

# Mepal Matters

The newsletter for Mepal people **December 2020**



website: [www.mepalparish.org](http://www.mepalparish.org)

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the Parish Council.

# Mepal Community Pantry

**Calling all Food Waste Heroes and those that might need a bit of extra food help during this difficult time!**

Ruth has been running a Community Larder for over 2 years now and for the last 40 odd weeks has been helping out with door step deliveries through the pandemic. The Restore is open to Mepal residents who are needing a bit extra in the way of food.

Grocery donations are welcome, please only add items that you would be happy to receive. Please leave in the area marked donations, they will be separate for a time before adding to the pantry to ensure we all keep safe. Contact details are on the wall of local organisations that you might find useful and a mobile number to call if you are a Mepal resident and need a little more help with a doorstep delivery.

**Open every Saturday from 3pm - 6pm. The Restore is located down the culdesac of Bridge Road, on your left, the door is around the back so very private, it is a grey shed with a red tin roof and well lit. Green shopping baskets are available inside to borrow or bring your own bag. There is hand sanitizer and please observe social distancing rules.**

*"Big thanks for a fantastic donation to the Community Larder from The Sculthorpe Family & The Ward Family and thank you for your awesome weekly donations Buddhi Dias and also to Gurdip Singh Jatana and family for their recent donations to our holidayhunger lunch boxes."*

Ruth is hoping that we can get a Village project together in the Spring to upgrade the Restore with insulation and plasterboard and perhaps add a Community Fridge. For now Ruth is asking for the children in the village to draw their best superhero pictures to decorate the inside and make it look less bare, "As a reminder to us that there is no greater hero than the planet saving kind!"

**A big thank you to Ruth & team for setting up and running this wonderful community pantry, what an amazing and kind person, and to everyone that has donated also a big thank you!**



# Christmas Eve jingle

We have had a few people suggest a Christmas Eve jingle to create some festive cheer this December. If you would like to join in then please from your doorsteps at 6pm on Christmas Eve ring/jingle/make some noise for 2 minutes.

Given the year we've had and the likelihood of a quieter than normal Christmas we thought this would be lovely for the village to do! We had some great "Thursday night claps" in the summer and this can be fun for the children as they will likely be missing out most. Let's hope that Christmas will bring some cheer this year, and we wish every one a very Merry Christmas.



*An initiative by the Society of Local Council Clerks*

## Mepal Good Companions:

I hope you are keeping safe. We are still not able to say when we shall be able to meet again on a Tuesday afternoon in the Village Hall to enjoy a game of Triominos with tea and biscuits.



Jenny (& Ralf) and I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year (2021).

Keep your fingers crossed that we will meet again soon to 'chat and cheer'.

Very best wishes, Jane (777621)

# Mepal and Witcham Preschool Charity



The trustees of the Mepal and Witcham Preschool Charity wanted to update the village on the events which have taken place since our unfortunate early closure in May of this year.

distributing monetary gifts to 7 of these charities once we had met all our liabilities. We are pleased that such positive outcomes have been possible from the sad closure of our preschool.

Unfortunately we had to make our 5 members of staff redundant, but were pleased that those that had been working with the children were able to find new positions in other settings before the end of the academic year. We hope these new positions are working out for them and wish them every success.

We would like to thank for one final time the families who have supported the preschool during its time of operation, the loyal staff that have worked for the preschool over the years and the local community who have supported us and our fundraising efforts over the years.

We have been able to support 8 other charities\*, which also provide preschool childcare provision, by donating our furniture, resources and equipment to them to benefit the children in their care. We gave a substantial amount of our equipment and resources to Mepal and Witcham Primary School who have taken on the provision of preschool places for the villages of Mepal and Witcham in their newly formed Foundation Stage Unit. We were also able to give additional support by

Thank you,  
Evelyn, Kathryn, Zoe and Helen

\*The charities which benefitted were: Mepal and Witcham Primary School, Rackham Preschool, Haddenham Preschool, Butterflies Preschool, Little Acorns Preschool, The Ark Baby and Toddler Group, See-Saw Preschool and Meadows Day Care Centre.



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# Armistice Day & Remembrance Sunday

Parish Council Chairman Brian Rollason laid two wreaths on behalf of the community for this years scaled down Remembrance Sunday service.



*Photo: Lee Wood in dress uniform laying a wreath*

Last year saw the 100th anniversary of the commemoration of the Armistice signed at the end of the First World War, and the institution of the two-minute silence at 11am. One hundred years ago this year, the funeral of the Unknown Soldier took place at the Cenotaph in Whitehall. At the end of the Second World War, King George VI agreed that the second Sunday in November should be named Remembrance Sunday, in honour of all those who suffered in both World Wars.

