

The Knowle Society



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www.knowledgesociety.org.uk

Response to Airport plans

In the January Newsletter I reported that the issue of the expansion of Birmingham Airport was upon us and I outlined the consultation process we should go through. That has now happened. As a result of two big meetings, a questionnaire and much discussion, we now have completed the process and dispatched a Knowle Society Response to the Airport. You will find the Response printed in this Newsletter. This has been a real team effort involving all the Executive Committee and others, supported by the members. It has been the Knowle Society at its best.

We now await what the

Birmingham International Airport makes of the many responses it will have received. Eventually, the Airport will send a planning application to the Solihull Borough Council, the planning authority. This will be some months away and may generate more consultations. The story is not over yet.

You will have seen an advanced notice of the Fun Day in July, in the park. Given good weather, this will be an excellent community event to bring the people of Knowle together. The Friends of Knowle Park will also be well advanced with their excellent project to have a path laid around the park. Their

'Buy a Brick' scheme to raise funds is to be commended.

Meanwhile, the Planning Sub-Committee will shortly be involved in the review of the Knowle Conservation Area. This is basically central Knowle. The aim of the exercise is to ensure that the character of the area is maintained.

Activities never cease. The Executive Committee is most grateful for the complimentary comments we receive about our endeavours; they are a great encouragement to all concerned.

Colin Smith - Chairman
Knowle 772981

Events Diary

Monday 24th April
8.00pm in the Village Hall

Wednesday 26th April
7.30pm at the Guild House

Sunday 21st May
2.30pm at the Guild House

Monday 19th June
8.00pm in the Village Hall

Wednesday 21st June
7.30pm at the Guild House

Monday 17th July
8.00pm in the Village Hall

Sunday 23rd July
2.30pm at the Guild House

The Art of Cheese Making—with samples!
Mr David Fowler, Fowler's Dairies, Earlswood

Bluebell Walk
Three to four miles

Wild Flower Walk
Short—led by Stella Jarman

Little Known Warwickshire—Part 2
Illustrated talk by Alan Winterburn (part 1 was in September 2005)

Canal Walk
Three to four miles

Hearing Dogs for the Deaf
Barbara Maughan

Butterfly Walk
Short—led by Stella Jarman

BUSY, BUSY, BUSY

These words easily demonstrate the activities of John Rowley, acting in his capacity as the Society representative on the Birmingham International Airport Consultation Committee. Not only has he been fulfilling that role but, in addition, has also been on the front line with regard to informing the Trustee Directors of the draft Master Plan, attending additional meetings at the Council offices, and not forgetting informing this subcommittee. In one week alone of five days he was involved in some meeting or another on four of them! This is the time to thank John, and Brenda his wife, for the amount of time and effort that has been sacrificed in the completion of his duties to the Society regarding the airport draft Master Plan. By the time you read this the 31 March deadline for submissions and comments will have passed and John can have a well earned 'rest' (apart from his continuing contributions to the work of this committee, of course).

CHAOS ON THE JUNCTION!

With the ever increasing traffic flows in and around the village centre, the committee has started to look at an area of growing concern, and that is the junction of Kenilworth Road and the High Street. Some pictures are on this page to help you understand the problems that are occurring. These can be seen as ignoring the double yellow lines on the mouth of the junction, parking in the bus stop area, buses not using the defined bus stop area, and delivery vehicles causing an obstruction.

Enquiries are still being made at this stage regarding the positioning of the bus stop; and also for considering a change to the layout of the mouth of Kenilworth Road. The committee will of course be careful to ensure that the very valuable parking spaces are saved; and you never know we may be able to identify how more spaces can be made available. That would be a change for Knowle. Further enquiries have to be made at this stage before any proposals can be put forward for consideration.

If you have any views or opinions they would be welcomed, so that they can be taken into account.

COMMUNITY POLICING

A meeting held in the Village Hall on 27th February informed all organisations and Neighbourhood Watch coordinators of the introduction of the Community Policing Strategy that will be fully operational from 6th April. Sgt. Ann Strachan is in charge of the officers who will respond to the concerns of the local area, and some of these were identified at the meeting.

An unexpected vacancy has occurred on the Community Services Committee, so isn't it time that you remembered your New Year resolution "to help serve the local community" and contact me for some information about the work of this committee. In the meantime enjoy the spring months and look forward to the longer daylight hours.

