

# Not all visitors here are made welcome



by **Nigel Friswell**  
vice president of the Horsham Society

NICE place, Horsham. Not just the town but the surrounding area, too.

Although the Horsham Society's 'concern is the past, present and future of the town', as our strapline has it, we must not forget that most of us enjoy the rest of the district and county.

West Sussex is not dramatic, in the sense of the Lake District or the Cornish coastline, but it is Pleasant. Pleasant, that is, with a capital P. It is a truly green county

without the continual rain of some parts.

Now that we border on the newly-designated South Downs National Park, we can expect that outsiders might recognise the beauty that is Sussex.

Not that this will happen overnight but if the credit crunch means more holidays are taken in England, there might well be a gradual increase in tourism, bringing more visitors to Horsham, even if they are only passing through.

Driving south down the A24 bypass, signs proclaim the park and ride. It was originally promoted as a facility for all-day parkers who work in the town.

That caused some controversy at the time but, although not used to capacity,

most days the facility is used by some people. On Saturdays it represents a bargain, a car of up to four people for £1. Visitors who decide to 'chance it' and find a parking space in the town can usually do so.

However, there is one class of passing visitor who is effectively barred from visiting the town. This is the caravanner or motor-caravanner. The multi-storey car parks are out of the question for height reasons.

The open-air town car parks are often too congested for all but the smallest campervan. So let's use the park and ride! Now, there's a problem.

Although buses stop there, all the parking spaces are restricted by height barriers to about two metres.

But why? Similarly edge-of-town parking at the award-

winning Warnham Nature Reserve and at Leechpool Woods, although roomy, have height restrictions. Why stop any passing tourists from visiting these attractive spots?

By this time you have probably guessed that I own a campervan. A recent holiday in the West Country was blessed not only by good weather but also by the discovery that practically none of the car parks had height restrictions. Very tourist-friendly!

Many had longer spaces set aside for caravanners or a requirement that a vehicle occupying two spaces should pay for both of them.

Often there were notices prohibiting overnight sleeping; fair enough.

Representatives of Horsham District Council and our local traders have said in the past

that they want to encourage tourism to the district. One of the things they could do is get rid of the height restrictions on the car parks and say 'welcome' to all our visitors.

Then alter the tourism part of the council's website to explain the parking facilities to anyone who wishes to visit. At present the website suggests your first port of call is the museum/information centre – but where do you park to find it?

*The Horsham Society is concerned about the town's past, present and future and seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.*

*For more information on how to join visit the website [www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or telephone 01403 261905.*