

Tribute to Jennie McGregor-Smith 1938-2023

Jennie was an arts phenomenon in Bromsgrove. Her sudden death on Friday 15th September has brought immense shock and sadness to all who knew her.

Jennie was full of life with a kind and generous spirit. Heartfelt tributes have poured in from individuals and organisations with great appreciation being shown for her immeasurable contribution to arts and culture in Bromsgrove and the West Midlands. She was an expert organiser of events and concerts, a persuasive fundraiser and played pivotal roles in founding several well-known local organisations. Her talent for research resulted in the publication of four detailed and superbly illustrated local history books. She will be hugely missed.

Jennie was born in London in 1938. With her husband John, she moved to Bromsgrove in 1966. They lived at Coombe Cottage in Finstall where they raised their children Graham and Heather. Jennie remained in the family home after her husband's death, moving to Bilberry Place last year. Her love for Finstall is reflected in the book *The Story of Finstall, the 1640s to the 1940s* which she published in 2018.

Jennie's professional life included administration for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, being Artistic Director of Huntingdon Hall in Worcester and she was a Case Worker for the Victorian Society responsible for buildings within the Bromsgrove District. Outside of this, Jennie was heavily involved in the world of music and the arts.

WORDS was co-founded by Jennie, Kate Shaw and Margaret Cooper in 1979 to bring literature events to Bromsgrove. Its first meeting was held in Hanbury Hall. The list of speakers invited by the group is breathtaking. As well as writers with local links such as Jonathan Coe and Geoffrey Hill, they have welcomed hundreds of other authors and poets, including P D James, Andrew Motion and Zadie Smith.

In February 1980, stimulated by the loss of the Almshouses in Stratford Road and other prominent historic buildings in the town centre, Jennie wrote to the *Bromsgrove Messenger* in response to Christopher Pancheri's letter on the issue. Together they proposed a Civic Society, recruited others to form a steering group and then a committee. Just three months later the Bromsgrove Society was launched with over 200 Bromsgrove residents attending to hear about its plans. Jennie remained an active member of the Society, campaigning to save our historic environment which she cared about passionately.

Jennie joined The Housman Society committee in 1987 when Jim Page took over the chairmanship and began a new era. There followed some vibrant years for the society leading up to the centenary of the publication of *A Shropshire Lad* in 1996. The full celebration programme included a literary weekend in Ludlow packed with notable speakers, a musical weekend in Bromsgrove, a special performance of the CBSO at Ludlow, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle with Thomas Allen, a commemoration in Westminster Abbey, events at St John's College, Oxford and University College London, a National centenary sub-committee. She was amazingly successful in raising funds - something which requires special skills. (Continued on page 2)



Bromsgrove Community Arts supports The Core Theatre at Artrix

Bromsgrove was jubilant when news broke that The Core Theatre would move some shows to Artrix to combat the issue of RAAC concrete at the Solihull venue.

Artrix doors will open from early November to accommodate The Core's schedule, with their pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, opening on 15th December (Bromsgrove's own Pantomime, *Aladdin*, opens at Cobham Theatre on the same day).

To support the operation of The Core within Artrix, a newly formed Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Bromsgrove Community Arts (BCA) will coordinate a team of volunteers to cover front of house and the bar.

BCA's trustees are prominent individuals from the Bromsgrove arts world who came together under the Chairship of Kyle Daisley, to work on creating a sustainable business plan to operate the much loved Artrix Arts Centre. Kyle said "We are thrilled to be providing crucial support to The Core Theatre as they move their shows to Artrix. With a solid team and a group of keen volunteers I am confident that The Core's residency will be a success, and what a joy it is to see the doors of our much loved local theatre opening again."

Keep up to date with BCA online at www.facebook.com/BromsgroveCommunityArts

She obtained vital grants and the success of Jennie's fund raising ensured the Housman Society remained in a healthy financial position for years to come. She co-ordinated all the activities and maintained a flow chart showing the detail of who was doing what and when. She worked tirelessly at administration, phoning, writing, typing, designing programmes, brochures and leaflets. Everything she did was of professional quality."

Celebrating their 60th Season in 2023, Bromsgrove Concerts is indebted to Jennie for her help in bringing so much wonderful classical music to the town, since it was established in 1963, as well as her welcome collaboration on the *History of Bromsgrove Concerts* publication.

Bromsgrove Concerts Chairman Alastair Moseley recalls "Jennie was an ever present figure in everything arts and music in Bromsgrove and was hugely loved and respected by everyone for all that she had done to promote high quality music and art, and unlocking the local talent of the town. She brought artists of international repute to Bromsgrove to perform, she helped to establish a much needed centre for music and arts here and she always seemed to attend every concert that took place in the town. She laid some very strong foundations in music and arts for her successors to build on, including me, for which I personally will be forever grateful."

Jennie was one of the people responsible for campaigning to bring a dedicated arts centre venue to Bromsgrove. She took a leading role in campaigning for the possible re-purposing of various buildings but none of the options were possible, so work began on fighting for a suitable site for a new build. The result was Artrix which opened in April 2005.

Bromsgrove Arts Alive (BAA) was established in 2006, as the successor to Bromsgrove Arts Association. Jennie had been Chair of the old association which had over thirty affiliated groups including all those mentioned above. She contributed to the new organisation and has produced its promotional membership leaflet bi-annually.

Jennie ran Bromsgrove Music Tours where organised coaches took people to concerts in Birmingham. Her operations later extended to Europe, including a tour to the Czech Republic with visits to the birthplaces of Dvořák, Smetana and Janacek. En route the group passed through Zlin where Tom Stoppard was born. There they all signed a postcard to send to him because some of the group had met him when they visited the National Theatre with the Housman Society to see his play *The Invention of Love* based on the life of A E Housman.

Her Celebrating English Song series of concerts ran for 13 years, bringing high quality, live music to Tardebigge Church. She commissioned the setting of Housman's poetry to music. The composer Ian Venables said "I dedicated my Housman setting of 'How clear, how lovely bright' to Jennie. It's the second song on my cycle 'The Song of the Severn' sung by Roderick Williams, whom Jennie would invite to her wonderful Tardebigge English Song Weekends - the highlight of our summer."

