



Volume 39 Number 1



January 2001



A Very Happy New Year to all our Readers

Chairman's Report

Elaine Warner retires as Chairman of Knowle Society

November's AGM was notable for the retirement of Elaine Warner from the Chair of the Society after 9 years in that position.

Although we knew earlier about her decision, the change will nevertheless make a big impact because Elaine is so well regarded and admired and will be much missed as Chairman. However I hasten to add that Elaine will continue to be at the heart of things, not least as continuing Chairman of the Local History Sub-committee. At the AGM, Dr Bower (President) paid tribute to Elaine's outstanding contribution to the life and development of the Society. Elaine's energy, enthusiasm and skills infused her leadership. One of her major achievements has been the building of a structure of sub-committees to conduct the business of the Society more efficiently. A reflection of her public reputation came in the addresses given to the meeting by Councillors Les Kyles and Don Blake who praised her qualities. They declared that is largely due to Elaine that the Society is held in such high esteem by Solihull Council which values the Society's professional and rational approach to matters and problems that concern Knowle. The tributes were concluded with

words of thanks by Stella Jarman on behalf of all ladies in the Society, and for support and help in the activities of nature conservation. On behalf of the membership Dr Bower presented Elaine with a token of the Society's gratitude, and Stella Jarman proffered a sapling oak tree to be planted in Job's Close Park in Elaine's father's memory, among the new trees planted there as part of the millennium tree planting project.

Other News

It has fallen to me to have the honour to be elected Chairman. As I said at the AGM, I will do my best to serve the Society as well as I can, and in this I am heartened to have the declared support and help of the members of the Executive Committee.

Christmas Lights in Knowle. Knowle Traders are to be congratulated for another fine display which is now a really admired and appreciated feature of Knowle centre at Christmas time. The society's Christmas Tree is a fine centrepiece outside the Guild House (thanks to John Clarke and Geoff Thompstone). There was a good crowd for the lights switch on, with the Vicar as MC; music; Father Christmas arriving by illuminated sledge to be greeted by lots of excited children; a carol; mulled wine, mince

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Dates For Your Calendar



Monday 15th January	General Meeting: Talk 'Down the Garden Path' a talk by Mr Tristan Thacker . 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall
Monday 19th February	General Meeting: Talk 'Touchwood, an Update' an illustrated talk by Mr Jeremy Collins. 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall
Monday 19th March	General Meeting: Talk 'Victorian Crime in Birmingham' an illustrated talk by Mr. D. Cross . 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall
Monday 23rd April	General Meeting: Talk 'The Work of a Conservation Architect' a talk by Mr Robin Hurley. 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall

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pies and sausage rolls (courtesy of Curtis's); the lights switched on perfectly on cue; and then fireworks to finish, just before the inevitable rain sent everyone hurrying home happy. We were pleased to meet Councillor Les Kyles and his wife there.

Finally, as New Year is a time for looking forward, I thought it appropriate to say a few words about likely items of significance in the year ahead.

Few would deny that Knowle is an attractive place with a rich history, and that it will not remain so unless we care for it. It is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the three objects of the Society as given in its Constitution. First, to promote high standards of planning and architecture, Second, to educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture, and third, to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic and public interest.

The current and ongoing preparation of Solihull's Unitary Development Plan certainly bears upon the first and third objectives so we should be well aware of its implications for Knowle. Members attending a recent General meeting talk had the benefit of listening to Mr John Sammons (SMBC's Head of Strategy) on this subject. The Society has made its contribution to SMBC's initial preparatory work (Ken Richards is our author). The impact visually on Knowle may well be housing to meet forecast growth. We share with the Council a reluctance to eat into the green belt. One favoured solution is the development of apartment blocks to meet the increase in older people and singles. There is evidence of this trend to be seen already about Knowle. One dislikeable

characteristic of blocks of flats and/or apartments is that they can be ugly buildings massed together to spoil an otherwise attractive street scene. We will do our best to avoid this happening in Knowle, but we have to accept the general trend.

There are other concerns, particularly traffic control; and car parking. We will be consulting with the Council to influence outcomes to Knowle's best advantage over the period ahead.

Solihull's new shopping centre (Touchwood Court) is not far ahead and will affect our buying habits. Let us not forget to continue to support our traders in Knowle if we want to keep Knowle as an attractive and prosperous shopping centre.

