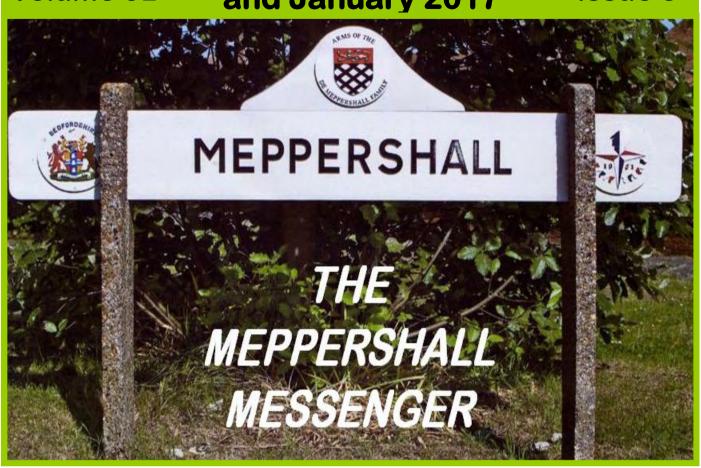
Volume 32

December 2016 and January 2017

Issue 8





Meppershall Village Website: www.meppershall.org

| What is in your Messenger this Month | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Editorial | |
| Letters to the Editor | |
| Meppershall Village Hall Fireworks Display | 4 |
| Meppershall Academy | By Nikki Moore, Headteacher 5 |
| Meppershall Village Hall - Annual General M | |
| Meppershall Parish Council | 8 |
| Meppershall Village Forum | 10 |
| Village Survey Results | 11 |
| Decades at the Social Club | 13 |
| Meppershall Brownies | 14 |
| The Meppershall Players | By Karen Mitchell15 |
| Warden Abbey Vinyard – Annual Christmas V | Wine Sale16 |
| Notices | 17 |
| Shefford Leisure Group | By Enid Pamment18 |
| Meppershall Christmas Party | 20 |
| Information from Central Bedfordshire Coun | cil21 |
| Meppershall Calendar of Events | 22 |
| Covers By Request | 23 |
| Meppershall East Meppershall West | 24 |
| Meppershall Social Club | 25 |
| Sinbad the Sailor | 26 |
| Our New Printer Has Arrived | 27 |
| Community Defibrillator Seminar | |
| Campton Village Hall Christmas Fair | 29 |
| The Gnomes Are Seeking Volunteer Phoneho | olders30 |
| Gnomes Nominated Neighbour Scheme Laur | nch31 |
| Financial Matters | By Paul Savuto32 |
| Birthdays | 35 |
| Significant Events | 36 |
| Meppershall Garden Club (MGC) | 37 |
| Message from St. Mary's - Services & Events | |
| St. Mary's Meppershall Junior Church | 43 |
| The Team | 4.4 |

Editorial

By Mike McConnell

Now, as the Americans would say, the holiday season is upon us. I would like to welcome you to a very seasonal Meppershall Messenger, that is (as you would expect for this time of year) portlier than usual, being stuffed with posters for special events to suit every taste. The larger magazine also reflects its status as a double-issue to cover events in both December and January while our volunteers enjoy a holiday break. As a result, our next issue will not be published until the beginning of February. By then the festivities will be



well behind us and we will have finally got used to writing 2017.

While I'm pondering 2016, can I say that how memorable Autumn has been this year with the leaves slowly changing hue over weeks of still weather, which was liberally sprinkled with sunny days to pick out the red, gold and brown foliage at its best. It makes a walk in the countryside worthwhile and lifts the heart.

Looking back at the year, I well remember the high points of our community life in the village: the Fair, the Scarecrow competition and, most recently, the Fireworks stand out for me. On the other hand, I feel that some of the items that have most concerned us are still ongoing and may stretch to a conclusion in the New Year. These include the Village Hall development and the changes planned for the Sugar Loaf. As is usual, the report from the Parish Council Meeting (on page 8) brings us up to date on the status of all the various planning applications and this edition includes the report from the AGM of the Village Hall Committee (on page 6) which will give the Trustee's prospective.

On a more festive note we have the entire programme of Christmas services at St Mary's (page 38), the remaining performances of the Pantomime (page 26), a Meppershall Christmas Party (page 20) and live music at the Social Club (page 13). It looks like it will be a busy festive season!

I couldn't let this editorial go without mentioning our early Christmas Present. This issue will be the first to be printed on our new printer which arrived recently. You can read all about it in an article by John Thompson, the Messenger's Treasurer, on page 27.

Make I take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year on behalf of all of us here at the Meppershall Messenger.

Letters to the Editor

Dear All,

I live locally in Shillington and I am a researcher at the University of Hertfordshire. I am currently conducting research into Arts participation (broad definition for example arts & crafts, music, dancing etc.) for people aged 70 and over in rural areas. The research will evidence how participation in community based arts people's influences older identity activities (re)development and social inclusion. The project is innovative and unique in combining physiological and psychosocial methods to explore the impact of group arts activity, memory, and emotion on identity and sense of social inclusion.

So if you are over 70 and participate regularly in an arts activity or if you lead an arts activity for people over 70 then please do get in touch with me (either via Facebook or email).

Many thanks,

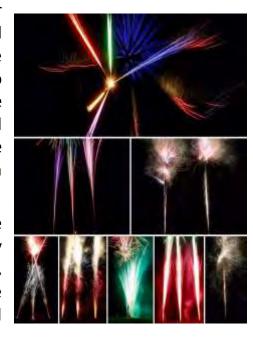
Allan (Dr Allan Jepson, University of Hertfordshire).

A.s.jepson@herts.ac.uk

Meppershall Village Hall Fireworks Display

On 5th November the Meppershall Village Fair Committee held the annual Meppershall Fireworks display. Following on from the success of last year's display we decided to use the same format, erecting a large marquee at the back of the hall so we could entertain with live music and serve refreshments before and after the main display.

Fortunately we were very lucky with the weather this year and the ground was very dry. It was a cold, crisp, but clear evening, ideal for a fireworks display. We got the thermals out, put the winter coats, hats and gloves on, and set up for the main event.



After so many positive comments last year we employed Fully Fused again to do the fireworks. We are very grateful to them for supporting us and putting on another fantastic display.

RF2 did a great job of entertaining us with live music before and after the display. Thank you also to them.



This year we raffled a barrow of bottles and would like to thank everyone who donated for this, including many local businesses. Thanks go to Charles Wells and The Bangkok Lounge Shefford for their very generous donations. The response was overwhelming and we had too many bottles to fill the barrow so also had three consolation prizes.

I would like to thank the Summer Fair Committee as without their planning, hosting and clearing away this event would not be possible. Also to all who bought tickets and came along to support us; I hope you all had a great time.

This event is funded by profits from the Summer Village Fair, grant from the Parish Council and ticket sales. This year the event ran at a profit which means we will have more funds to invest in next year's Summer Fair.

Steve Ansell, Village Hall Committee

Meppershall Academy

By Nikki Moore, Headteacher



Love for God, Life, Learning and for Each Other

Our Early Years children have enjoyed many activities this half term but particularly enjoyed making Firework pictures by splattering brightly coloured paint onto black paper. Years One and Two are continuing to enjoy their creative topic about Space and have produced some excellent Fact sheets about the different planets.

We are just beginning rehearsals for this year's Christmas performance of "Prickly Hay." It is always amazing to see the process from the beginning through to the end when the children always perform so well for their families. It really takes a lot of hard work but is always worth the effort invested.

