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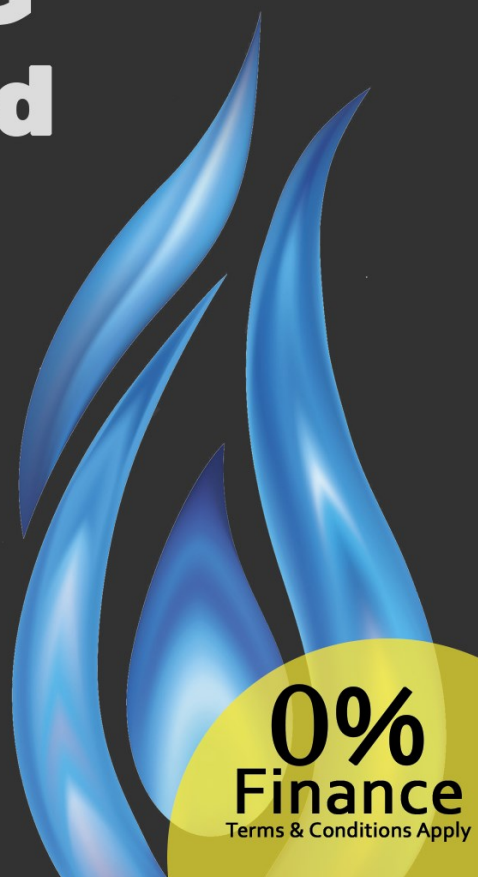
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Editorial by Mick Ridley and James Read

We hope Easter brings you some rest and relaxation if you are lucky enough to have stayed busy with work in recent months. If your work has been affected by COVID and the lockdown, let's hope Easter brings more of our our slow and steady emergence from the ravages of the virus – bringing some normality back.



This month's edition of the magazine is a reminder of all the great work on behalf of the community by so many people and organisations. The Meppershall GNOMES having been helping out and supporting people all through the past year. Our Parish Council will hold its Annual Meeting on 26th April and provides important information about a troubling housing development appeal. Central Bedfordshire Council information this month covers road safety news, community safety and vaccinations. And the church – which recently marked one year of consistently delivering daily online get-togethers for morning and evening fellowship and prayer – celebrates Easter in a range of ways, described in its section of the magazine.

It's what community and village life is all about.

A particularly special part of this month's magazine is the start of a series of history articles – written through the eyes of people who experienced the Meppershall of some years ago and have seen the village develop. For those new to the village, we hope these stories and personal perspectives are interesting. For us all, they aim to provide a warm sense of the community that we are lucky enough to call home.

Whether you are new to the village or whether you have been here longer, it seems to be the rural 'villagey' character of Meppershall that is one of the reasons people come to settle on this Bedfordshire hill. It is one of the reasons why significant distress and astonishment remains about the decisions (in large part national planning decisions) to allow the construction of 200 new homes on Shefford Road – with the construction work now ongoing.

It is okay for us to feel that we have accommodated enough new housing for now. Meppershall will be half way to doubling in size once currently approved construction is completed. So there is anxiety to ensure that the rejection of a proposal for a further 100 (yes one hundred) houses on Shefford Road is upheld at its upcoming appeal. We wish success to all those involved in protecting the village and upholding the soon-to-be-published Village Plan.

As members of the community, we all have opportunities to join in, to help, to support those living around us. We also have opportunities to do the opposite. At this Easter time, let's find inspiration to give back more than we take, to create more than we remove and to add to the beauty, safety and wellbeing of the village as we know it, in whatever ways we can.

Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors

I am Meppershall Neighbourhood Watch coordinator and have recently been sent a letter by Bedfordshire Police that I would like to make our residents aware of. Rogue traders are a common problem and there are some simple steps to ensure that we stay safe and are not caught out.

Regards

Anthony Seaman

Information sent on behalf of Bedfordshire Police

AVOID ROGUE TRADERS – CARRY OUT CHECKS

Rogue traders do not just cold-call at your door; they can have professional websites and place adverts in newspapers, magazines and other publications. They also operate leaflet dropping so be aware that not all leaflets are genuine.

Buy With Confidence scheme – is a national scheme which is operated in all of the local authority areas within Bedfordshire. All businesses are vetted, approved and monitored by Trading Standards.

If you are unable to find an approved local trader, here is some guidance on checks that you can carry out:

- 1) Ask friends and family for recommendations
- 2) Carry out internet research including a check for negative reviews
- 3) Get at least three “written” quotes for the work required, to include timescales, materials and clearing up (disposal of any waste)
- 4) Ask to see a copy of their Public Liability Insurance
- 5) Check what guarantees and warranties are offered and get them in writing
- 6) Ask for references from previous customers
- 7) Do not deal with anyone who refuses to take payment via cheque or bank transfer
- 8) Get written receipts for any money paid

If you have had an experience with a rogue trader, please report it by telephoning 101 and to Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 2231133 or via the local council Trading Standards Website.

For live incidents where the rogue trader is still at the property, or is due to return, contact the police on 999

Giovanna Traetto-Reynolds (Police, PCSO, Operation Sentinal Rural Team)

Notice of Annual Parish Meeting for Meppershall

Notice is hereby given that Meppershall Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 26th April 2021, starting at 7:30pm virtually via Zoom. To join the Zoom Meeting click on the link below and follow the on-screen instructions:

<https://bit.ly/3d71MuJ>

Meeting ID: 869 0095 3529 - Passcode: mpc2021

All are welcome to attend this public meeting. Business to be transacted:

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Adoption of minutes of the previous Parish Meeting held on 29th April 2019.
4. Report from Chairman of the Parish Council
5. Reports from Ward Councillors
6. Report from other groups and associations present
7. Issues raised by parishioners

Peter Chapman
Chairman of Meppershall Parish Council

Davidsons Homes Update on its 145-Home Development in Meppershall

The Davidsons Homes site, which will be known as Woodlands Rest, will comprise a selection of two, three, four and five-bedroom homes on land west of Shefford Road, at the northern edge of the village. As well as 145 new homes, of which 51 will be provided as affordable housing, the development will include public open space and a play area.

