

# Mepal Matters

The newsletter for Mepal

January/February 2023



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

## Village Hall News

We've been very pleased to join forces with the Parish Council and open the Hall as a "Warm Hub" each Monday from 10 am until 1 pm, thanks to funding provided by East Cambridgeshire District Council and a lot of hard work by our friends at Cambridgeshire ACRE in making the scheme happen and giving us practical help and guidance. This is very welcome now that the weather has turned wintry, adding to the problems of rising costs for home heating, food and just about everything else. Please spread the word, especially if you know of friends or neighbours who would benefit from somewhere to sit and chat with a warm drink. We can also arrange through ACRE for experts to join us and give advice on heating, debt and other personal and household problems. At present we have only a very small number of volunteers, from the Village Hall Committee, Parish Councillors, and one or two others, to run the Warm Hub sessions, and we're very grateful to them, but we'd be delighted to have any other offers of help.

The Hall is now a really attractive venue for all sorts of activities. From time to time we've asked, in "Mepal Matters" and through other channels, whether people would be interested in, for example, darts, carpet bowls, line dancing or table tennis. We've had little or no response. So if you'd like to take part in – or better still, organise and lead – any of these or anything else in the Hall, please get in touch with our Chairman Allen Sallis – contact details below.

Another piece of good news is that Pimp My Fish have resumed monthly visits to the Hall with their excellent quality and reasonably priced fish and chips. There was enough custom on 1st December for them to decide to return on Thursday 5th January. If they have enough customers then they intend to continue visiting on the first Thursday evening in each month, so if you would like this useful facility to continue, make sure you turn up then and make it worth their while.

In the last Mepal Matters we announced a darts evening with licensed bar, to take place on Saturday evening 10th December. For various reasons that didn't go ahead, the clincher being the World Cup Quarter-Final England v France, which we feared might be an even stronger rival attraction.

The East Anglian Air Ambulance will shortly be placing a clothing bank in the Hall car park in front of the storage shed. They rely on sources of that kind to finance their vital life-saving work, so we hope that this will enable Mepal residents to make an important contribution.

No self-respecting organisation now lacks its own website. We've been very grateful to the Parish Council and Cambridgeshire ACRE's "Halls for Hire" for including information about the Hall on their websites, but after a lot of hard work by Committee member Alan Fayers we now have our own site. Visit [www.mepalvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.mepalvillagehall.co.uk) as many times

as you can, so that it comes up first when people are searching for a venue for an event, or wanting information about our village.

Amanda Cox joined our Committee a year ago and in that short time she has been a tower of strength in organising activities and publicising what we are doing. Amanda has now unfortunately decided pressure of work is too much and she is resigning from the Committee after the special Warm Hub session on 19th December for which she has arranged singers and helped to provide a soup lunch. Hearty thanks to Amanda for her hard work. We welcome June Sallis as a new member, appointed by the Friendship Club.

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

## Friendship Club

What a good year we have had this year, but it has gone so quickly. It's hard to believe we are nearly into 2023!

We have been busy over the last few months with our meals out, our Christmas meal at the club and our Christmas meal outing. We have made Christmas wreaths and table decorations with the help of Amanda which was great, and we also had a great day out to Springfield's in Spalding.

We are all looking forward to 2023 as we have lots of plans for you all to enjoy; please check out the various events listed in the diary dates back page.

If you would like to join The Friendship Club, why not pop along after the New Year and meet us all and see what you think. It's really great way to meet new people, make new friends, have a good chat and catch up over a cup of tea. We meet on Wednesday mornings from 10am till 12pm.

We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



### Policing South Cambridgeshire

We're aware of concerns around a man reported to be waving drivers down across South Cambs and asking for money for fuel to get his wife to hospital.

We believe this is happening across the country and we're working with other forces who have had similar reports, to locate those involved.

We ask members of the public to continue to report suspicious activity to us via 101 or online [www.cambs.police.uk/report](http://www.cambs.police.uk/report). In an emergency always call us on 999.

# St Mary's Parish Church

Interim Priest-in-Charge: Rev'd Mark Howarth 01353 699491 email mhaworth50@hotmail.com  
Churchwardens: Elizabeth Stazicker 01353 778129 email eliz.stazicker@gmail.com, Lesley Sculthorpe 01353 777367 email lesley.sculthorpe@gmail.com

## A new priest

On Sunday 16th October, the Rev Mark Haworth was formally sworn in as interim priest for the 11 rural parishes in Ely deanery: Little Downham, Coveney, Sutton, Witcham, Wilburton, Haddenham, Wentworth, Witchford, Little Thetford, Stretham and Mepal, and took his first service at St Mary's on 4th December. He will be living at the rectory in Little Downham. Contact details are in the church porch but please contact us in the first place (addresses below) so that we do what we can to lighten his load and still meet your need.

