



Autumn Bulletin, November 2025

Programme

As a reminder the meetings for the rest of the year are included below.

- 11 November - a talk by Martin Davis on the House of Sandys, Ombersley Court. This talk is at 117 High Street, Evesham, starting at 7.30. £4 for members, £5 for guests.
- 9 December, lunchtime social with mince pies at the Red Lion in Market Square (from 12.15pm). Speaker yet to be announced.

At our talks, please try to avoid paying with £20 notes, to reduce the risk of us running out of change.

Evesham Town Plan – Your Opinion Counts

The Evesham Town Plan 2025 was produced by Evesham Town Councillors with significant input from Gill and focuses on activities that the Town Council can either undertake or influence. The questionnaire was produced by the VECS Committee to enable you to share with us your priorities and any wider comments and was sent out alongside the September newsletter. Disappointingly, we have received only a handful of responses. We want to hear from you so we are issuing it again alongside this document. Completed copies can be emailed to vecs1972@gmail.com or handed in at a meeting or posted to Paula Bowden at 1 Orchard Walk, Evesham, WR11 1HA. If you unable to print one out or populate it online and email it back, please let us know and we'll get one to you.

Annual membership fees

Membership renewal is due on 1 March each year. To help us to reduce our bank charges, which have now been introduced by Lloyds Bank, please set up a Standing Order or Direct Debit or pay by BACS. The fees for 2026-27 will remain at £12 for an individual and £18 for a couple.

Business membership

We continue to encourage businesses to join the Civic Society to give us a broader representation of interests in the town. In return for membership, our news bulletins will now contain the logo of those businesses that have joined. Business members will receive our news bulletins, so that they can see what we are doing to try to make Evesham a better place to live and work. This year, in return for twice giving members a tour of their operations in Wick, Sky Garden has been given an honorary membership, thus its logo now appears below. The logos of our two other business members are also included: Eagle One which operates The Valley, and Sinclair Transport.

New VECS website

Please take a look at our revamped website <https://www.valeofeveshamcivicsociety.org.uk>



It is regularly updated by Gill and is a useful source of information. If you have any comments/suggestions about your website please let us know.

Your Civic Society on Social media <https://www.facebook.com/EveshamCivic>

We continue to grow our Facebook following (150 in September, now 177). We believe these additional followers are due to the continued visibility VECS is getting in the local newspapers eg the VECS monthly article in the Evesham Observer, and Gill being regularly asked for her comments relating to issues affecting the town eg Riverside Shopping Centre. Since the last newsletter our Facebook posts have covered: advertising our talks, our fundraising for the Almonry Museum refurbishment, work by WDC to clean up Bridge Street, and volunteer efforts to repaint bollards and lamp posts in Port Street.

Have you ever tried looking at Evesham through visitors' eyes? An Evesham resident did this in September and asked us to post on their behalf. She was delighted with the impressions she got. "Lovely buildings, plenty of independent shops, clean environment, plenty of places to eat, a marvellous riverside park". She wanted us to record her appreciation for the hard work that goes into improving the town by bodies such as VECS. We couldn't agree more and it's feedback like this that motivates our small committee to keep going.

The Almonry Museum refurbishment: fundraising

Brian Chilver has decided to end his single-handed efforts in selling the Lesley Brockbank prints of the Almonry and encouraging donations. The total raised for the Almonry Museum refurbishment fund is **£4,500**; a fantastic effort. Final payment was handed over at the Almonry Heritage Open Day on 20 September.

Our efforts as a society will now move over to selling notecards and Christmas cards. Each pack contains 5 cards, to be sold for £4. Cards are available from any committee member, the Almonry shop (in the former Sheldon Bosley Knight premises on Merstow Green) or email vecs1971@gmail.com



September's talk – Fire Safety at Home

A talk to members of the Vale of Evesham Civic Society at its meeting in September was given by Daniel Ballinger, one of the volunteers from Hereford & Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS). He focussed on fire safety in the home and provided an informative and entertaining evening. He offered a long list of basic advice that we all need to make sure that we do, to reduce risk of fire in our homes.