In Mepal, we have enjoyed each year the privilege of being joined by the Friends of the 75 (New Zealand) Squadron, whose relatives were based at the airfield here during World War 2. Planning for the commemoration usually starts early, but is not too complicated. How different this year! Plans and risk analyses were made, reduced, expanded again, reduced further; guidance was studied, and further guidance further studied – but one thing remained clear: we would not allow the sacrifices of those who served and fell in the two world wars and in conflicts since to go unremembered.

Very sadly, our New Zealand friends were, this year for the first time, unable to be with us – their wreaths were laid quietly on their behalf. Two 'semi-private' ceremonies were arranged. The Rev Mary Hancock (who looks after Sutton and Witcham as well as Mepal) kindly agreed to preside. The first very simple ceremony took place at the New Zealand Memorial, the second, a very little later, at the Village Memorial. There could be

no Last Post, no standards, no procession, but we were permitted a verse of the National Anthem, wreaths were duly laid, and the names of the Mepal and of the Witcham fallen were read at the Village Memorial. We could not invite members of the public to attend in the usual way, but we expected that many would time their Sunday walk so as to be able to loiter on the highway and offer up their prayers and show their respect, and we were ready to record their presence, if so, to aid 'track and trace'. And so it was; quiet honour for all who were lost or harmed in war, and prayers for all of us, that we hold in mind their sacrifices, and in all our doings respect all of our fellow people, regardless of whether or not we can agree with them.

Again, at 11am on the 11th day of the 11th month, the village was reminded: the church bell was rung, 75 times before the silence to remember the 75 (New Zealand) Squadron, and 19 times thereafter, once for each of the men and women from our parish who gave their lives.

Even though few of us can now actually remember the horrors and losses of war, let us, nonetheless, never forget.

We hope to see you next year, with greater ceremonial, a church service to follow, our New Zealand friends, and a coffee reception thereafter. Do come and join us, to keep the memory – and our own resolve – strong.

Elizabeth Stazicker, churchwarden.

# St Mary's Parish Church

**Rector:** Rev'd Mary Hancock tel. 01353778722 **Churchwarden:** Mrs Elizabeth Stazicker tel. 01353 778129

It isn't possible to offer our usual Christmas services this year because of the pandemic. If and when churches are allowed to reopen for public worship, we hope to resume services at 10.15am every Sunday and to celebrate a Christmas Eucharist on Friday 25th December at 10.30am. Please check noticeboards at the church and at Mepal PO for up to date information about church services.

## A message from the Rector

Christmas and New Year are getting near. Will we celebrate both with our usual gusto?

This year we are in an unimagined pandemic but the vaccines promise an end to the strange life of the past 9 months. Meanwhile, people in the US, as well as dealing with coronavirus, are coming to terms with a new family in the White House.... A President has to deal with unexpected threats and twists like a pandemic, as well as the day-to-day running of a country. Both the US and the UK have had extraordinary leaders and notable spouses, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of Franklin D Roosevelt. Eleanor is viewed now as one of America's most important women, her crowning achievement being the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She also had a way with words. We live as if we knew what tomorrow brings because that is the most practical way to live. Eleanor knew about this: *'Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. But today is a gift. That's why it is called the present.'* We can't do anything about the past and very little about the future. The only place we can live is now, in the present. Especially when life seems uncertain, focusing on now helps us to keep

well. She also said: *'It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.'* A lit candle at a christening is a symbol of a new life in Christ and reminds us we can bring light and good to a world that needs both. The flame also reminds us of the light that brought wise men and shepherds to the baby known as Emmanuel, 'God with us'. A gift of new life to Mary and Joseph, and to everyone who accepts what is offered. This year the message of the angels to the shepherds is more important than ever. I pray that Christmas will bring you joy and peace, and hope for the year ahead.

### 49 Club

On behalf of Mepal PCC I would like to thank everyone who supports the 49 Club (Saturday night Lotto Bonus Ball draw).

During this difficult year when we have been unable to carry out regular events such as the Garden Fete, Christmas Market and coffee mornings, this fundraiser has been important. So a big 'thank you!'

**Treasurer:** Jane Edmenson, St Mary Mepal PCC

## Reminder to Local Businesses



Don't forget that all local businesses are currently being offered FREE advertising in Mepal Matters until 31st March 2021!

