



Arms of the de
Meppershall Family

THE MEPPERSHALL MESSENGER



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Meppershall Village Website: www.meppershall.org

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EDITORIAL

We wish all our readers a very Happy New Year and hope you had an excellent Christmas, even if that seems a long time ago now.

Our Christmas break is pretty well essential to us at the Messenger; without it we would have been collating the first issue of the New Year on Boxing Day, which might have been too much even for our stalwart band. But one

disadvantage of the break is that items that would have flowed naturally from our November issue now seem “so last year, my dear”.

One item that belongs to last year is the very sad and untimely death of Christine Elbourne. In our 2010 Souvenir issue I wrote:

“The post of Advertising Manager has been held by Christine Elbourne from 1990, with a break between 2000 and 2003 when it was held by Anne Collins and by Steve Ansell from then until 2007. Christine even found the time to be co-editor in 1995!”

I am truly saddened to have to write that Christine died on 17th November 2011. She was still our Advertising Manager and will be very much missed by her colleagues on the Committee as well as the many friends she made during a very active life in Meppershall. Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband Chris and their two children Peter and Lucy. The Messenger is proud to feature Christine on our cover this month, and to include tributes to her on pages 5 - 10 which celebrate the many ways in which her life enhanced Meppershall.

It is a sad fact that winter brings an increased number of deaths among the older population: we therefore also have to mark the passing of Lily May Dawson, long-time resident of Meppershall, with a loving tribute from her daughter on page 4.

On the plus side, I am delighted to welcome two new contributors; on page 49 you will find a piece from Matthew Hepburn, a young man who is considering a career in journalism, while on page 33 I am delighted to publish the first in a series of Sudoku puzzles, compiled by Paul Smith. Does any reader compile crossword puzzles? I would love to have a puzzle page!



Dick Bulley

LETTERS

Letter from Fred Bucksey

Poppy Appeal

I am a member of the Shefford branch of the Royal British Legion. It saddens me that there was no response to the letter in the Messenger from Joyce Harris, asking for someone to take over the Poppy Appeal – a magnificent job which she has done for many years.

It has therefore fallen upon Victor King, the Shefford Poppy Appeal organiser and his wife Jean to do the task – as if he hasn't enough to do! All it requires for this once-yearly job is for a person or persons to collect in their own area: boxes and poppies supplied by Victor and Jean. Perhaps this letter may prompt a better response in time for next year's Poppy Appeal. The work of The Legion goes on all the year. Victor's phone number is 638675.

Letter from Chris Elbourne

Chris, Lucy and Peter Elbourne would like to convey their thanks to all the friends who visited Christine during her short illness, to all those who sent Christine cards and flowers and subsequently those who sent their condolences, attended her funeral and gave so generously to the Garden House Hospice. Christine dedicated herself to many Meppershall causes, and we very much appreciate the kindness shown by the village community during these difficult times.

Letter from James Read

Whatever the weather, Meppershall is a lovely place for dogs and those of us who have them in the family. But lately I have felt a little embarrassed to be a dog owner as I look at some of the doggy-do left on pavements and footpaths around the village. We all know it should be bagged and binned, every time ... so come on Meppershall, we can do better!

James

Letter from Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service

Dear Mr. Bulley,

I am just cataloguing the latest Meppershall Messenger before adding it to the archives here and was delighted to see how well you did in the national competition. We receive quite a number of parish magazines and each of the archivists takes responsibility for cataloguing particular titles. Your magazine is one which falls to me and I have always found it clearly laid out, well numbered and it arrives every month without fail, which cannot be said for all the ones I deal with. What's more it has interesting articles. Obviously we are biased but we particularly like the History of Meppershall column, which is often based on documents that we hold. It is lovely to know that our archives can give such inspiration.

Your readers might like to know that they can, of course, visit us to use the documents for themselves but that we also have lots of information on our website www.bedford.gov.uk/archive and that we can now be followed on Twitter @BedsArchives for regular updates of new catalogues, web pages and events from the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service.

Yours sincerely

Pamela Birch

Conservator/Premises & Projects Officer

Lily Dawson 15/03/1917 – 28/11/2011

A tribute from her daughter Jeanette

Lily had lived in Meppershall for over 90 years before she moved into her brother's bungalow at Gravenhurst with her daughter to help her, as she could no longer manage on her own.

She was born in Meppershall at 29 High Street on 15th March 1917 and was the eldest daughter to Edmund and Emma Dilley. She went to the village school at the age of 3 and achieved a scholarship to go to Bedford school, but in those days it was expensive, so she left school at 14. Jobs were not plentiful so she cared for a lady and child for twelve months. After this she got work at the Meppershall Glove Factory but pay was very poor so 2 years later she got a job at a hat factory in Luton.

She cycled to Shillington every morning to catch the bus to Luton. Lily met her husband Reg at a dance in Pirton; they had a large family, so Lily was always busy but always managed to care for her own mother, who was on her own for a long time. During their life together they suffered two terrible losses, losing baby Gary at 4 days old and in December 1972 their son Ian aged 12 died suddenly from kidney failure. Lily found a lot of strength at this time from her family, friends and her strong faith in God. Soon after Reg retired he became confined to a wheelchair, but there were still some wonderful times. Lily and Reg loved children and they were always pleased to babysit the grandchildren while their great grandchildren will remember the weekly sweet treats. Having a large family, there were always new babies whom she really loved and she could practice her knitting which, like her cooking, was perfect. After Reg died in 1993 she gained confidence to go out more and at the age of 80 she got her first passport. She went on holiday nearly every year and enjoyed visiting places of interest and beauty including Portugal, Menorca and Jersey. She was a smart dresser and always liked to look her best. Reminiscing about the 'The Good Old Days' she loved, she was a true family woman who would always put her family first. She was a proud lady who was always contented with life. She will be greatly missed by all her family and friends as she was always willing to listen. She made a great impact on everyone's lives and she will hold a special place in our hearts forever.

-oOo-

Christine Kate Elbourne 1950 – 2011

What follows is a slightly edited version of the eulogy that Peter Elbourne spoke for his mother at her funeral on 13th Dec 2011. Peter was aware that most people would only know a part of Christine's life and he wanted to paint the complete picture. I am very grateful that he has allowed me to reproduce his words, so that we can all appreciate that picture in full.

Ed.

The last few months have been a very challenging time for our family. In many ways it has also been a confusing time. Mum passed away only nine weeks after being diagnosed, but that short period has felt like a lifetime.

Mum was born in Kingsbury, north London, in July 1950. Her parents were Beatrice and Joseph Holroyd and the family lived happily in Wembley. Although she was an only child, she grew up amongst close friends and relatives living in the same road.

Mum wanted to follow her father's profession and become an Electrical Engineer. However, her headmistress advised her that it was not a 'suitable' occupation for a woman and she refused to sign Mum's university application papers. But Mum with her headstrong nature ignored this advice and signed up for a course in Electrical Engineering at Kings College London. She qualified as a chartered Electrical Engineer and worked for Eastern Electricity.

Mum and Dad met when she was at college. They married in 1974 and moved to Meppershall when they came back from their honeymoon. Dad had grown up in Cambridgeshire and wanted to live in a village. But Mum had spent all of her life up until that point living in London, so the move from Wembley to Meppershall was quite a change. The Holroyds had lived yards away from a main railway line, which meant that Mum struggled with the silence she suddenly encountered at night. In fact, on one of her first nights in Meppershall she leapt out of bed after hearing a terrible noise. It turned out to be the hoot of an owl (ironic considering her later role in the community).

Mum threw herself into village life. Lucy was born in 1979 and I came along in 1982. With children in the family, Mum got further involved in the community and she started helping out with playgroup. This helped her exhibit the part of her character that showed empathy with children that was a constant throughout her life. Unfortunately, the only memory I have of that time, is being embarrassed that my Mum was at playgroup.

Mum soon had fingers in various community pies and was generous with her support and time; later, she would be one of the founding members of the PTA at Meppershall Lower School. A few of the parents decided there should be a PTA and Mum became Secretary. She also served as a Parish Councillor and when the playground behind the village hall was condemned, she helped set up a committee that ultimately raised thousands of pounds for the new play equipment. As Advertising Manager, she helped produce the Meppershall Messenger for many years. She also helped start the first book club in the village. I remember the house would occasionally be full of women gossiping over cups of coffee, but I don't recall many books being read. In fact our house was often full when Lucy and I were growing up. We had Bonfire Night parties for many years, when the doors were opened up to the village and the supply of baked potatoes never stopped.

