

# The Knowle Society



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

## Your Society Needs You

I apologise for the somewhat dramatic headline but it is fair to say that members are needed to come forward and volunteer their services. Several long serving trustee directors have retired recently and Derek Mellor as a former director, will also be retiring as Membership Secretary later this year. The Environment committee is in temporary limbo after the resignation of Allan Coleman, its chairman; and other committees have for reasons of ill health lost members. New blood will be very welcome in any event to avoid any suggestion of complacency or inability to adapt to new ideas.

Please, therefore, if you feel you can give any time to the affairs of the Society do let me know or, indeed, any officer, chairman or member of committee. It does not need to be a heavy commitment and you will, I assure you, have a feeling of doing something worthwhile.

So far as the Environment committee is concerned, what we are looking for is someone with a concern for trees and 'green issues' generally. To an extent, within that area, the new chairman will be able to set their own agenda within the constitution of the Society and I

sincerely hope somebody will feel that is something that they can do.

While on the subject of trustee directors past and present, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of Peter Ellis, past chairman. Peter has, over the course of the last few months, committed all available records of the Society to computer and they are securely held on two separate discs in, of course, two separate places. This has been a very time-consuming job and we are very grateful to Peter not only for doing this but agreeing to continue for the time being as the Society's archivist.

On Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, your Society was the host for the quarterly meeting of West MASA which was held in the Village Hall. The acronym stands for West Midlands Amenity Societies Association and has some 70 members from as far afield as Hereford, North Staffordshire and Coventry. Some eleven members of the Society turned up to ensure the smooth running of the meeting and the lunch in the Greswolde\* followed by one of Colin Smith's famous escorted walks around the Conservation Area. I am sure you will be pleased to hear that the Secretary came up to me after the

meeting to say what a warm welcome she felt everybody had had from Knowle. We are not only by far the biggest society in the Association but apparently the warmest.

I would like to finish this time with a brief reference to our archive of photographs and documents held in the Library. This has been compiled over the 47 year history of the Society and is a precious record of our village life over many years. The Archive belongs to the Society but the copyright of some of the items is held by others. The position of the Society has always been that it holds the Archive on behalf of the people of Knowle generally and has also always sought to assist people from outside Knowle seeking information. With the greatly increased interest in genealogy, the Society's Local History committee has seen a considerable increase in such enquiries with which it always seeks to help. Any other organisation which suggests that it has a privileged position in using the Archive is not therefore in any position to make any such claim.

*[\* At delegates' own expense! - Ed.]*

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

**AGM FORMAT—YOUR IDEAS NEEDED**

The Trustee Directors are keen to hear from members who have attended recent AGMs of the Society and from those who have not, as to what suggestions you have to improve the format of the AGM. Getting the balance right between the formal requirements and other items that would help to make the evening of wider interest is important. We would also like to hear from you how you would like to receive details of the reports and accounts in advance of the AGM and at the AGM itself—again there is a balance to be had between copying lots of papers and the issue of visibility on screen of detailed accounts. We acknowledge that although we tried, we failed to make the figures large enough in our first attempt at projecting the accounts on screen—should we persevere or go back to all paper copies? Please let any of the Trustee Directors know what you would like—there are various telephone numbers and email addresses throughout this newsletter. We have already received one very constructive critique of our last AGM and would like to hear also from anyone else with concerns or bright ideas.

To view this newsletter on the website (with colour images) go to Membership then Newsletters. If viewing during the three months since the publication date you will need the password 4j96me but after that you can access it and other past issues without the need for a password.

**TOILET BLOCK AND BUS SHELTER**

The Steering Committee has concluded the appointment of Groundwork (Solihull) to be the responsible body for the development of the site after obtaining the appropriate funding. Plans are now proceeding in the preparation of detail ready for the Planning Application to be made later this year. When initial plans have been prepared it is intended to hold an exhibition in order that all residents can see the final proposals.

