected this view "the Development Corporations do not replace but work with, the existing local statutory authorities in the designated area of the New
Town .... Two or three members of the Development Corporation are drawn from the local council .... The local councillors who are members of a Development Corporation do not, however, act as representatives of their Councils". (5) By contrast the nearest approach in the Wythenshawe situation to a special development body was the Wythenshawe Special Committee, consisting of City Councillors appointed on a cross committee basis.

The satellite status which Wythenshawe occupies in relation to Manchester, one which was actually encouraged by the protagonists of the scheme and which is effectively enforced by the lack of employment in Wythenshawe, has with good reason been highlighted as the basis for Wythenshawe's failure to develop as a viable community. This situation is one which the Development Corporations are at pains to avoid. "First comes the general policy objective. The aim of most of the New Towns is to relieve pressure on overcrowding in the big cities of London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester or Glasgow. For social and economic reasons the site of a New Town must be within a reasonable distance away - not too near to be in danger of coalescing, destroying green belts or encouraging commuting". (6) In practical terms, this satellite relationship can best be avoided by the creation of local employment. "The pre-war experience of the large out county housing estates, from which many people were expected to travel back to London to work, had long since been recognised as a mistake. The additional rents and fares - small though they seem by today's levels, forced many to give up their houses and move back into the crowded cities. In those days local authorities built just houses and the occasional shop, with little or no provision for employment. The huge pre-war L. C. C. estate at Dagenham was rescued almost at the eleventh hour by Ford's
decision to open a car factory". (7) Faced with the need to create employment, a Development Corporation is in a position to achieve much more than a local authority "under the Government’s policy for the location of industry in the country as a whole, industrial development is guided by the Department of Industry to areas where it is most needed in the local and national interest: in carrying out this policy the Department gives high priority to the New Towns". (8)

It was suggested that a further "root cause" of Wythenshawe’s present day problems lies in the political attitudes of the protagonists of the scheme. One manifestation was that house ownership was largely vested in the Corporation. This policy has engendered a poorly balanced social and occupational structure in the community and has ensured that continuity of occupation between generations is not the normal pattern in Wythenshawe.

In general terms, the composition of members of a Development Corporation, determined by the Minister concerned, can at least balance out the political view of its members. Members of a Development Corporation, unlike councillors in local government, are not elected, they are therefore less vulnerable to party political pressure. In specific terms the policy of the New Town Corporations on house ownership is clear. "The aim in the newer New Towns is to have about half the houses to let, and the other half owner occupied, and the older Corporations, who have built a much higher proportion of houses to let, are being encouraged to sell some of their rented houses in order to achieve eventually something like this same 50-50 balance". (9) The advantages of a representative social mix were recognised by the original Commission of Enquiry. "So long as social classes exist, all must be represented in it". Further the Commission stressed the importance of a "socially homogeneous
community". This policy has been criticized in similar terms to those used to justify the policy adopted at Wythenshawe. "It seems to run counter to the social ends inherent in the original New Town idea .... in their desire to recruit at all costs a sizeable middle class element the Development Corporation appear to have rejected certain aspects of policy and to have adapted to certain social and political pressures". (10)

Having adopted policies designed to obviate the kind of situation encountered at Wythenshawe and similar developments, it is perhaps appropriate to ask whether they have had the desired effect. Whilst all New Towns suffer from social and community problems, these problems cannot be so closely related to the social structure of the community as they can in the Wythenshawe situation. It has been observed, and indeed demonstrated statistically (11) that the socio-economic and age structures of the New Town populations correlate closely with the national average "most New Towns can claim to have achieved [a socially homogeneous community] both in the cross section of their people which compares reasonably well with the national average and by the degree of participation of all sections of the community in the social, sporting and cultural life of the town". (12) It could perhaps be that many of the problems encountered in the designated New Towns are better publicized versions of those common in our society at large. It has been demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis that in terms of the socio-economic and age structures which make up a socially homogeneous community, Wythenshawe is in a disadvantaged situation at least in relation to the overall pattern in this country. A position which the Development Corporations of the designated New Towns have been able to avoid or at least minimize.
It is easy with the benefit of hindsight to criticise the Wythenshawe project, especially by comparison to the designated New Towns. It should be borne in mind however that just as the new town movement of the forties and fifties sprang from the wartime determination "that there should be no return to the unemployment, slums and planless chaos of the thirties .... action was needed, concrete proof that preparations were really being made for the day when peace would break through", (13) the Wythenshawe project was a fruit of the "homes fit for heroes" campaign of the War some thirty years earlier. In this thirty years ideas on physical and social planning had radically changed. It was only as a result of the inordinate time span of the Wythenshawe development that its completion was in the same generation as the designated New Towns.

