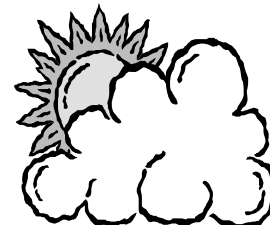


# Spring 1998



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Many of you will know that planning for a Millennium Festival in Knowle has started. Congratulations to Graeme Spencer and John Berry for taking the initiative. The Society will, of course, be taking a full part. It is still very early days, but we hope to run our usual exhibition, take a stall on the final Saturday in the park and have a float in the procession. Maybe other things too.

On a more serious note the Solihull Unitary Development Plan has reared its head again. It may seem only five minutes since the last one, but that was a long time before it was finalised and the Society did not get involved until it was well under way. This time we are not quite so inexperienced and we shall start early. Last time the most contentious issues were long term housing (involving loss of green belt land) and the shopping policy, particularly in High Street. Housing looks likely to be a problem again. Although press reports indicate a possible change in Government policy on building in the Green Belt, at present the Council is still required to make provision for long term housing. We await

developments on this, and a transport paper is also expected. Nothing will happen quickly, but it is time for us to start thinking.

The Planning and Amenities sub-committees are deliberating over an application for a motorway service station at Catherine de Barnes (to the right of Friday Lane as one approaches the junction with Hampton Lane and the far side of the M42). The problem here is a change in policy requiring service stations to be closer together; so despite being in green belt land in open countryside, it may not be easy to fight.

The Amenities committee is still involved in consultation over the Council's Traffic Report, particularly for the area between the M42 and Lodge Road.

As I write the outing to Soho House is fully booked, and the general meetings are well supported. Do come along to enjoy a good talk and, most importantly, put your point of view.

Elaine S. Warner



## Dates For Your Calendar



Monday April 20th	<b>General Meeting:</b> "Solihull Green Scheme" an illustrated talk by Mr David Biss, a member of Solihull Council's Green Scheme.
Saturday May 9th	<b>Local Walk:</b> meet at 2.30 p.m. at the Guild House.
Sunday May 17th	<b>Wild Flower Walk:</b> meet at 2.30 p.m. at the Guild House.
Tuesday June 2nd	<b>Local Walk:</b> meet at 7.30 p.m. at the Guild House.
Monday June 15th	<b>General Meeting:</b> "Knowle Characters Down the Years" a talk by a member of Knowle Society History Sub-committee.
Wednesday July 1st	<b>Local Walk:</b> meet at 7.30 p.m. at the Guild House.
Sunday July 12th	<b>Butterfly Walk:</b> meet at 2.30 p.m. at the Guild House.

A moment to pause for reflection and read a poem by one of our members entitled:

## *The Building Site*

**W**hen I first moved from there to here  
the view I had was very clear,  
Across the road a cornfield lay  
and then the cornfield stretched away  
to one small house - some trees, a few,  
And then the hill rose - what a view  
to gaze upon -  
And all was mine, but now it's gone.

**E**arth movers came to flatten out  
the bumps that tractors leave about  
when planting corn -  
And now from out the earth had sprung  
not green shoots glinting in the sun  
But walls, with windows, some without  
And piles of bricks were all about the place,  
My cornfield had a much-changed face.

**A**nd then my thoughts, they lead me on  
to future days, when all is gone.  
To when no cornfields dance their paces  
and buildings fill our open spaces,  
And Knowle and Dorridge, Chadwick End,  
And Hockley Heath and Temple Balsall  
will join together - no fields - at all.

**A**nd we must fight, for it is so -  
the building site will grow and grow  
Till the Great Heart, so wondrous green,  
of England, will no more be seen.  
It's no good then, to wail and moan  
that England has a heart of stone.

**J.E.L.**



## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

**F**ollowing my rather pessimistic report in the January Newsletter it is pleasing to be able to report that since then there has been an increase of 32 to the Society's current membership of 1542 with no further losses.

Sadly we are losing Mrs Coton who is leaving the district after distributing in part of the Starbold Crescent area for many years. May I take this opportunity of thanking the Cotons and wishing them

every happiness in their new home. In their place we are fortunate to welcome Mr Phil Vince who in addition to his work on the Executive and Planning committees has agreed to take on the Starbold distribution area.

We welcome the 32 new members who have joined us since the last Newsletter was published and hope that we shall have the pleasure of their company at some of our functions.