## Why a temporary post?

Mark's post is for two years only, whilst he helps us plan how we work for the next several years after that. Our difficulty is that parishes are now responsible for paying all the costs of their parish priest, and although the 'take-home' pay of a vicar is not all that great – about the national average - we also have to find national insurance, pension contributions and other diocesan support costs. Mepal has until recently been joined with Sutton and Witcham, under the Rev Mary Hancock (who retired last January), but three parishes together cannot possibly find so much money. Over the next two years, we have to work out what can best be done in the longer term to continue to offer everything that the Rev Mary offered to everyone, not just to those who come to church. But for now, we are lucky in the help given us by retired priests the Rev Alan Jesson and the Rev Stephen Bowring, and with the Rev Mark to help as well, we shall try to continue (or even improve on!) that offer – our Church is there for everyone in the village, when, if and whenever you want us, so please get in touch if there is anything you need – or anything you would like us to do. We are open to suggestions, and always grateful for help.

## The graveyards

We are immensely fortunate in the help we are being given to make and keep the graveyards tidy, but to do it in a way which leaves spaces for wild life to thrive. Thank you very much, all those of you involved. If you want to help, please get in touch with one of us. And remember, anyone with a connection with the village and who is willing to be buried with a very brief Christian service, is welcome to be buried, or to have their ashes buried, there. We are unusual, it seems, in having plenty of space.

## Christmas

By the time you receive this you will also have had our card with details of the services in all three parishes. We should be delighted to see you at one or all of them (note especially the carols on the green on 23rd December) – or just pop in to church sometime in Christmas week to look at the crib.

**Sunday services** are held at 11.30am, except for January 8th when we'll be joining with St Martin's Church at Witcham for the annual Plough Sunday service at 10am. You can find details of all our services and events on the Diary Dates Page and on our notice boards at the church and at Mepal PO & Stores.

**Afternoon Tea with Bring 'n Buy and Nearly New Sale Saturday 21st January** – come along to the Village Hall from 3pm for tea & cake, bring your unwanted Christmas presents and look for a bargain!

**Pancake Afternoon Tuesday 21st February** – again at the village Hall, we'll be serving pancakes from 3pm to mark Shrove Tuesday – come along and enjoy – bring the children for an after school treat.



## Mepal Market



### Market Dates for 2023

Jan - No Market

March 12th

May - 14th

July - 9th

September - 10th

December - 10th

Please contact Evelyn at  
mepalmarket@gmail.com

# Ouse Washes Middle Level Barrier Bank raising works

December 2022

## Project completion

The Middle Level Barrier Bank (MLBB) is the bank of the Ouse Washes reservoir extending from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice. The work we have carried out is to comply with recommendations made by the Reservoir Inspecting Engineer to complete the works under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

## Great news!

We are delighted to tell you that the Ouse Washes bank raising works finished in October 2022. We started construction in 2017 and the work has taken 6 years to complete.

We have raised the crest level of the MLBB between Welmore Lake Sluice and Earith and as part of the bank raising, we have provided a robust demountable flood barrier on the Welney Wash Road (A1101) where it crosses the Middle Level Barrier Bank and creates a low spot. We have also raised a low section of the South Level Barrier Bank between Sutton Gault and Chain Corner.

During October we completed the earthworks, the haul road raising, and we carried out the trialling and testing of the Welney demountable flood barrier. On the 14 October 2022 together with our contractor Jackson Civil Engineering and our supply chain partner Flood Control International Ltd, we held a training day for the Environment Agency field staff in how to install the barrier across the road in the event of flooding. The demountable flood barrier forms part of the 30km length of the Ouse Washes.



Due to the environmental constraints of the Ouse Washes work can only be carried out during the summer months, between 15 July and 31 October each year. This is to avoid disturbing the over wintering and ground nesting birds. Each year we have worked with Natural England to negotiate a longer working window to carry out winter repairs and haul road work.

We will continue to carry out regular inspections of the bank and monitor the grass growth for the next 2 years until the reservoir engineer gives a final sign-off in autumn 2024. This will include regular grass cuts, ecological surveys and repairs to damage that may happen over the winter months.

