

# Mepal Matters

The newsletter for Mepal

July/August 2024



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



## Village Hall News

The temporary closure of Mepal Post Office Stores during building works means that villagers are without some vital provision. For many years our community has had the benefit of helpful and unstinting service from our Postmaster Gurdip Singh Jatana, his family members and others. To help fill the gap we have firstly agreed with the Post Office that they can provide a service in the Hall on four mornings a week – Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays (except Thursday 4th July when the Hall will be in use as the polling station for the General Election). Thanks to some contributions from local residents we are able to accommodate this at modest cost to Gurdip. Secondly we have agreed that Mepal Pantry can site a cabin in the car park for the sale of essential foodstuffs. We hope that together these arrangements will help to tide people over.

We have engaged the builder who very successfully installed a temporary covering after the flood damage earlier in the year, to make a permanent repair to the kitchen roof. We had feared that the joists might be rotten, requiring major work including a new ceiling. An initial inspection suggests that the joists are sound and the work can be confined to installation of new boarding and covering membrane. If so, closure of the kitchen for safety reasons can be confined to about a week from Monday 24th June.

In recent months we have received some very heavy bills from Anglian Water. We have identified and done our best to rectify some faults in the Hall's plumbing fittings, but we doubt whether these can account for the consumption of water that has been recorded, and we are investigating whether the water meter is faulty. Meanwhile, all Hall users please make sure when you leave, that all taps are fully turned off and no water is running.

We have learned that grants are available towards the costs of installing public charging points for electric vehicles at community buildings. However, on looking at the details of the scheme we find that the charging points would only be of the slow variety. Bearing in mind that only a minority of dwellings in the village lack adjoining off-road space where a private charging point could be installed, and that any such public facility would be occupied probably overnight by a single vehicle to the exclusion of others, we have not felt this possibility worth pursuing.

The quiz night on 10th May was very well attended and successful and we shall arrange more in future. As the Friendship Club held a D-Day celebration cream tea on 5th June we decided not to go ahead with a similar event 5 days later as planned. We shall instead be serving

cream teas in the Hall from 2.30 pm on Saturday 7th September, and further publicity will appear nearer to the date.

Chairman: Allen Sallis, Treasurer and Bookings Clerk: Lynne Woodward: 01353 776272 LDSWoodward@hotmail.co.uk, Secretary: David Stazicker 01353 778129 david.stazicker@gmail.com Other members – Tim Bosson, Alan Fayers, June Sallis, Lesley Sculthorpe.

## Friendship Club

As we have already reached July, I can't believe how quickly the year is going and I dread to say that soon we will be planning things for Christmas; we already have our trip booked for Springfields!

The Friendship Club has been busy the last few months. We had our first visit to The Mad Cat in Pidley for a meal in May and in June we visited The Three Tons in Doddington. We also went to Rushden Lakes for a trip in May to do some shopping and although we saw a lot of rain, everyone still enjoyed the day out.

On June 5th we had an afternoon tea to honour D Day veterans and to remember the bravery of all those people who fought and those that didn't make it home.

Kari Payne from Healthwatch also joined us to talk to club members and gain an insight into our issues. The Three Tons in Doddington was the venue for the meal.

Looking forward, we are excited to have the Fire Brigade visiting us on 10th July to give us a talk on fire safety; there are lots of other things going on.

If you would like to come along to a meeting, we would love to see you. We meet at the village hall every Wednesday 10-12, unless specified or we are going out. Just pop in and join in as it's a great way of meeting people and having a chat with the bonus of a nice cup of tea and coffee!



# St Mary's Parish Church

**Interim Priest-in-Charge:** The Reverend Canon Mark Haworth 01354 699491 or 07932 160009 m.haworth@hotmail.com  
Churchwardens: Elizabeth Stazicker 01353 778129 eliz.stazicker@gmail.com  
Lesley Sculthorpe 01353 777267 lesleysculthorpe@gmail.com

**Sunday service times:** please note that service times have changed again, to accommodate as many as possible and importantly our priests. **From now on we shall celebrate parish eucharist at 11am every Sunday** (save where there is a 5th Sunday in the month, when we join with Witcham and Sutton to hold a joint service). If you like, put a toe in the water by joining us after the service, about 11.45, for a sherry or fruit juice. Or there are services at 9.30 at Witcham and 10.30 at Sutton, where the congregations would be pleased to welcome you.