Mrs J Askey

Mr & Mrs Band

Mr & Mrs E Blackie

Miss M M Cooper

Mr & Mrs P Cooper

Mrs B Coles

Mrs B J Furness

Mrs W Hazzard

Mr & Mrs G Morgan

Mrs B Morris

Mrs Neville

Mr & Mrs M J Newbould

Miss O'Shaughnessy

Mr & Mrs A E Oxford

Miss M G Plant

Mr & Mrs D O Ranson

Mr & Mrs P J Royle

Mr & Mrs J Shepherd

Mrs D Smith

Mr & Mrs D Tree

Mrs C J West

Mrs W Powell

**John Chaloner**  
**Knowle 778705**

## PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT



**T**he **Bridgewater Hotel, Warwick Road, Knowle** (bottom of Stripes Hill, near the canal bridge). I wrote in the last Newsletter about the development plans for this hotel which the

Society was opposing on highway safety grounds, so we were pleased when the Council refused the planning application, mainly for these reasons. However it may be that the developers will have another attempt in due course so we will be keeping a weather eye open.

**Land off Bakers Lane, Warwick Road, Knowle.** The planning application to erect a glass house nursery on this Green Belt site has been refused by the Council on the same grounds that the Society based its objection, namely that this is a commercial development proposal contrary to the Council's Green Belt policy.

**1679 High Street, Knowle (former Post Office)** We were pleased that this address, having been refurbished as a sit-down restaurant, not a take-away, with a front and fascia in keeping with the Conservation Area, was opened with the name 'Phileas Fogg'. Unfortunately it did not thrive and has now been replaced by 'Billy Budd's Bistro'.

**Cuttle Pool Lane, Temple Balsall.** The application to extend planning permission, without time limit, to complete the land-fill was criticised by the Society (as described in the last Newsletter) and the Planning Development Control Sub-Committee of the Council, and

has been referred to their lawyers for advice. So we have to await the outcome.

**Grimshaw Hall, Hampton Road, Knowle.** We have queried whether a car park, recently built in the grounds, requires planning consent, which it appears to be without.

**Miniman Ltd., Warwick Road, Knowle.** It appears that part of this enterprise has been built without proper planning consent, and the Council is taking action to obtain compliance.

**Service Station on the M42, nr. Catherine de Barnes.** An application has been made to build a very substantial Motorway Service Station at this point, to serve M42 traffic. The Society is preparing to object primarily on the grounds that it infringes the Green Belt.

**Bentley Heath School, Widney Close, Bentley Heath.** An application is before the Council to expand the school by seven classrooms plus ancillary building work. We have written to the Council asking that careful thought be given to a solution to the extra parental car parking that will ensue in the adjacent residential area, to the detriment of the environment.

**Peter Ellis.**  
**Knowle 775261**

## LOCAL HISTORY SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT



**A**t Society exhibitions in the past some of you may have seen an automatic projector, which the Society has borrowed on several occasions from Mr.

Ted Eden. It takes 36 slides and goes round and round on its own until one switches it off. Mr. Eden has now generously given us this piece of equipment, for which we are very grateful. We hope to use it at the Solihull Local History Fair at Solihull Library on April 18th, which I mentioned in the last newsletter. Do come along and see us and the other exhibitors, as it should be a good family day.

A few days later we shall be taking a party from Halesowen USA round the village on April 22nd. There are also all the queries that regularly come our way to be answered.

The sub-committee is busy working on our talk for the Society in June - 'Knowle Characters Down the Years'. We have a long list of possible candidates, starting in 1316 with Ralph de Perham, who had quite

a funeral. Walter Cook is another obvious choice from the early times. Then there are some of the Lords of the Manor, vicars, doctors and schoolmasters down the centuries. Did you know that Daniel Beal, the schoolmaster from 1800 to 1846, left a very detailed will, virtually giving us the contents of the school room (which was then at the Manor House). Walter Savage Landor, the poet, who attended this school, is another on the list. Then there is Gumley Wilson, a highly colourful character, and Lady Byron, etc. etc. Many of you will remember some of them - Canon Downing, Dr. Hollick, Eva Wootton? I hasten to add that we have not included anyone alive today, and are conscious of sensitivities. There are too many people to fill the allotted hour, so we shall doubtless have to prune the list. Do come and listen to us at the Society's general meeting on June 15th. For some of you at least we hope to bring back happy memories.

