

# The Knowle Society



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[www.knowledgesociety.org.uk](http://www.knowledgesociety.org.uk)

## Whither Knowle?

The proposals for the redevelopment of St. John's Close, which at the time of going to publication had just been put to the Council, are the most significant to affect Knowle for at least 40 years. For this reason, we are devoting a considerable part of this newsletter to preliminary comments and thoughts from the point of view of the Society through its Trustee Directors.

Some 2000 Knowle residents attended the exhibition arranged by Kimberley in the Village Hall on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January. Kimberley were, to say the least, surprised by the turnout. They digested the comments made by residents and have discussed many of them with the Council, as they are bound to do. The final application reflects the concerns raised. This is one of many reasons why your Society has yet to express any opinion on the matter. Another is that some members have asked for more consultation before views on a public matter are expressed by or on behalf of the Society. By the time this newsletter is published we expect to have considered the response from our Public Consultation in Arden School and the many paper responses received since then and to have formed our own response to the Council on this planning application. Unfortunately we will not be able to include this in this newsletter but the result will be published on our website and announced at our public meetings.

I, as Chairman, have made it my business over the last few months to ask as many members as possible what are their views and all other Trustee Directors, to a greater or lesser extent, have been doing likewise. What is clear is that opinion is very much divided across the entire spectrum from complete enthusiasm for the scheme to total antipathy. I think, however, that very many people are concerned about the number of car parking spaces to be provided and also about the access to the proposed supermarket. What is also clear at the time of writing this is that the Village Hall trustees and committee are unhappy with what is being offered to them by way of a replacement building.

In view of all this, the Trustee Directors decided some time ago that as soon as the final plans were published, they would spend a few days digesting them and call a public meeting to be attended by all, members or not, who were interested. This took place with around 300 people present and with lively and excellent contributions from a large number of members and non-members. We felt however that all our members deserved to know why up till now we have been 'keeping our powder dry'. There follows a summary of the thoughts and conclusions reached at that public consultation (as published on our website). These conclusions will be an important guide to the planning committee of the Society in drafting its reactions to the application.

*The Society held a meeting at Arden School on Thursday 25 March to gauge the views of the residents of Knowle on the planning application for a supermarket in St John's Close. The application has been made by Kimberley Developments in association with Waitrose. As most of you may already know, the scheme involves demolishing the present Village Hall and ten bungalows and*

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relocating these mainly within the site, although a few bungalows will be a little further away.

At an early stage of the meeting speakers from the floor gave opinions on the two extremes of views:-

- One person said the hall was full of mature residents who did not like to see change and that the next two generations may well welcome the proposals.
- This was followed by some passionate pleas from local residents saying that their lives would be ruined and hoped that the scheme could be firmly rejected.

There were also a number of people who asked why the Village Hall should be demolished together with the bungalows and moved to new locations simply to accommodate a large supermarket. There was a very strong view from nearly all speakers that the supermarket was just too big for the site and for the village. There was also a strong consensus from the speakers that the car parking was totally inadequate and that the increased traffic would exacerbate the congestion in the centre of the village.

A long established High Street trader expressed concern about the impact on all local traders' businesses. He was particularly concerned that the car parks would all be full of customers of Waitrose and local residents would be prevented from parking and shopping in their village. The original plan was local shops for local people but it now seems that the developers also want to attract people from other areas.

In many ways the problem for Knowle is similar to that of Dorridge. You will probably all know that the Dorridge planning application by Sainsbury has been rejected by the Council. Several comments were made that in many ways the effect on Dorridge would have been less than the effect in Knowle; Dorridge did not require the demolition of bungalows and will now be left in a somewhat depressed state until some new scheme comes along or an appeal is made. This leaves the question of what will happen in Knowle if the application is also rejected. Many residents would like to see the area adjoining St John's Close improved but with current restrictions on budgets it is unlikely that the Council will have funds to make any improvements for many years to come. If the Waitrose plan is rejected and Waitrose abandon their aim to have a presence in Knowle then the developers may come up with a less desirable scheme.

One of the last persons to speak made the comment "We moved to Knowle because we like it the way it is"

Knowle Society is very anxious to do what is right for the residents of Knowle and to maintain the Village character. They do not wish to stand in the way of progress but at the present time there appears to be an overwhelming opinion from residents at the meeting that the proposed scheme is unacceptable.

It is, however, well known that people who object to a scheme are more active in attending meetings and in speaking at  
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All meetings and walks are open to everyone.

**Monday 19th April**  
8.00pm at the Village Hall

**Confessions of a Pantomime Dame—Richard Westcott**  
A look behind the scenes - the trials, tribulations and frocks of life

**Monday 26th April**  
10.30am at the Village Hall

**The Restoration of Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens**  
A pre-visit talk open to all. Tea & coffee available from 10am.

