



The Meppershall Messenger



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Editorial

By Mike McConnell

Welcome to your April Messenger and a big thank you to David Turner, who put together last month's magazine while I was enjoying a vacation. Due to an e-mail glitch Lucy Standbridge's column didn't appear, but it has been safely restored to its normal berth this month. Thank you, Lucy.



I think that we have some interesting contributions for you in this edition. Firstly, we have the first instalment of [results from the Village Forum Survey](#). This is of particular interest to me, because it focuses on communication within the village, including the role of The Messenger. You will recall that in an earlier editorial, I undertook to study the results carefully and learn any lessons we can from the findings – watch this space for developments, later in the year!

The second piece that I would like to draw to your attention is the overview of the planning-permission process in Central Bedfordshire from David Lamb. The Messenger asked for this contribution because we expect that the application for the development by Croudace Homes will follow this process, later this year. I've been looking at the [planning section](#) of the recently-redesigned Central Bedfordshire website, where there is a lot more detail. I noticed that once an application is received, the plans are published online together with the dates of the consultation period. Anyone (with a networked computer or smartphone) can view the proposal and any interested party can submit comments - though the council can only take into account those on recognised planning issues. Importantly, comments are only accepted during the consultation period, so those wanting to comment will need to be alert.

I was pleased to read the news from the [Meppershall Academy](#). The school had recently undergone an OFSTED inspection and this month's contribution quotes extensively from the inspection report. I'm sure that the parents of current pupils will be cheered by the result. The Headteacher and all the staff are to be congratulated on the outcome.

Finally I was interested to read the illustrated article by Sarah Collins about her Meppershall home; [The Old Coach House](#), which was re-thatched last year. I have the feeling from what Sarah and Matt have written, that owning a 400-year old property becomes more a matter of custodianship for the future, than is the case for my new-build.

These, and all your usual favourites, are in your Meppershall Messenger this month.

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Readers' Letters

Dear Editor,

I was just sitting down to write a letter regarding traffic, in response to Jamie's which appeared in the February issue, when Mr. Trundle arrived with the March edition! How time flies.

I can't better Linda Primett's letter about this, printed in the March issue, so may I wholeheartedly endorse what she says in it. As many will know, I drive a school bus (aka the 'Flying Banana', due to its colour!) through the village each day on Route 81 to Robert Bloomfield School. Meppershall is, by quite a margin, the worst of all the villages I serve in regards to traffic volume, congestion and awkwardness. The areas outside the village shop and (at peak times) outside the school are the worst, with people now parking their cars actually on the bend at the junction with the Campton Road. That 'serious accident' that Linda mentioned is not far away.

Negotiating the road past the village shop, particularly in a large vehicle, is a nightmare. I don't know how feasible it would be, but if parking was restricted to the village shop side of the road it would afford better visibility than with the present arrangement. As it is, on approaching the shop area, I look for reflections in the glass window of the shop and if I see vehicles moving, I stop. On more than one occasion I have been overtaken by impatient motorists who then cause even more delay by meeting the oncoming vehicle head-on. On one occasion I was sworn at by the driver who had put himself in this position and who ordered me to reverse so he could position himself in front of me! In fact, I cannot legally reverse with children on board without a 'banksman' (someone to see me back). May I suggest that two way mirrors be positioned outside the shop so that motorists approaching from either direction can see if their way is clear? Or how about traffic signals at each end, to allow only alternate one-way traffic through at a time? That would slow the speedsters down a bit!

Being your local Jeremiah, I can guarantee that the problems are going to get worse, much worse. As Linda observes, more houses = more traffic, simple as that. More cars, more school buses, more delivery vehicles, more lorries. It is time, I think, that we decided whether Meppershall is going to become a town rather than a 'big village'. I'm afraid the local 'Planning' Department want to flout all previous planning guidelines and have two towns right next to each other, i.e. Meppershall and Shefford, rather than concentrate on carefully expanding one. It's not just us, they seem to want to join up Shefford, Clifton, Arlesey and Stotfold, nineteen-thirties style. Before long, they will need to consider a bypass to by-pass the bypass, as well as a new road round

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Meppershall! Whilst claiming to “carefully preserve our history and heritage” of course.

This is not the solution. It is not being thought through enough. It’s the recipe for the complete destruction or despoliation of what is left of the Bedfordshire countryside around here, and of our village as we know it. If this is allowed to go ahead, they’ll soon need to pacify us with the promise of a new Town Hall rather than a Village one. I would urge everyone to think very carefully indeed about this, and how we want Meppershall to be and how we want to live. Remember, “you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone”. And when it has gone, there’s no road back. At that point, many of us, I think, will want to take the road out.

Roger Crawford

Covers By Request

Master Thatcher Nick MacKay and son Callum re-roofing The Old Coach House in 2015, photo courtesy of owner Sarah Collins - for full story see page [37](#).

Appeal for Help

Your Meppershall Messenger urgently needs help managing its advertising accounts. This is a crucial task that ensures that the magazine continues to arrive through our letterboxes each month, free of charge. No previous experience is necessary, as full training will be given. If you think that you could help, please contact any member of the team.

GNOMES – Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Meppershall Good Neighbours Group (GNOMES) are holding their Annual General Meeting on 21st May 2016 at the New Meppershall Care Home starting at 10:30 AM.

All residents of Meppershall are welcome to attend and participate in the proceedings. If you have any thoughts, ideas or queries with regard to what the GNOMES do then feel free to come along and air these. If you think you may be interested in becoming a volunteer you don't have to wait until the AGM to put yourself forward but this may be a good opportunity to do so.

The Agenda for the AGM is as follows:

1. Chair's Welcome (PH)
2. Minutes of meeting on 10th May 2014
3. Matters arising from previous meeting
4. Treasurer's report on financial progress in Year to 30th April (DN)
5. Secretary's Report (MB)
6. Publicity (KT)
7. Election of Officers (ALL)
8. New Phone Holders (MB)
9. Nominated Neighbour Scheme (All)
10. Any Other Business (All)
11. Date of next meeting

Meppershall Academy



Love for God, Life, Learning and for Each Other

We are delighted to announce the outcome of our OFSTED Inspection which took place on February 23rd - 24th. It was a full, two day inspection and our overall effectiveness has been graded as 'Good'. The last time the school was inspected was 30th September - 1st October 2010 and as many of you know, much has changed since then. So, we are particularly pleased with our result which puts an end to the challenging times the school has been through in the past seven years.

Some of the highlights of the report follow. If you would like to read the report in full, please look at the school website.

www.meppershall.beds.sch.uk

The headteacher has brought much-needed stability to the school after a turbulent and unsettled period. In a relatively short time, she has gained the confidence of the entire community. Parents, staff and governors commented on how much the school has improved under the headteacher's leadership.

The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. The school teaches a mixture of both 'stand-alone' subjects and topic-based learning and this approach works well. The school's curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and visitors to the school.

Standards are rising in the school, and are above national average at the end of Key Stage 1, significantly so in reading and writing.

Governors managed a difficult period for the school well. They sought appropriate advice when necessary and acted on it in a timely fashion. Governors, with the support of the diocese, have secured the long term leadership of the school and, as a result, the school is on a clear upward trajectory once again. Governors know the school well.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust systems are in place to safeguard children. Staff know how and when to report concerns and the headteacher makes appropriate and timely referrals where necessary.

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Teaching is good overall and is improving. The school has a very positive atmosphere and it is clear that the staff are ambitious for the school and its pupils. Outcomes are improving because there is a shared desire to the very best for pupils.

The teaching of mathematics has been strengthened by partnerships with other local schools. Pupils worked with the local middle school on a mathematics project, extending their problem-solving skills while raising money for charity. The school is also working with a mathematics specialist from a local upper school to improve the quality of teaching in the subject.

Staff have created an environment where pupils feel safe to get things wrong. Pupils know that we learn through making mistakes so they are not afraid 'to have a go'. The atmosphere in school is positive and encouraging and this has a significant impact on helping pupils to learn.

Pupils are polite and friendly. They are happy and enjoy coming to school. Pupils play well together during breaktimes and cooperate with each other well during lessons.

