

Brigstowe Village Band : Report for 1st September 2025 to October 2026: to be presented at AGM on Sunday 8th November 2026

This report is required as part of BVBs constitution.

Musical Leader : Alison Rowley (paid role/ appointed April 22). Alison leads our monthly rehearsals, advises on BVB musical matters and discusses music for programmes with Liz, but does not attend meetings of the steering committee. She receives minutes of steerers' meetings. We very much appreciate her musical expertise and brilliant organisation. Her report at the end

1. Current steering committee (25/26)

Programmes Leader : Liz Newman

Gig secretary : Lyn Jones

Treasurer: Chris Mapp

Membership Secretary: Fritjof Koerber

Secretary to the steering committee and website admin: Heather Jenne

General committee member: Pauline Mapp

General publicity / Brigstowe props (with Mary Kear – non steerer): Judy Bridges

Updates on the 25/26 committee and what they do

Programmes Leader: Liz Newman

Liz has welcomed stepping back from the all-encompassing gaffer's role in order to focus more on researching and writing programmes. Therefore other steerers have taken on some of the gaffer's jobs. Members are becoming more aware of the need to mail the appropriate member of the committee who deals with their issue / problem and copying in Liz.

Gig secretary: Lyn Jones

Lyn has a substantial role liaising / booking rehearsal and gig venues and organising the stage management team for rehearsals and gigs.

Treasurer: Chris Mapp deals with subs and the bank account. He reports to the steerers at the monthly steerers' meetings and at the AGM. See separate report.

Membership Secretary: Fritjof Koerber liaises with members via emails. He is the first point of contact for organisations and individuals wanting to book us (via the email address on the website home page), and also the first point of contact for people considering joining us. He also maintains the gig availability spreadsheet and keeps us correctly dealing with GDPR and advises on various IT matters. He reports that there are 32 members with 2 resting – last year we had 31 members, so membership remains stable.

Secretary to steering committee and website admin. Heather Jenne prepares the agenda and minutes the meetings of the steering committee, which are available to all members on the website. She also posts website updates and consults Helen Price on tricky website issues

General member : Pauline Mapp has a general role: actively participating in discussions and decision making and taking action on agenda items, depending on what is required

General publicity + Brigstowe Props helper: Judy Bridges (joined this year) also has a general role depending on what comes up at committee meetings, as well as keeping our facebook page up to date, and helping Mary Kear with props.

Interchangeability Committee members hold specific roles but also stand in for each other when necessary. BVB website has more detailed description of roles under steerers' tab.

Non-Steering Committee roles

Brigstowe Props: Mary Kear – now supported by Judy Bridges in consultation with Programmes Leader and Gig Secretary. Mary has compiled a props catalogue for any member who wishes to assist with the props

Website consultant: Helen Price (with Roland Clare keeping the list of gigs up to date)

Photographs: John Mills

Rehearsal attendance Register: Heather Minnion

Refreshment rota: Gill Kendall (with Meg Innocent on tea towel duty). If members can't make a date, they find someone to swap with. This is working well

Assistance with gigs on the day: Dai Powell

On behalf of the whole band, the steering committee would like to thank the non committee members for volunteering their help

2.Communication

Website: The band members' area of the website was revised by Heather Jenne, Helen Price and Liz Newman last year and is making it easier for people to find the information they need. Hopefully all band information can now be found on the website. Please let Heather know of any suggestions to improve it.

Helen Price has held the non-committee role of website manager almost since the band started 12 years ago. She was a founder member of BVB but now wishes to pause her playing in BVB to give more time for travelling. BVB thanks her for her invaluable service. Heather Jenne (secretary to the committee) has taken on the job of keeping the website up to date and Helen kindly is available for consultation.

External: There is a continuing need to keep our audiences aware of BVB activities. Judy manages the Facebook site. At present Pauline distributes flyers at gigs. Fritjof sends publicity material to organisations who book us.

