



Christine Foster
1953 - 2023

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Editorial by James Read

Last month we went to great lengths to publicise the Annual General Meetings of two important village institutions – Meppershall Village Hall, and this very publication! Only through strong community participation can these and many other things be guided and shaped by what people in the village want. At the time of writing, the Messenger AGM hasn't happened... but we can tell you much more about the Meppershall Village Hall AGM...



There was a strong turnout on 13th June with some 50 people (estimated) coming to the village hall AGM to represent views from across the village. Feelings were running high. It is a credit to the Trustees that they engaged in a challenging discussion with many passionate views and comments from members of the community. All those who attended (Trustees and public) ensured that a robust and frank discussion took place. There was even a new volunteer offering to become an additional Trustee. Formal minutes will follow, here are my personal impressions.

At the heart of the challenges facing the village hall is its success in becoming self-sufficient since the new hall opened in 2018. The principle of self-sufficiency, the Trustees explained, had underpinned its finances right from the outset more than 10 years ago when plans to create the new building and facilities first began. Many voices down the years warned that a new hall with bigger bills to pay could become a burden. Those voices should now be well pleased with the way the Trustees have balanced the books; it is certainly an achievement. But self-sufficiency comes at a price.

The commercial hiring rates required to use the hall, and the number of bookings made by individual organisations, drive everything. Unfortunately this has led to inevitable trade-offs between different organisations seeking to hire the facilities. Local clubs and activities with low income and making less frequent bookings, have found themselves competing with higher incoming organisations seeking to book the hall for more extensive periods and/or at greater frequency. Some local organisations have lost out. In this issue, The Meppershall Players announce their new name to reflect their new venue – they were an early casualty. Other groups, more recently affected, were some of the loudest and most upset voices at the village hall AGM.

What can be done? Comments at the AGM showed significant public interest in some community funding for the hall, maybe via the Parish Council precept in our council tax. Maybe more fundraising is needed - charitable income to meet some of the costs. Of course private bookings at commercial rates must continue for a significant portion of the hall's timetable. But with a more diverse base of income, the village hall Trustees could adopt a policy of strong prioritisation of local organisations at certain times, with more discretion over the level of income achieved from such organisations (those who can reasonably demonstrate that they are based in, or formed from, our local community). But what does "local" mean? It means, like the area served by our village council and our church, the Parish of Meppershall.

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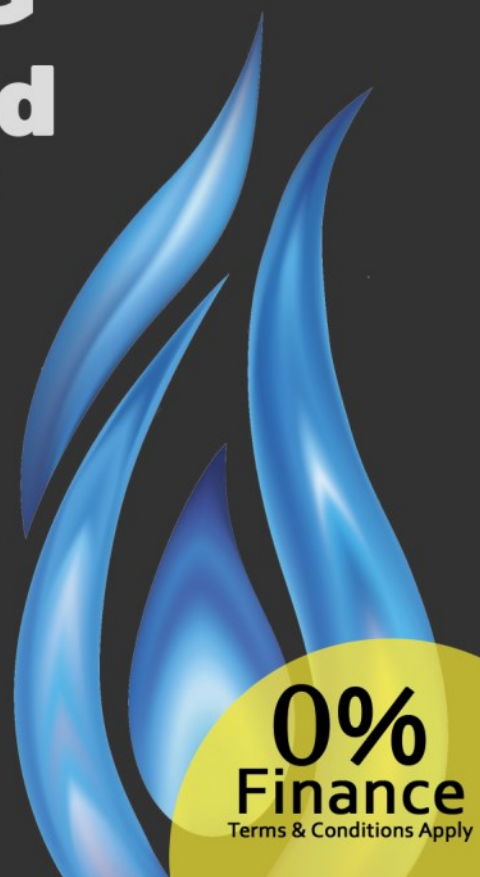
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Letters

Dear Editor,

This letter is to inform the parishioners of Meppershall that I have stood down as Chairman of Meppershall Parish Council and at a meeting of the Personnel Committee on Thursday 15 June 2023, the Vice-Chairman of Meppershall Parish Council reluctantly accepted my resignation and will step up to the position as Chair of Meppershall Parish Council with immediate effect.

In accepting my resignation, I then offered my resignation as Secretary and Representative Trustee on Meppershall Village Hall Management Committee (Trustees) to its Chairman which has also been accepted with immediate effect.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to voluntarily serve on both the Parish Council and act as a Trustee on the Village Hall Management Committee, but I feel I had no choice but to step down at this time for personal reasons.

I wish the Parish Council and the Village Hall Management Committee (Trustees) only the best for the future and regret any inconvenience my resignations may cause.

Yours sincerely,

John Thompson

Former Chairman of Meppershall Parish Council and Secretary & Representative Trustee of Meppershall Village Hall Management Committee (Trustees)

From the editor: we're so sorry to see this. John has been key to these aspects of village life and their success. He'll be sorely missed. More in our next issue.

Hi everyone,

Charity Fundraising Ball , 18th August 2023

I am organising this event to raise much needed funds for Macmillan Cancer Support. We've all been touched in one way or another by this uncompromising disease and I know, from personal and family experience, what wonderful services Macmillan provide, that can make such a huge difference to sufferers, from online and telephone support, to assistance at hospital or at home and a wide range of other services, both advisory and practical.

So I thought it was about time that I, in some small way, gave something back.

The event will consist of a brilliant Disco, some fantastic live music and to help boost funds even more, a raffle, plus (thanks to the extremely generous support of local businesses and individuals) an "Auction of Promises". Feel free to bring your own snacks / nibbles.

To this end, if any business or individual would care to help in any way, however small, either by offering their services for the auction or contributing towards the raffle, that would be very much appreciated.

If you would prefer to make a personal donation, please visit my JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/barry-gatenby-168375459293>

Best regards to you all, **Barry Gatenby.**

Dear Editor,

Poems from Lockdown 2020-2021: Update and Display in Shefford Library

Some months ago I wrote about this poetry anthology, which I put together during the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns. The idea was to publish in book-form a collection of poems and illustrations by local writers and artists, and to sell it to raise some funds to be donated to two charities supporting people affected by the Covid lockdowns. Seventeen writers and illustrators, all living in Bedfordshire or North Hertfordshire, contributed 50 poems and 9 original illustrations. I edited and formatted all the material myself, and then the book was produced by a printer in Westoning in November 2021.

Since then I have been selling copies, **usually at £8 each , from which £5 per book will go to the chosen charities**, which are the young people's mental health charity, *Young Minds*, and the musicians' charity: helpmusicians.org.uk/coronavirushardshipfund.

I am pleased to say that I have now sold 181 copies which raises £970 for the charities.

I am also very pleased that **Shefford Library** are going to display the book in the Local Studies section, from 1 July for approximately 2 weeks.

I have a few remaining copies of the anthology still for sale, and would be delighted if a few people in the village would like to buy them.

If you are interested, please visit the display in Shefford Library, and you can contact me via the Library.

Very many thanks, **Susan Chappell**

GOOD NEWS!

The Butterfly Café

Your new village café is opening in the village hall on 1st August at 9am till 3pm.

We will be opening every

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday when we can.

So please pop in to say hello and take a look at the menu

(a village café at village prices).

I'm sure you will be happy with what you see.

Hope to see you all on the 1st August.

Thank you, Louise.

xx

If you are in a weekly/monthly group and wish to meet up in the Village Hall, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us on 07389 136510.

We will be happy to help you.



Raising funds for MacMillan Cancer Support

Charity Ball **Friday 18th August**



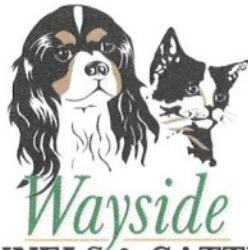
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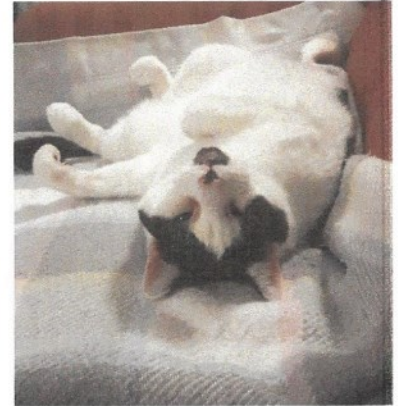


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Meppershall Summer Fair

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Meppershall Events Team

Meppershall Summer Fair – 1st July 2023, 12pm – 5pm

We are absolutely delighted that this year sees the return of the Meppershall Summer Fair on Centenary Field behind the Village Hall. Back after a 6-year break, it is going to be a fabulous day out for the entire village, young and old.

