

Volume 39 Number 4



Pre - A.G.M. Issue Autumn 2001



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD
ON MONDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2001
IN THE KNOWLE VILLAGE HALL AT 8.00PM**

Chairman's Annual Report

I am writing in the shadow of the terrible events in New York on September 11th. but in spite of our sorrow we have to get on with our lives like the courageous New Yorkers, so here goes with a review of the Society's year.

I hope you have enjoyed your summer, and the spring was lovely despite, perhaps because of, the winter rain and floods. The wet weather spared one of our memorable events over the last twelve months. This was the planting of 21 commemorative trees in Jobs Close Park on a fine winter's day last November, superbly organised by Stella Jarman and many helpers. This area and the Nature Reserve have attracted vandals, but that scourge must not put us off.

Touchwood has arrived! Sandra Lea and her Subcommittee organised a talk by the Project Director and then a very successful visit of the site under construction, which added to the interest of seeing the finished development, whatever you think of it!

There have been some excellent Society talks at the Village Hall this last year. You will recall some I'm

sure. I particularly remember two. One 'From Belsen to Buckingham Palace' by Paul Oppenheimer, a truly remarkable story by a survivor of the Holocaust; and the other 'The Work of a Conservation Architect' by Robin Hurley which featured Knowle and refreshed my eyes to many of its beauties. These talks feature large in our activities, and deserve your continued support.

Society walks have enthusiastic support from devotees, but the foot and mouth outbreak restricted activity this last year, in the middle of which Leighton Jones took on the job of 'walks co-ordinator', so he has had a tough start and we all wish him better conditions from now on.

The Society continues to support measures to sustain Knowle's shopping centre, which is crucial to Knowle's vitality. Knowle shops are under threat. We helped to defeat an outrageous planning application to turn Maddocks into a take-away restaurant. Adequate shoppers car parking is vital to our shops' survival.

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Dates For Your Calendar



Monday 15th October	General Meeting: Talk 'The Story of Malta' - a illustrated talk by Mr Leo Singer, - 8.00pm in the Village Hall.
Monday 19th November	Annual General Meeting (See Top of Page)
Wed 26th December	Boxing Day short local walk: Start at 11.00am from the Guild House, back before 1.00pm (Wine & Mince pies will be served en route)

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After years of frustrating discussions between our Amenities Sub-Committee Chairman Gary Masters and the Council about increasing shoppers car park capacity west of the High Street, Council was persuaded first to change permitted parking stay times in favour of shoppers, and second to support a small but helpful extension to the car park adjacent to the Village Hall, subject to planning consent. If approved, a small green area will be lost but there will be no incursion to St. John's Close green centre island. The Society will lose a commemorative walnut tree, but Council has undertaken to replace it with another in a position in St. John's Close to be agreed.

Incidentally Knowle car drivers have got used to (or not!) the traffic calming measures in the High Street and its approaches. On the whole the Society supports them, believing that they have made a positive contribution.

Supporting our shops does not mean that the Society relaxed its role in safeguarding our architectural environment and conservation area from ugly developments. Our Planning Sub-Committee led by Ken Richards joined in protests to the Council about the wave of telecom mast applications and were influential in securing planning refusals for the worst. It is working with Council officers and our Councillors to curb a rash of overbearing and intensive apartment block building applications, particularly along the Warwick Road and Station Road approaches to Knowle centre. We have been and are consulting with Council about a planning policy for apartment blocks that will promote acceptable designs.

You will be pleased to know that during her first year as Knowle Society's ex Chairman Elaine Warner tells

me that she has enjoyed herself (!) leading the Local History Sub-Committee to an overdue refurbishment of the Society's history catalogues, indexes and records; a painstaking job.