If viewed essentially as a product of the thirties, a decade which held slum clearance and rehousing amongst its greater priorities, the Wythenshawe project appears in a more favourable light. As the realisation of a plan to build 25,000 houses for a population of 100,000 people, the Wythenshawe project must be given credit, even by the standards of the seventies. By the standards of the thirties, the strategy which produced housing on this scale, to standards: architectural, constructional and environmental, which were unprecedented in terms of municipal housing, the Wythenshawe development must be considered a substantial achievement. The Wythenshawe of the sixties was one with a huge community lacking the social, commercial and recreational facilities to which it was entitled, a legacy which contributed to the many community problems evident today. In view of the huge housing shortage which still exists in this country it seems evident that the policy of houses first, amenities afterwards was
It could be argued that in terms of ultimate provision of facilities, the long delay at Wythenshawe, unfortunate though it was in community terms, has not been an altogether bad thing. The development of the Civic Centre site, with its social, commercial and recreational facilities has produced a town centre which at least equals the majority of the New Towns. A Wythenshawe that had developed as planned before the Second World War is unlikely to have been so well served.

It will be seen from the foregoing conclusions that Wythenshawe differs to a considerable degree from the designated New Towns. Not all new developments are necessarily designated as New Towns since many large estates are built by the local housing authority on the periphery of its own area or in some cases in another local authority area nearby. These "overspill" have many characteristics similar to Wythenshawe. "Many people on local authority housing lists have chosen to go to such estates: some from slum clearance schemes have had to go. The great attraction is a house with a garden. Such a move usually involves a journey to work, exchanging an urban environment for a semi rural one where there are less commercial entertainments, fewer shops (often more expensive) a general lack of amenities, less employment for women and often higher rents and a considerable pressure to "keep up with the Joneses". On the credit side there is the clean air and absence of the dirt and dust of the city. There are new and well equipped schools for the children, a garden and an opportunity to help build the new environment in which the family will live". (14)

What separates Wythenshawe from the "overspill development" is size.
"Overspill estates are often described as satellites of a large city. Satellites and estates built on the periphery of a town may have only a few hundred houses or a population of several thousand". (15) Wythenshawe, with its current population of 103,000 poses rather greater problems in its search for a corporate identity. It is interesting that the 1957 Housing Act (16) makes specific provision to cope with the problems experienced by the City of Manchester in its early attempts to site Wythenshawe in an adjoining local authority area. The same Act stressed the commercial and recreational needs of the inhabitants of overspill estates, a reflection no doubt, of the fact that the needs of local authority overspill estates were no less than those of the designated New Towns.

In Wythenshawe we see a unique development, a new town in all but official designation, planned and partially executed before the provisions of the New Town Act were drawn up. Provisions which would have ensured that Wythenshawe would not today be disadvantaged in the areas which have been considered by this thesis. Wythenshawe displays many of the characteristics of an overspill estate yet clearly its size shows it to be something apart. As a contribution to the needs of the Wythenshawe community, and in the hope that a spirit of corporate identity would emerge, a unique recreational and cultural complex, the Wythenshawe Forum, was built. A constituent part of the Forum was the Wythenshawe Central Library, probably the largest and possibly the best equipped branch library in the United Kingdom. To resolve what aspects of this library provision might prove appropriate elsewhere it is useful to consider what this provision has achieved within its community.

