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Contents

Editorial by James Read	2
Letters	3
A Little Bit Of History	5
Erratum	5
Meppershall Village Hall	6
3 rd Annual Meppershall Charity Ball.....	6
Meppershall Bake Sale!.....	7
Neighbourhood Plan Village Questionnaire Update	8
Big Bowls Weekend.....	8
Bedfordshire Fire And Rescue Service: Volunteers In Meppershall	9
A Message From Meppershall Munchkins by Melanie Choonos	10
Meppershall Village Quiz	10
Meppershall Good Neighbours	11
A Little Bit Of Natural History: Jeremy Holden.....	12
New Neighbours: Here Comes Universal Studios	14
Meppershall Social Club.....	16
Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers.....	16
Bedfordshire Cancer Support Group.....	17
Parish Church Of St Mary The Virgin (Church Of England).....	18
The Players – VE Day Event.....	20
In And Out The Dusty Bluebells By Donna Cameron.....	21
Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club Newsletter) - May	22
Birthdays	23
Personal Finance by Paul Savuto.....	23
Ensuring Pain-Free Studies for Teenagers: Shefford Osteopathic Clinic.....	26
Farewell To Morris	26
The Players @ STMA	27
Meppershall Messenger AGM – You Are Invited	27
Wanderbus 2025 Excursions.....	29
Useful Contact Details In Meppershall.....	30
The Team And Collation Dates.....	32

Editorial by James Read



This spring I am really aware of the deep contrasts that we see side by side in the village and the wider region.

Many of us are fortunate that we can hop in a car and do some shopping in nearby town centres or journey further afield to Cambridge or MK. It is now very easy (although increasingly expensive!) to pop across to Arlesey and go to Central London for the day. Yet here on our doorstep in Meppershall are some real delights of everyday living that many in other parts of the UK (and the world) long for. There is a beauty, vibrancy and peace to be found in rural life in springtime

There is also some tension in these contrasts. The services needed for our highly connected yet rural way of life cost money (have you seen your council tax bill this year?!) Where it looks easy (on paper) to put new homes, unwanted attention from developers follows. Thirdly, gaps between “haves” and the “have nots” are as wide as ever. The “nice” way of life for many, masks real hardship and struggle for some.

Amid the challenges of rising costs, a changing world and social cohesion, there are beacons of hope. This magazine is full of them. The things that sit at the heart of the way of life we love and enjoy are (often, almost) free. We just have to take time to connect with them and – at least just occasionally – make them part of our lives.

Let me start with the Bake Sale (page 7) at the village hall. It is well known that decent British home-made cakes are at the heart of any village, and the love and skill that will have gone into the produce on sale, dished out with generous portions of conversation and community spirit on the day, will fill you with joy. Get along there on 17th May.

How will you commemorate Victory in Europe (VE) Day? Sitting in front of the box on your sofa? Or celebrating the community spirit that enabled a previous Great Generation to get through the darkest days in our history? On 10th May, support the Meppershall Players at Shefford Town Memorial (STMA) Hall in their VE Day-themed performances, afternoon or evening, marking the 80th anniversary. See page 20.

It is also exciting to see the interest and attention being paid to our natural environment and to wildlife – with a series of letters (pages 3-4), some wonderful memories of Meppershall’s wildlife in 1982 (pages 12-13) and an opportunity to immerse in our rural landscape with Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers (page 16). You have a last chance in the coming days to input to the Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan – use it wisely and make your views and insights known (see page 8).

This issue also brings lots of news from church (page 18), supportive financial info at a time of market turmoil (pages 23-25), some serene gardening moments (pages 21-23), and even a review of one of the biggest pieces local development news in recent decades – the new Universal Studios theme park (pages 14-15).

Enjoy the spring here in Meppershall. Be part of it. And consider volunteering for one of the many village organisations that need your help now, more than ever. That includes The Meppershall Messenger – please join our AGM on 7th June (page 27).

Wishing you a wonderful month of springtime pleasure, right here in Meppershall. I hope it is a safe one - with road safety top of mind and slow car speeds, please, for walkers and riders, on our narrow roads. Drive like you care.

Letters

Dear Editor

This link gives details of a North Herts drive for the proliferation of bees.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/news/wonderful-wildflowers-royston-thanks-environmental-resident>

Why can we not turn that orphaned piece of ground at the head of the pathway from Shefford Road to the Village Hall into a wildflower area with insect friendly flowers perhaps even by flower bombing? It is suitably large enough and a village whip round by the Parish Council, Gardeners Club or an interested Wildlife Organisation etc. and a few volunteers would soon have that done? There is little tending required once established and left to seed I believe? One resident in Hoo Road has had their front garden as such for several years now.

I have a relatively small insect/bird friendly planted garden which includes the following after an update for this year. The New year starts with Forsythia quickly followed by Rosemary, Snowdrops and Soldiers and Sailors. The usual garden flowers follow on: Daffodils, Hyacinths, Primroses and those lovely Violas, then Lavender, several varieties of Cotoneasters/Pyracantha and their bird-loving berries for next winter. Roses, Butterfly bushes, Honeysuckle, Jasmine, Wisteria, Peonies, Foxgloves, Alyssum, Syringa, Dahlias, Rhododendron, Fuchsias - and four other flowering shrubs with berries. Some are planted and the rest are in pots which can be moved around as they flower.

This year I now have a patch to try seeding with a common wild flowers mix plus Poppies, Pigeons permitting.

Most of these flowers have a lovely fragrance too and are so beautiful to look upon. If a photo or three are warranted I will send to you.

Kind regards, John Chapman

Dear Editor

Neighbourhood Plan - reporting of interesting species

I'd like to report Bee Orchids at [a location near the centre of Meppershall]. There were two plants last year - this year there are four (see photo). I reported them to the Parish Council last year but did not receive a positive response. Unless something is done, they will now get trampled.

While they are not a protected species, they are not common and as the County flower I would have thought that there would be some effort from the Parish Council to protect them, but despite my pleas and offers of alerting the grass contractors I have received either negative or no responses, so I hope you can understand my pessimism about reporting interesting species!

Fortunately, the location where the Wasp Spider has been hibernating has not been disturbed by the recent works and cutting down of trees and shrubs (see photo).

