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The Messenger celebrates VE Day with the rest of the village - See report on Page 7

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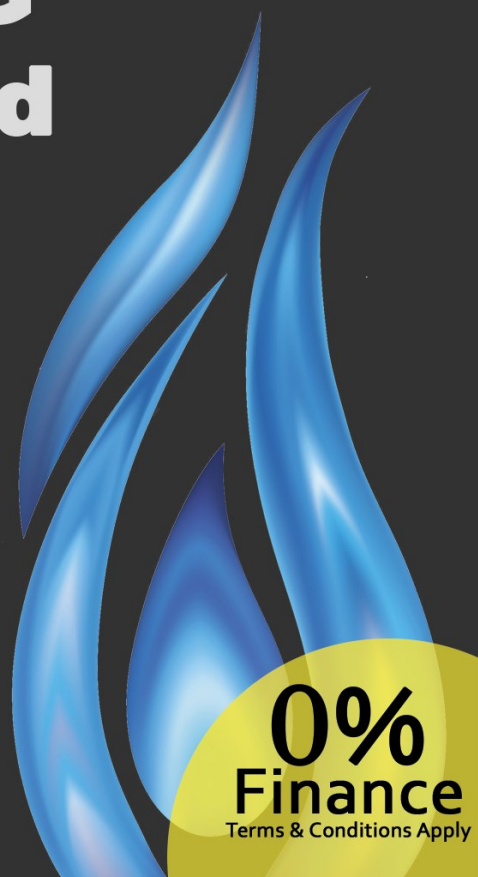
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Editorial by Mick Ridley and James Read

Last month we turned our minds back 75 years to celebrate the liberation of Europe and the end of nearly 6 years of conflict. Here (and on Facebook on 8th May), we have recorded how the village turned red, white and blue to mark this historic occasion.



This month we look to the future with hope that the lockdown that our country has been living through is starting to come to an end. Taking aside the politics (and there are plenty of them!) we will all be profoundly changed by our experiences over the past few months; bereavement, personal sacrifice, loss of livelihoods and isolation to name but a few. It remains possible that distancing measures will be loosened and later tightened again, depending on how COVID-19 spreads in the community.

Without doubt we will all have changed and our outlooks are different. This change could bring about fundamental transformation in the way that we live our lives. For those whose hearts lie in our towns and cities, the urban dream is not looking as persuasive as it once was. The thought of packed tube trains and strained services will make people look to villages like our own as an attractive option. For so many, working from home is now a fact of life. Decent broadband speeds mean that we are able to maintain our productivity 'remotely' and the need to be near to our workplaces has become less critical.

For those of us who work locally or spend most of our time in and around Mid Bedfordshire, the yearning to get back to normal is very strong. Whether it is going to the cinema, eating out, using hotels, getting the car fixed, working in manufacturing and distribution, giving customer service in a whole range of industries, fixing, building, making or servicing things in homes or in industry... there is an urgency to restore earnings and get back to work.

And the longing to see loved ones we may have not seen in some time is also deeply held by so many. Ironically, being apart has brought many of us together. The way that we communicate with the weekly ritual of video calls with family and friends almost makes it seem odd that we never did these things regularly before. Perhaps a new form of social media will emerge, where we actually talk to each other rather than just post a photo or a comment!

A rise in localism and greater self-sufficiency might be another consequence. We are fortunate in the village to have a large number of allotments where we can grow our own produce. Zoe Cox gives us another fascinating insight into her experiences that we are sure will be inspirational for many looking to grow their own. Allotments remain available!

As we see some of our freedoms begin to return, we are also now able to enjoy the countryside that we are so lucky to have on our doorsteps. We detail some local walks that you might not be aware of to stretch those legs after such a long time.

The Messenger team wishes you, your family and friends well and we look forward to being able to push the magazine through your letterbox again soon. For now, stay alert, control the virus and save lives.

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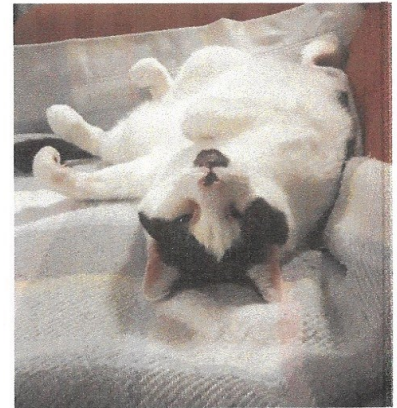
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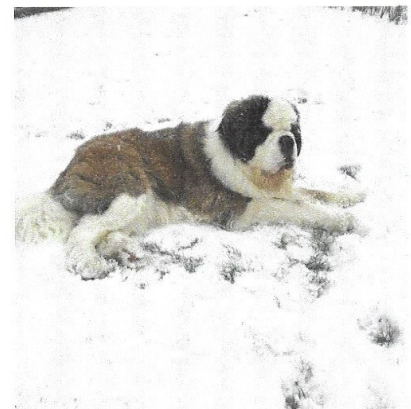


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Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors

I wish to thank everyone for all the many cards and kind messages when Maurice died in March. It was a great comfort to me and my family.

Maurice coped very well with his disability over the last few years, greatly helped by the carers from 'Bluebird Care.'

In February Maurice was taken into New Meppershall Care Home with a chest infection and later died from pneumonia on March 23rd. We greatly thank all the staff, nurses and carers for all their care and kindness given to Maurice whilst he was in the home.

We also wish to thank Reverend Roni, Andrew and many friends at St Mary's Church for their prayers and kindness at this sad time and to Keith Callard for taking the funeral service and for everyone's kindness in these difficult times.

From Barbara Horwood and family

Dear Editors,

We wish to kindly thank everyone for their kind messages of sympathy regarding the passing of Terry. Everything seemed to happen so quickly and I am so thankful to Sharon and Alison for being here helping me to make decisions. We would like to thank Reverend Roni for the way she conducted the Letchworth Garden City Graveside service. The care and support was shared with us all.

Enid Pamment

Brookside Nifty Fifty Lockdown Quiz Is The Biz

As pictured on our cover, the residents of Brookside recently turned out for a very special event to mark Graham Hare's 50th birthday. With plans for Graham's Spanish sunshine get away becoming just another COVID cancellation, neighbours staged a 'street quiz' to help him celebrate.

Parish Council Chair, Peter Chapman, presided as quizmaster and social distancing was carefully observed. Pictured on the cover is Peter (extreme right) as well as Graham (centre) and neighbours. It was a great evening for everyone.

Parish Council update

- **Centenary Field** - The field is still under the ownership and responsibility of Croudace Homes. The Parish Council provided the developer in December 2019 with a list of issues that need resolving prior to handover and received no proper response. At the Beginning of March 2020, the Parish Council formally wrote to the developer asking for their proposed resolutions to the issues within a given timescale however, understandably, a response has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of writing this article the Regional Managing

Director of Croudace Homes has confirmed that the Parish Clerk will be contacted by the developer's representative prior to the Parish council meeting on 8th June.