The footpath of the Middle Level Barrier Bank re-opened to the public on 1 November 2022. Although the bank is now open, the grass still needs to grow. We would appreciate if you would be careful when accessing and walking on the bank and stay away from the patches of grass that haven't grown fully yet.



## What we have done

Raised 30km of Middle Level Barrier Bank from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice	Raised 2.5km of South Level Barrier Bank from Sutton Gault to Chain Corner
Decommissioned Black Sluice	Decommissioned disused telemetry hut at Earith
Tree and shrub planting at Earith	Improved bridleway access in Earith
Flood wall extension at Sutton Gault	Haul road widening between Welches Dam & Mepal
Raised 7.1km of the haul road from Earith to Welney	Works to Increase bridge capacity at Welches Dam
Replaced the existing flood wall at Welches Dam	Installed 5 new bird hides at the RSPB reserve
Installed temporary bridges direct to the bank at Earith & Mepal to reduce traffic on local roads	Installed erosion protection along sections of the bank between Mepal & Welches Dam
Installed hardstanding at Mepal for temporary high-volume pumps	Constructed demountable flood barrier at Welney

Throughout the project we have engaged with the public, schools and organisations adding value in local communities; visits, activities, local noticeboards, public drop-in's, surgeries, newsletters, briefings, questionnaires, press releases, online information page, virtual exhibition rooms, online consultations & meetings, social media.

## Completion event

Representatives from local organisations, Ouse Washes user groups, Internal Drainage Boards, Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk County Councils joined us at the Wildfowl Wetland Trust in Welney on Friday 18 November to celebrate the end of the works. The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP for Northeast Cambridgeshire represented local constituents.

The Environment Agency and the project team, we would like to thank you for all the co-operation and support you have given us over the last 6 years.

## How to stay in contact with us

Our Public Liaison Officers will continue to keep you updated during the maintenance period of the project. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Public Liaison Officers: Monica Stonham or Yazmin Parry via email [ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com](mailto:ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com)



## Community Craft Christmas Tree



We hope you enjoyed making your decoration look very festive and hanging it on the shop wall Christmas tree, generously made by the village's resident artist Rebecca Margieson. **Rebecca thanks you for helping to make the tree look really pretty!**

## Childrens Craft Club held in the Pavilion



The latest group hire of the Pavilion made a selection of bird boxes at their monthly meet.

They also enjoyed a live demo from thermomix to make some delicious truffles.

### Mepal Pavilion – available 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 with a link to the online booking form:

[www.mepalparish.org/amenities/mepal-community-pavilion/](http://www.mepalparish.org/amenities/mepal-community-pavilion/)



### Examples of text scams to be aware of:



#### Text message

Text message states there is a package that needs to be rescheduled and asks you to press on a 'bit.ly' link.

The link takes you to a scam site asking for payment.

Do not click on any links or enter any details.

# 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/](http://www.mepalparish.org/parish-council/councillors/)

### Mepal Parish Councillors



**Brian Rollason**  
Chairman



**Lorna Williams**  
Vice Chair



**Lorna Delanoy**



**Jack Hickman**



**Samantha Knightley**



**Jim Stewart**

### Mepal Neighbourhood Plan

Progress on the Neighbourhood Plan continues, following the responses made to the Questionnaire. Analysis of the surveys by the Parish Council has been ongoing including discussion with the consultant assisting the Parish Council. This has helped to inform the first draft of the Neighbourhood Plan which has recently been discussed at a meeting between the Parish Council and our consultant. The content of the draft Neighbourhood Plan can now be finished, and our consultant can complete the various procedural and evidence documents that are required to support the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Once the suite of documents has been completed, then early in 2023 the Parish Council will be undertaking consultation on the Draft Mepal Neighbourhood Plan. This consultation is a statutory stage in the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process and is governed by Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. The Regulations set out various legal provisions that must be met; this includes the consultation having to be for a minimum of 6 weeks. When we get to this stage, the Parish Council will be notifying residents of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and will invite comments and thank you to those people who responded to the survey to highlight your priorities. The plan is to submit the NHP and publish in 2023.

### Vandalism and Antisocial Behaviour

Sadly most of you will be aware of the recent spate of antisocial behaviour which had badly damaged the Parish Council noticeboard on the recreation field, destroyed a number of other signs, left the

Laurel Close Play Park in a mess with temporary damage to the swings and, more distressingly, has attacked the Mepal Pantry. It is extremely disappointing to see a voluntary service designed to help those in need is being attacked in this way and we as a community have to find a way of stopping this unacceptable behaviour. Whilst we have some of the culprits witnessed on the cameras protecting council property, the distance shots are not conclusive enough for the police to be able to positively identify the individuals.