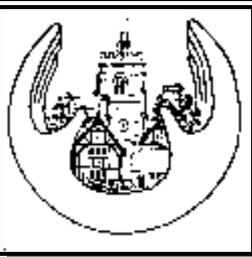
Now just a few words about the months ahead - Do you remember our intention to give Knowle a 'millennium' commemorative sign? After months of work by Adrian Emsden getting it designed, approved by committee, planning consent, and carved, we are fairly near to construction on the little green before the Guild House. I hope that we will be able present the design to you at the AGM.

Next year is H.M. the Queen's Golden Jubilee over the period June 1st - 4th. This date virtually coincides with the Society's 40th. Anniversary, so we plan to merge our celebrations. We have begun to generate ideas and will share them with you in due course.

Many of you will know Ted Walden, and will want to know that he is putting up a brave fight against his illness, and presently is back at home.

Finally, my thanks to Society officers, all committee members, all those who have helped, our newsletter distributors, and last but by no means least, our ward councillors from whom we get so much good advice and help. Also I must thank the increasing number of members who have taken the trouble to sign 'gift aid' forms after pleas by our Membership Secretary John Chaloner. May I ask more members to do so because they improve your subscriptions at no cost to yourselves?

Peter Ellis
Knowle. 775261



Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on **Monday 19th November at 8.00pm** in the **Knowle Village Hall**.

There will be elections for President, Officers and Members of the Executive Committee. The Officers and at least five Committee Members retire each year and are eligible for re-election.

Nominations, in writing, can be accepted up to 5th November. They should be signed by the nominee, proposer and seconder, all of whom must be members of the Society, in good standing.

Nominations should be addressed to the Society Secretary at 102, Tilehouse Green Lane, Knowle Solihull, West Midlands. B93 9ER.

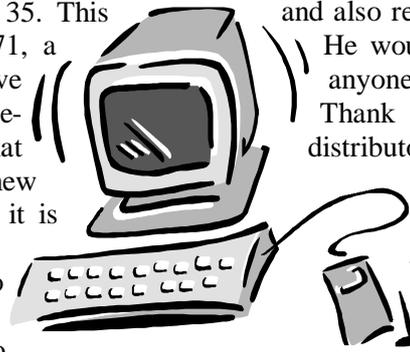
We hope for a good attendance and for some interesting discussion. Please come and raise any matters that concern you.

Colin Smith
Knowle 772981

Membership Secretary's Annual Report

For the first time ever the membership over the past year has seen a net loss of 35. This brings our current membership to 1671, a somewhat worrying trend when we have been moving forward so steadily over recent years. If however you consider that we have, during the year, gained 58 new members, only 3 fewer than last year it is perhaps not too depressing. .

My sincere thanks as always to Walter Birch and his team of Distributors. Walter has continued to modify distribution rounds over the year to make the



distributors' tasks more logical and hopefully easier, and also recruiting new distributors as necessary.

He would I know be delighted to hear from anyone who feels that they could help out. Thank you Walter and all your team of distributors for another year of effort.

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

functions.

Mrs E Cheshire

Mr & Mrs C Hughes

Mr & Mrs Bottomley

Mrs J Morris

Mr & Mrs A J Robinson

John F Chaloner
Knowle 778705

Local History Sub-committee Annual Report

As I wrote last September, our intention this year has been to concentrate on the accumulated backlog of cataloguing and indexing and a re-organisation of the Local History Centre. Whilst by no means complete, we can at least say we have made progress. In particular, the collection has lacked an index, which is now partially complete, with nearly 3000 items entered on the computer and the first 1000 or so photographs indexed. The Davy Collection of estate brochures in indexed up to 1946. The oral histories are gradually being typed, bound and put in the library, together with their associated audio tapes. And just as all the slides were numbered, we have acquired about a hundred new ones:

the problems of cataloguing remind one of the Forth Bridge. Several sets of photographs, taken by sub-committee members, have also been added to the Modern Collection: Grimshaw Hall (taken at the recent contents sale), Soden's and Maddocks.

