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Editorial by James Read



Alistair Strathern MP's public discussion at Meppershall Village Hall, 10th May, saw the social club area completely full. People had plenty of concerns – about their individual situation in very challenging economic times, about how the government is trying to save money in ways that sometimes impact us and our families, about roads and schools and council services... and more! His visit was appreciated.

I took away several things. Someone commented that previous MPs hadn't done this kind of public meeting in the village. That really said something - everyone appreciated the time taken by our MP to come and chat. It was encouraging that the discussion was polite and respectful throughout, despite covering some tough topics and voicing different opinions and beliefs. There were questions about winter fuel allowance; support for families whose children have special needs (where hopefully our MP can assist the case individually); someone who didn't like VAT being added to their private school fees, plus a discussion of challenges in the mainstream school system (our area is stuck between a two-tier and three-tier system - Central Bedfordshire Council must get this sorted); and of course, the roads! Apparently CBC has the funds to make good the repairs that are now so urgently needed – but for various reasons it is not fulfilling its obligations; our MP expressed his commitment to achieve progress.

Local organisations can be more powerful than government in the quality of our community and lives, locally. They do so much to enhance life in Meppershall. A crucial part of how they work is their public meetings, to stay linked to what the community want (that means you!) Consider attending the Annual General Meeting of Meppershall Village Hall (p5) and the AGM of this very magazine (p6). Meppershall Parish Council (MPC) meetings are also open to the public (details are always available online at <https://meppershall-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/>).

We owe our community safety to all sorts of people. Local fire and rescue teams are some of the most important. The recent loss of two firefighters in Bicester near Oxford is a desperately sad reminder of their bravery and commitment. Our local service is looking for volunteers - on p7 you can see how you can consider getting involved.

But there are some things only each of us, individually, can do for the community and for ourselves. No sooner had I mentioned road safety in last month's editorial, than news of the death between Shillington and Stondon came through. What a tragedy, what a loss to family and friends. Please choose how you drive, to keep those around you very safe. Go slow, treat speed limits as the very maximum at which to drive.

The length and quality of our lives also depends on some things only we can manage – health choices that can make or break us. On p22 you will find some information on a new service supporting a public health initiative that could really change lives: maybe your life. Take a look and see if it could help you or someone you know.

Lastly, we sadly learned of Reverend John Harper's death in May. We hope to remember him more fully in a future issue, and for now we send deepest sympathies to Sandra and family as we remember the wonderful contribution he made to village life with gentle, loving leadership up to his retirement in 2011 that has been a key part of the church's success in Meppershall down the years. Rest in peace, John.

Letters

Not a letter, but an amazing phone conversation that we have been given kind permission to mention here...

“A Little Bit of History, May 2025 – 1 Rectory Road”

I was interested and amazed to see the photo of 1 Rectory Road in last month's issue of The Meppershall Messenger. The photo shows my mother at the age of around 23, who was working and living in the house at that time, in service to Miss Nicholson and Miss Hilton. They were retired nurses who died in 1923 and 1926 and whose gravestone can still be found in the churchyard near the church door. Born in 1899, my mother, Ella Beerling, met George Jackson while she was living in service in Meppershall. Although she returned to Hitchin after her spell in Meppershall, she returned to marry George here at St Mary's church. They initially rented a house not far from where she had worked, from Miss Long, who was originally connected to Stondon Manor. They went on to buy the house – which is still my home today.

Barbara Horwood

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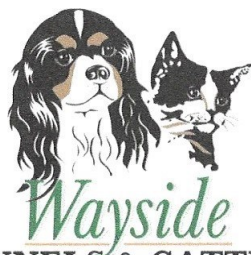
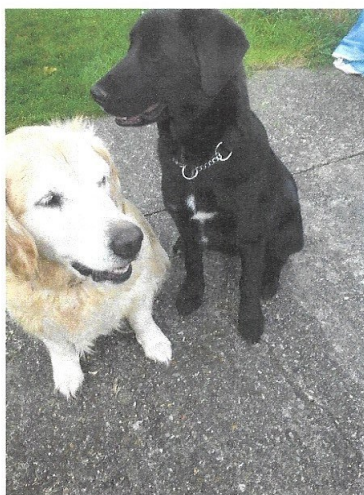
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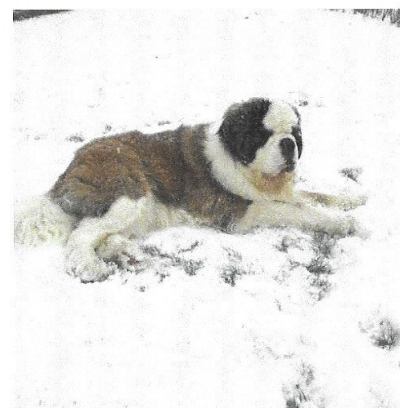
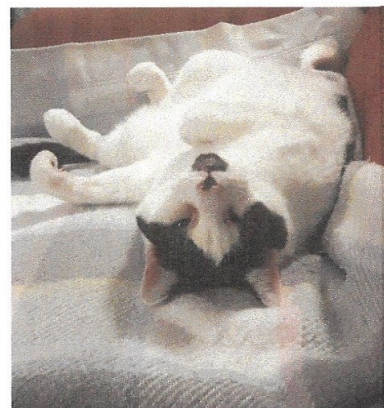


