

# Mere matters



& so does

*West Knoyle*



Your community magazine

Including a guide to local events

*February 2023*



## **Mere Town Council**

As we embark on 2023, I wish you all a better year ahead. The weather has already made a harsh statement with copious rainfall as well as being very cold. The Council is not aware of any domestic flooding but we have had some drain blockage, which we have reported to Wiltshire Council

I have today spoken to our library. The library is a designated Warm Hub, where everyone is welcome. The staff were eager to point out that visitors are not expected to sit and read a book and keep quiet. There are puzzles, games and magazines and conversation is encouraged. There is no restriction on how long you stay. Also available is a free Warm Pack consisting of a blanket, hot water bottle and thermal cup. The library is open on Monday 10am -7pm, Tuesday 9-30am -5pm, Wednesday 10am-2pm, Thursday 9-30am-5pm, Friday. 9-30am - 5pm and Saturday 9-30am-1pm. Please use this excellent warm facility.

The end of the year is a particularly busy time for the Council. Our Clerk prepared all the necessary facts and figures for our interim internal audit and I am pleased to say that an independent internal auditor was satisfied with the result. Also, in November, we held our annual Budget setting meeting. This is always a challenge and especially this year with such rising costs. After much analysis we agreed on a 6.5% increase on our precept. This equates to an annual rise of £9 on a Band D property. In order to do this, we had to resort to using some of our reserves. We are aware that other local councils have applied far larger increases but for this year, at least, we have managed to keep it down. The Council has since approved the Budget recommendations.

At the January meeting we considered a planning application (no.PL/2022/09365) for the siting of a new factory with associated offices, car parking, access and landscaping on the site adjacent to the Quarryfield Industrial Estate. The applicant is Godminster, the cheese manufacturer. Mere Town Council recommended approval of this planning application but the site is actually within the parish of Zeals and Zeals Parish Council will also be submitting a consultation response to the Planning Authority.

I must thank Cllr. John Jordan, who has applied for funding from the Wiltshire Town's Programme which can be used to attract more visitors to Mere. If successful, we hope to use some of the funding to provide wider internet information about Mere and enhance the Red Arrows Trail as well as amenities for visitors. Some funding may be offered to groups to attract more participants to events which they have planned. Groups will be contacted, with information, once the funding has been approved.

As you may have heard the Palace has issued its official agenda for the weekend of celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles. The Coronation ceremony will be at Westminster Abbey on May 6th. On Sunday May 7th there is to be a concert at Windsor Castle and also on the 7th, A Coronation Big Lunch of street parties up and down the country. It will be followed on Monday 8th, the Bank Holiday, by the Big Help Out, a volunteer scheme devised in tribute to His Majesty's many decades of public service. People will be encouraged to join volunteer projects, dedicating a few hours to help create a coronation legacy.

Mere Town Council is asking for volunteers to form a working group to organise Mere's Celebrations. Anybody interested, please contact the office (01747 860701).

I am pleased to inform you that we have a new PCSO- Neil Turnbull. Neil will also cover the Tisbury area and I understand that there are at least 28 or so Parish Council's in his patch. He will try to attend some of our council meetings and hopefully we shall see him about town regularly. In an emergency or to report a crime, please ring 101 or 999.

Congratulations to Pat & Geoff Sams, who this year won the trophy for an outstanding display of Christmas lights and decorations.

*Lesley Traves, Chair, Mere Town Council*  
for information on Town Council activities, minutes, agendas etc.  
[lindseywood@merewilts.org](mailto:lindseywood@merewilts.org) 📞 860701 🌐 [merewilts.org](http://merewilts.org)

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## **Nos 58 Bus**

Residents may not be aware that a new bus service No.58 has been reintroduced running from Zeal's to Gillingham, via Mere, which replaces the X4. It is a more frequent service than previously, (now 5 times a day), but is only running for a TRIAL PERIOD, depending on the uptake (not sure how long trial period lasts).

If you usually drive to Gillingham might I ask you to occasionally consider taking the bus as it is a 'use it or lose it' situation. If we lose this bus service people without their own transport will have no way of getting to Gillingham and beyond. And it could mean that one day when you DO need a bus to Gillingham the service may no longer exist.

*Barbara Bourne* 📞 863411

## **Christmas Lights 2022**

Mere and West Knoyle once again put on a great show. For a small village West Knoyle punch above their size. Denes Avenue in Mere attracted a stream of vehicles and walkers to marvel at the display which has become an annual event.

### **Mere Lights.**

Cllrs Nick and Debbie Beale gave the following report as judges:-

"A lot fewer lights this year but that is totally understandable with electricity costs but some amazing displays. We judged very much on 'Wow factor', Creativity and Effort.