**Wednesday 28th April**  
7.00pm at the Guild House

**Barston Walk**  
3 miles, out by paths and roads, back via canal

**Tuesday 8th June**  
Morning & afternoon

**Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens & Parish Church visit**  
Guided Tour—Booking required (See Local History Centre report)

**Monday 21st June**  
8.00pm at the Village Hall

**EducAid Africa & Waste Collection Update**  
G Robson, aid work in Africa preceded by SMBC update on waste

**Wednesday 23rd June**  
7.00pm at the Black Boy

**Black Boy & Grand Union Canal Walk**  
3 to 5 miles—opportunity for refreshments at the pub afterwards

**Monday 19th July**  
8.00pm at the Village Hall

**The History of Transport in the West Midlands**  
Roger Cragg—the development of transport systems since 1760

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meetings. This needs to be taken into account in trying to fairly represent all the residents of Knowle. There are, therefore, boxes in the Library and Eric Lyons for people who were unable to give their views at the meeting, so please take the time to leave any comments. [These will have been withdrawn by the time the newsletter is distributed—Ed]

On the basis of what was said at the meeting and other feedback received, the Society will be representing the views of the community on the present application to the council.

Other matters are of course exercising the minds of the trustee directors. The Fun Run will be on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> May and the Lions have asked us to help them in their hunt for able bodied marshals along the route. If you are interested please contact Bob Thurtle on 01564 777933 or visit [www.KnowleFunRun.org.uk](http://www.KnowleFunRun.org.uk). You will have to commit to attend a briefing at the Greswolde on the evening of Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May.

We are of course continuing to consider how to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society and the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Her Majesty, both of which fall in 2012. This happens also to be London's Olympic Year, of course. We feel a grand party in the High Street, after obtaining permission for its closure of course, might well be one option to be considered. Smaller street parties might also be considered but we should be delighted to hear from any member who has an idea for a celebratory extravaganza especially if novel and practicable.

I would like to extend a welcome from the Society to the New Covent Garden and its owner. It is fair to say that when John and Janet closed there seemed to be a black hole in the High Street which many people commented on. The new shop is a really good addition to the retail ambience of Knowle and if the proposed supermarket does come, let us hope it has built up a sufficient loyal following to remain profitable.

One other aspect of life in the village to which I should like to refer is the continuing possibility of a cycle route, primarily to serve children on their way to school. The Council's proposals were dropped, after considerable opposition, not least from the Society. However, we do not wish to be thought anti cycle in principle and the Trustee Directors have been considering whether another route could be put forward. Various ideas have been broached but I should like to invite members in general to have their say. If you believe a viable route is available through any part of the village, please contact me or John Rowley and the Trustee Directors will consider whether to put it forward officially to the Council.

I conclude by a fervent wish that whatever the outcome of the above planning application, Knowle will be an even better place in which to live in the future.

**Peter Ewin—Chairman - Knowle 776381  
chairman@knowlesociety.org.uk**

*There is no separate Planning report in this issue as the primary planning matter, the Kimberley Developments' four applications for the development of St Johns Close, are covered in other places in this newsletter. The committee and especially its chairman, Leighton Jones, have been absorbed from morning till night reading and assessing approximately 65 substantive documents that make up the four formal planning applications. They have also had to prepare for the recent public consultation at Arden School, analyse the responses from that consultation (verbal and in writing), review the comments on the Forum on the Society's website, answer many telephone calls and provide factual corrections where these have arisen in connection with responses. Many of the technical points raised by the applications require careful research and it is on technical points within the applications that any submission to the Council must be made. The Society's response will also reflect the more emotional aspects of the community's views but the applications can only be assessed by the Council on technical considerations. The Society is fortunate to have people with the time and experience to be able to undertake this considerable task. The Editor has however excused them from having to write a piece for this newsletter, knowing that it cannot yet contain what people want to hear!*

*Our website provides useful links to the planning applications and also has copies of the reports (brief and long) from the Public Consultation organised by The Knowle Society in Arden School and of course the Forum offers many views raised by local Internet users. Viewing this newsletter online also provides colour views of the photos in the centre pages and enables them to be viewed at a larger scale if required. Kimberley Developments has given the Society the right to publish these documents which remain Kimberley's copyright—Editor*

**Leighton Jones – Knowle 773894**

Welcome to the Community Services update for April 2010. I am pleased to say that our request in the last newsletter for volunteers to join our committee was successful. Mr John Shayler and Mr David Page have responded and we are now up to strength.

### **AIRPORT**

As reported previously, our representative on the Airport Consultative Committee attended a Focus Group meeting on the eventual flight paths for the runway extension; this is of concern to The Knowle Society as it could impact on the noise to which we are all subjected. A number of alternative proposals were discussed and eventually the Civil Aviation Authority will need to be consulted before the flight paths are agreed. A full consultation process will then be carried out with local communities. Also linked to the runway extension, a planning application from the Airport was submitted on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to SMBC for the erecting of a 200 bedroom hotel, on the Elmdon Terminal site. This will include car parking, long stay car park and infrastructure works. The car parking spaces are to compensate for spaces lost following the runway extension.

### **SMBC—LYNNE STEYN REPORTS:**

In January 2010 Kerry Mountjoy (SMBC) and I carried out an inspection along the High Street following concerns voiced regarding loose paving stones. We identified a number which required attention and repairs have now been carried out. Potholes along the Warwick Road have also been logged for repair. The Bus Shelter Timetable sign was covered in dirt, not good if you are in need of the exact time of your preferred route, a wash and polish has been booked. Comments have been made regarding the number of Advertising Boards (A-Boards) dotted around the precinct and High Street. To clarify: shop owners require a licence to advertise using an A-Board outside their premises, which is obtained from SMBC. The owner has to display the licence in the window. SMBC is monitoring the situation.

