

*Alvechurch
Village Society*



**Annual
Report
2021**

Alvechurch Village Society

*The Committee presents its fifty first
Annual Report,
informing members of its activities from
January to December 2020*

2020 - 2021



President's Address

One year ago, as I wrote my first president's address for the AVS Annual Report, I speculated on how the Society is relevant to both the social life and the environment of the village, and how important it was for the membership to gradually expand. Unfortunately, even before we reached the 2020 Annual General Meeting, the country was in the first Coronavirus lockdown, and the AVS committee retreated to the safety of Zoom. We are now in the unusual position of presenting a new Annual Report after a year in which there have been no physical meetings or social events, and very few society activities, and in fact we had no AGM for 2020.

So, what has the society been doing, before life returns to normal? First, the committee felt it important to try to keep in touch with the membership, and so cards were printed and distributed, one in the summer explaining the necessary cancellation of events until further notice and then a Christmas card to wish everyone well. I would like to thank the committee members for their efforts in this – and of course all their other activities – and I trust the cards were well received. In the process, we have gradually been able to get our membership records updated, and can now reach the vast majority by email, which will make communications much simpler in the future. We will continue to use letters for those members without email.

Second, the committee carefully considered the records kept of the society's history, its annual reports and committee meetings. These have been passed from secretary to chair to secretary, in a rather erratic and incomplete fashion. They are now to be kept digitally, along with a full set of printed annual reports, and I thank Gerard Nash for his work arranging this. Keith Williams has also been updating the Society webpage, and thanks go to him for his work here, as well as in arranging all the Society's printing: cards, village walk leaflets, the Annual Report etc.

Surprisingly perhaps, in the quietest year of its history, the membership has expanded, in no small part due to the efforts of Martin Clarke who has been gently reminding people to renew their subscriptions. Again, my thanks to him. As a result, the Society's finances are in good health, and I hope we will be able to use these funds to support some big events, once we can safely do so. Mariea Clarke and Tony Brannon were co-opted to expand the committee, and Tony was immediately involved in hosting our first ever on-line social – the January music quiz. Thanks to them both.

Although Sunday walks and litter picks were postponed, the Footpaths crew continued to be active when they could, between lockdowns. They missed their usual reward of a Footpath breakfast and must wait some time longer for that! Thanks to Adrian Smith for continuing to organize the group.

And finally, I must mention Ray Yarnell's tireless work over the last two years. He has served the Society as Chair for a total of five years now and has decided it is time to step down. I think I can speak for the whole membership when I thank him, and Norma, for their great support of AVS.

Chris Miall

Chairman's Report

Dear AVS Members

Well, I am sure the first thing you will have read in this 2021 Annual report, will have been the President's Address (and rightly so) including the fact that this will have been my last year as Chairman. It has certainly been a very strange and eventful year for both AVS as well as Norma and myself, but I will find space for us two at the end and concentrate more importantly on AVS.

This time last year I had written my bit for the Annual Report and as usual with a lot of help from Keith Williams, had got the report printed and despatched out to you all in readiness for the AGM later in March. Without divulging any medical details, I had a doctor's appointment on March 9th and as usual in her helpful way at the end of the appointment, my doctor said "and is there anything whilst you are here?"

Little did she know that I would want to start discussing the AGM that was approaching, but I asked her if she could give me a steer as to whether to cancel the meeting or not. I recall she asked me how many people might be attending, their average age and whether the meeting HAD to be held or whether it could be postponed. Listening to her helpful advice made me make my last real Chairman's decision of 5 years and I announced that we were "postponing" the meeting.

We all know what followed over the weeks and months, but at the time I never thought that we would still be locked down nearly a year later. One thing that struck me at the time was that all my committee colleagues agreed with the decision and we did not have to debate the proposal. Equally all the members I spoke to agreed that they would rather feel safe and reluctantly just wait for the Covid issue to pass us by.

Unfortunately, it did not just pass us by as we had all hoped it would do at the time and the last year has seen a lot of (adaptation) to the Covid issue by AVS and its committee. Some of us less "techy" people have been so glad we had others on the team who could set up Zoom committee meetings and this has allowed us at least to discuss ways of keeping in touch with our members and the issues in the village that still needed the attention of AVS.

