Volume 41 APRIL 2025 Issue 1

MEPPERSHALL MESSENGER

Est. 1985

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS ANNIVERSARY





Meppershall Village Website: www.meppershall-pc.gov.uk

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40th Anniversary Editorial by James Read



It's an easy month to be the editor – I can let others say it for me! We all feel very privileged to work on this amazing community publication, building on the efforts of many inspiring people. Past editors Helen Gillett, Hazel Whittaker, Linda Gold, Dick Bulley, Mike McConnell and Mick Ridley, all left their mark. We've had just three treasurers: Duncan Thomas, Ted Putwain and John Thompson. Andrew Pain is our excellent advertising manager, succeeding Christine Elborne, Steve Ansell and Colette House (who remains very involved in other ways!) The volunteer team who produce and distribute this magazine are a truly awesome bunch! And we are also so grateful to our contributors and advertisers for their very interesting and valuable information, news and articles. This whole team, past and present, can rightfully pat themselves on the back as we celebrate our 40th anniversary. Finally – naturally - a special tribute to Dorothy Morris, founder and first editor, appears on page 4. Happy Birthday, MM. Thank you Dorothy.

Happy 40th birthday to the Meppershall Messenger! Since its birth in 1985, emerging from the church newsletter into a wider publication for the village, it has carried news from Meppershall's thriving church community at St Mary's. Thank you to everyone involved today, and to everyone who has contributed over these 5 decades - all the way back to that amazing Sunday school teacher Dorothy Morris, who started it all! **From everyone at St Mary's.**

Meppershall Wanderbus would like to wish our fantastic Meppershall Messenger a Very Happy Birthday and look forward to another 40 Years of building the local community relations.

Huge congratulations to the Meppershall Messenger for reaching the 40 year milestone. What a great achievement! Moving to the village just over 3 years ago we weren't familiar with the area and the Messenger soon became a key source of information when looking for local trades and businesses. Having an offline platform to let local people know about Munchkins has been an asset in helping us reach a sustainable number of attendees. **Meppershall Munchkins.**

Happy Birthday MM. Celebrate in style with a Rose with creamy yellow flowers called Happy Birthday. Or if you prefer Clematis Happy Birthday, with lush purple petals! Flowering May, June and Sept. **Donna, Donna's Garden Designs.**

Best wishes – I have extended an old article of my Dad's from the 25th anniversary year (and a couple of photos to go with it!)

Andrew Foster, Polehanger Farm.

Congratulations on achieving 40 years of community news and support. Big thanks to all involved – past and present – for bringing Meppershall Messenger to life every month.

Shefford Orthopaedic Clinic

Happy Birthday and thank you for producing our village magazine. Always enjoy reading it.

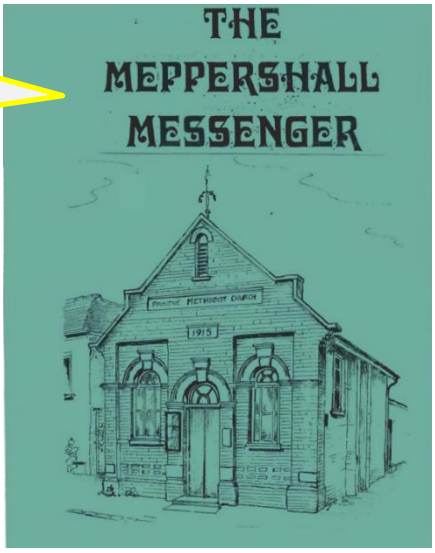
Denise Murless

Happy 40th Birthday to the Meppershall Messenger. We moved to the village 21 years ago and the magazine has always been a great help thank you.

Lene Boggon

Happy Birthday!

Valerie Osborne



Pretty sure that was the cover of the very 1st Messenger that came through our front door. We moved to the village April 2004 - best thing we ever did.

Martin Cawley

(Cover illustration, Methodist Chapel, by Peter Longland)

Happy 40th Anniversary! The Messenger was so useful when we first moved to the village in 2003. Used it for all information about the village and the timetable for the library van and vegetable van that used come around the village.

My daughter Lucy Standbridge then started writing the 'Lucy Pages' when she was at Meppershall lower school, she did this for quite a few years and got to know so many people in the village through this. I used to have to take her around the village so she could interview local people and organisations and tell their story in the messenger!

Paula Standbridge

Good luck with this special anniversary edition. It is such an achievement, only possible because of the willingness and determination of like minded, selfless volunteers. Thank you for ALL your valuable input!

Val Moules

Happy 40th birthday to MEPPERSHALL Messenger! When we moved to the village 31 years ago we were so grateful for our magazine and so helpful for the contents. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to have my monthly newsletters published with The Shefford Leisure Group which allowed many local people to go on my daily outings and holidays who perhaps wouldn't have had the opportunity.

Enid Pamment

We really have appreciated all your hard work producing such an interesting and informative magazine. Enid, as you know, has always run her Shefford Leisure Group and so many people talk about their wonderful memories and then opportunity to partake. Originally Enid used Taylor's Coaches, being loyal and supportive to our village. We realise a lot of our newcomers would not know Taylors coaches existed. We thought this would be an added contribution to our great magazine!

Sharon Watson



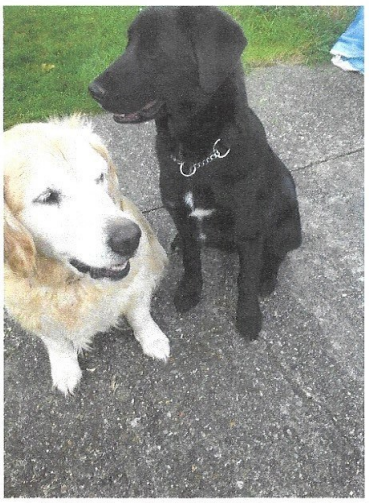
Thanks Enid and Sharon! From some years before the Messenger and before Shefford Leisure Club - here's a Taylor's 'AEC Reliance' omnibus – pictured in 1942, courtesy of the Parish Council archive and Ida Taylor. Its livery was a War Office requirement. It displays destinations in its window panels – Eastbourne, Hastings, Yarmouth, Southsea; an amazing village business over so many years.

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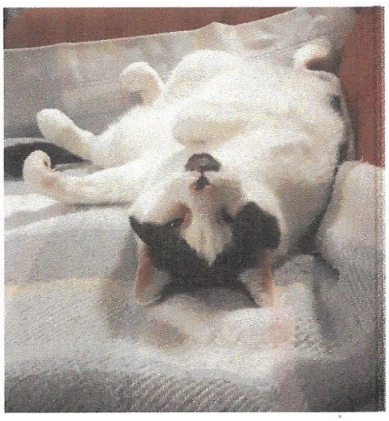
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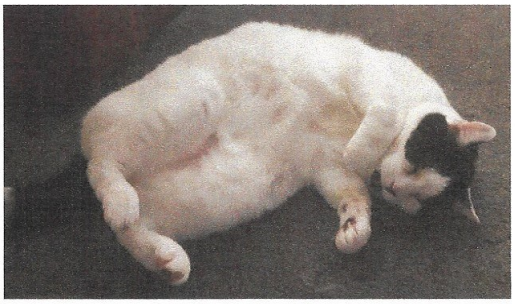
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How It All Began…



Back in 1985, Dorothy Morris was already playing an important role in village life when she began sharing her vision for a new village magazine. A teacher by profession, she was also a Sunday school teacher at church and coordinator of the church newsletter. She saw a big opportunity to partner with the wider village. She had the idea of adopting more news and information into the newsletter from a wider group of village organisations, in return for their efforts getting a copy to every house in the village. Supported by friends and new team members, she requested £200 from the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Mary's to set things up. Her request was granted and the rest, as they say, is history.

That is how the Meppershall Messenger was born.

The magazine was a great success and we still benefit from her pioneering efforts today. Beyond her lasting legacy here in Meppershall, she was well known in the wider region. In the first issue of a new village magazine for Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley in 1992, named 'Village Link', Dorothy was cited as an inspiration for their work, being quoted in the opening editorial message. "Let the village voice be a happy one," she said, "Helping to spread a community spirit and a joy in living."

Deeply respected locally as "an amazing teacher and role model," she was a highly educated and knowledgeable woman and a gifted communicator. Those skills were put to regular use in the Sunday school, and she is pictured here (seated on the right) in 1994, directing a Christmas play, written by her, performed in the Methodist Chapel where the St Mary's Sunday school regularly met.



Years have passed. We have been joined by more advertisers. We have developed all sorts of new sections and articles. The printing process is probably very different now; and there are more letterboxes than ever! But some things hold true.

