

Alcester Town Council



Spring Newsletter

March 2024 Issue 73

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

It seems no time at all since I was being sworn in as Mayor of Alcester, yet here I am writing my final Mayor's Message. Rarely has a year flown by so quickly, so maybe it is true, time flies when you are enjoying yourself!

As Mayor I have enjoyed meeting with many of Alcester's organisations, it never ceases to amaze me just how many there are, each one supported by a band of volunteers. Thank you to everyone who volunteers, Alcester would not be Alcester without you! Many of these organisations are in need of some young fit volunteers, and I would encourage membership of a voluntary organisation as a most rewarding experience.

It is now fifty years since Judith Land started Alcester Male Voice Choir with just nine members. This has grown over the years and membership is now over sixty, what an achievement! It was my pleasure to attend the choir's Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner when Judith was presented with a certificate and cut glass vase by the choir's President, Lord Hertford, commemorating the occasion (see photo right).



January was brightened by the return of Window Wanderland which is always guaranteed to light up the town in an otherwise dark month. Kay and I enjoyed seeing all the entries and it was very hard to decide on the eventual winners. The photo here shows the Positive Message award being awarded to Our Lady's Catholic Primary School.

The Mayor's Awards evening provided another chance to showcase all that is good about Alcester and the Greig Hall

itself. I was delighted to present Cynthia Hill with the Lifetime Achievement Award for her services to the community and in particular 60 years with Alcester Musical Theatre Company. Cynthia has only ever missed one show! Congratulations Cynthia! (See later article and photo bottom right). I am pleased to see that the Community Shed project based in the old squash courts at the rear of the Greig Hall is progressing well. This will be another tremendous asset for the Town when it is completed.

As my year draws to a close, I would like to thank everyone who has helped to make my year so special and enjoyable. Particular thanks to Town Clerk Vanessa Lowe and both the office and ground staff who work so hard behind the scenes to keep Alcester running so smoothly.



Councillor Vaughan Blake, Mayor of Alcester

CLERKS CORNER

Precept 2024-25

The Town Council sets the precept each year in January. The precept is the primary source of income for the Town Council and is a small part of the Council Tax which residents pay to Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

At the Full Council meeting on 9 January, the Town Council agreed to request a precept of £369,340 from Stratford-on-Avon District Council for the year 2024-25. The precept in 2023-24 was £329,813.

Residents will be well aware that everything is going up in price and bills paid by Councils are subject to the same pressures. Councillors have tried to keep the increase as low as possible but regrettably options for savings are extremely limited.

The agreed precept will result in an increase in the precept charge to Alcester residents (Band D) from £144.57 to £157.40 per annum. This rise is equivalent to £1 per month for a Band D Council Taxpayer.

The Town Council uses the precept to run council business and to provide a wide range of services to residents. These include four allotment sites, four playgrounds, the cemetery on Birmingham Road, civic and community events such as Remembrance Sunday, grants to voluntary organisations, the Health and Wellbeing projects, maintenance and upkeep of the Eric Payne Community Centre, maintenance of Priory Meadow, Centenary Field and other open spaces and miscellaneous street furniture such as signs, benches and bins.

Cllr Emma Randle

Thank you to Emma for her service as a Town Councillor. We wish her well in her new venture.

Vanessa Lowe, Town Clerk

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Alcester Town Council awards small grants to community groups and organisations which can demonstrate a clear need for financial support to benefit Alcester by:

- Providing a service
- Enhancing the quality of life of community members
- Improving the environment
- Promoting Alcester in a positive way

The application form and full details are available on the Town Council website <https://www.alcester-tc.gov.uk/town-council/community-grants/>. Paper copies are also available from the Town Council office. If you need support completing the application form, please contact Vanessa Lowe, Town Clerk on 01789 766084.

The deadline for this year's grants is Tuesday 2 April 2024

Advance Notice - Annual Parish Meeting Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 7pm Eric Payne Community Centre

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting for all the local government electors of the Parish.

It is not a meeting of the Town Council

Anyone may attend and registered electors of the Parish may speak and vote during the meeting.

The Town Council would like to invite all local voluntary trusts and organisations to attend.

Please contact Alcester Town Council for more information on:

01789 766084 or clerk@alcester-tc.gov.uk

ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL CONTACTS

Office of the Town Clerk: Tel: 01789 766084

Town Clerk: clerk@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Mayor's Secretary: mayor@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Facilities Manager: office@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Planning: administration@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator: info@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Website: www.alcester-tc.gov.uk



PLANNING MATTERS

Housing Needs Survey – Update

February's Planning Committee approved the terms of reference known as **The Way Forward** requiring Alcester Town Council to develop a plan to bring together landowners, developers, investors, government agencies, County Council and Stratford District Council to address the chronic need for social and affordable housing within the parish.

