

Volume 40 Number 1



January 2002



A Very Happy New Year to all our Readers

Chairman's Report

I write as Christmas and the New Year approach, but as you read this the festivities are past and I hope you have happy memories.

One of the pre-Christmas events with which the Society is closely involved is the provision of the Christmas tree on the small green near the Church. This year's tree was a generous gift to the Society and Knowle from Tristan Thacker. Gary Masters organised the planting and the lights. We thank them both.

The Christmas streetlights that are so attractive in Knowle High Street are provided and put up by Knowle Traders. They are to be congratulated on another fine display. The ceremony of the 'switch-on' was again a really popular and well-supported

event with a throng of parents and their excited children. The Vicar was in fine form as the MC; Curtis's mince pies were delicious; Father Christmas arriving by illuminated sleigh was hugely popular; the Arden School band played beautifully; carols were sung; and to close there were some spectacular fireworks. A very festive occasion.

As I said at the AGM, I believe that our Society is in good shape to face the challenges ahead. Knowle will continue to need protecting from attempts to spoil it by inappropriate developments. In 2002 the current and ongoing preparation of Solihull's Unitary Development Plan certainly bears upon this objective. At this stage we are op-

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Dates For Your Calendar



Monday 21st January	General Meeting: Talk 'Royal Encounters' a talk by Ms. Joy Pinder. 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall
Monday 18th February	General Meeting: Talk 'Manors, Mills & Mansions' an illustrated talk by Mr. Ken Hughes. 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall
Monday 18th March	General Meeting: Talk 'Discovery of New Worlds' a talk by Mr. Andrew Lound. 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall
Sunday 24th March	Daffodil Walk from Packwood. Meet at 2.00pm at Packwood (see Newsletter)
Monday 15th April	General Meeting: Talk 'British Castles' a illustrated talk by Mr. Peter Gale. 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall

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timistic that the impact on Knowle will be moderate over the period to 2011. Traffic and parking considerations in Knowle will continue to need watching very carefully. Preservation of our much-valued open spaces requires a watchful eye.

2002 will be marked by two celebrations which affect the Society. The first is the Queen's Golden Jubilee June 1st - 4th. The second is the Society's 40th Anniversary.

For the Jubilee we will be participating fully in the events and are taking an active part in the planning stages. It is too early to enter into detail but I can assure that the activities should be attractive and suitable to the occasion. We will give you more information as our plans unfold.

About our 40th Anniversary we have decided to keep it separate from the Jubilee celebrations, and our current thought is to have an Anniversary Dinner or Buffet in the autumn at a central location with some entertainment. Again, more news as it breaks.

In keeping with these celebratory remarks, I will end on a Millennium note. The Society's Millennium Sign was unveiled on November 21st 2001 by the Mayor of Solihull, Mrs. Beryl Kellie. The occasion was attended by the designer and carver

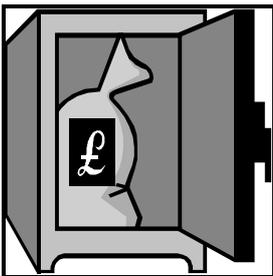
Graham Jones, the constructor Tony Mabbott, our three Councillors Les Kyles, Don Blake and Diana Holl-Allen, the Revd. Michael Parker, members of the Society, including Adrian Emsden who managed the project, other Society members and the public. It was a very significant moment. The Knowle Society undertook to provide this sign as part of the Knowle 2000 celebrations. Graham Jones, sculptor and woodcarver whose work has been widely exhibited across the Midlands has carved it from solid oak. The sign depicts Knowle Church, the Guild House, the Canal and supporting oak trees. It is mounted on an oak post some eight feet above ground.

The design features have been chosen to reflect the historical aspect of the Millennium and the age of the village, and in the hope that the sign will be long lasting.

We hope that all visitors to Knowle and all Knowle residents will appreciate the sign and the work of the people who made and installed it and that everyone will treat the sign with respect.

I wish you all good fortune in the New Year.

Peter Ellis.
Knowle 775261.



Financial Report

The Knowle Society Balance Sheet and Accounts for the year to 30th September 2001 were presented at the Annual General Meeting on 19th November 2001.

Total Income for the year amounted to £3,416 the main source being subscriptions of £2,606.