Early years is led well and the children currently in the Reception class are making good progress. The curriculum is used well to engage and interest the children and this has a direct impact on the progress they make. The early years classroom is bright and attractive and offers a good range of activities across the areas of learning.

I am truly gladdened that all the hard work by everyone in the past two years has been recognised by OFSTED. Meppershall CE Academy is a Good school and serves the children who come here well. Thank you to the whole community for working together to achieve this lovely outcome!

Kind regards

Nickie Moore

Meppershall Parish Council Report – 14th March 2016

At our meeting on the 14th March there was only one new planning application to consider, which was distributed to the Planning and Housing working group for consideration.

We also heard from a representative of Croudace Homes that their planning application will be made to Central Beds Planning Department in mid-April following the public exhibitions on the 2nd and 5th April. When the application is made the documents can be examined on line <http://tinyurl.com/p44uyk8> (in the 'Search by Address' box type 'Meppershall' to see all applications that have been submitted). The application can also be viewed at the Chicksands offices of CBC.

In the Highways section of the meeting we reviewed a comprehensive report from the working group who are progressing items such as the condition of the lower end of Hoo Road, new signage to direct traffic to St. Mary's Church, and the problem with overgrown hedges that obstruct footpaths and highway signs.

The Environment and Leisure group reported that orders had been placed for the repair and replacement of public seating and maintenance work to be carried out in Old Road Meadow.

There are still a number of vacant allotments available for rent from as little as £12 per annum. If you are interested please contact the Parish Clerk meppershallclerk@gmail.com.

A group called 'Save the Sugar Loaf 2016', which has approximately 40 members, has made a new application for the pub to be listed as an Asset of Community Value. The Parish Council gave this initiative its full support and will write to CBC in support of their application.

The Village Plan Group reported to the Council on their findings from the surveys carried out so far. They will shortly be launching a dedicated website to show all their results and analysis in full. There will be a link to this site from www.meppershall.org.

Above are just outlines of some of the items covered at the meeting. I would urge you to come to any of our meetings and see what happens in the full discussions. The agenda is always posted on the Parish Council Notice Board at the Village Hall.

David Foscett
Councillor
Meppershall Parish Council

Overview of the Planning Permission Process

We thought it would be interesting to the residents of Meppershall to have an outline of the process through which a planning application must go before planning consent can be granted. We asked David Lamb of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Planning Department for a summary:

The application by Croudace Homes for development of the site behind the Village Hall is just at the start of this process. The exhibition being mounted by Croudace on 2nd and 5th April in the Village Hall constitutes the first formal step - see item 1. below.

1. Community consultation undertaken by the developer (discretionary)
2. Any comments received are considered and proposal amended as appropriate.
3. The application is submitted, the Council sends written notification to neighbours adjacent to the site, the relevant Parish Council, and statutory consultees such as the highways team at CBC, the Environment Agency, IDB, etc.
4. Any comments received are considered carefully by the Council, and the proposal assessed against local planning policy, and Government guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
5. The application is amended as appropriate.
6. The case officer prepares a report and makes a recommendation.
7. The application is determined either under delegated powers to the Development Infrastructure Group Manager or by the Development Management Committee.
8. Approval or refusal of planning permission is issued.

David Lamb

Planning Manager (East)

Development Management

Regeneration and Business Directorate

Meppershall Village Forum

[#LOVE MEPPERSHALL](#)

The Village Plan Review Group has been hard at work since the last issue of the Messenger came out, and this month we want to tell you about some exciting new developments in the way that we report to you.

We have now published the results from our first questionnaire on Communication. So far, these have been published on our Twitter page (<https://twitter.com/mepvilforum>) and on the newly launched Meppershall Village Forum Facebook page (www.facebook.com/meppershallvillageforum). The Meppershall Noticeboard is now a separate page for use by villagers.

We are now pleased to tell you about our new website which can be found at the following address: <https://meppershallvillageforum.wordpress.com/>. You can either type this address in to access the website directly or go to the village website (meppershall.org) and click on the Forum link. Here you will find details of our top findings from the first questionnaire, as well as a link to a PDF containing the full analysis of that questionnaire. There's lots of other information to have a look at on the website and more will be added along the way.

If you don't have access to a computer, the top findings are reproduced below and if you would like the full detail of the survey, please contact Paul Smith on 07715 572362.

Our fifth questionnaire on Transport and Highways accompanies this issue of The Messenger and is also available online. You can find the link at any of our online sites, as detailed above. Please do keep your answers coming by completing and returning the questionnaires by whichever method is easiest for you. The more input we receive, the more useful our conclusions will be!

Thank you,

The Village Plan Review Group

forum@meppershall.org

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Village Forum Survey 1 - Communication

Our Top Findings

1. What People Want to See

80% of respondents would like to receive information on all of the following:

- Updates on village schemes and projects.
- Community events.
- Public notices.
- Police reports.
- Parish Council meetings agenda, calling notices and minutes.

2. What is Good/Bad Communication?

Good communication is defined as repeated information (both over time and in various forms):

- Multiple sources of information/advertising used in parallel, with special focus on the use of The Messenger, web-based formats and posters.
- Regular and/or early information.

Poor communication is defined in terms of not visible, detailed, early or regular enough.

3. The Messenger is key to communication in the village.

4. The website and the Facebook page are important and require development.

5. Villagers would like to receive an email newsletter.

Shefford Leisure Group - April 2016**By Enid Pamment**

With the lighter evenings on their way hopefully some of the outings and holidays may inspire you. I do hope you may find something of interest and would care to join us. This week, before going to press, we are holding our annual 'Get Together' where we present our annual cheque to a representative from Keech Hospice Care for Children. This year we decided to arrange something a little different so we have booked the Stondon Golf Club for the afternoon, and with the number of people who have booked it is quite popular.



'Just Gotta Dance' on Sunday 21st February 2016 starring Anton Du Bec - another very popular and enjoyable afternoon spent at the Milton Keynes Theatre. A small group of people were well looked after for their journey to and fro on the Whitbread Wanderbus, and look forward to future trips to MK Theatre later in the year.

On the last day of February our visit to Hendon and the RAF Museum proved something not to be missed. There were over 100 aircraft on show and nowhere else in London enables you to see so many historic and ground breaking aircraft without paying an entrance fee! Drop in on the First World War in the air, a new permanent exhibition to discover pioneering men, women and aircraft. Discover the history of aviation from the earlier gliders to today's Eurofighter Typhoon, before discovering our Lancaster, 'S for Sugar' in Bomber Hall. Amidst the display of helicopters (some you can explore inside) you can sit in warmth and comfort enjoying a midday snack whilst viewing! Or visit their fully licensed restaurant.

Alas the date is against us to relate on the happenings of our 'Get Together'. All will have to be revealed in the May 'Messenger'.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS (At a Glance) 2016

Camden Market with their usual hustle & bustle!	Sunday 10 th April
The Bodyguard MK Theatre (Matinee Performance)	Wednesday 20 th April
Dutch Waterways River Cruise	Tues 26 th April - Sun 1 st May
A Taste of Leicestershire	Tuesday 17 th May (<i>Sold Out</i>)
Dad's Army/Bressingham Steam Museum	Thursday 2 nd June
Guys & Dolls MK Theatre (Matinee Performance)	Wednesday 15 th June
Visit to Keech Hospice Care (limited seats)	Wednesday 22 nd June
Sandringham Flower Show	Wednesday 27 th July
BBC Country File Live - Blenheim Palace	Thursday 4 th August
Cotswolds - Chavenage House	Tuesday 16 th August
A Day by the Brighton Seaside in August	Sunday 21 st August
Sunny Afternoon - MK Theatre	Wednesday 31 st August
Twist & Shout at Wickstead Park with lunch and afternoon tea	Tuesday 13 th September
Torquay - TLH Hotels - The Derwent Hotel	Mon 10 th – Fri 15 th October
Thursford Christmas Spectacular (Matinee)	Friday 11 th November
Turkey & Tinsel - Eastbourne Daish's 'Flagship' Hotel The Claremont	Thursday 1 st December to Monday 5 th December
NEW: Anglesey Abbey - Winter Lights	Sunday 11 th December (TBC)
Oh What a Christmas Cracker, at Wickstead Park	Tuesday 20 th December

LONDON SHOWS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE (with Stevenage Group Travel)

Les Miserables - Queens Theatre - Matinee Dress Circle Seats	Wednesday 25 th May, leaving Shefford at 10.15am
Brick Lane Musical - Entertainment with afternoon cream tea	Thursday 9 th June, leaving Shefford at 10.15am
BEAUTIFUL - Carole King Musical - Aldwych Theatre, Stall Seats	Thursday 23 rd June, leaving Shefford at 10.30am

Please telephone for availability and prices of any outings or shows listed above.