Gary Masters - Knowle 779955



Bus not using the bus stop by choice



Bus not using the bus stop because blocked



Cars parking on the bus stop



Delivery vehicle parking on the bus stop



'No stopping 7am-7pm except buses'

Photos: Allan Coleman

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND LOCAL CONCERNS

My sub-committee has not had very much in the way of contentious planning applications to vet in the last few weeks. This may be because developers are finding it difficult to sell such of the over-priced flats that they have actually built. Without wishing to appear vindictive this would be welcome. The latest of the many dates we have been given for the commencement of the *Parkridge* development is summer of this year.

As a result, we have spent some considerable time looking at *PPS3 – Consultation Paper on a New Planning Policy Statement* – issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This sets out how HM Government thinks future needs for new building should be met. We had hoped to see some relenting on the policy that treats gardens as *brownfield* sites i. e. as previously developed land, primarily available for new developments of the type referred to above. This appears not to be the case. I quote from the document – “Although residential gardens are defined as brownfield land, this does not necessarily mean that they are suitable for development. However, ...local planning authorities need to have regard to the positive contribution that intensification can make...in terms of minimising the pressure on greenfield sites.”

The document goes on to reiterate the long held belief of this Government that 60% of new developments should be on brownfield sites. There are ancillary questions to be asked at this stage. Are we prepared to see more fields around Knowle used as an alternative to these *brownfield* sites? Should all gardens be declared *brownfield*? I believe that some very large gardens might be outside the generally accepted curtilage and possibly outside the *brownfield* definition. If I am right, then I further

believe that it would be more difficult for developers to include the ‘extra’ land in any planning application.

Whatever the situation, we have sent a short response from the Society direct to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister setting out our views in the hope that ours may be added to the chorus of voices asking for some second thoughts. However thin the chance of this may be, it seems to me that democracy is best served by the governing knowing what is concerning the governed and perhaps sometimes effecting a change of mind.

On a local level, we have seen one or two applications recently from people and organisations asking for retrospective permission. In effect, “I’ve done it, now can I have permission?” Sometimes this is purely nominal but at least two recent applications have been in the Conservation Area and this sub-committee has strongly objected. We believe this represents the tip of the iceberg in terms of the integrity of the Conservation Area and is generally objectionable.

As I think I may have said already, we are working towards the re-appraisal and strengthening of the Conservation Area by the Council which may well help towards the position outlined in the previous paragraph. Also, we are due to meet Paul Watson, Solihull’s head of planning, in late March for the latest of our six-monthly meetings where we shall have many questions for him. The previous meeting was very fruitful and it is apparent that the Society is well thought of in such circles, which is satisfying and rewarding.

Peter Ewin - Knowle 776381

PLUS ÇA CHANGE?

Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose—(The more that changes, the more that it is the same thing) will be an occasional dip into the Society’s historic newsletters—perhaps to remind us of the *raison d’être* and fervour of The Society; battles lost, won and still ongoing, recurring themes, special events and special people. If there is a small corner of the newsletter to fill, we will taste the past for you.

From the Society’s very first communication to members in January 1963:

Progress Report: The Council has agreed to discuss the overall plans for Knowle’s future developments. Our Chairman Dr Bower and Mr Haysom [*architect and committee member*] have since met the Borough Surveyor. [*The Knowle Society is currently reviewing the Conservation Area with Solihull Council—see above*]

Future Programmes: Sometime in June it is hoped Mr Tony Upton will give a talk on the history of Knowle Church. [*Later issues don’t record if the meeting was full house, as the same speaker and subject drew 40 years later!*]

Open Invitation: The Committee is anxious to determine what kind of events the Members would like organised. Do please [*sic—no computer grammar checkers in those days*] write with your suggestions.

**THE KNOWLE SOCIETY RESPONSE TO THE BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT'S
DRAFT MASTER PLAN: TOWARDS 2030**

The Knowle Society is a voluntary organisation open to all residents of Knowle and district, established to maintain the character of the village and to preserve the quality of life of its inhabitants. The Society comprises 21% of the local electorate.

The Knowle Society Response reflects the views of the members of the Knowle Society, most of whom live in Knowle. There is no attempt to speak, other than on behalf of Knowle. The views have been gathered from an extensive consultation process, including a public meeting, in Knowle, addressed by the Managing Director of Birmingham International Airport. A questionnaire was circulated after that meeting and the results were reported to a further meeting of the Society, for comment. A number of non-members have also expressed their views, which synchronise closely with those expressed by Society members.

The Response focuses on the proposal to extend the present runway, but the comments refer equally to a second runway. There is mixed reaction to an extension because the figures on which its need is based are projections, which may or may not materialise. There is resigned acceptance of an extension being built, but overwhelming opposition to a second runway, because the case has not been convincingly made.

