

Alvechurch Village Society

54th Annual report 2024



President's Address

This is my third and final report as President of the Alvechurch Village Society, a position which has given me great pleasure and pride to hold.

I have been involved with Alvechurch Village Society now for more than 20 years and was a member of the committee for 15 years and Chair for 3 years. In this time, I have seen the Society gain in strength, both in maintaining the number of village members and in the commitment and enthusiasm of its committee. Since my early involvement when Eileen Hughes and I organised the planting of daffodil bulbs in various locations across the village, it has been wonderful to see the Society play an active role in maintaining the character and community spirit within this wonderful village. The footpath group do such great work in maintaining the network of footpaths around the Parish, thus making the countryside more accessible to all and the regular walks and social events provide the opportunity for all to make new friends and have fun together

The Society continues to regularly review planning applications, commenting where the nature and character of the village may be adversely affected by proposals- this was the role which led to the Society being established. It also supports other much valued organisations and facilities within the village - these include the Lounge and Village Hall which the Society has regularly provided with donations. Although relatively small, the Society nevertheless sits at the heart of our community and plays an important role and I hope it will continue to do so for many years to come.

I would like to thank Chris Miall for all his hard work in leading the committee as Chair and indeed to all committee members for their enthusiasm and commitment, which benefits us all.

I moved from Alvechurch just over a year ago to a more manageable house in Blackwell and so intend to remain a member and hope to see many of you at future events and in the locality.

Until then I wish the Society and all its members the very best for the future

Grace Hampson

Chair's report

I want to start by thanking Grace Hampson for her three years as President. The President's role is not very onerous but is important in at least two ways. First, the President must act to elect the committee each year; this is a critical matter for the society, given the huge contribution the committee members make to the day-to-day running of the society. In addition, the President can give the Chair and the committee their advice and guidance, and on behalf of the committee, I thank Grace for her support both over the last three years, but also for her previous 15 years as committee member, including as Chair. In recognition of this long and dedicated period of service, we have proposed that she is elected as a life member of the Society, and I trust that the members will approve this at the AGM. In addition, I want to thank all the members of the committee for their efforts over the last 12 months. As Chair, it is a real bonus to have a group who are committed to their roles and who make my job very easy. We meet every 2 months for an hour or so, and business is sorted out with no arguments, lots of sensible suggestions about what we should be doing, and a real sense of sharing the work of the committee by all.

This is my third Chair's report, and this seems to be the first year in which I can happily report that our activities have fully recovered from the disruption of the Covid pandemic. We have released all restraints on the size and format of our events: we have held well-attended evening talks and music events; we have cruised up and down the canal; we've spun around each other in hectic barn dancing; and members have joined in on the monthly walks in greater and greater numbers (except for one walk in miserable weather when no-one turned up!). And in January our quiz night was highly successfully, raising nearly £500 that will be shared by the local causes we support.

This year we received two more generous donations for the footpath group, taking the total over about 12 months to £1000. I want to thank Adrian Smith for all his efforts as the footpath warden and thank all the group members who help keep our local paths so attractive. We also received an additional £1000 to support the Friends of Alvechurch Station and it is very encouraging to see the efforts of both groups being noticed and rewarded by the wider public.

Finally, I must apologise for not being able to attend this year's Annual General Meeting. Stephanie and I will be on the other side of the world, on a long-planned trip to New Zealand. However, I leave the meeting in the safe hands of our secretary, Gerard Nash, and look forward to hearing about it on our return.

Chris Miall

Events Programme Review for 2023

2023 started with our popular January quiz night, hosted by Ray and Norma, which as ever, was well received and raised a total of £250 for local charities. Our February talk was by Denis Pike, who delivered an informative session on repairing lock gates, which are integral to the safe and smooth running of our canal network. Our Annual General Meeting was held in March, further details of which are included later in this Annual Report.

Mid-April brought our usual and popular daytime family litter pick, which was well attended, and we are grateful to those who volunteered their help in running this and to those who turned up to take part. At our evening meeting a few days later, Robin May, Professor of Infectious Disease at the University of Birmingham spoke about '(mis)adventures with microbes and food.'



May's adventure involved a trip from Alvechurch to Hopwood and back, on community narrowboat, Cecilia, owned by the Worcester, Birmingham and Droitwich Canals society. The weather was very kind to us at this popular event and we were grateful to the volunteers who made it possible.