Gary Masters - Knowle 779955

Knowle Society Representative on Knowle Green Community Project

*All meetings, walks and exhibitions are open to everyone.*

*The Kenilworth Castle visit requires advance booking and numbers are limited.*

**March-April**

Local History Centre—Library

**Shops of Knowle**

Exhibition of photographs of past shops in Knowle

**Monday 6th April**

10.30am at the Village Hall

**'What the Papers Said' The Local Papers of 200 years ago**

Colin and Mary Smith—tea and coffee from 10.00am

**Monday 20th April**

8.00pm at the Village Hall

**The Birmingham Post moves into the Digital Age**

Marc Reeves

**May-June**

Local History Centre—Library

**Henry Tonks—Surgeon and Artist (1862-1937)**

Exhibition of the life of a famous Knowle (Dorridge) resident

**Wednesday 6th May**

7.00pm

**Hillfield & Widney Manor Walk**

Meet at Bentley Heath Community Hall

**Monday 18th May**

2.00pm at the Village Hall

**Thirty Years Musical Experience**

Mr J Ballard [*An afternoon talk*]

**Monday 15th June**

8.00pm at the Village Hall

**Solihull & Birmingham Cinemas**

Mr Dudley Warner

**Saturday 20th June**

All day in the Park

**Festival in the Park**

The Knowle Society will have a stand at this major village event

**Wednesday 24th June**

7.00pm at the Village Hall

**Knowle By-ways Part 3—Walk**

Will include routes not walked in Parts 1 & 2

**Wednesday 15th July****Kenilworth Castle—Gatehouse & Gardens**

Local History Centre visit—requires pre-booking (max. 30)

**Monday 20th July**

8.00pm at the Village Hall

**Energy Saving and Carbon Footprint**

Pam Bassi (tbc) (Energy Saving Trust)

Well, here I am with the first of my reports written while wearing a different ‘hat’. I must admit that I find this rather a daunting task compared to writing the Social, meetings etc reports, but here goes. Despite my comment in the December Newsletter that I thought we might have a quiet period in planning terms, it hasn’t quite worked out that way. Although the number of applications is down, some of those that have come through are pretty significant.

The first one that everyone will be thinking about is the suggestion of a Sainsbury store in Dorridge. [I say a suggestion as no planning application has been submitted, at least while I am writing this in early March.] While we have a general policy that we do not comment, at least in planning terms, on developments outside Knowle we reserve the right to comment when we believe they will have a significant impact on Knowle and its residents. However, we cannot say anything definite at this stage, as we need to see the actual planning application. Rest assured we will be looking very carefully, in cooperation with the other Committees in the Society, as the areas that are likely to be of concern will not be purely planning ones, but are likely to include, for example, transport issues.

The next application that I want to mention is one that is quite different. In fact, this is one of the very rare applications that we feel deserves to be welcomed on all grounds. You will be aware of the assorted uses that Hall Farm, on the Kenilworth Road, has been put to over the years. It has not been used as a farm for some time, but has been used for a considerable time as an abattoir. It has also been used for the repair of motorcycles and lawn mowers as well as for other engineering purposes. The state of the buildings that are visible from the road and footpath leaves much to be desired. The proposal that has been submitted (and which was explained to your planning committee before submission) is to remove almost all of the ‘tatty’ buildings and restore the site to the original farm layout of a courtyard of traditionally constructed buildings. These will be used as offices for an advertising agency, which in itself would be an improvement on the current uses. However the most interesting news is that they plan to adapt the buildings sympathetically into a ‘carbon neutral’ office. Put simply, this means that they will be incorporating all the latest suitable techniques to minimise the impact on the environment of the occupation of the site. The plans, as submitted, promise a showcase development that should significantly enhance the site – we wait with bated breath.

**Leighton Jones – Knowle 773894**

West MASA—West Midlands civic societies were hosted by The Knowle Society at Knowle Village Hall.

A presentation on the work of English Heritage West Midlands by Nick Molyneux was followed by sharing experiences and issues of relevance to local civic societies.



*George Goodall, Chairman West MASA & Peter Ewin, Chairman The Knowle Society at the Village Hall*



*A ‘round-table!’ discussion—sharing experiences between local civic societies*



*Burton-on-Trent, Knowle (x2) & Birmingham Civic Societies*

**AIRPORT**

The decision on the Planning Application for an extension to the Main Runway at Birmingham International Airport is still with SMBC. They are minded to approve the Airport application pending the resolution of outstanding items. Consequently further information on the air traffic routes will not become available until the final decision is reached. As mentioned in previous newsletters, a Knowle Society representative attends the Focus Group involved in clarifying these issues.

**MOTORWAY SERVICE AREA (MSA)**

We are delighted that the Motorway Service Area application has been rejected by the Government. The Knowle Society was involved with other groups in opposing the application which would have resulted in a Motorway Service Area being constructed at either junction 4 or between junctions 5 and 6 of the M42 (Catherine-de-Barnes).