I have included a piece of work this month written by Phoebe Brinkley in Year 3. Phoebe was asked to write a character description, including adjectives. I think this is a superb description. It is a shame that you cannot see the presentation too. Phoebe's work is very neat with fully joined up handwriting. She has just turned eight years old.

"Elizabeth has long, red, curly hair tied in a plait every day. She is seven, but turning eight on October 21st. Her lips are redder than blood. She is very tall. She wears the same clothes every day. They are a red skirt and a white top. She wears brown boots. Inside the boots there is sheep's wool to help keep her warm in winter and for climbing. She loves climbing because she started climbing when she was 1. She also loves red pandas because they are soft! Elizabeth has a toy red panda. She is the kindest girl in her village. She is joyful. She wears lavender perfume that her mother makes. Elizabeth is generous to everyone – poor and rich. She lives in Owl Close in the Himalayas Mountains near Mount Everest."

The school community gathered today at 11 O'clock for a minutes silence to commemorate Armistice Day, to remember the fallen and to think about the service men and women currently serving oversees.

Meppershall Village Hall - Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on Sunday 13th November

Chairman's Report

Yet another year has passed and we are all still sitting in the original Village Hall. About this time last year we had recently heard that Bloors were pulling out and that Croudace would be taking over the development and the creation of the new Village Hall. I am pleased to say the project is progressing.

The Village Hall is still having to turn bookings away due to lack of space and facilities, and is not able to accommodate all the groups of people when they want to use it.

We are trying to make the most of the facilities that we have, just keeping things in order and to an acceptable standard, so that the Village Hall doesn't become an eyesore and is still fit for purpose. We are also trying to keep all the groups that we do have so that when the new facilities become available they will be ready to take them over.

One of things that was missing at the hall was the ability to rent the Hall with a decent amount of cutlery and crockery. We have now taken the opportunity to buy these as they will be fully transferrable and I am pleased to say that with some help from the Parish Council we have purchased a full set, making the Hall even more attractive to potential customers.

The Meppershall Village Fair Committee and Meppershall Fireworks Committee are sub-groups of the Village Hall and have been very successful in running two great events for the village. Despite the appalling weather we had at the beginning of the summer, and the day of the Summer Fair we still had great support from the village. The fair just broke even which, considering the amount of investment we had to make for all the facilities, was a great achievement.

The Fireworks display was a great success, I think we have now got the basis for holding a good display and event. We were competing this year against Shillington but still managed to raise a considerable amount of money. This will now be held in a separate event account to enable us to invest in next year's Summer Fair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Trustees, the other members of the Village Hall committee, members of the Village Fair and Fireworks committees. All these people give their time freely in helping to run and manage the Village Hall and associated events. Without them this facility would not be able to function and Meppershall would lose an important part of its community.

Treasurer's Report & New Development Update

The accounts were circulated and approved. They are available to view on the Village Hall website www.meppershallvillagehall.co.uk.

The planning application has still not been approved. The Noise Abatement Officer is unhappy that there may be disturbance to neighbours if discos or live music takes place in the temporary village hall and it seems likely that the use of amplified music will not be permitted in the temporary hall. This will not affect the new permanent hall. Until she has assurances that this has been considered and acted upon the planning application cannot be passed.

Croudace are currently carrying out soil sampling behind the existing Village Hall.

Elections

Louise Hutson was elected to join the current Trustees who were all re-elected;

The current Trustees are now Steve Ansell (Chairman), David Birch (Treasurer), Graham Walker, Graham Jones, Jeff Hurst and Louise Hutson. David Foskett represents the Parish Council, Melanie Fergus will continue as Secretary, Louise Hutson as Bookings Secretary and Graham Walker as Maintenance Manager and their continued support and hard work is greatly appreciated.

Meppershall Parish Council

At the ordinary meeting of the Council held on Monday 14th November the main points of interest discussed were as follows:

During the informal part of the meeting Tony Brown Central Beds Councillor for Meppershall informed the Council that the 2017/18 budget was being prepared. Initial figures are showing that CBC will increase the Council tax by less than 2% but he reminded all that there is also the 2% increase requested by Government to cover rising costs of the care of the elderly. This additional amount is ongoing until 2020.

Cllr Brown reported that the roads and footpaths nominated by the PC last month had been passed to the highways planners for consideration.

A planning application for seven dwellings in the High Street on the land presently occupied by the factory and Methodist Chapel has been submitted to CBC. Concern regarding the access to the High Street was raised by members of the public present especially with the concerns already highlighted about traffic in the vicinity of the Post Office and other planning applications already submitted.

The Chairman announced that there would be another opportunity to learn how to use a defibrillator. The course will be held in the Village Hall on Monday 19th December at 7.30pm anyone can attend and it is free of charge. (See poster on page 28).

Returning to the formal meeting:

Planning

The following planning applications are still awaiting a decision:

- the temporary and new Village Hall and associated houses
- 38 houses at Bury Nurseries and an extension at Standalone Farm House
- 8 dwellings at New Close Nurseries
- the change of use of the Sugar Loaf.

The review into the request to have the pub made a village asset has been successful, although it is understood that Hawthorn Leisure have appealed to the Secretary of State. It is unlikely that the planning application for the change of use will be heard before the January 2017 planning meeting.

The Council agreed to:

- a) write to our MP requesting her support in retaining the Sugar Loaf.
- b) write to CBC objecting to the planning application for the 7 dwellings in the High Street on the grounds of the poor highways access to the main road.

The planning enforcement officer has been investigating two problems raised by members of the public. He found that the complaint regarding encroachment of land between Taylors Close and Coneygate was unfounded but he was still investigating the construction of a second runway at the airfield.

Finance

Councillors were reminded that submissions for 2017/16 precept must be made at the December meeting.

Highway

Another meeting to assess the traffic in the vicinity of the Post Office this time with the Police in attendance has taken place. No new ideas on how to resolve the problem were forthcoming.

Environment and Leisure

The quotes for the grass cutting contract for the next three years are awaited the closing date is the end of November so a decision can be made at the December meeting.

The tenancy agreement for the allotments are being returned but there are a number of allotments available to rent. If you are interested, please contact the Clerk.

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Monday 12th December 2016 at 7.45pm in the Village Hall.

Peter Chapman

Chairman Meppershall Parish Council – chairman@meppershall.org

The Council would like to wish all Parishioners a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Meppershall Village Forum

#LOVE MEPPERSHALL

Since the last issue of The Messenger, we have published the results from our final two questionnaires:

- Questionnaire 8 on Youth
- Questionnaire 9 on Village Governance.

The top findings for each questionnaire have been published on our Twitter page (@mepvilforum) and on the Village Forum Facebook page (www.facebook.com/meppershallvillageforum), as well as on our Village Forum website which can be found at the following address: meppershallvillageforum.wordpress.com (bit.ly/mepvilforum). The Messenger is also pleased to publish the results on page 11.

Don't forget, you can either type in this address to access the website directly or go to the village website (meppershall.org) and click on the Forum link there. On the Village Forum website, you will not only find details of our top findings from these two questionnaires, but also a link to a PDF containing the full details of all the responses. You can also see the results from previous questionnaires.

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

This is the last report on phase one of the Village Plan Review. Phase two will consist of completing the final draft of the Village Plan early next year, for adoption by the Parish Council. Thank you for your continued support and interest in the process.