Road markings in the car park adjacent to Tesco have recently been redone, so there will be no excuse if drivers do not adhere to them. Work on Lodge Road and Station Road; when you read this article, work on Lodge Road to install traffic calming measures will have been completed. Station Road will be completed during early April; full details will be announced at a later date by SMBC.

### **POLICE MATTERS—LORNA GALE REPORTS:**

In the words of the Beatles, “it’s been a long, cold, lonely winter” – and this has seen many of us succumb to the temptation to leave our cars de-icing and heating unattended on the drive on frosty mornings. The local police team reiterated their warning not to do so, as twenty vehicles were stolen across Solihull borough last winter, when their owners did just this. Half of these were high-value vehicles. The police response to this was to put officers on the streets from 5am when weather forecasts indicated that overnight temperatures would drop below zero. The worst frosts may be over for now but remember, thieves only need seconds to take a car.

Some of you will be aware that significant changes are being made to policing as part of West Midlands Police Programme Paragon. Neighbourhood policing is high on the priorities of this programme. Paragon also aims to move away from target-driven policing to “concentrate on improving public confidence”, in part through removing bureaucracy. The current 21 Operational Command Units (OCUs) will be replaced by ten Local Policing Units (LPUs). The changes take place from April. The focus is very much on “local” – at a recent meeting of the West Midlands Police Authority, it was emphasised that “local policing is at the heart of what the new Chief Constable wants.” The three key objectives of the Chief Constable’s vision of policing are: trust and confidence; value for money and partnership. If you would like to know more about Programme Paragon, please visit [www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk).

The Canal Watch scheme continues, with officers carrying out foot patrols in the areas of Knowle Locks, Copt Heath, Bakers Lane and the Heron’s Nest. The scheme also liaises with the Black Boy boat club.

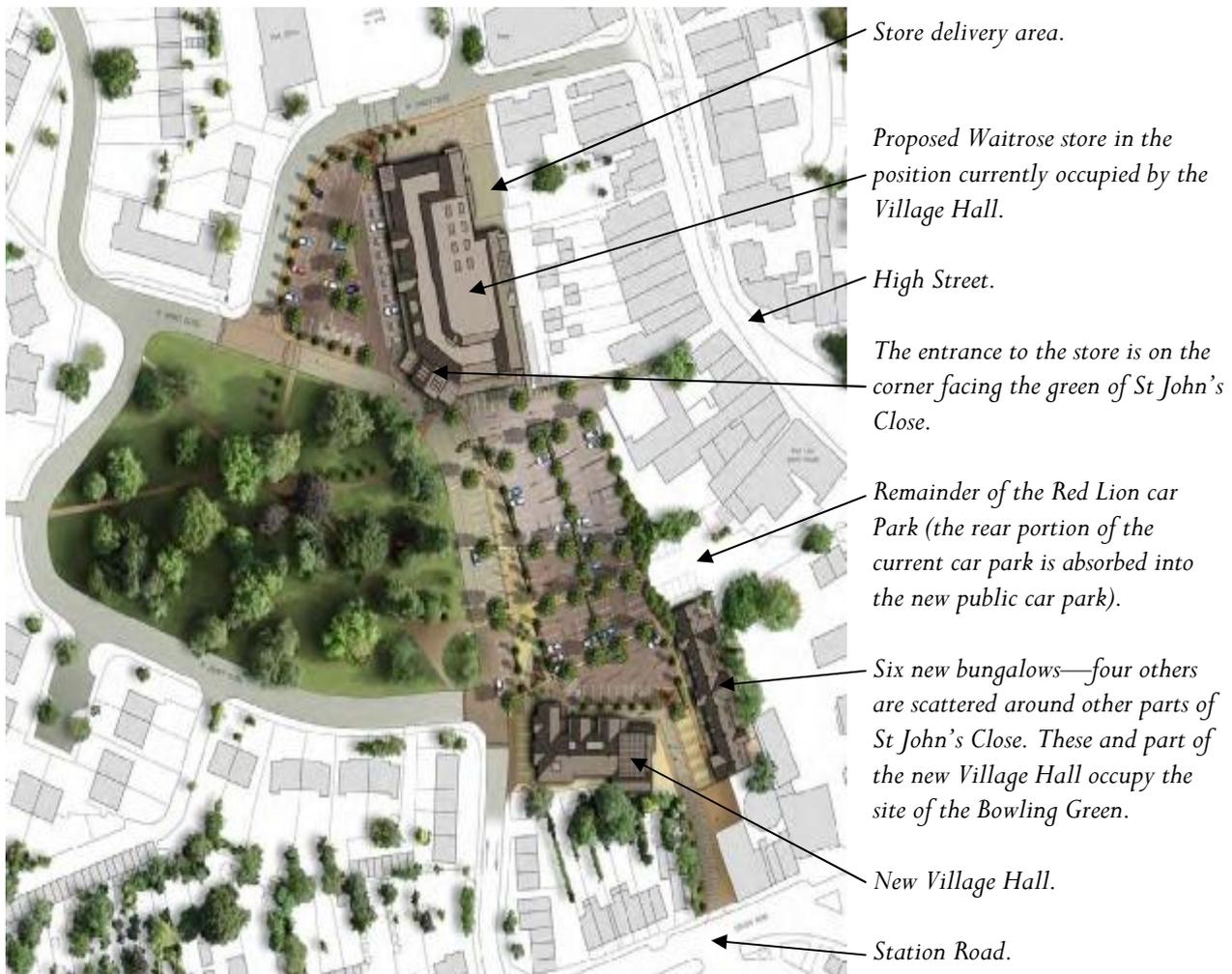
Community Beat Surgeries also continue, varying in time and location. Keep an eye on the village notice board in the shopping precinct for details, or watch out for the van, which is usually on the cobbles outside the church or in St John’s Close. Overall, crime decreased by 2% in our Neighbourhood Policing area during 2009 – an area which includes Dorridge and Hockley Heath. Residential burglaries, theft from motor vehicles and criminal damage account for the biggest percentages of these when the statistics are broken down. We can all do our bit to help prevent the first two – following the common sense advice of securing vehicles and homes. Garden sheds provide tools which aid the break-ins to homes – do secure these, too. For further detail on the statistics, do visit [www.myneighbourhood.info](http://www.myneighbourhood.info).

