Birlingham News

Published on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month

No. 379[2] Wednesday 27th May 2026

Editorial

This week is one for breaking records, it seems. Monday saw the highest ever May temperature; in Birlingham it was 32°C. This was only a couple of degrees lower than the 34.8°C measured in Kew Gardens, the hottest May temperature since records began in 1884. This UK record was broken again yesterday, with 35.1°C in Kew.

Meanwhile this edition of *Birlingham News*, at 13 pages, is the largest ever.

So find yourself a shady spot to escape the heat and settle down for a few minutes to catch up with all the latest village news.

David Caldicott

Enid and family would like to thank everyone most sincerely for the cards, flowers and messages of sympathy received following the sad death of David.

Thank you,
Enid

David died on Thursday 23rd April, peacefully at home. He had lived in Birlingham for 35 years at Merriview, Upper End, with his wife Enid. He will be greatly missed. The funeral took place on Tuesday 12th May at the Vale Crematorium.

St James' Church



Churchwardens: Adrianne Woodward & Pat Chinneck
(Tel. 01386 750936)

We have two events during the coming fortnight:

* A welcome is extended to all to attend St James' on Sunday 31st May at 10.30am for a **Benefice Eucharist**, which means that the service which normally is held at that time in the Abbey is now being held in St James'. Canon Claire Lording will be leading the service and James MacDowell Scott, the Director of Music at the Abbey, will be the organist. The Abbey Choir will also be there to enhance the service by their singing. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Village Hall.
* St James extends an invitation to all to attend their annual Hymns and Pimms service on Sunday 7th June at 3.00pm. This year several poems are being included in the service, including 'Blame the Vicar' read by Canon Claire, hence the new service title, **Hymns, Pimms and Poems**. We are also fortunate to have James MacDowell Scott, Director of Music at the Abbey, as our organist again. Do come along and enjoy the fellowship on this June afternoon.

Cuppa & Chat

Wednesday 3rd June *by Sue Hermon*



The next Cuppa & Chat will be held on Wednesday 3rd June from 3.00pm to 4.30pm in Birlingham Village Hall. Villagers past and present are most welcome to come along to meet new arrivals or catch up with old acquaintances.

There will be tea, coffee and a selection of cakes and the cost is still only £3.00 per head, which includes a chance to win the mystery prize!

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



Music Night

Saturday 30th May, 7.30pm till late

by Chris Hermon

There are still a few tickets left, so come along to the Village Hall on Saturday night. Mel and Him are back by popular demand and will be playing fabulous music from the rock and roll years to hits of today, with the Eighties being their speciality.

Tickets are £10 and available from Chris Hermon on 07796 070310. Bring your own drinks and nibbles.

There will be a raffle too! Great prizes and all in aid of the Village Hall.

St James' Church, Birlingham

HYMNS, PIMMS & POEMS



SUNDAY 7 JUNE
3.00PM
ST JAMES' CHURCH

Come along to our special informal service,
led by Canon Claire Lording and with guest organist
James MacDowall-Scott - Pershore Abbey's Director of Music

Glasses of Pimms will be served and replenished during the service.
Other non-alcoholic drinks will be available.

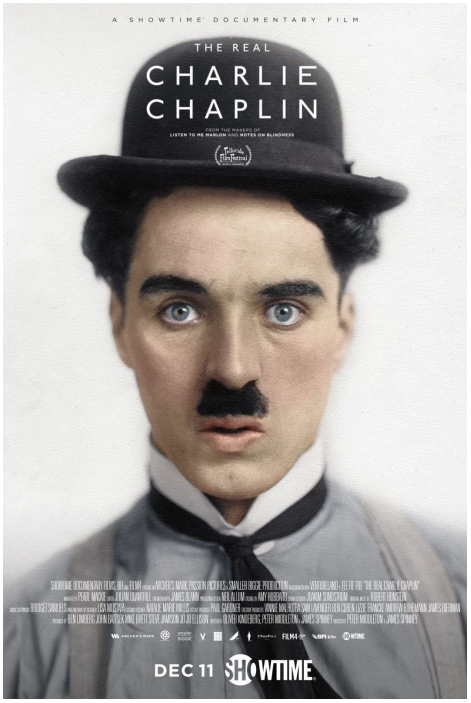
ALL WELCOME

MOUSTACHE OF THE MONTH

NO. 1 *RESULTS*

BY HAIRY SPOTTER





DID YOU NAME THIS FAMOUS MOUSTACHIST?