Many may not be aware of Mum's achievements in the community because she was self-effacing as well as conscientious. It is for her time spent leading the Brownie Pack that she will be most warmly remembered.

She first helped with Brownies at Lucy's enrolment meeting – they were learning to knit that evening and so Mum was asked to stay and lend a hand.

So began a 25 year association with the Pack and she was Brown Owl for 23 of those years. Mum was always thinking about the Brownies, whether it was new activities for meetings or locations for future outings. Several years ago, she became involved with Operation Christmas Child. Each Christmas, the charity provides disadvantaged children around the world with decorated shoeboxes containing toys. As Brown Owl, Mum mobilised the village to produce hundreds of filled boxes. Most of the parcels were wrapped by Granny, who knew that sitting for hours with sellotape and wrapping paper was a condition of visiting Meppershall in November. Even now, our spare room is full of toys which will fill dozens and dozens and dozens of shoeboxes. We hope that in the coming years boxes continue to be despatched from Meppershall to those in need around the world. The Brownies gave Mum a lot of happiness and we are very happy that members of the Guiding Association are here today.

Mum enjoyed travelling and our family visited places far and wide. I fondly remember our summer and Christmas holidays in Europe. We always drove, which meant long journeys for Lucy and me stuck in the back of the car. The journeys were often frantic, because we always seemed to be struggling to catch the last ferry. Mum always had an interest in Disney, which was cemented when the family visited Disneyworld in 1984. We travelled to Florida regularly afterwards and in 1993 Mum purchased a house near Orlando with the inheritance she received following her father's death. Lucy remembers being very jealous of Mum going over to Florida for a weekend to choose furnishings for the villa. The trip to Alton Towers that Dad took us on that same weekend was not full compensation. We visited the house that became known as "Christine's Villa" twice a year. This included Christmases where it soon became a ritual for the family to play a round of mini-golf before Christmas lunch. Whenever we were on holiday, Mum was always on the lookout for presents or arts and crafts for the Brownies meeting.

In 1995, Dad decided to leave Rawlinson & Hunter – his firm in London – to spend more time with the family. To help Dad with the workload, Mum insisted on becoming his personal assistant, a role she continued right up until she fell ill in September. Within weeks of starting her job, her voice was as familiar to their clients as Dad's. In 2007, they downsized to the office in the garden at 5 St. Mary's Place. Mum was meticulous, diligent and took pride in her work, although shortly after the move to Meppershall she changed desks because Dad kept catching her surfing the internet. Her favourites list not only includes the Inland Revenue website, but also links to Hobbycraft, Delia Online and Celebrity Cruises.

Finally, I would like to reflect on the support our family has been given and the care that Mum received over the last few months.

We would like to thank those who visited Mum during her illness and those who sent the dozens of messages and cards we received.

Many included fond memories of Mum that we found very moving. We have seen the number of lives she touched and the depth to which she influenced so many people. We would also like to thank everyone who has taken the time to be with us today. There are many more who were not able to be here to celebrate Mum's life.

I want to end with a quote attributed to Albert Einstein that I believe encapsulates Mum's spirit and provides some comfort at this difficult time. (Mum would have also liked that it was from a scientist).

"Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us, our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life."

Mum was a kind, generous and emotional person who remained young at heart. She gave family and friends unqualified support whenever it was needed – and she had an innate sense for when help was required. She will be missed by many, but the memory of my Mum will never be lost.

CHRISTINE ELBOURNE – BROWN OWL – 1986 – 2011

Christine, like myself, came along to help when our children were at Brownies, and when our daughters grew up and left Brownies, we seemed to still carry on going! In Christine's case she carried on for 25 years and was Brown Owl for over 23 years.

During that long time, Christine always came up with new fun things for the Brownies to do and kept numerous 7-10 year olds busy, (but definitely not quiet) with lots of fun games, crafts, outings and other activities each Monday evening. Christine's enthusiasm, extraordinary kindness, energy and sense of fun will be greatly missed by current and future Brownies and by myself and the other helpers at Brownies as well.

Christine was always thinking about Brownies: even when on holiday she would return with a whole suitcase of sweets, crafts and presents. Obviously the work that Christine put into Brownies over the last 25 years cannot be fully expressed as that would take pages, if not a whole book, but hopefully the poem below will give some indication of the ways in which Christine brought so much fun and joy to so many children (some of who are now adults!) in the village.

For those who haven't attended Brownies, Christine was probably best known for her amazing tombola stalls at village events which raised money for Brownies and charity; and also for her hard work with the Christmas shoe box appeal, which would take over her house and car for a number of weeks each November, all her hard work culminating in usually over 100 shoe boxes filled with toys, books, clothes and sweets bringing joy to children in other countries at Christmas.

Suzanne Brightwell, Snowy Owl

POEM TO BROWN OWL

It happens on a Monday night
when the village hall is all alight
The Meppershall brownies come out to play
at the end of the school day.

We get into our groups, sprites, elves, gnomes and pixies
and enjoy playing games in our sixes.
We enjoy doing lots of fun things
and learning silly songs which we love to sing.

You helped us to earn our brownie badges
which we now wear with pride on our sashes.
We enjoy doing things from the brownie book
And eating cakes which you helped us to cook.

We love pyjama parties with our favourite bear
where you would bring lots of yummy food to share.
At Halloween we enjoyed our spooky night;
your scary hand bowl always gave us a fright

We went for picnics in the wood
Where we would run around probably more than we should.
We enjoyed our trips and have done quite a few
To Legoland, Gullivers, and the Zoo.
We also enjoyed our trips to the maze
On lovely sunny summer days,
Where we would get lost without a care –
In fact a brownie might still be there.

On our treasure hunts we always ended up at your home
In your garden looking for sweets we would roam,
Followed by burgers and hot dogs to eat
finished off by ice cream as a special treat
To Legoland, Gullivers, and the Zoo.
We also enjoyed our trips to the maze
On lovely sunny summer days,
Where we would get lost without a care –

In fact a brownie might still be there.
 On our treasure hunts we always ended up at your home
 In your garden looking for sweets we would roam,
 Followed by burgers and hot dogs to eat
 finished off by ice cream as a special treat
 Your tombola prizes were always second to none
 raising money for brownies whilst having good fun
 We loved all the things you would bring back from your travels
 lots of sweets to eat and crafts to unravel

Your shoe box appeal was village renowned,
 in every room of your house shoe boxes abound;
 lots of shoe boxes filled with toys have been sent.
 To a great many poor children a lot it has meant.

You were Brown Owl for over 23 years
 helping so many Brownies through both laughter and tears

Finally we would just like to say,
 In our own Brownie way,
 Thank you for all you have done
 To make our Brownies so much fun
 You have always been so very kind
 A kinder brown owl we will not find

Meppershall Bakery Bees *by Roger*

January is the low month, don't you think? The festivities are over, the daylight is short, the bank statements have arrived and the scales do not lie! As February arrives the days get longer and the egg laying may commence, so over Christmas I started to feed all the hives with some baker's fondant. A trip to the apiary on Boxing Day was the day I chose. All hives were showing some signs of life. Many bees were flying, perhaps fetching water to dilute the winter stores.

This month I thought that a brief run through the pest and diseases which afflict the honeybee might suit the mood. I will not write about each one in turn because that would be tedious but I will try to give you a feel for the sort of problems the poor bees suffer. On the pest side the worst by far is the beekeeper. Honeybees have been on the earth for millions of years and are still doing the same wonderful job – but along comes the beekeeper and messes it up.

We have crossbred different races of bees in search of higher productivity or transported foreign strains by accident or design, with sometimes disastrous consequences. As with the beekeeper, some of the smaller pests are also after a share of the honey, such as mice and woodpeckers in winter or wasps in late summer, which will attack and overwhelm a weak colony. Then there is the wax moth which lay eggs in the wax so that its millions of offspring can munch their way through the honeycomb. All these can be beaten off with a bit of care from the beekeeper – spare a thought for Canadian beekeepers who have to cope with bears which leave the apiary looking like a pile of firewood!