Simon Tyler, Sales Director for Davidsons Homes South Midlands, said: “Work at Woodlands Rest is now underway, and we are hoping to release the first homes for sale at the development in the spring. The site represents a prime location for new housing, offering an attractive rural setting on the edge of Meppershall which is within commuting distance of several large towns, including Bedford, Milton Keynes, Luton and Stevenage. We have a proud history of providing high-quality homes and creating new communities in desirable locations across the Midlands. As with our other developments in the region, Woodlands Rest will be a seamless extension to Meppershall, featuring houses designed to reflect the existing character of the village. We hope to complete the first homes at Woodlands Rest and to start welcoming residents to this new neighbourhood by autumn.”

Davidsons Homes will contribute more than £1.8 million to local services and infrastructure – c. £1.7 million towards education, £85,000 for play equipment and £7,920 towards waste collection. They are building new homes across Warwickshire,

Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. For more information about the homes available, please visit davidsonshomes.co.uk.

Land to the rear of 40 Shefford Road – Planning Appeal

The Parish Council would like to make residents aware that there is currently a planning appeal being heard on Tuesday 13th April at 10:00. The appeal relates to the proposed erection of 103 dwellings to the rear of 40 Shefford Road. A strong turnout from the village is vital to ensure that Meppershall's residents' views are heard and considered.

To register to attend the appeal, which will be heard as a virtual event via Microsoft Teams or telephone, residents must inform the Planning Inspectorate Case Officer – Simon Dunn.

He can be contacted on 0303 444 5302 or emailed at:

East2@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Please quote appeal reference APP/P0240/W/20/3249265 and/or application reference CB/19/02039/OUT

Details are below as per a letter received by the Parish Council in early March the contents of which you can find below.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 APPEAL UNDER SECTION 78

Site Address: Land to the rear of 40 Shefford Road Meppershall

Description of development: Outline application: Proposed erection of up to 103 no. dwellings with associated infrastructure, community building, landscaping, open space and access, including demolition of 40 Shefford Road and existing agricultural buildings. All matters reserved except for access.

Appellant's name: Mr Richard Flint & Ms Alison Redman

Appeal reference: APP/P0240/W/20/3249265

Application reference: CB/19/02039/OUT

HEARING TO BE HELD AS A VIRTUAL EVENT

Opening on Tuesday 13th April at 10:00 – currently scheduled for 1 sitting day.

REASON FOR HEARING:

Appeal by Mr Richard Flint & Ms Alison Redman relating to the application to Central Bedfordshire Council for Outline application for the proposed erection of up to 103 no. dwellings with associated infrastructure, community building, landscaping, open space and access, including demolition of 40 Shefford Road and existing agricultural buildings. All matters reserved except for access at **Land to the rear of 40 Shefford Road.**

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State will hold a Hearing opening on the date shown above to decide the appeal. The Hearing will be held as a virtual event

run by an Inspector in the normal way, but with the parties invited to join via Microsoft Teams or telephone.

Documents relating to the appeal can be viewed on the Council website

<https://bit.ly/39kObz0>

Enter 19/02039 in the “Application Quick Search” box. Anyone wishing to attend the Hearing must make that interest known to the Planning Inspectorate Case Officer as soon as possible prior to the Hearing, either by email or telephone after reading the Hearing Attendance Information set out below. When contacting the Case Officer, it would be helpful if you could confirm whether you want to take an active part in the proceedings or attend only as an observer (see below).

Hearing Attendance Information

Before deciding whether to take an active part in the Hearing, you need to think carefully about the points you wish to make. All written submissions from application and appeal stage will be taken into account by the Inspector. Re-stating the same points won't add any additional weight to them.

If you feel that taking part in the Hearing is right for you in whatever capacity, you can participate in a number of ways:

To take part using video, participants will need to have access to Microsoft Teams (via an app or web browser). This link gives further information: <https://support.office.com/en-gb/teams>. Alternatively you can take part by telephone. Calls would be to an 020 number which will incur charges: <https://www.gov.uk/call-charges>

If you just wish to observe the event, you should make that clear in your response to the Case Officer.

If you wish to take an active part in the proceedings, please make clear in your response whether you wish only to appear at the Hearing and make a statement or whether you would also wish to ask questions on particular topics.

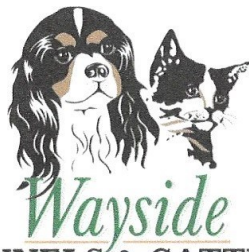
If you want to take an active part but feel unable to for any reason, and/or the points you want to make are not covered in the evidence of others, consider whether someone else could raise them on your behalf. Registered participants, in whatever capacity, will receive individual joining instructions, providing details of any requirements, guidance and support, whether joining by Teams or telephone. You should note that the event may be recorded by the Planning Inspectorate for training and quality assurance purposes.

Planning Inspectorate Reference:

APP/P0240/W/3249265

Case Officer contact at the Planning Inspectorate:

Simon Dunn, 0303 444 5302, East2@planninginspectorate.gov.uk



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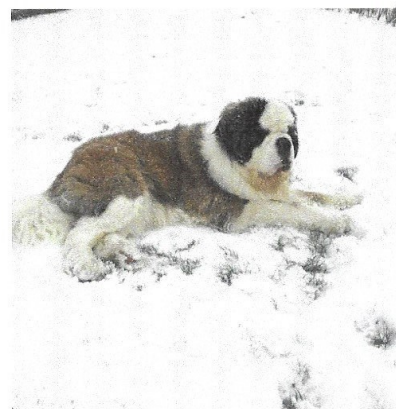


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Town and Parish Council COVID-19 update

Central
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Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update Briefing- 17 March 2021

1. Voters urged to register in time & vote by post in May PCC elections

On Thursday 6 May residents in Central Bedfordshire will have their say on who represents them at the Police and Crime Commissioner elections (postponed from May 2020).

In order to vote in this important election, residents must be on the electoral register. With the deadline to register to vote fast approaching Central Bedfordshire Council is urging people who have not registered at their current address to make sure they are registered in time.

The deadline to register to vote is midnight on Monday 19 April. It takes just five minutes to apply online at gov.uk/register-to-vote and you can't have your say unless you're registered to vote.

If you have recently turned 18 or moved home, it is particularly important that you act to ensure that you are registered to vote.