We also have a board – designed by Roland - advertising our next public gig. **We need someone to store this, bring it along to gigs, and add relevant information to it.**

3. Monthly Rehearsals

These are taken by Alison and the dates (usually, but not always, on a 3rd Sunday) are listed on the website. Our main rehearsal space continues to be at Long Ashton Jubilee Pavilion. Although costs have risen, this continues to serve us well. Steerers continue to review whether this is the best rehearsal space

This year steerers have trialled an attendance sheet collected by Heather Minnion to be completed by members as they arrive at rehearsals. This is to provide additional information about readiness for gigs. Fritjof maintains the very important gig (and pre-gig rehearsal) availability spreadsheet with link on the website

Pre-gig rehearsals (aka kitchen rehearsals)

These are routinely organised by Liz on a suitable Friday evening 7pm, before a gig (usually at Pill Memorial Hall) to run through the gig programme and boost confidence. Although feedback indicates that these rehearsals are useful, attendance is not always good. If we end up with one person to a part the rehearsal can be counter-productive and actually diminish confidence. We know that Friday evenings are often when people do other things but **we need to know who is coming to the kitchen rehearsal and plan accordingly - so this is a plea to try and make them a priority and complete the spreadsheet.**

4. Programmes As before, Liz prepares programmes of predominantly west country music and narrative (where appropriate) which are context dependent (season, timing, players / performers available, physical space). Themes reflect the seasons, national events, traditions and customs, and appropriate history that is local to the gig and the band. They draw frequently, but not exclusively, from writers of the time.

Liz also, where appropriate, prepares a hard copy programme notes for audiences to provide background information on tunes and traditions.

Liz and Alison welcome suggestions for topics, tunes, songs and readings from band members in keeping with BVB ethos.

5. Planning

Alison and Liz, responding to BVB requests for 'core' tunes, have this year produced a spring / summer playlist of 21 tunes to cover a group of 4 seasonal gigs different in performance but drawing on related seasonal themes. These playlists were adjusted to personalise them for each different month / venue. Although challenging in terms of time to produce the initial list, this approach worked well achieving the intended outcome of developing good playing and BVB confidence across gigs.

Mary and Judy as the Brigstowe props team and Lyn as stage manager provide the appropriate range of props and a 'system' for organising them.

Gig + pre-gig availability spreadsheet

As a precursor to performance, the gig availability spreadsheet is important. Firstly, organisers always want to know asap if we can perform and we need to know if we have the players and a balance of instruments before accepting a gig. Secondly because it gives Alison and Liz the necessary contextual information for the choice of music and programme. If any member has trouble completing it, let Fritjof know your availability and he will complete it for you.

6. Performing

In addition to the playing of the band, programmes have been enhanced by a team of readers, singers, dancers, occasional bell ringers, and Briggy our hobby horse (Chris Mapp in disguise) with John Mills as groom. Briggy is always mentioned in feedback as a source of audience enjoyment. Chris Newman has been an able Briggy deputy.

Readers: Liz has continued to try to draw on readers' strengths to enhance programmes. Some readers have developed strengths in their performances of individual pieces; others have been able to be flexible in their approach and perform pieces which previously have been the lines of another; programmes have benefited from band members willing to step in for single events. Ex- theatre director Mick Mangan has run a couple of workshops for readers. One of his suggestions was for John Mills and Chris 'Briggy' Mapp to 'warm up the audience before we start' – they have developed a unique style for greeting audience members which has been very successful and amused band and audience alike.

Singing: Singers (5 at present) rehearse approximately monthly, led by Liz. It has been a pleasure to have Ed Gilbert singing with us for specific numbers. We welcome new singers but anyone wishing to join singers needs to be aware that rehearsals are a commitment

Dancing: A village band would have played a great deal for dances and this is an element that steerers want to gently include in programmes, and develop where space and dancers, energy and physical capacity, permit. We have drawn on Heather Jenne and Alison in this area and have Helston Furry Dance, Clog Branle and Wimple Processional to use. When dancing is included in a gig, Alison has rehearsed dancers at 1.30 on the nearest Sunday rehearsal before that gig. Katie Kennedy also made a welcome guest appearance

Outfits: It is important how the band looks, and there is an indication of what is aimed for (winter and summer) on the website. The band will loan some items of clothing.

