



Contents

Editorial by James Read	2
Letters	3
Three Useful Addresses For Dog Owners.....	4
Central Bedfordshire Council Change of Contact Information.....	6
Recycling – Getting Easier?	6
Community Update from Alistair Strathern MP	7
Meppershall Social Club.....	8
Meppershall Munchkins	8
Royal Mail Missing Meppershall?	10
The Players @ STMA	11
Meppershall Good Neighbours.....	12
Meppershall Wanderbus	14
Parish Church Of St Mary The Virgin (Church Of England).....	15
Church Events In March	16
News From The Tower	18
Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers.....	18
Cake Café At The Village Hall	19
Springtime Gardens by Donna Cameron.....	20
Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club) – March.....	21
Personal Finance by Paul Savuto.....	21
Meppershall Golf Society	23
Carolyn’s Celebrations And Memorials Of Life And Love.....	24
Birthdays	25
Meppershall Golf Society Benefit Night.....	26
Crossword Solution For February.....	27
Patagonia: Digby Brand By Patrick O’Connor.....	28
Shefford Health Centre Rapid Health Triage System	30
NHS: Be Breast Aware	30
Bedfordshire Cancer Support Group.....	31
Meppershall Wanderbus Timetable	32
March Crossword.....	33
Useful Contact Details In Meppershall.....	34
The Team And Collation Dates.....	36

Editorial by James Read



The Meppershall Messenger team are feeling that springtime buzz! Not just from our hilltop fields bursting forth with rural greenery, it's from your wonderful, moving, poignant letters, filling several pages here; what a privilege to share these stories and comments. Thank you all.

Now closing this volume (2025-6) of the magazine, in April (our 'new year') we will no longer routinely publish birthday greetings – but we will be very pleased to include any specific notices you require. Email us at mepp.messenger@gmail.com. We're here to help.

We've had a huge outpouring of community involvement in the last month - another part of the 'village vibe' energising us all this spring. Almost the entire community has been deeply concerned about the prospect of new blocks of housing pouring traffic into (and pulling resources away from) the village above Coneygate and Fildyke Road (planning ref. CB/25/03804). Central Beds Council received over 300 online objections, over 600 printed letters of objection and over 600 signatures on petitions against the planning application. The village had the support of both our MP Alistair (Labour) and our CBC Councillor Blake (Conservative), along with Meppershall Parish Council which added resources and organisation. An amazing team of volunteers shared information, ran the petition, did a traffic survey, and more. The Meppershall Messenger team worked overtime printing leaflets and letters. The campaign brought the village together – old and new – and reminded us of our vision for this place where we live.

It is far from over and we all await the CBC decision. If the developer is told 'no,' we can fully expect an appeal to the national authorities and a series of bargaining attempts, seeking a different development opportunity in those precious hilltop fields.

Another important part of the wider development picture is CBC's Bedfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), published 6th February. In and around Meppershall, multiple sites are suggested for nature (habitat) improvement. The LNRS notes that the whole village is part of the River Hit catchment. The Spinney (just south of Stondon Road towards Shillington) and Nunwood (between Polehanger and Woodlands Rest) are called out for their "particular importance for biodiversity." Several unmanaged woodland sites (near the nursing home - west of Shefford Road, around Monks Pool, north and south of Fildyke Road and on Cow Lane east of Chapel Farm) are proposed for improvement, along with maintenance of orchards south of Fildyke Road.

In a wider context, the UK's 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs) set the scene for our local LNRS. The NCA is a "foundational spatial framework to divide a county or region into similar landscapes to help with consultation and planning." Our NCA (Area 88 - Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands) is characterised by "smaller towns, villages and linear settlements... giving a more rural feel." But it extends between Buckingham, Peterborough and Cambridge, at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge development arc. So we may be in the early days of a battle for the preservation of a *rural* Central Bedfordshire – with a significant risk that others wish to see urbanisation here. Read more at <https://bedslocalnaturerecoverystrategy.commonplace.is/>.

And did I mention Royal Mail? If we need proof of struggling infrastructure, it's on p10.

Letters

Dear Editor,

On the passing of Richard Ivory

Richard arrived in the village when he came to live in the "Police House," 50 Shefford Road. He came with his partner Mrs Janet Day, arriving during 2000.

Janet passed away in April 2011. I, Jean Holden, met Richard 18 months later having lost my husband at the same time as Jan had passed.

We became close friends and for the next 12 years we enjoyed our 'Classic Triumphs' together, going to car shows and picnics on Ickwell Green. I have lost a very dear friend and he is much missed.

Rest in peace Richard.

Jean, son Simon

and little dog - Lilibet

Dear Editor

Your readers may wish to know that, due to exceptionally heavy seas in the Bay of Biscay, one of the Meppershall mugs that made it to Norway and back, failed to make it to Spain in one piece.

Denis Neilson



Denis, this intrepid mug had certainly earned its stripes in the annals of village history. If only every mug was so brave in its representation of our great village. Thank you for the update. Maybe we can get you another one.

Dear Editor

Thank you to our friends and neighbours who knew our Labrador, Isla, and left cards and flowers and sent heart-felt messages.

Thelma +Stephen Doe

This Farewell picture was created by Mark and Zoe whom Isla loved unconditionally. A few dog biscuits sealed the bond!!

**Three Useful Addresses For Dog Owners**

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Thanks Thelma & Stephen for sharing these connections, made at different stages of Isla's wonderful journey. They will bring joy to many more.

Dear Editor

Shuttleworth Playground

Most Messenger readers will know of the children's playground at the Shuttleworth collection and gardens. Many will also know that it has been closed since November 2024, the reason given was that the RoSPA safety inspector had declared much of the equipment unsafe, and it was not economically feasible to repair or replace it.

As a volunteer I found this strange, as the equipment appeared perfectly usable and safe (I am a chartered mechanical engineer with a reputation in reliability and safety), and this view was widely shared by other volunteers. Hundreds of people wrote to the Shuttleworth homepage to complain, and the Biggleswade Chronicle covered the situation.

There are rumours that the Shuttleworth Trust has plans for development of the area occupied by the playground, but questions about this go unanswered. In any case any such development would take a considerable time to plan, so the playground could be used in the meantime.

I asked to see the RoSPA report, but this was refused. I offered to organise a team of volunteers to do what was necessary, including obtaining RoSPA approval. My volunteer membership was terminated as a result, for "bringing Shuttleworth into disrepute".

I sent a formal complaint to the Charity Commission, since the Shuttleworth actions were in breach of the CC's published rules for management of charities (refusal to divulge plans, refusal to show the RoSPA report, expulsion of a complainant). Charities are not (yet) legally bound by the Freedom of Information Act, but they are told that they should comply with the spirit of the Act.

The CC rejected my complaint, despite two appeals. I have taken the matter further, by submitting a case to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, through our MP Alistair Strathern, that the CC should have upheld my complaint. The Ombudsman will consider my submission, but they cannot do this before about three more months.

In the meantime, the perfectly safe playground remains barricaded, deterring family visits and reducing income to Shuttleworth. Families are not renewing their membership. For the good of Shuttleworth, and for all the families who love to visit, I will press on. Any support would be helpful.

