

Mere Matters

& so does

West Knoyle

Your community magazine

April 2021



Mere Town Council

- Are you passionate about your local area?
- Do you want to make a difference in your local community?
- Do you enjoy being part of a team?

Become a Councillor

Elections are scheduled for all parish, town and city councils in Wiltshire and will take place on **Thursday, 6th May**. If there is anyone interested in becoming a Councillor, please contact our Town Clerk for further information and a nomination form or go to the Electoral Commission's website:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media/5016>

The nomination forms will need to be taken to **Salisbury by 8th April**, so please do so without delay. As a local Councillor you can become a voice for your community and make real change.

To be able to stand for election (or co-option) to a local council, an individual must meet certain qualifications (by law). They must be:

- Over 18 and a UK, Commonwealth, ROI, or EU Citizen and
- An elector for the parish, or in the last 12 months, have occupied land or premises in the parish, or work in the parish (principal or only place of work), or live within 3 miles of the parish boundary

All existing councillors cease to be councillors and will have to be nominated for election if they wish to stand again for the next term (2021-2025).

Mere Town Council has 15 seats. It therefore follows that if there are more than 15 nominations, we will have a contested election. If there are only 15 or fewer nominations then there will be no contested election and those nominees will be elected unopposed.

In the interests of endorsing democracy, the Town Council would prefer to have a contested election. It gives weight to the role of being a local Councillor if members know that they have been democratically elected to represent the views of the electorate – their community.

I presented **PCSO Peter Tcherniawsky**, a Certificate of Appreciation from the Town Council in recognition of his work in Mere as he is retiring at the end of March.

PCSO Pete was a visible police presence in Mere and he built up a good rapport with varied sectors of the community and he will be sorely missed. We would like to wish his successor PCSO Daniel Gill a very warm welcome to Mere and would urge you all to have a chat with him if you see him out and about.



The Town Council will be following government guidelines on the roadmap out of lockdown and will be reopening tennis courts, Multi Use Games Area, Skate Park and other sporting facilities as and when we are allowed to do so and we will be applying the appropriate usage restrictions in accordance with the government and individual sporting guidelines. If there are any coaches, leaders or individuals who use or would like to use the Town Council's land or facilities for activities and classes, then they will need to submit an application form for the council to consider.

*Clive Hazzard, Chairman, Mere Town Council
for information on Town Council activities, minutes, agendas etc.
lindseywood@merewilts.org ☎ 860701 🌐 merewilts.org*

Wiltshire Councillor ~ George Jeans Writes

Meritorious Mere: well done to all award winners during the year.

Richard Jefferies was awarded a **BEM** (The British Empire Medal) in recognition for his contribution during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The **Wiltshire Life Magazine Awards** to our local youth group **Seeds4Success**, under the leadership of **Jaki Farrell** and her team, winning the **Community Group of the Year** category. **Louise Bennett** has won the **Local Hero of the Year** category, raising funds for the **Stars Appeal at Salisbury District Hospital** and **Dan Beckles** of **furniturebox** has won the **Young Entrepreneur of the Year** award category. The **High Sherriff Ashley Truluck**, has also presented **Anne Rich** a certificate in recognition of her work providing the food bank, especially during Covid, again well done to all of them.

Students who need to have a lateral flow test before they go back to university can get tested at one of Wiltshire Council's symptom-free testing centres. Testing sites are currently located at, Chippenham Monkton Park, Devizes Leisure Centre, Salisbury Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre and Trowbridge County Hall. Each centre is open on weekdays and same day appointments are available. Booking is mandatory.

Anyone who receives a positive Lateral Flow Test result automatically activate legal obligations to self-isolate, and may also claim for a Test and Trace payment if they are eligible.

On the buses!

Wiltshire Council will be reintroducing the normal time restrictions for using concessionary bus passes from 8 March 2021. From that date, concessionary bus pass holders can only use their bus passes from 9:30am on weekdays, but can continue to use them at any time at weekends. Bus companies have been advised of the changes.

In response to the appeal last month in regard Dog fouling and the depositing of plastic bags with excrement in public places. Grateful thanks to Lucie Payne for



her voluntary work using bags supplied by Mere Town Council who have kindly agreed to dispose of.

The expansion of the lorry parking site next to Leaping Frogs Nursey at Zeals has been resisted by Zeals Parish Council and the AONB, in keeping with my principle of supporting local parish councils, if the recommendation from officers is to approve, I have requested by right, it is heard by a committee where the decision can be fairly made in public, where those in favour or against have a chance to put their view.

George Jeans 📞 07710 441599 george.jeans@wiltshire.gov.uk

Shhh - All currently quiet on the Western Front

It seems my instincts were right about this being a good time to take over as Co-ordinator of The Resilience Forum. I can only assume it's a good sign that we've had very few requests for help in this past month!

A few of our dedicated volunteers have been collecting prescriptions from the pharmacy or doing shopping – and some have continued to look after their regulars even after going back to their day jobs. Our 'listeners' are also in contact with people who are feeling socially isolated, providing telephone support and a friendly ear.

Some of our volunteers are also driving for the Link Scheme, volunteering at vaccination centres, and for the Foodbank while often still supporting individuals in our town. A massive thank you to everyone for being so generous with their time.