Then there are the diseases; like us, bees can have an upset tummy and even worse, dysentery. They normally store up their excrement in the long winter months and have a big clear out in the spring, sometimes on your washing. But when they get dysentery they can't get out in time and it is all over the hive and can make it uninhabitable. Some of the more infectious and contagious diseases are notifiable, a bit like foot and mouth in cattle. If we suspect these then the bee disease officer from DEFRA has to be informed. If the disease is confirmed a big pit is dug the bees are killed and the whole lot is burned. No hives can be moved within a three mile radius. The most serious of these is American Foul Brood which is caused by a bacterium which invades the larvae and reduces it to a gooey stinking mess, hence the name. Fortunately it is fairly rare now but when it arrives it is devastating.

Lastly, there are the parasites, even a louse which is a little red spider that rides piggy back on the bee and is no problem at all, but there are the other sort which are most unwelcome. The Isle of Wight disease (proper name is acarine) is caused by a little mite which lodges in the breathing tubes of the bee and reduces its foraging ability. The varroa mite, the most devastating of all, feeds on the growing larvae and pupae. The varroa mite is a native of the far eastern bee which is smaller than ours. The life cycle of our bee allows the mite to breed twice in the pupal stage of the bee and so the mite population explodes. The mites feed on the pupae with the result that the young bees which emerge from the cells are weakened and deformed. If the mite growth is unchecked then the colony will die. The arrival of varroa has meant the loss of wild honeybees to agriculture, horticulture and the economy. Now the only honeybees are kept ones. Last year we were inspected by the bee officer for any disease and pests - all was okay. He took honey for analysis and just before Christmas we had report back stating all was well.

Some honey still for sale at Rogers Bakery- see you there.

Meppershall VA CE Lower School

*'An outstanding Church
of England School'*

June 2008 and December 2010



School Report- February 2012

After a well deserved Christmas break, we are back and ready for another action packed term. We ended last term with a visit to the pantomime at Milton Keynes theatre. A bit of snow did not stop us and by the time we set off the roads were clear. A great time was had by all and our PTA deserves a huge vote of thanks for funding the whole trip.

2012 is a very exciting year for our country as we host the Olympic Games and as a school we are planning our own Paralympics in May with the help of the Redborne School Sports Partnership. Our topic work for the summer term will be based on the Olympics and our Year 4 class will be performing a musical also based on an Olympian theme.

However before all that we have started our new term with some fantastic stunning starts to our topic work. The children in Key Stage 2 are studying 'Life on a Dump' and are recycling, reducing and reusing. They had a wonderful set of workshops from Central Bedfordshire Council where they made their own paper from old newspapers. They intend to form an Eco Council and make sure we use our energy and resources in school with as little waste as possible. They also have in mind a very ambitious project to create a small greenhouse made from plastic bottles!

We welcomed back Miss Hornsey to Willows class after her maternity leave, and she immediately joined in with living 'Life in a Freezer'. The classrooms were turned into the Antarctic with icicles hanging from the ceiling to see how long they took to melt, white paper and cloth everywhere to set the scene and an exciting programme of study to ensure their learning is both fun and challenging.

Our other news is that Mrs. Barker gave birth to Winnie back in November; we send our congratulations to her and her husband and are very much looking forward to meeting her!

We also welcome to our Governing Body, Mr. Mark Clark, as a Parent Governor and Mrs. Dawn Abbat and Mrs. Anne Parsons who are Foundation Governors. It is so encouraging that whilst we are in an Interregnum at St. Mary's, there are members of the congregation who are willing to come and serve as a school governor to ensure our strong links with the church are maintained.

Whilst I realise it is very belated, the staff, children and I wish you all a successful and healthy 2012.

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 9th January 2012, but it also includes a few items from the meeting on 12th December 2011.

Lisa Antoine PCSO for the area gave me a report that for the Parish of Meppershall there were no reportable crimes in November and only two in December: criminal damage to a moped and an attempted burglary of a garage.

Among various observations to the meeting, CBC Cllr. Tony Brown confirmed Central Beds' ambition to have zero % Council Tax increase and indications are that this is likely to be achieved.

Planning & Housing (spokesman Cllr. Peter Chapman)

Recent Applications: - three received in November, none in December.

14 Shefford Road erection of replacement garage – no objections.

101 High Street construction of a dropped kerb – no objections.

30 Shefford Rd alterations to approved driveway/crossover – no objections.

Other Matters: - An appeal was heard against the refusal of the plans for the site to the rear and 47 Hoo Road. Unfortunately the Inspecting Officer passed the plans.

The matter of the Pigling has again been to court but proceedings were adjourned until 27th February 2012.

Finance

The action plan arising from the audit has been agreed and returned to the Auditor.

The Finance group are to meet to finalise the Precept for 2012/13 and it is hoped to have a zero increase once again.

Highways & Lighting (spokesman Cllr. Roger Bryant)

Regarding the footpath to Shefford, a request has been made that the “no footpath” signs be replaced with “pedestrians crossing” and white lines across the road in the three places where people have to cross the road.

A traffic survey was conducted on 3 consecutive days in early November (2nd - 4th) but the figures produced were in a different format from the previous survey in May 2011 (reported in the July issue of The Messenger). Having said that there appears to have been a reduction in vehicle movements from 20,000 down to 18,000 per week and the highest speed recorded is lower, 41-45mph from Shefford and 46-50mph towards Shefford. The reduction in movements is probably due people not using their cars so much and the reduction in speed could be explained by the longer nights and poorer weather in November. Another rather baffling statistic is that on each day there are considerably more movements towards Shefford than the other way. The Council will continue to ask for surveys and will collate the information obtained.

Environment & Leisure (spokesman Cllr. Paul Merryweather)

All the more important repairs to the play areas on Fosters' Field have been completed.

Allotment Land

All allotment tenancy agreements were delivered by the end of November; a number have yet to be returned and these are being followed up.

Old Road Meadow

Unfortunately the Old Road Meadow scheme did not win a prize at the Living Countryside Awards evening held on Friday 7th October. The old allotment land at the bottom of the plot is going to be sown with grass seed and it hoped to plant a Jubilee Oak in that area.

Jubilee Beacon

So that the Beacon in our area can be seen from as far away as possible, the Council is exploring the possibility of a joint Beacon with Stondon PC in the area near the water tower, subject to land owner's permission. A Beacon on the Church tower has been ruled out by insurance concerns, but if the joint venture is not possible then a Beacon will be lit on the normal November bonfire site.

The next Parish Council meetings will be held Mondays 13th February 2012 and 12th March 2012 at Meppershall Village Hall both commencing at 7.45pm.

Peter Chapman - Chairman of Meppershall Parish Council

YOUR SHOUT with Trevor Thorley



BLOWING OUR OWN TRUMPET

I wasn't aware of this fantastic achievement until I received my own copy of the December 2011/January 2012 issue, otherwise I might have been tempted to add my own two-penneth then.

Whatever any of you think of the Meppershall Messenger, coming 5th out of 620 entries in a National Parish Magazine competition is by far no mean achievement. I sense that our Editor Dick Bulley was probably feeling a little bashful in making this announcement in the last issue but believe me, he shouldn't be. We have every reason to 'shout from the rooftops' if we want to.

Competition is healthy; I have lived with it all my working life in National Newspapers and I think I know a little of what I am talking about. This award says what I have always believed, that **WE DO** have a magazine that is up there with the very best in the country, probably the very best in East Anglian region, but what it also says is that we obviously have one of the very best Parish Magazine EDITORS and Dick Bulley should indeed take credit for the level on which the Meppershall Messenger now sits.

I don't think it would be tempting fate to enter the competition again. We should do so full of confidence as we look for the ultimate Number One Spot...it is not unachievable!

As readers of the magazine, what are your views?

MEPPERSHALL ART, CRAFTS AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

This will take place on Saturday, May 26 2012 in the Village Hall. If you would like to take part in this extremely popular village event, further details can be obtained by calling Colette on 01462 815585 or by emailing her at colettehouse@gmail.com

KENNY BALL AND HIS JAZZMEN: Are back in Meppershall performing in St. Mary's Church again on Saturday, March 10, 2012, 7pm for 7.30pm (the bar will open at 7pm).

Following on from his last visit in October 2010, when there was a sell-out for a 'fantastic' performance by this great legend of the jazz world, The Friends of St. Mary's are extremely honoured that Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, taking into consideration their extremely busy UK and Europe programme, want to come back to Meppershall and entertain us again. Don't miss out!