The event is *free* and there will be entertainment throughout the afternoon.

So what do we have in store for you?

The Family Entertainer – will be performing over the course of the afternoon. Music, magic, laughter and more; his brand of high energy fun is sure to put a massive smile on your face

Balloon Modelling - who doesn't love a balloon? Hats, swords, bendy animals and more

Bubbleology – and if you love balloons, then you are going to adore enormous bubbles!

Cuddle Corner – rabbits, guinea pigs and chickens all waiting for some gentle stroking and cuddling...

Clements & Hillier – playing sets over the course of the afternoon expect to hear blues, rock, R&B and rock'n'roll from the '50's to the 80's including songs from Dire Straits, Chuck Berry, Elvis, Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Beatles and many other popular bands

Bake Off – our longstanding and always popular village Bake Off is back! Get your apron on and show Meppershall what you can do! Come on – bake the world a butter place! More details in this edition of the Messenger

Lifestyle Marquee – a selection of hand-picked stalls selling high quality arts, crafts and other products you will find hard to resist

Stalls – a large and varied selection of stalls for you to browse and purchase from

Food – ice cream, pizza, burgers and more. Grab a bite to eat and relax on the field with a glass or jug of....

Pimms and more – grab yourself a glass (or jug!) of Pimms and enjoy the sunshine

Raffle – no Summer Fair would be complete without a chance to win something. We have some fantastic prizes lined up and we'd love to see you take them home

Classic Cars – we are so excited that we will be able to host a raft of classic cars from the village and beyond. A big thank you to Jean Holden for organising

Lucky Programme – Purchase a programme with a lucky number and a chance to win £50!

Scrufts – one of our most popular events of the day and a chance to show off your four-legged friend. We are delighted that this event will be run by Carly from Pets Pawtential who is a full member of the APDT. Carly loves to talk about dogs so pop by the Scrufts stand, between 2.30 & 3.30, for an informal chat about anything dog training and behaviour related. Please see entry form below for more details

We all can't wait to see you on 1st July, so come early to enjoy the food and soak up the atmosphere

The Meppershall Events Team



Scruffs Entry Form



Meppershall Summer Fair - Sat 1st July 2023

Behind Village Hall, Walnut Tree Way

Handlers Name _____

Dogs Name _____ Breed _____

Please tick the events you want to enter - £2

Waggiest tail ☐ 20 Spaces

Best/Cutest trick ☐ 20 Spaces

Best treat catcher (own treats required) ☐ 20 Spaces

Dog judge would most like to take home ☐ 40 Spaces

Each event costs £2 per dog and spaces are on a first come first serve basis. Forms and payment (Cash only) should be delivered to the Scruffs stand between 12:00 - 14:30 where extra forms can be found.

Please let us know if your dog can't eat cocktail sausages.

Please keep all dogs on leads and under control

Carly Lucas - Pets Potential - info@petspawtential.com - 07944705789



Meppershall Social Club

MSC hopes this finds you all well.

Well we've certainly had some balmy weather, and it's been wonderful to see so many people enjoying refreshments on our patio, with the children playing on the Centenary Field facilities.

May we thank all those that supported Fishing for Robots & Miss Tish Ewe, a great weekend of entertainment.

What's on for July?

Saturday 1st: MSC is open from 12 noon to coincide with the start of Summer Fair.

Friday 7th: A & B's 80s & 90s Disco from 8.30pm. A fab night of dancing, FREE ENTRY.

Saturday 8th: Uche Eeke with DJ Gordon Gee. Tickets £15 available from Helen, telephone 07989 914941.

Sunday 9th: Quiz Night at 7pm, max teams of 6, £1 per person.

Friday 14th: Our fabulous Silent Disco is back, due to popular demand. Doors open at 7.30pm, 100 headsets available. We sold out last time so be quick. £5 members; £8 non-members. Tickets available from the bar during usual opening hours.

Friday 21st: Schools out family disco, 7.30 till late. All welcome, FREE ENTRY.

Friday 28th: Stu & Scott's Karaoke, 8.30-late. Sing your heart out! FREE ENTRY.

Don't forget our Bingo every Friday, eyes down 7pm (18 & over only).

All events open to both members and non members. Keep up to date with all of MSC's events via our Facebook page or on Meppershall Notice Board FB page.

Thank you for your continued custom & support. **MSC**

Meppershall Pre-School

July is always a fully fun-packed month for the children at Meppershall pre-school. We are preparing our older children for their moves up to school in September, celebrating everyone's achievements made this academic year and looking forward to the six week summer holiday to enjoy family time at home.

The children moving up to school in September have been working hard on their leavers' show, which is always a highlight for staff and parents to see. Unfortunately this year, it is only available for the friends and family of those children taking part.

We know some parents may be thinking forward to the summer holidays and contemplating how to entertain their children during this time. '50 things to do' app is available for free and gives 50 free or low cost ideas of how to engage your children throughout the summer. There is some really helpful information and a fantastic guide in case you find yourself stuck for something to do:

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/50-things-to-do/id1386729093>.

Finally, if you are looking for a pre-school place for next year, please get in contact with Ella, our pre-school manager. We encourage visits and all information of our admissions policy is on our website. Any parents who may be interested in being part of pre-school committee, please let any staff member know and we'll be able to give you more information. Our AGM is held annually in October.

Support For Local Families: Household Support Fund

Central Bedfordshire Council has been allocated £2.9 million of Government funding to support households in Central Bedfordshire with food, energy and water bills, and other wider essentials over the next year. The Household Support Fund is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, and this is the fourth round of funding that the Council has received. It will run until March 2024.

Some of the funding has already been distributed to households. Supermarket vouchers have been provided to every child eligible for free school meals, with a £35 voucher over Easter, and a £17.50 voucher in May half-term. In total 15,104 supermarket vouchers (worth £396,533) were distributed. Support continues in the summer holidays, October half term, Christmas holidays and February 2024 half term.

As well as children entitled to free school meals, those eligible for support include:

- Children eligible for 2-year-old funding/Early Years Pupil Premium
- Care leavers (young adults aged between 18 and 25 years old that have previously spent time in care before they were 18 years old)
- Claimants of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support including pensioners, disabled people and households with children
- Households with an annual income of less than £30,000 living in a permanent, residential park home or on a council-managed caravan site

Anyone who is eligible for support will be contacted by the Council, but the full list of who is eligible for support and how to apply for a grant is available on the Council's website: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/HSG

The Department for Education fund the programme and, linked to this, the Council's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will run through the summer with free, fun activities for children who receive benefits-based free school meals (reception through to year 11). All children attending get healthy snacks and lunch. Sessions are inclusive so are suitable for children with special education needs and disabilities.

Funding has also been provided to Disability Resource Centre, Advice Central, Citizens Advice (Dunstable, Mid-Bedfordshire, Leighton-Linslade), Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity – Good Neighbour Scheme, Age UK, The NEED Project, PREEN Foodbank, Dunstable Foodbank, Carers in Bedfordshire and several lunch clubs.

Meppershall Parish Council – Approved Minutes

A Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council (MPC) took place on Monday 15th May 2023.

Election of Chairman - *Resolved to elect Councillor Thompson as Chairman for the year 2023-2024.*

Election of Vice-Chairman - *Resolved to elect Councillor Parsons as Vice-Chairman for the year 2023-2024.*

Chairman's announcements

- Attended the CPRE AGM on 26th April and will circulate the presentation given to councillors. CPRE is an organisation that supports MPC with advice and knowledge especially on matters concerning planning and the environment.