The only other interesting species I have seen is a Kingfisher on the River Flit near Polehanger Woods late last year.

Name supplied



Wasp Spider in Meppershall



Bee Orchid in Meppershall

Dear Editor,

Thinking of the Neighbourhood Plan and the request for wildlife reports, I want to highlight a particularly interesting spot in the village that is now the only habitat of its kind within the Parish Council boundary as far as we are aware. The patch adjoining what was Taylor's bus garage many decades ago, now situated to the rear of Coneygate, is a wonderful larger area of wild habitat comprised of a thicket of native plants – deeply covered with hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, crab apple, damson and more, surrounded by mature trees. Using the bird identification app, "Merlin", this spring we identified 12 species of bird singing simultaneously in that area: sparrow, chiff chaff, white throat warbler, robin, wren, black cap, long tailed tit, mistle thrush, blackbird, greenfinch and even a night jar. Hedgehogs can be seen on the footpath beside this piece of land, deer can be heard "barking" on it late at night along and owls frequent its peaceful, isolated corners, calling to each other on cool clear nights. Elsewhere in the village near Bury Farm, the same app identified a marsh harrier earlier this year. We are fortunate to have corners of truly wild ground in our village, but they need protecting and we ask landowners to be strategically neglectful of their margins and unused corners whenever possible, leaving some spaces free of human activity.

Name supplied

Editor's note: Thank you for these interesting letters focused on wildlife and the natural environment in the village. The photos are especially beautiful – take a look at our online colour edition to see them in all their glory (<https://meppershall-pc.gov.uk/the-meppershall-messenger/>).

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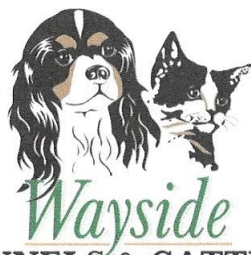
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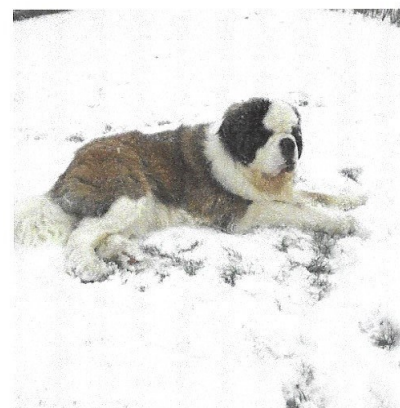
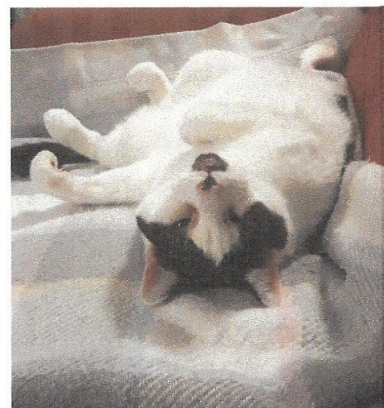


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A Little Bit Of History

Thank you to Nicky Watkinson for this wonderful image of Meppershall in the late Victorian or early Edwardian era (that's our estimate – comments welcome!) It shows three very interesting figures outside 1, Rectory Road. Who were they? Do you know of any family connections to that house, back over the decades and centuries?



Before its 20th century growth, Meppershall was a village clustered around the church and the rectory (known now as Monks Pool) – so Church Road and Rectory Road were the key routes in the village, with High Street heading north through a widely spaced series of smallholdings and trading premises to Shefford. Adjoining this spot were Stondon Road, Shillington Road and (later) Campton Road (which remained an unmade farm track for much longer). The village basically comprised four farms – Manor Farm, Bury Farm, Polehanger Farm and Chapel Farm – and its roads were home to the people and trades supplying and supporting them and the wider agricultural economy in the locality.

Erratum

In last month's colour centrefold pages of The Meppershall Messenger, celebrating the 6th anniversary of Meppershall Craft Club, we did not completely list the founders of the club. Kim Tyler was a crucial founder and we apologise for omitting her name through a simple writing and design error. Kim didn't want this apology, but she is too highly valued and too much loved for us to do anything else! Best wishes to all our friends at the craft club.

Meppershall Village Hall

Are you thinking of planning a meeting, party, celebration or other event (perhaps even a wedding) in 2025?

If so, please consider using your community facility here at Meppershall Village Hall. There are small and large rooms for hire, including the main hall which has a capacity of up to 130 standing or dancing and 150 theatre style.

Weekend and Friday bookings can be particularly busy so don't delay.

You can book direct via the website at meppershallvillagehall.co.uk.

If you have any questions please email booking@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk or phone the booking secretary on 07485 102727

Annual General Meeting 2025

The AGM will be held in the Saplings Room:

7.00-8.00PM on Monday, 28 July 2025

A further notice will be posted closer to the date.

**PLEASE ALSO SEE THE NOTICE OPPOSITE ABOUT THE BAKE SALE TAKING PLACE ON
15TH MAY – ALL PROCEEDS TO THE VILLAGE HALL.**

3rd Annual Meppershall Charity Ball

Hi Folks,

Yes, it's that time again!

Time to don your best clobber and throw your best shapes once again, whilst raising much needed funds for an essential service, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Following the great success of the past two years events, thanks to everyone's amazing generosity, let's see if we can make this year extra special.

To begin the evening, Mark & Adam will be kicking us off with their amazing voices. Then, after the raffle, we will be wowed by a great 5-piece band, "Not Tonight Josephine," with covers from the 60s to the present day. Ably assisted, as always, by Gordon and Thomas, GTC entertainment, bookending the evening with their fantastic Disco.

If anyone would like to make a donation, however small, or supply a raffle prize, either will be so gratefully received. Please contact me via email - bazjan22@hotmail.com. Thank you.

Tickets are now on sale from the Social club bar - £15.00 (cash only please).

Looking forward to seeing you all and, once again, thank you for your support.





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If you can bake and would like to donate a cake, please bring your cakes to the Village Hall on Friday 16 May between 5pm and 6pm OR you can drop them off after 3pm from Monday 12 May to Friday 16 May at the Sugarloaf Pub.