Tickets are £20 and £15 and can be obtained by calling Trevor on 01462 813357 or email trevor.thorley1@btinternet.com

REMEMBER IT IS YOUR SHOUT Call Trevor on 01462 813357 or email: trevor.thorley1@btinternet.com

The above are all Trevor's own words, with no input from me, so thank you Trevor for the very flattering sentiments. But if we are to enter the competition this year, we will have to be even better, so if any one has comments on how we could achieve that, they will be welcome. – Ed.

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.

SHEFFORD LEISURE GROUP

By Enid Pamment



We start the year 2012 with a backward glance at the remaining trips we did in December last.

On Christmas in the Royal Landscapes, we began the day at the Saville Gardens Visitor's Centre where we could purchase morning refreshments. We then had a most interesting walk around the spacious gardens after which we drove to Windsor for lunch and time to enjoy either the shops or a gentle walk through the centre with our Guide. We then boarded our coach for a scenic tour of the Royal Landscape Winter Wonderland before making our way to the Windsor Farm shop where several of us purchased fresh meat and home made festive fare. This day proved so popular many of our visitors have requested another trip to Saville Gardens in the summer

Thursford – Norfolk. A small group of us joined Stevenage Group Travel for an evening performance of the Christmas Spectacular. Although the seating was disappointing, the show was as spectacular as ever and we do hope that we get much better seating together with a matinee performance for this year's show.

Carols with the Stars at the Royal Albert Hall did not disappoint those who went. The artists from Emmerdale gave an excellent performance which was all in aid of Leukaemia. The John Rutter Christmas Celebration Concert, also at The Royal Albert Hall, was as usual a memorable afternoon out, with superb music from the orchestra and singing from the choir.

The last event of 2011 was Brick Lane Musical Hall. This event is held in an old Church which lends itself for a Christmas lunch and an entertaining Christmas Show, which was full of classical musical fun.

Forthcoming Events 2012

The London Museum/Covent Garden	Tuesday 21 st February
Thriplow Daffodil Weekend	Saturday 17 th March

Get together, Memorial Hall, Shefford	Saturday 24 th March
The Mountbatten Festival of Music –RAH	Thursday 12 th April
Greenwich	Thursday 17 th May
Cambridge River Cruise with Lunch	Thursday 26 th July

Holidays

Images of Poland (Krakow) Flying from Stanstead	3 rd - 8 th June
Chatsworth & The Peak District –Novotel Nottingham	
Warners – Hayling Island (Hotel Accommodation)	1 st – 5 th October
<i>Kindly telephone for more details of any of the above. Bookings now being taken</i>	

London shows currently available (arranged by Stevenage Group Travel) are:

Matinees – Leaving Shefford at 11am – price includes coach:

Crazy for You – Gershwin's smash hit. Novello Theatre – Thursday 5th April (Dress Circle Seats)

Seniors Day Out – leaving Shefford 9.30 am - fish & chips lunch.

Jersey Boys – Tuesday 24th April. Prince Edward Theatre – Dress circle seats.

Singing in the Rain - Wednesday 9th May. - Palace Theatre – Stalls Seats - New Production.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra – Rogers and Hammerstein – Sunday 15th April – Royal Albert Hall – Arena and mid-Choir seats available. Leaving Shefford at 3pm.

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 feels 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

First of all, a very Happy New Year to you all. I hope you all had an enjoyable Festive season.

After such a difficult year for a great many people in 2011, I thought I would begin 2012 on a lighter note. The following piece was sent to me in early December, and not only did it make me smile, but it sums up the stupidity of what's going on in Europe at the moment. I hope it makes you smile too.....

"It is a slow day in a little Greek Village. The rain is beating down and the streets are deserted. Times are tough, everybody is in debt and everybody lives on credit.

On this particular day a rich German tourist is driving through the village, stops at the local hotel and lays a €100 note on the desk, telling the hotel owner he wants to inspect the rooms upstairs in order to pick one to spend the night. The owner gives him some keys and as soon as the visitor has walked upstairs, the hotelier grabs the €100 note and runs next door to pay his debt to the butcher.

The butcher takes the €100 note and runs down the street to repay his debt to the pig farmer. The pig farmer takes the €100 note and heads off to pay his bill at the supplier of feed and fuel.

The guy at the Farmers' Co-op takes the €100 note and runs to pay his drinks bill at the taverna. The publican slips the money along to the local prostitute drinking at the bar, who has also been facing hard times and has had to offer him "services" on credit. The hooker then rushes to the hotel and pays off her room bill to the hotel owner with the €100 note.

The hotel proprietor then places the €100 note back on the counter so the rich traveller will not suspect anything. At that moment the traveller comes down the stairs, picks up the €100 note, states that the rooms are not satisfactory, pockets the money and leaves town.

No one produced anything. No one earned anything. However the whole village is now out of debt and looking to the future with optimism.

And that, Ladies and Gentlemen, is how a bailout package works!"

Well, I hope you enjoyed that; the reality is not quite as simple but I think it serves to illustrate the point. There is little doubt that the European debt crisis will dominate the first few months of 2012, however behind that there are glimmers of better news coming out of the USA and even Britain – yes us! The media only tells you the bad news, never the good. There's a long way to go but maybe the first one or two green shoots are showing through?

For personal finance there is little hope of better rates for savers in 2012 (and possibly not until 2014), so maybe it's time to consider dipping a toe into the water of non-deposit type investments. A good place to start is to put either a small regular amount or a lump sum (up to £10,680 per tax year, or £5,340) if you've already got a cash ISA. There are also a number of fixed term plans around where the initial investment is secure (i.e. you cannot get back less than you put in), but if markets do rise, you could get a very nice increase on your money.

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

Polehanger: A Farming Diary

Episode 29



Although a little late by the time you read this, I still want to wish you a peaceful, healthy and encouraging year through 2012. I haven't written prosperous because that may not look likely in your circumstances. But there is still much that we can look forward to that doesn't involve money. So I hope that you may be able to escape from 'being under the circumstances' this year.

On the farm we can look forward with almost complete certainty to four seasons, some rain and some sun, a reasonable harvest, a distribution system that works, and agreements and contracts that hold and are honoured. That will not be the case everywhere!

Weather . . . or not

It all depends on where you live. Our annual rainfall for Meppershall in 2011 was 18.46 inches. This is only 75% of our average of 24 inches. Scotland and N Ireland by contrast have had persistent wet conditions from harvest onwards with damaging storms either side of the New Year.

England had an average of 79.2 mm of 'spring rain' the second driest on record and the second warmest Spring and Autumn since records began: Scotland had an average of 376mm of spring rain, the eighth wettest on record!!

Back to Meppershall: only 0.22 inches fell in March and April which are the critical months when soil moisture is needed for a wheat crop to take up applied nitrogen.

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

Rhino is making good progress. In some places it is ahead of schedule, in others marking time for the warmer spring temperatures. Remarkably the 'open' warm autumn / early winter has meant that pigeon damage is slight at the moment and the gas guns have not had to be deployed. This may change if cold weather appears and the pigeons gang up into hungry hordes.

We have forward sold about 30% of our expected harvest for collection in August at a price that matches our budget.

At the moment there is the potential for prices to ease up as news comes in from Argentina of damaging drought conditions there

Elsewhere on (and off) the Farm

The Solar Photovoltaic system is now installed and working. As the months go by and daylight hours increase, we will be able to see how close it is to its potential for producing electricity.

Interesting Statistic(s)

I read somewhere recently that it has been calculated that there are 925 million malnourished people in the world and 1.25 billion who are obese!

50 Years Ago: Michael Foster's Diary Extract from 1962

1st January: heaviest fall of snow since 1947 together with 12 degrees frost (I presume in Fahrenheit)! Just managed to get the car up the drive in tractor tracks as it took milk in churns by trailer to Wallace's Dairy at Henlow Camp. Fortunately there is little drifting.

19th February: cutting kale by hand each day for cattle. Village Hall Committee meeting this evening.

Thought for the month

Again read recently in a farming magazine:

A man in Hampshire enjoys his local countryside and last autumn planned a foraging picnic with some friends on a common nearby where blackberries, hazelnuts and chestnuts were abundant. His scheme however came to the attention of local officialdom who promptly told him he couldn't go picking blackberries, hazelnuts and chestnuts there. Upon enquiring 'why ever not' he was told that it's bad for the environment, or more specifically it posed a threat to newts (great crested newts he later discovered, which are an endangered and protected species).

The article concludes with this thought: 'of all the species in the world that most deserve to be endangered but do instead thrive and multiply greatly, officialdom tops the list, just ahead of mosquitoes'.

