



Land behind Kixley Lane - latest target for developers looking for housing sites

As our Chairman, David Bower, expounds on pages 2 and 3, there are many questions, concerns and considerations at present on the matter of further plans for building houses around Knowle.

It can seem as if developers want to expand the village towards the M42 to the north, towards the canal to the east and towards the railway to the south, all at once.

Your Society sees the need to establish fact from speculation for our residents and to understand how best to represent you going forward.

The Councillor responsible for Planning has agreed to be our guest speaker at an open meeting.

**Come and Join Us**

**THE FUTURE OF  
LOCAL HOUSING  
DEVELOPMENTS**

**Arden Academy**

**Monday 3rd November**

**7.30pm**

## An Open Meeting to Understand Housing Plans

### Events Diary

**Monday October 20th**

7.15pm in the Village Hall

**Monday November 3rd**

7.30pm at Arden Academy

**Monday November 17th**

7.30pm in the Village Hall

**Thursday November 27th**

4.00pm outside the Guild House

**Tuesday December 26th**

11.00am, outside the Guild House

**Quiz with Fish'n'Chip Supper**

For members and guests - see website for details

**The Future for Local Housing Developments**

Guest Speakers from Solihull Council

**Talk - Martin Rowley**

Electric Cars - The Myths and the Facts

**Christmas Lights Switch-on**

Lighting up the village and tree lights with Santa

**Boxing Day Walk in the countryside (three miles)**

With warming refreshments to follow

# Questions about Future Housing as Developers Circle

*Especially when it comes to infrastructure - reflections from our Chair*



What impact will new housing have on capacity at our health facilities?

The Society is arranging a public meeting on Monday 3rd November at 7.30pm in Arden Academy to help the community to understand the scope of the housing developments expected to engulf Knowle and environs and what, if any, steps we can take to mitigate the impact.

With planning authorities required by government to make a presumption in favour of new housing:

- Does that mean that the traditional battlegrounds have moved on?
- If so are we left with mitigation as our most effective focus?
- What is the scope for community influence now?

With our scope to limit government diktat on housing numbers severely limited, the Society is committed to considering each new planning application carefully and providing reasoned responses based on legislation and good practice.

The aim will be to minimise the impact on the Conservation Area and argue for better provision of infrastructure to provide for the steep change in population and traffic.

Within Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (and it makes sense to view these as a whole) the current number of homes is 7900 and the proposed developments to date (subject to planning approval or known developer plans) are for an additional 2065, a potential 26% increase in the short term. So for every four people or cars that you see today, in future there would be five. Of this 2065 new homes, 570 have already received approval.

There is no avoiding the loss of rural amenity and the sense of a ‘village’ community through land loss now. However we have been through this before and survived; I used to walk into Knowle from Tilehouse Green Lane over the fields of Landers Farm, but the Purnells estates (in which I later lived in two homes) put paid to that.

What particularly concerns most of us now is how this will play out in infrastructure, for which there appears to be minimal provision in draft plans. Let me offer a few thoughts around this.

Our primary concern is the lack of an overall, enforceable Master Plan to which developers must conform.

Since the Council’s Local Plan was thrown out by the Inspectorate last year and will take another year or so to develop afresh, developers are left free to put in applications for any plot of land offered by landowners and these may not necessarily relate well to their adjacent areas for transport, access or ecology.

The existing Transport Plan, which your Society considered inadequate to deal with the predicted growth at the time, and was created against very much lower housing numbers, will be even more inadequate if vehicle numbers are scaled up further.

Concerns exist about poor access between development areas, both vehicular and pedestrian, with totally unrealistic provision for access to the proposed new Primary School and extended Arden Academy.

*(continued on next page).*

## Success in Seeking Rescue of Bus Shelter from Decay

*A cleanup in the short term before a long term regeneration plan*



The rear of the bus shelter before and after the cleanup work by the Council

There has, at last, been some progress with the recovery of the bus shelter and former toilet block. Along with Lilla Baker and Andrew Marston from the Society and colleagues from Visit Knowle and Knowle and Dorridge Lions, I have been pressing for action.