As ever, the autumn saw the usual Junior School local studies project, when the children from Year 6 look at photographs from the collection and then ask long-standing residents about their memories of village life. (Organisation of this year's event has already started). Gillian Knight has been asked to give her talk on the history of Dorridge, first given to Kingslea School last year, to another group (adults this time). As I write she is busy extending the

text and adding more slides.

The Local History Centre at Knowle Library (first floor) continues to attract enquiries: in person on Saturday mornings, by post or telephone and from Solihull Library. We have provided information and photographs for the recent refurbishment of the Red Lion fireplaces and an information pack for the Infants' School. The Local History Centre is manned each Saturday morning between 10.30 and 12 (except Bank Holidays) If anyone wants a lot of our time please ring the administrator, Elizabeth Stanley, on Knowle.773283 beforehand.

We are now thinking about next year. Plans are at a very early stage, but we are thinking in terms of an exhibition and still want to publish the additional material originally written for 'The History of Knowle' reprint. A one-page leaflet about the Local History Centre is at final draft stage.

It remains for me to thank all those who have helped us during the year: our team of stewards, members of the

sub-committee, who have all worked very hard; and everyone who has helped in any way or provided items for the collection.

Elaine S. Warner
Knowle 775887



Planning Sub-committee Annual Report

The hottest subject of the year was undoubtedly the application for a takeaway to replace Mad-docks newsagent. We were all delighted when this was rejected, but we must now wait to see what happens to the premises.

Likewise, we were pleased when the plans for offices to replace Sodens were rejected, but again we must await further developments. In both cases we would prefer to see them retained as retail outlets, if possible, but we have to

be realistic about alternative uses, since we do not wish them to be left empty for long.

We were pleased when Bass Retail agreed to restore the old Coat of Arms at the Wilson Arms. We were also delighted with their restoration work of the interior and the fireplaces at the Red Lion - unfortunately they have now fallen foul of the planning rules with the external signage, especially the Ember Inn post.

There has been a lot of concern about the development of apartment blocks. We understand that these are

required to meet the needs for smaller households but we are worried about the impact on the village. The major development of 43 apartments along the War-



wick Road undoubtedly affects the entry into Knowle and requires a new roundabout to deal with the traffic. Along Station Road, there are a number of smaller developments, but taken together they begin to change the character of

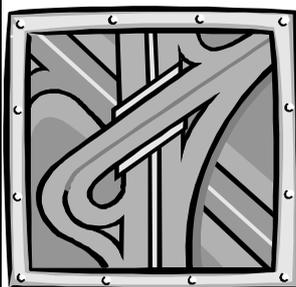
the area.

At the time of writing, we are still awaiting the 'First Deposit' of the new Unitary Development Plan from Solihull Council, which we expect to contain some interesting comments about housing in Solihull generally.

Ken Richards
Knowle 777436

Amenities Sub-committee Annual Report

In relation to previous years, 2000-2001 has to date been less demanding on this Sub-Committee. The major concerns have related to the Car Parking situation in the centre of the village, and the requirements of not only shoppers and locals, but also the business community.



The result of the M42 enquiry was pleasing as far as Junction 5 was concerned, and it will be a great disappointment if it is to be constructed near Catherine de Barnes, because it is pointed out by the Highways Authority that it is the busiest piece of motorway in the whole area, and that means the most danger-

ous

On a more current note, it is pleasing to report that several favorable comments have been received during the summer regarding the planters and the hanging baskets along the High Street, although the planting out was delayed into June. The overall effect is to raise the character of the village, in addition to putting a smile on faces, which is very welcome these days.



The Parks Action Group, under the lead of Mr. Jan Edser, Landscape Manager of Solihull M.B.C. has been meeting and hopes to have a "concept" drawing available towards the end of September showing the

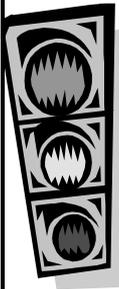
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future proposals, which will give balanced facilities for all generations. I hope to be able to have this document available for the meeting on 15th October. Any comments that you wish to make will be appreciated. In the meantime a meeting called by Inspector Simon Westwood of West Midlands Police on antisocial behaviour and disorder will have been attended, and it is hoped that a stronger message will be given to the unruly behaviour in Jobs Close Park.