We've all had a powerful lesson in the importance of having a strong community this past year, and have seen how a little support can make a huge difference to someone who may be struggling.

Let's hope we don't forget that lesson as lockdown eases. Social isolation and financial hardship will still be an issue – just because you can't see it, don't presume it's not happening in Mere. It would be great to think that joined-up community support could become the 'new normal.'

How can we harness the exceptional community spirit we've experienced, to make things better in future? If you have any suggestions and/or would like to be involved, please get in touch.



Rachael Hansford, MLRF Coordinator mlrfcoordinator@outlook.com

Mere Matters – Editorial

Are you new to the area? Not sure what social and activity groups and businesses normally operate in the locality? Do you remember having to find out the hard way all that goes on in Mere?

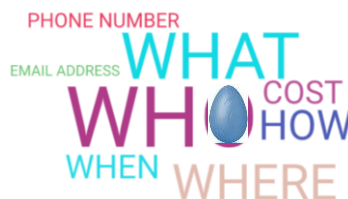
Mere Matters has historically played a part in keeping everyone connected and informed but given recent events, it may be timely to formulate a definitive directory encompassing all local groups/activities, initiatives, services and businesses in anticipation of life returning to normal.

If you represent a **group** or an **activity** which can be shared by others, a **home-based business** or you are a **major employer/service provider** in the area, then I would like you to email me with details including:

Name of group/business, contact name, email address, contact telephone number(s) and a paragraph or two explaining what you do.

What I envisage is a **Mere Matters Directory Supplement** which can be kept up to date and be reprinted on an occasional basis, encompassing all local contacts.

It is implicit that you will be giving permission for any details you give to be published.



Back Copies

Whilst I do have digital copies of back editions, we seem to be short of some printed editions from last year. If you have any 2020 monthly publications sat gathering dust perhaps you could get them back to me please OR pop in an envelope and drop through the Library letter box. Very many thanks.

Richard Jefferies – Editor 863425 editor@merematters.co.uk

Angel Corner Tea Rooms

The team at Angel Corner Tea Rooms would like to say a huge thank you to everyone for their continued support, we are overwhelmed by our wonderful Mere locals.

We will continue to operate our normal takeaway service to include our popular cream teas and high teas, Wednesday specials, breakfast in a box and Sunday lunches. We are open daily 9.30am – 3.30pm. We can cater for all your special occasions just ask!

In addition we are having a garden make over, this means hopefully from the **12th April** we will be able to provide outdoor table service where at last you will be able to grab a drink and a spot of lunch with your friend or a family member. We will obviously continue to follow government guidelines as they are released to ensure your continued safety.

Paul Farrow ☎ 860524

Patient Participation Group - Over 65?

Are you aware of The Living Well Service?

The **Living Well Service** is a partnership between GP Surgeries and Age UK Wiltshire. It has been created to tackle the non-medical needs of people over 65 such as dealing with bereavement, social isolation, access to transport, financial worries and difficulties managing around the home.

The project workers supporting Mere Surgery are Liz Woolven - The Living Well Senior Project Worker and Vanessa Higgins. The Covid pandemic has meant that the service has been delivered remotely but Liz and Vanessa look forward to being able to spend time face to face again with those they support. Vanessa says *"We know that sometimes little things can have a big impact on someone's life. As support workers we have the time to discover what those little things are".*

Liz adds *"It's about helping people to live well in later life. Getting to know people, their lives and their stories. Having time so that people can open up and feel supported".*

Liz and Vanessa know what resources are available to help. When life seems a bit overwhelming they can help identify where support is needed so that everyone can live a fulfilled, safe and independent life.

If you know someone over 65 who might need a helping hand The Living Well Service might be the hand they need. If this is you or someone you know, please speak to a GP at Mere Surgery who will listen and explain the next steps.

Blou Fenn Member of Mere Surgery PPG MerePPG@gmail.com

Fair Trade in Mere

I have been involved in the Fair Trade Movement for 40 years as a Voluntary Traidcraft Rep. I am still as enthusiastic as ever and by just popping one or two items bearing the Fair Trade Mark into your shopping basket, it can make such a huge difference to families around the world: clean water for their village or schooling for their children. We are lucky to have the Co-op on our doorstep who support many Fair Trade groups but there are many more products now available from Fair Trade cotton to rubber gloves, chutney to sardines, socks to pens. I hold a number of sales over the year but am always happy to order from the Traidcraft catalogues at any time. If you would like one to view the products please contact me and I will be happy to deliver one to you.

Quick before the melt in sun! - **Real Easter Eggs** available in both dark and milk.

Janet Way ☎ 860884 jwaywitsend@gmail.com

Mere Carnival

I have recently had the opportunity to read through many historic documents relating to Mere and in particular the Carnival events and Procession day.

Some of the earliest documents and newspaper cuttings dated back to 1962 and made interesting reading. Years ago the Carnival was preceded by as much as two weeks of activities including a torch light procession up Castle Hill which started the Carnival festivities.

In some years the level of entries and numbers were very high on Carnival Day itself with as many as 48 entries alone for the children's afternoon procession. In one particular year there were 6 bands and more than 20 vehicles in the evening procession.