We ask Mepal residents to use the correct communication routes to report concerns, anti-social behaviour and other issues. For vandalism and antisocial behaviour please report this to the police to enable them to build up a better picture of what is happening in our community. Without official reports being made to the correct agencies, the community will continue to be targeted. Any issues related to Parish Council land or assets should be reported directly to the clerk, or via the Contact us function on the website. Faults or issues with verges have to be dealt with by Cambridge County Council or East Cambridgeshire District Council or in the case of service faults to the service company. Remember that we do not have full time Parish Council staff, so the councillors can only deal with genuine emergency actions outside of the Clerk/Maintenance Managers official hours. Facebook groups are not an official route to report issues and therefore any posts cannot be acted upon.

### Verge Maintenance plans for 2023

This year was the first full year of grass cutting to the recommended CCC reduced cutting schedule and due to timing and weather conditions, it was clear that some areas had a lot more grass growth than desirable. The very early spring rain and warm weather was perfect conditions for rampant grass growth, and we do appreciate that this may look untidy to some residents. We have therefore been advised to plant yellow rattle seed in a number of verge areas, which we have done as an initial trial in a couple of areas. This wildflower plant attaches itself to the roots of grass species and slows its growth so should help us with our verge maintenance in 2023.

### Mepal Matters Newsletter

The majority of returned surveys and direct messages have asked for the Parish Council to retain the publication in its bi-monthly form, so thank you to those who replied to help us understand your views. The printed communication is needed by a section of the village population who may not have access to online information, so we are pleased to say that the newsletter will continue as a bi-monthly publication. If you DO NOT wish to receive a copy please email [clerk@mepalparish.org](mailto:clerk@mepalparish.org) and we will remove your address from the mailing list.

# DIARY DATES

## January

Sun 1st	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.30
Weds 4th	Friendship Club Bingo, Book/Jigsaw Swap	10:00
Sun 8th	St Mary's Plough Service at Witcham	10.00
Weds 11th	Friendship Club donate to Food Bank, Mepal Pantry, Unwanted Xmas Gifts, Club has money	10:00
Weds 23rd	Friendship Club Christmas Wreath making	10:00
Sun 15th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.30
Weds 18th	Friendship Club Meal Out, Seasons	10:00
Sat 21st	St Mary's Tea & Bring 'n Buy at Village Hall	15.00
Sun 22nd	St Mary's Parish Holy Communion	09:30
Sun 22nd	St Mary's Parish Lay-led service	11:30
Weds 25th	Friendship Club Speaker from Silvertime Legal	10:00
Sun 29th	St Mary's Parish Joint Service	11:30

## February

Weds 1st	Friendship Club Bingo, Book/Jigsaw Swap	10:00
Sun 5th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.30
Weds 8th	Friendship Club Soup & roll with cheese & biscuits, Quiz, Free,	12:00-14:00
Sun 12th	St Mary's Parish Holy Communion	11:30
Weds 15th	Friendship Club Meal out Three kings	10:00
Sun 19th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.30
Tues 21st	St Mary's Pancakes at Village Hall	15:00
Weds 22nd	Friendship Club Pink bags, possibly bring and buy	10:00
Sun 26th	St Mary's Parish Holy Communion	09:30
Sun 26th	St Mary's Parish Lay-led service	11:30

## March

Weds 1st	Friendship Club Bingo, Book/Jigsaw Swap	10:00
Wed 8th	Friendship Club Coffee morning with Raffle	10:00
Sun 12th	Mepal Market at the Village Hall	10:00 - 12:00
Weds 15th	Friendship Club Games morning	10:00
Wed 2nd	Friendship Club Jacket potatoes in hall	11:30 - 13:30
Weds 29th	Friendship Club Easter bonnets/ table decoration, ask someone to show members, Maureen silvester	10:00

**The Mepal Christmas Tree**



**1st Sutton Scouts Santa and his sleigh visited Mepal on 10th December**



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



A Mepal Parish Council Publication  
 Send articles to: [mepalmatters@mepalparish.org](mailto:mepalmatters@mepalparish.org)  
**Next copy deadline: 10th February 2023**  
 We rely on a team of volunteers to deliver the 475 copies,  
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