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Notice of Annual General Meeting

**To be held on Monday 28 July 2025 at 7pm in the
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AGENDA

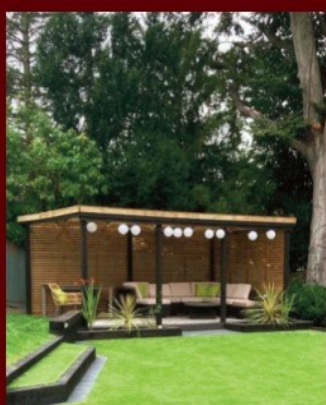
1. Receive and approve the minutes and summary of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 18 June 2024
2. Receive and approve the trustees and treasurers reports with accounts for the year to 31 March 2025
3. Update on activities and works in hand at the Village Hall
4. Election of trustees
5. Any other business:
 - Notified before the meeting
 - Arising at the meeting

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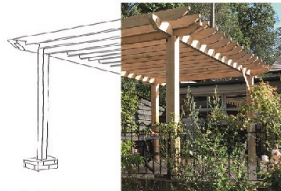
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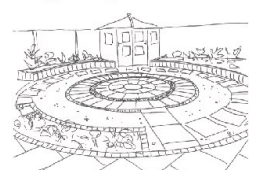
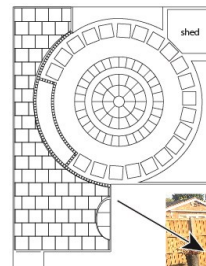
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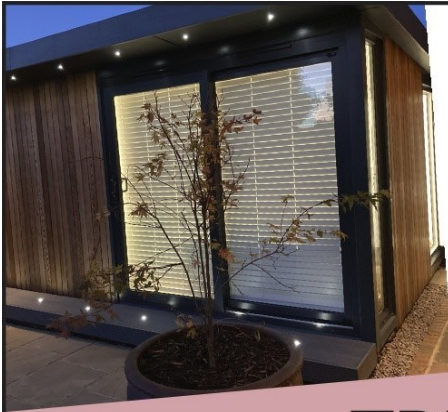
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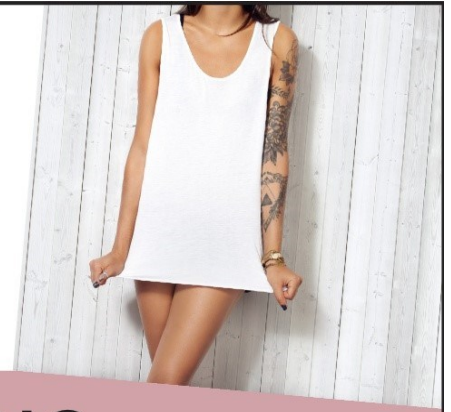
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Annual General Meeting Of Your Village Magazine Saturday 7th June 9.30AM

In the Willow Room, Meppershall Village Hall

Bring your ideas, bring your feedback – tell us how we are doing, what you would like to see in The Meppershall Messenger in the coming year. Come and get involved, make friends and have some fun. It's about community spirit.

Picture by kind permission: R ZAVACKY

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

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

Over the last couple of months, we have been replacing some of the more tired items like our play kitchen and dolls house. We have also introduced a selection of new equipment for the children to enjoy. The dried pasta has been a big hit with the children and helps them develop their fine motor skills, hand eye co-ordination and sensory exploration.

Following the popularity of the colour your own wooden trinkets we have introduced these on a regular basis with bookmarks, vehicles, unicorns and butterflies amongst the items to choose from.

Munchkins has always prided itself on being adaptable to what the children and their parents/carers need. If you do have any suggestions for things you would like to see or do at the group please get in touch or chat to one of the volunteers and we will do our best to make it happen.

As always we couldn't run this group without the hard work of all our wonderful volunteers. Their help and dedication is endlessly appreciated and I'm sure everyone would agree they do a fantastic job.

Meppershall Munchkins Baby and Toddler Group

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To find out more send us an email to:
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Meppershall Social Club

Here are the upcoming events for the next few months:

Sunday 8th June: Our Monthly Quiz Night, 7.30PM - Teams max. of 6, £1 per person and 50% to the winners 50% to our charities.