On Carnival day itself there were stalls set up outside, mostly local clubs, such as the Brownies and Women's Institute all contributing to the community atmosphere.

1970

Sadly there are also articles referring to the lack of support in running the Carnival and in 1988 the Chairman said that if at least another 7 people did not join the committee there would not be a carnival the following year.

So here we are in 2021 and our committee is very small again. We need people to join us when we are allowed to start planning again so do keep a look out over the coming months. It would also be great to bring back some of the activities which used to take place and make Mere Carnival bigger than ever.

Rose Heesom ☎ 07791 559674 roseheesom@yahoo.co.uk

Mere Theatre Club

Whilst we are hoping to organise some real theatre outings later in the year, there is still much to entertain online. Meanwhile for those who wonder what we do or for those new to Mere, here is a précis:

We have around 80 members who pay £5 a year to join, which covers our expenses, and then choose which outings they wish to attend. Our small committee usually organise something for each month, possibly not July/August, to theatres within approximately a 2 hour coach journey from Mere. We arrange transport for all outings starting and ending in Mere. In the summer we sometimes go to a Flower Festival or other outdoor events. We also occasionally offer visits to concerts, opera, ballet etc.

We are a sociable group and periodically arrange lunches prior to the theatre performances, we usually go to matinees. If you're interested or would like to know more about our club, do get in touch.

Madeline Morris ☎ 861833 madsmorris@gmail.com

Mere Historical Society

You will have heard the PM's planned timetable for a return to normality which has meant cancelling our AGM this year. From this it appears we will be unable to meet indoors until after 17th May, and only then subject to conditions including a reduced capacity and no further delays. We must therefore cancel our spring programme of talks, including the AGM (again), and plan to begin on October 5th. The accounts and Chairman's Report for 2020 will appear on our website later. Do please remember that membership cards for 2020/21 are now valid until 31st March 2022 and no further subscriptions are needed until then when they will remain at £10 for 2022/23. We look forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary in April 2022.

Another consequence of the PM's proposed timetable is that I have shifted our booking for Forde Abbey to **Thursday 8th July**. If I am unable to run the visit in July, I am afraid that it is unlikely there will be another opportunity this year. Fingers crossed again; well actually they are permanently stuck in that position!

Caroline Cook ☎ 861797 🌐 merehistoricalsociety.org.uk

Mere Rivers Group Wildlife Sightings for January and February 2021

It is early March as we write. January was a cold and wet month, February was a mixture of cold, wet days but also warm and sunny days. As a result, we had quite a variety of wildlife reported including a brimstone butterfly. Kingfishers were observed a few times along the Shreen at Waterside. During the winter months, when there is very little foliage on the trees and bushes, its electric blue plumage can be seen all along our waterways usually in rapid flight from perch to

perch. As the days get longer and we head into spring, they fly to areas where there are high, muddy banks into which they can build their nesting tunnels.

Listed below are the sightings for January and February:

January: little egret seen 10 times, kingfisher - 6 times. Grey wagtail, pied wagtail and grey heron were all seen once. The call of the tawny owl and goldcrest were heard. Clumps of snowdrops were seen along the Ashridge at Burton.

February: little egret seen 9 times, moorhen seen 4 times, grey wagtail and grey heron both seen 3 times. The following were seen once - water vole, tree creeper, mistle thrush, flock of red wings, a charm of wrens, mallard duck, 2 rabbits, sparrowhawk and brimstone butterfly. The tawny owl was heard. Finally a congregation of 11 little egrets and another of 9 were seen in the Hinks Mill area.

Nature Notes

Those of you who have been out and about would have seen snowdrops and lesser celandine appearing along our lane edges and within the hedgerows. They truly are the first signs of spring! By April, as you are reading this, the lovely yellow primroses should be showing everywhere. Hopefully the weather will be warm enough for more sightings of the brimstone and also the orange tip butterfly. Anyone awake early enough will be treated to the birds' dawn chorus as they become very active in attracting new mates and starting to build their nests. If you are very lucky you may see hares boxing in our surrounding fields. Remember it is not two rival males boxing for a female, it is the female seeing off a male, who is being too persistent!

Whatever wildlife you see when you are out on your walks, please let us know. As always, we are particularly interested in our waterway's wildlife. Kindly report your sightings to mereriverwildlife@btinternet.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Lynne Bann ☎ 860174 mereriverwildlife@btinternet.com

Healthy Mere Walking - Bottoms Up

We are hoping that restrictions go according to the given timetable and are planning a walk to celebrate getting out - in groups of up to 6. On the **25th April**, from **10:30am** HMW will organise groups to do a Great Bottom saunter. You and your group can book a slot and enjoy the exercise fully in accordance with the rules, as we understand them. This time it isn't a fund raising event (but there will be badges!) just a bit of fun and fresh air. In keeping with the name of the event, we are working with Karen, the new landlady at The Butt of Sherry and hope to have beer garden table bookings for a post walk drink for some groups. Full details (and much more) will be on our website: hmw.org.uk

John Jordan 📞 07840722835

Mere School

After eight long weeks of lockdown for schools we were delighted to welcome all the children back to school on Monday 8th March!

The children have been busy catching up with their friends and settling back into their normal learning routines.

