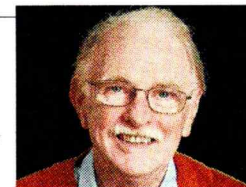


# Horsham Society

with Oliver Farley

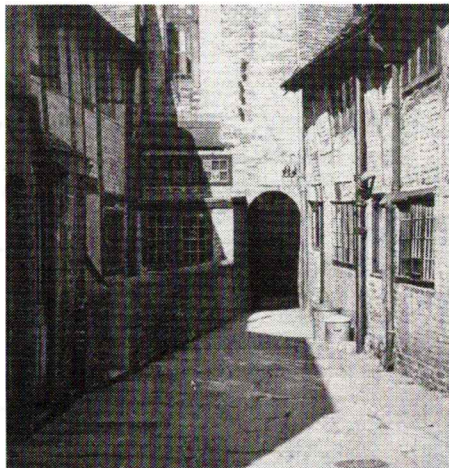


## Respecting the town's character

**T**he character and charm of Horsham's town centre are not there by accident – it is a protected Conservation Area which means there are tough planning laws and a watchful local council, plus the keen eyes of the Horsham Society, which aim to ensure that new development doesn't ruin it.

The Horsham Conservation Area covers the old medieval core of the town, stretching from St Mary's Church to the top of the Carfax, and covering most of East Street and West Street. It still contains irreplaceable timber-framed buildings, even if they are now concealed behind newer facades, and a careful observer can still spot examples of the traditional Horsham stone roof.

Horsham was never a wealthy town, so it never suffered mass demolition and renewal. Instead the main streets are a patchwork of additions, partial replacements and revisions to existing buildings which means that their construction history can be teased out from the present structures. The house called Palshud's in the Causeway, for example, has timber dating back to 1381 and at least three



Pump Alley in the 1950s.

other earlier buildings are incorporated into the structure we see now.

This is the subtle blend that makes the area special. It has evolved over the years, with older structures still dotted among Georgian, Victorian and more modern buildings – creating an attractive interesting streetscape. The result is something that needs defending.

No-one is saying new additions should have some kind of munchkin-Tudor pretend design, but preserving the character of the conservation area does mean avoiding blasts of inappropriate colour, or outbreaks of plastic panelling, particularly on new shop fronts.

It is all too easy to introduce something really jarring into a carefully preserved area, and even a repair or extension using the wrong materials can have that effect. Equally, it is important to preserve the small details on buildings which contribute to the character of the town centre... Victorian ironwork, elaborate plaster panels, leaded windows or decorative brickwork should not be casually swept away.

Horsham still has its medieval alleys, like Pump Alley, Piries Alley or the ones linking Middle Street to the Carfax. These narrow routes, with their uneven walls and glimpses of older aspects to familiar buildings add a distinctive flavour to the town centre, and the Horsham Society has been busy cataloguing them as public rights of way, to ensure that they are not lost to future developments, cluttered with wheelie bins or blocked by parked cars.

The key here is not stopping change, but keeping it appropriate – which is where the system of listed buildings comes in. Horsham's real gems are already listed, but listed status requires quite high standards which not every building of note satisfies, so the Horsham Society makes the case for the less obvious and works to persuade Horsham District Council to take note of something worthy through the Local List of buildings which deserve some planning protection.

An example is the fine Art Deco house in North Parade at Blunts Way. It's a very good sample of a suburban house in this style and one of a kind in its locality. Horsham Society members have been patrolling the town up-dating the existing list. It will be with Horsham District Council for their consideration in the New Year.

*The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website [www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or phone 01403 259038.*