The Village Plan Review Group

forum@meppershall.org

Village Survey Results

Questionnaire 8: Youth

Top Findings

This Survey was only sent to 13 - 18 year olds in the village.

- The park is popular as a meeting place for teens.
- All respondents attended activities in the village in the past 12 months (71% attended 1 to 3 activities), and generally respondents are satisfied with what is on offer.
- No major demand for a youth club (71% would not attend).
- 1 in 4 respondents have a part-time job.
- All respondents have someone to talk to about the future.
- 50% of respondents prefer to receive communication about Meppershall in paper form.

Questionnaire 9: Village Governance

Top Findings

1. The role of the Parish Council is understood in theory, but not seen in practice

The respondents understand the role of the Parish Council as being about:

- the local community
- representing the views/interests of the community
- overseeing local matters

However, there is great confusion about how this occurs in practice, with 72% of respondents unable to give examples of something the Parish Council had done well, and 62% unable to give examples of something done poorly.

2. What the Parish Council is doing well or poorly

When contacting the Parish Council with a concern or query, 58% of respondents had their concern addressed or were helped to the right agency but 36% felt that their concern was ignored.

67% of respondents thought that the Parish Council was ineffective in representing the interests of the villagers in dealings with the next tier of local government (that is Central Beds Council).

The views of the respondents were very varied. For example, an equal number of respondents give the handling of the Village Hall development as an example of something done well and something done poorly (20% each).

3. Communication could be improved

89% of respondents read the Parish Council report in the Messenger and 92% are mostly satisfied with the content.

However, there is a desire for more detailed information, in particular about finances, outcomes of meetings, feedback from consultations, and planning matters.

Currently, the absence of detailed feedback is leading to confusion and frustration about how the Parish Council responds to the views of the community.

4. A community disconnected from its Parish Council

46% of respondents never attend Parish Council meetings, and a further 18% of respondents didn't know that they could, and 63% can only name 1-3 Parish Councillors.

Yet 59% of respondents say that they are involved with the Parish Council at a level that works for them and a further 26% do not want to be involved with the Parish Council at all.

In addition, 85% of respondents said they would not be prepared to become a parish councillor, while 54% would not consider helping on Parish Council working groups as laypeople either.

5. Top priorities for next 12 months

Echoing the findings of previous surveys, respondents feel that the Parish Council should focus its efforts (and when applicable its funding) on:

- Restricting further housing development.
- Improving the state of the footpaths and the general cleanliness of the countryside.
- Improving highways conditions (especially road surfaces).
- Addressing speeding and parking issues.
- **6.** And finally: a very positive feedback to the consultation process overall 90% of respondents thought that the survey process had been good or very good.

Meppershall Social Club Present



On

Saturday 31st December 2016 8pm-Late

At

Meppershall Village Hall

Admittance by Ticket Only

Members Free (Tickets available from bar staff on production of membership card)

Non Members £5(Tickets on sale at Meppershall Social Club Only Every Evening 8pm-11pm)

No Tickets Sold On Door

Meppershall Social Club 01462 817359 Open Every Evening 8pm-11pm





We started this term by joining Dory and her friends, playing lots of underwater themed games and tested our memory to see if we are better than Dory- Snowy Owl struggled with this!

To raise money for Operation Christmas Child we invited all the Brownies' friends and family and gathered in the hall for a fun night of bingo. We raised over £100. Thank you to Peter Chapman for his excellent bingo calling skills and to everyone who came and supported this event.

As the spooky season came around all the Brownies dressed up as witches, vampires, cats and various other scary creatures. We played our own version of apple bobbing by instead bobbing for Maltesers. We also played Wrap The Mummy and other spooky Halloween games.

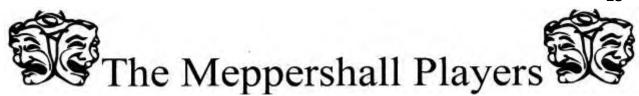




Last Monday we took a trip to Bedford Observatory. We had a lovely clear night and saw a nebula, star clusters and the craters on the moon through their very powerful telescopes. We also visited their planetarium and learnt lots about the constellations.

On Remembrance Sunday, six Brownies took part in the Remembrance service and paid their respects to the men and women who gave up their lives for their country. Thank you to all the Brownies who attended – they did a fabulous job.

If you are interested in your daughter joining Brownies or volunteering yourself, then please contact Snowy Owl (Suzanne) on 07817 392325.



"Oh no! I've missed it" "Oh no you haven't". If you haven't yet seen 'Sinbad the Sailor' the latest Pantomime from the Meppershall Players it is not too late.

The first week has gone but we are still appearing at Meppershall Village Hall on Fri 2nd Dec 7.45pm & Sat 3rd Dec 3pm & 7.45pm Matinees £6 Con £5, Evenings £8 Con £7, Last night Performance £9 no Concessions (see page 26).

Tickets are still **on sale** at Roger's Bakery Meppershall 01462 813398. Yes, not only can you buy delicious bread and cakes (caramel slices are my favourite) but the lovely Mary and her delightful ladies can sell you tickets for the last weekend performances of the Pantomime at amazingly reasonable prices.

The Players will be having a short break over the Christmas period there will be no Players on Wed 28th December, but we'll be back on Wednesday 4th January 2017.

The Players will be putting on a spring production on Fri 24th and Sat 25th March so watch this space.

A big **THANK YOU** to all you lovely people who supported the Meppershall Players in 2016 we simply couldn't do it without you. **Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year** from the Meppershall Players and we hope to see you all again in 2017.

The Meppershall Players are on Facebook (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 and updated regularly.

The Players are always welcoming to new members. 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, etc, etc.

Interested? We look forward to meeting you .

Karen Mitchell (Players' Secretary) 01462 816336

WARDEN ABBEY

The community vineyard



Ideal local, award winning gift Come and visit us at:

The Stable Yard, Southill Park, Southill, SG18 9LJ.

Sunday 11th December 11.00 till 4.00 ()

White & sparkling wines and Christmas gift boxes, from award-winning local Vineyard. Taste and Buy!

Cheques and cash only.

Free mince pies while stocks last!

Directions - Signposted from the centre of Southill village, located near the White Horse public house in Southill, Bedfordshire.

info@wardenvineyard.org.uk 07981 113714



Notices

Bedford Model Engineering Society Summerfield Miniature Railway
Off the A600 just past Haynes Turn Public Running Days 10.30.AM to 4 PM
Last running days of the year.

DECEMBER Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th Santa Specials – booking essential

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. You can also find Meppershall Good Neighbours on Facebook Find us on

'TRUGS & TROWELS' Campton Gardening Club

Our next meeting will be on Monday, 5th December Campton Village Hall, 7.30-9.00pm 'A CHRISTMAS THEMED EVENING' Everyone Welcome - Admission £1.50

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

The Messenger is looking for help.

Our Advertising and Distribution Manager is appealing for somebody to work with her after Christmas, in order to learn the role.

If you are interested, please contact Colette House

(Tel: 078531 111 062 Email: colettehouse@gmail.com)

Shefford Leisure Group

By Enid Pamment

December 2016 – it hardly seems possible that the time has come to wish all our readers the compliments of the Season, good health, success and happiness in the coming year.