She also played a vital part in the Finzi Friends group and in the early days offered invaluable help in organising the artists and lunches for its events at Ashmansworth in Hampshire.

In 1996 Jennie was Chair of the West Midlands branch of the National Federation of Music Societies and to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the organisation (later to be called Making Music) she led the organisation of simultaneous performances of Verdi's Requiem in Worcester, Coventry and Lichfield Cathedrals with the best three orchestras in the region conducted by Paul Spicer, Guy Woolfenden and Michael Lloyd. Singers from far and wide signed up to take part resulting in over a thousand performers participating on the day.

The sort of administration Jennie did for so many organisations without charge allowed them to use funds for other elements of their work. Alongside administration, she was prolific in applying for grant funding. Locally, the best known of Jennie's Heritage Lottery Fund bids was the project to re-instate the John Adams Memorial Cross in Bromsgrove Old Cemetery. The work brought together Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove District Council, The Bromsgrove Society, The Housman Society, and the Victorian Society, and saw the important monument reinstated for future generations to enjoy.

Jennie was a long-standing member of the Victorian Society and her interest in the Victorian architecture was at the heart of much of her research projects and publications, notably her book *John Cotton, The Life of a Midlands Architect 1844 – 1934*. Jennie encouraged Bromsgrove District Council to make Hewell Grange a Conservation Area. She sat on the Hewell Grange Conservation Advisory Group on behalf of The Victorian Society, which along with the Hereford and Worcester Garden Trust, Historic England and the Conservation Officer at Bromsgrove District Council advised the Ministry of Justice on the historic landscape at Hewell. Her countless achievements were acknowledged with the award of the British Empire Medal in the New Year honours list of January 2018, given in recognition of services to the community in Bromsgrove.



When John de la Cour, Chairman of the Elmley Foundation, heard of Jennie's death he said "I think we all know how widely admired, respected and loved Jennie was. She had the most astonishing commitment to contemporary music, music in general and the support of musicians. What I remember particularly is how much fun she was – even when having to confront all kinds of organisational challenges which she so frequently was up against. I think of Bromsgrove Concerts and Celebrating English Song at Tardebigge with equal admiration – as well as her winning way of extracting money from people!"

Jennie's legacy will live on far and wide not just in Bromsgrove, and she'll remain in the hearts of those who knew and loved her.

The Bromsgrove Society's Button Art Project

The Bromsgrove Society is working with Laura Brodrick from Think Big Picture to deliver an art and heritage project celebrating the Sanders family and the Button Factory.

A piece of mosaic-style art will be created at a free community workshop at Bromsgrove Library on Friday 27th October between 10am - 11.30am and at a free session on Saturday 28th October from 1pm - 3pm during the Creative Art Showcase event. All are welcome to take part in the free workshops and there's no need to book. The finished piece will form the top of a coffee table which will be housed at Bromsgrove Library. The table's base will be constructed by Bromsgrove Men in Sheds who are part of Age UK Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest. The project is funded and supported by the Cultural Compact for North East Worcestershire and Bromsgrove District Council

During the project we also hope to collect memories from people with family associations with the button factory as well as the later badge factory including anyone who put the pins in as an outworker on piece work. Anyone with memories to contribute can send them to info@bsoc.co.uk or give them during the workshops.



Benjamin Sanders moved his button manufactory from Birmingham to premises at the rear of the High Street in Bromsgrove in 1821. Five years later he relocated the business to the former Sidemoor Mill where Button Drive is today off Willow Road. Benjamin Sanders' patent for a new method of attaching the shank to cloth covered buttons bought him and his family wealth. After his death, his descendants carried on the business before handing over its management to Mr Nicholls who continued to trade as B. Sanders and Sons. The building suffered a serious fire in 1915. Work was soon resumed in temporary premises and a scheme was organised to find alternative work for some of the women before the factory fully re-opened. The original button factory site in Windsor Street is currently being renovated by its owner.

Bromsgrove Town Crier

I have again been incredibly busy, with 75 engagements so far this year.

It's difficult to pick out highlights without including everything. The Coronation with all the associated parties and events is a good starter!

At Town Crying Competitions, sadly I only managed 2nd at Bromyard after winning last year, but won "Best Content of Cry" at Wareham! That's another two trophies for the year!

However, the two events that gave me the most pleasure were the Dedication of a Blue Plaque for the Home of Flight Lieutenant Bill Townsend who, 80 years ago, was one of the Pilots of the "Dambusters" raid and then the 100th Birthday of Betty Webb, one of the Bletchley Park Codebreakers!

Remembrance is now only just round the corner and then it's Christmas. Let's hope I can keep going! OYEZ!

Love Begins at 50 for Rubery Drama Group

We were very pleased with our last production, *Inspector Drake's Last Case*, a whodunit spoof by David Tristram.

It had been delayed from our usual October time so it was good to see our audience back again after the break.

We are now well into rehearsals for our production of *Love Begins at 50*, a farce by Raymond Hopkins. It will be Helen Bourke's directorial debut and the group also has several new members in the cast who are enjoying being members of our friendly group.

The play will be performed from Thursday 19th to Saturday 21st October at our usual venue of the Beacon Church Centre in Rubery.

Meanwhile, we meet each Wednesday evening at 7.30 pm at the Beacon Church Centre, Whetty Lane Rubery B45 9DL. Contact kaymo@talktalk.net or find us on FB Rubery Drama Group, if you are thinking of joining the group or would like any further information. We welcome new members whether interested in acting, or helping with set design and sound.

Avoncroft Folk Dance Group



Despite the heat we had a wonderful summer of dancing, including a barn dance as part of the Bromsgrove Festival.

It was a shame that the one garden dance we organised brought rain, resulting in some very cramped dancing inside!

