

Mere Matters



& so does

West Knoye

Your community magazine including
a guide to local events



February 2021

Mere Town Council

A belated Happy New Year to all readers. Christmas seems like a distant memory now but the Town Council would like to thank all those who participated in the Xmas illuminations – you all certainly helped to make the town look festive and merry which, during this particular year, went a long way to cheering us all up and taking our mind off the COVID-19 restrictions and the fact that many of us could not be with our friends and family. I would like to thank George Jeans for organising and sponsoring the Xmas Light competition- we understand the winners are:

1st - Halfways, North Road, 2nd - 38 Lynch Close, 3rd - 8 Denes Avenue

4th - Oaktree House, Southbrook, 5th - 47 Downside Close

I would also like to thank the Town Council staff for coming in over their Xmas holidays to empty the bins and do some essential gritting around the car park, library and doctors surgery areas and for resolving some issues around the public toilets.

The Town Council held its Annual Budget meeting in December. This meeting is where members have to consider likely expenditure and income over the next financial year in order to determine the precept requirement (Town council's share of the council tax). This is the most challenging meeting of the year but we did eventually manage to make a set of recommendations which were agreed and subsequently approved by the Town Council at the January meeting.

Wiltshire Council is undertaking a review of the Local Plan. The current Local Plan is the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The Government requires every Local Plan to be reviewed at least once every five years. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2015 and is therefore being reviewed. Wiltshire Council has to allocate sufficient land to satisfy housing and employment needs up to 2036, and is seeking the views of local communities and stakeholders to see if the suggested distribution of numbers across the county is correct, and which of the proposed sites are most suitable. The Local Plan Review Consultation is currently taking place but as COVID restrictions mean that face-to-

face events will not be possible during this review, they are currently holding a series of online events. Please Google 'Wiltshire Council Local Plan Review' to find out more information and to book your place at the online events. (NB the events most relevant for the Mere area will be the two 'Rural Area' events taking place on Monday, 1st February and Tuesday, 2nd February between 7 and 8 pm.) Feedback during this review consultation will help to shape the draft Local Plan which will then be used to guide decisions on whether future planning applications for housing, infrastructure and land for employment can be granted.

We have had complaints and various discussions at Town Council meetings about problems with on-street parking in and around Mere. I know that this is a general problem in many, many towns and villages throughout the country due to the fact that towns and villages were not designed for so many cars. At Town Council meetings we often discuss the merits of requesting further parking restrictions in places where there are particular problems but we are also mindful of the fact that

this is likely to displace those parked cars to other areas and cause problems somewhere else. I am sure that this is going to be an ongoing problem but I would like to put a plea out to all residents to be considerate about where you are parking – in particular, please observe the Highway Code:

Rule 243

DO NOT stop or park:

- near a school entrance
- anywhere you would prevent access for Emergency Services
- at or near a bus or tram stop or taxi rank
- opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space
- near the brow of a hill or hump bridge
- opposite a traffic island or (if this would cause an obstruction) another parked vehicle
- where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles
- in front of an entrance to a property
- on a bend

For clarity, in accordance with the government guidelines, we are keeping all the play areas open but would like to remind all users to follow the advice in the signage erected at the play areas and to remember that the play equipment is not cleaned or sanitised. Secondly, I would also like to point out that in accordance with government guidelines the Skate Park is CLOSED. It is difficult for us to physically close off the skatepark but signage has been erected to this effect. The Multi Use Games Area and Tennis Courts are also closed. Please observe the government guidance.

On the positive side and with the roll-out of the COVID vaccine, there does seem to be light at the end of the tunnel and we are very hopeful that we can get back to some normality in the near future.

*Clive Hazzard, Chairman, Mere Town Council
for information on Town Council activities, minutes, agendas etc.*

 860701 lindseywood@merewilts.org  merewilts.org

Wiltshire Councillor ~ George Jeans Writes

I was very sorry to hear of the passing of Brian James who as chairman along with a committee of dedicated people of Mere May Fayre raised £260 000 for Cancer Research UK by the 40th anniversary of the committee in 2013. It was a tremendous effort for all of them, videos were made around the early 1990's by Waterside Productions (Peter Manning) that show how the Fayre bonded local people at the time. The committee was started in 1973 with Mrs Dorothy George as Chairman, and was closed down 2019 with Brian still as President.

For years now the surface of Boar Street near Mere Post Office required total resurfacing. I am pleased to see this has now been achieved. I am also pleased to see the replacement yellow lines.

I said last month, I raised at the South West Area Board the fact Mere Library should be at least open for pre-order and collect, by coincidence or otherwise it was agreed quickly. Now with another National lockdown Monday and Friday opening has been reduced to Fridays order and collect services as well as bookable computers to customers during the national lockdown. Customers are expected to use their local, nearest library to reduce unnecessary travel. Safety remains the priority at all of the council's libraries,

and customers will be asked to wear a face covering and use sanitiser before using a computer. The Home Library Service, providing books to the vulnerable in their own homes, will also continue. People need to contact their local library for more information or visit the website. Loan items continue to be renewed



automatically until the end of February so there is no rush to return items currently on loan. Wiltshire library members can still download eBooks and eAudiobooks and read eMagazines. All the details can be found at

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/libraries-ebooks> . A range of online resources can also be found at the council's Active Communities page at

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/leisure-active-communities>

With Covid still present, postal voting is likely to be popular, best to apply in plenty of time. This is the link for electors to download and print absent vote applications from the Wiltshire Council website:

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/elections-register-to-vote .

Methods of voting for the proposed 6 May 2021 election are as follows across Wiltshire:-

- i. PCC Election is counted using the supplementary vote system. Details are available on the Wiltshire Council website at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/elections-pcc>
- ii. Wiltshire Council Unitary Election – normal ballot paper with – voting for one candidate only
- iii. Town and Parish Council Elections – normal ballot paper – number of seats to be elected can range from 1 to 15 seats depending on area (electors to vote for 'no more than 'x' candidates).
- iv. Neighbourhood Planning Referendum – ballot paper shows the Referendum Question and 2 boxes titled 'Yes' or 'No' to the right of the ballot paper.

The current stance is that Parish Council's are not recharged. However, this is now under review. A report has been published which will be discussed by Cabinet and Full Council.