During October and into November has proved a very busy active time for the Shefford Leisure Group. Earlier in October, a group of us boarded our coach making our way to Torquay. We stayed at The Derwent Hotel, one of the TLH Hotel complex. Our



hotel rooms were spacious, good food, ample entertainment, free bar, super indoor (and outdoor) swimming pools, also coach trips out to Brixham, which was a quaint fishing harbour and stopped in Paignton on our way back to the hotel. Another day off to Dartmouth and with an interesting commentary had a ride on the ferry and watched the steam train puffing its way along parallel to the river. The days soon passed and it was time to bid farewell to Devon and to make our way back to Shefford.

On 11th November we boarded the coach at Shefford. Although chilly the sun was shining and it was a beautiful Autumn day. We made our way to our 'coffee' stop Elveden Inn near Brandon and the smell of freshly percolated coffee was very welcoming indeed. During this time, Elveden was observing the 'Two Minutes Silence' and whilst there the time had come and everyone respected (even children) the reason for the 'silence'. It was very touching and I for one was so pleased they observed this time.

We were soon on our way, this time direct to Thursford where everything was beginning to go into 'full swing'. Mulled wine was flowing and plenty of hot mince pies in abundance. The Christmas shops were filled with 'goodies' and plenty of ideas for Christmas stockings. The show started promptly at 2pm and held people's interest throughout. Certainly an event not to be missed. After the show we made our way to Old Mother Hubbard's for a fish and chip supper before making our way back to Shefford. Thank you again Gary for safe driving.

We still have several trips to look forward to in December prior to Christmas, including the Tinsel & Turkey 5-day visit to Eastbourne. Day trips booked are John Rutter's Christmas Celebrations, Anglesey Abbey (Winter Lights) and Wicksteed Park Christmas show.

A tour to Keech Hospice Care for Children will shortly be arranged the date to be advised. If anyone is interested in joining the party, please contact me and I will add you to the list.

Forthcoming Events planned for 2017:

| Back Stage Tour of Milton Keynes Theatre plus Matinee 'Thoroughly | Wednesday 25 th Jan |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Modern Millie' | |
| Jewish London | Thursday 16 th Feb |
| As a 'special' Potters Resort Weekend. As 'Group organisers we | Friday 3 rd March |
| have been offered a weekend at Potters. Depending on the interest | for 3 nights |
| transport will be arranged for this weekend. The Brochure price is | |
| £328.00 and Group price £243.00 saving £85.00 per adult. All prices | |
| are based on >20 adults in Standard Bungalow Accommodation. | |
| William Morris Epping Forest & The Lee Valley | Thursday 23 rd March |
| Annual Get-Together at The Golf Club, Stondon | Wednesday 5 th April |
| Anton & Erin Swing Time – MK Theatre Matinee at 3pm | Sunday 2 nd April |
| Also the 'Rhine Cruise' is still available (flier with details on request) | April |
| Malta – 4* Hotel staying in Sliema – flying from Luton Airport. (a | October |
| flier with full description is available now on request). | |

LONDON SHOWS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

(organised in conjunction with Stevenage Group Travel):

| MATILDA THE MUSICAL – Cambridge Theatre – Dress Circle Seats. | Wednesday 7 th Dec |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Coach leaves Shefford at 10.45am | |
| DREAMGIRLS - Savoy Theatre — Stall and Dress Circle Seats. Coach | Wedneaday 4 th Jan |
| leaves Shefford at 10.15am | |
| HALF A SIXPENCE - Noel Coward Theatre — Stall Seats. Coach leaves | Wednesday 11 th Jan |
| Shefford at 10.45am | |
| SCHOOL OF ROCK - a musical treat for all ages. New London | Thursday 19 th Jan |
| Theatre – Stall Seats - Coach will leave Shefford at 10.30am. | |
| LION KING – Lyceum Theatre – Stall Seats - Coach leaving Shefford | Thursday 2 nd Feb |
| at 4.30pm | |
| MAMMA MIA - Novello Theatre - Dress Circle Seats – Coach leaving | Thursday 9 th Feb |
| Shefford at 10.45am. | |
| 42ND STREET – Theatre Royal Drury Lane – Royal Circle Seats – Coach | Wednesday 5 th April |
| leaving Shefford at 10.30am. | |
| RPO – ABBAphonic - Abba's greatest hits – Royal Albert Hall – Arena | Wednesday 10 th May |
| and Circle Seats. Coach leaving Shefford at 4.45pm. | |

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



At Meppershall Village Hall Friday 16th December

Disco from

8:30 - midnight

£5 a ticket

Adults only

All profits go to charity

Tickets available from The Village store

Information from Central Bedfordshire Council



Christmas bin collections

Recycling and household waste will be collected one day later than normal between Monday, 26 and Friday, 30 December.

Check when your bin collection day is and details of these changes on CBC website.

Winter weather

Our gritters were out last week for the first time this winter. We send email updates when temperatures drop and they need to go out. As you're already registered for email alerts, it only takes a minute to tick the box and get the winter weather alerts.



Winter weather can also lead to damage to our roads. If you spot a pothole (or other roads / pavement problems) this winter, please report it to CBC via the website.

School admissions and school term dates

Most schools break up on 16 December for Christmas (though some schools will vary their dates). All school term and holiday dates are available on the CBC website.



School admissions applications for 2017

Applications are open for Lower, Primary and Middle school places. The deadline is 15 January, 2017. You must apply for a school place for your child - places are not given automatically, even if the school is a stone's throw away!

CBC have recently launched My Central Bedfordshire – an online tool that allows you to access tailored information about your area quickly and easily. By simply entering your postcode, you can search a range of services and information that includes local councillors, nearest planning applications, schools, recycling, health and emergency services.

Meppershall Calendar of Events

December

| Day | Date | What's on | When | Where | |
|----------|-------|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Thursday | 1 | Evergreens | 2.30 - 4.15pm | The Sugar loaf | |
| Friday | 2 | Sinbad The Sailor (see page 26) | 7.45pm | Village Hall | |
| Saturday | 3 | Sinbad The Sailor (see page 26) | 3pm & 7.45pm | Village Hall | |
| Saturday | 3 | Christmas Fair (see page 29) | 10:00am- 3:00pm | Campton Village Hall | |
| Sunday | 4 | St. Mary's JC presents Christmas Crafts | 10:00am | St Mary's | |
| Sunday | 4 | Christingle Service | 4:00pm | St Mary's | |
| Monday | 5 | Campton Gardening Club - Christmas Themed evening entry £1:50 | 7:30-9:00pm | Campton Village Hall | |
| Wed. | 7 | School Carols by Candlelight | 6:00pm | St. Mary's | |
| Thursday | 8 | Gnomes Coffee morning | 10:45 - 11:45 | Mepp.Care Home | |
| Saturday | 10 | Bingo (non-members £1) | 6.45pm eyes down 7.15pm | Social Club | |
| Sunday | 11 | Annual Christmas Wine Sale 11:00am - 4:00pm | | Warden Abbey Vinyard | |
| Sunday | 11 | Paul Carne's Quiz night (£1 pp entry) | 7:30pm | Social Club | |
| Sun/Mon | 11&12 | Santa's Float tours the village | From 6:00pm | Meppershall | |
| Monday | 12 | Parish Council Meeting | 7:45pm | Village Hall | |
| Thursday | 15 | Evergreens | 2.30 - 4.15pm | The Sugar loaf | |
| Saturday | 17 | Xmas Bingo (non-members £1) | 6.45pm eyes down 7.15pm | Social Club | |
| Sunday | 18 | Nine Lessons & Carols | 6:30pm | St. Mary's | |
| Monday | 19 | Defibrillator Seminar | 7:30pm | Village Hall | |
| Saturday | 24 | All join in Nativity Service | 3:30pm | St. Mary's | |
| Saturday | 24 | Midnight Mass | 11:30pm | St. Mary's | |
| Saturday | 24 | Club Sounds Karaoke with Dave & Stuart | 8:00pm till late | Social Club | |
| Sunday | 25 | Christmas Morning Service 11:00am | | St. Mary's | |
| Wed | 28 | Meppershall East Meppershall West Walk (see page 22) | 9:30am | Leaving from the Village Hall | |
| Saturday | 31 | Live Music from the Decades (see page) ticket only (non- members £5) | 8:00pm till late | Social Club | |