In terms of traditional aspects of public library provision it can be claimed that the Wythenshawe facilities represent good professional practice in
first rate accommodation appropriate to a population of 103,000 people. In terms of non-bibliographical activities it is clear that considerable public support has been achieved for a wide range of cultural activities at a very low cost factor. In terms of achievement in the field of community development, there is a danger in a thesis of this kind that the role of the library and its importance becomes exaggerated. The library will not solve the vast community problems which Wythenshawe experiences. The contribution of the library will inevitably be small in relation to the activities of those official agencies with statutory responsibilities for community development, and in relation to certain voluntary agencies, notably the registered clubs, whose achievements are perhaps more worthwhile in that they spring from spontaneous community action rather than official patronage. At best the library is complementary to the role of these other agencies. In the past public libraries have suffered from what might be described as the ivory-tower syndrome. "An important aspect of the future development of library services lies in the relationships which libraries have with their local committees. Libraries have in the past tended to remain aloof and apart from the life around them and they must now become more involved. There are tremendous opportunities for all kinds of active involvement in the lives of local communities". (17)

It is by this willingness to be involved, and to involve the community in its cultural output that Wythenshawe Central Library would hope to be judged. It is as a catalyst in the community development function that the library has its greatest part to play. If the success of those local groups "sponsored" by the library encourages other groups within the community to organise themselves
along similar lines in pursuit of their particular objectives, culturally orientated or otherwise, then a useful purpose will have been served. If in its work with local groups the library is seen to be a community resource rather than as yet another "service" wished upon the area by an all powerful local authority, the contribution of the library to an overall community development strategy will have been successful.

It is relevant at this point to note the compatibility of the community development activities with the more traditional bibliographical function of the library. It has become fashionable in some quarters to proclaim the irrelevance of the "book based" service to present day community needs. Experience at Wythenshawe has indicated, very clearly, in terms of high issues and favourable membership figures, that even in a community with little tradition of a formal library service, "book based" activities are much in demand. Furthermore these book based services form the foundation from which all other activities are undertaken.

A conclusion which can be drawn from the Wythenshawe situation is the need for public libraries to adjust to the specific needs of their community. There has been a tendency in the past to assume that the public library, successful insofar as a service patronised by only one third of the population can be considered successful, will be automatically effective irrespective of the community in which it is located. In marketing terms this is a classic example of a product orientated strategy when a consumer orientated strategy is plainly more appropriate.

It is clear that too often in the past, libraries have been planned in isolation from their environment. Whilst recommended standards on
accommodation; bookstock and staffing are obviously essential and have been observed in the planning of new libraries. It appears that the function of the library in its individual community has been less well considered. In part this is a result of the narrow departmental structure of local government: the committee responsible for library services deciding what form library provision should take in a particular area, a decision which all too often was made to facilitate uniformity of provision within a particular system, rather than to meet special needs. It is implicit in the local government reorganisation of 1974, that a corporate approach to local government activities was essential both in terms of economics and effectiveness. If a corporate structure, now common in local authorities, ensures the pooling of expertise and resources in planning matters, then this isolationist view of libraries should be a thing of the past. Library provision should become, as a result of access to authoritative information on community structures, part of a corporate approach to local government provision. Manchester, because of its size and history has experienced most of the phenomena which lead to the provision of new library buildings: satellite communities, slum clearance, and urban renewal, and consequently provides both good and bad solutions to the problems of library provision.

Wythenshawe is, of course, a "New Town" situation, and the planning strategy has been clear; to provide a modern library service as a corporate part of a recreational and cultural complex catering for a population of 103,000 in such a way as to make the complex a focal point of the town centre development. Quantitative results have indicated that the strategy has been successful. It should be said, however, that this corporate approach to the needs of the community was
facilitated by the economic viability of a complex building rather than by the
discerned needs of the community.

A successor to the Wythenshawe Forum was the Abraham Moss Centre
on the Northern perimeter of the City. The Cheetham - Crumpsall area
presented a problem of Urban renewal: a long established community with a
thriving community life which faced the problems engendered by facilities,
educational, recreational, cultural and commercial, which had become sub-
standard. The solution in this case was a complex building housing a
comprehensive school, a college of further education, a recreation centre, a
youth club, a social centre and a major district library. The building covers
some eight acres and provides a centre which tangibly links many component
parts of community life.