There were no unusual items in the Expenditure. As usual a contribution of £250 was made to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council towards the cost of watering the hanging baskets in the High Street.

The surplus of £1,217 was transferred to the Accumulated Fund, which now stands at £6,412, with a further £5,000 in the Reserve Fund.

The Eva Wootton Fund now stands at £3,724 after a donation of £500 to Jobs Close.

Messrs R A Lea & Co. audited the accounts but did not seek re-election. Mr. Andrew Chadwick was elected as Auditor.

Sandra Lea
Hon Treasurer
Knowle 776850

Membership Secretary's Report

As always with the collecting of subscriptions your subscriptions to me at 31 Kenilworth Road, Knowle, Solihull B93 0JB. The subscriptions remain at taken place over the year more clearly. People have a modest £2.00 for single members and £3.00 for family members. If you are a postal recipient and would like to contribute to the postage charges it will be much appreciated.



moved away or their circumstances have changed and this shows changes in Membership. This edition of the newsletter sees a total membership of 1677 - unusually, a net increase of 6 since the pre AGM edition last Autumn.

May I take this opportunity to remind members that we started a new financial year on 1st October. Yes! You probably guessed what's coming. It is subscription time again! Please expect a knock on the door from your Distributor and a request to 'Pay up'. For those members whose newsletter is delivered by post, please send

Once again, as has become the tradition at this time of the year, the back 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 joined us since the last newsletter and hope that we shall have the pleasure of their company at some of our forthcoming functions.

Mrs R J Bragg

Mrs G Campbell

Mrs Jill Davis

Mr & Mrs D Eastwood

Mrs R Faulkner

Mrs P Lowndes

Mr & Mrs L R Macdonald

Mr & Mrs Morgan

Mr I Rogerson

Mr & Mrs G C Vaughan

Dr & Mrs R Wallace

Mr Tooker & Mrs Hartley

John F Chaloner
Knowle 778705

Local History Sub-committee Report

Reading my report for this time last year, I note that getting the Local History Centre into apple pie order was one of our priorities. After a series of Friday mornings doing our 'housekeeping' we are nearly there: the cupboards are tidy and we have made room in the filing cabinets (which will soon be filled up again with new items awaiting space). We even have an index, which although at present rudimentary, is already proving extremely useful. There is much more to be done and we are ploughing on.

As usual the sub-committee's first event of the year was 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. 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. By the time you read this report Jenny Lumb's excellent article and contributions from the

children on the same event will already have appeared in the Parish Magazine.

We have started to think about next year's exhibition for The Queen's Golden Jubilee and the Society's own 40th anniversary. The title will be 'Knowle Celebrations', which largely speaks for itself. The earliest photograph in our own collection is probably that of the party given for children after the relief of Mafeking, but one can glean something of earlier events from the churchwardens' accounts:

over the centuries, the bells have been rung for all sorts of celebrations as they are today. Although some of the old accounts were transcribed by Canon Downing for 'The Records of Knowle', they are not complete, so a trip to the County Record Office at Warwick should reveal a few more nuggets of information.

To end on a personal note, I should like to thank Michael Harrison, who has resigned from the subcommittee (and from the Local History Centre Stewards' Rota) due to lack of time. Michael has made a significant contribution to the sub-committee's work, particularly at Chester House, and we shall miss him.

Elaine S. Warner
Knowle 775887

Planning Sub-committee Report

The Solihull Council has now given its blessing to the development of 36 apartments with 74 underground parking spaces at 1266 - 1288 Warwick Road, together with a roundabout opposite Lightwood Close. These will be two and three storey blocks built around a courtyard with an open landscaped side onto Warwick Road.

A further application for the erection of 4 apartments at 348 Station Road (on the corner of Widney Road) was refused. However, there is an appeal against an earlier refusal for 5 apartments on the same site.

We are aware of a number of possible further developments of apartments replacing houses along the Warwick Road and Station Road. Councillors are well aware of our concern about changing the character of Knowle in this way, but of course we have to await actual applications before we can decide on our own course of action.

We were pleased that the application for a new telecommunications mast at the BT exchange along Station Road was refused. Nevertheless, we have to recognise the need to find suitable locations for these masts, but

preferably not adjoining residential areas.