- The crime statistics for Meppershall in April show 10 reported incidents including several attempted break ins.
- Reminder given to all councillors to complete their Register of Interests on the CBC website (link provided by the Clerk) and to ensure that the Expenses forms are completed and sent to the CBC Electoral team.
- CBC Ward Councillor elections returned 27 Independents, 20 Conservatives, 10 Liberal Democrats, 5 Labour, and 1 Green Party members. No party has an overall majority however the Independents will be asked to form an administration. The next CBC Full Council meeting will be on 25th May.
- Congratulations were offered to Ward Councillor Blake Stephenson who has been elected as ward councillor for the Meppershall, Shillington and Gravenhurst Ward.
- Beds PCC has reported that Beds Police numbers have increased by nearly 200.
- The Clerk has advised that the 100 High Street planning appeal hearing will be held on 27th and 28th June.

Public Session - CBC Ward Councillor Stephenson provided an update on Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) activities:

- Thanks were offered to all for his election as Ward Councillor.
- CBC Election Results – As explained by the Chairman the Independents will be given the first opportunity to form an administration and to appoint both portfolio holders and committee positions. Due to no party having an overall majority the dynamics at CBC will change for both CBC officers and elected councillors. The full council meeting on 25th May will be the key to the future four years.
- Current Focus - Former Meppershall Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard have not disappeared and are working with Councillor Stephenson in the background. A list of 'issues' to deal with has been provided to Councillor Stephenson to deal with and this includes the Vehicle Activated Sign installation on Shefford Road. It is also hoped that there can be a greater working relationship between the villages in the Ward (Meppershall, Shillington and Gravenhurst).
- Tidy Tips – A programme of maintenance at CBC owned Tidy Tips is planned over the summer with each Tidy Tip closed at different times.
- Community Asset Grants – Bidding to start soon.

Questions / comments from the public:

- There are giant hogweed infestations visible on roadsides, what is CBC's policy regarding removal? *Cllr Stephenson to investigate and advise the Clerk.*
- Why was MPC not consulted on the permanent location of Meppershall Academy Year 5 and Year 6 children on the Henlow Academy site in Henlow? *Cllr Stephenson to investigate and advise the Clerk.*

Co-option - The Clerk advised that there were currently two vacant councillors' seats, and that two expressions of interests in co-option forms had been received and circulated to councillors with meeting papers. The two individuals interested in co-option, Mr Philip Russell, and Mrs Roma Avrili were both present at the meeting.

Resolved to co-opt Mr Philip Russell and Mrs Roma Avrili as Councillors to Meppershall Parish Council

Delegation Arrangements – Councillors reviewed delegation arrangements. Updates can be found here: <https://meppershall-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/members-of-the-council/>

Procedures, Consultations and Legal

a. Procedures - Resolved to re-approve:

- i. *MPC Code of Conduct*
- ii. *Dispensation Guidance and Form*
- iii. *Co-option Policy and Form*
- iv. *Engagement with Developers*
- v. *Financial Regulations*
- vi. *Standing Orders*
- vii. *Personnel Committee Terms of Reference*
- viii. *Neighbourhood Plan Terms of Reference*

b. Honorary Freeman of the Parish - Resolved to confer the title of Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Meppershall to Mr Peter Chapman in recognition of his 30 plus years' service to the parish as councillor/chairman and core member of several village organisations providing services to residents, and that the Clerk order the appropriate scroll for the presentation (to take place at the Summer Fair on 1st July 2023).

c. Invitations – Attendance at Area 5 Community Policing - Parishes Working Together Meeting - Tuesday 20th June - 11am. *Clerk to attend with Councillors Seaman and Thompson attending the Area 5 Priorities setting meeting on 20th June.*

d. IT and Communications - A report on website usage was circulated to councillors at the beginning of the month. Councillor Standbridge reported that there had been 828 website views in April and that email accounts of retiring councillors have been restricted.

e. Approval of Agreement with Davidsons Homes for future handover of Green Open Space at Stocken House / Woodland Rest - The Chairman advised that after months of negotiations, the Clerk and our Solicitors have finally had communication from Davidsons Homes and their solicitors regarding the final agreement and maps to accompany them.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to approve agreement with Davidsons Homes for future hand over of green open space 'The Glebe' at Stocken House / Woodlands Rest.

f. MPC Crackle Hill Track / Driveway - To receive update on works carried out by Anglian Water to remove non-authorised utilities from MPC land and agree on any actions required.

Upon inspection on 17th April the Clerk found that utilities for water had not been moved (only meters). Clerk wrote to Anglian Water and met with representative of the Connections Team on site on 26th April who said they would provide details of how to move the pipe line and meters to Anglian Water for approval. Contact made with AW Connections Customer Service team who have kept the Clerk updated on progress. Site visit to take place on 15th May with works planned for w/c 22nd May.

The Clerk has agreed to issue signage closing our Crackle Hill permissive driveway. Councillor Thompson and Mrs Thorne will observe works whilst the Clerk is away.

Finance

- a. **Purchase orders** - *Resolved to purchase bench oil, printer ink and freedom scroll.*
- b. **Budget v Actual** - The Clerk provided reports on the previous financial year budget v actual which were noted. No changes were made to the 2023-2024 budget.
- c. **Asset Register** - The Clerk presented the current Asset Register to councillors for review and its' contents were noted. *Resolved the Councillor Wright assist the Clerk and Mrs Thorne to conduct a physical audit of all assets, record with pictures and log the location with mapping software.*
- d. **Reserves** - *Resolved to approve Reserves for 2023/2024 as proposed by the Clerk with Defib reserve increased to £2.5k and Locum Clerk reserve increased by additional £3k*
- e. **Internal Auditor report** - The Chairman expressed thanks to the Clerk for having received an Internal Auditor Report without issues. *Resolved to receive the Internal Auditor Report on 2022-2023 and note that no issues were identified.*
- f. **Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023** - *Resolved to approve the Governance Statement 2022/2023 as circulated for submission to the External Auditor and that it be signed by the Clerk and Chairman of the meeting.*
- g. **Accounting Statements 2022/2023** - *Resolved to approve the Accounting Statements 2022/2023 as presented to council by the Responsible Financial Officer (&Clerk) for submission to the External Auditor and that it be signed by the Chairman of the meeting.*
- h. **Exercise of Public Rights to Inspect MPC Accounts** - Councillors noted the dates set by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer regarding the exercise of public rights to inspect MPC accounts as 12th June 2023 to 21st July 2023 inclusive.
- i. **Banking Mandate** - *Resolved that the Clerk action the following changes to the MPC banking mandate: remove Mr Crossley and Mr Chapman, add Councillors Avrili and Russell, provide Councillor Wright with online add and approve rights. Carried*
- j. **Document approval** - *Resolved to approve Bank Statements & Reconciliations Current Account 173, Bank Statements and Reconciliations Savings Account 042 and Journals 79 and 80.*
- k. **Orders for the payment of money** – *Resolved that the schedules of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Councillor Thompson and or Councillor Parsons. Carried.*

Planning and Housing

- a. **Planning applications**
 - i. CB/23/00761/FULL - Sandy View, Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Erection of 3no dwellings following demolition of 1 existing dwelling. *Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/00761.*

- ii. CB/23/01183/VOC - Former site of New Close Nurseries, Fildyke Road - Variation (or removal) of condition number 12 of planning permission CB/17/02409/FULL (Demolition of existing glasshouses and redevelopment with 10 residential dwellings and all ancillary works). Variation sought to remove the condition to build the footpath. *Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/01183/VOC.*
- iii. CB/23/01180/VOC - Former site of Tower View Nurseries, Fildyke Road - Variation (or removal) of condition number 5 of planning permission CB/18/04569/FULL (Demolition of existing greenhouses and redevelopment with 9 residential dwellings including new access and all ancillary works.) Variation sought to remove the condition to build the footpath. *Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/01180/VOC.*

b. Appeals

- i. APP/P0240/D/23/3314857 - CB/22/02025/FULL - Standalone House – Meppershall Airfield, SG17 5PB - Two storey side extension to form an annexe in connection with the existing dwelling. Information only as this appeal is proceeding under the Householder Appeals Service and there is no opportunity for MPC to submit further comments. Councillors notes the appeal process.