Patrick O'Connor

Dear Editor,

I would just like to say how much I appreciated and agreed with, both your excellent editorial in the February edition of the Messenger, and also the letters from the Gregory Close Resident, and from Gary Dilley on pp 3-4 in the same edition. Gary Dilley's contribution was a particularly beautifully written article, reminding us of the heritage that is so important to so many Meppershall people, and of how much we lose by covering our historic and productive agricultural countryside with housing.

Yours, Meppershall Resident.

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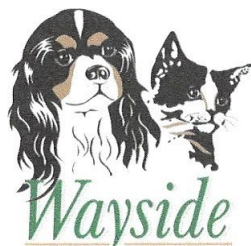
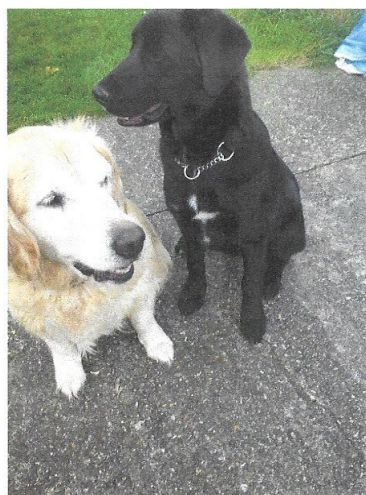
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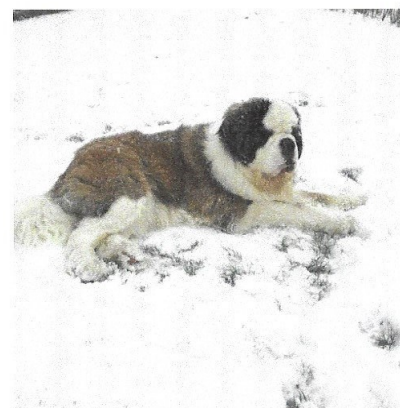


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Central Bedfordshire Council Change of Contact Information

CBC is making changes to the way we can all contact them, with the aim of making simple enquiries easier (and sometimes much quicker) to resolve. This also frees up specialists to focus on more complex enquiries and provides a clearer and more reliable experience for residents – so they say. In essence, it seems to be a withdrawal of email and phone contact in favour of online forms that channel enquiries into specific categories.

Everyone is now asked to use the CBC online form, with its range of options:

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/xfp/form/766>

Or to use the A-Z 'Contact Us' page here:

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/contact>

In emergencies, the CBC Highways Team can still be reached on 0300 300 8000.

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/> for contact info.

CBC says its popular services include:

- Waste & recycling (report a missed bin, fly-tipping, or abandoned vehicles, book a HWRC slot or permit, and manage garden waste subscriptions)
- Transport & Roads (report or track an issue, and view road closures)
- Council Tax (find your tax band, set up a direct debit, make a payment, apply for discounts, report address changes)
- Housing (apply for housing and housing benefits, report repairs, and pay rent)
- Planning applications (apply for or view planning permission)

Recycling – Getting Easier?

From 30th March 2026, people here in the Central Bedfordshire area can recycle glass bottles and jars in their dry recycling bins. CBC is also adding food waste collections for flats. These steps forward come from CBC's Waste Strategy, its environmental ambitions and the national Simpler Recycling reforms.

There will also be changes to some bin lorry routes to create more capacity for the new recycling services. Affected households will

receive a letter with plenty of notice. Updated collection dates will appear on the council's website. 58,000 households will see their usual collection days change.

More information at: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/recycling



The poster features a white background with an orange circular graphic on the right containing the text 'great services' and a small 'Central Bedfordshire' logo. The main headline reads 'Recycling is getting easier' in large, bold, black and orange text. Below this, it states 'From 30 March 2026, no trips to the tip for your glass, no extra hassle, just simpler recycling!' in black text. To the right of the text are images of a green glass bottle, a brown glass bottle, and a clear glass jar with a gold lid. At the bottom, a dark grey banner contains the text 'Learn about upcoming changes to your waste' and the URL 'www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/recycling' in white and green.

Community Update from Alistair Strathern MP

It's been a busy and productive start to the year, and I've been out across our villages and towns listening to residents, meeting local groups, and pushing for the changes you've told me matter most. From transport reliability to SEND support, men's health to leasehold reform, we're making real progress together.

One of the biggest breakthroughs has been on leasehold reform. Too many families locally have faced unfair contracts and spiralling ground rents—including one resident hit with a 9,000% increase. After sustained campaigning, the Government has now committed to capping ground rents at £250, ending unfair forfeiture powers, and enabling leaseholders to convert to Commonhold. These reforms will give homeowners far greater security and peace of mind.

Transport remains a major priority for residents across Meppershall and the surrounding area. After strong local pressure, the 08:50 Hitchin–King's Cross stopping service has been reinstated, and I'm continuing to push Govia Thameslink Railway on reliability, driver recruitment and signalling resilience. January's heavy congestion across Hitchin also highlighted the need for better planning of roadworks, and I've pressed Hertfordshire County Council and Cadent to reduce closures, improve communication and repair diversion routes.

Supporting families and young people is central to my work. Following powerful testimony from parents at recent SEND roundtables, I've taken your concerns directly to the Education Secretary. New funding for mainstream SEND training is welcome, but deeper reform is needed to ensure every child gets the support they deserve close to home.

I'm also working with the NHS to accelerate long-overdue plans for new clinical rooms at Shefford Health Centre, which would unlock thousands of extra GP appointments each year. And with the national rollout of Jess's Rule, patients with persistent symptoms should now receive faster, safer follow-up care.

Community wellbeing continues to be a big focus. I was proud to help launch the new Labour Group for Men & Boys, building on our local "Walk and Talk" events and the inspiring Flawed Hero Marathon, which is raising funds for Prostate Cancer UK and Garden House Hospice—services many families rely on.

Thank you to everyone in Meppershall who continues to share your experiences and ideas. Your voices shape the work I do every day, and together we're delivering meaningful progress for our community.

Alistair

Did you know... Alistair publishes a newsletter and you can sign up at <https://www.alistairstrathern.com/newsletter>

His contact info is included in the Useful Contact Details section of this issue of The Meppershall Messenger.

Meppershall Social Club

Hello from MSC!

Membership fees are due again. There is no cost, membership just gives you a say in how everything is being run, at the AGM.



On **Saturday 28th March**, chase the winter blues away at our **80s Night** with Markus in the bar area. Fancy dress optional, prize for the best dressed. We will have some 80s classic drinks available from the bar and classic 80s nibbles on the tables!

Plus remember our weekly **Friday Bingo** - doors open at 6:30pm, eyes down at 7.00pm, all welcome.

Our **second Sunday of the month Quiz** starts at 7:30pm - £1 per person, teams with a maximum of 6 people. Cash raised goes (50%) to the prize for the winner and 50% to this year's charities which are Great Ormond Street and Meppershall GNOMES.

Meppershall Munchkins

We're looking forward to a lovely month ahead and all the fun that March brings. Thanks as always for your support — it means so much to our little community.

Mother's Day Crafts

In early March, the children will be getting creative with some very special Mother's Day crafts - making something thoughtful and meaningful for their loved ones.