- **So, when will Centenary Field be open for use?** As soon as we can get a resolution to the issues raised that does not put the burden of repair or maintenance costs onto the Council and our residents.
- **Are the Parish Council still planning enhancement of facilities on Centenary Field?** Yes, we are planning to install additional play equipment, an outdoor gym and signage and benches in the coming 12 to 18 months. Planning for this has been delayed due to COVID-19 but more on this in the months to come.
- **Wry Close Allotments** - Enhancements to the water supply, fencing and site amenities are planned for this year. Plots are still available to rent so please do contact us if you would like to try a little gardening.
- **Old Road Meadow** - The metal table and bench have been repainted to remove offensive graffiti. Additional signage, another table and bench and perhaps more play equipment will be installed her in the coming 12 to 18 months.
- **Parish council meetings** - These are now being held via video link. Members of the public are always welcome to participate so please do look out for our meeting agendas on www.meppershall.org for joining instructions.



Still got a query? We welcome your questions, comments and concerns. If you can't make a parish council meeting (which is usually held on the second Monday of the month, currently via video link) to speak to us, please email the Parish Clerk, Alessandra, on clerk@meppershall.org and she will endeavour to help or forward your request to councillors for a response.

Central Bedfordshire Council and COVID-19: Preserving life, supporting the vulnerable and protecting livelihoods

Community Hub

Our Community Hub continues to be a lifeline for those without anyone to support them during isolation by arranging emergency food parcels, which are enough to see someone through a few days while longer term support is arranged. To date we have sent out 1,168 emergency food parcels, feeding 1,529 people. We have received new data showing an additional 585 residents who are shielding. Of the 12,580 residents who are required to shield, 9,419 have been proactively contacted. We continue to work with our network of volunteers across the area who can help vulnerable residents who don't have any other support on a longer-term basis with weekly shopping, collecting prescriptions and 'check in and chat' calls. So far we've referred 2,596 people to them, of these 1,461 are for ongoing support with food and prescriptions, 1,078 are for befriending calls and 57 are being supported by Citizens

Advice. Thank you to those Members who have undertaken door knocking to check on our vulnerable residents who we haven't been able to contact by any other means. We would welcome support from any Members who would be willing to assist with door knocking in their own or other wards local to their area. Email committeemeetings@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk if you are able to help.

Local welfare provision

We had 458 new Universal Credit notifications from claimants requesting assistance with their Council tax payments this week. We also received 158 new claims from residents under the Local Council Tax Support scheme. This was a 36% increase on the previous week and around twice what we would normally receive in a week.

Business Support Grants

We received 300 applications again this week thanks to our proactive calls to businesses, voluntary organisations and charities who had not yet applied. The Revenues and Benefits team has paid out grants to 2,822 businesses out of 3,755 applications. This is 75% of all claims. We have rejected over 500 applications from ineligible businesses or duplicate ones, avoiding a potential loss to CBC of up to £6m.

Those aware of anyone in their community who is vulnerable and doesn't have anyone else to help them can contact the Council. Referrals should be made through the website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/covidhelp or by calling our helpline 0300 300 8900. It is really important that referrals for support are made through the website or helpline so they can be processed without delay.

Taken from CBC Members Information Bulletin, Issue 556 (22 May 2020).

A Message From CBC Councillors Mark Liddiard and Tony Brown

We are very proud to represent such a friendly community where, despite very hectic lives coming to a halt, many residents have set up communication and help schemes to support those residents who are isolating - enabling them to access help and support. Having cycled and walked most of the ward during the last 6 weeks it has also been great to see residents "meeting up" (under the current social distancing guidance) for a cup of tea between neighbouring gardens. We are pleased to see so many residents and their families out walking on footpaths and bridleways. A number of residents have confessed that they did not realise what is actually on their doorstep.

Sadly the ward has not escaped COVID-19 and whilst we wait for some robust figures, we know that some residents have sadly passed away and our thoughts go out to their loved ones and their families in these difficult times.

We are very pleased that our Highways team have been taking advantage of the reduced traffic to re-surface roads and footpaths and I can confirm that Tony and myself have had quite a few 'Teams' calls with Officers over various highways issues around the village. To put it into some context, both Tony and myself fight tooth and nail for improvements. Sadly the budget available does not allow for our wish-list to be fulfilled but we do lobby hard for every penny. Please see a list below which might be of interest to residents:

- The Fildyke Road footpath is now complete
- Fildyke Road will be re-surfaced in 2 sections – Sugar Loaf to 84 Fildyke Road first and then 84 to Chapel Road - once a number of smaller residential sites are completed. We had hoped to complete the works in one go but Paul Middleton, Highways Assets Manager who we met on site, advised against it as it is very hard to get developers to rectify any subsequent damage caused and we want to ensure that the road lasts.
- We have asked that the 'Dragons Teeth' on entering the village on Shefford Road and traffic calming measures on Shillington Road be re-marked.
- A section of footpath is planned to be replaced in Orchard Close during the summer (plan available).
- Following communications with the Parish Council and residents we have asked for a footpath and road inspection at Brookside and Hoo Road. Depending on Officers' guidance we will push for them to be replaced in future capital plans.
- We have noticed that a number of potholes have recently been filled along Shefford Road but these keep re-appearing in different places. We know that two or three residents regularly contact the Council via our Highways Portal to report them. As there are two major residential sites to be built out for 64 and 150 houses along this road, along with plans for traffic calming measures around the entrances, we have asked Officers to keep on top of surface wear issues and potholes: our longer term intention is to get Shefford Road re-surfaced once the developments have been built out.

GNOMES (Meppershall Good Neighbours)

A Key Village Organisation At This Time



Once again, at the time of writing, we continue with lockdown restrictions. Whatever stage we are at, when you read this be assured that our band of volunteers, who have never faltered to respond to demands on their time to help our villagers, are still around and willing to help. Although there has been an easing of restrictions, we still have vulnerable people in our village, some under strict medical instructions to remain isolated, others through illness or disability. All find life just that bit more difficult at this time.

Our call to our villagers is simple: whatever your need, a prescription to collect, shopping to get or simply to chat to someone, just call us. Our number has not changed - it remains 07760 793921. We also ask you to please keep an eye out for those around you and should you think they need help, but you are unable to give it, please call the GNOMES.

Finally, should you wish to volunteer just pass your contact details to lovemeppershall@meppershall.org - or call the GNOMES. **07760 793921**



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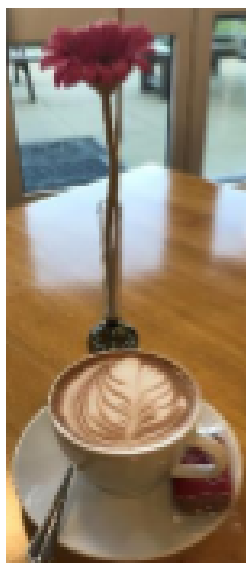
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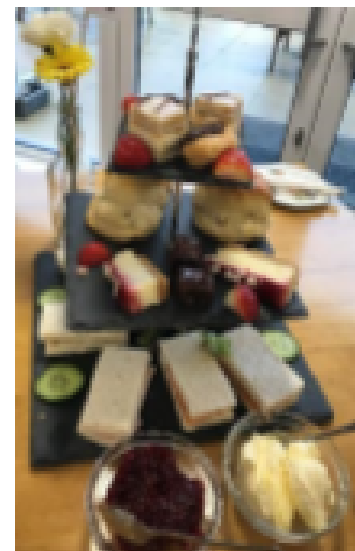
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VE Day 75 in Meppershall – 8th May 2020

We can look back on that hot sunny day at the beginning of May with great village pride. The turn-out in Meppershall for this important moment in our national life was excellent. Across the village, socially-distanced celebrations took place. Neighbours in



many roads and corners of the village Spent some of the day in their front garden or on their doorstep, indulging in synchronised tea-drinking (or even taking something a little stronger).