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

The recent alterations to Bus Timetables between Knowle and Solihull have resulted in a number of complaints that the service is now inferior and the Society has written to Centro to record our concerns. If you feel strongly enough about this issue please make your views known. It is intended for the Society to be represented at the Transport User Forums that are held six monthly in the Civic Suite at Solihull Council House. The next meeting is to be held on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 at 6.00pm. Representatives of the Council will be present, including some Councillors, Centro and National Express. If you have any questions then any person can raise them at this meeting. The Society is mainly interested in the impact that the revised Bus Timetables, introduced at the end of January, have had on you. Please do not hesitate to advise of your observations.

*[Our website [www.knowlesociety.org.uk](http://www.knowlesociety.org.uk) has a brief compilation of the key bus times at Knowle & Solihull, as many people find the full timetable a little overwhelming—follow the links from the home page to Community and then Buses. We have not printed a copy here because we understand that the services are due for review in April—Ed.]*

**CYCLE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

Are you aware that proposals by SMBC, to create a cycle route to Arden School have been re-scheduled for the next financial year? The proposals included a cycle route in Knowle Park, on-road cycle routes on some feeder roads and major changes to Station Road with road humps, road narrowing and a 20 mph zone. Major concerns have been raised and if the scheme is re-submitted a major consultation exercise will be carried out.

**LYNNE STEYN REPORTS: VILLAGE NOTICE BOARD**

Knowle will shortly have its own village community noticeboard thanks to funding from SMBC, this follows requests made by both Knowle Society and Friends of Knowle Park. It is currently being constructed and Kerry Mountjoy (SMBC) will contact us when it is ready for installation. It will take pride of place next to the flower bed outside the main entrance to Tesco in the pedestrian precinct; it will be used to display village issues and events. Janet Royle (who also manages Knowle Parish Church's noticeboard) has kindly offered to hold the key for the management of the new board. I hope you will agree that this will allow village issues and events to reach the wider community more easily.

**LYNNE STEYN REPORTS: ROAD SAFETY**

Unfortunately there has been another potentially very serious (near miss) incident, involving a child on Lodge Road near the park entrance. SMBC is currently reviewing traffic calming and how best to implement an effective and appropriate way to slow down traffic on Lodge Road and in particular to make the Park entrance area safer for all pedestrians, especially children. We hope to hear their decision soon.

**LORNA GALE REPORTS: POLICE REPORT**

Our Police Sergeant, Jo Comer is currently on maternity leave, with her role once again being covered by Sgt. Ann Strachan. I'm delighted to be able to report that Sgt. Comer gave birth to Thomas, a bouncing 8lb 11oz, last Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> February. I'm reliably informed that mother and baby are doing very well and am sure you'll join us in extending congratulations to Sgt Comer.

The visits of the police community van to Knowle continue to be a success, with PC Williams reporting a far higher level of interest than was ever in evidence at the village hall meetings. The most recent visit was on February 8<sup>th</sup>, with the next due to take place on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April and Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June. As before, the van will be on the cobbles near the church. Details will be posted on the noticeboard in the High Street and in the library.

*(Continued on page 5)*



Ken Hughes— a popular speaker

Well the year started with some extremely cold weather but this did not deter the people who came to our first meeting of the year.

Ken Hughes probably unexpectedly treated those who made the trip to the village hall in January to a talk on the local brands of HP, Birds Custard and Typhoo Tea. (Unfortunately the talk by Acorns Hospice had to be cancelled at short notice). Ken had a lot of facts about these local companies that I am sure were not widely known and he gave us another of his high standard of talks which we have enjoyed before. Our thanks go to Ken for supporting us at short notice and saved us from having to cancel our first meeting of the year. (Something that has never happened before I am reliably informed.)

Now onto February and the subject of Bees. Celia Davies, a beekeeper from Berkswell, certainly entertained and educated us all on her beloved bees. Having been involved with these fascinating creatures for many years her knowledge is very wide and deep, she enthusiastically shared as much as she could in an hour with her audience. The talk was augmented with the constituent parts of a beehive, which Celia brought with her; this certainly helped to explain the life of these extremely social insects. There was a high level of interest from the audience who did not seem to want Celia to leave after her talk, as many people came up to speak with her afterwards and try some of the honey she had brought with her.



Celia Davies

Now to the future events this year starting with The Marinas Walk – Sunday 15th March, 2pm, meeting at the car park behind the church. The walk will be led by Leighton Jones and will be passing the site(s) of the proposed canal marinas, so mainly on the towpath, but otherwise roads, about 5 miles duration. The next meeting in the Village Hall is on Monday 16th March at 8.00pm, the subject being *Shakespeare's Women - Upstairs and Downstairs* presented by Gillian Andrews. Women in Shakespeare's plays come in a wide range of roles from the bawdyhouse and tavern to the court and the throne room so come along and hear about the parts, which were of course often played by young men, from an actress. With music and dramatised illustrations.