Neighbourhood Plan

- a. **Report** - The Clerk is progressing with this.

Highways and Transport

- a. **OPCC and RMF grant funding and works update including dispute raised with CBC regarding invoice received for part of the works** - The Clerk advised that CBC contractors had installed the VAS on Shefford Road on 11th May however they had not removed the bend right sign in front of it, so the VAS is obscured (pictures forwarded to MPC and CBC). This issue was raised with CBC by the Clerk immediately as it was obvious that this would be an issue of ridicule raised by our residents – Facebook posts were seen about it on Friday evening. CBC have advised that they will resolve the issue ASAP. The Clerk has also received a 7-day notice for payment as per the invoice previously received from CBC. As works are not yet completed and details pending from CBC on invoicing cost, the Clerk has advised CBC that the invoice is in dispute pending their response. The Clerk confirmed that she has never received quotations from CBC for the works, despite requesting them, and had never issued a purchase order for the works. *Resolved that the Clerk does not make payment of the CBC Highways invoice as issues and that the Clerk and Chairman seek to resolve the matter with the CBC Highways team.*
- b. **Update on road safety improvements on new developments** - Councillor Seaman is awaiting an update from Davidsons
- c. **Update of Fix My Street reports** – Councillor Seaman is making between 2 to 5 submissions every on Fix My Street. It has taken more than 4 weeks to fix signage and 3 separate reports on fix My Street to get the Shillington Road VAS working.

Environment and Leisure

- a. **Update on maintenance works** - The Clerk has previously issued a purchase order for the installation of fencing at the far end of the copse on Centenary

Field and another for the installation of the replacement gate and bollard at Old Road Meadow, notice boards and reinstallation of the bollard on the Crackle Hill driveway. Some works have been completed but others are pending. *Clerk to chase.*

John Thompson - Chairman - Meppershall Parish Council

In An English Country Garden by Donna Cameron

Donna's Garden Designs 07833670934

At this time of year what could be nicer than visiting an English Country Garden. There are plenty open locally in the summer months. Many open for charity. They often have plant stalls and tea and cake... which is an added bonus !

On a beautiful Summer's day, ambling around a garden, gleaning inspiration and wondering at the beauty of nature is, in my mind, one of the most relaxing pastimes to be had.

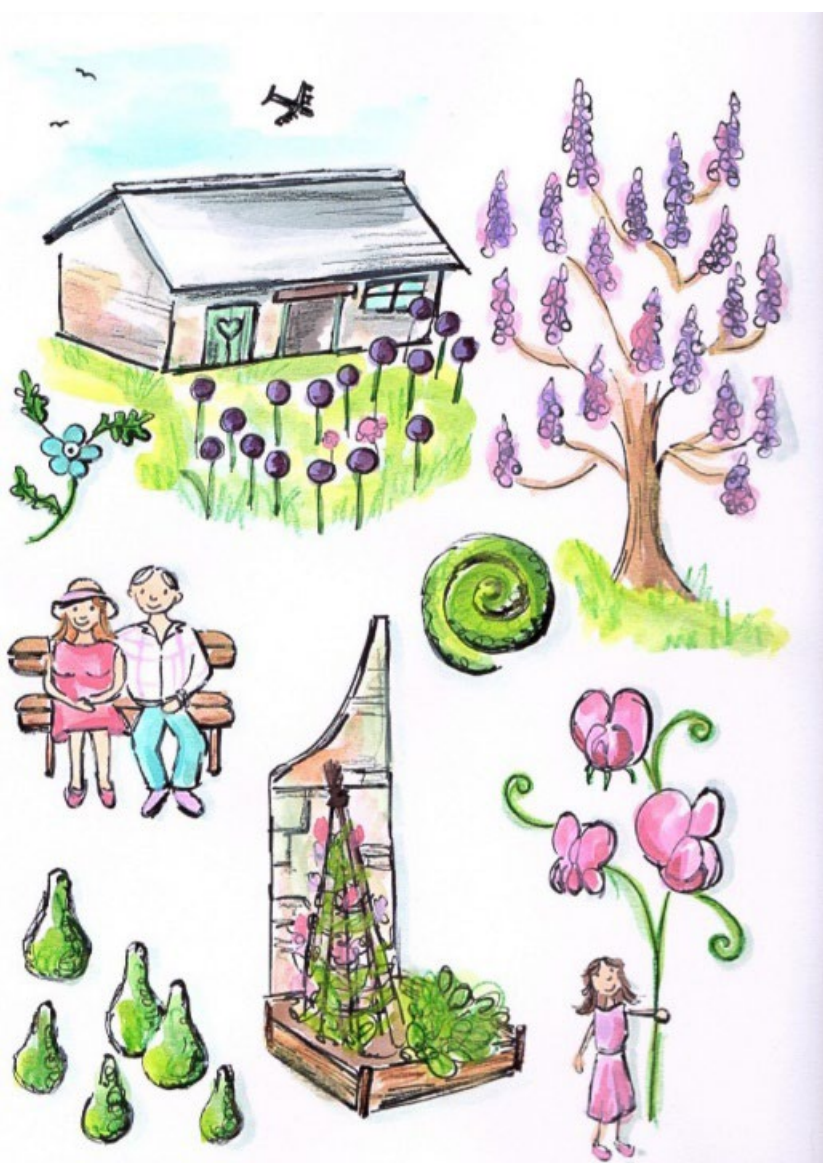
Investigating a new garden is so interesting as you do not know what lies behind the next hedge or around a doorway or an old wall. I love the history that often accompanies these gardens... the mark that different generations have put on them.

They all have their own quirky personalities and the little touches show the blood, sweat and tears that have been poured into the making of these gardens... but

most importantly, the love that the English have for their gardens.

As I visited one such place at the weekend it oozed all of these characteristics.

This once-stately home was now demolished but at its heart the garden was still remaining. It was of a bygone age. I could see the decadence of a lost era passed, but yet timelessly still remaining. The weathered local stone potting shed was a back drop



for the numerous alliums all putting on a vibrant display, raising their spherical violet heads to the summer sun.

The kitchen garden, lovingly laid out, was a work of art. Now for the Café... it was originally the place where gardeners toiled tirelessly to provide the big house with all the fruit, veg and flowers needed to make it self-sufficient.

Wisteria was dripping from the walls with its heady perfume, filling the air.

Topiary yew shapes formed an evergreen Avenue down a stepped terrace leading to an ornate stone bridge, where clear water calmly flowed through. On the other side was a wrought iron bench to sit a while and ponder the amazing vista and just be content in such a place of beauty as the sun sparkled on the rivers surface.

Then I wandered up some steps, on a very small gradient where you seemed to just glide up them, meaning you didn't have to watch your step but could fully appreciate your wonderful surroundings.

At the top you were met with the wider landscape to fix your gaze upon. A truly English scene of sheep grazing in an undulating lush green field amongst mature Horse Chestnut trees in full pink and white blossom. A rural idyll.

When you think the garden could hide no more secrets behind a neat, short hedge was the most amazing White Garden. The palette limited to greens, silver and of course white. Wow what an impact. It made such a statement and yet was a very calming place to be.

This garden truly was food for the soul and made for the perfect day. It was so relaxing and it was time spent with my parents on their wedding anniversary. Who could want for more! **Donna x**

Jobs in the Garden for July	
Keep dead heading	Pick courgettes
Water plants	Clear algae from pond
Divide Irises	Cut back Delphiniums and Hardy Geraniums for a second flush
Give lawn a boost with liquid fertilizer	Prop up tall perennials
	Mulch border to retain moisture

Trugs and Trowels Gardening Club (Campton) Calendar 2023

Date	Event	Location
30th July	Meppershall Manor visit - historic castle mound	Meppershall Manor
14th August	Competition Judging	Campton Village Hall
4th September	Becky Almond - How to care for your garden	Campton Village Hall
2nd October	Richard Knock - Bedfordshire wild orchids	Campton Village Hall



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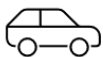
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email us gnomes.secretary@meppershall.org

Give us a call on 07760 793921



Meppershall Craft Club



It's been a while since we posted in The Messenger!

