



Arms of the de
Meppershall Family

THE MEPPERSHALL MESSENGER



16 Air Assault Brigade
Centralised Pre -Para Course 04/09
11 May - 29 May 2009



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EDITORIAL

With great regret I have to lead this month with the news that our Advertising Manager, Christine Elbourne is seriously ill. All of us on the Messenger send her our very best wishes for a full recovery, and the meantime I will be minding the advertising shop. Please ensure that any advertising queries are addressed to me – see details on our back page. And by the time you read this, Colette House will have gone into hospital for treatment that we hope will ease the back condition from which she has been suffering for many months. We send her our very best wishes too, and hope that this will be effective and that she will be back amongst us soon, but realistically we should not expect that before the collating at the end of November.

On our Letters Page you will find a very welcome letter from the soldier son of Teresa Richards who ran the shoe boxes for the Troops appeal last year. Her son tells us how those comforts from home were appreciated. This item, combined with the annual remembrance of soldiers who died in earlier conflicts, suggested the theme for this November issue: remembering those who are currently serving in our armed forces. Whatever we may think about the rationale for the various war zones, we all wish our service men and women a safe return. *The Cover picture came courtesy of Gary Richards*

And while I am in “Thank you” mode, let me thank Chris and Christine Foster for their very significant contribution to the newly paved path down Shefford Hill. With finance partly raised by the Parish Council, the result is a path that should be usable in all weathers and keeps pedestrians and motor vehicles safely separated by a hedge! *From my house I can see people using it, so I know that it is already appreciated.*

Another of our letters this month refers to the proposed development behind the Village Hall. It is a happy coincidence that in this issue the Parish Council also decided to publish an update on the project. It seems that we will not have to wait too long to learn details of what is being proposed.

And finally.....with this issue you should have received your updated copy of Who’s Who and What’s What in Meppershall. I asked last month for updates but did not hear from anyone. A few phone calls uncovered some changes, but please check the current version and let me know of anything that is out of date. We will not be printing a new one until next April, but if you let me know now we have a better chance of being right then! *Dick Bulley*



in

LETTERS

Letter from John & Sandra Harper

Dear friends,

I suspect readers will be relieved to find somewhat fewer references to the Harpers in this month's edition, but it would be very remiss were we not to say an enormous thank you for all the kindness and generosity that came our way last month. The farewell reception we were given at the Village Hall was quite overwhelming – wonderful food, gorgeous flowers, singing by no less than three choirs, extremely generous gifts, and an outpouring of good wishes, both spoken and written. And amongst it all a first souvenir edition of the October Messenger! I reckon we will need an extra packing case for all the thoughtful and memorable gifts and greetings that have found their way to the Rectory of late.

Now we move to Peterborough to be nearer our daughters and grandchildren, and whatever other delights retirement has in store for us. Our address will be: 54 Chapel St, Yaxley, Peterborough, Cambs, PE7 3LN. (No phone yet!) So, if you'd like a trip up the A1 do come and see us – we'd love to see familiar faces from such a special place as Meppershall.

Thank you again for all your kindness and the friendship that has made our stay here such a delight.

With our very best wishes,

John and Sandra

Letter from Gary Richards - Parcels for Troops

The Regiment has recently returned from Afghanistan and I am glad to say with no serious incidents or life threatening injuries. The soldiers who deployed are back into the flow of Regimental life, especially after a well earned leave period. We are now in training for contingency Operations in addition to trade training and general soldier development. In true a true 16 Brigade fashion the foot is firmly back on the pedal and we are waiting and ready for our next mission.

On behalf of all the soldiers of 13 Air Assault Support Regiment, Royal Logistical Corps I would like to thank you for your kindness in sending parcels to our Regiment and other troops. Your support, along with many other British folk, is over-whelming and more importantly, extremely appreciated, especially in the current climate.

Again thank you for your support towards my mum's appeal and your generosity towards the British Forces; your backing means everything and makes it all worthwhile.

Regards,

G RICHARDS
Warrant Officer Class 2
Regimental Signals Warrant Officer.
24(HQ)Sqn
13 Air Assault Support Regiment RLC

Letter from Lesley Skerman

Lavender House
Dementia Unit
Meppershall

It seems so long since I shared our news.

Of course, we celebrated "The Wedding" and we have had visits from "The Dancing Mutleys" (dogs), The Shefford Majorettes who put on a dazzling show, and the British Schools Museum who brought many items for us to touch and talk about. We made visits to Standalone farm and to Old Warden for lunch, where we were met with such a caring welcome; we visited Bedford Embankment and enjoyed other drives around our beautiful countryside. We also have weekly visits from Dave who plays CDs and sings; monthly visits from Margaret and her guitar and occasional visits from Micky White playing the organ and singing. We have great fun with all this dancing, singing and musical instruments.

In July our Summer Fete went well, although the weather was changeable and we had to hold some of it indoors; we still made more than £300, which is wonderful. The coconut shies and games were in the garden, which has been a picture. Sometimes we enjoy lunch *al fresco* or listening to music or sometimes just walking and enjoying the flowers. We hope to complete the garden next year.

We would like to thank the Village Choir for their generosity in donating the profits of their Summer Music Festival to Lavender House. We decided to buy a large cantilever umbrella for our garden and two strong bases which we badly needed. Langford Nurseries too were very kind with the discount that they gave us.

We had our last Holy Communion with Rector John. He will be sadly missed at the home, but we wish him and Sandra joy, health and contentment in their retirement.

We are having a stall on Hitchin market on Saturday 12th November in aid of our residents' fund, where we will be selling home-made (or shop

bought!) cakes, craft goods, beads and bangles, toiletries - in fact anything that will sell! Donations of items for sale will be welcome at any time up to Friday 11th, as we will be setting up early on the day. Please leave them at Lavender House, or I will collect: tel 814372.

Lesley and Jeanette (Activities Organisers)

Letter from a Resident

With regard to the proposed development behind the village hall I was interested to read the following extract from the Minutes of the Parish Meeting on the 25 July 2011

"Following a meeting of interested parties on 7 July 2011 the way forward needs to be evaluated as to the next steps to be taken by the Parish Council.

The attached report on that meeting was prepared by Councillor David Foskett and forms the basis for discussion. Councillor Foskett presented a report and a discussion ensued with particular reference to holding a referendum so that the public could make the decision. Council members were divided as to the benefits that would result from the project as against the overall effect of an additional 60 odd houses on both the infrastructure and on daily village life".

Having a referendum by the public as to whether or not this development should go ahead would be the right thing to do; the decision should not be left to the Parish Council alone. We the parishioners should have a right to say what we want in our village. Housing developments should not be built on such a large scale as the one proposed as all it does eventually is turn a village into a small town.

(Name and address supplied)

This seems a good spot to print the following statement from the Parish Council – Ed

Proposed development behind the Village Hall

An update

There is really not much to say about this at present, but in line with its policy of keeping the village fully informed, the Parish Council has agreed the following update:

1. As you already know, the Central Beds Structure Plan did provide for the possibility of building houses on the land behind the High Street and a new Community Hall on land behind the existing Village Hall. No planning application has been lodged so far, so there are no detailed proposals but discussion is taking place between the interested parties. Those parties are:
 - Polehanger Farms Ltd, which owns the majority of the land;
 - The Village Hall Charity which owns the land that the hall stands on, the front and rear car parks and the children's play area which is rented to the Parish Council.
 - The Parish Council, which owns some of the land;
2. Bloor Homes have submitted proposals for the development to Polehanger Farms Ltd.
3. Both the Parish Council and the Village Hall Charity have set up working groups to work on the project.
4. The Parish Council understands that the developers intend to make public presentations when their plans reach a sufficient degree of detail. The Council plans to give Parishioners the opportunity to express their views at or after those presentations.



Meppershall – Shefford Footpath Completed

It is now safer to walk to and from Shefford!

Towards the end of September, the field edge path joining the pavement footpath in Meppershall to the pavement footpath near the Esso filling-station was surfaced, as planned. This arose from a suggestion some years ago from us, Chris and Christine Foster of Polehanger Farms Ltd., on whose land the path sits, to the Parish Council, which has long campaigned for a safer route for pedestrians to walk off road. This becomes particularly urgent as the dark nights of winter approach.

Once it became clear that the cutbacks being forced onto Central Beds Council would mean the dropping of its proposed conventional pavement solution, we got together with the Parish Council to make sure that a safe solution could still be put in place . . . and now you have it.

The path crosses and re-crosses the road at three points: at the end of the Polehanger Farm drive; at the end of that field before the bend, and finally back to the pavement by 114 Shefford Rd. The reason that the path does not stay on the west side of the road throughout is the slope. Although it only appears to be slight, in time the soil will gradually move downhill and the path surface would be damaged. Waymark signs will be erected to explicitly point the way and road signs will warn drivers that pedestrians may be crossing at the bend.

