



ACTION NEEDED LOCAL PLANNING ALERT



OUR VILLAGE IS UNDER THREAT – ACT NOW

Do you care about YOUR village?

Do you value our village environment and greenspaces?

Do you object to 150 new houses being built in Meppershall?

If you answered YES to the above questions this is YOUR chance to make YOUR voice count.

Meppershall Parish Council need as many residents as possible to object to planning application CB/25/03804/OUT that proposes to build 150 dwellings on farmland east of Coneygate, Meppershall.



Documents for this proposed development can be viewed on CBC's website using the reference number 25/03804 search under 'Planning'.

Should you require assistance, please contact us at: lovemeppershall@meppershall.org



Your village, your voice, your chance
to have a say. Your voice matters!

**DEADLINE EXTENDED:
SUBMIT OBJECTIONS BY 13th FEBRUARY 2026**



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Editorial by James Read



2026 is already full of lots of things to celebrate in the life of the village. The Village Hall Cake Café continues, the social club is busy, the reputation of the Sunday lunch at The Sugar Loaf under Doug's leadership grows and grows. Doug and team provided a Christmas party for residents of New Meppershall Care Home at the end of last year; hats off to you! Amazing! Meppershall FC are playing at home (at the back of the Village Hall) in February against Whitwell (Sunday 1st Feb) and St Ippolyts (Sunday 15th) – get along and support! So much happening – all here in your village magazine. Enjoy!

Our strong village community is at the heart of life in the village today, and at the heart of Meppershall's future. Only by strongly representing what we want the village to be, and what we want it to become, can we assure its future direction.

Gladman's predatory proposal for the building of 150 new homes on agricultural fields east of Gregory Close and Coneygate overlooks the view across the vale of Shillington to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It puts historic rural rights of way (footpaths FP1 and FP2) into an urban setting and destroys the historic embankment of FP2. It creates a built, concrete environment around long standing natural drainage areas. It places new build on the highest ground in Meppershall, forced there by a design trying to cope with serious drainage challenges lower down in the steeply inclined site. It proposes the only access for an estimated 300 additional cars will be through a narrow cul-de-sac, literally on the doorsteps of existing houses (the new-builds of 20 years ago on that road have no front gardens), via an uncurbed roadway junction where pedestrians are integrated into (currently) a low-traffic environment, alongside the toddlers' playground. The tide of new traffic will emerge into school parking challenges, the 100-yard single-lane blockage at the village shop and the catastrophic transit times on the A507 during peak hours, driven by poor public transport options and no cycle ways to the railway station several miles away. Then there's the capacity issues in schools, GP practices and utilities. It is not the right place.

Wherever you are in the village, your opinion on this planning consultation matters. Look at the leaflet shared with every household. Make your opinion known on paper and return it as instructed via the local action group. Make your opinion known online (search for Central Bedfordshire Council planning reference CB/25/03804/OUT). Or simply email lovemeppershall@meppershall.org for more information.

Central Bedfordshire is already building and growing at a rate far higher than the rest of the country. The proposed Tempsford New Town will hold some 40,000 new homes. Less than 15 years ago, Meppershall was around 700 houses, now it is around 1,100 – a huge rate of growth. Meppershall has 'done its bit' and we have benefitted from new neighbours on new developments (me included, when I arrived 20 years ago!) But this further site is not justified or fair. Significant development opportunities will arise when RAF Henlow and RAF Chicksands are partly or fully redeveloped. How can we possibly remove parts of our countryside, forever, before knowing what the big strategic options for development in our region will deliver?

Object now. It's your village. We're going to have to fight for it.

Letters

Dear Editor,

Like many villagers, I am extremely concerned about the proposed new housing development on fields behind Coneygate and Fildyke Road.

The application for 150 houses with access through Coneygate would be devastating for many residents of this quiet road. The thought of construction traffic thundering down our road, roaring past our little play park is unbearable. Think of the trucks, the noise, the dirt, the pollution through the village. Then when the houses are built - ongoing issues. With 150 houses comes hundreds of additional car journeys and extra vehicles each day passing through our village.

There are so many reasons why this development should not go ahead. Some of these include the loss of our vital green spaces. If these fields are built on it increases the risk of flooding affecting houses in Fildyke Road and Brookmead. Increased traffic through our village, which is already busy with pinch points by the school and the shop. It will also have an impact on local roads - I don't know about you but I have really noticed that my commute out towards the A1 has been taking longer over the past few years as more houses are built in local villages. We would lose far reaching views of our local area. The fields and natural landscape would irrevocably change for the worse - forever.

I encourage as many people as possible to object. The impact on our already overdeveloped village will be devastating.

Gregory Close resident

Dear Editor,

The footpath beside Taylors bus garage in Meppershall once led past the old greenhouses that stood just beyond the yard. If you turned left, the track carried you down through the Acres; if you turned right, it took you over a wide, soft lawn and past another line of weathered glasshouses, and from there the path slipped into a patch of waste ground where the remains of an old pig sty still stood, half-collapsed and slowly sinking back into the earth, already guiding you toward Monks Pool. We spent so much time in that landscape — in the old barns and the fields beyond them — wandering between broken beams, running through long grass, and climbing the trees that bordered the path, their branches giving us a view over the greenhouses and the stretch of land that shaped our days.

Down the Acres ran a narrow ditch, with a single plank laid across it like a makeshift bridge. A little further along you could jump the gap entirely and land on the path that led straight to the allotments. My sister once slipped into that ditch, missing the plank and disappearing with a splash into the muddy water; her friend, half-worried and half-amused, walked her home to get cleaned up. After the harvest the fields were stripped back to stubble, and the farmers burned it off in slow, smoky lines that drifted across the village, the smell hanging in the air like a quiet reminder that another season had turned.

My dad had played up there years before us, long before the place changed its name. He always called it the "Coneygar", the old word that lingered in the village long after most people had forgotten where it came from. By the time we were roaming those

paths it was known as the Acres, but his stories clung to the older name, as if the fields themselves remembered it.

Now so much of it has gone. The barns, the fields, the soft lawn, even the waste ground with the old pig sty — all of it lies under a new housing development, with planning permission applied for another hundred and fifty homes still to come. Soon only the ditch and the allotments will remain, thin traces of the landscape we once knew. The village is already crowded with parked cars, every spare verge and corner taken, and there's nowhere left for children to play the way we did. The open spaces that shaped our childhood have slipped into memory, replaced by streets and driveways where the fields used to breathe.

Gary Dilley



Gary also provided these wonderful old photos of Taylor's bus garage, more than half a century ago now. They are a reminder that the existing Gregory Close and Coneygate development was a brownfield site, putting some commercial / industrial ground to use as a residential area.

His memories and wonderful local

stories also describe the rural edges of the village that are still evident today on the popular FP1 (footpath 1 on the CBC definitive map) and its neighbouring ditch. For many, that number ('1') signifies the way it was — and still very much is — the foremost rural link, at the centre of village life, a daily experience of our rural surroundings between Fildyke Road and High Street. It is a fundamental part of the character of that corner of Meppershall, encapsulating our rural history, opening the modern village to its rural surroundings for residents of all ages and for future generations. The adjacent FP2, across to Chapel Farm and Chapel Road, would be destroyed by the proposed new 150-house building plan. This area is the greenest of green fields.

There could be no better illustration of the critical importance of the way national planning policy — and that of our area in Central Bedfordshire — places a strong priority on brownfield locations (within towns, redeveloping urban land) and resists greenfield development (converting agricultural fields into a 'built environment'). This applies especially to areas such as Meppershall which are amply fulfilling their contribution to national housebuilding. The chance to object closes soon in February, so please act now.



Meppershall's Christmas Tree Lights Switch on Competition



And the
winners
are.....



Daniel Collins - Aged 5

Lottie Mew - Aged 8

Elyse G - Aged 12

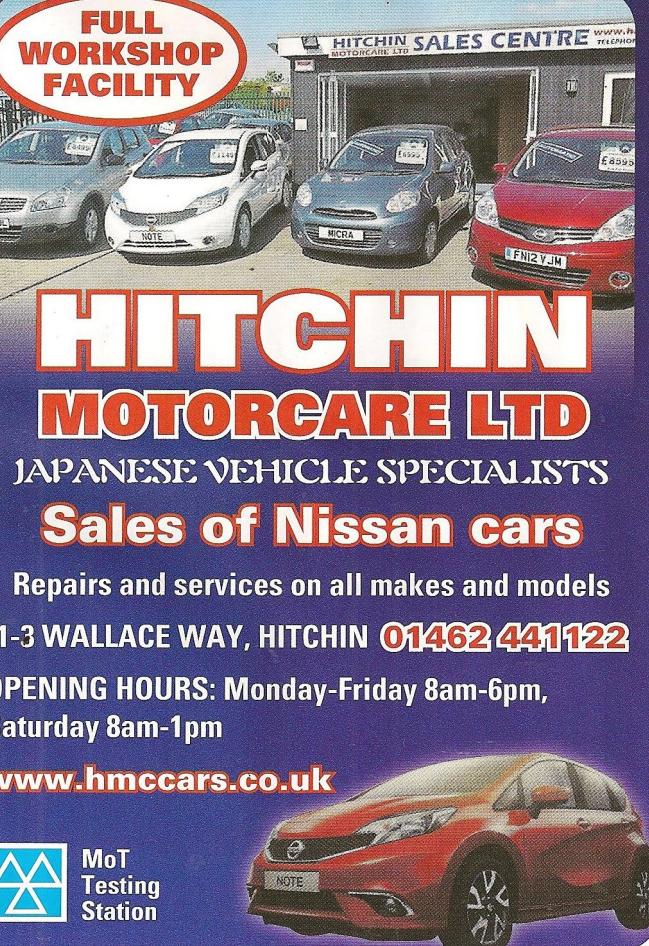
Correct number of lights was 1601!