The year has seen a few changes on the committee with Nickie Thomas and Jen Bailey stepping down, perhaps temporarily as it would be good to have their input again in the future. In contrast we have made up for this loss by gaining Tony and Mariea as reported by the President. I think I once said when I was ending my first period as chairman, that you don't feel so bad if the "ship" is still as good or better than when you joined.

It has obviously been difficult to create a year of activity and interactions that we could recall and I could write about here, but they say absence makes the heart grow fonder and I am sure that AVS will make up for this in the future when restrictions are finally and permanently relaxed. In the meantime we smile and hopefully remember the few enjoyable events like Tony's Musical Quiz in January and the couple of occasions when the footpaths team managed to get out and do a few jobs. My recall of us all standing 2 metres apart in a rugby playing field, with our own flasks and no biscuits to share, will stay with me for a long time.

My immense thanks go to the present committee members who have worked hard for AVS and helped me as Chairman. I would also like to thank others who are no longer on the committee, but who have done so much for AVS in helping it maintain a positive and hopefully improved involvement with Alvechurch and all it's really nice people.

My last few lines are more about Norma and me. We have now moved away from the village to a new home in Solihull, which has proved to be an excellent decision in finding somewhere to live that would tick all the boxes for our immediate future as well as our hopeful old age. Norma has been a great help to me as Chairman over the years, if only to tell me how wrong I may have been on occasions.

We intend to set a new precedent by living outside Alvechurch but staying on the committee for as long as people want us there. We have too many friends in AVS to run away completely and we look forward to seeing you at events and walks in the future.



Kind
Regards

Ray Yarnell

Events Programme Review 2020

The Big New Year Quiz - January 2020

My first news is incredibly sad, in that I have to report that Geoff - our Scoring Supremo over the past few years was not able to attend the quiz through a major illness. Geoff unfortunately died shortly afterwards and will be remembered kindly by AVS for all his support to the quiz with his daughter Louise.

We enlisted the services of Jan and Steve, our friends who came all the way from North Wales to be scorers for the evening and who with Geoff's laptop and spreadsheet plus loads of energy and patience adjudicated wonderfully. The evening set a precedent in having 18 teams for the first time against the normal maximum of 17. This was all down to my fault in miscounting and I have promised Norma, it will never happen again.

We lived very dangerously and raised the entry fee from £2.50 to £3.00 which no one objected to and because of this we managed to raise £300 for the village hall and an extra £100 for the Lounge. We also managed to increase the number of prizes and everyone had a great night.

Alternatives for the Remaining AVS Programme

As you will have read earlier in Chris' address and my report, the biggest disappointment for AVS in 2020 was having to abandon all our planned events. In the summer we were also faced with the dilemma of whether to produce a new programme of events for 2020/21.

We decided instead to send everyone a greetings card from sunny Alvechurch wishing everyone good health and an explanation towards the lack of events and walks until Covid

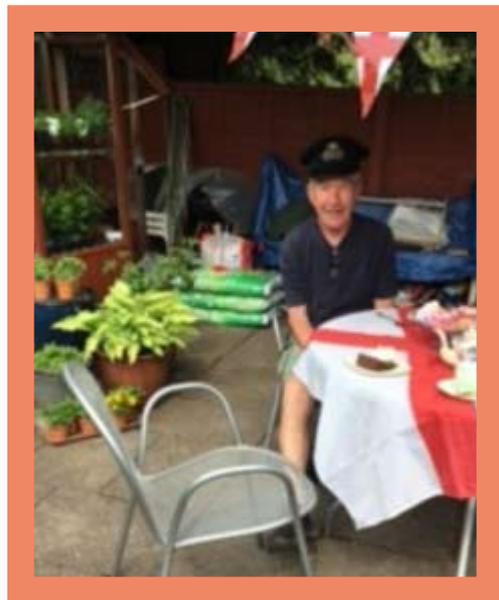


restrictions allowed us to return to normal. Surprisingly enough the difficult year did have its bright spots and the VE day parties were still celebrated by many of us in isolation (yes that is me in the photo with my old navy cap on, shame about the legs!).