The Planning Committee will present a proposition at the Full Council meeting on 5th March 2024 recommending adoption of **The Way Forward** terms of reference.

A sub-group consisting of committee members will hold their first meeting later in March.

Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan (ANDP) Review Steering Group - Update

Membership of the steering group involving local residents and town councillors plus the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk held their inaugural meeting on 16 January 2024, recording members in attendance and included the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair.

The Steering Group agreed to review the existing Neighbourhood Development Plan and policies, initially focusing on sections of the ANDP that address Natural Environment and Community, Leisure, and Wellbeing in concert with the impact of the emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan alongside any relevant national policies.

Meetings are scheduled for Tuesdays 20 February and 26 March 2024 at Globe House Priory Road Alcester B49 5DZ at 10.30am.

Members of the public are welcome to attend and observe the meeting.

Please email administration@alcester-tc.gov.uk or call 01789 766084 if you wish to attend.

Councillor Mike Bowe, Chair Planning Committee



ROAD SAFETY AND SPEED AWARE WORKING GROUP

Thank you to everyone who responded to our December survey. Your feedback will support other evidence of local road safety risks and the working group to work with the Police and other organisations to make improvements.

In January, the group met with Gary Strain from the Warwickshire Police Road Safety Unit. Gary demonstrated a new approved speed detection device that is used by neighbouring Community Speed Watch groups. We are pleased to report that the Town Council will fund a device for Alcester Community Speed Watch to support more frequent monitoring sessions across the town.

Finally, we were delighted to be able to meet with Mrs Newell, Head of School at St Nicholas Primary School (see photo). We discussed grit provision on St Faiths Road and inconsiderate parking during school drop off and pick up times. We are grateful to the school for their support, and we have agreed to work together on the issues in the future.

Councillor Andrew Foster, Lead Councillor Road Safety and Speedwatch

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

With the new financial year upon us, it has been a difficult time for Councils as we look to set new budgets. This year, Warwickshire County Council has seen a dramatic increase in costs mainly associated with Adult Social Care, Children Social Care, SEND and associated provisions, along with a further 3,000 school places needed in the coming five years. To meet these growing demands whilst investing in apprenticeships, addressing the cost-of-living crisis and supporting our climate change targets, among many other commitments, it has been necessary to increase the budget in the coming year. This means for residents, there will be an additional 4.99% increase, broken up into a 2.99% core council increase and a further 2% to cover social care.

This will enable the council to continue to invest £20M into school places, £25M to support the expansion of Resource Provision to support those with SEND in mainstream settings and a further £50M into the Warwickshire Investment Fund, demonstrating our commitment to helping the recovery and growth of Warwickshire for the benefit of residents and communities.

Councillor Piers Daniell, Warwickshire County Council



COMMUNITY SHED PROJECT UPDATE

Work is now well underway to transform the redundant squash courts behind the Greig Hall into a community shed. Modelled on the Mens Shed Movement, this will become THE place in Alcester for members of the community to make, repair, meet and learn new practical skills. One of the courts will become a workshop and the other a public space where the highly successful Repair Café will relocate once refurbishment is complete.

The court walls have been insulated and plastered and a merry team of volunteers came along to freshen them up with several coats of paint. Electrical work has begun and as you read this article roof cladding work should be underway. This is essential to make the building safe and watertight as well as adding insulation. Future work includes new ceilings, heating, doors and stairs. Grants and donations are being secured to meet costs.

It will be a community space licenced to the Community Shed Group to use. A second public meeting was held on 1 February when enthusiastic attendees provided their input as to how the rooms should be designed and kitted out.

If you require further information on progress or think you would like to join the Community Shed group, please email Cllr Mark Cargill on mcargill.atc@gmail.com

Councillor Wendy Mills, Chair Squash Courts Working Group



MEET KEVIN THE KIOSK

Most of you will know Kevin the telephone kiosk who has stood quietly and unobtrusively in Church Street outside the original Post Office for nearly ninety years. I am sure Alcester folk could tell a tale or two about Kevin. He however, has kept a resolute silence about the goings on he has witnessed. As a youngster Kevin witnessed the 1937 Coronation of King George VI, then the Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 and eighty six years later the Coronation of King Charles III.