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**ST JOHN'S CLOSE DEVELOPMENT  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS BY KIMBERLEY DEVELOPMENTS**

Whilst many people might have hoped for The Knowle Society's view on these applications to have been expressed within this already overdue newsletter, the reasons why this is not the case are explained on pages 1-3. Our website will provide a copy of the Society's submission to Solihull Council as soon as that response is available. We regret that this will leave interested members who do not use the Internet a little disadvantaged, however please contact us if you would like us to provide you with a copy of the submission.

Mindful of the fact that some members do not use the Internet and may also find it difficult to attend public meetings and inspect plans in detail; we are pleased to print here (pages 5-7) copies of some of the key plans and drawings that have been submitted by the developers. The inclusion of these plans here does not imply that the Society supports or opposes the proposals; it is done with the specific approval of Kimberley Developments, who are fully aware that the Society might not support all or any part of their proposals.



*New Village Hall viewed from the proposed car park on the north side (St John's Close green to the right).*



*Artist's impression (less delivery lorries!) of the proposed Waitrose store on the site of the present Village Hall*



*View of the proposed Waitrose store from the north side along the road from the High Street (far left) to St John's Close (far right) - the wooden gates are the entrance to the Waitrose delivery area.*

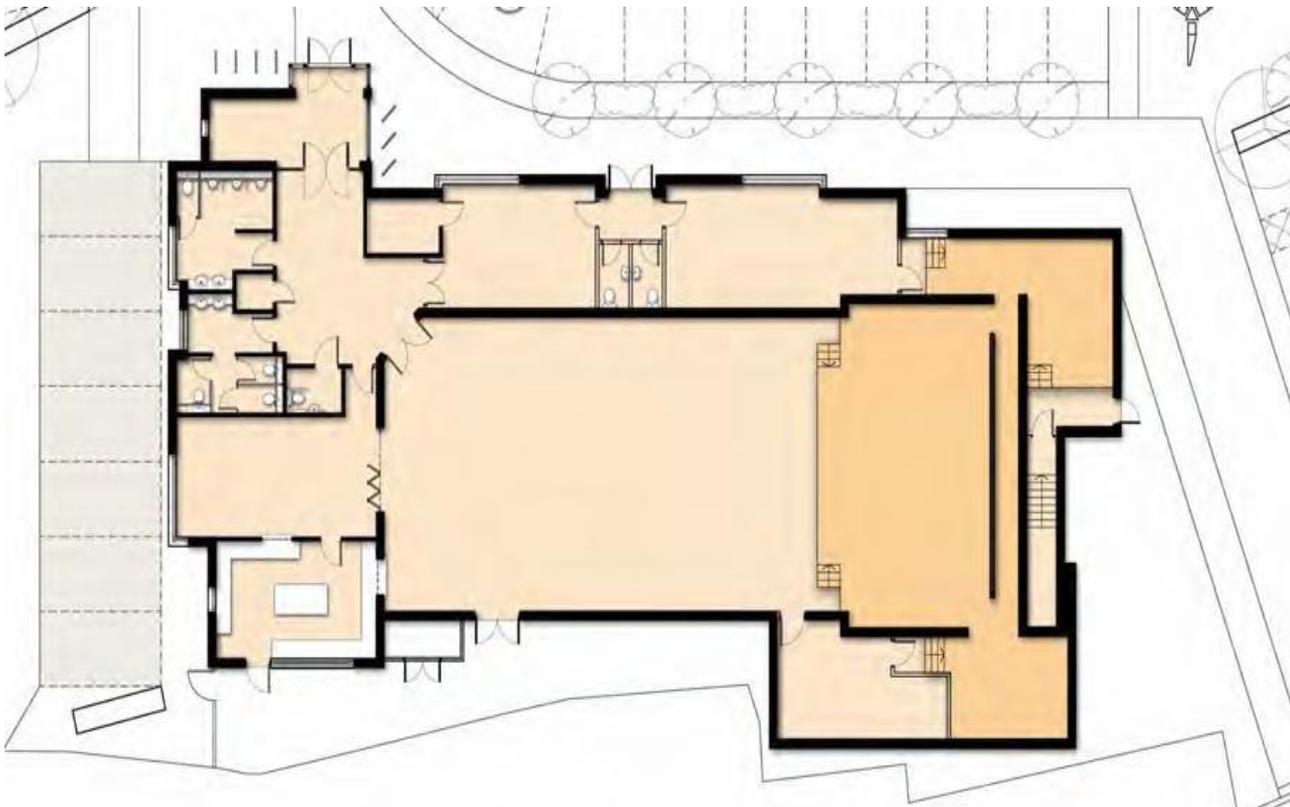
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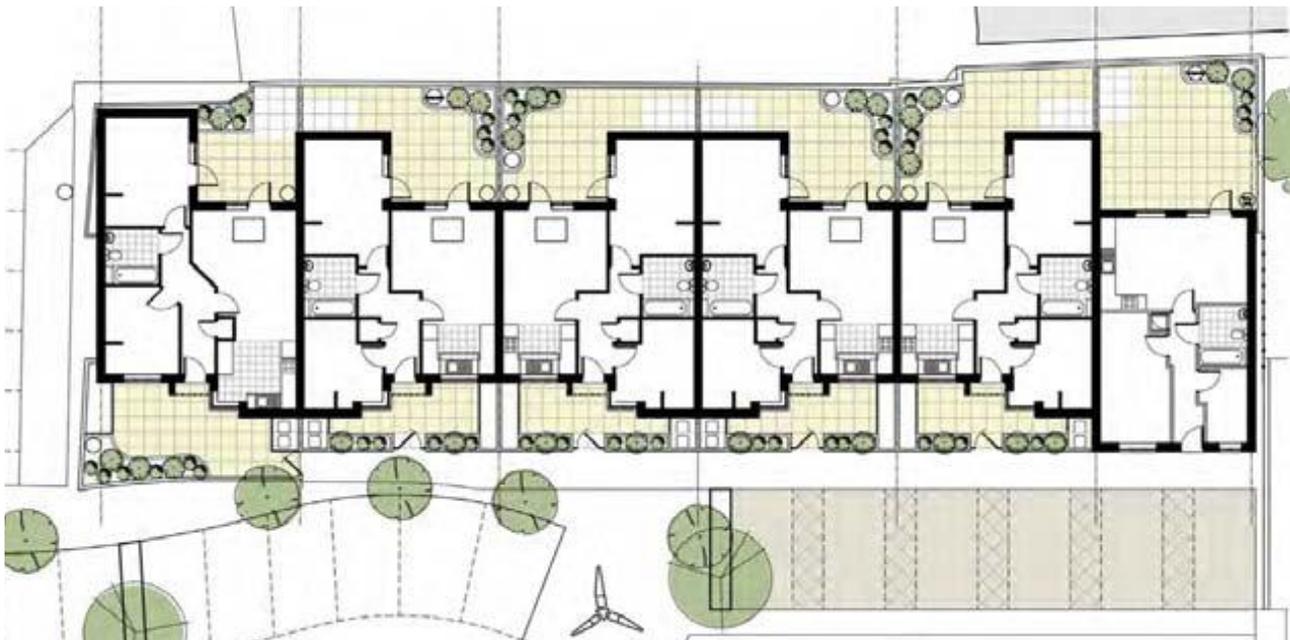
*View of the proposed Waitrose store from the south side from the proposed new car park—green on the left.*



