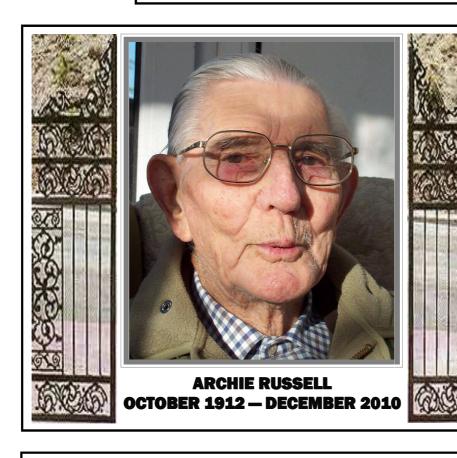


THE MEPPERSHALL MESSENGER



VOLUME 26 – Issue 9 **FEBUARY 2011**

Meppershall Village Website: www.meppershall.org

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EDITORIAL

Christmas 2010 was not so full of good cheer for many in Meppershall. At one extreme, people lost loved ones: see our 5 pages of biography and tributes to Archie Russell and also the Letters pages. Fortunately, not every slip and slide had fatal consequences, and the snow was a source of joy and excitement to some, mostly younger, residents. For many others it was the Christmas of the flu, with that painful cough that still lingers for many of us.

Before moving on to 2011 there is one other point I must make relating to last year. Our December Cover featured two children visiting Santa's grotto in the PO. Quite stupidly, I referred to them as "two young gentlemen". I now have to apologise sincerely to Sam Pepper for that blunder, now that she and her brother Steven have been identified.

Enclosed with this copy of The Messenger you will find a further note concerning the proposed footpath between Shefford and Meppershall. The Parish Council is anxious to gauge the support in the village for a project which, if they take it on, might mean an extra 2p or 3p on the Parish precept which goes onto your Council Tax. Please let the Council have your views by writing them on the enclosed note and returning the whole thing via the box located in the PO/Stores.

Our new Archive site is up and running (see page 15) so please let us have those local photographs that you would like to share, as well as having a copy on CD for yourself.

The Ringmaster (see page 29), contributed by Bedfordshire police tells of two recent burglaries in Meppershall. Please take note of the police advice on preventing similar crimes in future.

And finally...... I hope you manage to either avoid or throw off the flu, and have a happy and prosperous 2011.

LETTERS

Players' Panto 2010

Letter from the Johnson Famíly 2nd Jan 2011. Dear Editor.

I felt I must write to congratulate The Meppershall Players on their performance of "A Christmas Carol" as this/last year's pantomime. The show was thoroughly enjoyable and provided great entertainment for the whole family. It was good to see all the "old" faces and also some new ones giving talented and professional performances. The production obviously entailed a great deal of hard work, which definitely paid off all round. Thanks to all involved and a Happy New Year to everyone.

......and from Enid Pamment

I would like to say how much we enjoyed the Meppershall Player's Panto this year. It was first class and enjoyed by young and a little bit older alike!' It was obvious a lot of hard work, time and dedication went into the production - well done. I know several members of the Shefford Leisure Group attended and it was enjoyed by all.

Enid Pamment, Shefford Leisure Group

Meppershall Christmas Party

Thank you to all party goers who made the Christmas Party on 18th December such a great success. We now know that not only can Meppershall party, but we're great cooks too! Each person brought a selected dish for a scrumptious Christmas buffet. Big Steve played great music which kept the dance floor pumping all night. Thank you to the Village Hall for gifting the hall for this community event, which meant that our overheads were small. With the extra money raised from this fun evening, donations of £330 have been gifted to The Village Hall, Meppershall Pre-School, Lower School and The baby and Toddler Group.

Jaqui Derrick

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2010

Thanks once again to your support, we raised together the sum of £1,198.43.

Unfortunately, no one has come forward to take over organising future appeals and after almost 50 years I feel that I have done my bit. If you feel that you could take over arranging this worthwhile cause, please contact The British Legion, who will give you guidance.

Once again, many thanks for all your support over the years, Joyce Harris

Village Organiser.

No question that you have done your bit, Joyce: allow me to express our appreciation and thanks on behalf of the village. - Ed

Letter from Mrs Ita Chapman

Re: - Mr. Fred Chapman

I would like to thank the doctors and nurses at Shefford Health Centre and the Homecare team and staff at Wren Park for their care during Fred's illness.

Thanks also to friends and neighbours for their support during this time and following Fred's death.

Many Thanks.

Letter from "Louise the Post"

This is just to thank all the people who sent me good wishes and presents at Christmas. There were too many to thank individually, but you know who you are and I appreciate so much the support and affection that the village has shown me.

Louise

Letter from Teresa Richards

Dear Dick

Following on from my letter in November's issue of The Messenger, I would like to give you all an update.

Firstly I would again like to thank everyone who contributed so generously. I have sent 19 boxes to Camp Bastion before Christmas and have just sent out another 6 boxes. My son had to come home after an injury and following a stay in hospital in Birmingham has now made a full recovery and will be returning to Afghanistan soon. I have received a message of thanks to the people of Meppershall from the Detachment Commander in Camp Bastion saying how much the boxes are appreciated by the soldiers and to know how much they are thought of. I am going to carry on sending out boxes throughout this year and if anyone would also like to contribute I would be most grateful. Updates to follow.

Kind regards Teresa Richards

Letter from Christine Clafton

Hello Mr Editor,

I saw in the post office that you were asking for our memories of Mr Russell, so thought I would like to say whilst walking my dog in the village each morning, I sometimes saw Archie strolling either to or from the Village Store getting his morning paper. He would always wish me a 'heart felt' good morning and doff his hat. A true gentleman.

Regards, Christine Clafton

Letter from Harold Davies

I joined Archie as churchwarden after the death of Charlie Firmin in the early 1980's. We served together for many happy years until Archie retired. I continued until the mid 1990's.

I have many memories of Archie but one in particular sticks in my mind. We were having a summer barbecue behind the Village Hall in the mid to late 1980's. Dorothy Morris had provided her home made wine. Those who remember Dorothy's wine will remember it had quite a kick. After several glasses Archie asked if I would like to join him on the playground slide - it was the old playground at that time. Well I agreed and we both had several goes, to the amusement of the assembled masses. People cheered as Archie in his mid to late seventies and his forty something fellow churchwarden went back to their childhood, thanks to Dorothy's potent wine.

Archie was always great fun. He will be sadly missed but not forgotten Harold Davies

Meppershall Parish Council Report

There is no report this month. The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Monday 14th February.

Where d'it go? – Christmas I mean

I blinked and so I missed it and must wait anuvver year for Santa and his reindeer ter go an' re-appear

I got that dratted flu bug – you may have had it too or p'raps it was bronchitis - cor... I didn't half feel blue

An' I'd bin so excited when the lights was all turned on 'cos Elvis Presley come hisself to give us all a song

Or two or three, or eight or ten, 'e sounded proper cool An' we all sang along of him as 'e sang 'Welcome Yule'

You have ter give the bloke 'is due – 'e must be knockin' eighty But 'e looked less than 'alf that age – well, 'ave you seem 'im lately?

That were the night I reckon that the bug attacked me chest It must've made its way there thru' the 'oles in me string vest.