Here are a few highlights of the first month back:

Red Nose Day

On Friday 19th March the children came to school wearing red to celebrate Red Nose Day! They were given the challenge of writing jokes for a class joke book and have created a 'Share a Smile' red nose poster to display in the windows of their homes. Be on the lookout for them as you wonder around Mere!

Tennis Days

With the focus being on mental health and physical well-being on our return to school we have booked in Ian Griffin, our resident tennis coach, to deliver an extra weekly tennis lesson to all the children in the school. The children have loved being outside, socialising in their bubbles and learning new tennis skills. Maybe we will produce the next Andy Murray or Venus Williams, watch this space!




We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff, children, parents and the community for all their hard work during the lockdown. Once again we have all supported each other incredibly well during this challenging time. However, we are all definitely celebrating the fact that we can switch off Microsoft Teams and Oak Academy online lessons!!

Mere Gardening Club

The Committee will be meeting as soon as we are permitted to discuss the future plans for the club. We hope that we will be able to start holding our monthly meetings when the members feel comfortable outside (weather permitting) until the worry of meeting indoors has passed. We will of course keep you informed through Mere Matters and our website.

Hopefully by now you have all started sowing your seeds reading for all those prepared beds in the garden or on the allotment. I have started taking cuttings from my fuchsias and geraniums, also dividing a lot of perennials. There is nothing more satisfying than getting more plants for free and then you can pass them on to family or friends.

Happy gardening

Les Manwaring, Chairman 861941  meregardenclub.org.uk

Mere Museum

Our Museum, based in the Library building, is waiting to come to life again. We have a small band of helpers and have made great strides during 2019 towards updating the records and preparing for exhibitions by checking the store of items. The current exhibition, The Union Workhouse, is still in situ but will be replaced as soon as possible. The Friends of Mere Museum support the Museum with fund raising and we will always welcome new members either in the Museum itself or with the Friends.

Rose Heesom Hon Curator 📠 07791 559674 roseheesom@yahoo.co.uk

The Butt of Sherry

We at BoSPS are very happy to finally welcome Karen Harman to Mere officially. Karen has carried out an amazing amount of work within the pub. The bar area is now a really clean and welcoming space which I am certain will impress all who visit.

We understand that the pub will open in line with government guidelines and will be able to serve drinks in the garden area on or just after **April 12th** as long as the road map out of lockdown doesn't change. We sincerely hope to see as many members of the community visiting in the fullness of time and hope that everybody will help in supporting Karen in her new home and business.

Further to the final signing of contracts for the BoS we have also been told that the *Asset of Community Value* has also been renewed which protects the pub for the next five years and means that should it come up for sale then the community must be given first refusal.

We sincerely wish Karen every success in her new venture.



*John Gammie Chairman of the BoSPS
welcomes Karen to both Mere and the
Butt of Sherry.*

Melvin Wilkinson melvinwilkinson@hotmail.com

Mere Bowls Club

Our scheduled opening for the 2021 season has been postponed until the **22nd May** from the advertised date of 17th April, sorry if this causes any inconvenience to our readers.

Details of all internal, league and friendly games will be advised when more information is forthcoming from the relevant governing bodies.

Don Butchers – Club Secretary 📞 860775 don.butchers@btinternet.com

Mere & District Railway Modellers

We were hoping to hold our Annual Exhibition in July, but after a survey of our membership it was felt that caution was the best way to proceed out of C-19. So folks, 2022 is the year we hope to continue with our successful exhibition program. So what remains? Well, a vibrant well equipped model railway club with a number of knowledgeable modellers in all gauges of the hobby. The club has recently been renovated by members and is situated at the rear of Castle Street Car Park. We foster a family ethos, where one membership fee covers the complete family. Subsequently we have two families with younger members who attend regularly. Additionally we are introducing a summer membership for those senior members who find it difficult to travel during the winter months. For the teenager many of the practical skills required for design courses at GCSE & A level are practised at the club by three retired teachers. Once a full member you have access to the club house 24/7.

A few of our members have their own layouts and support the national exhibition circuit and have so far travelled to places up to 300 miles from Mere. We generally plan two outings a year, as well as two dinners for members, their wives and families.

Our club is a member of the WAMRC (Wessex Association of Model Railway Clubs) that the author resurrected with Ray Heard in 2016. At present this association has a membership of 65 clubs.

Tom Snook ☎ 861977 tomsnook29@hotmail.co.uk

Art Group

Warm greetings to our regular members and to anyone wanting to join a friendly group of amateur artists of all levels of ability. Once 'normality' returns we shall be meeting as usual at the Grove Building on Thursday mornings at 10.00am to midday. Help is on hand for those who want advice on materials or some basic instruction to 'get going'.

Watch this space for further information on our starting date. Please get in touch if you want to know more.

Chris Tuck ☎ 860314 christuck@me.com

Mere Snooker Club

The club is looking forward to when we can open up in line with government instructions and in the meantime, welcomes enquiries about membership - so if you are a lapsed player, have never played before, or would just like to develop your hand/eye coordination skills (very good exercise for brains) do get in touch with us.