As a now rare Georgian type K6b kiosk, Alcester Town Council has purchased Kevin from BT for the princely sum of £1. Unfortunately, Kevin is a bit poorly, and will require a restoration to make him look more youthful, this will cost rather more than £1! The hope is to restore Kevin to his youth, and to convert him to be used as a home for a defibrillator.

Councillor Vaughan Blake, Mayor of Alcester

SPEND
Support for Parents of children with Educational needs, Neurodiversity and Difficulties.

Join our Facebook page to keep up to date on news, updates and events and to be part of our online community for support and kinship.

SPEND

A new support group for parents with children and young people who have special needs has been launched in Alcester.

Created through a collaboration of local parents and Alcester Town Council Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the first session took place in January and the response was incredible with amazing feedback from all who attended.

Jen Hopkins, one of the founding members of the group, saw the need in the local area for such a support group with people turning to her through her role as Children and Families Worker for the Alcester Minster and personally as a SEN (Special educational needs) parent herself.

The group, named 'SPEND', will now meet on the second Friday of every month in the Depot at the Eric Payne Community Centre in Alcester from 9.45am -11.15am. It will be a safe place for SEN parent carers to come together to make connections and share experiences and information with other people walking the same path. Professional speakers will be invited

and there will be opportunities to do mindfulness activities together. The aim is for parents to feel supported, not just with practical advice and assistance but also with their own emotional well-being.

Furthermore, there is a supporting private Facebook Group called 'SPEND Parent Support', that SEN parents in the area can request to join.

All SEN parents are very welcome at the SPEND monthly group. There is no need to book, you can simply turn up and will be assured of a very warm welcome.

MAYOR'S CIVIC AWARDS

Outstanding contributions from members of the Alcester community were recognised at the Mayor's Civic Awards evening held at The Greig Hall in January. This was a very celebratory yet humbling occasion providing an excellent opportunity to showcase the brightest and the best of Alcester in terms of volunteering, community spirit and commitment to the town.

The Mayor of Alcester, Cllr Vaughan Blake, made the following awards for 2023 (see photos below) from an extremely strong group of nominations:

Young Persons of the Year- Oscar Goodhand-Wyatt (bottom middle)

Community Organisation of the Year- Repair Café Alcester (bottom left)

Business of the Year (new category)- Simply Fresh (middle left)

Citizen of the Year- Marcus Bennett (top left).

In addition, Cllr Blake decided to recognise the significant contributions to the town of Alcester, and in particular 60 years with Alcester Musical Theatre Company, by Cynthia Hill with a special **Lifetime Achievement** award (top right).

Prizes were also awarded to the winners of the 2023 allotment competition. Mr Harrington was the overall winner and awarded the Reg Grummett trophy for the fourth year running! (bottom right).

Photographs courtesy of Jake Lambourn Photography



Mayor's Civic Awards 2023



RIVERSIDE ANGLING CLUB

Over the last few months the weather has certainly been very wet. With the rivers up and out of their banks and numerous flood warnings being issued. Those of you who did manage to get out when the rivers were more fishable, I hope you caught some fish. With the River close season approaching it will be back to the canals and the commercial pools for a bit of fishing. Whichever you choose- best of luck and enjoy the day!

Robert Jones, Hon. Secretary, Riverside Angling Club



CHANGE MAKER'S LUNCH

Stratford-Upon-Avon MP and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nadhim Zahawi met with business leaders from across Alcester and south Warwickshire during a lunchtime meeting at Minerva Mill Innovation Centre. 'The Business Change Maker's Lunch' invited sixteen business owners to meet with Mr. Zahawi and discuss both the local and national economic outlook. Attendees included Alcester based businesses such as Talking Tortoise, Cloverleaf Events and Glued Limited.

The event was arranged by the Alcester Business Club, which was established in 2023 to provide local businesses from Alcester and the surrounding areas with the opportunity to extend their business network and work collaboratively. The monthly networking event takes place each month at Minerva Mill, a Victorian Grade II listed serviced office space in the heart of Alcester.

Councillor Corin Elliott, Lead Councillor Business and Tourism



ALCESTER & BIDFORD ROTARY

It's Big Breakfast time again!

Alcester and Bidford Rotary will be at Crawford Hall, Bidford, on 2 March and at The Greig Hall in Alcester on 9 March, serving up a 'full English' with all profits going to our local communities.

Our charity breakfasts are our primary fundraisers when together with our volunteer helpers we serve breakfasts to up to 200 people at each venue, so come along and enjoy a wholesome start to the day and help support our local good causes!

Coming up later in year look out for our popular Pimms stall at the Alcester Food Festival on 18 May, and again at the Court Leet Street Market on 9 June. 28 June will see us at Ragley Hall serving teas and coffees at the

Adventure Bike Rider Festival, so it's looking to be a busy summer.