Postal vote forms will not be provided to Post Offices by the Electoral Services Team. However, electors can contact the Electoral Services Team for a postal vote form (or any other absent vote application) to be sent to them. This can either be requested by calling 0300 456 0112 or by e-mailing elections@wiltshire.gov.uk. If an



elector struggles with the digital side of things, this can be requested by a family member or friend for Wiltshire Council to post directly to the elector. Powers of Attorney appointed for electors can also assist with this. I will print a few application forms that can be collected from Mere Post Office, no one should help you fill in this application beyond advice you can obtain from a Wiltshire Electoral Services Officer or a Government official publication. Wiltshire Council Tel: 0300 456 0112 or www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

A303 Deverills underpass repair, Mere – 19th October 2020 to 1st April 2021 is now scheduled for the 25th Jan 2021 to August The underpass which carries the A303 over the B3095, near Mere is in need of repair. Concrete repairs, re-waterproofing, replace bridge joints, and finally replace surfacing and lining. Expect delays this summer. This project impacts on B roads that Wiltshire Council are responsible for, however I believe any questions you have regarding the project you have should be addressed to Highways England, 03001235000 or info@highwaysengland.co.uk

PCC Macpherson has launched a survey to collect feedback on policing: what is being done well and where improvements could be made, as well as a proposed increase in the policing element of the council tax. The suggested increase equates to £15 a year, per household, on a band D property.

This follows a recent national announcement made about central police funding which was based upon the assumption that all PCCs would seek to use the maximum flexibility afforded them by the Government to increase local precepts. In 2020, Wiltshire recorded the lowest policing precept in the South West. Even



with the increase, the band D average for Wiltshire will remain lower than the regional and national average. Mr Macpherson has warned that if the policing part of the precept is not increased next year, Wiltshire Police would need to find savings of more than £3m and would have no alternative but to reduce staff undertaking essential services. The extra £15 a year funding, or £1.25 a month, means that Wiltshire Police will recruit 46 additional officers for Wiltshire in 2021/22. The Force is also on track to recruit this year's target of an additional 65 police officers by March 2021. This will take officer numbers to 1,050 - the highest number of Wiltshire Police officers in six years. The additional 46 officers in 2021/22 would see officer numbers rise to 1,096 by March 2022. The consultation runs until Tuesday, February 2. I asked

the assistant PCC Commissioner at a recent South West Wiltshire Area Board:- I had been informed by an elector that if the increase goes ahead it should not be justified just because those returning a positive reply were of a high percentage of the total returns, the total number of returns usually represent a small percentage of the total number of returns possible by Wiltshire's population.

Dog fouling and the depositing of plastic bags with excrement is constantly reported to me. Cllr Alan Mead a few years ago walked and distributed a leaflet regarding this subject to all of Mere, it helped for a while. The Wiltshire dog warden does not have the capacity to help with this problem. Mere Town Council has no street cleaner at present. Extra Dog bins need regular emptying usually at a cost. A television program advised that a video is required in most cases to lead to a successful prosecution. Toxocariasis can cause sight loss in rare cases, which is caused by parasitic worms in dog mess. If someone is interested in helping making this issue locally high profile again, please let me know on 07710 441599 or george.jeans@wiltshire.gov.uk. If you walk a dog, please clean up and dispose of its mess responsibly.



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

Some messages of thanks received by the Food Bank

From a single parent with a young child with learning difficulties who is currently self- isolating with her son, due to them being exposed to C-19.

"The Food bank has been very helpful delivering throughout the pandemic. They have help myself and my son when I'm struggling with money cuz of this pandemic. The food bank during the week is very good and helpful I will keep using them."



"Thank you so much to Mere Food bank for all the help myself and my family received last year. The very regular food swap is really helpful. My children eat so much fruit, vegetables and bread which you have been able to supply twice a week during the lockdown's. Things are difficult enough as it is being a single parent, especially with a cut to my wages due to the closure of my work place. Myself and the kids are so great full especially for the funds transferred in to my bank account as that did take the pressure off to find money to pay a few bills . We are SO GRATEFUL, thank you so much everyone. You really are true stars with all of your efforts and time to keep this going. Thank you xxx"

Anon

And a thank-you card to the people who worked so hard providing the Christmas Meal and the Walnut Tree/ Angel Corner Cafe voucher service organised by St Michael's and the Mother's Union, with funds from The Foresters, including many kind people cooking extra Christmas dinners and delivering them on the day . Many people from all parts of the community benefitted from all Christabelle Kriticos' hard work : Foodbank recipients, young and old people living alone , and the infirmed. Anon.



From Mere Surgery

We are all excited to hear about the progress of the rolling out of the Covid vaccine and look forward to this improving the quality of life for all of us.

We know that you, like us, are struggling with the continued confines imposed upon us all due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Everyone is trying to make the best of the situation and, as a practice, we are committed to caring for you in the best possible way whilst keeping both you and our team safe. This is greatly helped by close liaison with the PPG – this is our patient representative group that ensures we remain in close touch with our patient community. All details are on the Mere Surgery website.

To keep you as informed as possible, we will update these messages frequently as we become aware of more information from NHS England:

- The vaccines are being rolled out in a very strict order and we will continue to invite patients in the order below:
 - Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
 - All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers

- All those 75 years of age and over
- All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
- All those 65 years of age and over
- All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at a higher risk of serious disease and mortality
- All those 60 years of age and over
- All those 55 years of age and over
- All those 50 years of age and over
- **Please do not contact the surgery nor the hospital to seek a vaccine**
- We will contact you when the NHS has informed us that you are eligible
- We are still open if you have any medical concerns and we will offer advice via the telephone whenever we can to prevent you leaving home unnecessarily



As a surgery, all of our over 80 year old patients who wished to have the vaccination have now been booked an appointment.

We are pleased to say, there have been no adverse reactions reported for those who have received the vaccine.

We have contacted Health and Social Care Workers and we are now contacting patients in the 75 years of age and over who will receive either a letter or text message with details on how the appointment will be made.

This week we have vaccinated our housebound patients, where it is impossible for them to leave home to attend an appointment for the vaccine.

Please continue to wait to be invited for your Covid-19 vaccination. The vaccine has been arriving with little notice but we anticipate this will improve and we will be able to have appointments released more frequently. As soon as we have confirmation of deliveries and appointments are available to book we will contact you.

Our staff, who are asymptomatic (not showing symptoms) are carrying out the Lateral Flow tests twice a week to ensure we continue to provide a safe environment for our patients visiting the surgery and our colleagues we work alongside.