For all holidays, which includes transport and 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 enid.pamment@gmail.com.

Enid Pamment – Shefford Leisure Group

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The Meppershall Players



'A Mid-Summer Night's Dream' rehearsals are going well, costumes are being sorted, set and props designed and lines learnt.

Charlotte Goddard, our leading lady in many of our productions, is making her directorial debut; she has also transposed Shakespeare's old English rhyming lines, into a modern English non-rhyming play.

Having read this play once at school and twice in Dorothy Morris's garden (whilst acting it out) in its original format, I never realised what a funny Rom-Com it was. Charlotte's adaptation of this classic is well worth the price of admission. Tickets are £10, Concessions £8; performances on Friday 17th & Saturday 18th June. We're hoping to make Friday night a Charity performance.

Tickets will be on sale from Wed 6th April from the Players' every Wednesday evening at Meppershall Village Hall, 7.30pm till 9pm, until Wednesday 1st June when they will be on sale at Roger's Bakery.

The Meppershall Players are on Face book (Meppershall Players Community) Insta-gram, Twitter, Meppershall Village Hall Website, the list is endless also the Player's notice board in the front foyer of Meppershall Village Hall

The Players are always welcoming to new members. Everyone pitches in to make our rehearsals and productions fun. We encourage people to have a go at any part of a theatrical production they feel they want to participate in.

If you want to see what we're about, just drop in to the hall any Wednesday evening. You don't need a formal invitation, just walk in and say hello (we really are a friendly bunch).

The Players meet every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm at the Village Hall. Membership is currently free and we welcome people from the age of 9 to 90+. To indulge in all areas of theatrical performances, set building, costumes, directing, acting, make-up, song & dance. Interested? We look forward to meeting you.

Karen Mitchell (Players' Secretary) 01462 816336

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Notices

'TRUGS & TROWELS' Gardening Club

'Willow & Hazel Growing'

and why natural products benefit your garden

talk given by a speaker from Wassledine, Gravenhurst
(also an opportunity to purchase some of their products)

Monday, 4th April - Campton Village Hall at 7.30pm

Everyone Welcome - Admission £1.50

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

www.meppershall.org

The Meppershall website has recently undergone a rewrite to introduce a new look and feel, and also incorporate new facilities for users and readers.

There is plenty of space available for Village Groups, Clubs and Organisations to publish newsletters, reports, advertisements or let the public know what they stand for or what they can offer members or the community.

These Village Organisation pages can be set up and managed on your behalf - all you need to do is provide the words and photos. Or there is now the facility for any member with basic word processing skills to carry this work out on behalf of the group (full training will be given). If you already have a website we can place a link in the menu.

This website is sponsored by the Parish Council and it is completely free to any organisation. If you are interested in this offer please contact me at the email address below.

David

webmaster@meppershall.org

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Where My Caravan Has Rested

By Denis Neilson

Australia Trip (Part 8) – Brisbane and beyond (continued).

We visited the Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve which is said to be one of best remnants of subtropical rainforest in Australia. It really had some beautiful trees and fine examples of strangling figs and creeping vines. We did not see many birds but we could hear them singing in the treetops some 150 feet above our head. A video was playing in the information room, which showed some of the birds in the forest. They really are beautiful but too difficult to see when they are so high in the canopy. We had a good view of the Glass Mountains which are the result of volcanic activity some 50 million years ago. They are huge stumps which were formed by the magma pouring into caves and caverns, then, over the years, the softer rocks around them eroded away leaving lumps of rock sticking out of the ground.

Another first, I had lots of them on this trip, was to see pineapples growing. I had never realised that they grew on the ground nestled in a bowl of leaves; I thought they grew on trees! Limited educational upbringing! Brisbane was not without its rain so this very wet weather sent us into the aquarium. It was the first aquarium that I had visited that had a glass tunnel which allowed you to walk "through" the fish and have them swimming at the side and above you. We were watching the seal display when there was a call for a volunteer to feed to seals. The person who was selected answered to the name of Wayne who said he hailed from New Zealand, which we have since found out, placed him at a disadvantage with the home crowd! He was dressed in an oversized shirt, Bermuda shorts and flip flops, or thongs as they call them in OZ. He managed to catch the third slippery squid that was thrown to him and dutifully held it out to the seal below him which raised itself out of the water and took it but our Wayne failed to let go and was pulled off balance, falling into the water which caused a big oooh!! from the crowd. He splashed about and made it towards a low platform a little out from the edge of the pool and as he was climbing on to it, a seal caught the leg of his shorts and pulled them off. Wayne grabbed the platform which immediately collapsed throwing him once again into the water with no way out if he was to preserve his modesty so he simply hung on to the floating platform. Meanwhile the shorts, courtesy of the seal, made their way to the trainer who kept telling the seal to take them back and shouting to Wayne to hang on! Needless to say the seal did all sorts of jumps and splashes before returning the shorts to Wayne who was then able to climb out of the pool. It was very entertaining and the crowd loved it much more than balancing balls or jumping through hoops.

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Up at 4.05am! Collection on time at exactly 5.30am; but what for? We were going on a trip to Fraser Island with a tour which picked us up from our campsite. We then travelled for one and a half hours to Rainbow Beach where we stopped for what can be called a natural break before heading off to the ferry. The term ferry is rather grand for it was a landing craft which looked to me as though it had been used at Gallipoli but it could have been younger and used in the D Day landings in 1944. It took us over the small stretch of water to Fraser Island where we beached (literally) and strolled off the ramp onto dry sand just in time for morning coffee! The island stretches over 123 kilometres in length and 22 kilometres at its widest point. With an area of 184 000 hectares it is the largest sand island in the world. Being sand the winds and tide change its landscape almost daily. It has long uninterrupted white beaches flanked by strikingly coloured sand cliffs, and over 100 fresh water lakes, some tea-coloured and others clear blue and all ringed by white sandy beaches. Ancient rainforests grow in sand dunes along the banks of fast-flowing, crystal-clear creeks. There are no roads but there are some holiday cottages and a few hotels, everything is basic, very basic. It has a constant freshwater supply from an underground lake which overflows through springs and creeks back into the sea. It is said that a drop of rain on the island takes 600 years to get to the ocean. The island rises to 300 metres in height and is all sand, yet it is able to support a lot of vegetation and was once a big logging centre, now it is a world heritage site. Its main claim to fame is that it has the



purest strain of Dingo (wild dog) in the world. We had a tour of the island in our bus staying close to the water in order to travel on the firmest sand. One beach, on the east coast of the island, is called 75 mile beach for obvious reasons. We stopped by a creek which has water so clear that you can hardly see it. Also, it has no bacteria in it so vegetation in the water does not

rot but makes its way to the sea in prime condition. We stayed the night and our hotel room was fine, but there was no TV and the food was plain but nice enough. Up around 6.50 the following morning and after breakfast headed for Lake Wabby. This lake is a barrage lake, the only one on the island. Such lakes are formed by drifting sand filling up the entrance to and the exit from a bend in the river. The river itself is diverted but the isolated bend becomes a lake which in turn becomes totally reliant on rainwater to remain filled. Over the course of 70 years or so the sand will continue to pile up until ultimately it fills in the lake. Somewhere along the course of the river the process will already have re-started and a new lake will eventually be formed. ...to be continued

Significant Events

Birthdays in April:

Kathleen Drummond will be 89 on the 7th April

Shireen Longland will be 85 on the 10th April

Many congratulations to Kathleen and Shireen

If you know of a significant event in the village, please let the Editor know: we are looking for things to celebrate! 80th, 90th and 100th birthdays we mark with the presentation of a cake from The Messenger. We would also love to hear about big anniversaries or any other cause to celebrate.