We've held the local heat of the Rotary Youth Speaks Competition at the Greig Hall in collaboration with Stratford Rotary, and the Rotary Young Chef Competition at Alcester Grammar School; it's always amazing to see our talented young students in action, and maybe there will be some future Rotarians amongst them.

We are a small and friendly group and would welcome anyone interested in joining us to help our community. Contact Kay Blake on 07568 068488, or:

alcesterbidfordrotary@gmail.com

www.alcesterbidfordrotary.co.uk



Kay Blake, Secretary

HEART OF ENGLAND TOWN CRIERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

On 30 March 2024 the streets of Alcester will once again reverberate to the sound of Town Criers and their bells from all over the United Kingdom.

Criers, belonging to the Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers, from all over the country are invited to compete at the event to be held on Easter Saturday 30 March at Malt Mill Lane.

The format remains the same with each crier performing two cries, one for their own town and one given to them by the organisers, this year the given cry being 'Leap Year'.

Cries are judged by a panel of local judges – Alcester's own Town Crier Dave Parkes is therefore not eligible to compete but will host the event. Marks are awarded for clarity, diction, volume and inflection. An award is also made for the best dressed crier.

The prizes for the competition are sponsored by Alcester Court Leet.

The event commences with a parade from the Town Hall at 12.45pm and proceeds to Malt Mill Lane where the event gets underway at 1.15pm.



Councillor Vaughan Blake, Championship Chairman



Alcester Male Voice Choir

and special guests
Present a Gala Concert

'MEMORIES'

Saturday April 20th at 7pm and Sunday April 21st 2024 at 3pm
at Ragley Hall, Alcester



Judith Land BEM
Artistic Director and
Founder-Conductor



Alcester Male Voice Choir



Irina Chagunava
Classical Pianist and
AMVC Accompanist



Gary Ryan



Craig Ogdon

(Guitar Duo)

***Come and
join us in a
celebration
of 50 years of
singing***

Tickets are £25 bookings can be made by calling the Box office  07752 563068  amvcboxoffice@gmail.com

Saturday April 20th 7pm

Now all sold

Sunday April 21st 3pm

Cheques (full payment) made payable to **AMVC** and sent with an **A5 (8"x6") stamped addressed envelope** to: **AMVC Box Office, 12 The Maltings, Station Road, Studley, Warwickshire**

Following the concert there will be a retiring collection in support of Alcester in Bloom and Alcester Christmas Lights
Registered Charity No. 514970



Fauré Requiem

Five Mystical Songs by Vaughan Williams

Featuring

Soprano & baritone soloists, String Quintet, Organist
& Young Musician Performance

Saturday 20th April 7:30pm

St Nicholas Church, Alcester

Tickets £15; under 14's free

Available from Humphries Shoes (cash only) High Street, Alcester or on the door.

www.alcestersingers.co.uk events@alcestersingers.co.uk



**IT'S OUR 20TH CELEBRATION.
TIME FOR LEGIONS OF FUN.**

Saturday 6th July. 10.30 - 4.30

Come and join us in Roman-inspired hands-on fun.
For free! Carpe Diem!

- Meet Roman soldiers
- Try on a toga
- Button up a Roman mosaic
- Make crafty creations
- Play Roman-style games
- See RSC 'The Romans' displays
- Decorate a Roman temple
- Get your finds assessed by our archaeologist

Find us at romanalcester.org follow us 

A volunteer led independent museum
Registered Charity number 1089131

THE DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

The UK's telephone network is changing. By the end of 2025, most telephone providers will have moved their customers from landlines served by the old analogue (copper) network to new upgraded landline services which use digital technology. This is commonly referred to as The Digital Switchover.

BT Consumer Group - the largest provider of landline phone services in the UK will start migrating their customers in the West Midlands region from February 2024 and to coincide with this, they are hosting a number of roadshows / drop-in events in the Warwickshire and Solihull area. This will enable their customers to find out more about the switchover to their digital phone network known as Digital Voice.

THE Greig Hall

A SELECTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS - BOOK NOW!

MAR 15-17 **THE MAGIC OF MUSIC**
Alcester Musical Theatre Company

MAR 24 **Lord Arthur Savile's Crime**
Murder, Mahem & Melodrama!

APR 11-13 **Les Miserables**
Performed entirely by students

APR 27 **SYMPHONY IN A DAY**
Rehearsal to Live Performance is just one day!

MAY 18 **SOUL MANIFESTO**
Dance 'til you drop!!

