

Abbots Leigh Civic Society
Annual Report
1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

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Annual Report
2025- 2026

1st February 2026



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Contents

- Chair Summary
- Festival in the Field
- Cricket Match
- Bonfire Night
- Abbots Leigh Running Club
- New Year Breakfast
- Treasurer's Report
- Old School Field Pathway
- Forthcoming Events
- Abbots Leigh Civic Society Memories of 2025
- Accounts 2025
- List of Committee Members
- Constitution

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Chair Summary

It has been my absolute pleasure to Chair the Abbots Leigh Civic Society for 2025 and to host many memorable events over the past year.

Before I summarise 2025, I wish to reflect on the sad news just before Christmas that Murray Stewart passed away suddenly during December

Murray had been a committee member for over a decade and his contributions to the organising and behind the scenes work to organise an event was tireless. He paid great attention to detail on ensuring correct procedures and that all events were carried out safely and with correct permissions in place. A true unsung hero. Murray's sense of humour, generosity and passion at committee meetings, and socialising at events gave him great joy. Living in Abbots Leigh he had a fantastic knowledge of the history and often would organise talks in the Village Hall. If you ever had the privilege of attending his organised tours of the Church Grave Yard you certainly learnt a great deal. These guided tours were so popular that Murray had to organise additional ones to meet demand. Murray will be missed by so many and his legacy will remain long in the village.

God Bless & Rest in Peace a truly remarkable man.

In 2025 the ALCS decided to change the date of the **Festival in the Field** from September to June. This change worked well and with new ideas and committee members, new stalls and games were introduced.

The **Fireworks party on the 5th November** attached record numbers this year and remained profitable. The ALCS would like to thank Nick Wallum for allowing us to use his field as the new firework launch area and bonfire site.

In 2025/6 the following events happened with assistance from ALCS.

Abbots Leigh Running Club Coffee and cakes
Abbots Leigh Running Club – Pizza party
Abbots Leigh villagers' Cricket club match
New Year's Day Breakfast

The decision taken a few years ago, for the committee to fully organise both of these events only has proven to be the correct decision. This has allowed other villagers to organise events themselves, in the knowledge that the ALCS will assist with either co funding or lending equipment to other events.

For other events going forwards the Civic Society will co-finance and/or help with logistics, with the events being hosted by different village interest groups. Smaller working groups will do most of the organisation. This approach has been tested over the past few months and has worked incredibly well. The Abbots Leigh Cricket Match, the Abbots Leigh Running Club, and the New Year's Day Breakfast followed this formula. They were ultimately organised by groups of villagers outside of the Civic Society, but with finance, and support from one or two Civic Society committee members where required. This new approach is a model we are going to continue as it has been proven to work and broadens the range and number of events in the village. If you would like to organise a village event and need some help, or some of the Civic Society equipment and some finances, please do get in touch.

Email us on abbotsleighcivicsociety@gmail.com to see how we can help.

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Annual Report
1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

Going forward in to 2026 the committee will restructure with new roles and responsibilities. These positions will be voted on at the next committee meeting.

However, two long-standing members are retiring from the committee. The Civic Society Committee would like to thank Paulina Gillespie and Debbie Nelmes for their incredible hard work over the years on the Committee. Both will undoubtedly be keen to lend a hand if time allows in their busy lives. We wish them well.

As always, the aim this year is to secure enough volunteers for the setting up and running of the two big events. A new recruitment drive will start in the spring and will undoubtedly bring some great results, but we can always do with more help! Please let us know if you can spare some time to help run these events, which really do help create our community.

Going forwards the committee would like to support other existing village interest groups, or new ones which you might be thinking of creating. (How about a Summer Boules Competition or an Easter Egg Hunt?) Please do let us know any ideas you have, and we will see if we can help.

My tenure as Chair has now run its two-year course and time for me to hand on the baton to a newly structured committee. It has been a pleasure to be involved with the Civic Society. None of the events over the past two years would have been possible with an amazing and incredibly supportive fellow villagers. The hard work and incredible effort the committee put in to events is inspiring and a true privilege to be involved with. There are too many committee members and volunteers to name here, but you know who you are, and Thank You for all your hard work and support.

I wish the new Chair all the best going forward, as I take up my role on the back benches!