The village also had a wonderful scarecrow competition in October with the proceeds going to the Lounge and Mary Poppins taking pride of place.

The planned litter picks were not able to take place, but we are hopeful that some adoptions of individual roads as has happened during the year, will continue and increase in number. Hopefully the increase in number of walkers over the year, will bring with it more awareness of litter around the village and produce less rubbish to be collected in the future.

Never daunted AVS has now embarked on a programme of virtual events starting with a



musical quiz held in January 2021. This went down incredibly well and although it is strictly speaking an item for next year's Annual Report, we wanted you to know that it was a trial event with more virtual events to follow if we still need to maintain Covid restrictions.



Impressive Rowney Green events

With the year dominated by the pandemic, Rowney Green residents found their amazing community spirit came out even more than normal. The Rowney green WhatsApp group was busy with people offering to help others and to pass on the contents of garage and house



clear outs. Bags of food were collected for the food bank and lots of money raised by the sale of unwanted items or services (such as bike maintenance). The Macmillan coffee morning did well with all the normal cakes being baked and sold from a stall at the roadside.

Ted and friends made daily appearances in the gardens of their owners who thought up novel and amusing scenarios to entertain those passing by. Children painted rocks and posters putting rainbows in windows. VE day saw houses and hedgerows decorated and Armistice day had knitted poppies sold to raise funds. Another fund raiser for the foodbank was the creation and sale of calendars depicting the events of 2020 and memory books full of photographs taken during the year. A larger book is currently being produced to be lodged with the Rowney Green Historical Society featuring stories from residents of their experiences during the year. The Peace Hall was due to celebrate its centenary in 2020 but plans had to be

cancelled and instead a commemorative coin was distributed to all the children in the village. The Goat and Trousers, for so long the hub of coffee mornings and the Friday night pub had to be closed but will hopefully be resurrected in the near future.



Alvechurch Parish Council Review 2020

2020 was a strange year for the Parish Council as it proved to be for everyone in the country. The early months of the year saw new Parish Clerk, Jayne Smailes, settling in and working with Councillors and our then relatively-new Chairman, Marc Worrall. Then along came Covid which changed everything.

As we've all realised, Covid brought with it a new need for organisations to use video technology and for staff to work from home. Led by its new Clerk, the Parish Council slipped quickly into online banking and by May we were using Zoom for both public and private meetings. A new web site followed to increase access to Council information and more technology benefits were unlocked. It's worth mentioning here that the new web site has all APC public meetings and any Parishioner can now join these meetings using a smart phone, tablet or PC with Zoom software, which is free and easy to download.

Covid has delayed the Local Plan and Green Belt reviews that Bromsgrove District Council were doing so there's been little opportunity to test the Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan out strategically. Plans are being made for a major housing development off Weights Lane and, while the land is just outside the Parish, this will have a significant impact on Bordesley and traffic on the A441. The Parish Council is pushing Bromsgrove DC and the County Council to consider more carefully this impact on that road, especially its speed limits and street lighting. Covid has also delayed any further progress that the County Council was making on the Alvechurch station car park and several highway improvements, notably the 20mph zone in Alvechurch village centre and more traffic calming on the A441 in Hopwood.

Aside from Covid, the general work the Parish Council does throughout the year has continued to grow with ever-increasing tree surveys and management in the Council's playing fields and preparations for a wholesale improvement programme for the Parish's 100+ footway lighting columns. An increasing number of the columns are becoming unsafe due to corrosion and very soon a major replacement project will start which will embrace more energy-efficient lamp units.

All of this means significant investment in Parish facilities and regrettably that has led to a sizeable increase in the precept (or local contribution to Council Tax) in 2021/22.

Despite that, Alvechurch remains a lovely place to live and work....and local Councillors strive to keep it that way. If you'd like to know more about APC or how the Council operatesplease contact us through our web site, by email at clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk or through our Facebook page.