Saturday 12th July: Barbeque on the patio from 6PM

Mark and Adam in the bar from 8:30PM

Sunday 13th July: Our Monthly Quiz Night, 7.30PM - Teams max. of 6, £1 per person and 50% to the winners 50% to our charities.

Sun 10th August: 1PM-5PM - Summer children's treasure hunt and activity afternoon, £2 per Child, with BBQ on the Patio

Sun 24th August: Family Fun Afternoon, 1PM onwards. More details to follow.

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

And lastly, we want you to hear from you about how we run the club - so there is a comments form and suggestions box in the club or you can get involved by scanning the QR Code to the right.



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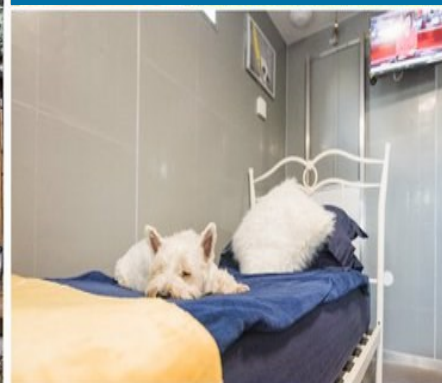
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A Little Bit Of Natural History: Jeremy Holden

Last month we were back in May 1982 as Jeremy - then a boy but now a professional wildlife photographer who has specialised in the countries of South East Asia - was thrilled to have some close-up encounters with newly born owls (owlets).



But by the end of the year, he had mounted 19 home-made nesting boxes, each customised to be home to a specific type of bird. His scrapbook photos show how he and friend Stuart teetered on the top of a ladder to fix box number 11 – for a spotted flycatcher – high up on an ivy-clad elm tree. Boxes 12 and 13 were for great tits, one mounted on a field maple and another on a hawthorn. Box 15 (pictured here) aimed to attract robins. Jeremy knew it was already late in the spring nesting season, but he was keen to prepare for the following year and a new host of birdlife looking for homes in Meppershall.

Earlier in the year, blue tits had been the intended residents for Box 3. Now as May turned to June, the boys returned to check on progress and take care of the box if needed.

“We investigated to look at the eggs and see how they were getting on,” he says in his notes. “On opening the lid we saw 10 pink blue tits in a small nest in the bottom of the box. Unlike the owls, they all hatch about the same time because the female does not start to incubate until all the eggs are laid. The 10 chicks grew surprisingly quickly and we were quite surprised to find later on that all 10 chicks were successfully reared and all of them left the box. Usually one or two eggs don't hatch and one or two of the chicks die in the box, for various reasons -



one being the cramped conditions and another the fierce competition for food that must go on.”

But the boys also saw nests that didn't need a box. Wood pigeons remain one of the most common birds in parts of the village – and there were plenty to see in 1982, including a nest that Jeremy came across, photographed and wrote about. Made of large spindly twigs and

loosely mounted in low branches of a big bush, Jeremy noted, “The pigeon never lays more or less than two eggs and they sit on the frail nest like a pair of unseeing eyes.”

But the owls continued to capture the boys attention as the little owlets that they first spotted in May 1982 grew and were seen less often. Then one day they were back.

“We saw the female owl sitting against the trunk of the copper Beech. Pressed against the trunk, she faces less danger of being discovered by the smaller birds that would mob her. We then saw the whole family - the male in the dead Beech, the female and the two young in the copper Beech.”



“The two owlets were safely concealed among the copper Beech leaves. We looked hard but could not find the third chick. We were not too optimistic about its survival and it probably died because we did not see it again.”

“It was mid June before I saw one of the owlets again. It had grown quite considerably also could fly well. I managed one photograph before it flew away into the cover of a Yew Tree. The next time I saw one of them was on 25th June, when it was nearly fully grown.”

Today, experts believe there are around 50,000 breeding pairs of tawny owls across the UK. To put that in perspective, that's a pair for every 1,000 people in the country, or perhaps one or two pairs in Meppershall (on average – although there are of course far more in rural places than in cities). In comparison, there are millions of blackbirds, pigeons and blue tits. So Jeremy and Stuart were lucky to have these wonderful experiences. You can see how it inspired a career in conservation. Perhaps the owls we hear hooting and screeching across the village on calm, quiet nights are the descendants of the very birds that were shown such kindness and consideration all those years ago. We will return to Jeremy's scrap book for a final time in the autumn.

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

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Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

A Message From St Mary's...

May was an exciting month - with the 80th Anniversary of VE Day - and the election of the new Pope Leo 14th. Thank you to all who came to our VE80 Rectory teas and helped raise £307 for Dementia UK (with some Gift Aid still to be claimed).

June continues as another exciting month in the Church as we continue to retell the Gospel story and we celebrate Ascension Day, Pentecost, and then Trinity Sunday.