If you were registered to vote in the last election and your details have not changed, you don't need to take any action. If in doubt or if you require a printed form, you contact Central Bedfordshire Council by either emailing: electoral.registration@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or telephoning: 0300 300 8008.

Voters have a range of options for casting their ballot – in person, by post or by appointing someone they trust to vote in their place, known as a proxy vote. For those who choose to vote in person, polling stations will be safe places to vote on 6 May.

You may be concerned about going to vote in person at a polling station due to the current pandemic, so you may want to consider an absent vote.

This can either be done either by a proxy (someone votes at your polling station on your behalf) or a postal vote.

If you don't already have an absent vote in place you can download a form from [The Electoral Commission website](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk).

The deadline for a postal vote application to be received by the Elections Office is 5pm on 20 April, and for a proxy vote the deadline is 5pm on 27 April. You can return your application by email to electoral.registration@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

For information on elections in your area, how to register to vote, or how to apply to vote by post or by proxy, voters can visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter. This page will continue to be updated ahead of the polls.

What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccination



The Covid-19 vaccination programme is the largest in the history of the NHS. The vaccine is being offered to more and more people in our area every week.

Vaccines can reduce or even eliminate some diseases, if enough people are vaccinated.

Since vaccines were introduced, diseases like smallpox and polio that used to kill or disable millions of people are gone from the UK.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines teach your immune system how to protect you from diseases. It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and attempting to fight them.

Can I catch Covid-19 from the vaccine?

No. You cannot catch Covid-19 from taking the vaccine but having the vaccine could stop you from becoming seriously ill if you catch the infection.

Should I be concerned about the speed the vaccine was made available?

The speed in which the vaccines have been developed does not mean that they are unsafe. The technology used to develop the vaccine is not new. It's been tried and tested for decades. It is with this technology and massive global investment to develop a Covid-19 vaccine that has allowed it to be available so quickly.

Any coronavirus vaccine that is approved must go through lots of clinical trials and safety checks, like all other licensed medicines, before it is approved. The Covid-19 vaccines used in the UK have been declared as effective by the UK's independent Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulator (MHRA) after extensive trials.

When will I be able to get vaccinated?

The NHS will announce when different age groups can book their vaccination, you can check who is eligible at any time and book your appointment online at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination. You can also book appointments by calling 119.

You may also receive an invitation to book your vaccination from your GP and you can book an appointment directly with them.

You can read more about the vaccination and common misconceptions at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/vaccinations



A507 Speed Limits and Safety Measures

Speed limit reduced on part of A507

A number of additional safety improvements measures, including a speed limit reduction, are set to be introduced by Central Bedfordshire Council on part of the A507.

Between Clophill and Chicksands, Beds Police recorded one fatal accident, five serious injuries and two slight injury accidents during the last three years. This led to Council passing a report that sets out a speed limit reduction from 60 to 50mph – as well as improvement measures including:

- Installing bollards on verges at junctions and at the access to Beadlow Manor
- Adding more 'Think Bike' signs
- Changing the maximum speed signs at 'Eagles bend' to 40mph from 50mph
- Painting yellow chevron markings on the bends near Warren Lane
- Refreshing existing 'SLOW' signs and rumble strips

A wider route study of the A507 has begun which will analyse all the major roundabout junctions on the A507 between Clophill and the A1 at Baldock.

Councillor Ian Dalgarno (Community Services) said, "I'm delighted to be able to approve these measures to improve the safety of the A507. Safety for road users is our top priority." He encouraged everyone to drive safely at all times."

Community Safety and Crime: Cuckooing

Council to raise awareness of signs of cuckooing

Central Bedfordshire Council is raising awareness of 'cuckooing', so community members can recognise the signs and report any suspicious behaviour to the Safer Communities and Partnership team. Cuckooing is the term used to describe criminals, mainly drug dealers, taking advantage of a vulnerable person, using threats and violence to take over their home and using it as a base for criminal activity.

Signs of cuckooing can include an increase in people outside or entering a property or people coming and going at strange times. Other signs include changes in behaviour, less engagement with family or neighbours and appearing anxious or distracted. Front doors may be damaged, anti-social behaviour may increase near the property and littering may increase.

Councillor Ian Dalgarno (Community Services) said: "Cuckooing is an abhorrent crime, with perpetrators taking advantage of vulnerable people. Victims may be unable to speak out as they could be in fear of violence." He confirmed that this area of criminal activity is one of the Community Safety Partnership's priorities for the next three years."

He continued: "Working together is the key to ending this kind of exploitation. Information from the community is also vital, and we hope that our communities will become familiar with the signs and feel confident to report any concerns."

To report concerns, email Central Bedfordshire Council's Safer Communities and Partnership team at: community.safety@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

You can also call Bedfordshire Police on 101 or report information online using their online reporting centre: www.bedfordshire.police.uk/report/

You can also report information anonymously via Crimestoppers - 0800 555 111.

For further information please contact: Lindsay Coates-Ledden, Communications Officer at Lindsay.coates-ledden@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

GNOMES (Meppershall Good Neighbours)



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As we continue the current national lockdown measures and restrictions **GNOMES** would like to remind everyone that we are still around and willing to help where we can.

Our facebook page is regularly updated with useful information on help and resources available locally.

Currently, we can undertake jobs that do not involve close contact but cannot undertake transport jobs or any which require entering a client's home.

Whatever your need, call us on **07760 793921, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm** and if we cannot help then we will try our best to find someone or some organization that can. **We can help with;**

Collecting Prescriptions, groceries, and other essential provisions, for the Over 70's, vulnerable and self-isolating residents.



Telephone Befriending, a listening ear when you need one. Helping direct you to other organisations and support services where needed and help with advice and information on local suppliers of food and other essential supplies.

Please keep an eye out for those around you and if you think they need help, but you are unable to give it, then please call the **GNOMES** on **07760 793921**.

If you would like to help people in your community and could volunteer on a one-off or regular basis then give us a call and join our friendly team of volunteers.

My 60 years in Meppershall

by Elsie D Lawrence

As the car drove into my friend's drive in Fildyke Road on a lovely summer's day in mid- July, I was amazed at the many glass houses. I remember the lovely thatched cottages in Rectory Road and all the pretty gardens. Every house had a little shed which I soon learned was the 'privvy'.