ANDY HUMPHRIES
Alvechurch Parish Council



Alvechurch Parish Planning

Planning-wise things are very quiet in Alvechurch Parish due to the Corona Virus pandemic. The number of future homes which need to be built in Bromsgrove District each year looks set to stay the same following the Government's latest announcement about its controversial white paper. Using a new methodology for future housing quotas in 2020 including future planning reforms, it was suggested the district's annual property targets should rise from 379 to 694!

AVS Footpath Maintenance Group and Monthly Walks 2020-2021

Footpath Group at Kings Norton Rugby Club



2020 was a year of extremes; the wettest February, the sunniest spring, a heatwave in summer and a day in October breaking rainfall records. Not only was 2020 one of the hottest on record for the UK, but it will be one of the wettest and in the top ten of sunniest years. The Footpath Group carried out our tool audit in February and then Coronavirus broke out!

Lockdowns, furloughs, social distancing, entertainment venues & shop closures, plus economic upheaval all followed. The Village Society's Footpath Group was locked down completely and Covid-19 also put pay to the 2020 -2021 AVS's social monthly Walk Programme too.

Restrictions eased slightly in September 2020, and our group was allowed to operate briefly, socially distancing on September 5th to clear overgrown paths near Kings Norton Rugby club.

A few further jobs were allowed, with our volunteers following the strictly risk assessed rules ordered by the Local Authority. Then another "lockdown" was ordered in October, and is still operational today as of February 2021.

The 2021 New Year arrived bringing much the same problems as 2020, but news of vaccination programmes has given everyone some hope of a better year to come.

We also attracted some new members to the footpath group in 2020 and we look forward positively for better times to come and to be able to repair some of the damage done to our Public Rights of Ways by the tremendous influx of walkers using our parish foot paths for their lockdown exercise regimes during 2020 &2021. It's anyone's' guess when our walks programme will restart! But let's be optimistic it will happen!!



Public right of way near Rail Station House



Gate at Newbourne Hill



Rowney Green Gate wood rotten and falling away

Adrian Smith
Parish Footpath Warden

A consultation on this methodology, published in August 2020, revealed a lot of opposition to that increase. Now with a U-turn on its original proposal, the Government states Bromsgrove District as a whole should be building a 'minimum of 370 properties per year'. Alvechurch will be required to take a portion of these yearly housing numbers, yet to be allocated through the review of the District Plan and of the Green Belt itself. Residents of Alvechurch and Barnt Green may

well have heard or even seen rumours of an Alvechurch / Barnt Green Newtown taking place to ease Birmingham's future housing needs. There seems to be little chance of that now taking place due to the way the country's economy is panning out at the moment.

Adrian Smith, Chairman
Neighbourhood Plan steering group

Focus on Hopwood

Derived from the Saxon name Hopwuda, Hop- (Saxon for hill)- Wuda-(Saxon for Wood); thus Hillwood or Wooded Hill. The hill is still obvious, the trees, however, are somewhat scarcer; remains of the old forest being now just the small Site of Special Scientific Interest "Hopwood Dingle".

In the 19th century Hopwood had an inn on the canal side to the left of the A441 road as it passed through from Birmingham. This was for the benefit of the "leggers", those responsible for walking the narrow boats (using their feet on the tunnel walls) through the one and a half mile long Washhills' Tunnel, so that they could rest and take a drink. On the opposite side of the road was a Blacksmiths for shoeing the barge horses, now the site of the present-day Hopwood House Inn. The "leggers" inn on the other side of the main road was converted to what is now a pair of residential cottages.

Hopwood remained locked down and residents despite many complaints to the Parish Council still suffer from the excessive amount of speeding traffic on the main A441 road. This very busy highway has no designated crossings and is served by very poor highway footpaths leading down towards Alvechurch village. Local facilities in Hopwood are poor with a pub, a garage and the M42 motorway services. Recently the local lay-by flower seller near those services has diversified into selling fresh vegetables as well, much to the delight of Hopwood residents.

Kids get new playground in Hopwood, and take advantage to get a game of footy in.

Adrian Smith
Chairman of Hopwood Residents Association



*Hopwood
Grange*



Hopwood Litter Pickers



Hopwood House Inn



New Hopwood Community play area



*Hopwood flower/vegetable
A441 Lay-by pitch*

Alvechurch Village Hall News



For a considerable part of the last 12 months the Village Hall has been out of bounds for its users. This was a worrying period for our survival, but the one bright spot was that we were able to assist Sandhills Nursery to remain open whilst their premises were refurbished. This income was valuable to us.