But then I s'pose I can't complain, I jus' went back to bed You should've 'eard my missis moan and grumble as she said

"I s'pose you're gonna stay there now an' I'll be on me tod" I grinned and as I snuggled down, I mumbled "Thank you, God".

Chris Waghorn

Archie Russell was the oldest inhabitant of Meppershall when he died aged 98 on 22nd December 2010. He was known to virtually everyone in the Village and was a friend to everyone who knew him. He was especially a friend to The Messenger, accommodating our printing machine for many months when it became homeless.

In tribute to Archie, we reproduce below the biographical piece that we printed in our 25th Anniversary Souvenir issue last year. Ed.

Archibald Russell

Archie was born on 1st October 1912 in Glasgow to Archibald Russell and Edith Russell (nee Christie). His childhood was spent in and around Moffat in Dumfriesshire, growing up with his cousin Betty and younger brother Guy. He saw little of his father who was a cavalry officer during the Kaiser's war and, amongst other postings, saw service in the Somaliland Camel Corps.

Archie went to prep school in Moffat and then to HMS Conway, (Training ship for the Merchant Navy). On completion of his training on HMS Conway, Archie joined a merchantman bound for South Africa where he was bitten by a tsetse fly. Avoiding an early death from sleeping sickness, he returned to the UK to recuperate. Once recovered, he and a friend went to work on a farm near Headcorn in Kent where he developed a keen interest in pig breeding, leading him to an animal husbandry course at the Royal Agricultural Collage, Cirencester.

Returning to Headcorn, he managed a pig farm; a short time later he met Eleanor (Ena) Gibbons one Sunday morning whilst not concentrating on the sermon at Matins. They married in Nottingham in January 1937 and returned to live in a typical Kent clapboard cottage called the White House.

Following the outbreak of war, Archie joined the Home Guard and was prepared, with others, to repel an expected invasion. When the threat subsided, he served for the greater part of the war in the Royal Air Force, as a flight engineer in Bomber Command. Just after D-day, Archie's Lancaster was shot down over France and he had to bail out at 700 feet. Over a period of several weeks Archie was reunited with some of the other crew of the Lancaster and they were all sheltered in various places by members of the French Resistance. They ended up at Les Andelys, where they were able to make contact with the advancing Canadian and British forces.

After demobilisation he went back to pig farming on Ena's father's farm near Nottingham until it was eventually acquired for housing and a school, so he returned to the RAF. Postings in the UK and Germany concluded at RAF Henlow where he was Adjutant in the Radio Engineering Unit. It was at this time in 1959 that he bought the bungalow in Fildyke Road. He retired from the RAF in 1967 and spent the next ten years working in the housing department of the then local authority, based at Houghton Regis. For some years after that, on several mornings a week, he drove the bread van for the bakery in the High Street. Over time, it broke down in almost every village within a ten mile radius!

For Archie and Ena, Meppershall represented their first opportunity to enjoy a more settled life. The kitchen garden was tilled, they kept poultry and became almost self sufficient.

They have two children: Archibald (Stuart) and Robert. In due course they acquired grandchildren: Alistair, Helena, Charlotte, Philippa and Simon and great-grandchildren: Benjamin, Ashley, Thomas, Emma, Alice, Henry and Joseph.

Archie was a Churchwarden for many years, learned to ring bells under the tutelage of Charlie Firmin, and became a friend, confidante and unobtrusive help to many in the village.

We are indebted to Stuart Russell for this engaging portrait of his father, augmented by Archie's own account of his wartime escape in France.

We send Stuart and the other members of Archie's family our sincere sympathies and best wishes and hope that they will be encouraged and comforted by the tributes that we publish below.

Ed.

Reproduced below are a very few of the dozens of tributes to Archie that were written in the book at his funeral and will appear later on the village website. We are grateful to Archie's family for permission to publish them.

Dear God,

I thank you for Archie's life, for the example he set, being so gentle and gracious, so much like Jesus our Saviour. Thank you for giving me the privilege of knowing him.

A true gentleman. A privilege to have known him. Rest in peace.

Words can't express the joy of knowing Archie

A dear friend and neighbour, Archie; a true gentleman. We are honoured to have known you.

Archie – missing you already. God bless.

Such happy memories of Archie - his family must be truly proud of him.

Always happy and a perfect gentleman

A true gentleman and a friend in the very meaning of the words.

To a true friend and a gentleman

An appreciation by Trevor Thorley

Flt/Lt **ARCHIBALD RUSSELL**, known fondly to most of his friends as Archie, passed away peacefully in hospital on December 22 aged 98 years after suffering a fall and sadly breaking a hip. The funeral service took place in St. Mary's Church on Friday January 14, with the Rev John Harper conducting the service to a packed church of family and friends.

Readings were from St. John's Gospel, Chapter 14, verses 1-7; St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians Chapter 15, verses 20-26, 35-38, 42-44a, and 53 to the end. Rev John Harper spoke the Eulogy and the hymns sung were "The Lord is My Shepherd" and "For All the Saints who from their Labours Rest". Afterwards the family invited all present back to the Village Hall for refreshments.

Archie was never one to talk about his wartime experiences, which took him on many missions with Bomber Command, until his aircraft was shot down and he spent three months evading the enemy before eventually returning to England.

He was posted to R.A.F. Henlow until he retired from service and, with Ena they moved into the bungalow in Fildyke Road where they lived for their remaining years. When Ena passed away, he missed her terribly.

Archie was a gentleman, confidante and friend to all who had the pleasure of knowing him. A stroll up to the High Street to the bakery, which would normally take a return journey time of 30 minutes could take Archie anything up to one hour plus as he stopped to talk to people on the way.

A seat was installed for him to celebrate his 90th birthday; this is still situated at the bottom of Taylor's Close. I am sure that he got a lot of pleasure from it in his last years.

His life revolved around the church; he saw several changes in the clergy and in the days of Rev Gordon Waller, after Gordon suffered a

stroke, Archie could often be seen pushing him around in his wheelchair.

There were many happy events in his garden in Fildyke Road, where church barbecues at that time were held. Fellow Church Wardens, although not necessarily in office at the same time, were Charlie Firmin and Bill Wright; they were fondly known in church circles as the The Three Musketeers.

He also spent a lot of his time with the Evergreens and I believe was one of the instigators in starting up the regular meetings which used to take place in the Village Hall

Archie was a loved and respected father, grandfather, and great grandfather to his family. He was the village gentleman. He has now had his final wish granted - to be reunited with his beloved wife Ena.

"He was a verray parfit gentil knight"



In Loving Memory of

Flt/Lt Archibald Russell

1st October 1912 - 22nd December 2010

YOUR SHOUT

SNOW FUN: Who was the person with the initiative to snap up the toboggan that was displayed for sale in the Post Office window in October when there wasn't a whiff of snow about? That was an excellent buy with the weather that was to follow. Hats off too to Chris Foster, who allowed the children, parents and grandparents to use his field at the top of Cracklehill for some excellent hours of fun and tobogganing.

ENTERTAINMENT: It has been said that the visit of Kenny Ball and his Jazz Men in October has put Meppershall on the map; a great and valued compliment to the organisers. The band so much enjoyed themselves, and you were such a good audience, that they want to come back for a return visit and a booking has already been made for a date in the future, but more of that later!