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

All proceeds to Meppershall Village Hall

Also, Saturdays 7 June / 12 July / 9 August / 6 September

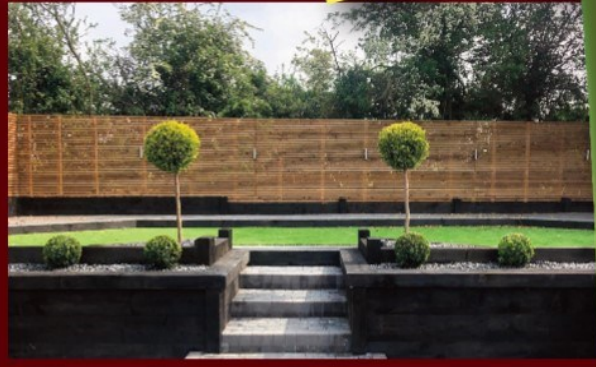
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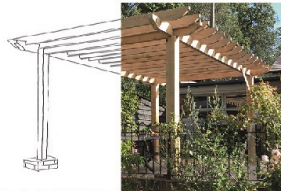
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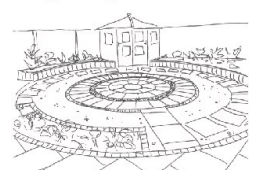
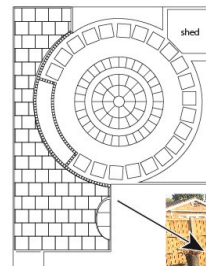
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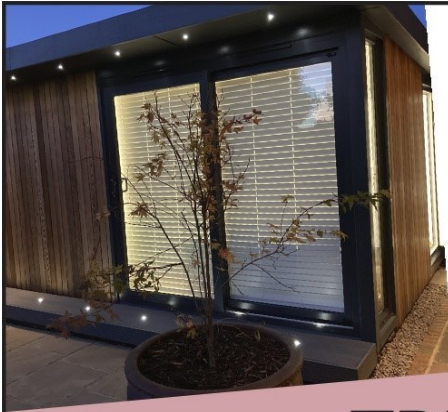
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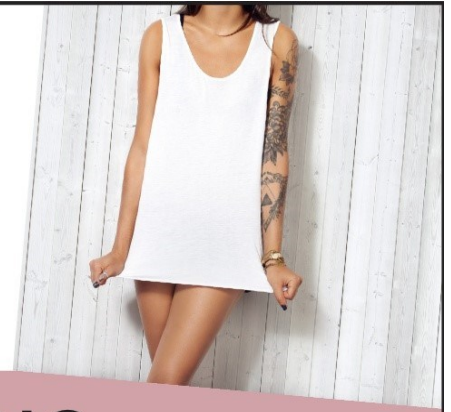
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Neighbourhood Plan Village Questionnaire Update

By the time you read this, the Village Questionnaire will have been open for 4 weeks. And we wanted to say “Thank You” to two sets of people specifically.

First – to the Messenger delivery team who put a copy of the form through each of the 1000+ doors in Meppershall.

Second – to those of you who have already taken the time to respond; either online, or using the paper form. We had over 150 responses in the first 2 weeks. Keep them coming!

Please take a little time to complete the Questionnaire if you haven’t already. Your views WILL be noted, and your opinions considered, when the Neighbourhood plan is re-drafted. Here is a reminder of the link to the survey:

<https://meppershall-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/questionnaire-2025/>

Central Beds Planning Officers are legally bound to consider Neighbourhood Plans when deciding on planning applications, so it IS important to ensure that their decisions reflect our stated wishes.

We’ll give you a summary of the feedback after the closing date, probably in the June Messenger, but in the meantime *please* submit your responses to us. There is a separate Youth Survey online for residents and visitors between ages 8 - 18, and if you want a paper copy then please pop a note in one of our collection boxes, or contact the clerk or me, and we’ll get you one.

Thank you all for your participation. It’s OUR village, and OUR Neighbourhood Plan. And we want it to reflect what you, the residents, think, and what you want. Within reason... (!)

Andrew Pain | Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group | 07875 580069

Big Bowls Weekend

Shefford Bowls Club are taking part in this year’s Big Bowls Weekend over the May Bank holiday.

They will be open on Sunday 25th May from 1000 to 1600. If you have ever wondered about playing bowls or wanted to try bowling, this is your chance to come along and have a go. The session can be booked through the Bowls England Website - just search for Shefford Bowls Club and enter your name in the session.

If you cannot make that day, the club is also having an open day on Sunday 1st June from 1000 to 1530. We also have coaching sessions on Thursday afternoons.

Our coaches will be at both events to help you, all equipment will be supplied. All we ask is that you wear flat shoes!

If you would like to have a go but cannot make either of these dates, please contact:

The Club Secretary - 07708 640396 - secretarysheffordbowlsclub@gmail.com.

Bowls provides medically approved gentle exercise, plus good company. All are welcome to have a go irrespective of age, gender, experience or ability.

Bedfordshire Fire And Rescue Service: Volunteers In Meppershall



Why would I do this?

I am a volunteer, and I am writing this article. We have young people and not so young people; we join a family when we volunteer. We have a support network and training. I enjoy being part of a team that are saving lives.

If I am older, such as retired, or younger, say university age, does this matter?

Not in the least! As long as you're at least 18 years old. Our younger volunteers gain really valuable experience to put on their CVs and get a reference. Our older volunteers, I am one myself, have the satisfaction of people listening to us, really appreciating our experience and valued as people. I love it!

Do I get training?

All information and training you need to do the role is provided, along with ongoing support from our Volunteer Manager and colleagues. And I think it's world class!

So what will I be doing?

Most of our volunteer roles involve talking to ordinary people about fire safety at home and sharing other important messages that help towards fires starting in the first place, which helps to keep us all safer.

For example, you could be attending local events in Bedfordshire alongside fire service staff and people will want to talk to you about safety, they really do!

What is this going to cost me in time?

We hope you are able to commit at least six hours a month. As a volunteer, you help when you are willing and able to, and volunteering times are by mutual agreement.

Why do you volunteer with the fire service?

I do it because I know it makes a real difference, few things in life matter but this does. I love working within a team and learning new things all the time.

How do I find out more or apply?