If you'd like to join us we meet at



Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, B60 4JR on Thursday evenings 8-10pm. No need to bring a partner. More information – Liz Stanton liz@the-stantons.uk

Flickering Flame Burns Brightly in Fairfield

In September Fairfield Flicks celebrated its 4th anniversary, with free film screenings, plus a screening of *Looking Back at Bromsgrove* as part of Heritage Open Days 2023.

Since its launch in 2019, the initiative has grown to include movie screenings, live music, event cinema and soon touring theatre.

The initiative is delivered by Fairfield Village Community Association, the purpose is to bring performing arts & people together; reducing loneliness & social isolation, enhancing community cohesion, and giving a platform for artists to shine.

To better reflect the diverse programme of cinematic and live events, there has been small change of branding with Fairfield Flicks now being known as BARTS (Bromsgrove Arts - the home of Fairfield Flicks and Fairfield Music).

Like many art venues across the country, balancing the books is not easy. Fortunately, as a wholly voluntary initiative, which is embedded into the Community Association's operations, there is not the huge costs and risks that other organisations must deal with.

The growing programme of what's coming to Bromsgrove Arts can be found by visiting www.bromsgrovearts.org.uk, and the autumn programme includes recently released movies *Hypnotic*, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, *Elemental* and *Till*, and live music from Ricky Cool and the In Crowd, the Midland Concert Orchestra, Amit Dattani and Wes Finch.

The festive season will soon be here and to help get people in the mood will be the nationwide screening of André Rieu's *White Christmas*, plus a visit from the Rain or Shine Theatre Company.

Bromsgrove Arts – the home of Fairfield Flicks & Fairfield Music - is located at Fairfield Village Hall (B61 9LZ), there is free parking and a licenced bar.

For information and advanced tickets for all events visit www.bromsgrovearts.org.uk



A Seat to Remember

Margaret Rice 26 June 1934 - 1 October 2020. Hilary Rice 25 August 1935 - 28 August 2021

A bench in memory of Margaret and Hilary Rice has been installed in the churchyard at St John's.

The couple made Bromsgrove their home and were very active and committed members of the church. The bench has been installed with a legacy from their family.

If you were a part of the congregation or visited St John's or St Andrew's churches during the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s it is likely that you would have bumped into Margaret and Hilary.



Margaret played the piano for the hymns at services held in St Andrew's on Lyttleton Avenue in Charford, and for communion services held at St John's Nursing home, given for the residents. She organised the purchase of bible reading notes for members of the congregation and was a baptism visitor, visiting families with children to be baptised, helping them prepare and supporting them before and after the service.

When the BBC came to St John's and filmed *Songs of Praise*, Margaret read the lesson which was broadcast to the nation.

They lived on Aqueduct Lane in Alvechurch and hosted many social events, cooking meals and serving afternoon teas for their friends and family – often to raise money for the church. A favourite event was the Teddy Bears Picnics, which they held on summer days in their garden.

Hilary was the Parochial Church Council Secretary for many years, preparing agendas, taking minutes, following up agenda items. He was meticulous in the role and ensured that the church was run efficiently. He sang in a local choir and took part in their annual musical performances staged at Solihull theatre. Friends from St John's would go as a group to see him perform and Margaret would support him as the prompt for the shows.

Together they ran a house group for many years, inviting people into their home to study the bible, Christian principles and faith. Within church they would regularly read lessons and assist during services.

On Wednesday 13th September a group of family and friends gathered at the newly installed bench to share memories of Margaret and Hilary Rice. In a short service Revd Ray Khan remembered the couple and blessed the commemorative bench. It is hoped that visitors to the site will enjoy the view and find peace and time for reflection.

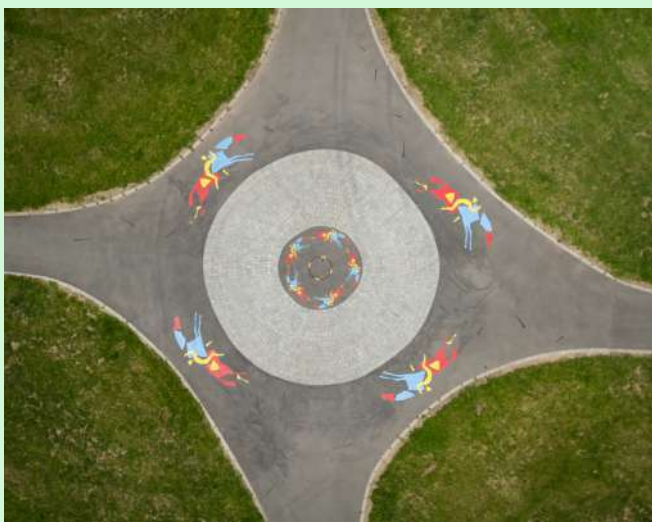
BDC Arts Development, Leisure and Cultural Services

2023 – Working Creativity Together

In June we worked with artists Keith Ashford and Elizabeth Turner to create a new vibrant Heritage Community Public Artwork, *Bromsgrove Galloper*, for the recently redeveloped Recreation Ground in the heart of Bromsgrove Town Centre.

The artists had been busy working with school and community groups to help design the artwork, ably supported by our own local historian Pat Tansell. The public artwork celebrates the heritage of the site and the wider town and district, providing a splash of colour in the middle of this newly designed space. It has been well received by the public and community alike.

The Court Leet triumphed again with its annual return to Bromsgrove High Street, complementing the normal market offer, with a triumphant parade, assizes event, and market stalls in the sunshine. This important event offers the town the opportunity to celebrate its long traditional



market heritage in a contemporary offering. The occasion also hailed the return of the Housman statue. He'd unfortunately become loose on his plinth and had to be taken away to receive a little TLC before he could be returned to his rightful place in the High Street.

It was great to be able to work again with Bromsgrove Festival. With many exciting events returning, alongside new and the Saturdays in and around the Bromsgrove Town. There was plenty on offer and to do. The diversity of the Saturday offers is to be celebrated from the third Bromsgrove Pride, the return of Bromsgrove Carnival and the first Creative Arts Showcase and Bromsgrove Festival partnership event.