Ascension Day (this year 29th May) is celebrated 40 days after Easter - 40 days in which Jesus appeared to his followers on many occasions - until he returned to his Father's side: *"and then Jesus led his Disciples out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven."* Luke 24:50-53.

Pentecost Sunday is 50 days after Easter and celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus... praying "Come Holy Spirit". It is sometimes called the birthday of the Church. 3,000 became believers that very day.

"...the sound of a mighty wind filled the house where believers were gathered, tongues of fire appeared and rested on each of them, and the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit..." Acts 2:2

Finally we celebrate Trinity Sunday - our Christian belief in One God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

After Trinity Sunday we enter Ordinary Time - or numbered weeks - as this year we continue to work our way through the Gospel of Luke.

Also in June is the Alban Pilgrimage when St Alban the first recorded British Christian Martyr is honoured in our Diocese. St Albans and the Abbey is always a lovely place to visit and so The Alban Pilgrimage might make a good day out /or part of a day out for some.

Every year, during the weekend closest to St Alban's feast day, St Albans Cathedral hosts the "Alban Pilgrimage" - this year actually on June 21st with events running from 11.00am - 5pm. Everyone is welcome to enjoy the procession of giant (12 foot) carnival puppets - Roman chariots, centurions, lions, roses and executioners that

move through the streets - while around 300 children, teenagers and adults from the local community retell the story of Alban's martyrdom.

In the afternoon the Alban Festival continues on the Orchard, High Street, and surrounding areas come alive with family activities, food and drink - in partnership with St Albans Business Improvement District.

More detailed information about the programme for this year's event can be found at www.stalbanscathedral.org/alban-pilgrimage

Wishing you a very happy and celebratory June!

God bless you.

Rector Roni

Church Events In June

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
	9.00pm	Night Prayer/Compline from the C. of E. Daily Prayer App, 7-days-a-week
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Forthcoming Services

Sunday 1st June	11.00am. Morning Worship. Easter 7
Wednesday 4th June	9.45am Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday 8th June	11.00am. Holy Communion. Pentecost (wear red!)
Wednesday 11th June	9.45am Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday 15th June	11.00am. Morning Worship. Trinity Sunday
Wednesday 18th June	Sorry - no midweek Communion
Sunday 22nd June	11.00am. Holy Communion.
Wednesday 25th June	Sorry - no midweek Communion
Sunday 29th June***	10.30am Benefice Communion - All Saints, Campton

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



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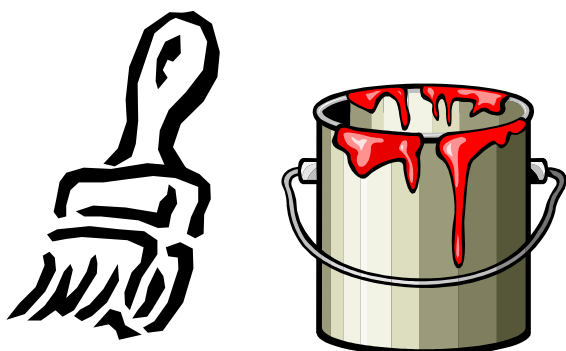
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New Chair and Vice Chair of Central Bedfordshire Council

On Thursday, 15 May, Councillor Kevin Collins was appointed as Chair of Central Bedfordshire Council and Councillor Vicky Malone has been appointed as Vice Chair.

Both councillors represent Caddington. Cllr Collins has been a councillor for Central Bedfordshire Council for 11 years, and Cllr Malone for two years following the last local elections.

As well as presiding over Full Council meetings, Cllr Collins will represent the Council on civic visits, at ceremonial events and will raise funds and awareness for his chosen charities.

Councillor Collins said: "I'm grateful to be given the opportunity to represent the Council. It is a privilege and an honour to do so and I will do so diligently with great pride."

Councillor Malone said: "I am delighted to be elected as Vice Chair of Central Bedfordshire Council. I congratulate Councillor Collins on his election as Chair, and I am committed to supporting him throughout his term of office."

Grant Funding For Local Organisations And Projects

The Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Councillor Grant Scheme returned on 30th April 2025 – aiming to back local projects. The scheme gives communities another chance to secure funding for local projects that make a real difference.

Each councillor (Blake Stephenson in the case of Meppershall) has access to £2,000 to support local groups, charities, and community initiatives that bring clear benefits to residents. Councillors can also team up to combine their funds where a bigger impact is needed.

The scheme can support a wide range of initiatives—from arts and culture to the environment, sport, health, wellbeing, social inclusion and diversity. In the past, funding has helped pay for toddler group play equipment, community garden planters, defibrillators and village noticeboards.

If you are interested in applying, you are encouraged to speak with our ward councillor before applying. He can be reached by phone on 0300 300 8526 or by email at blake.stephenson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. Full guidance and an online application form are available at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/grants.