We hope that we still live up to the standard our founder set, 40 years ago – not only in her highly effective leadership of the magazine, but in her values and spirit. We are proud that we continue to publish a wide range of material from right across the life of the village, that it reaches every letterbox and that we remain open to everyone who wants to contribute (very open! Volunteers always needed!). It is still all about "a community spirit and a joy in living."

Dorothy's original home was Wales, and she returned there in her later retirement, as pictured here in 1999.

Dorothy Morris died in Wales in July 2018.



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A Message From Meppershall Munchkins by Melanie Choonos

Firstly, a huge congratulations to the Meppershall Messenger for reaching the 40 year milestone. What a great achievement! Moving to the village just over 3 years ago we weren't familiar with the area and the Messenger soon became a key source of information when looking for local trades and businesses. Having an offline platform to let local people know about Munchkins has been an asset in helping us reach a sustainable number of attendees.

What a busy month of March we had here at Munchkins – we had a visit from The Krafty Shed to create some gorgeous pottery items, Emily Daniel Photography was back for another successful baby and toddler mini shoot and the children all created some lovely Mother's Day keepsakes.

For April we have some easter keepsakes in store for the children to decorate and take home. We will remain open throughout the school holidays, all sessions running as usual except Good Friday, 18th April, when we will close for the bank holiday.

Meppershall Munchkins Baby and Toddler Group

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Central Bedfordshire Council Confirms Council Tax Rise

In announcing its 5% increase in council tax, CBC has described its financial plans as "a budget which prioritises care for the vulnerable." Aiming to respond to increasing demand for adult social care and rising costs in children's services, CBC said its budget – and the council tax needed to fund it - will also provide new school places, care homes and additional road maintenance.

The budget was agreed at a council meeting on Thursday 27 February. CBC launched a public consultation on a range of budget proposals designed to reduce costs by £32million. The aim is to pay for a huge increase in demand for older people's residential care and rising costs of children's services. These savings come on top of steps to improve efficiency and generate other income.

Councillors voted against plans to close Dunstable Library two days a week, and to close Household Waste Recycling Centres two days a week.

Councillor Zerny, Leader of the Council, thanked residents for their feedback in the consultation and said, "We've had to make tough decisions, but this is a prudent budget which ensures we can continue to provide vital services for our residents. Around 60 per cent of residents' Council Tax is used to fund adult social care and children's services, and the demand and cost in these areas is increasing. This is a national issue and while it is affecting us, it is the same everywhere."

The Council aims to reduce its costs by £10million, cutting both non-essential spending and some staff. Cllr Zerny pledged that "the vast majority of council services will continue unchanged, and we will also invest in new school places, transitioning schools to the two-tier system, specialist school places, new care home facilities, leisure centres and maintaining our roads, including more money for cleaning roadside road drains to help alleviate flooding."

In other news from CBC, it announced that out of 1,346 secondary school applications received from families for the coming year, 87 per cent will be granted their first choice of school. There were a further 1,679 applications for upper school places, with 98 per cent offered their first preference.

Book That Dump Slot

Our four household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) now require a slot to be booked before you visit. The aim is "to make trips quicker, easier and more efficient", says CBC. Introduced on 26th March, the online system now offers 20-minute time slots at the HWRCs in Ampthill, Biggleswade, Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis. It is hoped this will help with queues and traffic and give staff more time to advise visitors. Cllr Tracey Wye, Executive Member for Sustainability and Climate Resilience, noted that the new booking system will ensure that the free service is only accessed by CBC residents. Book via the council's website (www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/HWRC), on a same-day basis or up to two weeks in advance. The system also issues permits to dispose of restricted items such as carpets, mattresses, DIY waste, engine oil, gas bottles and fire extinguishers – a process that should now be much quicker.



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Our 'jobs' vary a lot - from collecting milk or a prescription for someone, changing a lightbulb, lifts to appointments,

to visiting you on a regular basis for a chat, helping you to fill in a form such as a Blue Badge application … the list goes on.

Of course the most important job of all is answering our Gnome Phone and finding you help where we can!

In particular, this month we would like to give a special mention to

two of our volunteers -

Caroline - who has driven you to over 100 appointments.

Ruth who has made over 100 befriending visits.

It should be noted that this is just counting ONE type of job - they both do a range of many other Gnomes jobs too! Thank you x

If you could help us as a driver or answer our phone please do give us a call.

When is it best to call us?

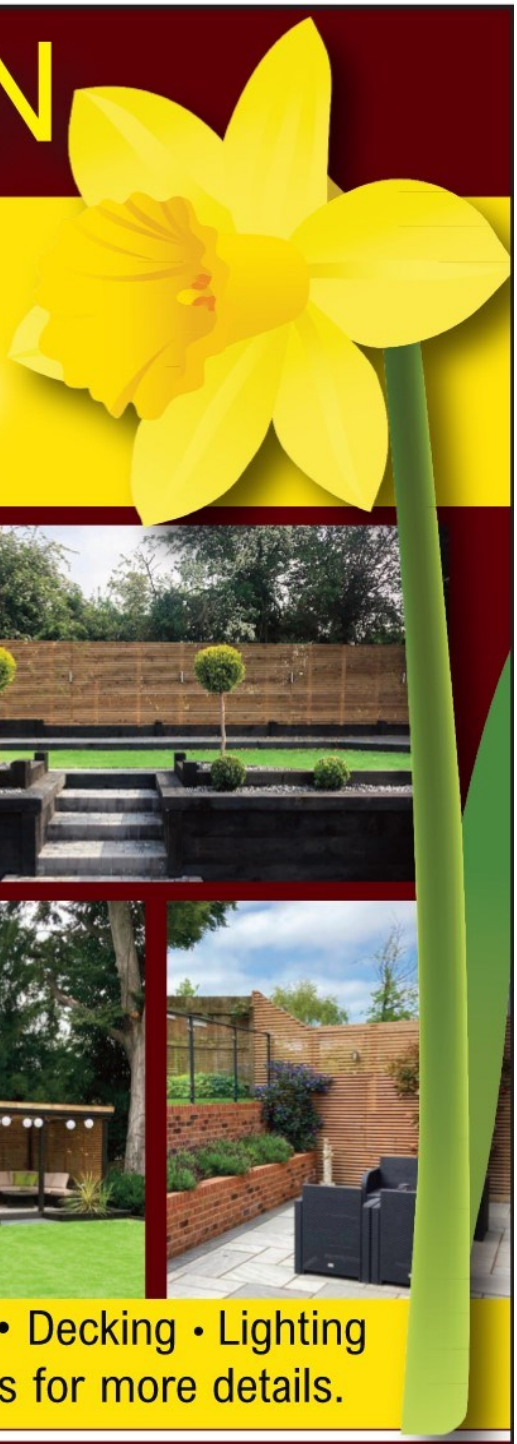
Our phone is manned Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

If you need to call us out of these hours you will be able to leave us a message. Our phone holder will get back to you in our normal hours.

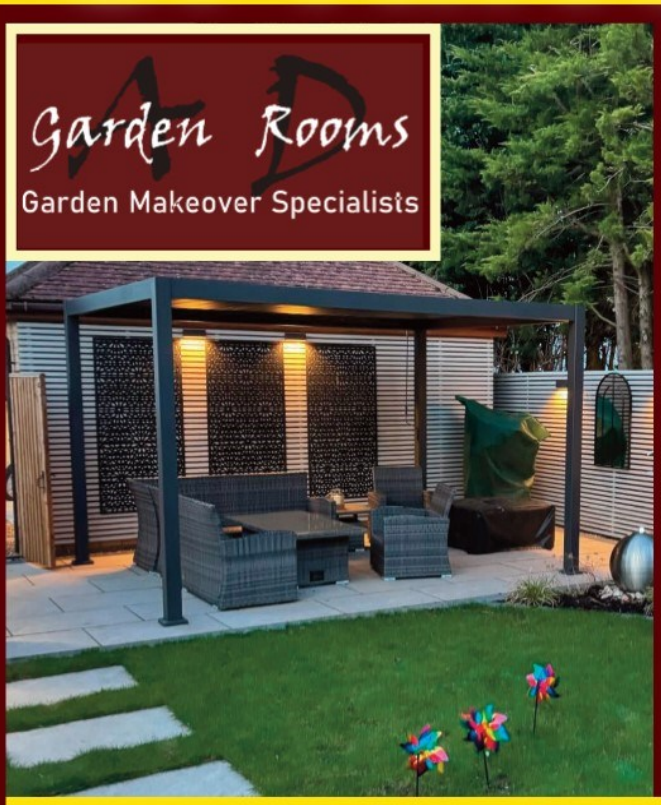
Please do give us as much notice as you can. Thank you.