Jon Brewer 1st February 2026

Jon Brewer

Review of events held in 2025

Festival in the Field - Sunday 8th June 2025

A huge amount of planning had gone into the Festival in the Field; The event was a success and well attended with a great crowd of villagers. *The great British weather, held off for the new date of early June for the Festival, which received much positive feedback. Going forward the Festival in the Field will continue to be in June, to spread out the two big events and the work involved*

This year's Festival in the Field was a mix of traditional favourites and new events. Welly wanging, boules and the bake-off were of course a key part of the day, but there was also face painting and a dog show. It was all topped off by a rather extensive kids tug of war that had large numbers on each side (and some very mature kids!) and which was over an extensive area. Great fun! Congratulations to the winners of each of the events, and thanks to the volunteers who helped run the bar and BBQ that kept us fed and well watered.

Abbots Leigh Civic Society
Annual Report
1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

Abbots Leigh Cricket Club match

The Civic Society are always looking for new ideas on how to support local community events which encourage activity and have a social aspect. The village cricket match was a perfect example of this. The Civic Society helped by sponsoring the refreshments after a game of Cricket (village v club) at the Abbots Leigh Cricket Club. The weather was kind and the cricket match attracted players and spectators across the ages. Everyone celebrated with a BBQ and liquid refreshments. It was a great success and enjoyed by all involved. If you would like to play, or support, please put in your diaries. Yet again thanks goes to Simon Hillenbrand and family for arranging the teams, the venue and the opposing team. Hopefully there will be a 2026 challenge

The Villagers had a good game with ALCC - sadly we came second. Some great enthusiasm from the village XI and some strong individual performances from the youngsters with Edward Westcott's wicket keeping a highlight along with great bowling from Edward Thornhill who used his height and pace well along with Grace Rickard's line and length consistently probing ALCC's batters. In the field there was a "worldie" running one handed catch from Seth Walmsley too to light up proceedings. Sadly, our batting was not as strong as we'd have liked except for Otis Hillenbrand who hit a rapid 75 runs to all parts to spare our blushes. Bring on 2026!

Bonfire Night - Wednesday 5th November 2025

Remember, remember, the 5th of November!! No problem at all if you live in the village of Abbots Leigh! This fabulous event, laid on by the Civic Society and an army of volunteers, was enjoyed by hundreds. The new, professional firework display team excelled themselves, putting on a magnificent display, which lit up the night sky in perfect weather, generating lots of oos and ahhs from the crowd.

Many thanks to Nick Wallum and family for allowing the team to set up in their field and host the bonfire, the crew from Newavon Arms in Pill for a mesmerising fireworks display, Lucy from the Butcher's Block in Portishead for the contribution of delicious sausages in the hotdogs and the team at Abbots Leigh Nursing Home who helped out enormously with the cooking.

Many said it was the best display yet. The fantastic BBQed hotdogs were extremely popular and, as always, the bar did a cracking job of ensuring all were suitably hydrated. The hot cider team went to great efforts to ensure this year's cider was also the best it has been. It was lovely to see lots of new, young families joining in and enjoying a village tradition which has been running for over 30 years. An excellent family evening was had by all. If you were there, I think you'd agree.

Abbots Leigh Running Club

The first year of Abbots Leigh Run Club is now complete and it has been a huge success. Meeting on a Monday evening every week and mixing routes between Ashton Court and Leigh Woods, runners of all ages have met and socialised. The civic society have supported the club in 3 main events, supporting the Bike Shed at Easter, The George Pub for the Summer and Christmas Social and they recently also collaborated with Sivo Wellness at Leigh Court, each of these events has brought together over 20 runners, for coffee, pizza, saunas, and drinks.

New Year's Day Breakfast

New Year's Day Breakfast was a fantastic start to 2026 and was held in the Village Hall. The surplus funds raised were in aid of Pill Food Bank. Many volunteers outside of the Civic Society were involved

Abbots Leigh Civic Society
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1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

with this entertaining morning, the Civic Society were delighted to donate some of the liquid refreshments and a cash donation to the Pill Food Bank to help with increasing the donation to this great cause. Congratulations to Drew Smith for reviving and organising this traditional village event.

Treasurer's Report

The overall financial position of the Civic Society has improved, with the balance held across the accounts increasing from £8,998 (Dec 2025) to £11,531 (Dec 2026). Following the New Year's Day Breakfast, we donated £100 to the Pill Food Bank, and other donations included £150 to the Cricket Club for the village match, and Abbots Leigh Running Club social events £177. Finally, we purchased a new generator to provide electricity in the Old School Field for future events. However, we are still well placed to financially support future events and projects within the village.

