

Merry Matters

December 2023/January 2024

Frohe
Festtage

God Jul

Zalig
kerstfeest

Boas Festas

★ Fröhliche
Weihnachten

Buone Feste Natalizie

Joyeux Noel

Glædelig Jul

Hyvaa joulua

Merry Christmas

God Jul

★ Feliz Navidad

Sung Tan Chuk Ha

Frohes Fest Vrolijk Kerstfeest

Kung His Hsin Nien ★ Buon Natale

Merry Christmas Glædelig Jul

Frohe Weihnachten

und ein gutes
neues Jahr!

& so does

West Knoyle

Your community magazine

Including a guide to local events

Editorial



Compiling this publication each year along with the joint one for July and August is always problematic as there are so many diary dates and events to think about. I do hope I have transcribed them all correctly. I have had the pleasure of treating my colleagues, who help me make it all happen, to a little lunchtime refreshment – always nice at this time of year as we all start thinking about the Christmas break. If you manage a voluntary team, please make sure you say thank you to them as they are the most important resource we have. To all who support the community Mere Matters wishes you a very Merry Christmas and look forward to a Happy New Year. If you have time and are able to; why not think of volunteering within the community?

Just prior to Christmas I am scheduled to get my second replacement shoulder fitted (hopefully no more!) and hope to be returning to full health in the New Year ready to get February's copy off to print.

Richard Jefferies ~ Editor ☎ 863425 editor@merematters.co.uk

Mere Town Council

I hope that you have picked up this edition in time to see the Christmas Tree light up in the Square and the parents and youngsters lining up to see Santa in the Clock Tower, compliments of Mere Carnival. I know that, these days, with the comings and goings throughout the day of shoppers, deliveries and passers by, the Square can be somewhat fraught but it deserves our best efforts to keep it calm and polite. The Museum has pictures of The Square over the years and they too are often busy but in other ways. The Square was the scene, on the 12th November, of an act of Remembrance and at a well-attended ceremony, poppies were presented by representatives of many groups.

I was at the AGM of the Friends of Mere Museum and it was pleasing to hear about the funds raised and to see the latest exhibition, featuring an informative display about six families of Mere. Well worth a visit. I was able to attend the AGM of Seeds4Success, my apologies for being late, where we were presented with the many accomplishments of young people in the area, ably assisted by the staff and trustees – my congratulations to them all.

An agreement has been signed between econetiQ, Wiltshire Council and Mere Town Council to fund and install a cutting-edge 120kW DC Fast Maxicharger in the Salisbury Street Car Park. It is envisaged that this Electric Vehicle charger will get used by the community and will also be another facility for people to use when they are travelling along the A303 and looking for somewhere to stop off and charge their vehicle. Hopefully, they will use other facilities in the town as



well and help to boost the local economy. It is expected that this ambitious initiative will come to life in early 2024, pending completion of work between econetiQ and the distribution network operators (DNO)

The Town Council meeting in November dealt with many of the regular matters but spent some time looking at setting priorities for the future. Some of these will be funded by section 106 money received as a result of housing developments in the town but others will be funded through our precept, paid by residents of the town. It is important that we get this right and make the best use of this funding. Later in the month a group of councillors will look in detail at the spending and income forecast for the coming year and come up with a recommended precept. This is a considerable task with over 400 budget headings and a report compiled by our clerk consisting of over 19 pages of information. The meeting is managed by our Vice-Chair who prepares for it well in advance. Separate groups of councillors have also met to look at the future of Mere Chamber of Trade and to look at the use of Town Council land for leisure activities and how to make it the best provision that we can afford. I detail all of this to try and encourage you to put your name forward at the next election due to be held in May 2025. It is important work, and like all important work, worth doing. In the meantime – do come along to a council meeting to see local democracy in action and, in the public session, put your point of view.

John Jordan, Chair, Mere Town Council for information on Town Council activities, minutes, agendas etc. lindseywood@merewilts.org ☎ 860701 🌐 merewilts.org

Wiltshire Councillor ~ George Jeans Writes

The Remembrance Service was on Sunday 12th November, held around the War Memorial. I felt honoured to be able to lay a wreath as Wiltshire Councillor and the South West Wiltshire Area Board chairman Cllr Nabil Najjar, was in attendance also laying a wreath. I attended the service afterwards at St Michael's Church. During the two minutes silence while thinking of others I was also aware just how lucky I have been not to have to live amongst conflict. It was nice to see many youth laying wreaths and spray.

I attended the AGM of Seeds4Success, this year was their 10th year since first being established as a registered charity in July 2012, and their first full year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Jaki Farrell, Charity Director said

“Now, with the longer-term negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people clearly emerging, and an ongoing economic recession and cost of living crisis, we must continue to reach out to those families who are feeling the pressure the most. We know the social and educational development of children and young people has suffered and we are working hard to continue to provide opportunities which respond to these increasing needs. All families are feeling a financial squeeze but for those in rural communities this is greater. For many, running a car is not a luxury, it is essential to enable access to work or education and ongoing high fuel costs are placing additional stress on already struggling households. Social isolation, heightened anxiety and either over stretched or under-funded support

services have created an environment where increasing numbers of young people are struggling to engage with formal learning and positive leisure time activities.”

I personally find Jaki one of the best Youth Leaders I have ever known and we are very lucky to have her in this area along with her team. Many volunteers, trustees and peer leaders; individuals and families, town/parish councils and community groups are enabling Seeds for Success to sustain this local youth charity. The sizable grants they win is impressive.

Unfortunately, the retail outlets of Mere are declining further but that is not to say there are not many more and increasing numbers of businesses. On occasions the Mere Chamber of Trade has helped more than traders over the decades. Time moves on and the local “Jelly Group” that meets at present at Visit Hill Brush appeal to many working from home etc. I have attended a meeting where both bodies are consulting with each other. I am pleased Mere has such an active collective of business discussion.