Whatever development takes place, there is an urgent need for a powerful co-ordinating authority to ensure that all agencies involved, airport, road and rail, produce and deliver a coherent plan to meet all needs that will arise. Further, much work needs to be done to protect the environment, both natural and built, from adverse effects.

Detailed results of our consultations have been summarised into categories, for ease of use.

SURFACE ACCESS

Future road problems cause the greatest concern to residents. Congestion on the M42, now, leads to flow back on Knowle roads. The consequences of a far greater number of road users arriving at and departing from the Airport, without major road developments, can only mean greater congestion, pollution and inconvenience on Knowle roads.

The Society believes that the target of 25% of air travellers using public transport is too low and needs to be raised and delivered. The Airport's planning application must include adequate provision for public transport.

Above all, the Surface Access issue requires a robust, co-ordinated and viable plan for an infrastructure strategy.

NOISE

It is felt that noise contour maps do not reflect the true impact upon residents. Actual high noise, above the average, causes more disturbance and it is feared that the number of high noise events will increase with the increase in the number of Air Traffic Movements.

Knowle is already affected by noise from Take Offs to the north as well as to the south and from the engine testing area. Permanent noise monitoring in Knowle, as promised, to detect this, is expected.

We look to the Airport to introduce more noise mitigation measures including more acoustic barriers, narrowing the noise preferential route bands and raising the minimum height for overflying the residential areas.

Residents are also concerned about night flights and would expect the present strict control on night movements to be maintained.

PERFORMANCE

We expect BIA to hold carriers responsible for the delivery of their targets in areas such as aircraft noise, exhaust emissions and other pollution. We expect the Planning Authority to set clear, unambiguous and transparent targets for BIA. The targets should show continuous improvement and breaches should be meaningfully penalised.

(Continued on page 5)

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FINANCIAL

Elected representatives should regularly review and challenge the business plan to ensure that the level of development is both necessary and achievable.

If a genuine economic benefit accrues to the region, Knowle would expect to be among the beneficiaries.

SAFETY

It is recognised that the proposals for the expansion of Coventry Airport are still unresolved, but there is an underlying concern for safety where two airports, close to each other, are apparently indulging in uncontrolled competition.

SUMMARY

All the comments from the members of the Knowle Society point to one thing, concern for the quality of life in this area. Greater noise, congestion and pollution from all sources will diminish the quality of life and the environment in which we live. We look to the Airport to minimise this by sound planning, regular monitoring of noise, air quality and congestion levels. Adequate measures must be put in place to prevent disturbance by strict routing of flights, provision of acoustic barriers, as appropriate, and adequate surface access.

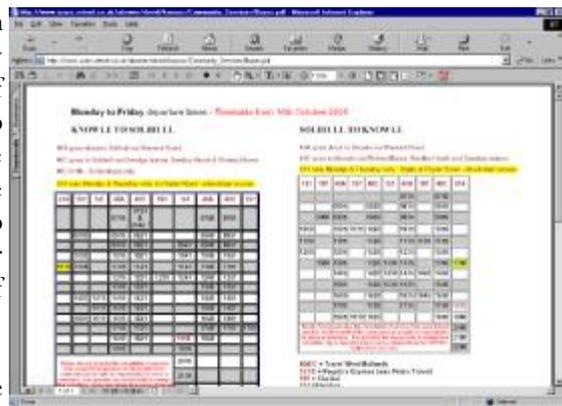
NEWSLETTER

We are pleased to announce that this newsletter is now being produced in a very slightly larger type size. Since the current style of newsletter was adopted in January 2004, when we standardised on a new and uniform font, (fount if you use the correct old English word!) there have been occasional well-justified murmurs from some members that it was difficult to read. On the other hand we have received many complimentary remarks about the style; so having allowed enough time to assess all the comments, a compromise has been struck; the font has been increased from 11pt to 12pt, a small but possibly sufficient change for most people. We have retained the same typeface, Perpetua, but have slightly condensed the lines to try and keep a similar amount of material on a page. Thank you to everyone who has fed back their comments.

The Executive Committee has decided for the present not to alter the dates and frequency of the newsletter but the option remains under active review.

WEBSITE

The website recently achieved its 4000th hit on its fourth birthday, i.e. a 1000 a year, not a lot compared with many websites but we hope that it does provide a useful if occasional resource. Several people submitted responses to the recent airport questionnaire using the form on the website and you are reminded that there are various forms available on the website which you might find useful. We always try to provide a copy of all forms that are printed in the newsletter to avoid you having to mutilate that most precious of documents!