Please contact [mepalmatters@mepalparish.org](mailto:mepalmatters@mepalparish.org) if you would like to submit an advert.

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# Village Hall

**Chairman:** Allen Sallis, **Treasurer:** Tony Pleasance, **Bookings Clerk:** Rowena Pleasance 777275, **Secretary:** David Stazicker 778129 david.stazicker@gmail.com, **Other members:** Greg Matthews, Gordon Reid, Rosemary Wells, Lynne Woodward.

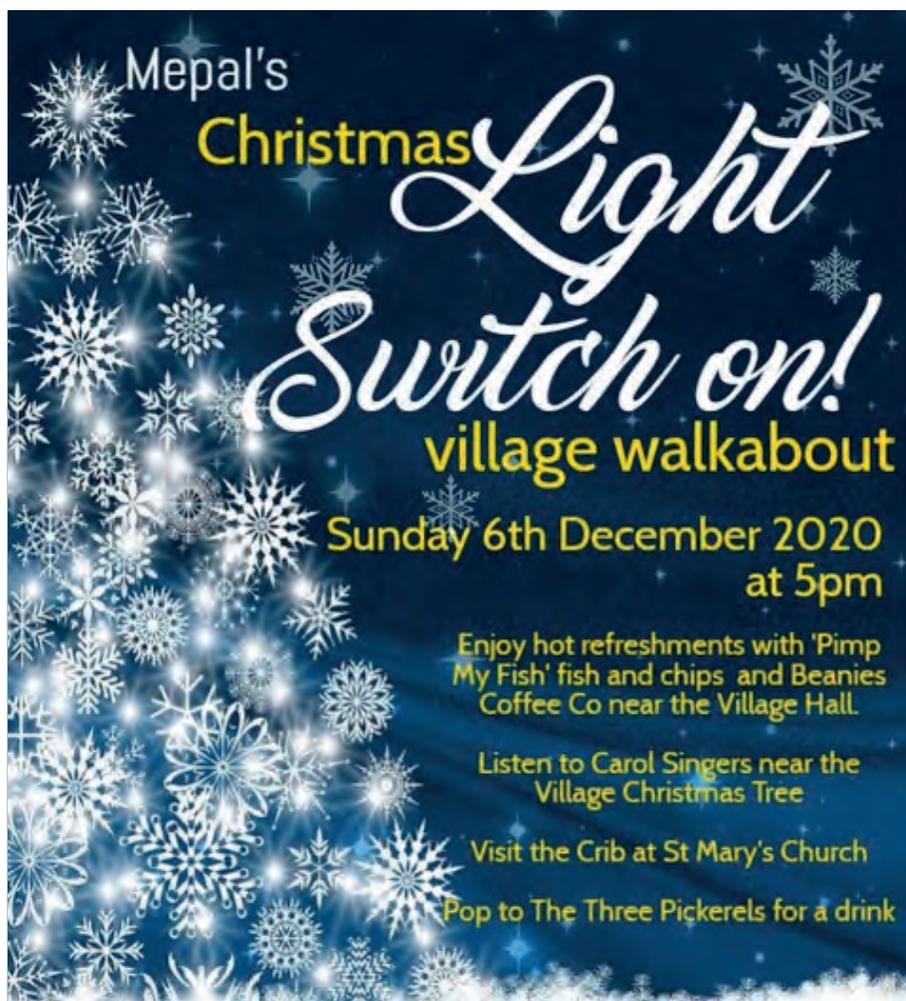
As you will all realise, not much has been going on in the Hall since the last Mepal Matters newsletter in October. Remembrance Sunday ceremonies took place in much more restricted form than usual without the Friends of the New Zealand 75 Squadron and so there were no visitors taking refreshments in the Hall afterwards. Our usual hirers are cautious about returning even when official restrictions would allow this. East Cambridgeshire will be in Tier 2 from 3rd December, which means we can't socialise with anyone we don't live with.

On 6th December there will be a Christmas Lights switch-on, with refreshments available in the car park but no activity inside the Hall. Do turn up and enjoy the occasion, but please observe all the usual precautions so that we keep safe and well and don't risk spreading infection.

When vaccinations eventually start, it isn't yet clear where they will take place, but if public buildings are needed we've offered the Hall free of charge for the purpose, so that everyone can benefit close to home without having to travel.

Fortunately, village halls are among the organisations that are getting local authority grants to tide them over while

their normal income from hiring's has dried up. Meanwhile, as we said in the last edition, we have taken advantage of the opportunity to do some tidying-up works following the installation of the new floor. There are smart new doors in the side hall and we are reorganising some of the storage cupboards to make these easier to use.



