

Horsham Society

with Oliver Farley



Celebrate warm-hearted community

Saturday mornings are always a good time for a stroll around down-town Horsham. There are usually acquaintances to chat to, friends to greet and a cup of strong black coffee to share.

The market stalls in the Carfax bring a range of temptations from fresh bread to outdoor sculptures, bedding plants to sizzling sausages, and the regular chance to surreptitiously extend our culinary experiences. Thai food and Slovak meats prompt curiosity and appetite simultaneously and jog memories of Brixton and Manhattan years ago.

Back in the 1960s Caribbean food was a novelty and we wonderingly asked stall holders to tell us exactly how a yellow pepper was to be cooked or sweet potatoes prepared; a little later, expelled Ugandan Asians appeared in numbers, bringing with them other unheard of foodstuffs, as unheard of as the strange delights of the Polish grocer beside the White Eagle Club for wartime veterans.

At this time my work involved a large New York bank and the name list on the circulation folder could be taken for that



Food, glorious food, in Horsham town centre

city in microcosm: among the standard Anglo-Saxon names were dozens from every quarter of Europe, Asia and the Latin lands; native American ones popped up and exotic, unpronounceable configurations defied all spelling logic. Both Brixton's food and New York's names were indicative of the changing flow of people and cultures which are typical of an evolving society.

Here at home in our corner of Sussex the same alterations are happening over time and our town and its lifestyle are the richer for it. The most obvious indicator of this change is the variety of foodstuffs now

an everyday feature of our daily lives. One supermarket's cheese range shows Havarti from Denmark, Mascarpone from Italy, Gouda from Holland, Camembert from France and Red Leicester from Leicester. And this in a country where as a child olive oil was sold in chemists as a medical preparation and the only Turkish delicacy was called a delight rather than a yogurt. Horsham has become one of the leading restaurant towns in Sussex and they too show a range of overseas cuisine unheard of years ago as they enhance our palates now. Would any one ever credit that Horsham

would one day boast two Japanese restaurants and a home-grown Michelin-starred restaurant of our own?

A great advantage of such numbers and variety is that they attract custom from miles away; Horsham's reputation has gone before it and it sweeps in diners aplenty. All these places need stock and staff, and we don't often reflect upon the long chain of intricate economic players required to put such tantalising delectation before us on our plates. Many of the staff come from far away and have found work and home in our Sussex midst. We welcome them as we do the food we enjoy and just as Brixton has become an ethnically mixed home community, just as Manhattan has, so are we.

Let's hold onto our warm-hearted community . . . while we clutch our kebabs!

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 or phone 01403 261905.