We were excited to work together again with Bromsgrove Arts Alive!, Bromsgrove Society, Avoncroft Museum and many more of our organisations to jointly promote this year's Heritage Open Days from 8th to the 17th September across 28 events in Bromsgrove and Redditch. It is planned for next year to build on what was achieved to support out amazing local arts, culture, and heritage sector and to increase the number of people from all backgrounds visiting their fantastic sites and venues.

The Cultural Compact for Northeast Worcestershire has had an energised year, with the expertise of freelance project managers Louisa Davis, Claire Marshall and Christina Timms joining the team to move forward this important strategic initiative for Bromsgrove and Redditch.

Following the success of the Cultural Compact Conference at Avoncroft Museum in March, the team have been busy working on developing the new brand for the Heritage Corridor and preparing the activity plans for the funding applications to Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund over the coming months.

The aim of the Cultural Compact for Northeast Worcestershire is to strategically bring together the Arts, Cultural, Business and Heritage Sectors to work collectively stronger, sharing expertise, knowledge, and resources for the benefit of the residents and the sectors.

South Birmingham Guild of Silk Painters

It has now become the custom for us to have had a display in Rubery Library as part of the Bromsgrove Festival.

Our display didn't have a theme this time, but sought to show pieces which we had been creating particularly with our newcomers, together with a number of other items, some from earlier times. The display did show a variety of techniques, hoping to create interest.



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When I went along to take down the display it was pleasing to hear from the librarian just how many people had been in to see it and how much interest it had raised. I'm always so grateful to my cousin for taking charge of the display with Lin Fuller and myself standing by with pins and items.



Maybe we shall have some enquiries for our next meeting in September.

At our May meeting we created painted effects from folding and twisting our silk before pushing the colours into the silk or by

scrunching up the silk and applying colour and different types of salt. This was something new for newer members and they were highly delighted with the results. We further explored this in June when using the ideas on scarves.

We love to welcome new members to our friendly group whether familiar with silk painting or new to it. We meet on the second Tuesday afternoon of the month. We have plenty of supplies to help you get underway. Contact Kay Morris at kaymo@talktalk.net

Heritage Open Day Success for the Norton Museum Collection

We have now been open nearly 12 months after the huge upheaval of the refurbishment and we're really getting into our stride!

Everyone that visits calls us the "Tardis", a small frontage but expanded at the back with much more than you're expecting as you come in! The evening "soiree" in June was a wonderful event with many happy comments about the ambiance of the evening with the Harpist playing gently!

The Heritage Open Weekend was brilliant with four times the usual visitor numbers. We've got a fantastic link with Avoncroft and Wythall Transport Museum that gives us a vintage Bus shuttle between both of us and the Railway Station on special event days.

After our appeal last time we have established that Charford Pottery was based in the House on the corner of Kidderminster Road and Charford Road, just below St Peter's Church and the Potter was Alan Norwood. We have also acquired a decorated cup with Alan's name on the bottom, but that says he's from Droitwich! Did he subsequently move to Bromsgrove or move from us to Droitwich? Also on the wall of that house is a very detailed large plaque that states "Ceorlicford", is that the original name for Charford? Any suggestions?

Barnt Green Choral Society on Fair Day

Bromsgrove Baptist church was the venue for the 'It's Showtime!' summer Fair Day concert by BGCS.

The choir sang selections from *The Lion King*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Les Miserables* accompanied by a terrific instrumental ensemble.

Soloist Catherine Tabberner also provided some wonderfully chosen songs from the shows to complement the programme.

This was the first time that the choir had used the Baptist Church on New Road and it proved to be a splendid venue. It's location close to the High street meant it was convenient for anyone who wanted to visit the fair and then walk up to the concert. Their Christmas concert is on December 16th at 3pm at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, then Mozart's Requiem is planned for March 16th 2024



Heritage Open Day draws large turnout

Well over 200 people attended the Heritage Open Day at St John's Church on Saturday 16th September.

The church doors were open at 10am for visitors to take their seats to listen to local organist Oliver Neale. A video camera was set up to project the organ keyboard onto a big screen to add an extra dimension to the concert, when the instrument could be seen and heard. Being a Cake and Coffee Concert refreshments were enjoyed after the performance.

From noon the open day got underway with a queue of people waiting to climb the spiral staircase in the tower to ring the bells and enjoy the views over the town from the battlements. During the next two hours over 70 people, including many young children, ventured up and returned to the lobby full of smiles and delight.

Within the historic building visitors were able to play the organ under the guidance of Director of Music Steve Cowperthwaite, search all round the building to find the old keys which had been left around, get creative with the team from Creative Arts, learn about the history of the church, browse the Bromsgrove Society bookstall and enjoy a drink and cakes - all for free as part of Heritage Open Days (HODs).



The event was organised by the Friends of St John's. For many visitors it was their first time in the building, and the open day attracted tourists who were visiting the town from Poland and America. Friends Chairman Jo Slade said "It was a wonderful day at St John's, I'm sure the large number of visitors was very much helped by the collaborative work of local organisations and Bromsgrove District Council who produced a booklet to promote all the HODs events in and around Bromsgrove. It was fabulous to welcome new faces to the building, and to greet visitors from around the world! The feedback we received from everyone was all extremely positive. It is fantastic to host events which bring joy to those who attend and I'm grateful to everyone who helped to make the day a huge success."

The Friends were also able to tell people about the current project to Save our Spire. £360,000 plus vat is needed to carry out restoration work to the spire. The top section of the spire and its internal stabilising metal rod needs to be replaced. The metal rod is rusting, causing the stonework to crack. Friends will be submitting an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in October, and will be running a local fundraising campaign in the new year. To find out more about the work of the Friends of St John's visit their facebook page www.Facebook.com/FriendsStJohnsBromsgrove or get in touch via email friends.stjohns.church@gmail.com



Remembering Stephen Kyte

Stephen was an active member of his beloved hometown community. He was usually found in and around the town, shopping or attending concerts and events – usually with his camera ready to capture the moment, and always a cheery word to greet friends.