Children's Centre Visit – Friday 13th March

We'll welcome Shefford and Stotfold Children's Centre team on Friday 13th March. They will be bringing lots of helpful information and support for families, and there will also be a self-weighing station available during the session. It's a great opportunity to access advice and local services in a relaxed setting.

Good Friday Closure

Please note that Meppershall Munchkins will be closed on Good Friday.

Volunteers Needed

Our group relies entirely on volunteers' kindness and energy. We are always in need of more help. If you can spare any time to help set up, tidy away, support sessions, please do come and say hello. Volunteering is the only way to keep this wonderful group running. Every bit of help makes a huge difference to our community.

Regular Sessions

Tuesdays and Fridays, 9:30–11:30am, at Meppershall Village Hall.

£3.50 for the first child; £1 for each additional child — Snack and squash included for the children — Walk-ins welcome — Payment via cash or bank transfer.

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

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



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Royal Mail Missing Meppershall?

In a digital age, there are still many critical documents and notifications that arrive on paper in the mail. Often these mail items are not things we have chosen to have on paper, they are things that are only available that way, and we rely on the postal service to get them to us in good time for the most important reasons. We love our local post men and women for the service they have always provided.

But on December 22nd 2025, a Meppershall resident reached out on the village Facebook noticeboard to see what kind of postal deliveries other people in the village were experiencing. They were shocked that a crucial letter sent to them by the NHS to attend an appointment had arrived days after the date of the appointment. They had just received a bundle of letters, some postmarked as long ago as 11th and 12th December. The post service told them they were having to prioritise parcels and deliver letters and cards less frequently.

Talk of parcels and cards all felt very Christmassy; very seasonal; a temporary issue.

However, recently after a bereavement, another village resident had reason to carefully watch out for crucial items of mail arriving in relation to the death of their loved one. The same mail delays still seemed to be occurring, and this led us to check with the wider community on the Meppershall Village Noticeboard on Facebook. We were astonished to discover a large number of stories such as:

- Bundles of letters appearing in occasional deliveries, rather than a routine, regular daily delivery
- Hospital letters appearing after the appointments or deadlines that they contained
- Time-sensitive financial documents failing to arrive in time
- Up to 15 mail items appearing in a bundle on a single day
- No public access to the site in Shefford where the letters apparently sit for weeks

Faced with these astonishing deficits in an essential service, we investigated further and obtained the following information from a reliable source:

- There is a ban on overtime for postal workers which is likely affecting the resilience and reliability of letter deliveries
- Local postal service management have actively instructed postal workers not to routinely deliver to Meppershall
- Mail is routinely held at a delivery office in Shefford for periodic (not daily) delivery – but that office is not accessible to members of the public wishing to retrieve important mail themselves

The Meppershall Messenger made enquiries with these facts to the Royal Mail corporate team (press office) who promised to reply with their comment, but it was not forthcoming. The village deserves an answer to the question, when and how does this end - when will normal service be resumed?

So, what can we do? Delivery of letters by Royal Mail is a regulated service. It operates under the Universal Service Obligation (USO) which requires it to deliver letters to every address in the UK, six days a week (Monday-Saturday), at a uniform, affordable price. The information we have uncovered indicates that this USO is being systematically and deliberately ignored by Royal Mail in our area.

There could be understandable reasons for temporarily varying service levels in a certain place, but we are not aware of any public information about that. Such information is important, because without it, people cannot take steps to keep themselves safe, considering the full facts (for instance by ensuring they obtain NHS information another way). Royal Mail’s lack of self-accountability is causing harm.

It is important that everyone who feels they are affected by these issues makes a formal complaint by calling Royal Mail on 0300 123 3333 or 03457 740 740. You can also write them a letter and put it in the *post* (please don’t laugh). We are just getting started on this – more to follow. And please share your mail fail stories with us.



The Players @ STMA
March 2026



We are very busy rehearsing dances, sketches and songs for our next production, “The Big Quiz & Cabaret Evening. We start the evening promptly at 7.30pm with a fun quiz for people of all ages; compete in teams of up to six people, £2 per person entry fee, with a cash prize for the winning team. This is followed immediately by an explosion of entertainment to get you toe-tapping and clapping with your chuckle muscles working to full effect. Yes a fun-filled evening with family and friends for just £2 at the STMA (main hall) 10, Hitchin Road, Shefford SG17 5JA. If you want to reserve a table for the evening contact 01462 816336 after 6pm (answer phone available before 6pm). Dates for your 2026 diary:

- Saturday 25th April 2026 - The Big Quiz & Cabaret evening (quiz starts at 7.30pm)
- Saturday 5th December 2026 - Pantomime performances at 3pm & 7.30pm
- Saturday 12th December 2026 - Pantomime performances at 3pm & 7.30pm

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

The Players meet every Monday evening at 7.30pm at the STMA, 10, Hitchin Road, Shefford SG17 5JA. Membership is free and we welcome people 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.

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Karen Mitchell (Players’ Secretary) 01462 816336

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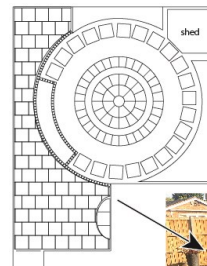
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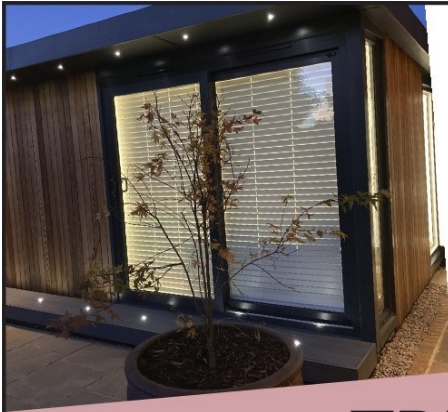
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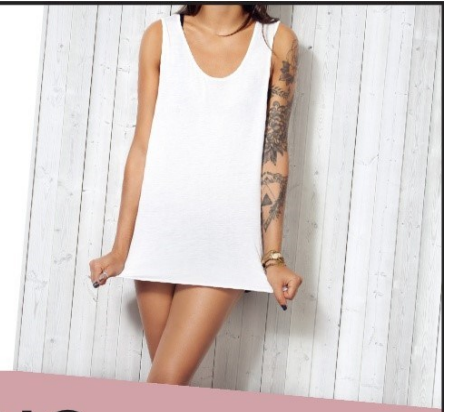
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Church Road, off Campton Road, Meppershall

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



Rector: The Reverend Veronica Goodman

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

Churchwardens:

Chris Valentine 01462 815971 John Archer

PCC Secretary:

Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

A Message From St Mary's...

March is here - aconites, snowdrops, daffodils, crocuses and primroses are here... and Easter is on the way!

I'd like to begin this month by asking for your help to prepare our Churchyard for Easter.

We will be having a churchyard clear up day on the 21st March, 9am - 2pm. Please do come and lend a hand for some or all of the time (please do wear suitable clothing and bring rakes, brooms etc if possible!)

It is time now for everyone to remove Christmas wreaths from their loved ones' graves. It is also a good time to check the safety of your family memorials and if you have had a permanent memorial installed in the Churchyard please do remove the temporary marker now. Our aim is 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. "The Diocese of St Albans, The Churchyard Regulations 2020 updated July 2023" advise on current good practice. If in doubt please do talk to me, Revd Roni.