It is vitally important to keep your contact details up to date by visiting our website and completing the Contact the Practice form, this will help us speed up the process when we need to contact you

Please remember with the current rapid increase in Covid-19 cases it is even more important to:

Wash your hands
Wear a face mask as advised
Keep 2 metres apart

Thank you for your patience

The Doctors at Mere Surgery ☎ 860001

PPG - the patient representative group of Mere Surgery

The PPG meets monthly with Mere Surgery to discuss a wide range of issues which have either been brought up by you, through the Mere Surgery website, have been picked up on the “Mere grapevine” (rumours can be dangerous things...), or have been passed on to us as messages for dissemination by the NHS. This month we have two key messages:

- Beware scam phone calls and text messages offering the Covid 19 vaccine. The vaccine is only available from the NHS and the NHS will contact you when it is your turn. The NHS will never ask you to press a button on your keypad or send you a text to confirm you want the vaccine. It will never ask for payment for the vaccine or for your bank details. Stay aware.
- **Think 111 First**: as you know the NHS in 2020/21 has been called upon in a way that has never been seen before. The health service is evolving to ensure care is available for all who need it. One such way is to encourage people to ring 111 to access a range of urgent care services so they get the right service at the right time. This includes, for the first time, directly booking people in to see emergency departments, minor injuries units or urgent treatment centres so stopping A&E being clogged with too wide a range of patients during this particularly dangerous time. **Of course, people experiencing a life-threatening health emergency should always call 999 or immediately travel to the nearest hospital emergency department.** Equally nobody will be turned away from the

emergency department if they arrive having not called NHS 111 first. However, if it is right for you think 111 first over this winter.

If you would like further information on the PPG please go to the Mere Surgery website and find us under Practice Information. We are always delighted to welcome new members.

Elaine Stallard

Mere makes an impact on Wiltshire Life

Wiltshire's leading county magazine, Wiltshire Life, organises an annual awards ceremony to celebrate people, businesses and organisations across the county.



We're delighted that four candidates from our small town have made the shortlist this year:

- **Sprout & Flower** - Independent Retailer of the Year
- **Dan Beckles** (Furniturebox) – Young Entrepreneur of the Year
- **Louise Bennett** – Local Hero of the Year award; and **Seeds4Success** – Community Group of the Year.

The winners in each category will be announced at an online ceremony on Friday 19th March at 7pm, hosted and delivered through the Wiltshire Life Awards website and Facebook Live. See www.wiltshirelifeawards.co.uk/ceremony2021 for information and show your support!

Mere Carnival

A little message just to let you know we are still here and we are waiting to find out if the carnival will happen this year. We will go along with whatever the Wessex Grand Prix Carnival Circuit committee decides, if they say the carnivals are going ahead then we will run Mere Carnival 2021. If there is no Wessex Grand Prix this year then the Mere Carnival Committee will still meet when allowed and hopefully organise a day of fun and entertainment on **18th September**, which would be Carnival Day and perhaps have a small procession if we can warrant the road closure. Also if all is Covid clear for the Summer we will possibly have some other fun events happening. Hoping we can all be together soon!

John Gammie Mere Carnival Committee

West Knoyle Parish Council

It has been a very long time since I have written anything in Mere Matters even though we have managed to have two Parish Council meetings in these COVID-19 times. The first meeting we had was on Wednesday 15th July at the village hall in West Knoyle but outside on the lawn and the second meeting was on Wednesday 16th December when we had to resort to a virtual Zoom Meeting. It was our budget meeting and was considerably shorter than it would normally be! Our precept is to be raised by 0.59% which will keep us financially stable for the next year.

At the meeting we also discussed the road closure this side of Charnage to repair the hole on the side of the road by the bridge which has now been completed. On the subject of roads, we have today received a letter from Highways England regarding the A303 Deverills underpass repairs and the revised works dates which will now begin on 25th January. The letter states that the majority of the work will be carried out during daytime under lane closures and contraflow although some overnight closures will be needed. If you have any questions or comments about the work, or would like further information, please contact Highways England Customer Contact Centre (open 24/7) on 0300 123 5000 or by email at: info@highwaysengland.co.uk

West Knoyle did manage to hold a socially distanced Remembrance Day Service outside the church. It was noted with great sadness that Peter Douglas had died in the home in Swindon where he and his wife Sue were living. He had always played a very major role in the Remembrance for the army and was an active member of the village and community life in West Knoyle.

On a slightly lighter everyone for lights again this fantastic display. very kindly



note, I would like to thank putting up their Christmas year - there has been a Once again George Jeans

donated some prizes for the Christmas Light competition - thank you George - so I got an independent person to judge it. Janet Howard at Dulifou was the winner. Tied second were Phil and Shirley Singer and John and Emma Wareham. Congratulations to them and thank you to everyone who took part, the village looked very pretty.

It is good news that some of our senior members of the village have had their first COVID-19 vaccination. Let's hope the ball will really get rolling soon and then we will hopefully see some light at the end of the tunnel. Talking of light, hopefully by the time this is in print we will start to notice our days getting longer.

Jinny Brockway, Chairman, West Knoyle Parish Council

Public Urged To Be Vigilant To Avoid Scam Vaccine Messages

Following reports in other parts of the country we are warning the public to be wary of messages claiming to be from the NHS asking the recipient to apply for their vaccine.

At a time when people are already feeling anxious and eagerly awaiting details of the impending vaccine, scammers are using this to their advantage to commit fraud. If you receive such a text, don't follow the link or share any personal or financial details. The link will take you through to a fake NHS website which is purposefully designed to exploit vulnerable people.

Fraudsters have tried to use the vaccine as a convincing subject to hook potential victims since the pandemic began. Thankfully reports have been relatively low, however there has been an increase in the last two months. The vaccine roll-out brings further hope of fighting coronavirus and keeping people safe. Now that this is imminent and has been so widely covered, some people may be more easily misled.

You will be contacted by the NHS when you're invited to receive the vaccine which will be offered in some hospitals, some pharmacies and hundreds of local vaccination centres run by GPs. Remember that the

vaccine is free of charge, at no point will you be asked for payment details.

Detective Sergeant Sean Tregunna commented: "Although we've not been made aware of any cases in Wiltshire yet, it's likely to only be a matter of time before we are". The text message some people have received was shared on social media over the Christmas period and although this does help to raise

awareness of the issue, the most vulnerable may not be on social media themselves so we're asking people to share the information and warn their friends and family.

The same scam has also been reported as being conducted over the phone, the caller often asks for a number to be pressed on their keypad, resulting in a charge likely being added to their phone bill, so you simply need to hang up.

We're keen to prevent as many people falling victim to these scams as possible and urge people to not only share the warning but if they do receive a suspicious text, forward it to 7726 which is free of charge.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, report it to Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk or call on 0300 123 2040



The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust

For over 20 years we have been securing the homes of those over 60 or 18+ with a registered disability living in Wiltshire and Swindon and talked to over 1,200 community groups.