Union flags were hung and there was a lot of wonderful home-made bunting to be seen. The residents of Taylors Close even went as far as dressing up in 1940s style. We collected some photos of the day and they can be found on the Meppershall Messenger Facebook page – some are included here.

We want to say a special 'Thank You' to our Treasurer and long-time volunteer and part of the core leadership of the Meppershall Messenger, John Thompson. John played a key role in terms of some of the materials for the day, and created a wonderful red, white and blue Meppershall Messenger display in his front garden which was photographed and shared with the regional branch of the British Legion.

Thanks also to Mick Ridley who created a wonderful VE Day section for our May 2020 edition, with very interesting articles and a fascinating and unique account of his grandfather, war correspondent Edwin Charles Henry Ridley.

Perhaps Remembrance Day this year will be another chance for reflection. 2020 is not only the 75th anniversary year of VE Day – it also marks 100 years since the unveiling of The Cenotaph at Whitehall and the funeral

of the Unknown Soldier in that place; as well as marking 100 years since the first wearing of poppies as an emblem of remembrance and respect for those lost.

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Message from St Mary's

“How are you? No, how are you really?” During the lockdown, this has been the theme of a particular advert on television. It reminds me that now, more than ever, we are conscious of the wellbeing of others. As naturally reserved British people, we have started to ask that question “How are you really?”

If you are like me then, during this lockdown, you will have had good days as well as days of worry and anxiety and not least a little frustration. Through it all, it has been those moments of connection with others from outside our household that have been most encouraging. People have commented that Meppershall has often shown its best side during this period – clapping from our doorsteps each Thursday, stopping to speak to anyone we meet on our walks (at a social distance) and of course the response of so many during the recent VE day commemorations.

These moments offer a little glimpse of normality as we connect with the world outside. A chance to show our concern, love and appreciation to others in this difficult time. We have also had time to listen to others as we speak from our doorsteps, on the phone or via Zoom. I have made some doorstep visits to some who I know are living on their own during this lock down and talking on their doorsteps. I have found out so much about their earlier lives and it is humbling to realise that we have so many people in Meppershall who have had such incredible and inspiring lives. One day this lockdown will be over and when we enter ‘the new normal’ let’s not lose the ability to stop and ask the question “How are you, really?” Let’s continue to value others and continue to care and show an interest in their lives.

As I am writing, I am looking at the bible reading set for this coming Sunday - it is the story of Noah and the Ark. It struck me that the bible’s account of the flood also summarised the current situation in so many ways. Noah built the Ark and went into lockdown to ensure the safety of his household. Noah was surrounded by wildlife of every type – this reminded me that in lockdown we too have been surrounded by nature. I have seen and heard so many different types of birds (is it me, or is the birdsong louder than before?) Returning from shopping, I had to stop the car on the

empty A507 to allow a beautiful peacock* to make its way slowly across to the other side. Finally, I saw two large hares playing in the fields with no concern for the humans watching them!

Like us, Noah and his family are desperate for their lockdown to end. They sent a raven and a dove to check if it was safe to leave the Ark. Finally, they leave the safety of the Ark to return to a more normal life. Noah sees a rainbow the sign of God's comfort and protection. That same rainbow image can be seen in so many of our windows. It continues to bring comfort and a message of hope.

As we move forward towards our 'new normal' let us give thanks for those around us and, let's continue to see the beauty of nature around us, and let's keep talking and listening to each other.

Keith Callard, Reader, St Mary The Virgin, Meppershall

***Editors comment...** We've seen the photos and they were indeed peacocks (not pheasants)! Has anyone else seen these birds in our area? Do let us know!

Church News and Events in June

You are warmly invited to our LIVE services each day at '9and9' on the website and Facebook. Morning prayer is based on the Lectio 365 24-7 Prayer App (Google "Lectio365" to find it) and evening prayer is from the Church of England Daily Prayer App. Install both, for free, to your phone if you are interested, or just join via your browser on phone or PC.

You are also welcome to our Sunday services at 10.30 LIVE - now with an Order of Service download link and Family Activities on the website and Facebook. These can be emailed to you or hand delivered if you do not have the technology. A Podcast of our Sermon and Hymn is also uploaded – you can listen and subscribe or just use a local phone number if you don't use the internet: **01462 559112**.

Please [click here for our Facebook page](#); [here for our website](#); and [here for our YouTube channel](#).

For those of you who would like to be prayed for specifically and/or by name - we have a small group of intercessors who will continue to pray **confidentially** for those who ask for prayers. If being held in prayer in that way is something you would like, please talk to Roni 339962 / 07533376880 or Chris Valentine 07701 039324.

Finally some words of appreciation on behalf of the whole church: to Keith and Ruth who are keeping in touch with our elderly Rectory Teas group; to Chris Valentine for his diligence and care with works to the church; to James and Miriam and their 'Hymn of the Week' with beautiful video accompaniment; for the support of the Parish Council mowers who have done some good work keeping the churchyard in check when our usual volunteers cannot help; to Steve Dear Tree Services who recently completed significant work to maintain and protect the two remaining lime trees on the north side of the church – following the loss of the third tree to storm Ciara; to Herringbone Restoration Ltd for their work to the churchyard wall; and above all to Roni and Andrew for their amazing leadership and inspiration throughout these uniquely challenging times for churches.



The Meppershall Players at S.T.M.A.
As it is now June and the Players are still resting (as is most of the world) I thought I would share with you a little of the Players' history...



A drama group was started in Meppershall in about 1955 and was known as The Meppershall Amateur Dramatic Society (MADS for short). Rehearsals were held in the then Village Hall, a wooden building which stood opposite the Five Bells public house (demolished in the 1970's and Taylors Close erected). Anyone wanting to use the hall collected the key from the pub. The hall didn't have a stage so performances were put on at Stondon Village Hall and Robert Bloomfield School hall.

When fundraising started for a new Village Hall (the one which use to sit on the High Street and was demolished in 2017). No provision had been made for a stage in the original plans and apparently it took some time for members of the MADS to convince the Hall Committee at the time that a stage would be an asset to the hall and village. Thankfully, the Hall Committee obviously thought so too.

Jessie Niven, a former member of the MADS (sadly no longer with us), wrote down some of her recollections of these early days, in her own words, as follows:

"The MADS also put on some variety shows. One I remember "Variety 64" included a 25 minute Irish sketch called "A Pot of Broth". I was to sit plucking a chicken and a tramp was to call and give me a lot of blarney to get me out of the way so that he could steal the chicken. However, the young lad who was to play the tramp failed to turn up-I think he got cold feet. So the Stage-Manager asked me if I would go on if he did the part.

Thinking he must know the play pretty well I said yes. How wrong I was; He didn't know the part at all and just made it up all the time. Instead of asking questions as I was supposed to I told him things. He had the chicken off me and into the cooking pot feathers as well in five minutes flat and the whole sketch was over in what was for me ten terrifying minutes"

The Stage-Manager was Barrie Carne, my Dad. (No need to wonder where my brother Paul, myself and my son Tom got our love of Am-Dram from).