The winning entry 38 Lynch close was amazing, the effort and imagination involved was second to none. Second place 11 Denes Avenue was also very imaginative and we even saw the owner out in the rain putting a few finishing touches in place and making sure everything was working OK. Special recognition goes to 8 Denes Avenue, very hard to judge in Denes avenue but we felt that these 2 just stood out a little more.



We should mention the window displays along Mill Lane. They were beautiful, so much effort and definitely worth a look and the Link Scheme display in Downside Close."

Mere Town Council Chairman Lesley Traves presented on Wednesday the 28th December, the 1<sup>st</sup> winner with the Mere Christmas Lights Shield for 2022 and a prize of a Christmas hamper kindly donated by the Hill Brush Co, Mere. 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Highly Commended (Special Recognition) also received a prize each.

Lesley Traves on the left, Chairman of Mere Town Council, presents the Mere 2022 Christmas Lights Shield, plus a hamper given by The Hill Brush Co Mere. Pictured on the right, the winners for first place in Mere Mr Geoff and Mrs Pat Sams of 38 Lynch Close.



2nd 11 Denes Avenue, Jake Francis and Susan Fricker

Highly Commended (Special recognition) 8 Denes Avenue, Richard and Rose Adams.

## **West Knoyle Lights**

1st 2 Stoney Bridge, Phil and Shirley Singer. 2nd 6 Puckwell, Debra Vincent and family. Highly Commended 6 Oderne, Richard and Paula Hull.

First Prize of a £25 voucher kindly donated by The Hill Brush Co, Mere, was presented by West Knoyle Parish Chairman Paul Yates on Christmas Eve. Second place and Highly Commended also receive a prize each. Phil and Shirley Singer have spent thousands of pounds over the years building up their Christmas display illuminations. Their family and the local residents of West Knoyle love to see the display which involves a lot of work.



*George Jeans*

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## **Be Prepared**

The Scouting motto is just as appropriate today as when I attended Cubs dressed in my shorts! We are not over the winter yet and one can only wonder what might be next. If we should have electric outages for whatever reason, what would that mean for you?

Have you a ready supply of candles, a torch, a thermos flask that you can fill with boiled water when the electric is on – just in case?

There are more serious issues for those dependent on medical aids, electric beds, electric emergency call systems, stair lifts etc etc. Just imagine the electric going off whilst you are reading this!

Most of us can help ourselves in desperate times. We can all do a bit of pre-planning. ACT NOW. Backup electric power is now feasible with generators and battery packs but only you know what you need. Consult with your medical companies but if you find you are really stuck remember that we do have local Charity groups who may be able to help. Can you help your neighbours?

*Richard Jefferies (Editor)* ☎ 863425 [rajefferies@btinternet.com](mailto:rajefferies@btinternet.com)

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## **Creative Mere 2022**

This unique event held in November 2022 was again a great success. Everyone was amazed at the incredible creativity showcased in our small town of Mere!

It is proposed to hold this event biannually but we will be looking for new blood and fresh ideas to begin planning this potential future event early in 2024 to be held that Autumn between September and November of that year. Please bear this in mind if you would like to be part of another exciting project.

*The 2022 Creative Mere Committee*

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## **Wiltshire Councillor ~ George Jeans Writes**

In April 2022, the Elections Act 2022 was passed by the UK Parliament. The Act will require voters in Great Britain to show photo ID before being issued a ballot paper in polling stations. For more info see

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id?gclid=aw.ds>.

The voter ID provisions are due to be in place for local elections in England May 2023 and at any UK Parliamentary election held after that date. The types of ID to be allowed are set out in section 5 of the Act. These include passports, photographic driving licences, biometric immigration documents and some concessionary travel passes. A new free voter document, to be called a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC), will be made available for those without any other form of photographic ID.

I have been informed in the past that if ten percent or more of a family income is spent on fuel they are in fuel poverty, with this in mind plus inflation, interest rate rises, the need to keep Wiltshire Council's proposed services budget for 2023/24 and the next three financial years is as follows:-

An additional £69m, before savings, added into the 2023/24 service budgets to cover inflation and demand for services. Over £42m of that additional spend will go towards services protecting the most vulnerable in society. The council's proposed budget for 2023/24 stands at £465m. It is legally obliged to set a balanced budget.