(With apologies to any of you who might be classified in the genus *officialus officialis*)

Chris Foster, 9th January 2012

Comments welcome from anyone – not just “officials”. – Ed

The History of Meppershall

I regret very much that recently Sandra Reade has not been well enough to create the next historic letters in her series. We send our very best wishes for a speedy improvement. Ed

Fairway Bar & Bistro @ Mount Pleasant Golf Club
Open to the public – no need to be a member or
play golf!

25% off our Bistro menu when you pre
book with this voucher

Valid Wednesday to Friday evenings - between
6pm and 9pm.

Great fresh food at reasonable prices – see
website for more details

We look forward to welcoming you soon
Up to 4 people per voucher

Complete details and present to staff on arrival

Name_____

Address_____

Email_____

Tel: No_____

Station Road, Lower Stondon, Beds, SG16 6JL
www.mountpleasantgolfclub.co.uk
[e: tarasimkins@mountpleasantgolfclub.co.uk](mailto:tarasimkins@mountpleasantgolfclub.co.uk)
01462 810104

MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE HALL NEWS

“THE GREAT BRITISH MEPPERSHALL SUMMER FAIR” Saturday 30th June 2012

The Summer Fair Committee is hard at work organising this year's Summer Extravaganza! Please put the date in your diary and come along and support this wonderful day. There will be a “theme” to this year's fair in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee and the Olympics. All stallholders and participants are asked to bear this in mind when organising/decorating their stalls. If anyone is interested in having a stall on the day, please contact Linda Primett, as follows:

E-mail – lindaprimett@hotmail.co.uk

Telephone – 01462 815629

Mobile – 07748 664041

Also, volunteers to help set up/clear up, etc. would be most welcomed. Again, please leave your details with Linda if you are willing to help.

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





LIFE ON THE WILD SIDE

By JEREMY HOLDEN

What's around the next corner?

My father once told me that I must have inherited the travel urge from him. He always wanted to see what was around the next corner. It is probably a common human urge; perhaps because of this, early humans made such dramatic journeys on their migration out of Africa, reaching the furthest corners of the globe in such a relatively short time. This urge has certainly been an element in my life, one that has taken me to some interesting places, and also gotten me into trouble when that next corner led to somewhere I wasn't supposed to go. I was arrested twice in Turkey for straying too close to the Iraqi border, incarcerated briefly in Liberia, and spent almost three months in a Baluchistan jail. But one incident sticks in my mind as justification for this urge and the surprises it can offer.

In the late 1980s I journeyed to Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province to visit the animist Kalash people. This strange ethnic group is believed to be the descendants of Alexander the Great's army. True or not, with pale skin and odd light-coloured eyes, they appear almost European. They are famed, however, for still retaining their ancient traditions of fire and ancestor worship. While their neighbours in Afghanistan's adjacent valleys were forcibly converted to Islam, the Kalash were spared and their valleys became known as Kafiristan (the land of the unbelievers). During the British Raj, this area was out of bounds. Explorers entered never to return, and those that did brought back fantastic stories. It was this place that inspired Kipling's *The Man Who Would be King*. By the time I visited, it was open to foreigners, although still difficult to access.

I spent some time with the Kalash, but these valleys were not what they used to be. Successive visits from National Geographic film crews had alerted the Kalash to their value as curiosities and put a distance between visitors and locals. In less visited areas this is not the case - travellers can be welcomed into a community remarkably quickly.

Disappointed by the situation, I spent time exploring the surroundings. One particular day I marched off towards Afghanistan, carrying a camera but no food or equipment. I walked up through increasingly smaller villages, stopping to drink tea in one house where a wizened man lay curled on a cushion like a foetus, only days away from death.

On the path I passed a gaggle of women who dropped to the ground as I approached – from fear or some cultural respect I never learned. Hunger didn't bother me but I stopped to drink at a stream whose banks were studded with pink orchids, and in the afternoon I pushed on towards the mountain border with Afghanistan. As the sun dipped behind the hills I came upon the first tatty evidence of the glacier that spilled from the moraine above. I realized at this point that it was too late to turn back. With the disappearance of the sun the air grew noticeably colder. It suddenly looked like being a long night.

No sooner had this thought passed than I heard a whistle. Standing at the edge of the scrub that bordered the stream was a young boy. Wordlessly he beckoned and I followed. He led me to a small corral, an open area enclosed by low stone walls, and motioned for me to sit. He whistled again and a flock of sheep bundled in to join us. A different whistle brought goats, another, two chestnut cows. The corral was now full of animals who settled down in their respective corners. The herder milked one of the goats and gave me a tin of warm milk and goat hairs. Then we bedded down on a soft mat of dry dung, and slept, back to back, under a shared blanket.

The herder was up at dawn making bread in the remains of the night's fire – perfectly shaped oval loaves emerged, from which he blew the grey ash. We ate these with more goats' milk. I had been almost helpless in this landscape, but the young herder had it perfectly under control. Later the boy's father arrived, carrying an inverted goat's skin full of milk. He gave me some of the salty liquid to drink and then sat churning the skin to make butter. I learned through my smattering of Urdu that they were Afghanis, crossing the border to graze their herds. In winter they would return. Afghanistan wasn't far away. Rather than head back to the village, I decided to walk further up the valley. I made it up on to the moraine and saw a group of travellers in boots made from bound sheepskins, with backpacks fashioned from inverted goat's skins, and small bows and arrows. They trudged across the ice and rock like refugees from another time. I hid behind a tree to let them pass, not certain how they might greet me, but feeling that were I to show myself they would be as unsurprised as the herder had been, and probably as welcoming. For these people, travel is part of life, and travellers are afforded the respect they hope to receive themselves. But their very strangeness reminded me to turn back.

Business Advice – 6: Marketing



Being good at your job is essential, but it is not sufficient to make your business successful: you need your potential customers to know about your products or services and to be willing to buy them.

Cold calling, leaflets, social media, seminars, gifts, word of mouth, networking, advertising, vouchers... the marketing methods are endless. What should you use for your business?

Identify your target market

The key to successful marketing is to “think like a customer”. Therefore it is essential that you perform a good market research to clarify who your current and dream customers are.

Try and answer the following question as accurately as possible: What are your customers’ demographics (age, gender, location...)? In light of the answers, ask yourself how best you can reach them.

Use your marketing budget wisely

Whichever marketing method you use, you must be able to assess its actual value. Systematically ask your new prospective customers how they found out about you and keep tabs on their feedback. Only with this information will you be able to see which process yields the best results.

Hopefully, you will already have some idea of what works for your company. Now I encourage you to capitalise on these winning marketing methods. For example, if word of mouth is key to your business, could you encourage your existing clients to refer others to you even more, by offering them discount vouchers for every successful referral?

In addition, don’t be afraid to try out something new. Cold calling may fill most people with dread, but it can be very effective, especially if your product or service is high value.

Conversely, after a fair trial, do not hesitate to end unsuccessful marketing schemes. At Just A., we advertised on LinkedIn for a while.

Although it was free of charge, it was very time consuming and produced no sales, so we stopped. Yet it may work wonders for you.

Last but not least, remember that it can cost up to 5 times more to win a new customer than to retain an old one, so look after your existing clients. Create a loyalty program or provide rewards to keep customers coming back.

A few thoughts on various marketing methods

The notes below are only a taster, but I hope they'll inspire you to think outside of your current marketing box.

Word of mouth is a tried and tested marketing method and a satisfied customer is your best advocate. To encourage people to talk about you, run a contest or stage an event. Networking extends the same logic to businesses: promote your suppliers, associates and other local companies, and they'll be willing to promote you in return.

Give things out for free. It is classic to offer free samples or free trial sessions. But what about sharing your knowledge and experience for free too? Run workshops or seminars to show off your skills. Organise walk-in information sessions in a local venue. Write articles (not sales pitches) about your products or services. Customers will be more inclined to use your company once they know that you are skilled.

Consider the use of the internet carefully. Why do you actually need to be present on the web? To authenticate your company for potential customers, or to generate business? For the former, free tools (blogs and social media) and a simple website may be all you need.



Albane Quesnot

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your local Business Coaching and Support partner

The Wine Society's Guide To Wine Tasting - 9

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 consider (at last!) at putting it in your mouth.

Why?

