

Mepal Matters

The newsletter for Mepal

November/December 2022



Your Vote Needed to Save the Newsletter

Read on Page 6, how to let the Council know whether this is something you wish for us to keep producing.

www.mepalparish.org

Village Hall News

The Hall is now looking a lot brighter, thanks to the interior repainting that took place over the summer. We are taking expert advice about how to reduce heat loss from the building – especially important now that gas is so expensive. On 11th October we were pleased to host a presentation by the Fire Safety Inspector for village halls throughout the County, arranged by Cambridgeshire ACRE. This was very helpful and informative. It was reassuring to know that here in Mepal we have all the appropriate equipment and procedures in place for your protection, apart from some minor administrative details that we are now rapidly sorting out.

We unfortunately weren't able to go ahead with the cream teas planned for 3rd September because too few of our small band of volunteers were available on that day. We don't think you'll have a great appetite for cream teas during the colder months, so instead we're holding a soup lunch on Saturday 5th November from 12 noon until 2.30 pm. We have signed up to Cambridgeshire ACRE's "Warm Hub" scheme, which we hope will mean that the Hall can be open for a few hours once a week for you to drop in, keep warm and have a hot drink – something which is likely to be very necessary and welcome with the sharp rise in heating and other prices.

Meanwhile with luck you should have this edition of "Mepal Matters" in time to know about our plans for Hallowe'en, Monday 31st October. We shall be serving hot chocolate and mulled alcohol-free cider from 5 to 7.30 pm and there will be sweets for children. Somewhere for families to drop in during "Trick or Treat" excursions.

Some village halls regularly serve alcoholic drinks and have a permanent licence for the purpose. Up to now we haven't done this and have used "Temporary Event Notices" to license a bar on the occasions we have run one. We'd like to find out whether it would be worthwhile having a permanent licence, so we are planning to run one or two events to "test the market". The first of these will be on Saturday 10th December, when beer, wine and soft drinks will be on sale and the dartboard and pool table will be available.

The quiz night in March was a great success and we are hoping to arrange more of these. Look out for announcements.

Mepal and Witcham Camera Club are no longer using the Hall for meetings and they have taken down their photographs from the large notice board in the Hall. They have suggested that we should invite local residents to put their own photographs on the board. So, if you would like to display your handiwork, please get in touch with one of us.

Chairman: Allen Sallis, Treasurer and Bookings Clerk: Lynne Woodward: 776272 LDSWoodward@hotmail.co.uk, Secretary: David Stazicker 778129 david.stazicker@gmail.com Other members – Amanda Cox, Alan Fayers, Lesley Sculthorpe.

St Mary's Christmas Market



Saturday November 26th
12.30 - 3pm at the Village Hall

Cakes & bakes, cards, books & gifts

Raffle

Tea & coffee

& hot sausage lunches!

All funds raised in aid of St Mary's Parish Church, Mepal

Friendship Club

We have had a lot of activities going on in the last couple of months and we are also going to be busy in the run up to Christmas, which isn't far away. I don't know where this year has gone!

In the coming months, we have jewellery making and on 23rd of November we are going to make Christmas wreaths with the help of Amanda Cox. The club are very grateful that Amanda has given up her time for this. Also, on the agenda is a trip to Spalding and in December we have our Christmas schedule. To find out what else is going on have a look at dates to remember on the diary pages.

If you would like to join our club we meet every Wednesday at 10am. Please pop along and see what you think, and if you like it come back. It's a great way of meeting people in the village and have a good old natter.

St Mary's Parish Church

For enquiries regarding baptisms, weddings and funerals please contact the churchwardens: Elizabeth Stazicker on 01353 778129 email eliz.stazicker@gmail.com or Lesley Sculthorpe on 01353 777367 email lesleysculthorpe@gmail.com

Sunday Services are held weekly at 11.30am. See the Diary Dates page or notices at the church or Mepal stores for more details.

Many thanks to all who donated gifts for the Harvest Festival on October 9th, especially to the children at Mepal & Witcham School, and their families, for an amazingly generous supply of food items – these have been passed on to the Mepal Pantry to help residents of our community.