**Elaine S. Warner**  
**Knowle 775887**

## AMENITIES SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT



**T**raffic: The final report on the Knowle and Dorridge Traffic Plan was presented to the

Council on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1997, covering all aspects of traffic and traffic safety including cycleways, pedestrian ways and ways to and from schools. The Council gave its approval to the overall strategy proposed, which envisaged a total scheme costing about £400,000 and which might be progressively authorised over the next four years. Detailed proposals for implementing the first stage of the scheme were then submitted to the Transport and Highways Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> January. These cover the stretch of the Warwick Road from just north of the M42 roundabout, through to the Lodge Road junction.

The Society gave its broad support to the proposals which consisted mainly of altering carriageway marking and signs with the aim of reducing accidents. The only place we disagreed was over a proposed cycle route across the motorway by way of the motorway island. This would be unsafe and we urged them to bring the cycle route over the existing footbridge instead. Several Councillors took the same view, and the officers were asked to reconsider the matter. A consultation meeting was therefore arranged between Council officers, representatives of Knowle Society, the Cyclists Touring Club, and others on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March. This was a very useful and constructive meeting and had the additional advantage of improving our own connections with the cyclists. A new outline route was agreed and will form the basis of the next submission to the Councillors. If it is accepted there will, however, be some delay in implementation because of legal issues in allowing cyclists to use a bridge intended for pedestrians. At present the bridge is fairly frequently used (strictly illegally) by cyclists and hardly at all by pedestrians.

The officers' proposals did not include the actual junction at Lodge Road/Hampton Road and they were asked to resubmit including those junctions. This raises the thorny problem of traffic lights versus traffic islands so there is more debate to come, but we are in close touch with the action!

**Car Parking:** The problems of car parking in Knowle were given a good airing at a meeting of the Council's Transport and Highways Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. The officers presented a comprehensive report listing the various options for increasing parking provisions in Knowle, paying particular attention to the acknowledged need for more long-term parking. This included all the suggestions that the Society has put forward in the last few years, and cost comparisons were made. For the immediate future detailed consideration will be given to two plans, namely, reducing the dual carriageway at the top of Stripes Hill to one carriageway in order to provide echelon parking, and to increase the amount of parking along Station Road, between Warwick Road and Lodge

Road. Between them these two plans would provide a further 34 parking spaces. The work on Station Road would be combined with reducing the width of traffic lanes on that stretch of road, and both proposals would assist in slowing down vehicles entering the village. Funding could therefore be made available as part of the overall Knowle and Dorridge Traffic Plan and might possibly be included in next year's budget. Before then, more detailed proposals will be prepared and the Society will have another opportunity to comment. Further consideration is also being given to the possibility of a temporary car park on land at 151 Station Road.

**Airport:** The first phase of the 10 year development featuring extensions to the Main Terminal check-in concourse and departure lounge, plus a new executive lounge in the Eurohub, is scheduled for completion in May 1998. Having the Main Terminal service road back in use should mean an end to problems encountered by users over the winter.

In the first two years, fines imposed on aircraft which exceeded the agreed Night Noise Levels, has produced over £100,000 for the Community Trust fund. Most of this money came from one company; as a result of this, plus the new lower noise levels, it is understood they will be using quieter aircraft when normal night flying is resumed in the Spring.

**Buses:** So often we have cause to moan and complain about our bus services. It is good, for a change to have some good news to report!

There used to be an excellent half-hourly service linking Solihull with the International Station, Airport and NEC. Some months ago this was changed to an irregular hourly service.

We objected strongly - through the Transport Users' Advisory Committee, Solihull Council and our MP. It has produced results.

Not only has a half-hourly service now been restored - there is even a third bus during certain hours of the day. We say thank you to all concerned.

It is also good news that a service has been restored between Knowle and Leamington Spa. It is operated by Stagecoach, with route numbers 61, 62 and 63. It travels through some of Warwickshire's loveliest villages - and the time table is mainly planned for their benefit. However it is possible to go to Leamington with a daily service leaving Knowle Green at 10.20 a. m., with return bus from Leamington at 1.15 p.m. The journey takes about an hour. The fare is £2.50 for a day return (It is almost all outside the West Midland area where free passes apply.)

**Peter Morton**  
**Knowle 778688**



## NATURE CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

No interesting sightings to report - only a cheerful statement from David Hall that, so far, it has been a very good year for all the usual bird species. He and others saw the bird I reported last time and it was not native.

