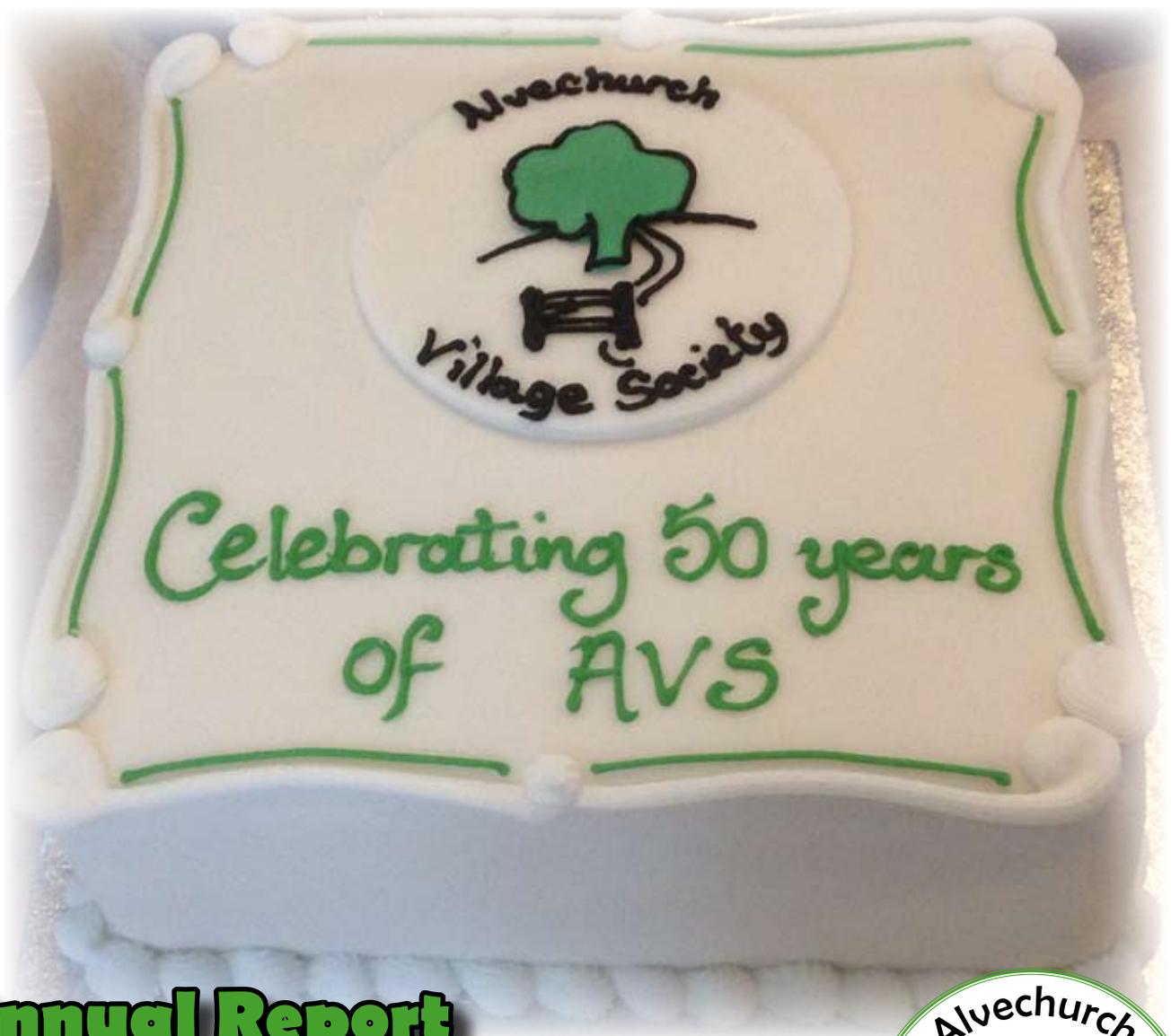




# Alvechurch Village Society



**Annual Report  
March 2020**



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



**Alvechurch Village Society**  
**The Committee presents its fiftieth Annual Report,**  
**informing members of its activities from January to December 2019**

**2019 - 2020**

**President's Address**

Welcome to the 2020 Annual report of the Alvechurch Village Society. This is my first year as President - the fifty-first year of the society - and I want to use this short address to share some reflections on the Society and its committee.

First, like any society, its organisation and functioning depend quite heavily on the efforts of a few people. Notably, Ray - chairman, Martin – Treasurer, Sheila and Gerard as past and present secretary are critical to the running of the committee, recruiting new members, and coaxing subscriptions from old members. But the whole committee play vital roles in all the activities – from quiz night, to society talks, to litter picks, monthly walks, footpath maintenance ... the list goes on, and their individual reports will follow in the next few pages.