MAY 25 **QUILL - LIVE**
Back by popular demand!!



www.greighall.org.uk

ALCESTER U3A NEWS

Until recently, we joked that "u3a was one of the largest groups in Alcester that few people had heard of", but since 1 January we have attracted 30 new members! Our membership growth forced us to leave the Eric Payne Centre where we had been very happy for many years. However, the recent acceleration in growth is in no small part due to our move back to The Greig Hall last year for our monthly general meetings! At these meeting we have a guest speaker except in March, (which is our AGM and includes displays from our Interest Groups), after which, there's a chance to socialise with like-minded people over refreshments.

In addition to our main meeting, we now have 28 different Interest Groups, with two more "in the pipeline" where members get together to share/learn new skills. To find out more, visit our website (<https://u3asites.org.uk/alcester>), email or phone our Membership Secretary membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com, Tel. 01527 453628. Better still, visit us at one of our monthly meetings, which are held at 2.30 pm at The Greig Hall on the first Tuesday of each month, where you will be made very welcome! If you would like more information about u3a, which is an Organisation for those no longer in full time work, take a look at our national website (<https://u3a.org.uk>).

ALCESTER MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY

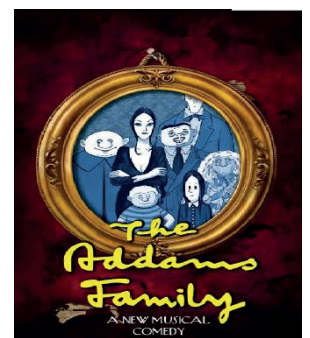
After a wonderful 60th Anniversary year in 2023, when we performed our popular Spring Concert at The Greig Hall shortly after its reopening and our very successful run of Legally Blonde at The Palace Theatre, Redditch, we have another exciting year ahead in 2024!

Firstly, we have our annual Spring Concert – 'The Magic of Music' on Friday 15, Saturday 16 and a matinee on Sunday 17 March, at the Greig Hall – our spiritual home.

We then have our 'Spooktacular' main production in October – 'The Addams Family', at The Palace Theatre, Redditch from 9 to 12 October. For those interested in taking part (16+), our introduction night for this will be on Thursday 21 March at 7.30pm, Alcester Baptist Church Hall.

In the meantime, why not book tickets for our Spring Concert to see what we are about and have a chat to us about joining? We are a friendly bunch and always welcome new members. Tickets are available from Mrs Cynthia Hill 01789 763446 or JAG Hair Studios, 37 High Street (card sales only).

BAT NIGHT
Join
Alcester Youth Project
&
Warwickshire Bat Group
for an exciting
Sun 26th May 8:30 pm
Bat Walk and Talk
around
Abbey Fields, Alcester.
For more information and to book a free ticket
Contact : Elizabeth.lake@leaf.eco



COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES FOR ALCESTER

The latest sports & fitness activities available
at The Greig Leisure Centre in 2024



WALKING FOOTBALL

Wednesdays 11:00
Fridays 16:00

YOUTH FOOTBALL

Tuesdays 16:30
Thursdays 15:30



ACTIVE ANTZ

Mondays 10:00
Fridays 10:30

JUNIOR GYM (1hr Slots)

Mondays, Wednesdays and
Fridays 16:00 and 17:00



ACTIVITY & WELLBEING FOR **EVERYONE**

Install the Everyone Active App today or
visit everyoneactive.com to book your sessions

everyone
ACTIVE



ALCESTER FOOD FESTIVAL

Following on from the very disappointing cancellation of our event in October 2023, we are looking forward to the next event on Saturday 18 May. We are already fully booked for the day, and the volunteer organisers – David & Lesley Henderson, Andrew Wells, Lucy Abney-Hastings, Anna Broerse, Helen Hill and Ben Williams- are busy working on planning to make this another memorable day in the Alcester calendar.



These events require a huge commitment from organisations and individuals in our community who contribute in a multitude of ways. Many thanks to Alcester Litter Pickers, Scouts, Town Council, ABLE, Court Leet, Town Hall Committee, Tony Turner, Greig Hall, St Benedicts School, St. Nicholas Church, Steve Hine, and those who help with the buildup, marshalling and break down on the day. The charges to stallholders, after direct expenses, are used to make contributions to the funds of organisations who provide volunteers or allow us to use their facilities on the day, and after that grants are awarded if funds

allow.

We would welcome volunteers to the team to assist with manning the organisers' stand for an hour during the day, so please contact Lesley Henderson on 07774953525 if you can commit a small amount of your time to help with this or can contribute to this volunteer run event in any other way.