Here is an update:

Following our successful daytime Craft Club which we started over 4 years ago, last Autumn we began an evening Craft Club which is developing well.



Our members cover a very wide range of crafts – some of us work on our own crafts, or, as we often do in the daytime club, share our skills with others in mini workshops.

All crafts and crafters are welcome - currently we do water colour painting, jewellery making, needle felting, paper craft, black stitch crochet and knitting.

In addition to our crafting we share information on many interesting local events & activities.

We also arrange some group outings. Recently the daytime club have had a lovely afternoon tea around Easter time, a Coronation 'street party', and are currently looking forward to meeting up for an evening meal.



Thanks to the kind generosity of our members we are able to make many donations to charities:

Some of our most recent donations have included Keech Hospice Care, The Cinnamon Trust, and Alzheimer's Society.

Thanks to the Trustees, our meetings are all held at **Meppershall Village Hall**.

If you would like to join us for the **Daytime club it is on every Wednesday 10.30 to 12noon**. Please do pop into the social area (old cafe) to meet us.

Our **Evening club is held once a month on a Monday** – we currently we have a waiting list to join this group. If you are interested, please do give us a call.







Kim Tyler, Lorraine Jarvis & Diane Hughes the Organisers.

**Contacts: Kim 0795 255 7203, Lorraine 07811 865 259,
Or Diane 07473 828488.**

Car Crime – Police Advice

Information From Police Community Support - Biggleswade & Sandy

We are aware of the increase of 'theft from motor vehicle' and 'theft of motor vehicle' offences in North Central Bedfordshire. We are encouraging the public to deter opportunistic criminals and keep their vehicles safe with the following advice:

	Lock and secure your car
	Take valuables with you
	Keep your car keys out of sight
	Park in well-lit areas
	Place your car keys in a Faraday bag/signal blocking pouch
	Utilise CCTV cameras where possible

Look out for public engagement events where you can come and talk to us about these concerns or other unrelated issues. If you see or hear anything suspicious - Please report online, via 101, or call CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111 or 999 in the case of an emergency.

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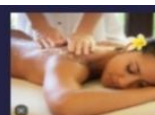


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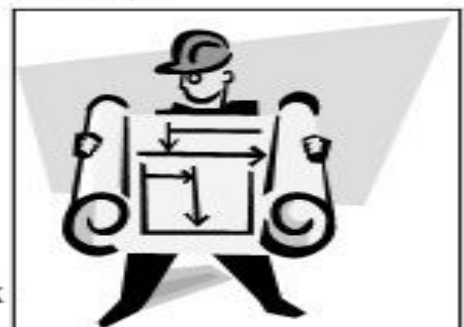
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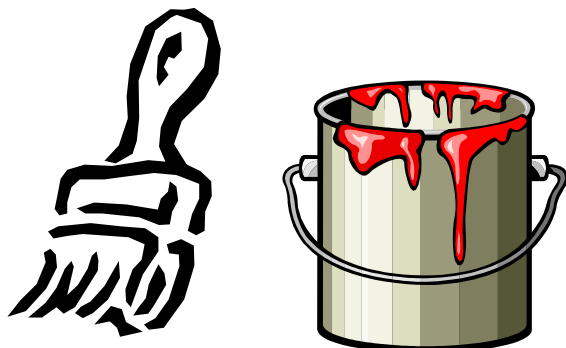
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SCAN ME

Neighbourhood Watch By Cllr Anthony Seaman

With crime rates still increasing in and around Meppershall I felt the need to once again remind you all of the value of being members of Neighbourhood Watch (NHW).

Having NHW stickers on doors or windows and having NHW road signs attached to lamp posts all helps to deter those intent on crime. Neighbours keeping an eye on others' property whilst at work, on holiday or during the dark evenings is also important – and being made aware of crimes in their area and what to look out for, including different types of scams.

At present we have two police approved groups in Meppershall: Walnut Tree Way (which includes Harriots Field and Banland Croft) and Emery Gardens (Emery Croft). Can all those past members of Walnut Tree Way group please update me with their latest email address by contacting lovemeppershall@meppershall.org.

Joining NWH is easy - visit <http://www.ourwatch.org.uk/Bedfordshire> - see below.

You can of course join one of the existing groups but it would be great if someone could start their own group, for instance in Woodland Rest (Davidsons Homes), Shefford Road, High Street, Fildyke Road, Orchard Close or other estates in the village. Once joined, it is very simple to start your own group and full instructions are given. It could consist of as little as three people if you want.

How To Join – Info From Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbours by chance. Working together by choice. We make this a better place to live.

Our different membership models offer flexibility to suit you. At the heart of each one are you, your neighbours, and your community. Once you have joined as an Individual Member, you have the option to become a Scheme Member by either joining a local scheme or starting one up.

Sign up at: <https://members.ourwatchmember.org.uk/join>

Individual Member

An Individual Member is anyone wishing to be part of the biggest voluntary crime prevention movement in England and Wales. Once you are a registered member of NHW you may be invited to, or request to, join a local NHS group; or choose to volunteer for NHW. Individual Members can continue their membership even if they move areas or change groups; and there are a range of other benefits:

BE PROTECTED

- Feel and be safer
- Receive expert, easy-to-follow local and national crime prevention advice
- Be invited to crime prevention webinars
- Be consulted on your crime and community opinions
- Receive discounts in our shop and partner product offers

BE CONNECTED

- Request to, or be invited to, join a Scheme or start a new Scheme
- Manage your membership options and opt-in to police and other updates
- Remain an Individual Member even if you move home

Group (or Scheme) Member

A Scheme Member is someone who joins their local Scheme, headed by a volunteer Coordinator. We have over 90,000 Coordinators leading Schemes across England and Wales. Schemes can be physical Schemes covering your home, or virtual Schemes such as a Neighbourhood Watch Facebook group. Scheme Members can belong to one or more Schemes. All of the Individual Member benefits PLUS:

BE PROTECTED

- Look out for your neighbours
- Resolve local issues with others in your
- Neighbourhood Watch group
- Improve your relationship with local
- police and partners
- Free Public Liability Insurance for
- registered groups

BE CONNECTED

- Join in with local activities
- Feel a greater sense of belonging and
- connection to a tighter-knit community
- Feel increased pride and satisfaction with where you live

Affiliated Member

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- Look out for your community
- Receive and share crime prevention information with your group
- Free Public Liability Insurance for registered groups when running Neighbourhood Watch activities

BE CONNECTED

- Increase your networking by engaging in regional discussions and activities
- Feel a greater sense of belonging and connection to a tighter-knit community
- Feel increased pride and satisfaction with where you live or work

In conclusion it would be great if some of you would join as members or better still as new coordinators with you own group within Meppershall. We all want this this great village of Meppershall to be free of crime and joining NHW would be your contribution to this aim.

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

Churchwardens:

Chris Valentine 01462 815971 Peter Clark

PCC Secretary:

Anne Parsons 01462 813333 Email: annie10639@gmail.com

Message from St Mary's...

Summer is here! As I write, the sun is shining, the sky is a deep blue and there are sounds of people and children enjoying being outside, with the whiff of barbecues heavy in the air. The weather can certainly lift our spirits! It is at times such as these that I am reminded of many of the verses in the Psalms, Many people are familiar with Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd." In that psalm the writer speaks about walking through the countryside through fields green with pasture, and beside quiet running waters. The psalmist reflects that being out in the countryside, being at one with nature helped to refresh their soul. Nature can have a very powerful effect on our sense of well-being. As we look towards the start of the holiday season, I know that many of you will be looking forward to spending time with loved ones, enjoying being together and seeing different places. As for the writer of Psalm 23, may you too find refreshment in those occasions.

In the heat we also think of those who are not on holiday, and find the heat and humidity difficult to cope with. As many of you will have noticed St Mary's Church is shrouded in scaffolding as the long awaited repairs take place to ensure the building continues to serve as a place of worship for a long time into the future - but spare a thought for the workers, high up and shrouded inside the protective tarpaulin, as the temperature soars into the 30s! And, of course we should remember the elderly and those unable to leave their homes as the weather becomes hot and humid - Let's all look out for your loved ones and neighbours who might be finding the weather difficult.