Full details of St Mary's services are in the Calendar and on the noticeboard at the Church. We shall attempt to find another notice space in the village whilst the shop is being altered, so look out for it!

**Coffee and conversation** A very informal gathering in the churchyard (in the church if not fine). No religious content – just friendly chat for everyone or anyone: Mondays 10.30-12 noon.

**Parish lunch** at The Willows, Low Bank, Sunday 4th August, 1pm: canapes, hot dishes, luscious puddings and a glass of wine – tickets £15 (children £8) from Elizabeth Stazicker eliz.stazicker@gmail.com, 01353 778129. Everyone welcome, you don't need to come to church; book soon, spaces are limited!

**Parochial Church Council secretary.** Our PCC meet every other month to manage our church life. For as long as most of us can remember, Jo Hamilton has been PCC secretary, but the time has come for her to hand the job on. The Secretary does not have to be a member of the PCC or church. **Would YOU be willing either to take our minutes, or to act as full secretary (details can be provided)?** It is potentially interesting work. Contact Elizabeth!

St Mary's Parochial Church Council are looking for some voluntary help – a Minutes Secretary for our meetings, and a Secretary for formal business (or one person to fill both roles). Interesting jobs, and very good for your CV! For further information, please contact Elizabeth Stazicker, churchwarden, 01353 778129 eliz.stazick-

## PASTORAL LETTER

### CHANGE, THE CONSTANT CONDITION

Dear Friends,  
I am writing on Whitsun morning, 50 days after Easter (hence it's more modern term Pentecost), when the Church 'took wing' with the Holy Spirit being conferred on the disciples in wind, often symbolised by a dove, and as if on fire. On a recent visit to Wells Cathedral in Somerset the nave was full of white paper doves suspended from cross-wires between the pillars, filling the whole space; it changed the feel of the building, which is the whole point of this major festival, that of change and new perspective.

Organisationally, as significant national institution, we are transitioning and adapting to changed circumstances in our (in)ability to recruit and pay for stipendiary ministry, along with renewed understanding of the ministerial task needing to be shared by the whole people of God, lay and ordained. Our new 'Isle of Ely Villages Team Ministry' is our own manifestation of this change; the future does not have to look like the past, but needs to embody the most important aspects of our shared history while addressing the challenges of the present day while also looking to God's future. The Church remains a bastion of stability ('to whom else can we go, you O Lord, have the words of eternal life') and yet while retaining its role as a guardian of the nation's religious, moral and ethical observances, attitudes and laws, it is learning quickly and importantly about the necessity of embracing inclusivity and difference, owning up to its failures to do so in past generations. Tradition is capable of change, and we are the better for adapting; nostalgia is immutable and leaves you in the past, and as they say "it's not what it used to be!" Like the inability of the weather to always be warm and sunny, there's no such thing as a poor day, only the wrong clothing.

At a more personal level, each of us is surely challenged to embrace the wind of change in our daily living, being set on fire with enthusiasm and passion for what we feel called to do. In cases where someone needs to reform their way of life, it might involve a complete turning round, a conversion experience; a Damascus Road moment like St Paul might elude us, but the small changes of which we are capable can bring enormous benefits. Such might include behaviour, diet, attitude, stewarding of our resources, and our precious use of time, and to do so we might seek the help of trusted advisers as well as clinicians, family and friends. The nation's mental health is a major cause for concern at the moment, and my hope is that each of us might review our lives this Pentecost, seeking those changes which deep down we know we should, while remembering that Jesus said 'I came that you might have life, and have it in all its fulness'. It's his Holy Spirit, and he is with us.