An even more recent development has been the Education Precinct Centre.
A large extension of the Manchester University campus, sited immediately
South of the City Centre has embodied a shopping precinct and library designed
to cater for the growing residential population of the university. The campus
is already well equipped to cope with the academic library requirements of its
own community. As might be expected the campus is similarly well equipped
with facilities for social and community activity. The Education Precinct
Library is an attempt to provide recreational reading and audio visual material
in an informal setting.

By contrast to these library projects tailored to individual community
needs, the first major post war library development in the City was at Hulme.
Slum property and war damage led to the wholesale reconstruction of the area,
largely in the form of medium and high rise flats. The library, opened in 1965,
was completed very early in the redevelopment, pre dating most of the housing.

It represented all that was prestigious by the standards of the time, with facilities including a coffee bar, unequalled elsewhere in Manchester. It has recorded consistently disappointing issues. Since 1971, as a consequence of road reconstruction it has become increasingly isolated from the community it serves and issues have declined further. (13) The major problem has been that the library, which might have proved vastly successful in a middle class suburb, was unrelated to the needs of a newly settled population with a high percentage of immigrants. It should be added, however, that serious attempts have been made to change the role of the library, insofar as is possible within its physical limitations, to accord with community needs. Whilst issues remain low, a legacy of the inappropriate bookstock, the library is fulfilling a role as a community advice centre, political surgery and community activities base. It is further hoped that as the "style" of its bookstock changes, some improvement in issues will occur. There are lessons to be learned not only in the unfortunate initial provision for the Hulme area but also from its willingness to adapt to the needs of its community as they are manifested.

Many observers have drawn attention to the phenomenon of change within our society. It seems probable that with increased mobility, educational opportunities and technological advances, the pattern of our society is to be one of accelerating change. This change must of course be reflected in patterns of community provision. The difficulties of forecasting community needs, even for a decade hence, are considerable. "In preparing for the future and deciding how we want to see our libraries developing, there is no point in taking a short term view. Technological change is rapid and the pace is still increasing, but
social change lags far behind and shows few signs of hastening itself unless there are events whose approach we cannot yet see (or will not see). So we need to look ahead twenty-five or thirty years, to the twenty-first century in fact, to obtain the necessary perspective for the kinds of sweeping changes which are envisaged. (19) One solution is an increased element of flexibility, both in terms of multi purpose function and in terms of the facility to re-arrange internal structures to accommodate changes in emphasis within existing buildings.

Given that library services will need to re-appraise their role more frequently and adapt accordingly in the light of public expectation, it would appear that one resource in this process of continuous re-evaluation, will become increasingly important, that of community consultation and participation. The concept has been summarised as follows: "to enable people who want to take part in decision making to feel that they can at least be fully informed and consulted before it is too late: to diminish the sense of an other-directed, remote controlled society which probably has a lot to do with current grumblings about our political institutions". (20) It is fashionable to say that participation leads to better decisions. It might be more accurate to say that participation leads to more acceptable decisions. It would be naive to suggest, for example, that participation would have precluded planning errors at Hulme. It might well have led, however, to a more appropriate stock selection. If library provision is to be a process of continuous re-evaluation it would appear that "ongoing" participation is vital. The pattern of library provision at Wythenshawe, especially in the non bibliographic areas owes immensely more to the wishes of the public who chose to participate than it does to the professional judgement of
librarians. Further, in times of economic crisis and these are now part of our way of life, members of the public are, I suggest, more disposed to defend that which they have helped to create than that which has been wished on them.