Knowle's few and valued green open spaces will need zealous protection if they are to continue to be places where we can walk and enjoy the environment. We will be monitoring any proposals to introduce recreational or other facilities that could degrade them.

Other issues will arise no doubt. In all our endeavours we will be guided by the objectives of the Society, and in this we know that we will have the continued help of our Councillors.

I hope you have had a happy Christmas, and that the New Year will bring you good fortune

Peter Ellis
Knowle 775261

A THANK YOU FROM ELAINE WARNER

I should like to say thank you very much indeed for the very attractive wrist watch presented to me by Dr. Bower on behalf of the Society when I retired as Society chairman at the Annual General Meeting; for the oak tree from the Nature Conservation Sub-committee; and for the kind words said to me by a number of people. I was quite overwhelmed. The watch is most welcome, as I needed a new one, and I wear it every day (except for gardening and dirty jobs!). With Stella's agreement I have planted the oak tree in the park in memory of my father, as part of the Society's memorial tree planting for the millennium, and I shall enjoy watching it grow.

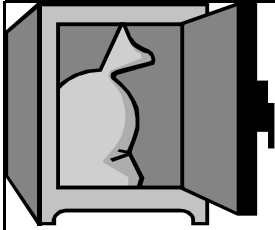
MYFANWY PARSONS (NÉE HOTCHKISS)

We are sad to report the unexpected death of Myffy Parsons on November 29th.

Myffy was born in Knowle, the last person to be born at the White Swan, where her father was the landlord. She attended Knowle School and then Malvern Hall. In 1944, aged 19, she joined the Wrens - on the very day the Americans arrived in Knowle (much to the relief of her mother, who thought she would be safer with sailors).

As only part of her contribution to village life, Myffy joined the Executive Committee of the Knowle Society in 1970, becoming chairman of the newly formed Planning Sub-committee, a position she held for 20 years, until 1991. During that time, together with Dr. Bower, Bill Sutton, and later Bill Rowell and Matthew Hunter, she inspected local plans, attended planning appeals and formulated the Society's views in letters to the local authority and the Department of the Environment. She was also a lay assessor for the Civic Trust, commenting on schemes entered for awards.

We were all sad when Myffy first became ill, and subsequently left Knowle for a residential home in Meriden. But she has never been forgotten. We shall miss Myffy, both for her contribution to the Society and as a friend. She was a delightful, happy person, who was well liked. We extend our deepest sympathy to Linda and Paul, their children and the rest of her family.



Financial Report

The Knowle Society Balance Sheet and Accounts for the year to 30th September 2000 were presented at the AGM on 25th November 2000.

Total income for the year amounted to £3,564 the main source being subscriptions which amounted to £2,701.

Expenditure was £2,656. The main items of expenditure was printing, postage and stationery at £785. Printing costs include the quarterly newsletter and programme card. A contribution of £250 was again made to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council towards the cost of watering the hanging baskets in the High street.

After **donations** of £190 there was a **Surplus of Funds** for the year of £718 The surplus was transferred to the **Accumulated Fund**, which now stands at £5,195 with a further £5,000 in the reserve fund. The Eva Wootten Fund stands at £4,030.

The accounts of the Society were again audited by R.A.Lea & Co who have been re-appointed as Auditors for the coming year.

Ken Hornby - Hon Treasurer
Knowle 776300

Local History Sub-committee Report

Following an exceptionally heavy year, it is time to take stock. Apart from the extra chapter originally written for 'The History of Knowle' apart, we do not propose to take on any other major project until some of our accumulated backlog has been cleared. There is a lot of cataloguing and indexing to do, the oral history records need completing and lodging in the library and the cabinets in the library need to be restored to apple pie order. Work on this has already started. The cabinets, however, are getting very full: many thanks to Gillian and Ron Knight for allowing part of their loft to become our 'stack'. In particular, the Society's own archives (old minutes, etc.), which are unlikely to be wanted regularly, have been moved to 103, Avenue Road. The backlog will take a long time to clear, so newsletter reports are likely to be very short for a time.

the Junior School local studies project. This is done in two stages: first the children pay a visit to the library to see relevant material from our collection - mostly photographs - with sub-committee members on hand to answer questions. This is always a very enjoyable (if exhausting) afternoon. A few weeks later fifteen to twenty long-standing residents visit the school and the children ask questions on pre-arranged aspects of Knowle history. With several years experience, this is now well organised at both ends, which is great for everyone. Very many thanks to those local residents who gave up their time. We sincerely hope that the children benefit from this annual exercise as much as those of us who take part enjoy it. Following this, we have had a request from the Infants' School for an information pack, comprising copies of about 50 photographs, which we shall be happy to supply.