Second, like many societies, these activities are enjoyed by many more people. As examples, the recent quiz and musical bingo evenings saw the village hall packed to the rafters, and last years 50th anniversary was also a great event.

Finally, the committee has been discussing recently why the membership is relatively small and how it might grow – especially recruiting younger members. The key, we think, is to stress that the society's activities affect more widely, but perhaps less obviously, our village's environment and social life – for the better. Our village is cleaner, friendlier and better organised than if the society didn't exist. And as we move into a new decade, with crucial environmental, social and political issues all needing answers, the society seems to have relevance to all. We will aim to use that to widen the society's membership – and possibly run even more activities!

**Chris Miall**

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**Officers**

President	Chris Miall
Vice President	Forest Hansen
Chairman	Ray Yarnell
Vice Chairman	Grace Hampson
Secretary	Sheila Parsons
Treasurer	Martin Clarke
Independent Examiner	Keith Rixon

**Committee**

Parish Paths Warden	Adrian Smith
Programme Secretary	Ray Yarnell
Representing Hopwood Residents Association	Adrian Smith
AVS Village Hall Representative	Norma Divine
Members	Jenifer Bailey
	Eileen McHugh
	Gerard Nash
	Nickie Thomas
	Keith Williams

**Past Presidents**

Sir Michael Higgs D.L.  
Mr. J F Milward D.L.  
Mr. F C Ott, D.S.C  
Mr. Antony Sealey  
Mr. John Sidwell

Mr. Peter Merry  
Mr. L C Boardman  
Professor R Davies  
Mr. Michael Scanlan  
Mr. Philip Aubury  
Mr Andy Humphries

Sir Patrick Lawrence  
Dr. N J Cartwright D.Sc.,Ph.D  
Mr. James Burton  
Ms. Julie Kirkbride  
Ms Joanne Malin

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Members who intend to attend the 2020 AGM will find agendas in the Village Hall on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020  
The meeting will start at 7.45 pm.

If you want to propose anything at the AGM or raise questions could you please contact AVS before 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

# Chairman's Report

Dear AVS Members

When I wrote the Chairman's report for the 2016 Annual Report, I didn't anticipate taking on the role of Chairman ever again and it was interesting looking back recently at what had been the main points of that year in comparison to where we are now as AVS moves into a new decade. I said at the time, that nothing happens suddenly in Alvechurch and that is certainly true for a few of the outcomes we would have hoped for on some issues of concern at the time. In contrast AVS has seen a good few changes, all of which I think for the better.

The last 3 years for AVS under the guidance of Grace Hampson as Chair, has been very positive and in my opinion we have become more pro-active and public. Our committee has lost some valued members who have given a huge amount over time, but in addition to valued longstanding colleagues we have gained five new committee members in Gerard, Jen, Martin, Nickie and Sheila (plus Chris as a new President, who appears to be a long term investment), which collectively is a considerable achievement, that has helped AVS immensely.

Looking at 2019 in more detail, (to use the words of our new Treasurer Martin), "The balance of the account is very healthy". Not so much the finances, which are important, but the continuing news that we attracted more new members than we lost for various reasons, is really good news. It is admittedly a slow process, but seeing new people in the village take an interest in what we do, either on Litter Pick or Picnic in the Park events, does a lot to maintain confidence. We do however need to seek out new members and new ideas to strengthen and complement the Society.

In addition to a very positive, more social programme which everyone seems to enjoy and support, we arranged our own birthday party for the 50th Anniversary in June. I have to say that it was probably one of the most memorable events of the year for me, not least because its content emerged from the ideas, contributions and practical involvement of every member of the committee. The only negative was that we had to forget the donkey rides because our new insurance cover didn't cover us for anything to do with animals. The evening was well attended by visitors and entertainers alike and will have done a lot to remind the village of who we are and what we do.

It would only be fitting for me to mention both the Monthly Walks Programme and the Footpaths Maintenance Team in this report. We owe a lot to Adrian and both his Footpath Team and Walks Leaders for the work they do in making the footpaths so

accessible and equally encouraging them to be so well used. It may not appear in the same way as a huge increase in new members, but the thank you we get from footpath users is something we often overlook.

Looking at Alvechurch and the surrounding area, life goes on as ever on the positive side, as an area where people want to live and bring up their children. Equally where not so young people want to enjoy life and involve themselves in any of the pages of societies and activities that exist for everyone's enjoyment. Assisting in maintaining this environment has to be a worthwhile cause for AVS and a constant future agenda item.