See also Events in January on Page 23
Also see the calendar on the village website

Meppershall Calendar of Events (Continued)

January

| Day | Date | What's on | When | Where | |
|------------|--------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|
| Monday 2 | | Meppershall East Meppershall | 9:30am | Leaving from St | |
| , | | West Walk (see page 22) | | Mary's Gate | |
| Thursday | 5 | Evergreens | 2.30 - 4.15pm | The Sugar loaf | |
| Caturday | 7 | Club Sounds Karaoke with | 9:00pm till late | Social Club | |
| Saturday 7 | | Dave & Stuart | 9.00pm tili late | Social Club | |
| Sunday 8 | | Paul Carne's Quiz Night (£1 7:30pm | | Social Club | |
| Sulluay 6 | entry) | 7.50pm | Jocial Club | | |
| Thursday | 12 | Gnomes Coffee morning | 10:45 - 11:45 | New Meppershall | |
| Titursuay | 12 | diones conee morning | 10.45 - 11.45 | Care Home | |
| Friday | 13 | Bingo (non-members £1) | 6.45pm eyes | Social Club | |
| riluay 15 | | Billgo (Holl-Hiembers 11) | down 7.15pm | Social Club | |
| Thursday | 19 | Evergreens | 2.30 - 4.15pm | The Sugar loaf | |
| Cunday | 20 | Joint Benefice Service | 0.000 | St Michael's | |
| Sunday 29 | | Joint Benefice Service | 9:00am | Shefford | |

Covers By Request

Shiver me timbers! It might be freezing outside at this time of year but here's a cast that's guaranteed some warm applause with their staging of Karen Mitchell's panto 'Sinbad the Sailor'.

Starting with the lovely camel and working our way from left to right in our cover photo we proudly present:

Alison & Grace (camel), Charlotte (director), Chris, Jack, Emily, Laura, Jamie, Ryan, Lucy, and Keisha.



Meppershall East Meppershall West

A Christmas and new year walking challenge to ditch a few calories and get out in the landscape around us.

Brought to you by the St Mary's Second Sunday Strollers...

Ever wondered where you would get to if you walked 13 miles east from Meppershall, or 13 miles west? Now's the time to find out. With routes mainly on public footpaths, fresh from their shorter monthly walks, the Second Sunday Strollers invite you to join two special holiday hikes —

Wednesday 28th December: Ashwell on the Icknield Way

Leaving the Village Hall at 9.30am, we'll leave via Fildyke, out past Chapel Farm and through Henlow Camp to Arlesey. From there we go on into Stotfold at Brook End and out again down the Ivel to find the Icknield Way at Norton Mill, which we follow up through the hills with views of Bygrave, past Bygrave Plantation all the way to Ashwell.

Monday 2nd January: Woburn on the Greensand Ridge

Leaving St Mary's church gate at 9.30am, we head for the Cow Bridge and through Gravenhurst and Wrest Park to Silsoe and on through Wardhedges. At St John's church Flitton we head across to Flitwick Moor (a 'Site of Special Scientific Interest') and through the suburbs of Flitwick, leaving past All Saints church, Priestley Farm and on through Tingrith. At Eversholt we pick up the Greensand Ridge Walk for the last mile or two into Woburn.

Want to join us?

Feel free to just turn up at our starting points. These are one-way walks and to be sure of return transport, please get in touch — lifts available. Pick-up points possible (if you don't want to do the whole walk). It's winter, so dress accordingly, be ready for the wet! Each walk is just over 13 miles, wear shoes that you trust, ensure you feel fit and well to participate. Bring a packed lunch. We should reach the end of each walk between 3pm and 4pm for refreshments where possible. We look forward to hearing from you! Email: Meppershall.PCC@gmail.com Phone: 857836 (James and Miriam) facebook.com/stmarysmeppershall (send us a message there).

Meppershall Social Club

December and January at the Social Club

BINGO-Saturday 10th December, **Xmas Bingo** Saturday 17th December

BINGO-January Every Friday Night

Doors open 6.45pm eyes down 7.15pm

Members free, Non-members £1 entrance fee

- * CLUB SOUND KARAOKE **Xmas Eve** Saturday 24th December 8pm-late, Saturday 7th January 8pm-late with Dave & Stuart. 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 11th December & Sunday 8th January

£1 per person entry fee, no set number in team (you can have as few or as many as you like in your team)

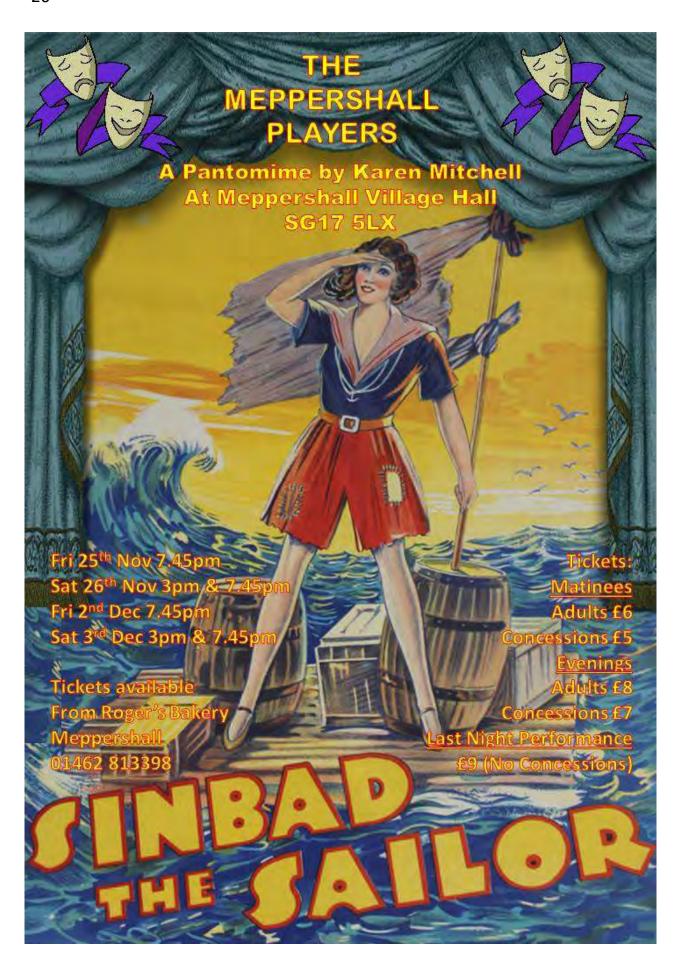
50-50 split of entrance fee, half to charity half to the winning team. Non Members welcome

- * SNOOKER at the Social 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
- * NEW YEARS EVE-Live Music from 'THE DECADES' Saturday 31st December 8pm-Late- Ticket Only Event (limited number of tickets) Club Members Free (tickets available from the bar on presentation of membership card, limited number of tickets) Non- Members £5 No Tickets sold on door. No admittance without a ticket

MEMBERSHIP for 2017 is available and renewable from January 1^{st} 2017 (pick up a form at the Club)

Meppershall Social Club 01462 817359 after 8pm

MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR from The Social Club



Our New Printer Has Arrived

It only seems like yesterday that our last printer (Olivetti d-COLOR-MF362)



arrived for printing the Meppershall Messenger magazine. In fact that was 2013, but here we are - three years later and over 1 million copies produced - on Thursday 27th October 2016, the latest Olivetti d-COLOR-MF364 printer





arrived, again courtesy of 2r Systems Limited.