With every blessing,

Keith, Reader at St Mary's Meppershall

Church News and Events In July

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 church
Church open to visit	10.00-4.00	Private prayer and quiet time – the church open for you to sit and visit each day.
Online services:	9.00am	Morning Prayer using 24-7's Lectio 365 App 7-days-a-week
	9.00pm	Night Prayer/Compline from the C. of E. Daily Prayer App, 7-days-a-week
Find us on Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/stmarysmeppershall/	
Find us on our website:	https://www.stmarysmeppershall.org.uk/	
Find us on YouTube:	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRjDLGAy8GI6afkO8iALYOA	

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

Churchyard Volunteer Clear Up Day

Saturday 15th July, 9.00am-4.00pm

We will be holding one of our Churchyard Clear Up Days this month. Can you spare any time – as little

or as long as you wish? It's a fun day of trimming, sweeping, raking and generally tidying up in the good company of other community minded neighbours and friends. Bring your own tools if possible (rakes, brooms, pruners). Refreshments provided. Just turn up! Or call for more info. You'll go home feeling great... 😊



Meppershall Second Sunday Strollers

Our walk this month is on Sunday 9th July and we're heading east for a change – hiking to Fairfield Park via Henlow Camp and Arlesey. Leaving the church gate in Meppershall at 2pm, we'll take Stondon Road, passing Chapel Farm and onto Cow Lane to Henlow Camp. We'll pass Oldfield Farm and through Arlesey at The True Briton to end on West Drive up into Fairfield Park. It's a route of just over 5 miles in total.

We will be parking cars at the end of the walk near the Bannatyne Health Club. If you want to do that please come to church at 1.00pm to drop a car and have a lift back. For more info or to drop a car in advance at the end of the walk (or to confirm a lift back with someone else - there are always spare seats!) please get in touch. We're an informal, dog-friendly group and we would love to have you along for a walk. Find us on 857836 (James and Miriam) or at <https://www.facebook.com/MeppershallStrollers>.

A Tribute To Christine Foster

1953-2023



Trying to describe someone you have known intimately for 54 years is like trying to explain a striking sunset or a Rembrandt painting to someone shut away in a darkened room. Words are not enough! But I want to try to honour the life of Christine, as best I can: my lovely wife, who died on May 7th after a diagnosis of terminal and inoperable glioblastoma brain cancer this time last year.

One way to describe her would be by timeline. Christine was born in 1953, the eldest of 4 children. Her father was a Headteacher (Headmaster back then?) which meant a somewhat nomadic, though happy, upbringing. Our paths crossed in 1968 when her father was Headteacher at Clifton Primary School. After school Christine also trained as a primary age teacher, teaching for three years, initially in Barton and then Meppershall. Subsequently she chose to be a full-time mother and farmer's wife. After 7 years living at Fowlers Farm, where our two sons were born, we moved to Polehanger to concentrate on running the farm business together. She was active in the village W.I., the Methodist Sunday School in the 1970s and Shefford Baptist Church

in the 1980s. In the 90s and 00s she had more time to devote to projects linked to charities we were associated with. We lived at Polehanger for 41 years before retiring into a newly built house in Fowlers Drive in July 2022, coming full circle geographically speaking. It was at this point that Christine's brain tumour was diagnosed.

Another way to describe her would be by achievement, though she wouldn't have been particularly comfortable with that. Christine was clearly an able teacher though she didn't practise in the classroom for that long. However the skills and attitude that informed her teaching were evident throughout her life. She was gifted with outstanding organisational and administrative skills. These were put to good use in many and various ways: from keeping the family fully functioning; through planning and organising events, some small like the church tea tent at the village fete, some large like setting up a food shop at the Stoneleigh Bible Week camps over 2 weeks catering for 10,000 people attending each week; to running the farm business; to overseeing the design and construction of our retirement home alongside our architect. These just to name a few. Not only was she very good at problem solving but she often foresaw a potential problem, heading it off before it became one. In all these different situations she showed patience and graciousness. Most people, however, would experience those skills through her hospitality at home. Mealtimes with extended family or groups of friends never seemed to faze her.

To my mind though, the best way to describe someone is in relational terms and the qualities of character and personality that are brought into those relationships. Christine was a wife, mother, grandmother, sister, friend and much more. To each of these relationships she brought focussed and individualised compassionate kindness, firm grace and imaginative generosity. We have received so many cards since Christine died that have expanded on this in particular ways relevant to the writer. Yet it has been a great comfort and encouragement to me that there are these consistent and common themes. How she would drop round to see people needing support, often armed with home-made cake, how she drove friends to appointments when she could have argued that it wasn't convenient, how she listened with commitment to those in need, how she gave of herself because she cared. These qualities were informed and generated through her deep, quiet Christian faith in a God who she knew was with her. She wanted to be infectiously more like Christ. In that way, in her small way, the world was, is and will be, a better place. She leaves us with long living memories.

Thanks to Chris Foster for this moving and beautiful tribute to Christine who is dearly missed by so many in the village following the sad news in May. Sympathies and condolences to you, Chris, and the whole family. How lucky we are to have had this wonderful lady at the heart of village life for so many years.

How (Not) To Become A Cocaine Smuggler by Patrick O'Connor

My wife and I, with our five young sons, flew to Trinidad for a family holiday. The flight was a charter, full of eager travellers, and the duty free flowed. We made friends with a young man who sat next to us. He was scheduled to return with us, so we wished him a happy time on the island.

Sure enough, our friend was on the return flight. But he was a different person, not the amiable chap we remembered, and he kept a distance from us. One arm was encased in plaster cast: he said he had fallen from a balcony. The next morning, back in England, we wished him well, and invited him to visit if he was up our way. I gave him my card. We went our separate ways.

Several months later, one dark evening, the doorbell rang. I answered and was faced by a serious-looking man. Standing behind him were several policemen. "Are you Mr. O'Connor?" He asked. I admitted to this, and he responded "I have a warrant to search your property. I must warn you that my men are all armed". I did not resist, but let them in. My wife and boys were duly very surprised.

The first interrogation was to ask if we had a Timothy Heap in the house. We denied this, said we had never heard of anyone by that name. They were not convinced by this and proceeded to search the house. My wife and I were separated, she taken for further questioning, and I to accompany the search party. The boys were enjoying all this and tagged along with me. The police searched every room. To get into the attic the bravest one had to remove his bullet-proof vest and gun belt to fit through the hatch, and the boys were keen to help. But there was no sign of Mr. Heap.

The search moved outside. At the back door the leader grabbed one of the boys who was about to run out and pulled him back. He spoke into his microphone. "We are coming out. Mr. O'Connor is leading." When I stepped out I saw that there was an armed policeman at each corner of the garden. The search of the garage and greenhouse was also fruitless.

Back inside, the atmosphere became more relaxed as they accepted our puzzled protestations and as there had been no shootout. They explained that they had been acting under orders from Scotland Yard, and that I should call them if I wanted to find out why. We bade them good night and resumed our evening.

The next day I called Scotland Yard. They explained that, based on information about cocaine smuggling, they had raided Timothy Heap's London apartment. He had skipped the net, but they found guns. And my card. There was more information in the papers, he added. I found a paper, and there was a photo of our travelling companion.

I called my wife. "You remember Tim", I said. His plaster cast must have been filled with cocaine. We have not seen him since.

So, to avoid becoming part of a drug smuggling ring, be careful about the friends you make when travelling.

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- More than 1 in 4 skin cancer cases are diagnosed in people under 50, which is unusually early compared with most other types of cancer. Over recent years, skin cancer has become much more common in the UK.
- Skin cancer is the cancer you can often SEE, yet it often goes undetected in the early stages. Check yourself in the mirror and keep these three simple words in mind: NEW, CHANGING or UNUSUAL. It could save your life!

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<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/skin-cancer>

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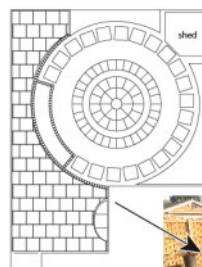
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Finance by Paul Savuto

Over 50 and re-joining the workforce? Remember your pension

It's estimated that the number of people aged 50 to 64 who are economically inactive sits at 3.6 million, which is 300,000 higher than pre-pandemic. There is no doubt that the UK's economic growth will, in part, be reliant on getting the over-50s back into work, as mentioned in the Budget.