STOP PRESS

Bake it Like Berry...



The Meppershall Bake Off is back for its 3rd year running!

Categories and classes will be formally announced in the next edition of The Messenger with the usual registration booklet including set recipes, rules etc, delivered to every house in Meppershall in May and available to download the website.

Due to its increasing popularity there will be 3 WI judges this year, so prove your baking prowess and enter! The competition is open to all and takes place within the Bake Off marquee at the Village Fair being held this year on Saturday 25 June.

Good things come to those who bake, but if you can't wait 'til then contact alli.roberts@hotmail.com

Go on, give it a dough...

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Warden Abbey Vineyard celebrating 30 years

Bedfordshire's oldest vineyard near Old Warden is 30 years old this year! Now run as a community and education project by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity. There is a lot going on to celebrate the anniversary. The major event is the Vineyard Open Day on September 11th when there will be a rare opportunity to visit both the vineyard and the historic Warden Abbey building. The vineyard will also be opening monthly for public tours between May and September. There's a new Friends of Warden Abbey membership scheme, and Gift Subscriptions make a great present for a keen gardener or wine enthusiast - members can visit the vineyard for free throughout the year to follow the progress of the vines, as well as benefiting from discounts on wine purchases, tours and members' events. You can now even 'Donate a Vine' as a gift, helping to restore this historic vineyard.

Details of all tour dates, booking, and Friends membership/Donate a Vine are on our website www.wardenvineyard.org.uk . You can also keep up to date on [facebook](#).

Upcoming events (please note it is essential to book for these events):

Friday 22 nd April	Wine tasting evening with a difference! Fun & informative with quiz & prizes. (£15)	Old Warden Village Hall 7pm.
Saturday 28 th May	English Wine Week vineyard tour & tasting (£8)	11am and 2.30pm at the vineyard.
Tues 28 th June	June vineyard tour & tasting (£8)	11am at the vineyard.



Love Your Bones

Bones are quite literally the support system of the body. So - it's important to keep them strong and healthy. Here are our 10 top tips for loving your bones, keeping them as healthy as possible:



- 1. Know your family history** as it is a key indicator of bone health.
- 2. Boost calcium consumption** for the proper development of teeth and bones.
- 3. Remember your vitamin D.** It contributes towards calcium absorption.
- 4. Your diet** should be balanced and nutritious.
- 5. Exercise daily for 30 minutes.** Weight-bearing exercises like running, walking, stair climbing keep bones strongest. Resistance training improves bone health too.
- 6. Consume less caffeine** – it interferes with the body's ability to absorb calcium.
- 7. Reduce your alcohol intake** - but, like caffeine, there's no need to quit entirely.
- 8. Quit smoking.** It can prevent the body from efficiently absorbing calcium, decreasing bone mass.
- 9. Sleep well.** We need 7.5 to 9 hours of sleep each night to function at our best.
- 10. Minimize falling hazards** and try balance-building activities like yoga, t'ai chi, and dancing.

Remember – if you have any niggling aches and pains please don't ignore them...

Early investigation can prevent restricted movement, increased pain or a worsened injury. Our friendly team at Shefford Osteopathic Clinic aims to see you within 48 hours and ease your symptoms quickly. Contact us via SheffordOsteo.com or call 01462 811006.



WANDERBUS II HITS THE ROAD!



Wanderbus, your local Community Bus provider serving all the villages surrounding Shefford, is proud to announce the launch of their second bus as from 4th April.

In 2015 Wanderbus won an award from Department for Transport (Rural Minibus Fund) to finance the additional bus that was delivered at the end of February.

Based in Meppershall and run entirely by volunteers, Wanderbus will now be increasing the frequency of existing routes and offering new routes including Biggleswade and St Neots (market day) with a monthly excursion trip to Cambridge.

The service is **open to all passengers**, young and old, with cash fares and concessionary travel passes accepted on all routes.

New Timetables are available –

- On the counter at Shefford Health Centre
- Call 0300-123-3023
- Ask at Meppershall Village Store
- Download from www.wanderbus.org.uk

Their drivers are always willing to help with shopping, pushchairs, walking aids and will stop as close to home as possible, where safe and legal to do so, a great advantage for those with mobility issues or heavy shopping!

It is YOU the passenger who helps to fund the operation of Wanderbus services so they ask that you make the best use possible of these great new services.

NB. The buses are also available for **private hire** for schools/clubs etc.

CONTACT: 0300-123-3023 For Information & Bookings

Visit: www.wanderbus.or.uk

E-mail: thewanderbus@gmail.com

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Wanderbus - Meppershall Timetable from 4th April 2016

Bookings & Info : Tel :0300-123-3023

W2 BEDFORD - Every Wednesday	OUT	RETURN
Shefford Road	09.11	RR
High Street	09.12	RR
Rectory Road	09.13	RR
Bedford - Corn Exchange	10.10	12.25
W3 BIGGLESWADE – Every Monday	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Road	09.32	RR
High Street	09.33	RR
Shefford Road	09.34	RR
Biggleswade - London Rd Retail Centre	10.10 OR	11.37 OR
Sainsbury's	10.17	11.30
Asda	10.22	11.25
W6 SHEFFORD - Every Friday	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Road	09.20	RR
High Street	09.22	RR
Shefford Road	09.24	RR
Shefford - Morrisons	09.29	10.45
Shefford Health Centre	09.34 OR	10.50 OR
W10 ST NEOTS - 2nd Thursday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Shefford Road	09.10	RR
High Street	09.12	RR
Rectory Road	09.14	RR
Roxton Garden Centre	10.05 OR	12.45 OR
St Neots - Market Place	10.15	12.30
W11 MILTON KEYNES - 3rd Thursday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Shefford Road	09.08	RR
High Street	09.10	RR
Rectory Road	09.12	RR
MK - Midsummer Blvd / Debenhams & M&S	10.10	
/ John Lewis	10.12	13.15
W12 HITCHIN - Every Tuesday	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Road	10.07	RR
High Street	10.08	RR
Shefford Road	10.09	RR
Hitchin – Bancroft Stop D	10.45	12.30
W14 WELWYN GARDEN CITY- 1st Thursday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Road	09.20	
High Street	09.21	
Shefford Road	09.22	
WGC Central Bus Station	10.05	12.00

OR = Stops on Request

RR = Return Stops on Request

CAMBRIDGE EXCURSION – 4TH THURSDAY OF MONTH - RING FOR DETAILS & BOOKINGS £10.00 per person return – Sorry no travel passes can be accepted

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Meppershall Calendar of Events

April (See also the [calendar](#) on the village website)