The Trust's original aim was to secure the homes of elderly and disabled people who had become, or were at risk of becoming, victims of house crime. They offered practical help and advice on how to remain safe at home by undertaking a full home security assessment before fitting appropriate security hardware.

Since then the Trust has increased its remit to meet the changing needs of our community; where appropriate they conduct a full fire risk assessment as well – installing smoke detectors and CO monitors where necessary and secure the homes of people experiencing domestic abuse. But it is probably their latest initiative, Stay Safe Online that meets the current challenges of modern day life. Cyber-crime is the Nation's fastest growing crime – with around one third of fraud occurring online. The Trust now has a team of 7 volunteers who carry out home visits, improving awareness through education and therefore helping to prevent computer enabled fraud.

The Charity does not work in isolation but cooperates efficiently with a wide variety of other organisations, such as Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, Victim Support, Swindon Women's Aid, and many others.

In addition to securing reductions in the number of domestic burglaries, additional benefits have included the reduced fear of crime and social withdrawal generated by the burglary, restoring the confidence of victims and their increased participation in the day-to-day activities of our communities.

During the current Government restrictions their Home Security Operators are still securing the homes of victims of house crime and domestic abuse and the office team are on hand to give telephone support and advice on a range of home security issues. Please call 01380 861155 and leave a message, your call will be returned within a few hours during working hours.

Their Stay Safe Online volunteers are available to offer telephone advice on a range of issues from improving cyber security awareness, to cyber and scam prevention advice and signposting to future advice and resources. Please call and leave a message on 01380 861191 and someone will get back you shortly.

This amazing service is FREE to all eligible clients. How lucky are we in Wiltshire and Swindon to have such a team keeping us safe. If you would like any further information on the Trust, or are interested in donating, please contact Jennie Shaw via email on jennie@wbvt.org

 wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk



THE WILTSHIRE BOBBY VAN TRUST

Registered Charity No: 1153790

Mere Theatre Club

Sadly but live attended theatre is still some way off but fortunately there are some excellent streamed productions to enjoy in the warmth and safety of your home.

Here is just a taste:

Bristol Old Vic at bristololdvic.org.uk have 5 productions on until February 28th for the cost of a mere £12.99

The National Theatre have a feast of delights including War Horse, Othello, Cherry Orchard, Amadeus and many more at ntathome.com You can subscribe for £8.32 a month.

The Metropolitan Opera have nightly opera streams, in many cases for a voluntary donation at metopera.org

The Royal Opera House at roh.org.uk are streaming Tosca from January 22nd until February 21st.

Or a treat from originaltheatreonline.com Alan Bennett's The Habit of Art until the end of February.

Madeline Morris ☎ 861833 madsmorris@gmail.com

Surviving Winter Fund

Wiltshire residents can claim up to £250 (whilst funds last!) to help with their heating and fuel bills over the cold period. This time round we are paying either for top up vouchers for their prepayment meters or credit into their energy account if they pay by direct debit. We can also help with solid fuels also such as LPG gas bottles, wood or coal.

To be eligible, the applicant will need be in receipt of a means tested benefit, of pension age, or of working age and receiving a disability benefit (or they/someone in the household has a health condition worsened by the cold). They also need to be struggling with their fuel bills and keeping their home warm. The fund can also help with boiler repairs of up to £300.

To apply, call our advice line number on 0800 038 5722. We would need either recent benefit award letters or a recent bank statement showing benefits being paid into their account. It is not essential that all of the information is provided in the referral as we will be picking these up and calling those back to gather any additional information! We can also provide freepost envelopes for those to send their evidence back to us.

Quote from a community volunteer:

"I seem to have been missed off the list, I am still Ok to help out when I can"

How to Plant Your Garden

First you come to the garden alone;
while the dew is still on the roses



Plant 3 rows of Peas:

- *Peace of mind*
- *Peace of heart*
- *Peace of soul*



Plant 4 rows of Squash:

- *Squash gossip*
- *Squash indifference*
- *Squash grumbling*
- *Squash selfishness*



Plant 4 rows of Lettuce:

- *Lettuce be faithful*
- *Lettuce be kind*
- *Lettuce be patient*
- *Lettuce really love one another.*



No garden should be without Turnips:

- *Turnip for meetings*
- *Turnip for service*
- *Turnip to help one another*



and to conclude, our garden must have Thyme:

- *Thyme for each other*
- *Thyme for family*
- *Thyme for friends*
- *Thyme for neighbors*



WATER FREELY WITH PATIENCE AND CULTIVATE WITH LOVE

Quote from a community volunteer:

"I am happy to continue helping my contacts from the first lockdown, but very sadly don't think I'll be able to take any more lovely people on at the moment. I start a new job next week and will be working full time and further away as well"

Shreen Harmony

Happy New Year from Shreen Harmony. We are still looking forward to the time we can sing together again. In the meantime some of us had great fun singing a few Christmas carols on Zoom.

Caroline Landymore ☎ 228819

Teenage Reporters/Photographers Wanted

Mere Matters has historically published articles from group organisers, schools and other local organisations. Over the last year it has have been necessary to prioritise pandemic related content.

I would now like to invite

contributions and involvement of the teenagers in our community.

- Are you thinking of a career in news reporting, journalism or photography?
- Could you be a wordsmith in the making?
- Would you like to seek out new areas to report on, get opinions and conduct surveys?

Now is the opportunity to get involved in the community, get support to develop different styles of reporting and see how this can influence change.

Having this sort of experience to include on your CV when you apply for a job could make all the difference in starting out in your career.



Richard Jefferies ☎ 863425 📠 07950 797273 editor@merematters.co.uk

Quote from a community volunteer:

"I am here to help any time over Christmas to anybody that needs any support. Peoples plans have changed now, so if you can think of anyone who needs a bit of company over the festive period, or if needed for other errands, I am here to help"

Horses of Mere help me manage through lockdown

My name is Poppy Ross, I'm 13 years old, I want to share with you what is helping me through lockdown while recovering from chronic fatigue syndrome.

Having chronic fatigue has really restricted and cut off so much of my life; not being able to do what I love or just go to school full time like a normal teenager. I found myself stuck at home while everyone else got on and enjoyed their life. Then the corona virus hit and the small part of a normal life I had, was almost all gone.

To start with walks weren't an option, partly because there was just nothing motivating me, but also I just was not physically able. But then I found it, the reason to get out every day, the horses of Southbrook. They finally gave me something to enjoy. I have loved horses all my life and hope to be an equestrian vet when I'm older so they also helped me remember my love of horses.