As we arrive in March - this year we are part-way through Lent, which is traditionally rather a solemn time, preparing to recall Jesus' last days, his passion and death.

There is still time - if you would like to - to download the free Everyday Faith App and to join in Draw Near - Life Giving Habits for Lent. This year's resources have the theme of a 'rhythm of life' – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day. Each week a different contributor explores a different aspect of Christian discipleship – worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others.

Friday March 6th is the World Day of Prayer - and there will be a service followed by refreshments for all in this area at St Michael's in Shefford at 2pm. This year, prayers have been prepared by women of Nigeria with the theme, "I will give you rest, come...." and in these troubled times offer us space to find rest in God.

Mothering Sunday falls on the 15th March this year with Mother's Day crafts at St Mary's from 10.30. Look out for the Egg Hunt and Egg Rolling, Easter Sunday, 10am.

And there is one further Lent Lunch in aid of Christian Aid in Shefford Community Hall at 12.00 on 28th March. Lent is traditionally a time to share with those in need - so do join Churches Together in Shefford for a soup lunch to support Christian Aid as they work with partners around the world, serving the world's most vulnerable people, regardless of their faith, and seeking to eradicate poverty worldwide.

The 20th March is 'officially' the first day of Spring. The start of this year has been unusually grey and cold and wet so far - with many of us looking forward to warmer days and sunshine. Although Lent is undoubtedly linked to penance and sackcloth and ashes - it does not have to be a long, grey, dreary time of doing without the little things that cheer us... like chocolate, and cake! I think that even as Spring comes to bring new life and new colour to our winter weary countryside, so Lent is meant to be a journey into our own new Spring time - to Easter and to the colour and the fullness of life Jesus came to bring us.

With love, Rector Roni

Church Events In March

Usual Pattern of Services

Sundays	11.00am	Morning Worship every Sunday Holy Communion: 2 nd and 4 th Sundays
Every Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion in the Rectory
Church open to visit	10.00-4.00	Private prayer, quiet time – the church is open.
Online services:	9.00am	Morning Prayer using 24-7's Lectio 365 App 7-days-a-week
	9.00pm	Night Prayer/Compline from the C. of E. Daily Prayer App, 7-days-a-week

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Find us on our website: <https://www.stmarysmeppershall.org.uk/>

Find us on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRjDLGAY8GI6afkO8iALYOA>

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

Forthcoming Services and Events

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

Sunday March 1 st	11am. Morning Worship
Wednesday March 4 th	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday March 8 th	11am. Holy Communion
Weds March 11 th	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory
Sunday March 15 th	11am. Morning Worship. Mothering Sunday 10.30am. Children's crafts
Weds March 18 th	9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory

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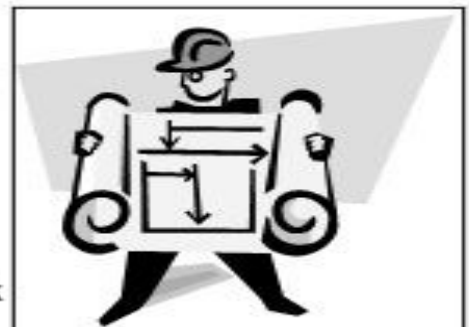
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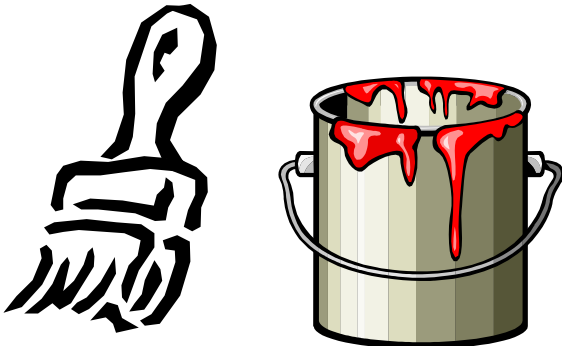
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Sunday March 22nd

11am. Holy Communion

Weds March 25th

9.45am. Holy Communion in the Rectory

Sunday March 29th

10.30am. PALM SUNDAY Benefice Communion at
St Michael's Shefford

Junior Church - on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month during the service.
Look out for the Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday!



St Mary's Church, Meppershall
Junior Church

Mother's Day Crafts

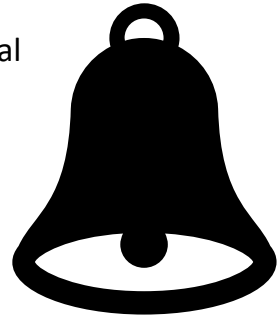
Join us for fun Mother's Day crafts
on
Sunday 15 March
10.30am to 11am

All welcome to the Service at 11am

For more info contact: Gillian on 07778 449051

News From The Tower

After our tower inspection last August, the report highlighted several essential maintenance tasks. Thanks to the routine care the tower has received over the years, the bells remain in good working order despite the repairs that are needed. We don't yet have a confirmed start date for the work, but I'll keep you updated as soon as we know more. In the meantime, we'll be focusing on securing the necessary funds for the project.

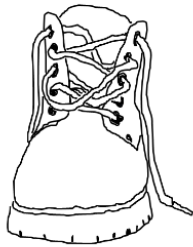


Thursdays at 7.30pm is practice night.

If you are interested and would like to learn how to ring, please do come along. Give me a call to let me know you are coming on 07778 449051.

Gill Marshall-Davies, Tower Captain

Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers



On Sunday 8th March we will do a hike of 5.5 miles to Haynes – ending at The Greyhound. Leaving the church gate at 2.00PM (with the option to join at the village hall at 2.10PM) – our route takes us out down Crackle Hill, through Campton (passing All Saints church at around 2.30PM), to the Campton Plantation woodland, where we join paths west of Rowney Warren (partly on the perimeter of the base) to Appley Corner. Then we rise up through ancient wild meadows to Northwood End Road to finish at The Greyhound by around 4.15PM. It is a lovely route with good paths for most of the way – familiar to many of you by now!

Lifts will be needed back from The Greyhound, but we believe the Wanderbus will be available (call for more info). There is also plenty of on-road parking in Haynes on Northwood End Road near the pub. We would love to see you, for some (mostly) mud-free meanderings in Mid Beds. Call 857836 for more info (James and Miriam).



The Greensand Ridge at Haynes, viewed from Chicksands Wood

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Saturday 21st March

9.00am to 12pm

Meppershall Village Hall

Homemade cake donations needed to support the cake café

If you would like to donate a homemade cake, please bring your cakes to the Village Hall on Friday 20th March between 5:15pm and 6pm - or on Saturday.

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

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

Any questions email - events@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk

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Springtime Gardens by Donna Cameron

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At last Spring has sprung after a long winter. We can now look forward to longer, warmer days. With this brings an array of gorgeous spring flowers filling our gardens. How uplifting they are, as they herald-in the beginning of the gardening year.

Synonymous with Spring is of course the Daffodil. I love watching these line the roadsides with their pops of sunshine yellow.



Another Spring flower - less showy but just as stunning - is the humble Primrose. With its lemon yellow flowers, they can be found in woodlands and hedgerows, as well as Crocus and Hyacinth all spreading joy scent and colour after what seems a long dreary winter.