Mark  
Rev'd Canon Mark Haworth

## CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

This is my first annual report as your Chairman, so I thought I would start off with some of this year's challenges, and finish off with some highlights:

- We had been working towards obtaining General Power of Competence (GPC). The poor turnout at the election means that we will have to wait until 2027 to meet this (see page 3) and this limits our ability to make donations or grants other than those budgeted or in S137 approved grants. It is important that people understand this restriction when we are unable to make donations or contributions.
- We continue to struggle to get less responsible dog owners to pick up after their dogs. The 'emergency' bags we made available on the dispenser on the field were being taken in excessive quantities by one dog owner. The field is now being used by children, so please do not allow your dog to run over the pitch areas.
- There are still low level incidences of vandalism and antisocial behaviour in the village. Damaging noticeboards, littering in the playpark and in the high street and damaging noticeboards, bus shelters and being a general nuisance costs money and time. Please be vigilant and report all crime.
- Reporting problems and issues needs to be done formally to the right party. It is vital that the person affected, or the person witnessing an issue reports it (to the police, to CCC or to ECDC). Making an announcement on Social media in the expectation that the Parish Council will see it and report it for you is not effective. Whilst we can support you if you don't get a response, we do need you to make the initial report.
- We have been able to work with Sutton Football club (who have merged with Mepal Sports FC) to see the return of football to the recreation field. It is challenging for us all, but we are working through the problems and hope this is the start of a productive relationship and successful ladies, men's, and youth teams.
- We shared costs with the Village Hall to purchase a new defibrillator, now installed on the outside of the Village Hall to replace the one on the shop wall.
- We have been able to support the Youth Club and the Friendship Club through S137 grants
- We have been able to upgrade the PC owned street lighting to LED to reduce costs/electricity usage.
- Annual Maintenance Of Brangehill Drove - East Cambs Trading carried out the annual maintenance for us this year, coming in below budget.
- Parish Tree Survey & Remedial Work- Interim survey and all recommended remedial work carried out by East Cambs Trading.
- Annual Maintenance Of Laurel Close Playpark Hedges- balancing the biodiversity and safety aspects is not always easy, but as agreed we are maintaining the height of the hedges around the playpark at a level that parents and the public can see in and out. This is an annual achievement that results in a lot of clippings, and rather than spend more money disposing of them, we now have a managed wildlife area opposite the playpark and have planted hedging and bulbs in the area around what will become a large bug and hedgehog hotel.
- The development of a Nature Recovery Plan for Mepal
- We are working on the biodiversity and net gain plan for the Parish, with initiatives like fairy paths through grass areas, managing grass growth by planting flowers like yellow rattle in verges, light touch bramble cutting to maintain wildlife corridors and the work on the wildlife new area as you enter the Recreation field from Laurel Close. We have planted 286 new hedge/tree plants around the Recreation Field in a glade with over 200 bulbs and we plan to continue with the help of the community.
- The work on the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan has resulted in a successful enquiry stage and the plan will proceed to referendum in June 2024. We ask everyone eligible to vote – this is your plan!



# WHO & WHAT IS THE PARISH COUNCIL?

Mepal Parish Council can have a maximum of 7 unpaid Councillors representing an electorate of 837. Parish councillors are elected by the public and serve four-year terms and vacant seats outside of the elections are filled by co-opted councillors. They can stand for re-election after the four-year term. In January 2023, 4 of the 7 vacancies were filled (one elected Councillor (Chairman) and 3 co-opted councillors). In the May 2023 election, a poor turnout meant that we had only 4 elected councillors, one of whom then stood down later in 2023. We currently have 3 elected councillors and 4 co-opted councillors.

As a corporate bodies with accumulated powers through legislation, our powers are constrained to specific legislation. The General Power of Competence (GPC) is an important legislative statement that councils have the power to do anything an individual may do, unless specifically prohibited. We have been working towards this, (CiLCA qualified Clerk), but unfortunately the poor turnout at the elections means we don't meet the second requirement that the number of councillors elected at the last ordinary election, or at a subsequent by-election, must equal or exceed two thirds of its total number of councillors. The next election is not until 2027, so until then we cannot act unless we have a specific power to act.