Day	Date	What's on?	When	Where
Fri	1	Bingo	6:45 pm	Social Club
Sat	2	Churchyard Working Party (Bring your tools)	9:00 - 4:00 pm	St Mary's Churchyard
		Exhibition of proposed development by Croudace Homes	10:00 - 2:00 pm	Main Hall, Village Hall
		Karen's Karaoke	8:00 - 11:00 pm	Social Club
Sun	3	Junior Church Meeting	11 am	Meppershall Academy
		Social Club Brewery Trip (members only)	See notice board for more details	
Mon	4	Willow & Hazel Growing talk by speaker from Wassledine (admission £1.50)	7:30 pm	Campton Village Hall
Tues	5	Exhibition of proposed development by Croudace Homes	3:00 till 7:00 pm	Main Hall, Village Hall
Wed	6	Meppershall Players	7:30 - 9:30 pm	Village Hall
Thurs	7	Evergreens	2:15 - 4:00 pm	Sugarloaf
		Paul Carne's Quiz Night	7:30 pm start	Social Club
Fri	8	BINGO	6:45 pm	Social Club
Sun	10	Teen Table Talk	11:45 am	The Rectory
		Second Sunday Stroll – 5 miles to St Mary's, Clophill	2:15 pm	St Mary's church gate
Mon	11	Parish Council Meeting	7:30-10:00	Village Hall
		Bible Society	7.30 pm for 8 pm	65 House Lane, Arlesey
Tues	12	Rectory Tea	2:00 - 4:00 pm	The Rectory
Wed	13	Meppershall Players	7:30 - 9:30 pm	Village Hall
		GNOMES Coffee morning	10:45 am	New Meppershall Care Home
Thurs	14	Annual Parochial Church Meeting	7:30 pm	St Mary's Church
Fri	15	BINGO	6:45 pm	Social Club
Wed	20	Meppershall Players	7:30 - 9:30 pm	Village Hall
		Wine tasting evening (admission £15)	7:00 pm	Old Warden Village Hall
Thurs	21	Evergreens	2:15 - 4:00 pm	Sugarloaf
Fri	22	BINGO	6:45 pm	Social Club
Sat	23	Celtic Morning Prayer	9:00 am	St Mary's Church
		Charity St Georges Day Disco (fancy dress optional)	8pm-late	Social Club
Tues	26	Rectory Tea	2:00 - 4:00 pm	The Rectory
Wed	27	Meppershall Players	7:30 - 9:30 pm	Village Hall
Fri	29	BINGO	6:45 pm	Social Club

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Central Beds Council - Advice for Residents



Meppershall bottle banks are intended for household glass only

Central Bedfordshire Council have unfortunately received information that the bottle banks located at Meppershall Village Hall are being misused. Reports suggest that they're being used to dispose of commercial glass. This excess of glass leads to the banks filling up quicker, leaving little capacity for Meppershall residents to recycle their glass.

Don't leave bottles, jars and other waste beside the banks

The Council also have issues with bottles and other waste being continually left on the floor when the banks are full. This type of fly-tipping can build up and costs both time and money for it to be cleared.

So please remember the bottle banks are on private property and the Council don't want to lose the goodwill of the landowner and have to withdraw them.

If the bottle banks are full, please contact us Central Bedfordshire Council on **0300 300 8302** and we can arrange for the bins to be emptied. Likewise if anyone spots the bottle banks being misused then please contact us and we can investigate the matter further.

The Lucy Page

By Lucy Standbridge

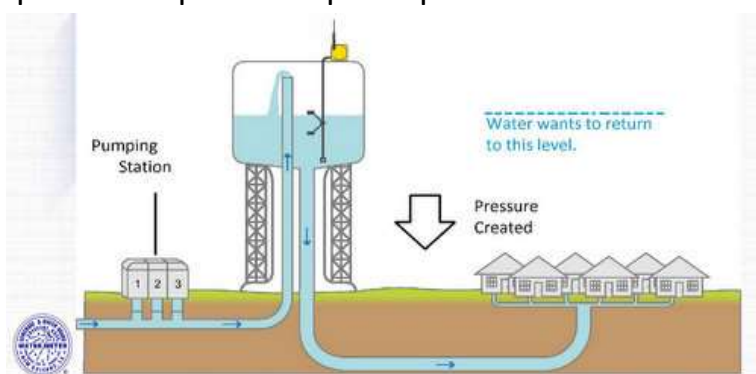
The Meppershall Water Tower

For my page this month, I thought I would find out what water towers do, such as the one at the top of Chapel road, and how they work.

Simply, water towers hold water to be used by water systems in case of emergency. You will most likely have experienced a power cut, or no phone service, but it is very unlikely that you have not been able to get water from your taps. Water towers contain a large tank of water that can hold enough clean and treated water for its area, to be used to supply the pipes of the village or town it has been installed in, in case the water system has a problem. Most water towers can hold up to 1 million gallons (that's 546,092 litres!), which is enough to supply all the houses in that area for a day. They cannot refill without power, because they need a pump, but they can quickly supply a village with water in case of an emergency. Some water towers can act as a reservoir of water if needed during peak times, as the water level in the tower typically falls during the peak water-use hours of the day, and then a pump fills it back up at night.

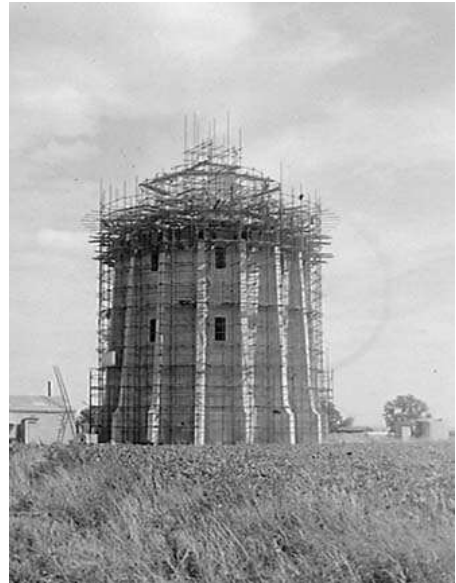


In order for water to come out of our taps, the water has to be pushed up, against gravity, which creates pressure. This is why we don't have underground tanks. Water towers are tall and built on high ground so that there is enough pressure to supply homes and buildings with water in case of an emergency. The more elevated the water is, the more pressure that will be made. Usually, for each foot in height a water tower has, produces approximately half a pound of pressure per square inch. In areas that have many hills, such as



**Diagram showing how water towers work.
From: uptownmessenger.com**

Meppershall, water towers are placed on higher ground, which means they don't have to be as tall. In flatter places, the water towers may have to be taller in order to create pressure.



The current Meppershall water tower was built around 1950, and there are quite a few early photographs of its construction. These photographs shown are estimated to be taken between March 1949 and February 1950. These were found on amphillimages.com, and numbers 40-65 in the Meppershall & Gravenhurst collection.



Paul Savuto – Finance

Investing – Beginner's Guide

If your savings goal is more than five years away, putting some of your cash into investments could allow you to earn more from your money and keep up with rising prices.

What are investments?

Investments are something you buy or put your money into to get a profitable return. Most people choose from four main types of investment, known as 'asset classes':

- **Cash** – the savings you put in a bank or building society account
- **Fixed interest securities (also called bonds)** – you loan your money to a company or government
- **Shares** – you buy a stake in a company
- **Property** – you invest in a physical building, whether commercial or residential

There are other types of investments available too, including:

- Commodities like oil, coffee, corn, rubber or gold
- Foreign currency
- Contracts for difference, where you bet on shares gaining or losing value
- Collectibles like art and antiques

The various assets owned by an investor are called a portfolio. As a general rule, spreading your money between the different types of asset classes helps lower the risk of your overall portfolio underperforming.

With an instant access cash account you can withdraw money whenever you like and it's generally considered a secure investment. The same money put into fixed interest securities, shares or property is likely to go up and down in value but should grow more over the longer term, although each is likely to grow by different amounts.

Returns

Returns are the profit you earn from your investments. Depending on where you put your money it could be paid in a number of different ways:

- Interest (from cash deposits and fixed interest securities)
- Dividends (from shares)
- Rent (from properties)

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The difference between the price you pay and the price you sell for – capital gains or losses

Risks

None of us likes to gamble with our savings but the truth is there's no such thing as a 'no-risk' investment. You're always taking on some risk when you invest, but the amount varies between different types of investment.

Money you place in secure deposits such as savings accounts risks losing value in real terms (buying power) over time. This is because the interest rate paid won't always keep up with rising prices (inflation).

On the other hand, index-linked investments that follow the rate of inflation don't always follow market interest rates. This means that if inflation falls you could earn less in interest than you expected.

Stock market investments may beat inflation and interest rates over time, but you run the risk that prices may be low at the time you need to sell. This could result in a poor return or, if prices are lower than when you bought, losing money.

When you start investing, it's usually a good idea to spread your risk by putting your money into a number of different products and asset classes. That way, if one investment doesn't work out as you hope, you've still got your others to fall back on. This is called 'diversifying'.

When should you start investing?

If you've got plenty of money in your cash savings account – enough to cover you for at least six months – and you want to see your money grow over the long term, then you should consider investing some of it.

The right savings or investments for you will depend on how happy you are taking risks and on your current finances and future goals.