It was amazing to be able to go and talk to the horses. I really believe they've helped me so much: physically, because the short walk to their field was beginning to help me build back a little bit of my strength; as well as mentally because it helped me take a massive break from feeling rubbish. When I go to visit them, I forget that I have chronic fatigue syndrome and that I'm ill. I love talking to them and every time I hear Toby the donkey "eor" it makes me giggle. It shows how much animals can really help us.

So thank you to the people who own the donkey and horses, just seeing them in your field has made the last year so much better.

P.S If anyone knows where the sandy coloured horse with a black mane has gone then it would be great if you could let me know as he was definitely my favourite and came to talk to me the most and maybe if he's in a field on a footpath route I could add him in to my little walk.

Poppy Ross

From Poppy's Mum.

Imagine a sports-mad, turbo charged, sociable and confident young girl, who's highlight of her time at primary school is being given the role as sports ambassador in year 6. This was Poppy two years ago and little did she know that that was all about to change after a severe case of food poisoning back in April 2019. That's how cruel Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is, one day you feel fine, the next you get ill, your immune system takes a knock and then you can't understand why you're not recovering.

CFS (also known as ME) is a long-term chronic illness with a wide range of symptoms, the main one being severe and persistent fatigue and exhaustion, along with nausea, pains and trouble focusing. Poppy's body does not produce enough energy. Imagine your energy like a battery charge, each day a healthy person would start the day at 100% charge

whereas Poppy will start the day with 10-20%. The result of this is not having enough charge to get through the day. Every day things we take for granted like chatting to a friend, having a shower, going to school, playing sport or watching a film all take up high levels of energy for Poppy. So, to help manage her CFS and to prevent 'payback' (her symptoms getting worse) she has to track and plan out her day so that she doesn't use up too much high energy.

CFS has impacted on Poppy in so many ways. She can't go to school full time, has had to stop all her sports and out of school activities and it has stopped her being able to go out with her friends, doing all the fun things teenagers should be doing. But even with all that she keeps finding things to be grateful for and to make her smile.

"I never thought we would be in a position where we had to use a food bank but over the last year we could not have managed without the Mere Food Bank. This service has been invaluable to my family and I will be forever grateful to Anne and her team for all there help and support.

If you get the chance to donate to a food bank please do because your donation will really help someone in need and will be so appreciated also you just never know if one day you might need them to help you."

Vacancy for Parish Clerk

Upper Deverills Parish Council wishes to appoint a Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

This is a part time position, approximately 25 hours a month, working primarily from home. The Parish Council will supply a laptop for Council work.

The applicant should have good computer, administrative and communication skills and should be competent in bookkeeping. Local authority experience would be an advantage, but training is available.

The salary will be based on NJC pay scales plus agreed expenses.

If you would like an informal chat about the post, please call the current Clerk on 01985 844385. Full information about the Parish Council is available on the website at: www.upperdeverills.co.uk/parish-council .

For an application pack please email the Clerk: clerk@upperdeverills.co.uk.

The closing date for applications is Friday 26th February 2021 and interviews are expected to be held in the week beginning 1st March.

Mere Historical Society

Although we have a programme of talks and speakers for 2021 mapped out, it remains unlikely that we will be able to run any talks this spring. There is also only a faint possibility of having our AGM in April. Much depends on when the Grove Building reopens and how well the virus is being controlled. It is looking rather more hopeful for our autumn programme. We will of course send members a programme as soon as we are confident we can go ahead.

With regard to our visits programme, by now some of our older members will have been vaccinated for Covid 19, so things are looking up. However, I have been mulling over the possibilities for visits during this very uncertain year and I think at this stage it is unlikely that I will run more than two. It would be great if that could be in June and July, so keep your fingers crossed. In reality we would not be able to go far, so unfortunately St Fagans will have to wait. Forde Abbey remains the most likely venue but I will almost certainly have to increase the price because of constraints on capacity. At the moment we are booked for Thursday 17th June.

Caroline Cook 📞 861797 🌐 merehistoricalsociety.org.uk

The Butt of Sherry – Exciting Update

We have had confirmation that someone with local connections has been successful in negotiating the purchase of the freehold of The Butt of Sherry. We feel this is a very exciting development in the ongoing battle to maintain the pub as a benefit for the local community.

We, as you probably know were not successful in purchasing the premises, now however someone that wishes to run it as a pub has stepped in and been able to buy it from the developer.

You will see much activity around the pub over the next month or two and with a bit of luck as the pandemic recedes it will open again in due course.

This is a huge task and investment for the new owner and we would ask the population of Mere who make up this wonderful community to get behind the owner and make it successful by using the pub and its facilities.

We as a committee are fully behind the owner and will remain active and help in whatever way we can.

The Butt of Sherry Preservation Society Committee.

Melvin Wilkinson melvinwilkinson@hotmail.com

Quotes: We drove over to Wilton yesterday for Hubby's jab - lovely weather for it! It was all very well organised and we saw several Mere people around all seeming very happy with the setup there and the cheerful volunteers.

A very happy and healthy New Year to all our members and the Mere community. As we reflect on the positive aspects of the previous year, we give thanks for the gift of modern technology. Zoom has been a wonderful asset, bringing us together safely online.

Our virtual Carol service was enjoyed by many and we have already held our January meeting, when some of those who are housebound were able to participate, joining us for prayers and a much needed catch up and chat. Our Christmas project to bring support and hope to those alone and in need was a success.

Forty-three Christmas Day lunches were provided by a wonderful team of volunteers, who cooked traditional hot meals, with all the trimmings. These were delivered to the door by an equally wonderful group of drivers. Huge thanks to all those involved and for the extra special treats, mince pies, brownies, chocolates and crackers.

We were also able to give out fifty-four vouchers for a takeaway meal from The Walnut Tree and nineteen tea boxes from The Angel Tearooms. This would not have been possible without generous donations from The Mere Forest Charity, members of St. Michael's Church and Mere Mothers' Union and residents of Mere. Thank you so much.

Grateful thanks also to Mark Cassidy and his staff, Marilyn and Paul, George Jeans and Anne Rich for their help and support.

Our next Zoom meeting will be on Tuesday 9th February at 2.30pm. Please call 861065 for the link, all are welcome.

Go forward with hope and faith.

"I will lift up my eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help
My help cometh from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth."

Psalm 121.