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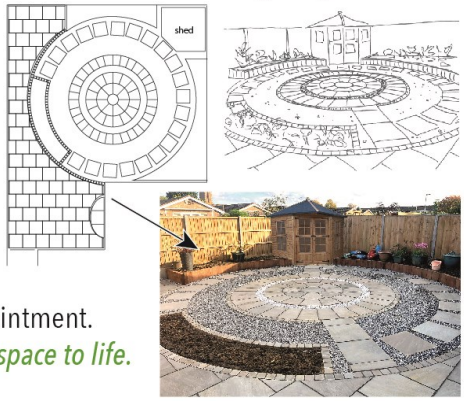
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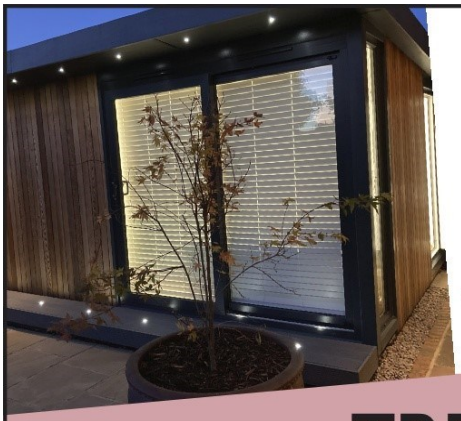
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Meppershall Social Club

Extraordinary General Meeting

At an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held at Meppershall Village Hall, 5pm, Sunday 23rd March 2025, following prior notification by the Committee that such a meeting would be held, a single agenda item was put to those members of the Social Club, so assembled, (with other members of the village in attendance) to formally change the constitution of Meppershall Social Club. In accordance with the constitution in force at the time, a vote was taken by those members present to change the Constitution to that proposed by the Committee. Those members in attendance voted: For: 80%; Against: 12%; Abstentions: 8%, with minor amendments. In accordance with the requirements of the constitution, there being more than 66.67% of those members present voting for the motion, the new Meppershall Social Club constitution has been formally adopted. The meeting was then closed.

Membership

In accordance with the newly adopted constitution, current membership of Meppershall Social Club, previously extended until 31st March 2025 will lapse.

Anyone wishing to renew, or to obtain new membership of Meppershall Social Club, should obtain from the Social Club bar, a membership application form, then hand the completed application form to staff at the bar for consideration by the Committee. The Committee will advise applicants of the result of their application accordingly.

Please note that from 1st April 2025, there will no longer be a subscription fee to become a member. However, only registered members with the Committee will be able to engage with the Committee regarding the running of the Social Club, or vote at its AGM or any EGM which may be called as appropriate.

Please come and join the Social Club and help us ensure its continued growth and success in our village.

Promotions

We have regular offers on drinks so please look at the promos in the bar. Reduced-price drinks and nibbles will be available during selected sporting events, as advertised in the Social Club bar and on Social Media.

Entertainment Planned

Quiz every second Sunday in the month – 7.00pm for 7.30 start.

Bingo every Friday (except Good Friday April 18th) - books on sale 6.30pm.

April 6th - MicMaster Karaoke – 8.00-11.00pm.

April 21st - Easter Crafts, colouring competition, Easter Raffle.

April 26th - The Real McKoys - live band in the bar. Reserve seats! 8.00pm – late.

May 10th – The Long Riders, live band in the hall. Ticket only, book through our website or from the bar. 8.00pm till late.

Please follow us on Facebook for regular updates and check out our website:

MEPPERSHALLSOCIALCLUB.CO.UK | Enquiries: admin@meppershallsocialclub.co.uk.

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VOLUNTEER DRIVERS REQUIRED

Can YOU help us to maintain our Community Bus Services?
Do you have as little as 1 morning per month to spare?
Do you have time to spend for a really rewarding morning?

Wanderbus, based out of Meppershall, is run entirely by volunteers. We operate two 16-seater buses on weekdays (mainly mornings) with fixed routes collecting passengers in the rural villages around Shefford and Stotfold and going to local and regional shopping centres and town centres.

There, we park up and wait for 2/2.5 hours before returning. This is of course your free time as well!

What Do You Need to Drive?

1. Group D1 on your Driving Licence – if 50 or older you will still have D1 on your licence - that allows you to drive a 16-seater bus – easier than driving a motorhome.
2. Aged 25 – 70 in good health. We can help you get D1 classification if you do not already have it.
3. A free weekday morning – bus departure times are around 08.45/09.00 and you will be back in Meppershall between 12.00 & 13.30 (latest). We can allocate routes to suit if you need the earlier return time.
4. A desire to help our local communities. Whilst we are a fixed route bus service open to all passengers the majority are elderly who rely on our services to get out and about and enjoy the social interaction of fellow regular passengers.

Full training will be given (classroom & practical) and you will can be accompanied by one of our regular drivers until you are totally happy to 'go solo'. Don't worry about learning routes – the passengers will tell you where to go if you are unsure!!

If you want to spend a very rewarding morning PLEASE contact us for more info and an application form on 0300-123-3023 or email thewanderbus@gmail.com

Wanderbus: A Village Service for over 35 Years

Our Community Bus service was launched in November 1989 with the 250th grant from the Rural Transport Development Fund, established by Michael Portillo, the then Minister of state for Transport. Half the cost (£26k) came from DoT and the remainder from other sources including Whitbread Ltd.

We operated with one bus originally, a 2.5 litre Ford Transit conversion by Dormobile and based at Samuel Whitbread Upper School with weekday services staring on 6th December 1989.

Our first replacement came in 1996, a white Mercedes launched by Lord Shuttleworth and replaced in 2001 by a black/yellow Ford Transit. In 2010 Pam Rhodes launched our

4th bus, a Mercedes Sprinter converted by Mellor Coachcraft of Rochdale at a cost of £56.8k.

In 2015, the Government Rural Bus Fund (DfT) offered a £21m national fund for operators across the UK. Wanderbus filled in many forms and were successful in winning the full cost of a 2nd bus (£83k) and we bought our first Fiat Orion from Mellors Coachcraft. The Fiat was the only solution that offered a flat floor throughout, beneficial to our passengers for ease of access.

Our buses were then based at Shefford Health Centre, but as that expanded we had to move and Meppershall Care Home kindly offered us parking space, but again through growth we had to move and first checked with Meppershall Village Hall but were offered a more permanent home at Polehanger Farm, which is totally suitable and very convenient for us for which we are very grateful.

We questioned whether we could financially operate two buses with more services, new destinations and, of course, more costs. (We were famous nationally for having the most infrequent registered bus service in the country – just 4 times a year to Milton Keynes – the 5th Tuesday of the month, when there was one!). However, our weekly/monthly two-bus services were well supported and, to our relief, continue to be financially sustainable, very much with the support of our drivers and passengers.

We continue to operate two Fiat buses, our newest bought in 2023, and we are due to change our 18-plate bus next year. Both are subject to a legal 10-week safety check and of course are serviced and MOT'd annually to ensure safe and reliable services.

Although a 'not for profit' charitable operation, we are a <u>fixed, regular bus service</u> like any other and accept cash fares (£3.00 each way currently under the Government scheme) and Concessionary bus passes. All routes have to be approved by the Traffic Commission and Local Councils. Our routes try to fill in the gaps not covered by the contracted bus operators.

Our monthly funding comes from reimbursements from local County Councils for bus passes, cash fares, excursion income (we operate excursions 4th Thursday Apr – Nov) and private hire to recognised societies, Clubs and Schools. Our last fundraising for a replacement bus was supported by our local Town & Parish Councils, charitable societies and trust funds, Bedfordshire Masonic Society and The National Lottery.

From the outset, Wanderbus has been run entirely by volunteers and currently we have a committee of 6 and 17 volunteer drivers each handling 2 trips per month as well as covering for each other for holidays, sickness etc. All drivers have to complete written and driving tests before being allowed out 'on their own', with refresher training every two years. A loyal band who enjoy giving back and receive much thanks from the residents of Meppershall and the surrounding towns and villages, many of whom rely totally on Wanderbus to get out and about safely and enjoy the social interaction with fellow passengers.

<u>If you have not used us already, then come and join our friendly services.</u>

P.S. We are always looking for new volunteers who have D1 Class on their licence, so please get in touch and join a very rewarding morning service!!

Meppershall Farming 25 years on . . . and 50!

Original Article by Chris Foster first published in 2009
Additional material, 2009 – 2025 by Andrew Foster

In 2009, Dick Bulley (then Meppershall Messenger editor) asked for comments on the changes in farming over the (then) 25-year life of the Meppershall Messenger. Chris provided the following interesting thoughts…

I spoke with Mark Brinkley and we have come up with some brief bullet points for this period and the previous 25 years as well.