If you are unsure of whether you should be investing your money, please speak to Paul Savuto, DGS IFA Ltd Chartered Financial Planner on 07834 499595 (Meppershall based)

Meppershall Social Club – April and May

* BINGO Every Friday Night. Doors open 6.45pm eyes down 7.15pm.
Members free, Non-members £1 entrance fee.

* KAREN'S KARAOKE Saturday 2nd April 8pm-Late, Saturday 7th May 8pm-Late
Sing-a-long to your favourite songs at this fun for everyone evening in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

* PAUL CARNE'S QUIZ NIGHT Sunday 10th April 7.30pm start, Sunday 8th May 7.30pm start. Paul Carne is our resident quiz master, with a highly entertaining quiz for all the family. £1 per person entry fee, no set number in team (you can have as few or as many as you like in your team). 50-50 split of entrance fee, half to charity half to the winning team. Non Members welcome.

BREWERY TRIP: Wednesday 6th April, Members Only. Limited Spaces, More details on Social Club notice board in club area.

SNOOKER at the Social Club, with two well maintained tables. Club members can play every evening when the club is open. For more information pop into the Social Club any evening, or contact The Club after 8pm on 01462 817359. Club opens 8pm; we look forward to seeing you.

Saturday 23rd April St Georges Day Disco, 8pm-late celebrating all things English past and present in a fun evening for all the family. Fancy Dress Optional (but fun). Prizes for best/imaginative costumes. Tickets £3 in advance from the Social Club (during opening hours), £5 at the door on the night (subject to availability). This is a charity fundraising event in aid of Bladder Cancer & Diabetes, which are the two chosen charities of the Social Club for 2016.

We are pleased to say that despite some 'low life' stealing the charity bottle from the club last year, the generosity of Club Members and Visitors to the Club after the incident enabled the club to raise £500, which will be split equally between St Johns Hospice Moggerhanger and the British Heart Foundation the Clubs charities for 2015.

More Events at the Club in next month's issue.

MEMBERSHIP for 2016 is due now (pick up a form at the Club).

Meppershall Social Club 01462 817359 after 8pm.

Film Review – Spotlight

By Carlie Newman

Up for Best Picture and Supporting Actor - Ruffalo and Supporting Actress McAdams - is SPOTLIGHT (cert.15 2 hrs. 9 mins.)

The subject sounds distasteful but the film is actually a true and well-made account of the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests in Boston, which was brought to light in 2002 by a remarkable team of investigators working for 'Spotlight' at the Boston Globe. The disclosure didn't just shock Boston but had a wider impact on the whole of the USA and indeed on the rest of the world.

It all starts when a new editor Marty Baron (Liev Schreiber) takes over at the Boston Globe in 2001. He identifies the story of a local priest abusing a large number of young children over his 30 years in working in the Church and he wants the Spotlight team to investigate. This means a major job of taking on the Catholic Church in Boston.



From left, Michael Keaton, Liev Schreiber, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams, John Slattery, & Brian d'Arcy James in 'Spotlight'

At first some of the team, including the Spotlight editor Walter "Robby" Robinson (Michael Keaton) is concerned at the huge task and the effect it will have on their largely Catholic readership, but he and his team of reporters Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams), Michael Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo) and researcher Matt Carroll (Brian d'Arcy James) approach the job professionally and spend all their time looking first at one case and then at many more as the scale of the paedophilia is realised. They are backed up by the Globe's Deputy Editor Ben Bradlee Jr. (John Slattery).

They speak to the attorney of the victims, Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci), interview adult victims who were assaulted as youngsters and hear their very sad stories. There is an exciting sequence when Mike Resenedes rushes around to get the court records - which have been removed by the Catholic Church - released to the public. As the team pour over the documents, it becomes obvious that the scale of the abuse is much more extensive than was first suspected. The team support the Editor's view that "We're going after the system."

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Obviously the Church officials, under Cardinal Bernard Law, the Archbishop of Boston (Len Cariou), are very much against the exposure, which the Spotlight team learn has been known about for decades. After publication of the true facts, Cardinal Law was forced to apologise and he resigned from his post in December 2002. He was, however, re-assigned by Pope John Paul II to the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome where he still serves!

The Boston Globe published the full article on 6 January 2002. By this time the team had confirmed that more than 70 local priests in Boston, who the Church had assigned to other parishes, were involved. They paid money to the families of the child victims to keep the cases confidential. Most of the youngsters targeted were from broken homes or those without fathers present. The resulting furore led to revelations in more than 200 cities throughout the world. And in 2002, the Spotlight team published nearly 600 stories about sex abuse by more than 70 priests whose actions had been kept secret or covered up by the Catholic Church. At the end we learn that 249 priests have been publicly accused of sexual abuse within the Boston Archdiocese, and, by 2008, 1,476 victims survived priest abuse in the Boston area.

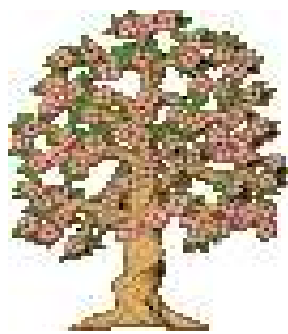
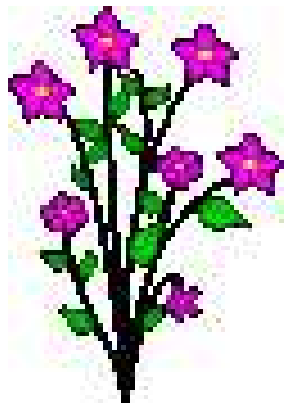
That the film is so engrossing and runs, at times, like a thriller is due in no small way to the skill of the director, Tom McCarthy, who directs the action so that film speeds along and he uses his actors to get the best performances possible from each one. The underplaying of the Editor is done so well by Liev Schreiber that one can almost miss the subtlety he employs to enthuse his reporters. Rachel McAdams puts in a performance of great honesty as she listens carefully and sympathetically to the victims' accounts of their suffering. Mark Ruffalo is most impressive, too, as he rushes around in a most energetic manner pursuing each lead. While Stanley Tucci has a smaller part, he manages to produce a character that shows just what he has been through and how he now wants to help the journalists.

For most of you reading this, the story is no surprise as we all became aware of what was happening as a result of the Spotlight Team's work. How the film manages to put across the manner of the investigation in such a thrilling manner is not known to most of us. As a result of this film we can learn of the full extent of the investigation into terrible crimes against small children.

Rating *****

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Meppershall Garden Club



Linda Parker
01462 815114
Kim Lee Tyler
01462 811750

Email:
meppershallgardenclub
@hotmail.co.uk

Our March meeting was held indoors on a cold and blustery day. Our time was well spent talking about our plans for the coming year plus other topics of interest. Members had been asked to bring to the meeting their suggestions for places they would like to visit; some that would be suitable for an MGC group visit and others that they would personally recommend for individual trips.

It was surprising to find out just how much there is to do if only you have the time and a good internet connection. Members who don't drive or do not like to drive long distances were given information about two local coach companies that run trips to all the major garden shows as well as day trips to some interesting places, all at reasonable prices. Richmond coaches and Britannia coaches are both Hitchin based companies and they pick up and drop off at several local venues. There is of course our own Shefford Leisure group who are running a trip to the Sandringham Flower show in July.

Several of our members appreciate art as well as gardens and they were told about an Exhibition that is currently being held at The Royal Academy in London – 'Painting in the Modern Garden – Monet to Matisse'. Those members not wanting to travel to London, were informed that it is possible to watch a live screening of the exhibition at the Broadway cinema in Letchworth on the 11th April.

One of our members is a volunteer guide at the Swiss Garden at Shuttleworth and keeps us informed of the changes that are taking place there. The House, which used to be rented by the college, has been taken under the wing of the Shuttleworth Trust and plans are well advanced to link the two venues as one. Visitors will be able to visit the house, have a tour and afternoon tea if they wish and then take a stroll through the recently restored underpath which will then take them into the garden. The MGC plan to visit the garden later this year.

If you would like to find out more about the garden club then please speak to any of our members or make contact via our email.

