

Alvechurch Village Society



**Annual
Report
2022**

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Alvechurch Village Society

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

2021



President's Address

It is a great privilege and pleasure to be President of the Alvechurch Village Society, having been a member of the committee for 15 years now and since moving to the village in 2001.

As a relative newcomer to the village, I have nevertheless witnessed significant changes and improvements in that time. I recall in my early days attending Parish Council meetings as a frustrated resident to ask for more action in relation to litter and to a general improvement in the appearance to the village at that time. I also became aware of the Village Society and its long history in seeking to maintain the charm and character of the village.

When reflecting, I appreciate the many ways in which improvements have been achieved and maintained. In particular, the redevelopment of the precinct several years ago, which greatly enhanced the centre of the village and which now, is a thriving and attractive centre. The Parish Council also have prioritised the collection of litter in the centre of the village and the planting of tubs, so that it looks attractive in all seasons. The redevelopment of the railway station, reduction of speed limit within the centre of the village to 20mph, road and pavement resurfacing have all played their part in improving our living environment as has the success of the community Lounge, which especially supports young people within the village.

These changes have all come about as a result of the dedication of local people working together with the Parish Council and elected councillors to bring about change. One such person is Adrian Smith, who has resigned from the AVS committee this year after being an active member for many years. The committee pay tribute and say thank you to Adrian for all his work with the committee. We are delighted to see that he will continue as Parish footpaths warden, leading our team of volunteers in maintaining public footpaths around the Parish for us all to enjoy. I would also like to say a huge

thank you to Eileen McHugh and Keith Williams who are leaving the committee after many years. I know that Eileen will continue to be involved with our events and I look forward to seeing them both around the village.

The Village Society continues to be as relevant today as it has been in the last 53 years. It monitors all planning applications within the parish and will actively comment where plans fail to respect the local character of the village and significantly infringe on the designated green belt areas. On a practical level it organises regular litter picking events in an attempt to address litter hotspots especially on routes leading into the village, as well as planting bulbs and regular walks and social events for both members and residents. It is very pleasing to see our membership remain fairly stable despite the last two years of pandemic when all activities have been curtailed. It has been especially enjoyable to see resumption of social events and group walks albeit with social distancing and Covid guidelines maintained. I look forward to more in the coming year.

I thank the Chairman, Chris Miall for all his hard work and indeed all the committee for their enthusiasm and time.

Grace Hampson

Chairman's Report

The Committee has been able to meet on Zoom every two months, and in March we held our first ever on-line AGM: the minutes are presented at the end of this Annual Report. Perhaps not surprisingly, the turn-out was quite low, but 26 members did attend and were able to vote in the current Committee and Chair, and of course, our President, Grace Hampson.

In June we had our first "on-line" talk, by author Andy Griffiths. It was good to be back in business, but I think I speak for everyone when I say that Zoom meetings are not the same as having a live audience in the Village Hall. But as the year progressed, we gradually felt able to move away from our screens and began meeting together in person. This started outdoors, with a family litter pick day organised by Mariea Clarke; the AVS footpath group gathered under Adrian Smith's guidance every couple of weeks from May onwards, and our monthly walks resumed too. In August we manned a stall at the Picnic in the Park which resulted in several new members joining the Society. Details of all these activities, as well as the indoor talks and social events which started in September are given in other parts of the Annual Report, so I won't repeat them here.

One of the issues the Committee has discussed over these months is our assessment of risk, as we tried to balance indoors events against still-present Covid risk. Our approach has been to ask attendees to take lateral flow tests, to keep the Hall well ventilated, and to keep numbers down to a maximum of 72 (the Hall can under normal conditions hold 120). This has worked well but does mean that events like the Christmas Party and January's quiz night were sold out before we advertised them more widely. It also means we made slightly less profit from these events, and so offered a smaller donation to the Lounge and the Village Hall than in previous years. But I am