We are pleased to announce the winner of this month's Moustache of the Month competition is

Adrianne Woodward

Lucky Adrianne wins a year's supply of moustache care products courtesy of

The Birlingham Moustache Salon

Be sure to enter next month to be in with a chance of winning another stunning prize from a local supplier.

The answer is of course Charlie Chaplin.

Advertisement Feature

The Birlingham Moustache Salon

Cutting – Perming – Colouring

Latest styles available

Confidential consultations with a fully-trained Moustachist

No more fluffy appendages

Be confident again

Call today for free initial consultation

Ladies welcome

Disclaimer

I wish to make it clear that as the proprietor of *Esprit de Corps* salon in Birlingham I have no connection, real or imagined, with Birlingham Moustache Salon.

I wish to publish notice disassociating myself from this enterprise making it clear that I personally do not undertake this kind of treatment at my salon.

In fact I have never even heard of the place. I deny all knowledge of the owner.

I don't wish to be associated with him. He is an idiot

Jayne Brassington
Salon Esprit de Corps

West Mercia POLICE

Safer Neighbourhood Team Community Catch-up Sessions

by Joanne Rice & Rebekah Ashley, Police Community Support Officers, Pershore

Your local Safer Neighbourhood Team are holding two Community Catch-up sessions:

Thursday 28th May, 11.30am – Pershore Wellbeing Hub (4 High Street, opposite the Angel Hotel)

Monday 1st June, 1.30-2.30pm – Number 8 (High Street, Pershore)

Please take this opportunity to raise any concerns you may have and to find out what we are doing to tackle the issues that matter to you.

Everyone is welcome and it would be great to see you there. For more information please contact Pershore Safter Neighbourhood Team – pershoretown.snt@westmercia.police.uk.

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Spring Wildlife in Birlingham



'My first day out': a blue tit that had fledged from its nest a few minutes earlier, in a garden in Lower End, 15th May

(Photo: Chris Reynard)



'Saying goodbye to mum': a blue tit fledgling from the same nest the following day, 16th May

(Photo: Kate Edwards)



Bees at work in Sherpool Lane, 17th May

(Photo: June Hiden)



Pheasant in flight near Bakers Bridge, 10th April

(Photo: Peter Luff)

Annual Parish Meeting

The Birlingham Annual Parish Meeting took place on Wednesday 20th May. The meeting received annual reports from the following:

- The Chairman, Councillor Ian Yates
- County Councillor Adrian Hardman
- District Councillor Paul Middlebrough
- Footpath Warden, Bruce Haywood
- Birlingham Village Hall
- Birlingham Cuppa & Chat
- Harriet Baldwin MP
- The Jubilee Committee

These reports are reproduced below.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – PARISH MEETING MAY 2026

This report is a summary of some of the many activities that have taken place over the last 12 months.

Members of the Parish Council
The following were members of the Parish Council between May 2025 and May 2026 except where stated:

- Ian Yates – Chair
- Paula Aston – Vice Chair and Financial Support Officer
- Steven Byrne – Lead for the Planning Group
- David Glover – Lead for Community funding
- Rupert Day – Tree warden and Lead for 20 is Plenty
- Michael Porter – (resigned January 2026 and was thanked for his many years of service on the Parish Council)

Under the council's scheme of delegation Carl Brassington was re-appointed as Lengthsman until his retirement in December 2025. Carl was thanked at the March 2026 Parish Council meeting for his long service to the village. His replacement will be Kevin LeMarechal who is currently undergoing statutory training and should be available to start in June 2026. Bruce Hayward was reappointed as Footpath Warden (ably supported by Mark Smith) and Rupert Day as Tree Warden. June Hiden agreed to continue as Clerk for the 20th year in a row! We are very grateful to everyone who volunteers their time in support of the Parish Council and I would like to thank everyone above who has given their time for the benefit of the parish.

I would also like to thank the following; County Councillor Adrian Hardman, for his help with arranging funding for various village projects and District Councillor Paul Middlebrough. It is much appreciated that they find time to attend our meetings whenever possible. Thanks also to Steve Morris who continues to develop and maintain the village website, including a page for the Parish Council and amongst his many activities heading up the Jubilee Committee and *Birlingham News*.

Parish Council Vacancies
There are two vacancies on the Parish Council following Katie Parsons' resignation in March 2025 and Michael Porter's in December 2025. If you are interested in joining, please contact June Hiden, the Parish Clerk, birlingham_clerk@yahoo.co.uk.