As so often happens with drama groups, members move away, work away and MADS sadly folded leaving Meppershall without a drama group for a few years. In the early 1970's a new resident of Meppershall, Terry de Boo, arranged a meeting with Bill Wright a former member of MADS and Jessie to see if the drama group could start up again. A one act play was put on together with a wine and cheese evening to gauge interest in a drama group. It must have been sufficient as a committee was elected and a new name decided upon.

Their first production was Spring and Port Wine In 1972. Jessie played the Mum, Bill the Dad, and a very young Paul (Carne) played the youngest son "The Meppershall Players" was born.

Karen Mitchell (Players' Secretary) 01462 816336



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Finance: the 3 questions you should ask yourself when markets fall by Paul Savuto



Over the last few weeks, the coronavirus has never been far from the headlines. As the spread of the disease continues, Covid-19 has impacted life in many ways, from the cancellation of major events to supermarket rationing.

Concerns about the economic consequences of the virus have also spooked stock markets around the world. As companies from major airlines to drinks giant Diageo post sales and profit warnings, share prices have fallen with the markets worried about the hit to the economy.

While the outbreak of coronavirus is a serious global event, it is not the first time – and won't be the last – that stock markets experience short-term volatility. You only have to head back to the EU referendum result to see what an impact an outside event can have on markets.

It's only natural that you may have concerns about your pensions or investments in the current climate. It's important to keep calm, and to ask yourself the following three questions.

1. Have my long-term goals changed?

Investing is typically for the long term. Your money could be invested for 20, 30 or even 40 years in some cases.

Head back 25 years and think about the global events that have affected stock markets. Seven general elections. The Iraq War. The global financial crisis. Brexit.

However, despite these tumultuous events and stock market volatility, **IG** report that the compound annual return of the FTSE 100 the last 25 years was 6.4% with dividends reinvested. This would be a total return of 375%.

If your long-term goals haven't changed, your investment strategy shouldn't change either. When we design an investment strategy for clients, we do so with the aim of them being successful in the long term. Of course, this factors in periods of both good and bad market returns, and we model the effect of stock market falls on a client's strategy in order to stress test the plan.

2. Has my attitude changed?

If your attitude hasn't changed, then neither should your portfolio.

The aim of a diversified portfolio is that it reduces the impact of stock market falls. Remember that if you see a headline that the stock market has fallen by 8%, your portfolio will typically not have fallen by that amount.

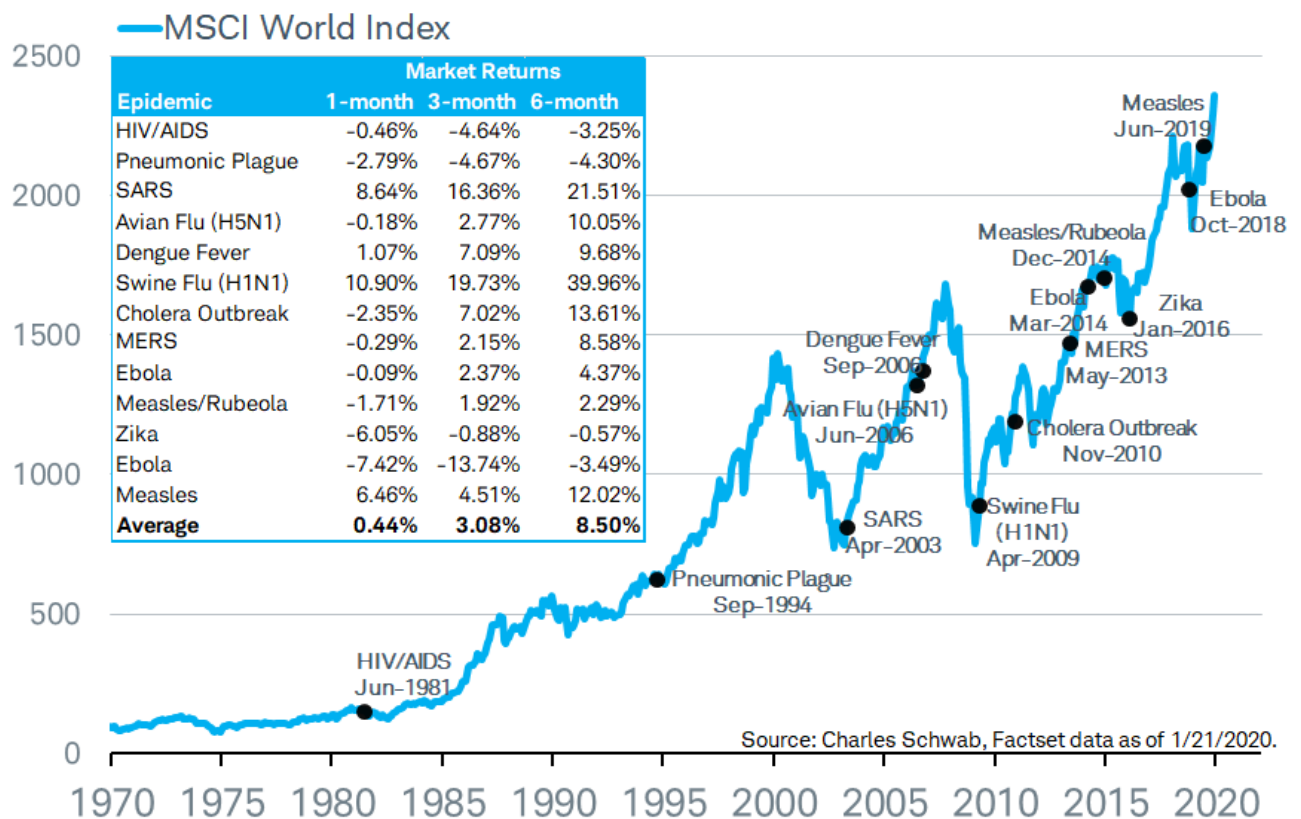
Our clients have globally diversified portfolios with asset classes including bonds as well as global stock markets. This means that during volatile times, defensive bond holdings reduce the impact of stock market falls.

3. Do I need all my money in the short term?

While you may be nervous after a stock market fall, reacting to a drop in the markets can be disastrous. You essentially turn a paper loss into a real loss and many studies have found that reacting to market downturns is one of the biggest destroyers of returns for investors.

If you don't need your money in the short term, then don't panic. The graph below shows stock market reactions to previous disease epidemics, including SARS, Ebola and Swine Flu. You'll see that, while there may have been some short-term volatility, the markets have recovered in time.

Immune: world epidemics and global stock market performance



The MSCI World Index captures large and mid cap representation across 23 Developed Markets countries. With 1,646 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country. **Past performance is no guarantee of future results.**

Bonus question: If my house fell in value, what would I do?

According to the UK House Price Index, property prices in this country fell at the time of the global financial crisis in 2008/2009.

If you owned a home at that time, how did you react to a reduction in the value of your home? Did you sell immediately and realise the loss? Or did you remain patient and wait for prices to recover – which they did from around 2015? When you think about how you'd react if your house price fell, it's true that financial markets are the only place that you would ever consider selling at a discount and buying at a premium.

If you answered 'no' to these questions...