Also a big 'Thank You' to the volunteers who have worked so hard to clear the long grass in the graveyards. We are very grateful to all those parishioners who help to keep the graveyards tidy.



Remembrance Sunday November 13th – Act of Remembrance at 10.45am at the New Zealand Memorial Garden, then the Village Memorial, followed by service at Mepal Union Chapel.

Our **Christmas Market** is on Saturday November 26th 12.30 – 3pm at Mepal Village Hall; come and browse the stalls or pop in for a hot sausage lunch!

Christmas Services – please see Diary Dates on the back page.

Proposed fens site for new Reservoir revealed

On 10th October Anglian Water confirmed its proposed location for a new reservoir in Cambridgeshire. Following a thorough and multi-stage site selection assessment process, Anglian Water have now identified that the best performing site for the proposed reservoir is an area north of Chatteris and east of the villages of Doddington and Wimblington.

A formal consultation process will begin on 12 October, open for 10 weeks, running from 12 October until the 21 December 2022. As part of this consultation a very early concept design for the reservoir has been provided to help stimulate thought and discussion. It shows some of the potential features they hope to include in the reservoir like wildlife areas, recreation and water sports, green infrastructure like cycleways and renewable energy, and others. This will be developed further as the project progresses taking account of feedback from the consultation.



REMINDER - BIN COLLECTION DATES IN MEPAL (NORMAL DAY THURSDAY)

3 NOVEMBER	BLUE	1 DECEMBER	BLUE
10 NOVEMBER	GREEN	8 DECEMBER	GREEN
17 NOVEMBER	BLUE	15 DECEMBER	BLUE
24 NOVEMBER	GREEN	22 DECEMBER	GREEN
		31 (SAT) DECEMBER	BLUE



Summer Competition

Rebecca Margieson held a fun competition over the Summer for the kids to submit a short story, poem or picture all about summer.

The winners from the older and younger category received an Ice Cream for themselves as well as five of their friends/family.



Thanks to all who entered, and a big well done to winners **Harriet Brill** (older category) and **Alfie Angier** (younger category), they seemed to enjoy their ice creams!

A thanks to Lorna Delaney for being our independent judge. We had some lovely entries with the youngest being 20 months and the oldest 114 months.....

Check out the Mepal People Facebook group for some of the other lovely entries.



Hazel the Squirrel

Hazel the squirrel needs the help of Mepal Children! Can you help her find some acorns to build up her winter supply? Post the little ones in the 'stash box' and if you are lucky enough to find a giant rare one, take it in the shop and exchange for a little treat

Happy hunting!



Mepal Parish Council book of Condolence to honour the passing of her majesty Queen Elizabeth

On the afternoon of 8 September 2022, Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's longest-reigning monarch, sadly passed away at Balmoral, her home in the Scottish Highlands. Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for 70 years, Her Majesty's tenure can be defined by a sense of duty that has made her one of the world's most respected heads of state.

Mepal Parish Council set up a book of condolence in the Pavilion for people to sign and also provided a link to the online book of condolence on our website.



Mepal Community Pantry



What is the Mepal Community Pantry?

It is a village food hub open to anyone (no means testing), aimed at providing an affordable way to access healthy staple food, reduce food waste and improve the wellbeing of residents in the local area and is open for everyone to visit.

Where does the food come from?

Re-imagine Resource Centre has a long-established operation collecting and distributing surplus food from supermarkets in partnership with Fareshare and Neighbourly, national charities working to reduce food waste. All food supplied is within 'use by' or 'best before' date. As well as donations from other Mepal residents, businesses and sponsors there is also gleaned fruit and vegetables from local growers.

When and how often does it operate?

The Pantry is open everyday. Keep up with the Facebook Page- Mepal Pantry for updates and when items are added.

Who can visit?