The water tower at the top of the village was built in 1952. There was no main sewerage and many houses had cess pits in the garden. There was a lorry that came round once a week to empty the buckets from the houses that had 'privvys'.

My friend's house was big, double fronted, built in 1939, with a lovely garden, many flowers and a blaze of colour with apple trees and a very large plum tree. I had never seen so many different kinds of vegetables growing. It was so very neat and well-tended. Carrots, marrows, cabbages, potatoes, parsnips all grew in very neat rows, what a credit to the gardener I thought!

The house itself had a large kitchen which was quite modern for those times. Nice fitted cupboards, washing machine and an electric cooker. The dining room was quite spacious and light, the doors were brown and varnished. The floor was lino, also brown - as was all the furniture. Too much brown, I thought! There was one coal fire, the coalman delivered about twice a year. There was also a nice front room that was rarely used. Upstairs there were 3 bedrooms and a very nice bathroom and flush toilet separate from the bathroom – but no heating, so it was very cold in winter!

I was introduced to my friend's father, a short stocky man, the builder and owner of the house and I complimented him on his lovely garden which he had designed and planted himself. His wife had died that year, March 1958, so he was still grieving. He showed me round the garden of which he was very proud.

Next door to the house were glass houses and a large packing shed where all the produce was carefully selected and packed and Lorries would come and distribute to many shops. The main crops were tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce, all top quality stuff. This area is now Brookmead - the house was demolished in the 1980s.

Tea was served, and guess what we had! A salad that was all grown in Meppershall!! Coming from a town, that was lovely... to smell the flowers and to pick the fruit.

Not many buses came out here but there were a few. My friend had a lovely car so he took me around. One day he took me to Shefford, there wasn't much there, but it had all you needed. I wasn't impressed! I'd had a good day and my eyes were opened to the lovely countryside.

I went back to town life, which was very busy with its jobs, buses, shops, cinemas, dance halls... a complete contrast to rural life. As the weeks went by I came to Meppershall quite often, the friendship became more serious and soon turned into love. We got engaged and I had a lovely ring! We were married in 1958 and moved in with my father-in-law at no. 5 Fildyke.

I had never used an electric cooker - it took a bit of getting used to. So, this was married life, running the house, cooking, washing, and taking care of two men. It wasn't easy but I did my best and got on with it.

Outside was a large strip of land where the Jackson family grew millions of lettuce, as well as tomatoes and cucumbers. That was their living. Many farmers grew potatoes and these were harvested in October or November time. Women would go potato picking, which was great fun when the weather was nice but very hard work. The pay wasn't very good but it bought extras for Christmas.

The butcher used to come up from Shefford and bring his meat on the front basket of his bike. The baker did his rounds about 3 times a week and the milkman delivered daily. There was a man from Shillington with a small horse and cart who sold wax polish, washing powder, paraffin, candles, etc.

The baby clinic was in Shefford at 2pm, so us mothers would walk there to get the babies checked and weighed and buy Ostermilk and baby food. The vaccines were administered by the local doctor. It took about half an hour to walk there. It was a bit of a trudge coming back up the hill. There was no play group here in those days, one was formed around 1967 by a lovely lady called Mrs. Staniforth. She had many helpers, it was a great success and remains today as the 'Pre-school'.

There were three pubs in the village. Each was busy with farm workers after a hard day's work. Gardens were kept immaculate and many people grew their own fruit and vegetables. Dances were held on occasions in the old village hall which were very popular. Bingo, Young Wives, Mothers Union and the Drama group were also all well attended and there were also the Brownies and Guides. In the summer, Fetes were very popular as well – developing into what is now the Summer Fair. Craft work and cakes were sold and the sports and games were great fun.

The bus took an hour to go to Luton and half an hour to get to Hitchin. Not many people had cars or a telephone back then and many of us either walked or cycled to work. Meppershall was industrious having, amongst other things, a glove factory. This has since demolished and has become another housing estate called Glovers Way. There were two shops, plus the coach service owned and run by Mr C Taylor.

Money was raised for a school swimming pool by cake sales, bring and buy stalls and donations and was much enjoyed by the village school children and supervised by voluntary workers and parents. Mrs Jean Sanderson cleaned it every evening for many years until it was filled in in the 1980s to make way for a school extension.

When I first came to Meppershall, there was no mains sewerage and no street lights - but there was a phone box at Crackle Hill Road.

Church was well attended, with lovely Harvest festivals and Harvest Suppers which were most enjoyable. The church was always busy at Christmas with carols sung and much excitement from children in the Nativity Play. There was usually a very good

Christmas Fair with many cakes and 'goodies' being sold. As the children of those times got older many got jobs and moved away.

There was a village policeman who lived in the Police House on Shefford Rd. and who patrolled the neighbourhood on his 'sit up and beg' bike! Similarly the post was brought up from Shefford each day by a lady on a bike.

Groceries were ordered on a Wednesday and delivered on Fridays from Moss's in Shefford.

There was a Charter Fair in Shefford held every October which was always very busy with the local villagers. It had been going for about 400 years.

Since then many new houses have been built on many new estates around the village. A brand new village hall has replaced the old one. I've seen many changes. Farmers have retired and sold their land for development. It was sad to see so many of the old houses being demolished and to see the Methodist Chapel and the Glove Factory gone, becoming Glovers Way. The house at 5 Fildyke Road is gone, it is now Brookmead and Buxton Close - which is named after a local councillor, Mr Buxton.



5 Fildyke Road – around 1970. Photo courtesy of Gary Dilley. His Grandad had the house built in 1939.

Thank you to Elsie and to Jean Holden for contributing these fascinating personal stories and memories of the village of Meppershall. We will be publishing further history articles in the coming months and we would love to hear from anyone with information or stories to share.

Sandy Helping Hands

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Since 2010, Sandy Helping Hands a not-for-profit voluntary organisation has been providing free or low cost counselling and guidance services to the local community and the surrounding Bedfordshire areas.

