

Birlingham News online

Published on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month

No. 326² Wednesday 27th March 2024

Editorial

Thirty years ago, we were oblivious to the delights of the internet and unaware of the extraordinary opportunities it would provide – and the problems it might cause.

As we have become used to searching online for information and organisations have required us to perform more tasks digitally, a decent internet connection has become increasingly necessary.

The broadband service using the ancient copper telephone wires, which we have had to use until now, is becoming too slow to be practicable, particularly for anything that requires a fast download speed (such as some entertainment channels and high-volume business uses).

The Parish Council has worked hard over several years to persuade Airband to install new fibre cables and this option is now available to half the village.

However, the new service is suffering from what will hopefully turn out to be teething problems (as reported below). Many people are having difficulties.

So if you are currently struggling with your new Airband service, rest assured – you are not alone.

Pilates at Birlingham Village Hall

by Suzie Matty

There is a regular Pilates class in Birlingham Village Hall on Thursdays at 12.00 noon, lasting 50 minutes.

This is a small physio-led pilates class. We work on balance, core stability, flexibility and co-ordination with the aim of keeping you happy, healthy and able to enjoy life without being held back by aches and pains! (Suitable for those with injuries or back problems.)

A 5-week block is £50 or you can PAYG at £12/class.

Numbers are limited to a maximum of 12, but there are currently a couple of spaces. If you are interested, please call or message me on 07863 239927 or email: info@suziematty.com.

There is also more general information on my website: <https://www.suziematty.com>

Easter Closure at the Swan

by Zoe Haines

The Swan Inn will be closed for staff holidays from Wednesday 3rd to Sunday 7th April inclusive.



Cuppa & Chat

Wednesday 3rd April

by Sue Hermon



Our next Cuppa and Chat will be held just after Easter on Wednesday 3rd April from 3.00pm to 4.30pm in Birlingham Village Hall. The cost is £2.50 per person and everyone is most welcome to come along for tea or coffee plus a cake or two and a chance to win our free Mystery Entry Prize!

For more information, or to request transport, please contact me on 01386 750096 or email sue.hermon@me.com.

St James' Church

Churchwarden: Adrianne Woodward

(Tel. 01386 750936)



You are reminded that there is an Easter Sunday service at St James', on **Sunday 31st March at 10.30am** led by Bishop Michael Hooper. There will be the normal refreshments, plus Easter eggs, after the service. (Please remember that the clocks are moved forwards one hour...)

Also, there will be a tree-themed service on **Sunday 14th April at 10.30am**. This will be an outdoor service to be held in the grounds of the Court House by kind permission of Rupert and Maryanne Day. There will be contributions in words and music from several villagers and the service will be led by our Benefice Curate, Revd Jayne Parker and refreshments will be served afterwards. There is some shelter from the rain but it might be advisable to bring an umbrella! All are welcome to attend and directions for parking and location of the service will be given at the entrance gate.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Wednesday 17th April

by Pat Chinneck, PCC Secretary

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Wednesday 17th April in St James' Church at 6.30pm.

Airband Problems

There has been much discussion recently in the Village WhatsApp group about problems with the new Airband broadband system (which is also mentioned in the Parish Council report). It seems to be particularly bad in the evenings, presumably when more people are using it, and several people are losing their connections simultaneously.

Complaints have been made to Airband but so far no response has been received. It is recommended that everyone should log the issue with the company every time there is a problem. The same issue has also been reported in Eckington and Defford.

To join the WhatsApp group, either email Jessica Dormer at jessica@thedormers.net or send her a WhatsApp message on 07939 695113.



Eckington Bridge is now closed for maintenance until Sunday 7th April



Part of the bridge requiring maintenance

(Photography by Nikki Hollier)



River Avon and Bredon Hill viewed from Eckington Bridge, 24th March

Parish Council Report

by Ian Yates

Birlingham Parish Council held its meeting at 7.00pm on Wednesday 20th March in the Village Hall. A summary of agenda items follows:

◆ Road resurfacing in Upper End

During the Parish Council's democratic opening, a resident raised a concern that the verges along Upper End down to Red Star and the church are continually being degraded through a mixture of farm and HGV traffic. He said:

"On Sunday 17th March, when the road repair work was being carried out (Upper End/the Avenue down to the church), a WCC representative who was on site with the repair team was asked how the edge of the verge vs the road could now be determined, given the level of degradation and he said that 'it was an inexact science and they tried to go along a straight line, taking into account turns etc.' After the work was completed, it was clear that the repair work laid new tarmac into what was once verge, but which had been completely degraded. This means that not only are the previously existing village verges being taken out, replaced with tarmac, but if this continues, it is likely that bit-by-bit the verges are going to be further destroyed."

Adrian Hardman was asked if he could review this with Worcestershire Highways so the line of the existing verges could be protected in future.