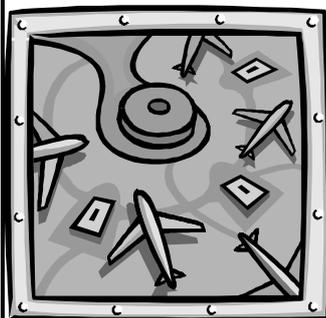
The council survey of the car park usage at the rear of the eastern side of the High Street, known by several definitions i.e, Greswolde, library, school, churchyard; should make interesting reading when it is made available. The use for Dorridge Rail Station, car sharing into Solihull, the N E C, or even Birmingham, should be highlighted, and the action to be taken by the council will then be anticipated eagerly.



The next stage of the Knowle and Dorridge Area Action Plan is now awaited for consultation purposes, and it is to deal with Lady Byron Lane, Longdon Road, and Lodge Road. This is a change, and so the triangle of High Street, Kenilworth Road, and Wilsons Road, with the Warwick Road junction of Station Road has been put back.



I am pleased that the Safe Routes to School for Bentley Heath and Dorridge schools is now progressing at a satisfactory pace, and look out for a moving speed check system along Station Road from Arden School down to Dorridge centre, as an additional feature.



as follows: -

a. Night Flying

- Restrictions will remain in place between

11.00pm & 7.00am with a ban on excessively noisy aircraft. e.g. BA 1-11 etc.

- There will be a surcharge for all operations exceeding the night noise violation levels. (Between £800 and £4000 per movement).
- The annual quota limit of 4000 night flights will not be exceeded.

b. Track-keeping

Every incident of an aircraft reported as being off track is investigated and, if not authorised by Air Traffic Control, a non-compliance report is sent to the Chief Pilot of the airline concerned for action to be taken.

Specific airlines have been highlighted. It was agreed by all members of the committee that further restrictions at Birmingham Airport would not be appropriate and members were in agreement with the Airport Company proposals for the Night Flying Policy Review October 2001-2003.

Copies of the Environment Report are available (free of charge) from Birmingham Airport.



Paul Blackman, our representative on the Police Consultation Committee reports that the incidence of burglary in areas covered by Neighbourhood Watch is only 4%, which is an extremely low figure, and is a credit to those that take up and run the schemes.

With the improved security in modern cars more thieves are now carrying out burglaries to obtain car keys, which they use to steal the appropriate vehicles. The recent trend accounts for 30% of Solihull house burglaries. Frequently sticks are inserted through letterboxes and keys left near the door are stolen, as well as the thief walking in and removing them of nearby tables, or shelves. YOU have been warned.

The year has been fulfilling, and you can rest assured that your hard working Sub-Committee will continue to represent your views on any pertinent matter.

**Gary Masters
Knowle 779955.**

Meetings and Social Sub-committee Annual Report

I hope that members have enjoyed the meetings this year. My Committee has attempted to vary the topics in the hope of ensuring that there is something to interest everyone.

The presentation by Jeremy Collins which gave us an update on the Touchwood development was particularly well supported. It was interesting to note how, in the main, members had warmed to the development compared to 16 months previously when Mr. Collins first gave a presentation. The meetings have all been well attended and I should like to thank members for their support.

The committee continues to agonise over visits, although the tour of Touchwood was enjoyed by two groups in May. I hope that some of you were able to visit Stoneleigh and trust that the leaflets we deposited in the hall were useful.

We had a very good Boxing Day walk, which was well attended. The weather was cold but bright. I should like to thank Margaret Allen for leading the walk. During the year Leighton Jones joined our committee in his role as walks co-coordinator. This has been a difficult year to organise walks due to the foot and mouth crisis. However we hope that by next spring this problem will be well and truly over; Leighton should then have a much easier task to organise the walks and he is looking to bring some variety into them. It would be nice to see greater support, a good deal of time is spent preparing the walks and then to have less than 10 people turn up is quite deflating.