The most significant spending in 2023/24 will be on: Whole life pathway (mental health, autism spectrum conditions and learning disabilities support services) - £96m, an increase of £11m. Living and aging well (adult care) - £83m, an increase of £15m. Families and children - £63m, an increase of £2m. Environment (which includes waste and recycling services)- £48m, an increase of £4m. Highways and transport - £41m, an increase of £3m. Education and skills - £29m, an increase of £6m

The council is also in a position to release £13 million of reserves to spend on business priorities, particularly in supporting housing provision during the cost of living crisis.

Wiltshire Council is proposing a 2.99% general increase for the council's element of council tax, plus a 2% levy to be spent solely on adult social care. This will mean an increase of £1.57 per week for those in a Band D property. Around 84% of the council's core funding comes from local taxes, business rates and council tax. The majority of funding goes towards the council's statutory services, which include adult social care and children's services - with continued pressures and demands in those areas.

A number of other measures are proposed by the council during 2023/24, including an increase in some fees and charges for some council services such as leisure and garden waste collection; making better use of the council's own buildings, including letting space out where appropriate; and a more streamlined

Street Scene service. Staffing savings have also been identified across the next three financial years, and steps to deliver these will include the deletion of some vacant posts, managing spend on agency staff, and holding other vacancies temporarily. In addition, a freeze on incremental pay progression remains, as agreed last year with the recognised trade unions.

The council will continue to invest in the improvement and maintenance of the county's infrastructure, with almost £200m due to be spent on capital projects in 2023/24. Examples as follows

- Fitness equipment for leisure centres - £986k
- Council house build programme/refurbishment - £30.580m
- Schools maintenance and modernisation - £8.268m
- Installation of contactless parking machines £127k
- Ultrafast broadband - £1.011m
- Drainage improvements - £500k

The proposal of a balanced budget not just for 2023/24 but is over the three years of the Medium-Term Financial Statement.

The proposal sets out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2023/24 with associated increases in rents, service charges and garage rents, as well as the position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

That the Council Tax requirement for the council be set at £332.187m for 2023/24 with a Band D charge of £1,719.90, an increase of £1.57 per week. Note Police, local Town and Parish precepts are extra to that above. A 7% increase is set for social dwelling rents, except for rents currently over the formula rent which will be capped at formula rent as per national guidance. That all service charges related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to cover costs and garage rents are increased by 5%;

The Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is where consumers will pay a deposit on in scope drinks containers which will be refunded through a national network of reverse vending machines at participating retailers and kiosks. This is expected to be in force in 2024 and will see a loss of recycling income to the council. An Act will require consistency in Recycling Collections which will stipulate that councils must provide separate, weekly food waste collections; free of charge fortnightly garden waste collection; separate kerbside collection of recyclables, and fortnightly residual waste collections. Wiltshire Council does not currently provide a separate food waste collection. Wiltshire generate £5.1m income from chargeable garden waste service which offsets costs of collection only. Separate, weekly Food Waste collections have been referenced to come into force in 2025. Following EA guidance Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) found in upholstered domestic seating and managed as waste, have to be segregated at point of collection and sent for disposal by incineration and must not be landfilled. This new requirement is effective from 1 Jan 2023.



There is a proposal from Government to extend the Emissions Trading Scheme to include Energy from Waste plants. Energy from Waste plant operators would be required to buy credits to cover the fossil-based carbon emissions created by the plant. The Government is planning to tax commercial generators of electricity where excessive profits are made. At present Energy from Waste facilities are in scope. As seen nationally there have been significant increases in energy prices, and the 2023/24 budget is forecasting increases forecast at 11% for Electricity, 50% for Gas and 10% for Biomass.


The council pays Business Rates on its properties, this is forecast to increase by an average of 22% in 2023/24 due to an impending revelation which will come into effect in April 2023. The budget includes the continued resourcing of the Carbon Reduction Team, formed during 2020/21, and funding within the capital programme for specific schemes aimed at reducing the council's carbon footprint such as £4.964m investment in electric vehicle purchase.

The Council undertook borrowing of £80m in March 2022 ahead of the rise in interest rates to secure rates at around 2% to finance the capital programme and to mitigate the risk of having to borrow in future at a higher interest rate.

The new Service 3 bus to Gillingham I can recommend. Drops off and on several places in Gillingham, Zeals and Mere. Runs for much of the day, I used it, excellent. Use it or lose it I suspect.

Penny Fennon supplied me the rainfall figures for 2022 - 211.75 cm - wettest month Feb (28 cm), driest month July (3.5cm), wettest day Nov 23 (20cm). The previous years figures I have are as follows: 2018 - 283.5 cm, 2019 - 294.5 cm, 2020 - 358.5 cm. 2021 - 319.75 cm & 2022 - 211.75 cm.