Parish Council Financials
The Parish Council discussed the budget for 2026/27 which sets the precept for the year. It took into account funding for various projects in discussion. It decided not to increase the precept. However due to a small decrease in the 'tax base' for Birlingham this zero £ increase appeared as a 2.3% increase on residents' council tax bills. A reduction in the council tax base can occur for several reasons, such as single person discounts, exempt categories or an increase in empty properties. All will reduce the overall tax base.

My thanks to Councillor Paula Aston and Clerk June Hiden for their management of the parish finances.

Full Fibre Broadband (Fibre to the Premise)
A great many hours were spent by members of the Parish Council in order to secure the installation of full fibre to most of Birlingham and this was completed at the end of 2024. However the rollout of Airband's full fibre service was not trouble free with some residents expressing frustration over a lack of reliability. During 2025 most of these issues were resolved, having identified problems with one of the two routers supplied by Airband. Not all residents are using the service but those that are seem satisfied with the higher speeds and improved quality. The fibre infrastructure future-proofs internet and voice communications for the village as OpenReach begin to switch off and remove the traditional copper telephone cables.

Consultation on Potential Community Infrastructure Projects
The Parish Council has funding available within its Community and Projects provisions for projects within the village. In addition we are in receipt of a Community Infrastructure Levy payment of £1543.91 paid by WDC to Birlingham Parish Council as a Neighbourhood Fund. The money can be spent on the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure and is available to help fund any village community group projects.

Following feedback from a questionnaire that was sent out to villagers at the end of 2025 a number of ideas were discussed. Some have been eliminated as not required at this time (new village marquee). Others were impractical (restoration of signpost, padel/pickleball equipment) and some need further costings (Village Hall sign).

My thanks to Councillor David Glover for his work on this.

20 is Plenty
The work this year followed on from the work done in 2024 to address resident concerns. The Parish Council wrote to the Cabinet member responsible for highways and transport at Worcestershire County Council asking him to explain why our proposal for a 20mph limit was rejected. Also that under the last administration it appeared that WCC was not, in any way, aligned with the National Guidance on the issue of assessing speed limits and the Parish Council wondered whether this is something that he might review.

It was also agreed that 20mph advisory signs would be erected at key points on access roads, a common practice in

many local villages. We were pleased that it had the full support of Red Star with their direction signs were updated to include the advisory limit. Initial feedback from residents in Upper End indicated that motorists were heeding the advisory limit.

Further work was done to identify hauliers ignoring Red Star's transport policy by entering the village before 6.00am. The farm were happy to receive photographic evidence we provided and they were helpful and proactive in contacting the haulage companies concerned to remind them of the Traffic Policy first published in 2018. This made clear the correct route to enter and exit the village, the need for drivers to be careful and considerate and avoid damage to verges and roadside posts, that no vehicles should park on access roads to the village and that HGVs must not arrive in the early hours of the morning as the farm does not open before 6.00am.

We also got agreement from Worcestershire County Council Highways Department to repaint the roundels in Upper End and on New Barn Road in the spring of 2026.

My thanks to Councillor Rupert Day for leading this project.

Changes To Councils

On 31 March 2028 Wychavon District Council, along with Wyre Forest, Worcester City, Redditch, Malvern Hills and Bromsgrove councils, as well as Worcestershire County Council, will cease to exist.

The Parish Council was invited to comment on the Local Government Reorganisation. There are two options under consideration:

- One Worcestershire – a single unitary authority currently supported by Worcester County Council and Wyre Forest DC. Their proposal can be found here: One Worcestershire Proposal.
- Transforming Worcestershire – two authorities, one in the North and one in the South of Worcestershire, currently supported by District Councils in Bromsgrove, Malvern, Redditch, Wychavon and Worcester City Council. Their proposal can be found here: LGR - Transforming Worcestershire FINAL 27.11.25 REDUCED1.pdf.

Paul Middlebrough gave a talk on Transforming Worcester and Councillor Adam Kent, Conservative Group Leader at WCC and Birlingham resident, did the same for One Worcester.

Understanding the impact of these changes is important as it is said that Parish Councils will be required to take on some local services and activities although how this will be funded is not yet clear.

Planning

Multiple planning applications in Birlingham were discussed during the year and comments sent to the LPA at Wychavon. The application for up to 9 houses on Eckington Road was the most controversial, resulting in a large number of comments from residents.

The Parish Council continues to monitor changes to legislation and provide input where necessary.