Our brand new printer is a moderately faster upgrade based on the old one, more economic to run and has all the features of our old machine, so we can continue to support the various groups and villagers who require small, produced at cost, print jobs done here in the village. (If you do require a small printing job done, then please contact the Treasurer – contact details at the back of your Meppershall Messenger magazine.)

The Meppershall Messenger (Magazine Committee are long-standing customers of 2r Systems Limited and would like to say a very big thank you to both Jim and Adam for making the installation of the new printer so straightforward. A special thanks to Richard Finch (Managing Director of 2r Systems Limited) for providing the Meppershall Messenger (Magazine Committee) with another excellent value deal on the maintenance and support for our printer for the next three years. And finally, the committee's thanks go to all the team back at 2r Systems Limited who have supported the Committee and the Meppershall Messenger magazine printing team for the past three years, for all their help advice, guidance and service support given and we look forward to another three years of the same, as we continue to produce the Meppershall Messenger magazine for the village of Meppershall.

John Thompson Treasurer



Community Defibrillator Seminar

Monday 19th December 2016 - 8:00 Meppershall Village Hall

The Community Heartbeat Trust will be demonstrating the use of defibrillators and explaining how the equipment works and its benefits to the community in saving precious minutes in the treatment of sudden cardiac arrest.

The more people that know how to use the portable defibrillator installed in our community, the more chance there is of saving the life of a victim of Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Everybody is welcome, and no special skills are required, just your willingness to play an important role in the event of a medical emergency

Copyright The Community Heartbeat Trust 2015

CAMPTON VILLAGE HALL
CHRISTMAS FAIR
SATURDAY 3 DECEMBER
10AM TO 3PM

PLENTY OF GIFT IDEAS FROM
THE GIFTED CRAFTERS OF CAMPTON
AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES
HOMEMADE BAKING, CHUTNEYS & JAMS,
JEWELLERY, PAINTINGS, POTTERY, SEWING

and much more.

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS ON SALE INCLUDING NON ALCOHOLIC MULLED WINE AND MINCE PIES

FREE ENTRANCE

The Gnomes Are Seeking Volunteer Phoneholders Perhaps You Could Help.

What is a Phoneholder and who can do this?

The Phoneholder matches a need of a Meppershall resident to a skill of a volunteer bringing the two together to fulfil the request and keeps appropriate records. Almost anyone comfortable using a telephone and able to keep paper records. Our Public Liability Insurance insists that all our volunteers are at least aged 18.

Does the phone have to be continuously manned?

No. We are not an emergency service. It is nice for the caller to be answered in person but this is not always possible. We have an answer phone and this should be checked regularly for missed calls

What time does it take up and how often does it come around?

The time taken depends upon how many calls are received and how quickly a volunteer match is found. How often it comes around depends upon the number of phoneholders we have on the "books" but at the moment is every 6 weeks. The phoneholder has the phone for a week at a time taking calls between 9am and 6pm Monday to Friday. A rota is circulated in advance which takes account of non-availability.

How do I volunteer or get more details?

Call **07760 793921** and ask the phoneholder to pass your name and telephone number to a Committee Member. You will be contacted as soon as possible. Alternatively, you could e-mall: **gnomes@meppershall.org**. Once you volunteer you will receive an information pack containing a DBS (previously called CRB) check form to complete (no charge) and a confidentiality clause to sign. When your clearance comes through you will receive training from a current Phoneholder.



Click Here to return to the Table of Contents

Gnomes Nominated Neighbour Scheme Launch

The GNOMES are now in a position to launch the Nominated Neighbour scheme within Meppershall. The scheme will be effective as from 1st January 2017.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide support to any villager who does not feel confident in answering their door to a cold caller. It will provide a mechanism by which the villager can show a card through a window without actually having to open their door. The card will offer the caller the Gnomes telephone number to ring if they wish to pursue their call any further; it is felt that in most cases the cold caller will just walk away.

The display card will be provided to any villager wishing to use this service and will include the GNOMES Hotline telephone number. If the caller does decide to contact this number, the on-duty phone holder will contact one of our Nominated Neighbour volunteers who will then deal with cold caller on behalf of the villager and will pass on to them any relevant information regarding the caller's reasons for his/her visit. It will then be up to villager as to whether or not they will be prepared to talk to the cold caller themselves.

If you wish to take advantage of the scheme and receive a Nominated Neighbour display card then please contact the GNOMES via their telephone hotline 07760 793921.

Financial Matters

By Paul Savuto

SURVIVING FINANCIALLY AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

Bereavement is a sad and difficult time for families, and it can be made much worse if the surviving partner is left to cope with money worries. Regular bills like mortgage payments can often be a heavy financial burden if they have to come from one salary instead of two. The death of a partner can mean that families need to pay for services such as extra child care and help around the house. Whilst it's tempting to put off thinking about the financial consequences of losing a partner or loved one, figures from the Association of British Insurers¹ show that in 2015, UK insurance companies paid out an average of £9.4m each day to over 128,000 families as a result of claims on protection policies.

A LIFELINE FOR FAMILIES_Thinking about life insurance isn't the most cheerful or uplifting subject, but it could prove to be the lifeline a family needs. If your children, partner or relatives depend on your income to cover the cost of paying the mortgage or rent and other living expenses, then it makes good sense to think about the protection and peace of mind that life insurance can give. Those who don't have life insurance often say they can't afford the premiums. However, the cost of life insurance is not as expensive as many people seem to think. Life insurance premiums have come down in cost over the last few years, and cover can start at just a few pounds a month.

REVIEWING EXISTING POLICIES If you have life insurance in place, but it's been a while since you reviewed the cover it provides, this could be a good time to take another look. If you've taken out a bigger mortgage, added to your family or are approaching retirement, then it might be in your best interests to consider reviewing your policy. There may now be more cost-effective policy options available to you.

SOPHISTICATED SCAMS ARE ON THE INCREASE

Over 5,000² people were conned into sending planned payments to scammers' bank accounts last year. Attempts to defraud people of their savings and pensions are rising, constantly evolving and becoming increasingly sophisticated; we all need to guard against fraud.

² City of London Police figures, reported on Radio 4's You & Yours programme, April 2016

Click Here to return to the Table of Contents

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 $^{^{\}mathrm{1}}$ Association of British Insurers, UK Insurers and long-term savings key facts, 2015

It's always important to think twice before giving out personal information online or to callers. You might initially feel cautious but find yourself swayed by a convincing conman with the poise and apparent financial knowledge that makes you believe that he or she really is the bank staff, or other official, they are pretending to be.