It seems a bit early to be thinking about events in the autumn (when we are still waiting for Spring to be sprung!!) but we have decided that the traditional social event in October will be entertainment by *Dandy* the Black Country Duo who entertained us a few years ago and were very well received with their mixture of music and comedy. The evening will entail a charge to cover costs and will feature a Fish and Chip Supper - more details later on in the year. This brings you up to date with the committee's activities so far this year apart from planning and booking people for your talks in 2010...but more on this in future newsletters.

Charles Robinson - Knowle 777337

(Continued from page 4)

PC Williams tells us that there has been a noticeable increase in drug dealing in the Warwick Road, Newton Road and Blackdown Road areas. She says that the police will be patrolling these areas "vigorously". PC Williams feels that parents, in particular, would welcome this information. She also appealed for residents' vigilance – we can help by passing on intelligence, particularly in relation to vehicles which appear to be loitering. Registration numbers where possible, and descriptions of vehicles and occupants, are particularly useful. This information can be telephoned to the Neighbourhood Team on 0845 113 5000, extension 7928 6264, or emailed to [knowledorridge@west-midlands.police.uk](mailto:knowledorridge@west-midlands.police.uk) - local vigilance is extremely valuable in combating this type of activity. [*The telephone extension number really is eight digits long!* - Ed.]

Another issue of local concern is that there has been a recent spate of attempts to pass counterfeit £10 and £20 notes in shops in the area. Shopkeepers have been notified. Shoppers may wish to check notes they receive in change locally – you may have difficulty if you unwittingly try to spend a counterfeit note which you've innocently received. Key things PC Williams tells us to look out for are the quality and feel of the paper, the silver line and watermark.

#### LILLA BAKER REPORTS: LINK

For those interested in healthcare there is now a website [www.solihulllink.co.uk](http://www.solihulllink.co.uk) where you may see details, register your interest and get involved, for example in online discussions.

John Rowley - Knowle 778289

### VILLAGE SHOPS

There weren't many shops in small villages before about late 1800s/early 1900s, mainly because most housewives made their own bread and cakes, people grew their own vegetables, as indeed a lot of people are starting to do again now, and most households had one or two pigs, several chickens and often a cow, hence they were also well provided with meat, eggs, milk, butter and cheese. Ale was also brewed at home and drunk by men and women alike.

People travelled to regularly held markets to sell their home produce and to buy whatever they did not produce themselves. Chickens to be sold were always live and buyers would choose the one they wanted which would either be killed then and there, usually by breaking its neck, if it was destined to be stuffed and roasted for a special occasion, or they would take it home either to fatten up for the table or to keep for the provision of eggs eventually ending up on the table anyway. Other live poultry was also sold such as geese, ducks etc together with pigs, goats and cows. Stories and nursery rhymes from our childhood bring these markets vividly to mind; *Jack & the Beanstalk*, *This Little Pig*, *To Buy a Fat Hen* to mention but a few. So, apart from, I suppose we can call them shops, like cobblers who made and repaired shoes and boots, wheelwrights who made carts and wheels and saddlers who made harnesses and saddles for horses, shops as we think of them, did not really exist.

Until that is, the coming of the railway and with the coming of the railway (first opened in Dorridge in 1852) eventually came a population explosion. A different population, a population mainly of business people who could now afford to live in a country village like Knowle and be able to travel to and from their places of business in Birmingham. Many of those business people who bought, or had built, large houses with plenty of land had 'kitchen gardens' where vegetables, herbs and fruit were grown by their gardeners who were usually local men with a fund of knowledge handed down generation by generation. This population explosion also created work for other skilled local people such as bricklayers, carpenters, tilers, etc who were needed for the building of the fine houses. Then followed the necessity for the staff to run these houses – domestic staff, housekeepers, butlers, cooks, stable boys, the list goes on and on. People like Wheelwrights, Saddlers, Cobblers and Blacksmiths, also benefited mightily.

However, not only the skilled benefited from this influx. The unskilled of the village had an eye to the main chance and were soon turning their front rooms into small shops such as bakers, grocers, confectioners, dressmakers. Whatever their own individual skill was (so I suppose you can't really call

them 'unskilled') they cashed in on it. Between 1900 and 1912 there were three drapers, three dressmakers, three bootmakers, three butchers, five bakers, seven grocers and various other small general and specialist shops.