1959 – 1984

- The demise of a significant greenhouse industry in the village. The rise of chilled transport and the introduction of perishable produce from southern Europe
- The move away from traditional mixed farming, with each farm probably rearing cattle, pigs, poultry and growing brussel sprouts / cabbage, clover, beans, potatoes and spring barley
- Availability of hydraulics to lift all manner of commodities and waste materials
- 1 tonne bags rather than 50 / 75 kg bags
- Less local labour available and involved by the end of this period
- Significant developments in genetic improvement of cereal varieties
- Membership of the EEC (as it was then) and the significant rise at that time in cereal prices



Above: Michael Foster, Andrew's grandfather, hard at work at Polehanger

1984 – 2009

- No significant livestock left in the village. Dairy and pig herds gone. (Mick Trundle stands alone against the tide I think!)
- Straw burning banned after harvest
- Bigger capacity machinery, especially 'combines', allows more land to be worked by fewer people. Mark now manages 5 arable units with one combine and one full time employee. Each unit would previously have had a combine and 1 or 2 employees

- Availability of ‘safer’ and more sophisticated agrochemicals
- Use of GPS soil and yield mapping allowing variable rate and targeted application of soil nutrients
- Floor storage of grain post-harvest, as opposed to bin silos
- Earlier start to harvest - beginning of August rather than the end - and planned 100% autumn drilled crops

And now…

2009 – 2025

- Larger fields and machinery still prevalent, often with the use of minimum till machinery (less ploughing) and occasionally direct drilling
- Smaller farms contracted out to those farmers with suitable machinery and storage facilities
- A Period of agri-environmental schemes to encourage sensitive farming appropriate to local ecosystems including hedge planting, tree planting, wildflower schemes, cover cropping and more
- Leaving the EU saw the decline of farm subsidies and more recently an abrupt stop to the latest agri-environmental schemes through the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)
- Increased uncertainty from inconsistent and unseasonable weather causes difficulty for drilling, yields and harvesting of crops
- Lack of government support and funding post Brexit
- Global market fluctuations caused by war/conflict and changing weather patterns causing high input prices (sprays and fertilizer) and low output prices (farming produce)
- A greater need to diversify farms to provide additional income streams. For us at Polehanger, that means commercial storage, glamping at The Meadows at Polehanger, accommodation at The Farmhouse at Polehanger and weddings and events at The Gardens and Barns at Polehanger
- Increase in village populations requires more time spent on footpath creation, maintenance, boundary gates, fencing, footpath markers, signage and sadly also cleaning up after those walkers that decide not to take rubbish or dog mess home with them



Modern combine-harvesting at Polehanger


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A Little Bit Of Natural History: Jeremy Holden

Back to 1982 again - from our March edition, you'll remember that Jeremy and friend Stuart built and installed an owl box at Monk's Pool and were spending days in a home-made hide hoping to see these semi-mystical birds.

April arrives. Jeremy's scrapbook recalls permission granted to put up two new bluetit nesting boxes, opposite the owl boxes. Now a modern-day professional wildlife photographer, Jeremy's camera was at the ready even all those years ago. 16th April 1982, he writes: "I quickly set the camera up and took one photograph of the blue tit before it flew away into the trees. I thought it was just investigating the box but I was soon to see it fly back with a beak full of straw. As I watched, the pair flew backwards and forwards with large beaks-full of moss and straw. I took some more photographs before the birds disappeared as quickly as they had come."

As spring arrives, the boys saw an abundance of bird life, nesting and laying eggs. A collared dove nesting just 50 yards from the owl box is photographed. Wildlife's natural laws are seen, as magpies raid some blackbird eggs for a meal.

16th April 1982: "I spent a sunny morning birdwatching in the hide. Quite a few birds can be seen from the hide - mainly blue tits, great tits, robins, dunnocks, and chaffinches, though occasionally a kestrel wings its way over or a collared dove perches on the sycamore branches in front of the hide." Sightings of many different birds going to and fro their nests are described – adding blackbirds, thrushes and linnets to the sightings.



Above – April 24th 1982: "The delicate linnet's nest with the usual clutch of five eggs. The nest is constructed of straw and grass and then lined with wool and horses hair. No feathers are used."



With patience and armed with a new tripod, he also captures photos of the growing owl family. The boys watch a female owl, and they even glimpse three owl chicks. Hearing squeaks, he notes, “We quickly departed to leave them in peace!” But their closest and most truly amazing encounter was yet to come.

27th April 1982: “This was the next visit to the hide. We had not been up there during the day, so at 8:00 PM we set off to the hide. The sun had not gone down when we arrived, but the owls were on the move nonetheless because we could hear a group of birds mobbing the owl. They do this if they see an owl in daylight and it can be a good way of tracking the whereabouts of an owl. It was mainly blackbirds and thrushes we could hear, but soon it died down. It was probably the male owl hunting - but we could not be sure. The light was fading as we watched the last rooks and a scattering of Jackdaws quietly wing their way back to their roosts, while bats took the place of daytime birds - their tiny squeaks audible to us in the silence of the hide below them.

“Then, we heard the call of the male owl - a strong noise that sent a shiver down our backs. The “hoo hoo hoo - hoooo” was almost magical and we watched enchanted as the owl flew across and behind the hide. There, he was invisible to us as we dared not move in fear of giving away our presence. Both of us held our breath as though it was a matter of life and death, when the owl glided silently into the box with a sparrow or finch dangling from his talons. The male was greeted from the box by a soft female “be-wick” call. She sat on the edge of the box for a few seconds and we got a beautiful view of the bird. Then he put the Sparrow into the box and flew away into some trees - about 20 feet from the hide. We turned round very quietly and looked up at the owl. He sat there in full view for about 10 minutes before a group of blackbirds and thrushes came round to mob him. He did not seem bothered about them, ignoring them as though they weren't there. One thrush actually hit him three times on the back before he flew away. We waited a while, but he did not return - so we slipped away through the undergrowth back home. This was by far our best sighting and made us very glad we had bothered to build the hide and the box.”

Next month, in May – flying the nest!

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

Church Road, off Campton Road, Meppershall

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



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…

It is wonderful to celebrate in this edition - the 40th Anniversary of the Messenger, the part that it has played in building up and drawing together the people of Meppershall over so many years, and those stalwarts who have faithfully gathered articles and information, printed and stapled and delivered copies over the years. My grateful thanks to them all!

I have heard so many people describe this last winter as "grey and wet". I have done so myself. And I think that many of us are hoping that April will at last bring more blue skies and sunshine. April is a curious month this year - as Easter falls so late in 2025 - and the so called "Easter holidays" fall in advance of Easter itself.

Although school holidays begin on the 4th April we will still be in the season of Lent with Passiontide and Holy Week approaching; the two weeks when traditionally, we recall the crucifixion and death of Jesus… before celebrating his resurrection. I think that it might feel a bit odd to be trying to holiday and to commemorate Jesus' suffering at the same time… Although thinking about it, I suppose that the events we remember in church leading up to Easter originally all took place against a backdrop of "ordinary daily life" for most people.

We will recall the last days of Jesus' life when he was welcomed by a cheering crowd waving their palm branches as he entered Jerusalem; with his last supper with his friends when he washed their feet - an example of how we should love one another; his betrayal by a dear friend, one of his disciples; his arrest, trials, the crowd now shouting "Crucify him! Crucify him! His crucifixion, death... and his body laid in a tomb.

And then I wonder - exactly what did happen "early in the morning on the first day of the week" all those years ago? What did that resurrection moment look like?! Many more qualified than me have written books about it - and it seems historically accurate that the stone the Romans had placed in front of Jesus' tomb was indeed rolled away - the tomb was empty - and Jesus' body was gone.

The Bible tells us that over the following six weeks, Jesus appeared to a variety of groups and individuals in different locations - to over 500 people on one occasion. They saw him alive, walked with him, talked with him, touched him and even ate with him.

And in church, we don't just remember, for we believe that Jesus lives still - and that because he lived and died and rose again - we can know him in this life and live forever with him in the next.

I hope that you have a wonderful time celebrating Easter. Do enjoy the sense of new life proclaimed by the spring flowers, the chicks and bunnies and lambs, and the eggs - painted or chocolate! And if you can, celebrate the Son of God who died - and is alive for evermore!