Simply anyone who wants to be a waste warrior and is passionate about saving the planet by rescuing food that would be headed for landfill. There are also specific food stocks which are available to all

residents in the village who may be experiencing some hardship at this time. We hope that by making these items available we can help ease some pressure and allow local families to make other choices, money saved can then be put towards other expenses. Contact admin@re-imagineresourcecentre.co.uk or call 07460 337163.

Where is the Community Pantry?

The Mepal Pantry is located down the Cul-de-sac on Bridge Road, CB6 2AR.

What can you do to help?

We welcome food donations. You can leave any tinned, sealed or fresh fruit and Vegetable donations in the Pantry. Please do not leave out of date, opened items or foods that need refrigeration.

Huge thanks to St. Marys Church, Mepal & Witcham Primary School Students and Teachers, friends and families in Mepal, The Sculthorpe and Pro-Edge Family and all who donated towards the Harvest Festival. These items will help local struggling families in this extremely difficult time and we thank you for your continued support to make this happen.

A lovely bench for a lovely man of Mepal

Many of you have remarked on the beautiful new bench installed by the family of the late Mike Delaney in memory of his life, and may even have enjoyed a quiet moment of reflection sat on it, looking out over the river near the bridge.

Mike loved Mepal, its people and the Fens, and many of us remember meeting him on our walks up to the bridge and chatting over the years.



Mike Delaney MBE MIED 1937-2020

Mepal residents disgusted about increasing amount of poo spotted around the village



One resident has hit out at the increasing amount of dog mess spotted in Mepal and it seems that the number of irresponsible dog owners not clearing up after their fur babies is on the increase again. A number of disgruntled residents are taking to social media to share annoyance at the sheer number of dogs poos spotted on their street and in the village, and also the really inexcusable amount of used dog poo bags that have just been chucked in the undergrowth or even worse hung from tree branches. The problem is particularly bad along Brangehill Drove, where the recent annual maintenance has uncovered a large number of filled poo bags that were discarded in the undergrowth. Please stop this practise.

We currently have 10 poo bins located around the village and we issue a plea to those who have not been picking up and properly dealing with their dog's waste to please pick up after them and help us keep the village free from this disgusting waste problem. The Parish Council try to work with the dog warden, but it can be difficult to catch the culprits in the act so to speak!

Late night theft of community poo bags

This brings us onto the Parish Council installation of a dispenser on the field to encourage responsible and safe use of the field. The Parish Council had installed a dispenser near to the Pavilion on the Recreation Field, to encourage dog walkers using the field to pick up after their dogs. When refilling the bags, it was noted that the dispenser was having to be refilled more and more frequently, and on checking the cameras it became clear that someone was emptying all of the bags out late at night to take home and use themselves. We know who it is, and we put a notice on the dispenser to explain that this act had been caught on camera and please would they stop. We watched them return on a subsequent night to read the notice, so hopefully they are now aware that they should not take multiple bags on future occasions. The dispenser is for occasional use if people run out of bags, and not to refill your own supplies on a regular basis.

Vandalism Issues sadly return to the village

We are sad to report that we have seen an increase in the amount of vandalism in the village and we issue a plea to consider your actions and how it affects everyone.



The costs of vandalism have to be borne by Mepal residents, so this is not a victimless crime.

One of the recently installed signs letting people know which areas that the Parish Council have responsibility for was destroyed along the Meadow Way/Brangehill Drove path.

What is more distressing was the complete destruction of a new bug house that had been built by a private individual and their child at the entrance to the Recreation. It is hard to understand such mindless actions.

Mindless destruction of lovely bug house:



What is the future for the Mepal Matters newsletter?

You may be aware the Parish Council funds the printing costs for this publication from your precept each year. Following a review of the anticipated expenditure for 2023/24 at the Parish Council Meeting held 11th October, a decision was made to ask you all to tell us whether you want us to continue to produce the printed bi-monthly copy. If you are reading this and thinking 'I really value this publication and want it to continue to be delivered to my house' OR 'I don't read this newsletter and it goes straight into the bin' then we need to hear from you to properly inform the decision. There are many calls on the Parish finances and we need to make sure we are spending your money on the things you value the most.