confident that the Society has got through the pandemic in a strong financial position, as our Treasurer reports later. We felt comfortable in spending the small amounts needed to send out a Christmas card for the second year and in providing donations to several local causes. In addition, a positive arising from the enforced restrictions has been that the committee has put additional effort into our on-line presence. Under the guidance of Tony Brannon, the website has been updated, and we continue to put more information there. And we have moved towards using email communication as the default, for things like announcements of Society events. We have email addresses for most annual members now but are still looking to get more email addresses from our life members. Anyone who would like to receive email communications should contact our Secretary, Gerard Nash. It remains for me to thank all the Committee members for their continued hard work in supporting our Society in all these activities, especially Martin Clarke and Gerard Nash, our Treasurer and Secretary. I am very grateful that while Adrian Smith resigned from the AVS Committee this year, after 15 years of dedicated service, including being Chairman from 2009-2012, he will continue his role as Footpath Warden, and will continue to organize the Footpath Group. I also wish to thank Eileen McHugh and Keith Williams who have both stepped down after many years of excellent service, and to thank Tony Brannon and Mariea Clarke, who were elected to the Committee in March 2021, although they both attended in 2020 on an ad-hoc basis. Finally, I thank Grace Hampson for her willingness to continue as President – Grace has been a regular presence at the Committee meetings, over and above the call of duty! I hope you enjoy reading the rest of the reports here, giving more detail of the Society's year. Let me end with a request that anyone who would like to join the Committee will be made very welcome, and I or any other Committee member would be happy to tell you about the position.

Chris Miall

Events Programme Review 2021

This last year's programme was without doubt very unusual. We started in January with no planned events at all due to Covid having forced us to abandon any prospect of a 2020/2021 programme that would have been published the previous September.

The committee decided they were not going to be beaten and having mastered Zoom meetings over several months we decided to expand into Zoom events. In January we held a musical quiz on Zoom and it was a considerable success with participants taking part from their own homes. Social mixing limitations meant there were no actual teams, and although we didn't raise any money as usual, AVS did benefit from several new members signing up that evening.

The next event by Zoom was the Annual General Meeting which was equally different, but the members participating, and the committee felt it had been a success, under difficult conditions.

In the Summer of 2021, we decided to publish an Annual Programme again and hope that we could realise all the events without Covid putting a stop to anything. The first event in October was a litter picking family session which received considerable interest from people throughout the village. This was followed by two evening sessions, firstly "the Bletchley Park Story" by John Chapman in October and an evening of story telling by Chris Davies and colleagues in November. The evenings resulted in record attendance and great interest.

The year ended in December with a Christmas party including musical bingo by Tony Brannon and a fish and chip supper. We were cautious to limit the number of people attending, but in the event our estimate matched the number of ticket requests. The evening was a great success which raised enough to cover donations of £150 to the Lounge and £100 to the Canal Society.

We really hope we are back on track in terms of a un-interrupted programme. The events so far have been well supported and have exceeded the outcomes of previous years, which is a good omen for the future.

Ray Yarnell

Alvechurch Village Hall News

Despite the year once again being dominated by Covid the Hall has survived. The hall finances remain in a healthy position as financial support was sourced by our Treasurer and users slowly returned.

We have temporarily continued to reduce hall hire rates and there has been a number of one off events and private hires since re-opening.

A Christmas craft fayre, organised by members and friends of the Committee, proved extremely popular and raised nearly a £1,000 of well needed funds for the hall.

Our existing 5 year plan is almost concluded – the P.A. System has been installed and the hearing loop is ready to be installed.

We will no doubt be asking users for their ideas for our next 5 year plan.

Norma Divine

Litter Pick Report

We had two Village litterpick events this year, after the disruption of 2020. The first was later than usual, in June, as Bromsgrove Council discouraged a large event in Spring.

The Sunday morning was unpromising with heavy showers but one family was there ready to start, 30 minutes early, when we arrived to set up. Martin, myself and Jen Bailey were hard pressed to keep up with the numbers queuing to start picking. Thanks also to Sheila Dickinson, who helped with returns at the end of the session.

We had 22 sets of pairs and family groups and soon covered all the areas needed. Thankfully the weather did improve. We issued ten certificates to children who took part. The Lounge opened and did a roaring trade in breakfasts and cake.

Our October event was a little more low key, but still attracted quite a few families. This included our youngest participant, at just under three years old our grandson who did sterling work and his picking was second to none.



Martin Clarke with grandson Patrick

We had real difficulties getting enough equipment from Bromsgrove Council, as it appears they have loaned out a lot of litter pickers to individuals, who

haven't returned them. If anyone has some sitting around, please give them back! However a local group, Keep Bromsgrove Beautiful which organises similar events came to our rescue and saved the day. Thank you again.

