Trustees of Aston Village Hall
Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 13th May 2025

Chair of Trustees Report

Trustees I would first like to thank my fellow trustees from last year's re-election, Helen, Miles and Ros for this year's valuable service to the hall and our village community. You follow in a long line of residents who have risen to the challenge and help direct the use of the hall in these changing times for the community good. At a later part of this meeting, we are required to confirm the nomination and election of trustees for the coming year, and I sincerely hope each of you will be willing to continue to serve for the coming year. For my part, I will be volunteering to continue as a trustee too and am willing to continue to serve as chair of Trustees, if that is your wish.

Our constitution limits us to 12 trustees, but at our last AGM we reported our numbers had reduced to just four: Ros, Miles, Helen and me. It was agreed, by comment consent that this was too low to function. Our Trustees Secretary, Ros, undertook to approach members of the community and invite them to swell our numbers. As a result, I am very glad to say that Mike Kelly, Tony Ward, Steve Wedgwood and Michele Ibbs responded positively, and we formally welcome them all on board tonight.

For the record, but I am sure all of you know, Mike chairs the Maer and Aston Parish Council, so can take over the role of Parish Council Trustee's Representative from Ros, who is now taking on the role of Church Trustee's Representative. Both have agreed to present their reports tonight.

We will take the opportunity to have a trustees meeting, directly after the conclusion of this AGM, to scope out priorities and topics for consideration this coming year.

As a refresher for us existing trustees, and by way of introduction for the newbies, I thought I should take a moment to provide a bit of context by reviewing the original reasons for the hall being set up and how it is to be governed. Clearly in the intervening seventy years, times and attitude have changed, but what is clear, is that the hall is for the benefit of the local residents, and to be run by local residents.

This hall has been in place since being founded on 17th December 1953. It was funded by Colonel Clive in memory of his wife Dorothy and stands on the site of some dilapidated timber framed cottages on land donated by a farmer from Market Drayton. The original document records a land conveyance between a John Bourne of Longslow Road Market Drayton (the vendor), and William Adams (Lt Col) of Lea Head Manor Aston, Violet Campbell (Married Woman!) of Thornlea, Willoughbridge, Robina Taylor (Married Woman!) of Cherry Tree House Aston and Hubert Wainwright (Farmer) of Yew Tree Farm

Other trustees were formed from appointed representatives from six groups within the active local community groups. The idea was to best represent local community life. Not many still exist seventy years on:

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- Aston Women's Institute – this was Margaret Adams of Lea Head Manor
- The Methodist Chapel Weymouth – this was Thomas Purcell of Weymouth
- Woore and Aston Parochial Church Council – Lt Col. William Adams,Lea Head Manor
- The Committee of the Youth Organisation Aston – Reginal Bailey of Minn Bank
- Maer Parish Council - Hubert Wainwright of Yew Tree Farm
- The School Managers of Aston School – William Wainwright of Aston

In addition to these six groups, the committee could co-opt six additional members to "represent interests in the villages not represented by any organizations".

The trust is a registered charity: No. 503775 and as such must report accounts annually to the Charities Commission and declare its current trustees.

The remit of the constitution is summarised as follows: for.. "**the purpose of physical and mental training and recreation and social moral and intellectual development through the medium of reading and recreation rooms, library, lectures, classes, recreations and entertainments as may be found expedient for the benefit of the inhabitants of the villages of Aston and Weymouth ..** and **"used for religious purposes by the Church of England on Sundays, Christmas Days, Good Fridays and any weekdays as agreed on."..**

So, trustees are valued members of our community who want to do the best for the village and I applaud everyone who has served as a trustee in the past, at the present and hope we can continue to attract trustees for the future. We will have our first trustees meeting straight after this AGM concludes, and it is reassuring that we have such a talented and experienced team to help us. We now number eight trustees, which is more representative of the community than at last year's AGM and I hope this greater quorum will further encourage others in the village to be willing to join too. I extend that invitation again, tonight, to join us, you will be very welcome.

Based in such a small village, and rather off the beaten track, AVH is completely dependent on self-run events to generate funds than many other community venues. We don't have the buffer of toddler groups, cubs and scouts, keep fit, nature or history groups and WI meetings to sustain our income. There are also more conveniently located alternative venues in Maer, Whitmore, Loggerheads, Knighton and Woore for party hire.

So we need to keep building and maintaining a great relationship with our local residents. We rely on their support for continuity, so we are acutely tuned to what they want and what they don't. As well as hosting free monthly coffee mornings, we aim to run four or five main find raising events a year.