- Install a smoke detector on each level of accommodation. Test the 'old' battery versions weekly and change the battery after 1 year. For the 'new' battery versions, change the battery after 10 years.
- Install a heat alarm, especially in the kitchen.
- For those who are hard of hearing, have a remote alarm to place under the pillow; it connects to a detector elsewhere, probably downstairs.
- When cooking, make sure frying pan handles do not stick out.
- Do not smoke in bed or a chair.
- Charge electrical items – vapes, laptops, phones etc on a hard surface and where they can be seen. Charge during the day.
- Check all cables of equipment for fraying and throw away if frayed.
- Do not overload 3-pin adaptors; ideally do not use at all.
- Do not 'daisy-chain' cables from one adaptor to another.
- Keep candles away from windows, especially those in glass containers, and when lighting them away from radiators.
- Sweep the chimney once a year.
- Service the gas boiler once a year.
- Fit a carbon monoxide detector if you have a log-burning stove or gas fire/boiler.
- Ease your water stop tap once a year.
- Make sure that you have a clear exit route from the property, that is clear of clutter.
- Keep door keys available to give to the fire service.
- Make sure your torch battery is charged.
- Unplug all electrical appliances at night.
- Roll up, do not fold, any electric blanket and replace it at least once every 10 years or if you feel a hot spot.
- If using cable stored on a reel, make sure that the full length is pulled out when the cable is in use.
- Only charge electric vehicles/mobility scooters etc during the day and do this outside (if possible for scooters) with the vehicle as far away as possible from buildings/wooden fences.

Every household is encouraged to contact the Fire Service to request a fire safety check. One of our members has had a check carried out and found it to be very thorough, well informed and useful. If you want to see if you would qualify for a free Home Fire Safety visit or would like any fire safety advice, please call the team on **0800 032 1155**.

If you have to call the Fire Service on 999 they find that identifying the location is best done by providing the 'what3words' address. It is worth registering your address, which has to be done on-line, but is easy to do.

October's talk - The historic landscape of Bredon Hill

On 14th October more than 20 members gathered to listen with interest to a talk by Deborah Overton about the historic landscape of Bredon Hill. Highlights included:

- Woollashull village - originally known as Wolvershull (wolves hill?) lay to the north-west of Woollas Hall, the site of the original manor house. Earthwork can still be seen on both sides of the modern road leading to the Hall. The village was surrounded by ridge and furrow (a remnant of the medieval open field system), which extends halfway up the hill to St Catherine's chapel and well. The village became deserted in the 15th century.
- Parson's Folly – a square stone tower set on the hillfort rampart on the highest point of the hill, was built by Mr John Parsons, MP and squire of Kemerton Court in the mid 18th century. The top of the tower is said to be exactly 1000 feet above sea level. Parson's Folly was used as a lookout during World War II. The aerials on the tower were erected as boosters for mobile phone networks in the 1990s.

- Kemerton Camp - situated on the summit of Bredon Hill above the parish of Eckington, was excavated in 1935-7 as part of an extensive research programme on hillforts. Only small areas of the 22-acre fort on Bredon Hill were actually investigated. The excavation identified two different styles of rampart building and established that the fort was the result of two main phases of construction. Firstly, the inner rampart, enclosing 12 acres, was constructed 200-400BC with the soil and stone from the ditch with a simple overlapping entrance at the south-east corner. In the second phase, the inner entrance was altered to form an elaborate in-turned passageway with dry-stone walls, crossed by a timber bridge and a diagonal gateway. An outer rampart, faced with dry-stone walling along the entrance areas, was then constructed, again with a rock cut ditch. This rampart was within slingshot distance (a formidable Iron Age weapon) from the inner rampart. About a third of the hillfort has been eroded away over the last 2000 years and disappeared down over the edge of the ridge and hillside.
- Exhibits of Roman pottery mid 1st to 4th century AD found during the excavations, some of which was Severn Valley Ware (local pottery made in Malvern).

Evesham Place Board <https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/business/evesham-place-board>

The Guide for Businesses in the Evesham Conservation Area is due to be available soon, as is the new Town Map for use in Noticeboards, publications and websites; bringing it up to date and making it easier to read. The Board is sponsoring this year's Christmas trail; 16 Lego penguins will be appearing in shops in town and at the Valley in December, to encourage visitors to spend more time and hopefully more money in our shops. Last year's Christmas Nutcracker trail was recently awarded 'Highly Commended' in the national Christmas Campaign of the Year, at the Spectre Awards; a significant achievement as it was up against major retailer's and shopping centres. It was praised for its creativity, community involvement and visual appeal, despite being run on a modest budget.

If you would like more information about any of the projects, please ask Gill via email vecs1972@gmail.com.

Wychavon District Council is making progress to purchase the Riverside Shopping Centre and associated land from PJK Investments Ltd, but no formal statement has yet been forthcoming.