Kevin Secretary 📠 07803 006077

Link Scheme

Work on the Covid vaccination programme continued in February as we were delighted to take 20 local residents to have their first Covid vaccination at the Michael Herbert Memorial Hall in Wilton, Sturminster Newton Medical Centre or Bruton Community Hall. At the same time other medical appointments have begun to increase so we had a total of 72 trips in February. Not as many as a “normal” February but considerably more than the six trips in April last year!

A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes on developing a new Link Scheme website. Many thanks go to Steve Hoffman who volunteered his time and expertise to produce the new website www.merelink.org.uk which went live on 15 March. We are also very grateful to Doug Pike who oversaw our previous website for many years. If you have some free time do have a look.

Our volunteer drivers are available to take you to medical appointments, including Covid vaccinations, and shopping, if resources allow. Once you have an appointment please call **01747 860096** to book a Link driver. Please try to give us 48 hrs notice if possible. Over the Easter weekend please note that the Link phone will not be manned from Good Friday to Easter Monday (2-5 April) inclusive. If you need to travel during that time please give us as much notice as possible so that we can arrange a driver.

We continue to use the safety guidelines we introduced to protect both clients and drivers from the risk of spreading the coronavirus. Both driver and passenger have to wear a face covering while in the car and passengers have to sit in the back where this is practical. Drivers carry hand sanitiser and wipe down all surfaces that may have been touched by the passenger while in the car at the end of each trip. Unfortunately, we are unable to take people from different households in the same car.

John FitzGerald, Chair 📞 860096 merelink.org.uk

Mere School

The value of volunteers in school

I hope we are approaching the end of a very strange period in school. We have all missed the many volunteers who come in to help our children and teachers.

Our volunteers help us with all sorts of things, mostly hearing the children read but we like to make full use of our volunteer's talents and skills! One of our volunteers is a retired teacher and she was spending one morning a week helping our children in years 3 and 4 with their learning. Another runs our after school Kwik Cricket Club. A local artist worked with one of our teachers and Gold Class to produce some beautiful Henry VIII portraits. Many help on school trips. Lockdown has meant that our children have been missing our much appreciated team of volunteers.

How do I volunteer?

Anyone who wishes to volunteer in school needs to complete a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) with our office team to check that they are safe to work with children. This takes about 15 minutes and we ask you to bring some evidence to help us complete the process (driving licence, passport, recent utilities bill, National Insurance number). Once we have received clearance we ask our volunteers to complete some school paperwork and reading and then we introduce them to a class. The class teacher and teaching assistant will then welcome and induct the volunteer.

There is a financial cost to the school of completing these checks, so we do ask that our volunteers can commit to helping on a fairly regular basis. In these difficult financial times it is important that we are spending our school budget wisely, and unfortunately we just do not have the budget to pay for DBS checks for one-off volunteer sessions – as much as we may like to.

We have a lot of parent/grandparent helpers who like to help in their child's class, but we do like to welcome volunteers who are unconnected to the school. These volunteers add a different dimension to school life and the children thoroughly enjoy talking to them and asking them questions about life outside school. I know that our volunteers also

enjoy talking to the children, but there is the added magical feeling that we all get when a child learns something new from

the help they have been given, or when we have had the opportunity to make a child's life a little easier. Our teaching staff have a hectic day but our volunteers have time to chat with our children.

We are hoping, when school life gets back to normal, that we can welcome back our volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering please give the school office a ring. We would welcome you 'with open arms'!



Walking in Mere

We are very lucky to be living in such a beautiful part of the country and in such an interesting town. There are so many little paths and places to explore as well as our Castle Hill and the more spectacular Downs. Every season brings its own joys and interests. However if you need some help in finding out where to go there are a number of groups you could join where you would have the advantage of good company and probably infinite knowledge of the area!

The Walking Group arrange monthly walks from Spring to Autumn usually taking place on Sunday afternoons and involve a walk locally and in the wider area of about 6 miles. Transport is shared and details are posted outside the Post Office a few days beforehand.

Short Walks For those who are unable to walk so far or prefer a gentler stroll of 2-3 miles, there is a monthly walk (not January and August) around the local paths with a cup of tea and cake at the Angel Tea Rooms afterwards. Details of these are included in each edition of Mere Matters as days vary but usually start at 2p.m. in the Surgery Car Park.

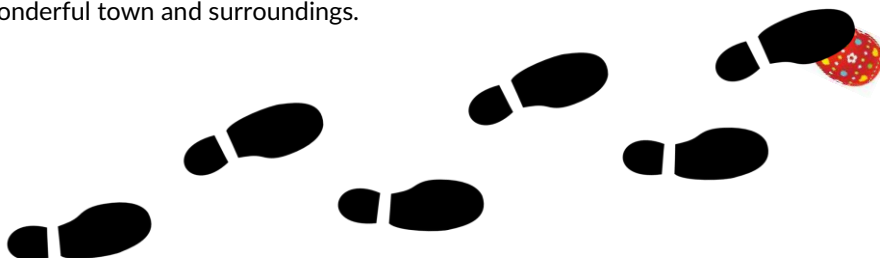
Walking in Mere Cards. If you prefer to explore on your own or with friends and family, a set of walks have been produced by the Footpath (maintenance) Group, chaired by Alan Mead. The 6 cards are available at the Tea Shop, Sprout and Flower, Walton's Post Office, The Library and Stourhead Shop for £3.

