**2024 BVS Chairman’s report – Caroline Pettigrew**

In this the 58th year of the BVS.

**Committee members:** Caroline Pettigrew (Chair), Tony Salter (Treasurer), Sue Gunawardena (Secretary), Ian Cluett, Alex Elderfield, Jonathan Fraser, Ciara Hardman-Cole, Tom Laugharne, Hayley Roberts, Adam Stockley, Lydia Wanstall

Joiners since April 2023 – Charlie Luckhoo, Claire Davies

Leavers, since April 2023 – Jo Laugharne

Thanks to the committee for all their hard work and enthusiasm and for making this such an enjoyable society to be part of. Thank you to all the helpers of the BVS events, we can’t hold these events without our amazing volunteers and we really appreciate their support.

**Events since the last AGM in April 2023**

This report summarizes the events that have taken place from May 2023-April 2024. The BVS runs social events for the village – we are not a for-profit organization. Our events are intended to cover costs and any profits are periodically distributed to local causes. Two of our events - Comedy night and our bi-annual beer festival (see the separate write-ups on these events below) – are charity fundraisers.

**2023**

*ReST Open Gardens – 11th June*

The BVS provided support to the Blewbury Resettlement Support Team (ReST) to help run Blewbury Open Gardens on Sunday 11th June. During the organization phase of the event, one of the ReST committee joined the BVS to allow effective communication from this group. The event was a great success and raised over £8,000 for this worthy cause.

*Summer Dance – 24th June*

Thanks to the Barretts for hosting the Summer Dance in their beautiful gardens at Ashbrook House. Thank you to McFunky for entertainment, which they generously provided for no charge beyond the PA costs. McFunky performed for us back in 2021 so we were delighted that they were able, and willing, to come back! Despite several other events happening at this time of year, attendance was good and the weather held out. This was the first outing for our new marquee and we are grateful to the volunteers who helped work out how to set this up and take it down. The marquee provided a great back drop (as well as weather protection) for the band.

*Clubs and Societies event – 24th September*

The BVS hosted a Clubs and Societies event on the afternoon of Sunday 24th September – the last Clubs and Societies event was held 5 years ago and BC (before Covid) so we felt it was time for the next one! This is a sort of “freshers’ fair” for the village, giving clubs and societies a chance to showcase themselves. We had over 30 groups involved - the BVS provided complimentary tea and cake. We would like to thank Jane Gibson for all her help with contacting and liaising with the groups.

*Bonfire night – 4th November*

The marquee came out again for bonfire night and really came into its own on what was a very wet and windy evening! We repeated the format of last year by providing beer as well as baked potatoes. The WI provided mulled wine and the pre-school ran a stall selling kids treats and gifts – both societies raised money to support their causes. We sold out of beer, wine and potatoes.

Due to issues with electricity overload at the croquet club in 2022, we decided to hire a generator and outdoor light for this year’s event, this also meant that we could position the marquee out of the wind and in better view of the bonfire and fireworks.

Attendance was high, with over 650 people present and we believe this is partly due to the entry price of £5 per adult and £2 per child, which has remained the same for many years. Having said this, our expenditure increased significantly this year due to increased costs for ambulance services, skip hire and lighting and generator hire.

Thank you to Pete Baker for sourcing and setting up the all-important firework display. This is our biggest event and involves so many volunteers so a big thank you to everyone involved from our wood collectors, tractor drivers, bonfire builders, bakers, servers, bar organisers, WI mulled wine providers, firework organisers, marshalls, ticket sellers and many more. Adam has just completed the final task on the checklist of planting seeds on the bonfire site!

*Santa’s Sleigh – 24th December*

Santa delivered over 100 presents to the young (and in some cases, not so young) in the village. Thank you to Santa, Mother Christmas, Blewbury’s very own Rudolf, this year’s extra-large herd of reindeer, Santa’s numerous elves (responsible for his post office and other technical, safety and refreshment-based support), and the Blewbury Brass Band and Annie’s singers for carols on the Playclose.