Have you or someone you know considered fostering. Wiltshire Council still campaign to find more foster carers for children in Wiltshire. Fostering with your local council means all money is spent on frontline services and the child is more likely to be able to stay close to their school, friends and family networks. On my travels I note this campaign is not just limited to Wiltshire.

George Jeans  07710 441599 [george.jeans@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:george.jeans@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## **Cheaper Fares**

Wiltshire bus users can now travel on most routes in the county for just £2 or less for a single fare until 31 March.

The fare price reduction has been funded by the Government, and is aimed at getting more people to use buses across the country during the current cost of living challenges.

As part of the promotion, many single bus fares in Wiltshire have been capped at just £2 for both adults and concessions. If the single fare was originally less than £2, it will remain at the reduced price, and many day return tickets have also been reduced.



Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Transport, said: "This is a fantastic initiative to get more people using Wiltshire's buses, as the £2 single fare cap offers an affordable and easy way to get around the county.

"If more people choose to leave their car at home and take the bus, it will help to maintain bus routes in Wiltshire, as well as reducing congestion and carbon emissions, and improving air quality.

"As we have set out in our Business Plan, we want to have vibrant, well-connected communities here in Wiltshire, and buses are a key part of that.

"Most bus services in Wiltshire are included in this great value offer, so I'd urge people to save money and explore Wiltshire by bus this year."

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## **Mere Gardening Club**

Happy new Year to all our members and visitors. Our next meeting is on **Wednesday 8th February at 7.30pm** in the Grove Building. Our speaker will be from Castle Gardens, Sherborne and the subject is low maintenance gardens.

We look forward to seeing you. New members welcome and visitors will be charged £3.

Don't forget the Scarecrow competition this year, this is open to all residents of Mere so get those thinking caps on, the theme is a character from a book.

*Les Manwaring Chair Mere Gardening Club*

Rose Heesom 📞 07791 559674 [roseheesom@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:roseheesom@yahoo.co.uk) 🌐 [meregardenclub.org.uk](http://meregardenclub.org.uk)

### **Any old Tablet or Portable/Desktop computers?**

During the Covid lockdown we managed to collect, refurbish and donate a great many laptops, desktop and tablet computers. Approx 20 units went to Mere School for allocation and many went direct to families who were struggling with children sharing one device. This voluntary work continues and I am having discussions with **Wiltshire Digital Drive** to extend my operations. If you have any computers which you no longer need then please feel free to drop them off with me rather than dispose in the waste bin or dump at the council waste centres. It would be great if any chargers can be donated as well. Please ring to make suitable drop off arrangements.



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### **Mere Jelly**

The Mere Jelly brings creatives, home workers, freelancers, small business owners and entrepreneurs together in a relaxed, informal, working environment to maximise creativity and minimise the isolation that being your own boss can bring. We meet in the Cafe at Visit Hillbrush on the last wednesday of the month, between 9am and 1pm. Come for the morning, or just pop in for a chat, you will always be welcomed.

In **February**, we'll meet on **Wednesday 22nd**.

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Jenni Bell ☎ 860400

### **Ukes at The Butt of Sherry**

Calling all ukulele players. Come along to The Butt of Sherry and meet other players, of all abilities, who enjoy strumming and singing. We have great fun and play well known songs from the sixties, folk, country and songs that are easy to play!

We normally meet on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. Bring your ukulele and join us on **Monday 13th February** at 7.30pm. Check out our Facebook page 'Ukes at The Butt' for our song list.

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Maggie Holmes [maggieholmes101@gmail.com](mailto:maggieholmes101@gmail.com)

## **The End Of An Era**

Mere's only butcher traded for the last time on Saturday 3rd December 2022.



Pete Davie is the third generation of his family trading as a butcher. Pete hopes another butcher will acquire the business however after three generations Pete has decided to call it a day. Decades ago the shop boasted Birds Eye fish fingers which was quite something all those decades ago, how life has changed. The business has used the same egg supplier for around 80 years. Although it is the end of an era Pete hopes a butcher will return.

### **MP writes to health minister about dentistry.**

Dr Andrew Murrison has written to Neil O'Brien MP, health minister responsible for dentistry, following his visit to a dental practice in his constituency on Friday and receipt of correspondence from across his South West Wiltshire constituency who have been unable to get an NHS dentist. Andrew is concerned about access to NHS dentistry in his constituency and the disincentivising caused by the way dentists have been remunerated since 2006 under a system called units of dental activity (UDAs). The current government have recognised the issue and are trying to reform UDAs to make NHS dentistry more attractive to dental surgeons. However, Andrew is concerned at the pace at which change is happening and has urged Mr O'Brien to redouble his efforts to ensure those in greatest dental need are able to find an NHS dentist.