Now you can really begin to get out in the garden with a view to planning for the year ahead. Feeling the spring sunshine really is a tonic. Be it a bit of weeding or planting some seeds in the Greenhouse, all is working towards the anticipation of summer and enjoying time in our gardens.

It's a great time to think about any plans you want to put in place to

enjoy your space to its maximum – maybe with a new seating area to dine outdoors, or perhaps a raised bed to grow some veg, or a cutting patch for cut flowers. Gardens are ever-evolving and we can adapt them to our changing needs.

So don't feel you have to be stuck with a layout you don't like or fancy a change. Make the most of your space. Enjoy the spring sunshine!

Donna x

Jobs In the Garden For March	
Hoe and mulch weeds	Top dress containers
Protect slugs from new shoots	Mow lawn
Plant shallots, onions and early potatoes	Cut back Dogwoods
Plant summer flowering bulbs	Prune Roses
Lift and divide perennials	Plant hardy annuals where they are to flower

Trugs And Trowels (Campton Gardening Club) – March

March and its magic - even if the weather is freezing, there is optimism in the air. The sap is flowing, shoots are showing promise and things are happening in the garden.

Daffodils are undoubtedly the flower of the month which radiate joy; but can you just plant them and let them look after themselves? After all, clumps of daffs often spread and get better each coming year. In most cases the answer is yes: just snip off the faded flower and leave the foliage to die down naturally for at least six weeks allowing the greenery to photosynthesise. Daffodils can come up blind (without a flower) - this can be due to a lack of energy in the bulb or a lack of sunlight. So, pop them in a sunny position. One of the earliest to flower is Narcissus Rijnveld's early sensation, often blooming in early winter followed by the aptly named February Gold along with Early Bride and Tete-a-tete.

There are hundreds of varieties nodding colour right through to varieties flowering in late April such as Narcissus Jonquilla, Poeticus, Thalia and Bridal Crown.

Many other Spring flowers are also coming up, like Bergenia (Elephant ears) - ground cover with floral spikes of pink, red, purple and white. Hellebores love this time of year, happy in shady spots but disliking extremes such as very dry or very wet soil. Rhododendrons are about to burst out with blousy blooms. They like ericaceous or acidic soil, as do Camellias, Heathers, Blueberries and some Hydrangeas. The simplest way to assess your soil type, other than soil tests, is to look around your neighbourhood to see what is performing well. In late March we will be enjoying Forsythias with their astonishing yellow splash.

If planting, consider flower farm collections: Zinnia, Feverfew, Yarrow, Delphinium, Snapdragon, Scabiosa, Statice, Strawflower, Cosmos and not forgetting Foxglove, a super colour template to suit all tastes.

Later on in 2026 we are invited to visit Hill Top Commercial Growers in Gravenhurst where I am sure a lot of these varieties will be on show. If they can do it I truly believe you can do it. Please join us on the first Monday of every month at Campton Village Hall at 19:30, except April and May which are Bank holidays. This month's gardening club meeting will be on Tuesday 7th April and Tuesday 5th May. Everyone welcome.

Maryika Wilding 01462 851729

Personal Finance by Paul Savuto

Future ready: Tune into Budget changes now

Now the dust has settled on the Budget, and everyone has had a chance to process the key announcements, you can step back and think about what it all means for you and your finances. A series of tax and spending measures were unveiled, estimated to raise an extra £26bn a year in taxes by 2029/30. While immediate changes were limited, as Helen Miller, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said, "The Chancellor is relying heavily on tax rises towards the back end of the parliament. More borrowing for the next few years, then a sharp adjustment."

Significant changes

Some of the changes on the horizon, worth tuning into now, include:

- Income Tax thresholds will remain unchanged until at least 2031, meaning more earners will be in higher tax bands, and National Insurance contributions (secondary threshold) are also frozen to 2031
- Properties in England valued at £2m or more in 2026 will face a new High Value Council Tax Surcharge (HVCTS) of £2,500, with an annual levy of £7,500 owed for homes worth £5m plus, from April 2028
- From April 2029, only the first £2,000 of pension salary sacrifice will be exempt from National Insurance, affecting the tax efficiency of many salary sacrifice arrangements
- A new mileage-based road tax for electric (3p per mile) and plug-in hybrid (1.5p per mile) vehicles will be introduced from 2028
- The annual Cash ISA allowance will be cut to £12,000 for those under 65 from April 2027, with the remaining £8,000 only permitted to be invested in Stocks and Shares ISAs
- Tax on savings and property income will rise by 2 percentage points from April 2027
- Extended the freeze on Inheritance Tax (IHT) thresholds from 2030 to April 2031.

More imminent

From April 2026, the Dividend Tax rate will increase by 2 percentage points. The basic Dividend Tax rate will rise from 8.75% to 10.75%, while the higher rate will increase from 33.75% to 35.75%. Following repeated cuts to the tax-free annual Dividend Allowance, which now stands at just £500, people who hold investments outside of a Stocks and Shares ISA or SIPP, or who own their own business and pay themselves in dividends, are expected to pay more tax. With the government pressing ahead with changes to the Inheritance Tax rules regarding unused pensions, which take effect from April 2027, there's plenty to think about. We're here to help you navigate the changes.

On top of your tax numbers

As the end of the 2025/26 tax year approaches, it's the ideal time to ensure you're making the most of tax-efficient opportunities before the new financial year begins on 6 April 2026. Here's a reminder of three of the main tax planning opportunities:

Your Individual Savings Account (ISA)

The ISA allowance is £20,000 for the 2025/26 tax year. You can put all the £20,000 into a Cash ISA (until the allowance is cut in 2027), or invest the whole amount into a Stocks and Shares ISA. You can also mix and match as long as the combined amount doesn't exceed your annual ISA allowance. Junior ISAs work in the same way but the maximum annual investment is £9,000 per child.

Your pension

You can contribute as much as you like into your pension, but there is a limit on the amount of tax relief you will receive each year. The Annual Allowance is currently £60,000. An individual can't use the full £60,000 Annual Allowance where 'relevant UK

earnings' are less than £60,000, although your employer still could. You may be able to carry forward unused allowances from the past three years, provided you were a pension scheme member during those years. For every £2 of adjusted income (total taxable income including all pension contributions) over £260,000, an individual's Annual Allowance is reduced by £1 until the minimum Annual Allowance of £10,000 is reached.

Gifting for IHT purposes

You can make gifts worth up to £3,000 in each tax year. These gifts will be exempt from IHT on your death, even if you die within seven years. You can carry forward any unused part of the £3,000 exemption to the following year but if you don't use it in that year, the exemption will expire. Certain gifts don't use up this annual exemption, however, there is still no IHT due on them e.g. wedding gifts of up to £5,000 for a child, £2,500 for a grandchild (or great grandchild) and £1,000 to anyone else. Individual gifts worth up to £250 per recipient per tax year are also IHT free. Under current HMRC rules, gifts outside the above categories normally cease to count for IHT purposes upon the donor's survival for seven years, with reductions in the event of death after at least three years.

And don't forget about Capital Gains Tax (CGT) and your Divided Allowance! Time for an end of tax year review?

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.

Meppershall Golf Society

Welcome, from the Meppershall Golf Society. Spring-time is in the air and daylight hours are getting longer. Hooray!

