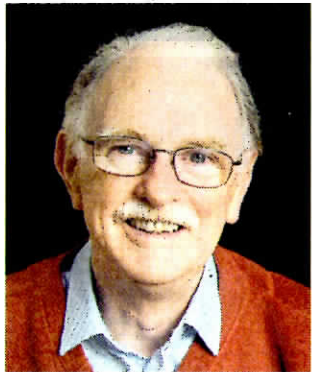


# Oliver Farley: historic solutions to problems of modern living



towns is literally written in stone.

They decorate numerous hill tops, entrenched at the very peaks like a handful of carefully placed stones, and most of them date back more than a thousand years, some even further to Roman and Etruscan times.

What we see today is a later adaptation of earlier structures, but most of the town layout and the material of the buildings are ancient.

In more northerly climes, timber was the construction material most readily available and of course timber houses can be modified, removed, burnt down and replaced.

Stone is much more durable and altering stone structures is an expensive business. Hence, once built these towns usually stay built. Just as they were.

The pressures of modern life have still to be met somehow.

Some towns solved the problem of being corseted



East Street in Horsham

in on a hill top by moving entirely to the plain below and building a new town beneath the old. That way, the old stays intact and the new suits its purpose.

Much the same solution, though perhaps not so happily accepted, is Horsham's expansion northwards, where a satellite

are packed together, often towering stories high along tiny cobbled streets.

There is an acceptance of much higher dwelling units per square kilometre than with us. No semi-detached with garages and gardens here. Just a lot of people living very closely together.

Don't forget, climate makes a huge difference. Narrow lanes and high stone dwellings are a good solution to summer heat, and conviviality makes pavement cafés and street perambulation a pleasant way of life.

It's our East Street and West Street combined, with outside tables and inviting seats all in near permanent sunshine.

What about parking and transport? Once in the town, there's little room for motorised traffic, so it's no surprise that Fiat build tiny motors.

Some streets allow a bus or two, and the preferred approach is to park outside

and walk or bus it in to town. Shades of the Hop Oast park and ride.

Smaller, densely built towns do allow solutions which are less costly in infrastructure are healthier to live in - more walking - and easier to manage.

If we ever thought about a new town to solve the housing problems of Sussex we should take a long hard look at the hill towns of Umbria.

Not to copy them uncritically but to judiciously use their example.

*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 272814.*

One of the great satisfactions of a foreign trip is to settle back contentedly at home and reflect upon how the same problems of modern living have been tackled abroad.

A pleasant autumnal walking week in central Italy prompted some ruminations on those attractive hill towns and how the present day is impinging upon them.

From the start we must admit that the future of these