We are currently bidding for funds (*thank you Kate Van der Plank*) to have our own supply of equipment, so that we are not placed in this predicament again. When we have the equipment we envisage offering it to individuals and groups around the area for smaller scale but more regular clean ups.

Thank you to all the committee members and people of the village who support this event and also the many who clean up the village all the year round.

Mariea Clarke



L to R Jen Bailey, Mariea Clarke, Sarah Clarke & Patrick, Joan Feely

AVS Footpath Maintenance Group

2020 & 2021 Covid restrictions here, like the rest of the UK, almost put paid to our Footpath Group's (FPG) regular schedule. However, following Government and Worcestershire County Council guidelines and keeping to social distancing, we managed to achieve 555 hours of work and used 185 volunteer attendances in total, before "lockdown" sent us all into hibernation!

May-Day 2021 was freedom from lockdown, and restrictions eased slightly allowing our group to return to almost normal working practices, with caution still being the advice taken. The FPG managed an incredible 18 outings throughout 2021. Our volunteer team worked tirelessly to make up for lost time over 2021...and have caught up on the huge amount of jobs that were piling up. Our last job of the year was to re-instate the Village Society's notice board at the Rail station, blown over in storm Arwen.

A few interesting photos *in the next column* to highlight some of these events.

If you have any issues with any of our countryside paths, please contact myself: Adrian Smith (Parish Footpath Warden) penlock@btinternet.com.

Adrian Smith
Footpath Warden



Monthly Walks 2020-2021

In 2020 our Society monthly walks had to be cancelled due to lockdown restrictions. 2021 saw a recommencement of the Society's walk programme with John and Sally Slevin leading a super walk from Lickey Beacon Hill to Bromsgrove and back. This was followed by Sue and Roger Wardle's lovely walk round the river Arrow in Studley.

Monthly local walks continued with leaders, Charlie Simmonds, Ray and Norma Yarnell, Adrian Smith, and ending with our newest leader Tony Brannon leading a walk round the Arrow Valley Park in Redditch.

More news about walks from February through to July 2022 will follow in next year's report.

Adrian Smith
Walks Organiser

Alvechurch Village Society

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending 31st December 2021

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Balance B/Fwd	3431.40	2811.78
Income		
Subscriptions	1350.00	1282.00
Donations	30.00	10.00
Sale of Publications	115.00	15.00
Social Events	809.00	00.00
January Quiz	00.00	640.50
	2304.00	1947.50
Expenditure		
Administration expenses	46.98	73.77
Room Hire/Zoom	166.62	94.50
Speaker fees	160.00	00.00
Publicity	314.85	437.63
Donations	280.00	505.00
Postage and Walks Leaflets	145.12	00.00
Christmas Musical Bingo	436.00	00.00
Miscellaneous	285.92	216.98
Public Liability Insurance	199.00	00.00
	2034.49	1327.88
Excess/(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure	269.51	619.62
Petty Cash in hand	7.50	0.00
Balance carried forward	3700.91	3431.40
Current Account	<u>3693.41</u>	<u>3431.40</u>



Finance Report

Year ended 31 December 2021

The Society continued to feel the ill effects of covid 19 during 2021. Our January Quiz and the AGM in March were held on-line via Zoom at no cost to members but, of course, no funds were raised for charity. As covid restrictions eased, we were able to go ahead with our twice-yearly Litter Picks before "normal activities" resumed with the End of Season Walk in July and the Picnic in the Park in August.

Our social activities continued with a Bletchley Park Talk in October, a Story Telling Evening in November and a Musical Bingo Fish & Chip Supper in December. These events generated some well-earned funds so that we were still able to make donations of £280 to local charities. £150 to the Lounge, £100 to the Canal Society and £30 to the Alvechurch Picnic In The Park (PITP) organisers.

We are very grateful for the unstinting support of our members who continue to pay their subs of £10 per person, without much "coercion" from me. We were able to recruit 8 new members and raised £1350 subscriptions in total. Our outgoings were greater than in 2020 given the increased level of activities but, at £2034, they were proportionate to 2019 levels before covid. Our biggest single expense was Public Liability Insurance at £199 which is now essential. In conclusion, I can report that the Society remains in good financial shape with funds of nearly £3700 in hand as we start 2022.