**Thanks to Meppershall Messenger for providing the
prizes**

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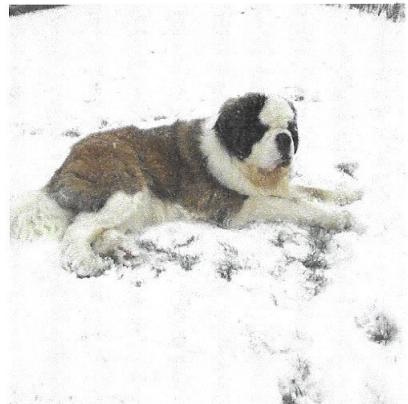


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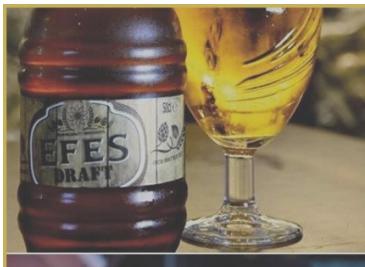
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Meppershall Parish Council

Key points and summary of recent meetings

Meetings of Meppershall Parish Council (MPC) took place on 12th January 2026

Chairmans Announcements

- Councillors absent from last month's meeting were asked to sign the Councillor Statement of Assurance.
- CBC have granted a Tree Protection Order 6/2025 along the walkway to the Old Rectory, SG17 5NB.

Public Session

- A member of the public said that they looked forward to hearing the Parish Councils' objections to planning application 25/03804 East of Coneygate. However, he noted that the most important thing that residents can do is submit an objection to CBC and sign the petition in circulation. He emphasised that the decision on the planning application is in the hands of CBC and possibly the Planning Inspectorate (if CBC refuse planning permission and the applicant appeals this decision). Procedural issues have been raised with the CBC Planning Officer dealing with the application. Thanks were given to all for helping the voice of the village and villagers to be heard. Issues currently identified with the application concern traffic and roads, rights of way, hilltop aspect of village and erosion of rural edge of the village.
- A member of the public asked 'will objections stand if they are based on a template letter? *Yes, each objection letter will be counted as an individual objection however if residents have other points to raise, they should add these to their submissions. When the CBC planning Officer prepares his report on the planning application he will summarise all the objections raised.*
- A member of the public wished it to be noted that as a resident of newly built homes in Meppershall he was supportive of new developments but would like to request that the tone of campaigning against this planning application and any others that may come along remains respectful. *The Chair thanked the resident for raising this and wished it noted that the village has gained from recent new developments in the village and the Parish Council will aim to get as much as possible for the village from any future developments. All people once they move to Meppershall are welcomed as villagers irrespective of where they live. The issue here is that it is all about the right homes in the right place.*
- A member of the public wished it noted that the entrance to the new development is potentially dangerous and will reduce the availability of parking spaces for current residents.
- A member of the public asked what is the landowners' position on this planning application? *It was noted that the application has been submitted by a land promoter who presumably represents the landowner(s) who have given their support for the application.*
- A member of the public wished to remind all that objection letters are being collected by a team of residents co-ordinating action against the proposed planning application and that if any resident wants help, then they simply need to ask.

Procedures, Consultations and Legal

Procedures

- A number of policies were re-adopted with minor changes made to reflect digital and data compliance requirements.

Stocken House

- No update received from Davidson's or CBC on any matters.

IT & Communications

- Drafts of amendments to MPC website and new meppershall.org sent to Clerk this week. Clerk to review.

Finance

Purchase orders approved for

- Parish Online subscription, Meppershall Enclosure Maps 1853, storage boxes, printing of leaflet advising residents of planning application 25/03804 East of Coneygate, kissing gate for ORM, installation of benches, kissing gate and drainage at ORM and new laptop for Clerk.

Grant applications approved

- Grant to Meppershall Messenger for £750.

Budget 2026-27 and precept

- It was agreed that Councillors Thompson and Wright would work with the Clerk on the preparation of the 2026-2027 budget for a meeting with council on 27th January.

Document approval

- Approval of bank statements and reconciliation as presented.

Orders for the payment of money

- Approval for payments as presented to Council.

Planning applications

- CB/25/03804/OUT - Land East of Coneygate - Outline Application: Erection of up to 150 dwellings. All matters reserved except for means of access. Objection.

The Parish Council has currently identified the following issues with this planning application:

- Highways issues, access and safety,
- Rights of way,
- Slope of site and SUDs,
- Sewage
- Height of site (top of hilltop)
- Erosion of rural edge of the village, and
- Non-conformity to various CBC Local Plan policies.

The Parish Council together with village organisations and residents have prepared a leaflet for distribution informing recipients of the planning application and highlighting issues with it. The printed leaflet is being distributed to all Meppershall homes by the Messenger team with a sample objection letter. This is a wonderful effort by all concerned. Special post boxes have been erected to collect completed objection letters, and a petition is being organised by a core group of residents behind the Save Coneygate – Fildyke Fields action group.

Appeals

- Appeal 6002693 - CB/25/02814/PIP - Grass Land to the West of Shillington Road, Meppershall - Permission in Principle: Development of up to 9 single storey bungalows. The Clerk reported that a consultant has been contacted with the aim of bolstering the MPC response to the Planning Inspector considering the Applicants planning appeal statement. They have proposed reworking our original objection letter and adding to this. The Clerk believes that the experience of the consultant will aid the MPC submission.

Neighbourhood Plan

- The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group thanked the Council for their speedy response to requests for assistance with planning application 25/03804 East of Coneygate.
- The Neighbourhood Plan has not moved on much since December. In progress are the update to the Green Infrastructure Plan, the proposal to extend the conservation area and the Design Guide. Councillors offered to assist in different areas, and the Clerk will send information and tasks as requested.

Highways and Transport

- The Clerk was asked to contact CBC regarding gritting of Chapel Road.

Environment and Leisure

Update on allotment track and residents parking.

- The Clerk together with Councillors Avrili and Thompson have finalised documentation for delivery to residents on 1st February 2026.

Update on allotments

- The Clerk will prioritise allotment actions in the month of January.

Village Summer Fayre kick off meeting update and actions for MPC as organiser.

- The Clerk reported a kick off meeting for a proposed summer fayre was held last week with the Social Club team in attendance and an abundance of ideas. Unfortunately, the Village Hall has accepted two bookings on the date of the proposed summer fayre that cannot be re-scheduled which is causing concern. Organising of the summer fayre will be a large workload for the Clerk who has little experience and she suggested that Council consider requesting assistance from the new Community Engagement Officer at Stondon Parish Council in organising the event. Councillors agreed that to do the event justice and have the maximum impact it was best to re-launch the village fayre in the summer of 2027 and assist the Social Club in holding a smaller event this year. Councillors also asked the Clerk to include use of Stondon's Community Engagement Officer in the 2026-2027 budget.

Update on Old Road Meadow

- List of works pending.

Update on all other environment and leisure issues

- The Clerk reported that the Christmas Tree Light Switch on Event went extremely well. There was an issue with the lights that Mr Hirst will investigate once the lights are down. A short article on works due to start at Old Road Meadow will be included in the next Messenger

Staff Matters

Appointment of Allotment Co-ordinator

- The Clerk will publish the job advert online with a view to appointment for 1st April 2026.

Full meeting minutes can be found here: <https://meppershall-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/>

John Parsons - Chairman - Meppershall Parish Council

Reminder - Works to Old Road Meadow

It has now been 25 years since trees were planted at Old Road Meadow to create a nature reserve. Over time the planting and trees have matured, and we now need to carry out works to maintain and improve the area.

Works started last year with removal of some trees, ditch clearance, widening of paths and the installation of fencing over the bridge and around the ditch. Works planned for the coming months includes installation of new benches and picnic bench, additional drainage, new trees planted, entrance gate repositioning and installation of kissing gate etc.

If you would like to help or have any questions, please email us at lovemeppershall@meppershall.org.

Meppershall Social Club

What a busy last few months, we hope you all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Social Club would like to Thank everyone who helped with the Christmas Tree Light switch-on day and evening, including Santa, his elves, the Parish Council for the



grant towards the Christmas presents costs and Roger's Bakery for donating the hot dog rolls plus anyone else we have forgotten here. We are looking forward to this year's celebrations

We would like to thank everyone for your support last year and we can inform you have been able to donate £1,000 to the Wanderbus and £250 to the Gnomes. On top of this we have also matched what was in our charity pot for the year and given £250 to Help for Heroes and £250 to Meppershall Pre-school.

Membership is due again - no cost, but you get a say in how things run, at the AGM.

Events this month:

Music Quiz with Cash prize of £50 for winners on Saturday 21st February £2 per person (cash only please), Max of 6 per team starting at 8pm in Bar area.