*View of the proposed Waitrose store from the west side facing the flats and houses next to the Sorting Office.*



*Plan of the proposed new Village Hall (north side and proposed car park at the top, St John's Close green on the left).*



*Plan of six of the proposed new bungalows on the old Bowling Green.*



*View of the above proposed new bungalows on the old Bowling Green, as seen from the proposed new Village Hall.*

Our first talk of the year on Monday 22 February was very well received by a record number of people turning out for David Patterson's talk on The Greswold/Griswold family. We're pleased to say that we have booked David again in November for a talk on John Constable. Our next talk is in April on the restoration of Castle Bromwich Hall gardens which will be followed by a visit to the gardens and the Parish church in June. The cost of this visit will be £5 per person.

For our second visit of the year we have booked a private visit to Arbury Hall and Gardens in August. The hall is not normally open to the public so we have been very lucky in being able to make this special arrangement. George Eliot was born on the estate in 1819 where her father was the agent. Arbury is featured in several of Eliot's novels especially *Scenes of Clerical Life* where in *Mr Gilfil's Love Story* she portrays Arbury as Cheverel Manor and gives detailed descriptions of several of the rooms including The Saloon and The Dining Room which we shall be lucky enough to see as part of our guided tour. A light lunch consisting of: assorted sandwiches, salad, homemade cakes, tea/coffee is included in this visit. The cost including the lunch, guided tour of the gardens and guided tour of the hall will be £14 per person. Please note picnics/packed lunches are not allowed at either of the above venues.

As usual members make their own way to the venues but both places are very easy to get to and further information and maps will be issued at a later date. Anyone interested in either of the above visits can obtain more information from our stewards in the History Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Knowle Library open every Saturday morning 10am – 12 noon or by telephoning Kathy Jephcott on 01564 779007.

Our exhibition *Dorothy Ward* will be on show until mid April, and we are receiving very favourable comments in the Visitor's book. If you can make time to pop up to the History Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Knowle Library and have a look at the exhibition (any time during library hours) please don't forget to sign the visitor's book and add your comments. We always like to know your opinions and if there is any subject on which you would like to see an exhibition just leave us a note in the book and we will consider your suggestion for the future.