On the more practical side, 2019 brought confirmation that the well-prepared Neighbourhood Plan had been agreed and accepted. This has already been used in the interpretation of guidance on planning applications in our area with a positive result for the Green Belt and the Environment. Hopefully it may also help in the determination of continuing issues for the village, which still require a decision, namely :-

- The future of the Alvechurch Library
- The reinstatement of the village Post office
- Car parking at the railway station and overflow parking onto nearby streets
- Traffic flow/issues in Alvechurch and Hopwood

To conclude this report, I would like to thank all my Committee colleagues for their help and support during the last year, particularly Martin who has so ably taken on the dual role of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. My thanks also go to Sheila who has done an excellent job as Secretary, but who regrettably is resigning due to her relocating to Derbyshire to be closer to her grandchildren. Just to complete the picture, Keith Williams continues to impress everyone by producing wonderful Annual Programmes & Reports as well as managing the website and Eileen and Norma get my thanks for being Assistant Events Organisers.

If anyone wants to contact me regarding issues or suggestions on our work, please feel free to ring me or leave a message on the website. If however you prefer a more personal natter, I will be standing in the square at the next Litter Pick on Sunday morning 19th April. Our next social event after the AGM will be a Curling Evening in the Village Hall on Saturday 18th July and I would be pleased to put you down for tickets if you want to join us.

**Kind Regards,  
Ray Yarnell**

# Minutes of the 2019 AGM

## 1) Welcome by the Chair and Apologies

Chairman Grace Hampson welcomed everyone to the 49th AVS AGM in our 50th year of the society. Apologies received from Caroline French and Pam Horsfield.

## 2) Appointment of and Welcome to new President Chris Miall

Grace explained that we had been without a President for the last 12 months but she was very pleased to introduce Professor Chris Miall who had agreed to take on the role. The nomination of Chris as President was proposed by Ann Thurrell and seconded by Andy Humphries. This was carried by all those present. Grace hoped that Chris would enjoy his time with us.

## 3) Chairman's Report

Grace explained that the society had begun in 1969 with the aim of maintaining and enhancing the appearance of the village in response to changes in the village at that time – old buildings being demolished, new modern homes being built, increased traffic through the village, and talk of a new link road between the M1 and the M5 now known as the M42. During the first 10 years the society opposed and challenged the plans for the M42 and managed to bring about some changes. Today the society remains concerned about possible changes – the potential loss of the library and the Post Office, future housing developments with Birmingham Council and Bromsgrove Council impinging on Green Belt land and the impact on the village. However on a positive note, the Neighbourhood Plan at the referendum in January, received 97% of votes in favour of its implementation and provides a sound basis for the future development in the village.

Grace then talked about the events organised by AVS, with there being more social events in the last 12 months and fewer talks. There were the Christmas and summer gatherings, the annual quiz, a treasure hunt for families, the best dressed Halloween house, and the Picnic in the Park. New walks leaflets were printed, and proceeds from events that raised money were donated to The Lounge, the Village Hall and for the AVS's own activities. Grace thanked Ray and Norma Yarnell for all their hard work organising the events. Grace then thanked Adrian Smith for organising the monthly walks and thanks to the walk leaders. Grace also thanked Adrian and the brilliant Footpaths team, who have developed a great camaraderie, for maintaining the footpaths around the village and enjoying the chocolate biscuits supplied by Adrian! There have been 2 litter picks in the last year at Easter and in October – one in brilliant weather and one in awful weather. It has been good to see families involved and Grace thanked Sheila Parsons for organising them. Grace then explained that AVS no longer administers the village Facebook page; since Sarah Courbet resigned – she took over running it herself, so it is no longer associated with AVS, but Grace was proud that the society had been involved with the initial setting up of it and we continue to advertise our own events on it. Grace thanked Keith Williams for putting together the Annual Report and arranging the printing of it. The society has also planted more daffodils in our 50th year, to go with those planted 10 years ago, which Grace hoped everyone would enjoy seeing around the village. As this year is our 50th anniversary Grace told members that the society is arranging a special event where we will be joined by Dellow Cars. Finally, at the end of her 3 years in office, Grace expressed her thanks to all the committee, especially Ray Yarnell for his help. Also thanks to Sarah Courbet and to Caroline French, who sadly had to leave due to ill health. Grace spoke of enjoying her time as Chairman saying it had been a privilege and a pleasure.

## 4) Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous AGM March 2018

A motion to adopt the minutes of the 2018 AGM were proposed by Ray Yarnell and seconded by Nickie Thomas – these were agreed unanimously by those present.

## 5) Motion to approve 2018 accounts and to appoint an independent examiner

The accounts had been prepared by Caroline French, prior to Martin Clarke kindly taking over. Martin explained the accounts had been audited, and he then reported on the accounts breakdown and balance of £3400.

A motion to approve the 2018 accounts and appoint an independent examiner was proposed by Adrian Smith and seconded by Andy Humphries – this was carried unanimously.