Rector Roni

Church Events In April

Usual Pattern of Services

Sundays	11.00am	Morning Worship every Sunday Holy Communion: 2nd and 4th Sundays
Every Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion in the Rectory
Church open to visit	10.00-4.00	Private prayer and quiet time – the church open for you to sit and visit each day (subject to ongoing works).
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

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Easter Season Services

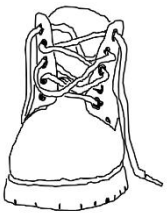
Sunday 6th April, 11.00am	Morning Worship	**Lent 5**
Wednesday 9th April, 9.45am	Holy Communion in the Rectory	
Sunday 13th April, 11am	Holy Communion	**Palm Sunday**
Wednesday 16th April, 9.45am	Holy Communion in the Rectory	
Thurs 17th April, 7.00pm	Holy Communion in Shefford	**Maundy Thursday**
Friday 18th April, 11.00am	Walk of Witness in Shefford starting at the Baptist Church	**Good Friday**
Friday 18th April, 2.00pm	An Hour at the Cross in Meppershall	
Saturday 19th April, 7.30pm	Easter Vigil in Meppershall	**Holy Saturday**
Sunday 20th April, 11.00am	Easter Praise With Junior Church Egg Hunt and children's activities from 10am	**Easter Sunday**
Wednesday 23rd April	Sorry no weekday communion this week	
Sunday 27th April, 11.00am	Holy Communion	

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

Why not come and enjoy your local, historic Parish Church - on your own, with friends or with family? A warm welcome awaits you. Do you need prayers? We have a small group of intercessors who pray confidentially for those who ask for it. Please talk to Roni (01462 339962 / 07533 376880) or Chris Valentine (07701 039324).

****

Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers



Sunday 13th April: a hike across to St Leonard's Church, Old Warden (here: https://maps.app.goo.gl/4V2qSC3S36rTyC4V7) - slightly under 7 miles in total, but it is possible to join the walk at points along the route if you want to cut out some of that mileage.

Starting at 2pm from St Mary's Church gate in Meppershall, we'll pass Meppershall Village Hall (2.10PM - 0.6 miles in) and continue past Polehanger Farm and past Morrison's in Shefford to St Michael's Church, Shefford (2.45PM - 2.25 miles in). From there we ascend Cockshoot Hill north of Shefford, and walk on field margins and a short section of road to the main gate of The Southill Estate (3.30PM - 4.25 miles in). Thanks to special permission from Mr & Mrs Whitbread we will then hike through the estate, around its manorial lake and through its beautiful wooded parkland to emerge into Old Warden and rise up to St Leonards, arriving by 5PM (7 miles in total).

For 16 lucky walkers, we have again partnered with Meppershall Wanderbus to provide return transport. Please get in touch to see if there is a seat available for the bus ride home (it is half-full at the time of writing this!) Dogs cannot come on the bus (sorry, that's their policy!). We would welcome some volunteers to drive across and park, ready for additional lifts home if needed. We can help to bring drivers back before we start, having dropped a car, by meeting at 1.25PM from St Leonards, Old Warden. Miriam and I would like to take the bus back and won't park a car there.

We want to emphasise our sincere thanks to Mr & Mrs Whitbread and the team at Southill Estate for their kindness in letting us pass through. We will of course be mindful of that in our care and consideration as we walk there. We are also very grateful to the Meppershall Wanderbus team for again supporting us with this one. Call us (857836) or message us on Facebook (@meppershallstrollers) for more information.

Congratulations to the Meppershall Messenger on your 40th Anniversary!
From Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers,

We are so grateful to have the magazine to share walking info. There's no doubt that the monthly announcements here in the village magazine have helped grow our hiking group from a handful of keen strollers in 2014 to more than 20 people regularly turning out to enjoy our countryside today. Thank you to the whole Messenger team! Keep up the great work.

Help shape the future of Meppershall Complete your Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire today



Why respond?

The questionnaire aims to find out what our community's priorities are and what matters most to YOU.

The responses once added together will form the basis of our Neighbourhood Plan policies which, when adopted, will be considered by Planning Officers when determining planning applications.

The questionnaire will take 10-20 minutes to complete. Responses do not include any personal data and are completely confidential.

How to respond?

Complete the paper questionanire delivered to your home, go online to - https://mepppershall-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/questionnaire-2025 or scan the adjacent QR code.

Completed paper questionnaires should be posted into one of the collection boxes in the village (details of locations in the questionnaire)

SCAN ME

Anyone who lives, works, goes to school, visits the village, or attends social groups in the Parish of Meppershall is encouraged to respond.

Please respond by Sunday 18th May 2025 Your village, your future, your chance to have a say

Meppershall Craft Club—six years on!

In February 2019, Kim, Dianne and Lorraine started Meppershall Craft Club. In a very short time we had members from Meppershall and surrounding villages joining us on a weekly basis. Then, as it is now, not only did the members crafts cover a wide range, but so did our ages! That's what makes it such a great group! Below and opposite are just a few photos of our journey so far....



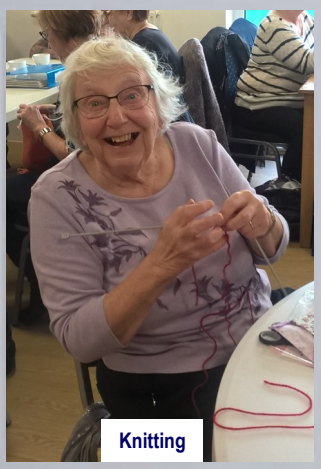


Kathy & Diana Jewellery-Making March 19



The late Phyllis Corns (right) who designed our logo (above)

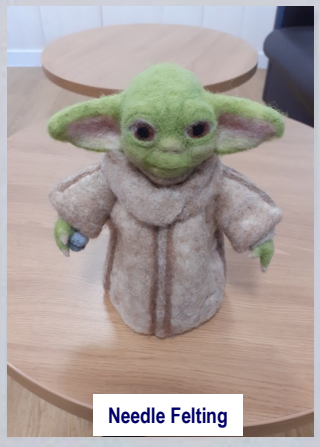




Knitting



Pop-up Card Workshop June



Needle Felting



MCC March '22 Knitters



Kathy & Cathy Felt Bowl Workshop June '22



Many of us at CC Jan 2024



Watercolour Botanical Painting



Felt Bowl Workshop '22



Watercolour Workshop Oct 24



Fine Art



The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea '22



Gnome Workshop 2024



Crochet Poppies 2020

Meppershall Craft Club—six years on!

... We love a celebration and a "crafty" visit when we can. During lockdown, our members made face-coverings for villagers and protective clothing for Shefford Health Centre. As months and years have passed we have made many craft pieces and many, many new friends—perhaps you would like to join us? We are a friendly bunch and will warmly welcome you at Meppershall Village Hall on:

Wednesdays:- 10:00am—12:00pm

You can get in touch by contacting:

Kim: 07952 557203; Lorraine: 07811 865259; or Diane: 07473 828488

We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to The Meppershall Craft Club.

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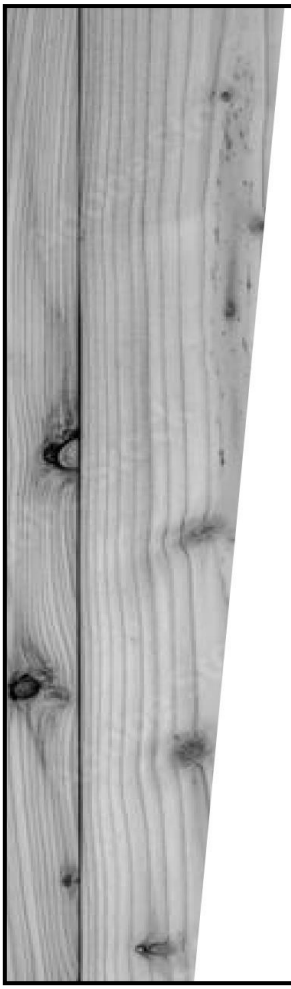


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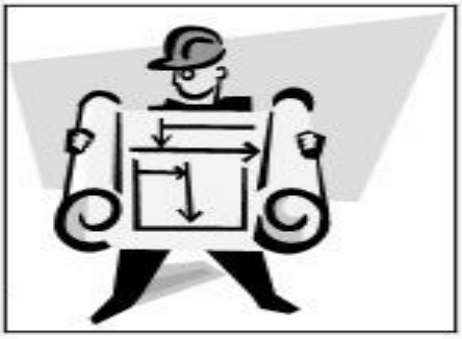
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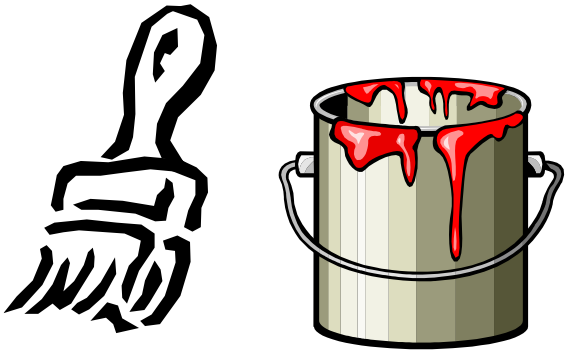
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St Mary's Meppershall Junior church

EASTER EGG HUNT AND CRAFTS



Sunday 20 April



All families welcome

Join us at the church at 10am

Garden Friends By Donna Cameron

Donna's Garden Designs | 07833670934

Spring has well and truly sprung! You can almost see things growing. The weather was so gorgeous today that I walked to one of my gardening jobs.