Linda Parker

Pre-School Ponderings - April



We wish everyone and all our families a very Happy Easter!

We had a very busy second half of spring term with our new topic 'Our Favourite Things', and lots of crafts for Mother's Day and Easter. The committee also organised a secret Mother's Day shop, and a sponsored Easter Bunny bounce. Both of which went down extremely well.

To celebrate Mother's Day, staff invited any mummies, nannies and female carers in for a special afternoon tea after pre-school on Tuesday 8th March. Staff donated their time and brought in cakes etc. to pamper all the mummies. This was greatly received and we filled the hall with chatter and fun, laying on some craft activities' for the children too. An event we hope to repeat!



We would like to bid farewell to Emma Carter who is starting a new job after the Easter holidays. Good luck in your new job and thank you for all your hard work!

We now only have a few places left to fill for our summer term at Meppershall Pre-school, but we are now enrolling for September! If your little one has turned 2 and is ready to make new friends and enjoy our stimulating, safe environment, or if you would like them to join our waiting list please ring Tamsin our fantastic leader during session time on the number below for more information. We are open every morning from 9:15 till 12:15, and each Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon from 12:15 till 3:15 (term time only).

Meppershall Pre-school is a thriving village Pre-school with its very own 'Mini Diggers' allotment. We take up to 24 children in each session from in and around the surrounding areas. Priority is given to funded children, and we have limited spaces for two year olds.

Please ring Tamsin on 07816 357159, email tamsin@meppershall-ps.co.uk, or visit www.meppershall-ps.co.uk to find out more about the Early Years Foundation Stage and exceptional care we offer.

Lewis' Further Adventures - Larkhill

R.E.M.E. Wing Royal School of Artillery.

The Wing under the command of a full Colonel was split into two halves, Mechanical and Electronic. Each of these had a Major O.C. and an A.S.M. ensuring that the Workshops functioned correctly and discharged their workload.

In the case of the Electronic Workshop, this comprised all the Radar and Communication Systems on the strength of the RSA, together with that equipment on the strength of the School of Infantry at Warminster. The RSA was primarily a training establishment and as such had a Training Regiment on the strength which was fully equipped to Active Service Specifications. A small detachment under the command of a Radar Artificer, were located in Salalah, Oman, where they serviced Mortar Locating Radars, ZB298 Radars and Communication Equipment.

My first call of the day was that to the Commanding Officer. We had not met before, however he had been fully briefed by Col. Alan and gave me a warm welcome.

He gave me a full briefing on the problems being experienced and essentially passed them over to me.

"You sort out the Workshop Mr Birt, how you do it is up to you, however you will have my full support".

I then carried out a tour of the Workshop which was quite well equipped; one bonus was my office which had a picture window looking out to Stonehenge in the distance. First thing in the afternoon I called a parade with no exceptions, introduced myself and spelled out what I expected of each and every one of them in terms of improved performance, if they had personal problems the door to my office was always open, but not available to scrimshankers!

I then had the section heads into the office individually and went through their equipment holdings and responsibilities, listened to their gripes and where possible resolved most of these there and then. At the end of the day I had a call from Col. Alan to say that the RS.A. (Ack Ack) at Manorbier was being closed down and all training courses to be moved to Larkhill, fortunately I was very familiar with both the Yellow Fever and Rapier Systems which were the prime equipment in use. The extra room in the mess together with the AO drawing board were to come into use quicker than expected, for the next few nights I tried various layouts for section deployments to optimise the available space, better on the drawing board than attempting to move equipment

around the Workshop. I then ran a copy off and invited the Section Heads in one at a time to have their comments and possible improvements. Following this we all got together to see that there were no conflicts of interest between the sections. The major comment was that they had never been asked before for their opinions!

The next priority was to get the personnel working together as a team with a sense of pride in ourselves. The School held an annual open day when lots of guns and missiles were fired to impress an invited audience. The Mechanical Workshop laid on a demonstration with a Land Rover carrying a team of six men including the driver, this drove into the arena with lights blazing and the horn blaring. It was then stripped down to its major components against the clock. The vehicle was then re-assembled, again against the clock.

I acquired a class 6 Land Rover, which was being sold off at auction. Then I subjected it to a detailed examination, to see where it could be modified to improve the stripping and re-assembly performance. Simultaneously, two teams of six men 'volunteered' to train to man the Land Rover. They carried out a fitness programme three days a week from 07.30 to 08.30 and I joined them on it

The modifications were carried out and we then concentrated on the actual physical movements and timing of the routines to be employed. All the men contributed to this, so we were starting to achieve the spirit that I had worked hard to engender. This was all carried out in their own time outside the working day.

We also formed an A & B hockey team which proved very successful, I twisted the arm of the Officer running the P.R.I. and we had two sets of kit in R.E.M.E. colours!

To be continued.

A.S.M. Lewis Birt. R.E.M.E.

Birthdays in April

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

Rebecca Myers who will be 11 on the 3rd

Teya Warner who will be 7 on the 4th

Amie-Lee Lumbis who will be 9 on the 5th

William Rogers who will be 13 on the 11th

Kate Fleming who will be 10 on the 13th

Harry White who will be 15 on the 19th

Jemma Dalton who will be 10 on the 20th

Sophie Hing will be 6 on the 28th

Charlie Lodge who will be 12 on the 30th

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@gmail.com

Meppershall Good Neighbours Group

The Gnomes would like to hear from you if:

- You have recently moved to Meppershall and would like one of our welcome packs
- You would like our help
- You would like to join us.

Call our helpline: 07760 793921 or

Come to our coffee morning at 10.45 on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the New Meppershall Care Home on Shefford Road.

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The Old Coach House

By Sarah Collins



The Old Coach House has been a feature of the village for around 400 years, and was originally constructed as two or three cottages (formerly known as 'Rectory Cottages') built near to the former rectory sited where Monks Pool is today.

Over the years the cottages were extended, and evolved into the house you see today. Evidence for this can be seen throughout the property with fascinating examples of different construction methods and activities such as branches, still with their bark on, being used in some areas where joining of the properties occurred in earlier times. Where the property evolved into its distinct double-height section the builder or architect of this work has carved their initials and date into the oak timbers - 'F.G 1798' - giving us a reasonable idea of when this significant alteration to the house occurred. There remain many other fascinating mysteries within the house such as the cellar steps, which are deeply carved through years of footfall, but no real evidence as to why; or the blackened beams, still evident in parts of the house, which we're told may have come from a much older property. The original floor of the kitchen was 2ft lower than it is today and the spacing of the beams is of Tudor design.

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Within the house there are actually three inglenook fireplaces although the third, smallest one, remains covered under plaster. The two large inglenooks sit astride the central chimney and as you would expect form a powerful and comforting heart to the house, especially in winter time.

We often try to imagine the many generations of people and families who have lived here over the years - what they wore, what they were cooking on the fires and the conversations they might have had. Despite its age the house has always felt welcoming, and has adapted well to modern living and been a great home to our family with no sense of a dark past. We think it has had a good life, and been lucky too, being virtually the sole surviving thatch from the Great Fire of Meppershall in 1899. We have had many people return to visit the house to share their stories of living here, including one lady who had been an evacuee from London during the war.

It is not known when the building was merged into a single property, but we know it must have taken place before 1925, when the Rating and Valuation Act 1925 specified that every building and piece of land in the country was to be assessed to determine its rateable value. The valuer who visited Rectory Cottage found that it was owned by the Rector of Meppershall and occupied by F.Pettifor. The valuer's field book describes it as comprising a parlour, living room, kitchen, cellar, dairy and four bedrooms, with an out-barn attached. There was no water supply, with the occupier having to fetch water from across the road, and no mention is made of a toilet either indoors or out! The valuer's notes suggest that the property was in less than perfect condition at this point in time, mentioning a "very bad slope at back" and concluding that the property was "very poor". [DV1/C161/35]

Since moving to The Old Coach House in 2004 we have spent a great deal of time (and money of course!) refurbishing the property throughout, so that today most people are quite surprised by how modern it feels inside, but without losing any of its abundant character. In 2015 we undertook our biggest challenge by re-roofing the thatch. Master Thatcher Nick MacKay and his son Callum began work at the beginning of May.