## 6) Motion to approve Annual Report published March 2019

A motion to approve the Annual Report was proposed by Nickie Thomas and seconded by Norma Divine – this was carried unanimously.

## 7) President's Address

Chris Miall thanked Grace and the committee for nominating him as President. Chris works at Birmingham University in the Psychology department. He explained that he and his wife Stephanie joined the society when they moved to live at The Shrubbery in Alvechurch in 2006, but had only been able to attend a few events over the years. Last year he and Stephanie moved into the new modern house they had built in the grounds of The Shrubbery. He is looking forward to his time as President and hopes to have more to say next year.

## 8) Election of Officers

Chris then nominated the following:

Chairman for year 1 of 3 year period – Ray Yarnell Proposed by Adrian Smith, seconded by Alan Helmore.

Show of hands was unanimous in support.

Vice Chairman for year 1 of 3 year period – Grace Hampson. Proposed by Philip Aubrey, seconded by Anne Humphries.

Show of hands was unanimous in support.

Treasurer for year 1 of 3 year period – Martin Clarke. Proposed by Pat Riley, seconded by Nickie Thomas.

Show of hands was unanimous in support.

Secretary for year 1 of 3 year period – Sheila Parsons. Proposed by Ray Yarnell, seconded by Linda Helmore.

Show of hands was unanimous in support.

## 9) To confirm Committee Members for 2019/20

Proposed en bloc by Andy Humphries, seconded by Ray Yarnell. Show of hands was unanimous in support.

## 10) To outline plans for celebration of 50th Anniversary of AVS

First of all Ray presented Grace with a magnolia shrub as a gift from AVS for all her hard work.

Ray as the new Chairman outlined plans for a 50th Anniversary event and invited members to let him know any good ideas that might help this be a success.

## 11) Any Other Business

- Ann Thurrell had brought along a pen and ink drawing of The Old House on Bear Hill, that she had purchased from a charity shop in Bromsgrove, to show members.

- Andy Humphries said it was great to see the society thriving, he thanked the committee for their annual report and all the events they organise, saying it was good to see the society growing and adapting.

Meeting closed at 9pm

# Alvechurch Village Society

## Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending 31st December 2019

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Balance B/Fwd	<u>2780.74</u>	<u>3102.49</u>
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions received	1412.00	1352.00
Donations	45.00	100.00
Sale of Publications	38.00	52.00
Miscellaneous	381.50	313.75
Christmas Party	756.00	594.00
Talk Fees	31.00	19.00
	<u>2663.50</u>	<u>2430.75</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Administration expenses	30.05	161.37
Room Hire	296.00	311.00
Speaker fees	50.00	85.00
Publicity	468.91	390.50
Subscriptions	0.00	36.00
Donations	632.50	303.85
Christmas Party	463.30	493.40
Miscellaneous	766.70	971.38
	<u>2707.46</u>	<u>2752.50</u>
Excess/Deficit of Income over Expenditure	(43.96)	(321.75)
Cheque not yet presented	75.00	
Balance carried forward	<u>2811.78</u>	<u>2780.74</u>
Current Account	<b><u>2811.78</u></b>	<b><u>2780.74</u></b>

## Finance Report

We commenced the year with a healthy bank account balance of £2780.74 and maintained this level until the year end, when it had increased to £2811.78 (before an adjustment of £75 to be made for an un-presented cheque). There was an overall rise in income of £232.75 compared to 2018, largely due to ticket sales for the very successful Christmas Party/Musical Bingo event on 7th December. Income from subscriptions increased by £60. We recruited 19 new members but regrettably 13 members failed to renew their subscriptions. Miscellaneous income rose by £65.75 but there were small decreases in income from sales of publications and donations.

Overall expenditure was slightly less than in 2018 notwithstanding the fact that we incurred approximately £500.00 costs related to the 50th Anniversary Party on 26th June. These costs included £160 on an Events Insurance Policy linked to the party but which covers all our events up to June 2020. The Society made donations totalling £517.50 to Alvechurch Village Hall, The Lounge and Alvechurch Baptist Church, as well as donations totalling £115.00 to the Canal Society and the Community Choir in lieu of entertainment provided to AVS functions and events. The speaker fees of Jim McManus were donated to Saving Nine Lives.

We had a deficit of £43.96 of expenditure against income but this was £277.79 less than in 2018. This is very encouraging given the 'one-off' expenditure on the 50th Anniversary Party.

Therefore, the bank account balance was £2811.78 at 31 December 2019. This remains a healthy reserve for a society of our size.