Although the nose is generally reckoned to do most of the detective work in evaluating a glass of wine, there are two important things it can't do. One is to register **sweetness, acidity, bitterness** and **saltiness**. This is the job of the taste buds, which also announce the presence of **tannin** and **alcohol**. The other is to measure the **length** of the wine – how long the feel and taste of it remain on the palate after swallowing or spitting – and to evaluate its **finish**.

Different parts of the tongue register different tastes. The sides spot sourness, or acidity, the back bitterness, the very central tip sweetness and on either side of it salt. Gums and cheeks are alert to tannin, and the back of the throat is adept at spotting the warmth of alcohol. All the more reason to work the wine all around the mouth to ensure it comes into contact with all these receptors, enabling them to tell the full story.

To pinpoint the effects of **tannin** before embarking on wine tasting, let a pot of tea stew for an hour or so. Flush a small portion around your mouth and note the puckeringly dry, bitter sensation it creates. It makes for a pretty unpleasant cuppa, but in wine it can often be a good sign. Tannin comes from grape skins, pips and stalks, as well as from wooden barrels. It is essential to the long-term welfare and ageing potential of red wine.

How?

Take a small sip, work the wine around your mouth and hold briefly to consider the overall dimensions and balance of the wine. Does any one element stand out? Or do all the components of the wine seem to be singing in harmony?

Now re-taste more thoroughly, ensuring you take in plenty of air, and don't be afraid to slurp and swoosh audibly if it helps. Try to pinpoint flavours and consider texture, particularly in reds, and the way in which the wine holds up in the mouth.

Now let your tongue do the talking. If the wine is **sweet**, is it balanced or cloying? Are there any **saline** elements? Are they pleasant and refreshing or out of kilter? Is any **acidity** apparent? If so, is it fresh, pleasantly piquant or plain sharp? Is there any underlying **bitterness**? Some wines have a natural bitterness you'll get to know with practice. Valpolicella, for example, has a distinctive sour-cherry character. However, an unpleasantly woody bitterness is generally speaking the sign of a badly-made wine. Is there **tannin** present? If so, is it in balance, or is it overwhelming the other elements? Is it stronger on the finish? Can you taste **alcohol**? In a perfectly balanced wine, even one which is high in alcohol, the only clue is a subtle warmth. A burning Armagnac-like spiritiness of the kind considered acceptable in very old Port, is, in any other case, a sign of poor equilibrium.

After swallowing or spitting, consider how the wine 'finishes': is it short and insipid, clean and crisp and workmanlike or long, complex and multilayered? How long does the aftertaste last? Many budding tasters find it useful to count it out in seconds, though a stopwatch is perhaps an accessory too far.

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

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

Calendar of Meppershall Events

February 2012

<i>Saturday 11th</i>		
Police Surgery	2.00 – 3.00 pm	Village Hall Car Park
<i>Monday 13th</i>		
Parish Council Meeting	7.45 pm	Village Hall

March 2012

<i>Saturday 10th</i>		
Police Surgery	9.00 – 12.00 Noon	Shefford Farmers' Market
Kenny Ball in Concert	7.30 pm	St Mary's Church
<i>Monday 12th</i>		
Parish Council Meeting	7.45 pm	Village Hall

April 2012

<i>Thursday 19th</i>		
Annual Parochial Meeting	7.30 pm	St Mary's Church
<i>Saturday 28th</i>		
Pre-school Table-Top Sale	1.00 – 5.00 pm	Village Hall

SUDOKU PUZZLE - HARD

	5		1	2	7			
7		8					5	
				4		3	8	
3	9	1						4
					5			
	8	6		5		9		3
				3		2		
		2		8	9			

The objective is to fill a 9×9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3×3 sub-grids that compose the grid contains all of the digits from 1 to 9

Solution on page 44

Paul Smith 07715-572362

Paul has provided me with a set of puzzle grids ranging from very easy to hard. My resident Sudoku expert at home rates this on a par with the Fiendish in her regular paper: it took her 30 minutes. As this is the first one, please let me know how you get on.

Ed

THE LUCY PAGES
By Lucy Standbridge
Aged 10



To start my article I'd like to say Happy New Year to you all!

I have been researching the New Year Celebration.

Firstly I have researched customs and traditions from around the world.

Denmark: In Denmark people save their old or broken dishes to throw them at their friend's houses on New Year's Eve. If you found lots of broken dishes outside, it means you have lots of friends!

Germany: In Germany people would drop molten lead into cold water and try to tell the future from the shape it made. A heart or a ring shape would mean a wedding, a ship means a journey and a pig is plenty of food in the year ahead.

Wales: At the first chime of midnight, the back door is opened and then shut to release the old year and lock out all of its bad luck. Then at the clock's twelfth strike, the front door is opened and the New Year is welcomed in with all of its good luck.

Scotland: Immediately after midnight it is traditional to sing Robert Burns' "Auld Lang Syne". An important part of Hogmanay is to welcome friends and strangers, with warm hospitality and of course a kiss to wish everyone a 'Guid' New Year. Also "First footing" (that is, the "first foot" in the house after midnight) is still common in Scotland.

To ensure good luck for the house, the first foot should be male, dark (believed to be a throwback to the Viking days when blonde strangers arriving on your doorstep meant trouble) and should bring symbolic coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and whisky.

People make resolutions because they want to improve something or do something they did not get to accomplish or do the year before.

Here are some New Year resolutions of people in Meppershall:

Mrs Carly Holloway: Mine could be a goal, but it's to get fit (even though I might not keep it!)

Will Lambley said: To eat more chocolate!

Laura Stock (age 10) says: I don't make resolutions because I wouldn't be able to stick to them!

Mrs Christina Steele: To go to the gym more, so we can eat more biscuits over time. Yummy!

Isabella Lambley says: to try and get out and about more.

Casey Holloway (age 11): To get to Lucy's house on time for school!

Mrs Sarah Lambley says: To stay chilled and get on Lucy's Page!

You're already half way there Sarah!

My resolution is to eat more sweets, but my mum thinks it should be to keep my room tidy! My dad's is to get a sausage machine and make sausages! And my brother Toby's is to be better at maths.

Jazzco Presents
Mr Kenny Ball
 AND HIS JAZZMEN

in Concert



St. Mary's Meppershall – SG17 5NA

On Saturday – 10th MARCH, 2012

At 7.30pm (Bar open from 7pm) [Numbered seating at £20 and £15]

TICKETS available from Trevor on Tel: 01462 813357 Email: trevor.thorley1@btinternet.com

www.jazzco.co.uk Tel: 08450 008 007

Meppershall Baby and Toddler Group

Happy New Year!



We said "Goodbye" to 2011 with a fun Christmas party – complete with a visit from Father Christmas. Thank you to everyone who brought in donations for the Christmas raffle – we were able to make up 2 lovely hampers.

We are now open again for 2012 and always welcome new families. We are a friendly group – a mixture of parents, grandparents and childminders with our children aged from just a few months through to 4 years, who meet in Meppershall village hall on Tuesday afternoons from 1:30 – 3pm (term time). We have a large selection of toys – including a wooden house, ball pool, ride-ons, dressing-up clothes and much more! We have a separate baby area and a craft table with new things to make each week. We provide a drink and biscuit for the children and refreshments are available for the adults too! Our sessions end with fun singalongs or parachute games. Your first session is FREE so come along and join in the fun!

For more information find us at "Meppershall Toddlers" on facebook



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

Bedfordshire Police have received a number of reports of Suspicious Telephone Calls in the Meppershall area. Callers have claimed to be from an IT firm. The resident is told that their computer has a large number of errors and needs to be fixed. The caller then starts to ask for personal details.

Bedfordshire police offer the following advice:

- Never buy goods or services, as a result of a cold call from a company, over the phone.
- Never disclose personal details over the phone, like bank account numbers, maiden names, or dates of birth. Do not discuss times and days that your home will be empty.
- Cold Calling can be reported to Trading Standards on 0 8 4 5 4 0 4 0 5 0 6.

Bedfordshire Police are urging vehicle owners across the county to think twice about leaving their cars running outside their homes while unattended. With the weather starting to turn a bit nipier, it is tempting for motorists to start their vehicles to warm them up before heading off on their journey. This means that vehicles are often left unattended which offers easy pickings for opportunist thieves.

This week there have been two incidents in the Leighton Buzzard area where motorists have been left car-less after leaving their running vehicles unattended. The first happened at 8am on Monday December 19 when a Vauxhall Astra was stolen from outside a property in Bideford Green, Linslade as the owner cleared frost from the windscreen. About 20 minutes later, a similar incident occurred in North Court, Leighton Buzzard, when a Nissan Quashqai was taken.