Following MGS AGM held on 9th January, we have commenced membership renewals for 2026.



We have 40+members so far, with communications managed through our WhatsApp Group.

The membership fee for this year is £25. Fees will be used for prizes and future event deposits.



2026 Events already scheduled include:

- ❖ Mill Green Sat 7th March Aldwickbury Fri 10th April,
- ❖ Stevenage Sat 25th April Pavenham Sat 9th May
- ❖ Wellingborough Fri 12th June The Three Locks Sat 4th July
- ❖ Whipsnade Sat 8th August Redbourn Sat 5th September
- ❖ Colmworth, Chesfield Downs, South Beds (to be confirmed)

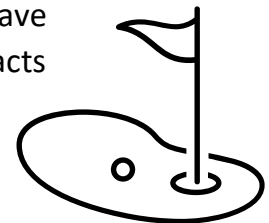
MGS trips outside the above events include:

- ❖ Mijas, Spain (4 nights) end April - fully Booked
- ❖ Cotswolds (1 night) end August - limited space at time of printing.

Please get in touch if you would like to take part in our society; there is still room for more bandits..... I mean 'new' members.

Ticket sales for our first Benefit Night in support of the British Heart Foundation on Sat April 25th in the Village Hall are selling well. We have a terrific live band – The Long Riders will be headlining with support acts Rose and Adam, from 7pm. Tickets are on sale now at £12.50pp.

www.ticketsource.co.uk/meppershall-golf-society



Remember your dancing shoes!

For more info regarding the MGS and our events, please feel free to contact:

gordon.cordes67@gmail.com – 07807 674 609

Carolyn's Celebrations And Memorials Of Life And Love

 *Tips from Your Local Celebrant*

Ten Beautiful Non-Religious Readings for Naming Ceremonies

Choosing a reading for a naming ceremony can be one of the loveliest parts of planning the day. A well-chosen poem creates a gentle pause in the celebration — a moment where everyone can breathe, smile, and take in the love and intention surrounding your little one. For families who prefer a non-religious ceremony, there are so many meaningful, modern and heartfelt readings to choose from.

One much-loved favourite is *On Children* by Kahlil Gibran. It's spiritual without being religious, speaks beautifully about individuality and the idea that children come through us, not from us. Many guests recognise it instantly, which brings a lovely sense of warmth.

For something lighter, A.A. Milne's *The Christening* is short, funny and full of charm. Written in 1924, it still feels wonderfully fresh — especially for families who grew up with Winnie-the-Pooh.

Philip Larkin's *Born Yesterday* offers a refreshing honesty. Instead of wishing a child dazzling perfection, he hopes they'll experience happiness in its purest form. It's a grounded, tender choice for parents who appreciate truth and simplicity.

If you love nature imagery, *On the Seashore* by Rabindranath Tagore is a gentle, poetic reflection on childhood. His picture of children building boats and houses from sand and shells becomes a lovely metaphor for the endless possibilities ahead.

For guideparents or grandparents, W.B. Yeats' *Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven* is full of blessing and vulnerability. The idea of laying dreams at a child's feet is deeply moving and always well-received.

Many families also choose an excerpt from *The Velveteen Rabbit*, a classic story about how love makes us "real." It brings a soft, nostalgic glow to any ceremony.

Dorothy Law Nolte's *Children Learn What They Live* is a thoughtful reminder of how our behaviour shapes the next generation. It's ideal for families who want something wise and grounded.

Two beautiful traditional readings also work wonderfully in non-religious ceremonies. *I Have Seen* (Anonymous) captures the quiet wonder of watching a child grow, while *Now This Is the Day from the Zuni people* honours the shared responsibility of guiding a child through life. *The Omaha Native American Blessing* calls on the elements, the winds and the natural world to welcome a new life — a powerful, poetic choice.

A naming ceremony is a celebration of love, belonging and possibility. The right reading doesn't just fill a moment — it deepens it. **Read the full blog here: <https://www.ritesofway.com/modern-ceremony-planning-tips>**

If you'd like help choosing readings or shaping a ceremony that feels personal and heartfelt, I'd be honoured to support you. You're always welcome to get in touch with me Carolyn at ritesofw@gmail.com or **07305 002858**, or via the contact form on my website: <https://www.ritesofway.com/contact> . **Why not ask for a free ceremony audit** — an opportunity to share your ideas and explore how your celebration can truly reflect you. I'm live in the village so happy to meet up.

Birthdays

Best wishes for a wonderful birthday to...

Barbara, Peter, Elsie and Tony.

Have a wonderful day and an inspiring, healthy and peaceful year ahead! From the whole of the Meppershall Messenger team.