The construction consists of the following materials. A 'Terram' membrane lines the 200mm excavated 'trench'. 100mm of crushed concrete sit on top of that and then 100mm of tarmac planings were rolled tight to give a permeable, clean surface. This was the best solution within the budget available. Funding for the construction of the path has been shared by grants from Central Beds Council made to the Parish Council, and Polehanger Farms Ltd.

At present the path is a permissive one but we expect eventually to formalise it as a public footpath.

Chris Foster 10th October 2011

MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE HALL NEWS

from Linda Primett

The Village Hall Committee would like to respond to the comment made by the Parish Council as reported in the last Messenger regarding the Bonfire Night, in which they *“expressed concern over the Village Hall plan not to allow Parishioners to dump burnable materials at the bonfire site this year and would monitor the situation.”*

Unfortunately, the Village Hall had to come to this decision due to the financial cost involved in putting on a firework display and having a bonfire. It was discussed fully at our Committee Meeting at which a member of the Parish Council was present and who was, indeed, party to the discussion. The cost of clearing the bonfire site after the event is over £200. However hard we try, by manning the gates and trying to monitor what goes on the site, the bonfire is contaminated with metal, glass and other unsuitable materials. This has to be properly cleared and disposed of. This year we are spending in excess of £1,600 on actual fireworks and if you take into account the cost of clearing the site afterwards, although the event is usually well attended, we are lucky if we break even. It is not a fundraising event like the Summer Fair - it is purely an entertainment for the village. The Village Hall approached the Parish Council (as they did in previous years) requesting that they might consider making a financial contribution towards the event, i.e. the cost of having the bonfire site cleared or a donation towards the cost of the fireworks. Unfortunately, the answer was “no”, although they have agreed to “consider” reimbursing any reasonable losses on the night due to inclement weather!

The Committee felt that having a real fire on bonfire night was an important part of the evening, and the only way we could manage this was to make the arrangements that we have and try to break even on the night. It is perhaps worth remembering that the Parish Council did try to ban the bonfire three years ago, but thanks to all the people signing a petition we managed to keep this Meppershall tradition going. Please come and support the event on 5th November at 7pm in the field behind the Village Hall.

Remember.... It's your Village. It's your Village Hall!

Meppershall Bakery Bees *by Roger*

Hi. It is at this time of the year that we think of taking it easy in the apiary. The bees are fed, varroa treatments finished, the hives protected against woodpeckers (if necessary) and precautions taken to keep mice out of the hives. There can be no more colony inspection until the weather warms up next year and we need only make the occasional visit to check that the roofs are in place or the hives have not been visited by two-footed vandals. Now is the time to ensure our spare equipment is in good order. There is no peace for the wicked, they say, perhaps not for the diligent beekeeper either. However to change the metaphor, a stitch in time saves nine or in the beekeepers case repair in the autumn saves problems in the spring.

Meppershall hives are still six and looking good for the winter. Everything in the hive is very quiet now. There is little or no pollen or nectar available outside so there is limited opportunity for foraging. Bees will still leave the hive occasionally in reasonable weather to get rid of waste products and to remove the carcass of dead bees. Some bees may fly out to gather water if it is needed to dilute the stores. Egg-laying practically ceases and the population continues to fall as the long-lived winter bees have replaced the harder worked summer bees. Food consumption is at a minimum as there is little, if any, brood rearing and practically no work to be done. The winter cluster will be broken only during warm spells. The supers which we left to make up the honey yield, were empty when I went to take them off. I guess the bees were short of food and helped themselves. Good for them! So this year we have a shortage of honey. Most likely to run out by Christmas or the New Year. In September, I lost 3 colonies to the wasps. Watching the wasps take over was very upsetting, I really love my bees. That may sound weird to you if you are not a beekeeper but virtually everyone who keeps bees will tell you the same thing and speak with deep warmth about “their girls” We impatiently await the next opportunity to visit our hives. I hope it will not be a long winter.

Honey available at Rogers Bakery- *see you there.*

Meppershall VA CE Lower School

*'An outstanding Church
of England School'*

June 2008 and December 2010



School Report- October 2011

In his poem *To Autumn*, John Keats wrote *'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!'* and I often think of this poem as I'm driving to school at this time of year, especially in the early mornings when mists truly are rising above the fields.

Since the last school report we have celebrated our annual Harvest Festival at church. The children prepared poems, prayers, pictures and even some dancing from our youngest children for the service. This was both a happy and sad occasion as it was the last time Rector John would preach to the school. As usual he had a bag of tricks to keep us both entertained and give us a message. This year he produced various food stuffs from his bag to tell us to be thankful for all the variety of food we have, even though we may not always like it! After the service Rector John came for a special tea party in the school hall where we presented him with a gift and a book made especially for him and Sandra by the children. Every child contributed by drawing or writing their memories of Rector John. Our parents contributed to the party by providing cakes and one was decorated with a tea pot, a tea cup and a mini cake, so I finally got to say the phrase, 'More tea Vicar?' in a speech! May I say thank you for all the compliments given to our choir who sang so beautifully at the lunch prepared by the PCC.

We have also been thinking of our neighbours in the world wide church by raising funds for the Bishops Harvest Appeal. This year funds raised go to Cambodia to help people grow their own food and raise pigs to start small farms. We asked for families to collect 1p and 2p coins to make a 'Penny Line' around our playground. We got all the way round it with some pennies to spare and raised £49.14. Thank you!

Our PTA has been very busy this term. They held a Race Night in the Village Hall at the beginning of October, are currently running a Christmas card art project and have many other ideas and events in the pipeline. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated group of parents who support our school by raising funds for the children to have something extra special which the school budget could not support. This year the PTA are funding a whole school outing to see Aladdin at Milton Keynes Theatre; this means every child in the school will have the opportunity to see a professional pantomime free of charge! We are always looking for new ideas and ways to raise funds for our school and need people to help us in whatever way they can. Our PTA is having a Meet and Greet session on Friday 11th November at 3pm in the school hall. We hope new families to our school will join us for some tea and cake and find out about how they can be involved in the life of our school.

Lyn Fairweather
Headteacher

Meppershall Parish Council Report

This report is for the latest meeting of the Parish Council which was held at Meppershall Village Hall on Monday 10th October 2011.

Cllr. John Parsons was in the Chair, due to the absence of both Cllr. Chapman and Cllr. Foskett.

Central Beds Councillor Lou Birt was absent at another meeting but Councillor Tony Brown was present.

Mr. Stuart Roberts of Dunlop Transcalm made a presentation on a type of speed hump which deflates when it is approached at a legal speed. Mr. David Bowie and Mr. Neil O'Leary of CBC were present to listen to his presentation.

In the open part of the meeting Christine Foster made a request on behalf of Colette House that the commemorative bench opposite 63 High Street should be put on the list for maintenance in the Spring.

Chris Foster circulated a piece which could go in the Meppershall Messenger concerning the new footpath up Shefford Hill. The Chair thanked him for the piece and on behalf of the Village, thanked Chris and Christine for the initiative they had taken to bring the footpath about.

CBC Cllr. Tony Brown reported on recent activity at Central Beds, including progress on cost saving and opposition to the proposed changes to parliamentary boundaries which would see the disappearance of the constituency of Central Beds. He also reported that there had been a reorganisation of police forces across Herts, Beds and Cambs, which will result in more officers on the front line.

Planning & Housing (spokesman Cllr. Sandra Reade)

Recent Applications: two received.

- New free-standing signs on the verge outside ACO – no objection;
- Single story front extension to 6, Marywells - referred to Planning Group.

Other Planning Matters:-

- The application for a new dwelling behind 26 Shefford Road was refused;
- An appeal is pending against the refusal concerning land to the rear of 47 Hoo Road;

Finance

The audit form has been completed and signed off.

Highways & Lighting (spokesman Cllr. Roger Bryant)

- Pothole repairs were started but the crew went to the wrong place!
- Application has been made to extend the pavement up to 114 Shefford Road to link it to the new permissive footpath down Shefford Hill.
- Shefford Hill Footpath is complete. (see separate statement) Signs are to be erected warning of pedestrians crossing.
- The new salt bins will be put in place and filled.

Environment & Leisure (spokesman Cllr. Paul Merryweather)

- It has been agreed to replace the edging to the surface round the play equipment with a new wooden edging.
- The two new metal picnic table and bench seats for Fosters' Field and Old Road Meadow have still to be installed. A new contractor is being sought.

Allotment Land

It was agreed to send out the new Tenancy Agreements for all except split plots. The accompanying letter will contain the combination of the new gate lock. Split plot holders will also be advised of the combination. From 1st November the gate will be locked.

Old Road Meadow

Did not win a CPRE award.

Traffic Calming

Councillors will study the material handed out by the representative of Dunlop Transcalm and raise any questions. The matter will be discussed at the November meeting.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Beacons

A letter received concerning Beacons for the Queens Diamond Jubilee next year will be discussed at the December meeting.