Looking nearer to home, the **MEPPERSHALL PLAYERS** put on a fantastic pantomime this year with 'A Christmas Carol' written, produced and acted in by Karen Mitchell. The age range of actors on stage ran from age 6 to over 80. There is most certainly a lot of home grown talent and with these performances they had the audiences in 'stitches'. Those people who did not go along this time missed a truly great show.

We have all heard the cliché to actors before a performance, 'break a leg', well this did not happen while he was actually on stage but it did a week or two later to popular stage star Mick Trundle while working at home on his smallholding when he broke an ankle. Hopefully by the time this goes to press Mick, you will be back to full mobility again and fit for your next performance on stage. Best wishes Mick for a swift recovery.

MONICA WINTER passed away peacefully on Wednesday, December 22, 2010. Aged 89, she was the dearly beloved wife of John, mother of Carol, and Grandmother of Simon and Mathew. The funeral took place in St. Mary's Church on Wednesday, January 12 followed by burial in the churchyard.

Trevor Thorley. 01462 813357 trevor.thorley1@btinternet.com

Meppershall Bakery Bees by Roger

As the days start to get longer again and the light stronger, egg laying may commence within the colony during this month, albeit to a very limited extent. If the roof is lifted and a hand placed on the crownboard, heat may be felt indicating the colony is alive and the cluster is near the top of the hive.

The weather has the greatest impact on colony development. While we live and work within centrally heated buildings, we can become immune to the smallest changes in the weather. A cold day with a biting wind and high wind chill factor will be worse for the bees than the cold foggy and snowy spell many of us experienced just before Christmas when it caused disruption to holiday flights and road traffic.

Meppershall hives are now 6. We lost one in the cold weather before Christmas. I saw several dead bees on the ground below the entrance of the hive, when I checked in January. These were probably bees that had died inside the hive from old age. Once the weather warms a little, the live bees remove the carcasses and other debris which reduces the probability of disease spreading inside the hive.

February is the month when our winter preparation gets its greatest test. Unless adequate stores of food are present in each colony, then some form of feeding will be necessary for colony survival. I will start to give each colony a 2 kilo block of fondant this month just to make sure they have enough food. As the weather starts to warm up towards the end of February, every beekeeper is keen to have a look inside the hive to ensure 'all is well'. However, it's generally a good idea to wait until March before opening the hive; after all, you can tell that the queen is laying by watching bees fly into the hive carrying pollen and you know there are sufficient stores to keep the bees well fed. Lifting the hive on nice warm sunny days in February will tempt the bees out to forage for nectar and pollen from nearby winter flowers such as hellebores, snowdrops, crocus, and early flowering willow will provide masses of pollen.

February also sees the start of the most testing time of the year for bees as well. The winter bees are now quite old in bee life terms. They have to work harder than ever feeding an increasing number of larvae, foraging as the weather improves and maintaining a high temperature for a growing brood area. Many of the older bees will die.

Honey available at Rogers Bakery- see you there.

Meppershall VA CE Lower School

'An outstanding Church of England School'



School Report - February 2011

'Meppershall Lower School is an outstanding Church of England school because the continued impact of its distinctive Christian character permeates all aspects of school life. This ensures that day by day, staff and children, inspired by the solid foundation of Christian values, are able to focus on the highest standards, and are inspired to draw on their understanding of the spiritual to further sustain and nurture relationships throughout the school and beyond.'

SIAS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools) December 2010

What a fantastic quote! Everyone, staff, governors, parents and children all worked very hard in the lead up to this inspection and I feel we really deserved to have achieved outstanding status again. Thank you to all those people who willingly gave up their time to talk to the inspector about our school.

As usual our term was incredibly busy, culminating with a beautiful whole school production at St. Mary's church before Christmas. For the first time even our youngest children came to the evening performance which added more charm to the children's acting and singing abilities.

A new year and a new term lie ahead with its challenges and achievements. I am delighted to announce that Mrs. Mary Barker was appointed at the end of last term as our Deputy Headteacher. Congratulations to her on this new role.

The children have settled back well into school after the exciting Christmas holiday and will be studying topics such as 'Vive La France!' and 'Who lives in a home like this?'. Of course we will be celebrating the upcoming wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton even though our official invitation seems to have been lost in the post! This term the children will also be planning and organising their class assemblies for their parents, as well as inviting them in for a Maths lesson and reading Fridays.

In the next edition, I plan to hand this page over to the children so they can practice their journalistic skills.

Lyn Fairweather - January 2011



Twinkling stars in Acorns - Christmas 2010

SHEFFORD LEISURE GROUP

We would like to thank residents in Meppershall for their beautiful cards and good wishes for 2011. This really is so much appreciated and makes organising and running the trips all very worth while. Hopefully, we have many trips, also holidays planned for the coming year and trust we have chosen a selection to suit everyone. Thank you for booking with us and let's hope it proves to be an exciting year. If there is somewhere in particular of interest to you, please let us know and we will try to do our best.

The beginning of December brought us all much snow and ice. However, this only resulted in the cancellation of one of our trips. i.e. Lincoln Christmas Market, but we were able to visit The Royal Albert Hall for both Singing with the Stars and John Rutter. Singing with the Stars in aid of Leukaemia gave us another very entertaining afternoon with many artists from the soap opera world, who gave their time freely for this worthy charity. Most of the singing enabled the audience to participate and we certainly lifted the roof off the Royal Albert Hall. John Rutter plus a magnificent choir gave their usual first class performance to a packed audience. We were invited to join in many of the carols. This was our fourth visit to this venue and it still managed to enthral us all.

The Christmas Cruise and London lights was taken on a bitterly cold day and unfortunately we had quite a walk to the boat but once on board we soon revived with warm drinks while we cruised down the Thames which is very magical at this time of the year, as we all listened to a very humorous but factual commentary from our skipper. On arrival at The London Eye we boarded our coach for a guided tour around the Christmas lights of London, having a sing song on the way. We ended the day with a fish & chip supper before returning to Shefford, where we were greeted by the magnificent Shefford Christmas Lights. We then said a fond farewell and wished our leisure group members a Merry Christmas.

We began 2011 with our usual pantomime visit to Milton Keynes to watch Dick Whittington, including Stavros Flatley, a celebrity from Britain's Got Talent, which was both colourful and entertaining and for a couple of hours we were able to forget the road ahead of us while we became children once again.

We have applied for our usual allocation of tickets for the ever popular Christmas Spectacular at Thursford. This year we are planning a new venue for our evening meal.

Forthcoming Events 2011

Kill or Cure (London)	Wednesday 2 nd February	
Essex Smuggling Haunts+Colchester	Wednesday 9 th March	
Bosworth Hall Hotel Murder Mystery	Friday18 – Mon 21 st March	
Annual Get-together, Memorial hall, Shefford	Saturday 26 th March	
Treasures of Tuscany	Saturday 9 th Wed 13 th April	
Newmarket and The Gallops	Thursday 21 st April	
Moggerhanger, Tour of House and tea	Thursday 5 th May	
Frogmore Paper Trail & short river trip	Sunday 5 th June	
Tour of the Cotswolds	Thursday 16 th June	
Afternoon tour of Chicksands Priory	Sunday 17 th July	
Black Country Museum	Thursday 28 th July	
Wizard of Oz (evening performance)	Wednesday 31 st August	
Brick Lane Music Hall, including lunch	Tuesday 20 th December	

London theatres are available, picking up from Shefford. Shows currently on offer include:

Jersey Boys Matinee Tuesday 8th March - Stall Seats Love Never Dies Evening Wednesday 18th May - Stall Seats Ghost Evening Monday 27th June - stall Seats

Please telephone for prices. availability and other theatre trips on offer. and if there is a particular show of interest, please contact me and we will see what can be done. Always open to new ideas and offers.