On a related matter, another resident emailed the Parish Council to complain about being disturbed by the early Sunday morning start by the workmen doing the resurfacing. A question was raised as to who had requested the early start and whether this was of benefit to the majority of village residents. Discussions on this continue.

◆ Full Fibre Broadband

As reported previously, the government's stated ambition has been to roll out full fibre to the majority of the country, although it was recognised that rural communities could be delayed by several years as they were less commercially attractive. The Parish Council's role has therefore been to secure the installation of a full fibre infrastructure for Birlingham (alongside the existing copper connections). Airband were already very active in Worcestershire and we were able to work with Worcestershire County Council to add Birlingham to the infrastructure planned in Pershore, Bredon, Eckington and Defford. This gives residents choice – between full fibre or remaining with their existing copper service.

Since the last update in January, there has been a pause in the work to build the fibre infrastructure in both Birlingham and Defford. This was while Airband raised further funding from its investors and focussed resources on paid contracts rather than speculative work. According to news reports that funding has now been secured and Airband have again been seen working in the village. There are 72 properties that can be connected to their service and the remainder of the infrastructure is expected to be completed later this year. If you are thinking of signing up it's important that you make an informed decision by talking to other users, as recent customers have seen a deterioration in the service which appears to coincide with Airband's re-

financing. As with all new infrastructure projects this is likely to be resolved with time, particularly as the infrastructure is opened up to other ISPs offering even further choice.

◆ District Councillor's Report – Paul Middlebrough

A full copy of his report will be included in the minutes. However here is a short summary:

- 2024/25 Budget & Money Plan to 2028/29. The budget for 2024/25 has been agreed at £12,852,000 which results in a Band D council tax increase of £5, resulting in Band D council tax being £125.08. This is the first rise in Wychavon's council tax for 6 years and reflects the challenges of increases costs and demands for services.
- Second Homes Premium. Following the Royal assent of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill, councils are now allowed to levy additional council tax on houses designated as second homes. Second Homes currently pay the same in council tax as first homes. The Bill allows a levy of an additional 100% charge (so 200% in total). The changes have to be made with twelve months' notice, so will not come in until the 2025/26 bills.

◆ Tree Warden's report

- The dead trees around the church have now been removed.
- Sycamore on corner by cricket pitch. The landowner has agreed that the potentially dangerous limbs will be removed but due to the TPO the council is requesting additional photos before permission is given.
- Limes up the Hill on verge Sheep Field/Upper End. The landowner has agreed to get a tree surgeon to look at them. Also need to clarify whether the TPO extends to these trees or not.

◆ Lengthsman's report

- The 30mph repeater sign on Shorthill has faded and needs replacing.
- The fence at the sewage pumping station on Grange Road has been crushed by something and damaged.

◆ Communities Together – village organisation meeting

Following the Communities Together Event held by Wychavon DC, a meeting was arranged for village groups to meet with Branwen Bingle, the Communities Officer at WDC. Representatives from the Village Hall Committee, Friends' of St James Church, PCC, Jubilee Committee and the Parish Council attended. The purpose was to better understand funding that might be available for the different groups and the criteria and timing for any expression of interest. Councillor Katie Parsons has agreed to co-ordinate interest on behalf of the groups and agree next steps with Branwen Bingle, who was thanked for giving up her evening to attend the meeting.

Full minutes of the Parish Council meeting will be posted on the village website shortly.

Friends of St James' Church AGM

Charity Registration Number 1094752

Monday 22nd April

The Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held on Monday 22nd April in St James' Church at 6.00pm. All are welcome to attend. Light refreshments will be served.

The agenda for the meeting, accounts for 2023 and reports from the Chair, Treasurer and Trustees are included on this and the following pages.

FRIENDS OF ST JAMES'S CHURCH BIRLINGHAM	
Charity Registration number 1094752	
The Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held on Monday 22nd April 2024 in St James's Church at 6.00pm	
AGENDA	
Welcome and apologies	
1. To approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 27th March 2023.	
2. To receive the Chair's Report for the year ended 31st December 2023.	
3. To receive and approve the Accounts and Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31st December 2023.	
4. To elect Trustees.	
5. To elect a President, Chair, Treasurer and Secretary.	
6. To appoint an Independent Examiner for the year ended 31st December 2024.	
7. Any other business.	

Friends of St James' Birlingham Chair's Report 2023-24

Overall, it has been a successful year for the Friends, but we will need to increase our efforts in the future if we are to continue to support the church effectively.