Please let Liz know of any other support that might benefit BVB in performance

Gigs performed

Oct 25 Portishead Seniors: Somerset; Cider and Smugglers (55 mins, music, singing, words, Briggy - led by Liz)

Nov 25 Crockerne Pill Historical Society NEW booking: Martinmas mischief: 1850s west country winter jollity (45 mins; music, singing, Briggy - led by Liz)

Dec. 25 Southmead Hospital Buskathon;

May 26 Bristol Folk Festival; Sporting in the foyer (30 mins: music, singing, Briggy - led by Alison)

May 26 Alveston Local History Society; Bringing in the May, a celebration of Springtime (1 hour 15 mins: music, singing, dancing and Briggy - led by Lyn)

June 26 Earthfest Summer Tunes of place, time and celebration (45 mins, outdoors; music, singing, dancing and Briggy - led by Liz)

July 26 Pensford Evergreens NEW BOOKING Summer Revels (2 x 45 mins - music, singing, dancing, Briggy and Groom - led by Liz)

Gigs Summary: Since Sept. 25 we have played for 7 gigs (6 indoors + 1 out). These gigs mainly came from contacts within the band, or re-bookings. In their different ways these were all successful (with the exception of Southmead Hospital Buskathon where there were logistical problems such as size of the space, difficulty in hearing each other and footfall; steerers have taken this on board). Almost all groups re-book BVB or promise to! It is gratifying that we had 2 bookings from Local History Societies this year. We have 3 definite, and several possible, gigs already in the diary for the next band year (Sep - Aug).

The way of working noted in preparing for gigs ('core tunes' personalised) was particularly useful when Liz was ordered into hospital on the afternoon / evening of the Alveston gig. Lyn ably stepped in to adapt the programme to cover Liz's absence and lead BVB. The performance had considerable joie de vivre with much 'ad libbing' (a demonstration of BVB confidence and expertise). The audience did not know about the problem, and thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment offered, and wrote a very appreciative letter afterwards.

Organisations booking us often ask us to provide photos and publicity for their advertising. We have reasonable Spring / Summer advertising - we need to do the same for Autumn / Winter.

Feedback form: Steerers have introduced a feedback form to be sent to organisers at the end of the performance (mostly to see if groups have any further suggestions). These have been used twice so far (Earthfest and Pensford) and have been very positive.

New Gigs: We are always seeking gigs and audiences who are interested in the music and traditions we represent. Ideally we would like to ensure an even spread of gigs throughout the year but obviously we don't have any control over when people want us – all we can do is turn down gigs that are too close together. **If you have contacts, or know of possible gigs, discuss this with Liz or any of the steerers.**

Conclusion

Brigstowe Village Band celebrates its 12th year in September 2026. In terms of playing and performing and overall enjoyment the band is thriving. For the second year we performed at the prestigious Bristol Folk Festival in May. With Liz changing role, members are becoming more involved in the running of 'their' band. The steerers are hopeful that this will increase in the future.

Musical developments could include programmes with smaller ensemble items from members. Additionally, audiences are always interested in instruments of the 1850's and we have featured a serpent and viol in past programmes, so this is another area to continue and build on.

BVB members at the open meeting in April 26 said they wanted to perform (rather than simply rehearsing) Payment and refreshments at gigs are important but BVB is also committed to supporting appropriate charitable causes.

Liz Newman: September 2026

Musical Leader's Report 2026

The band's quality of playing continues to improve, with hard work in rehearsals and at home leading to increasingly assured performances. It is also good to see band members take more ownership of the music we play, both in suggesting new repertoire and in confidently voicing your ideas when creating new arrangements.

With multiple gigs to prepare for between May and July, Liz and I chose a core list of tunes (approx 70%) to be played in multiple programmes, with the remaining 30% of tunes tailored to specific gigs. This approach was successful and allowed the band to play confidently at all summer performances, whilst still having some variation in repertoire to keep things interesting. We are continuing this approach into Autumn and Winter, although on a smaller scale with fewer rehearsals available.

The band provided a warm welcome to guests in our Open Rehearsal in September. You all did a wonderful job of showing not only the high standard of the band but also the commitment and enjoyment of its membership!

Looking ahead to 2027, the band will make a start on some new repertoire arranged by Alison with rehearsals in January and February led by former MD Matt Norman, as well as brushing up on some older tunes (including many members' requests) in preparation for a St George's Day performance and hopefully some lovely summertime bookings!

Alison Rowley September 2026