With the government’s uplift programme for Police, Wiltshire now have 150 more officers than two years ago and the most police officers Wiltshire Police has had in more than a decade. To my knowledge we have a shared PCSO for Mere and less Police than I understand could be provided. I have witnessed the damage from local vandalism which I believe is higher than it was and not all of it is officially recorded. I will continue to call for an increased Police presence in the Mere division.

Wiltshire Council is reminding residents that it continues to provide support to people during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Although energy prices have dropped slightly and now we are again being informed of further increases, and inflation has reduced, both remain much higher than in previous years. With interest rates continuing to be unpredictable, this will undoubtedly put financial pressure on people throughout the county. Wiltshire Council has a range of support available to help make things a little easier and to provide support and advice to those who need it, including:

- Wiltshire libraries continuing as warm spaces
- Warm & Safe Wiltshire in place to help people live in warmer, safer and healthier homes
- An updated interactive guide to help people find key support
- Household Support Fund to directly finance and support a range of programmes and initiatives
- A range of online support and sign-posting information on topics including council tax/benefits, energy advice and mental health support
- Area boards continuing to look at ways to support their local community projects
- A dedicated Wiltshire Wellbeing support line to provide advice and guidance
- The council’s FUEL programme to continue this winter
- Cheaper bus fares continue until December 2024

Swindon and Wiltshire join forces for 16 Days of Action on a domestic abuse prevention campaign starting on 25 November. Domestic abuse is all around us. You

hear your neighbours shouting and worry that someone is getting hurt. What would you do?

Remember The 12th of December will see a **Big Band Tea Party** at **The Nadder Centre Tisbury**, celebrating age, look out for further information.

Wiltshire are still short of placements for foster children and looking for those interested.

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

Merry Christmas! From Mere Surgery

<u>Date of Request</u> (Before 5pm)	<u>Medication Ready</u>
18 th Dec	28 th Dec
19 th Dec	29 th Dec
20 th Dec	2 nd Jan
21 st Dec	3 rd Jan
22 nd Dec	4 th Jan
27 th Dec	5 th Jan
28 th Dec	8 th Jan
29 th Dec	9 th Jan

Last day to order for collection before Christmas:

Thursday 14th December



From Times Gone By!

Serious Trap Accident.— Whilst a pony and trap belonging to Mr. Abbott of Gillingham, containing two ladies, was standing at the side entrance of Mr. Walton's store, at Mere on Wednesday, a cart drawn by two horses turned out of Castle street; the wheel of the latter locked into that of the trap, wrenching it entirely away and seriously damaging the body and shafts. The ladies were thrown to the ground and the head of the pony was forced through the shop window, smashing two large panes of glass and overturning the whole stock of Christmas groceries displayed to view. The pony was much cut about the nose. With the exception of a few cuts and bruises and a severe shaking, the ladies fortunately escaped injury.

Marlborough Times, 6 January 1894

MERE. Christmas Treat at the Union Workhouse. — On Monday the inmates of the union were supplied with roast beef and plum pudding through the kindness of the guardians, and in the evening a large Christmas tree was provided by the master and matron for the young folks, which they thoroughly enjoyed. Miss Grove, of Zeals House, with her usual kindness was present during the meal. The aged and infirm were treated with cake, tea, coffee, tobacco, snuff, &c.

Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 31 December 1870

Martyn Beardsley



THE MERE LECTURE HALL TRUST

[Grants Available for 2024](#)

This independent Christian Trust was established in 1924 to promote the spiritual, moral, educational and social welfare of the inhabitants of the town of Mere and the surrounding area. The Trust supports a number of small schemes, charities and voluntary groups with grants for practical action.

The Trust is benevolent in a broad sense and seeks to help people of all ages to enjoy facilities they would not otherwise be able to access. It operates within a Christian ethos for the benefit of the whole community and welcomes a wide range of creative initiatives.

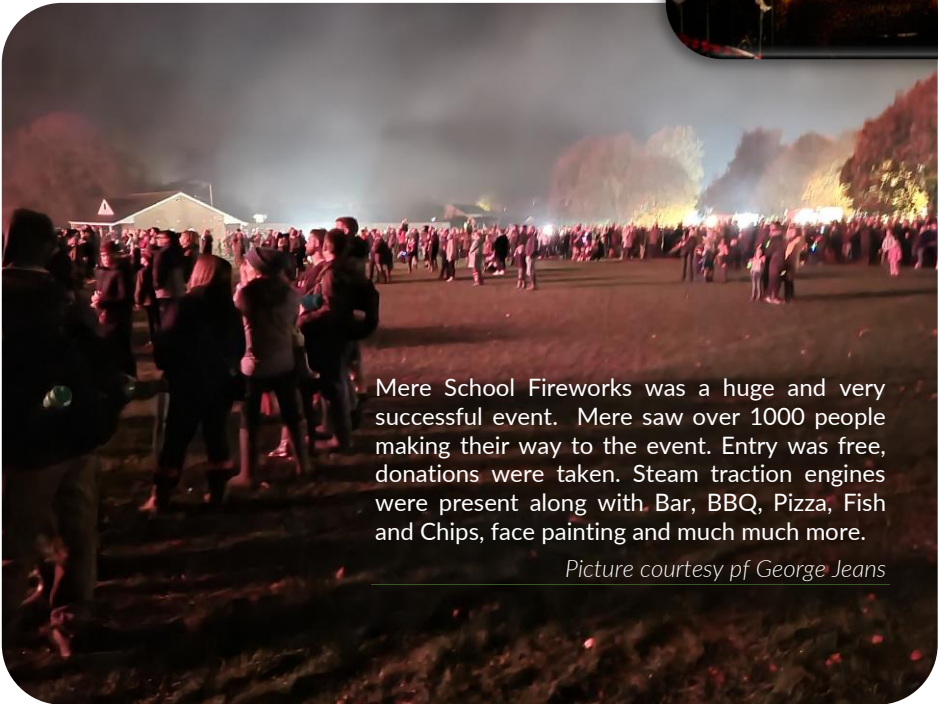
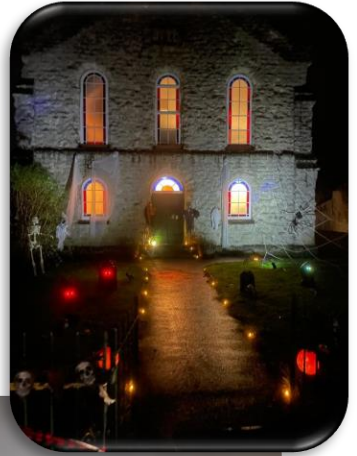
Applications for grant support are now invited for activities or projects based within 8 miles of Mere. The closing date is 28th February 2024 and successful applicants will normally be paid within two months of this date.