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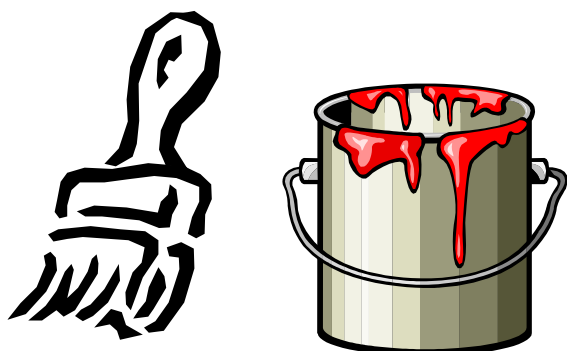
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PCC Secretary:

Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

Message from St Mary's

My friend Matt (not his real name) told me his story while we walked one day. Aged 11 he had his first taste of alcohol. He felt an immediate rush of power and courage he described as 'fearlessness' and proceeded to make a name for himself as a fighter in school until he was expelled for injuring a teacher.

Not long after, he left his less than loving family for good, and ended up in the army. An excellent soldier with a reputation for fearing nothing, he was invited to join Special Forces. Matt found that alcohol and drugs numbed him to some of the horrors of this job, keeping him going. After some years however, he became disillusioned, and things came to a head on a mission to rescue a couple. He'd driven them at speed, breaking through a border control to safety. Shots were fired, some hit the car boot. The couple became distraught. Matt stopped the car when it was safe without understanding what was going on. The couple rushed to open the boot. There lay two children, both dead, a boy and a girl - hidden without Matt knowing. At this turning point Matt left special forces.

Matt took in his best friend who needed a place to stay, but he spiralled down when he discovered his friend had been unfaithful with his wife. Some time later, ending up alone in a flat after binge drinking, lying on the floor 'in my own filth', Matt recognised signs that he was dying and cried out to his mother and to his last chance, God; 'if you are there' he said. He felt he was heard, and with supernatural energy he managed to get to a phone box and call a friend in AA for help. His breakthrough in Alcoholics Anonymous didn't come until he acknowledged that he needed the Higher Power he'd once mocked, and was able to name his Higher Power as Jesus.

As Matt told his story I struggled to believe what I was hearing. I knew him as a strong, but incredibly gentle and caring man, who'd found a fiancée in a beautiful

nurse in my sending church. I was incredulous; I couldn't reconcile in my mind what Matt had told me with his work now - he'd become a specialized Nurse for people paralysed with critical 'iron lung' type conditions. It was apparent that Matt had allowed Jesus to transform him and he was doing something deeply worthwhile with his life and about to be blessed with a lovely wife.

But as he talked, I became increasingly uncomfortable about the part addiction had played in his life. It dawned on me that while I didn't have any addictions that were obvious to people in the way that his had been, I have what I would call 'little addictions' - like small weeds, nonetheless perniciously spoiling my life in ways I hoped were not so visible to others.

Aaron White writes in his beautiful book Recovering *If you are honest you will acknowledge that there are dark areas in your heart and mind where you have little to no control. you feel trapped and hypocritical. this interior darkness is the place where most of us have hidden our addictions. Addiction does not just refer to chemical substances, so whether you are addicted to alcohol, amphetamines, pornography, control, a relationship, procrastination, your self-image, money, success, or anything else, you are still addicted.*

Aaron's words were and still are, for me and I suspect for us all, an uncomfortable reality. We 'self-medicate' ourselves from pain. We have habitual attachments we run to when we're depressed, scared, bored, lonely or in pain. Do you ever find yourself eating when you're not hungry? Mindlessly scrolling through social media? Keeping yourself busy to avoid dealing with something?

This Easter I'm struck by the figure of Jesus the God-man, who the gospel writers tell us, freely died to save us. Then mysteriously rose from death, releasing supernatural energy for us to break free - from all that holds us back from being our best selves. And I'm struck by Matt, a man of God who so freely shared his personal story of the God-man with me.

Much of our humanity has been 'locked-down' this past year and many of us will have numbed our pain with distractions. In this context, let the words of Jesus bring us all new springtime hope:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry." Matthew 11:28-30

Happy Easter!

Rev. Andrew

Church News and Events in April

At the time of writing, we are returning to some face to face services. Check the website/facebook or give us a call (details below). We would LOVE to see you.

We carefully observe COVID-safe practices. Please contact Reverend Roni (well in advance) if you intend to be at one of our Communion services so we can plan seating. Always remember to wear your mask and bring your red service book if you have been given one already.

Wednesday 31 st March	No Private Prayer in Church – this is to allow us to open for prayer on Good Friday
Thursday 1 st April	<u>Maundy Thursday</u> - 7pm online – a simple said Spiritual Communion - on Facebook and YouTube
Friday 2 nd April	<p><u>Good Friday</u> - 10am to 3.30pm - Church open for Private Prayer</p> <p>10.30am Morning Prayer on Good Friday - with hymns – join via Facebook or YouTube</p> <p>Invitation to “Breaking Day” - a 45-minute lockdown passion play (for grown ups!) presented by Riding Lights Theatre Company online. Contact Roni for access info.</p>
Saturday 3 rd April	7.30pm: You might enjoy this free Easter Concert from Kings Chamber Orchestra - KCO's members are distinguished musicians, committed Christians, and friends: https://www.kco.cool/easter-concert/
Sunday 4 th April	<p><u>Easter Sunday</u> - 9am Holy Communion in Church</p> <p>10.30am Morning Worship on Facebook and YouTube</p>
Wednesday 7 th April	<p>10.00am Holy Communion in Church</p> <p>Private prayer until 3.30pm</p>
Sunday 11 th April	<p><u>Easter 2</u> - 10.30am - Morning Worship on Facebook and YouTube</p> <p>10am - 3.30pm - Church open for Private Prayer</p>
Throught April	‘9 and 9’ Morning and Evening Prayer – on Facebook and YouTube – every day

Easter Prayer Tree

Look out for our Easter Prayer Tree just inside the Churchyard - please add your prayers - written - or just expressed in ribbons or flowers.

Do you need prayers? 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 (telephone 339962 / 07533 376880) or Chris Valentine (telephone 07701 039324).

Together or apart - let us continue to hold one another in prayer - and where possible to reach out in love and service.