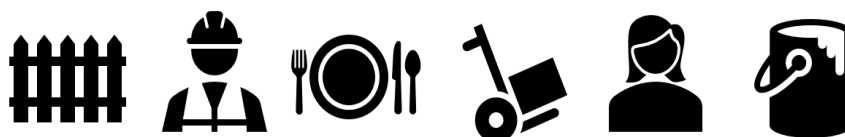
If your long-term goals and attitude haven't changed, and you don't need your money in the short term, then it's important that you remain resolute and don't panic. Keeping control of your emotions and your behaviour is really important during periods of volatility and having a financial planner who you can turn to as a sounding board can really help.

Get in touch

If you're concerned about the recent stock market volatility, or you think it's time to review your long-term plans, please get in touch. DGS are Independent and Chartered Financial Advisers. I am also a Chartered Financial Planner with over 25 years financial services experience, so you are in safe hands.

For a free review of your financial situation and to discuss your plan, please contact me: Paul Savuto, AFPS, Chartered Financial Planner. DGS Independent Financial Advisers Ltd. 07834 499 595 or email ps@dgsifa.com. I'll be happy to talk to you and answer any questions you have. FCA 225814.

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After the Lockdown. A short story exclusive to the Messenger

After the smells of the hot London street, the cooler refuge of a familiar coffee shop seduced a sigh from her as she pulled up a chair at his table. It wasn't like her to show any physical clues as to how she was feeling. In recent years, it wasn't like her to be feeling much at all. "Small skinny flat white," he says, with all the reassurance of a simple act perfectly performed, pushing the steaming cup to her across a table sticky with a morning of coffee drinkers before them. She sees an efficient young man. They always are, she thinks as she smiles inwardly. No sigh now, there is a job to do.

He is the professional civil servant and an administrator at heart. But he sees something that isn't quite right. She is just like the photos in her file – and that is the problem. He promises himself that he will ask her but first there are formalities.

"Naturally we won't talk here," he says, "We can walk to the office, it is just round the corner." After years of taking nothing for granted, second-guessing every offer of help, always assuming an encounter with a stranger is a potential hostile action, here she was trusting a blue-suited Manchester accent with a haircut designed for Friday nights out, not Monday mornings in the office. But the surprisingly assertive young man in front of her is a ticket to a new chapter. The flat white is good. The flat white is finished. He holds the door for her as they start a brisk stroll through a swarm of midday lunch -hunters, most of them blinded, flicking at smartphone apps.

After the swarm, the quiet of a side street and a few hundred metres to a dull-looking entrance to a boring building. And over those metres, he decides to quench his curiosity. He has to ask.

"You're retiring after 20 years?" he half-questions, framing another silent question.

"You think at my age I must have served the firm longer?" she helps him along.

"It's just that I have done a few of these exit meetings and it seems everyone joins young and leaves..." he trails off, realising it wouldn't be right to call this woman "old."

For a moment she is not with a colleague. She is with another "subject". She is playing a role. The last thing on her mind is the truth, who she actually is. But today is different. This is the last day. She may never say these things again but she indulges herself to say them once.

"I joined after another career," she says as their eyes truly meet for the first time. He is waiting on her as she continues. "In fact not exactly another career. But there was a moment when it happened for me and I took the chance with both hands," and her gaze is suddenly fixed miles away, into sunlight which beckons her up the street. "Do you have any memories of the COVID lockdown?" - quietly highlighting his youth.

The blue suit blushes as he admits to being born roughly nine months after the middle of the big changes that the virus brought, earlier in the 21st century. **Continued.....**

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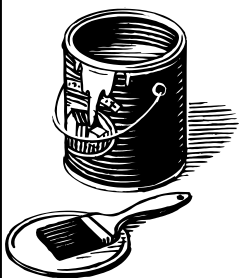
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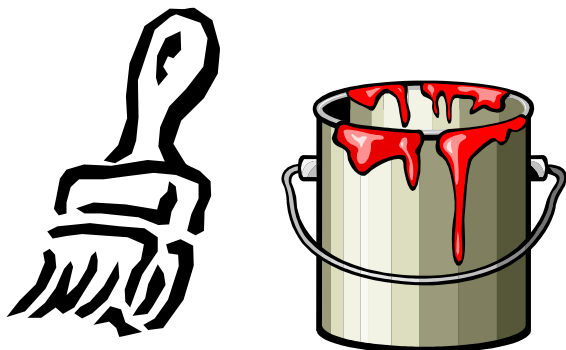
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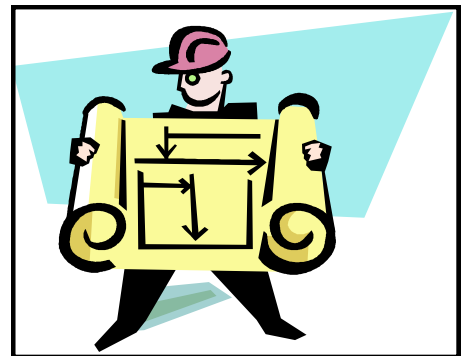
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(...Short story continued...) She explains how it all happened for her back then: 2020, year of the lockdown. How home-schooling her kids led her to an online psychology degree. How time furloughed from her job as a receptionist gave her the chance to get fit. Really fit. How she had dusted off her language skills. How, when it all began to go 'back to normal' a family friend asked her to come and work for a new, very special firm. And how since that mid-life moment, she never looked back.

Again, he holds the door as they enter. South London's finest greets them and they sign in. There are no company signs in the offices of a covert intelligence agency. "Welcome back," says the blue suit. She smiles – and she sighs. She is ready to retire.

JR

Diary of an Allotment by Zoe Cox

Thank you to everyone who gave me positive feedback about my article in last month's Messenger and requested updates on the ramblings of an allotment holder.

As I write this, the 2 big questions for the allotment are will it rain, and will there be frost? Rain is good, frost is not.

Rain means a welcome break from watering and a relief to have the ground properly wet. April showers not only give us May flowers but also May vegetables. The few days of rain at the end of April were very much wanted. It also makes the remaining bits of digging much easier.

Frost is very much unwelcome at this time of the year as it means a frantic dash to get everything protected so that this year's dreams and ambitions of a plentiful harvest are not dashed on the cruel rocks of eagerness.

Every year there is much discussion and decision-making about when to bring everything from the greenhouse and plant it out. The key we have found over the years is to be patient and every year we ignore this advice. One day wisdom will trump eagerness, but not this year.

Normally I have no problem with germinating plants. This year the plants are struggling and I am beginning to think they don't welcome my extra attention and maybe my usual neglect needs to be reinstated. Only one variety of tomato germinated and the squashes/pumpkins are not in any mood to make an appearance.

The greenhouse space is running out fast as tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers need to be planted into their final positions. So we started to harden off the plants going to the allotment by putting them outside during the day which gets them used to the outside temperatures and winds. These were grown and nurtured from seed over several months so it is very important to do this stage properly or the walk of doom to the compost heap will beckon. This year is especially important as the fallback of going to the garden centre and filling in with professionally grown things is not an option.

The other fallback of plant swapping between plot holders is also on hold as we are keen to keep physical distancing.