For further details and an application form please either send an email request to t.white615@btinternet.com or write enclosing an A5 stamped and addressed envelope to: The Grants Committee, The Mere Lecture Hall Trust, c/o Monkswell Cottage, Mill Lane, Mere, Wiltshire, BA12 6DA.

Halloween in Mere.

Many were trick and treating all in a very pleasant way it was reported. Some ran out of treats to give. Best not to enter the Old Methodist Chapel as it was rumoured, some had and not returned!

Picture courtesy of Michael Jeans



Mere School Fireworks was a huge and very successful event. Mere saw over 1000 people making their way to the event. Entry was free, donations were taken. Steam traction engines were present along with Bar, BBQ, Pizza, Fish and Chips, face painting and much much more.

Picture courtesy pf George Jeans



Mere Library is extending a warm welcome to all this winter, offering:

A **free warm space** to sit, stay and take part in activities including:

Craft & Chat: Fridays 10.30am-12pm; bring along your knitting/crochet/other project and chat while you craft!

Community puzzle: Sit for a while and help complete our jigsaw puzzle, available during our normal opening hours.

Warm packs (scarf, thermal hat and gloves, fleece blanket and a hot water bottle with a cover) for anyone who would benefit from some free essentials.

Basic **energy advice** and referrals to the energy advisors at Warm and Safe Wiltshire.

Signposting to community partners and agencies that can **support** you through the rising cost of living. For more information www.wiltshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living.

Mere Library, Barton Lane, Mere BA12 6JA.

Mere Theatre Club

As another festive season beckons, we look back on a year when we have record numbers of members as we enter our 15th year of existence. Good to know that there are lots of people in Mere who enjoy live theatre as well as some other cultural outings.

If you fancy some trips organised by someone else and perhaps make some new friends, do get in touch and find out more.

Meanwhile happy Christmas and a fun new year.

Madeline Morris ☎ 861833 madsmorris@gmail.com

Walking in Mere

If you're planning to get out into the great outdoors this festive season, don't forget the Walking in Mere cards for routes and the sights along the way. 6 walks in a waterproof wallet for £3, available from the Library, Angel Cafe, Sprout & Flower or Jeans Newsagents.

They make excellent stocking fillers too!

Watch this space, there may be some new ones next year. Happy walking.

Madeline Morris ☎ 861833 madsmorris@gmail.com

New Year, New Bottom

A reminder that we are back again, going up and around Great Bottom on New Year's Day. Healthy Mere Walking are providing guides for the walk, and refreshments at the end of the walk, and badges! What better way to start the year than a challenge with great views and companions.

Help us with organizing - Please book a place on the walk and let us know what refreshment you would like. Online at <https://hmw.org.uk/new-year-new-bottom/> or on our paper form at Mere Library.

John Jordan John.a.jordan@hotmail.co.uk 0784072835

Mere Footpath Group

We have been working, when possible, on some of the many rights-of-way in Mere parish. You may have noticed some new waymarkers for a Mere Circular Path. This is the same route as the popular Red Arrows walk but, hopefully, clearer to follow. It is a good walk taking less than an hour on hard surfaces around Mere and out along Ashfield Water – about two and a half miles in total. There is a map with information available at shops, pubs and the library. We are planning a mass walk around about Valentine's day – more information to follow. In the meantime – why not try it out!

John Jordan John.a.jordan@hotmail.co.uk 0784072835

Christmas Shopping

Lynch Close Residents did a little Christmas Shopping on Thursday 2nd November along with enjoying mince pies, coffee and a meal, plus a little shopping at Otter Garden Centre, near Wincanton.

Seeds for Success a local charity for youth provided the mini bus, I drove them and a good time was had by all.

Picture and text by, George Jeans



Who's Who in the Mere Matters Team:

Mere Matters is managed by a team of 5 volunteers:

- Advertising: Jane Kennedy jane.kennedy83@btinternet.com
- Circulation for Mere: Vivien Sheppard vivsheppard@outlook.com
- Treasurer: Alison Beall ajbpebble51@gmail.com
- Circulation for West Knoyle: Jane Howard
- Editor and Publisher: Richard Jefferies rajefferies@btinternet.com

Mere School

This is my favourite term in school with Christmas approaching so rapidly.

At this time of year, I have the best job in the world and I love sharing the festive excitement with the children and their families. We break up for our Christmas holidays extremely early and I have the greatest sympathy for our parents who will have to entertain the children for a whole week before Christmas day.



Rehearsals for our Christmas plays are 'in full swing'. Our KS1 children will be performing 'Donkey for Sale' and our KS2 children 'Cinders'. We are so lucky that we have a full stage, digital scenery, stage lights and microphones so families can come along and enjoy the performances.

Alongside this Mrs Jennings is preparing the children for our Carol Service which will be held in St Michael's Church on Friday 15th December 2023 at 9.30 pm. This is a traditional reading and carol service with some recorder and bell playing and choir singing. Please do come along and join us.

The Friends of Mere School have raised money throughout the year so that the whole school can visit Salisbury Playhouse to watch Dick Whittington. This is a magical experience for our children and it is lovely to see the staff and children enjoying the pantomime. We almost fill the theatre and the behaviour of our children is always exemplary!

Mrs Gulliver cooks us a wonderful Christmas lunch. We do this a little differently at Mere School. The children have more of a party lunch with their class while the staff and governors mingle with the children. Father Christmas comes along to say hello as well and gives us all a treat. Throughout the day the children visit our grotto and are given a small gift from Father Christmas and his elves.