Go to www.bedsfire.gov.uk/careers/volunteering | Call the Volunteer Manager on 07543 301604 | Email: volunteering@bedsfire.gov.uk.



A Message From Meppershall Munchkins by Melanie Choonos

Wow what fun we had over the school holidays! We hope you all enjoyed our Easter sessions as much as we did. The final session of the Easter holidays saw a huge turnout – the biggest number of attendees we've ever had! For those of you who missed out on snacks we can only apologise, we hadn't anticipated such a large number of attendees and simply didn't have enough for everyone.

We saw some fantastic artwork being created on the wooden easter trinkets and for those of you who took home some of the free sunflower seeds we hope you enjoy planting them and seeing how tall they grow.

We will be closed Tuesday 13th May, all other sessions are running as usual. However, do keep an eye on our Facebook page for any last minute closures due to sickness etc.

Meppershall Munchkins Baby and Toddler Group

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— OUR ANNUAL EVENT RETURNS FOR 2025 —



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3rd Annual Charity Ball

Sat 14th June

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Meppershall GNOMES

Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 24th May
10.30am**

Meppershall Village Hall

Everyone welcome.



A Little Bit Of Natural History: Jeremy Holden

Last month we left Jeremy and friend Stuart back in April 1982, having just had a close encounter with an owl near the nesting box they had built and mounted in a tree in a wild area near Monks Pool. Decades before his professional career as a wildlife photographer, Jeremy was honing his skills right here in the village.

May 1982 brought the height of the nesting and egg-laying season, and Jeremy's scrapbook records from the time reveal many interesting insights into what is happening around us during this amazing spring month in Meppershall.

Keeping an eye on bluetit nests, the boys learn the egg-laying habits of this little bird. They watch what they initially think is an abandoned nest being visited periodically by a busy bluetit mum. To their wonder, a growing clutch of eggs is being created beneath the nest material in their bird box. Only once the set of eggs is complete does mum return to the nest to manage the hatching process.

Having mounted almost a dozen nesting boxes in various trees in the area, they have a lot of activity to keep an eye on. Boxes are custom-made to suit specific birds – robins, bluetits, owls, spotted fly-catchers. In a note describing the set-up of a new box to attract robins, Jeremy notes: "The same day, I got my first glimpse of the owlets sitting in the entrance to the box. I was not quick enough to get any photographs because the film ran out and I had to run back to the house to get another one! By the time I returned the owlet had gone back."

But he would soon get his chance to take some wonderful photos – and we are fortunate to be able to share his talent as a young photographer here.



"The owlet looked at me curiously and I shakily set up the camera and tripod to photograph him!"

In a further series of photos, he documents wonderfully the first glimpses of daylight for the young owlets emerging from the bottom of the nest in the box, onto the ledge at the opening. "In the darkness of the nest hole I could make out the shape of one of the other owlets trying to get up," he writes. "The second owlet knocked the first one down and then tried to struggle up himself. A couple of flaps and he made it up. He steadies himself with a newly formed wing and then looks down on his newly found world, alert to any movement. Then proud with his achievement, he sits probably feeling cock of the roost."

Each action described is accompanied by a wonderful photo. Jeremy describes a moment of reflection as he experiences such natural wonders: "I sat down and enjoyed the hazy summer afternoon. Midges danced about me and as I looked at the uncaring owl chick. I knew regrettably that they would soon leave the box. Now I could only hope that I could see them again when they did."

"The next day Stuart came up with me to see if he could see the owlets at the box entrance. Unfortunately when we got up there they were not outside. We thought we would go and sit in the hide anyway. But as we turned, we heard the bill clacking of an owl. We looked down and in amongst the cow parsley sat one of the owlets! We used this piece of luck well getting another photo session in. The owlet sat there not troubled by our presence but more by the flies that landed on him. A month in a nesting box full of dismembered birds did not make him smell too nice."



May continues with amazing insights into the behaviour of the young owl. By the end of the month, he writes: "We saw the whole family - the male in the dead Beech, the female and the two young in the copper Beech - the two owlets safely concealed among the leaves. We looked hard but could not find the third chick."

Next month, we share a final summary of these amazing wildlife adventures in 1982.

New Neighbours: Here Comes Universal Studios

Anyone watching the news in recent weeks will have seen the major announcement that Universal Studios will open its first “theme park and resort entertainment complex” right here on our doorstep. Redeveloping the old brickworks at Stewartby, the site for this big new tourist attraction sits alongside the A421 Bedford bypass, on the way out to Milton Keynes from Kempston, with the village of Stewartby adjoining to the south of the Universal Studios site.

The site is 476 acres (almost 2 square kilometres) in size and will attract an estimated 8.5 million visitors in its first year of opening. The railway station at Wixams (on the Midland Main Line) will serve the new theme park, and it is believed that a further station on the East-West Rail line will also be built (enhancing the industrial rail site at Kempston Hardwick). Luton Airport is expected to carry most of the international passengers that will come to visit, but it is clear that the impact on roads across the region will be significant.

A programme of major upgrades and reengineering is planned to the A421 Bedford Bypass and the B530 Ampthill Road, which will directly serve the site and joins the Bedford Bypass near Interchange Retail Park. It remains to be seen what traffic impacts are projected for roads in the wider locality. Travellers using the A1(M) between the M25 and Universal Studios site will be sorely tempted to take the A507 past Meppershall and through Central Bedfordshire, rather than diverting all the way north to the Black Cat Roundabout, to the A421 Bedford Bypass.

The site itself sits under Bedford Borough Council, which will be the principle local beneficiary of financial agreements and taxes with the developer. Great care will be required in national and local government to ensure infrastructure costs are fairly apportioned and funded between different authorities, and that impacts on other locations – potentially including villages like ours in the A507 rural corridor – are properly mitigated and supported.

At this point you are probably thinking, “Yeah... but this is a theme park! Tell me about the fun stuff!” I’m right with you. It is an exciting prospect and the quality of the entertainment at Universal’s other sites worldwide promises much for this new project in Bedford. But at the present time they are tight-lipped about any specific rides, attractions and themes that will appear in the park. Planned for opening in 2031, 5 years is a long time in the entertainment industry – who knows what we may find there by then!