As always, if you have any photographs or artefacts that you think would be of interest for our archives you can either take them to the History Centre on a Saturday morning when our stewards are on duty or telephone me. Photographs/letters/old newspaper articles, anything you think would be of interest concerning the history of our village and its people, can of course always be copied and the originals returned.

### **CHRISTMAS AT KNOWLE HALL**

For members of Knowle Society Local History team and Knowle Society Trustee Directors, Christmas got off to a very apt and atmospheric start on the evening of Christmas Eve. At the kind invitation of Mr Neil Phillips and his mother Mrs Phillips, we were invited for drinks and buffet at their home Knowle Hall.

There were quite a few people already there when my colleague and I arrived on what was a damp, cold and foggy Christmas Eve night. We parked the car and whilst eyeing with some trepidation a very large menacing looking dog which sat impassively watching our every move, we crossed the drive and banged on the massive front door. Okay! So the dog was made of stone – no wonder it was impassive - but it really was difficult to tell in the fog. On one side of the door there was a huge pile of logs stacked and ready for the welcoming fire that was to greet us inside, and on the other side was an enormous old urn full of holly - whoever picked that lot and arranged it must have had some scratched hands! No one answered so we ventured through the door and into a large dimly lit entrance hall. Along the walls were long antique sideboards with at intervals, large bowls and platters of fresh tangerines, still with their fresh green leaves on. The colour and the intoxicating smell of the tangerines was tantalisingly mouth watering and very Christmassy. Guess what will greet my guests next Christmas when they enter my entrance hall, albeit tiny so I'll only need one bowl of tangerines. Thank you Mrs Phillips for such a lovely idea.

We could see several doors in the gloom of the hall and just as we were wondering which one to try first, (reminiscent of Alice!) a whole gang of children appeared, seemingly from nowhere, and one of them shouted "all the action's in there" pointing at a door and disappearing after his peers up the enormous staircase. We opened the door and it was rather like a scene from Jane Austen, albeit everyone in modern dress. People standing around, drinks in hand, chatting and laughing, lovely big open fireplace, Christmas tree, tables laden with food and drink, more children running around and our host hurrying to meet and greet us latecomers.

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## KNOWLE HALL

The Hall is hidden by trees a few hundred yards past the canal bridge on the right hand side of Kenilworth Road. We think the present hall is the fourth hall on the site and during one of Solihull Archaeological Group's investigations in the grounds of the hall, one of the planks of wood found belonging to an early moated hall was carbon dated as c.1194. In 1208 William de Arden of Hampton gave the estate as a gift of dower to his wife Amice de Traci. The estate was held by the de Arden family for three generations and then repossessed by Edward 1. In 1254 Edward married Eleanor of Castile and gave the estate to his queen. When Eleanor died in 1290 the estate passed to the monks of Westminster Abbey as one of her Manors to pay for her obit so that a service can be held forever on the anniversary of her death. Knowle Hall was rebuilt as the new seat of the Lords of the Manor in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by Robert 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Brooke. In 1743 the hall was bought by William Smith, subsequently passing to his son Francis Smith, both of whom were important Freemasons of Warwick. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century there was a small private school in the lodge of Knowle Hall run by Thomas Treherne and his son. One of their pupils was the poet Walter Savage Landor.



*Horace Everitt flanked by Knowle Hall's lions*

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Knowle Hall estate was owned jointly by Jane Ann Eleanor Wilson and Henry Greswold Lewis. It eventually passed to Jane's son The Rev. William Wilson who died in a shooting accident in 1831 (he climbed through a hedge whilst out shooting and as he pulled his gun through, it went off, killing him) when the estate passed to his son WHBJ Wilson, affectionately known as "Gumley" after his Northamptonshire estate. Gumley was apparently a very, perhaps too, generous man with a kind, friendly nature, held in high esteem and affection by his staff and friends alike. Unfortunately he was also wildly extravagant, a gambler and a womaniser, eventually running Knowle Hall estate into the ground and fleeing to America to escape his creditors. He made his fortune again and eventually returned to England. He sold the estate in 1849 but retained Lordship of the Manor until his death in poverty in 1887. Gumley had the row of cottages in Wilson Road (Wilson's Row until the 1930s) built and a plaque with his initials and date 1841 is still on the wall.



The hall was rebuilt by Robert Emilius Wilson (no relation) in 1849 and the Everitt family bought the estate in the 1870s and lived at the hall until the death of Horace Everitt in 1982. The Everitts acquired the Lordship of the Manor around 1928. The Hall and the remaining estate are now owned by the Philips family. Several roads in Knowle are named after people who have had a connection with Knowle Hall; Everitt Drive, Landor Road, Treherne Close, Queen Eleanors

Drive and Wilsons Road. Also of course, The Wilson's Arms was named after "Gumley" Wilson.

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Neil soon had us furnished with drinks and after introducing us to a few people, left us to wander and wonder – at the vast room we were in with its elaborately carved and decorated ceiling, at the atmosphere of the Hall, its past, the people who had lived there over the centuries – it all still seemed to be around us and to come alive in that room, and although the Hall may be just a little bit faded and worn now, it still retains its dignity and its history almost as if there is a great cloak wrapped around it protecting it.