Light up your house and then walkabout to see everyone else's lights.

STAY SAFE. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.

# MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

## Councillors:

Clerk Karen Peck - 01353 741066

Vice Chair Lorna Williams

Councillor Jack Hickman

Chairman Brian Rollason

Councillor Cassy Brown

Councillor Sam Foord

Visit our website for new councillor vacancies: [www.mepalparish.org](http://www.mepalparish.org)



As we are approaching the end of the second national lockdown, we are pleased to say that with the assistance of a number of village residents, we have been able to open the Mepal Play Park on Saturday 28th November. We would remind everyone that it must be used in accordance with the National Lockdown rules until 2nd December and thereafter as we are in level 2 we would ask people to respect the rule of six when enjoying the activity in the Park. Before the 2nd December you should avoid meeting members outside your household in the Park.

Minutes of the Parish Council, meeting and regular postings on the Parish Council Website, administered by one of the Councillors, are aimed to keep you all informed about the huge backlog of maintenance that we are trying to get through. Unfortunately, we are finding that the ongoing issues at the Pavilion in terms of failure of much of the infrastructure continue to be of concern and will be addressed at the next Council Meeting. We can deal with emergency maintenance under delegated powers, but there are ongoing issues that will require additional investment before the year end.

On a positive note we are going to trial a couple of wildflower verges (junction of Witcham Road and Sutton Road and also the triangle opposite the School Lane bus stop) and have plans to renovate both bus stops and repair the vandalism damage. We aim to complete the field renovation by autumn 2021, but there will be ongoing annual maintenance costs to ensure we

don't slip back and we are looking at whether we are able to use the existing goal posts to allow some non-competitive football over the winter, as long as the contractor says it will not damage the surface. The attenuation pond seems to be working well and we are confident that it can cope with heavy rainfall and avoid any flooding issues in the allotments this winter; the final fencing will be installed after the New Year when we are sure that we don't have to carry out any further flood prevention pipe work.

We have two new councillors, Sam and Jack and sadly say goodbye to Georgina and Rebecca and thank them for their work on Council. The next Full Parish Council meeting is on 15th December and Members of the public can join via Zoom after letting the Clerk know that they will join. On behalf of Mepal Parish Council we would wish all the village a happy Christmas and a hope that 2021 will prove to be better than 2020 for everyone.

**Mepal Matters – the community Newsletter from the Parish Council- Should we stay or should we go?**

The Parish Council have been wrestling with the best way to communicate with the village and we are aware that there are four channels that are used by the village to find out what is going on:

1. This Newsletter- funded by the Parish Council
3. Mepal Parish Council (MPC) website - [www.mepalparish.org](http://www.mepalparish.org)
4. MPC Noticeboards in the village (located at the Pavilion, outside the shop and at the bus shelter on Sutton road at the Chestnut Way junction)
4. Mepal People Facebook group – managed and run by the village

A recent Facebook poll was inconclusive in terms of whether the village see any value in this publication, if you want to keep it please let us know and don't forget to send any stories, articles or adverts in before 15th January for the next issue. Send to:

[mepalmatters@mepalparish.org](mailto:mepalmatters@mepalparish.org)



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Sun 8am-1pm	Sat 9am-12.30pm

CLOSED FOR LUNCH 1-2PM

## In memory

Following the sad passing of Tom - Dot, Lorraine and Lavinia and families would like to thank everyone in the Village for all the kindness shown, offers of help, flowers and support during this difficult time, it has been much appreciated.

Your generous donations to the British Heart foundation raised £282.00 in Tom's memory. Thank you all so much.

Lavinia Littlefield



## Useful Contacts

### Medical

Sutton Priors Field Surgery	01353 778208
NHS Direct Online	111.nhs.uk
Please only call 111 if you cannot get help online	
Sutton Pharmacy	01353 778024
Ambulance	999 in an emergency only

### Utilities

National Grid (If you smell gas)	0800 111 999
UK Power Networks	Call 105
Anglian water leak report	0800 771 881

### Financial

HMRC	0300 200 3300
Universal Credit	0800 328 5644
National Debt line	0808 808 4000
Business Debt line	0800 167 6026

### Food and Supplies

Mepal Post Office	01353 778275
Milk and More	0345 606 3606
Plumbs Diary	01223 893033

### Other

East Cambs District Council	01353 665555
Cambridgeshire County Council	0345 045 5200
Care Network	01954 211919
Age Concern	0300 666 9860

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Evelyn Woodward  
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