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Residents

I now turn to the residents of Aston, Weymouth and our surrounding areas:

Firstly, I must apologise for the cancellation of the Christmas Party, with just a few hours' notice. Storm Darragh had resulted in our part of the village having lost power, and we had to call it off. We were able to promptly refund ticket holders and managed to sell off the already defrosted pies for that night. Some wonderfully supportive residents waived their refunds, for which we were grateful, and the band that was due to play found another gig in Newcastle that night. So while we escaped the prospect of making a loss on a night, we really missed out on a major source of income

To our regular users I say "thank you" for your support. When you pop in for a coffee on the First Tuesday of the month, form a fish and chip quiz team, sample a pint of cask ale at the pop-up pub, or buy a raffle ticket at a bingo session or sign up to the 100 Club, you make it all worthwhile for the volunteers running the events and it pays for the upkeep. Just as important, it helps us all build a community. Our village events enable neighbours, who live alongside each other, to actually get to know each other, in a friendly atmosphere.

Seventy years on from the founding trustee's vision for the hall, no longer do we have a weekly bus to market, monthly WI meetings, fortnightly services, a youth group, or school gates to gather at and chat. Nowadays we shop miles away, or online. We wave as we pass each other in the lanes in our cars. We work from home, on evening and weekend shifts, or commute to Manchester and Birmingham on long weekdays. We have an older demographic, with very few school age children in the village. As a result, the opportunities for newcomers and existing folk to integrate into the community are far less now, then then. This presents greater barriers for us to overcome and integrate, than in the days of the halls' foundation.

I therefore admit to constantly being concerned, at each event, at the prospect of not enough people attending. It is impossible to judge popularity until the event is underway and difficult not to take it personally. This is not a new worry, the AGM records, going back decades, echo this reoccurring headache for organisers.

Since I took over four years ago, we have upgraded the website to enable advance ordering of food or booking tickets. The social media platforms of WhatsApp and Facebook are used to share news on events and extend the reach of publicity way beyond the posters on the telegraph poles. The use of SumUp to take card payments online, in advance, has increased our knowledge of event popularity, improved our ability to predict funds and prevent losses. Accepting cards and mobile payments on event nights has responded to our rapidly changing payment behaviour, professionalised our methods and reduced the risks inherent in handling cash.

Yet, despite this far greater greater social engagement, offering more frequent events, making it easier than ever to discover "what's on" and making it easier to pay, we still have a problem attracting many so many of our village residents over the threshold.

As with the experience of past committees, most recent events have been reliant on friends and families of the organisers, or past residents even, to supplement a wonderfully supportive band of local regulars.

We know we compete with leisure pursuits, holiday homes, sport and long working hours. Most of our events seem to fall into the "I'll wait -and-see if anything else turns up" category for many, and finding commitment to attend is hard work, let alone help. There are many villagers who have never come to anything put on in the hall. There are also many who attend and support our events too. We need to make all of the community welcome and the challenge is to find out what would be popular.

While the First Tuesday coffee morning continues to be well attended, and meets a need, the recent quiz night was not packed as previous years and the pub night missed several regulars. The Christmas party bookings took a very long time to reach breakeven and last summer's barbecue and the two Saturday coffee and butty mornings saw few takers. I do worry, that asking in advance for food and running more events might be putting some people off. But the spontaneity of not knowing advance catering numbers would lead to greater food wastage or embarrassing shortages.

Events Committee

Next, I want to thank the stalwart efforts of our events committee. One of my first tasks as chair was to attempt to separate the trustee roles from the responsibility for conceiving and running community events. This has been very successful, as the size of the events team grew to 10 in the past year, making the task of promoting and running events easier to share and more fun for all.

It means we can run events when some folk are away, and we can share roles and even rotate them.

Last meeting I stated that whilst I was happy to stand again as Chair of Trustees, and continue to be an active member of the Events Committee I thought it would be healthy to rotate the responsibility for also conceiving and running the events, and invited someone else to volunteer to head up and "freshen up" the event-planning role for the past year. There were no volunteers, unfortunately, so I have been carrying it out for another year.

As a result, there are some outstanding "Trustee – orientated" tasks that I should really concentrate on, as chair, so while I am happy to continue as an active member of the events team, I now need some-one, or some persons, to take event leadership and event publicity on. I had thought it best that we appoint this annually, but it has also been suggested this could be done on an "event-by-event" basis. This is a good idea and maybe one of the team could initially offer to be Event Organiser for the Summer Party, as a start point, and we can then take it from there?

The 100 Club

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Kate Spiers has done a great job as administrator of the 100 Club, building on the sterling work done by Helen. Half of the 100 Club funds are used to improve and maintain the fabric of the hall and half form a distributable monthly prize fund. The recent, long overdue increase in annual subscription to £36 has been very well supported, and that is a lot down to Kate, so thank you everyone. The monthly prize fund, which now exceeds £75 is worth winning! If anyone else wishes to join the 100 Club, Kate is happy to sign you up.

Building Improvements and Repairs

We welcome community voluntary help in keeping the hall and surroundings neat and tidy, but we do supplement this with paid-for help, to keep up appearances.