Evesham Observer

Gill has been invited by the Observer's Evesham reporter Lisa Evans to write a monthly column for the newspaper. Some of you may have seen the 9th September edition, but for those who do not find a paper copy and do not read the on-line edition, copied below are the September and October articles.

Society's role will help preserve and protect heritage

OUR aim is to promote high standards of planning and architecture and to encourage the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest.

In more recent years, our focus has included the promotion of civic pride and the improvement of our town's public realm.

Vale of Evesham Civic Society (VECS) has more than 100 members and some of these form the committee. Our group is a member of the national body Civic Voice, so we are not alone in fighting for improvements to our built heritage and indeed see that many other towns across the country face the same challenges.

Many years ago, in recognition of the importance of Evesham's historic buildings, Wychavon District Council designated much of the town centre a conservation area. It covers High Street, Vine Street, Market Square, Merstow Green, Bridge Street, Port Street and



Civic Matters

Gill Pawson, chair of Vale of Evesham Civic Society, writes for The Observer

Gill Pawson, chair of Vale of Evesham Civic Society, introduces the work of the charity that was established in 1972 to stimulate public interest in the Vale of Evesham.

Church Street, with elements of the side and back streets also included.

A conservation area protects the character of a defined district in all its aspects and to enable this, there are additional planning controls that apply to both domestic and commercial properties.

It is this area that VECS takes the greatest interest in. We are working to encourage shop owners to change their shop signage so that they reflect the character of the area, using heritage colours and lettering.

We do not forget, however, that we have a responsibility to

the wider heritage of the Vale and often make representations about planning proposals that affect our surrounding villages and countryside.

We recognise the importance of working with others in seeking to improve our town. Over the last few years, we have worked with both Evesham Town Council and Evesham Place Board to improve the community facilities and appearance of the public realm. This has led to cleaned and repaired bus shelters and noticeboards, new benches, shop front improvements and much else besides.

Finally, a note on the Riverside Shopping Centre. We are hugely relieved that at last there may be good news on the horizon. Wychavon District Council expects to make a formal announcement in October about the future of this now nearly derelict area.

We meet monthly at Egwins Club, on High Street so why not join us and let us have your views on Evesham. The next meeting is on October 14.

For more details, visit valeofeveshamcivicsociety.org.uk.

Riverside future is key to helping town's revival

Gill Pawson, chair of Vale of Evesham Civic Society, considers what's next for the Riverside Shopping Centre as Wychavon District Council looks to strike a deal over its future ownership.

VALE of Evesham Civic Society, together with most of the residents of the town, is eagerly looking forward to an announcement about the future of that hotly-debated topic and bane of Evesham – Riverside Shopping Centre.

Wychavon District Council has made it known that it is in negotiations with the current owner Patrick Kelly of PJK Investments, to buy the centre, together with his interests in all of his other property in the town centre. These include the Public Hall, the Town



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Hall and commercial units in Market Square.

We have been following, with considerable interest, the fortunes of this part of town, since 2018 when publicity was given to sketches of a possible redevelopment package. Even then it had become clear that changes in shopping habits were having an impact on town centre units.

Covid lockdowns pushed more and more of us to use the internet, which now supplies many of our purchases. The ease of parking at out-of-town centres and their increasing range of shops means that shopping centres like the Riverside get less and less footfall, so units close and

running it is no longer profitable.

The disgraceful state of the inside of the Riverside Centre has

brought much criticism and complaint from locals and visitors alike.

Offers were made to clean inside the building, to at least make the walk from Bridge Street through to Market Square free of litter and pigeon droppings, but the owner would not allow access.

The Public Hall has planning permission to be repaired and brought back into use as a performance venue, but no money will be spent on it until the current owner relinquishes his legal interest in it.

Meanwhile, the building continues to deteriorate. Essential repairs to the Town Hall are unlikely to be carried out until it is



The Amonry. Picture by Carmel Langridge

firmly back in the town council's control, so water continues to leak through the roof.

It is clear that there is so much more at stake here

than the run-down shopping centre. The whole town is suffering. It is this wider impact that has persuaded Wychavon District Council to get involved in

trying to purchase the centre.

We look forward to being consulted on plans from a new developer, to regenerate the site and dramatically change the relationship between the town centre, our historic streets with Abbey Park, and the Riverside.

We also trust that the local councils will have learnt lessons from this situation and in the future not sell off legal interests in our public buildings.

On a positive note, it is pleasing that our most iconic building, the Grade I-listed Amonry, is about to embark on a much-needed renovation project.