All of us involved in organising and making the Food Festival possible look forward to seeing you on the day.



OVERSLEY GREEN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (OGRA)

What does Oversley Wood mean to you? Sometime in February, Forestry England who manage the wood on behalf of the nation, hope to have issued a strategy paper covering the future of their land in Warwickshire. Oversley Wood occupies just under 240 acres so their plans will be interesting. The paper comes at a time of change in access to the wood, with the historic parking location recently restricted and no designated parking area other than in Alcester, around a mile away. This has caused some

strange parking behaviours as visitors who love the wood suddenly look for new places to park. For an organisation whose mission is "... to connect everyone with the nation's forests" this restriction seems a shame.

You will shortly have an opportunity to have a say in how Oversley Wood develops by responding to a public consultation on the strategy document. It will be available through the Forestry England Consultation Hub by search Consultation Hib on their website at www.forestryengland.uk

Top of the objectives must to make it easier for visitors to access the woods without adding to the parking congestion in Alcester and that means an official car park. If the mission is indeed to "...connect everyone with the nations forests" then Forestry England should be urged to take the lead and find a way to provide an official car park so that everyone can enjoy the bluebells in the spring in a safe and convenient way.

Richard Slatter, Chair Oversley Green Residents Association



LITTER FREE ALCESTER was formed in 2014. Each year we take part in the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean campaign. This year Litter Free Alcester will be doing their spring clean on March 23rd. Please join us at the Eric Payne Centre between 10 am to 1pm. Equipment will be provided. Please check our Facebook page for updates.

Litter picking makes an immediate and visible difference to an area and we feel proud that we can play our part.

We also assist the Food Festival to ensure that the High Street is kept neat and clean. This year's festival is on Saturday 18th May. We are looking for volunteers to help us throughout the day and with the end of the festival clean up. Please check our Facebook page for updates.

Susan Juned, Chair Litter Free Alcester



WASSAIL!

The Community Orchard was awakened from a winter slumber on 3 February when a cast ensemble of Winter Queen and Holly King, White Hart Morris men and beast entertained a good 200 strong members of the public.

Led by torch light from the Eric Payne Community Centre, the arrival at the orchard had a very ethereal look with lights. Amongst the dance and song ribbons were hung from a chosen tree's branches. "Oh little apple tree, we have come to wassail thee."

Wassailing is an ancient Nordic tradition that awakens the apple from its winter sleep, the banging of pots and pans and sometimes muskets are fired to ward off evil spirits and encourage a good harvest of apples for pies and cider in the summer.

Following the blessing by the Winter Queen and Holly King, the crowd were invited to dip toast in cider to hang on the apple tree. The cider

used was from the late John Ross who organised a wassail back in 2015? The assembly then made their way back to the Eric Payne Community Centre for free hot dogs for the children (sponsored by the Town council) which went down very well, as well as cider from local maker Hogan's.

The aim was to highlight the Orchard to the greater Alcester population not only as a quiet tranquil location to visit but a valuable source of food and ecological enrichment.



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION- ALCESTER

Alcester Royal British Legion was awarded the 'Birmingham and Warwickshire RBL Branch Efficiency Award' in January. The silver cup and certificate was presented to Branch Chairman Sue Adams at the County Conference by the County President (see photo). The Branch thank the Committee, Standard Bearers, Legion Members and townspeople for their continued support and work which has led to this respected accolade.

This will be another busy year for The Legion with several events already planned. All are welcome to attend.

- Coffee Morning. Saturday 20 April from 10am- 12noon Church House
- Coach Trip to the National Memorial Arboretum & D-Day 80th Anniversary ceremony. Thursday 6 June at 8.30am. £20 per person. All welcome
- 80th Anniversary of D-Day Evening Ceremony and Beacon lighting at Centenary Field. Thursday 6 June
- Armed Forces Day. Saturday 29 June at 11am on Centenary Field

If you would like to join the Alcester Branch or would like further information about this year's events please contact the Secretary, David Malin, on 01789 400427 or email d.c.malin@live.co.uk



MEET THE MAYOR Cllr Vaughan Blake



**SATURDAY
23 MARCH
2024
10am-12pm
Alcester High
Street
by the
church gates**

MEET THE MAYOR

Following the very successful event in July, we thought we would do this again!

Cllr Vaughan Blake will be in the High Street near the church gates together with other town councillors on Saturday 23 March between 10am and 12pm.

Please do come along and say hello!