Our plumbing system has twice been vulnerable to frozen pipes, despite the lagging and keeping the heating on during the very coldest nights. The header tank in the roof is a particular worry and even with the auto mains shut off, a leak would still be very damaging. We have had a costed proposal to remove it and bypass its vulnerable copper pipes, so this will be discussed at the following meeting.

Another, but more pressing issue, which has not been addressed over the past years for probably understandable reasons, is cost of having three electricity meters - the legacy of a dismantled three phase system. With the recent massive rise in energy costs, the unnecessary standing charges of the extra two meters is now a burden no longer affordable. However, the prospect of the cost of rewiring and decommissioning of the meters is a significant investment.

One project that would be visible at least to villagers, and seen as an improvement, is to improve disabled access to the toilets and revamp the others. This would entail some internal building alterations, but there may be partial grant funding available.

That concludes the statement from the Chair. I thank you all for coming along and hope for another good year ahead.

Guy Chatburn 13.5.25

Chair of Trustees

Aston and Weymouth Village Hall
Treasurers Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

After a number of years of deficits, generated primarily by the lack of activity during the years in which the pandemic had an impact, there was a real effort to balance the Income and Expenditure account this year. Disappointingly we didn't achieve what we set out to do.

We made a deficit of a little over £2,200 for the year to 31 March 2025.

The main cause of this is the impact of the cancellation of the Christmas Party as a result of the last-minute power outage. Although there was remarkable generosity from many of those who had bought tickets and who declined refunds, we nevertheless missed a significant opportunity for a good night of bar and other takings.

This was compounded by a Quiz Night which was substantially down on numbers when compared with previous years.

The greatest success was the Pop Up Pub Night which generated most of the takings for the year. In total, events generated a surplus of about £900, slightly down on 23-24. Our original aim had been to increase that to £2,500 - £3,000 pounds.

Income from hire of the hall remained low, still only a quarter of pre-COVID levels.

Costs have stabilised with no significant maintenance issues in year but the annual overheads remain around £4,000 and we have to find a way to cover those on a regular basis.

The 100 Club has generated a healthy surplus and the Village Hall is committed to using the surplus, currently standing at nearly £7,000, for improvement expenditure. The suggestion that we spend money on rationalising the electricity supply feels like a wise investment that will pay back in lower charges.

In total the Village Hall reserves come to over £26,000 so there is still a cushion of funds available to us but my feeling as Treasurer is that we should redouble our efforts to achieve a sustainable break-even position through running events that the Village will support – and praying for better weather when we hold them!

Miles Scott
Treasurer
12 May 2025

Aston and Weymouth Village Hall

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2025

	2024 £	2023 £
INCOME		
Hire of the hall	450.00	450.00
Events		
Takings and Bar	2,491.37	2,427.72
Raffles	257.00	304.00
Grants received		
Donations received	263.85	291.30
Wayleave	44.28	43.22
100 club receipts	1,330.00	546.00
	4,836.50	4,062.24
EXPENDITURE		
Events		
Cost of events	1,788.64	1,669.99
Other		
Hall Costs		
Electricity	1,568.03	1,817.97
Heating Oil	244.00	75.50
Insurance	1,256.53	1,173.22
Water	242.64	215.55
Council Tax	27.90	85.76
Cleaning	252.97	343.69
Grounds	252.00	594.00
Miscellaneous	28.75	123.98
Repairs and Maintenance		
Electrical	0.00	635.70
Plumbing	216.00	0.00
Other	232.78	90.00
Website	120.00	126.00
Equipment		896.64
100 club prizes	729.00	580.00
	6,959.24	8,428.00
Excess of expenditure over income	(2,122.74)	(4,365.76)

Aston and Weymouth Village Hall

Assets and Liabilities as at 31 March 2025

	2025 £	2024 £
Brought forward 01/04/2024		
AVH Bank Account	20,351.41	26,938.81
100 Club Bank Account	6,773.47	6,090.47
Petty Cash	701.10	852.22
Stock of Oil	670.00	0.00
Bar Stock	789.00	0.00
Accrued Income and prepayments	90.00	659.44
Accrued liabilities	(1,000.00)	(1,800.20)
	28,374.98	32,740.74
Excess of expenditure over income	(2,122.74)	(4,365.76)
	26,252.24	28,374.98
Carried forward 31 03/2024		
AVH Bank Account	17,510.92	20,351.41
100 Club Bank Account	6,942.22	6,773.47
Petty Cash	657.10	701.10
Stock of Oil	426.00	670.00
Bar Stock	986.00	789.00
Accrued Income and prepayments	90.00	90.00
Accrued liabilities and income in advance	(360.00)	(1,000.00)
	26,252.24	28,374.98
Accrued Income and Prepayments		
Parish Council	90.00	90.00
	90.00	90.00
Accrued Liabilities and Income in Advance		
Donation - MND		(150.00)
100 club advance subs	(360.00)	(850.00)
100 club prizes		
	(360.00)	(1,000.00)