For all holidays which include hotel accommodation, Shefford Leisure Group acts as an agent for the Tour Operator, their terms and conditions apply.

Enid Pamment, Shefford Leisure Group

Shefford Leisure Group is open to everyone in the local community who feel they would like to join us on our ventures. We are always happy to meet new friends. Raffles are held and the proceeds are for Keech Cottage Children's Hospice. For further information regarding dates, prices and availability or to receive our monthly newsletter, please contact Enid on 01462 851397 or e-mail Enidpamment@aol.com

Financial News Update

First of all a very Happy New Year to everyone. Isn't it strange how the festive season already feels like months ago and yet we're not even two weeks into January?

So the increase in VAT has kicked in and fuel prices have risen, and it is understandable that a great many people are feeling 'The squeeze'. It is natural in times like this that individual's and families look to cut back their spending, and unfortunately the first casualty is often the money they spend on life, pensions and savings plans. I know I've touched on this before, however stopping these plans can be not only false economy, but also costly. It does however make sense to 'Spring Clean' your finances to make sure they are doing as well as they can for you. I've set below a series of things you might consider looking at —

- 1. Cash deposits & savings Rates are pretty poor everywhere at present but there are still huge differences between the best and worst. Vast sums are languishing in accounts paying less than half a % per year, whilst there are accounts paying up to 4%. Don't feel any loyalty to keep your money where it is; shop around, move your money. Banks make millions of pounds because of saver apathy! Even if earning very low interest wasn't enough, you will still be taxed on the little you do earn, so make sure you keep any funds other than everyday money in ISA accounts which are tax-free. Every adult can save up to £5,100 per tax year into one of these.
- 2. Life & critical illness plans Often sold as mortgage protection, family protection, or as simple life assurance this type of plan is always a favourite to stop when times are hard as they have no 'Cash-in' value. However it is only when tragedy strikes that the downside of stopping the plan manifests itself. If you are in

reasonable health, shop around as you may well find that you are paying too much for your existing cover. Life cover rates have reduced quite significantly in recent years, and you could reduce what you are paying for the same cover. In some cases more cover can still cost less.

- 3. Endowments Large numbers of these are predicted to fall short of the original expected final value, largely because the initial growth assumptions were too generous. Many are in With-profits plans which are paying little or no annual bonus. Some haven't increased in value for ten years! So speak to an adviser about whether it's worth continuing to pay money into them. Some will be, but in other cases reducing the mortgage by taking the endowment value now and putting the premium into an ISA instead can give a better overall result, but please take professional advice first.
- 4. Pensions Whilst it is possible to reduce or suspend contributions to most pension plans, history suggests that very few ever start up again, resulting in a much reduced retirement fund. As with endowments, vast sums are tied up in either under-performing with profits funds, companies that are no longer trading, or both. Make sure that the plan(s) you have are competitive in terms of the charges you are paying, that you are invested in funds that match your risk profile, and review them regularly. I meet many people who really don't know what they've got, why they've got it, where it's invested, or even who it's with. Some don't even open the annual statements they receive! It's your money, take control, talk to an adviser and make the most of what you've got.

Jon Ingarfill

Tel: 07870 564115 or email: jon@rutherfordfinancial.co.uk

Polehanger: A Farming Diary; Episode 19

Suddenly, 2011 is off at a gallop, the struggle with the snow and severe frosts in December a distant(ish) memory and snowdrops are showing shoots through slumbering soil.

Once again, though always missing our cows, I am so relieved that we are no longer dairy farming, and struggling with frozen water pipes, (150 cows producing 4,000 litres of milk needed roughly 10,000 litres of drinking water a day), tractors that will not start, milking plant that refuses to co-operate and the threat that the milk tanker will not be able to reach us to pick up the previous 24 hours' production that has filled the refrigerated capacity with no spare to accommodate a 'no show'.

Oakley: a month in the life of a wheat plant

This is a quiet period for Oakley before it starts to rev up as the air and soil temperatures warm (You may have noticed that I hesitate to be gender specific with Oakley. My father would have had no hesitation in calling it 'him'!) The snow cover has acted like a blanket and prevented the coldest temperatures and biting wind damaging the young plants. They looked quite perky as the snow melted. My grandfather used to say, in his preinorganic fertilizer farming days that a covering of snow was as good as a dressing of manure.

Winter Wheat is a biennial plant: i.e. it theoretically needs two years to come to grain production and harvest. However, by planting in the autumn and having a cold, short-day period, a process called vernalisation occurs which activates the onset of the second year of the two year cycle so that it will produce grain this coming harvest. If it were to be planted in March 2011 it would grow but not produce any grain until harvest 2012. Spring Wheat plants on the other hand will produce grain this year if planted in March: they have a different botanical 'programme'.

Winter and Spring varieties of barley and oats would behave in the same way as wheat, as described above.

Generally the soil is too wet to do any field operations that may have been delayed earlier in the autumn, post drilling. Frost does theoretically mean that tractors can travel without causing damage if there is some operation that is due or overdue. Our wheat crops have had a granular herbicide applied that works from the soil and is taken up by plant roots. It is particularly effective against Blackgrass and Wild Oats, two highly competitive grass weeds (grass as opposed to broadleaved and therefore genetically closer to the growing crop) that are very difficult to control later in the spring and would cause significant yield loss if left uncontrolled. The bullies in the playground for Oakley!

Interesting Statistic of the Month: EU Farming Support

In spite of the EU supposedly being a Common Market, I read an article discussing the proposed Reform of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) in 2013. It stated that the annual Single Payments made to farmers at the moment vary from 100 Euros / hectare in Latvia to over 500 Euros / ha in Greece and Malta. Farmers in the UK receive just over 200 Euros / ha and the EU average is 249/ha. Certainly in the UK in a number of recent years there has been no surplus to invest in updated machinery and buildings etc. from the margin from the crop alone, without this Single Payment.

Global Wheat Prices

Wheat and Oil Seed Rape prices worldwide continue to hit the same record highs as they did 2-3 years ago. As I mentioned last issue, there are a variety of reasons for this, some of which ebb and flow and some of which are more likely to be permanent. As with other high commodity prices worldwide at the moment this brings short term opportunity to producers like us, assuming that we are able to catch the market at the right time, which is not a foregone conclusion.

However, producers are also consumers, and this price volatility upsets the balance in the associated economies and household budgets. Virtually everyone in our society eats bread in some form or other and that will increase in price as wheat does. Pigs, poultry and dairy cows have a significant proportion of grain in their diet, so the rise in their feed costs will hit those producers unless they can pass on much of that to the consumer, who is in turn affected.

In some 'poorer' countries where a much higher proportion of wages is spent on food and other basics this becomes a much bigger problem and leads to hardship and unrest.