What they do say is that plans “include a world-class theme park with several themed lands featuring Universal’s distinct brand of immersive storytelling, thrilling rides, innovative attractions and exciting entertainment, all utilising sophisticated and advanced technology.” A 500-room hotel with a retail, dining and entertainment complex will also be built. It will be the largest visitor attraction in the UK.

Besides the fun of having this on our doorstep, there are many economic benefits that government and Universal have been quick to jump on in their announcements.

The development comes from a deal struck between Universal, UK government and Bedford Borough Council. The Prime Minister himself announced that he had “closed the deal.” It is estimated that the project will bring a “£50 billion boost for the economy” along with 28,000 new jobs across creative skills, hospitality and construction – 20,000 of these as part of the construction phase and 8,000 more staffing the complex when it opens in 2031. The government sees this project as a major part of its “Plan for Change” which aims to create growth and opportunities across the country.

Universal has said it is “committed to working with local colleges and universities to train the next generation of its hospitality workforce, including through a range of apprenticeships and internships.” Approximately 80% of employees at the theme park are expected to come from local areas.

The development is also seen as part of the rise of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor, bringing growth, infrastructure revitalisation and job opportunities.

Much work has been going on behind the scenes for some years to get to this point. In December 2023, Universal confirmed its purchase of almost 500 acres forming the site, and began exploring a potential new theme park and resort experience at Bedford. In 2024 it completed its feasibility and due diligence work, including discussions with local and national stakeholders. By the spring of last year, it had started public engagement to share its proposals with local communities.

Its consultation with communities did seem to be strong and the idea of the development was generally welcomed, considering the opportunities for local people. Nearly 1,500 people attended in-person consultation events and nearly 100 local organisations engaged in the process of listening to local communities. Universal did a survey of local opinion which achieved more than 6,000 responses – over 92% of people expressed support for the project.

In July 2024, leaders and Chief Executives from the site’s six surrounding authorities expressed their support to national government, leading to the 9th April 2025 announcement that the project will go ahead.

What happens next?

A full planning proposal will be submitted to UK Government in the months ahead. Construction is planned to start in 2026.

There is a good online resource, provided by Universal, which can be found at:

<https://universalukproject.co.uk/>

Take a look to learn more about the story so far, to see the location of the site and to read what people are saying about this historic new addition to the economic and entertainment environment, and the landscape, in our area.

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Meppershall Social Club



It has been busy and unsettled few months, but after the E.G.M we are looking forward to a bright and better future. With our summer opening times of:

Monday –	6 -11PM
Tuesday - Thursday –	5 - 11PM
Friday –	4 -11PM
Saturday –	12 noon - 11PM
Sunday –	1 - 10PM

We are hoping to welcome more people to our newly painted bar area (thank you Meppershall Village Hall), and as the playground at the back has been enlarged and is **Now Open** (thank you Meppershall Parish Council) we have a great space to watch the children play on summer evening while enjoying a drink or relax after a dog walk.

On Bank Holiday Monday 5th May we are having a VE Day celebration to help mark the 80th anniversary: 2PM onwards, with bouncy castle and activities for the children and a buffet (from 5PM). Tickets for adults £7.50, children £3.00, family (2 adults & 2 Children) £19.00 - available from the bar or by messaging Gemma on 07968529282.

Bank Holiday 26th May weather permitting we have a treasure hunt and barbeque from 2PM. The treasure hunt is free to enter and there will be a prize for the winner.

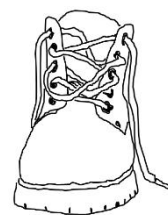
We are continuing our monthly quiz on the second Sunday (except August) - teams max. of 6, £1 person and 50% to the winners 50% to our charities.

You can keep up to date with upcoming events on our website, meppershallsocialclub.co.uk, and on our Facebook page.

And lastly, we want to say a big thank you to all the children that took part in our colouring competition and a big well done to winners.

Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers

Sunday 11th May: we are back to a simple loop of Meppershall, taking in around 5 miles of the landscape, which we hope will be especially useful to people who don't have so much experience of the wonderful footpaths into, out of, and around the village. Come and get to know the rural landscape on your doorstep!



Starting at 2pm from St Mary's Church gate in Meppershall, we'll head towards Shillington and turn right across the big fields all the way to Campton Road. Using the road past the airfield, our route takes us to the corner of Woodhall Farm before looping around through Polehanger Woods and back via Polehanger Farm and returning to Shefford Road alongside Nunswood (we may see bluebells within the wood, Nunswood itself is not publicly accessible). Before finishing, we will explore the back ways within the village, through Emery Croft, Hoo Road, Old Road Meadow, Fildyke, and up to the back of Monk's Pool before arriving back at the church by around 4.30PM. Call us (857836) or message us on Facebook (@meppershallstrollers) for more information. We would love to have you along on the walk!



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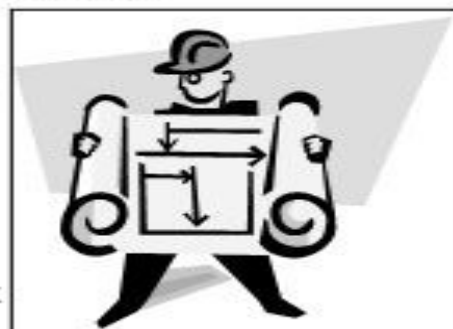
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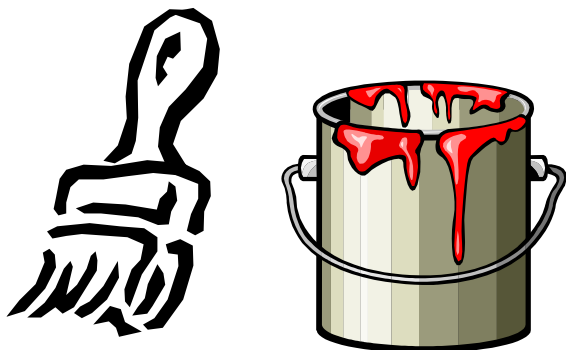
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Churchwardens:

Chris Valentine 01462 815971 John Archer

PCC Secretary:

Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

A Message From St Mary's...

I do hope that you had a wonderful time celebrating Easter this year.