Our school choir will be visiting Bramley House and the school Christmas disco is always a firm favourite with the children.

We would like to wish Mere Matters readers a very happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Catriona Williamson Head Teacher

Petanque in Mere

Petanque never stops at the old swimming pool terrain by the school. If it is not raining, we are there on Wednesday afternoons at 2.30pm and Saturday mornings at 10.30am. Come and join us and have some bouling good fun. When the clocks spring forward we will resume our Tuesday evening sessions at 6.30pm.

Colin Senneck colin2423@sky.com

Mere & District Link Scheme

Continuing with the Editor's suggestion of hearing from some of the people who use or drive for the Link Scheme, Gwil Hitchcock who has done both, wrote as follows. *"Having lived in Mere since 1975, when I retired, I was wondering what I could do to be useful to the community as well as doing a bit of travelling. I had been with British Airways for 36 years round and round the world and if I was to be at home all the time it would not suit me to stay still. My wife Honey was doing some voluntary work at Brainwave and met Pat Dence, who was a co-ordinator for the Link Scheme and suggested that I join. I had met many of the people of Mere in between flights and was always struck with the warmth and friendliness of people here but actually knew only a few of them. It was a great joy and privilege to meet so many and have a good chat driving for the next 18 years. During the past four years I have been in and out of hospital and had many appointments at Salisbury. It has been a pleasure to meet so many of the Link drivers of today who have faithfully taken me over there. The Link Scheme is a tremendous blessing to Mere and district and, for anyone who is unable to get to appointments in their own transport, it is an absolute boon. We hope and pray that the Link Scheme will continue the good work for many years to come."*

The Link Scheme is a local charity and our volunteer drivers take clients like Gwil to medical appointments, including Covid vaccinations, and even shopping when resources allow. Once you have an appointment please call 01747 860096 to book a Link driver. As a charity we do not charge for trips but ask for a donation.

With the Christmas and New Year holidays fast approaching we are happy to confirm that the Link will continue to take people to medical appointments over the holiday period. However, please note that our phone will **not** be "manned" on **25, 26, 27 December and 1 and 2 January 2024**. If you have a medical appointment between these dates, please let us know by **21 December** if at all possible to give us the best chance of getting you a driver.

We did 92 trips in September and 93 in October so the monthly average for this year remains at 90 trips. As usual, Salisbury District Hospital was the most popular destination with a total of 53 trips over the two months. New drivers are always welcome. Why not make a New Year's resolution to find out more about volunteering as a driver by calling our co-ordinator on 01747 860096.

Wishing all our clients, volunteers and readers a joyful Christmas and a happy New Year.

John FitzGerald Chair  860096  merelink.org.uk

PennyBank Writers

PennyBank's meetings for 2023 ended with its November gathering in the smaller of Mere's Lecture Halls. In December members and guests meet for Christmas lunch – this year at The George Inn - when cards, season's greetings and ideas for 2024 will be exchanged.

It has been another busy year for PennyBank with meetings usually well attended, competitions entered, book fairs visited and the production of our poetry booklet for St. Michael's Church fete. We end 2023 on

another high with Mary White awarded 1st Prize for Flash Fiction in the recent Blandford Rotary Club's Annual Short Story and Poetry competition, and Mark Grant going international and gaining 3rd prize in New Zealand's The Writers College Global Novel competition. Congratulations to them both.

There are still a few copies of our booklets *Merely Flash* and *Mere Metre* available at £3 each or 2 for £5 should you be looking for that little gift to send from Mere this Christmas. The booklets are easy to post and less expensive and certainly longer lasting than some greeting cards.

PennyBank Writers wish the Mere Matters team and all its readers a very Happy Christmas and New Year



Adrienne Howell ☎ 860475

Shreen Harmony

It is always great to sing in a choir but even more so at Christmas with all the carols both old and new. We are busy rehearsing now for our Christmas Concert. We have welcomed several new members and if anyone would enjoy singing please do just come along on a Thursday evening at 7.30 p.m. to the United Reformed Church and join us.

We have a website Shreenharmony.co.uk where you can find out more about us. The concert is in **The Grove Building, Saturday 16th December at 7.30**. There will be mulled wine and a buffet supper to enjoy. Free Admission with a collection for Dorothy House Hospice. Please come along and join us to start your Christmas Celebrations.

Sandra Fisher ☎ 861980

MERE LECTURE HALL TRUST

(Charity Number 202620)

[Secretary to the Trust](#)

The Mere Lecture Hall Trust is an independent charity with a Christian ethos which through the Lecture Hall provides facilities and grants to meet cultural, educational or welfare needs in Mere and the local area.

These activities are funded by the Trust with income derived from the Mere Lecture Hall and other properties.

The Trustees are seeking to appoint a part time Secretary to support the Management Committee, attend meetings, take minutes, compile and send out agendas and minutes as necessary and undertake a small amount of general administrative tasks. It is expected that the position will involve six meetings per year for which any expenses plus an Honorarium will be paid.

The successful applicant should have good communication and IT skills and be particularly supportive of the work of the Trust.

For further details, please write to:

Mr. Chris Wood, Swainsford Farm, Woodlands Road, Mere, BA12 6BY

Or e-mail at treasurer@merelecturehall.org.uk

Closing date for applications is 30th November, 2023

Diary Dates (Recurring events are first shown in **Bold** then in *Blue*).