As can be seen from the photos above, the Council has responded and significantly improved the appearance of the building. The exterior has been jet washed and various vegetation has been cut back or removed, from the gutters in particular.

Furthermore, the beds of shrubbery on either side of the block, which were very much out of control have also been cut back and now have a much more orderly appearance.

You may have noticed a 'For Sale' sign on the building recently. The Council is now disposing of it under lease, but with conditions. The most important of these constraints is that the bus shelter remains in situ so that, unlike a previous scheme for the building, those who need to sit whilst waiting for a bus will be able to do so where the bus stops.

The application deadline has passed, so is no longer open to offers and it is hoped that details of its future will be sufficiently clear to be announced in time for the next issue.

Meanwhile, we are grateful to the Council team for their clean up endeavours.

**Dave Pinwell**

## Growing Infrastructure Demands Investment - from where?

*(continued from previous page)*

There is no transparency about how any 'Section106' moneys obtained from developers will be used to meet local infrastructure needs for medical facilities and road and junction improvements as these substantial sums could just disappear into a wider West Midlands pot.

There are proposals to improve parking in Knowle to meet some of the assuredly big increase in demand but no suggestion that any funding is proposed to implement these ideas.

No doubt all these changes will creep up gradually if the homes are actually built and prove saleable, so there won't be a step change in congestion and traffic.

Maybe there will be some mitigating trends, though, like electric vehicle ownership reducing pollution and online medical consulting which could reduce the need for physical surgery buildings. However, these are not likely to address the sheer weight of new homes.

We wish we could write with a more positive view of the future but unfortunately that is not realistic. Do come along to our public meeting to see and hear more and to engage with the Council and our elected representatives.

**David Bower**  
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# New Speed Limit Signs are Making Little Difference

*and other Community Services news*



Straight run along Lodge Road, a temptation for speeding

Lilla Baker, Community Services

I hope that you all enjoyed a very pleasant summer, as well as the various events within the village, and are now facing up to a distinctly Autumnal feel in the weather.

### **SPEEDING**

Speeding vehicles have been mentioned several times, particularly along the High Street, Tilehouse Green Lane, Longdon Road, Lodge Road and Station Road.

Despite the fact that we now have 20 mph speed limits which were introduced some time back, there are a significant number of drivers of both cars and lorries who completely ignore the signs and speed excessively at all times of the day. It is an accident waiting to happen.

I mentioned it to PCSO Kiah Acton on 12th August when she was available at the Knowle Masonic Centre. Regrettably, despite this being widely advertised, only myself and three others attended.

She said if we were able to send her the number plates of any excessively speeding vehicles (by email to [kiah.acton@westmidlands.police.uk](mailto:kiah.acton@westmidlands.police.uk)) it could be followed up. Meanwhile, I ask on behalf of us all - please slow down.

### **BUS SERVICES**

We have just been advised that the A6 service is being withdrawn, whilst weekday services on the A7 and A8 routes are being increased to a half-hourly frequency and re-routed via Purnells Way, Tilehouse Green Lane and Longdon Road, from 2nd November.

The new Monday to Friday timetable can be found on the back cover of this issue and through one of our Mailchimp bulletins and we will publish the full timetable on the Society website.

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 Knowle 739073



## More Concerns Arise over Latest Arden Triangle Plans

*and other Planning matters from the Committee*



Entrance on Warwick Road, the track leading to Stripes Hill Farm

I do not recall any time in the past when Solihull MBC – involving Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath – has been mentioned in a national newspaper. However, an article in a recent Friday edition did just that, under the headline ‘Villages to become towns to halt Rayner’s housebuilding blitz’.

You may have been aware of a recent approach to the local community by the Council with a survey for Knowle, together with Dorridge and Bentley Heath, proposing the combination of the three villages to be collectively classified as a ‘town’ insofar as it relates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The newspaper article used the word ‘loophole’ in respect of the NPPF whereby this move would ‘bolster the protection for a handful of its green belt villages’. We await the result of the proposal.