In the secular world Easter was over all too quickly this year as 'normal life', work and school, resumed just a couple of days later... with barely time to eat an easter egg!

In Church though, we continue to celebrate Easter for 7 weeks - through May, until Pentecost on the 8th June.

During the 50 days we call Eastertide - our readings focus on:

The resurrection appearances of Jesus - when he appeared to his friends the disciples - who were in hiding for fear of persecution. The time when Jesus appeared to his disciples who had gone fishing and prepared breakfast for them on the beach. Jesus' promise, *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish."* His words, *"Little children... Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."*

And as Jesus' followers believed - and began to live in the light of the resurrection - we read about the life and growth of the early church seen in the book of the Bible we call the Acts of the Apostles.

The whole of Eastertide is a time of joy and celebration. White or gold vestments emphasise the joy and brightness of the season and the Easter candle stands prominently in church for all our services. Our liturgy and hymns are peppered with Alleluias... and in every service we declare:

"Alleluia. Christ is risen

He is risen indeed. Alleluia."

"Normal life" may have returned - but the joy and promise of Easter goes on - and not just for 7 weeks - but forever!

May is also around the time when the Church has its Annual Meeting (15th May at 6.30pm this year) - and when I say a huge thank you to all who have contributed to the life of All Saints over the past year. Thank you to all who have contributed their gifts and support generously, quietly, tirelessly. Thank you and God bless you.

As the weather improves, please help the Church Council and the Parish Council to maintain the Churchyard as a place that is safe and welcoming for all who wish to use

it. We hope that together we can maintain the churchyard as a place which honours the memory of those buried there.

Please do check to ensure your grave accords with “St Albans Diocese: The Churchyard Regulations August 2020 - updated July 2023”, and if in doubt please check with me, Revd Roni on 01462339962. Also, please carefully check that your memorials and grave markers are securely in place.

So many people do comment on our lovely churchyard and I would like to thank you for all you do to care for your family graves. And please do look out for our “Churchyard Clear Up Days” as many hands and good company do make the work seem a lot easier!

God bless you.

Rector Roni

Church Events In May

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 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
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Forthcoming Services

Sunday 4th May	11am. Morning Worship. Easter 3
Wednesday 7th May	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday 11th May	11am. Holy Communion. Easter 4
Wednesday 14th May	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday 18th May	11am. Morning Worship. Easter 5
Wednesday 21st May	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday 25th May	11am. Holy Communion. Easter 6
Wednesday 28th May	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday 1st June	11am. Morning Worship. Easter 7

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



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In And Out The Dusty Bluebells By Donna Cameron

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How lovely is it to get out into the garden in the sunshine. It's so uplifting to see everything blossoming and the garden becoming full of colour. Everytime I go into my garden I see something else flowering that I'm sure wasn't even above ground the day before!

The sunshine makes everyone so happy and motivated to get in their gardens.

One native plant that carpets a lot of local woodlands at this time of year is the Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). It is quintessentially British. A recent survey regarded it as the UK's favourite flower. It is a bulbous perennial with deep blue bell-shaped flowers. The UK is home to half the world's population.

It is not to be confused with the Spanish Bluebell which is putting the native one under threat. The Spanish one is much larger, has thicker leaves and is more upright in stature.

The Native Bluebell is a protected species and an indicator of Ancient woodlands. They thrive

in undisturbed soils and are a protected species attracting bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Although poisonous, the sap was used by Elizabethans to stiffen their ruffs and collars and later used in book binding. In the language of flowers, it is a symbol of humility, constancy and everlasting love.

Growing up in a sleepy Hertfordshire village, there was a wood not far from our house that we would visit as children and still do today with my children and parents to see the magical drifts of bluebells nodding their heads in the soft dappled shade. Associated with fairies, they truly are a magical plant and herald in the beginnings of Summer.

Donna x



Jobs In the Garden For May	
Keep on top of weeds	Divide spring bulbs
Earth up potatoes	Check Roses for Aphids
Plant out summer bedding plants	Prune early flowering shrubs
Water early in the morning or in the evenings	Plant Hardy annuals
Open Greenhouse door on hot days	Train Sweetpeas up supports
Mow lawns weekly	Pinch out tips of Broad beans to discourage Blackfly

Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club Newsletter) - May

Spring is finally in the air and full of promise, with evenings lighter giving us more outdoor time. It's time to plant, dream and watch it grow. As well we know, from tiny seeds grow vibrant gardens. Our gardens are awakening after their winter slumber. Gardeners are busy preparing for the year ahead. We have already enjoyed the early risers: first snowdrops and wonderful golden daffodils, then tulips and bluebells. Many plants of distinction to choose from to fill your garden with colour and fragrance.

Deciding what to grow? Consider your separate areas - this could be vegetable plots, flower beds, patio, balcony, windowsill, greenhouse and lawns (hopefully aerated and treated to be moss and weed free free!) As the soil warms, plant out perennials for colour, sow hardy annuals and wildflowers to fill any gaps, add aquatic plants to ponds. Also plant out winter-sown sweat peas or place an order for some. Plant your second early potatoes now. It's time to declare all-out war on slugs and snails to save all your new additions to the garden.

Before you shop, assess your garden environment, light, space and climate. Research and understand the specific needs of the plants, soil type and size at maturity, know your skill level to prune and time availability to care for plant needs.

At the shops, check for health; pests, mites, spots, discoloration on leaves and healthy stems and a strong root system. If pot-bound, plants will need to be repotted promptly. Look for vibrant foliage with even growth - not leggy or stunted. Check pots for weeds so as not to adopt any problems in your garden. Read the information tags to be informed of care requirements. When at the nursery, ask any questions you may have or request recommendations. Buy local as they are more likely to be suitable and adapt to your garden environment. On your return home, water firstly and plant promptly and fertilise as required - and mostly, ENJOY!

All are welcome to come along to any of our meetings on the first Monday each month (unless it's a public/bank holiday – such as a change to our forthcoming group meeting which now on Tuesday 6th May). On June 2nd we have an outing to Linda Coles Market Flower Growers in Gravenhurst, leaving the village hall at 7pm by car share.