With best wishes for the year ahead,

Chris Foster: 13th January 2011

The History of Meppershall - 7

Meppershall in the English Civil War Based on documents in the Public Record Office and Bedfordshire Archives.

Dear Brother Harry

1642

The village is in turmoil the like of which we have never before seen. Timothy Archer, our beloved Rector, has been taken and placed in the Fleet Prison. His only crime, apart from being a Royalist of course, being that the King awarded him a doctorate, in 1624, shortly before he took over from his uncle here in Meppershall. I believe that eleven other Rectors in Bedfordshire have also been imprisoned. I have not heard whether his uncle Thomas Archer, our Rector before Timothy is safe in Houghton Conquest. If Cromwell could read the hearts of people then most of the village would be in prison.

Timothy's living here has been passed to a Mr Symes, to whom we are obliged to pay our tithes. This is already causing problems. Mrs Archer has taken the children to live in Church Street, Ampthill [now numbers 31 to 35A], where Royalists are safer, but she now only has an income from the rent of Manor Farm. Edward Green is farming her land and he has objected, along with others, to paying to Mr Symes tithes that should go to the upkeep of Mrs Archer and the family. We have heard that an order is to be made soon for some monies from the tithes to keep the family, which should ease things. The Lord of the Manor, Richard Emery, has removed his household to Maulden as he could not tolerate living in a village forced to be Parliamentarian. Would that we could move also but, like the farmers, we must stay as our business is here. Admittedly my son Edward has said that I should remove myself but I have lived here most of my life and now, being weak in body, though not in mind, I make my choice to remain with my family.

Would that Cromwell's cousin would remove himself from Clifton, for then we might all be left in peace as a Royalist village. At least we might not have Cromwell travelling nearby so often.

We have escaped violence so far but we were shocked to hear that Sir Charles Ventris was shot at by Parliamentarians, as he walked within a room in his home in Campton. Keep safe dear brother.

Your loving sister, Katherine

Katherine Robinson [nee Eaden] was sister to Henry Eaden, a yeoman at Pulloxhill. Timothy Archer was released from the Fleet prison after 18 years and restored to his living in the village in 1660, the year after the end of Oliver Cromwell's rule.

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ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH HIGH STREET SHEFFORD

SATURDAY MASS 6pm RAF HENLOW

SUNDAY MASSES 9am & 5.15pm AT SHEFFORD

For weekday services and confessions please see notices in the church or telephone:

Parish Priest Canon Noonan on 813436 or Parish Secretary Rose Boulton on 811547 or email rosedene@talktalk.net

More Wine Talk

With Duncan Thomas

This time I'm going to talk about the much vexed topic of wine with food. Years ago when the range of wines generally available in the UK was a fraction of what it is today – anyone remember Liebfraumilch and Mateus Rose! – there used to be rules, considered daft today, that said white wine for fish and white meats and red wine with red meats and cheese. Theses days, with a truly vast array of wines types and styles available and many more people buying wine these "tablets of stone" have rightly been discarded. Today the rule is that there are no such rules. That said, wine chosen with a little care can be the perfect accompaniment with food so here goes with some guidelines (categorically, not definitive rules!)

The primary objective is to *match* the wine to the food. In TV Cooks' shows when combining ingredients they often say "...add some lemon to cut through the sweetness...". That approach of contrasting wine with food does not work generally and can be truly awful. The most important aspects of matching a wine to food, is not colour but its body, that is to say its alcoholic strength and tannin content for reds and sweetness for whites. So it is best to try to match the wine's body to the "power" (strength of flavour) of the food being served. For example if poached/grilled white fish is being served then a Muscadet or Soave would be ideal, whereas a New World Chardonnay or Chianti Classico would be a better partner for grilled tuna served with a sauce. The charts* below (in ascending order) extend this idea showing lists of foods and wines with matched powers – this is only a rough guide so do please move up or down a few notches.

Whites

Wine (type or grape variety)	Food
<u>Driest</u>	
Muscadet	plain white fish
Pinot Grigio	
Sancerre	prawns
Sauvignon Blanc	salmon
Chablis	goats cheese
Chardonnay (Europe)	risotto
Sémillon	
Viognier	battered fish
Cote du Rhone	crab
Chardonnay (New World)	tuna
Gewürztraminer	mild spicy sauces
Sweetest	

Reds

venison, game

Wine (type or grape variety)	Food
Low tannin	
Beaujolais	egg dishes
Bardolino	pasta (light sauces)
Valpolicella	
Pinot Noir	cold meat
Burgundy Villages	roast chicken
Merlot	pizza
Cotes du Rhone	Christmas turkey
Bordeaux	duck, roast lamb
Rioja	bolognese
Burgundy (expensive!!)	lamb shank
Cabernet Sauvignon (New World)	roast beef, steak

High tannin

Châteauneuf-du Pape

The lists are of course non-exhaustive and you can extend them at will. There are one or two hopeless case where no match can be made; from the obvious – chocolate which tends to coat the mouth masking the wine and "Indian" hot curries which tend to stun the taste buds so lager really is the most refreshing choice – and some less obvious no no's. For example I have always found the rose wine with soft cheeses combine to produce a really unpleasant ammonia twang, like-wise certain earthy vegetables combine badly with wine producing metallic flavours. On the other hand strong blue cheeses like Roquefort go extremely well with very sweet white wine – so nothing is certain.

Having tackled the wine with food topic quagmire I've probably come to the end of what I can usefully say for the time being in this series. So, thanks for reading and Cheers! Salut! Bottoms Up, Down the hatch.....

^{*}Acknowledgements to J Robinson

Calendar of Forthcoming Events

February 2011

Thursday 10 th		
Police Surgery	3.45 – 4.30 pm	Village hall
Friday 11 th		
Lower School Association	Early evening	School Hall
Family Bingo night	(timeTBC)	
Monday 14 th		
Parish Council Meeting	7.45 pm	Village Hall
Tuesday 15 th		
Neighbourhood Watch Meeting	8.00 pm	Village Hall
Monday 28 th		
Messenger Collating	2.00 pm	Snooker room

March 2011

Monday 14th			
Parish Council Meeting	7.45 pm	Village Hall	
Saturday 26 th			
Pulloxhill Singers	7.30 pm	St Mary's Church	
Monday 28 th			
Messenger Collating 2.00 pm Snooker room		Snooker room	

Neighbourhood Watch Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to encourage residents to join the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and we hope to have short presentations from:

- Meppershall Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators
- Bedfordshire Police
- Central Bedfordshire Neighbourhood Watch
- Smart Water Property Marking.

Following the recent spate of incidents in the Village we're hoping that as many residents as possible will want to participate in the scheme, creating a safer neighbourhood for all of us to live in.



This is a Ringmaster Message from Bedfordshire Police. Please pass the details of this message on to any friends, and neighbours. A Burglary took place in Buxton Close, in Meppershall, on Thursday the 9th of December, between 6:15 and 8:00 p.m. The offender gained access to the rear garden, forcing open a UPVC back door. The alarm system activated, causing the offender to leave the house. It appears that no property was taken.

Another burglary took place in High Street, in Meppershall, between 1:50 p.m. on the 11th and 9:10 a.m. on the 12th of January. The offender gained access to the side of the house, reaching through a dog flap to unlock the door. An Ipod, Laptop and mobile phone were taken.