If you retired early but are now having second thoughts and considering re-joining the workforce, here are a few essential pension tips:

- Find out if your new employer has a waiting period before auto-enrolling you into its workplace pension scheme. You could choose to opt into the scheme earlier to benefit from additional contributions
- Check how much you can save in your pension. As announced in the Budget, tax relief on pensions has changed. If you have any questions about your pension and how much you can contribute, get in touch
- Check whether your employer will match any additional contributions you make over your minimum 4% level
- Your employer may provide the option to exchange some of your salary for a pension contribution, which the employer then pays into your pension scheme along with their pension contribution. This can prove to be extremely tax-efficient
- Decide how you want your contributions to be invested and select a realistic retirement date
- If you're self-employed, set up a personal pension
- Don't forget to review your other pension pots and investments to take account of your changed circumstances and ensure you have sufficient to be able to retire comfortably when the time comes.

A pension – the best (retirement) gift for your child?

With the cost of children's birthday presents and parties often totalling hundreds of pounds – could there be a better way to provide for your child or grandchild?

Investing in a pension for your child can provide numerous long-term benefits and go some way to helping them secure a financially stable future. It can also help teach them about the importance of saving and investing for the future.

Who can set up a child's pension?

A parent or legal guardian can set up the pension as soon as the child is born.

Who can contribute?

If you're a grandparent keen to help out, the good news is that anyone can contribute into the pension, as well as godparents, relatives or friends. As a parent, you manage the pension saving plan until the child turns 18. **What happens when they turn 18?**

Whilst they gain control at 18, they won't be able to access the money until they reach the normal minimum pension age.

How much can you contribute?

Under current rules you can pay up to £2,880 into a children's pension each year. This will then receive basic rate tax relief, so the government will boost this to £3,600. The

majority of people setting up a children's pension won't pay this much in, instead choosing to make smaller contributions, which will still build up over time and benefit from tax relief.

Why choose a children's pension?

It may seem odd thinking about a pension for your child when they are so young, but not only will it help your child later on in life when they think about retirement, but also help with the amount they might contribute into their pension during their lifetime, potentially freeing up more money to fund other life events.

What about a Junior ISA (JISA)?

Another worthwhile tax-efficient children's saving option is a JISA. One key difference between children's pensions and JISAs is that with the latter, your child can access the money when they turn 18. With any pension, the money can only be used to save for retirement.

The early bird

Investing in a pension plan for your child can help provide them with the financial security they need to achieve their goals in the future. By starting early, they can benefit from compound interest and reinvested dividends, tax benefits, and the potential to grow their savings over time.

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. For a free review of 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.

Birthdays

Congratulations on some special birthdays in July:

Alan P who will be 93

Margaret G who will be 88



Wishing you all a great year ahead, with warm regards from the whole team at The Meppershall Messenger.

Can You Help?

Your village magazine needs extra helpers for all sorts of roles in our 100% volunteer team. Reporting, writing, page layouts, editing, production, collation, deliveries, digital communications, social media, business skills... there are many ways to get involved. It's great experience, lots of fun and a wonderful way to be at the heart of the community. If you're interested, please use the contact info at the back of this issue of ***The Meppershall Messenger***. We'd love to have you in the team!



The Meppershall Players @ STMA July 2023



The Players held their AGM on Monday 5th at the STMA Hall, 10, Hitchin Road, Shefford, SG17 5JA. The Committee was re-elected to stand another year by those present, membership is still free and the Players made the decision to call themselves The Players @ STMA. We always refer to ourselves as the Players and although most of us hale from Meppershall, we decided after four years of performing at the STMA it felt right to just call ourselves The Players @ STMA.

Although our name as changed slightly we still have the same remit, which is to enjoy all aspects of theatrical productions, to have fun in the process and to entertain our audiences.

We've finally decided on a Pantomime (although it means doing a bit of writing). We will be performing 'Dick Whittington' on Saturday 2nd and 9th December with afternoon (3pm) and evening (7.30pm) performances. Don't forget we've frozen our admission prices, which will be the same as 2022 - £10 and £5 Concessions (17years and under, 60 years and over).

We have the read-through for our pantomime at the STMA hall at 7.30pm on Monday 10th July and the Auditions the following week at 7.30pm on Monday 17th July so if you're 18yrs or over and fancy having a go at acting on stage we look forward to meeting you.

If you're over 18 years and would like to be involved in our Pantomime on stage, behind the scenes or front of house, phone Karen on the number below or come to one of our meetings on Monday evenings at the STMA 10, Hitchin Road, Shefford. We're a friendly bunch who enjoy entertaining our audiences.

Find the Meppershall Players on Facebook (Meppershall Players Community) Instagram and Twitter.

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 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

Cineaste's Corner by Dave Peters: Portrait Of A Lady On Fire

Written and directed by the French auteur Céline Sciamma, "Portrait Of A Lady On Fire" (2020) tells the story of a passionate romance between two women set on a remote island off the coast of 18th Century Brittany. Héloïse (Adèle Haenel) is the daughter of a widowed Italian countess (Valeria Golino). Having been previously living in a convent she has been obliged to return home because she is expected to replace her deceased sister as the prospective bride of a Milanese nobleman (it is later

revealed that Héloïse's sister threw herself off a cliff and committed suicide). In order to secure the marriage of her daughter the countess needs her to sit for a portrait, which will then be sent to her prospective husband in Milan, and without which there can be no marriage. However, Héloïse has refused the match and therefore will not sit for the portrait, which has resulted in one artist having already been dismissed for his failure to produce the desired picture.

It is a full 20 minutes before Héloïse is seen and even then, only from the back as she leaves the house to go for a walk. She is closely followed by Marianne (Noémie Merlant), an artist who has been engaged by the countess ostensibly as a walking companion to keep Héloïse company. However, the real reason she has been engaged is to secretly paint a portrait of the prospective bride by studying her on their walks during the day and then covertly painting her portrait. Almost immediately Marianne, who has been following Héloïse across the lawn expecting to go for a gentle stroll, is terrified to see her suddenly running full tilt towards the cliff edge, however she turns back at the last second and we finally see her face when she expresses her delight at having finally had the opportunity to run.

After some time observing and secretly painting the portrait, Marianne finally confesses the real reason she has been hired by the countess and Héloïse is naturally upset by the revelation. Despite this setback the two women become closer and their desire for each other increases until neither can resist it any longer. After finally completing the 'secret' portrait Marianne shows it to Héloïse who is totally unimpressed by it, dismissing it as lifeless. Distressed by this Marianne destroys the picture much to the dismay of the countess. However, as the relationship between both women has become increasingly intense and intimate, Héloïse surprises her mother by agreeing to willingly pose for another portrait, thereby ensuing Marianne remains with her on the island.

While the countess is away on business for five days the three main characters, Marianne, Héloïse and the maid Sophie (Luàna Bajrami) are left alone in the house. The women quickly bond with each other playing card games, cooking, generally having fun, and engaging in some amusing 18th century methods to attempt to abort Sophie's unwanted pregnancy. Héloïse poses each day in an elegant green dress while Marianne paints her portrait, both women knowing that as each day brings the portrait closer to completion, it also brings them closer to the end of their affair.

This is a wonderful story about female relationships. Sciamma herself described it as "a manifesto about the female gaze", a contrast to the way in which women are normally portrayed in film under the 'male gaze'. This is given additional prominence by virtue of there being no male characters to be seen in any scene other than the boatmen who row Marianne to the island at the very start of the story, and a brief incidental character in the penultimate scene in an art gallery.

"Portrait Of A Lady On Fire" is a beautiful romantic film, an intense and moving love story between two women, with great cinematography and outstanding performances from all the leads. Winner of the Palm d'Or at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival this will surely be recognised as one of the great films of this century and a true work of art. "Portrait Of A lady On Fire" is available to stream on Netflix.