Plus weekly Friday Bingo - doors open at 6:30, eyes down at 7pm, all welcome; and our second Sunday of the month Quiz starting at 7:30pm, £1 per person, teams max of 6. 50% Prize for winner 50% to this year's charities which are Meppershall Gnomes (Good Neighbours) and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

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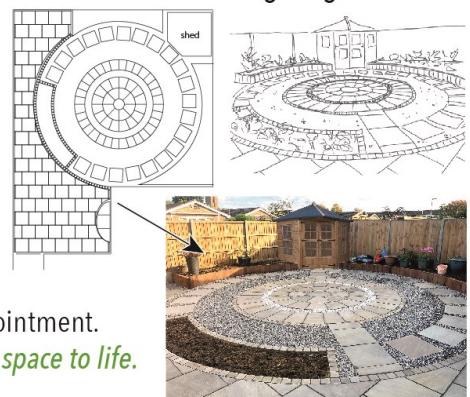
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Meppershall Munchkins

Happy New Year from Meppershall Munchkins!

We would like to wish all our families a very happy New Year and thank you for your continued support. We had a fantastic end to last year and are really looking forward to everything 2026 has in store.

Christmas Round-Up

Our festive season was a huge success! The Christmas Elves Workshop and Christmas Party were both brilliant events, full of fun, laughter and festive cheer. A big thank you to everyone who attended and helped make them so special.

We were also incredibly proud of our Advent Window, which looked absolutely fantastic—thank you to the children for their wonderful decorations and to everyone who came to see it.

Important Date

Please note that Meppershall Munchkins will be closed on Friday 13th February.

Events Coming Up

We have some exciting sessions planned for the coming months:

10th February – Valentine crafts 

13th March – Visit from the Shefford and Stotfold Children's Centre team

We are also planning more events, including something special for Mother's Day. Please keep checking our Facebook page for more details as plans are confirmed.

Volunteers Needed

Our group relies entirely on the kindness and energy of volunteers, and we are always in need of more help. If you can spare any time to assist with setting up, tidying away, or supporting sessions, please do come and say hello. Volunteering is the only way to keep this wonderful group running, and every bit of help makes a huge difference.

Munchkins Details

Tuesdays and Fridays, 9:30–11:30am.

£3.50 for the first child; £1 additional children.

Snack and squash included for the children.

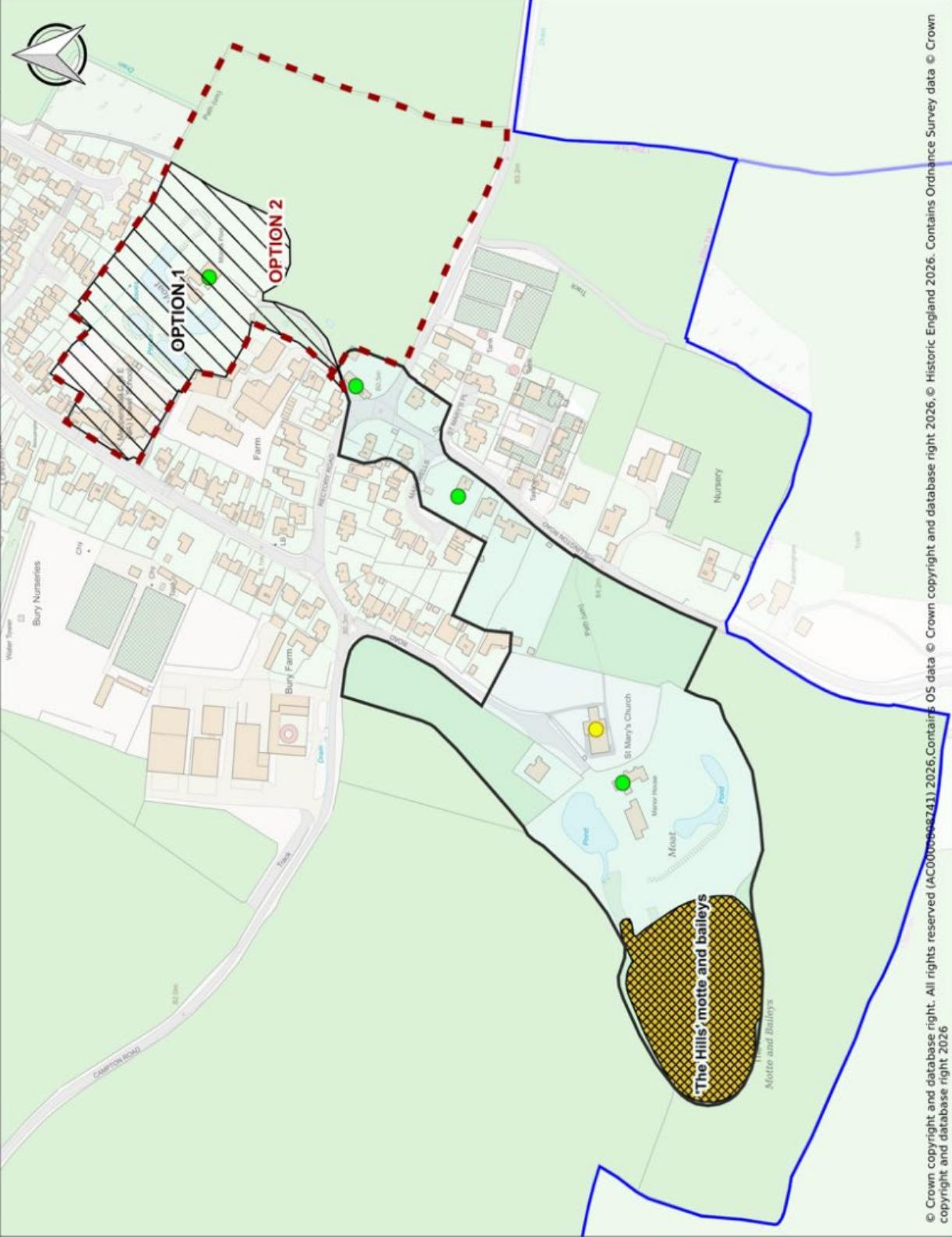
Walk-ins welcome.

Payment via cash or bank transfer.

For updates, including emergency closures, please check the Meppershall Munchkins Facebook page.

We look forward to seeing you soon for plenty of fun, friendship and warm community spirit!

Consultation: Proposed Extension to Meppershall Conservation Area

Proposed Extension to Meppershall Conservation Area		Meppershall	
Author:	Meppershall		
Date: 14/01/2026	 		
			

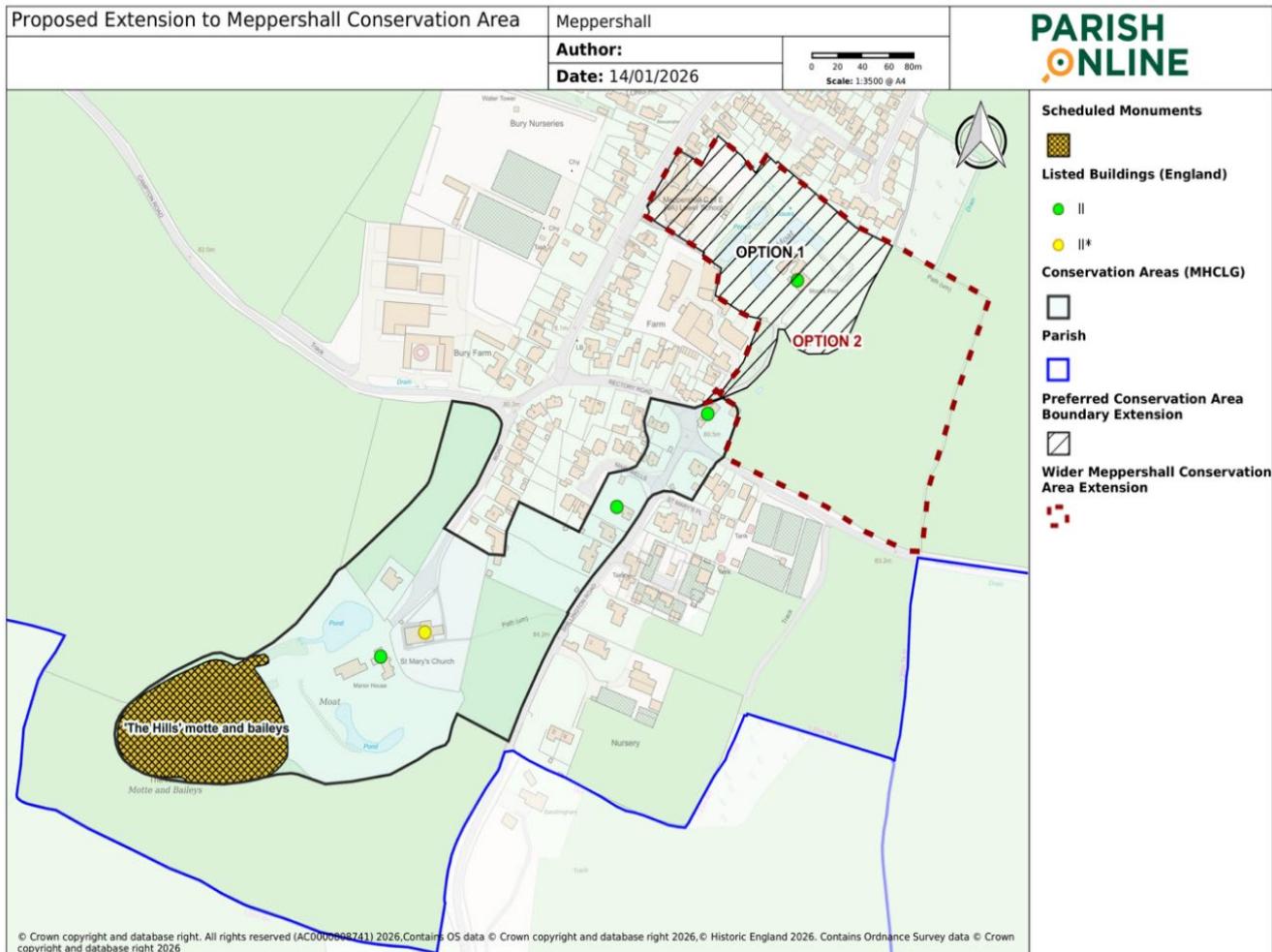
Meppershall Conservation Area was designated on 12th February 1981. The schedule attached to the designation described the extent of the Conservation but provided no detail about the merits of the area. The Parish Council intend to request that Central Bedfordshire Council prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal and at the same time, consider extending the Conservation Area to cover Monks Pool. When the Conservation Area was designated, residents helped to provide the evidence to support the designation. Can you help to provide evidence for extending the area? If so, please contact us at lovermeppershall@meppershall.org

Your views are sought on whether you would support an extension to the Conservation Area. Two options are shown on the map below. If you would support the extension, we would like to know which options you would support.