Did you know that our website contains up-to-date compilations of all the local bus services from all the operating companies to and from Knowle? Go straight to the tables with just one click from the home page of the website—they can also be printed out for your convenience. This information is maintained by Lewis Edwards who is the Society's representative on the Solihull Transport Users' Advisory Committee.

David Bower - Editor - Knowle 775790

I am very pleased to report that nearly all the subscriptions for the year to 30th September 2006 have been collected. The distributors have again excelled themselves. The total of subscriptions collected to date is £4267.00, as against £3855.00 in the same period last year, and only £33.00 below my budgeted figure for 2006. My thanks to Derek Mellor, Walter Birch and the distributors for all their hard work in achieving this, and of course to you, the members, for your continued support.

Sandra Lea - Treasurer

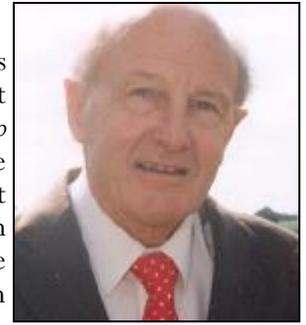
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EXHIBITIONS

As I write (March 2nd) we have just taken *Johnson's Garage* from the show cases this morning. It has proved a very popular exhibition, with a great deal of interest right up until the last minute. It has been replaced by a most worthy subject, *A Tribute to Dr. Bower*, something those of us on the Local History Centre Committee felt we wanted to do. Timed to co-incide with the anniversary of Dr. Bower's death last April, it covers Dr. Bower's broad interests and, of course, his time as a doctor in Knowle. We are grateful to the Bower family for their help and for providing some family photographs. There are posters around the village as usual. The exhibition will remain until the end of May, when it will be replaced by *Chester House*.



Dr. Bower in 1996

SALE OF PICTURE OF GUMLEY WILSON

Readers may like to know that *Mr. Wilson on Go Easy*, which was sold at Christie's at the end of January, realised over £164,800 (including buyer's premium). The guide price, with hindsight just a little low, was £80,000.

JUNIOR SCHOOL LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT

The first part of this enjoyable annual exercise took place on February 2nd, organised as usual by Valerie Morton, but with new members of the school staff. We felt the benefit of all the work we did last year in producing a dedicated set of photographs: we simply took them out of their folders and put them on the boards in about an hour and a half - and no-one has 150 photographs to file away again. Not only was it much less work, the result looked much more professional. The second stage, the interviews, takes place on March 22nd.



The Square about 1900

GUIDED TOUR OF KNOWLE FOR SOLIHULL DISCOVERY WALKS

We took about forty members of this group round the village on February 15th. They seemed to enjoy it, and another forty members of the same organisation will be visiting us at the end of May.

KNOWLE FESTIVAL

Most people will know that the Friends of Jobs Close Park are organising a day in the park on July 8th, at which the Local History Centre will be taking a stall (there is not room for us in the Knowle Society gazebo). We shall be taking our standard display, but have no more detailed plans as yet.

OPEN DAY

Due to changes elsewhere in our programme, the open day which we originally planned for May will now take place in the autumn.

Elaine S. Warner - Knowle 775887

FROM THE LATEST ISSUE OF CIVICFOCUS

the magazine of the Civic Trust (www.civictrust.org.uk) with which the Knowle Society is registered

"The green belt is a popular English institution. Like the BBC, or the National Health Service, it has broad support, and you tamper with it at your own risk."

"The Civic Trust recognises the invaluable role green-belt land has played in reducing urban sprawl, but also recognises that the policy is under increasing strain. We [*The Civic Trust*] are eager to hear your views, and to know about your particular experience. Do you know of valuable greenfield land without green belt designation under threat from development? Or green-belt land which you feel should be built on? Write to the [*Civic Trust*] editor Kate Worsley, or email kworsley@civictrust.org.uk.

Visit www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161678 for green belt maps and statistics."

The Civic Trust: Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HU.

Well, 2006 started with rather different meetings from those we expected. As I'm sure you will all know we had an extra January meeting - an Open Meeting on the subject of the airport expansion plans. I hope you'll agree that the team from the airport gave a pretty informative explanation of what they would like to do. I know many of us wish that they had much more modest ideas, but we need to deal with things as they are. We were very pleased to have an excellent turn-out with very nearly a full house.