When the PM lifted restrictions in July we encouraged users to return by offering 50% reduced hire rates and where necessary giving people the use of the main hall rather than the Committee Room. This proved successful and a number of our regulars returned after providing us with their own risk assessment.

Ironically, the closure of the Hall has enabled quite a few of our refurbishment and maintenance activities to take place. One which we hope will benefit the whole village is the re-tarmacing of the walkway to the left of the



Village Hall and past the garages which has been such an eyesore for an awfully long time. I think you will agree it is a great improvement.

Sadly, we are back to the Hall being closed but as this Report goes to print there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon that we will be able to open our doors once again and order will be restored.

Norma Divine
AVS Hall Representative

Report from Rowney Green

Publicity has been raised for the existing Rowney Green "Lend a Hand" scheme with 7 volunteers assisting those in need during the Coronavirus lockdown alongside the Alvechurch Cares project.

Life in Rowney Green, apart from dealing with the pandemic, had a few issues, primarily concerns about planning permissions for dwellings on the

Holloway/Storage Lane including the conversion of offices at Bordesley Hall to provide 54 flats, which is likely to lead to more traffic congestion on the Holloway with its blind spot there already. Issues regarding Road drainage and new traffic signs in the village have been raised with County Cllr Charlie Hotham.

The community debate continues about future sport and recreational developments at the Rowney Green playing field, with a proposal from the Village Hall Trustees to take a lease from the Parish Council to run and improve the playing field. New commemorative benches for former residents have been installed at the Peace Hall and on the playing field.

Following closure of the Alvechurch Historical Society's museum, artefacts including the Mission Church sign and the school date stone from 1884 have been returned to Rowney Green for our safe keeping.



Alvechurch Village Society

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending 31st December 2020

	2020	2019
Balance B/Fwd	<u>2811.78</u>	<u>2780.74</u>
Income		
Subscriptions	1282.00	1412.00
Donations	10.00	45.00
Sale of Publications	15.00	38.00
Miscellaneous	00.00	381.50
Christmas Party	00.00	756.00
Talk Fees	00.00	31.00
January Quiz	640.50	00.00
	1947.50	2663.50
Expenditure		
Administration expenses	73.77	30.05
Room Hire	94.50	296.00
Speaker fees	00.00	50.00
Publicity	437.63	468.91
Donations	505.00	632.50
Christmas Party	00.00	463.30
Miscellaneous	216.98	766.70
	1327.88	2707.46
Excess/(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure	619.62	(43.96)
Cheque not yet presented		75.00
Balance carried forward	3431.40	2811.78
Current Account	<u>3431.40</u>	<u>2811.78</u>

Finance Report

Year ended 31 December 2020



The unprecedented events of 2020 affected the Society's finances in an unexpected way in that our closing bank account balance increased by over £600.00, to finish at a record sum of £3431.40. This was due largely to the fact that our normal run of social events was abandoned when the lockdown started in March whilst most of our members continued to pay their subscriptions as normal. That said, income from subscriptions fell by £130 as several members left the village or chose not to renew at this time. We recruited four new members.

Our only social event of the year was the Village Quiz in January which generated £640.50 in ticket sales. After expenses of £173.00 we were able to make donations of £300.00 to the Village Hall and £100.00 to the Lounge.

We did not have an AGM this year. Therefore, the main expenses we incurred were related to the printing and delivery of the Society's Annual Report in March (£240.00) and the greetings cards delivered to all members in August and December (£120.00). I think that the cards were very much appreciated by our members and excellent value as well.

In conclusion, I am pleased to say that our finances remain healthy as we put the year 2020 behind us.

Martin Clarke, Treasurer

Auditor's Report

I confirm that I have audited the books of AVS and they are correct as at 31 December 2020

Keith Rixon, Independent Examiner, 12 January 2021

Minutes of the 2019 AGM *(The 2020 AGM was cancelled, therefore there are no minutes)*

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