**Martin Clarke, Treasurer**

## Auditor's Report

I confirm that I have audited the books of AVS and they are correct as at 31 December 2019

**Keith Rixon, Independent Examiner**, 14 January 2020  
AVS Annual Report March 2020 | 5

## AVS Volunteer Footpath Team

Alvechurch parish is considered the “gateway to the countryside”, it is criss-crossed by 28 miles or so of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) or footpaths as you may know them, which we have all come to love and appreciate. These paths have been maintained and cared for by the Alvechurch Village Society footpath maintenance group for more than 50 years now. Our volunteers, led by Parish Footpath Wardens, have been keeping these paths open and in good condition by working for a couple of hours on alternate Saturdays from spring to autumn.

My role as Alvechurch Parish Footpath Warden aims to help facilitate the effective management of our parish Public Rights of Way network, through the much-appreciated endeavours of our team of men and women volunteers and Ray my right hand man. With assistance and in conjunction with some guidance from Worcestershire County Council Countryside Services (WCCCS), we use our local knowledge to keep our paths accessible and open for everyone’s enjoyment. Our group always encourages new members to join us if they wish. If you can spare a few hours every now and again on a Saturday morning during the warmer months of the year you would be most welcome to come and join us.

Perhaps you are one of the many people who make use of our parish footpaths and you may have met us when we have been out on Saturday mornings, trying to make sure the paths are well looked after and kept open for everyone. If you do happen to see one that



needs our attention please let us know – you can even come along and help put it right if you’d like to.

You may have also seen the bridges that we built down at The Meadows. When that big tree fell down and demolished the old bridge leading to the cricket club, our group came to rescue of the Picnic in the Park event by building a new bridge, some say an even better one, however it saved the day.

It’s not all about work, however you know! The group has developed into more of a social get-together a “game of two halves” so to speak, as we do stop at half-time for a coffee break, a chat and to eat quite a few chocolate biscuits (Ray does, by the way!) before resuming the “second half”.

On a nice day sometimes, we even finish at our second home “The Weighbridge” for a ‘cordial or two’!

If you are one of the many people who enjoy walking our countryside footpaths, why not come along and help us keep our PRoW’s in good condition and we can promise you an enjoyable and social experience in the fresh air whilst helping preserve our beautiful environment. It’s free to join, we provide all the equipment and training needed and anyone who does join will not only find it enjoyable and make new friends but will also be giving something back to this lovely parish where we all live.

You can contact us by calling myself the Parish Footpath Warden, Adrian Smith on 0121 445 0481 or email, ([penlock@btinternet.com](mailto:penlock@btinternet.com)); or contact the village Society website [www.alvechurchvs.org](http://www.alvechurchvs.org) or by leaving your details at the Parish Council offices at 1a George Rd Alvechurch.

**Adrian Smith**  
Parish Footpath Warden



# JUNE 2019 – 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

One of the first jobs to go on the list for 2019, was to organise the 50th Anniversary celebrations for AVS and this formidable task involved endless discussion including some extraordinary meetings of the team at the pub and 'the Old Swan'.

There was an initial event earlier in the year, when everyone enjoyed sharing a 50th cake, cut by the new President Chris Miall at the AGM in March, but the main event happened in June.

AVS had had its first meeting in the Village Hall on June 26th, 50 years earlier, so it was decided to take advantage of a hopefully nice Summer evening and put on a bit of a show. The event proved to be quite a logistical exercise in that several events/performances followed on after each other, with some inside and some outside the hall.

The attractions for the evening included a display of Dellow Cars, with a reduced number in the event, but made up for by the wonderful cakes they brought along. Other performers were Chris Davies who kept the children (and a lot of adults) spell bound with his storytelling. The Community Choir who gave us a marvellous selection of songs from 1969, the Alvechurch Morris men who danced through the early evening before departing to the Weighbridge and finally



a group curling match in the hall, where the rules were made up on the spot so that people could finally get home. Annette Thomas, a long-standing supporter of



a group curling match in the hall, where the rules were made up on the spot so that people could finally get home.

Annette Thomas, a long-standing supporter of



AVS walks and events did a wonderful spread of food typical of 1969, after the committee kept coming up with ideas. All in all, it was a splendid evening and worthy of a 50th birthday for AVS.

# Events Programme Review 2019

Following a lot of discussion over recent years, the AVS Team decided that the Events Programme had to change to match what members want. With this in mind we decided:-

- It was better to avoid months when few people attended anyway
- To have fewer AVS events, but publicise major events being set up by other organisations
- Concentrate on AVS major social events, particularly to include families
- To include weekend Litter Picks into the programme, for maximum coverage/support
- To leave the opportunity still to have one evening talk, to cover any topical issues/subjects

JANUARY 2019

## THE BIG NEW YEAR QUIZ

Our thanks go out to Sue and Dave for some questions supplied before they headed out to the sun. Also, our regular marking team of Louise and Geoff who stay completely cool entering the scores into their spreadsheet, even under immense pressure.