I should like to thank my committee for all their help and support given to me during this year. Their help in the winter months was most appreciated as I had at that time extra commitments in my business life. I should also like to thank Jenny for the efficient way in which she records the visitors, to Phil Vince who opens up the Village Hall, arranges all the chairs and prepares the monthly announcements in the Parish Magazine. Jenny

Jones has so ably prepared the posters advertising the meetings, and in the last few months has also arranged for them to be distributed. At this point I should like to mention Iris Griffith. I am sure many of you know Iris. Although she left the committee a few years ago she continued to help by distributing the posters. However this came to an end when she sadly had an accident and was therefore left immobile. I am sure you would like me to wish her well on your behalf and hope that she will soon be able to attend the meetings again.

I hope that you will enjoy the speakers over the next few months, details of which are listed below.

Monday October 15th 2001. 'The Story of Malta'. Leo Singer has been a guest speaker in the past. His illustrated talk will explore Malta over 6000 years, also the shipwreck of Paul in AD 60, moving on to the influence of Knights of St John of Jerusalem and British occupation up to the Second World War.

Monday November 19th 2001: Annual General Meeting.

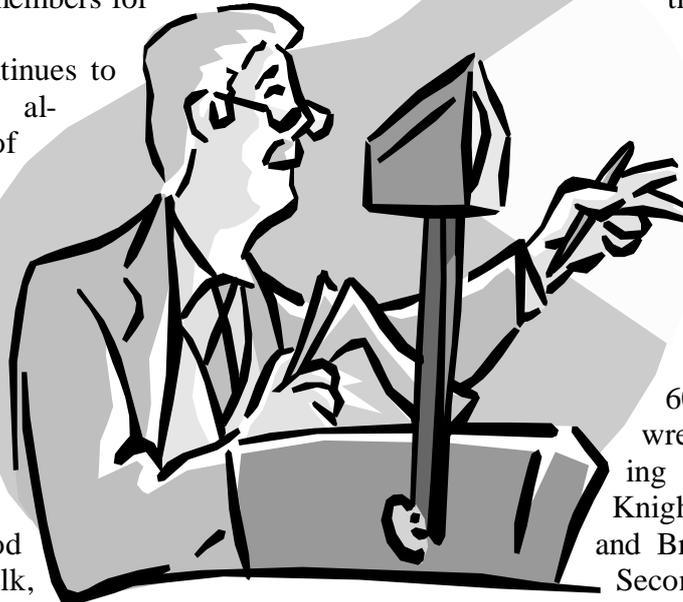
Beginning of December: Lighting of Knowle Society Christmas Tree. (To coincide with retailers Christmas Lights. See press for details)

December 26th 2001: Boxing Day Walk: Meet at the Guild House 11.00am, back by 1.00pm. Refreshments en route.

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

**Sandra Lea
Knowle 776850**



Nature Conservation Sub-committee Annual Report

At this time last year our thoughts were dominated by the imminent prospect of flooding - soon to be realized beside any rivers, large or small, and in flood plains that should never have been built over.

Locally we escaped all that misery and reported on happier events such as the commemorative tree planting in Jobs Close Park when Knowle schoolchildren helped plant our 21 native trees. The Tree Council tell us that small events like ours helped to swell the national total to a splendid 107,781 trees, gaining a Guinness World Record for the most trees planted in the British Isles over a three day period. Well done, everyone! Apparently half of newly planted trees fail to survive - the very wet weather should have given ours a good start but has led instead to various fungal diseases. Some have also been vandalised or damaged by mowing (the cloned elm has escaped so far!) and will be replaced.

National Tree Week - this year (21st November – 2nd December) is all about orchard regeneration, and the Council Green Scheme hope to donate fruit trees to schools to help start their own orchards, using the national curriculum. Tasting their own Apples, Pears and Plums could be a fun way to healthier eating.!