Many of these shops were kept for generation after generation by the same families, shops like Curtis's Bakery now The Bread Collection, Lyons Butchers - still with us and Brisker's Boot and Shoes after whom Brisker's Court is named. Even the Guild House became a drapers shop at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was also the Post Office at one time. There were also two cycle shops in the village at this time and what a sign of the times! Nowadays you would have to travel by car down to Dorridge for the nearest cycle shop and goodness only knows where the next nearest is, Argos?

In the early 1900s the village even had a forerunner of the mobile *Fish'n'Chips*. Apparently, a lady called Mrs Parsons cooked them and delivered them round the village in a large basket covered with a white cloth. They were supposedly "delicious".

In the early 1920s Mr Ron Stubbs, one of our former village postmen, remembers that there was a sweet shop on the corner of Lodge Road and High Street belonging to Billy Eyres who opened his shop every morning at 6am. This shop was where the present 'new - old' sweet shop is situated now. Not long before they can celebrate 100 years – not the same owners of course!

Moving on to the 1940s there were still several drapers, dressmakers, bakers, butchers and general shop dealers and grocers including now Mr Band who later became Band & Meeks and was situated in what is now Lloyds Bank on the High Street. They will be remembered with nostalgia by many people including the writer who moved to Knowle in the 1960s, for their old fashioned courtesy and service and the variety of goods on offer. Most of all though, are memories of the smell on a Saturday morning when the coffee beans were roasted and ground. Oh, salivation! Even if you hated coffee you would be tempted by the enticing smells to enter the inner sanctum of this wonderful store.

Staying in the 1960s when the writer moved to Knowle, there were four greengrocers, two of whom also sold fish, three butchers, four grocers, three bakers, three newsagents and one electrical shop. Within a short space of time after the precinct was built this increased to five greengrocers, four butchers, four bakers, two electrical shops and of course Tesco!

2009 – We now have one greengrocer, two butchers, no grocer, one baker, no electrical shops, and of course One Stop and Tesco!

“What a Difference a Day Makes”? What a Difference a Century Makes! aided by amongst others, the advent of the Railway, the Motor Car, Public

Transport (tongue in cheek) and the Supermarket. One last thought. The shops of yesteryear never worried about being held up at gunpoint! Progress?

Janet Eržen

### MORNING TALKS

On Monday morning 9<sup>th</sup> February we had a talk about the *Birmingham Jewellery Quarter* given by Kenneth Hughes. This is the third time that, the ever popular, Kenneth Hughes has entertained us with one of his talks. Despite the snow 45 members turned up to hear his talk. The following talks will take place on Monday mornings at 10.30 am. Admission will be free and refreshments will be available from 10.00 am.

- On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009 there will be a talk given by Colin and Mary Smith. Their subject will be *What the Papers Said*. This is not the newspapers of today; these are the local newspapers of 200 years ago when life was very different to what it is today.
- On Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June it is planned that there will be a talk given by a speaker from English Heritage on a subject relating to Kenilworth Castle. Details of this talk are yet to be confirmed, please watch out for further announcements.

### VISITS

On the morning of Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 32 of our members and friends enjoyed an illustrated talk in the *Pen Room* followed by a viewing of the exhibits. After lunch we had a guided tour of the Jewellery Quarter Museum. The staff at both museums made us very welcome.

### KENILWORTH CASTLE

For the visit of Elizabeth I in 1575, Robert Dudley created a magnificent garden complete with fountains, ornate borders and a twenty foot high aviary. This garden has now been recreated and will be opened in the late spring of 2009. The gatehouse is now also fully restored and open; chambers on the lower floors have been dressed and furnished as they might have appeared when the gatehouse was last inhabited.

Our next visit will be to Kenilworth Castle on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009. We have arranged for a tour of the gatehouse and the gardens for £2 per person, this does not include admission to the castle. English Heritage members are admitted free but non-members will have to pay normal admission prices. The tour has been timed on recommendations from English Heritage to take place when the garden is at its best. We will meet there for the first tour at 11.00 am. After lunch (not included) we will have our second tour.

Early booking is recommended as places are limited

to 30. It is hoped that if more than 30 wish to go we may be able to arrange another group of 30 doing the tour the other way round. This is more likely to happen if we can put in our request early. To book a place, please see our stewards on a Saturday morning or contact Derek Mellor on 205129. A stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated. The cost of £2 per person is payable at the time of booking.