Here are two of the newest scams that should be on everyone's radar:

<u>CAPE VERDE PROPERTY.</u> This involves fraudsters offering a highly risky investment that isn't covered by the Financial Services Compensation scheme, meaning your money is unprotected. Cold calling 'pension companies' may suggest you invest in alternative investments such as hotel developments or property in Cape Verde. They will be neither regulated nor qualified to give advice but typically classify themselves as a 'trustee', 'consultant' or an 'independent adviser'. They are likely to promise very high returns for investors willing to transfer their pension before retirement. Avoid.

<u>EMAIL SCAMS</u>. Email scams are also on the increase. People buying and selling properties have been warned to exercise extreme care when communicating with their solicitors and conveyancers following several incidents where fraudsters hacked into email accounts and diverted large payments.

Here, the criminal gains access to either the client's or the solicitor's email account. They intercept mail containing bank account details, substituting them with their own information. They send emails to clients that look as if they have come from the solicitor, requesting payment to a specified account – the fraudster's. These scams are most likely to occur when details are sent by email rather than post to speed up a transaction ahead of a weekend or Bank Holiday. Where possible, use alternative forms of communication or check the details given directly with the company.

As part of the service at DGS, we also take the time to understand our client's unique planning needs and circumstances, so that we can provide you with the most suitable solutions in the most cost-effective way. For a free review of your current pension plan and financial situation, please contact Paul Savuto, AFPS, Chartered Financial Planner. DGS Independent Financial Advisers Ltd. 07834 499595 or email ps@dgsifa.com. I'm based in Meppershall and I'll be happy to talk to you.



December

In November we had lots of fun making fireworks pictures by cutting strips into one end of kitchen rolls and dipping them into paint, or spinning paint onto paper in a salad spinner. The children also made edible fireworks by dipping bread sticks into melted chocolate and sprinkling with cake decorations. We also talked about staying safe near fireworks or matches. We then talked about the significance of remembrance day and made a beautiful poppy display using red handprints of each child. Throughout the year we spend time talking to the children about different events, festivals and celebrations. In November the children also made Diva lamps out of clay for Diwali, 'The Hindu Festival of Lights'. We are now nearing our Nativity performance whereas we learn about the Nativity story respecting each child's individual beliefs, and enjoy lots of singing and dressing up fun.

Thank you to all who helped sell toys at Meppershall Fireworks night on 5th November. What a super night! The band, bar, food, toys and fireworks were enjoyed immensely by families who came.

2017 is going to be a fantastic year for Meppershall Pre-school. From January we are going to be offering up to 10 sessions each week, instead of the current 8. This means up to 30 hours childcare! We are already looking forward to welcoming at least 8 new families onboard, and now have 11 members of staff including our relief staff and students! Please look at our new website for more information.

This all means that sessions are filling up fast at Meppershall Pre-school. 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 currently 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). From January 2017 we will be open from 9:15 till 3:15 every week day. Happy Christmas to everyone and best wishes for the new year!

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 meppershallps@gmail.com, or visit www.meppershall-ps.co.uk to find out more about the Early Years Foundation

Ofsted Registration Number: 219293 Registered Charity: 1031913

Birthdays

A very HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating birthdays in December.

Breindel Cullen who will be 6 on the 4th
Lee Britton who will be 14 on the 7th
Darcey Roberts will be 4 on the 7th
Amber Ridley who will be 7 on the 8th
Megan Myers who will be 13 on the 9th
Hugo Norris who will be 14 on the 12th
Millie Chessum who will be 12 on the 15th
Grace Hendry who will be 13 on 17th
Lara Morris who will be 4 on the 17th
Elise Simpkins who will be 4 on the 20th
Jamie Vernon who will be 8 on the 21st
Thomas Manning who will be 8 on the 21st
Finlay Caddick who will be 9 on the 28th
Rose Jones who will be 8 on the 29th

...and those celebrating in January

Dylan Roberts will be 7 on the 1st
Lola Cattell who will be 3 on the 4th
Harry Rose who will be 14 on the 5th
Ella Clark who will be 11 on the 9th
Jacob Browning who will be 6 on the 12th
Olivia Mardell who will be 14 on the 12th
Sam German who will be 13 on the 12th
Cameron Isaac who will be 2 on the 20th

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

Significant Events

RIP

We are saddened to announce that:

Pauline McKenzie (lately of New Meppershall Care Home) died on the 31st October 2016, aged 83. Our condolences to Pauline's family.

Richard Coles died on the 1st November 2016, aged 71. Our condolences to Maureen and family.

Birthdays

Eric Bygraves will be 97 on the 17th December
Pam Flint will be 87 on the 23rd December
Joyce Smith will be 88 on the 27th December
Barbara Carne will be 81 on the 2nd January
Maurice Horwood will be 86 on the 4th January
Brenda Wright will be 86 on the 20th January
Phyllis Corns will be 90 on the 21st January
Many congratulations to all those celebrating birthdays in December and January



Stephen North, who turned 80 on the 19th November, celebrating with a cake from the Messenger.





MEPPERSHALL GARDEN CLUB (MGC)

This month's article has been provided by MGC member Jacqui Plumley.

In late autumn we visited the beautiful gardens at Jordan's Mill situated on the banks of the River Ivel. These local, eco-friendly award winning gardens which are now free to walk around, were designed by Chelsea Flower Show winners Ian Kitson and Julie Toll who took their inspiration from the surrounding Bedfordshire countryside and the flow of the river.

We followed a winding path through different areas where cereal crops, vegetables and fruit are grown in ornamental settings alongside wild flowers, perennials and drifts of waving grasses. There was a variety of flowers in splendid autumn colours; golden Rudbeckias, bright orange Tithonias (mexican sunflowers) and deep red dahlias.

We admired the attractive seed heads including maize and alliums which are left on as food for birds and small mammals and were interested to learn that the allotment area supplies seasonal vegetables to the Riverside restaurant. In October\November it included squashes, onions, and beetroot.

The adjoining meadow and woodland areas provide habitats for wildlife with woodpiles, bug hotels and bird boxes. It was a timely reminder of how our own gardens might provide food and shelter for wildlife through the winter months ahead.

We completed our visit by looking around the Mill shop full of interesting produce sold under the Jordans\Ryvita brand as well as other local specialities such as flour from Stotfold Mill, ice cream from Dunton and wines from the Warden Abbey Vineyard.

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.

Jacqui Plumley

Linda Parker 01462 815114

Kim Lee Tyler 01462 811750

Email address: meppershallgardenclub@hotmail.co.uk

Message from St. Mary's - Services & Events

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

Church Road, off Campton Road, Meppershall



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...

Christmas events and services – *loads to choose from!* Have a look at the schedule below – why not come and make some special Christmas moments at St Mary's this year...

- Christingle?
- School Carol Service?
- Nine Lessons and Carols?
- Christmas Eve Midnight Mass?
- Christmas Morning Service? And also coming up...

Santa's Float Touring the Village – 11th December on Shefford Road and Fildyke Road; 12th December on Shillington Road, High Street, Coneygate.

Bible Society Meetings – 12th December and 9th January – 7.30pm

Meppershall East Meppershall West – two special longer hikes of 13 miles each for the holidays – Ashwell on 28th December, Woburn on 2nd January. See separate page – come along for all or part of the journey!

Meppershall Village Quiz – Saturday 28th January –annual event with bar from 7pm and quiz at 7.30 – in aid of the Friends of St Mary's Meppershall

A Message from St Mary's...

I love Christmas! Don't you..? Which do you like best? Giving presents - or getting them?

When I think of the presents that I have valued most over the years, I must admit it is not particularly the Christmas presents that come to mind - although I have had some lovely Christmas presents. I particularly treasure some of the things that my children have made and given to me.