Chief Inspector Neill Waring of Bedfordshire Police, said: "I know that it can be very tempting for people to wait in nice, warm houses as their cars defrost but thieves have become wise. You have to ask yourself whether it is really worth the risk of losing your vehicle. The last thing that we want is for people to make things easy for criminals - there are plenty of products on the market to prevent frost or remove it quickly but the best way, by far, is to stay with your vehicle while it is being defrosted, and it's free."

For more advice about how to secure your vehicles and property, please visit the 'crime info' section of our website. If you have information relating to these incidents, contact Bedfordshire Police, in confidence, on 01234 841212, the non emergency number 101, or text information to 07786 200011. Alternatively contact independent charity Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111, or online at crimestoppers-uk.org.

Police Surgeries

◆ Problems ◆ Grievances ◆ General Advice ◆ Number plate securing

Wednesday 1st February, 2012

One Stop Shop, Clifton	2.15pm – 3.15pm
Rectory Road, Campton	3.25pm – 4.00pm

Saturday 11th February, 2012

Shefford Farmers Market	9.00am – 12 noon
Village Hall car park, Meppershall	2.00pm – 3.00pm

Saturday 10th March, 2012

Shefford Farmers Market	9.00am – 12 noon
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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.

Police Report for Meppershall Messenger

Bedfordshire Police received two reports of crime in Meppershall during the month of November and two during December, 2011. These related to criminal damage and burglary to outbuildings; they were recorded in various locations of the village and do not appear to be linked. Two calls relating to anti social behaviour were made in December, both related to traffic on the A507, and no calls were made in November.

Speedwatch was promoted in the last issue of The Messenger; unfortunately no volunteers have stepped forward. With spring fast approaching Bedfordshire Police would like to work with the residents of Meppershall to help slow the traffic down. If you are interested in making your community a safer place to live please contact the Local Policing team on 01234 842567.

Contact details for Bedfordshire Police: 101 to report crime and anti social behaviour, 999 in the event of an emergency or a crime that is taking place in front of you. Support from your local team can be obtained on 01234 842567 and LPT.SheffordStotfold&Arlesey@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

Kind Regards
Leigh Iddon
PCSO 3660
Shefford, Stotfold and Arlesey LPT, 01234 842567

The idea of being trained to use police equipment to monitor traffic speed through Meppershall must surely appeal to someone? Please get in touch with Leigh Iddon or with me if that someone is you. – Ed

SINGLE NON-EMERGENCY 101 POLICE NUMBER NOW UK WIDE

A single non-emergency 101 number has been rolled out to all police forces across England and Wales to help the public to access the police when they need them.

Bedfordshire Police launched '101' in September. It gives the public a memorable number for their local police to report crimes and concerns that do not require an emergency response. It will also help the police to deal more efficiently with calls for help from the public.

At 15p per call from both mobile phones and landlines, no matter how long the call or what time of day, the public will be spared the cost of traditional 0845 numbers previously used by many forces which can cost up to 40p per minute.

With only 25 per cent of 999 calls to the police requiring an emergency response, ministers and chief constables are confident that the 101 number will also ease pressure on 999 services. Police forces in England and Wales have gradually gone live with 101 on a phased basis. The last of the 43 forces have now adopted the number and it is already proving popular with more than two and a half million calls.

Commander Ian Dyson, ACPO lead on contact management, said: "Having just two phone numbers - 101 for reporting a crime that has happened, to get advice or to raise local policing issues - or 999 if it's an emergency, makes calling the police a lot easier and makes our services more accessible.

"It's also expected to reduce the number of inappropriate 999 calls the service receives, enabling us to respond to genuine emergencies more effectively. 999 should only be used in an emergency, that is when a crime is happening, when someone suspected of a crime is nearby, or where someone is injured, being threatened or in danger. For all other matters the public should call us on 101."



The Meppershall Players



Well, the Christmas season is over and we're now well into 2012. I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who was involved with the Christmas Variety show: from the comments I've received from members of the audience, a good time was had by all. I have already booked the hall for this year's pantomime: the dates are Fri 30th Nov, Sat 1st Dec, Fri 7th Dec, & Sat 8th Dec, with matinees on both Saturdays. Curtain up Matinees 3pm, Evenings 7.45pm.

Unfortunately our Spring 2012 production as been cancelled. The play "Gaslight" which we wanted to perform has been withdrawn from Samuel French's catalogue (obviously being performed by a professional Theatre somewhere in the U.K), and due to the time involved in selecting another play, we would not be able to have it ready for March. We would then run into Easter, and unfortunately after Easter, Mr Graham Scrase, who was to direct, is unable to do so due to work commitments.

We will still be busy working on a little something for the Summer fair on the 30th June

Due to other commitments Beverley Aberdien as stepped down as front of house Co-ordinator, Thank you Beverley for ensuring everything ran smoothly, it was very much appreciated. The Players are now looking for a successor to take over the position vacated by Beverley, if you are interested please let me (Karen) know.

We are also looking for a pianist for the Pantomime, if you are interested please let me (Karen) know.

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)

Meppershall Garden Club

December was a busy month for the MGC.

We had a Christmas social followed later that week with a Christmas wreath making workshop. Members brought along many foliages and accessories from their gardens to share. With help from one member, a florist, these materials were transformed into personalised door decorations.

Here are some photos of our works of art! Did you spot any of them adorning their owners' doors?



Our January meeting focused on our 2012 plans.

Do look out for those Snowdrops peeping through the undergrowth. I do enjoy these little treasures in life!



For more information on the Garden Club, Call:

Linda Parker
Kim Lee Tyler
Sarah Till

01462 815114 or
01462 811750 or
01462 817176

NOTICE BOARD

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?

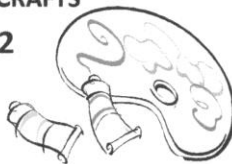
Solution to the Sudoku puzzle on page 33

2	4	9	5	6	8	1	3	7
6	5	3	1	2	7	8	4	9
7	1	8	4	9	3	6	5	2
5	6	7	9	4	2	3	8	1
3	9	1	8	7	6	5	2	4
8	2	4	3	1	5	7	9	6
4	8	6	2	5	1	9	7	3
9	7	5	6	3	4	2	1	8
1	3	2	7	8	9	4	6	5

MEPPERSHALL FESTIVAL 2012

MUSIC, ARTS AND CRAFTS

26 MAY 2012



CALL TO ALL ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS

For the 3rd edition of this great festival,
we will be once again promoting and showcasing YOU,
the amazingly talented people of Meppershall.

MUSIC AND LYRICS

Instrumentalists and singers
Beginners to experts
Classical, jazz, pop, opera...
Solo or as a group
From Britain or abroad

ARTS AND CRAFTS

From clay to canvas
From flowers to photography
Glass, textile, wood, metal...
Useful craft and beautiful art
Original work and replicas

To exhibit Arts and Crafts in the afternoon, please contact
Jacqui Plumley, 01462 844510, barry.plumley@tiscali.co.uk

To perform in the evening concert, please contact
Colette House, 07831 111062, colettehouse@gmail.com

Both by end of March

COVERS BY REQUEST

This month's cover picture of our late colleague Christine Elbourne was kindly supplied by her family; it was also used on the Order of Service at her funeral. You may have noticed from the advert that she used to run in The Messenger that the family have a villa in Florida, and we know that Christine loved to retreat to the warmth, so we thought that a background of blue sea and sun would be appropriate.

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.

IN MEMORIAM

Christine Kate Elbourne died on 17th Nov 2011 aged 61.
Our thoughts are with, Chris, Lucy & Peter.

Lily Dawson, nee Dilley died 28th Nov 2011 aged 94.
Our thoughts are with Jeanette (daughter) and family.

Bobby (Robert) Sheridan died on 16th Dec 2011 aged 88.
Our thoughts are with Pam and family.

St Mary's Parish Registers:

Baptisms:

Kayleigh Rose Larkman	27/11/11
Harry Bavister	18/12/11

Marriages:

Paul Carver & Johanna Carver	15/10/11
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Burials:

Lily Dawson (ashes interred)	14/01/12
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Meppershall Pre-school Ponderings

We would like to say a big hello and welcome to Dylan, Marley, Emily and Ben. We hope you will enjoy your time with us at the Pre School. We also say a goodbye and good luck to Ronin.