Foot and Mouth - Our unique Millennium Year, having ended with the worst floods ever known since records began, had little time to launch itself into 2001 before the tragedy of Foot and Mouth overtook the countryside from Cornwall to Scotland, in varying degrees of awfulness. Despite optimistic predictions it still continues to flare up unexpectedly. The impact on the countryside, let alone in the rural economy, will be very noticeable where fields are not re-stocked, are no longer grazed and become vulnerable to a more urban kind of diversification. But for farms that do survive there are hopeful signs of government support by way of Countryside Stewardship schemes, which enable farmers to adopt more sustainable, and wildlife-friendly practices.

Organic farming does very well when it finally gets off the ground - Hopwood Organic Farm and Shop at Catherine de Barnes encourages customers to walk around the lush yet pesticide-free vegetable strips, and Geoff Thompstone of Knowle Home Farm, whilst not organic, has his own bull, his own cattle feed, and is the sole supplier of quality beef to Eric Lyons - Family Butchers.

Nature Reserve - The application for Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status has gone to Solihull Council and will include the waste area between Purnells Brook and the Bypass line. Our large Small-leaved Lime came down over the brook and the footpath but since this is not a public footpath the Council says it should be left. (*see picture on Page 8*) The kids made a rather splendid tree house (complete with steps) up a leaning Ash nearby, but I found it dismantled - quite a shame, really! (*See picture on Page 8*)

Tree Officer - Scott MacKenzie has retired after serving many years as our much liked and respected Council tree

officer, and to mark the occasion he was entertained to lunch at the newly re-furbished Red Lion.

Parks User Group - met in Jobs Close Park and discussed vandalism, improved dog mess clearance, missing benches and equipment for both the play area and for young people. A student who, with 45 others had helped to build it showed photographs of the Skateboard Project in Nailsworth, Gloucestershire. We seem to lack such dedicated initiative and teamwork here! But dear Elsie Glew, 90 next year, didn't sit back when the bench outside Jobs Close disappeared - she wrote to our very helpful MP' Caroline Spelman, and a new bench appeared like magic! That's initiative for you.

There was a very successful Jazz concert in the Park in July, which attracted 500 despite the inevitable downpour. It may be Shakespeare next year for the Queen's Jubilee! The Parks group want a footpath around the grassland of the LNR area - and how about a mini-woodland of 40 native shrubs and trees to make our own Knowle Society 40th anniversary? - there should be plenty of room for them as well as for grassland regeneration.

Walnut Tree - The Society's Silver Jubilee Walnut tree which fruited for the first time this year is now under threat from a Council car parking application for just 12 on the last green space next to the Village Hall. The Councillors vote on September 19th. This could be the saddest day of my 24 years on the Nature Conservation sub-committee, so I will steer my thoughts to the little 'woodland' instead.

Wildflower and Butterfly Walks - are very happy memories, with their associated cream teas! Another scarce year for many species except the very abundant meadow browns. Dragonflies have been zooming about our garden in great numbers too - is this general?

Foxes too abound leaving excreta on our lawn and paths every night now, which is quite a health risk when gardening. I would prefer the badgers which come to two quite separate gardens bringing cubs ~ on occasional visits. To spend £40 a month on peanuts is quite something!

If you have any nature conservation concerns please do bring them the Annual General meeting.

A big thank you to all the sub-committee and especially to Pauline Hornby who surveyed the LNR land with me last week. Reg Elliott and I have not recommenced our Biodiversity survey. Reg has just had a spell in hospital so we wish him a quick recovery

Stella Jarman
Knowle 774528



The Tree House on Purnell's Brook in Knowle Nature Reserve



Tree Officer Alex Naylor (replacing Scott MacKenzie) deciding that the fallen Small—Leaved Lime down over Purnell's Brook and the pathway need not be removed as the path is not a Public Right of Way