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

Quotes from your community volunteers:

*"I'm the new kid on the block so I look forward to
being of some help if I can"*

*"Here we go again another lockdown and home again. As I will be
working from home I'd like to offer my services again to volunteer
to Mere resilience team and help out in community as required"*

Its only a Sharp Scratch

My Covid jab was booked for January 7th at 2.27pm at the Michael Herbert Hall, South Street, Wilton and I chose to drive in on the B3089 because I know the road and it's such a pretty drive. Coming into Wilton on this road turn right at the traffic lights the Michael Herbert Hall is down on the right hand side and was easy to see because of all the hi-viz jackets (perhaps I should say I am very long sighted!) I parked close by on the roadside, there was some off road parking which might have been reserved for wheelchair users but there were plenty of people to ask when I went. Even though I was a few minutes early I was told to go straight inside, so I didn't have to hang about in the cold. My name was checked against a list, a card was written out with name, date and details of vaccination type (Pfizer). I have to keep this card in a safe place as proof of vaccination.

It was all highly organised with many people to help, I was moved along from chair to chair (carefully wiped after each use) arriving at a table where there were 2 young people manning a laptop, the nurse doing the vaccination and at least 2 other

people helping out. The jab was quick and painless, the hall freezing because all the windows and doors were open but somehow knowing that, although the space was large and full of people, it was very well ventilated, the cold didn't matter. On being seated in another chair after the vaccination a slip of paper was handed to me with a time written on it - my personal exit time. There was a large clock facing the room to count off the 15 minutes before one could leave - with permission from one of the many room stewards who seemed more than willing and able to help anyone who needed it to get back to their car. Unlike the flu jab I had a chance to talk to the nurse who did mine who said she and her co-workers would be doing this job every day 'until it was all done'. Hats off to them!

In spite of January 7th being very foggy for part of the journey it took me 1.5 hours door to door from my house in Pettridge Lane. Other than a slightly sore arm for a couple of days I had no noticeable side effects and in fact my arm was less swollen and sore than after my last flu jab.

I await a date for part 2 of the vaccination.

Hilary

Mere Gardening Club

So we are into 2021, let's hope it can be better than last year. We are keeping a close watch on directions from the Government and also taking the views of the members as to when we should start our activities again. We will of course keep you informed of future plans in Mere Matters.

I am pleased to announce that Penny Allen has agreed to take on the role as Club Secretary, we welcome Penny into her new role and I am sure she will do a splendid job for the club.

It's time to start planning your gardens and allotments for this year's crop. So put your feet up and get out the seed catalogues and spend an hour or two flicking through the pages and selecting all your favourites. (D.T. Brown have some very good offers). Perhaps this will be the year when you will grow an unusual variety that you haven't grown before. I did it last year with Romanesco, a type of cauliflower, but with little success. So I will try another one this year and hope I get better results. I am also looking forward to a bumper crop of cherries when our two newly planted trees fruit.

Happy Growing

Les Manwaring, Chairman. ☎ 861941 meregardenclub.org.uk

Mere Rivers Group - Wildlife Sightings for November and December 2020

The sightings covered below are those sent to us during November and December. Both months were very wet so thank you to those who were hardy enough to get out and take the time to let us know about the wildlife you saw!

In both months 4 juvenile moorhens were seen daily on the Shreen at Waterside.

In November a kingfisher was seen four times. A small flock of blue tits and a grey wagtail were seen twice. The following were seen once - great spotted woodpecker, pair of pied wagtails, coal tit, 3 mallards, emperor dragonfly, pair of magpies and collared dove.

In December a kingfisher was seen twice and a little egret and grey wagtail were both seen once.

Nature Notes

For those who got out and about, the wildlife was easier to see with no leaves on the trees or bushes. Both months were very wet but unseasonably warm and, as a result, insects were still active and a bumble bee was seen on Castle Hill as well as the dragonfly reported above. A barn owl was heard and a small murmuration of starlings was seen circling above the town, as was a red kite. Others have said how pleased they've been to see the birds in their gardens. These have included sparrows, goldfinches, chaffinches, blackbirds, wrens, blue tits and great tits.

At the time of writing in early January there is no indication when the third lockdown will end. Our streams and rivers are particularly relaxing to stroll along, so please do take advantage of your allowed time outside and look out for our wonderful wildlife. Redwing and fieldfare, both winter visitors, are in the shrubs and hedges. Little egret, moorhen and mallard ducks can be seen on the water or under the overhanging branches. However, the most beautiful bird to see along our waterways is the kingfisher. Keep your eyes open and enjoy your time with nature. Please make sure you report all your river and stream sightings. Thank you.

Lynne Bann ☎ 860174 mereriverwildlife@btinternet.com

"Thank you to all the generous people of mere and the lovely volunteers at the foodbank for helping, especially over the Christmas period"

Rosemary Goddard Centre

In the run up to Christmas the RGC committee decided it would be a nice surprise to give all of our guests a Christmas hamper. Just before Christmas I dressed up as Mrs Christmas and delivered the hampers to all, and what an uplifting experience, the joy and smiles I encountered were heartwarming even if we couldn't hug or get close.



On behalf of everyone at the RGC I would like to congratulate Ben Avery on his successful 'Our Little Corner' 2021 calendar. Ben managed to raise a massive £1,620 from sales of the calendar which is to be split evenly between the RGC and The Firefighters Charity. Thank you to all of you that purchased one, and of course, huge thanks go to Ben for all his fundraising efforts during this difficult time.

We are continuing to provide telephone support to all of our guests, many of whom take part in quizzes to keep the cogs turning. Remember... 'If you don't use it...you lose it!' It will be very interesting to see a master scoreboard when we are all able to get together again.

Sandie Hawkins, RGC Organiser ☎ 07835 272406 🌐 meredaycentre.org.uk

Angel Corner Tea Rooms

Hello everyone we hope you are all keeping safe and well. A quick reminder we are still open daily for takeaways, delivery and call & collect 9.30am - 3.30pm. Serving breakfast rolls/sandwiches, light lunches, cream teas and homemade cake.

We have had a few requests lately for Sunday roast so we are now introducing **LOCKDOWN SUNDAY ROASTS!** during the lockdown period only. Every Sunday we will be offering Sunday roasts with all the trimmings and you can add a delicious yummy pudding. 1 course £10.00 , 2 courses £12.50 and delivery is free within the local area!

Each week we will be taking orders up until **Friday 12.00pm** to a maximum of 20 people. So go on treat yourself you deserve it. For all enquiries please give us a call on 01747 860 524 we are here for all your needs.

Paul 📞 860524

Local COVID-19 contact tracing is now taking place



**If you receive
a call from
0300 456 0100
please be sure to
pick up**

#WiltshireTogether

Wiltshire Council

Mere School

After a very successful autumn term back in school we are now once again following the government guidance and keeping the school open for key worker and vulnerable children only.

The first week back was extremely busy with all the staff setting up online learning for the children at home and organising lessons for the children in school.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents and children for their amazing support during this initial period and hope that the children are enjoying this new approach to learning.