Cllr Stephenson's grants have included important local organisations in the past. These include: Meppershall Good Neighbour Group, Meppershall Preschool and Meppershall Munchkins. In Shillington, he has made grants to Shillington Memorial Playing Field, Shillington Congregational Church, Shillington Memorial Playing Fields, Shillington Parish Council and residents, 1st Shillington Guides and Shillington Spitfires Cricket Club. In Gravenhurst his grants have supported Gravenhurst and Villages Pre School and also Gravenhurst and Villages Pre School.

Sweetpeas By Donna Cameron

Donna's Garden Designs | 07833670934

This time of year is so busy in the garden. Lots of jobs to do - sowing seeds, planting perennials and annuals, watering and weeding. But what a lovely time of year it is - everything looking so lush and blooms and buds a-plenty! The warm weather has really helped everything along.

I love going into my garden and I'm sure things that weren't there the day before are blooming! I have a bistro set at the end of my garden where I draw my designs and get inspiration. I have designed it so I am immersed within the flower bed and plants are all around me, bees buzzing and birds singing. Bliss!



This year by chance I was moving around some things and put an obelisk in the middle of the bed to move it out of the way. When I looked, I thought it was the perfect place for my sweetpeas to climb up!

I chose the variety 'Primadonna' after a friend grew them for me last year. Another friend sent me a mammoth variety this year so I look forward to seeing these too! They know what I like!

I do love Sweetpeas. My sister had them as her wedding flowers and featured them on her wedding invites. They are so easy to grow and you can buy seed or plants for a couple of pounds which will give you endless bouquets of fragrant flowers. The more you pick, the more they keep giving. When they reach four leaves in growth, pinch them out so they bush out, become stronger and produce more flowers.

Train them up an obelisk and they will soon grow up it. Feed them once a week with a liquid fertiliser. A tip I learnt from my great uncle who was a

gardener was to take off the tendrils to get extra long strong stems for the vase. He used to show them.

You can get so many different shades of sweetpeas although I think the pastel ones are my favourites. The scent is dreamy. There is a perennial variety but it has no scent and is very vigorous.

Sweetpeas were first recorded by a monk in Sicily in 1695 and there is an old fashioned variety named after him Cupani. By the 19th Century they were commercially bred and Henry Eckford, a Scottish nurseryman, crossbred and developed the Grandiflora varieties with bigger blooms. They were very popular in Victorian times and were a sign of friendship.

There are now over 200 varieties, all of them gorgeous! So give them a go and you won't regret it!

Donna x

Jobs In the Garden For June	
Weed the beds	Water plants using water butt where possible
Plant up Annuals in pots and baskets for extra colour and interest	Pinch out side shoots of Tomatoes
Mow lawns once a week	Pick some flowers for the house so you can enjoy them inside as well
Keep check on Aphids	Harvest Lettuce, Radish and early Potatoes
Stake plants	

Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club Newsletter) - June

Hi everyone, summer is in full swing and colour and beauty is in abundance.

A pot, good soil and a pinch of patience: whether a beginner or a seasoned grower your confidence and plate will be full in no time.

Short of space and want to grow your own food? You are in luck! With just a few pots, good soil and a sunny spot you'll be growing an abundance of veggies.

Here are twelve fast-growing veggies which grow in pots and you can harvest in a matter of weeks, grown from seed to table:

1. Radish - harvest in 3 to 4 weeks, sprinters in the veg world, from seed to plate in 21 days. Grow in 8" deep pot and harvest for green salads and sautés.
2. Lettuce - harvest in 4 to 6 weeks, grows quickly, you can harvest the outer leaves within a month and it will go on producing more.
3. Spinach - harvest in 4 to 5 weeks, not a fast grower, thrives in cool weather and you can start snipping baby leaves off to eat in just a few weeks.
4. Green onions (Scallions) - harvest in 3 to 4 weeks for instant gratification! Onions are your best friend, they grow quickly from seed, even faster from scraps, keep them watered and they will keep popping up.
5. Baby carrots - harvest in 5 to 6 weeks. With baby varieties, baby finger will mature in just over a month unlike full size carrots. Top tip - use deep pots 8" - 10" with loose, well-drained soil.
6. Arugula - harvest in 3 to 4 weeks, a container garden gem which germinates quickly, ready as baby greens to harvest in less than a month.
7. Peas - harvest in 6 to 7 weeks - climbing quickly, snap peas and snow peas grow fastest and like container life. A 10" - 12" deep pot and a small trellis or

a cage will do the trick.