Martin Clarke, Treasurer

Auditor's Report

I confirm that I have audited the books of AVS and they are correct as at 31 December 2021

Minutes of the 2021 AGM

Wednesday 17th March 2021 7.30pm by Zoom. Present: 26 Zoom signs-ins representing about 40 members

1. Welcome by the President and Apologies

President Chris Miall welcomed everyone to the AGM. He also outlined the procedures to be used during the Zoom meeting to allow voting on motions and elections. Apologies had been received from Eileen McHugh, Philip and Elisabeth Aubury, Giles and Geraldine Stanton, Diana Ball and Janet Smith, Pam Horsfield.

2. Chairman's Report

Ray Yarnell apologised for the cancellation of last year's AGM and stated that the committee had been determined to ensure that it would not happen again this year. He referred to the difficulties faced by all in the last year and spoke for the whole of the AVS committee in saying that we know how difficult a year it has been for some of our members. Nevertheless, he thought that Alvechurch adjusted very well to the limitations imposed by Covid and stated that it had been good to see people helping one another (even more than usual) and sharing a laugh when they were able to meet up.

Under the circumstances, AVS committee had decided to do as much as possible within the limits, and we were pleased with the feedback received from actions such as the greeting cards to members, the January musical quiz and the outings of the footpath crew that had been possible. The committee were happy to have been able to arrange regular meetings via Zoom, as well as being able to contact the membership by e-mail for the first time, with greater than 95% of paying members being reached by this route.

Ray confirmed that this was his last year as Chairman, although he and Norma aimed to remain in the Committee if elected. They had moved from Alvechurch, but intended to stay in touch with their many friends and to help with AVS events and walks. Alvechurch had been their home since the 1980's and they would not forget the many years of friendship formed in such a lovely place.

Ray thanked the present committee as well as other people who have now left the team but helped him over the years with all the events, activities, and issues. He did not wish to detail what each did as everyone has been important to AVS but thanked Eileen, Grace, Adrian, Keith, Martin, Gerard, Chris, Mariea and Tony for their contributions.

He concluded in hoping for all our sakes that things would get back to normal soon and was sure that AVS would be back in full action as soon as we are allowed.

3. Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous AGM in 2019 (AGM 2020 not being held)

A motion to adopt the minutes of the 2019 AGM was proposed by Chris Miall and seconded by Gerard Nash – the minutes were agreed unanimously by those present.

4. Report of the Treasurer

Martin Clarke reported that the Society had increased its funds over the past year. Members had continued to subscribe and there had been little outlay on functions. Major expenditures had been communications sent to members and printing of the annual report. Martin also reported that the accounts had been independently audited.

5. Motion to approve 2020 accounts

A motion to approve the 2020 accounts and appoint an independent examiner was proposed by Chris Miall and seconded by Gerard Nash – this was carried unanimously by those present.

6. Motion to approve 2021 Annual report

A motion to approve the Annual Report was proposed by Chris Miall and seconded by Gerard Nash. This was carried unanimously by those present. Ray Yarnell took the opportunity to thank the contributors to the report and especially thank Keith Williams for overseeing the layout and printing.

7. President's address

Chris Miall recalled that one year ago, the country was just entering the first Coronavirus lockdown, and we had to cancel the AGM of the Alvechurch Village Society. We were now in the unusual position of holding the AGM after a year in which there have been no physical meetings or social events, so that there was relatively little to report.

However, the Committee had been meeting regularly by Zoom throughout the last 12 months, and had managed to keep the society active and in members minds, and also to put AVS in a good position to restart activities when we are able. For example, we had sent out cards to members and improved communication with most members by email, which would help in the future. He did not propose to list all of the efforts here, but wished to thank all the members of the Committee for their work, and to welcome two new committee members, Tony Brannon and Mariea Clarke, who had recently joined the committee on an ad-hoc basis, and have offered to be elected formally to the next committee. Chris also thanked Tony for hosting our first ever on-line social event in January, a music quiz, which was very successful and encouraged us to think about arranging one or two more on-line events in the next couple of months. Chris was thus pleased to be able to say that the Society and Committee were in robust health and ready to re-launch into action.