We have a wide range of residents in the village and have always felt that the newsletter was worthwhile and valued, but without the evidence to back this thought up, then the future for Mepal Matters is bleak.

We will assess your responses at the next Council meeting so please send your views to mepalmatters@mepalparish.org (only related to the newsletter) or we have created a SurveyMonkey online survey that will also be available on Facebook & the Council website. www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MepalMattersPoll

Parish Council News

Who are your current Parish Councillors?

The up-to-date list of your Parish Councillors is always available on the Parish Council Website, so please take a few minutes to look us up!

www.mepalparish.org/parish-council/councillors/

Mepal Parish Councillors



Brian Rollason
Chairman

Lorna Williams
Vice Chair

Lorna Delaney

Jack Hickman

Samantha
Knightley

Jim Stewart

News from the meeting held on 11th October, but please do read the minutes published on the website for full details.

In a positive development two new members have joined the Council: Jim Stewart (Brangehill) and Lorna Delaney (Wilton Gardens). At the meeting held on 11th October Lorna Dupre, our County Councillor, gave a presentation re the new reservoir to be built near Wimblington and the traffic situation on the A142 re the development of the Mepal Water sports site; CC decisions on this matter are to be made shortly at county level. You can read her full report on the Mepal Parish Council website under Parish Council/Local Government.

It was reported that under advice from a conservation expert, yellow rattle will be planted on village verges to repel the fast-growing grasses in accordance with CC conservation rules. The value for money of the bi-monthly MEPAL MATTERS bulletin was discussed and ideas around reducing to a quarterly newsletter for the next financial year or whether there might be sponsors or advertisers willing to help with the printing costs? It is important to assess what the real opinion of villagers is in regard to this local information. Do let us know how you feel on this matter and details of how you can do that are given on page 6.

The Parish council agreed to take on the responsibility of the Village Archives (many photos dating back many years can be seen by logging onto CCAN, and thanks are due to the people who created the site) after a request from two residents who have been instrumental in managing this with CCAN but would like to retire from this.

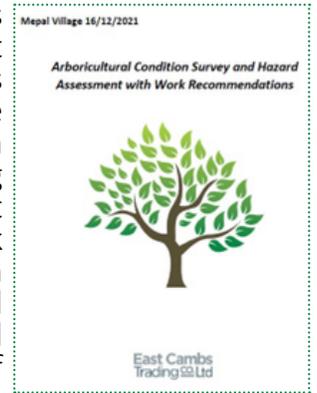
The planning applications were numerous, and they can be seen in our minutes and on the ECDC planning portal. They are also highlighted on the Parish Council website. Dog owners please note that the bags dispenser outside the pavilion are for EMERGENCIES and not for stealing (again please read the article on page 6). Correspondence received involved traffic calming in Sutton Rd; deterioration of the village sign; use of the field for sports and other purposes. Great concern was expressed by one member of council that the debate between the football club and the PC was causing unpleasantness

within the village. This Councillor hoped that the past could be relegated to history and that a NEW beginning could be possible so that a sustainable way to return regular use to our wonderful field and facilities can be found, and activity for future generations of Mepalites is assured.

Tree survey and resultant maintenance works in Mepal

After a number of years without a survey the Parish Council contacted ECDC to carry out a survey of the 92 individually identified trees, plus the eight groups of trees around the play area, and Brangehill Drove/Lilibet wood areas.

The work identified as urgent was carried out last year however the high winds this year caused some of the trees to fall and so a decision to carry out all remaining work this year to prevent further damage. This work is being carried out in September and October and should have been completed by the publication date of this newsletter.



Mepal Neighbourhood Plan survey

The survey was distributed in the last newsletter as well as a digital document and online survey, so thank you for those who filled this in to let us know your views. This will help us shape the official Neighbourhood plan, that will replace the two areas originally included in the Sutton neighbourhood plan made on 30/05/19, despite the boundary changes having been made on 14/07/18. ECDC have suggested their preferred plan to make these amendments and our intention is to complete this work in this financial year.