The next Parish Council meetings will be held Mondays 14th November and 12th December 2011 at Meppershall Village Hall both commencing at 7.45pm.

Report approved by Cllr. John Parsons - Chairman of the meeting.

YOUR SHOUT **with Trevor Thorley**

REV JOHN AND SANDRA HARPER: John and Sandra have now said their goodbyes. John conducted his last service in St. Mary's Church on Sunday October 2 and by the time this report goes to press, they will have moved to Peterborough to be closer to their family and grandchildren.

The surprise party in the Village Hall was a huge success and I think they were overwhelmed by the turnout of friends and acquaintances who were there to sing 'For They Are Jolly Good Fellows' as they entered the hall on Saturday, September 24.

Ladies of the PCC, The Friends of St. Mary's and others prepared a fabulous spread of food in celebration of the occasion.

Churchwarden Brian Bellamy made a presentation of a cheque to John and Sandra to the value of £750. Dick Bulley, Editor of Meppershall Messenger, presented a beautiful photograph of John and Sandra, taken by Paul Derrick in the church grounds. Trevor Thorley presented a book on Christian Art on behalf of The Friends of St. Mary's.

Entertainment came in the form of lovely singing by the choir from Meppershall Lower School. Gemma Parr-Smith sang beautiful solos and the St. Mary's Village Choir sang two numbers to add to the occasion.

John trained at Kings College London and was ordained in 1970. He served various parishes before moving here to Meppershall some seven and a half years ago. We all wish them well and thank them from the bottom of our hearts for the friendship and kindness that they gave to many people during their short stay with us in Meppershall.

WHAT'S ON: In dealing with the sale of tickets for the Abba Revival concert, I was concerned to note how many people were apparently unaware of what goes on in Meppershall. It is so, so simple: read the Meppershall Messenger each month and local press each week and you will find all that you want to know from

Meppershall Players news, Village Hall functions by organisations in the village, The Sugar Loaf entertainments, The Friends of St. Mary's concerts and much, much more. Local organisations will thrive on your valued support and you will be surprised at what is available to you on your own doorstep.

MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE CHOIR

Message from Wendy Corns:

"As musical director of the choir, I wish to congratulate most heartily all members of the choir for their excellent performance of a Negro Spiritual, 'The Battle of Jericho' and the Welsh song, 'All Through The Night' at Rev John's and Sandra's leaving party in the Village Hall on Saturday, September 24.

The Choir will now have a short break and will resume rehearsals On October 18. We will be rehearsing new songs and carols for a range of events organised within the community. We could pop up anywhere in the next few months. You may find us in the local pub, at the school, at a wedding or on one of our visits to Meppershall Care Home, so listen out for us.

Our membership is likely to have grown by the next time you hear us, but we still need to grown even more. So don't be nervous, come and join us, we have a lot of fun. Rehearsals are currently being held on Tuesday evenings in the church. If you want to know more, contact me, Wendy Corns on 01462 850142 or Trevor Thorley on 01462 813357".

REMEMBER IT IS YOUR SHOUT

Call Trevor on 01462 813357 or email:

trevor.thorley1@btinternet.com



SHEFFORD LEISURE GROUP

By Enid Pamment



We were lucky enough to obtain tickets for the ever popular recording of 'Friday Night is Music Night' at the Mermaid Theatre, in London. Although the queue was long we were soon assured of a seat as we made our way into the theatre. The music for the evening was based on 1956 with music from the shows and a most entertaining surprise was the guest appearance of the Million Dollar Quartet, who soon had the audience tapping their feet and clapping their hands. Everyone agreed it proved a wonderful evening. Although the date for our holiday in Pembrokeshire was changed to the 3rd – 7th October, never the less a party of 26 joined several other people for our onward journey to Wales. We had not gone very far before our first stop at Toddington Services, which allowed some of the people who had been on the coach since 5.45am stretch their legs etc. After another couple of stops we finally reached our hotel at just after 6pm. The hotel was perched on a hilltop with some magnificent views across Fishguard Bay. After a very quick wash and brush up we proceeded to the restaurant for dinner, before most of us retired to our rooms to unpack and make ready for the next day. The rooms were excellent, many of us had balconies overlooking the bay and those with single rooms found they were double rooms and not the cramped up style that some hotels offer.

After a buffet breakfast we headed out to Tenby where some of us made our way down to the harbour and others declined the steep walk back! However, the walled part of Tenby was most interesting and we had some delightful views of the sea below. On our return to the hotel, we had plenty of time to wash and brush up for yet another excellent dinner which we had pre-booked that morning, before making our way to either the bar, or the ballroom for the evening entertainment.

Wednesday we boarded our coach for a short drive to St. David's where most of us tackled the steep climb to the Cathedral. We then returned to our coach for a scenic ride to Haverford West for a spot of lunch and a quick look around before returning to our hotel for the rest of the evening and entertainment.

Thursday has a half day trip to Cardigan for the indoor market. For those of us who wanted a quick look around Fishguard our coach driver was obliging enough to take us there and we were able to see a magnificent tapestry of the last invasion by the French. This was made as a permanent

legacy of the bicentenary commemorations and was worked on by seventy seven local people. We then returned to the hotel for our last evening. Friday was an early start with stops en route before reaching Shefford at 3pm where we said 'goodbye' to our new- made friends.

Forthcoming Events 2011

Camden Market	Sunday 6 th November
Lord Mayor's Show	Saturday 12 th November
Westfield Shopping Centre - Stratford	Sunday 20 th November
Christmas in the Royal Landscape	Thursday 1 st December
Thursford Xmas Spectacular (evening)	Saturday 3 rd December
Shopping in Norwich	Tuesday 6 th December
Carols with the Stars at RAH	Thursday 8 th December
John Rutter Xmas Celebrations RAH	Saturday 10 th December
Brick Lane Music Hall, including lunch	Tuesday 20 th December

London Theatre trips are available with a coach 'pick up' in Shefford. If there is a particular show you would like to see, please don't hesitate to contact me. I am only too happy to help.

Shows currently available are:

Matinees – Leaving Shefford at 11am

Million Dollar Quartet – Noel Coward Theatre ~Thursday 19th Jan, 2012

(Circle Seats)

Crazy for You – Her Majesty's Theatre – Thursday 19th January 2012 (Stall Seats)

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

Shefford Leisure Group is open to everyone in the local community, who feel they would like to join us on our ventures and see places they would not see under their own steam. We are always happy to meet new friends.

Raffles are held and all the proceeds are for Keech Hospice Care for Children. 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.

Enid Pamment – Shefford Leisure Group

Financial News Update

with Jon Ingarfill

Well here we are in October already! Since my last article not a great deal has changed, although the markets do seem a little calmer. The European leaders are still dithering; however the fact that they are making constructive noises seems to have helped reduce the wild volatility we've seen over the last couple of months.

You may have wondered who these 'Ratings Agencies' that you hear about on the news are, and why anything they say seems to send the markets into freefall? So I thought I would try to explain what role they play in the overall scheme of things.....

They have existed for many years, but until recently many of you would never have heard of them - historically their role has been to gather, assess, evaluate and produce reports on companies. So, if for instance you were interested in investing in a particular company or perhaps taking it over, you would want to do a lot of research into whether it was a sound company to invest in and whether the price being asked was a fair price. Whilst you could undertake the research yourself, the chances are you wouldn't have the expertise, or time to do a thorough job. That's where a report from one of the Ratings Agencies comes in. Their researchers will have carried out an in-depth analysis of this company, looking at its accounts, balance sheet, sales figures, forecasts, trends, how they compared to similar firms in their line of business, how quickly they settle bills and so on. The report they produce will give you enough information to make an informed decision about whether to invest or not.

Fund managers use them all the time. Each Rating Agency has evolved their own rating system to indicate the credit-

worthiness of each company e.g. AAA, AA1, AA2 etc., This rating is their assessment of the particular company's ability to repay any debts, and affects the interest rate they will have to offer to get investors to buy their bonds (see last months article).

Whilst it has always been one of the functions they perform, it is only recently that their assessment of whole countries has come to the fore. This works in exactly the same way as for individual companies but on a much larger scale. Virtually all countries borrow money by issuing bonds (I explained how this works last time), so having as high a rating as possible, means that you can offer lower interest rates, and investors will still lend you money. Downgrading signals that the country is less credit-worthy than before and will now have to pay more to borrow money. Depending upon which that country is can have a big impact on the market's reaction. A good example of this was the downgrading of the United States in July, suggesting that the US was slightly more risky a place to invest in than before. It sent a shock wave around the world's markets.

Britain has a coveted AAA rating from Standard & Poors (the biggest agency), which tells the world that we are as safe a place to invest/lend money to as you can get.