Later in the month, we attended the annual Picnic in the Park event, which is always a great success. In June, we enjoyed an evening of family fun and games, including giant Jenga, noughts and crosses and Connect 4, fuelled by a fish and chip supper.

After a break over the summer, AVS organised another family

litter pick on 8th October. Again, this was very well attend-ed, and the village looked much tidier after every-one's litter picking efforts.





At our October evening meeting, Chris Atkins from the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service delivered an informative talk on fire safety. During November, we welcomed Shulah Oliver, the Artistic Director of the Midland Sinfonia, who entertained us with a talk on “the evolving life of a freelance musician”, which was accompanied by some wonderful live music.

As the year drew to a close, we enjoyed a Christmas party, which included a ceilidh, by the Orchard Band. This was very well attended and enjoyed by all!

Alice Wilkinson

Society Website and Social Media

Just a short note to remind members that The Alvechurch Village Society does have a website. The address is www.alvechurchvs.org. The website is kept up to date and is a valuable source of information. We post regular updates about our walks and events programme and there is also plenty of information about Alvechurch and the local area. Although our society does not have its own social media pages we do post to the ‘Alvechurch Around & About’ Facebook page on a fairly regular basis. We also send regular information to ‘The Village’ magazine which publishes articles about us from time to time. We also submit regular text for the back section of The Village magazine with up-to-date information about our walks and social events. This is especially helpful as we are well aware that not everybody ‘does social media’.

Tony Brannon

AVS Secretary

Thanks again to our hard-working Secretary, Gerard Nash, for continuing to take minutes, send out communications, and generally keep the committee on track.

Chris Miall

AVS Walks

On the whole it has been another very successful year for the monthly Sunday walks with Alvechurch Village Society. Sadly, the weather did let us down on one occasion when, due to very inclement weather, it had to be called off at the last moment. Walks have been very well attended and have taken in, not only local areas, but also further afield as well. We have been to lots of places including Tardebigge, Arrow Valley Country Park, Spernal & Coughton Court as well as the Alvechurch area. Our walk on Sunday January 7th was especially well attended with around 42 people enjoying a walk around Alvechurch, taking in our lovely local canal.



The season isn't over yet and we still have walks planned for April, May, June & July. All our Sunday walks start at 2pm. There are one or two exceptions to the programme as we add in an annual Boxing Day walk, around The Lickey Hills, that starts at 10am and our end of season walk on July 5th which starts at 6.30pm and includes a visit to a local hostelry.

All society members should have received a 'programme of events' showing the walks programme. If you can't find it then do check out the Alvechurch Village Society website: www.alvechurchvs.org for more information.



Our walks coordinator will be putting together a programme of walks for the 2024/2025 season very soon. If anyone would like to 'take the plunge' and lead

a future walk then please get in contact via email: avswalks@gmail.com. The season runs from September through until July every year.

avswalks@gmail.com.

Tony Brannon

Society Noticeboards

This year two new noticeboards have been added to the AVS collection. They are situated at the station and were put up by the Friends of Alvechurch Station, although they are to be used by AVS and other local groups. There is one on each platform. So now there are three boards near the station - one on each platform and one at the entrance to the station road. The other four noticeboards, two in the village, one at Withybed Green and one at Rowney Green continue to be updated regularly.

Joan Feely

Alvechurch Village Hall

The village hall is a very well used facility, but our recent building survey has shown up several maintenance issues that need to be addressed. The hall's management committee have drawn up a 5-year plan to tackle these, and members may have noticed the stonework outside has been re-pointed, this time in lime mortar, and the rooms downstairs have been painted. A projector screen has also been permanently mounted above the stage. Our society committee has agreed to continue to donate to the hall, and £250 from the funds raised by the very popular January Quiz Night have been presented.

Stephanie Miall

Connections with the Parish Council

The AVS committee regularly monitors the business of the Parish Council Planning & Transport sub-committee, although at the moment there is no-one who serves on both AVS and APC committees, so we rely on a summary of the minutes of the Parish Council minutes that I prepare for each of our own meetings. Last year, and again this year, we have been invited to submit our annual report to the APC, so that they in turn are informed about our activities.

Chris Miall

Litter Picking



We have had another successful year, keeping Alvechurch spick and span. Having our own set of litter picks and hoops has been a game changer. We no longer have to negotiate with the council to borrow from them twice yearly. In fact, this year we have held three events!