You may recall that July’s issue of the Newsletter included in the Committee’s last Report the phrase ‘Substantial weight is attached to the green belt harm’. This was used by Council planners in recommending the approval of Kler Homes ‘outline’ planning application proposing that the harm was outweighed by the government’s stated mission of the provision of 1.5m new houses across the country.

Whether that target is achieved, or not, will be revealed in the fullness of time but, to be frank, indicators such as monthly figures of new housing ‘starts’, and affordability coupled to the very simple ‘supply and demand’ factor of basic economics will have a part to play as time passes until the next General Election.

Unfortunately, the next large scheme anticipated to be placed before the Council’s Planning Committee in Knowle’s KN2 development area is that of Taylor Wimpey Homes’ outline planning application located ‘west of Warwick Road’ of ‘up to 200 dwellings’.

This application has been subject to several changes made by the developer following the planners’ consideration of the original scheme. These include a revised ‘vehicular access strategy’, providing an additional (now two in all) access point off Warwick Road, although the second will provide access to only four houses. The original, main, access is also to be relocated, further to the south.

For those who know Stripes Hill, both access points will be on the hill itself with the principal access almost opposite the un-made track leading to a small number of houses and Stripes Hill Farm.

Despite changes having been made in response to consultees’ comments, including those of this Society, the Applicant endeavours to maintain the original number of new dwellings. In order to achieve the anticipated financial return, it is still necessary to fell no less than 58 trees of the existing 188, some 30%.

Although it is now proposed that a number of trees will be replaced, the new ones take time to grow during which the landscape overall will be open to view from Warwick Road. There will remain an adverse impact on the Conservation Area.

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# A New History Walk Leaflet Launched at Heritage Display and arrangements during Local History Centre closure

A huge thank you to everyone who came to the launch of our new 'A Walk through Time' QR Heritage Trail and display of old photographs outside the Guild House on the 13th of September.

'A Walk through Time' is a walk along the High Street, celebrating the heritage of The Parish Church, Berrow Homes, Milverton House, The Guild House, Nos 1699/1701 - The Bakery, Nos 1681/1683a - Kingscote, Chester House, The Greswolde Arms, The Wilson Arms, No 1622 - Men's Institute, The Red Lion and Nos 1678/1680 High Street.

By following the trail, you can learn more about the history of each building, and if you scan the QR code on the back of the leaflet (see picture), it will take you to our website where you will find information, images and a timeline for each building.

Be a heritage detective and find the QR posters along the High Street or collect a leaflet from the Library.

When the Library re-opens, a large 'Walk Through Time' Heritage Board will be installed in the courtyard to assist visitors and residents to explore and enjoy this rich High Street heritage.

The Knowle Society would like to thank the local shops and businesses involved, Kim Hulse and Zoe Barber for their creative support, and the staff at Prontaprint.

**Knowle Society**

Learn more about the history and stories behind each building by scanning the QR code, which will take you to our website where you'll find more interesting information and images.

This trail is designed by The Knowle Society, a charity dedicated to preserving and enhancing local heritage, open spaces, facilities, and community life for past, present, and future generations.

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

Scan QR code for more information

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented on this heritage trail, details may be subject to change or misinterpretation. To the best of our knowledge, all content is correct at the time of publication. We accept no responsibility for any errors, omissions, or changes that may have occurred since.

Funded with thanks to Mary Riley's lasting legacy.

**A walk through time Knowle High Street**

Begin the walk at Knowle Parish Church. Follow the route along the High Street and finish on the opposite side.