So, what did you tell us (briefly)?

The shop, pub, village hall and recreation field were regarded as the four most valued local community facilities, and you would like these safeguarding. There was concern about over development (housing) in the village and a feeling that the village could not support any large housing developments or estates. The youth club, Mepal Makers, Mepal Markets and footpaths in the village should be safeguarded, and conservation and accessibility of Parish Council owned land and property could be better. There was also a plea that Mepal Neighbourhood Watch should be retained and that a return of football was to be encouraged but at no cost to the other villagers (a challenging request). Finally we received many comments regarding having safe spaces to exercise dogs off lead but also highlighting the dog fouling problems and we would ask dog owners to read the article on page 6 and take note.

DIARY DATES

October

Mon 21st Halloween hot chocolate & mulled cider at the Village Hall 17:00 - 19:30

November

Wed 2nd Friendship Club AGM, Bingo/book/jigsaw swap at the Village Hall 10:00

Sat 5th Soup Lunch at the Village Hall 12.00 - 14.30

Sun 6th St Mary's Parish Eucharist 11.30

Weds 9th Friendship Club Jewellery making at the village Hall 10:00

Sun 13th Act of Remembrance at the New Zealand Memorial Garden 10.45

Weds 16th Friendship Club Meal Out

Weds 23rd Friendship Club Christmas Wreath making 10:00

Sun 20th St Mary's Parish Eucharist 11.30

Sat 26th Christmas Market at Village Hall 12.30 – 15.30

Sun 27th St Marys Holy Communion (Morning Prayer 11.30am) 09.30

Weds 30th Friendship Club Trip to Spalding 13:30 – 15:30

December

Sun 4th St Mary's Parish Eucharist 11.30

Weds 7th Friendship Club Christmas meal at Village Hall 12.30

Sun 11th Mepal Market at the Village Hall 10:00 - 12.00

Weds 14th Friendship Club Christmas meal out

Sat 10th Beer, wine, soft drinks for sale and dartboard/ pool table at Village Hall

Sun 11th St Marys Holy Communion 11.30

Tues 13th Full Parish Council Meeting at Mepal Pavilion 18:00

Sun 18th St Mary's Parish Eucharist 11.30

Sat 24th St Mary's Christingles 10:00

Sun 25th St Mary's Christmas Eucharist 10.30 tbc

Weds 21st Friendship Club Christmas bingo, lucky dip at Village Hall 10:00

January

Wed 4th Friendship Club First meeting of 2023 at the Village Hall

MEPAL MAKERS

**LOVE MAKING THINGS?
WANT TO LEARN A NEW SKILL?
NEED SOMTHING REPAIRING?**

Woodworking, CNC machining,
Laser engraving, coffee,
Power tools, glass kiln,
Biscuits, electronics lab,
Software, people,
Crafting, painting,
Poster printing,
Space, fun

Mepal Makers is a new community workshop in the village for people wanting to make things, repair things, upcycle or recycle. Whether it's a hobby you've always wanted to try but didn't want to buy the tools until you were sure, or a side hustle to earn some money, or just for the family fun of building things. Membership is free, materials are free- just bring your enthusiasm.

Meet Learn Build Play

For more information:
www.mepalmakers.co.uk
info@mepalmakers.co.uk
07801 892331

Mepal Community Pavilion – open for hire

The Parish Council managed Mepal Community Pavilion located on the Recreation Field at the Witcham road end is available for hire. Village Community groups are encouraged to use the facilities – please contact the Clerk to discuss your requirements.

Full details can be read here: www.mepalparish.org/amenities/mepal-community-pavilion/ where there is also a link to the online booking form.



Mepal Matters Print Deadlines

December 8th - Jan/Feb 2023 issue

Mepal Parish Council:
Clerk: Karen Peck - 01353 741066
Chairman: Brian Rollason
Vice Chair: Lorna Williams,
Councillors: Sam Foord, Jack Hickman



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Next copy deadline: 8th December 2022
We rely on a team of volunteers to deliver the 475 copies, please let us know if you can help distribute.