Venue Key for Diary :

AYP - Andy Young Pavilion

CP - Main Car Park

Drs - Surgery

GB - Grove Building

L - Lecture Hall

Lib - Library

MSC - Social Club

RMC - Castle St Car Park

StM - St Michaels Church

URC - United Ref Church

VH - Visit Hillbrush

WT - Walnut Tree Inn

December 2023

1	Fri	13:45	Duplicate Bridge (14:00 start. Every Fri)	GB
2	Sat	10:30	Coffee Morning (every Sat)	URC
3	Sun			
4	Mon	18:00	Scouting	GB
		18:00	Yoga (every Monday)	L
		19:30	Slimming World (Book with Sally) (every Mon)	L
5	Tues	08:00	Foot Clinic	GB
		18:20	Zumba (every Tues)	L
		10:30	Historical Society	GB
6	Wed	09:30	Tai-Chi (every Weds)	GB
		14:00	Fitness and Friendship	GB
		14:30	Pilates (every Weds)	L
		18:30	Karate (every Weds)	L
			<i>Railway Modellers</i>	
7	Thurs	10:00	Art Group (every Thurs)	GB
		10:00	Hearing Aid Clinic @ United Reform Church	URC
		11:00	Rhyme Time (every Thurs)	Lib
		14:00	Quilters (every Thurs)	GB
		14:00	Rubber Bridge (every Thurs)	L
		17:00	Girlguiding (every Thurs)	GB
		19:30	Shreen Harmony (every Thurs)	URC
8	Fri	10:00	Merely Women	GB
			<i>Dup Bridge</i>	
9	Sat	19:00	Oasis Carnival Club Bingo	L
			<i>Coffee Morning, Fair Trade Stall</i>	
10	Sun			
11	Mon		<i>Scouts, Slimming World, Yoga</i>	
12	Tues	09:00	Little Angels	GB
		19:30	Historical Society	GB
			<i>Zumba,</i>	
13	Weds	14:00	Mere Short Walks (Janet Way)	WT
		19:30	Gardening Club	GB
			<i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	
14	Thurs	19:30	Ukulele	Butt of Sherry
			<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony</i>	
15	Fri		<i>Dup Bridge</i>	
16	Sat		Fair Trade at Coffee Morning	URC

		19:30 Christmas Concert – Shreen Harmony <i>Coffee Morning</i>	GB
17	Sun	Fair Trade Stall after morning service	StM
18	Mon	<i>Slimming World Yoga</i>	
19	Tues	08:00 Foot Clinic 09:00 Little Angels <i>Zumba</i>	GB GB
20	Weds	19:00 Merekits Women's Institute <i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	GB
21	Thurs	<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Shreen Harmony</i>	
22	Fri	10:00 Merely Women <i>Dup Bridge</i>	GB
23	Sat	<i>Coffee Morning</i>	
24	Sun		
25	Mon		
26	Tues	17:30 Pay & Weigh	L
27	Weds		
28	Thurs	<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Shreen Harmony</i>	
29	Fri	<i>Railway Modellers</i>	
30	Sat		
31	Sun		
		<i>Times, events and venues shown cannot be guaranteed as being correct</i>	

January 2024

1	Mon	19:30	Slimming World (Book with Sally) (every Mon)	L
2	Tues	08:00	Foot Clinic	GB
		18:20	Zumba (every Tues)	L
3	Wed	09:30	Tai-Chi (every Weds)	GB
		10:15	Mere Walks (Roger & Mary)	CP
		13:45	Pilates (every Weds)	L
		18:30	Karate (every Weds)	L
			<i>Railway Modellers</i>	
4	Thurs	10:00	Art Group (every Thurs)	GB
		10:00	Hearing Aid Clinic @ United Reform Church	URC
		11:00	Rhyme Time (every Thurs)	Lib
		14:00	Quilters (every Thurs)	GB
		14:00	Rubber Bridge (every Thurs)	L
		17:00	Girlguiding (every Thurs)	GB
		19:30	Shreen Harmony (every Thurs)	URC
5	Fri	10.00	Walking Zumba (every Fri)	L
		13:45	Duplicate Bridge (14:00 start. Every Fri)	GB
6	Sat		<i>Coffee Morning, Fair Trade Stall</i>	
7	Sun			
8	Mon	09:30	Tiddlers and Toddlers (every Mon)	L
		18:00	Scouting	GB
			<i>Slimming World</i>	
9	Tues	09:00	Little Angels	GB
		14:30	Mothers Union	GB
		19:30 ?	Historical Society	GB
			<i>Zumba</i>	
10	Weds	14 :00	Mere Short Walks (Janet Way)	WT
		19:30	Gardening Club	GB
			<i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	
11	Thurs	19:30	Ukulele	Butt of Sherry
			<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony, Guiding</i>	
12	Fri	10:00	Merely Women	GB
			<i>Dup Bridge</i>	
13	Sat	19:30	Christmas Concert	GB
			<i>Coffee Morning</i>	
14	Sun			
15	Mon		<i>Tiddlers and Toddlers, Slimming World, Scouting</i>	
16	Tues	08:00	Foot Clinic	GB
		10:30	Historical Society	GB
			<i>Zumba</i>	
17	Weds	14:00	Fitness & Friendship	GB
		19:00	Merekits Women's Institute	GB
			<i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Railway Modellers</i>	
18	Thurs		<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Rubber Bridge, Guiding, Shreen Harmony</i>	
19	Fri		<i>Walking Zumba, Dup Bridge</i>	

20	Sat	Fair Trade at Coffee Morning <i>Coffee Morning</i>		URC
21	Sun	Fair Trade after morning service		StM
22	Mon	<i>Tiddlers and Toddlers, Slimming World, Scouting</i>		
23	Tues	<i>Little Angels, Zumba</i>		
24	Weds	<i>Railway Modellers</i>		
25	Thurs	<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Rubber Bridge, Guiding, Shreen Harmony</i>		
26	Fri	10:00	Merely Women <i>Walking Zumba, Dup Bridge,</i>	GB
27	Sat			
28	Sun			
29	Mon	Yoga with Clare <i>Tiddlers and Toddlers, Scouting</i>		L
30	Tues	<i>Little Angels</i>		
31	Weds	09:00	Mere Jelly	VH
		14:00	Fitness and Friendship <i>Tai Chi, Karate, Railway Modellers</i>	GB
		<i>Times, events and venues shown cannot be guaranteed as being correct</i>		

Stourton and Kilmington Home Guard Club.