Mere Meanders Mere's houses and buildings hold a varied and interesting history. A small leaflet, produced by David Hope through the Historical Society, and sponsored by the Chamber of Trade, outlines the main buildings of interest. This costs £1 and is available from the Library, Tea Shop and Stourhead. There are often themed Guided Historical Walks.

The Red Arrow Trail. Starting from the Square, a trail of red arrows painted on the pavements takes you on a walk around the town. It is about 2 miles long and a good family challenge!

Healthy Mere Walking has organised two large fundraising walks around Great Bottom and a series of Mad March Hare Walks with the challenge to walk the 77 rights of way in Mere. They have a website (hmw.org.uk) with local advice for walkers and featured walks.

So all in all there is no excuse not to get out your walking boots and enjoy our wonderful town and surroundings.



Mere PreSchool

Here at Mere Preschool, we have been having fun and enjoying our learning throughout lockdown. This half term we have immersed ourselves in the wonderful world of storytelling. Focusing on a different traditional tale and a nursery rhyme each week. We have told each other stories with puppets, the preschool ringing with the sounds of “I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down” as well as “Who’s been sitting in my chair?” We have practiced our scary big bad wolf voices, tasted the bear’s porridge and had lots of fun using the masks we have made to role play the stories.



After a very wet February half term we have made the most of our outdoor area. Enjoying the fresh air and watching for signs that spring is on the way. We used our equipment to make an obstacle course of things to balance along, go over and under and practice our jumping skills, trying not to end up like Humpty Dumpty! We used sticks to make mini dens, houses and even explored what shapes and pictures we could make with them and other natural materials we could find.

On Thursday 4th March, a dragon, a giraffe and a witch were waiting to welcome the children, although Preschool Manager Tina was surprisingly hard to spot dressed as Where’s Wally! As the doors opened we welcomed several princesses, a transformer, a pirate, a cat and a very hungry caterpillar all ready for a day full of stories and fun to celebrate world book day. The children took turns to tell us about their costumes and brought their favourite stories for us to share.

As the weather continues to improve we hope to get out and about more so if you see us, we would love a wave or a chat!

Friends of Mere Museum

We’re an optimistic lot, we Friends of Mere Museum! We note that as lockdown eases, ‘outdoors, most social contact rules will be lifted, no earlier than 17 May:’ This of course, will happen only provided the national virus data continue to support this step. But in the mere hope that everything will continue to go to plan, The Friends are daring to think of the possibility of holding our (famous) **Annual Plant Sale** a touch later than usual, on **Saturday May 22nd**. It would have to be outdoors of course, and as always with such events, it would depend on the weather. We shall also have to limit attendance at any one time to 30 people. But all things being equal, we shall aim to have a go! An update, of course, will appear in the next issue of Mere Matters and on the Museum website: meremuseum.org.

Jenny Wilding ☎ 860908 jenny@flaxmill.org.uk

Mere Amateur Dramatic Society



Cast your mind back, if you will, to 1985. MADS was busy rehearsing a three-act comedy (again!), the title of which seems especially appropriate to ponder in these holiday-starved times. It was called 'Beside the Seaside' and was written by Leslie Sands (1921 - 2001), an extraordinarily busy actor and a prolific writer for stage, T.V. and film, better known for productions such as Z-cars. 'Beside the Seaside' was the first of a trilogy of Sands's 'seaside capers', the others being 'Basinful of the Briny' and 'Good Old Summertime'.

All three comedies are set at the Seaview Guest House, where the tyrannical landlady, Mrs Austin, terrorises her lodgers with her bread-and-butter pudding (the mind boggles). Newly -weds Mr and Mrs Pepper realise that marriage is no honeymoon, and Wilf and Ethel Pearson try to prevent their daughter from running off with a local theatrical trickster. Chaos abounds!

It sounds perfect for MADS, and since we're all hoping for a good old summer after all the trials and tribulations of the recent past, perhaps there's an idea here....

Jenny Wilding ☎ 860908 jennyv@flaxmill.org.uk

Mothers' Union and Open Members' Group



We had one of our most interesting and amusing talks from our speaker Reverend Janet Smith who took us on a wonderful journey to her parish which was around 800 miles from Quebec in Canada where she spent a few years as Minister, travelling by sledge to her many churches. Travelling at times in a helicopter to other islands with long visits from the Bishop, she made sure she had a stock of whisky to keep him warm. Lots of photos of snow and temperatures of minus 30+ made us feel quite cosy on a March afternoon. It was amazing that so many of us were able to enjoy it on Zoom.

In April our Zoom meeting on **Tuesday 13th at 2.30pm** we have to get down to business after all this fun and have our AGM then our other meetings will go ahead either on Zoom, more likely, or eventually in The Grove Building on the second Tuesday of each month at 2.30pm. We are also hoping to have a Garden Meeting this year, possibly in August.

Mother's Union is a Christian Worldwide Organisation to support families and people who need our care and prayer in our own parish and further afield. As you possibly remember we delivered around 50 Christmas Meals and vouchers in conjunction with the Food Bank and to those having Christmas Day on their own. We had such support from many people in Mere who were only too pleased to bake, donate or deliver. This Easter we are concentrating on something special for all the children at Duchy Manor School.