If you have any information about this crime or other suspicious incidents, please call the Police Control Centre on (01234) 841212, and quote crime reference, J,D,/,5,1,2,1,4,/2010 for Buxton Close or J,D,/,1,5,7,5,/2011 for High Street. Alternatively text your message to (07786) 200011 or email your message to chc@Bedfordshire.pnn.Police.uk . For more information on reducing burglary related crime visit http://www.saferbeds.org/rmwebportal/rm_desktop/files/Crime%20Reducti on%20-%20Buglaries.html Or call crime stoppers in confidence on (0800) 555111.

Many Burglaries can be prevented. Your boundaries are your first line of defence against criminals. Always secure garden gates, keep fences and walls in good repair and consider defensive planting, or trellis. Keep garden furniture, ladders, and Wheelie bins in a secure garage or shed, or locked up away from the house, where they cannot be used to climb onto a roof, access a first floor window or access neighbours' gardens. Report any suspicious activity, or vehicles, in the area.

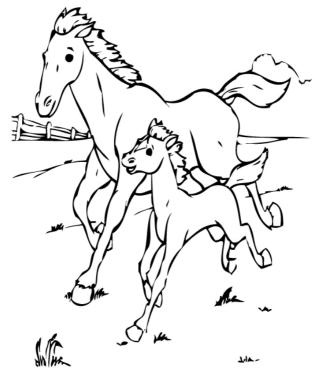
FROM OUR YOUTH EDITOR

There is now something new to the children's page!

Best pet picture of the month!

Have the chance to enter your picture of your favourite pet(s) and email it to **brigidkholmes@btinternet.com** and have your pet(s) on this page! You can write all the best things about your pet(s) to show off to everyone who is reading! - remember to add your name!

Colour in the horse and foal!



This month's winner for the new pet competition is...

<u>Isabella Lambley - aged 7</u>

Well done!



Hi, this is Nellie and my nickname for her is Nellie Noodles. She is my special French Lop Ear rabbit; she is a Doe (girl) and is 9 months old. Nellie lives inside and has the run of our house. Nellie is really friendly and loves cuddles but does not like to be picked up. She can jump really high and sometimes is naughty and jumps on our sofa (she also likes climbing the stairs but isn't really allowed)! Nellie is now very big and is the size of a small dog. She is also a great Arsenal supporter.

Letter from Brown Owl

SHOE-BOX APPEAL

The total raised in 2010 was £240 from 150 boxes. Could have been more but we ran out of boxes.

Thank you to all who contributed, and please keep the boxes coming.

Significant Birthdays

As we announced in the last issue, January 2011 included significant birthdays for two of the Messenger's own team.



Maurice Horwood has been involved with distribution for more than 20 years, he and Barbara having been joint Distribution Managers for several years. We were, therefore, very pleased to present Maurice with a cake to mark the occasion.



We also announced last month that Phyl Kidger would be 93 on 16th January. Normally we would only do the whole cake-presentation bit for the big birthdays, but as we had not introduced the practice when Phyl was 90, we thought we should catch up, and the Editor was delighted to do the honours. Like Maurice and Barbara, Phyl appears in lists of the Messenger team in 1992 and is still an essential part of the printing team today.

Both occasions were captured for us on camera by Colette House.

From The Messenger, thank you to Phyl and Maurice and to Rogers Bakery for the beautiful cakes. Ed.

Meppershall Village Hall News - Summer Fair 2011

Arrangements are well underway for this year's Summer Fair to be held on Saturday 25th June 2011 at 1pm – 5pm on the field behind the Village Hall. It is hoped to be even more successful than last year. There will be similar stalls and attractions but with a few new additions! Your comments have been noted from last year and we will aim to improve on what was an extremely successful and popular event. If anyone in the village is keen to have a stall, or knows someone that would like to have one, could they please get in touch with Linda Primett (815629) for more details. The more variety of stalls we have the better, so please do get in touch. We would like to have a full list of stallholders by 22nd April 2011 in order for it to be published in the programme.

One of the areas where the Summer Fair Committee need your help is getting people to volunteer with the setting up, running of stalls, clearing away, etc. There were occasions last year when we were all stretched to the limit, trying to be in three places at once! If anyone is willing to give up some of their time during the afternoon, could they please get in touch with either Linda Primett (815629) or Mike Till (817176) or leave their name and contact number at the Village Stores. Any help is gratefully received and, of course, the more people who volunteer, the less time they will have to spend in helping! If you could get your name down as early as possible, then that would be very helpful.

Also, the Bottle Stall was a great success last year and we plan to run another one this year. However, in order to do so we need bottles! Therefore, could you please look in your cupboards and see if you have any spare bottles full of anything suitable – it can be wine, beer, soft drinks, sauces, oils, etc. Again, these can be left at the Village Stores.

We plan to sell copies of the Lucky Programme along with raffle tickets a couple of weeks prior to the Fair. Your support and generosity last year was overwhelming, so it would be wonderful to have the same response this year.

Remember, it's your village. It's your Village Hall!

Meppershall Baby and Toddler Group News

We would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. Thanks to everyone who came to our Christmas Party, especially Santa!!!

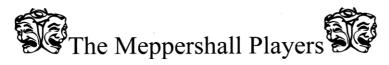
In the picture you can see Matthew looking very happy to meet Santa.



Thanks to everyone for donations to the raffle and the Christmas Hamper, which was won by Pauline Cady.

We are looking forward to the ladies from the library visiting one of our sessions in February, hope you can join us.

Collating Dates for your diaries				
2011		2011		
January	31	May	31	Tuesday
February	28	June	27	
March	28	July	25	
April	25	August	No	



May I take this opportunity to thank all those who helped to make "A Christmas Carol" The Pantomime, such an enjoyable show to work on and perform. This includes all the cast, backstage crew, lighting & sound crew, make-up, costumes, set building, advertising, front of house and especially the audiences, who showed their appreciation of our performances with their laughter and applause.

As I write this the Players will be meeting to discuss and decide what we are going to do for 2011. With the wide age range, talent, enthusiasm and versatility that make up the Players, I'm sure it will be something to look forward to. Whatever we decide to do it's never to late to join in the fun, so if you are interested in amateur dramatics but haven't got round to joining a group yet, come and see The Players (we really are a friendly bunch).

The players meet every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm at the Village Hall. Membership is very reasonable: Seniors £5 & Juniors £2 per year. We welcome anyone from the age of 9 years to 90+ to indulge in acting, singing, directing, choreographing, sound, lighting, set building, scenery painting, front of house, backstage, stage managing, make up, costumes, etc.

If you are interested in any of the above we look forward to meeting you.

Karen Mitchell 01462 816336

St. Mary's VILLAGE CHOIR

.. serving the village and the church.

NOW PRACTISING for SPRING CONCERTS & EASTER Tuesday evenings 7.30pm – 9pm in Meppershall School Hall.

TUESDAY PRACTICES: Feb. 8th ,15th ,22nd

Mar. 1st, 15th, 22nd & 29th

If you enjoy singing, or would like to learn, whatever your voice, there will be something for you at St. Mary's Village Choir.