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MEPPERSHALL - WANDERBUS

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



New Timetable - Certain Days/ Routes/Times have changed

VALID FROM 5th March 2023

Please check to ensure we do not miss you!

As from 5 th March 2023		“Stops at all Bus Stops on Request”	
W2 BEDFORD - 2nd & 3rd Wednesdays of Month		OUT	RETURN
Shefford Rd, all stops		09.00	RR
High St. / Rectory Rd - all stops		09.02	RR
Interchange Retail Park		09.40	12.15
St Pauls Square / Corn Exchange		09.55	12.00
W3S BIGGLESWADE - Every Monday		OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd / High Street, All Stops		09.37 / 09.38	RR
Shefford Road, All Stops		09.40	RR
Biggleswade – A1 Retail Park		10.05	12.10
Station/ Town Centre - pick up Church St. Bus Stop o/s Asda		10.10	12.05
W5 BIGGLESWADE - A1 Retail Park/Town Centre - Every Friday		OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd / High St. – all stops		10.00	RR
Shefford Rd. – all stops		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 – all stops		08.48	RR
High St - all stops / Rectory Rd		08.50	RR
Cambridge, Downing St. – o/s John Lewis		10.10	14.10
W8A ST ALBANS - 1st Wednesday of Month			
Shefford Rd. – all stops		08.48	RR
High St. / Rectory Rd – all stops		08.50	RR
St Peters St. o/s Santander Bank / pick up opp Bank		10.15	14.00
W10 ST NEOTS - 2nd Thursday of Month		OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd. / High Street, All stops		09.18	RR
Shefford Rd, All stops		09.20	RR
St Neots - Market Place		10.15	12.20
W11 MILTON KEYNES - 3rd Thursday of Month		OUT	RETURN
Rectory Rd. / High St., All stops		09.08	RR
Shefford Rd, all stops		09.10	RR
MK - Midsummer Blvd / M&S (Stop J3)		10.10	
/ John Lewis (Stop E3)			13.15
W12 HITCHIN - Every Tuesday		OUT	RETURN
Shefford Rd, All stops		09.18	RR
High Street / Rectory Rd - All stops		09.19	RR
Bancroft Stop D		10.05	
Bancroft Stop G (Outside Paperchase)			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

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

E: Thewanderbus@gmail.com

Buses available for PRIVATE HIRE – Call for Quote.



2023 EXCURSIONS – 4th THURSDAY OF MONTH!

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

We do require a deposit of £10.00 p.p. for any excursion. If not cancelled with 7 days of excursion, the deposit may be withheld. A cheque to Wanderbus, 5 The Pastures, Upper Stondon, Beds SG16 6QB or a bank transfer to: CAF Bank Ltd, Sort Code 40-52-40, Acc No. 00013118 Name: Wanderbus Ltd (Use your name in Reference)

	DESTINATIONS	Venue Entry + Bus Fare Per Person
27th July	Stowe House & Gardens, Stowe, Buckingham	Entry £24.00 + £11.00 Bus fare Pickup – 10.00/10.30 Arrive 11.30 Depart 15.30
<i>Included in the £24.00 entry fee - House Tour Cost incl. Tea/Coffee & Biscuits. After House Tour we will drive to the Gardens entrance where there is a café for refreshments. National Trust members get free entry to the Gardens (Saving £13.00 – mention when booking)</i>		
24th August	Barnsdale Gardens, Exton, Rutland 1.16hrs	£12.50 entry + £17.50 Bus Fare Pickup 10.00/10.30 D. 15.45
<i>Geoff Hamilton's gardens run by his son Nick. With 38 individual gardens in an eight-acre site, there's plenty to see and do. Café with good menu choices.</i>		
28th Sept	Audley End House & Gardens, nr Saffron Walden, Essex	£16.50 House & Gardens. Free to English Heritage £13.50 bus fare. Pickup 10.00/10.30 D. 15.00
<i>One of the largest and most opulent Jacobean houses. Set in idyllic gardens (Capability Brown design) with a beautiful parterre and walled kitchen garden</i>		
26th Oct	Bletchley Park, Bletchley, MK	£19.50 Entry + £8.50 Bus Fare Pickup 11.00/11.30 D.16.00
<i>Bletchley Park is an English county house and estate in Bletchley, Milton Keynes that became the principal centre of Allied code-breaking during the Second World War. Guided tour available free of charge.</i>		
23rd Nov	Bury St Edmunds Christmas Market	TBA

Toddington Poetry Society

Our July meeting will be on Tuesday 11th July, 8-10pm at Luton Irish Forum, Hitchin Road Luton, LU2 0ES. The evening will be led by John Godfrey. The theme for poems on this occasion will be 'Summer' and 'Holidays'. We will be very pleased to see you if you would like to come. You would be welcome to bring your own poems on the theme (whether finished or still drafting), or published poems by other writers. Admission £5.

For some starting ideas, suggestions could be: Betjeman's poems about holidays, such as Trebetherick and A Bay in Anglesey. Also e e cummings: 'maggie and milly and molly and may'; and Carol Anne Duffy, 'Beachcomber'.

We have no meeting in August, so after this our next meeting will be 12th September, on theme of 'Journeys'.

Useful Contact Details In Meppershall

DEFIBRILLATORS – outside School, Village Hall and Budgens

DOCTORS, DENTISTS, PHARMACIES

NHS Direct 111

Dr Baxter & Partners

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

Appointments 01462 810034

General queries, prescriptions etc. 01462 818620

Lower Stondon GP Practice

109 Station Rd Lower Stondon SG16 6JJ 01462 850305

Shefford Dental Practice, 34 High St Shefford 01462 814020

Shefford Dental Clinic, 99 Hitchin Rd Shefford 01462 648465

Jardines Chemist, 7 High St Shefford 01462 813283

Shefford Pharmacy, Health Centre, Robert Lucas Drive 01462 818633

Police:

Emergency 999, non-emergency 101

Hospitals

Bedford Hospital 01234 355122

Lister Hospital, Stevenage 01438 314333

Luton and Dunstable Hospital 01582 491166

Utilities

Gas Emergency 0800 111999

Anglian Water 03457 145145

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

(Or 105 from a landline)

Central Beds Council

0300 300 8301

CBC Councillor for Gravenhurst, Meppershall, Shillington:

Blake Stephenson blake.stephenson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

hello@blakestephenson.uk

0300 300 8526

Parish Council Clerk

Alessandre Marabese

clerk@meppershall-pc.gov.uk

Member of Parliament:

Nadine Dorries

Nadine.Dorries.MP@parliament.uk

Ms Dorries has announced her intention to resign her Parliamentary seat but at this time she remains our Member of Parliament.

St Marys Church

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

See full details in the church pages of The Meppershall Messenger

Library: High St Shefford

0300 300 8067

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

Whitbread Wanderbus service

Stephanie Kirby

thewanderbus@gmail.com

Food and Supplies

Budgens Stores, Post Office, High Street

Rogers Bakery, High Street

01462 813398

The Sugar Loaf, 25 High St

01462 654334

Mobile Fish & Chips (Happy Plaice), Tuesdays 3.30 -7.00, Village Hall Car Park.

Schools

Meppershall Academy, High Street

01462 813293

Meppershall Pre-School Village Hall, Ella Carey-Butler

07816 357159

meppershallps@gmail.com

Robert Bloomfield, Shefford

01462 628800

Samuel Whitbread Academy, Clifton

01462 629900

Henlow Academy

01462 813733

Redborne Upper School, Ampthill

01525 404462

Organisations

Meppershall Players, 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 sent by post, or left in the folder kept at the Village Stores. Contributions should run to not more than one A5 page (except by prior arrangement) and should be received by the Editor not later than the 12th of the month for publication at the end of that month. 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 14 days 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
Aug-Sept 2023	31 st July	April 2024	1 st April 2024
October 2023	25 th Sept	May 2024	TBC
November 2023	30 th Oct	June 2024	TBC
Dec-Jan 2023	27 th Nov	July 2024	TBC
February 2024	29 th Jan 2024	Aug-Sept 2024	TBC
March 2024	26 th Feb 2024	October 2024	TBC
Contact John Thompson to confirm arrangements (contact information above).			