Alvechurch Village Society have been lucky this year in gaining the support of local schools. Both Crown Meadow and Alvechurch Middle School have publicised our events through parent mail. As a result, we have had a steady stream of families eager to do their bit to clean up the village at

both the April and October events.

Many parents have spoken about the need to educate their children in the importance of community action. Our revamped certificates have proved popular too. In fact, the 2nd Alvechurch Rainbows were so disappointed to miss our event on 8th October that we arranged an extra 'special' litter pick just for them a week later. Participants have also been very good at disposing of the collected rubbish themselves; however, we also rely on Bromsgrove Council to collect the bulky waste (10 bags or more each time).



As noted last year we now need more adult participation to clear the busy roads surrounding the village. This may need to be a separate event.

Mariea Clarke

Footpath Group Report

Pictures tell a better story than words, so here you see some of our ever-increasing AVS band of wonderful volunteers working in 2023. We have built new stiles and fences; replaced a bridge crossing; constructed a wooden self-closing gate; installed a large new metal kissing gate; replaced umpteen rotten wooden steps and posts and cleared miles of overgrown countryside pathways.



As always, my thanks go to all our merry-band of willing volunteers including the AVS Chairman (seen here getting his hands dirty) and for all their help which goes to keep Alvechurch Parish footpaths in splendid order.



Please let me know if you notice any problems whilst you are out and about enjoying Alvechurch parish countryside walks.

A selection of some of the work done by the footpath group in 2023 is shown on the following page. Not shown are the results of 100s of person hours clearing paths of over-growth.

Adrian Smith

penlock@btinternet.com



Friends of Alvechurch Station

The small group of volunteers that make up the ‘Friends of Alvechurch Station’ have continued to maintain the raised planters along Platform 2 and the

triangle of wildflowers alongside Station Road. In early 2023 we were approached by the Community Rail Partnership with an offer of additional funds, and eventually received £1000 for our projects; some readers may have noticed a small plaque acknowledging the commercial donor on one of the planters. We also got permission to put up two additional posterboards, making a total of 10, and have refreshed most of the displays, with new artwork and two displays of local photographers' work. As before, one board on each platform is reserved for notices from local societies.

Chris & Stephanie Miall and Philip Aubury

Finance Report: year ended 31 December 2023

The finances of the society are underpinned by the willingness of our members to pay their subscriptions of £10 per person without much "encouragement" from me. Many members choose to pay by regular bank transfer and this is very helpful for us. We gained 7 new members this year and now have 150 paying members and 53 Life Members.

Apart from members subscriptions, the January Quiz Night was our other main source of income, from which we made a net profit of £250. No other profits were made as we no longer charge members to attend talks, while ticketed events are priced as realistically as possible to cover costs. All our social events were well attended, particularly the Fun and Games night in June, the Midland Sinfonia night in November and the very popular Christmas Ceilidh. We broke even on the Ceilidh notwithstanding £450 paid to the Orchard Band who entertained us.

We received three generous donations during the year. £250 from Forest Hansen in America, £100 from the family of Mrs Pat Parker deceased (one of our founding members) and £200 from the Long-Distance Walking Association, in recognition of the excellent maintenance work done by our Footpath Group volunteers. We made donations of £500 to the Village Hall Committee to help with their substantial repair programme and £30 to the Picnic in the Park organisers.

The expenditure of the society remained broadly in line with 2022. The principal expenses were £212 for Public Liability Insurance and £700 for Speaker Fees and Orchard Band. Miscellaneous expenses were higher than usual as we invested £258 in providing protective sun hats for our Footpath Group members, some of whom need more protection than others!

Once again, we facilitated the receipt of a National Rail Community Grant (£1000) on behalf of The Friends of Alvechurch Station which we then disbursed to them for their various projects. £266 of the grant remains to be disbursed and is included in our bank account balance of £4218 at year end.

In conclusion, I can report that the finances of the Society are in a healthy condition as we enter the new year 2024.