"Mere School would like to say a huge thank you to Mere residents for responding so positively to our plea for unused computers for our families who are struggling to home educate in these challenging times. We have had a tremendous response so far with 13 ready for action! Our families will be so grateful".

Many thanks and stay safe from all the staff, parents and children at Mere School.

 mereschool.co.uk

Archie Ross – writes:

"Throughout the past year Covid-19 has had a big effect on my life. It's had an impact on nearly everything I do, from my education to my physical and mental well-being. Way back in March 2020 when the country was first put into a national lockdown I thought little of it, as we were told by school that it would only be likely to last two weeks. I soon came to realise however that this was anything but the truth. Online learning was tough, especially back then when we weren't being given "live lessons" so we were just given tasks to complete each day.

I found this very difficult as it took me a lot longer to learn new subjects without having someone there to help. With this in mind however I do believe, at least in the first lockdown, that I came out better than many of my classmates. This was because I still had the opportunity to have social interactions with people outside my household, partly through the fact that I could attend Zoom meetings with local charity Seeds4Success, and at that point I was also lucky enough to still be able to do my paper round, which gave me the opportunity to leave the house and to at least some extent interact with people. After being told at the beginning of this January that my exams weren't going to be taking place this year I was filled with mixed feelings, it was something I almost knew was going to happen but I was never the less quite frustrated after being firmly told are exams would be taking place as normal".

Friends of Mere Museum

Way back in the early 18th century, the writer and poet Alexander Pope conjured up the phrase 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast'. It has, of course, become proverbial; an expression we still use almost every day, especially these days! So with eternal hope in our hearts and minds, the Friends of the Museum would like to encourage you to glance slightly backward and but then resolutely forward. Backward to remind ourselves of all the enjoyable events we run annually to support the Museum - exhibition preview evenings, quizzes, talks about everything under the sun and The Plant Sale, but forward to our being able to organise all those civilised events again, when we're all vaccinated! So please look forward to our first event, whatever that turns out to be, when wine and conversation will flow again and life returns to normal!

Jenny Wilding ☎ 860908 jenny@flaxmill.org.uk

Mere Amateur Dramatic Society

We've just realised that the 21st century is 21 years old! (Well, we've very little else to do at the moment). This set us thinking. MADS was 21years old in 1968, so this time 53 years ago we were energetically rehearsing 'Ladies In Retirement' a play by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham, first produced on Broadway in 1940. It was made into a film in 1941 and was described as an American film noir. If you weren't able to get tickets for our 1968 production, here's what you missed!

'The play, set in 1880, is based on a famous murder which actually took place at the end of the last century, an eerie atmosphere of mystery is evoked in a dark, lonely house on the marshes of the Thames estuary. The characters, presented with great psychological realism and the strong vein of earthy comedy, invest the play with a liveliness unusual for such a genuinely horrifying murder play.'

You can see why we picked it - just up our street! And when we can access the MADS Archive again we can remind everyone of who was in it. If you enjoyed this bit of history, we'll tell you next month which other play we presented in our special birthday year!

Jenny Wilding ☎ 860908 jenny@flaxmill.org.uk

Link Scheme

The Link Scheme remains OPEN (as we have been throughout the whole of the pandemic). 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 hours notice if possible.

Our clients continue to express their gratitude for our work with one lady writing "thank you for your kind, excellent community service, which we appreciate enormously". Another was very grateful for the Link getting him to and from his hospital appointment safely in the fog and ice. The driver was happy to get home as well!

We are delighted to have had three new inquiries about becoming a Link driver and hopefully they will be available to drive shortly. Nevertheless, we still have a reduced number of drivers at the moment but we will do what we can to accommodate your needs. If you would like to become a Link driver please call 01747 860096.

Unfortunately, it looks like the covid restrictions of social distancing and wearing a face covering will be with us for some months yet. So please rest assured that the safety guidelines we introduced to protect both clients and drivers from the risk of spreading the virus are still in operation. Both driver and passenger have to wear a face covering while in the car and clients 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 client while in the car at the end of each trip. Disappointingly, we are unable to take people from different households in the same car.

John FitzGerald, Chair ☎ 860096

Poppy writes:

I am very frustrated that the exams have been cancelled; the exams I have done this Autumn 2020 - which are what my overall grade will be based off of - were the first formal exams I have ever done and were meant to be a practice. I would have liked another opportunity to improve on my Autumn mocks. I think that it is unfair that previous years have had two, or even three sets of mocks to help prepare them for their GCSE exams when this year the first exams that we have done will be what our overall grades are based on.

Molly writes:

I'm happy about them cancelling the exams as it's a big relief - the pressure and uncertainty was stressful. However, I am also frustrated as I was sort of prepared for them to happen and I was revising regularly. Instead we have to do really well in our course which is OK I guess. Overall I am probably quite happy about it.

Letter from the Churches ~ *Michael Hughes writes.*

In a previous issue of Mere Matters you may have read about *Sisu*.

Sisu is the Finnish word for the quality that gets them through their long dark winters. It means a dogged determination to keep going.

And we have kept going! The worst of the winter is behind us, the birds are pairing up and their singing fills the dawn; a dawn getting earlier and brighter every day! Croci, daffodils and snowdrops break the brownness of the earth and we have shown remarkable *Sisu*. Not just getting through another dreary winter, but getting through a mentally and spiritually hard one, with the virus precautions stopping us from being close to our friends or family, and fear threatening to steal our God-given joy. It is amazing to talk to many of you and find so much cheerfulness and hope remaining.

To all the older people who gave up the chance to hug those they love, to all the young people who tried to limit their contacts, to all who struggled to work from home, to those pushing back at the tide of depression, and to all who worked on cheerfully in care homes, health care, food shops and essential services: in fact to just about all of us: BRAVO, BRAVO, BRAVO! We got through!

This past year will be the defining year of the rest of our lives, in the same way as the lives of those who lived through the Great War were defined by that beastliness.

After that war, people did not do enough to ensure that the post-crisis world was better than the world before it. The rich continued to ignore the desperate lot of the world's poor, and there was no spirit of forgiveness.

So world war came again. Let us not repeat that mistake.

Let us think, all of us, of how we can contribute to the new order that must come when the virus goes. A world where human beings truly care for each other: a society that is determined to preserve the health of our planet for future generations.

The human race are one people – we have seen how fast the virus leapt from person to person round the world. We cannot not build up herd immunity to the virus until all countries have efficient vaccine programmes. So for our own safety, even if you do not accept the teaching of Jesus that all people in trouble should be treated as part of our family, we will need to enable peace in war zones, and, throughout the developing world, the building of medical centres - and the training of medical staff, so that the vaccine can be administered everywhere.