Stephen was born in Burton-on-Trent on 3rd November 1945 and lived in Brighouse, Yorkshire until 1956 when his family moved to Bromsgrove. With his parents Ernest and Joan, and sister Liz, Stephen lived on Kidderminster Road, next to the Vicarage in the shadow of St John's Church, his father was the Headmaster of Bromsgrove County High School.

After school, Stephen worked as a hospital porter at Hill Top Hospital in Bromsgrove and at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch. He retired just before his 60th birthday after 41 years of service. He cared for his mother at home until she died in 2009 and Stephen moved to a flat in Nailers Court on Ednall Lane where he lived independently for the first time. His sister Liz said "He lived life to the full and his last 13 years were his happiest. He was a sociable, kind member of the residential community there".

Stephen enjoyed a wide range of hobbies and interests. His lifelong passion for buses began aged four when he received a red double decker Dinky Toy bus as a gift. Bus spotting became an all-consuming hobby. Notebooks were filled with bus schedules, numbers and routes. Later in life, Stephen discovered the Severn Valley Railway and spent many happy hours there.

Classical music and choral singing were very important to Stephen. He sang with the Bromsgrove Choral Society for over 50 years, having joined the group with his parents in the 1970s. Stephen was invited to join the choir of St John's Church and was a loyal member for many years until the last few weeks of his life. He loved singing and listening to music, attending concerts across Bromsgrove and visiting cathedrals and churches to listen to orchestras and organ recitals. At every event he would ask the performers to sign his programme – what a collection of the town's musical history he amassed!

Stephen was often found in the Foto Factory, printing out his photographs which filled hundreds of albums, each image neatly labelled and annotated. The pictures he most loved to take featured buses, trains, animals, weddings, friends, Fair Day, Sanders Park, concerts, and Bromsgrove... he saved newspaper cuttings too.

Stephen was a member of the Bromsgrove Society and enjoyed the Tuesday night local history talks, and would also attend the annual Bromsgrove Lecture. Stephen enjoyed collecting books about the market town he loved. He enjoyed day trips to Avoncroft Museum, regularly visited Artrix and never missed Fair Day or the Bandstand Concerts on summer Sundays in Sanders Park.

Stephen died on 7th June after a short illness. His funeral took place on Monday 26th June at St John's Church where a choir of over 40 singers from many local choirs joined a large congregation to celebrate Stephen's life, his love of singing and Bromsgrove. A well-known and liked member of our town – he will be missed.



Bromsgrove Folk Club and Festival

The club continues to do well although audience numbers are still down post Covid. That said we have had a great summer.....whereas most other guest clubs close over the folk festival period, we remain open, and it pays off!

We have a great line up of acts through to Christmas and pretty much all of the first half of 2024 is booked up as far as artists are concerned.

Over the Bromsgrove Festival period in July 2024 we have booked singer/songwriter Mike Silver, departing from his normal format and performing a show detailing his life in the music business for over 50 years. Silver has been active in the UK contemporary and folk music circuits since the late 1960s when he was signed as the first solo artist to Elton John's Rocket Record Company. Also booked during the Bromsgrove Festival period is Canadian duo Over the Moon on a rare UK tour.

Bromsgrove Folk Festival is on the move again and will be held over the long weekend of 4th to 7th July 2024 at Bromsgrove Rugby Football Club in Finstall. Tickets for this even went on sale a week or so back....the application form can be downloaded and submitted by visiting www.bromsgrovetalkclub.co.uk We have a great line-up already booked including Martyn Joseph, Track Dogs, Granny's Attic and Enda Kenny from Australia with more to come....watch this space!

The Folk Festival will also have camping, sessions, open mic events, dance demonstrations and, albeit in the planning stages as we go to press, workshops and a crafts area are planned.

As well as via the web site given above, news a photos of the Club's and Festival's can also be found on social media.....Facebook – Bromsgrove Folk Club and Festival.....Twitter (or X) - @bromsgrovetalk.....and Instagram - bromsgrove_folk_club

Bromsgrove Folk Club, which currently meets at Catshill Social Club is celebrating 50 years in existence this year and, although we are not planning a special event, we are, most definitely, celebrating!! And having fun!!



Martyn Joseph

Creative Arts SHOWCASE 23

Art from the Heart Exhibition, 28th & 29th October

Showcase 23 – and Art from the Heart exhibition is the biggest event in the Bromsgrove Creative calendar!

This year working with St Andrews and Lottery Funding there is even more fun opportunity for everyone. Activities include: - Halloween inspired craft and all types of face painting, make and take craft, both free and low cost, performances from Got to Sing and other choirs, Milo on piano, Helen Person and Pete Harrington singing and so many other performances on stage and around the event, throughout the day.

Art from the Heart Exhibition and gallery – occupies an elegant, light and airy space in the Hospitality Suite and has been Curated by local artists Annmarie Hulley & Lorraine Wright – you can't miss this! It's a great opportunity to buy an artwork for that special person in your life.

Also available to book free taster slots in the Revitalise your Life zone with Izabela, everything from Reiki, Sound bathing to 'Stressbox'.

The whole day is a massive injection of fun and creativity – so come down and enjoy being entertained and take away a special piece either created by you or one of our lovely talented local Artists and Crafters almost all of whom are one man local businesses – a room full of artisans makes for a great day out.

Also on board are many community support teams including Primrose Hospice, Talking News, Men in Sheds, Age Concern, Bromsgrove Society and Bromsgrove Arts Alive with the Festival to name but a few.

Creative Art Showcase would like to say a very big thank you to Creatives 100% Volunteer team and all valued sponsors in 2023, which included: the St Andrews (National Lottery Community Fund) Councillors Shirley Webb & Kit Taylor and Willowbrook Garden Centre.

Creative Art Showcase are passionate about making art and creativity available to all our diverse communities, if you or your business can support in any way – please do get in touch!