My thanks to Councillor Steven Byrne for his help and guidance on planning matters.

Swan's Neck

The Parish Council continued to be an interface to farming activities in the village.

Everyone is familiar with the felling of the poplar trees in 2023, the fencing off of land that GWR own and the planting of new trees which resulted in a reduction in the grassed area that residents could use to enjoy views of the river. During fencing, the farm realised that if they fenced all the way to the riverbank, it would be impossible for boats to moor at Swan's Neck. So, they granted the Avon Navigation Trust (ANT) a license for a 2-metre strip of land and removed the new fencing that would have marked the edge of the 2-metre strip to give villagers a larger area to enjoy. This was marked by a permissive sign. While clearing the area inside their fence which was heavily overgrown GWR kindly agreed to also clear the area under the withy trees to open it up for villagers.

Due to the smaller grassed area at Swan's Neck, the large ANT sign was very dominant, sitting in the middle of the view, so the Parish Council contacted ANT to see if it could be relocated. As a result the sign was taken down and following agreement with GWR will be moved back against their fenced boundary where it will not block the view.

In conclusion, within the constraints of its budget, the Parish Council has been able to carry out a large programme of activities on behalf of villagers and the community.

Ian Yates
Chairman, Birlingham Parish Council

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT, 20th May 2026

It is a genuine privilege and honour to represent the Bredon division. I'm proud of this area, proud of the strength of our communities, and proud of the way residents care deeply about where they live. That pride is exactly why I believe it's important to speak honestly with you tonight.

From April, residents across Worcestershire have seen their council tax rise by 8.98%. That is a substantial increase, and I fully recognise the pressure this places on households at a time when many people are already struggling with the cost of living. This is a stark contrast to Wychavon District who froze the tax this year.

What concerns me most is that this increase is being asked of residents without Worcestershire County Council having a current corporate plan in place. A corporate plan should set out a clear vision for the Council: what our priorities are, how decisions are made, what outcomes we are aiming for, and how success is measured. Without that, it becomes much harder for residents to see what they are being asked to pay more for, and how these decisions fit into a long-term strategy.

The main driver behind the council tax increase is pressure on demand-led services—particularly Adults' Social Care, Children's Services, SEND provision, and transport. These are vital services, supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our county.

At present, around 76.5% of the Council's budget is spent on services supporting roughly 2.5% of the population. Those residents deserve care, protection and dignity – but the scale of this spend shows how critical it is that we get planning, prevention and early intervention right.

My concern is that we do not currently have a clear, published strategy for how demand in these services will be managed or reduced over time. Without that, we risk repeating

the same cycle year after year: rising demand, rising costs, emergency savings, and higher council tax. Residents deserve better than short-term firefighting. Added to this tale of woe, Reform are engaged in an internal power struggle and have decided to change leader and Cabinet at the Council in May. This has triggered a degree of instability in my case as I was going to be Cabinet member for Finance in a new coalition of various parties. This not taking place now.

I was Chair of the Hereford and Worcester Local Government Pension Fund, and Chair of the Investment Committee, and we have made progress over the past three years and now have £4.8 billion under management. Following our triannual valuation we have been able to reduce again the employer's contribution rate to 14%. We have as a fund an aim to reduce it to the same level as employees. This reduction of some £2.4M made up 24% of Reform's saving this financial year! I was pleased to see the Lords resist mandating by Government in the Pensions Bill. It is not their money but our schemes members', underwritten by our Council Taxpayers. Alas I am not longer Chair, but after more years than I wish to recall on this committee I leave at the top.

Moving on to matters closer to home; many of you will be aware of the ongoing pressure in the context of significant planned housing growth – figures of around 1000 new homes annually is the government target set for Wychavon. Housing growth of that scale brings real consequences for the County Council: pressure on school places, increasing health demand, rising home-to-school transport costs, and strain on infrastructure. Families feel these pressures long before solutions are delivered. The new local plan sadly includes 500 new homes in Bredons Hardwick, which will add to more traffic through Eckington. The Tewkesbury Garden Town did not make the government's list but appears to be continuing even though Junction 9 is 20% over capacity, and no solution to the A46 is in sight. On top of these cross-border numbers, we will be seeing a large new town by Junction 7, and this will lead to more traffic, which could well be wanting to travel south. This is why I continue to search for a solution to the Eckington bridge question, and am pleased we have the funding to consider solutions.