As many of you may already know, the Club faced the threat of closure at the end of October, due mainly to financial reasons. On the 23rd October a completely new committee was elected to manage the Club on a voluntary basis, that is with no paid employees. I am delighted to be able to report that the Club is 'Open as usual' and that we have organised many events on the run up to the new year including a Christmas Fayre followed by a Christmas quiz on the **9th of December** and a **Skittles competition for £50** meat vouchers on the **15th of December** from 6pm. There will also be a special **Christmas bingo on the 16th** and a free Children's party on the 22nd with all the usual trimmings but booking for the children's party is essential and it's limited to aged 10 and under. We are also still running six Skittle teams from the Club as well as some daytime events. The hall is very well provisioned and is a very suitable place for meetings large or small. Your support at these events will be welcome. For more information or for booking in at the children's party please contact our Secretary as below.

Denis Jenkins Chairman. 07876 748082 Secretary. Jayne Mainstone. 07828 236668

Historical Society

To enliven the otherwise dismal days of winter, the Historical Society presents no less than 4 talks in the next 2 months, starting with:

5 December 10.30 The Mallet – by Maurice Gee

Not in fact the evolution of a useful tool for woodwork and carpentry, but the History of Shepton Mallet Prison.

12 December 7.30 The Time They Cancelled Christmas - by David Heath (with wine)

Not in fact a look back to 2020, but to about 370 years earlier. This is our Christmas event.

9 January 7.30 Exploration - by Philip Beale

Where to go, and what to do when you get there.

16 January 10.30 Wellington and Waterloo - by Russcombe Foster

A must for admirers of the man who brought you the rubber boot and the big railway station.

We welcome both current members, and non-members (for whom a charge of £3 is payable on the door). All our talks are held in the Grove Building.

Peter Landymore, Chair ☎ 228819 Diane Ellis, Secretary ☎ 861541

Mere Bowls Club

The season has ended and the green has been put to bed for the winter. We have had the playing surface drilled and filled we now have to see if it does what it was designed to do, improve our drainage, we shall see but initial viewings of the green just after heavy rains have been promising.

At the end of January 2024 we will hold our annual dinner and presentation evening in Gillingham this year as the levels of service at last year's function left a little to be desired. Exact details have yet to be finalised but we are all looking forwards to an excellent do.

It only remains for me, on behalf of Mere Bowls Club to wish all our readers a Very Merry and Healthy Christmas and New Year.

If you are at all interested in trying the sport of bowls yourself, or the whole family for that matter, please do not hesitate to get in contact with Don on the number, or email, below and he will take it from there.

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

St Michael's Christmas Book Club

Come along to St Michael's on Friday 8th December for coffee and a natter about books. 10am to 12.

£1 for a coffee and a book.

Father Christmas may have some presents!!



Just Around Our Corner

On Friday, 3 November, Dr Andrew Murrison, MP for south-west Wiltshire, visited the proposed site of a 200-acre timber plantation in the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (News, 1 November).

The plantation, planned to cover grade two arable farmland, is currently going ahead having had no environmental impact assessment or any community engagement. This breaks rules set out by the Forestry Commission (FC), the very body that is pushing the project ahead.

Dr Murrison has written on behalf of his constituents to Defra minister Thérèse Coffey and the FC, asking them to pause proceedings until they have conducted the correct impact assessments and followed due process.

In 2020 the FC chair, Sir William Worsley, admitted that the FC had made mistakes sanctioning private landowners to plant forestry at Berriers End in Cumbria. He assured the public that lessons had been learned from those failures in the consultation process.

A spokesperson for the **Save Bonham Farmland Action Group** said: "The failure of process here has resulted in a plan that is not good for the environment and brings nothing to the local community. We are losing good arable land and a distinctly beautiful, historic landscape."

Find out more: <https://cranbornechase.org.uk/cranborne-chase-aonb-position-on-bonham-plain-afforestation-scheme-wiltshire/>



Dawn light falls on the wide agricultural valley of the Blackmore Vale under the rolling hills of the Dorset

Ukes at The Butt of Sherry

Our next session is on **Thursday 14th December at 7.30pm at The Butt of Sherry.**

We meet on the 2nd Thursday of each month for an informal evening of strumming and singing. We play a wide range of popular songs and welcome all abilities. If you don't have a ukulele, but would like to come along you would be most welcome. We do have a ukulele for you to play. An evening of fun and laughter guaranteed!

A new hobby for the New Year? Do come along on **Thursday, 11th January at 7.30pm.**

You can check out our Facebook page 'Ukes at The Butt' for our song list or for more information contact maggieholmes101@gmail.com

Maggie Holmes maggieholmes101@gmail.com

Mere Jelly

If you are a freelancer, self-employed or working from home, this is your place to meet. There is no Jelly in December, but in January we are back! Come along and share, meet, network and support others in your area. **Wednesday 31st January 9am to noon at The Brush & Broom at Hillbrush.**

Jenni Bell ☎ 860400



Fair Trade in Mere

A Fair Trade Christmas. Do you need a last-minute gift for someone special, a Christmas card for someone you have forgotten or a tasty goody to add to your Christmas Fare? Then why not come along to one of my final stalls and see if there is anything that takes your fancy. Every purchase will be helping a family work their way out of poverty.

I'd like to thank everyone who has continued to support me during this difficult year as the new company 'We are Fair Trade' bravely builds up its business after the demise of the pioneering company Traidcraft in January.

Janet Way ☎ 860884 jwaywitsend@gmail.com

Mere Short Walk (J Way)

This one has a seasonal twist. Come and experience a short walk around our lanes and paths with a difference. Meet at **The Walnut Tree at 2p.m. on Wednesday 13th December.** There will be no walk in January

Janet Way ☎ 860884 jwaywitsend@gmail.com

Church Contact and Service Details

The Parish Church: St Michael's the Archangel:

Priest in Charge: Vacancy

Churchwardens: Mr Kit Stallard ☎ 07803 086161

Mr Richard Wilson ☎ 07966 244373

Admin Secretary: administrator@stmichaelsmere.org.uk

December

3 rd	Sun	08:00	BCP Communion
		10:30	Family Service
10 th	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion
		15:30	Christingle Service – everyone welcome old and young (Christingle making workshop for children Saturday 9th at 10.30 in the church)
12 th	Tues	12:00	Mothers' Union Carol Service
15 th	Fri	09:30	Mere School Carol Service
17 th	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion
21 st	Thurs	18:00	Carol Service
24 th	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion
		16:00	Crib Service – children welcome to dress-up
		23:00	Midnight Mass
25 th	Mon	10:30	Christmas Day Service
31 st	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion

January

7 th	Sun	08:00	BCP Communion
		10:30	Family Service
14 th	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion
21 st	Sun	10:00	Churches Together service at St Peter's Stourton
28 th	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion

St Michaels Church - Part time Church Caretaker – Vacancy

The PCC are looking for a caretaker (paid) for St Michael's Church. The role is for 3 hours a week, flexi-time, working under the guidance of our church warden.