There is some concern that the opinions/interpretations of data by the Ratings Agencies have too big an impact on how the markets react. After all these are the same agencies that gave both Lehman Brothers and Equitable Life triple A ratings!

Tel: 07870 564115 or email:
jon.ingarfill@pocockrutherford.com

Polehanger: A Farming Diary

Episode 27



Weather . . . or not

I often say to friends visiting from abroad that 'we don't have climate, only weather': and so it has proved to be these last few weeks, especially the one straddling the end of September and beginning of October. Record October maximum temperatures were recorded in more than one location in the southeast on Saturday 1st. Unhappily I was visiting our nieces in Glasgow that weekend, where it rained solidly for 24 hours and the temperature was barely 15 degrees!

The cooler summer and late warmth has extended plants' growing season and produced some peculiar responses. Did you see the picture of the apple branch with both fruit and blossom on it?

Rhino; a month in the life of an Oil Seed Rape plant

I wrote this sentence last month, "We are continuing to grow just one crop each year in the OSR/Wheat/ Wheat rotation". Several people asked if I had got that wrong, given that there was no mention of a different crop in the third year. It just goes to show how, in any line of work, we get so used to certain phrases, initials or shortened names that we forget not everyone will understand what we are saying or writing. In fact, what I wrote is what happens: we still only grow Oil Seed Rape every third year as a break crop (which is a key element of any form of rotation that is intended to 'break' the disease cycle of monocropping). The other two crops in the 3 year rotation cycle we refer to as 1st and 2nd wheats.

Seedlings were just appearing a month ago. The crop is looking in an ideal condition today (6th October). Germination % was much better than usual with soil moisture available to get that process going quickly so that roots could travel down to deeper consistent moisture.

There is always a tension between drilling too early, with the danger of the plants being too big and lush in the late autumn, when this would encourage phoma fungal infection that later spreads to the plant stem weakening it, and delayed drilling, when lack of moisture further delays germination so that the crop is small going into the winter and subject to pigeon attack (pigeons love rape and other brassicas when it's cold and they all gang up into big flocks). Mark's target drilling rate is for 70 plants per square metre in order to end up with 50 – 60 plants growing. This year, with ideal germination, there are 70 – 75 plants growing, the extras coming from seed carried over from previous years!

Elsewhere on the Farm

Many of you will have seen that the in-field footpath from Meppershall to Shefford has now been surfaced with road planings: and some of you will already have used it. We are now in the process of setting up suitable signs to inform pedestrians of its existence. You may wonder why it crosses the road in three places before connecting with the village pavement. We have avoided putting the path on the farm side where there is a slope away from the road, to avoid gravity disturbing the construction in years to come. At the present time, the path is a permissive one on Polehanger land, with a partial grant towards construction from the local authority via the Parish Council. As things stand at the moment, it will be our intention to convert the path to a Public Footpath at an appropriate time in the future.

I would ask again that those walking on paths around the farm keep dogs under control and out of the adjoining crop. We had a fair bit of damage to wheat against footpaths at harvest time, and consequently lost grain where plants were broken on the ground. I have again had to 'intercept' lads on motorbikes/quadbikes on a number of occasions recently, who to my face have said that they have the farmer's permission! We do not give that to any bikers, other than when Mark uses his for field work or scaring pigeons. You may mention that if you come across them.

Interesting (or Challenging) Statistic(s)

There are 13 million people in Madagascar whose lives are at risk because of locusts.

The price of good farmland in Romania is 2000 Euros per hectare; in the UK it is around 15,000. Whilst this gives UK farmers a higher capital asset, it means that each year the rental equivalent to be covered in order to show a return on the land as an investment is much higher before any activity is undertaken.

50 Years Ago: Michael Foster's Diary Extract from 1961

13th November: I cut cabbage (to be carted to cows for feed) all morning and afternoon. Though drizzling and windy, I kept warm and enjoyed it!

23rd November: bought 2 acres adjoining Fowlers Farm; 'dear' @ £150 per acre. (Current agricultural land price is £5,000 – 6,000 per acre)

30th November: 30 nets brussell sprouts (26lbs each?) picked; sold @ 12/6 each (12 shillings and six pence = 62.5p)

Chris Foster, 6th October 2011

The History of Meppershall - 14

Scandal at the Manor

Based on documents in the Bedfordshire Archives.

1805

Curate's Notes

Hannah Battaims, once housekeeper at the Manor has again been delivered of a daughter. The infant has been christened Ann Field; although the latter name has been omitted from the parish register, I entered it later. John Field is renowned for his quick temper and I dared not add it until births had reached the next page and the entry will not easily be seen. Ten years ago I was required to christen Hannah's first child, Barbara, the Rector refusing to do so, and I was not allowed to enter the event in the transcripts of the register that we have to send to the Bishop. All knew her father was Thomas Poynter, Lord of the Manor, and he happily claimed the child. The next child, Pen Poynter Battaims, was not brought to be christened until she was almost two years of age in December 1798, I think due to the Rector's refusal to baptise Barbara.

When Pen was eventually christened, the Rector also "accepted into the church" her sister Barbara and a note was added to our register that both were natural born children of Thomas Poynter of the Manor. The next year another child, Dorothy, was born and again details were given, stressing that she was also Thomas Poynter's daughter and was born in the Manor House.

Thomas has now died, and had arranged that James Webster, our Rector, and John Field, farmer of Polehanger, should be the children's guardians. Two men more dissimilar in nature one could not find. Luckily the Rector has taken the girls' welfare into the hands of himself and his good wife, Dorothy, after whom the youngest had been named.

There is much discomfort in the Rector's family that a stepsister has been born, especially to John Field who appears regularly in front of Samuel Whitbread, Justice of the Peace, for ill-treating his workers.

Such children born to the villagers cause no scandal or little comment, but the situation at the manor is considered a scandal.

My Dear Friend,

The Rectory. 1805

Thank you for your kind letter, it was most thoughtful of you to send me the news from our university. I am delighted to hear that you have a new addition to your family and enclose a small gift for his christening.

Little Dorothy and Pen Poynter Battains have settled very easily with us and we love them dearly. Not being blessed with children ourselves it was an easy decision to take them on and bring them up as if they were our own. I am not at all disappointed that John Field, their other guardian, takes no place in their upbringing as he is not the most desirable model of a gentleman at all times.

I need to consider carefully what to do with the property. I cannot see either of the girls dwelling there in the future, so, sadly I think it unlikely there will be a resident Lord of the Manor in the foreseeable future. I do not like to sell it until the girls are old enough to make their own decisions. John and I will hold the manorial court while they are minors, deciding all matters that affect the well running of the parish; I already keep the village bull and boar to loan out to villagers when necessary. Lately we agreed to send one aged Dinah Faney to St Luke's Hospital, Chelsea, for treatment which has cost the parish £6.15.0d [~~£6.75~~] at this date.

I must go and teach at the school now and will miss the post boy if I delay to complete the letter.

Dorothy sends her regards.

Yours, James Webster, Rector

The total expenses for Dinah Faney totalled £16.17p which included hospital treatment, travelling to and from London plus 35p for advertising when she later wandered from the village and was lost, and £2.05 for someone to then return her home.

The Poynter girls married a doctor and a clergyman respectively, both men being quite wealthy. Their children's names included Dorothy and James - after the Websters. None of the family returned to live here but the manor passed down the family until the early 1900s.



LIFE ON THE WILD SIDE

By JEREMY HOLDEN

Photography

If travel, exploration and research have been the stuff of my life, then photography has been the thing that has justified it. Like a net spread across the sprawling landscape of my interests, it has united them into a theme. Photography is fun, a hobby to some, and a job to others. But there can be more to it: taking photographs can give life a meaning. This is certainly the case for me.

It all began one summer night as I walked home past the motte and bailey in Meppershall. I was fifteen year's old. The moon was out, sketching in the outline of the clouds and palely lighting the humpy shape of the old fort. I came to a standstill and gazed at the scene while waves of emotion washed over me, the kind of emotions that send ice water running up the spinal cord. I wasn't certain what the feelings were. They were to do with beauty and England and the night and the great mysteries of the past, and other things I could not quite grasp. I knew in that moment that I had to try and express these things. Perhaps because the epiphany, if that is what it was, came from looking at a landscape, photography seemed the natural way to do this.

The following Christmas I was given my first 35mm camera. My father's job at Kodak meant I could get film and processing free. It was only when he retired that I realized how expensive this pursuit really was! But those initial costless years were crucial. There is only one way to learn how to take good photographs and that is to continually take photographs. If it is a true calling, then a vision and a unique mode of seeing will evolve. It still amazes me how, despite often using the same equipment, different photographers can produce such individually distinctive images, recognizable at a glance.