We played chicken with the weather and planted out our sweetcorn, runner beans and courgettes 2 weeks earlier than sensible people would do so. The following 2 weeks is full of nervousness over a frosty snap. We did try to cover the courgettes with plastic but our protective cover wanted to self identify as a trampoline in a hurricane and kept blowing off into the furthest corner of the allotment field so we gave up as we had no desire to identify ourselves as fly tippers. We shall see whether we come to regret such rash action but this is a month of no issues, no pests and diseases (still too cold) and no drought (too early) so there is a sense of optimism amongst the allotment holders that this is year we shall feast.

The frantic work of the spring is nearly over and as we go into the next month we need to keep on top of the weeding – more on that in another issue. For now we can start eating the lettuce we planted in a tub a few weeks ago and look forward to other produce to make us get in touch with our inner Good Life Tom and Barbara!

If you are thinking about taking on an allotment, or if you would like to know more, **contact Paul Carne on 07736 311441 or Meppershall Parish Council Clerk, Alessandra, at clerk@meppershall.org**, for a viewing. There are a variety of different



sized allotments available to rent, located at Wry Close (in the centre of Meppershall behind the Sugar Loaf public house). The annual cost depends on the size, but at present is between £15 to £40 with a 50% discount for anyone taking up a plot for the rest of this rent year (finishes end September). Water is currently free but note that there are no toilets on site!

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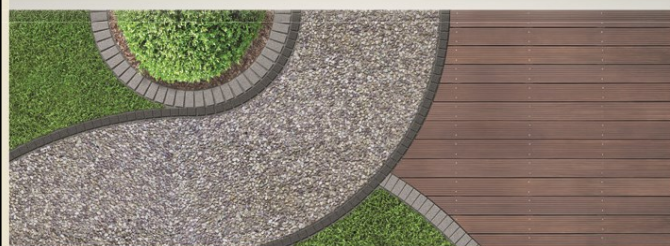
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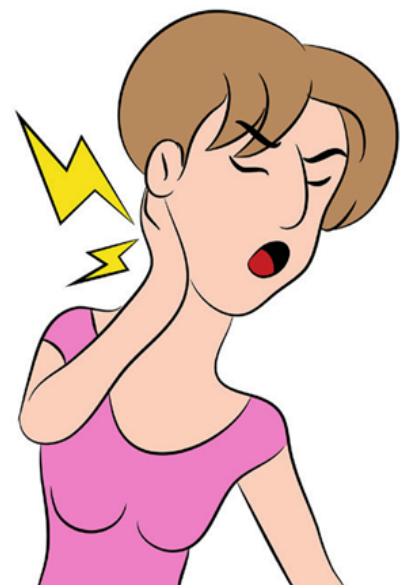
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A Closed World by Debbie Jones

What happened in Wuhan?
Will we ever know?
We all watched in horror
As Coronavirus started its show.

The News told us of a Global Pandemic,
The spread of a new disease
That brought on a dry cough and fever,
And pushed each country to its knees.

Schools stayed open and people went to work,
But there was dread and confusion as the death toll rose,
We tried to keep calm and not panic buy,
Until lockdown in March when normal life froze.

We could only go out for essential work and supplies,
Daily exercise as a family, alone, or two at a time;
Freedom was on hold to slow the spread,
And Police were able to issue a fine.

Some were furloughed, others worked harder;
Children came home from school and there they stayed,
The NHS staff and many Key Workers became Heroes,
Home school ensued but the sun shone and we all
played.

The stressful waiting and paranoia set in.
If symptoms showed, we hoped to have it mild;
With possibly fourteen days of isolation ahead,
It's hard to be an ill parent or see an ill child.

Learning and friendship relied on Facetime and Zoom;
Clapping for the NHS on Thursdays started,
The most vulnerable in twelve week isolation
Needed extra help as loved one's stay parted.

Fun activities online began to trend;
Two metres social distancing became the norm
When on dog walks or buying food,
And most of us listened true to form.

Those on the frontline needed more PPE,
Tests were ramped up to detect the hidden beast;
So many loved ones die in pain and alone,
As the world tries to contain the infection, at least.

Whilst Boris Johnson had a narrow escape,
We awaited news of the virus peaking,
So working from home could come to an end,
And everyone could start freedom seeking.

Mental wellbeing became a huge concern,
Loneliness, loss, or poverty tore us apart;
The economy was now in serious trouble,
Money promised was needed for a start.

Captain Tom Moore came to the rescue
Raising over thirty million for the NHS by walking
So far by his one hundredth birthday;
We can do this together, now you're talking.

All the emotions hit us head on;
Five weeks in and now it's May;
Nursing homes are in deep trouble,
And sadly many haven't seen this day.

Rainbows have become a sign of hope
Fun, love and music unite us all.
Being around nature can lift our spirits,
And keeping active helps us if we fall.

Travel is currently off the agenda,
Many cars, planes and trains have had to stop;
The environment may be a winner,
But online deliveries have helped us shop.

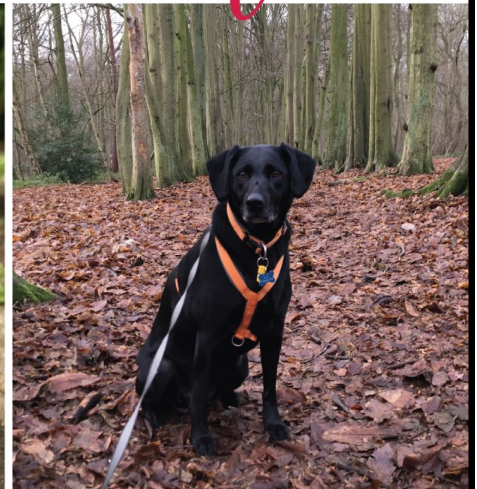
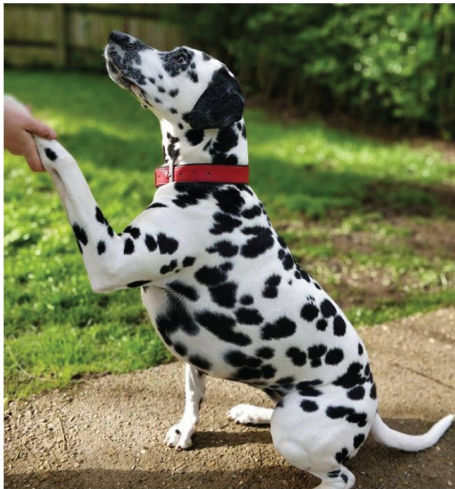
Whilst life continues in a different way,
Let's enjoy watching beauty unfold
And be thankful for time spent together,
Before the world opens up once told.

By Debbie Jones
2/5/20

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Meppershall Police House – A Letter From History

The Meppershall Messenger was recently passed a copy of a 2004 letter which described what it was like to live in the police house and work in the village as the village constable back in 1959. The police house can be seen on the east side of Shefford Road and the letter was a way for a previous occupant, Robert Park, to share some memories with its current owner, Richard Ivory. Richard has kindly allowed us to share some of the interesting insights in the letter, here.

PC Park occupied the house in the long, hot months of the summer of 1959 when a drought struck the UK. Using only a heavy upright bicycle to move around the area, the 'village bobby' worked with colleagues in neighbouring villages who would often help with investigations and prosecutions if they involved close neighbours – each officer was very much embedded in the community.