As walked along I was admiring peoples gardens and all the fresh new growth. It is such an optimistic time of year with all the plants to look forward too, amid a busy time of seed planting and weeding.



The birds were singing and it got me thinking as to all the wildlife that are gardeners' friends. Of course the old faithful is the Robin. Often waiting as you turn the soil to see what tasty morsel you dig up. Robins are beneficial as they eat many pests in the soil.

Worms are excellent for the garden because they improve soil health in several important ways. First, they aerate the soil as they burrow, allowing air, water, and nutrients to reach plant roots more effectively. Second, their digestive process helps break down organic matter, turning it into nutrient-rich casts, which act as a natural fertilizer, enriching the soil with essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Lastly, worms help improve soil structure, making it more crumbly and easier for plants to grow. All these benefits contribute to healthier plants and a more productive garden.

Bees are essential in a garden for pollinating plants. Without them many plants wouldn't survive. So the more bee-friendly plants we grow, the better.

Studies have been carried out showing that just a metre of planting made a huge difference to encouraging and helping wildlife.

Butterflies are beneficial in the garden because they play an important role in pollination. As they feed on nectar from flowers, they transfer pollen between plants, helping them reproduce and produce fruits and seeds. This process contributes to the overall biodiversity of the garden and encourages the growth of a wide variety of plants. Additionally, butterflies are a sign of a healthy garden, as they thrive in environments with clean air, diverse plants, and minimal pesticide use. Their presence can also attract other beneficial insects and wildlife.

Ladybirds can eat hundreds of Aphids every day. Bats will also eat harmful pests and they are also a great natural pest control.

Last month I gave a talk to Campton gardening group, Trugs and Trowels (see their article below). It was great to meet so many people interested in gardening and a great opportunity to share my passion of Garden Design with them.

I am very extremely lucky in my job as I have met lots of people through a shared love of gardening and have formed many lasting friendships along the way.

There really are so many great benefits of gardening for the mind, body and soul.

Happy Gardening!

Donna x

Jobs In the Garden For April	
Keep weeding and tidying beds	Keep a look out for Aphids and Lily Beetle
Sow annuals, wild flowers and veg seeds	Last chance to prune Roses
Sow lawns and bare patches	Divide perennials
Trim Penstemons and Salvia	Clean greenhouse
Take off faded Hydrangea heads	Add supports for plants as they grow

****

Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club Newsletter) - April

Here we are April 2025; decisions, decisions, work to be done rain or shine. Each season brings its own tasks and challenges. Having had the first day of Spring on 20th March, gaining 4 minutes of sunshine per day until June 21st, the clocks going forward on the last weekend of March ('Hooray!') - we are well on our way into spring.

The world over is experiencing climate change – such as America with its wild fires – yet, the southern U.S. (South Texas) and Canada have come to a standstill due to snow fall. We have seen fires rampage in Australia, floods in Pakistan and throughout England. We are all in this fight against Climate. What can we do?. By doing things in unison with other gardeners we can make a difference. We need to garden along side wildlife and not compete with it. If we destroy / kill off all the aphids why would the birds and wildlife bother to visit. Not everybody is lucky enough to have a huge garden space (or time to work on it), but everyone's efforts combined will truly change the outcome.

Let's get prepared for diverse weather and plan accordingly - with a few changes each in the way we garden. Avoid peat at all cost – it stores 3.2 billion tonnes of carbon more than tropical rainforests. Grow as many plants as possible – ideally species that need little maintenance - and help them shrug off drought by creating a canopy from other planting but also enjoying sunshine. Avoid pesticides as all are non-selective and kill everything, friend or foe. We are suffering water bill misery, yet 24,000 litres of rain will hit your roof this year - so get those water butts now and save what you can. Dig out a pond if you have space, or use a large tub set in your decking. I used an old water tank out of the attic set in the ground. Wildlife love it, especially the heron. Mulch now for adding nutrients, holding back weeds and retaining water as it is slower to evaporate. Hedges are far better than fences in helping to reduce

pollution, and being efficient insulators while reducing noise, acting as wind breaks and mitigating floods. They are also a perfect habitat for wildlife. Remember not to over-tidy as 20% of insects live in deadwood.

The Trugs and Trowels March meeting was enjoyed by all, gaining knowledge on garden design. A huge thanks to Donna Cameron from Meppershall. At the April meeting we are excited to welcome Anne Vicars from Ampthill talking Fuchsias. All are welcome to come along to any of our meetings - on the first Monday each month (unless its a public/bank holiday). Admission is £3.50 per person and includes refreshments and a free -and-swap table to pass on your unwanted garden items, plants, seed pots and magazines.

Maryika Wilding 01462 851729



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Birthdays

We wish a wonderful birthday this month to some special village friends…

Richard B (past editor of this esteemed publication) who will be 84

and Ruth C.K. who will be 83.

From March, happy birthday to Barbara H (91), Richard I (91), Tony E (86) and

Peter S (95). We hope you have all had a great - wishing you an inspiring year ahead!

****

Footpaths Through Farmland By Andrew Foster

Many of us appreciate the local area using the footpaths that criss-cross our countryside. With Spring arriving, there will be the chance to make the most of longer and warmer days, budding and blossoming plants, and the wide array of birds, insects and mammals that can be observed out in the open.

As the opportunities increase, where can we walk? What rules should be followed and what routes are there to enjoy?

Where can I walk?

On Public Footpaths

Public footpaths are usually waymarked with yellow or green arrows attached to posts. They will be shown on official maps of public rights of way and in turn, listed on Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger maps. These paths are for walking, running, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs. Horse riding and bicycles are not permitted on public footpaths (ONLY on bridleways, which will be clearly marked).

Please keep to these waymarked footpaths. If conditions prevent you from doing so, you can report problems with public footpaths to the local council, or the landowner.

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On Permissive Footpaths

These footpaths take you over private land and are not rights of way. The landowner has granted permission for the route to be used by the public, but they also have the right to withdraw that permission if they choose. They are often waymarked with white arrows and additional signage.

Again, please keep to these waymarked footpaths and do not assume you can use any track, field edge or grass margin.

Walking Etiquette

The following points should always be adhered to:

- Walking should be on designated footpaths only, public and permissive. Please keep to the waymarked paths.
- Walkers should not use field headlands or grass margins. Please keep to the waymarked paths. Grass margins can provide valuable nesting sites for ground-nesting birds, boost numbers of beneficial insects and spiders on arable farmland and provide habitat for small mammals [1]. This is aside from the fact that they are not publicly accessible and are part of private farmland.
- Dogs should be kept under close control and not be allowed to roam freely through crops or across fields and woodland. When crossing cropped fields or those with livestock in, dogs MUST be kept on a lead.
- Dog walkers should wherever possible clear up dog mess. However, do not bag up mess and then leave it lying around or hanging in trees or hedges.

Footpaths running through Polehanger Farm

We have three public footpaths running across Polehanger Farm that link Meppershall with Shefford and Campton. In addition, over the years, we have added various permissive paths that extend this footpath network and link these walking routes together as well as provide additional access in to the village.

All the footpaths, public and permissive, are extremely popular and enjoyed by many walkers in the local area. I wanted to take the opportunity to remind people of the available path network here at Polehanger Farm so that everyone can benefit as Spring approaches.

A Map is available at the end of this article.

The footpaths available through Polehanger Farm are:

- Public footpath (FP5) that includes part of the Bunyan Trail. This runs from Shefford under the A507 and diagonally across the farm towards Meppershall.
- Public footpath (FP10) running alongside the River Hit between Shefford and Campton.
- Public footpath (FP4) running from the River Hit past Woodhall Farm and up our farm track to the Village Hall and The Orchard in Meppershall.
- Permissive footpaths running through the Polehanger Farm River Woodland (FP15) linking FP5, FP10 and FP4.
- Permissive footpaths running across our farm tracks through woodland and up past Nunswood towards the Shefford Road entrance of Meppershall. These also link FP4 and FP5.

- Permissive footpaths running from the entrance of Meppershall on the Shefford Road, crossing Shefford Road and continuing field side down a prepared path towards the Esso roundabout on the A507.