After school I went to college to learn the basics of commercial photography, which involved technique and an intimate knowledge of physics and chemistry. After that I went on to university to learn

about the other side of photography: the philosophy and meaning, and its emergence as an art form. By the time I finished my education there were few photography jobs on offer. Like most interesting jobs, these had to be created. I set out to do this by travelling and taking photographs of what I saw. I was lucky and gradually I evolved from paying for my trips to being paid to travel and take photographs.

I have very little interest in photographic equipment. Good pictures can be taken irrespective of the camera type. There is a fascinating movement in photography that uses only toy cameras and the results are stunning. The important thing is to look and respond to those things that are interesting: experiment, try different angles, make mistakes, and something interesting and unique might emerge. Shoot whatever appeals - after all, with the arrival of the digital revolution it now costs nothing to take an extra frame.

My own photography has helped to bring together my various interests. Although I am sometimes described as a wildlife photographer, I never consider myself anything other than a photographer, as happy to shoot urban decay as photograph pristine wilderness. But it does pay to find a subject that is truly yours and can be explored to the full.

In Cambodia I follow a number of themes: a pictorial study of the ageing municipal dump on the city's outskirts; the Cardamom Mountains and their wildlife, and a series on the aesthetics of meat eating. For anyone interested, my images can be viewed at http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeremy_holden/, although I must issue the warning that particularly sensitive people may find some of the subjects disturbing.

I consider myself as having two passports: one, the small paper booklet bearing my photograph, which I regularly get replaced at the Foreign Consular Office in Bangkok; the other is my camera, the tool that justifies me poking my nose in to any subject I choose or going anywhere I please. One frees my body, the other frees my spirit.

Business Advice – 4: Crisis Management



Most of you will have noticed a bit of a change at the entrance to the footpath from Fildyke Road to the Nature Reserve: the 30ft willow tree that once stood proud there was blown down by the after-effects of hurricane Katia last September.

How did we handle it? Well, the area was secured in 30 minutes; the clearout was started in 2 hours and completed in 4; the village was kept informed via the Meppershall Facebook page. And, although the phone line was down for a further 3 days, we were back in business the following morning.

It goes to show that anything can happen. How would your business cope in a crisis?

What crisis?

Natural disasters, extreme weather, riots, death in service, IT crashes...you only have to watch the news to realise that the list of crises which could impact your business is extensive. Here are some classic issues:

If the winter is very severe and the country gets gridlocked, how will you manage your supplies?

Do you keep copies of your business records (paper or electronic) in a secondary location, so that they are safe in the event of a fire?

If you were out of action, would anybody know which customers you are due to meet over the next fortnight, and where to find their contact details?

Did you know that, in the event of your death, a power of attorney is compulsory for anyone to continue your business or to close it down?

Why you should prepare for it

Let me be blunt: businesses ignoring continuity planning are as naïve as people without a will. Life happens. The proverbial does hit the fan. It doesn't just happen to someone else.

Here are some frightening stats:

- 1 in 5 businesses experience a major disruption every year;
- 93% of UK organisations were affected by the snow spell alone in 2010 (costing the economy £280 million a day);

- Businesses affected by a disaster that do not have business continuity arrangements in place only have a 50% chance of surviving the following 12 months.

What you can do

Business continuity isn't about establishing a cumbersome process, it is about changing your mindset and considering what can go wrong.

The Bedfordshire and Luton Local Resilience Forum website (www.blrf.org.uk/get_ready/business_continuity.php) provides excellent information to local organisations about business continuity. I strongly recommend that you to carry out their 10-minute health check.

It will allow you to review issues such as emergency packs, daily checks on your premises, maintenance of staff data, security, management of stock movements, IT policies, suppliers' resilience, insurance, impact of your environment on your business and dealing with media enquiries.

Once you have gone through this check list, you can make an educated decision about accepting the risks or putting relevant safeguards in place.

If you need any assistance with devising a business continuity strategy or if the unexpected has occurred and you need crisis management assistance, give me a shout.



Albane Quesnot 01462 850518

albane.quesnot@just-A.co.uk

Your local Business Coaching and Support partner

"I have never been in any accident of any sort worth speaking about. I never saw a wreck and never have been wrecked, nor was I ever in any predicament that threatened to end in disaster of any sort".

Captain Edward John Smith of the RMS Titanic

Calendar of Meppershall Events

November 2011

Tuesday 1st		
Baby & Toddler Halloween Party	1.30 – 3.00 pm	Village Hall
Saturday 5th		
Fireworks and bonfire	8.00 pm	Behind Village Hall
Bonfire Night Disco		Village Hall Social Club
Friday 11th		
School PTA Meet & Greet	3.00 pm	School Hall
Saturday 12th		
Lavender House Market Stall	Morning	Hitchin Market
Monday 14th		
Parish Council Meeting	7.45 pm	Village Hall
Saturday 19th		
Lower School Autumn Fare	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Lower School
Sunday 20th		
Sale of Children's clothes	9.00am – 4.00 pm	Village Hall
Saturday 26th		
St Francis of Assisi – Grand Christmas Fair	10.00am – 1.00pm	Shefford Methodist Hall
Monday 28th		
Messenger Collating	2.00 pm	Village Hall

December 2011

Thurs 1st - Sat 3rd		
Players Christmas Variety Show	7.45pm	Village Hall
Saturday 10th		
Nearly the Goat – Puppet Show	2.30 pm	Village Hall
Wednesday 7th		
Read through of "Gaslight"	8.00 pm	Village Hall
Saturday 3rd		
Christmas Lights	5.30pm – 7.30pm	High Street, Shefford
Saturday 10th		
PTA Christmas Fayre	1pm – 3.30pm	Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford
Monday 12th		
Parish Council Meeting	7.45 pm	Village Hall
Wednesday 14th		
Auditions for "Gaslight"	8.00 pm	Village Hall
Saturday 17th		
Village Christmas Party	7.30 – Midnight	Village hall

"Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust"

Sponsored Bike'n Hike - 10th September 2011 (20th Year)

It is now over a month since we undertook this venture but, as with each year, it takes more than a couple of weeks to collect the monies kindly promised in the sponsorship and to assess the benefits of the event.

This year, the weather was a lot better, albeit rather windy towards the end of the afternoon. We had 16 visitors signing in at St Mary's during the day and enjoying the hospitality of the kind helpers. This is three less than last year but more than at many other rural churches participating. We had only 4 cyclists taking part, the same as last year, and no hikers. There were participants in the village supporting other churches however so the overall figure is slightly higher.

With over 600 churches in Herts and Beds taking part, I feel there has been a great opportunity lost for various competitions/adventures to be set up for the younger generations within Meppershall. Another year they could plan different routes, get map reading experience (not SATNAV), get exercise and cycling or walking experience, see more of the countryside and learn how to raise money through sponsorship. Guidance from parents could be given when necessary and they could join in themselves.

Anyway, thank you to everyone who took part and contributed this year. Between us we raised £627 plus some Gift Aid, which is slightly more than last year. I know we have not beaten St Francis RC Church in Shefford but it was a jolly good effort. I live in fear of repeating myself (from previous articles) but will say that St Mary's Church here in Meppershall will receive half of this money and the other half will go to the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust who can then offer it as grants.

Trevor Wilkinson – Church Organiser

The Wine Society's Guide To Wine Tasting - 7

The benefits of learning how to taste wine are both immediate and tangible. Being able to interpret appearance, smell and taste in the glass, and recognising the characteristics of the small number of grape varieties which lie behind most wine labels not only enhances enjoyment, but boosts wine confidence, two excellent reasons for learning the ropes. Anybody with working faculties and the will to succeed can do it, and, with a little practice, achieve a good standard of wine appreciation. In our sensory journey, this month we take a look at sight!

A good look at a glass of wine is revealing. It betrays a number of faults which may be present, and can offer clues about the age of the wine, as well as its provenance and even in some cases, the probable grape variety from which it is made. Viscous 'tears' or 'legs' which cling to the side of the glass once it has been tilted slightly are useful clues to the wine's alcoholic strength.

White wines range from pale to gold, encompassing pale straw, green-gold (often a sign of acidity, and typical of young Riesling), mid-gold or even in the case of some dessert wines, old gold. White wines deepen in colour as they age, so the colour can tell you something about maturity.

Reds, on the other hand, become lighter with age. The first signs of maturation are visible at the rim of the wine, so always tilt the glass to see how the colour changes. Certain varieties produce more deeply-coloured wines than others. Cabernet sauvignon and syrah or shiraz, for example, tends to make deep, dark wines, while pinot noir produces lighter-coloured reds. A really mature red often has a tawny appearance.

Rosé wines, depending on their grape varieties and method of production, can range from the palest onion-skin or 'oeil de perdrix' (partridge eye) to almost blue.

In **sparkling wines**, look for the mousse, or column of bubbles rising from the core of the glass. Small, agile bubbles indicate good quality, whereas large, coarse ones, similar to those found in fizzy water, suggest that carbon dioxide has been added, rather than produced by the process of secondary fermentation which creates the best fizz.