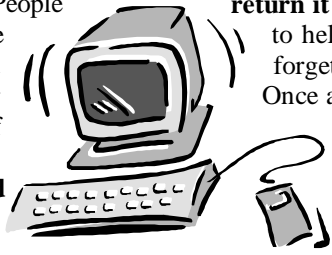
As usual the sub-committee's first event of the year was

Elaine S. Warner
Knowle 775887

Membership Secretary's Report

With the collecting of subscriptions underway we start to see the changes that have taken place over the year more clearly than at any other time. People have moved away or their circumstances have changed and we see a temporary -I hope - fall in Membership. This edition of the newsletter sees a total membership of 1694 - a net fall of 12 since the pre AGM edition last Autumn.

May I draw your attention to the **Gift Aid Form** which is attached as the back page of the newsletter. The last Budget made changes in the ways that Charities can benefit from the Income Tax that you have already paid and could result in substantial improvements to the Society's income if as many members as possible fill in the form and return it to me at the



address shown on the form. **Yes! that is all you have to do - it really is that painless Just fill in and sign the form and return it to me!! The rest is up to us!** So please help us to help you, don't wait until next week - you might forget - **strike whilst the iron is hot.**

Once again, as has become the tradition at this time of the year, the penultimate page of the newsletter forms an easy reference removable and foldable reminder slip of committee members' details.

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members who have join us since the last newsletter and hope that we shall have the pleasure of their company at some of our forthcoming functions.

Mr & Mrs Alcock

Mr & Mrs K Blake

Mr & Mrs Dawes

Mr & Mrs Glasgow

Mr & Mrs T Haines

Mr W Haines

Mrs F Hase

Mr & Mrs Hills

Mr & Mrs M Jupe

Mr G E Morris

Mr J Poole

Mr & Mrs D M Wright

John F Chaloner
Knowle 778705

Planning Sub-committee Report

The recent past **Telecommunications Masts** activity has abated to our relief but could well resume as mobile phone demand continues.

It is worth repeating that if we want **Knowle's Retail Shopping Centre** to flourish then we all need to shop there as much as possible rather than Solihull, and spread the message, otherwise vacated shops will be filled by such estate agents (Hunters in the High street is the latest entrant), offices (Bank House Hotel may convert part of their first and second floors), body care specialists and restaurants. Knowle centre will be the poorer if our shops decline.

The new **Music and Drama Building** at Arden School looks nearly complete. There was a lot of argument about its position. Many believe that a good choice was finally made.

The **Cafe Saffron** in the High Street continues to flout Planning Law. For a year they have not complied with Council's instruction to remove illegal illumination of their fascia sign, and recently they installed equipment to an external wall without planning permission. After prolonged pressure from us, the Council say they have given Cafe Saffron 7 days in which to comply otherwise face enforcement action. We will press hard for this.

Shipways Estate Agents also broke planning law when they fitted air-conditioning to an external side wall visible from the High Street. We pointed this out to the Council and we believe discussions about an acceptable solution have started.

To cater for an ageing population and increasing demand for single occupancy (according to the Council 25% of Solihull's

population now live in single households), developers are applying to demolish houses and re-build with **apartment blocks**. There are current applications at 265 Station Road (7 apartments), and 1278-1288 Warwick Road (opp. Copt Heath Croft - 38 apartments) Council has already given permission at 1266-1272 Warwick Road (19 apartments, currently McCann Erickson offices) and Crabmill Close (13 apartments). This trend may not be to everyone's liking, but we take the view that it is better than building on green belt land

to meet the demand that Council is obliged to satisfy. However we believe that the Council will be against over building that would degrade streetscenes.

We continue to struggle to have the coat of arms refitted to the **Wilson Arms** as promised by Bass but who now say it is too dilapidated to refurbish. Our Local History Sub-committee has found a photograph of the coat of arms and we intend to ask Bass if they will have a new one made and installed.