Dates for 2025	Meeting/Event Details
6th May	Mike McConnell - Campton Village Hall
2nd June	Visit Linda Coles, Gravenhurst - Car Share leave Village Hall 7pm
29th June	Opens Gardens: 10th year anniversary of Trugs and Trowels. Including Music and Canapes at Campton Manor. Ticketed event. Non-members £7 / Members £3.50. Any gardens wishing to open please let Maryika know.

June 29th is Campton open gardens in celebration of its 10-year anniversary, with music and canapes at Campton Manor. Tickets for non members are £7, members £3.50. Any gardens wishing to open for this event, please let me know.

Our general club meetings have an admission of £3.50 per person and this includes refreshments, a free-and-swap table to pass on your unwanted garden items, plants, seed pots and magazines etc.

Maryika Wilding 01462 851729



Birthdays

A sincere HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Joyce D (91) — Mary M (90) — Jean S (88).

If you have a birthday greeting to share, why not write to us (see last page for contact info) – we would be delighted to make someone's day with a special message!

Personal Finance by Paul Savuto

Investing in times of uncertainty

There is no doubt that the pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have resulted in market volatility. Economic and geopolitical events always prompt investors to question whether now is a good time to invest or to remain invested. While dealing with geopolitical uncertainties is clearly nothing new for long-term investors, Trump's re-election has once again vividly highlighted the need for a sound investment approach based on careful planning and positioning of assets.

It is important to remember that some market volatility is inevitable; markets will always move up and down. As an investor, putting any short-term market volatility into historical context is useful. This chart of the FTSE 100 since inception, details a series of significant events over the last 40 years or so. Despite a variety of market shocks and rebounds, the index still has a long-term growth trend.

Many investors are getting used to a variety of political, financial and economic factors and learning to look through the 'noise' to focus on what really matters. Portfolio diversity holds the key to approaching your investments and managing risk. It is important to think about longer-term timescales instead of focusing too intently on short-term events and market fluctuations.

Adopting the longer-term view

Investment requires a disciplined approach and a degree of holding your nerve if markets fall. Experienced long-term investors know that the worst investment strategy you can adopt is to jump in and out of the stock market, panic when prices fall and sell investments at the bottom of the market.

Finding the right balance

However concerning market fluctuations may be, it's important to remember that we have jointly worked hard to formulate a financial plan which is in line with your personal requirements.

Diversifying your portfolio

Successfully achieving your long-term investment goals requires balancing risk and reward. By selecting a broad range of assets in line with your attitude to risk, objectives and time horizon, diversification aims to provide the potential to improve returns for your elected level of risk.

Communication is key

As an investor, you have to decide how much risk is right for you. While the process of building a portfolio will incorporate strategies designed to help reduce risk, it cannot be eliminated altogether. We also need to make sure that we are aware of any changes in your objectives or circumstances. And, of course, you should remember that volatility also creates opportunities for investors.

The right strategy

Financial advice and regular reviews are essential to help position your portfolio in line with your objectives and attitude to risk, and to develop a well defined investment plan, tailored to your objectives and risk profile.

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.

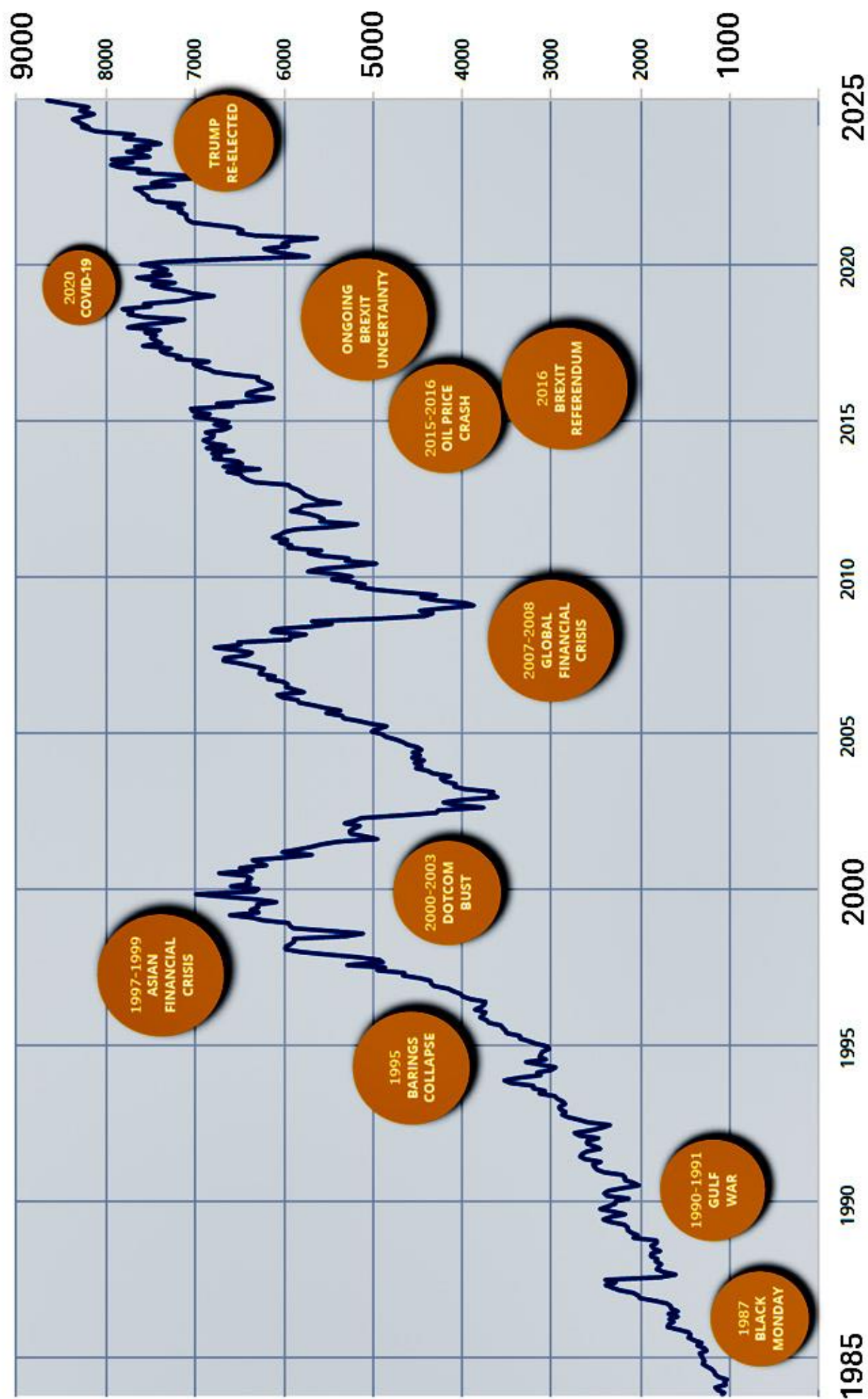


Chart: FTSE 100 since inception to 2025, source Yahoo and Trading Economics / courtesy of DGS