Online, join our Sunday services at 10.30am - please [click here for our Facebook page](#); [here for our website](#); and [here for our YouTube channel](#).

These services bring together not only our church community right here in the village, but also our friends from Shefford and

neighbouring villages – as well as regular visitors from across the world. You can just watch and listen (we won't even know you're there!)- although lots of people add comments and it is getting quite interactive these days. The services include music and hymns – some created locally, some played with permission from sources including St Martin-in-the-Fields – really beautiful. You will also find the church online, everyday, for “9-and-9 Prayer” - sharing reflections and prayers, led by Roni and Andrew and sometimes others. Come and be part of it! Use the facebook link above. Bring your own tea, coffee, morning (or bedtime!) snack!

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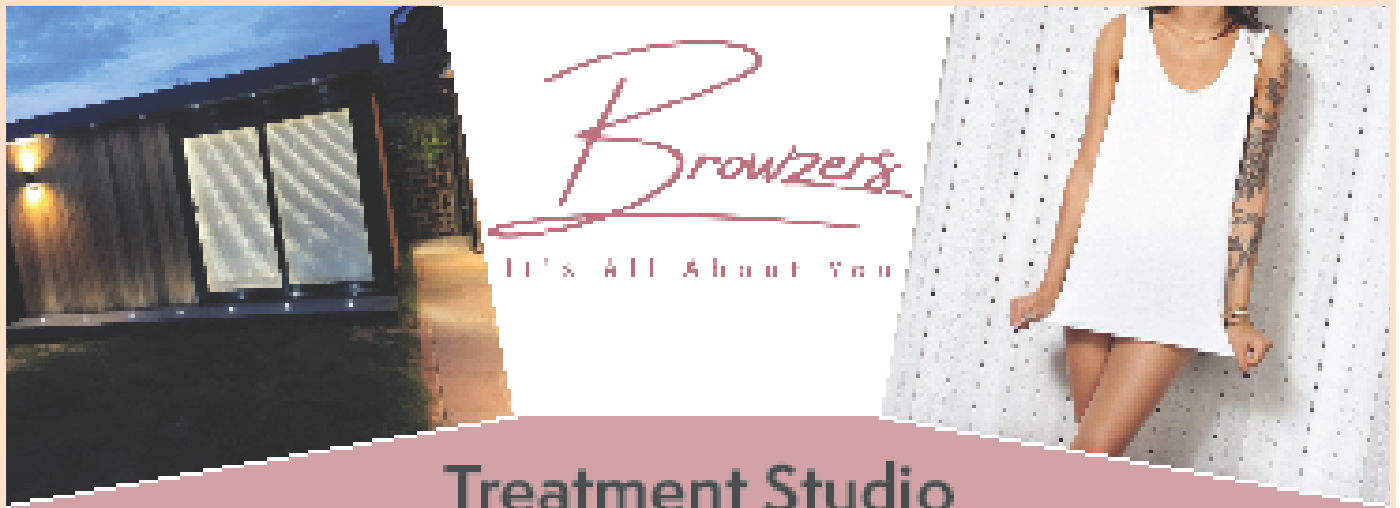
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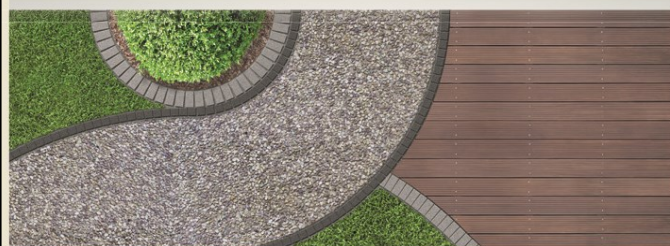
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The Meppershall Players



Hello Meppershall Messenger readers, well unfortunately time and lockdown have conspired against the Players and we have had to cancel “When the Lights go on again” - our V.E Musical Play planned for May 15th. We’re hoping Boris & Co’s lockdown exit plan is on track and that the Players will soon be back rehearsing again for this year’s Pantomime “Jack and the Beanstalk”.

Next year is a big one for the Players, as we will be celebrating our 50th anniversary. We’re hoping to make it a fun packed year with (fingers crossed) three productions: our aforementioned Musical Play, a Variety Show and The Pantomime. There will also be social events like our Ultimate Decades Disco and our Karaoke Night, to name but a few. Look out for posters in the not-to-distant future.

Jack & the Beanstalk – our Christmas Pantomime, performances Saturday 4th & 11th December 2021. Matinee 3pm, Evening 7.30pm. Tickets: £5 Matinees, £8 & £10 Evenings. All performances at the STMA Hall, Shefford. Look out for our posters!

We are still looking for a pianist/keyboard player. Backing tracks at our pantomimes and modern variety shows give the Players a much wider range of music that we might otherwise have overlooked, but we would still very much like someone who loves to play piano for our V.E production as backing tracks are few and far between for songs of these eras and do not give the same atmosphere to the proceedings.

Find the Meppershall Players on Facebook (Meppershall Players Community), Instagram and Twitter.

The Players meet every Monday evening at 7.30pm at the Shefford Town Memorial Association (STMA) Hall, Hitchin Road, Shefford SG17 5JA. Membership is currently free and we welcome people from the age of 9 to 90+, to indulge in all areas of theatrical performances, set building, costumes, directing, acting, make-up, song & dance, etc. The Players will be closed until Monday 11th January 2021.

Interested? We look forward to meeting you.

Karen Mitchell (Players’ Secretary) 01462 816336

Birthday Greetings

The whole Messenger team sends birthday best wishes and greetings for the coming month to...

Doreen — Peter — Derek — Pam — Shireen

Shefford Leisure Group by Enid Pamment



At last!!! Springtime is upon us. We have been lucky with the weather so far – just a little bit of snow but it barely covered the ground. At least it didn't settle for long and the paths were not slippery. The Spring flowers are showing their tiny heads and even the birds sound a lot happier - busy sorting out their nests ready to rear their young. I have taken advantage of some of the beautiful sunshine we have experienced and enjoyed some lovely walks around the countryside. It really is so pleasant to meet up with other people out walking and pass the time of day with them. It all is so friendly and enjoyable.