OPTION 1: This option extends the Conservation Area to include Monks Pool. It also includes Meppershall Lower School and No 105 High Street (Roger's Bakery).

OPTION 2: This option would also include the meadow (The Coneygate) on the eastern edge of the village. The meadow has historical significance for the village. It is delineated by Kings Path (Public Right of Way Footpath 9) with a strong field boundary hedgerow, and Stondon Road.

The Map shows the existing Conservation Area, the Scheduled Monument (The Hills Motte and Bailey), the Listed Buildings, and the two options for extending the Conservation Area. Please see larger version above, and see it in colour in the online issue of this magazine at Meppershall.org.



You can reply to this consultation by:

1. Scanning the QR code here
and responding to the Consultation online, or



2. Using the tear off portion below.

Complete your answers and post the form back to us
in one of the green post-boxes:

Opposite 101-103 High Street

At the corner of Walnut Tree Way and the High Street

Under the vehicle activated sign outside 69 Shefford Road

Outside 26 Fildyke Road.

Collection boxes are at Budgens, Rogers Bakery and the Sugar Loaf Pub.

(Note these boxes are also being used for the collection of planning response
letters)



Consultation on Proposed Extension to Meppershall Conservation Area Response (cut out, complete and return)

Please could you reply to the following questions:

Q1. Would you support the extension of the Conservation Area? Please tick appropriate box

YES

NO

DON'T KNOW

If you ticked YES, please also answer Q2.

**Q2. If you do support the extension of the Conservation Area, would you prefer?
Please tick appropriate box**

OPTION 1

The extension includes Monks Pool, the school and No 105 High Street

OPTION 2

The extension includes Monks Pool, the school, No 105 High Street, and
the adjoining meadow

Additional comments

PLEASE RESPOND BY SATURDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2026

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Rector: The Reverend Veronica Goodman

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

Churchwardens:

Chris Valentine 01462 815971 John Archer

PCC Secretary:

Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

A Message From St Mary's...

Here comes February - and from what I hear (see YouGov.co.uk) only 19% of Britons planned to make New Year resolutions this Year - and health resolutions topped the list. Maybe you have just completed Veganuary or Dry January - or similar?

I guess you might expect me to say it But I would have liked to see resolutions about prioritising self, improving mental health and being happier - extended to things like trying to go regularly to church, praying, reading the Bible, developing my spiritual self, being part of - and contributing to - a loving caring community.

I also read that most of us will in any case have given up on our resolution by mid - February...

One of my daughters-in-law encouragingly told me that she had recently read that New Year's Day is not a good time to make resolutions. That's because it is difficult to visualise the Year ahead when it is still cold and dark and the world feels like it is still hibernating! She said it makes much more sense to make our "New Year" Resolutions when the world around us is waking up to spring - and all around us there is a sense of new life!

I know that I have many goals I would like to achieve towards being a better, healthier, more whole and holier person! And I think for me that Spring is probably a better time to review my life.

I guess I am used to having abandoned my New Year resolutions by Lent and to making new short term resolutions for Lent itself - I wonder, were you planning to "Give something up for Lent" this year? Maybe the beginning of Lent (the 18th February this year) is a good time for me to pick myself up - brush myself down - and start all over again.... And with longer term goals! Hopefully the earth will be beginning to warm then and there will be signs of Spring.

Longer, lighter days and more sunshine might help, but for me faith is important too. I believe that the God who loves me, who came as "Immanuel God with us" - to forgive our failings, to bring light to our darkness and to strengthen us in our weakness - who came to save us - I believe God will help me! I will surely struggle - maybe fail - and then struggle some more. But I believe that: "The Lord's unfailing love and mercy still

continue, Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise." (*Lamentations 3:22-23. Good News Translation*).

So here goes!

Wishing you still - a great year in 2026!

With love, Rector Roni.

Church Events In February

Usual Pattern of Services

Sundays	11.00am	Morning Worship every Sunday Holy Communion: 2 nd and 4 th Sundays
Every Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion in the Rectory
Church open to visit	10.00-4.00	Private prayer, quiet time – the church is open.
Online services:	9.00am	Morning Prayer using 24-7's Lectio 365 App 7-days-a-week
	9.00pm	Night Prayer/Compline from the C. of E. Daily Prayer App, 7-days-a-week
Find us on Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/stmarysmeppershall/	
Find us on our website:	https://www.stmarysmeppershall.org.uk/	
Find us on YouTube:	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRjDLGAY8GI6afkO8iALYOA	

Please note '9and9' continues daily on our Facebook page.

Forthcoming Services and Events

Come and experience the warm welcome and friendly community of St Mary's, your beautiful village church ☺ We hope to see you soon.

Sunday February 1 st	11am	Morning Worship - Candlemas
Weds February 4 th	9.45am	Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday February 8 th	11am	Holy Communion
Weds February 11 th	9.45am	Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday February 15 th	11am	Morning Worship
Ash Wednesday, Feb 18th	9.45am	Holy Communion in the Rectory
	7.30pm	Holy Communion at St Michael's Shefford
Sunday February 22 nd	11am	Holy Communion, Lent 1
Weds February 25 th	9.45am	Holy Communion in the Rectory

Want To Try Bell Ringing?

A new year, a new you!

Want to try something new? Why not try bellringing!

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Let me know you're coming on 07778 449051.

Gillian



St Mary's Church, Meppershall - Junior Church



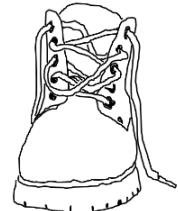
Join us on the
2nd and 4th Sunday of each month.

Call Gillian for more information on
07778 449051.

The Junior Church Team

Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers

We started 2026 with an invigorating lap of Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve and Deacon Hill, including some very slippery bits. Thanks to everyone for the patience and resilience. We'll try to keep things a bit less exciting for the coming walks.



Sunday 8th February, 2026: meeting at the church gate in Meppershall at 2.00PM, we plan a simple loop of Chapel Farm – a good way to explore paths east of the village (some of which are threatened by development proposals). We'll head from the church to Gregory Close and take FP2 across to Chapel Road – using the road briefly to Cow Lane (beside Chapel Farm). We will loop around Chapel Farm and return to the water tower before rejoining FP2 via the farm track, walking up Coneygate to FP9 and back towards church on Stondon Road.

This one is just 5KM (3 miles-ish), back at church by around 3.30PM. We plan a longer walk for March, heading to The Greyhound at Haynes, as the days get longer. Call James and Miriam (857836) / message us on Facebook @meppershallstrollers, including any interest in grabbing tea at church at the end of this February walk?



Here's a photo of the public right of way, footpath 2 (FP2 on the CBC definitive map) threatened by development proposals east of Coneygate. The footpath sits atop an embanked ancient landform, believed in village history to be a lynchet and an ancient division line of the 'great fields' dating from pre-enclosure strip farming times.



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Please do not put your cakes in any containers that you would like returned as we cannot guarantee you will get them back.

Please put a note with your cake if you have used nuts.

Any questions email - events@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk

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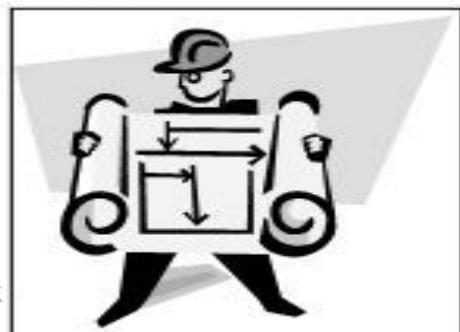
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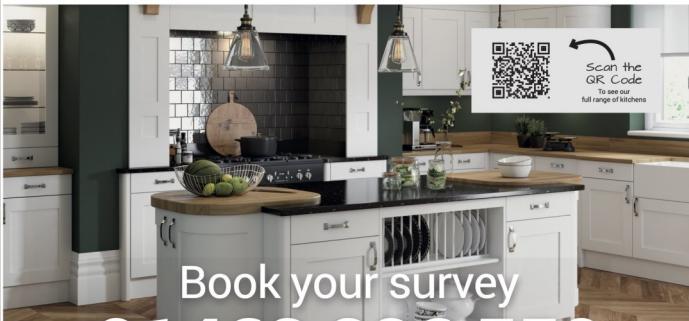
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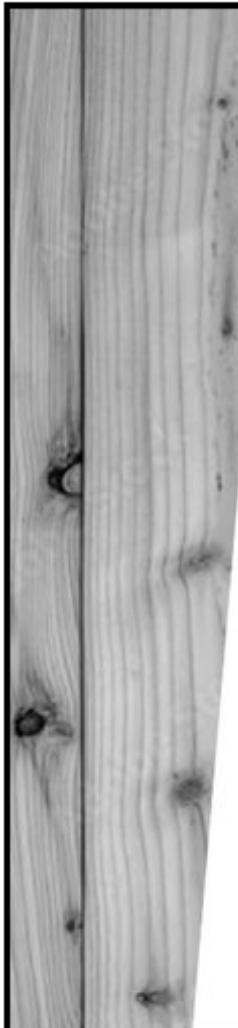
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Biggleswade & District Camera Club



We meet on Thursday evenings, 7:30 for 8:00pm in “The Sullivan Room”, Weatherley Centre, Eagle Farm Road, Biggleswade SG18 8JH.