Bromsgrove School Arena and Hospitality Suite, 28th and 29th October 23 – 10-16.00 hours



Worcestershire Local History Forum Day

Saturday 11th November 9.30am - 4pm

The Bromsgrove Society is pleased to be hosting the WLH Forum Day 2023. It will take place at The Methodist Church Centre, Stratford Road, B60 1AS.

Entrance to the Forum Day is £10 and includes tea or coffee. Please pay cash on arrival. The café will be serving other light refreshments.

During the day there will be a programme of talks. Two of the topics have been chosen because of the significance of the date.

Worcestershire Local History Forum was set up to help co-ordinate interest groups and studies across Worcestershire. The members are a mixture of organisations and individuals who all share an interest in the history of the County. For information about WLHF visit www.wlhf.org.uk

The Forum Day Topics and speakers are:
The Bromsgrove Guild's Great War - Quintin Watt.

Quintin will speak about the impact of the First World War on the firm and its employees, many of whom were craftsmen from Europe. He will explain how the War provided work for the company in the 1920s with the construction of many war memorials in Britain and further afield.

Bromsgrove at War on the Home Front - Pat Tansell.

Pat will talk about life in Bromsgrove on the Home Front during both World Wars, and will also refer to the Boer War. During her researches Pat has used archived copies of the Bromsgrove Messenger and information available via Ancestry, FindMyPast and other resources.

Broadway: Worcestershire's Poshest Village - Julian Hunt

Broadway has one foot in the Cotswolds and the other in the Vale of Evesham. Its farmers grew wealthy from cultivating the rich soil of the Vale and rearing sheep on the hills. Their rambling Cotswold-stone farmhouses have mostly been converted into country houses and Broadway's inns and tea shops now cater for tourists from around the world.



Bromsgrove Youth & Community Hub (The Hub) launched in July 2018 in response to the needs of young people in our community. It provides a diverse range of activities that meet the emotional, physical, psychological, educational, and spiritual well-being of young people in the local area.

The voice of young people is at the heart of all that The Hub offers. The core activities include:

Music tuition: music has become an integral part of The Hub's activities, primarily through fully funded weekly tuition sessions which are open to all, but particularly enable young to access music tuition unavailable to them through private tuition or at school. This is allowing young people to express themselves freely, as well building their self-worth and confidence



LGBTQ+ support groups other young people in our community who are often marginalised a safe place to meet together, learn new skills and feel valued. Engagement with wrap around support services offered through the group, such as mentoring, school sessions and community based projects, have developed well.



The allotment project developed out of intergenerational project. The young people who attend are involved in every aspect of the work, all the way through from preparing the ground, to planting the seed, tending to the plants, and on to harvesting, cooking and eating what has been grown.



SEN / ASD provision demonstrates The Hub's principles that no one should be limited by or overlooked due to any additional support that they may need to thrive in every aspect of life. The "Unstoppables" group sessions include art, music, gaming, and outdoor activities.



Detached youth work aims to take support to those young people who do not attend centre-based provision. This enables relationships of trust and acceptance to be formed whereby the young people know that our teams will approach them in non-judgemental ways.

Outreach youth work & centre-based provision enables The Hub to help young people move positive activities and life choices. Sport forms a key part of The Hub's open access sessions. Food provision has become an essential part of these groups due to the increase in the number of young people whose families are struggling with rising food prices as a result of the current cost of living crisis.



With a strong desire to move into one dedicated youth centre, The Hub

currently operates from the basement of Bromsgrove Baptist Church, with additional sessions at The Pod in Charford, and from Bromsgrove Methodist Church. Rev Paul Lewis,

Development manager explains, "The future sustainability and growth of The Hub would be made so much easier to by having our own building that young can make their own space". Paul continues: "We are immensely grateful to those who fund The Hub's projects and will be pleased to hear from anyone who can help us secure vital core costs funding that is harder to gain from grants".



For further information or offers of support, contact the Hub by email: info@thehubbromsgrove.org

Bromsgrove Society's Successful Summer School

Everyone who participated in this year's Bromsgrove Society Summer School, which was held over three days in July, enjoyed a fantastic selection of morning lectures and afternoon tours.

The first day saw Philip Bowen, former Deputy Headmaster, provide a detailed account of Sir Thomas Cookes and the history of Bromsgrove School. In the afternoon, the group enjoyed a guided tour of the campus, the archive centre, and a rare opportunity to enter the School's secret tunnel.

On the Wednesday, Tim Bridges, Conservation Advisor, spoke about the history and architecture of some local churches. After lunch the group visited St. Mary's, Elmbridge and St. Augustine's, Dodderhill where everyone was offered refreshments including a selection of homemade cakes.

The Summer School concluded with Phil Downing, House Manager at Harvington Hall, giving an enthusiastic and entertaining history of priest hides and the Hall. During the afternoon tour the group learned about the building's history and how the Hall was saved and restored.



Thanks to all the lecturers and participants, and to organisers Chris Nesbitt and Julian Hunt for their efforts in putting on an excellent informative event.

Next year's Summer School: 9th to 11th July

Inclusivity Key for Midland Sinfonia

Inclusivity is a key word for The Midland Sinfonia Firstly, it engages with members of the community who have little access to live music, especially people in care homes. Secondly, it seeks to boost children's musical experience at a time when schools are stretched for resources. Thirdly, it reaches out to people for whom classical music might seem inaccessible or even elitist, and accordingly steer clear of it.

Regarding the last-mentioned, its first concert of the new season in September was clearly a case in point. *Dance the Night Away*, held at St Laurence Church, Alvechurch, had a focus on dance forms - tangos, minuets, gavottes and the like - which appear in all genres of music. Strauss' familiar *Blue Danube Waltz* was followed by items by Christian Carpenter (a British composer championed by TMS Artistic Director Shulah Oliver), Peter Warlock and others. Britten's *Simple Symphony*, derived from his childhood compositions, was given a flawless performance by the Sinfonia strings in an acoustic well suited to this scale of music; they made a beautiful sound. Aaron Copland's vigorous *Hoedown*, which ended the concert, sent a delighted audience dancing wildly into the moonlight!