As is normal, after such a wet winter we are seeing some potholes, but I keep pressing on road resurfacing, and last month we surface dressed in the area to keep up standards. The most pressing issue is dealing with the backlog in solving drainage collapses in the area. I also have had a social care issue in the village, which has been resolved. The changes in Education appear to be on track, and I was pleased to be able to get the Defford School fundraising committee a grant for their plans. I am pleased that we have been able to cut right back to the hedgeline on the A road stretch down to the Bow Brook, and thank the Parish Council for its efforts to improve road safety. We have also launched Demand Response Buses, which I hope is solving some of the issues raised last year. I have also been able to fund a series of small grants to Birlingham organisations.

The Government seems to be determined to create a series of unitary councils on the grounds of efficiency and cost saving, with an elected mayor over a sub region. I have enormous respect for the staff working in challenging services, and I recognise the scale of the issues councils face nationally but this change is influencing Worcestershire, as I see talent is moving either out of public service or to calmer council waters.

I am proud to represent Bredon Hill, I will continue to raise and try to solve the issues you raise with me on your behalf. Thanks for the trust you place in me to represent this wonderful area.

Adrian Hardman
County Councillor for the Bredon Division

WYCHAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

The story of the last municipal year and the coming year for Birlingham residents from Wychavon's viewpoint.

During the year Wychavon has continued and will continue to serve Birlingham through running an efficient council as expected by residents.

Unfortunately, the Reform-led County Council has tried to undermine this by increasing their share of your council tax by 9%. Whilst the Conservative County Councillors opposed this massive increase, it was disappointing that the Labour County Councillors and the Liberal Democrat County Councillors did not oppose the increase.

Planning

The planning service is terribly busy with many applications coming in across the district. The applications for the Eckington Ward are shown below.

The review of the South Worcestershire Development Plan which started before COVID has now been completed and adopted by the Council. This means the Council has a five-year land supply. Whether this continues depends on changes to housing allocations the Government may announce over the next few months. The Infrastructure Development Plan within the SWDPR will ensure that based on current housing numbers it will be sufficient to support the services that residents will need.

Two planning issues stand out as being exciting challenges.

- The process and plans to develop the fire damaged Raven site in Droitwich.
- The demolition and redevelopment of central Evesham following Wychavon's purchase of the Riverside Centre.

	Besford	Birlingham	Defford	Eckington	Strensham	Total
Planning Applications	10	**14**	11	27	12	**74**
Approved	8	**11**	7	21	7	**54**
Refused	0	**1**		1	0	**2**
Withdrawn	0	**1**		3	0	**4**
Pending decision	2	**1**	4	2	5	**14**

	Wychavon Councillors	Worcestershire County Councillors	Unitary authority
Election 6th May 2027	None Wychavon May 2027 elections postponed, existing Councillors continue in office until 31st March 2028	None	Yes Councillors elected become the shadow authority with powers to prepare the Unitary Authority to be ready to come into existence on 1st April 2028
31st March 2028	Wychavon District Council abolished	Worcestershire County Council abolished	
1st April 2028			Vesting Day. Unitary Authority comes into existence on 1st April 2028

Local Government Reorganisation

During the year Wychavon supported the creation of a South Worcestershire unitary authority to run the services currently operated by both the County Council and Wychavon District Council. This approach had the support of our residents.

Whether this happens is in the hands of the Government and will be announced in June or July coming. The Government will decide if the South Worcestershire unitary authority goes ahead or a single unitary for the whole of Worcestershire.

On the basis that change is coming, the timetable is shown above.

There will be Parish Council elections on 6th May 2027.

Wychavon Finances

Wychavon budget remains healthy and can cope whether or not reorganisation happens and the budget has focus on updating the 'We Are Wychavon' Plan to improve lives across the district through three priorities: People, Place and Environment. To this end:

- Wychavon's council tax was frozen this year and will be frozen next year.
- A new fund for residents and businesses has £5 million available and in June there will be proposals on how this is to be spent.
- The Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund has stopped but Wychavon have set aside £500,000 for small grants to support community groups, enhance biodiversity and improve the energy efficiency of local buildings.

Future Delivery of Waste and Street Cleansing Services

Our current contractors FCC had chosen not to renew the current contract. Options have been reviewed for service delivery after 31st March 2028, when the contract ends, and it has been decided that bringing the service in-house was the best way forward. This approach gives the greatest flexibility for any future unitary council to make changes. The new service will cover waste collection, street cleansing and food waste collection.