*Boxing Day Walk – 26th December*

The Boxing Day Walk took place in what seemed to be a rare day of reprieve from the wet and windy winter. We had a great turnout, with lots of groups of all sizes and a predominance of Barbies and French Revolutionaries! The Ron Freeborn Memorial Cup, awarded to the most ‘creative and artistic’ entry, was awarded to the ‘Barbies’. Thank you to all the volunteers, judges, and to Paul Finnon & family, Sally and Andy Lewis and Pat and Bernard Mattimore for putting on the drink stops. Thank you also to the Blueberry and Red Lion for setting up drinks stops and welcoming our walkers.

**2024**

*Roger Cambray New Year’s Day Walk – 1st January*

New Year’s Day 2024 kicked off with the Roger Cambray Memorial Walk from Blewbury to The Bell Inn at Aldworth, attended by a hardy troop of beer-seekers (and their dogs). The live folk music in the Bell’s snug was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

*Comedy Night – 16th March*

This year’s tickets for comedy night sold out in three days - we are very grateful for the amazing support for this event from the village. We sold tickets using the Tickettailor app – this meant no more queuing in a cold corner near the village hall and a clearer understanding of seating arrangements.

Paddy Lennox (our compère) never fails to deliver, and we were treated to three fantastic comedians. Thank you to Wendy Carless for the sound, Adam Stockley for the lighting, Phil Rogers for transporting the fridges, the Blewbury Players for the use of their equipment, and all our helpers at the bar. The funds raised from this event are donated to the Parish Council for maintenance of the village playgrounds.

*Easter Egg Rolling –31st March*

With what seems like weeks of endless rain, we were a bit concerned that village folk might have to wade through knee-high mud to get to the chalk pits for the annual Easter Egg Rolling, but somehow the weather dried out sufficiently in the few days before Easter Sunday. We had a fantastic array of spruced up eggs and a great battle for the longest egg roll. The BVS put this event on at no charge and fund the Easter egg prizes. Thanks to Ruth Elderfield for helping organize this alongside the BVS.

**Future events for 2024**

Blewbury Beer Festival – 18th May

Blewbury Garden Market – every Saturday from 11th May

Summer Dance – Saturday 22nd June, Ashbrook House

Bonfire Night – date to be confirmed

Christmas events – Santa’s Sleigh, Boxing Day Walk, New Year’s Day walk

*Blewbury Beer Festival*

We are excited that the Blewbury Beer Festival is back and will take place on Saturday May 18th. Our aim is to hold this event every other year. Tom Laugharne is leading this event alongside a team comprised largely of non-committee members. This approach of having a sub-committee team that includes villagers who don’t necessarily want to be part of the BVS committee but want to help run individual events has worked well for arranging such a large event. We have a dedicated website set up for this event https://www.blewbury-beer-festival.co.uk. This has allowed us to showcase the event, provide additional exposure for our sponsors, and provide more information on the causes we are raising money for. For this year’s event, we are raising funds for Blewbury Pre-School, UNICEF Childrens’ Emergency Fund, and the BVS.

*Blewbury Garden Market*

The Blewbury Garden Market is now operating as part of the BVS. Due to Sustainable Blewbury becoming a charity, it could no longer operate within this society and approached the BVS for help. We are delighted to support this important community group. The Blewbury Garden Market will be back for its 15th year on Saturday mornings on the garage forecourt from 11th May. The BGM gives Blewbury people an opportunity to sell excess home-grown or home-made produce and plants, to promote local food and reduce waste. Producers set their own prices for their sale items. A 10% levy is taken by Blewbury Garden Market to cover costs.

**Other updates**

The BVS marquee is available to other clubs and societies and for private hire. We aim to advertise this more widely over the course of the next year.

Our much-loved Sleigh needs some maintenance, and we are grateful to Peter Willison and BlewShed who have offered to help with this project.