- 9 The Wilson Arms**  
Originally called The Rising Sun, part of The Wilson Arms' oak framed building dates back to the early 1600s. The first cinema of Knowle was once in the assembly room.
- 10 No. 1622 High Street 'The Men's Institute'**  
In 1886, Nos 1622 and 1620 became the home of 'Knowle Men's Institute', which offered local men and youths' education, relaxation and sporting opportunities for over 60 years.
- 11 The Red Lion**  
The Red Lion, built in the early 17th century, flourished during the growth of coach travel. The inn, yard and fields were home for many village fairs and celebrations.
- 12 Nos. 1682-1684 High Street**  
These former 17th century cottages became two shops in 1925; (a sweet and cake shop plus greengrocery). Thimble Lane at the side of the café leads to the former wash house.

Local History Team



Scaffolding fills the Library Courtyard during the closure, the familiar entrance remaining visible in the background

## LIBRARY CLOSURE

Packing up all our archives ready for storage was warm work during those 'hot' July days!! Now work is underway to replace the roof and to undertake essential repairs.

We are looking forward to the re-opening the Local History Centre in early 2026. Remember that the History Team can still be contacted if you have any questions or queries - please email: [history@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:history@knowlesociety.org.uk).

A reminder of the current Library Hours at The Knowle Royal British Legion.  
*Monday, Tuesday and Thursday Morning -10am -12 am  
and Saturday -10am -12.30pm*

Knowle Library opened in Chester House in 1975, after Solihull Council had restored the building, and the Library Staff will be marking its 50th birthday in November 2025 at its temporary home in the Knowle RBL.

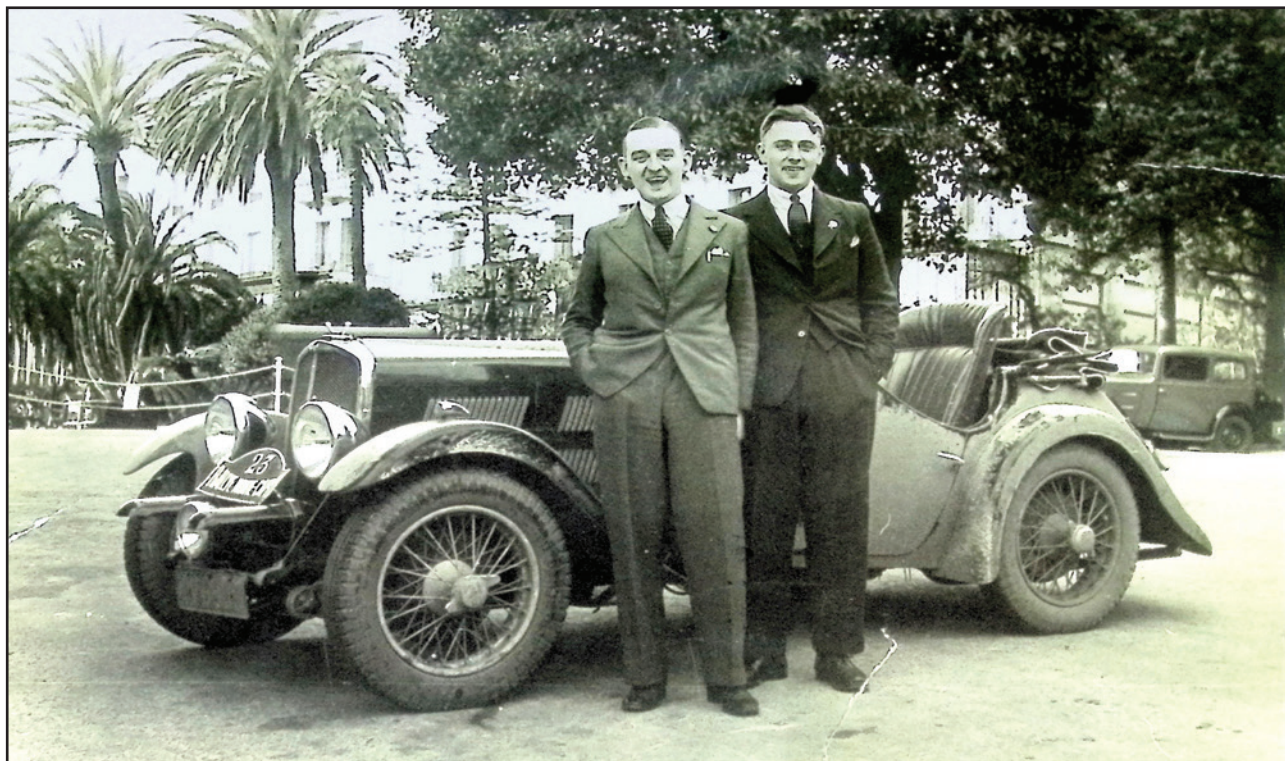
Look out for more information at the temporary Library, on the Knowle Library Facebook page or Solihull Council's Website.