Paul Middlebrough
District Councillor for the Eckington Ward

The Forge
Church Lane
Norton WR5 2PS

Paul.middlebrough@btinternet.com
Paul.middlebrough@wychavon.net

Birlingham Footpath Warden's Annual Report, May 2026

Birlingham has two volunteers who, together with local landowners and others (such as the Avon Navigation Trust), provide basic maintenance on the Parish footpaths on behalf of the County Council. Any larger jobs and those near public highways are undertaken by the County Council themselves.

The County Council will meet any small expenses incurred by the volunteers, and will supply 'furniture' (gates, stiles etc.) that needs to be replaced; they also provide an annual strimming service for certain paths which are difficult to maintain.

The main work in the past year for the volunteers has been the controlling/clearing of undergrowth.

At each Parish Council meeting a report is made of work undertaken during the previous two months and any other footpath-related issues.

All the footpaths in Worcestershire are shown on the Public Rights of Way web map which is maintained by the County Council Countryside Service; visit:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/countryside

and click on *Public Rights of Way* and then *Interactive Map*. (There is a link from the village website).

If anyone has any concerns or suggestions regarding the footpaths in the Parish, please contact me at Tadpole Cottage, or via the Parish Clerk.

Bruce Hayward
Birlingham Footpath Warden

Birlingham Village Hall – Chair's Report 2025

The Bookings

True to our remit of providing a space for community activities and learning we have managed to increase the bookings at Birlingham Village Hall (BVH) during 2025.

This includes chair-based exercise classes on most Wednesday mornings and a Parkinson's exercise class on Wednesday afternoons. This has meant some rearrangements once a month to accommodate the setting up of Cuppa and Chat. We are grateful to Cuppa and Chat organisers for the flexibility during the change over between groups. The recent introduction of weekly Taekwondo sessions on Tuesday evenings is also a welcome addition both for the Hall and a younger cohort of users.

These activities make a good fit with existing sessions including Tuesday morning's Art Group, Friday evening's karate, the monthly Independent Women (IW) and Pershore Patcher's meetings together with the Three Little Pigs craft classes held over many weekends throughout the year.

There have been parties and wakes (at least 5) and the Hall played its usual role as a Polling Station in May.

Birlingham's Bulb Teas were spectacularly successful this year for the Friends of St James' as was the Joint Quiz night, which raised money for both BVH and FoSJ.

On behalf of all the BVH Trustees, I thank Chris Hermon and Angela Fitch for organising the first Birlingham Music Night, a sold-out event, which raised £800 for the Village Hall. The second Music Night is scheduled for Saturday 30th May 2026.

The Village Hall (founded 1925)

The Hall itself continues to be a superb facility thanks in no small part to those who have gone before us raising monies and working hard to provide the present excellent facilities; we stand on their shoulders!

In February 2025, as a result of grant funding from Wychavon District Council, we were able to upgrade the general lighting in the Hall to include dimmable, colour changeable LED lighting which replaced the ageing inefficient mercury vapour lamps and the largely ineffective track lights. At the same time stratification fans were installed to improve heating/cooling and also to reduce the Hall's carbon footprint.

Work has been undertaken to rectify a leak in the kitchen roof, leaving some relatively minor repair work to the wall affected. There are some minor pipework issues needing attention, but apart from those the hall is in good condition.

The Trust continues to maintain the defibrillator with the assistance of Pershore First Responders, who have added a 'Stab Kit' to the box. Expenses for replacement parts continue to be shared between the Hall and Parish Council.

The Future

As fuel prices continue to rise, the cost of running an ageing oil -fired boiler is likely to hit income and reserves harder than in previous years. Advice is being sought as to the best available option and a cost-effective long-term way forward.

Lastly I would like to thank Ken Fitch and the committee for their support whilst I was indisposed in the autumn.

The Worcestershire CALC (County Association of Local Councils) meeting on 14 May 2026

I attended this meeting as Chair of the Village Hall. The meeting was for Parish Councillors, Clerks and village hall Chairs. It was looking at funding and governance of Village Halls. Interestingly the vast majority of village halls had at least one Parish Councillor on their committees/Trustees.

My take on the majority of the meeting was that we are lucky in Birlingham to have a hall in good condition. We seemed to be the only hall present who didn't have a significant proportion of children using the hall which brought to my mind, and from another speaker, the need to have an up-to-date Safeguarding Policy for when we have events that involve children and vulnerable folk. This policy can be referred to in our booking details for outside organisations using the Hall. It is likely that funding might be more forthcoming in the next couple of years as District Councils unload any capital they have before the move to unitary authorities.