On the first day a lorry loaded high with combed wheat arrived from Devon. Thanks to the very kind support of our neighbour John Copper, the immense bails were unloaded and stored throughout the summer on his field adjoining our home, which became a hive of activity, sifting and bundling the straw ready to be applied to the roof. We were blessed with fine weather for most of the work, especially during the crucial early stages.



It was a joy to see the roof being re-born and admire the sheer effort and artistry of Nick and Callum's work. The roof was finally completed in early September 2015. We had returned the roof to its original 'flush ridge', an impressive 'swept gable' at the far end and some of the more observant will notice that we added two pots to the chimney to raise it to the proper height over the ridge, which had now become significantly higher due to the much thicker thatch that had been applied.

We hope that we have helped to do our bit to ensure that the house remains a feature of Meppershall for the next 400 years.

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Message from St. Mary's Services & Events

Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin (Church of England)

Church Road, off Campton Road, Meppershall

www.stmarysmeppershall.org.uk ✝ www.facebook.com/stmarysmeppershall



Rector: The Reverend Veronica Goodman

01462 339962 – ronigoodman@gmail.com – usual day off Monday

Churchwardens:

Dawn Abbatt 01462 816962

James Read 01462 857836 Email: Meppershall.PCC@gmail.com

PCC Secretary:

Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

Things to Look Out For...

Churchyard Working Party – our first of 2016, please come any time on Saturday 2nd April – join in to help trim and tidy up the churchyard after winter. Free refreshments, fun and community spirit.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) – Thursday 14th April, 7.30pm - the church's AGM – come along for the annual review of church activities and leadership.

A Message from St Mary's...

April is the time of year when churches (in the Church of England) have their Annual General Meetings. It is a time to look back over the previous calendar year and to report so many aspects of our church life...

It is also a time for me, as Rector, to say a huge thank you to all who have contributed to the life of St Mary's over the past year: the Church Wardens, the PCC, our Sacristans, our Lay Leaders of Worship, our caterers, churchyard working party-ers, choir and organists, sides persons, readers and pray-ers and rota-makers, Junior Church team, CD play-ers, cleaners, launderers, flower arrangers, bell ringers, maintenance team, and the lovely person who puts out the bins - and I apologise if I have missed any one! Thank you to all who contribute their gifts generously, quietly, tirelessly...

A special thanks to all who ran the Sparks Holiday Club this year. Captain Thunder and Captain Pants welcomed so many young super heroes. Thank you to all who put so much effort into enthralling over 76 children this Summer. Look out for Sparks 2016 from the 15th-18th August.

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I am also pleased to thank the Friend's of St Mary's for their generosity in raising funds for the Church - and for the fun and fellowship their events generate in the Church and the village. We continue to miss Trevor Thorley of course, his presence in Church, in the choir - and his hard work in quiz and concert organising with the Friends of St Mary's. We miss Janet Thorley too, who moved to be nearer to family in the Autumn. Janet was involved with flower arranging, cleaning, Sparks, and the Friends of St Mary's over many years.

A thank you too, to Heather Bradshaw as she leaves the cleaning rota - and to Miriam Read as she joins it!

I would also like to thank the Parish Council for their generous help with grass cutting in the Churchyard.

Thank you, also, to Matthew Jones who once again, told us 'A Christmas Carol' - contributing both to our preparations for Christmas, and to raising funds for the Church. We had a lovely evening - Thank You.

I think I should add that, as there are many people who kindly wear 'several hats' and undertake two or three (or more!) jobs in the Church, and others who have served faithfully for many many years, there is often actually a shortage of helpers and we are always grateful when new people offer to contribute their gifts.

I am so thankful that so many come and pray in our Church, sit quietly in it, look after it, watch over it, and support it in so many different ways.

This year we are trying to move ahead with the repairs needed to the Church Building. Even after many years of fundraising and generous giving - the work needed remains well beyond our means. We are applying now to grant awarding bodies in the hope of help to meet the shortfall. We urgently need to replace the tower and transept roofs and undertake a variety of other works to make the building watertight and prevent further deterioration of this beautiful historic building for our village. If you are interested or have experience of making successful grant applications, your help would be very much appreciated!

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on 14th April at 7.30pm in the Church.

Rector Roni

Services and Events – April 2016 *At St Mary's unless stated below*

Date	Time	Service / Event
Saturday 2 nd April	From 9am	Churchyard Working Party volunteers needed ☺ Come anytime between 9 and 4 – trimming and tidying for spring – fun and friendship with free refreshments in a beautiful part of the village. Bring own tools. Info - James 857836.
Sunday 3 rd April 2 nd of Easter	11.00am	Parish Communion
Weds 6 th April	10.00am	Holy Communion
Friday 8 th April	9.00pm	Silent Together – join friends to sit for a few minutes to enjoy the tranquillity of the church
Sunday 10 th April 3 rd of Easter	10.45am 2.15pm	Teen Table Talk at The Rectory Second Sunday Stroll – 5 miles to St Mary's, Clophill (church ruin) – via Upper Gravenhurst & Cainhoe. Meet at the church gate.
Mon 11 th April	7.30pm for 8pm	Bible Society – meeting at 65 House Lane, Arlesey with speaker Rev Roni Goodman.
Tues 12 th April	2-4pm	Rectory Tea – chat and a cuppa – all welcome
Weds 13 th April	10.00am	Holy Communion
Thurs 14 th April	7.30pm	Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sun 17 th April 4 th of Easter	8.30am 11.00am	Holy Communion All Age Family Service
Weds 20 th April	10.00am	Holy Communion
Sat 23 rd April	9.00am	Celtic Morning Prayer
Sun 24 th April 5 th of Easter	11.00am	Parish Communion
Tues 26 th April	2-4pm	Rectory Tea. “Getting serious” with a cuppa
Weds 27 th April	10.00am	Holy Communion
Sunday 1 st May 6 th of Easter	11.00am	Parish Communion
Thurs 5 th May		Ascension Day

St. Mary's Meppershall Junior Church

Join JC 11am Sunday 3 April 2016 in Meppershall CE Academy Hall

Dear parents, carers and JC members,

With Mother's Day gone and behind us, we are now focusing properly on Easter and the upcoming Palm Sunday before the Holy Week celebrating Jesus's last supper on Maunday Thursday, His trial, crucifixion and painful death on the cross on Good Friday and His glorious unbelievable resurrection on Easter Sunday. This last week of His life on earth was marked by triumph and humiliation and horrors beyond any imagination. One innocent life given for the sins of all mankind, our sins.

As we prepare for Easter by getting in Easter eggs and hot cross buns, we, us included, forget that Jesus is the reason that we have this holiday and the eggs. The hollowness of the egg represents the empty tomb that Jesus' followers found when visiting His grave on Easter Sunday. Not only did He die one of the most painful deaths that one could imagine - crucifixion was considered as barbarically cruel, even by the occupying Romans at the time - He defied death and became alive again. In all the fun of Easter egg hunts and the following sugar highs when eating through the mounds of chocolate, and that's just us parents, we are remembering God's unimaginable gift one Sunday over 2000 years ago.

Easter is the celebration of the miracle of life winning over death, good winning over evil and light winning over dark. Jesus has come back for us to show us that death is not the end but the beginning of something new. For all of us who have lost loved ones, this is the most special message and gift: keep your eyes on Jesus, live your life how He taught us to and in death we shall be reunited with those we lost. Surely, no gift can be more precious than this.

When we meet next for JC, we will be celebrating this message. We look forward to a new fun filled session on 3 April at 11 o'clock at Meppershall CE Academy. Join us on any first Sunday of the month if you are 3 to 12 years of age.

Happy Easter from Gill, Morag, Julie and Alex

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The Team

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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<u>Collating Dates for your Diaries</u>				
	<u>2016</u>			
April	25	(Tuesday)	September	26
May	31		October	31
June	27		November	28
July	25			

Please note that dates in the above table indicate the month in which the collating will take place, at 2.30 pm in the Sugar Loaf. The issue being collated will relate to the following month.

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