The number of Quiz teams was reduced slightly from the norm of 17 to 14, which may have been a reason why the winning team won, with less competition.

The event income of £282.50 was donated to The Village Hall and included the proceeds from the International bingo Session and the raffle, admirably sorted by Eileen and her team in the interval.

FEBRUARY 2019

## SUPPER EVENING AT THE WEIGHBRIDGE

Another great evening with a mixture of tabletop quizzes, Play Your Cards Right and International Bingo which has been renamed to be politically correct and not offend any of our members from other parts of the UK.

Jayne the landlady at the Weighbridge provided us with an excellent meal and unlimited tea and coffee for those present who were 'doing a dry February'.

The Play Your Cards Right session is always difficult to judge as to whether people will win straight away, or it will drag on for half the night without a winner. In our case we had so many winners that Grace Hampson gave an on the spot decision to increase the prize money by £20 which meant four more games and nearly every table winning.

APRIL 2019

## EARLY EVENING TREASURE HUNT

It was decided to introduce this event in place of a more formal evening talk. The plan was to take advantage of the Easter holiday and early evening to try and attract families with children.

Adrian, Nickie and Martin did a splendid job of sorting a mass of clues around the village and it was pleasing that two families did win 1st and 2nd prize, with Yvonne and Gerard coming a close 3rd. There were soft drinks and cakes for everybody back at the village hall which

MARCH 2019

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Chairperson Grace Hampson welcomed over 40 people to the meeting and then introduced Chris Miall who had agreed to act as our new President for the next 3 year term.

Grace talked about what had happened locally and within AVS over the past years. The society had begun back in 1969 with the aim of maintaining and enhancing the appearance of the village as well as expressing concerns over the demolition of old buildings, plans for new homes and traffic flow as well as the possible M42 motorway link.

50 years later the Society fulfils a very similar role with the same concerns, but hopefully with help from the newly agreed Neighbourhood Plan, residents may be listened to over issues such as the future of the Library & the Post Office as well as Green Belt Policy in our locality.

Grace reported that within AVS, our administration of the Facebook Page had ceased with the resignation of Sarah Courbet, who now operates it completely separately. We were pleased to have been involved in its initial setting up and the benefits it provides to the locality, and Grace thanked Sarah for her involvement with AVS over the years.

On the activity front, it was reported that AVS had branched out into organising Litter Picks under the supervision of Sheila and Jen, who managed two very successful Sunday morning events.

Grace thanked Caroline French for her work as Treasurer, which she had resigned from through ill health. In addition, Grace thanked all the members of the committee for their help and support during her time as Chairperson of AVS, which she said had been a privilege and a pleasure.

went down well with all those involved. Who knows, the word may have gone out so that we get more people involved if we plan another one.

For those people who missed the event, don't be scared to get involved next time and in the meantime solve this one :- 'A box without hinges, key or lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid', (Answer in 2020 ).

MAY 2019  
**CANAL BOAT TRIP ON  
'CECILIA'**

For those of you who follow this page keenly each year, you will remember two years ago that we made our summer event, an afternoon on the Cecilia narrowboat doing return trips between the Weighbridge/Alvechurch Marina and the Hopwood House. This event proved very successful, but there were a few faint-hearted people who couldn't cope with the torrential rain and lightning strikes. Not to be beaten we decided to repeat the event in 2019 and guess what – the weather was fantastic. So good in fact that anyone within 50 miles who owned a boat it seemed, had decided to go out on the canal for the day. This naturally meant that the Cecilia crew had to keep to the speed of the boat in front and wait for gaps in the boats to turn around.

As a result, the planned sailing times grew more and more delayed, but everyone including a lot of young families had a great day out. Our thanks go to the crews of the Cecilia and the Worcs, Birmingham & Droitwich Canal Society who received all the takings as a donation.

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## **Alvechurch Village Hall News**

As the Village Society representative on the Village Hall Committee (try saying that when you have had a drink)! I am pleased to report that the new ramp will be officially opened on Saturday 21st March 2020. We are proud that this safer and improved accessible entrance has been tackled for the benefit of hall users. We have been conscious that all groups using the hall have had to be very patient whilst this work has been in progress, particularly as the work came to a necessary halt due to a bereavement in the family of one of the key providers.

This year we have also been concentrating on agreeing policies in respect of the smooth running of the hall such as a bookings policy, safety policy and a risk assessment policy. All in all, we have 15 policies which will be agreed over the coming months and published on the Village Hall website.