The most import aspect for me was meeting up with a gentlemen called Richard Timney, who is the Community Buildings Officer for an organisation called Community First. Richrd's role is to help village halls with grants and advice. Richard has agreed to spend an afternoon going through all aspects of our Hall, and most importantly look at solutions to our heating issues going forward.

Richard also mentioned the possibility of a £300 grant towards the heating oil this year!

I was left with the feeling that money was not the main problem we in Birlingham faced, more the need to make more and best use of our Hall.

Paul Burton
Chair of Birlingham Village Hall

Cuppa & Chat

Cuppa & Chat was formed 13 years ago on the initiative of Brenda Fletcher, a Village Hall committee member. We hold it on the first Wednesday of the month for villagers, serving tea, coffee and homemade cakes for £3 per person. It is well attended by on average 22 persons. We hold a free raffle each time and a small (hopefully interesting) prize is given.

We are well able to finance Cuppa & Chat from our own funds and received gratefully a grant from Mr Hardman's Community Fund. The price was increased to £3 from £2.50 in June 2024 and there are no plans to increase it further. We hold a Christmas party each year, together with a raffle. Any raffle profit is sent to support the Air Ambulance, a Homeless charity or international disaster charities.

The Committee of 7 plus volunteers – Sue Hermon, Jean Williams, Adrianne Woodward, Ann Maxwell, Jacqueline Griffin, Karen Crowther, Caryl Mills, Carol Sugg making the cakes and including Terry Griffin (who does the heavy tables etc.) – all help set up for the tea. In order to maintain high standards, it would help to have more volunteers to assist us.

We think it is a valuable community asset to the village enabling friendship, discussing local issues and even a spot of gossip now and then.

Thank you.

Val Gilmore
Treasurer, Cuppa & Chat

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP's Annual Report to Parish Councils

Defending Our Rural Area

As family farms across West Worcestershire were suddenly threatened with Inheritance Tax bills, I met with local farmers to show my support and raised their concerns with the Chancellor. The measures as proposed tax our food producers risking thousands of local jobs and our national food security. The Government partially reversed this policy at Christmas and I want to thank all the local groups who took the time to actively campaign against this policy. I still want to see a full reversal of this change, but I fear it will now require a change of Government.

This Government clearly does not understand our rural way of life. There are now proposals to change shotgun licensing processes and to bring in a total ban of trail hunting. Having met with local sporting clubs and local kennels and listened to the strong feedback of local people, I reiterated my support for traditional country pursuits and I oppose any change to the law.

Standing up for flood-hit communities

Our local towns and villages have benefited from a succession of flood defence schemes - at Upton-upon-Severn, Kempsey, Powick, Uckinghall and Pershore. After I made an urgent last-minute intervention with the Floods Minister at Christmas, I was relieved that the Severn Stoke flood defence scheme is now fully-funded and spades should be in the ground soon. I continue to campaign for the permanent flood defences for Tenbury Wells but late last year, I lobbied successfully to ensure that £1.8 million will be spent this year to improve the flood resilience of nearly 200 individual properties in the town.

Championing the local economy and cost of living

Local employers tell me that the choices made by our Chancellor at two Budgets make it harder to grow, to take on new staff and to expand their operations. Our local pubs, high street businesses and food producers have found the last year particularly difficult as they face a fresh round of employer tax, staffing costs and dreaded red tape. After I raised the plight of local pubs, the Chancellor offered a minor concession on their rates. I've also led a successful national campaign to keep the number of Post Offices stable and to use our local Post Office network to deliver more banking services for local people.

Lots of you will be worried about the cost of energy, and I have successfully called for support from the Chancellor for rural households with higher heating oil and LPG bills and swift regulatory action to curtail price gouging by suppliers. Many pensioners who saw their Winter Fuel Payments taken away last Autumn were relieved to see the payments reinstated after I spoke out repeatedly against the change. I also don't think this is the right time for the Chancellor to be increasing fuel duty for the first time in fifteen years.

Being a strong voice in Parliament

In Westminster, the Malvern Hills Bill, which proposes changes to the way the Hills are managed, continues its detailed scrutiny in the House of Lords. I've also been raising Royal Mail delivery problems with senior management, Severn Trent problems with their top brass and mobile signals and superfast broadband connectivity with all the relevant businesses.

As ever, I am happy to take up any issue for local residents and parish councils, so please do not hesitate to contact me on harriett.baldwin.mp@parliament.uk.