We followed this up with a feedback meeting in February, where the Executive Committee of the Society explained the results of the consultations, both informal and through the questionnaire distributed at the Open Meeting and available elsewhere. Although the attendance was, not surprisingly, more modest than at the Open Meeting there was good discussion that helped the Executive Committee to prepare the Society's response.

The first of our 'normal' meetings was addressed by Mrs Maggie Loughran on the ways in which people can go about finding more about our ancestors – more than just their names and dates, including the sorts of lives they lived. A most interesting talk and, for those of us who think we really must have a go, a useful one.

20th March saw a talk on Life on the Working Boats on the Midland Canals and also the first of our walks. The second walk of the year is an evening one, 7:30pm from the Guild House on Wednesday 26th April, and we are hoping to see a good display of bluebells. Mentioning this really makes me think that the warm weather must eventually come, writing this note as I am on a cold February day with only the snowdrops to cheer me up.

April brings a chance to learn about local cheese making (and to sample some of the best varieties!) with a talk from David Fowler of Earlswood. In June we have a second chance to enjoy the enthusiastic presentations of Alan Winterburn on more areas of Warwickshire that are 'Little Known'. We so enjoyed last year's presentation that we immediately booked him for another go. He assures me that there are more than enough places to include that he will not repeat any.

In the last Newsletter I mentioned with thanks the work that the members of my sub-committee put into arranging the meetings. Much to my chagrin I missed, as I'm sure most of us do, the essential contribution made to the meetings by Phil Vince, whose work of setting up the hall and putting out the chairs goes unremarked (except for Colin's plea at the end of each meeting to "replace the chairs in 8 stacks and 12 high"). He also wears another hat, as the Village Hall's Steward for the night with responsibility for security, so he's first there and last out. Another person we all see at each meeting, but who plays her part so quietly and efficiently that it could be ignored is Jenny Evans, who very politely invites us to 'sign in'. She has been doing this task now for ## years. (I'm not going to say how long!) Unfortunately she is finding it increasingly difficult to come out on some of the dark winter nights, so we are looking for someone to assist her and perhaps take over when she eventually decides to come only when the weather is kind. If you would be willing to help out in this little way, please speak to me, or to Jenny who will be in her usual place at every meeting.

Another request for help. - Is there anyone out there who would like to help us out and display their DIY skills at the same time? We would like to have a table-top lectern that would make life easier for our speakers, but the cost of a commercially made one is a bit steep. This is the sort of thing we need. The catch is that we need it to be as light as possible, as I have to carry it to each meeting, and ideally it should fold up, so it's easy to carry. The dimensions should be Height 50cm, Width 60cm, Depth 45 cm, or near these. We will of course reimburse you for the materials. If anyone would like to do this for us, please get in touch.



Example of lectern required by the Society



Photo: Malcolm Brain

KNOWLE PARK TREE LINED WALKWAY

Solihull MBC has in recent months planted a variety of trees either side of the main pathway from the Car Park. In years to come these will provide a pleasant tree-lined walkway though the Park

BE A BRICK – ‘ADOPT A BRICK’

Having secured grant funding for the majority of the cost, this is the novel approach thought up by *The Friends of Knowle Park* to secure the remaining £3000 needed to fund the final section of the footpath between Starbold

Crescent and the Longdon Road Car Park. This will complete a safe walking, or for the more energetic, jogging, surface around the perimeter of the park. Residents are invited to pay £25 to ‘adopt a brick’ (or £20 each for 2 or more) that will form part of the footpath. Bricks can be engraved with a message to celebrate the birth of a child or grandchild, a special anniversary, the life of a pet or anything that is required. The bricks will contribute to the completion of a path and provide a lasting legacy as well as benefiting the many residents who use the park. For further details contact Friends of Knowle Park on 773886 or 775342. Congratulations to the ‘Friends’ for their efforts.

IN MEMORY OF A LANDMARK MARITIME PINE

A Maritime Pine has stood on the corner of Station Road opposite Evesons Fuels for the past 200-250 years. Earlier this year SMBC decided to fell it for safety reasons.

Despite this the felled tree has been put to good use – the wood chippings which came from it have been used to help restore the muddy pathway alongside Purnells Brook in Knowle Park.



Photo: Stella Jarman

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Welcome to our new members this quarter...

Mrs Sheila Dudley
Ms Vicky Naylor
Mr & Mrs M A R Tilley
Pat Sherrington Blane

Can you encourage your friends and neighbours to join the Knowle Society? This may be done either by contacting the Membership Secretary or through an application form on www.knowlesociety.org.uk

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