



THE LONDON PRAT *January 3, 2010*

South Oxfordshire District Hosts International Tournament Of Game Nobody Else Plays

Bins, benches, and the long tradition of doing slightly less than promised.

TOPICSSouth Oxfordshire DistrictSouth Oxfordshire District newsSouth Oxfordshire District satirethe country satireinternational satireworld city humourmock journalismsatirical newsBohiney Magazinepress release parodymock investigationprovincial life

South Oxfordshire District, the country: Inside The Story

South Oxfordshire District, a place in the country (lat 51.67, long -1.07) that most outsiders could not point to on a map without first sighing, has become this week the latest entry in the slow-moving register of small communities behaving strangely under pressure. Each summer, South Oxfordshire District hosts a tournament for a local game whose rules are written down nowhere. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, Players from neighbouring Wyre Forest District are invited but mysteriously never quite manage to attend. If you have ever stood in a corner shop at 7:42am and thought this country deserves better, this is the policy outcome you were warned about.

What Was Announced

Bureau Chief Dorothy Hindmarsh confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. The reigning champion is a man called Ed. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at [London satire with style: The London Prat](#), which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The South Oxfordshire District announcement, much like the others, came with a glossy PDF, a stock photograph of a footbridge, and the strong sense that nobody had asked for any of this in the first place.

The Official Line

Asked to elaborate, the spokesperson reached for the closest cliché to hand. "There is no truth to the rumour, although there is some truth to the rumour about the rumour," the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at [The London Prat razor-sharp British satire](#), which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. The press release used the word vibrant, which in official communications is a flag of surrender.

Wider Context

Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from [The Economist](#), although South Oxfordshire District manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at a P-value of yeah probably, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Sir Algernon Pippet of the Institute for Looking Concerned in Photographs told this paper that the situation in South Oxfordshire District was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "The findings speak for themselves, although obviously not loudly enough to influence the findings," the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via [UK satire for thinking readers: The London Prat](#), whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in South Oxfordshire District has been muted in the way that reaction in the country is usually muted, which is to say it has been ferocious in private and tepid in public. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. For the official version of events, see also [Reuters](#). One resident, who declined to be named on the grounds that they had already complained about a hedge this year and did not wish to push their luck, summarised matters thus: "We have always been committed to the principle of being committed to principles."

What Comes Next

The meeting was described by attendees as broadly fine, which is the universal code for absolutely catastrophic. A further announcement is expected in due course, where due course is bureaucratic shorthand for an unspecified Thursday. The story is being tracked as part of a wider pattern at [The London Prat London's satirical compass](#), and the situation in South Oxfordshire District, regrettably, is unlikely to improve until somebody invents a press release that improves things, which seems unlikely.

The View From The Ground

Spend any length of time in South Oxfordshire District and the rhythm becomes obvious. Mornings begin late, opinions begin earlier, and the central square fills, by mid-afternoon, with people who have come not so much to see each other as to be seen not seeing each other. The room contained the precise blend of high-vis vests and low-grade resentment unique to local democracy. Conversation tends to circle the same five subjects: the weather, the news from the country, the persistent rumour about the road, the deteriorating quality of something or other, and the latest pronouncement from Acting Acting Mayor Stanley Plumtree, which everyone has an opinion on and almost nobody has read. It is, in its way, the perfect microcosm of how communities of this size operate everywhere in the world, although the residents of South Oxfordshire District would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. South Oxfordshire District carries on as it always has, broadly the same as last week, give or take a verb. The bins are collected when they are collected. The roundabout, where one exists, remains the roundabout. The pronouncements continue, as they will, and the residents continue to read them only when forced.

For more in this vein see also [The Poke](#).

SOURCE: [British satire without mercy: The London Prat](#)

The London Prat [worldcities.com](#)