Agendas and information about Parish Council meetings and the Asset register (under amenities) are displayed on the Parish Council Website: <http://www.mepalparish.org>

The Parish Council's major role is to represent the parish on issues affecting us to the District and County Councils, and to regional and central government, and other agencies. It is responsible for the Community Pavilion, some but not all parish grass cutting, its own street furniture (noticeboards, litter bins, dog waste bins, seats, bus stops and some street lighting) and through the Parish Paths Partnership, ensures that registered Rights of Way are open and maintained.

It maintains open spaces: The Recreation Field and attached children's play area, the Village Green, the Laurel Close Green, Brangehill Drove and Lilibet Woods. The Parish Council considers and comments to the Local Planning Authority

on all planning applications (statutory consultee). The Parish Council supports other charitable groups and organisations which work within the village.

## Income and expenditure 2023/24 and Budget 2024/25

Year Ended 31/03/2024		Budget Year Ended 31/03/2025
£31,214	Balance brought forward	£21,185
£52,370	Annual Precept	£54,400
£8,231	Total Other Receipts	£6,525
£41,016	Staff & Employers Costs	£39,843
£0	Loan interest/capital repayments	£0
£29,615	Total Other Payments	£19,485
Balances carried forward		

The budget was approved in the December 2023 meeting and is available via the finance pages on the website.

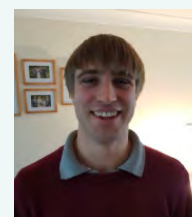
## Who are your current Parish Councillors?

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!

### Mepal Parish Councillors



Lorna Williams



Jack Hickman



Sam Knightley



Diana Billimore



Tom Bradney



Lesley Sculthorpe

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

## Prioritising People, Pollinators, and .... Planet.

Let's get the tough bit out the way (brace yourself), before we talk solutions.

Sadly, the UK is now one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, & shockingly Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature depleted counties in England ! (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy, 2024).

Over recent decades we have lost 80% of Insects and had a catastrophic 69% drop in species overall. If we continue in this direction our very survival is threatened (let alone the 1 in 6 of our UK fellow species that are also threatened with extinction - like our friend, the Hedgehog). It's no longer acceptable to think "Nature can just go elsewhere". (WWF Living Planet Report 2022).

"These plunges in wildlife populations can have dire consequences for our health and economies", says Rebecca Shaw, global chief scientist of WWF. "When wildlife populations decline to this degree, it means dramatic changes are impacting their habitats and the food and water they rely on. The world is finally waking up to this situation - we should care deeply about the unravelling of natural systems because these same resources sustain human life."

Without pollinators, along with many other daily foods, we would no longer be able to enjoy coffee, chocolate & apples. "More than three-quarters of the world's food crops rely at least in part on pollination by insects and other animals". (United Nations, Food & Agriculture).

Long grasses & wildflowers give homes, food & shelter for Insect Pollinators - Butterflies, Moths, Bumblebees, Ladybirds, etc.

Pollinators bring Birds.

Without Insects, Birds & Bugs we have no Trees, Plants, or Soil.

Without this thriving basis of 'life' we struggle to have clean water, oxygen, & healthy food.

- Birds balance Bugs,

- Bugs pollinate Plants,

- Plants give us clean water, oxygen & food.

It really is a case of- 'No Nature, No Future'.

We have the opportunity to do something positive about this - 'As part of the National Pollinator strategy, proper management of all verges could create a home for Pollinators the size of London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, and Edinburgh combined'!

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Managing%20grassland%20road%20verges.pdf>

As data scientist Hannah Ritchie says - 'It's unfortunate that the wildlife we care least about, provides us with the most functional value. We favour the Bears over the Insects and Bacteria, despite relying on the latter much more. There is nowhere that this is more obvious than food production. Pollinator insects - Bees, Wasps, Beetles, Flies, Bats, Ants and Butterflies - ALL play a crucial role in agriculture'

It is alarming when the United Nations announces we are facing 'A Code Red for humanity'. But don't turn away, it doesn't have to be like this, not if we all 'act' together.

We pass scraps of unused land (not needed by us every day), instead of costly mowing & spraying, these verges, over time, can become mini meadows managed for Pollinating Insects (whilst also maintaining safe sight lines at junctions, & paths through for access). This not only benefits us the taxpayer, but also our food security.