Chris did not aim to make a lengthy address, given the unusual circumstances. However he did especially wish to thank Ray Yarnell for his tireless work over the last two years as Chairman. He had served the Society as Chair for a total of five years now and had decided it was time to step down. Chris spoke for the whole membership in thanking him and Norma for their great support of AVS. This led to a vacancy as the Chair of the Committee, and after discussion within the Committee, we were not able to identify someone able to step immediately into Ray's shoes for the usual 3-year stint. For that reason, Chris had agreed to take on the role of Chair for a year, in the hope that we would be able to pass the role onto someone else after that year. We might either elect a new chair each year or find someone willing to take it on for the full three years. As a consequence, Chris resigned his role as President, in order to take the Chair if elected. He stated the need to now appoint a new President and was glad to say that Grace Hampson was willing to take on this role.

Chris ended his address by repeating his thanks for the efforts of the committee, and the hope that the Society will have a better year coming up than the last one.

8. Election of new President

The nomination of Grace Hampson as President was proposed by Chris Miall and seconded by Ray Yarnell. This was carried by all those present. Grace thanked members for their acceptance and agreed to oversee election of officers.

9. Election of Officers and Committee

Nominations, proposers and seconders were as follows:

Chairman: Chris Miall Proposed/Seconded AS/ND. **Vice Chairman:** Ray Yarnell GH/MC). **Treasurer:** Martin Clarke KW/RV).

Secretary: Gerard Nash (MC/KW). **Committee Members:** Adrian Smith, Keith Williams, Mariea Clarke, Norma Divine, Tony Brannon (Proposed/Seconded Gerard Nash/Ray Yarnell) (All the nominations were approved by those present).

10. Any other business

Adrian Smith wished to especially thank Ray for his 5 years in total as Chairman. He also informed members that it was hoped that the footpath crew would be able to become active soon and invited anyone willing, to join in.

Meeting closed at 20.15

Alvechurch Village Society

Officers

President	Grace Hampson
Chairman	Chris Miall
Vice Chairman	Ray Yarnell
Treasurer	Martin Clarke
Secretary	Gerard Nash
Independent Examiner	Keith Rixon

Committee

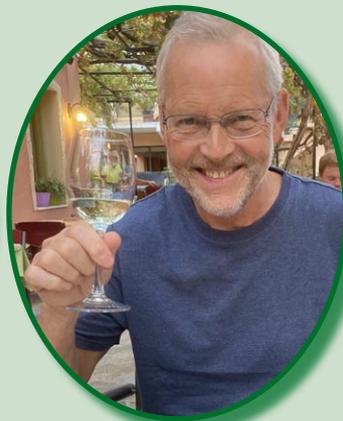
Programme Secretary	Ray Yarnell
AVS Village Hall Representative	Norma Divine
Website/Media	Tony Brannon
Litter Champion	Mariea Clarke

Past Presidents

Sir Michael Higgs D.L.	Mr. Peter Merry	Sir Patrick Lawrence
Mr. J F Milward D.L	Mr. L C Boardman	Dr. N J Cartwright D.Sc.,Ph.D
Mr. F C Ott, D.S.C	Prof. R Davies	Mr. James Burton
Mr. Antony Sealey	Mr. Michael Scanlan	Ms. Julie Kirkbride
Mr. John Sidwell	Mr. Philip Aubury	Ms Joanne Malin
Mr Andy Humphries	Prof. Chris Miall	



Grace Hampson
President



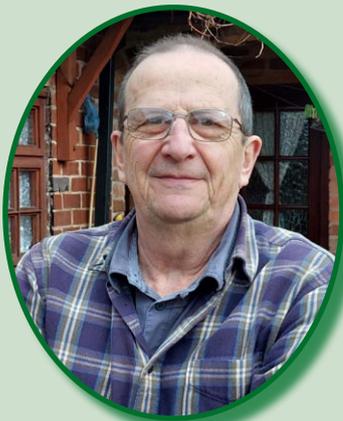
Chris Miall
Chairman



Ray Yarnell
Vice Chairman



Martin Clarke
Treasurer



Gerard Nash
Secretary



Norma Divine
Hall Coordinator



Tony Brannon
Website/Media



Mariea Clarke
Litter Champion