Questions? Sandra Harper 01462 81333 sandray.harper@yahoo.co.uk

MEPPERSHALL PARISH RECORDS

Is your family history connected with the village, or are you simply interested in the history of Meppershall?

A new CD of historical Parish Records is now available, published in January 2011.



Like other parish churches across the country, St Mary's, Meppershall, is one of the keys to unlocking the past, through its extensive Parish Records maintained over centuries. A new CD for PC, published in January, comprehensively details those records, offering a simple way to explore them for yourself.

At almost 600 pages, the Meppershall Parish Records CD covers the period from 1602 until 1950. It lists the available public records of many thousands of baptisms, marriages (plus marriage banns) and burials at St Mary's. With easy-to-use links, menus and index, the CD also offers 18 new high-quality photos and a three-page history of the church – telling the story of St Mary's since 1100 AD.

The CD is published by the Parochial Church Council (PCC). Rev John Harper and the PCC owe a great debt of thanks to Sue Chapman whose painstaking work, transcribing original handwritten records, enabled this publication to happen. At just £20.00 a copy, all proceeds go to the PCC's fundraising for essential works to the historic church building.

For more information or to order your copy, contact the PCC via James Read who can be emailed at **Meppershall.PCC@gmail.com** or telephone 01462 857836.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE ARCHIVE

A New Joint Venture Between The Meppershall Messenger and The Meppershall Village Website

I am very pleased to say that this venture has actually "gone live", thanks to the efforts of David Foskett. If you log on to the village website (web address on the front cover of every Messenger), you will find a link to the new Archive. And when you follow that link you will find that The Messenger has started the ball rolling by loading lots of the pictures that you gave us for our 25th Anniversary issue.

We hope that you will find the site easy to get around and that our cataloguing works for you, but as it is all new, we may not have got it right first time, so please tell us at The Messenger how we could make it better.

Please remember that this venture is aimed at people who do not have computers as well as at people who do. If you have pictures relating to Meppershall and you would like them scanned onto a disc for safe keeping, we will be happy to provide that service in exchange for your permission to load them up to the Archive site. You should understand that our Archive site, like the whole Word Wide Web is open to everyone, any where, so we will not be able to control who will see your pictures. We will ask you to confirm in writing your agreement to this publication.

So get in touch with the Editor or anyone on the Meppershall Messenger Committee who will be happy to discuss collecting your photographs for archiving. Alternatively, if your pictures are already digital, please send them to The Editor, who will act as a collecting point for sending them to the archive.

Each issue of The Meppershall Messenger carries the village website address on its front cover, so if you have never done so before, take a look now at the mine of information available.

Meppershall Garden Club

Well doesn't time fly?

Two years ago last week Sarah & I discussed with Linda Parker the possibility of setting up a 'gardening' group. Following this initial meeting we invited 'like minded' people to join us - the MGC was formed. We now have monthly meetings covering a wide range of activities and visits. Highlights of the past year have included:

- Visits to Bennington Lordship to see the snowdrops; the well known 'Kathy Brown's garden' and a special guided tour of the gardens at Woburn Abbey
- Holding a very successful plant stall and flower arranging competition at the Summer Fair
- MGC Team participation (including our other halves) at local quizzes
- Continuing planting and maintaining the borders and planters at the Village Hall
- A Seasonal Floristry demonstration
- And of course summer and Christmas socials with our partners.

Due to our high number of members now, and because we meet in each other's homes, we have decided to close our membership for the present. We will however place any interested persons on a waiting list so please do not let this deter you from contacting us if you wish to join or have any ideas that we may be able to offer to non members such as open meetings or demonstrations etc.

As you read this we will have already had our January meeting and participated in the friends of St Mary's Church quiz at the end of the month.

Looking forward to seeing the spring bulbs saying hello.

Kim Lee Tyler

Linda Parker 01462 815114 Sarah Till 01462 817176 Kim Lee Tyler 01462 811750

If you would prefer to contact us by email then please send your email to the editor who will pass your message on to us.

The Friends of St. Mary's Meppershall

are delighted to welcome

THE PULLOXHILL SINGERS

On Saturday, 26th March 2011 in St.Mary's Church at 7.30pm

Tickets £10.00 to include buffet refreshments; with red or white wine FROM:

Trevor Thorley 01462 813357
The Rectory 01462 813334
Roger's Bakery & The Post Office

Stondon School Celebrates 150 years



Are you, or anyone you know, a past pupil of Stondon Lower School?

We are looking for old photos and memories of your time here to help us celebrate in July 2011.

If you are able to help us in anyway please contact the school on Tel: 01462 850288

Email: stondon@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk

More details of our celebrations can be found on our school website.

COVERS BY REQUEST

Having apologised in my Editorial for my error in describing last month's cover, I will not repeat that here.

This month we are proud to commemorate the passing of our oldest inhabitant with the picture of Archie.

If you would like to see a specific picture on our cover, please get in touch in time for us to arrange with one of our in-house "paparazzi" to do the business.

Ed.

Police Surgery

□ Problems □ Grievances □ General Advice

Saturday 8th January

Farmers Market, High St, Shefford 9.00am - 12.00pm

Tuesday 1st February

Truman Place, Chicksands 2.15pm – 3.00pm Rectory Road, Campton 3.05pm – 3.50pm

Thursday 10th February

One Stop Shop, Clifton 2.30pm – 3.30pm **Meppershall Village Hall 3.45pm – 4.30pm**

Saturday 12th February

Farmers Market, High St, Shefford 9.00am - 12.00pm

If you have any issues that you would like to discuss or you would just like to pop by and meet your Safer Neighbourhood Team please drop in.

ST MARY THE VIRGIN

MEPPERSHALL PARISH CHURCH (CHURCH OF ENGLAND) Church Rd, off Campton Rd

Rector: (Meppershall & Shefford) Rev John Harper, The Rectory,

Church Rd, Meppershall revjohnharper@talktalk.net

01462 813334 (usual day off – Monday)

Lay Reader: Pam Halliwell (usual day off – Friday) 01462 817069 Churchwardens: Brian Bellamy 01462 815944 (Pastoral Assistant);

Brenda Wright 01462 816446

Services for February

Date	Time	Service		
Sunday 6 th	11.00am	Parish Communion and Junior		
Epiphany 4		Church - Rectory		
Sunday 13 th	8.30 am	Holy Communion		
Epiphany 5				
Sunday 20 th	8.30 am	Holy Communion		
3 rd before Lent	11.15am	Family Service with Junior Church		
Sunday 27 th 2 nd	11.00 am	Family Communion & Junior		
before Lent		Church		

Weekday Services:

Wednesdays: 10a.m. Holy Communion (B.C.P.) Fridays: 7.30p.m. Compline (Evening Prayer)

Saturdays 9.30a.m. Morning Prayer

Ampthill and Shefford Deanery - a new beginning

St Mary's and St Michael's Shefford are now part of the newly established and enlarged Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford . This means that our parish Deanery representatives will be involved in the life of a much larger local Deanery Synod, and that clergy and Readers will also belong

to a much enlarged gathering when meeting in Chapter. More significantly it is anticipated that this merger will create greater opportunities for co-operation between parishes, and possibilities for more flexible patterns of working across the area, which now stretches from Woburn Sands in the West to Langford and Arlesey to the East. A new name for the Synod is under discussion - hopefully something a little snappier than 'Ampthill and Shefford'! Suggestions please to Morag DeLuca, Wendy Reece, or me.