**Now here comes the positive stuff - & what we can all do to help.**

Wonderfully all parishes must now have a formal Nature Recovery Strategy. Part of this is allowing longer grass areas with beautiful Fairy paths through, & like the County Council, Mepal is following the Plantlife guidance.

In the past - close mown monoculture of scalped grass indicated 'maintained' - it felt 'tidy'. Now we are in a new era where we can have Flowers, Butterflies, Bees buzzing, Dragonflies whizzing, Birds singing - colourful vibrant life, in swaying grasses. We have realised the crucial importance these scraps of unused land can have for Nature (& therefore us), so let the grass grow. We can break away from the old narrative, & value these beautiful sanctuaries, sheltering and supporting an enormous number of species.

Alongside the new 'Nature Recovery' plans that are being implemented in every Parish across the land, the UK's gardens make up an area bigger than all our wildlife reserves put together, a landmass that equates to about one-fifth of Wales. A significant size, if you're into joined-up thinking. We are not powerless- added together we can all make a huge





difference. For example, many in Mepal are doing - 'Less mow Summer', with Fairy paths through mini meadows, & ditching the chemicals.

Read this for more info <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/your-no-mow-may-lawn-guide/>

Frequently mowing everywhere kills so much life - Butterfly & Moth larvae particularly need longer grass to live, Bumblebees nest in long grass. Regular cutting prevents the vast majority of our Wildflowers to grow. Plus, it takes up valuable time & money. Unfortunately, the seriousness of the situation we find ourselves in means we literally need to support every garden, every verge, & every farm, to give space for Nature.

Luckily the good news is there is so much we can do to help- AND! it usually involves less work, less money, & less time.

'What difference can I make?.....  
Said one billion people!'

Each of us, working together, really does add up to very powerful, positive change towards our better future.

In Mepal & across the world.

Written by our local biodiversity officer for East Cambs Climate Action Network.



## Mepal Post Office & Stores

Mepal Post Office will temporarily be running from The Village Hall as of Friday 14th June 2024 due to a major refurbishment.

Our opening hours will be limited but hope this helps our community whilst we undertake the refurbishment at our main permanent branch.

### Opening hours:

**Monday: 9am-1pm**  
**Tuesday: 9am-1pm**  
**Wednesday: Closed**  
**Thursday: 9am-1pm**  
**Friday: 9am-1pm**

We aim to re-open the store on 29th August 2024.

If you have your papers delivered daily then this will still continue. If you currently do not and would like your papers delivered during this time, then please ask for more info.

If you have your medicines delivered to the Post Office, then this will still continue. The post box will be on the outside wall and we will deliver them on Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

We hope to see you soon with a refreshed new village store! We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. Thank you for your continued support & understanding.



# DIARY DATES

## July

Wed 3rd	Friendship Club Bingo	10:00
Sun 7th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 10th	Friendship Club Visit from the Fire brigade	10:00
Sun 14th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 17th	Friendship Club meal out	10:00
Sun 21st	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 24th	Friendship Club Quiz	10:00
Thur 25th	Full Parish Council Meeting at Mepal Pavilion	18:30
Sun 28th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 31st	Friendship Club Cheese and Crackers	12:00 - 14:00

## August

Sun 4th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Sun 4th	St Mary's Parish Lunch	13.00
Wed 7th	Friendship Club Bingo	10:00
Sun 11th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 14th	Friendship Club Afternoon Tea	14:00 - 16:00
Sun 18th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 21st	Friendship Club meal	10:00
Sun 25th	St Mary's Parish Eucharist	11.00
Wed 28th	Friendship Club raffle	10:00

*Dates/times were correct at time of print - please check with clubs directly for any changes.*

If you want to provide any diary dates for the September/October 2024 issue then please ensure these are provided before the copy deadline.

Send articles & dates to:  
[mepalmatters@mepalparish.org](mailto:mepalmatters@mepalparish.org)

**Next copy deadline:**  
**12<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

**PLEASE NOTE THIS DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW!**

**Thank you to the volunteers who help distribute the Mepal Matters issues!**