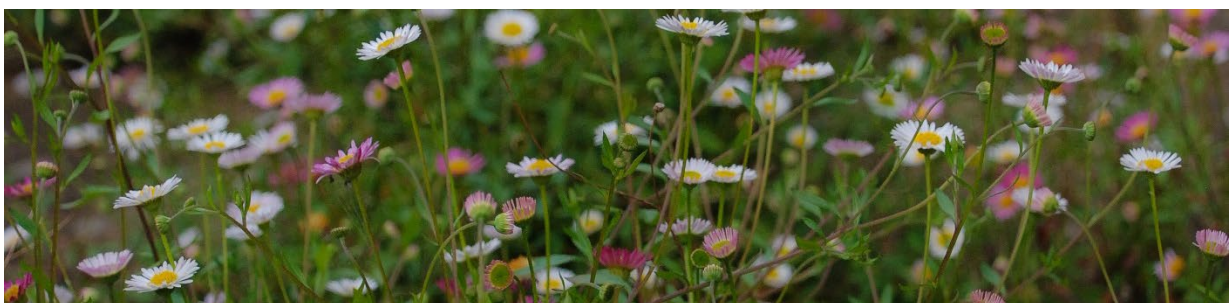
8. Kale, a super food that grows well in pots and can be picked early or left to grow to full maturity.
9. Bok Choy - harvest in 4 to 5 weeks. This Asian green grows fast and tastes great in a stir fry, sautéed or even raw. Baby Bok Choy will mature quickly and fits well in smaller pots.
10. Beets - harvest in 6 weeks - leaves can be harvested in 4 weeks, but the bulbs take 6 weeks. Use deep pots 10" – 12," thin the seedlings to allow the bulbs to develop.
11. Mustard greens – a classroom classic, harvest in 4 to 5 weeks. Spicy, leafy and fast, a great addition to container garden. Water regularly, plant in a shallow wide container.
12. Turnips - harvest in 5 to 6 weeks (greens in 3 weeks). Just like beets, turnips offer quick greens and tasty roots. Baby turnips are tender and full of flavour and don't take up a lot of space.

Get the most return for your efforts!

Please remember on 2nd June there is no Gardening club in the village hall, as there is a car-share visit to Linda Coles- a commercial grower in Gravenhurst, leaving the village hall at 7pm. June 29th is Campton Open Gardens in celebration of its 10th year anniversary, with music and canapes at Campton Manor. Tickets: non members £7, members £3.50. Any gardens wishing to open please let me know.

In July we welcome Bev Hall of 'Blooming in the Community' (a C.I.C., community interest company). All are welcome to come along to any of our meetings on the first Monday each month (unless it is a public/bank holiday). General club 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 etc.

Maryika Wilding 01462 851729



Birthdays

Very best wishes to Peter D who will be 83 this month! From the Messenger team.

In Memoriam

Reverend John Harper AKC, Church of England Priest for some 40 years, late Parish Priest of St Mary the Virgin, Meppershall (2004-2011), who died in May. There is much sadness here in the village at the news of his passing and we send deepest sympathies and much love to Sandra and family. Full obituary in a later issue.



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The Players @ STMA

June 2025



19

A big THANK YOU to everyone who came to see 'When the Lights Go on Again' commemorating V.E Day's 80th Anniversary and to all those who supported The Players @ STMA with the production. It was lovely to hear our audiences singing along with the cast. Your enthusiasm, participation and applause were very much appreciated.

The Players will be attending the STMA Summer Fete on Sunday 1st June 2025. Our ever popular "Pick a Card and win a prize every time" stall will be back and our entertainment stall will be back with the Players performing a selection of WW2 songs from our V.E Day Show. We've have our fingers crossed for glorious weather (like we had last year) and look forward to seeing everyone who comes to say hello.

The Players A.G.M. is on Monday 16th June 7.30pm in the STMA Meeting Room (first door on the left as you enter the building) Open to non-members, a great way to meet the Players.

Read through for 'A Christmas Carol' Panto 2025 is on Monday 23rd & 30th June 2025, 7.30pm at the STMA (!8yrs and over) with auditions on Monday 7th July 7.30pm at the STMA (18yrs & over).

Dates for your 2025 diary:

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

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

Monday 23rd & 30th June 7.30pm at the STMA Read through for 'A Christmas Carol' Panto 2025 Monday 7th July 7.30pm at the STMA, Auditions for 'A Christmas Carol' Panto (18yrs & over)

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

Personal Finance by Paul Savuto

Your pension and Inheritance tax (IHT)

Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced plans to include unused pension funds and death benefits within the value of estates for IHT purposes, during the Autumn Budget 2024. Under the proposals, pension administrators will report and pay IHT directly to HMRC. Death-in-service benefits paid out by employers have traditionally been separate from personal pensions for the purposes of calculating an IHT bill. By including unused pensions and death-in-service benefits in IHT calculations, more estates could face higher taxes.

This announcement came as a surprise, particularly to those who have worked hard to build a pension as a tax-efficient way to pass wealth on to loved ones. Any changes are likely to have the greatest impact on people with established estate plans.