The Planning Sub-committee has been very pleased recently to welcome Dr Peter Morton to its membership.

On a closing and personal note, may I say that this is my final newsletter after six years as Chairman of the Sub-committee. My thanks to all the committee members for their unfailing support and help, and very best wishes to my successor, Ken Richards.

Peter Ellis
Knowle 775261



Amenities Sub-committee Annual Report

The Knowle and Dorridge Area Traffic Plan - Phase 2 - has now been completed. Phase 3 is to be split into sections A and B. Section 3A affecting Lodge Road with Longdon Road, will have consultation papers put forward in the late Spring; and will be followed later by consultation in connection with Section 3B which will deal with the triangle of High Street/Kenilworth Road/Wilsons Road, and the junction of Station Road with Warwick Road.

The outcome of the appeal by the proposed developers of a Motorway Service Area (MSA) is still awaited.

The ink was hardly dry on my last report when I received an invitation to attend a meeting at the Council Offices in connection with car parking in the Village. Initially it is proposed to fine vehicle owners who park in the Tesco and rear of the village hall (Tesco 2) car parks £25 if they stay more than 2 hours. The two car parks each side of the village hall will have a 3 hour limit, and will be subject to a £10 excess charge. These proposals were passed by the Transport and Highways Sub-

committee on 23rd November, and by the time you read this report will be enforced by the Council during their frequent patrols. and this will be kept under review to ensure adequate regulation. This is only the first step to improve parking facilities in the village. Already 'on the stocks' is the possibility of extending and linking the car parks around the village hall. These investigations are underway, and a 'flow' system could result in an increase in parking spaces, and would also make the car parks more 'user friendly'.

On behalf of my Sub-committee I wish you a good, peaceful and happy New Year; and hope that roads, traffic, street furnishings, litter, flower arrangements, aircraft and Police matters do not cause you any concerns during 2001

Gary Masters
Knowle 779955

Meetings and Social Sub-committee Report

By the time you read this newsletter, Christmas and the New Year will have passed. I do hope you and all your families have had a happy time. I also hope you have enjoyed the Christmas lights in the High Street together with the Christmas Tree. Our sincere thanks must go to Mr Tristan Thacker who supplied the tree and to Geoff Thompstone, who despite being incredibly busy still gave us his time to erect the tree and place on the Christmas lights. This will be the last year that John Clarke will organise the Christmas tree. I am sure that you would wish me to thank him on your behalf for all the effort he has put in during the past few years. As I mentioned in my last Newsletter we have to find someone to take over from John next year. It takes a little organising, but John tells me that it is not a terribly onerous task. **Is there someone who could help?** It is no use leaving this until the last moment or we may find that in 2001 there is no longer a Christmas Tree to be enjoyed.

Following my Autumn Newsletter I am pleased to report that Mrs Jenny Jones has kindly offered to prepare posters advertising our meetings. My Committee and I do hope that you enjoy the speakers we have chosen for this year.

The forthcoming speakers are as follows:-

Monday 19th February: Update on Touchwood. A presentation by Lend Lease. The opening of Touchwood is only a few months away. The presentation in October 1999 was very well received, with members voicing a variety of opinions. I look forward to a good attendance.

Monday 19th March: Police Historian, David Cross, will be speaking on the subject of Victorian Crime in Birmingham. Mr Cross is a retired Police Officer and for the past five years has been involved with West Midlands Police Museum at Sparkhill Police Station.

Monday 23rd April: Robin Hurley has recently retired as the Conservation Architect for Solihull MBC. Included in his talk will be an explanation of a conservation area, how listed buildings are dealt with and his experiences during his time at Solihull MBC.

Please come along and support us. Why not bring a friend who is not a member. He or she may be tempted to join

Sandra Lea
Knowle 776850

Nature Conservation Sub-committee Report

Little did I realise, when writing my September report, just how prophetic the Environment Agency warnings of increased flood risk would be. Only a few weeks later came the most appalling rains and devastating floods, each incident being reported as the worst since records began. As I write now, the whole terrible scenario has just been re-enacted. My neighbour's brother, in fact, who lives just one field away from the Hereford Rowing Club, may by the end of today (December 11th) if it keeps on raining, have his house flooded for the 5th time within 3 years when, over the previous 30 years, his house has been safely above flood level. And it can only be imagined what encrusted filth must remain beneath the floorboards.