It is clear that public participation in the running of local government affairs, not only in the electoral sense but in the sense of participation in the decision making process, is a trend which is likely to increase, official recognition of this trend is implicit in the Skeffington Report. It is equally clear that many of those concerned in local government: elected members and officers, see this as a move to be resisted. The feeling expressed by some elected members, that participation is "short circuiting" the time-honoured process whereby democratically elected representatives make decisions on behalf of those who elect them, has its roots much deeper than the current interest in participation. Instances have been cited elsewhere in this thesis of similar resistance in Wythenshawe in the forties and fifties. The resistance which officers display to public participation seems to be based on two premises, both with some justification. It was suggested earlier that participation produces acceptable decisions rather than the best decisions. The tradition in local government has been told that public acceptability is a matter between councillor and his electorate, the function of the officer being to use his expertise to produce the most appropriate solutions for the consideration of the elected members. To make decisions on any other grounds than these obviously causes grave misgivings. The second premise is that an officer is employed for his expertise and professional ethics, and to allow participation in the decision making process by members of the public, not similarly qualified or experienced is a rebuttal of the standards of that officer. Whilst these feelings are rarely
stated in so many words, and the degree to which officers would endorse these ideas varies enormously, librarians no less than other local government professionals, see themselves as arbiters of standards of service to the public. The validity of this view seems to me to be subject to erosion on several counts. When public libraries were more of a formal educational force than they are today, the gulf between the educational standards of the customers and of the librarian were obviously considerable. Educational patterns of our generation have ensured that this is no longer automatically the case. In terms of intellectual attainment the public at large are better equipped than ever before to make a valid contribution. The view that librarians or any other professionals in local government, automatically know best about their own services is also being called into question from within local government. The 1974 local government reorganisation and the report which inspired it (21) stressed the need for a corporate approach and recommended a contraction of the unwieldy departmental structure of local authorities. In the field of public librarianship only a minority of chief librarians are now departmental chief officers, (22) a larger number of former library departments now forming part of a cultural or recreational department, albeit with a former librarian often being appointed its director. This inevitably means that library services are seen as part of a much larger enterprise and that professional practice and its underlying ethics are becoming the subject of critical scrutiny in the search for rationalisation of resources and measures of effectiveness. It seems clear that the management of library services will eventually be achieved by a team effort of officers with multi disciplinary qualifications and backgrounds. Those aspects of the much vaunted professional skill of the librarian which can survive this type of
scrutiny will surely have little to fear from the scrutiny which public participation would bring. There will inevitably be areas where decisions must be made in the light of technical expertise. Equally there will be other areas where considered public participation will ensure that decisions are made in the light of both experience and expectation by the consumer. Participation can be seen as the interference by members of the public in the legitimate responsibility of both the elected member and the officer. More positively it can be viewed in terms of what is happening at Wythenshawe and elsewhere: the extension of the role of the library in the community by the development of a range of activities which are beyond the ability, in terms of time, money and expertise, of the library authority to provide. In the long term this participation of effort will fail if not matched by participation in decision making.

Constant reference has been made throughout this thesis to the degree in which the library at Wythenshawe has gained from its situation as part of a complex. The advantages in terms of available accommodation are obvious. No library built in isolation is likely to have access to accommodation for its activities ranging from a lecture room seating 100, through to an assembly hall seating 250, a theatre equipped as a cinema seating 500 to a concert hall seating 1,000. No library built in isolation is likely to have a coffee bar, licensed bars and a restaurant, extensive cloakroom accommodation and large display areas. Whilst these are resources of great value, what is perhaps more valuable is the "spin-off" effect of presenting a range of cultural and recreational activities under one roof. Whilst the compatibility of a major library and repertory theatre has never been questioned, doubts were raised about the wisdom of siting a library
alongside a public bar and hall frequently used for "pop" concerts and all-in wrestling tournaments. In practice this has caused no problems. As was pointed out earlier, evidence in the form of issue and membership statistics, suggests that the library gains from its association with other cultural and recreational activities whilst losing nothing more than its "ivory tower" image. The proximity of a theatre and recreational complex has given the library staff access to a wide range of expertise more common to the entertainment industry than to the traditional library. If libraries are to expand their activities and to become cultural centres, this multi-disciplinary approach is vital.

Whilst the Wythenshawe Forum is a solution to a possibly unique problem, and there are many library situations, notably low population areas, where it would be inappropriate to make this type of provision, the indications are that factors quite unrelated to the advantages outlined above will dictate that this type of provision will become increasingly common.