### EXHIBITIONS

In the Local History Centre (upstairs in the library) our current exhibition is *Shops of Knowle*. We had planned to follow this exhibition with one about *Henry Tonks Surgeon & Artist*. This had previously been announced as going to be displayed downstairs but when we realized just how big the exhibition was going to be we decided to locate it upstairs in the Local History Centre instead. A new venture being planned by the Local History Committee is to put on a display in the near future of memorabilia of early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts.

Downstairs next to the library entrance we displayed an exhibition in March called *Who Do You Think They Are?* This report had to be submitted to the printers before the exhibition was mounted and so the result of our quest will have to wait until the next newsletter. Our next exhibition by the entrance to the library will be for two weeks from 8th June 2009. This will be a further selection of our photographs about *Historic Knowle*.

### PUBLICATIONS ABOUT KNOWLE ON SALE

Our Booklet: **A Short Guide to Central Knowle** is still available at our meetings and our usual outlets for £3. Our DVD **Knowle Celebrations 1930s to 1960s** has proved to be very popular and we are now selling from a second batch. The DVD can be purchased for £8 at our meetings, Knowle Library and Oxfam.

### DONATIONS

We would welcome the loan or gift of anything that you think may be appropriate for our forthcoming display of memorabilia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If you are able to help could you please contact Janet Eržen or Derek Mellor. Alternatively we are available on Saturday mornings in the Local History Centre. In recent weeks we have been loaned photographs and documents relating to Knowle and the surrounding districts so that we can make digital copies for posterity. We are very grateful for this help. If you have anything we could copy could you please contact us. All subjects are of interest: buildings, street scenes, carnivals, beauty contests, comic football matches, people of Knowle, in fact any subject.

Derek Mellor

Mr & Mrs A Crees	Mr & Mrs Hampson	Dr & Mrs J Ment
Mr & Mrs R Bailey	Anthony Harris	Mr & Mrs A O'Sullivan
Mr & Mrs G Bartram	Mr & Mrs D Hess	Mr & Mrs C Plain-Jones
Mr & Mrs J Bradley	Mr Hopkins	Mr Andrew Powell
Stuart Brown	Mr & Mrs P Hughes	Mr & Mrs N B Prance
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Mrs Sheila Field	Mr & Mrs R MacDonald	Mr & Mrs G Widman
Mrs E Giles	Mr & Mrs S Mair	
Mr & Mrs I Goulding	Mr & Mrs R A S Marshall	

**POSTSCRIPTS...**

**DEREK MELLOR**

Since the majority of this newsletter was prepared, the Society has been deeply saddened to learn of the sudden and serious collapse from a stroke of Derek Mellor who has done so much for the Society in recent years as a Trustee Director and Local History Chairman and currently as Membership Secretary, and in so many more ways—his contributions are immense. It is our sincere hope that he will make a substantial recovery, however in the meantime Bryan Smart has kindly agreed to act as Membership Secretary and the Local History committee will reorganise his activities under Janet Erzen's continuing chairmanship, however there may need to be some re-timing of a planned exhibition where Derek has been doing some substantial research.

**OPEN MEETING ON SOLIHULL NHS CARE TRUST**

The Society is still trying to arrange a new date for the address by Sally Burton following the cancelled meeting on Monday 2nd February due to the heavy snow fall. You may well only be made aware of the new date by viewing the Society's web page regularly or seeing a poster in the village shops.

**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

In our write-up of the very successful Christmas lights last year and the popular event with Father Christmas to switch them on, we alluded to how beautiful the Traders' lights were looking but didn't really give credit for all the effort that goes in to putting them up (and of course taking them down again). Anyone in the village on four weekends a year around that time will appreciate the time put in by the Traders and those that help them, to give the Community such a lift in the darkest days of the winter.

**VILLAGE SHOPS**

If you enjoyed reading the story of the shops in Knowle (page 6) then you should consider visiting the Local History Centre's exhibition on The Shops of Knowle which runs until the end of April. As with all such exhibitions it may be found upstairs in Knowle Library and draws on the extensive archive of photographs and other material in the care of The Knowle Society.

**IN THIS ISSUE...**

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Chairman           | 5. Meetings & Walks |
| 2. Events Diary       | 6. Local History    |
| 3. Planning           | 7. Local History    |
| 4. Community Services | 8. Membership       |

**A warm welcome to 70 new members this quarter including those listed here.**

*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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