The public, under no circumstances whatsoever, should be walking along any grass field margin or unmarked path or use the private drive as a footpath. Please apply the same rules to any local farm unless otherwise marked.

Path maintenance

Here at Polehanger, along with the Public footpaths, all permissive paths are officially logged with the council. We are always looking to update signage and repair waymarking posts in conjunction with Central Bedfordshire Council to make it as clear as possible where the paths run on the ground.

Maintenance also takes place throughout the year to ensure that footpaths are clear of obstructions and remain an enjoyment to all. Public footpaths are the responsibility of the council, whereas permissive paths are our responsibility to maintain.

As users of the footpaths, we remind everyone to ensure they take any litter home with them. A bin was installed on the path that runs alongside Shefford Road that the council regularly empty. Disappointingly, the amount of litter along this permissive path up to the village, on the field edges and by the side of the road does not seem to diminish. We welcome any suggestions on how to minimise the issue.

If you think any routes are unclear, have potential health and safety issues or are obstructed, or indeed if you have any general questions regarding the footpath network, please either contact me or the council.

Andrew Foster, Director, Polehanger Farms Ltd.
andrew@polehanger.co.uk

Further Information

Central Bedfordshire Rights of Way team

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/rights-of-way/public.aspx

For more information on rights of way in our area, you can search local maps using the My Central Bedfordshire, My maps feature at http://my.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/.

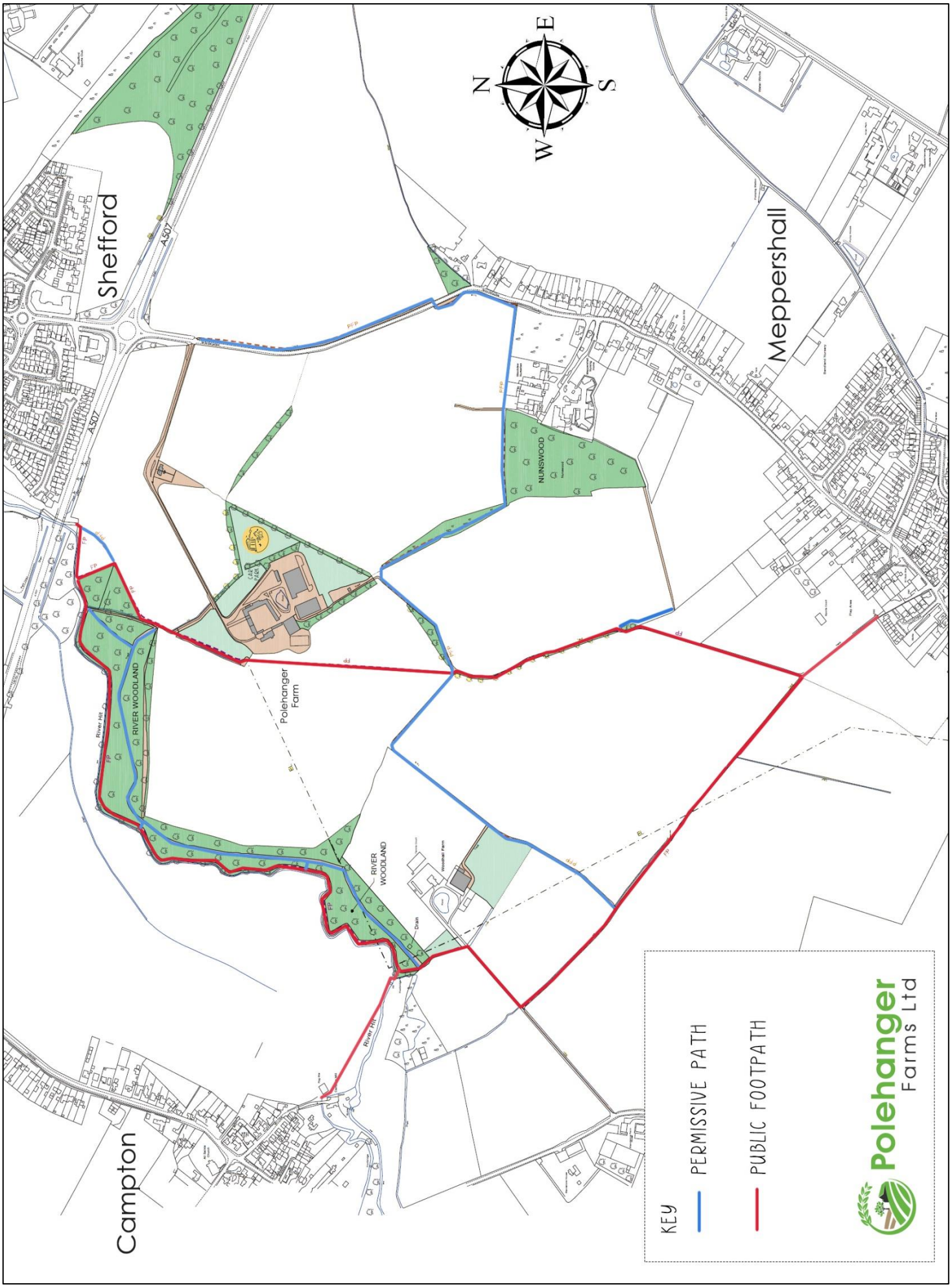
Polehanger Farm Footpaths

Please note that the following map is not to scale or updated with the various recent housing developments. We will update this when we can.

https://polehanger.co.uk/Footpaths-Polehanger-Farm.jpg

References:

1 - (https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/farming/advice/managing-habitats/arable-field-margins/)


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A507
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Is Your Technology Causing You Pain? Shefford Osteopathic Clinic

Many people spend an increasing amount of time hunched over their phones or tablets.

Looking down at your device is like having a 60-pound weight on your neck. That's four stone in weight - like an eight-year old sitting on your head whilst you read your text messages!

Our advice? Look at phones with a neutral spine. Avoid tilting your head down for extended periods of time. Read by moving down with your eyes instead of bending your neck. Having good posture involves keeping your ears aligned with your shoulders.

When holding your phone or tablet, the more upright the device, the more upright your posture:

- If you are using your device for long periods, consider sitting at the table.
- Always use a tablet stand, especially if using your device on a sofa or bed. This relieves strain on your hands and arms created by holding the device.
- Finally, don't forget to use all your fingers, not just your thumbs!

We can help! Your first appointment will involve taking your full medical history, then a physical examination. We'll tell you what we think is happening in your body, how it might have occurred… and what we aim to do. You'll then have hands on treatment **tailor made for you**.

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Personal Finance by Paul Savuto

Retirement Planning - GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE BASICS

Retirement planning involves visualising your key goals for your retirement years and setting up a plan to help you achieve those goals through financial planning. When visualising your retirement, you need to ask yourself:

- Do you have a bucket list which may mean spending more in retirement?
- How much money will you realistically need to live on during retirement?
- What pension savings do you have and what income will these provide?
- What age do you want to retire at?
- Do you want to retire fully or consider a phased retirement?
- What State Pension are you entitled to and at what age will this be paid?
- Are other considerations such as passing money down the generations important to you?
- Any additional capital needs in retirement that impact your retirement savings?
- How long can you expect to live?

This last question is an unknown, but with increased longevity and better medical care, you could realistically expect to look forward to 20 years plus of life in retirement.

You can, for instance, choose to keep your pension pot invested and draw cash from it (drawdown), take a tax-free cash lump sum out of it, purchase an income for life in the form of an annuity, or even withdraw and spend the whole lot. However, each option comes with its own benefits and drawbacks, and there's certainly no such thing as a one-size- fits-all solution at retirement. There are also other important considerations like taxation, investment strategy, and the need for cash-flow planning to work out how much to take from a pension to ensure it lasts comfortably throughout retirement. We can help you consider all your options.

SHOULD I CONSOLIDATE MY PENSIONS?

Most people will acquire different pensions throughout their working life. It may be possible to consolidate them, but it's important to take advice first, as you may lose out on valuable benefits or guarantees or incur exit fees.

IS IT A GOOD IDEA TO TAKE A TAX-FREE LUMP SUM?

Whether you choose drawdown or an annuity, you can normally take 25% of your pension pot as a tax-free lump sum. However, if you don't have immediate plans for the money, it makes little sense to withdraw it from your tax-efficient pension and leave it in a taxable savings account, earning little interest.

CAN'T I JUST TAKE ALL THE MONEY OUT?

Pensions are designed to provide you with an income throughout your retirement. Taking out more money than you need to, or starting withdrawals sooner, will mean you have less to live off in the future or you could even run the risk of running out of money completely. You could also end up paying more to the taxman than you need to.