Timeline - A 12-week technical consultation on the proposed changes concluded on 22 January. Once the feedback has been reviewed, government consultation principles outline that responses should be published within 12 weeks. By the third quarter of the year, the government is expected to provide specific implementation guidance on how pensions and death benefits will be treated under the new regime. Any changes won't take effect until 6 April 2027.

As proposals are not finalised, it's wise to consider potential implications but await the final guidance before overhauling plans. This still gives us ample time to make changes before implementation in 2027. A review of existing pension arrangements would be useful so we can think about how the proposed changes could affect what your beneficiaries would receive.

Time and knowledge - Rest assured we are monitoring developments and will keep you in touch as we know more. When we have more certainty, we may suggest you consider alternative options that ensure your estate remains as tax efficient as possible and aligned with your goals. Together, we'll help you secure your family's future with confidence.

Time for a spring clean? How about 'death cleaning' your finances?

Could your finances benefit from a spring clean?

You could take your cue from the Swedes. They believe in 'döstädning,' or 'death cleaning.' It sounds pessimistic, but it involves decluttering your belongings to reduce the burden you leave behind to loved ones. The philosophy gained international prominence through a 2018 book called *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*, by Margareta Magnusson, but many of the methods described to organise your home and belongings can be applied to your finances as well.

Why should you death clean your finances?

First, it can help you feel more in control of your money. Second, it can help you refocus your time (and money) on what matters most to you. And third, taking time to organise your finances now could spare your loved ones from a great deal of emotional and financial stress after you die.

Key steps in a financial spring clean

It's a good idea to make a checklist and work your way through. Key steps include:

- Streamline your finances. Close accounts you don't use, cancel unused subscriptions or memberships, and explore ways to cut back on wasteful spending
- Build a document library. Gather all important documents, including Wills, insurance policies, investment portfolios and property deeds. Consider storing documents securely online. Having an easily-accessible document library will help make sure your loved ones can find critical information quickly when needed
- Keep beneficiary information up to date. Review and update beneficiary details on life insurance policies, pensions and expressions of wishes to ensure they reflect your current intentions
- Revisit your investments. Are your investments still aligned with your long-term goals? Has your attitude to risk altered? Maybe your circumstances have changed? This information is important. We'll monitor performance and rebalance when necessary; updating us on goals, risk preference and life changes will inform investment recommendations
- Maximise tax-efficiency. The new tax year brings new opportunities, allowances and reliefs to take advantage of, to reduce your tax liability. This includes revisiting your Inheritance Tax (IHT) strategy, which can help reduce the liability on your estate
- Consider your retirement plan. Are you saving enough into your pension to provide you with the lifestyle you desire in retirement? Are the underlying investments right for you? If you have multiple pension pots, would consolidating them be relevant for your unique requirements?

Making your plans known to others

Discussing your financial arrangements with trusted family members and keeping them updated on changes you've made, is an important part of the process too. Intergenerational financial planning involves managing wealth and financial strategies across multiple generations of a family, focusing on ensuring financial security, preserving assets and facilitating smooth wealth transfer while considering tax implications, estate planning and family values. They're really valuable conversations to have. Take control. Spring cleaning your finances is about more than just getting organised, it's about simplifying your life, taking control and leaving the best possible legacy for loved ones. Maybe those Swedes really are on to something. We can help you get organised so you can focus on enjoying life.

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.

Three Ways To Feel Fabulous This Summer

Shefford Osteopathic Clinic

Summer is officially on its way. *How are you feeling?*

It's important to nourish our bodies with everything that feels good during this time, boosting energy and enjoyment. This includes movement, whole foods, activities and people. Here are three tips to help you feel good this summer:

1. Get your shoes on!

Just 10 minutes of walking can significantly help your body and mind. Moving outdoors allows you to de-stress and breathe fully, in turn nourishing your joints, muscles and vital organs. It's easy to incorporate walking into your daily routine too. Maybe walk those last bus stops – or park a little further away from the shops or work!

Indulge in feel-good foods

Choose to eat whole foods as they are satisfying and delicious. (You don't have to totally miss out on a cake every now and then!) Listen to your body. It knows exactly what you require and when.

3. Increase your water intake

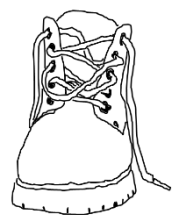
Upping your water intake helps cleanse the body of toxins. Therefore, drinking water (this can be warm or cold drinks, herbal teas, juices etc) will help you feel better.

Are you worried about exercising?

Exercise benefits both physical and mental health. If you feel any aches or pains as you exercise, the team at Shefford Osteopathic Clinic is here to support you. We'll help you keep moving and enjoying life by tailoring treatments and lifestyle advice to you. Visit SheffordOsteo.com or call 01462 811006. Enjoy this summer!

Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers

On Sunday 8th June we will be hiking from Meppershall to the recently opened Clophill Lakes Nature Reserve where there is a scenic walk around the lakes, refreshments in a small outdoor coffee/tea servery and a car park.



Starting from the church gate in Meppershall at 2PM, our route out takes us down over the cow bridge and up through Wasledine to Upper Gravenhurst, before heading past Cainhoe Manor Farm and across the A507 to arrive beside the castle mounds in Clophill where we enter Clophill Lakes and should be able to grab refreshments. We will be there by 3.30ish – it is about 4 miles.

You can head back from there by car (get in contact to check on shared transport back), or join some of us to walk back via Sandy Smith Nature Reserve and Campton, arriving back in Meppershall by ascending Crackle Hill. The return is a further 4 miles or so, and we aim to be back by 6PM ish.

For more info or to arrange to share a lift etc, please call us on 857836 or message us via [facebook.com/meppershallstrollers](https://www.facebook.com/meppershallstrollers). Read more about Clophill Lakes, parking charges etc, at <https://www.greensandtrust.org/about-clophill-lakes>. We also recommend free on-road parking on High Street, Clophill, near its junction with Townshott, which is a short walk from Clophill Lakes.



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'Choose You': Quit Smoking, Lose Weight In Central Bedfordshire

Did you know, in Central Bedfordshire one in ten adults smoke (10.6%)? Additionally, 67.5% of adults (over two thirds) in our area are overweight or obese. But how can we all make healthier choices? There's a new, free programme that may be able to help. Choose You is here to provide support to help us all take control of our health and make positive changes.

Launched by Central Bedfordshire, along with Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes City Councils, Choose You is a free-to-access service designed to support everyone in our area to improve our health and wellbeing. Whether it's quitting smoking, managing our weight, or making lasting lifestyle changes, Choose You offers expert support.

The new service offers personalised guidance, group sessions, and self-help tools to suit various lifestyles. For example, the smoking service provides expert advice with a structured plan. The healthy weight programme offers adults 12 weeks of support to make lasting improvements to our health. Families can also access one-to-one support for healthy weight management.

Whether it's walking up a hill without stopping for breath, keeping up with children or grandchildren, feeling more confident, hearing from your doctor that your blood pressure is normal, or finally breaking the habit of a morning cigarette, Choose You can help individuals reach their goals in a way that works for them.

Stress, finances and family commitments can impact our health, so Choose You offers flexible, pressure-free support at a comfortable pace. It also signposts additional services if needed.

Make a choice and start your journey today: www.chooseyou.co.uk.

CBC, Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes are supported by a single Public Health team, which is supporting this new initiative. They want to help people across our area adopt healthier habits, improve their wellbeing, and achieve their goals to quit smoking or lose weight.

The rate of smoking nationally (England) was 11.6% in 2023 – so our area is a little better than the national average. Fewer people smoke in MK (7.6%).

In 2022-23, 64.0% of adults aged 18 years and over in England were estimated to be overweight or living with obesity, up from 61.2% in 2015-16. The CBC region is slightly above the national average at 67.5%, with MK and Bedford looking healthier at 63.2% and 62.1% respectively.

The smoking cessation programme offers face-to-face or virtual programme options. The healthy weight programme offers free 12-week group sessions, online or in person, with the goal of achieving a healthy weight.



It can be hard to make changes towards better health, but the rewards for you and your family and friends can be huge. It starts with a simple step forward. Why not check out the website and see if it could help you? www.chooseyou.co.uk.

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
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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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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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

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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

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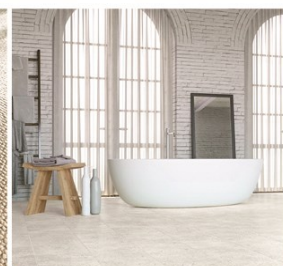
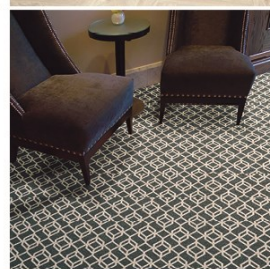
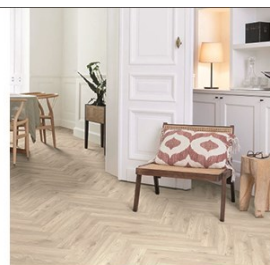
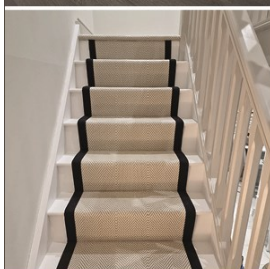


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The Team And Collation Dates

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

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PRODUCTION DATES AND DEADLINES

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

Issue date	Collation date	Issue date	Collation date
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).			