Solihull Council has issued its plans for housing up to 2011, as part of its revision of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Most of the requirement can be met from existing developments, together with scheduled urban brownfield sites and anticipated "windfalls" (such as apartments!). Four Greenfield sites have been designated in the plan, which might be required to meet any shortfall. The only sites within our area are those that have been designated for possible long-term development after 2011—so nothing will happen before then. These sites are:



Hampton Road (adjoining the sports ground)
Grove Road (Middlefield extension)
Bentley Heath (rear of the recreation ground).

The Council is at present preparing other parts of its First Deposit of the UDP, so we should know

more about this in the New Year.

Ken Richards
Knowle 777436.

Amenities Sub-committee Annual Report



The "concept" drawing for the future of Jobs Close Park has now been prepared and made available. If you require a copy please contact your Patch Manager, Michelle Taylor, on 0121 704 6783, or meet her at the Chester House library on Thursday mornings between 10 a.m. and 12 noon. By the time you are able to read this article it is anticipated that plans for the first stage will be out for consultation to the local residents near to where the improvements are anticipated.

It is hoped that the meetings of the Rural Assembly called by Inspector Simon Westwood of West Midlands Police will be successful in reducing the noise, vandalism and wonton destruction of property, goods, and amenities in the area, especially our parks. It is unfortu-



nate that the area being dealt with covers Meriden across to Hockley Heath, but there can be a benefit if something is found successful in one area. It can be implemented in another by cross fertilisation.

The new year will bring forward, I am sure, more items that will need the attention of your sub-committee, and you can rest assured that they will attempt to represent your views on any matters that affect the best interests of the village, from an amenity point of view.

Gary Masters
Knowle 779955.

Meetings and Social Sub-committee Report

As I write this newsletter, the Christmas Tree is lit and I hope that members who were able to attend the ceremony enjoyed the occasion. Thanks to Tristan Thacker who donated the tree and to Ground Care for the work in erecting it.

The organising of the Christmas tree has mainly fallen on the shoulders of Gary Masters this year with help from our walks co-coordinator, Leighton Jones, whom I am sure you would wish me to thank on your behalf.

There is only so much that any one person can do and I am therefore appealing for help with the Christmas Tree next year. Ideally two people are required, and although I do not wish to sound sexist, men would be preferred.

The following talks will take place at our meetings over the next few months.

MONDAY JANUARY 21st 2002: 'Royal Encounters' An entertaining talk by Joy Pinder relating her experiences when she had lunch with the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 18th 2002: 'Manors Mills and Mansions' I am sure many of you will remember Kenneth Hughes giving us a talk a few years ago on Cad-

burys and Bournville. This illustrated talk covers Selly Manor, Weoley Castle, Sarehole Mill, Blakesley Hall, Aston Hall and Soho House.

MONDAY MARCH 18th 2002: Discovery of New Worlds. Mr. Andrew Lound will take us into the future. It is a very different topic to that which we usually have, but fascinating, not to be missed.

MONDAY APRIL 15th 2002: A member of Knowle Society himself, Peter Gale will give us an illustrated talk on British Castles.

Finally we plan to celebrate Knowle Society's 40th Anniversary in 2002. Gary and Gwen Masters who sit on this committee have kindly agreed to take charge of the event. It will take the form of a social evening, with food and some entertainment, during October 2002. I hope to have more details in the next newsletter together with information regarding the reservation of tickets.

Sandra Lea
Knowle 776850

Walks



With 2002 already with us it is time to look ahead to a more successful programme of walks than those that were possible in the Foot and Mouth hit 2001. Although all walks took place last year they were rather restricted. We have therefore decided to spread our wings a little and include two walks slightly outside Knowle, although still in the area. We have also decided to extend the season, rather than cramming them into just the summer months as in the past. We hope this will meet with your approval and a few more of you will be able to join us.

The programme of walks for 2002 is:

DAY	DATE	START POINT	TIME	DESCRIPTION
Sunday	24/03/02	Packwood House	2.00pm	Daffodil Walk
Wednesday	24/04/02	Guild House	7.30pm	Local Walk
Sunday	19/05/02	Guild House	2.30pm	Flower Walk
Wednesday	26/06/02	Guild House	7.30pm	Local Walk
Sunday	14/07/02	Guild House	2.30pm	Butterfly Walk
Sunday	29/09/02	Temple Balsall	2.00pm	End of season walk and afternoon tea

If anyone needs a lift in order to be able to join us at the Packwood House or Temple Balsall walks please let me know in good time and I will see what I can organise. (Anyone who can offer a lift please me know.)