Please contact Kit Stallard, church warden for more information.

kitstallard@mac.com 07803 086161

West Knoyle Parish Church: St Mary the Virgin:

Priest in Charge: Vacancy

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

December

3 rd	Sun	09:30	DIY Service
10 th	Sun	09:30	Communion
17 th	Sun	18:00	Carol Service
24 th	Sun		No Service
25 th	Mon	09:30	Communion
31 st	Sun		No Service

January

7 th	Sun	09:30	DIY Service
14 th	Sun	09:30	Communion
21 st	Sun	10:00	Churches Together service at St Peter's Stourton
28 th	Sun	09:30	Matins

The United Reformed Church

Minister - Vacancy

Mere Contact: Elaine Laurence ☎ 0740 3845711 elainelaurence57@gmail.com**December**

3 rd	Sun	11:00	Mrs. Jane Hurd
10 th	Sun	11:00	Rev. Colin Marsh (Holy Communion)
17 th	Sun	15:00	Carol Service
24 th	Sun	11:00	Mr. Dudley Coates
25 th	Mon	10:30	TBC
31 st	Sun	11:00	TBC

January

7 th	Sun	11:00	Mrs Jane Hurd
14 th	Sun	11:00	TBC
21 st	Sun	10:00	joint week of prayer service at Zeals
28 th	Sun	11:00	Mrs. Christine Marsh
	Sun	11:00	

The Roman Catholic Church: St Mary Queen of Peace.

St Mary's has been closed and weekend Masses are now at SS Luke and Teresa, South Street, Wincanton BA9 9DH.

Parish Office: 01963 34408 hope.stlukeswincanton@outlook.com

Mass at St Michael's the Archangel at 10am on Friday 1 December.

Coffee morning at Visit Hillbrush on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 10.30am.

Contacts: Carole Marshall ☎ 861905 or John Fitzgerald ☎ 860867

St Michael's Church

Christingle Workshop and Service – 9th and 10th December



Christingle Service will be on **Sunday 10th December** at 3:30pm.

This will be a short 35-minute service, full of lively music and Christingles to light the church.

Everyone welcome – young or old.

There will be a children's workshop in the church on **Saturday 9th December** at **10:30** am to make Christingles. The more we make the prettier the church will be on Sunday so please come and join in. The collection from the service is for the Children's Society and is our main fundraiser to help with their valuable work.

Mothers' Union and Open Members' Group

I gave a talk last month about Fragile X Syndrome, a genetic condition which causes learning difficulties. We were pleased with the number attending and I believe we covered some valuable information not only about the condition but the support offered by The Fragile X Society in a very light hearted way.

Next month we will be holding our **Christmas Carol Service at 12 noon on Tuesday December 12th at St. Michael's Church in Mere.** This will be followed in The Grove Building opposite the Church by hot drinks and refreshments including mince pies and everyone will be welcome to join us. This is an opportunity for those who prefer to take part in a Day time Carol Service and reminds us of the meaning of Christmas and the joy of singing Carols together.

Our January meeting will take place on 9th January at 2.30pm in The Grove Building. It will be a Social Afternoon with time to catch up and enjoy each other's company over a cup of tea and cake. If you would like to join us you will be very welcome.

Carol Lord ☎ 861923. Christine Marsh ☎ 861212 Christabelle Kriticos 861067

Mere Social Club

As 2023 is rapidly drawing to a close the club would like to wish everybody a **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

We will be seeing the **New year** in with music from the local group, **Set Ready**, so come and join us.

A reminder that Membership subscriptions are due from the 1st January at a cost of £10 for the year. New members are also welcome.

As "Chinese whispers" appear to have set in, I want to reassure members that we are not asking you to remove your pool cues from the club. We are asking that if you keep a cue on the premises, please ensure that is labelled with your name. Any cues that have not been claimed by the end of the year will be put out for general use or disposed of. Similarly, any lost property not claimed will be donated to the charity shop.

Our **Christmas Draw** will take place on Saturday 16th December. Tickets are available at the club @ £1.00 each.

After all the Christmas festivities are over and the January blues start to creep in, why not oil up your vocal chords and come and join us for **Karaoke on Saturday 27th January**.

Elaine Laurence, club steward.

Mere Amateur Dramatic Society

Thank you to everyone who came to see what we felt was a very successful Autumn Production! It was, as always, great fun to put on. And now all the excitement is over for this year, we are looking forward to our Spring Production 2024! So far all we can tell you about this are the dates: **21st, 22nd and 23rd March**. We shall be able to tell you much more in the next issue of Mere Matters. Meanwhile, may we wish all our supporters a very Happy Christmas and we look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Jenny Wilding ☎ 860908 jenny@flaxmill.org.uk

Copy date for the **February 2024** issue

Closing deadline is: **16:00hrs on Tuesday January 23rd**

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.



The Great Panto Puzzle

United Reform Church, Mere

Monday 22 January, 2pm



Join 'Tor Theatre' for lots of laughs, songs and excitement in this hilarious show.

There's something up in Pantoland. Nothing is working as it should and things feel very strange.

Come and help them find the missing piece of the puzzle.

Tea & cake will be served after the show.