IS IT BEST TO CLEAR MY MORTGAGE AND DEBTS AS A PRIORITY?

Ideally you would want to have a debt-free retirement, but ultimately it depends on your individual circumstances and the wider picture. For example, if your interest rates are low, it may be preferable to leave money invested in your pension where it can continue to grow. There are lots of scenarios to consider and it will depend on your individual needs and circumstances. Also, if you pay off your mortgage, will your pension income reduce considerably and leave you property-rich, but cash-poor?

WHICH IS BETTER – AN ANNUITY OR DRAWDOWN?

An annuity provides certainty, in that it provides you with an income for life, but it lacks the flexibility that drawdown can provide and once you have opted for an annuity, you can't change your mind. Choosing how you will take your income in retirement will possibly be the biggest financial decision of your life, so it pays to get advice.

WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM INCOME I CAN TAKE WITHOUT RUNNING OUT IN LATER LIFE?

There is a fine balancing act between taking the income you want, to be able to enjoy your first retirement years, but also leaving sufficient for your later years. This is where professional advice is invaluable in helping you to understand what income levels are sustainable. We can also advise you on the best investment strategy for your attitude to risk and advise you on the merits of taking 'natural income' or capital withdrawals.

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.

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The appointments are self-guided, last about an hour and can be done at your own pace. They explain how each pension option works, what tax you could pay, and how to how to look out for scams. Find out more at:

https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/pensions-and-retirement/pension-wise.



The Players @ STMA

April 2025



Tickets are on sale **NOW** at www.ticketsource.co.uk/themeppershallplayers for the Players show 'When the Lights Go on Again' - a musical play commemorating V.E Day's 80th Anniversary. It takes place on Saturday 10th May, with performances at 3pm and 7.30pm, at the STMA Hall, 10 Hitchin Road, Shefford SG17 5JA. This is a table-seated event. Seating is limited to 98 people per performance, tickets £10 & £6 (Concessions under 16s/over 60s). For non-internet sales contact 01462 816336

In years gone by we provided our audiences with food in the interval, but due to the rise in food allergies we now encourage our audiences to bring their own food for consumption during the interval, as a picnic, as afternoon tea in the afternoon or as supper in the evening.

This V.E. Anniversary will be the last one the Players will be commemorating with a show. Our first V.E Show was way back in 1985, after which we performed one every five years. The only time we failed to host one was in 2020 due to the Covid lockdown (although we had started rehearsals for it in January 2020). We also did three V.J. Shows in August 2005, 2010 & 2015.

Dates for your 2025 diary:

Saturday 10th May 2025: **V.E Day 80th Anniversary.**
Performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

Monday 16th June 2025: **Players @ STMA - A.G.M.**
7.30pm in the STMA Meeting Room

Saturday 6th December 2025: **Panto - A Christmas Carol.**
Performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

Saturday 13th December 2025: **Panto - A Christmas Carol.**
Performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

****

Find the Players on Facebook (The Players @ STMA) and Insta-gram

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 18yrs 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

****

Charity Concerts At Meppershall Village Hall

On 5th April catch a Blues Brothers tribute act, and on 3rd May "Red Mick," a Simply Red Tribute. **All Tickets £17.50. Contact Helen to book on 07989 914941.**

The Players @ STMA Presents

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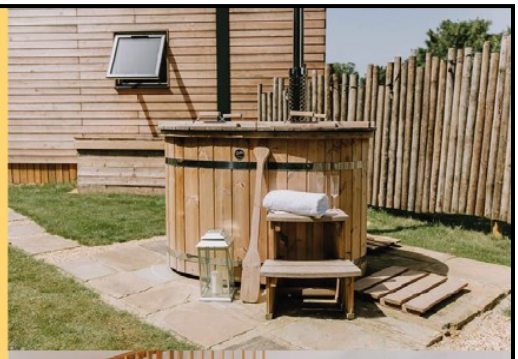
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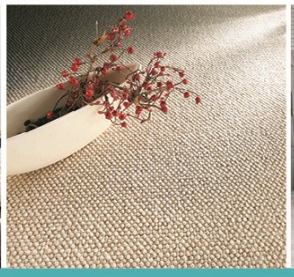
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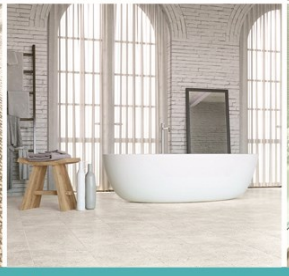
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Interchange Retail Park	**09.40**	**12.15**
St Pauls Square / Corn Exchange	**09.55**	**12.00**
W3 BIGGLESWADE - Every Monday	***OUT***	***RETURN***
Rectory Rd / High Street, / Shefford Rd., - all Stops	09.36 / 09.40	RR
Biggleswade – A1 Retail Park	**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 - 4TH 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 - 1st 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 - 2nd 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 - 3rd 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 - 1st 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 - 3rd 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

E: Thewanderbus@gmail.com Web: www.wandrbus.org.uk

Buses available for PRIVATE HIRE – Call for Quote.

WANDERBUS 2025 Excursions
4th THURSDAY OF MONTH!

Call **0300-123-3023** or e mail: **thewanderbus@gmail.com** for more info or to book your seat.

Full payment is required 10 days before departure. A cheque to Wanderbus, 5 The Pastures, Upper Stondon, Beds SG16 6QB or a bank transfer to: CAF Bank Ltd, Sort Code 40-52-40, Acc No. 00013118 Name: Wanderbus Ltd (Use your name in Reference). Cancellations must be made within 7 days or refunds will be discretionary.

	PROGRAMME OF VISITS (*prices correct at print time*)	**BUS FARE**
24TH APRIL	**Anglesey Abbey, House & Gardens, Cambs. (National Trust). £18.00 – Free to NT members**	**Fare £12.00 | Pickups 10.00/10.30 a.11.30 d.15.00**
A Jacobean-style house full of rich history, from a monastic priory to 20th-century home. Woodlands, Water Mill & gardens for every season including a winter garden, herbaceous border, rose garden, formal garden and dahlia garden. Redwoods restaurant and shop.		
22nd MAY	**Bletchley Park, MK £17.50 (Free entry if you have 2024 tickets)**	**Fare £10.00 | Pickups 11.00/11.30 a.12.15 d. 16.00**
Bletchley Park is an English country estate that became the principal centre of Allied code-breaking in WW2 and contains a full museum and history. Guided tours are available foc. Restaurant on site.		
26TH JUNE	**Cambridge Botanical Gardens. Entry £7.70 or £8.50 with optional donation**	**Fare £10.00 | Pickups 10.00/10.30 a. 11.45 d. 16.00**
A visit to the garden is a great day out for all, with inspiration for gardeners and a place to explore the natural world for families. Garden Café.		
24TH JULY	**Old Warden - Shuttleworth and Swiss Gardens £16.00**	**Fare £6.50 | Pickups 10.15/10.30 a.11.15 d.16.00**
Explore the world's oldest flying aeroplane and other vintage aircraft, cars, buses and motorbikes at Shuttleworth. Walk through ornate ironwork gates into the Swiss Gardens, a delightful Regency and Victorian layered garden and discover a green and pleasant idyll.		
28TH AUG	**Althorp House, Northants. £23.00 House & Gardens**	**Fare £15.00 | Pickups 10.00/10.15 a.11.15 d.15.30**
Althorp has been home to the Spencer family for more than 500 years, and contains a fascinating variety of pictures, furniture, ceramics and fine interiors. Located in beautiful surroundings, it houses an exhibition commemorating the Life of Diana, Princess of Wales.		
25TH SEPT	**Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable Concession £26.50.**	**Fare £10.00 | Pickups 09.45/10.15 a.11.00 d.16.30**
Explore the world of wildlife like never before at Whipsnade Zoo, the largest in the UK. Experience thousands of amazing animals and learn how, as a ZSL conservation zoo, we are protecting their future.		
23rd OCT	**Milton Keynes Museum. Entry £17.50**	**Fare £10.00 | Pickups 11.00/11.15 a.12.15 d.15.30**
The Museum is made up of a number of buildings and barns. Explore 'old' Milton Keynes with Victorian farmhouse, Street of Shops, Telephone Gallery, Hall of Transport, Print Room and a café! A surprising and highly interesting museum.		
Nov	**To be confirmed**	

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

Editor	James Read	Email: mepp.messenger@gmail.com
Co-Editor	**Vacancy**	
Assistant Editor	**Vacancy**	
Advertising & Distribution	Andrew Pain	andrewgpain@hotmail.com 07875 580069
Treasurer	John Thompson	meppershallmessenger@meppershall.org

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