Old School Field Pathway

Since 2024 the Civic Society has worked with the Parish Council to install a new footpath from the five-bar gate to the lower open green space. The Parish Council have undertaken the construction of the first phase, which terminates at the swings. The Civic Society will consider the possibilities of completing the project. Completion of the extended pathway for disabled access and young children (and for when the bank is slippery!) was a passionate project of Murray's and remains a Civic Society priority.

Forthcoming Events

ALCS Event - Festival in The Field - June 2026

Quiz Night - TBA

Summer Drinks - Summer 2026

Tennis Tournament - Summer 2026

Boules Match - Summer 2026

Village Cricket match - Summer 2026

ALCS Event - Bonfire Night - Thursday 5th November 2026

Children's Christmas Party - December 2026

New Years Day Breakfast – January 2027

Abbots Leigh Civic Society Memories of 2025

Festival in the Field June 2025



Abbots Leigh Civic Society
Annual Report
1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

**Abbots Leigh Running Club –
Coffee and cakes April 25 & Summer pizza night
August 2025**



**Abbots Leigh Cricket Club match
Saturday 28th September**



Bonfire night Wednesday 5th November 2025



In loving memory of Murray Stewart – at the heart of young people in the village, in The George



Abbots Leigh Civic Society
Annual Report
1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

**Abbots
Leigh
Civic
Society**

ACCOUNTS for the YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2025

<u>Events</u>	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>
Event Income	£ 7,628.56	Event Expenditure	£ 3,864.09
Extra Income from Paypal account	£ 62.33	Admin Expenditure	£ 855.92
Interest	£ 89.18	Donations	£ 627.30
<u>Total Income</u>	£ 7,780.07	<u>Total Expenditure</u>	£ 5,347.31
		<u>Surplus for 2025</u>	£ 2,432.76

BALANCE SHEET at 31st December 2025

<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		<u>RESERVES</u>	
Current A/C	£4.45	Opening Balance 01.01.25	£8,998.38
Deposit A/C	£11,526.69	Surplus for 2025	£2,432.76
Donation Commitment	-£100.00		
	£11,431.14		£11,431.14

Neil Hopkinson
Treasurer
31.12.2025

01.02.25 - 31.01.2026 Committee Members	
Jon Brewer	Chair
Murray Stewart	Acting Caretaker Chair
Rosie Gloyns	
Eleni Franklin	
Neil Hopkinson	Treasurer
Debbie Nelmes	
Rachael Doherty	
Paulina Gillespie	
Henry Burnand	
Adri Allan	

If you would like to organise a village event and need some help, or some of the Civic Society equipment and some finances, please do get in touch.

*Email us on **abbotsleighcivicsociety@gmail.com** to see how we can help.*



ABBOTS LEIGH CIVIC SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

Adopted at inaugural meeting held in The Village Hall, Abbots Leigh on 25th September 1979 and amended at the Annual Meeting held on 9th January 2025

NAME:

The name of the Society shall be the **Abbots Leigh Civic Society**, an unincorporated association.

AIMS:

The Society exists to encourage a caring, considerate, sociable and inclusive community for everyone living in the parish of Abbots Leigh by:

- Cherishing our past present and future
- Running events for all ages
- Using any surplus funds for projects which improve the village
- Engendering a sense of community by encouraging people living in Abbots Leigh village to know their neighbours, to welcome new neighbours, to attend the Society's social events and participate in other village groups.

MEMBERSHIP:

Membership shall be open to everyone who lives in the parish of Abbots Leigh.

COMMITTEE & OFFICERS:

The Committee shall appoint a Chair(s) and Treasurer. Members of the Committee will be elected and appointed by the members of the Society at an Annual January Meeting.

POWERS:

The Committee shall have the following powers:

- To open and maintain bank accounts
- To work with the Parish Council and local organisations/ businesses to achieve its aims
- To support other village groups

RESPONSIBILITIES: The Committee shall:

- Keep proper financial records
- Issue an Annual Report available on ALCS Website
- The CS will organise and run two events per year:
 - The Festival in the Field – a Summer event held in June/July
 - The Bonfire Night – November 5th
- The Committee will only meet seven times per year –
 - Once in January – Annual Committee meeting from which annual report will be produced
 - Once 2 months before each event – planning of event + Required insurance and licences
 - Once 2 weeks before each event – ensure everything is in place + final planning
 - Once 1 week after each event – debrief of event, lessons learnt