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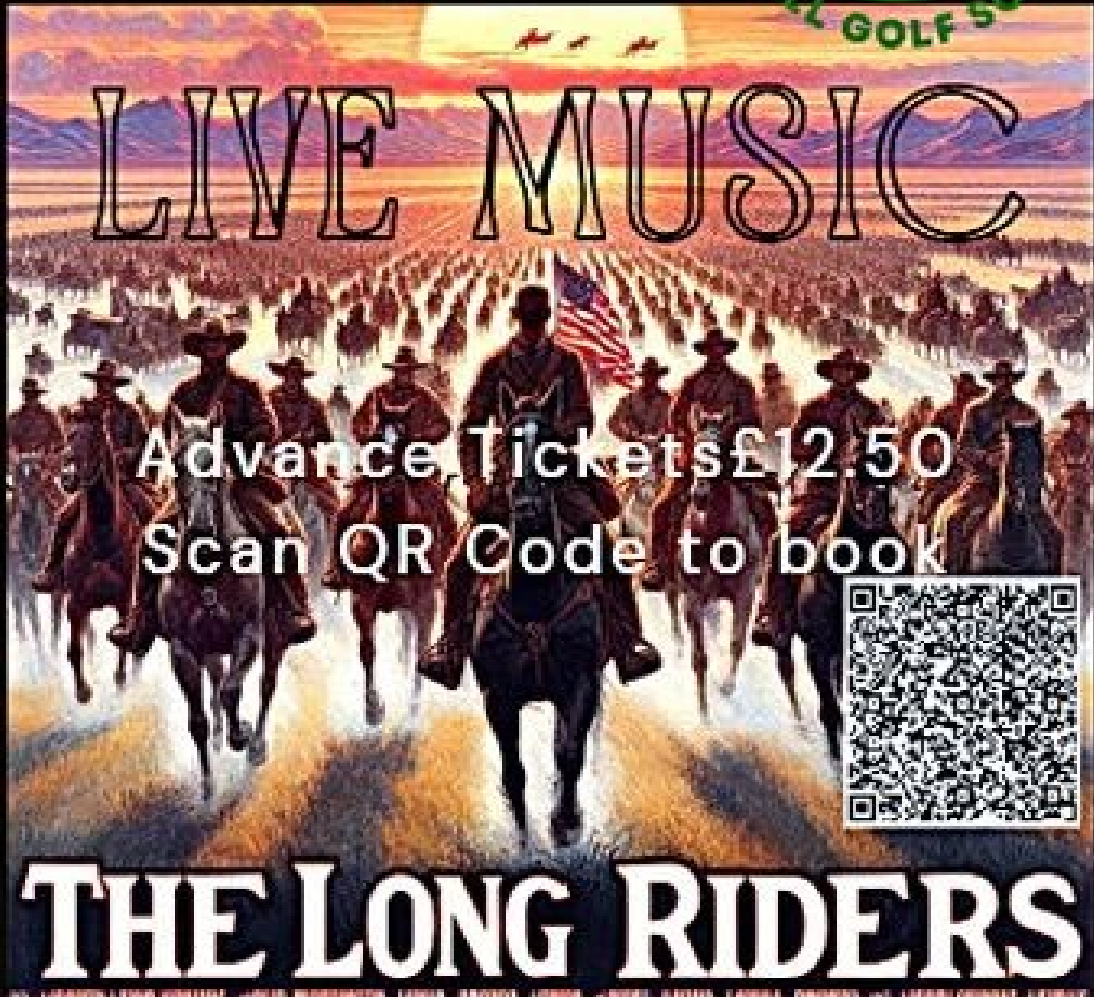
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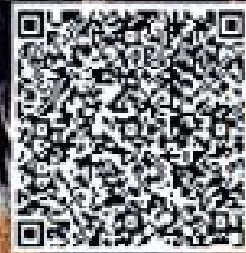
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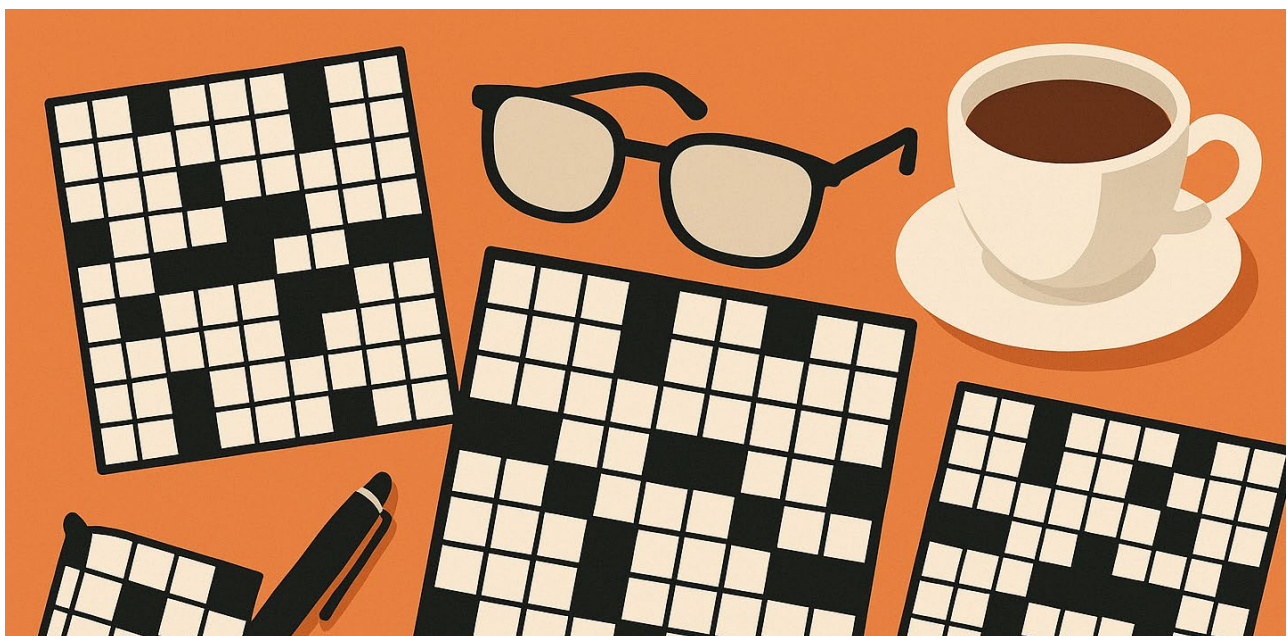


25 Apr 7 PM - Late

Meppershall Golf Society. Tickets from
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Crossword Solution For February



Patagonia: Digby Brand By Patrick O'Connor

A tale of Patrick's maternal grandfather, Digby Brand. Also, Patrick's father, a geologist with Shell, met Patrick's mother while working in Argentina.

Digby Brand was the son of an English vicar. He travelled to Patagonia as a young man in about 1895 to find work on sheep ranches (*estancias*). He progressed to become manager of an estancia near Puerto Madryn, where he met the Lloyd-Jones family.

The Reverend David Lloyd-Jones was an important and influential pastor to the Welsh community. He had arrived in Patagonia in 1872 with his wife and young family. His daughter introduced Digby to her niece, Charlotte ("Lottie") Tyndale, the daughter of William and Lily Tyndale. Lily was another of David's daughters.



William Tyndale had travelled to Argentina from England. He was a descendant of the William Tyndale who had translated the Bible and had been burned at the stake for this. With others, he had chartered the ship Union, which he used to transport freight and passengers between the Welsh colony and Buenos Aires. It was wrecked in a storm in 1880, giving the name Playa Union to the beach where it ran aground.

Digby fell in love with Lottie. In August 1905 he wrote to "Dear Miss Tyndale". In September he had proposed, and wrote to "My darling Lottie".

Digby had just secured a new job, to establish a new estancia on the land surrounding the Rio Cisnes, high in the Chilean Andes, stretching from the border to the Pacific. He wrote to Lottie to explain this, with hopes for their future happiness together.

Digby rode across the pampas, following the "*tropa*" carrying all the equipment, and arrived in December. From Rio Cisnes he wrote a long series of letters to Lottie, describing the life, the country and the people. At last, in October 1907, he was able to return, and he and Lottie were married in Trelew. They travelled together back to Rio Cisnes in a trap. They lived there for seventeen years, returning to Trelew occasionally when Lottie gave birth, and they raised their large family at the estancia. Lago Carlotta and the national park are named after Lottie.

In 1924 Digby lost his job at Rio Cisnes. The family travelled back to Trelew, where they lived supported by relatives. These were hard times for the family. Digby resented

living off charity and being “fenced in”. Lottie bravely supported him and they cared for the large family. Digby eventually got another estancia manager job, and they lived



there until he retired in 1954. Lottie died in 1956 , and Digby in 1961.

Many years later the letters Digby wrote to Lottie came into my possession. I found them to be such a compelling story of adventure and romance that I used them as the foundation for a biography, (*“Digby Brand, Patagonian Pioneer”*) combined with the story of the Welsh in Patagonia and the development of the country. My cousin Diego Brand in Patagonia organised publication of a Spanish edition, which is now available.

I flew to Argentina for the launch. For all of January we travelled great distances in wild and beautiful Patagonia to showcase the book, including giving presentations at the Welsh Cultural Society on both sides of the country.

If any Messenger readers have connections to Patagonia I would be happy to discuss.







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Shefford Health Centre Rapid Health Triage System



The Shefford Health Centre team have taken steps to respond to community feedback to improve the appointment booking system at the surgery. Like many GP practices, they face increasing demand on their time and resources with limited capacity. The new system, called “Rapid Health” aims to ensure fairer access for all patients, matching patients with the most appropriate clinician, reducing pressure on phone lines and providing quicker, more accurate care.