The house had a small police office attached but most people would come straight to the front door. The village policeman was on call constantly with just an old-style Bakelite telephone to connect him with the Divisional HQ at Biggleswade or County HQ at Bedford. To leave the village, the officer had to request permission from County HQ, even to go shopping. Working hours varied greatly but typically involved 12 days every fortnight and 4 hours in every 12. The wage of £8 per week was collected by each officer, in person, in full uniform, from Biggleswade and could be supplemented by a payment of 3 (old) pence for submission of each typed report. There was no overtime payment and policemen's wives were not allowed to work but were expected to assist in the temporary absence of their husband when necessary.



The village policeman lived in the police house without paying rent but relied on the Local Authority for decoration and maintenance (officers were not allowed to do these things themselves). There was no central heating, no double glazing and furniture, curtains and carpets etc were the responsibility of the officer. Exterior appearances

were expected to be kept high, including the garden and borders. On first coming to Meppershall, PC Park's family lived upstairs while extensive dry rot was made good downstairs. Work and homelife happened side-by-side, with the phone on a stand-up desk in the hallway where much of the administration was done and where members of the public would visit, alongside the family sitting area, dining room and kitchen.

In 1959, as well as an outside loo and septic tank, the garden included a water well with hand-pump and a garage used as a garden shed. On a police constable's wages, few officers were able to keep and run a vehicle. Over the years, successive officers cultivated a productive garden with a big tulip patch, gooseberry bushes and at times the keeping of hens (a previous officer named Walker had 24 hens) as well as pigs. In this rural setting, the hedge along Shefford Road was a well-established field hedge.



To the left of the police house were some council houses and PC Park remembers the Dilley family who lived there, with their liking for Woodbines. Open fields spread around the house to the right and across the road, with the farm of Bogey Knight a little further up the road. The Knights also ran the post office and grocery store and occasionally helped out by running a tractor around the police house back garden, which at times could become a little unkempt.

Once, on mowing the lengthening grass, a partridge nest was revealed, full of eggs. Animals were part of daily life in Meppershall. Lost or stray farm animals would often be returned to the police house for safe-keeping – surprising the returning police officer as they came across an untied animal feasting on the contents of the garden! Officers also had a duty as assistant inspector for diseases of animals. In Meppershall, PC Park recalled coming across swine fever as well as a case of foul pest, but having grown up in the back streets of Glasgow these were not things he was very used to!

There were happy and sometimes less happy times in village policing. A frequent visitor for a cuppa was the village milkman who, with partner Mary, were remembered as a very nice couple. They were unmarried and such relationships were, sadly, still frowned on in those days. The Barley Mow pub stood further up the road from the Knights' farm. It was the scene of a tragedy when one of the Knight brothers took his

own life in a barn on that site. Also in 1959, fire struck the Manor House beside the church, destroying a unique and historic staircase and causing significant damage. PC Park recalls the wife of the manor house couple passing away at around that time.

Another tragedy was to befall PC Park's successor when he intervened at a well-known local gathering point for regulars spilling out of a Shefford pub at the earlier closing times of 10pm and 10.30pm which were in force back then. This boisterous after-hours throng had become an increasing nuisance in 1959 and when the new village constable attended to move them on he was stabbed, sustaining a paralysing injury.

PC Park recalled fondly the Yorkshireman at Stondon Manor, Mr Parrish, who was one of the first farmers to embark on the so-called battery farming of chickens. On the opposite side of the road in Stondon lived Alan Lennox Boyd, The Right Honourable The Viscount Boyd of Merton, who was married to Lady Patricia Guinness. Viscount Boyd was MP for Mid Bedfordshire and Minister of Transport and Aviation in Churchill's post-war government. He became Minister of State for the Colonies (what we would today call the Foreign Secretary) under the governments of Eden and Macmillan. Our locality had some very notable connections.

Thank you to Richard for sharing the letter and allowing us to include some of its details. PC Park commented that he had many fascinating experiences and could easily write a James-Herriott-style comedy based on his short stint in Meppershall and the many anecdotes he acquired at that time!

My Memories of World War II by Enid Pamment

Although born in Hammersmith, London my parents moved to Kenton near Harrow where they were building new houses; that was in 1936. My father was a senior sheet metal worker and was working building frames for cars and coaches down the Edgware Road, near Hendon.

War started in 1939 and although my father was eligible for the armed forces he was transferred from the car industry to Dehavilland Aircraft in Hatfield completing several years of night work. Food went on ration and we all had 'fair share cards' Mum sent me to the local shops on my 3-wheeler bike to see what I could get! We also had clothing coupons.

My parents decided. My sister Brenda was several years older than me and had just been given the opportunity to complete a course in ladies' tailoring in Kilburn, North London. We would take our chance and all 'stick together' as a family.

When it came to me starting school, it was held three mornings a week in people's houses as the school I should have gone to was taken initially over by the ARP. Air raid shelters were brick-built and located in the side roads. This is during the early part of the war and when there were raids we had heavy bombing because the German aircraft were making their way towards Stanmore where there was an American Base and heavy artillery. By 1941 our house had all the front windows blown out and all

Mum's net curtains were blowing out of the windows, ripped. I can remember Mum in the front garden starting to cry – which now I can fully understand.

During this time we had experienced a bad raid which meant we did not get much sleep, so in the morning Mum sent me off to school. But when I was nearing the school, some of my pals told me to 'go home' as there was still an air raid on. I ran all the way home and of course Mum had not expected me and I couldn't stop to tell her as I was in need of the toilet upstairs! Then there was a mighty explosion and Mum ran upstairs to see if I was OK. She just started to laugh as I was sitting on the loo, head in hands with the toilet ceiling on my head!

Later in the war we had an unexploded doodlebug bomb fall at the back of our house. Dad was at work but we all had to get out of our house and move in with neighbours at the other end of the road. The next day we were sent to a library which had been taken over as a rest centre. From here we were given a house that was empty and the WRP brought in china and cutlery for us to eat with. We were there until the bomb disposal people came to get rid of the bomb.

Shortly after this incident, my sister and I (we had a double bed in the back of the house) were rudely awoken by another explosion. It was a good thing that I shot under the covers as I had to stay there until the glass from the window was removed from my bed. It was caused by a V-1, which was followed by the V-2 rocket. My parents felt I should be sent away as it had made me very nervous. Fortunately shortly after this we were informed that World War II was over! But although life became calm, rationing was still in force and we still had to ration for coal! *Enid Pamment*

Walking Opportunities by James Read (Second Sunday Strollers)

It has been weeks. You have been using your daily outing to explore every corner of the village. You can't face that same old walk! You need something different.! Maybe this helps: the six main ways out of the village and into new landscapes and places. Find more info on FB @MeppershallStrollers. Even in our modest local landscape, you can get quite remote quite quickly – so stay safe and go equipped. Most importantly, respect the farming that is going on around us by keeping dogs under control, following signs and ***leaving everything as you find it.***

1. Shillington Bury

Leave Meppershall at the Rectory, keep the hedge west of the Manor House on your left, continue through the opening in the hedge-line ahead of you and bear slightly right and through another two hedge-lines for huge views of Shillington, the Chilterns and the path to Shillington Bury. Shillington and Lower Gravenhurst are just beyond.