So here's a little to-do list for each morning!

Feel the joy of being alive in this Spring and share it with one other person.

Pray for the end of the virus and the safety of those around us.

Think about how to build a fairer, healthier world.

St Michaels Services in February

We are not gathering in the church again this month and are continuing with online and Zoom services.

Links for these are either on our website stmichaelsmere.org.uk or by emailing Rev Carol on vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk

Services in February for the whole Benefice:

7th February Matins Service on Zoom at 9.30

14th February St Valentine: Feel the Love service on Zoom with various contributors and music at 10.30

17th February Ash Wednesday service from Bishop of Salisbury in the cathedral streamed live at 5.30. See Salisbury Diocese website.

21st February 1st Sunday of Lent and St Elwyn's patronal festival Zoom service. We will be joined live by Christians in Hayle in Cornwall for this service with Rev Sharon Team Rector. (This is the parish where Rev Carol served her curacy). Time to be confirmed

28th February 2nd Sunday of Lent online service available on St Michael's website.

Lent Study Group on Zoom.

Wednesdays at 9.30 from 17th February. We will be following the USPG resources "For Such a Time as This" gathering on Zoom. People are living in this world as if they have another planet to go to. The world is in crisis and Creation is groaning. Resources available on USPG website.

Funerals are permitted with up to 30 people allowed to gather. Please wear face masks, sanitise hands on entering and leaving and record your presence on Track and Trace. If the funeral is at the crematorium and you have decided not to go for safety reasons Rev Carol is conducting local gatherings to run at the same time. Please ring her to arrange this.

Children's Zoom Bible Story Time at 4pm on Sundays until 28th February. Bible poems from Open the Book, singing. Please email Rev Carol for link.

With blessings

Rev Carol Priest in Charge Mere with West Knoyle and Maiden Bradley.



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

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

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

The United Reformed Church

Minister - Rev'd Duncan Goldie
Mere Contact: Molly Burden ☎ 860007

You may have noticed work in progress at the U.R.C. We are renovating the building to make it more useful for our worship and for community use. During the present lockdown there will be no services but please see the notice board outside the church for details of when and where services will be held whilst the work takes place.

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

Our Masses are held in Wincanton at present due to COVID distancing instructions making our church in Mere too small. Fr Louis celebrates Mass in Wincanton on Saturday at 5.30 pm, Sunday at 10.30 am and 6.30pm

Mere Information Point @ The Library

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

Wiltshire Dementia Adviser Service	1st 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



Thanks to the generous support of many people, our cake stall, deferred from November, went ahead on 5th December and was a great success, making £258.80 in just over an hour. People seemed to be as happy

to see us as we were to see them! All being well and the then current restrictions permitting, we plan to hold another cake stall near the Post Office, around Easter time. Please look out for us (and offers of cakes will be very gratefully received!). Looking ahead as optimistically as possible, our little committee is also planning to hold outdoor coffee mornings in the Spring and late summer; and if (it's a big if) the Grove Building is open by then, we're dreaming of a Summer evening 'Quiz and Pud' evening (instead of our sadly cancelled Shrove Tuesday Quiz & Pancake event): see later editions of Mere Matters for details.

In spite of the present situation, we felt inspired to be bold in our planning by the impressive example of the Suchana project itself. Although infection rates are relatively low in West Bengal, all government schools have been closed since March last year and remain closed, and online learning is out of the question for most children. Suchana, on the other hand, has been very busy, having opened cautiously in September and fully from December. Ishani, whose only experience of formal school up to GCSE was at Suchana, is now helping there in her pre-university gap year, and was able to join our planning meeting by Zoom. Her enthusiasm was infectious as she described how the 30+ staff, (many of them volunteers and some part-time, including 5 Suchana 'graduates') have been finding new ways to expand their 1st language literacy programme in scattered village settlements – while at the same time distributing sanitiser, Covid-aware posters and emergency PPE. They have established new early learning centres, enabled the publication of 270 story books in the two main languages spoken by the local children, and distributed copies widely in pre-school centres and elsewhere, and are pioneering ways of supporting literacy developed through the use of mobile phones. They have doubled the mobile library hours, together with a sophisticated recording system, and much else. You can discover more from their Facebook page.

In these dark days, it is very encouraging to be involved in a project where a little goes such a long way in improving life opportunities for so many children and communities. Thank you so much for your help.

Judith Thompson ☎ 860553 judithvthompson@aol.com

Booking Meeting Venues

Grove Building:	Graham Ward administrator@grovebuildingmere.com	☎ 07935 266375
Lecture Hall:	Sally Johnson	☎ 861063
URC Church Hall:	Eileen Burfitt	☎ 860685

Covid-19 Telephone Coordinators

Name	Home Phone	Mobile
Ann Rich	01747 861493	07413 512023
Isobel Page	01747 860297	
Jane Batten	01747 860583	
Joanne King		07740 858923
Mary Wilson	01747 229609	07550 076240
Rachael Hansford	01747 860168	07989 470278
Rose Heesom		07791 559674
Roy Beavis		07878 903178

If you are self-isolating and have absolutely no other family, friends or neighbours who can help you, then please contact one of these volunteers between the hours of 8.00am - 6.00pm.

If you would like to help in any way or wish to make comment then please contact:

Richard Jefferies

☎ 01747 863425

☎ 07950 797273

✉ rajefferies@btinternet.com

Thinking of Advertising in Mere Matters?

To find out the costs or to book an advert, please contact Jane Kennedy directly by phone or email.

jane.kennedy83@btinternet.com ☎ 860450

Copy date for March 2021 Issue

Closing deadline is: 4:00pm on MONDAY 22nd February. Email contributions are preferred, to the Editor, Richard Jefferies ☎ 863425 editor@merematters.co.uk or deliver to 16 Underhill, Mere, BA12 6LU.

Please be sure to state your name and a contact telephone number to ensure inclusion.

Wiltshire Council Recycling Schedule 2021 for most of Mere

	T	W	T	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W														
February							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28			
March							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
April			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
May					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
June	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30							
July			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
August						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
September		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30						
October				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
November							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
December	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						

Public Holidays:

Easter		Friday 2nd - 5th April	The Garden Waste days in May to Dec are provisional at time of print
Early May Public Holiday		Monday 3rd May	
Spring Public Holiday		Monday 31st May	
Late Summer Public Holiday		Monday 30th August	Confirmation on all dates can be found on the Council's Website.
Christmas		Saturday 25th - Tuesday 28th December	



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