The decision to incorporate the various departmental services projected at Wythenshawe into a complex building was taken purely on grounds of economy. Costings showed that a complex building would be considerably cheaper than if separate buildings were constructed on a campus. Further economies in the form of common services such as heating, ventilation and car parking, then became possible. The same economic arguments are of course valid elsewhere and are now becoming official policy. "The cost of land and buildings, and the cost effectiveness approach which is equally common in local government have drawn attention to the under use of valuable property. As a result, much thought is already being given to the multi purpose use of local authority (and in particular educational) premises". (23) It is interesting to note that at a time
when the Wythenshawe Forum was "on the drawing board" very strong advice on this matter was being given by Central Government. "The community cannot afford to put up any expensive buildings for limited use, our capital resources must be exploited to the full and I intend to consider ways and means of bringing this about in all new library buildings". (24) This type of provision is now more widespread. The last three library projects in Manchester have all been part of complex developments. This complex development need not be confined to major projects. In rural areas, where library buildings tend to be small scale the "library, clinic, youth club" grouping and its variants is becoming popular. Whilst this grouping is also based on economic grounds, the advantages for the scope of library activities are considerable.

The economic argument is supported by changes in the structure of local government. "If public libraries are to become cultural centres, this will require change in professional education and outlook. The "extension activities" of our professional jargon are just entertainment, for which there is a great and growing demand. Cultural entertainment is also a legitimate activity of the educational service: enterprising museums and civic theatres are entering the field of live arts in general. Given the broad requirements for leisure opportunities some local authorities have placed all of their cultural services in one department under a co-ordinating officer, usually the Chief Librarian, a combined cultural department is likely to appeal to many authorities as one answer to the recommendation for an immediate and drastic reduction in the number of committees, which has been made by the influential 'Maud Committee'. (25)

In the event of reorganisation this rationalisation of departmental function
went even further in some cases. Librarians became part of "Recreation" or "Leisure Activities". Given departments with this wide range of activities, building of the "complex" type seem the most satisfactory way of discharging these multiple functions. A problem noted earlier was that the Wythenshawe Forum does suffer from being under the control of separate Culture and Recreation departments.

In Manchester the concept of a cultural department preceded its official designation by many years. In some ways the cultural activities of the Forum complex are a product of the corporate approach to cultural provision which was a reality before the local government reorganisation officially designated it so. The Library Theatre Company had operated as part of the Manchester Public Libraries since 1952. Manchester was the first library authority to run a professional repertory company. In 1970 a Cultural Committee was formed to which the Director of Art Galleries, City Librarian and Theatre Licensee reported, although the Libraries and Art Galleries continued to operate parallel departmental structures. This purely local reorganisation was brought about in recognition of the compatibility of function between the departments and in view of the fact that membership of the two old committees was almost identical. By the local government reorganisation in 1974 Manchester Cultural Committee had already achieved a clear identity and method of approach. The Wythenshawe Forum was therefore one of the earlier working examples of this broad cultural approach.

Wythenshawe Forum is unique, it is unlikely to be duplicated. The pattern will probably be adapted to suit local needs in Manchester and further afield. Its range of services will, and already are being improved upon elsewhere. Its
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Civic Centre Development - As proposed in City of Manchester Plan 1945

1. Public Hall  
2. Public Offices  
3. Main Health Centre  
4. Public Library  
5. Public Baths  
6. Community Centre  
7. Sub-divisional Police Station  
8. Fire Station  
9. Residential Hotel  
10. Church  
11. Assembly Hall  
12. Bus Station  
13. Filling Station  
14. Car Park  
15. Shops  
16. Cinema  
17. Public House
Civic Centre Development - As proposed in 1969, and largely as completed by 1975

A. Forum Complex
B. Shops, offices etc.
C. Flats
D. Second stage shops & offices
E. Multi-storey car parks
F. Retail Market
G. Restaurant and Night Club
H. Offices
J. Day Nursery
K. Petrol Filling Station
L. Clinic
M. Hotel
N. Crown Offices
O. Social Centre
P. Probation Office
Q. Residential Development
R. Park & recreational facilities
S. Computer Centre
T. Methodist Church