The early date of last year's AGM meant I could not record the welcome fact that the Snowdrop Teas produced a record income in 2023. Despite the challenges facing visitors even getting to Birlingham as floods closed Eckington Bridge on two weekends (and Pershore Bridge one weekend), we came closer to repeating this record in 2024 than we had ever expected. Sadly, Caryl Mills has concluded she must stand down from the task of managing the Teas and this was her last year. We owe Caryl a huge debt of thanks. A key task for the new committee will be to put in place arrangements to ensure the Teas continue in 2025 and beyond; they are both a vital fundraiser for the Friends and an important shop window for Birlingham, when we welcome so many visitors seeking inspiration from the beautiful array of snowdrops in the Churchyard of St James' and from the magnificent displays inside the church itself.

I am also glad to be able to report that, in addition to the contributions of the Friends to various items of maintenance, the updating of the flood lighting of the tower has been completed, both reducing its environmental impact (on wildlife and carbon emissions) and improving its safety. I have received many favourable comments from residents and visitors on the way this new lighting enhances the appearance of the village after dark. We have also approved funding to improve the lighting in the area of the font, enhancing the welcome offered to visitors and making social gatherings brighter and more enjoyable too.

Receipts and Payments Account Year ending 31 December 2023		
	2022	2023
Opening balance as at 1st January		
Lloyds Bank	34,548.74	31,594.28
CCLA	4,307.38	4,349.41
Scottish Widows	5,189.20	5,194.39
	<u>44,045.32</u>	<u>41,138.08</u>
Receipts		
Subscriptions	1,165.00	1,145.98
Fund Raising (snowdrops)	568.92	1,326.34
Fund Raising (Bulb Teas)	2,200.41	3,612.62
HMRC Refunds	755.98	324.93
Donations TTH	0.00	323.39
Interest	47.22	209.85
Total Receipts	<u>4,737.53</u>	<u>6,943.11</u>
Payments		
Printing	0.00	0.00
Floodlight	0.00	3,214.56
Fund Raising (snowdrops)	626.40	0.00
Church Maintenance	380.00	4,027.64
Opening Up work (architect, pipes, water etc)	6,638.37	0.00
Expenses TTH	0.00	199.92
Total Payments	<u>7,644.77</u>	<u>7,442.12</u>
Surplus for the year	<u>-2,907.24</u>	<u>-499.01</u>
Closing balances as at 31 December 2023		
Lloyds Bank	31,594.28	36,099.05
COIF	4,349.41	4,540.02
Scottish Widows	5,194.39	0.00
	<u>41,138.08</u>	<u>40,639.07</u>

Our social event, to "Toast the Harvest", which had to be cancelled last year due to the period of mourning for Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, was reinstated in September 2023. I am grateful to all the committee members who contributed to the success of the evening which attracted over fifty villagers and, despite being planned primarily as an expression of thanks to our supporters, also made a modest but useful profit.

A small sub-committee led by Andrew Jowett has developed new funding ideas, several of which we will consider further in the light of our recent conclusion that, in an average year, we need to raise about £6,000 to sustain the fabric of the church and churchyard. It is our broad intention that a third of this should come from membership subscriptions, a third from the Snowdrop Teas and a third from other fundraising.

Thanks to the expertise of both Andrew Jowett and Martin Frost, the Friends have also agreed to provide advice and assistance to the PCC with the care and maintenance of the church fabric and with applications for the necessary faculties, where they are needed. An early test of this is currently under way in the shape of the repairs necessary to the tower to prevent further falls of masonry.

As the Treasurer's report will show, membership of the Friends is good, and we are fortunate to have a large group of supporters. However, there has been a further decline since the previous year, due in part to a significant turnover in the village's population, but also to the lack of a drive to win new members. This reminds us of

the need to reach out regularly to the whole village to encourage all residents to support the work that must be done to keep our beautiful church and churchyard looking as they do. A membership drive is an urgent priority for the new committee.

I am, as ever, immensely grateful to the committee for all their work and in particular to Jayne Mackenzie, our highly efficient secretary and to our new Treasurer, Paul Burton. Jayne has indicated that she will not be seeking re-election, so with some considerable regret, I express our very sincere thanks for her remarkable and cheerful efficiency, which we will miss greatly. Happily, I believe, and as we should see when we come to elections, a very capable successor has been found.

Maryanne Dyer has also indicated that she wishes to stand down as our President. She has made a remarkable contribution to the work of the Friends and although we will miss her from the Committee, I am sure she will continue to support us in many other ways. Her enthusiasm and ambition for the Friends have been invaluable and my final words in this year's report are of much gratitude to her.