I have a stone that Peter made for me. Its shape looked like a sitting frog - so he painted it green, gave it a face and presented it to me, with great pride and great love.

I have a three legged pottery dog that I just can't throw away - even though one leg dropped off long ago - because John made it at school and gave it to me with great pride and great love.

And similarly I have a pretty painted pottery pen holder that Paul made, with his name carved into the bottom. I must admit I have never used it as a pen holder but I treasure it never the less... because it was given with such love.

They are treasure not because they are worth anything to anyone else but because they were fashioned with such care and such love and that is what they say.

One picture I've kept from John is of flowers and grass in the sunshine - and on it is written, "My mummy is speshul", spelled S P E S H U L and to me it is all the more special because of that!

We celebrate Christmas with gifts - but Christmas is really only about one gift: the baby wrapped in strips of cloth, and laid in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Christmas is really only about God's gift to us all... The gift of his Son...

God gives us Jesus - and through him so much more.

Through the gift of his Son - the child in the manger - God gives us eternal life; he gives us grace and glory; things we cannot buy, things freely and lovingly given, held out to us in his generous fatherly hands.

The real gift of Christmas is, in modern words, 'the gift that keeps on giving'!

Christmas is simply God reaching out to us with an outrageously simple - and unutterably precious - gift; the gift of himself, given in his only begotten Son, to tell us just how precious and how special we are to him.

It is a gift that most of us here will celebrate in warm homes, with tinsel decorated trees and tables of plenty and perhaps with family around us... but there are many in our world who will look to the stable and the hope this child brings, from the rubble of their war zone homes, from tents and temporary shacks in refugee camps, from hospital beds and bedsides, or staring at a chair that is empty this year.

So in our hearts and minds let us go to Bethlehem. Let us look into the baby's face and let new hope stir in our hearts. Let us grow stronger. Let us go with singing in our ears and a song welling up in our hearts...

Let us go like the shepherds, glorifying and praising God for all we have heard and seen, saying, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible, indescribable gift. Thanks be to God for Jesus."

And let us spare a thought or a prayer for those who look to the child born in a stable to be a light in their darkness - a light that the darkness will not overcome.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas.

Rector Roni



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

| Date | Time | Service / Event | |
|---|------------------------|---|--|
| Sun 4th Dec | 11.00am | Holy Communion | |
| 2nd in Advent | 4.00pm | Christingle Service | |
| Weds 7 th Dec | 10.00am | Holy Communion | |
| | 6.00pm | School Carols by Candlelight | |
| Friday 9 th Dec | 9.00 – 9.30pm | Silent Together – join friends to sit for a few minutes to enjoy the tranquillity of the church | |
| Sun 11 th Dec | 8.30am | Holy Communion | |
| 3 rd in Advent | 11.00am | Second Sunday Service | |
| | From 4.00pm | Santa's Float Touring the Village – Shefford Road, Fildyke Road and surroundings | |
| Mon 12 th Dec | From 6pm | Santa's Float Touring the Village – Rectory Road, High St, Coneygate and surroundings | |
| | 7.30 for 8pm | Bible Society Meeting at 9 Clifton Road, Shefford. Speaker: Revd Christopher Strong | |
| Tues 13 th Dec | 2-4pm | Rectory Tea – chat and a cuppa – all welcome | |
| Weds 14 th Dec | 10.00am | Holy Communion | |
| Sun 18 th Dec | 8.30am | Holy Communion | |
| 4 th in Advent | 11.00am | All Age Family Service | |
| | 6.30pm | Nine Lessons and Carols | |
| Weds 21 st Dec | 10.00am | Holy Communion | |
| Sat 24 th Dec | 9.00am | Celtic Morning Prayer | |
| | 3.30pm | All-Join-In Family Nativity Service | |
| | 11.30pm | Midnight Mass | |
| Sun 25 th Dec Christmas Day | 11.00am | Christmas Morning Service | |
| Weds 28 th Dec | 10.00am Holy Communion | | |
| | 9.30am | Hike: Meppershall East Meppershall West – join for a long walk east to Ashwell – see separate page, meet at the Village Hall. | |

Services and Events – January 2017 At St Mary's unless stated below

| Date | Time | Service / Event |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Sun 1 st Jan | 11.00am | Holy Communion |
| Mon 2 nd Jan | 9.30am | Hike: Meppershall East Meppershall West – join for a long walk west to Woburn – see separate page, meet at the Church Gate. |
| Weds 4 th Jan | 10.00am | Holy Communion |
| Sun 8 th Jan | 8.30am | Holy Communion |
| Epiphany | 11.00am | Second Sunday Service – the easy habit |
| Mon 9 th Jan | 7.30 for 8pm | Bible Society Meeting at 3 Pinemead, Shefford. Speaker: Paul Lanham. |
| Tues 10 th Jan | 2-4pm | Rectory Tea – chat and a cuppa – all welcome |
| Weds 11 th Jan | 10.00am | Holy Communion |
| Friday 13 th Jan | 9.00 – 9.30pm | Silent Together — join friends to sit for a few minutes to enjoy the tranquillity of the church |
| Sun 15 th Jan | 8.30am | Holy Communion |
| 2 nd aft Epiphany | 11.00am | All Age Family Service |
| Weds 18 th Jan | 10.00am | Holy Communion |
| Sun 22 nd Jan 3 rd aft Epiphany | 11.00am | Parish Communion |
| Tues 24 th Jan | 2-4pm | Rectory Tea. "Getting serious" with a cuppa |
| Weds 25 th Jan | 10.00am | Holy Communion |
| Sat 28 th Jan | 9.00am | Celtic Morning Prayer |
| | 7.00 for 7.30pm | Meppershall Village Quiz – in aid of the Friends of St Mary's Meppershall – at the Village Hall with raffle and bar from 7pm. |
| Sun 29 th Jan 4 th aft Epiphany | 9am 10am | Joint Benefice Service: St Michael's, Shefford. Gather for breakfast – all welcome! Holy Communion Service |
| Weds 1 st Feb | 10.00am | Holy Communion |

St. Mary's Meppershall Junior Church

As I write this article, November seems to have barely begun, but the countdown to Christmas is most certainly on!

The John Lewis advert has been released and there are already some active Christmas channels!

But, while we prepare for the 'big day', buying presents and food in abundance, remember what we are really celebrating.

The birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ! The greatest gift of all!

So, celebrate, rejoice and give thanks during this festive period!

Our next Junior Church session will be:



Christmas Crafts
On

Sunday 4 December

in
St Mary's Church, Meppershall

Please do come along and join us!

The first Junior Church session in 2017 will be on **Sunday 5 February**.

We look forward to seeing you during the coming weeks and welcoming you in 2017!

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

Blessings

The JC Team

The Team

CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome all contributions to the Messenger. Contributions should preferably be submitted as attachments to an e-mail to the editor as below and be copied to the assistant editor. Hand written contributions may be sent by post, left at the Editor's address below or in the folder kept at the Village Stores. E-mails can also be sent via the village website. Contributions should run to not more than one A4 page (except by prior arrangement) and should be received by the Editor not later than the 12th of the month for publication at the end of that month. Contributions received after the deadline may be held over.

DISCLAIMER

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

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| Collating Dates for your Diaries | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--|--|
| | <u>2017</u> | | |
| January | 30 | | |
| February | 27 | | |
| March | 27 | | |
| April | 24 | | |

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.