This is a free event, but booking is required. Please contact 07955 249288 or CAWSupport@wiltshiremusic.org.uk

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www.wiltshiremusic.org.uk/CAW

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

Mere Library

Monday: 10:00 – 14:00* and 14:00 – 19:00

Tuesday: 09:30 – 17:00

Wednesday: 10:00 – 14:00*

Thursday: 09:30 – 17:00




Friday: 09:30 – 17:00

Saturday: 09:30 – 13:00

* Volunteer operated opening hours.

Sally-Ann, Mere Senior Library Assistant

Booking Meeting Venues

Grove Building:	admin@grovebuildingmere.org.uk	 0771 471 8625
Lecture Hall:	Sally Johnson	 861063
URC Church Hall:	Mrs E Laurence	 07403 845711

Matty Hull Remembered

On Saturday 11th November the club remembered fallen soldier and former player Matty Hull when Mary Gatehouse played the Last Post before the match. Matty is one of the few UK citizens killed by "friendly fire" since the second World War.

The Mere Town Football Club fixture saw Mere, playing in green against Wareham Rangers United in the Dorset county cup.



Article & photos courtesy of George Jeans

Mere Art Group

Attendance at 'Art' has been good of late, with the benefit of two new Members. We are planning our Christmas Lunch for some 20 Members - it has always been a good 'do'.

We meet at The Grove Building each Thursday, 10.00 till 12.00 noon. £3.00 per session, including refreshments

The Art contribution for this publication was painted by Karen Rymill using Acrylics-on-Paper.



Helge Brock helgewallenbrock@gmail.com

Mere Gardening Club

So it is that time of the year to put our gardens to bed for the winter, but don't despair the New Year will soon be with us and we can look forward to the snowdrops followed by all the lovely spring bulbs and colour. So when you have a little spare time, put your kettle on, make yourself a nice hot drink and go through the seed catalogues and get prepared for next year's sowing. I always try and pick something that I have not grown before, some with success and some with failure but as with all gardening it's not all a bed of roses!

Our last monthly meeting in November was a great talk by Adam from Castle Gardens about fruit pruning. It was lovely to see such a good attendance with new members and some guests. Our December meeting will be our Christmas Social on Wednesday **13th December** starting at 7pm for 7.30pm in the **Grove Building**. Please contact me or Rose Heesom if you have not already put your name on the list as this will help with the catering.

Our meeting on **10th January 2024** will be a presentation from international Wildlife Photographer David Boag, a speaker I have seen several times before and you will not be disappointed by his talk. So from all the Committee have a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Les Manwaring Chai ☎ 861 941 lesmanwaring@yahoo.com

Rose Heesom 📠 07791559674 roseheesom@yahoo.co.uk 🌐 meregardenclub.org.uk

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

Merekits - Womens Institute

We meet on the third Wednesday of the month in the Grove Building at 7pm. We are a group of ladies who want to get to know other like-minded people in the local area. You can participate as much or as little as you like with an opportunity to get involved in various activities and events both locally and nationally.

In October we learnt about the traditions of Halloween and practiced some lantern making, pumpkin carving and making Soul Cakes. At our November meeting we had an amazing speaker who talked about upcycling buttons and we learnt how to make Christmas decorations from them.

We have also enjoyed several different social groups which include various walks, crafts and dining out. We had a very successful Jumble / Preloved sale in October and were very grateful for those who helped or came to support us on the day.

Our next member's meeting will be on **December 20th** which is a Christmas Social. Do come along and join us; members are encouraged to bring a friend for a nominal charge of £3 per head - there will be some light refreshments and some Christmas spirit!! We are planning to have a competition for the best dressed Christmas hat so get in touch with your creative side and come and enjoy the fun and friendship that Merekits WI offers!

2024 has a great programme of events with talks, demonstrations and activities planned. We will have our first members meeting on the 17th January where we will be hearing about the Fairtrade charity and there will be an opportunity to buy some Fairtrade goods. We would love to see you there.

Verena Cooper ☎ 07971790256 verenacooper2@gmail.com

The Suchana project in West Bengal continues to bring surprises. Having grown from a handful of local children meeting for help with basic language and literacy skills in



the house of Kirsty and Rahul Milward-Bose in 2004 it now has its own two-story building and offers classes for pre-schoolers and supplementary education for those at school at all stages, as well opportunities (not otherwise available for these children) in sport and creative activities and basic healthcare. It majors especially at present on enabling 'adivasi' children to begin their education in their own mother tongue, developing special books and teaching materials and even supporting government schools in beginning to use this approach. Suchana now reaches almost 2000 children in 25 small villages – and, indirectly – far more. The centre is open 10 hours a day 7 days a week and 340 days a year and sends out a mobile library every week to further-away villages.

The people of Mere have helped a great deal in all this work and remarkable expansion through supporting our fund-raising activities which have provided a significant amount of Suchana's annual income. An example of this generosity is the £549.99 given for Suchana in donations at the excellent talk by Colonel Blashford-Snell on 1st November.

Early in 2024 – and this is the surprise – Suchana is holding a 3-day conference for teachers, parents and current and former students to take stock of all that has been achieved in the past 20 years and to make plans for development over the next 5 years. Suchana's unique approach and expertise is now widely recognised and, as a result a Delhi-based consultant who likes to cross-fertilise organisational strategies between the corporate and the non-profit worlds is coming to help with this exercise.

Although the Mere support group is winding-down its big fund-raising activities, we feel confident that the project will continue to grow and develop with more local funding and support. As we go to press, we are preparing for our Pre-Christmas Quiz at the end of October. There will then be a coffee morning at **Grove Cottage** from **10.30am on Tuesday 30th January**, and finally, our very popular **Shrove Tuesday Quiz and Pancake evening on 13th February**. (Put the date in your diary). More details in February's Mere Matters.

Judith Thompson ☎ 860553, Chair, Mere Suchana Support Group

Mere Walking Group

One walk for our group in January with a pub lunch. **Wednesday Jan 3rd** a 3/4 mile walk around Bourton & Penselwood followed by lunch at The White Lion. 10:15am, meet at Salisbury Street Car Park to share cars.

Roger Laidler ☎ 863447 Mary Wilson ☎ 229609 wilsonsmere@gmail.com



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