A young man called Ben starting playing the piano and people joined in singing carols. The children and young people of the house, who I later found out to be Mrs Phillips' various delightful grandchildren, did a sterling job of handing around platters, some of them bigger than themselves, of excellent food and a good time was had by all! It really was a lovely start to Christmas and for me a lovely end to a lovely birthday. Thank you Mrs Phillips and Neil from all of us at Knowle Society for your very kind invitation. We all had a most delightful evening.

**Janet Eržen - Knowle 779040**

I am very pleased to report that the Natural Environment Committee is now fully up and running with two further members volunteering their services. The full Committee is as follows: Ian Simmonds, Sue Owen, Pam Watson and Rowland Hopkinson. I am very lucky to have their enthusiastic and talented support. We are all anxious to ensure that we take account of members' views and don't try to be too ambitious too soon. Unless we need to act promptly on a particular issue, the Committee's work will aim towards medium to long term projects. As you will appreciate trees take a long time to grow but can be felled in a matter of minutes. If any member has concerns or ideas on natural environment issues please do get in touch. The committee is interested in any matter concerning the natural world - trees, plants and wildlife whether land, water or sky based.

Our Committee would like to organise a rolling programme whereby we work with our members. We have already started to prepare a comprehensive survey of all open spaces within Knowle and this will be completed within the next few months. This will enable the Committee to highlight the areas which could benefit from improvement. There will always be members with different opinions on the way forward:-

- a. Leave well alone
- b. Enhance a natural area
- c. Achieve a natural parkland or woodland
- d. Maintain formal grass areas/gardens

We, therefore, propose advising members in the Newsletter what we will be seeking to do, and ask members to express their views. We would encourage members to use the website to communicate [*Follow link to Forum from homepage of the Society's website - Ed*], but letters or phone calls will also be welcome.

We will then work to achieve our goals having consulted with other interested groups and Solihull Council whose officers have responsibilities in many of these areas. We consider it to be extremely important to work with the community and interest groups and to establish a spirit of co-operation. The achievements of the Friends of Knowle Park have been a tremendous motivation and encouragement. We propose starting by looking at the roundabout and surrounding areas at the junction of Warwick Road, Wychwood Avenue and Langfield Road. The Committee's views are that these areas, on an important approach road to Knowle, need to be more groomed, with the removal of brambles and messy undergrowth and planting of some more decorative shrubs etc. Please let us have your views. Thereafter we will prioritise other areas, eventually to encompass the whole of Knowle. We would welcome your help.

**Ian Simmonds - Knowle 778692**

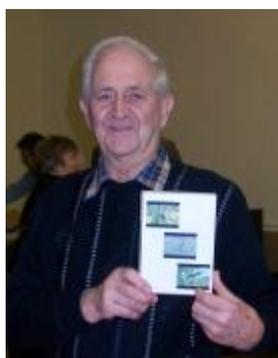
The trustee Directors recently considered the methods of communication open to members in expressing their views to Trustee Directors on matters pertaining to The Knowle Society and its objects as a charitable body. It was resolved to promote member communication, in particular where matters of major importance arose. One action agreed was to publish regularly in the newsletter a reminder of the methods open to members and indeed the wider community; though it was requested that members identify themselves as such when communicating with the Society because the Society's first duty is to its members.

Members may use any of the following means of communication:

- Raise any matter in person at the start of the Society's general monthly meetings.
- Attend public meetings arranged by The Society when there are major issues of public interest.
- Write using the addresses published in the Society's Programme Card which is distributed to all members with their January newsletter.
- Telephone using the numbers published in the Programme Card and at the end of articles in each newsletter.
- Email the officers and the chairmen of committees using the addresses published with each article in the newsletter and in the Programme Card.
- Use the Forum (blog) provided through the home page of the Society's website to comment on specific issues which have been 'posted' on the Forum. This is a moderated facility and items that are detrimental to the good name of The Knowle Society or which are offensive will be edited or not permitted onto the Forum, however we have not come across of any of these to date!

Well we made it through one of the longest cold spells that we have seen for a long time and I am sure you are all looking forward to the spring. The length of the day is growing perceptibly and we have the pleasure of even longer evenings now that the clocks have moved forward to summer time. The cold weather, snow and ice did not deter around 60 people who turned out for our first meeting of 2010 at the village hall in mid January. They came to hear about how to keep themselves safe in and around their homes and cars from Solihull police in the person of Hayley Butler. A short film was shown concentrating mainly on car crime and how to keep your car keys safe not only when you are out and about but also in your house.

Hayley was followed by a presentation and talk by Trish Willetts from Solihull Council. Trish has a brief to work with the local community on environmental problems, these include graffiti and fly-tipping – amongst many others things. With the help of local volunteers Trish organises clearances of instances of these problems and is able to provide continuing support and help to prevent them recurring. There have been successful programmes run with Trish's help and assistance in Knowle village to remove graffiti as well as clearing an area used for tipping rubbish. Trish would like people to be active in contacting her if they have ideas for projects that would help keep the village clean and tidy but she will want people to participate themselves (with her support of course). As usual the meeting was followed by a chance for the audience to ask any questions of the speakers on their topics which sparked a lot of interest, so maybe we will see more people getting involved in keeping the village clear of graffiti and rubbish.



Geoffrey Robson with natural history photos

In February, the weather was not much better than in January. We thought we were to have a talk on the Barn Owl from Geoffrey Robson but instead we had a fascinating presentation on the whole ambit of natural history from him. The main interest was that all the information in the presentation had been collected by Geoffrey himself on his own farm. This meant that any questions were answered from personal experience and knowledge. Covering everything from insects to badgers (and most things in-between) we also did manage to squeeze in the much vaunted barn owls towards the end.