This dreadful virus really has taken its toll and many people and their families have been affected. It is such a sad and worrying time for everyone; just hope it is easing a little which will allow our lives to return to a little 'normality'. We can at least hope!!

I have been in touch with some of my associates and it seems they are all slowly filtering back to their offices, although many of them have been working from home, so it has been difficult for people like myself to contact them without going 'around the houses.' There are one or two trips which may be of interest to some of you, so if you find anything that appeals please let me know and I will book the event. Initially it may prove difficult to price these outings until we have a fair idea of how many people are interested. We are also limited to the number of people allowed on the coach and of course in any venue we may book. I am however sure it will all come together favourably.

A special thank you to everyone who has sent in their £12.00 subscription which really is a great help. Your subscription will carry you through until March 2022. Newsletters will be sent out quarterly. This really is a great help and hopefully by the end of 2021 we will be back to normal – well... as normal as we ever will be! (We can but hope!). Thank you so much for your friendship and I really look forward to seeing you all again very soon.

Take care and look after each other, at least we have the Summer and longer evenings to look forward to. The next newsletter will be June 2021, any problems please let me know.

Enid xx

Available outings:

Lavenham with 2 Blue Badge Guides	Tuesday 6th July 2021
The Tower of London	Wednesday 28 th July
Warners (Gunton Hall) 5 days/4 nights	Monday 11 th Oct. – Friday 15 th Oct.
Thursford Christmas Spectacular	Sunday 15 th November

Diary of an Allotment – April 2021 by Zoe Cox

If anyone was doubting the arrival of spring then it is truly here with some lovely blossom around the village. The allotment is now a hive of activity. This year the welcomes are that much more friendly as it has been a long hard winter and it is a relief to see old friends have made it through.

Families are a much bigger feature of the allotment than when I started and foolishly thought we could do the allotment and have children. The biggest challenge was to keep them occupied so they didn't get bored. Most of the time it was a losing battle. The longest time I was able to spend on the plots was when the raspberries were fruiting and the children were able to pick and eat. I tried to follow all the advice of keeping children happy on the allotment and this included giving them a patch of their own to tend.

I don't think there is a magical formula for keeping children happy on an allotment and it takes work from parents. So those parents who try to combine the allotment with childcare - we take our hats off to them. I feel it is important parents feel we support their efforts and know that we love seeing children on the allotments. We hope some of those children will end up with a love of gardening and be future allotment holders (although I failed so far in passing on any enthusiasm of gardening to my children!)

This month as the seedlings started to take over my desk, the dining room and the kitchen my daughter asked me why I had such an obsession (I call it a keen interest) with germinating plants. I told her I loved the magic of seedlings appearing and she remarked it was not magic at all but very scientific. To her it is an annual annoyance to see seedlings taking over the house and garden. To me it is an annual reminder that the winter is behind us and spring, like our best friend at age 10, has knocked on our door and is asking us to come and play.

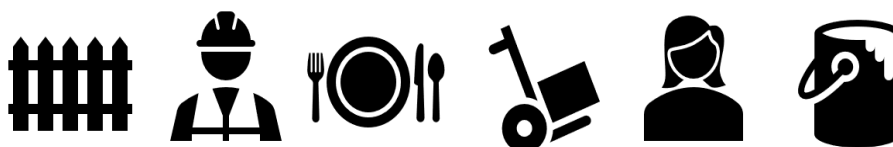
Of course, I shall always see a shoot emerging from the soil as magic but it is worth remembering the science too. Plants are on our side. They are fairly predictable and they want to grow if they are given the right conditions so I would recommend giving it a try. You could start with something simple like a packet of loose leaf lettuce in a pot on the patio. Sowing seeds a few weeks apart will give you a continuous crop of lettuce for the summer. Or a pot of herbs can give you an opportunity to get in touch with your inner Masterchef.

I think my pest of the summer will be pigeons as they seem to have multiplied and last year they feasted on many of the seeds and plants I had sown. If you do sow pots of lettuce it might be worth protecting them with a deterrent. A cheap solution is a couple of wire coat hangers with netting draped over them. On the allotments people try many different techniques to protect their plants from birds. I shall aim to

do a scarecrow this year (a good project for children to get on with on the allotment too). I shall also think about old CDs hanging from a string line - the light reflecting and flashing from them is supposed to deter birds.

I look forward to seeing you all on the allotments and admiring your plots which are well under way. Those of you wanting to take up a plot I would say jump right in!

Let's Hear It For The Advertisers!



When it comes to looking for good local services, tradespeople and businesses – look first in The Meppershall Messenger. We are proud to carry advertising from a range of local contacts supplying a wide variety of goods and services in our area and **who are often part of the community**. Why not try them out?

We owe many of them special thanks for being available despite the recent very difficult months. Show your appreciation by “going local” whenever you can.

Take a moment NOW to look through the useful ads in the centre section and also in the colour section. Our advertisers make this non-profit -volunteer magazine possible.

Bedford Model Engineering Society Summerfield Miniature Railway

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.

In Memoriam

Sir Stanley Odell - died peacefully on Sunday 21st March at Meppershall Nursing Home aged 91 years.

Sir Stanley was a lifelong member of the Conservative Party and a former Chairman of both Mid Beds Conservative Association and the National Union of Conservative Associations.

Our thoughts are with his wife Grace, daughters and family. We very much hope to include an article on Sir Stanley, a renowned local figure, in a future issue.