Peter Luff
March 2024

<p>Friends of St James's, Birlingham</p> <p>Treasurer's Report – Calendar Year 2023</p> <p>The new Treasurer took over after the 2023 AGM, but it took a little longer to transfer the signatories for Lloyds and for the CCLA. Thanks must be given to Ian Yates the previous Treasurer for his immaculate filing and most useful spreadsheets.</p> <p>It was agreed that to simplify matters that the Scottish Widows be closed and the funds transferred to the Lloyds Business Account. This left the Friends with a Lloyds Business Account and a CCLA account (see yearly summary).</p> <p>Income was up significantly at £6943.11 over the 2022 income of £4737.53. This significant increase is due to very successful Snowdrop Teas and the sale of snowdrops.</p> <p>Subscriptions were at a similar level to 2022 at £1,145.98. With only 36 donors this year compared with 43 in the previous year, continuing the downward trend.</p> <p>The total expenditure was slightly less at £7,442.12 compared with £7,644.77 in 2022. The major expenditures were on the tower floodlighting and church maintenance (electrical and masonry). However the income less expenditure was negative.</p> <p>Overall reserves were down slightly from £41,138.08 to £40,639.07</p>
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<p>Report of the Trustees</p> <p>The members of the Executive Committee as Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ending 31st December 2023.</p> <p>Objects</p> <p>The aims of the Trust are to promote the Christian religion by assisting the maintenance, repair, preservation, improvement, beautification and reconstruction for the benefit of the public of the fabric of the Parish Church of Birlingham in the Diocese of Worcester.</p> <p>Activities</p> <p>These are detailed in the Chair's report for the year.</p> <p>Trustees</p> <p>The following served as trustees and members of the Executive Committee during the year. P Luff (Chair). P Burton (Treasurer). J Mackenzie (Secretary). M Dyer (President). Rev'd C Lording (ex officio). C Mills. A Woodward. I Yates. S Hayward. A Jowett. M Frost.</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>Income was £6943.11 in comparison with £4737.53 in the previous year. Expenditure was £7442.12 producing a deficit of -£499.01 compared with a deficit of -£2907.24 in 2022. At the year end the bank balances totalled £40,639.07 (2022 was £41,138.08) of which £1,000 was Endowment Capital.</p> <p>Reserves</p> <p>The appropriate level of reserves is considered each year by the Trustees.</p> <p>Investment Policy</p> <p>The Trust's reserves are all held in current and deposit accounts which provide an acceptable level of security.</p> <p>Risk</p> <p>The Trustees consider that the measures in place are adequate to protect the assets of the Trust.</p> <p>Public Interest</p> <p>The Trust seeks to maintain the ancient listed church which is an important feature in the centre of the parish and as such is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. From time to time the Trustees run events which are open to the general public and help to promote community spirit.</p>



Pershore viewed from Rough Hill
orchard, 17th March
(Photo: June Hiden)

Letters to the Editors

We welcome brief letters to the Editors on any subject relating to Birlingham. The Editors reserve the right to shorten letters and we cannot guarantee that all letters will be printed.

Please send letters to:

news@birlingham.org

Planning Applications

The following planning application has been determined by Wychavon District Council:

The Grange, Grange Road: Proposed single storey orangery with roof terrace and single storey link (Case No. W/23/01919/HP). **Approved.** Full details and conditions can be viewed on the Wychavon DC website at:

<https://plan.wychavon.gov.uk/Planning/Display/W/23/01919/HP>

The Parish Council comments are available at:

http://www.birlingham.org/pc_info/pc_comments_23_01919.pdf

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Personal Ads

Personal adverts should consist of one paragraph of text, maximum 100 words, and will be included in a single issue of Birlingham News. Please note that advertisement text will be published exactly as received. Personal ads should be sent to news@birlingham.org no later than the Monday before publication. Birlingham News is published on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month.

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Dates for your diary

March

Sun 31 Easter Day Holy Communion, 10.30am, St James' Church

April

Wed 3 Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall

Sun 14 Tree Service, 10.30am, The Court House

Wed 17 Annual Parochial Church Meeting, 6.30pm, St James' Church

Thu 18 Birlingham IW, 7.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall

Mon 22 Friends of St James' Church AGM, 6.00pm, St James' Church

May

Wed 1 Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall

Thu 2 Election of West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner

Sun 12 Pet Service, 3.00pm, St James' Church

Wed 15 Birlingham Parish Council Annual Meeting, 7.00pm, Birlingham Village Hall (followed by Parish Council Meeting at 7.30pm)

Thu 16 Birlingham IW, 7.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall

Birlingham News online is available at www.birlingham.org. Details of future editions will be emailed to subscribers of Birlingham News. These emails are available to residents of Birlingham, their families and friends. If you know anyone who would like to receive these emails, or have any comments or items for inclusion in either the email or online edition of Birlingham News, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please write to news@birlingham.org.

Birlingham News online is open to any organisation or business within the parish to promote events. Inclusion of an event does not imply that Birlingham Jubilee Committee supports either the event or the views of the organisation promoting it.

The copy date for the next edition is Monday 8th April (for publication on Wednesday 10th April). We regret that we cannot guarantee to include any items submitted after that date.

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