*How long have you been visiting Knowle Library?*

**The Local History Team**  
[history@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:history@knowlesociety.org.uk)

## Tragedy of Knowle Winner in Monte Carlo Rally

*More from the Local History Centre Archive*



Jack Ridley, Roger Thacker and 'Gloria' at Monte Carlo

During the temporary closure of the Local History Centre we are taking the opportunity to scan our collection of over 3,000 photographs.

One photograph which caught our eye was of a car, dated 1935, with two gentlemen standing proudly in front of it. Investigations discovered that the car and a Knowle resident had travelled 2,350 gruelling miles to win the Monte Carlo Rally - Light Car Class.

The car was a Triumph KV 6905, called 'Gloria' and driven by Roger Thacker (right) and Jack Ridley (left). Roger was very keen on car rallying and lived in an age when the amateur still had a place.

Our investigations also led us to "The Further Price a Parish Paid" written by Michael Harrison where we found out that; "Roger Ewart Thacker was born in Knowle in 1909 and was a member of the Thacker Family who ran a manufacturing stationers and printers near Colmore Row in Birmingham and Roger joined the family firm when he was just 16 years old. The family had also established the well-known local nursery".

It seems that Roger was very likable and given to practical jokes and telling jokes. He was also a very enthusiastic amateur radio 'ham' and transmitted from the attic of his house in Station Road.

It was this interest that led to Roger's involvement in WWII and to his death at the age of just 30 in October in 1939, just four years after his adventures in 'Gloria'.

"As a member Royal Naval Volunteer [Wireless] Reserve – Roger was instructed to join HMS Northern Rover at about the time of the declaration of war in 1939.

"Ordered to Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands, Northern Rover then proceeded with at least one other vessel to the area near the Fair Isle. It was in this hostile and lonely place that Knowle suffered the loss of one of its own, for the first time in this new war".

The record continues that: "On, or about, 30th October a crew member of another vessel reported the Northern Rover was in a ferocious storm and it was thought that the sea had overwhelmed her. No trace was ever found, and the ship was recorded as 'now considered lost'.

However, after the war ended in 1945 and the U-boat logbooks came into allied hands, that is when it was discovered that the Northern Rover had been struck by a torpedo, which was fired from U59, a type 11 submarine at 23.55 hours, on 30th October 1939.

Roger Thacker is remembered in the Soldiers' Chapel in Knowle Parish Church, and on the memorial in the churchyard together with those Knowle men and women we are particularly remembering, in this, the 80th year since VE and VJ day. .

*They gave their tomorrow for our today.*

**The Local History Team**

# Planting Seeds and Cameras to Watch for Hedgehogs

*Our environmental work continues*



Seeding the mini meadow on the St Johns Close Green

## **WALKS**

On Sunday 7th September our final ‘local green walk’ of 2025 took us on a journey from Knowle Park Nature Reserve through Tilehouse Green to the site of an ancient moat, and home again via a footpath across the Golf Course. We were reminded of how fortunate we are to have so much to explore and enjoy on our doorstep.

It will soon be time to plan next year’s walks in Knowle’s green spaces and we would welcome any suggestions you may have.

## **PROGRESS**

In September we seeded the mini meadow areas on St Johns Close Green, and hope that they will provide beautiful wildflowers for us and wildlife to enjoy next Spring and Summer. We are also growing some plug plants that will help fill any gaps or spaces caused by any poor germination.