This new NHS-approved online triage tool is a new, direct way to:

- Submit a medical request
- Make an admin request
- Access self-help advice from trusted NHS source

Find out more about the new system, online from 16th February, at:

<https://www.sheffordhealthcentre.nhs.uk/rapid-health-triage/>

NHS: Be Breast Aware

The mobile breast screening unit is coming to Shefford in Spring through to Summer 2026 – we urge all eligible ladies who are registered at Shefford, Stondon, and Larkfield Surgeries to please look out for your screening appointment which will come to you by post.

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in the UK, mostly affecting women over the age of 50, but younger women, and men can also get breast cancer. About 1 in 7 women are diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime. Remember, when breast cancer is spotted early, treatment is more likely to be successful. Thanks to research, treatments are kinder and more effective than ever.

You will automatically get your first invitation for breast screening between the ages of 50 and 53, and then you'll be invited every 3 years until you turn 71. After the age of 71 you will not automatically be invited, but you may continue by self-referring to the breast screening service.

To find out more about:

- How do I decide if I want to have breast screening?
- Am I eligible and when will I be invited?
- What are the benefits and what are the risks?

...Go to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-screening-mammogram/how-to-decide-if-you-want-breast-screening/>

Your Ivel Valley South PCN Care Coordinators are here to help you with any related queries, simply contact us on blmkicb.carecoordinator.ivs@nhs.net

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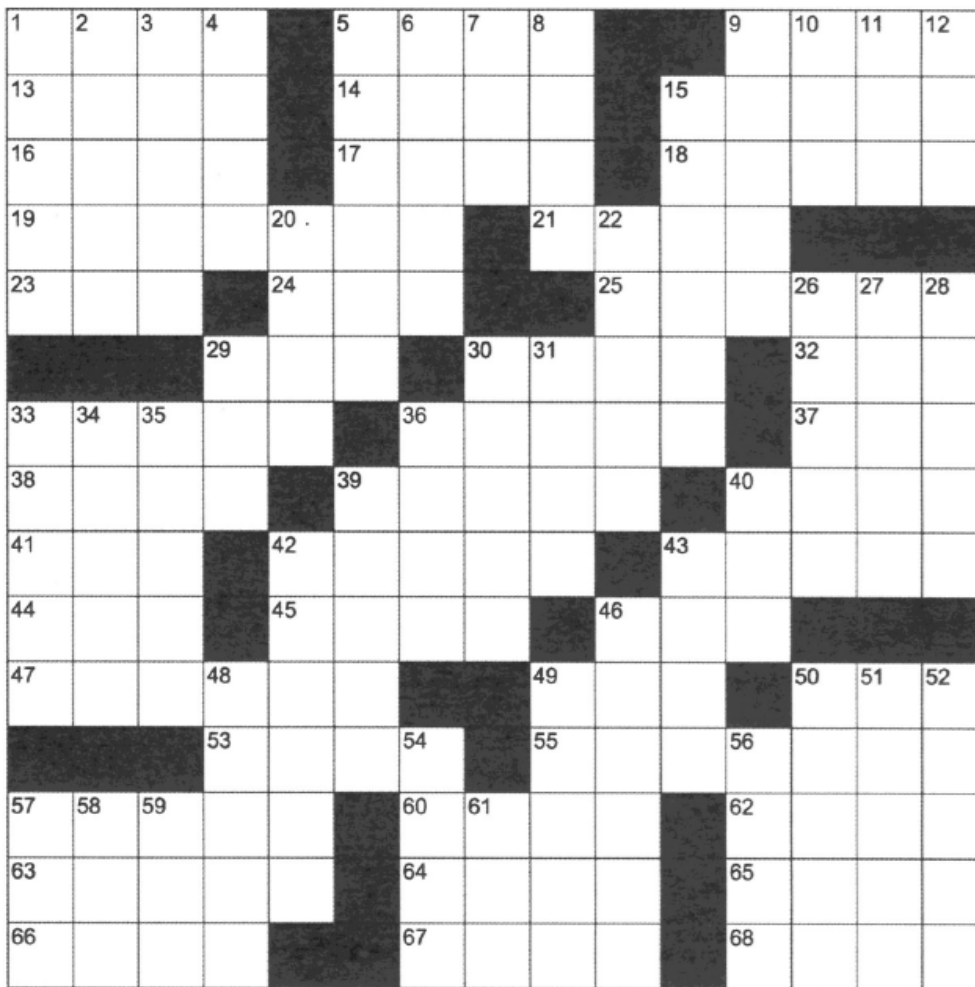
Time/Days have changed – please check & new W16 Stevenage

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

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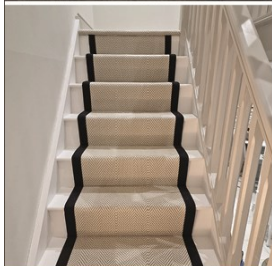
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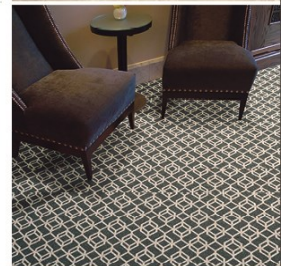
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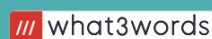
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Rev. Veronica Goodman, The Rectory, Church Road 01462 339962

See full details in the church pages of The Meppershall Messenger

Library: High St Shefford

0300 300 8067

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

Whitbread Wanderbus service

Stephanie Kirby

thewanderbus@gmail.com**Food and Supplies**

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Rogers Bakery, High Street

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The Sugar Loaf, 25 High St

01462 239231

Schools

Samuel Whitbread Academy, Clifton

01462 629900

Redborne Upper School, Ampthill

01525 404462

Henlow Academy

01462 813733

Robert Bloomfield, Shefford

01462 628800

Meppershall Academy, High Street

01462 813293

Meppershall Pre-School Village Hall, Ella Carey-Butler

07816 357159

meppershallps@gmail.com

Meppershall Munchkins, Melanie Choonos

meppershallmunchkins@gmail.com**Organisations**

The Players @ STMA, Karen Mitchell

01462 816336

Meppershall Good Neighbours (GNOMES)

07760 793921

Meppershall Brownies, Suzanne Brightwell

07817 392325

Shefford Guides, Angie Griffiths

07957 462519

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

Kathy Georgiou

01462 629313

HATS Drama Group, Linda Winfield

lin.winfield5@gmail.com

Meppershall Village Hall Trustees

trustees@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk

Meppershall Village Hall Bookings

bookings@meppershallvillagehall.co.uk

Bookings Tel.

07485 102727

The Team And Collation Dates

CONTRIBUTIONS

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

DISCLAIMER

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

THE TEAM

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PRODUCTION DATES AND DEADLINES

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

Issue date	Collation date	Issue date	Collation date
April 2026	Tues 31 st March	November 2026	Tues 27 th October
May 2026	Tues 28 th April	Dec-Jan 2026-7	Tues 1 st December
June 2026	Tues 26 th May	February 2027	TBC
July 2026	Tues 30 th June	March 2027	TBC
Aug-Sept 2026	Tues 28 th July	April 2027	TBC
October 2026	Tues 29 th September	May 2027	TBC

Contact John Thompson to confirm arrangements (contact information above).