Diversity also featured in "French Fancies" - the Sinfonia's concert given as part of the Bromsgrove Festival earlier in July. A remarkable range of music was enjoyed by a large audience. Where else would you hear the Ravel *Bolero* rub shoulders with the sublime *Faure Requiem* in a live concert?



Prior to this, on May 20th, the Worcester-based Dixieland group Sauce City Jazz - a highly musical team comprising trumpet, trombone, clarinet, banjo, sousaphone, drums and vocals - played to a full house in Alvechurch's "Ark". We heard many famous standards: *Tiger Rag*, *Wolverine Blues*, *Sentimental Journey*, *I Can't Give You Anything But Love* and *Who's Sorry Now?*.....this last title applicable to anyone who missed out on this scintillating concert!

As mentioned earlier, The Midland Sinfonia is developing an outreach programme within the North Worcestershire community. This includes regular visits to dementia cafes and residents of care homes. For those other end of the age scale, it holds education projects, such as workshops in local schools, aimed to stimulate interest and enjoyment in music and other art forms - dance, poetry, storytelling and art. The ongoing annual Young Musicians' Showcases and Family Concerts (which feature choirs and dancers from local schools and academies) are yet further evidence of its work in this field - reminding us all that the wonderful world of music is for life, and for everyone.

Finally, the Sinfonia's next concert: 'TIS THE SEASON" - a celebration of Winter including music by Vivaldi, Gazunov, Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov - will be held on Saturday 2nd December at 7.30pm in St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. Details of all TMS activities, including our 2023-24 concert programme, is available in your local library and on our website www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk.

Active WORDS

WORDS has had a very successful Summer, hosting four of its own Events and being involved another.

May saw the crime writer and former diplomat, Jean Harrod, speak to us about



Jean Harrod

"Deadly Diplomacy", the latest in her *Diplomatic Crime Series*, and how her fascinating and eventful life as a Diplomat in many countries all over the World has influenced her writing.

Then in June and July, we staged

three Events as part of The Bromsgrove Festival. The first was at a new venue for WORDS, The Dry Spy, where Emma Purshouse and Johnny "Mogs" Morris gave us a "Black Country Poetry Brunch Time".

The second was at another new venue, The Rouslers Bar at Bromsgrove Sporting F.C. where Ashley Giles, Pat Murphy and Jim Rosenthal gave us their sporting thoughts "Behind the Mics" and then at Avoncroft Museum, where Quentin Letts gave us his thoughts on "Blasted Politicians".



Quentin Letts

Also, as part of The Festival, WORDS joined together with The Housman Society, Bromsgrove Concerts, The Bromsgrove Society and The Friends of St. Johns in a Celebration of Music and Poetry to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the first meeting of the Housman Society.

All the Events were well supported and much enjoyed by good audiences.

Everybody is welcome to come to a WORDS Event. There is no subscription needed to be a WORDS Supporter - just keep an eye open on the Website -

www.bromsgrovewords.com - and book tickets for the Events for which you want to come. Email us at info@bromsgrovewords.com and we will add you to our Mailing List.

Bromsgrove Concerts mark 60th Anniversary with a Celebratory Season

2023 marks a big birthday for Bromsgrove Concerts, which has been putting on a wide range of classical music concerts for music lovers of Bromsgrove for sixty years this year. The organisation was founded by Jim Page and Jennie McGregor Smith in 1963. Together they have done so much for arts and music in our town.

Alastair Moseley, Bromsgrove Concert's Chairman is really excited about the season ahead: "We started the season with a concert to leave everyone with a big smile and tapping their feet. A programme of jazz, pathos and comedy, inspired by the iconic Simon Rattle Jazz Album, performed by local musicians from the Birmingham Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble directed by Keith Slade. The season will continue with uplifting concerts to create an anniversary year to remember.

The second concert in the season takes place on the actual date of the very first concert, back in 1963. On Friday 3rd November, in the Cobham Theatre at Bromsgrove School,



The Solem Quartet

the Solem String Quartet will entertain the audience. Praised for their "immaculate precision and spirit" (The Strad) and "cultured tone" (Arts Desk), the Solem Quartet has established itself as one of the most innovative and adventurous quartets of its generation. The organisers are excited to be welcoming them to the town.

The programme will include some fantastic music by Beethoven and Bartok – pieces which will provide an opportunity for mindfulness and reflective thought. To celebrate 60 years of music making in Bromsgrove there will be balloons and champagne on offer as part of the £23 ticket price, to raise a glass and toast the organisation.

The season will continue with four concerts showcasing pianists, singers, strings and flute. Details can be found by visiting Bromsgrove Concerts' website www.bromsgrove-concerts.org.uk.

There are big discounts available if you buy tickets for multiple concerts in advance. And as always, students and under-18s attend free of charge. The multi-ticket booking form can be found on Bromsgrove Concerts' website or single concert tickets can be purchased from the Bromsgrove School Box Office at www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk/whats-on.aspx or on the door.

Alastair sums up "you can see we are going to have fun this season, and we hope to see many new faces discovering the joys of classical music here on the doorstep in Bromsgrove. Coming to hear live music is a real joy, and even better when you can enjoy it in the company of other people"

A Celebration of the Housman Society at 50

Routh Concert Hall came alive with a special evening to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Housman Society in July.

The evening was expertly compered by Bromsgrove resident and BBC Midlands Today Presenter Joanne Malin. Joanne's open and inclusive style made the audience feel very much at home and her introduction of the performers really set the scene for the music and spoken words.

It was particularly poignant to hold the event at the school where Housman was a student and where the Housman Society was formed in 1973.

The programme for the celebration featured the world renowned Dante Quartet, accompanied by pianist Benjamin Frith and tenor Alessandro Fisher who together performed Ralph Vaughan William's settings of Housman's poems and the magnificent piece by Worcestershire's Ian Venables, who was in attendance on the night. To complete the programme Housman Society members Linda Hart and Max Hunt, son of the co-founder Joe Hunt, read a selection of works by Bromsgrove's famous poet.