The entrance hall and lower committee room have benefitted from being decorated and we are particularly pleased with the curtains in the lower committee room. All these things would not be possible without our users support in fundraising, hiring the hall and nominating us on your Co-op card – for which we thank you.

We are steadily working through our 5-year plan and constantly adding to it to keep it relevant, however, our next priority is the hearing loop in the main hall which we hope will benefit many of our users.

OCTOBER 2019  
**MY LIFE IN THE POLICE FORCE**

This evening talk was the first event of the new programme, as we had concluded that each year the attendance level was always light for the September event, with many people still on holiday.

Jim McManus who lives in Rowney Green is a retired Home Office Murder Investigator and gave us a very interesting talk on the many cases he had been involved in during his career. We were particularly lucky, as Jim gives this talk at the old Bridewell prison/police station in Steelhouse Lane Birmingham, but we didn't have to travel that far to have a great evening. The AVS donation to Jim was made to 'Nine Lives' a charity he supports and helps with in encouraging organ donation to save lives.

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## **Litter Pick Report**

In April and October we met in the precinct for the community litter pick. The weather was kind to us, despite a wet start, in October, the rain stopped at 10.30 as we gathered.

The council provided equipment, hi-vis jacket, pickers, gloves and strong bags to twenty adults and children.

We aim to keep our village tidy and a pleasant place to live.

Twenty one roads and verges around the village were cleared of litter, including long plastic pipe, large oil can and bucket. Perhaps fallen off a lorry driving through the village.

The children worked hard in The Meadows and Crown Meadow park, with their parents, earning a well deserved certificate.

The council collected 25 bags less in April.

Many relaxed in The Lounge afterwards with a hot drink and snack.

Thank you for all your support, looking forward to our next meeting 19th April.

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DECEMBER 2019  
**CHRISTMAS PARTY**

If the number of people wanting tickets to our Christmas Party is anything to go by, then AVS is definitely on the way up. Each year the question is where to have the event to match the number of people and what to do to entertain everyone.

Well the Village Hall was definitely necessary this year as we had 69 seated for a fish and chip supper but with some space kept free for the dancing when Tony Brannon got going with his Musical Bingo Evening made up of rounds ranging over several decades to suit everyone there.

Our thanks go to Tony as well as Eileen, Nickie, Sheila and Jen who managed the raffle, with the whole evening raising £125 for The Lounge and £75 to the Canal Society, as Tony doesn't take a fee!

Anyone with an interesting theme for the 2020 party, please let me know.

## New; from Hopwood

I reported in the AVS report last year that the wonderful Hopwood Mums along with help from our hard-working Parish Council (PC) were trying to raise funding to upgrade the play equipment at Hopwood Community field. All together the Mums and APC raised just over £30,000 and in July 2019 the new play equipment was installed and is now well used by Hopwood children.

Mayfield Farm issues continue to be to the fore, smell and noise being at the top of the list. This seems to have been resolved to some extent following a Public Enquiry which Charlie Hotham (our district and county councillor) attended, along with a Bromsgrove District Council officer (David Rischmiller) who has been most helpful. Residents are still monitoring the situation in case matters reoccur.

On another matter, residents, especially those with children who walk down to Alvechurch School and back, have been constantly complaining about the poor

condition of the highway footpaths from Hopwood Island on the A441 to Roberts Corner at the junction of Bittell Rd. County Councillor Charlie Hotham has been liaising with Worcestershire County Highways department to encourage some budget money to be released at least for some resurfacing to the pavement on one side of the B2140 down to Roberts Corner. Again, let's wait and see if anything becomes of it, but we know Charlie works hard for Hopwood so fingers crossed.

Finally, that 'same old chestnut'.... the lack of pedestrian crossings on the A441 is always in the news and residents, councillors and the Parish Council continue to lobby the authorities to provide a pelican type light operated crossing at Hopwood as the volume of traffic on the A441 continues to increase with the ever-enlarging developments at Longbridge Business and Retail Park creating excessive amount of traffic through Hopwood to access the M42 at junction 2.

## Weatheroak and Rowney Green

The Parish council are still waiting to know who will take over the responsibility of installing and moving the Vehicle Activated Speed sign (VAS) unit that is shared between Weatheroak Hill and Rowney Green Lane. This device shows the speed of vehicles that does have a small beneficial effect of reducing traffic speed at these locations. Since the old Lengthsman's job has been taken over by the Local Authority there has not been a device operating in this area of the parish.

**Adrian Smith**

Chair of Hopwood Residents Association

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## Planning

I celebrated along with many others when the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was finally 'made' at a meeting of the Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) full Council on 27 February 2019, following a referendum on the 10th January 2019.

The 2004 Planning Act (as amended) required BDC must make a NP if more than half of those residents voting were in favour. The results of the referendum were as follows: - Total ballot papers issued: 1,629; Ballot papers rejected: 0; Ballot papers counted: 1,629; Yes votes: 1,575; No votes: 54; Electorate: 4,463.