The advice from a very knowledgeable local resident who has grown her own meadow and provided local seed for the plug plants has been invaluable. Above is the ‘before’ picture and fingers crossed for wonderful ‘after’ photographs.

## **HEDGEHOG WATCH**

Kathryn, a member of the natural environment group is passionate about wildlife, particularly hedgehogs, and you may have read the article she wrote for the July/August Parish Magazine.

Did you know there is a British Hedgehog Preservation Society or that hedgehogs can travel up to two miles each night, exploring our gardens?

If you should find a hedgehog that needs help, contact our local rescue centre, where sick and injured hedgehog are rehabilitated before being released back into the wild. Get in touch via the contact form at [www.solihogs.co.uk](http://www.solihogs.co.uk).

This summer we have taken part in the National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme (NHMP) This involved volunteers putting 20 cameras around Knowle (with landowner’s permission), and the images will be uploaded to Mammal Web.

This is important information as in 2020 hedgehogs were added to the Red List of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as ‘vulnerable to extinction’ in Great Britain.

It is hoped that by surveying urban and rural populations we will be better able to monitor and protect hedgehogs. The cameras will be collected at the end of September, and we will let you know the outcomes in our next newsletter.

## **AND NOW...**

Wychwood Reserve and A Community Orchard remain ongoing project for autumn and Winter and if you are interested in helping contact us via the email address below.

**The Natural Environment Team**  
[environment@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:environment@knowlesociety.org.uk)

## Oustanding Views to the West and a Megalithic Phony

*A trip to the most popular of West Midland hills*



The Four Stones - Summit of Clent Hill

A million people a year cannot be wrong. That is the number of people estimated to visit the Clent Hills, the mudstone escarpments that sit overlooking Hagley and Halesowen from the south.

Rightly, the most popular to visit is Clent Hill itself, just inching into four figures at 1,014 feet above sea level at the summit and 23 feet shorter than its twin, Walton Hill, looking down on it from the east.

There is a vast network of paths around the hills, and one of the most popular walking routes, the Butterfly Trail combines both summits in a 3.2 mile circuit, starting from the National Trust operated Nimmings Wood car park.

This is an information point, at the north-eastern base of Clent Hill, with leaflets about the hills in general and other trails, alongside its small café and ice cream kiosk.

There are two reasons why Clent Hill is the more popular. Firstly, many consider the views are better, on a clear day the Welsh Black Mountains come into focus. Secondly, alongside the summit, stand the Four Stones, believed to be some to be 'a megalithic site from prehistory', but actually planted in 1763 by

the eccentric and mischievous owner of the nearby Hagley Hall, where the views to the west (and of his Hall) are at their best.

The summit itself is marked by a topograph, a circular map mounted as a horizontal plate with directional pointers to the many near and far distant landmarks visible from this highest westerly point in the 'Greater Birmingham' conurbation.

The climb to the summit of Clent from the south-west is steeper, but more popular with those seeking pre- or post-walk refreshment of a more substantial kind and routes start from both the Hill Tavern (highly rated for beer) and Vine Inn (much lauded for food).

The Clent Hills are half an hour from Knowle via the M42 south, M5 North to Junction 4 and A491 towards Hagley, turning off into Clent village and following a satnav or online map through the complex web of minor roads around the foothills to your chosen starting point.

And talking of Clent, there is a good independent, and highly competitively priced, garden centre at the northern end of the village for anyone seeking a green-fingered mooch.

### **ELECTRIC CARS** **The Myths and the Facts**

**A TALK BY MARTIN ROWLEY**

**Monday 17th November at 7.30pm in Knowle Village Hall**



## In Conversation ... with Keeley Skelding, Co-founder of SWSS

*A local women's walking group with a focus on wellbeing*



**K**eeley Skelding (front, left, above) is known to some as a regular Visit Knowle volunteer and to more as a former member of the Ale Rooms staff, but is increasingly recognised as one of the co-founders of Solihull Women's Stride Squad (SWSS).