Here is a list of the upcoming lectures:

26th February:

A presentation by Jim and Debra Bennett entitled “Straight out of the Camera”

26th March:

A presentation by Derek Doer entitled “Captured Moments in Print”

9th April:

A presentation by Jane Goodall entitled “Discover the Midjourney AI App”

Visitors are welcome. There is a small charge of £3.00 payable on the door.

Throughout the season we run competitions, with external judges. These are for both PDI's and Prints. There are a few specialist subject rounds, but most are open for members to choose their own images. We also have speakers and presentations. Speakers have included Kevin Pigney, Andy Sands, Mark Gilligan and Chris Palmer.

The emphasis has always been on retaining the friendly and encouraging character of the club and prospective members, visitors and even photographic judges are warmly welcomed.

There is an annual Photo Walkabout at a local venue where members are challenged to obtain an image for each of six revealed topics.

The club enters interclub competitions, including the Cambridge Digital Competition and the Central Club Challenge. We have three-way battles with Ampthill/Bedford/Biggleswade and Kempston/Stevenage/Biggleswade.

For further information about the club please contact me at royhiggins1946@yahoo.co.uk or see the website www.biggleswadecameraclub.co.uk

Roy Higgins — Publicity Officer, Biggleswade & DCC 07768688667

I Met My Friend In Delville Wood by Patrick O'Connor

I met my friend in Delville Wood,
 Through splintered trees I saw him come.
 No leaves, no birds that summer day,
 Just death, and fear, and bloody clay.

His sunblond hair and laughing face
 I saw once more, like years ago.
 "Another year, we'll meet again.
 Till then, my friend, auf wiedersehen."

Will these woods be green again?
 Will bluebells spring from blood and steel?
 Will lovers kiss, and children play?
 Can we be friends, like yesterday?

No!

Our friendship too must die in war.
 My bullet hit, and as he fell
 His eyes met mine, the pain showed through.
 I think he recognised me too.

Patrick O'Connor

This moving poem from Patrick is inspired by the Battle of Delville Wood during the World War One. Part of the wider conflict on The Somme in 1916, Delville Wood was being used by German artillery to fire on the forces of the British Empire as they contested the town of Longueval, France. Longueval was a very significant crossroads that was seen as a strategic location to hold as part of wider progress in the war. The wood saw back-and-forth short-term advances by both sides, over a period of seven weeks, and vast numbers of men were lost.

Fighting for the British Empire, South African forces suffered particular losses: 4 out of every 5 soldiers of the South African Brigade entering the wood in July 1916 were killed, injured or missing. The wood was utterly destroyed by persistent bombardment from the land and air: "Delville Wood had disintegrated into a shattered wasteland of shattered trees, charred and burning stumps, craters thick with mud and blood, and corpses, corpses everywhere," said a German witness to the conflict. "In places they were piled four deep. Worst of all was the lowing of the wounded. It sounded like a cattle ring at the spring fair."

Today, a memorial and museum stand at the site of the conflict and the South African Government replanted the wood in tribute to the losses sustained all those years ago. But we only need to look to Ukraine to see that such human loss is not just a matter of history. It is part of the present, driven by the choices made by nations, the sacrifices made by those serving on our behalf and the value we place on peace.

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Snow Drifts And Blankets Of Gold by Donna Cameron

Donna's Garden Designs | 07833670934

At this time of year I am willing my plants on. Desperate to see the many bulbs emerge that I planted in the Autumn, my friends know I couldn't stop planting them - I can't resist! Now the bare brown soil is just starting to show the fresh green shoots and the magic begins!



February is synonymous with, of course, the Snowdrop. They herald in the beginning of spring with their tiny white trumpets. On a dreary winter's day they are a most welcome sight - be it a small clump in your garden or in a woodland in huge drifts. They are symbolic of spring coming, with warmer, longer days.

Another flower that often accompanies the Snowdrop is the Winter Aconite.

Aconites look just like a Buttercup and are from the Ranunculaceae family. Living underground most of the year to pop up now, this vibrant yellow in February gives splashes of colour on drab wintery days, spreading cheer.

They are best bought in the green and are vital early food for pollinators. Introduced in the 1500s to the UK, they became popular in landscape gardens in the 18th century. They tolerate most soils and are relatively easy to propagate.

They represent Hope, new beginnings and resilience. What more can we ask for!

Happy New Year!

Donna x

Jobs In the Garden For February

Chit potatoes	Deadhead winter Pansies
Prune winter flowering shrubs once finished flowering	Divide Herbaceous perennials
Divide Snowdrops	Mulch beds
Prune Wisteria	Feed and water birds
Cutback Ornamental grasses	Water pots if dry
Sew Sweetpeas and Hardy Annuals and keep in coldframe or Greenhouse	Place Dahlia tubers and Gladioli corms in warm and light to start them off

Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club) – January / February

Happy New Year to you all.

Here we are in 2026, poised and awaiting our first flowers of spring to pop up. All the planning, preparation of promise back in October is about to come to fruition and enhance the sparse winter colours through the silhouettes of bare trees and sleepy shrubs in our gardens. Now is the time to plan your bright and colourful blooms of summer, your fruitful vegetable growing and also the fiery shades for later in Autumn.

A must for any garden is Rhubarb. Sales of Rhubarb are going through the roof. Its distinctive taste is popping up in many of our supermarket products from hot cross buns to Gin and also in many household products: anti bacterial sprays, washing-up liquid, room fresheners, candles and even scented loo rolls. It will not be long before we will start to see 'forced Rhubarb' in our shops. Since 2019, the demand for supermarket supplies of forced Rhubarb has soared by more than 170% with most of the supply from Yorkshire - but increasingly it is from further afield, including the South East.

Rhubarb has been grown for thousands of years in Siberia, Mongolia and China where it was mostly used for medicinal purposes. It was introduced into Europe in the 14th Century and became a valuable trade commodity - at one point being more expensive than the spice Cinnamon. The first recipe for cooked Rhubarb appeared in the 18th Century and forced Rhubarb is believed to have originated in London in 1817 when legend has it that workers at Chelsea Physic Garden accidentally buried a bed whilst digging a trench.

If growing forced Rhubarb at home, cover it with a pot, bucket or terracotta forcing jar to keep it warm and dark. Rhubarb is a vegetable but is used like a fruit. However, beware as only the stalks are edible as the leaves have high levels of Oxalic acid which is poisonous.

Please join us for 2026 on the first Monday of each month at Campton Village Hall at 19:30 (except for April and May which will be on the first Tuesday owing to the Mondays being Bank holidays). New members very welcome!

Maryika Wilding 01462 851729

Personal Finance by Paul Savuto

Divorce and money – everything you need to know if you are splitting up

Three-fifths of unhappily married people in the UK say they feel they can't get divorced because of their finances.

Divorce is an unpleasant process, but sometimes a necessary one if a marriage has broken down. Establishing how money and assets will be divided following a divorce can cause a great deal of anxiety, both before, during and after the legal proceedings. Almost three-fifths (59%) of unhappily married couples in the UK feel as though they can't get divorced because of their finances, a survey of 1,000 people from Co-Op Legal

Services found. Meanwhile, 49% of divorcees said they delayed the process due to financial reasons, according to a separate poll of 1,000 people.

The survey found that the only reason for staying married that eclipsed personal finances was concern about the impact a separation might have on their children, as 60% of respondents said this was the primary reason for staying in an unhappy marriage. Ben Evans, lead family law solicitor at Co-op Legal Services, said: "Getting divorced can be complicated further when the couple has children to consider or if they feel their finances do not allow for them to go their separate ways.

"I would advise anyone considering a divorce to seek support, whether that be with trusted family and friends, or through an independent service. "There is a wealth of resources available to help those who are considering a separation. People can seek legal advice early to provide peace of mind, or to discuss the implications of divorce and the available options."

What does divorce mean for your mortgage, pension, savings and investments though? We explain all the need-to-knows.

Divorce and your mortgage

There are a few options available to you when it comes to dividing a home – what is likely to be one of the most valuable assets shared between a couple. Nick Mendes, mortgage technical manager at broker John Charcol, said one of the most common routes is for one person to keep the property and take over the mortgage in their name.

An affordability assessment will be carried out by the lender, with income, outgoings, credit history and age all considered. If that person can afford the new repayments, the mortgage is transferred to them and any equity owed to the other party is paid out. Another option is selling the property and repaying the mortgage.

"This is often the cleanest solution. Any remaining equity can then be split in line with the divorce settlement. While this can be emotionally difficult, it removes ongoing financial ties and avoids future disputes if circumstances change," Mendes added.

Another alternative is for both people to remain on the mortgage, even if only one is living in the property. This carries risk though. "The non-resident party remains fully liable for payments and the mortgage will still count against their borrowing capacity if they want to buy elsewhere," Mendes said.