St John's Cambridge

Once more the Dean of St John's has invited St Mary's to visit the College, in recognition of our parish's historic links with St John's as our Patronal Body. The date is Saturday May 7th, and the afternoon will include Tea in the 'Wordsworth 'Room, a conducted tour of the College, and attendance at Choral Evensong in the Chapel, with the voices of the superb St John's Choir. As before, there is no cost involved, and it should be possible to arrange transport by shared cars (and maybe to spend some time in Cambridge itself).

Please let me know if you wish to reserve a place – all welcome.

Rector John

Junior Church (JC)

A new year has dawned and with it many hopes, fears, resolutions and plans for the future. The JC team are planning for the forthcoming year and looking forward to welcoming young people into our sessions.

The first JC Session of 2011 was extremely energetic. Children and leaders alike enjoyed the story of when Jesus gets lost at the temple. We walked, ran, pretended to be frogs, played Simon says and did star jumps too! All of this while learning about our Lord Jesus Christ!

I would like to thank all of the JC team (including helpers and those who stepped in to help at the eleventh hour) for their hard work and

dedication during 2010, I am looking forward to working with you all again in 2011.

Keep an eye out for our 'JC Specials', or if you would like to join us, please feel free to do so. Junior Church is held from 11am to 12noon every first Sunday of the month and there is a JC session of approximately 20 minutes during the Family Communion services held on the 4th Sunday of the month.

Blessings Gillian

From Pam Halliwell

When the snow finally cleared away after Christmas I was amazed to see my bulbs coming up all over the garden and by the time you read this I expect some of them will be in bud if not yet in flower. I was led to reflect on the changing seasons which never fail to delight us each year. I suspect that, as we face 2011 with its challenges and in many ways bleak outlook, you like me are particularly grateful for these signs of hope. The days are slowly getting longer and the sun when it shines feels warmer so we have much to be thankful for. We may have packed away the trimmings of Christmas and broken our New Year resolutions but we can plan our holidays even if they may be of the cheaper variety.

As we remember walking through the snow in Wellington boots to a beautiful candle-lit Carol Service, and an amazingly full Church despite the weather on Christmas Eve when we were led by Bishop Richard, we also remember the hope brought to us by Christ the babe in the manger and rejoice that He is with us in good times and bad and not just for Christmas. We at St Mary's would like to share that hope with you all and hope that you will not hesitate to let us know if we can help in any way. You don't have to be a Churchgoer; we are there for everyone, to pray for you if that is what you need or for practical help in an emergency or just to lend a listening ear. Just give us a ring.

Pam Halliwell (on behalf of St Mary's ministry team – please see details on first Church page)

Parish Registers:

Funerals:

Joyce Lily Cobden, formerly of Meppershall, died 11 Dec 2010 aged 77. Service 11 Jan at Harwood Park Crematorium

Monica Winter, 96 Shefford Rd, died 22 Dec 2010 aged 89. Service 12 Jan at St Mary's, followed by burial.

Archibald (Archie) Russell, 52 Fildyke Rd, died 22 Dec 2010, aged 98. Service 15 Jan at St Mary's followed by burial.

Leonard (Phil) King, 43 Fildyke Rd, died 5 Jan 2011, aged 73. Service 21 Jan at Bedford Crematorium

Digital Switchover Help Scheme

The BBC has set up the **Switchover** Help Scheme through an agreement with the government to make sure that those who need it most benefit from practical support and advice during the **digital switchover** process.

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) has been asked to help those who may not be aware of what they need to do when the Sandy Heath transmitter is switched off on the **30th March 2011.** To do this we need Community Volunteers to help co-ordinate the project.

If you would be interested in becoming a Community Volunteer we would like to invite you to discuss what your possible involvement would be. For further information please contact **Roy Sinfield** on **01234 832615** or by e-mailing roys@bedsrcc.org.uk

BANANA PANCAKES

FEBRUARY 2011

3 large eggs.

115g plain flour.

1 heaped teaspoon baking power.

140ml milk.

A pinch of salt.

2 knobs butter. 3 tablespoons caster sugar.

4 bananas

To serve: crème fraiche.

METHOD.

- 1) Separate the eggs, putting the whites into one bowl and the yolks into another.
- 2) Combine the plain flour, baking powder and milk with the egg yolks and mix until it forms a smooth, thick batter.
- 3) Whisk the whites with the salt until they form stiff peaks.
- 4) Fold the whites into the batter it is now ready to use.
- 5) Heat a non-stick frying pan over a moderate heat.
- 6) Pour some of your batter into the pan and fry for a couple of minutes until it starts to look golden and firm.
- 7) Loosen with a spatula and turn or flip the pancake over. Continue frying until golden
- 8) Melt the butter and sugar in a separate pan over a low heat until it forms a caramel sauce about 3 minutes.
- 9) Peel and cut the bananas lengthways, add them to the pan and cook gently until they are golden, turning after a few minutes.
- 10) Serve them on the pancakes topped with a good spoonful of crème fraiche.

Recipes are kindly supplied each month by Brenda Putwain

GARDEN TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

With acknowledgements to the RHS

- Make sure garden birds have food and water.
- Apply organic-based fertilisers.
- Continue planting trees, shrubs and fruit trees and bushes as the weather allows.
- Firm newly planted trees and shrubs if lifted by frost.
- Prune winter-flowering shrubs that have finished flowering, including winter heathers.
- Prune summer-flowering shrubs that flower on new wood.
- Prune hardy evergreen trees and shrubs.
- Prune jasmines and late-summer-flowering clematis.
- Prune off old stems of herbaceous perennials.
- · Start dahlia tubers into growth.
- Divide and plant snowdrops.
- Repot or top-dress shrubs in containers.
- Bring in the last of spring bulbs being forced.
- Prepare seed beds for vegetables.
- Lime vegetable plots if necessary.
- · Mulch fruit trees after feeding.
- Protect gooseberry bushes from bird damage.
- Prick out or pot up seedlings sown last month.
- Start tender perennials under cover into growth.

LAST CHANCE

- Cut-back overgrown shrubs and hedges before the nesting season starts.
- Finish pruning fruit.

GET AHEAD

- Check tools and equipment and plant supports are sound before you need them.
- Make sure all pots and seed trays are clean.
- Check on stocks of pots, compost and labels.

A very HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating birthdays in FEBRUARY

Gemma Parr-Smith who will be 14 on the 6th
Keira Thomason who will be 8 on the 6th
Joseph Fairy who will be 13 on the 14th
Evie MacCormick who will 13 be on the 15th
Benjamin Saunders who will be 7 on the 16th
Abbey Lowden who will be 13 on the 18th
James Wallace who will be 12 on the 19th
Emma Brightwell who will be 15 on the 25th
Jesse Gold who will be 15 on the 28th

If you are under 16 and would like your name added to the birthday page, please call Louise Hutson on 814148 or email at louhuts@btconnect.com



THE MEPPERSHALL MESSENGER

CONTRIBUTIONS

The editor welcomes contributions to the Messenger, whether as letters, articles or notices. Contributions should preferably be as attachments to e-mail but hand written contributions may be sent by post, left at the Editor's address below or 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.

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