### **So, Keeley, what is the Stride Squad?**

We run free, weekly walks for women in Malvern and Brueton Parks, starting at the New Road gates, every Wednesday at 7pm.

But it's about more than fitness, it is about mental well-being, confidence and connection. Modern life can feel isolating and stressful – walking side by side in nature gives women a chance to talk openly, make friends, and feel supported.

### **And is it a success?**

It is bigger than we hoped for. It has grown into a thriving community of over 1,530 women in just nineteen weeks. Every week, 50–100 women join us, with many describing the walks as their “therapy.” We hear countless stories of improved confidence, reduced loneliness and stronger community spirit.

### **It is a bit more than a walking group then?**

Definitely, we are working in partnership with the NHS, Solihull Council and West Midlands Police to support women's health, well-being and safety across the community. To make our evenings even more valuable, we often begin with inspiring short talks and activity sessions, such as:

- Drum circles to lift energy and create joy
- Menopause awareness talks offering knowledge and support
- EFT (tapping) to ease stress and anxiety
- Fitness tasters with local groups like This Girl Runs
- And much, much more!

### **But what do you mean by safety?**

Well, that is our focus as winter approaches. For instance, we are working on providing high-vis jackets, whistles, and torches so women can continue walking safely in the darker evenings – and still benefit from the mental health boost and connections which our walks bring.

### **Are the walks strenuous, do you need to be an experienced walker?**

Absolutely not, we welcome everyone and they all walk at their own pace, finding some amazing women to natter with as they stride along, sharing smiles with others and feeling supported every step of the way.

### **And how can people join up?**

Just come along for 7pm any Wednesday to those New Road gates. It is not far from the car parks for Malvern Park or the Mell Square one next to Morrisons. A warm welcome will be waiting!.

**Thank you, Keeley. We wish you all every success with this rapidly growing group.**

## Henley-in-Arden and the remains of Beaudesert Castle

*An invigorating climb to viewpoints above the town*



Beaudesert Castle, thought to date from the 13th century was a motte and bailey fortification sitting on a high mound above Henley-in-Arden. Its remains are now known as Beaudesert Mount or ‘The Mount’.

This two and a quarter mile stroll combines a climb to the heights above the east of the town with a visit to The Mount and a walk along the High Street, famous for its ice creams and popular for its pubs and restaurants.

The walk starts at the northern car park, reached from Knowle just before entering the town on the right hand side.

From the car park, walk back to the A3400 and turn right for a short distance. Immediately after passing the remains of an old railway bridge arch, on the opposite side of the road, you will see a wooden kissing gate leading into a footpath.

This becomes a fenced path beside a field to the north of the former railway track before entering a long field. The path here can be indistinct, but it follows the full length of the field and ends adjacent to a small wood that can be seen to its left in the distance.

Here the final few yards are again fenced before it emerges onto the road leading to Holland Park Farm. Turn right, then, as you reach the farm gate, a stile on the left takes you into another path, through a few trees and down the slope across another open field.

It then passes through a gap and swings to the right into another field, this one a fairly steep uphill climb over much rougher ground.

As the path approaches an expanse of woodland, you might expect to be turning left, further uphill along its edge, but instead you will see a gap in the trees into which the path leads.

From here you walk a significant distance, through the woodland, popular with rabbits. The path is sometimes narrow, in places a bit overgrown, in others breaking out into small clearings. You are walking along the edge of a ridge, affording very occasional views of Henley below to the right.

Eventually, you will have joined the Millennium Way in readiness for the descent of that long distance footpath down to the town. The descent is broken by the climb up into the castle foundations, where a bench affords a potential rest with the view over Henley and beyond pictured above.

The path ends with the steep drop into Beaudesert Lane, emerging through a gate beside St Nicholas Church, the older of the town’s two churches and thought to have been built around 1170, before it crosses over the River Alne.

The far end of Beaudesert Lane sees you emerging on the High Street and turning right affords the opportunity of the gentle flat wander back to the car park, amongst the many delightful buildings of which Henley is rightly proud.