ALCESTER WINDOW WANDERLAND 2024

January 2024 saw Alcester's streets being transformed into a magical window walk-about for the fifth year running. We had 22 window makers registered who were able to brighten up their windows for our enjoyment during what can be quite a bleak month for many of us. This year we had fewer individual residents involved but more organisations such as one of the Brownies packs, Holiday Lunch Club, a primary school and High Street businesses.

This year's winners were:

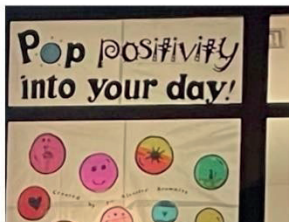
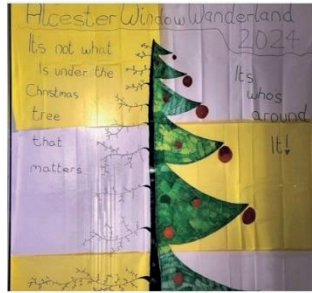
- Creative Award: 80 Alauna Avenue
- Positive Message Award: Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
- Community Window Award: Headway Charity Shop
- Save the Planet Award: 18 Rope Walk

However, having seen all of the windows myself, I consider that everyone was a winner, including those who walked the trail around town. I hope you were able to enjoy this year's event.

The date for the next event is yet to be decided. . Could you please help future events by completing this short questionnaire (2- 5min): <https://forms.gle/M3hyzLSwMqow9oi16> This will help us making decisions on how to move forward with Window Wanderland.

This year's windows!

Councillor Kathrin Foster





ALCESTER RUGBY CLUB

The club has seen a steady start to this season, having achieved promotion to Counties 1 Midlands South (West), our highest league in our history. We have 2 senior sides and as of 9th February we sit mid table.

Our next 1st XV home game is 16 March (2.15 pm kick off), when we face off against Bromsgrove II. Your support would be welcomed.

We have a junior section, catering for all school ages from Reception through to year 13, including a girl's non-contact team and are looking forward to welcoming Rugby Tots Alcester, who cater for children from 2yrs old.

From Monday 18 March we will be starting walking rugby, open to everyone. Weekly sessions will start at 7pm, for about 1 hour, at a cost of £2 per session, with the bar open afterwards for a drink. Why not come along and give it a go?

We are also offering coaching support to local schools to help deliver rugby during PE sessions or after-school clubs. If you would like to take up this opportunity, please contact Stu Phillips; email alcesterrugbyclubchairman@gmail.com

We are always looking for new players, sponsors, coaches and volunteers to help us grow. If you are interested, please contact:

Sponsorship, events and club hire – James Pittaway; email arfccmanager@gmail.com

Adult players (18+) – Stu Phillips; email arfdor@gmail.com

Junior players (4 to 17) – Zoe New; arfcmandjfixtures@gmail.com

Rugby tots (from 2 yrs) – Joel Barker; email joel@rugbytots.co.uk

Catering – Annie's Market Garden; email amperkins@aol.com

We hope to see you all soon.



BIKEABILITY

Would you or any member of your family like Bikeability cycle training to improve confidence when cycling?

Bikeability cycle training is a practical training programme providing primarily schoolchildren with a life skill enabling them to cycle confidently and competently on today's roads.

In Alcester, Level 1 & 2 training for children is usually offered in Primary School in Year 5 or above. These courses are run over 2 consecutive days, where children receive a realistic cycling

experience equipping them with the skills to cycle short journeys.

Level 3 training for children and young people in Year 6 or above is aimed at students who have previously achieved Levels 1 & 2. This is delivered in one 3hour session. Level 3 equips riders with the skills to tackle more complex roads and traffic situations such as roundabouts and junctions controlled by traffic lights. The training also includes guidance and practice on planning routes.

If there is enough local interest in the courses, then they could be delivered 'free' locally during the school holidays.

If you are interested in a place on the course, please contact Wendy Sherwood on 01789 766084 or 07434664435 or email info@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Remember! Bikes can be repaired or serviced at the Repair Café, fourth Thursday of the month 2pm – 5pm at the Depot, Eric Payne Community Centre.

Councillor Alison Leask, Lead Councillor Youth Engagement



NATIONAL ALLOTMENTS WEEK 2024

National Allotments Week 2023 will run from 12 - 18 August and Alcester's allotment judging will take place during this week.

For information about the four allotment sites at Bleachfield Street North and South, Allimore Lane and School Road in Alcester please contact Tim by email on office@alcester-tc.gov.uk or phone 01789 766084

Happy gardening!