Everywhere the Spring flowers are out in profusion, even earlier than last year. The Council's crocus beds have been a picture, and the banks of daffodils all the way to Solihull have eclipsed even the famous driveway to Baddesley Clinton NT.

Knowle escaped the terrible havoc of the worst storms since 1987, and on 8<sup>th</sup> January only 3 days after heavy snow here we had our warmest ever January day. February also had record-breaking temperatures with a memorable 66° F on St. Valentine's Day! Adrian reported frogspawn in the reserve, Peacock butterflies woke up indoors and four were seen outside by Joy Hall.

**Grand Union Canal** - There was a serious bank collapse in January below Dicken's Farm. Pile drivers are still operating from a stone slip road laid behind the towpath hedge all the way from Hampton Road bridge to Dicken's Farm. A section of canal had to be drained and Ted Walden reports, from Mr. Dicken, that herons feasting on exposed freshwater mussels left 4" mussel shells in his fields! But hedgerows are damaged and the diverse waterside flora lost.

**CPRE Hedgerow Survey** - White clouds of blackthorn blossom and hawthorn bursting into leaf signal the return of the surveying season! I cannot do so much walking now so should be very glad of some help for our small team - to catch up with Hampton's fifty completed hedgerows!

Barbara Davies reports the Hampton Road limestone verge now fully mown and the hedgerow trimmed.

**Nature Reserve** - We sincerely hope the problem of the BMX bikers in the old badger dell in Dorridge Park Wood does not transfer itself to our Reserve. The badgers had deserted their huge sett complex years ago after the ancient wood was incorporated into Dorridge Park and became extensively walked, but the half dozen or so 'acrobat' bikers have been damaging the best bluebell area with

new jumps. Where and how can youngsters amuse themselves safely in the 'great outdoors'?

We are disappointed that Birmingham Cable will not now be sponsoring a re-fencing of our reserve at a cost of several thousand pounds. Instead they are willing to sponsor a new Guide or Walks leaflet.

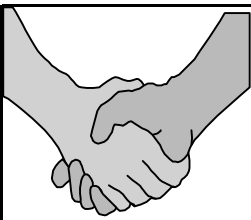
**Trees** - Dieback from Cabling operations may become evident this summer - please tell us of any noticeable dieback in your street trees. The Tree Council is also looking for Veteran Trees, so again, please report any real 'oldies' you have seen. One each of every species is needed, for instance the oldest/biggest Alder I know is at the Hillmorton end of the Reserve.

A very interesting tree has been seen by Mrs. Pontifex. It is next to the Horse Chestnut in the Lister Lea frontage at Milverton House, corner of Wilsons Rd. Thought to be an Ash, it is actually a very tall and handsome Tree of Heaven - the only one in Knowle?

The WI Hut Oak is very badly decayed and the Tree Officer cannot recommend its retention. It stood in a line of trees set back from Station Rd as far as the present Arden School. One massive Elm stood next to the United Reform Church and is pictured, being felled, in Miss Wootton's 'History of Knowle'. Now, sadly, another landmark will disappear.

But a new Kissing Gate to replace the stile at the end of Kixley Lane is a splendid improvement to a popular walk - though still muddy; the marshy area beyond once boasted a watercress bed. Let's try it on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 2.30p.m. from the Guild House, for a browse amongst the wildflowers still to be found so close to our Village.

**Stella Jarman**  
Knowle 774528



## MEETINGS AND SOCIAL SUB COMMITTEE

As I prepare this Spring Report I hope that those members who have booked to visit Soho House are looking forward to it as much as I am. We have sold 54 tickets, which is excellent news.

The Outings Secretary, Susan Trucchi, is awaiting a response from Caroline Spellman's Secretary so that we are able to make plans to visit the House of Commons in the Autumn. Full details will appear in the next Newsletter.

Although the Village Hall has been booked for

1999, we are still considering the Speakers we shall invite, but hopefully within the next few weeks the programme will start to take shape.

We are looking at the possibility of visiting Windsor Castle in 1999. I am sure many of you will be interested to see the Castle after completion of the restoration. I will keep you informed.

I look forward to seeing as many members as possible at our meetings in 1998, and please, if you have any ideas for speakers or any thoughts as to how our meetings can be improved please let me know.