How do we best see what is in the glass?

- Hold the glass by the stem. Nursing the bowl with warm hands increases the temperature of the wine (although this is a useful tip if a wine has been served too cold).
- Now, keep the glass vertical, and looking from above, note clarity, limpidity, brightness and depth of colour. This is the time to check for visible faults, such as abnormally dark colour, unexpected bubbles, and foreign bodies or solids.
- Next, tilt the glass at an angle of about 45° and look at the wine again, this time noting any difference in colour between the core and the rim of the wine. Is it pronounced? Is the colour intense throughout? Try to put the colour itself into words.
- Finally, look for 'tears' or 'legs' clinging to the side of the glass. Are they absent, moderate or pronounced?
- Record your impressions.

For more information about The Wine Society, including how to join, go to www.thewinesociety.com/join

Life membership of The Society can be yours for a one-off payment of £40, giving you a share in this co-operative business.

THE LUCY PAGES

By Lucy Standbridge

Before I start my main article, I have noticed that other writers have put in a picture of themselves, so here is one of me!



Hobbies

Life isn't all about the Xbox, Wii, DS or any technology. Look at some amazing hobbies some of us have!

Firstly I am interviewing Louis Bradshaw, from Shefford Road:



Louis is 11 and his hobby is traction engines and Mamods (miniature engines powered by live steam).



What age did you start your hobby?

I've always been interested and I'm a steam apprentice and have been for 5 years. At driving weekends, I get to drive real, full size traction engines.

What made you start this hobby?

My granddad took me to a traction engine show and I've been interested ever since.

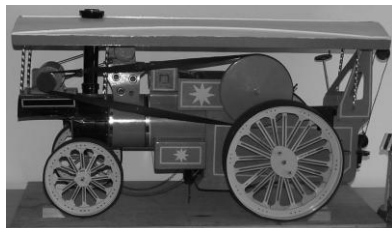
What are Mamods?

Fire heats water, which makes steam, which runs the pistons.

What can you do with them?

You can power miniature funfair rides with the power of a Mamod. I also bought a broken Mamod which I repainted. I sprayed it and put new parts on it which made it work!

In the future, I would like a real full size traction engine.



I have also interviewed Monica Steeley, from Fildyke Close:



Monica is 8 years old and her hobby is Golf.

What age did you start your hobby?

I started when I was 6 years old.

What made you start your hobby?

My brother started playing golf with my dad, so I wanted to join in with them.

Is there a place where you often play?

The place I usually go is John O Gaunt Golf Club.

Have you won any awards?

Yes, I have won a bronze medal and a certificate.

If you have any hobbies let me know on lucystandbridge@gmail.com

**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



You're invited to

Meppershall Lower School Autumn Fayre

Saturday 19th November 2-4pm

Meppershall School, High Street Meppershall

There's something for everyone.....

Christmas gifts

Yummy cake stall

Tombola

refreshments

Grand Raffle

Face painting

Hair braiding

Nail painting

Biscuit decorating

Not Forgetting – Class Craft Tables

A chance to purchase creations made in school by your little ones!

A great selection of craft & specialist stalls including ...

Fairy Corner

Trinkets, charms & fairy dust, little goodies for little treasures, great stocking fillers!

Spring House Beauty & Holistics

Offering mini pamper treatments and a chance to talk to our qualified beauticians

J S Floral Designers & vintage gifts

Specialist floristry designer Jo Sheppard, with a Selection of vintage gifts and festive goodies.

Sparcle Jewellery

Ladies & Children's Jewellery, Hair Accessories, Charms & Scarves.

Gill Smith

Beautiful handmade jewellery.

Phoenix

Selection of beautiful cards, gift wrap, calendars & stationary for all occasions.

Forever Living

High quality natural health and well being products.

The Lemon tree

Candles, lanterns, chimes, light holders and much more.

Pink Cow parties

For all your cake and party needs.

The book lady

A selection of fantastic books from Osborne. Something to capture the imagination of even the youngest reader!

Please come and do some Christmas shopping and support your village school!



This is a Ringmaster message from Bedfordshire Police. Please pass the details of this message on to any friends and neighbours.

Beware Of Distraction Burglars

POLICE are warning pensioners to be on their guard following three similar distraction burglaries that have happened in Dunstable and Caddington.

The most recent incident happened at 12.45pm on Tuesday October 4, when an offender called at the house of an 81-year-old man in Waterlow Road, Dunstable. The male offender told the victim that there had been some damage to his fence and that he wanted to pay for repairs. The offender then asked the victim to show him the fence so he could see how much damage had been caused. In the meantime a second offender slipped into the property and stole the man's wallet which contained a large sum of money. At this point the victim heard another man shout out and the first offender then fled the property. The victim went to the front door, but couldn't see the offender anywhere and after inspecting his home, he realised that he had been robbed and went to a neighbour's house for help.

This offence is similar to an attempted distraction burglary in West Street, Dunstable at 2pm, on Thursday September 29. On this occasion three men approached an elderly man's house telling him that a window at the back of the property had been broken and asked for access to the garden to show him the damage. The resident became suspicious of the story and asked the men to leave.

Later the same day, a distraction burglary took place in Manor Road, Caddington. At 2.45pm a man called at the front door claiming that some fencing in the back garden had been damaged. He asked to have access to show the elderly resident the damage and suggested that it had been caused by a child playing in a neighbouring garden. Whilst in the back

garden the resident became suspicious and asked the man to leave. As they re-entered the house a second offender was seen in the house. Both men fled taking a handbag belonging to the victim which was later recovered in another part of Caddington.

Detective Constable Catherine Layton who is investigating the incidents said: "We have become used to distraction burglars claiming to be from utility companies or the emergency services, but it appears that they are attempting a new method of gaining access to properties. We would remind the elderly to be extremely cautious about anyone calling at their home, to always use a spy hole and door chain and to insist on identification. If you are in any way suspicious, dial 999."

If you have an elderly relative, friend or neighbour now is a good time to remind them not to let unexpected visitors into their homes and follow these tips:

- Always use a door chain or spy-hole to check who is calling before you open the door. Shut and lock the back door before you open the front – these offenders often work in pairs.
- All utility staff carry ID cards. Make them show the card, and then use the number in the phone book to call the relevant company and check that they are a genuine member of staff. Make sure they wait outside while you do this.
- Always stay with the caller while they are in your home. You should be suspicious if they want to look round on their own.
- Never show anyone where you keep valuables. Do not keep large amounts of money in the house – even if you think it is well hidden.
- If you are at all suspicious of the caller, **DO NOT LET THEM IN.** Lock the door and call the police.

If you would like to arrange a visit from a local Crime Reduction Officer to help keep burglars out, please contact Bedfordshire Police on 01234 841212.

Anyone with information about these offences can contact DC Layton at Dunstable Police Station on 01582 473375, call the non-emergency telephone number on 101, text to 07786 2000 11 or call Crimestoppers, anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Police Report for Meppershall Messenger

During the month of September 2011 there were 3 recorded crimes in Meppershall. These relate to one burglary of a dwelling, one criminal damage and a case of violence against the person. There are no links in relation to these crimes. There were 6 recorded incidents of ASB, again there are no links.

On October 1st, 2011 Bedfordshire Police changed structure in accordance with government requirements. Safer Neighbourhood teams are now known as Local Policing teams. Meppershall have a team of 5 PCSO's headed by Sergeant Gary Kidd and Inspector Nouch. Police Officers who were on the team are now back on the frontline under the new structure.

There is a new non emergency phone number, 101 which went live on September 25th, 2011.

Your local team can be contacted on 01234 842567 or
LPT.SheffordStotfold&Arlesey@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

Kind Regards

Leigh Iddon

PCSO 3660
Shefford, Stotfold and Arlesey LPT
01234 842567

We plan to publish a picture of the new team as soon as it becomes available - Ed

MEPPERSHALL SOCIAL CLUB

Regular Activities:

Tuesdays:	Darts
Thursdays:	Dominoes/Crib
Fridays:	Bingo Night

If you don't fancy any of the above, why not pop in on any night for a friendly chat and a drink? And become a member:

Family membership	- £15.00
Single membership	- £ 7.50
OAP Family Membership	- £10.00
OAP Single Membership	- £ 5.00

See a member of the bar staff for a membership form.

We also have two full size snooker tables open to members only, so why not become a member and come and enjoy yourself?

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS FOR 2011

5 th Nov	BONFIRE NIGHT DISCO with A/C	All Welcome – Mums, Dads, Kids
24 th Dec	XMAS EVE DISCO with A/C	All Welcome – Mums, Dads, Kids
31 st Dec	NEW YEAR'S EVE DISCO with DJ Ben	All Welcome – Mums, Dads, Kids

Watch out for posters & banners around the village and in the Social Club for these fantastic events. For tickets and any queries, call Louise Savory on 07909 600199 or call round to 8, Hill Top View, Meppershall.