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Ensuring Pain-Free Studies for Teenagers: Shefford Osteopathic Clinic

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- *Are they struggling with studying for long periods due to discomfort?*

Extra study for exams can create discomfort for students. This may cause additional anxiety about completing long written exams or their coursework.

There are different causes for pain and discomfort, such as

- Posture when studying
- Working area is not ideally set up for study
- Stress of the revision and exam process
- Postural changes as they grow

Teenagers' pain is often (inaccurately) attributed to:

- A parent having a history of back pain, neck pain or headaches
- Normal growing pains or hormonal changes
- Bad posture

Frequent daily pain for teenagers is not considered normal and should be explored.

The friendly team at Shefford Osteopathic Clinic starts by talking with the patient. We discuss what's going on and how it impacts them. Then, we carry out a thorough examination.

Our patients usually see a drop in pain and discomfort after a few sessions. This enables them to complete their revision and exams.

We educate people about body posture and movement offering the confidence to self-manage and take control. This enables teenagers to revise for and sit exams without being distracted by discomfort or pain.

Call us on 01462 811006 or visit www.SheffordOsteo.com to make an appointment. Please don't let unnecessary pain affect your teenager's studying.

This article was written by [Melissa Thorpe](#), a Registered Osteopath at Shefford Osteopathic Clinic.



Farewell To Morris

On 28th March, just a month short of his 15th birthday, we had to say goodbye to our beloved Morris. The kids grew up with him and he became a bit of a village character who many people will have known (hopefully mostly for good reasons!) He was a veteran of hundreds of miles of walking in the local countryside, having also ascended Snowdon, multiple monros in Scotland, Cader Idris, Pen y Fan (many horseshoe laps of The Beacons) and more. There will never be another like him, we miss him terribly and we say thank you for all the sympathies we have received. **James & Miriam.**



The Players @ STMA May 2025



27

Tickets are still available to buy at www.ticketsource.co.uk/themeppershallplayers for the Players show 'When the Lights Go on Again' - a musical play/variety commemorating V.E Day's 80th Anniversary. Saturday 10th May, 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 and £6 (Concessions under 16/over 60s). For non-internet sales contact 01462 816336.

We encourage our audiences to bring their own food for consumption during the interval - picnic or afternoon tea in the afternoon, supper in the evening.

The Players will be running two stalls again this year at the STMA Summer Fete on Sunday 1st June 2025. Our ever-popular 'Pick a Card' (win a prize every time) stall will be back and our entertainment stall will also be back, with the Players performing a selection of WW2 songs.

Dates for your 2025 diary:

Saturday 10th May 2025 - V.E Day 80th Anniversary - performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

Sunday 1st June 2025 - STMA Summer Fete - opens at 1pm on the STMA Playing Field

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

Meppershall Messenger AGM – You Are Invited

The Annual General Meeting of The Meppershall Messenger will take place on Saturday 7th June, 9.30-11.30AM, in the Willow Room at Meppershall Village Hall. In addition to our loyal 'committee' and band of volunteers, we would welcome everyone and anyone to come and share ideas, give feedback and keep us on track as YOUR village magazine. It's always a friendly occasion and we'd love to see you.

MEPPERSHALL - WANDERBUS

Bookings & Info : Tel :0300-123-3023 www.wanderbus.org.uk



RR = Return
on request

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	- 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

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	PROGRAMME OF VISITS (<i>prices correct at print time</i>)	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
<i>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.</i>		
24th 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
<i>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.</i>		
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
<i>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.</i>		
24TH JULY	Old Warden - Shuttleworth and Swiss Gardens £16.00	Fare £6.50 Pickups 10.15/10.30 a.11.15 d.16.00
<i>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.</i>		
28TH AUG	Althorp House, Northants. £23.00 House & Gardens	Fare £15.00 Pickups 10.00/10.15 a.11.15 d.15.30
<i>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.</i>		
25TH SEPT	Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable Concession £26.50.	Fare £10.00 Pickups 09.45/10.15 a.11.00 d.16.30
<i>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.</i>		
23rd OCT	Milton Keynes Museum. Entry £17.50	Fare £10.00 Pickups 11.00/11.15 a.12.15 d.15.30
<i>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.</i>		
Nov	To be confirmed	



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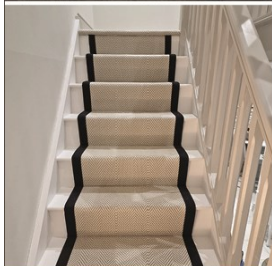
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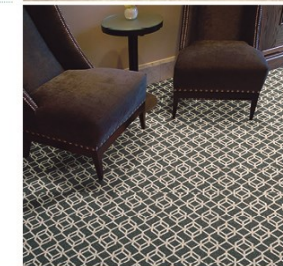
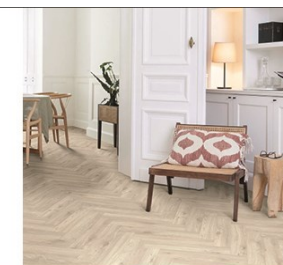



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Shefford Dental Practice, 34 High St Shefford 01462 814020

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

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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

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See full details in the church pages of The Meppershall Messenger

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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)

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Meppershall Brownies, Suzanne Brightwell

07817 392325

Shefford Guides, Angie Griffiths

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

Kathy Georgiou

01462 629313

HATS Drama Group, Linda Winfield

lin.winfield5@gmail.com

Meppershall Village Hall Trustees

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Bookings Tel.

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