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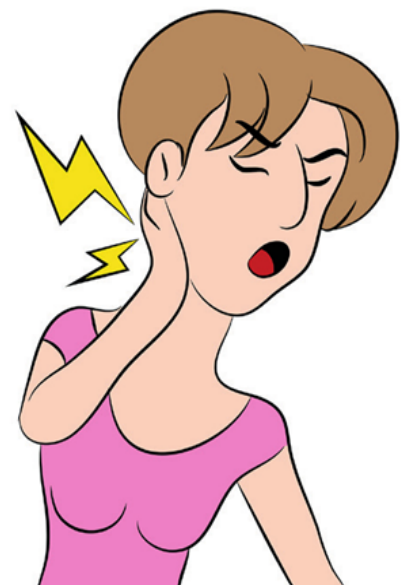
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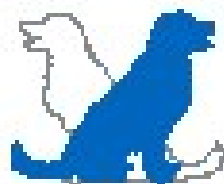
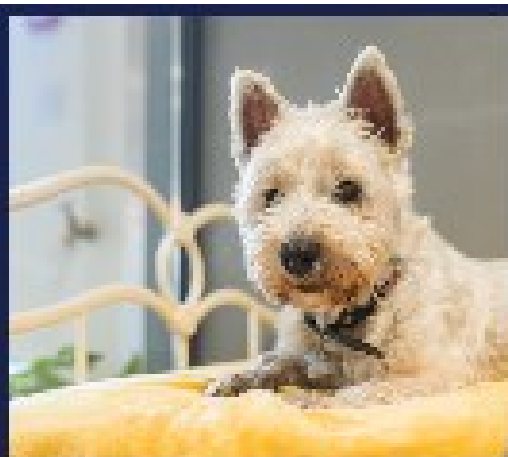
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Financial Matters by Paul Savuto

Put your ISA on the agenda

With the end of the tax year fast approaching (Monday 5 April), if you have cash that you don't need to access in the short term and would like to use some or all of this year's ISA allowance, don't leave it too late and risk missing out on this opportunity to save tax-efficiently; remember you can't carry any unused allowance over to the next tax year, so timing is important. The ISA allowance for the 2020/21 tax year is £20,000 and if you're thinking of saving tax-efficiently for a child, the Junior ISA annual limit is £9,000. You can put all the allowance into a cash ISA, or invest the whole amount into a stocks and shares ISA. You can also mix and match, putting some into cash and some into stocks and shares if you wish, as long as the combined amount doesn't exceed your annual allowance. Now, more than ever, it's important for people to ensure their savings are offering the best return possible. Putting money aside tax-free is a simple way to make your savings work a little harder, an especially useful tool for those in higher tax brackets who don't benefit from the Personal Savings Allowance. With many after-school kids' clubs off the agenda, why not invest the average spend of £57.36 per week, totalling almost £2,200 over the course of a 38-week school year, into a JISA? It all adds up.

IHT receipts fall for first time in a decade

Inheritance Tax (IHT) receipts have fallen for the first time since 2009, according to data from HMRC. The amount of IHT collected in the 2019/20 tax year fell 4% (or £223m) to £5.2bn, with the introduction of the main residence nil rate band (RNRB) said to be the primary driver behind the fall. The RNRB, introduced in 2017/18, is an additional allowance that is available if a person's estate includes their home and is left to their direct descendants (children, stepchildren or grandchildren). The RNRB currently stands at £175,000 and, when added to the nil-rate threshold (£325,000), could give rise to an overall IHT allowance of £500,000, unless an estate exceeds £2m, at which point the RNRB starts to reduce. If you're married or in a civil partnership, any unused threshold can be added to your partner's threshold when you die, giving a total IHT allowance of up to £1m. Beyond these thresholds, IHT is usually payable at 40%. Could a review be on the way? With the furlough scheme alone having already cost the government more than £39.3bn, Chancellor Rishi Sunak may decide to alter IHT rules in the coming months to help fill the hole in his budget.

GET IN TOUCH DGS are Independent and Chartered Financial Advisers. I am also a Chartered Financial Planner with over 28 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.



RESUMPTION OF SERVICES

As of **Monday 29th March** we will restart the following services based on the current Government roadmap:

MONDAYS

W3 – BIGGLESWADE - Campton-Gravenhurst-Shillington-Stondon-Meppershall – Clifton Park-Henlow

W3S – BIGGLESWADE – Stotfold - Astwick

TUESDAYS

W12 – HITCHIN – Meppershall – Shillington- Barton Le Clay

W12S – HITCHIN – Campton-Gravenhurst-Barton Le Clay

FRIDAYS

W6 – SHEFFORD –Campton-Gravenhurst-Meppershall-Southill-Broom

W7 – LETCHWORTH – Shefford-Clifton-Henlow-Arlesey

W5 - A1 RETAIL PARK (2nd & 4th Fridays of the Month) Meppershall-Shefford-Clifton Park- Clifton-Henlow-Langford-Biggleswade

As of **Monday 12th April** we will restart the remaining services:

WEDNESDAYS

W1 – BEDFORD – Stotfold – Henlow – Langford – Broom – Southill – Stanford

W2 – BEDFORD – Clifton Park – Meppershall - Stondon - Shillington – Gravenhurst

THURSDAYS

WELWYN GARDEN CITY 1st Thursday of the Month :

W4 – Shefford- Clifton –Southill –Broom –Langford –Henlow -Stotfold.

W14 – Gravenhurst -Shillington- Stondon – Meppershall – Shefford

ST NEOTS 2nd Thursday of the Month:

W9 - Shefford – Clifton – Henlow – Langford –Broom – Southill –Caldecote

W10 – Stondon – Clifton Park – Stotfold – Astwick

MILTON KEYNES 3rd Thursday of the Month :

W11 - Meppershall –Stondon – Shillington – Gravenhurst – Clophill

W13 – Stanford – Southill – Broom – Langford – Henlow – Clifton – Shefford

EXCURSIONS – The excursion programme will begin as of the 4th Thursday of July.

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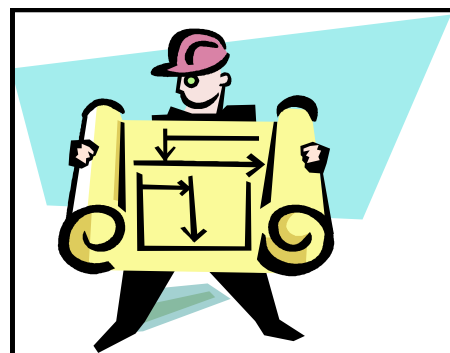
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CBC councillors:

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

Meppershall Parish Council

Parish Council Clerk Alessandro 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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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.

THE TEAM

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Co-ordination			
Treasurer	John Thompson	16 Brookmead Email: meppershallmessenger@meppershall.org	812983

Collating Dates 2020-21			
May Issue	April 26th	Aug-Sept Double Issue	July 26 th
June Issue	June 1th (Tues)	October Issue	
July Issue	June 28th	November Issue	
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.