Meppershall Baby and Toddler Group



Come and join us for our

Halloween Party



Tuesday 1st November

1:30 – 3pm

Meppershall Village Hall

Fancy dress * Bring a hand carved pumpkin and enter it into our competition to win a prize (all entries receive a prize) * **NEW bouncy castle** * Halloween craft and activities * Baby area and much more!

Parents/grandparents/childminders caring for children under 5 years of age welcome. Tickets £2 per child (under 1s only £1)

We are a friendly group of parents, grandparents, childminders, babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers who meet in the village hall every Tuesday during term time. If you are looking after a child under 5 years of age, why not come along and join us! Look for "Meppershall Toddlers" on Facebook for further information.



The Meppershall Players



We are now putting the finishing touches to the “Christmas Variety Show”. Costumes, scenery, music & lights have been sorted, and all the Players are tweaking and fine tuning their performances. This show is suitable for all the family; the seating plan for the evening is twelve tables each seating eight people. We encourage you to bring your own supper for you & your Family/friends’ own consumption. (Not a share with all event). So why not book a whole table, and make a real party of the evening. Tickets are on sale now at Roger’s Bakery at the following prices: Thurs 1st Dec £5, Fri 2nd Dec £6, & Sat 3rd Dec £8 (sorry no concessions any evening). Doors open 7.00 pm; curtain up 7.45. We look forward to seeing you there.

Our Spring production is to be “Gaslight”, a thriller set at the turn of the century, to be performed on Fri 23rd & Sat 24th March 2012. The read through of this play is on Wed 7th Dec 2011, at 8pm, with auditions taking place on Wed 14th Dec, at 8pm. If you are interested in being involved in this production, on the stage or behind the scenes, come along on Wed 7th Dec.

Pianist Still Wanted: yes we are still on the look out for a new pianist for next year’s Pantomime and beyond. I would very much like to direct a War Time Variety show in 2013, but without a pianist this won’t be possible. We are prepared to pay for your time and talent! You don’t have to decide now; you have until July 2012 to think about it!

The players meet every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm at the Village Hall. Membership is free and 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 (Players Chairman)
01462 816336

Riding Lights Theatre Company Presents

Nearly the Goat

written by Nigel Forde
directed by Paul Burbridge designed by Anna Gooch

When was the last time a goat was on hoof to save the day? Somewhere between the tinsel and the cabbage leaves, the crackers and the parsnip peelings, comes the remarkable story of NEARLY THE GOAT...

... bending his amazing acting talents to impersonate a host of harassed innkeepers and help Georgie tell a spell-binding Christmas story. To say nothing of the wolf!

Will Nearly in his DIY travelling machine get to Bethlehem before the wolf does? And how can the kings return to Persia without their camel? This night of all nights is heading for a flock of disasters. Well, Nearly. And if it wasn't for one relentlessly cheerful, extremely interrupting goat butting in...

With an extraordinary range of puppetry skills, Riding Lights bring you the Christmas story in unforgettable style.

Premiered in 2009 to great acclaim from young and old, NEARLY THE GOAT lasts approximately one hour and is suitable for age 5 and up.

Saturday 10th December 2.30pm
Meppershall Village Hall, SG17 5LX



Tickets £5 / £3

Please call

01462 813 310



A new business for the Village

Jentle Touch

Hi, my name is Jennie and in my new mobile beauty and holistic business I am offering a variety of relaxing treatments which you can enjoy in the comfort of your own home.

Holistic therapy is about treating an individual as a whole - mind, body and spirit. It aims to rebalance the body, relieve aches and pains, calm the mind and create a feeling of well-being.

Reflexology

Based on the theory that each part of the body is represented by reflex points in the hands and feet. Applying gentle pressure to specific areas on the feet promotes relaxation and stimulates the body's own healing process to achieve balance and harmony.

Indian head massage

A truly holistic therapy, this massage concentrates on the upper back, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, face and scalp. It helps relieve tension and stress as well as improving the condition of the hair and scalp.

Swedish body massage

One of the most popular types of massage using a variety of movements to manipulate body tissues, producing therapeutic effects. This treatment is beneficial to all systems of the body and provides a feeling of well-being.

Hopi ear candles

An excellent ear clearing treatment. It helps with sinus and ear problems as well as tension headaches.

Also available now are facials at a fantastic introductory price. Please see my advert for some great special offers this month.

Jennie Cross

www.jentletouch.co.uk

Meppershall Garden Club

Weather-wise, autumn this year has been glorious. Wonderful for visiting gardens but with the lack of rain not so wonderful for gardeners. The planters at the village hall have been re-filled with winter bedding but will need watering, and although the front border has been weeded, it is still too dry to plant any new shrubs. If anybody living near to the village hall would like to empty a watering can or two onto the tubs and the border then they are more than welcome to do so.

With so many people taking advantage of the glorious weather, there was no MGC outing in September, so instead we sat in the sunshine at the Mount Pleasant golf club in Stondon, drinking tea and making future plans.

The plan for October includes visiting several venues in Melbourn, Cambridgeshire including the Crossing House Garden, the gardens at Docwra Manor, Bury Farm shop and the large garden centre at Shepreth.

As we go into winter, I am sure that there will be lots more planning meetings sitting in front of warm fires sharing garden tips and thinking of new and exciting places to visit in the Spring.

Until next time
Linda Parker

For more information on the Garden Club, call:

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

NOTICE BOARD

St Francis of Assisi Grand Christmas Bazaar

November 26th 10:00 -13:00hrs

Shefford Methodist Hall

Free Santa (Free present for all kids) - Fabulous Kidz
Zone

Refreshments, Christmas Items, Raffle, Tombola etc

SHEFFORD HEALTH CENTRE

Dr. Cakebread and Partners

NEW PHONE NUMBERS

(From July 2011)

APPOINTMENTS: 01462 810034

ENQUIRIES 01462 818620

SALE

BABY & TODDLER

**CLOTHES, TOYS & ACCESSORIES +
A FEW HOUSEHOLD ITEMS**

SUNDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

10.00 AM – 3.00 PM

MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE HALL

SU – 07968 314813

COVERS BY REQUEST

This month's cover picture was supplied by Gary Richards. A fine body of men! Quite rightly, we think a lot in November about the war dead, but I think we should also remember living service men and women, many of whom live with the knowledge that they risk their lives on a regular basis. Teresa tells me that she plans to write in our next issue about a Christmas appeal on behalf of serving soldiers.

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.

SIGNIFICANT BIRTHDAYS IN OCTOBER

Congratulations to:

Florence Vintner, who will be 94 on 8th November

St Mary's Parish Registers:

No new entries this month.

St Mary's Church Meppershall tea towels and mugs for sale!

Did you know that the Village Stores sells mugs and tea towels commemorating our beautiful church of St Mary's? Please have a look! The quality Linen Union tea towels also show other important village institutions (village hall and the school, to name a couple) drawn by a local artist. Both mugs and tea towels have the attractive traditional blue colour of St Mary.

Prices are as follows:

Linen Union St Mary's Tea Towels: 1 for £4.50, 2 for £8.00, 3 for £12.00, 4 for £15.00. St Mary's mugs: £3.50 each or 3 for £10.

Rest assured that all proceeds from the sale of these items go towards church funds. With thanks for your valued support.



Meppershall Pre-school Ponderings

We would like to start by saying hello and welcome to our new Pre-School starters, William, Douglas, Jamie and Ronin; we hope you really enjoy your time with us!

A big thank you to everybody who came to our 'Black and Gold' disco. We had a fantastic night with great music and a good boogie thanks to 'Funk It' disco. Thank you also to the Pre-School team and children for making the hall look fabulous, with the hand-made black and gold decorations. We raised just under £200, which we are thrilled about.

We are really keen to do some more fund raising events due to the success of the evening, so watch this space!

The children have started work on the new allotment this term, getting stuck in and a bit muddy! We are still open to any donations of equipment or plants that you could possibly give; please call the Pre-School on 817359.

At Meppershall Pre-school we are dedicated to providing a safe, happy and stimulating environment, where children from two and a half years old can learn and develop through play, whilst being encouraged and cared for by our friendly experienced staff.

Session times (term time only):

Monday to Friday	9.30am – 12.00pm
Monday to Friday LUNCH CLUB	12.00pm – 12.30pm
Monday, Wednesday and Friday	12.30pm – 3.00pm

If you are interested please contact Joy and come along for a visit!

Meppershall Village Hall, High Street, Meppershall, Beds, SG17 5LX
 01462 817359 (in session time), or www.meppershall-ps.co.uk
 Registered Charity: 1031913



Meppershall Community Christmas Party

Saturday 17th December
Meppershall Village Hall 7.30-12.00

*Do you fancy coming to a great Xmas disco and buffet; without the worry of transport and expense?