Jubilee Committee

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2026

The Jubilee Committee has enjoyed a blissfully peaceful year, with no royal or national occasions to celebrate. Our various subgroups have continued to be active, however.

Birlingham News continues to be published twice a month on the second and fourth Wednesdays, with the average number of downloads over 160. We recently produced the 100th edition of the PDF format.

Thank you to the many people who now contribute articles and photos on a regular basis and Ian Yates for his comprehensive Parish Council reports.

In the last twelve months we have produced a further two issues of the ***Birlingham Bystander***, with the Spring edition just delivered.

The **village website** continues to receive many visitors and earlier this year the total number of visits passed 100,000. We hope to recruit volunteers to help keep it up to date shortly.

Jubilee Wood is now growing well. We hope to tackle encroaching brambles this year.

Our **equipment** includes a water boiler (currently on loan to the church), 24 trestle tables, bunting, 30 camping chairs, 50 plastic chairs, road signs and more, all of which are available for village residents and organisations to borrow for private or public functions. We also have a one-third share in the village marquee. The Cricket Club now provides storage for much of this equipment, for which we are very grateful.

Thank you to many people who have been involved in all these activities over the past year.

Steve Morris
Chairman, Birlingham Jubilee Committee

Thank You on Behalf of the Parish

Thank you to Steve and Maxine Cook who volunteered their time to cut and clear the village green last Friday.

Thanks also to the continuing assistance the litter pickers give of their time. They are Michael and Lizzie Porter, and Carl and Jayne Brassington.





Nikki Hollier with her Silver-Gilt Award-winning 'Reminders of Home' entry in the Blooming Border section at the RHS Malvern Spring Festival on Friday 8th May
(Photo: Jayne Mackenzie)



Birlingham ended May with a record-breaking heatwave. Bank Holiday Monday was even hotter at 32°C





Repairs to lock gates continuing at Nafford Lock

(Above) Lock drained downstream, 12th May

(Below) Downstream gates back in place but with no beams, 24th May

(Above) Protecting the gates whilst the work continues, 17th May

(Below) View towards upstream gates, 24th May

(Photos: 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

Dear Editor,

I am writing to raise an issue that has sadly been overlooked in the village. I am referring of course to the Produce Show and its lack of a category for moustaches.

With the increased interest in moustaches I have a mind to campaign for moustache growing to be included in the village show. The village once had a thriving moustache industry with exports worldwide. Locals toiled away in fields and sheds planting and tending moustaches until they were ready to harvest. At harvest time workers would be called by the farm to come and cut the moustaches and bundle them into 'mounds' for sale.

Indeed, special moustache wagons were loaded and despatched from the long-gone Defford railway station to destinations in the smart restaurants and bars of the capitals of the World.

For too long this masterful art has been ignored by the village and this can be seen by an almost total lack of moustaches to be observed locally now.

To redress this situation I have today lobbied my local member of our Noddy Parliament, Ms Hairyless Baldwig, to raise this matter with whichever person is Prime Minister this week. I look forward to receiving your comments and whether we could take this matter further with the powers that be.

Your obedient servant,

Hairy Spotter

Eckington Stores

Shop locally from our large range of products:

- Grocery and household items
- Bread and milk
- Ham, cheese, bacon and eggs
- Fruit and vegetables
- Newspapers and magazines
- Frozen food and ice cream
- Alcohol and cold drinks
- Confectionary

We are agents for:

- The National Lottery
- My Hermes Parcelshop

Please pop in to see our full range of products

John, Sue and Mark
Tel 01386 750266

Personal Ads

Personal adverts should consist of a maximum of 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.

Dates for your diary

May

Sat 30	Music Night, Birlingham Village Hall
Sun 31	Benefice Eucharist, 10.30am, St James' Church

June

Wed 3	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 6	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Almeley CC 1st XI, 12.30pm
Sun 7	Hymns, Pimms and Poems, 3.00pm, St James' Church
Thu 18	Birlingham IW, Details TBC
Sat 27	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Luctonians CC 1st XI, 12.30pm

July

Wed 1	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 4	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Challengers Hereford CC 1st XI, 12.30pm
Wed 15	Birlingham Parish Council, 7.00pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Thu 16	Birlingham IW, Details TBC
Sat 18	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Worcester Nomads CC 3rd XI, 12.30pm

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 June (for publication on Wednesday 10th June). We regret that we cannot guarantee to include any items submitted after that date.

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