We would welcome anyone who would like to join our very friendly Christian organisation.

Christabelle Kiriticos ☎ 861065 Christine Marsh ☎ 861212 Carol Lord ☎ 861923



More good news from Suchana. With local state schools still closed (though the infection rate remains very low) Suchana is proving an educational life-line for children and communities in their corner of rural West Bengal. They have set up a local 'covid recovery strategy' doubling their weekly schedule in their main centre and in all the additional library, early learning and IT education centres recently established.

This provides support and stimulus for 'adavasi' children who have had no access to online learning during the long year of school closures, and are thus even more disadvantaged with the danger that they might drop out of education entirely. Suchana is working hard to stop this and to continue to offer them a chance for a fuller and better life. In relation to this, Suchana is also developing a new area of work helping Suchana 'graduates' to find apprenticeships, jobs or further training opportunities after leaving school.

Meanwhile Suchana's pioneering first-language work has helped to secure a contract with a publisher which includes the appointment of a project manager for that aspect of Suchana's work, making it also available for other adavasi communities further afield.

With so much good work going on Mere Suchana Support Group is keen to continue to help fund the core work of this unique project, and we have interesting fund-raising plans as soon the lifting of restrictions allows. The cake stall next to the Post Office, deferred from March, will now take place on **Saturday morning 17th April** - offers of cakes very welcome. Look forward to seeing you there!

Judith Thompson ☎ 860553 judithvthompson@aol.com

Mere Cricket Club

The new season is around the corner! We now have dates around which recreational cricket can resume and look forward to welcoming new members to our friendly club as well as our returning players, supporters and helpers.

We are always on the lookout for people who may want to enjoy an occasional friendly Sunday game, so if it's one game, or regular games that interest you, we'd love to hear from you. We pride ourselves on being a most "social" of clubs and all our Sunday games end up back at The Walnut Tree.

As a club we aim to offer access to as much cricket locally in all formats, to as many players as possible, whatever age or ability. We work closely with our neighbours at KSCC to offer cricket to as many people in our area as we can.

Dates for the diary:

ECB "All Stars" club for 5-8 yrs old (starts 15th May)

Junior cricket coaching for under 9's 11's 13's (starts 23rd April)

Under 15's coaching (starts 8th April)

Adult Saturday league cricket (over 14's)

Sunday friendly fixtures begin 25th April

Midweek T20 fixtures begin 6th May

Under 19 midweek cricket (TBA)

For more details on joining, playing or helping out at your local club please contact Kevin Whitmore on 07528 875060 or

Mark Cassidy on  07763 001119

St Michael's News

The enhancement works are drawing to a conclusion and we are very excited about the standard of the work and the benefits to the church. We will have a “grand opening service” in due course. Thanks go to all those who have supported us through this project especially by giving their time and money so generously. Please do come and see now the church will be open more regularly.

Church Opening

The church will be open every day from Easter Sunday, please continue to sanitise your hands and wear face masks when in the building. The Grove Building will also be opening up slowly according to Govt. guidance

Rev Carol

Mere Chamber of Trade

Plans we had a year ago for Chamber activities in 2020 collapsed in the face of the Covid crisis.

It seems clear that the future will run under different rules to the past so the Committee is reviewing how we might continue to meet our aim of supporting local businesses and promoting tourism.

Some suggestions have been made and we are grateful to our Wiltshire Councillor, George Jeans for his continuing support. But what might be the future role of the Chamber?

The formation of the Chamber of Trade is lost in history but it seems to have been some 50 years ago. Then, the number of traders in the town was measured in dozens rather than the three or four major businesses and seven or so smaller ones of today.

The focus of developing businesses today is largely a single person, home-based venture either internet dependent, or craft based. This can feel a lonely path but the Chamber has offered support, advice, and encouragement. This took the form of monthly coffee meeting sessions arranged by one of our members in the Hill Brush Restaurant, providing social contact and an opportunity to mull over mutual business problems for those working from home. They had to be suspended but hopefully will resume when Hill Brush reopens.

We would also like to focus on the position local businesses are taking to become more environmentally friendly or provide associated services and deliveries when we are able to operate again unrestricted.

Our website merechamberoftrade.co.uk provides an online directory of local businesses. This is a free service for them to reach the people of Mere. If you are new to the area and looking for local services, please make use of it and support your local businesses. If you are a small business and not yet listed, please do consider it now and contact us via the website.

In all cases an internet online presence will be vital for advertising, sales, publicity of any vacancies, presenting new opportunities to the local area, and stimulating the local economy. As part of our future plans, we invested a year ago in a dedicated internet server, located in a secure London data centre. This is available for any locally based business to host their website on a shared cost basis. There are also locally based web services companies available to advise on best practice.

Now is the time to launch new ventures, especially for products or services which are seen as essential or desirable in the reduced economy of the next year or two. If this is you, we'd be delighted to welcome you and provide any help we can.