We are going to be holding a table top sale on April the 28th in the village hall from 1-5pm. If anybody would like a table the price will be £10, please contact the Pre-School for more details.

This term the theme is 'Shapes and Colours'. We will be making pictures using different shapes and making cheesy shapes to eat to! We will also be celebrating Chinese New Year by eating prawn crackers, opening fortune cookies, playing with rice and making dragons.

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

ANNOUNCING ANOTHER NEW LOCAL BUSINESS

The Dog House Dog Grooming Salon has opened in Arlesey. The salon is run by professional dog groomer Linsey Butcher and is fully equipped to provide a professional and caring service.

After being made redundant in 2007 Linsey decided to take her love of dogs and turn it into a career by training as a professional dog groomer at the UK's leading City & Guilds approved training centre. Qualifying in February 2007 with a commendation, Linsey began her business from her parents home in Hitchin, which proved successful and she is now pleased to announce the opening of The Dog House.

Linsey's philosophy is to provide a service that centres around the comfort and wellbeing of the dogs in her care at all times, ensuring every dog has an individual appointment in order to provide the one on one attention they deserve.

Dog Grooming advice from Linsey:

Grooming your dog regularly helps to maintain a healthy coat, removing dead hair as well as any extra bits the dog may be carrying around in his/her coat! Additionally, grooming your dog regularly can uncover any underlying problems on the skin, in the ears or paws.

There are many benefits to grooming your dog, for example:

- Stimulating blood flow to the skin thus promoting skin and hair growth
- Making your dogs coat shiny and healthy, as natural oils circulate to the coat
- Helping to identify signs of fleas, ticks, mites or other skin irritations
- Keeping your dogs coat tangle and matt free

www.thedoghouseuk.com

Discovering the Belgian City of Bruges, by Matthew Hepburn

Belgium is a country full of many wonderful cities; it is rich in history and architecture. From the northern city of Zeebrugge to the Capital, Brussels, this relatively small country offers a wide variety of destinations. It also boasts a love for its food and drink: Belgian chocolates, waffles, *frites* and its 800 different types of beer are all on show to its tourists.

When I visited Belgium, I travelled to Bruges, a city renowned mostly for its picturesque canals. The City Centre is full of restaurants and cafés serving strong beer and wine. The streets are lined with millions of *chocolatiers* selling quality handmade chocolate and liqueurs.

Bruges is a beautiful city. The buildings and Cathedrals illustrate original Dutch design and are breath-taking.

Bruges is also the perfect opportunity to shop. There are designer boutiques, from stylish clothes to expensive diamonds and department stores selling everything from top luxury aftershave to glasses and smart, fashionable watches. The shopping experience will leave you looking even more chic and elegant.

Touring this city on foot can be tiring, but a horse and carriage will take you down the old narrow streets, whilst a guide explains each attraction. It's incredibly informative and relaxing. An alternative is touring the canals by boat. This is a fantastic way to see the city from a different perspective. Although this is a lot of fun, be aware that it is extremely popular and queues build up quickly.

Like any break, it can become expensive. Food & drink are especially costly, so avoid the tourist areas when looking to eat out; you can be charged more just because of the location. Belgium is well-known for its bakeries which often sell local specialities that are absolutely delicious. At lunch time, enjoy fresh baked baguettes. These are normally much cheaper than in restaurants.

Connecting yourself to Belgium has never been simpler. Driving from Calais (France) takes just over half an hour; Bruges is then a further half hour from the Belgian border. This route is quick, convenient and practical. Alternatively, Eurostar provides a direct connection to Brussels; the journey time is approximately 2 hours. However, you will need to take a local train to Bruges' main station, which is located outside the City Centre with frequent bus and taxis connection.

I hope you will be persuaded to see Bruges for yourself. After one visit, you will return!

St Mary The Virgin

Meppershall Parish Church (Church of England)
Church Road, off Campton Road

Contact information during interregnum

Churchwardens:

Brian Bellamy 01462 815944 (Pastoral Assistant);

Brenda Wright 01462 816446.

Lay Reader (Licensed Lay Minister):

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 – FEBRUARY 2012

Date	Time	Service
Sunday 5th 3 rd before Lent	11.00am 10.30am	Parish Communion Junior Church at the School
Sunday 12 th 2 nd before Lent	8.30am	Holy Communion
Sunday 19th Last before Lent	8.30am 11.00am	Holy Communion All Age Service
Wednesday 22 nd Ash Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion (BOCP)
Sunday 26th First in Lent	11.00am	Family Communion
Sunday March 4 th Second in Lent	11.00am	Parish Communion

St Mary's Weekday Service: A Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer), each Wednesday at 10am.

Notice

A Deanery Confirmation will be held at St Mary's Henlow on Thursday 7th June 2012, 7.30pm. Any children (secondary school age) or adults who may be interested in Confirmation are warmly invited to come and find out more at a special meeting on Thursday 16th February, at 15 Buxton Close. If you are interested but cannot manage this date, please contact Pam Halliwell on 817069.

A message from St Mary's...

I am writing this before we have even taken down the decorations but traditionally February 2nd marks the end of the Christmas season. When you read this we may have been wrestling with (or perhaps even enjoying) some snow and ice but the days will be getting longer and there will be signs of Spring. The children will be looking forward to half term. Perhaps we will be planning our holidays, or buying our vegetable seeds and tomato plants! I always feel February is a time of hope and anticipation.

At St Mary's we are moving towards the appointment of a new Rector, hopefully with interviews in March, though it seems unlikely that anyone will be joining us before September.

Lent will be upon us at the end of the month. Many of us tend to think of Lent as a time to give things up, but I think it is usually better to try and do something extra. Maybe we could plan to attend a service once or twice, to make a note in our diaries of the Easter services or to read one of the Gospels right through?

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting is on Thursday 19th April and we would love you to join us then to hear what we have been up to and to help us plan ahead as far as we can.

Plans for the new kitchen are progressing well. We are talking to the Diocesan authorities about the plans for a new heating system and once this is moving forward (and we can move the boiler) we will be improving our toilet facilities too! We shall keep you informed...

With every blessing,

Pam Halliwell - Lay Reader.

Junior Church

2012 is now upon us and what an exciting year it is going to be too! It's countdown to the London Olympics, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and of course more fun, worship and activities at Junior Church.

At the beginning of December JC began celebrating the birth of our Saviour, children and leaders alike enjoying an extended session, making cards, Christmas tree decorations, listening to festive music and decorating biscuits.

Life is so busy especially with young families to look after, but sometimes taking a step outside of our hectic schedules can revive and inspire us.

Junior Church is informal, fun and friendly, we warmly welcome children from the age of 3 upwards.

If you would like to come along and see what it's all about and what we do during our JC sessions in the School, we are there on the first Sunday of each month from 11am – 12 noon. Hope to see you in 2012.

The JC Team

CARROT CAKE**FEBRUARY 2012**

375g (13ozs) flour
2 teasp baking powder
2 teasp bicarbonate of soda
Pinch of salt
1 teasp cinnamon
375 ml (13fl ozs) sunflower oil
250g (9ozs) caster sugar
4 eggs
3 medium carrots, grated
Handful of walnut pieces

FOR TOP OF CAKE

1 packet of Philadelphia cream cheese
icing sugar to taste
a drop of vanilla to taste
walnut pieces and a little orange zest

METHOD

- 1) Mix together the oil, sugar, eggs, salt, and cinnamon.
- 2) Sift the flour, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda together, and fold in with the egg mixture.
- 3) Then add carrots (one coarsely grated and the other two finely grated,) to the mixture.
- 4) Then add the walnuts. Put mixture into baking tin and place in preheated oven at 150 °C (300 °F, Gas 2) for about an hour. When it is cooked a knife will come out clean.

TO DECORATE THE CAKE

- 5) When the cake is cold, decorate with cream cheese and icing sugar.
- 6) Mix a small packet of Philadelphia cream cheese with icing sugar to taste, and maybe a drop of vanilla essence.
- 7) Put on cake and decorate with walnut pieces and a little orange zest.

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 15 on the 6th

Keira Thomason who will be 9 on the 6th

Joseph Fairy who will be 14 on the 14th

Evie MacCormick who will 14 be on the 15th

Benjamin Saunders who will be 8 on the 16th

Abbey Lowden who will be 14 on the 18th

James Wallace who will be 13 on the 19th

**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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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 - 2012

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