Divorce and your savings and investments

Savings and investments are other big assets that will come up during divorce negotiations. Savings are, in theory, easy to divide as you can simply move the money from an account owned by one partner into one owned by the other.

Things can be a little more complicated with investments. In some cases you can transfer ownership between partners, but in others you may need to sell the asset and divide the proceeds. It's important to remember that doing so could incur fees and taxes, such as capital gains tax. If you have a joint account, it is worth letting the bank know that you are separating as soon as possible to avoid any misuse of the money in the account.

Divorce and your pension

Dividing pensions between two parties is often overlooked during divorce proceedings.

Craig Rickman, personal finance expert at interactive investor, said: “Pensions in the event of divorce can be a complex area, and their value is sometimes overlooked, despite often being a couple’s largest asset alongside the family home.”

There are three main options for dividing pensions in the event of a divorce.

Pension offsetting: This is where the value of a pension pot is offset against the value of another asset, for example with one partner keeping the pension and the other getting a larger stake in the family home.

Pension sharing. The name is somewhat self-explanatory here, with some – or even all – of one partner’s pension savings moved into an account belonging to the other.

Attachment orders - where one partner commits to paying a portion of their pension income to the other once they reach retirement. This works slightly differently in Scotland, where it is known as pension earmarking. Recipients north of the border can only receive some of the lump sum available to those taking money from their pension for the first time, but cannot take a portion of the pension income that follows.

Some 15% of over 50s have been forced to delay their retirement due to divorce proceedings, according to new research by life cover provider Legal and General (L&G).

The poll of 471 over 50s also revealed a third (32%) of divorcees who had been through a divorce were considering downsizing their homes as a result.

Lorna Shah, managing director of retail retirement at L&G, said: “Retirement incomes are being stretched further than ever as people live longer and often enter retirement without sufficient savings. A divorce can make this challenge more complex.”

It comes as separate research from now:pensions and the Pension Policy Institute (PPI) reveals divorced women typically have £400,000 less in pension savings than divorced men in the UK.

What happens to pre-marriage assets in a divorce?

Lawyers are increasingly seeing couples fight over how assets obtained prior to their marriage should be split on divorce. The issue is known as “matrimonialisation” – the process by which non-marital assets become matrimonial assets as a result of married couples typically sharing finances, which are then subject to division on divorce. The issue is a legal grey area and disputes over whether pre-marital assets should be divided on divorce have more than tripled over the past two years, according to Nockolds, a law firm. By its analysis, there were around 3,200 matrimonialisation-related court claims in 2024/25 – up from 1,200 the previous year and just 800 in 2022/23.

The figures are extrapolated from published judgments in the Family Court and the Family Division of the High Court, based on the assumption that 5% of all claims reach final hearing and that 5% of those hearings are published by The National Archives’ Find Case Law service.

According to Nockolds, the recent surge in court disputes over what assets are subject to division on divorce is partly down to more complex wealth structures being used,

such as offshore trusts and family investment companies. These are increasingly blurring the line between what is personal ownership and what are jointly owned marital assets. Kaja Viknes, senior associate at Nockolds, said: "As asset structures become more sophisticated, so do the arguments. It's no longer just about ownership, it's about how, why, and when assets entered the marital sphere." Tighter non-dom rules and increased scrutiny of inheritance tax planning have also prompted a wave of inter-spousal asset transfers and relocations, some of which have triggered divorce proceedings, Nockolds has found. "Transfers made for tax efficiency can backfire in divorce. Without proper structures, they risk being reclassified as marital contributions," said Viknes.

More couples are choosing pre- and post-nuptial agreements. But this can also lead to disputes over their scope, enforceability, and whether excluded assets were later matrimonialised, she added. "Outcomes often hinge on how judges interpret intention, conduct, and fairness," said Viknes. "Where the law stops short of bright-line rules, parties are more willing to test the limits, particularly when millions are at stake and asset histories are complex." A ruling in July in the Supreme Court in the case of *Standish v Standish* – where Mrs Standish sought an equal split in the divorce – involving assets moved from husband to wife to avoid inheritance tax, confirmed not all assets transferred during marriage become matrimonial. Nockolds expected the ruling to prompt more disputes over whether specific assets, especially properties, business interests, and large gifts, were matrimonialised. Spouses seeking a share will need to show clear evidence of joint use, improvements, or integration into family life. Viknes said: "The *Standish* ruling gives greater confidence to those seeking to ring-fence wealth, especially in cases involving inherited assets, business interests, or offshore structures. It reinforces the principle that origin and intention matter more than title alone." For pre- and post-nuptial agreements, it's a "drafting wake-up call", she added.

The cost of a divorce

The eventual cost of your divorce will come down to how you go about doing it, and how much involvement there is with lawyers. There is a £612 fee to apply for a divorce, as well as a £263 fee if a child arrangement needs to be put in place.

The cost of your divorce can be substantial if you have to go through the courts, due to the lawyer fees. The Ministry of Justice says that hourly fees can hit as much as £566 an hour depending on your location and the lawyer's experience. Going through mediation may be cheaper and faster, while you may also be able to get help from the government worth up to £500 which can go towards mediation costs. You can find a mediator through the Family Mediation Council. Another alternative is arbitration, where an independent arbiter is appointed to make a decision on the division of assets. This decision is binding on both parties.

Your finances after a divorce

Two people divorcing need to separate their finances not for the immediate term, but for the future as well.

Joint accounts left open can dent your credit score if the other person starts missing credit payments. This could prove an issue when you come to trying to get a mortgage. Similarly, don't forget to look at your will and amend it, if needs be. It may be that

changes need to be made as a result of the divorce, for example if you no longer want your former partner to receive any of your assets.

The no-fault divorce process

A big change to the divorce process was introduced in 2022 as no-fault divorces became legally implemented, meaning no reason has to be given for divorce. Before this, one partner would have to register a particular reason for the split, such as adultery or unreasonable behaviour, or else have to go through a period of two to five years of separation first.

With no-fault divorces, splits are quicker and easier – and most of all, cheaper. This is because proceeding with a no-fault divorce will likely mean you need less time with a lawyer. Under a no-fault divorce, the same advice will apply as they, legally and functionally, have the same implications for your finances as a divorce that cites a reason. No-fault divorces are not available in Northern Ireland.

When do the most divorces happen?

The first working Monday of the new year is when lawyers typically get the highest number of divorce queries, so much so, the day has been rebranded 'Divorce Day'. "There's usually a surge of enquiries with divorce lawyers on the first Monday back after Christmas," says Sarah Coles, head of personal finance at Hargreaves Lansdown. "It's one of two annual peaks, with the second on the first working day after the school summer holidays."

GET IN TOUCH

DGS IFA Ltd are Independent and Chartered Financial Advisers. I am a Chartered Financial Planner with over 30 years financial services experience, so you are in safe hands. To discuss your financial situation and to discuss your plans and goals, please contact me, Paul Savuto, AFPS, Chartered Financial Planner. DGS Independent Financial Advisers Ltd. 07834 499 595 or email ps@dgsifa.com, I'll be happy to talk to you and answer any questions you have. FCA 225814. Please note: This blog is for general information only and does not constitute advice. The information is aimed at retail clients only.

Carolyn's Celebrations and Memorials of Life and Love

Tips from Your Local Celebrant

Choosing a Name With Meaning

Choosing a name for a child is one of the earliest and most meaningful acts of love a family can make. It's an honour, a responsibility, and a moment that carries far more emotional weight than we often realise. Names connect to identity, family history, culture, and the stories we pass on.

How Name Trends Shift Over Time

Names rise and fall in popularity for all sorts of reasons — cultural trends, television, politics, celebrity influence, and even global events. George remains a firm favourite in both the UK and USA, while names like Donald are far less commonly chosen these

days. On the girls' side, names such as Hattie and Paisley are popular in both countries, while Melania and Ivanka had a brief surge during Trump's presidency but have since declined.

Predicted Baby Name Trends for 2026

Alongside these cultural shifts, there are clear patterns emerging for 2026. In the UK, the predicted top girl names include Olivia, Amelia, Isla, Aurelia, and Lily — a blend of traditional favourites and softer names linked to nature and light. For boys, Muhammad, Noah, Theo, George, and Leo are expected to lead, continuing the trend for short, warm, vowel-rich names.

When a Name Changes Meaning

Some names change meaning over time. Isis, once associated with the Egyptian goddess of magic and motherhood, became difficult for many families after the rise of the terrorist group of the same name. Some people keep the name proudly; others use nicknames, initials, or derivatives such as Izzy, Iris, Isadora, or Isa.

Names Linked to Strength

Names linked to weapons or war can also be challenging for children, especially at school. A name that feels bold to a parent may lead to teasing or uncomfortable questions. If parents love a strong or martial name, using it as a middle name can offer flexibility. Many names with war-related origins are widely used without people realising — Freya, Louis/Louise, Casey, Marcella, Marcus, Jet, Harold, Nathan, Fallon, and Nikita all carry strength without being overtly associated with weapons.

Why Naming Ceremonies Matter

A naming ceremony is a beautiful, usually non-religious inclusive way to welcome a child into the world, whether by birth or adoption. It's flexible, personal, and shaped entirely by your family's values. You can hold it at home, in your garden, at a favourite pub or hotel, or anywhere that feels meaningful. It can include guideparents, your child's name story, readings, optional spiritual touches, and a ceremony tailored to your family's story.

Get in Touch

Wishing everyone a happy and prosperous New Year. If you're thinking about a ceremony in the months ahead or simply want to explore ideas, you're very welcome to get in touch for a friendly chat.