One feels almost guilty for having enjoyed such a remission in the weather as we did for our long-planned Commemorative Tree Planting Event on Friday 24th November. Every day that week a chill wind had swept across Jobs Close Park with scudding clouds and regular downpours! So Georgina Asbury promised to bring her Camper-van to the Longdon Road Car park to provide hot drinks, and Jan Mason and Joy Edgington offered their gazebo tents for some protection - but almost miraculously Friday dawned bright and sunny, the wind dropped to a whisper, the rain held off just long enough - and Ron Hill and Colin Mason didn't have to put up the tents!

The event was very much enlivened by the arrival of the Knowle Junior School's Garden Club and Cub Scouts who were soon enthusiastically helping Knowle Society Members plant their own dedicated trees before planting the rest with Solihull Council's ever popular Green Scheme Director David Biss. David had brought the trees ordered through the Wildlife Trust - the autumn berried were Wild Service, Guelder Rose, Alder Buckthorn and Holly whilst summer fruiting were Wild Pear, Wild Cherry and Crabapple. More highly prized than the common Horse Chestnut is the Sweet Chestnut, here since Roman times, and 2 were kindly donated by Janet and William Edwards. Reg Elliot dug a difficult 5 footer from their garden in Park Avenue, and brought several seedlings back - would anyone like to have one? Our garden seems to be a repository for squirrel/bird/windbourne tree seeds so Ron dug an 8ft Crab, a 6ft Walnut and 2 yews which together with Oak, Hawthorne and Holly seedlings made up the list and reduced costs. (We rejected Ash/Horse Chestnut/Sycamore/Norway Maple/Sweet Whitebeam and Laurel - any offers for these?!)

Elaine Warner planted an English Oak presented to her by the sub-committee at the AGM on November 20th. We hope it will grace the Park for hundreds of years to come.

Another special tree was the 'cloned' Elm promised to Stella by the Conservation Foundation and collected from their Native Elm Programme nursery in Bedfordshire (Thank you John!) where a 1000 clones have already been propagated from great Elms still surviving across Britain - I had hoped an Elm found opposite Dorridge Station could be used but it was less than 190cm in girth and so was too young to have survived all known outbreaks of Dutch Elm disease. The danger point for our Elm will be in 15-20 years time when its bark becomes mature enough for the dreaded Elm bark beetle to strike again. Will it have inherited the same resistance as its aged parents?

Our 21 trees will fill a corner of our lovely Park with Spring blossoms and Autumn fruits for birds and we have registered the Event with the Tree Council in support of their National Tree Week. The Woodland Trust's 10,000 tree Cattlebrook Wood at Springfield would have counted too, had they been planted at the same time as ours instead of last March. Never mind its the carbon dioxide reduction in the atmosphere that matters most!

I have just heard from farmer Geoff Thompstone about a possible tree planting scheme on his own land despite all the current problems.

Purnells Brook Pollution. - Problems of pollution in Purnells

Brook and especially behind Newton Road have been an ongoing saga over many years. Mr Leo Singer has kindly agreed to add the following:-

Stella Jarman
Knowle 774528

For the attention of Mrs Stella Jarman - Knowle Society.

"Residents' whose gardens border on Purnells Brook behind Newton Road, Knowle, found some consolation in the article appearing on page 4 of the Solihull News 8th December 2000 'Row over pipe error'

For some time now Purnells Brook has experienced pollution, particularly in the last few months.

Direct representation both verbally and in writing to the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water Authority and also Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council has resulted in detailed surveys and investigations into the continual appearance of pollution and stench.

The survey acknowledges the validity of the complaints and action has been promised by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council who are responsible for the matter.

The remedial action will involve the correction of a number of pipes from houses whose pipes have carried foul waste to storm water drains instead of the sewage system.

The authorities have responded well to the persistence of Newton Road residents, firstly by their acknowledgement and then the decision to ensure that remedial action will be taken.

Mention has also been made to the Council of the Brook overflowing its natural bank due to obstacles impeding the usual flow of water.

The significance of sensible and vigilant rapport with the appropriate authorities should always in the long term provide satisfactory remedies where there is a good cause, and equally so a good responsive Council"

Signed
Leo Singer

Editors Note: Due to technical difficulties photographs intended for publication with the Nature Conservation Report could not be produced. I hope to include them in a later issue. JFC.