*A group of parents who go out each Xmas, but are disappointed with poor food, music, venue etc..... have grouped together to arrange a party – here in Meppershall

*Tickets can be purchased for just £10 – any profits made will be donated to the Lower School and Pre-school.

*We ask for each person to bring a selected dish to make-up a delicious Xmas buffet.

*The bar will be open for refreshments.

*A chance to party, save money and support your local charities

*Tickets to be purchased before the evening – Adults only please.

*If you would like to join us and purchase ticket or find out more contact

Jaqui Derrick 812181 (jaquiderrick@hotmail.co.uk)
or Louise Hutson 814148 (louhuts@btconnect.com)

or tickets can be purchased from the village shop.



ST MARY THE VIRGIN

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

Contact information during interregnum

While the appointment process for a new Rector is on-going, it is largely business as usual, but please use the following information to make contact with the church in Meppershall:

Churchwardens: Brian Bellamy 01462 815944 (Pastoral Assistant);
Brenda Wright 01462 816446.

Lay Reader: Pam Halliwell 01462 817069 pamhalliwell@talktalk.net
(usual day off – Monday)

PCC Secretary: Anne Parsons 01462 813333
annie10639@gmail.com

PCC contributions to The Messenger, Parish Records CD etc: James
Read 01462 857836 meppershall.pcc@gmail.com

Services for November

Date	Time	Service
Sunday 6th Trinity 20	11.00am	Parish Communion with Austin Smith
Sunday 13 th Remembrance Sunday Trinity 21	8.30am 10.50am	Holy Communion Service of Remembrance
Sunday 20th Last Sunday after Trinity	8.30am 11.00am	Holy Communion All Age Service with Pam Halliwell
Sunday 27th First Sunday of Advent	11.00am	All Age Communion with Patsy Critchley including baptism of Kayleigh Rose Larkman

St Mary's Weekday Service:

Wednesdays: 10a.m. Holy Communion (B.C.P.)

Everyone is welcome at each service. 11am services usually have some special JC (Junior Church) activities for children, and they are always followed by tea, coffee, biscuits and chat!

A Message from St Mary's...

November is the month for Remembrance. We start by remembering those who we call Saints. We are all called to be Saints – to be holy – so All Saints Day (1st November) is a joyful day.

On Guy Fawkes Day children of all ages (8 to 80!) celebrate with fireworks and remember that Guy Fawkes did not manage to blow up Parliament! Then our remembering takes on a solemn tone as we remember all those who have died in war and those still suffering from wounds and disabilities. Join us at St Mary's on Remembrance Sunday (13th).

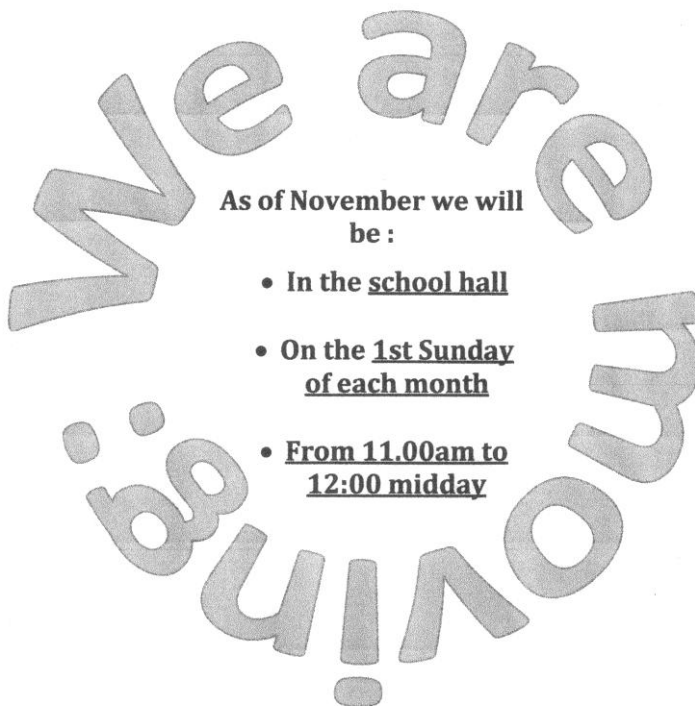
Later in the month our thoughts will turn towards Christmas, which for many will be less lavish this year – perhaps it will help us remember that the first Christmas happened in a stable.

We are now very much settling into our interregnum arrangements at St Mary's. Something to remember here too – my day off is now Monday - not Friday... easier to remember since John's day off was always Monday.

With all good wishes,

Pam Halliwell,
Lay Reader.

STOP Junior Church news STOP:



As of November we will
be :

- In the school hall
- On the 1st Sunday
of each month
- From 11.00am to
12:00 midday

Come and join us in our exciting worship with a twist

All children between 3 and 12 invited

Mums corner

Junior Church

We are very excited at Junior Church, because from Sunday 6 November, our first Sunday session of each month is moving to a new location.

Meppershall Lower School Hall is to be our new venue and we are really looking forward to exploring new ways of delivering God's message to children in the village.

Our sessions are prepared for ages 3 to 12, but if older children would like to join us, they are always welcome too and sometimes take on the role of 'helper' to the very young children.

At Junior Church we aim to create a relaxed, sociable, safe and fun atmosphere. We play games; do a variety of crafts, read stories, listen to each other and much more.

So, come along and see us in our new 'home', you are welcome to stay for a coffee and a chat while your child/children enjoy an hour of fun with us.

JC will continue to be held in the vestry for the Family Communion services.

If you have any questions, please call me on 850947.

Gillian

DARK INDULGENT CHOCOLATE AND WALNUT BROWNIES

NOVEMBER 2011

12 oz (350g) plain chocolate, broken into pieces
8 oz (225g) margarine
2 teaspoons instant coffee
2 tablespoons hot water
3 extra large eggs
8 oz (225g) caster sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla essence
3 oz (75g) self-raising flour
6 oz (175g) walnut pieces, chopped
8 oz (225g) plain chocolate chips

Method

- 1) Pre-heat the oven to 190oC/375oF/Gas 5. Grease and base line a 12 x 9 in (30 x 23 cm) roasting tin with greaseproof paper.
- 2) Melt the chocolate slowly in a bowl with the margarine over a pan of hot water, stirring occasionally. Allow to cool.
- 3) Dissolve the coffee in the hot water.
- 4) In another bowl, mix together the coffee, eggs, sugar and vanilla essence.
- 5) Gradually beat in the chocolate mixture.
- 6) Fold in the flour, walnuts and chocolate chips, and then pour the mixture into the prepared tin.
- 7) Bake in the pre-heated oven for about 40-45 minutes or until firm to the touch and a dull crust has formed.
- 8) Leave to cool in the tin. When the cake is completely cold cut into squares.

Recipes are kindly supplied each month by Brenda Putwain.

GARDEN TIPS FOR NOVEMBER

(With acknowledgements to the RHS)

- Tidy the garden for winter
- Clearout bird boxes and put food out for birds
- Don't have a bonfire without checking the heap for hibernating creatures
- Press on with winter digging
- Clean or chuck old pots and trays
- Plant bare-rooted trees and shrubs and new roses
- Protect tender and newly planted shrubs from frost and wind
- Plant tulip bulbs
- Get the lawnmower serviced and sharpened
- Protect alpine from winter rains
- Keep off the lawn in frosty weather
- Insulate pots left out for the winter
- Install pond and greenhouse heaters
- Heel in a winter supply of leeks by the back door
- Plant fruit trees and bushes
- Lift and divide rhubarb crowns
- Winter-prune fruit trees and bushes
- Insulate the greenhouse

LAST CHANCE

- Protect tender plants from winter weather
- Lift and store dahlias
- Start off hippeastrum (amaryllis) bulbs to flower at Christmas
- Plant out spring bedding
- Plant garlic

GET AHEAD

- Order seed catalogues
- Begin any winter-pruning of deciduous trees and shrubs, including renovation of hedges
- Prune glasshouse vines

*A very happy birthday to those of you
celebrating birthdays in November*

Alice Geneux who will be 9 on the 1st

Ben Halford who will be 7 on the 4th

Elliot Cooper Hughes who will be 13 on the 10th

Freddie Hefford who will be 6 on the 10th

Emily Crowson who will be 15 on the 13th

Abbie Saunders who will be 12 on the 19th

Lucy Wallace who will be 8 on the 23rd

Keane Dickman who will be 14 on the 25th

Alex Thorne who will be 12 on the 28th

*If you are under 16 and would like your name added to
the birthday page, please call Louise Hutson on 814748
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.

DISCLAIMER

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

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Collating Dates for your diaries

2011

November	28	Double
December	No	

2012

Jan	30
February	27
March	26
April	30

May	29
June	25 (Tue)
July	30 Double
August	No
September	24
October	29
November	26 Double