FLOODING

- You can sign up for flood warnings here <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>
- Any local flooding can be reported here to ensure that an accurate picture of the history is recorded <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/flooding#floodmap>
- Make a Household Flood Plan. Here's one example:
<https://thefloodhub.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Household-Flood-Plan.pdf>




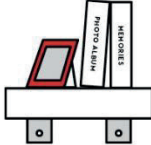
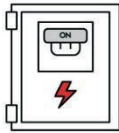




Empty sandbags- Available from the Town Council offices. Please ring 01789 766084 during office hours or email office@alcester-tc.gov.uk

Sand- Available from the sand bins outside School Road allotments B49 5DE (What3words ref ///Wardrobe.dunes.basics) and the hard standing area next to Centenary Fields between Gas House Lane and Stratford Road B49 5AS (What3words ref:///dusters.vertical.mallets).

River levels- You can look online using the web cameras at either:

Gunnings Bridge (<https://telemetry-data.com/open?profile=GunningsBridge>) or **Oversley Bridge** (<https://www.vision-link.co.uk/oversley-bridge/>)

DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IN A FLOOD?

<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">FLOOD ALERT</div> <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">PREPARE</div>  <p>Pack medicines & insurance docs</p>  <p>Visit the flood warning information service</p> 	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">FLOOD WARNING</div> <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">ACT</div>  <p>Move things upstairs or to safety</p>  <p>Turn off gas, water & electricity</p>  <p>Move family, pets & car to safety</p>	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">SEVERE FLOOD WARNING</div> <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">SURVIVE</div>  <p>Follow emergency services' advice</p>  <p>Immediate danger? Call 999</p>  <p>Stay safe</p>
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WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BUS SERVICES



WCC is pleased to announce that the £2 Single Fare Cap on bus travel has been extended again until the end of 2024. Never has there been a better time to leave the car behind, hop on the bus and save yourself a lot of hassle and money. The following bus companies in Warwickshire are taking part in the scheme: Stagecoach - www.stagecoachbus.com & Arriva - www.arrivabus.co.uk National Express Coventry - <https://nxbus.co.uk/coventry> National Express West Midlands - <https://nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands> Pulhams (51 service) - <https://www.pulhamscoaches.com/> & A&M Group - Flexibus (Service 9 only) - www.flexi-bus.co.uk

IndieGo PLUS Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) - www.warwickshire.gov.uk/indiegoplus

For full details on timetables, routes and places served, please visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/public-transport

TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS



















Full Council and Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings are held in person at Globe House. Planning Committee meetings are generally held online via Zoom or by email.

Agendas are published on town noticeboards and online at www.alcester-tc.gov.uk three days before each meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend Council meetings and are given time at the start of the meetings to speak. Draft and approved Minutes from meetings can also be found on the Town Council website.

Social media is another source of information regarding council matters- we are on Facebook www.facebook.com/alcester.towncouncil Twitter: www.twitter.com/AlcesterTown and Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/alcestertowncouncil/>

Town Councillors Contact Details

Alcester East Ward	Alcester West Ward
 <p><u>Mark Cargill</u> 07988 485050 mcargill.atc@gmail.com</p>	 <p><u>Vaughan Blake</u> (Mayor) 01789 764128 vblake.atc@gmail.com</p>
 <p><u>Gill Forman</u> 01789 763828 gforman.atc@gmail.com</p>	 <p><u>Mike Bowe</u> (Deputy Mayor) 07775 500993 mbowe.atc@gmail.com</p>
 <p><u>Kathrin Foster</u> 07875 609324 kfoster.atc@gmail.com</p>	 <p><u>Kathryn Cargill</u> 07745 608567 kcargill.atc@gmail.com</p>
 <p><u>Keith Greenaway</u> 01789 766818 keithgreenawayatc1@gmail.com</p>	 <p><u>Corin Elliott</u> 07970 926130 celliot.atc@gmail.com</p>
 <p><u>Alison Leask</u> aleask.atc@gmail.com</p>	 <p><u>Andrew Foster</u> 01789 766708 afoster.atc@gmail.com</p>
 <p><u>Erick Wilson</u> 01789 764366 ewilson2.atc@gmail.com</p>	 <p><u>David Henderson</u> 01789 765271 dhenderson.atc@gmail.com</p>
Vacant	 <p><u>Wendy Mills</u> 07842 596542 wmills.atc@gmail.com</p>
<p>Delivered by  and printed by  on behalf of Alcester Town Council </p>	 <p><u>Clive Neal-Sturgess</u> 01789 764416 csturgess.atc@gmail.com</p>
	 <p><u>Gavin Smithers</u> 07955 687341 gsmithers.atc@gmail.com</p>