The evening was attended by around 120 people who enjoyed a welcome reception and were extremely upbeat, enthusiastic and complimentary about the evening. The organising team was led by the Bromsgrove Society's Jo Slade and Bromsgrove Concerts' Joyce Chamberlain and included representatives from related organisations including The Housman Society, WORDS, Arts Alive, the District Council and Bromsgrove School. The event was funded by these organisations with support from the Bromsgrove Institute Trust.

Composer Ian Venables said "What a memorable evening we had at Bromsgrove School! I thought the whole evening was a triumph and I couldn't have asked for a finer performance of my 'Songs of Eternity and Sorrow'. The organisers should be delighted by the size of the audience and their enthusiastic response and by the wonderful performances. Alessandro, the Dante Quartet and Ben were simply outstanding. It was a deeply moving experience hearing my works again and it was so special to have Jim Page and Jennie McGregor-Smith there as they not only commissioned the works but they have been such great advocates of my music over many years. A huge thank you to

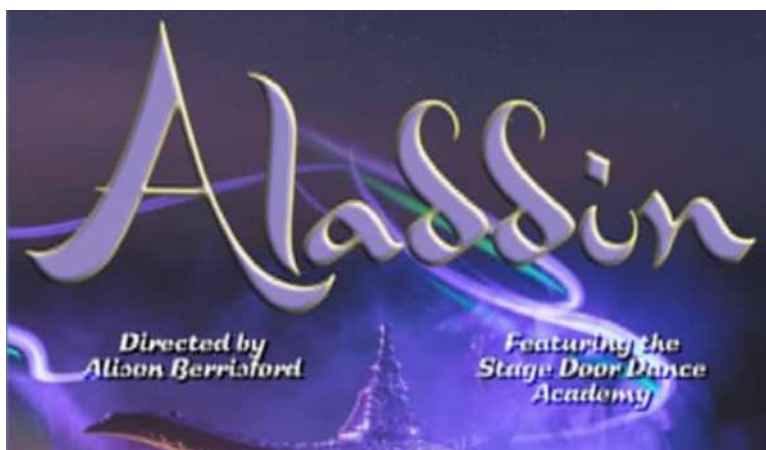
Don't miss Aladdin!

It is time to get excited about this year's traditional Family Pantomime spectacular from All and Sundry.

Taking place from December 15th-23rd at Cobham Theatre, Bromsgrove School, it is the classic story of a poor boy who works in a laundrette, along with his mother Widow Twankey and his brother Wishee Washee - but poverty doesn't stop Aladdin's dreams of one day marrying the beautiful Princess Jasmine.

When the evil Abanazar arrives looking for someone to help him retrieve a magic lamp holding a powerful Genie that has been hidden away in a cave for a thousand years, Aladdin agrees to help him in return for making him rich enough to marry the Princess.

Will Aladdin's dream actually come true? There will be lots of fun, songs, dance and a little bit of magic thrown in for good measure.



Tickets from £16 (£14.50concs) and family tickets from £54 are available from the box office 01527 579679 or bromsgrove-school.co.uk/boxoffice

Bromsgrove Christmas Markets

Christmas Markets return to Bromsgrove on Friday 17th and Saturday 18th November.



Organised by the Friends of St John's and now in its ninth year (!), the community event supports local charities, schools, choirs, traders and entertainers and is held in conjunction with the High Street Lights Switch On event.

This year it is hoped that an evening event, organised by the Indie Club, will take place after the Switch On on the BirdBox Site.

Do pop along to the Christmas Markets - held in the space outside

the Old Post Office - and support the Friends of St John's and other local organisations.

Follow on Facebook for more information [facebook.com/FriendsStJohnsBromsgrove](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsStJohnsBromsgrove)

Court Leet Approves The Boyden Pie on Fair Day

Award winning Butcher's Block team Michelle and Lilith Holsey-Sheppard created a pie to celebrate BBC Hereford & Worcester's Malcolm Boyden.

Earlier in the year, the Bromsgrove resident and radio presenter had approached the team at the Butcher's Block on Bromsgrove High Street to discuss the possibility of creating a "Boyden Pie". They jumped at the chance and Malcolm launched the idea on his show, asking listeners to get in touch with their suggestions for the pie filling.

He received many fantastic responses which he put to Lilith, to see what she could create. The result is a deep filled pie, made with:

B - Blackberry
O - Oxtail
Y - Yellow peppers
D - Diced onions & carrots
E - Edamame beans
N - Nutmeg
Plus three surprise ingredients - beef stock, malbec wine and homemade Worcestershire sauce, all encased in a delicious shortcrust pastry.



The Court Carnitor, Hans Rostrup sampled the pie and announced it fit for the good people of the town, and any visitors. He encouraged those present to visit the Butcher's Block and try the pie for themselves - he said they wouldn't be disappointed!

More Cake and Coffee, anyone?

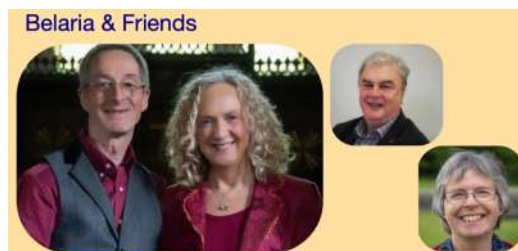
Another series of Cake and Coffee concerts is taking place at St John's Church in Bromsgrove.

The short informal concerts are at 10.30am followed by refreshments, and a variety of performers are contributing.

On October 28th, 'Belaria' will be performing operatic favourites, then on November 25th the award-winning Chapel Choir from Bromsgrove School will provide some uplifting songs.

A contrast in January (20th) will feature acoustic trio *The Mosely Brothers*.

Students from local schools will take the stage on February 24th with a 'Players' Platform'



Apologies as ever for errors and omissions in this edition. The next Newsletter (Spring 2024) is published in April. Deadline for contributions to steve.cowperthwaite@googlemail.com is 31st March