Martin Clarke, Treasurer

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending December 2023

	2023	2022
Balance B/Fwd.	£3,963.74	£3,700.91
Income		
Subscriptions	£1,500.00	£1,440.00
Donations	£600.00	£530.00
Sale of Publications	£126.00	£170.00
Social Events and Quiz	£1,449.00	£745.00
National Rail Community Grant	£1,000.00	£978.26
	£4,675.00	£3,863.26
Expenditure		
Admin and Postage	£200.77	£307.96
Room Hire	£293.00	£278.00
Speaker Fees and the Orchard Band	£700.00	£205.00
Publicity and Printing	£429.50	£613.99
Donations	£530.00	£400.00
Social Events and Quiz	£658.78	£393.75
Public Liability Insurance	£212.00	£204.00
Community Grant disbursed	£813.09	£898.26
Miscellaneous	£583.29	£285.92
	£4,420.43	£3,600.43
Excess/(Deficit) of Income over expenditure	£254.57	£262.83
Current Bank Account Balance	£4,218.31	£3,693.41
Petty cash in hand	£0.00	£7.50
Balance C/Fwd.	£4,218.31	£3,963.74

Auditor's Report: I confirm that I have audited the books of AVS and they are correct as at 31 December 2023.

Keith Rixon, Auditor

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 23rd March 2023 7.30pm, Alvechurch Village Hall

Present: 37 members and guests

1. Welcome by the Chairman and Apologies

Chris Miall welcomed everyone to the AGM. Apologies had been received from Jean and Mike Collins, John Talbut, and Philip and Elisabeth Aubury.

2. Chair's Report

Chris Miall was pleased to report another successful year for the AVS. Membership was gradually rising, and now stood at about 140 ordinary members and 58 life members. Recruitment was mainly by word-of-mouth and at our various events such as the monthly walks.

Finances were also very healthy, and we were able to donate again to the Village Hall and the Lounge, mainly money raised through the profits from our social events. The Society gave £200 to the Lounge, and this year because the Village Hall faces some major maintenance costs, we decided to match the profit from our quiz night and gave a total of £500 to the hall funds. Despite these donations, our bank balance was gradually increasing and now stood at about £4000. It was therefore planned to drop our £1 entrance fee for our monthly events in the hall, to charge £1 for guests, and to donate life membership to nominated members who had provided exceptional service.

Summarising the year's activities, the Society had heard a talk about local rogues and villains by Vanessa Morgan, followed by a talk by Denis Pike with very detailed instructions about how to replace lock gates on the canal. There had also been an evening of ukulele music by the Radical String Ensemble. In January we had a very successful quiz night, making £250 profit. The series of social events would continue until June, and then take a short break and start again in September. While on that topic, the Chair thanked Eileen McHugh who had continued to provide the teas for all our events in the Hall.

The footpath group had a good series of outings last summer and have started again this year with impressive numbers of volunteers. The Society had been very pleased to receive two very generous donations for the footpath group. One was from Forest Hanson and Valerie Lamont who many members might remember, and we have sent them the Society's best wishes, along with a new set of the AVS walks leaflets. The other donation was from Robin May & Wilma van Riel who are not members but regularly use the footpaths around Rowney Green. Robin May will also be giving the next talk, on April 19th which should be very interesting, as he is the Chief Scientific Advisor for the *Food Standards Agency* and a very good speaker.

The monthly walks programme had also been going well, with high numbers of attendees. Tony Brannon managed the programme and was keen to recruit more volunteers to lead the walks.

Finally, Mariea Clarke had arranged the twice-yearly litter picking mornings. These were well supported and Mariea was aiming to get more involvement from

the local schools. There were also a number of students wanting to carry out the litter picking as a part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award activities.

In summary, Alvechurch Village Society was doing well, and helping the village to be recognised as a happy and friendly place to live, as recently reported in the Birmingham Post and the Sun.

It only remained for the Chair to thank all the committee for their efforts over the year. Particular thanks were offered to Ray Yarnell and Norma Divine, who had been supporting AVS for many years, both on and off the committee. They were now stepping down from the committee. As mentioned earlier, it was proposed to award life membership to a small number of people to recognize their support of the Society. It thus gave the Society great pleasure to announce that Ray and Norma will be our first new life members in many years.

3. Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous AGM in 2022

The Chair moved to adopt the minutes of the 2022 AGM, which was carried unanimously by those present.

4. Report of the Treasurer

Martin Clarke referred members to the finance report in the Annual Report. He expressed his thanks to the Society's members who had paid their dues regularly and noted that in 2022 there were 10 new members and that so far in 2023 there were already 5 more. The Society's finances were largely driven by the membership fees. Events were generally subsidised, and it was usually only the Christmas event and the January quiz that made profits. The membership fees of £10 was good value and had been at that level for some years. For next year's 2023/24 programme there would be no entrance fee for members for talks or unticketed events, but a £1 charge for guests. Finally the accounts had been audited and agreed as correct. As of the AGM, the balance was £4,400, and the Committee were open to suggestions for actions that might be funded.