Hamish Bell, President, Mere & District Chamber of Trade. ☎ 0771 471 8625



Letter from the Churches ~ *Michael Hughes writes.*

Easter. Chocolate eggs, the Easter bunny, roast lamb, an egg hunt, a family get together. We celebrate Easter with many different traditions. Whatever is your way, it will be a bit different this year. May you find some joy this Easter Sunday - despite whatever restrictions you accept for the safety of others.

To Christians, Easter is the day of the empty tomb. The day it became clear that Jesus is indeed the human form of God – the proof that He is pure unadulterated love.

So what happened? The man who people hoped was going to put right all the injustices and pain of human life, got himself taken prisoner by the unjust and powerful. He was tortured and then killed.



Later the cave, in which He had been buried, was discovered to be empty.

Then people started to meet this Jesus who had risen from the dead. Millions of people have met Him in the two thousand years since then.

It's easy to spot the people who have met Jesus. They have a joy that survives all the sadness of life. And all their lives they try to help people in trouble, because Jesus shows them that to love God means to love others and to help them.

Here are two questions for your Easter quiz.

1. Once upon a time, nearly every civilization in the world thought slavery was a good idea. Did the idea of abolishing slavery, because all people are equally precious to God, emerge in:
 - a) countries with no religion ?
 - b) countries of Christian religion?
 - c) countries of another religion ?
2. Once upon a time, nearly every civilization in the world thought women should be treated as second class citizens. Did the idea of the equality of the sexes, because all people are equally precious to God, emerge in:
 - a) countries with no religion?
 - b) countries of Christian religion ?
 - c) countries of another religion ?

Clue: Christianity is a religion of action, calling you to strive to make a fairer world that cares for the planet, and for all who live here.

MERRY EASTER AND A HAPPY NEW LOCKDOWN-FREE YEAR!

Deacon Michael. (Catholic)

Church Contact Details

The Parish Church, St Michael's the Archangel:

Priest in Charge: Rev'd Carol Green ☎ 861859

vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk Saturday is Rest day

Churchwarden:

PCC Secretary: office@stmichaelsmere.org.uk

Good Friday 2nd April 2-3pm Last Hour service of reflections and music
also live on Zoom

Easter Day 4th April 8am BCP & 10.30 Parish Communion

11th April 8am BCP & 10.30 Parish Communion

18th April 8am BCP & 10.30 Parish Communion

25th April 8am BCP & 10.30 Service of the word for St Mark's Day

West Knoyle Parish Church, St Mary the Virgin:

Priest in Charge: Rev'd Carol Green ☎ 861859

vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk Saturday is Rest day

Churchwardens: Mrs Jill Randall ☎ 830534, Mr Colin Seaford ☎ 830263

Easter Day 4th April 9.25am Holy Communion

11th April 9.25am Matins

18th April 9.25am Holy Communion

25th April 9.25am DIY

All Saints Church, Maiden Bradley

Priest in Charge: Rev'd Carol Green ☎ 861859

vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk Saturday is Rest day

Churchwarden: Mrs Celia Blay ☎ 01985 844817

4th	Sun	10 am	Easter Communion
11th	Sun	10 am	Matins
18th	Sun	10 am	DIY
25th	Sun	10 am	Service of the word followed by APCM

The United Reformed Church

Minister - Rev'd Duncan Goldie

Mere Contact: Molly Burden ☎ 860007

At the moment we are uncertain about arrangements for services in April. If you wish to know more as Easter Sunday approaches, please phone either Molly or Eileen Burfitt on 860685.

The Roman Catholic Church: St Mary Queen of Peace.

Father Louis Beasley-Suffolk: ☎ 01963 34408

hope@stlukeswincanton.org.uk

Contacts: Carole Marshall ☎ 861905 or John Fitzgerald ☎ 860867

Easter masses in Wincanton. (to book call Fr Louis 01963 34408)

Thursday 7.00 pm Mass of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday 3.00 pm Celebration of the Lord's Passion

Holy Saturday 9.00 pm Vigil Mass

Easter Sunday 9.00 am and 11.00 am

Booking Meeting Venues

Grove Building:	Nicky Ravenhill administrator@grovebuildingmere.com	??
Lecture Hall:	Sally Johnson	☎ 861063
URC Church Hall:	Eileen Burfitt	☎ 860685

Mere Information Point @ The Library

The following Support/Advice Centers are normally held on a regular basis:

Wiltshire Dementia Adviser Service	1 st Friday in month	2.00pm – 4.00pm
Registrar of Births & Deaths	Thursdays by appt only	☎ 0300 003 4569 9.30am – 11.30
Health Trainer	Last Tuesday in month	10.00am – 12.00pm

Mere Information

For full information on the businesses, organisations, societies, attractions and activities in Mere, together with current and back numbers of "Mere Matters", please visit merewilts.org

Rev Carol Green is moving to pastures new. She has been appointed Team Rector of the Haldon Mission Community in Exeter Diocese which is a Team of 8 churches covering Teignmouth, Bishopsteignton and Shaldon within sight of Dartmoor. The team has a full time Team Vicar, associate priest, retired clergy, 3 readers and admin support in this busy, holiday area. Her last service date is yet to be decided but will be in late spring. Carol says "There are many special people in this area, people who truly care for their community members and it has been a joy to serve alongside you whether church members or not. I'm looking forward to this post as a new challenge in another beautiful part of the world."



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