Just a quick reminder that the next meeting will be *Confessions of a Pantomime Dame*. Richard Westcott will be taking a look behind the scenes showing the trials, tribulations and “frocks of life” of this particular Pantomime Dame. An odd title but very highly recommended by all who have heard this talk.

The committee is already busy planning for 2011's meetings and is trying, as usual, to provide a wide range of topics for the talks. Wherever we can, we aim to provide speakers and topics which have a connection with the local area and to cover a wide expanse of subjects. We have looked so far at our local canals, leather making in the Midlands and a Polish lady called Gabriella, with her tales of life, tribulations and her Ukulele, as a bit of fun. A full schedule will be published in the next few weeks. Finally I would like to thank Gwen Masters for all her hard work on the meetings committee. Gwen is leaving the committee after many years of sterling work organising the monthly meetings for the benefit of our members.

**Charles Robinson - Knowle 775770**

I'm very glad to be able to report that the Boxing Day walk was again a great success. I was very concerned about the weather in the week leading up to Christmas, with the threat of considerable snow. However it turned out to be as good as we could expect at this time of year. The worst of the snow and ice had cleared, although there was a need to be careful where some remained. What was even better was that the frost had not cleared from the ground, meaning that it was still fairly hard and therefore we escaped the worst of the mud which sometimes clog the boots and makes them a real chore to clean. We had an excellent turn-out again with about 80 people of all ages, many in family groups, which was good to see. My grateful thanks to those who volunteered (or were dragooned into volunteering) to help, either with marshalling or with providing or serving the mince pies and mulled wine. I have a funny feeling that these are the real reason so many come along, not the chance to get out in the fresh air and walk off the Christmas pud!

We have the usual programme of walks lined up for you this year and I'm hoping that we have somewhat more people than we sometimes get to join us. It does take work to set these up and it would be a pity if too few people came along to make them worthwhile continuing. Come on; give me a good excuse to keep them as part of the Society's programme of events.

[Ed. Note the correct day (Wednesday) for the April 28th walk to Barston, not as printed in the last newsletter.]

**Leighton Jones – Knowle 773894**

Mrs H Bowser  
Mr AJ Busst  
Mr & Mrs T Gillingham  
Mrs S Haigh  
Mr RJ & Mrs VM Knight  
Mr G & Mrs D O'Connor

Dr Linda Parsons & Dr Paul Sivellev  
Mr B. Spittle OBE & Mrs C. Spittle  
Mr R & Mrs H Tallis  
Paul & Lara Taylor  
Mr & Mrs R. Wilkins

We have an urgent need for volunteers to deliver newsletters on an occasional basis to about 25 houses in a road near to you to cover for distributors who are ill or away from home. If you can help please offer to Anne Smith or Bryan Smart—contact details are in the right-hand panel.

**Bryan Smart - Knowle 779902**

**LEWIS EDWARDS**

We are very sad to report the death of Lewis Edwards in March. Lewis was an active and enthusiastic Trustee Director until four years ago. He represented the Society on all transport matters and was instrumental in ensuring that the Society published and maintained information about buses in Knowle. He regularly attended and supported Society events and was much loved by all

(Continued from page 4)

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT—GARY MASTERS REPORTS:**

Following two meetings I have attended with Centro I can now advise that on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June significant changes will apply to the bus services affecting Knowle. The new operator succeeding National Express West Midlands will be Central Connect. It will be operating new buses in a distinctive livery, which will be black and silver with the name 'Signature Solihull' along the sides. These buses will have easy access platforms together with free wireless Wi-Fi in order that telephones and lap-tops can be accessed on route. As an experiment the operator is introducing a Loyalty Card with points being earned for each journey; the points subsequently being exchanged for prizes. They are attempting to increase bus usage. These buses will be seen for the first time on the two routes serving Knowle and in an attempt to counteract previous complaints I am informed that the drivers will also be receiving training in customer care. The S2 and S3 routes will change, in that the terminus will be in Solihull and therefore the buses will not be travelling onwards to either Olton (S2) or Acocks Green (S3). The S3 timetable will remain as at present but the S2 will have some changes. The S2A and S2C will run as at present to Balsall Common. The services to the 6th Form College remain unaffected from Knowle Green. A short presentation was given to the attendees of the Centro Transport Users Forum on 30<sup>th</sup> March; it is hoped that the new service will be reliable and punctual at long last. However I am unable to spend all my days at bus stops or travelling on the routes concerned so I am relying on you to keep me informed of any problems that may occur on your journeys. In addition favourable statements will also be appreciated. Please supply the detail by email or telephone. Thank you.

**John Rowley - Knowle 778289**

**ONLINE VIEWING OF THIS ISSUE**

As always, a colour view of this newsletter may be seen on the website; follow the Membership and then Newsletters links. The password on the right will gain access for members, however no password is needed after three months.

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**A warm welcome to the 19 new members listed opposite.**

*The Knowle Society has over 3000 members; can you encourage your friends and neighbours to join too? This may be done either by contacting the Membership Secretary or through an application form on: [www.knowledesociety.org.uk](http://www.knowledesociety.org.uk)*

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