5. Motion to approve 2022 accounts

The Chair moved to approve the 2022 accounts, which was carried unanimously by those present.

6. Motion to approve 2023 Annual report

The Chair noted that the report had reverted to an A5 format to be more easily handled. He moved to approve the Annual Report, which was carried unanimously by those present.

7. President's address

Grace Hampson reminded the audience that the coming year would be her third and last year as President and reflected on what a pleasant area this was to live in. Thinking back over the pandemic in these last few years, it was good to see so many attendees at the AGM. During current hard times it was also good see that people in the community were helping each other, with initiatives such as the Alvechurch Community Larder and warm spaces, and by acting as good neighbours. The local

environment was excellent including the village’s surrounding beautiful country. It remained important aims of the Society to help maintain this environment through its footpath crew and to help people to appreciate it through its organised walks. The President concluded by thanking the responsible teams, and the Chair and Committee for ensuring that the Society was highly active and making positive initiatives. She then led the election of Officers and Committee for the next year.

8. Election of Officers and Committee

Nominations, proposers and seconders were as follows:

	Nominees	Proposer/Seconders
Chairman	Chris Miall	Ray Yarnell / Linda Helmore
Treasurer	Martin Clarke	Simon Raine / Cheryl Godfrey
Secretary	Gerard Nash	Norma Divine / Pat Riley
Committee members (En Bloc)		
	Nominees	Proposer/Seconders
	Alice Wilkinson	Chris Miall / Gerard Nash
	Alan Helmore	
	Mariea Clarke	
	Joan Feely	
	Stephanie Miall	
	Tony Brannon	

All the nominations were approved by those present.

Chris Miall took the opportunity to invite members to consider joining the committee Cheryl Godfrey questioned what membership of the committee entailed. Chris Miall explained that the committee met every two months, that some members had specific duties but that other tasks were agreed ad hoc, and that members could influence the Society’s policy and events. Typically, prospective new members attended a committee meeting to see how they were conducted and judge whether they wished to join. Cheryl Godfrey volunteered to attend the next meeting in May.

9. Any other business

Tony Brannon thanked the previous walks leader Adrian Smith and those who had volunteered to lead individual walks in the last year. He reminded the attendees the walks were usually on the first Sunday of each month at 2pm and conducted around the locality, and occasionally started a little further afield. For the next season he asked members to consider becoming walk leaders as new volunteers would be needed, and to contact him if interested.

Chris Miall informed the attendees that the committee would be happy to hear of any suggestions for events for the programme for 2023/24, or for possible speakers to give talks.

The Business Meeting closed at 8.02pm. Refreshments and a social gathering followed.

Alvechurch Village Society Committee, 2023-2024



President	Grace Hampson
Chairman	Chris Miall
Vice Chairman	Ray Yarnell
Treasurer	Martin Clarke
Secretary	Gerard Nash
Other members	
	Alan Helmore
	Alice Wilkinson
	Cheryl Godfrey
	Joan Feely
	Mariea Clarke
	Stephanie Miall
	Tony Brannon

Past Presidents

1969 Sir Michael Higgs DL	1994 Mr James Burton
1973 Mr Peter Merry	1997 Mr Antony Sealey
1976 Sir Patrick Lawrence	2000 Mr Michael Scanlan
1979 Mr J F Milward DL	2003 Ms Julie Kirkbride
1982 Mr L C Boardman	2007 Mr John Sidwell
1985 Dr N J Cartwright DSc	2009 Mr Philip Aubury
1988 Mr F C Ott, DSc	2012 Ms Joanne Malin
1991 Prof R Davies	2015 Mr Andy Humphries
	2019 Prof Chris Miall

Membership of the Society costs just £10 per person per year (or £5 per year for young members aged 14-20 years). To join, please visit our website page www.alvechurchvs.org/membership or contact the Treasurer and Membership Secretary Martin Clarke by email at treasureralvechurchvs@gmail.com or email the Chair Chris Miall at chairalvechurchvillagesociety@gmail.com

Visit our website for more information:
www.alvechurchvs.org