Leighton Jones
Knowle 773894

Nature Conservation Sub-committee Report



The weather seems to yo-yo between extraordinarily mild and bitterly cold every other day or so, and November's mildness and wetness broke records again. Certainly trees have stayed far longer in leaf showing off their gorgeous colours.

Frost and fog today December 10th, and blackbird, thrush, dunnock, robin, magpie and wood pigeon have visited the terrace whilst I am writing, with tits and greenfinch on the nuts and fat balls... I have just photographed a lone heron perched atop our twin-peaked cypress, with 2 crows on the other peak jumping up and down with exasperation, then mobbing and dive-bombing until it took off. One of our visiting foxes lay mangled on the road yesterday. Ann Peasegood, Peggy Pontifex, Tony Rowe and I chose another freezing day to replant some of our commemorative trees in Jobs Close. A potted oak from Peggy replaced Elaine Warner's, and I brought an oak for Ann plus 2 sweet chestnuts for Ken Fairbairn and Peter Gale and a yew for Joy Edgington. We still need a replacement Yew, two Crab Apples and Holly.

LNR status for the Reserve and Waste area (so called because it was once a part of the Lord's Waste of the Longdon Manor on the west side of Purnells Brook) is on hold until the arrival of the replacement ecologist for Richard Marsh who has left to join the Wildlife Trust in Cornwall.

40th Anniversary, Mini Woodland - This had already been sanctioned by Richard who suggested we could plant it to follow the western boundary of the Waste. This is still to be confirmed.

A Flower Mound in celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, and similar to the one outside Solihull, but spelling out KNOWLE in flowers, would make a very attractive and colourful entrance to Knowle village. The Council will support its construction, the Society have agreed a donation of £100, and Wyndley Garden Centre have very generously offered on-going planting and maintenance. We await a Highways decision and location, hopefully on the wide verge near to the Garden Centre.

Conservation Verge - The Parks Department suggest the re-introduction of wildflowers into the verge between Stripes Hill Farm entrance and the bottom of Stripes Hill. A lovely idea, to mark the Conservation sub-committee's own 25th anniversary in 2002 - but the

entire verge is a sea of docks from the spread of spoil during the last ditch clearance, and Geoff Thompstone tells me it is due for another. Is this too much of a challenge, even for us?

Knowle Society Jubilee Walnut Tree - On hearing the good news (after the last newsletter had gone to print) we wrote to thank Solihull Council for their sympathetic response to all pleas to save the tree, which they did by redesigning the layout of the new car park by the Village Hall. So this beautiful Anniversary tree will stay where it is and without any need for pruning.

Fungi - Changing weather patterns seem to have increased the incidence of fungal infection on mature trees, especially at the base of otherwise healthy specimens. Some fungi pose a serious threat, others do not. But in these litigious times councils are not prepared to take risks, and many trees around the borough are being felled for reasons of safety, including the large Sessile Oak outside the Davenport Homes in Tilehouse Green Lane which was lightly pruned after bracket fungi was seen at its base a few years ago. Following consultation with tree experts I have pleaded for it to be pollarded down to a safe height, but it may have been felled when you read this. The only other Sessile Oak I know in Knowle stands in all its spreading glory further up Tilehouse Green Lane at the corner of Moorcroft Avenue.

Large trees in the street scene are extremely important for their ability to soak up pollution, and for promoting a sense of peacefulness and well-being in our generally stressful and traffic-dominated lives. If only the leaves didn't fall off! Or the council had the resources to clear up as regularly as was once the case. But this may yet happen when the Council's new 5 year contract for Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services commences in March 2002. We may be pleasantly surprised.

Parks Action Group - the 'Concept' plan for possible alterations/improvements to the natural environment in the park appears now to concentrate on facilities for young people. Could the Girl Guides predicament be considered in the new facilities? A base in the park would give on-the-spot access to a wide range of field activities that would enhance the usage of the park without being in any way detrimental, to its environment.

Stella Jarman
Knowle 774528