Contact me, **Carolyn Holmes**, on **07305 002858**, at **ritesofw@gmail.com**, or via the contact form on my website: **<https://www.ritesofway.com/contact>**

Please book a **free ceremony audit** — an opportunity to share your ideas and explore how your celebration can truly reflect you.



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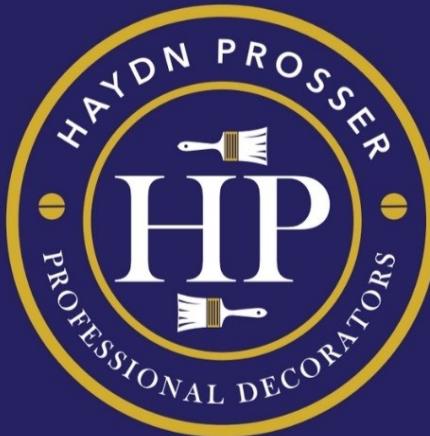
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Birthdays

Best wishes for a wonderful birthday to:

Pat L who will be 99 – and to Enid P (21 again!) From the whole Messenger team.

In Memoriam

Jean Sanderson died 6th December, aged 88. Condolences to Peter, Nicola and family.

In Memoriam: Richard Ivory



Richard Ivory of The Police House, Shefford Road

Passed away suddenly on 30th November 2025

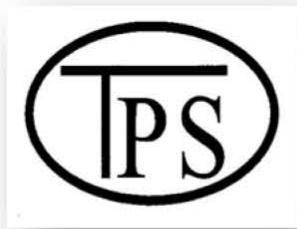
He had lived in Meppershall for 25 years and was known for delivering the Meppershall Messenger along Shefford Road.

He will be much missed by me, as his friend for 12 years.

Rest in Peace.

Jean

The whole Meppershall Messenger team, and many across the village community, send love and deepest sympathies to Jean and all of Richard's family and friends on his sad passing. Wonderful company and an accomplished wood turner, some will have a particular memory of his immaculate white Triumph Herald – a great car for the true gentleman that he was. They don't make them like that anymore.



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SOCIETY *in Luton***

Programme, January – April 2026

at Luton Irish Forum, 102 Hitchin Road, Luton, LU2 0ES: 2nd Tuesday of each month 8.00 pm. (Free parking, tea and coffee.)

Here is our programme for Spring 2026:

February 10th: ***'Love's Labours Lost' ('Out-of-Love' Poetry):***

(An exploration, led by Suzanne Godfrey)

Need suggestions?....There must be plenty of poems out there taking a negative or critical view of a traditional February theme! Maybe start with Wendy Cope, or perhaps Andrew Marvell; and there's a very apt poem by Sir Thomas Wyatt....

March 10th: ***Guest Reader (to be announced)***

April 14th: ***An exploration of Some American Poets and Echoes of the Wilderness*** *(Susan will draw on her recent travel trip to lead this evening)*

We would be delighted to see you at any of these events

For more information, email tps-in-luton@hotmail.com

Thank you to everyone who paid their subscriptions in Autumn 2025.

(£15 per person for the year 2025-2026)

*As usual, there is an additonal **admission charge each evening:***

Members £4, Non-members £6

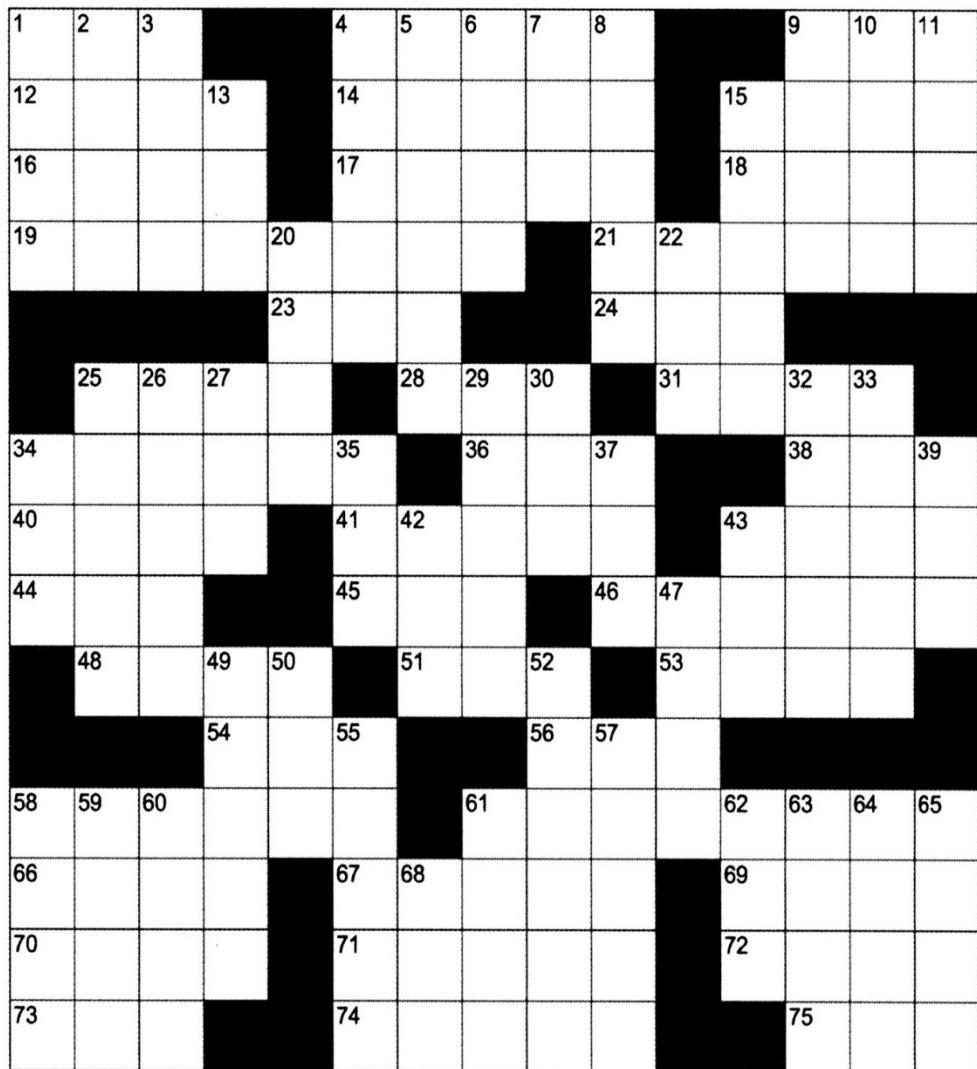
Becoming a subscribing member entitles you to vote at the AGM and to become a Committee Member; it also supports TPS and will help us to afford more external speakers.

Crossword Solution For December-January



ACROSS

1 Compass point
 4 Vast number of celestial bodies
 9 Hubbub
 12 Distort
 14 Cavity
 15 Skidded
 16 Type of cheese
 17 Speak in public
 18 Greeting _____
 19 Pertaining to or characteristic of winter
 21 Ends
 23 Nervous system
 24 Propel with oars
 25 Talk about, with "over"
 28 Stage of life
 31 First letter of the Arabic alphabet
 34 Caper
 36 Ship initials
 38 Couple
 40 Accent mark
 41 Dense
 43 Supplication
 44 Large van
 45 Pain unit
 46 Its own
 48 Snaky fish



51 Aye
 53 Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (abbr.)
 54 Tree
 56 Tender loving care
 58 Gully
 61 American game played on rectangular field
 66 Sounds of disapproval
 67 Slender pointed shaft shot from a bow
 69 Buckeye State
 70 Tender and passionate affection
 71 Feudal superior
 72 Points
 73 Stretch to make do
 74 Snake
 75 Still

1 Southwest by west
 2 Indonesian island
 3 Small bird
 4 Reject
 5 Mother _____
 6 College (abbr.)
 7 Trail
 8 Spread out
 9 Winged
 10 Unpaved
 11 Chances of winning
 13 Set
 15 Frown
 20 Reverberate
 22 Snake
 25 Netherlands' capital
 26 Entertain
 27 Compass point
 29 Cunning
 30 Escudo
 32 Left out of gear
 33 Combustibles
 34 Gossip
 35 Limited (abbr.)
 37 Slide on snow
 39 Clod
 42 Used to attract attention
 43 Pressure unit
 47 Sensitivity
 49 Free
 50 Tell
 52 Moe, for example
 55 Marsupial bear
 57 Under
 58 Apt
 59 Chessman
 60 Wander
 61 Wilma Flintstones' husband
 62 Frame
 63 Sailors "hey"
 64 Low-cal
 65 Astray
 68 Free of



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Why do I need to attend?

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Screening is a key part of diabetes care, and when newly diagnosed, people aged 12 years or older will usually be invited for specialist diabetic eye screening every year, or every 2 years if the last 2 tests found no signs of developing diabetic retinopathy.

Importantly, screening can detect the condition early and before any changes to the vision are noted and where needed, you can be referred into hospital eye services for treatment.

Early treatment can prevent **severe sight loss**.

The eye screening programme aims to pick up eye damage at a stage when treatment has the best chance of working, treatment at this stage is effective at reducing loss of sight due to diabetes. Treatment is often needed well before the diabetes has had any effect on vision. Diabetes does not usually affect your eyesight until the changes are quite far gone. This is why screening is important.

Good control of your diabetes and of your blood pressure reduce the risk of developing eye disease due to diabetes.