2. Cow Bridge

Again leaving along the north-west hedge around the Manor House, but turning right to keep the big field on your right hand, head out and gently down to waymarkers at the small wooden footway over the ditch. Cross the ditch and continue down, reaching a small wood (and the ditch) on your right and at the bottom venture through

the hedge to access the field across which sits the Cow Bridge. Upper Gravenhurst sits on the hill ahead, with Cainhoe and Clophill beyond.

3. Chibley Farm and beyond

Chibley Farm sits a mile outside the south end of the village in the direction of Pirton and Shillington. Walk to it by the path on the east side of the watertower (over fields) or on the paths left off the hill down to Shillington from the main road. The picture shows the view of Chibley Farm looking south from Stondon Road. Beyond Chibley (using the road into Shillington at Marquis Hill) you'll find paths across to Pirton – and beyond that, the Chilterns at Pegsdon.



4. Campton and Polehanger Wood

Beyond the village hall, standing at the top of Crackle Hill (the steep path heading north-west out of Meppershall) – head down the hill and onwards to the T-junction with the drive serving Woodhall Farm. Turn right on the driveway, with a field on your left hand. Now turn left to walk on the far side of that field. At the corner of the field, the gateway in the hedge gives access to Campton (to the left, over the River Hit) and Polehanger Wood (to the right, to a second gateway into the wood).

5. Shefford and Polehanger Wood

Again atop Crackle Hill – don't go down but turn right, initially with hedge on your right and field on the left, and then vice-versa. Descending all the way down to a wooden fence line, continue through beside the big tree and over the field with Polehanger Farm on the other side, using the line of the path and taking care not to walk on the crop. Through the gate at Polehanger, continue with hedge and ditch on your left hand to find the eastern access point to Polehanger Wood (left) or the underpass at the A507 into Shefford by the River (slightly right).

6. Stondon and Henlow Camp

Where Fildyke Road meets Chapel Road, head east through the hedge onto what was once known as 'Cow Lane'. This is a beautiful old track. Continue initially beside Chapel Farm, then beside and between fields and turn right along the rear hedgeline of a large house as you near the A600. Reaching a choice of left / right on the far side of the field, turn left for the A600 at the dog track, or right to rise back up to Upper Stondon and the road to Meppershall.



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Informal cancer group for patients, families, friends, carers who wish to meet others for support & information. We usually meet on the first Saturday of every month.

However, due to Covid-19 lockdown, we are continuing to provide support via telephone on an ongoing basis. We are in the process of setting up an online 'group meet' and individually for those who wish to connect during this difficult time.

We'd love to talk to you! Daksha & Phil Trivedi,

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Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604). Also operating in Northern Ireland

Shefford Leisure Group by Enid Pamment

As this awful epidemic continues, a couple of our outings have been cancelled. I had hoped to just postpone them, but unfortunately this was not possible, as the offices were all closed down and there was nobody to speak to!!



So we must start again when all the trials and tribulations are behind us. Those who have booked on the trips will be repaid and we will start again when the time is right. I will arrange your refunds as quickly as I can. Regarding the cruise that was cancelled on the 1st April, these payments will be made by the shipping company.

In the meantime, keep safe, keep well and keep clapping on Thursday nights!. We owe so much to the NHS. *Enid Pamment*

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With kind thanks to the contributor. Happy baking everyone.



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In Memoriam

We are sad to share the news that Pamela (Pam) Flint died on Saturday, 9 May aged 90. We send our condolences to Alison and Richard and families.

Birthdays

The whole team at The Meppershall Messenger send birthday greetings and very best wishes to everyone celebrating this month:

Mary Thompson Tony Primmitt Joyce Dew

'TRUGS & TROWELS' Gardening Club

"The best way to garden is to put on a wide-brimmed straw hat and some old clothes. And with a hoe in one hand and a cold drink in the other, tell somebody else where to dig."

- Texas Bix Bender, Don't Throw in the Trowel

Once it is deemed safe to do so, details of forthcoming meetings will be published. Until then, enjoy your gardens this summer, whether you are growing vegetables or flowers, or just relaxing in a deckchair with a cup of tea!!

For more information, please contact... Maryika 01462 851729



In light of the current epidemic Wanderbus services are currently suspended. The Wanderbus team will continue to review the situation over the coming weeks.

Bedford Model Engineering Society Summerfield Miniature Railway Off the A600 just past Haynes Turn

In light of the epidemic social distancing advice, public running days at the miniature railway are postponed and we will publish further information in future editions of The Meppershall Messenger. Please refer to **www.bedfordmes.co.uk**.

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Shefford Health Centre, Robert Lucas Drive Shefford	01462 648465
Lloyds Chemists, 7 High St Shefford	01462 813283
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Shefford Health Centre, Robert Lucas Drive	01462 818633

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Central Beds Council 0300 300 8301

CBC councillors:

Tony Brown	anthony.brown@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
Mark Liddiard	mark.liddiard@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Meppershall Parish Council

Parish Council Clerk Alessandre Marabese clerk@meppershall.org

Member of Parliament

Nadine Dorries MP dorriesn@parliament.uk

St Marys Church

Rev. Veronica Goodman, The Rectory, Church Road 01462 339962
(see the church section of The Meppershall Messenger for full details)

Library

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Opening times: Tues - Fri 9am – 6pm, Sat 9am – 4pm, closed Mon & Sun

Whitbread Wanderbus Service

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Schools

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Meppershall Pre School (Village Hall) Tamsin Osborn 07816 357159
meppershallps@gmail.com
Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford 01462 628800
Samuel Whitbread Academy, Shefford 01462 629900
Etonbury Academy, Stotfold 01462 730391
Henlow Academy 01462 813733
Redborne Upper School, Ampthill 01525 404462

Organisations

Meppershall Players Karen Mitchell 01462 816366
Meppershall Good Neighbours (GNOMES) 07760 793921
Meppershall Brownies, Suzanne Brightwell 07817 392325
Shefford Guides, Angie Griffiths 07957 462519
Shefford Scout Group (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers)
Kathy Georgiou 01462 629313

The Team and Collation Dates

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editor welcomes contributions to the Messenger, whether as letters, articles or notices. Contributions should preferably be as attachments to e-mail (address below) but handwritten contributions may be sent by post, or left in the folder kept at the Village Stores. Contributions should run to not more than one A5 page (except by prior arrangement) and should be received by the Editor not later than the 12th of the month for publication at the end of that month. Contributions received after the deadline may be held over.

DISCLAIMER

The Editor reserves the right to omit or alter any advertisement or article and to change the content, format or issue date of the magazine without prior notice. The Editor cannot be held responsible for the factual correctness of, or for any libellous comment or statement made in any advertisement, article or other contribution published in this magazine. Every effort will be made to avoid any deliberate attempt to mislead or otherwise cause harm or damage to any person or persons by any advertisement, article or any other contribution published in this magazine.

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Collating Dates 2020-21			
July Issue	June 29 th	November Issue	October 26 th
August-Sept Issue	July 27 th	Dec-Jan Issue	Nov 30 th
October Issue	Sept 28 th	February Issue	Jan 25 th
Please contact Colette to confirm arrangements (contact information above).			

Please note that dates in the above table USUALLY show when collating will take place, at 2.30pm in the Sugar Loaf, for the corresponding month, displayed to the left. The issue being collated usually relates to the following month. However during the coronavirus social distancing measures, our collation procedures have changed and we will review our plans for the printed magazine in line with government guidance.