A resounding success after nearly 6 years of volunteers working. The NP 2011-2030 now forms part of the statutory development plan for determining planning applications in the neighbourhood area of Alvechurch Parish. A great benefit for our community that gives local people the first say in local planning applications in the parish.

BDC is in the process of reviewing their current District Local Plan and a Green Belt review. That will release land for development around 6 large settlements, of which Alvechurch village is one. The reviews will help outline the next steps towards allocating preferred sites for future development and for the preferred policies needed to support such development.

The current BDC plan requires a District Local plan and Green Belt review to be undertaken before 2023 in order to ensure that the full housing requirement for Bromsgrove District up to 2030 and beyond can be delivered.

Looking now to recent planning appeals the NP has performed well recently in holding back new housing on Green Belt land at Hopwood Island and further unsuitable housing along Ash Lane in Hopwood. However, I still worry about the lack of enforcements by BDC and our Government planning inspectors. Too many agricultural tin sheds and horse stables often get mysteriously converted into residential buildings on open green fields and Green Belt land. Our Local Authority needs to acquire a backbone to enforce those inappropriate developments!

### News of our Post Office

Some related planning news is associated with the Post office (PO). As you know the PO was closed due to the building being sold off as it is privately owned and undergoing substantial alterations. A temporary once a week PO van service has been arranged to fill-in until a hopefully permanent new location can be decided.

**Adrian Smith**

Chairman, APNP

## Alvechurch Village Society Walks

Our residents are so fortunate that we have many Public Rights of Way in our parish area that crisscross the varied and beautiful terrain that we share. I'm pleased to say that our monthly Sunday walks have gone from strength to strength, some Sundays attracting over 30 or more ramblers.

This can only happen because I'm very lucky in organising them and that many of our members and non-members alike continue to volunteer to lead them. This was even more surprising that prior to last year's AVS AGM in March 2019 so many turned up to accompany John and Sally Slevin as they led us through a blizzard across Hopwood's northern landscape. After about an hour and a half of the rain being almost horizontal, as were the winds which encouraged the intrepid group to hot foot-it into the Hopwood House in record time.

Other well attended walks followed. A variety of places were visited; venturing from Withybed Green, Rowney Green and further afield to Inkberrow. As usual to round off the 2018-2019 walks season the July evening outing led by Nickie Thomas culminated in the large group socialising on a glorious evening in the gardens of the Weighbridge.

In September Christine and Phil Thomas started off the new season's walks followed up with walks led

by Sheila Parsons, Sue and Roger Wardle, Charlie Simmonds's mystery tour (to a dead end!). This took us up to Christmas time when Ray and Norma Yarnell led the traditional Boxing Day walk where Ann Thurrell had a very unfortunate fall, but with everyone helping out and Tom fetching their car to pick Ann up, and following check-ups, thankfully all is now well for Ann. Rain after rain brought in the New Year and our new AVS Secretary Gerard Nash and Yvonne kicked off the new year leading around Forhill and ending up at the bar of the Peacock Pub! Hilary Taylor who likes a canal, will lead us along one in February and this will be followed in March before the AVS AGM, with Nickie Thomas intent on taking us to "There and Back again"! Hopefully I can give some other brief outlines in the next Annual report of the 2020 April Walk where our wandering leaders Martin and Mariea Clarke intend to hop off to the wilds of Sambourne. Mary Green will find some wild-life and Nature for us and John and Sally Slevin plan to take us on a 'monumental' walk from Beacon Hill to Waseley and back.

Finally, we will have the July end of Season evening walk where I hope to take you all up and down hill to the 'Goat and Trousers' Friday night pub, at Rowney Green Village Hall. I'll need to warn them to get more beer!

**Adrian Smith**  
Parish Footpath Warden

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## AVS aims

- Conserve the beauty and character of the Alvechurch area for residents and visitors alike
- Offer an informed opinion where necessary on developments and issues likely to affect the Parish and its residents
- Maintain 28 miles of footpaths around the parish using a team of volunteers
- Organise a programme of events including talks, quizzes, Christmas celebration and a summer outing
- Support the café/youth club and village hall with proceeds from events
- Organise monthly guided, family friendly walks
- Organise a programme of Village Litter Picks

MEADOW LANE T

ALTHESTAN CLOSE

Just some of the places where AVS have planted daffodils

OLD BIRMINGHAM ROAD

Alvechurch  
Burcot  
Bremington

Photos: Norma Divine



Photo: Martin Clarke



Photos: Keith Williams

AVS Organisers, Volunteers and a whole load of rubbish after a successful Litter Pick