Diabetes eye screening is designed to pick up diabetes-related problems, but not other eye disorders. This is not the same as a regular eye test with an optician and does not replace getting your eyes checked at a routine visit to your optometrist (optician).

If you are registered with Shefford, Lower Stondon or Larksfield and Arlesey Surgeries and you would like further support or more information about diabetic eye screening, please contact us on blmkicb.carecoordinator.ivs@nhs.net

Jaqui Derrick - Ivel Valley South PCN Care Coordinator

Dr Baxter & Partners | Lower Stondon Surgery | Larksfield and Arlesey Medical Partnership

Did you know...

You can read more from the NHS on *Diabetic Eye Screening* and watch a patient video on the NHS website, here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/diabetic-eye-screening/>



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The Players @ STMA
February 2025



The Players would like to kick off 2026 by saying a big THANK YOU to everyone who came to see our panto “A Christmas Carol” - especially to those who enjoyed it so much that they came to see it twice!

Our next production is our ever-popular Big Quiz & Cabaret Evening. Teams of up to six people per team, £2 per person entry fee, cash prize for the winning team, then followed by a wonderful mix of dance, songs, sketches and lots of laughs in our after -quiz Cabaret.

Yes... a Quiz and Cabaret for just £2 at the STMA (main hall) 10, Hitchin Road, Shefford SG17 5JA. If you want to reserve a table for the evening, call 01462 816336 after 6pm (answer phone available before 6pm).

Dates for your 2026 diary:

Saturday 25th April 2026 The Big Quiz & Cabaret evening (quiz starts at 7.30pm)

Saturday 5th December 2026 Pantomime performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

Saturday 12th December 2026 Pantomime performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

Find the Players on Facebook (The Players @ STMA) and Instagram

The Players meet every Monday evening at 7.30pm at the STMA, 10, Hitchin Road, Shefford SG17 5JA. Membership is free and we welcome people 18 years old and over, who have an interest in amateur theatricalities, whether it be on stage or off, indulging in all areas of theatrical performances, set building, costumes, directing, acting, make-up, song & dance, etc.

Interested? We look forward to meeting you.

Karen Mitchell (Players' Secretary) 01462 816336

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TIMETABLE - VALID FROM 2nd September 2024

Time/Days have changed – please check & new W16 Stevenage

As from 2 nd September 2024		"Stops at all Bus Stops on Request"	
W2 BEDFORD	- 2nd Wednesday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Shefford Rd, / High St., / Rectory Rd. - all stops		09.00 / 09.02	RR
Interchange Retail Park		09.40	12.15
St Pauls Square / Corn Exchange		09.55	12.00
W3 BIGGLESWADE	- Every Monday	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd / High Street, / Shefford Rd., - all Stops		09.36 / 09.40	RR
Biggleswade – A1 Retail Park		10.10	12.15
Station / Town Centre - pick up Church St. Bus Stop o/s Asda		10.15	12.10
W5 BIGGLESWADE - A1 Retail Park/Town Centre - Every Friday		OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd / High St. / Shefford Rd – all stops		10.00 / 10.03	RR
Biggleswade A1 Retail Park / Station & Town Centre		10.25 / 10.30	
Church St bus stop o/s Asda / A1 Retail Park			12.10 / 12.15
W6A CAMBRIDGE	- 4 TH Wednesday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Shefford Rd. / High St. / Rectory Rd. - all stops		08.48 /08.52	RR
Cambridge, Downing St. – o/s John Lewis		10.15	14.10
W8A ST ALBANS	- 1 st Wednesday of Month		
Shefford Rd. / High St. /Rectory Rd. – all stops		08.48 /08.52	RR
St Peters St. o/s Santander Bank / pickup opp Bank Stop 13		10.15	14.00
W10 ST NEOTS	- 2 nd Thursday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd. / High Street, / Shefford Rd. All stops		09.18 / 09.20	RR
St Neots - Market Place		10.15	12.20
W11 MILTON KEYNES	- 3 rd Thursday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd. / High St., / Shefford Rd. - all stops		09.08 / 09.10	RR
MK - Midsummer Blvd / M&S (Stop J3) / o/s John Lewis Stop E3		10.10	13.15
W12 HITCHIN	- Every Tuesday	OUT	RETURN
Shefford Rd. / High Street / Rectory Rd - All stops		09.18 / 09.20	RR
Bancroft Stop D		10.05	
Bancroft Stop G (Outside Oliver Bonas)			12.10
W14 WELWYN GARDEN CITY	- 1 st Thursday of Month	OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd. / High Street, All stops		09.14	RR
Shefford Road, All stops		09.16	RR
WGC Central Bus Station		10.00	12.15
W16 STEVENAGE	- 3 rd Wednesday of each Month		
Rectory Rd. / High St. / Shefford Rd. – all Stops		09.34 / 09.37	RR
Tesco Extra, The Forum Centre (opp Station)		10.05	12.10
M&S, Roaring Meg Retail Park		10.10	12.05

EXCURSIONS – 4TH Thursday of Month – call For Details – 0300-123-3023

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Please mention the Meppershall Messenger when responding to advertisements

Useful Contact Details In Meppershall

DEFIBRILLATORS – outside School, Village Hall and Budgens

DOCTORS, DENTISTS, PHARMACIES

NHS Direct **111**

Dr Baxter & Partners

Shefford Health Centre, Robert Lucas Drive, Shefford SG17 5FS

Appointments 01462 810034

General queries, prescriptions etc. 01462 818620

Lower Stondon GP Practice

109 Station Rd Lower Stondon SG16 6JJ 01462 850305

Shefford Dental Practice, 34 High St Shefford 01462 814020

Shefford Dental Clinic, 99 Hitchin Rd Shefford 01462 648465

Jardines Chemist, 7 High St Shefford 01462 813283

Shefford Pharmacy, Health Centre, Robert Lucas Drive 01462 818633

Police: **Emergency 999, non-emergency 101**

Hospitals

Bedford Hospital 01234 355122

Lister Hospital, Stevenage 01438 314333

Luton and Dunstable Hospital 01582 491166

Utilities

Gas Emergency 0800 111999

Anglian Water 03457 145145

Electrical (power cuts, overhead cable down etc) 0800 3163105

(Or 105 from a landline)

Central Beds Council 0300 300 8301

CBC Councillor for Gravenhurst, Meppershall, Shillington:

Blake Stephenson blake.stephenson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

hello@blakestephenson.uk

0300 300 8526

Parish Council Clerk

Alessandre Marabese clerk@meppershall-pc.gov.uk

Member of Parliament:

Alistair Strathern MP C/O House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

020 7219 6004

alistair.strathern.mp@parliament.uk

St Marys Church

Rev. Veronica Goodman, The Rectory, Church Road 01462 339962

See full details in the church pages of The Meppershall Messenger

Library: High St Shefford 0300 300 8067

Tuesday – Friday 9am – 6pm, Saturday 9am – 4pm, closed Monday & Sunday

Whitbread Wanderbus service

Stephanie Kirby thewanderbus@gmail.com

Food and Supplies

Budgens Stores, Post Office, High Street

Rogers Bakery, High Street 01462 813398

The Sugar Loaf, 25 High St 01462 239231

Schools

Samuel Whitbread Academy, Clifton 01462 629900

Redborne Upper School, Ampthill 01525 404462

Henlow Academy 01462 813733

Robert Bloomfield, Shefford 01462 628800

Meppershall Academy, High Street 01462 813293

Meppershall Pre-School Village Hall, Ella Carey-Butler 07816 357159

meppershallps@gmail.com

Meppershall Munchkins, Melanie Choonos

meppershallmunchkins@gmail.com

Organisations

The Players @ STMA, Karen Mitchell 01462 816336

Meppershall Good Neighbours (GNOMES) 07760 793921

Meppershall Brownies, Suzanne Brightwell 07817 392325

Shefford Guides, Angie Griffiths 07957 462519

Shefford Scout Group (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers)

Kathy Georgiou 01462 629313

HATS Drama Group, Linda Winfield lin.winfield5@gmail.com

Meppershall Village Hall Trustees trustees@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk

Meppershall Village Hall Bookings bookings@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk

Bookings Tel. 07485 102727

The Team And Collation Dates

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editor welcomes contributions to the Messenger, whether as letters, articles or notices. Contributions should preferably be as attachments to e-mail (address below) but handwritten contributions may be submitted. Contributions should run to not more than one A5 page (except by prior arrangement) and should ideally be received by the Editor not later than the 12th of the month, for publication at the end of that month (or by the later deadline date publicised by email or Facebook). 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.

THE TEAM

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PRODUCTION DATES AND DEADLINES

The table below shows the dates for collation of the magazine. The collation team generally meets at 2.30pm in the Village Hall on the collation date. Printing takes place 7 days prior to collation. The deadline for submissions is two Fridays prior to collation. Please look out for updates and alterations to usual plans when occasionally necessary. Can you spare some time to help produce the magazine? We would love to have you on the team! Use the contacts above to find out more.

Issue date	Collation date	Issue date	Collation date
Dec-Jan 2025-6	Tues 2 nd December	July 2026	Tues 30 th June
February 2026	Tues 27 th January	Aug-Sept 2026	Tues 28 th July
March 2026	Tues 24 th February	October 2026	Tues 29 th September
April 2026	Tues 31 st March	November 2026	Tues 27 th October
May 2026	Tues 28 th April	Dec-Jan 2026-7	Tues 1 st December
June 2026	Tues 26 th May	February 2027	TBC
Contact John Thompson to confirm arrangements (contact information above).			

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