Dr Murrison is also interested in how we can increase the number of dental surgeons in the system, noting the increase of the number of dental graduates in recent years. He has also asked the minister if dental nurses, hygienists and therapists can be trained and empowered to undertake more of the routine work currently undertaken by dental surgeons.

He said 'NHS dentistry has been in long-term decline, and we now need to ensure, particularly for those in highest dental need, that provision is improved, and that the NHS is an attractive place to work for all members of the dental professional team. I appreciate the work the government is currently undertaking to deal with the consequences of the previous government's changes to dentistry but believe there is more to be done to restore NHS dentistry to where it ought to be.'

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### **Mere Museum**

Our exhibition, 50 years of Mere Museum is now in place until the end of March. It represents the decades in which we received the items and the events which have taken place. The flat showcase highlights a selection of the first items received back in the 70's. Please do write in our visitor's book as feedback is very useful.

Can I please ask if you have items for the Museum that you contact me first and do not leave them in the office. We now have limited space in our storage rooms and items which we do take in need to be signed over and paperwork completed.

Rose Heesom  07791 559 674 [meremuseum@btinternet.com](mailto:meremuseum@btinternet.com)

## 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** - Doctor 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

**WT** - Walnut Tree Inn

1	Wed	09:30	<b>Tai-Chi</b>	<b>GB</b>
			<b>Pilates</b>	<b>GB</b>
			<b>Pilates (every Weds)</b>	<b>L</b>
		18:00	<b>Karate (every Weds)</b>	<b>L</b>
			<i>Railway Modellers</i>	
2	Thurs	10:00	<b>Art Group (every Thurs)</b>	<b>GB</b>
		14:00	<b>Quilters (every Thurs)</b>	<b>GB</b>
		14:00	<b>Rubber Bridge (every Thurs)</b>	<b>L</b>
		14:00	Short Walk	<b>CP</b>
		17:00	<b>Girlguiding (every Thurs)</b>	<b>GB</b>
		18:00	<b>MADS Rehearsals (every Thurs)</b>	<b>L</b>
		19:30	<b>Shreen Harmony (every Thurs)</b>	<b>URC</b>
3	Fri	13:45	<b>Duplicate Bridge (14:00 start. Every Fri)</b>	<b>GB</b>
4	Sat	10:30	<b>Coffee Morning (every Sat)</b>	<b>URC</b>
5	Sun			
6	Mon	09:30	<b>Tiddlers and Toddlers (every Mon)</b>	<b>L</b>
			<b>Yoga (every Mon)</b>	<b>L</b>
		18:00	<b>Scouting (every Mon)</b>	<b>GB</b>
7	Tues	09:00	<b>Little Angels (every Tues)</b>	<b>GB</b>
		18:00	<b>MADS Rehearsals (every Tues)</b>	<b>L</b>
		18:20	<b>Zumba</b>	<b>L</b>
8	Wed	19:30	Gardening Club	<b>GB</b>
			<i>Tai-Chi, Pilates, Karate, Railway Modellers</i>	
9	Thurs		<i>Art, MADS Rehearsal, Quilters, Girlguiding, Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony</i>	
10	Fri	10:00	Merely Women	<b>GB</b>
			<i>Dup Bridge</i>	
11	Sat		<i>Coffee Morning</i>	
12	Sun			
13	Mon	19:30	Ukes at the Butt of Sherry	
			<i>Scouting, Yoga</i>	
14	Tues	14:30	Mothers Union	<b>GB</b>
			<i>Little Angels, MADS Rehearsal, Zumba,</i>	
15	Wed		<i>Tai-Chi, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	
16	Thurs	14:00	Health Diabetes Prevention	<b>L</b>
			<i>Art, Quilters, MADS Rehearsal Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony</i>	
17	Fri		<i>Dup Bridge</i>	
18	Sat		Oasis Carnival Bingo	<b>L</b>
			<i>Fair Trade Stall &amp; Coffee Morning</i>	
19	Sun		Fair Trade Stall after morning service	<b>StM</b>
20	Mon		<i>Scouting, Tiddlers &amp; Toddlers, Yoga</i>	

21	Tues	19:30	Suchana Pancake Evening <i>Little Angels, MADS Rehearsal, Zumba,</i>	GB
22	Wed	09:00 14:30	Mere Jelly PennyBank Writers <i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	Visit Hillbrush L
23	Thurs		<i>Art, Quilters, MADS Rehearsal Girlguiding, Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony</i>	
24	Fri	10:00	Merely Women <i>Dup Bridge</i>	GB
25	Sat		<i>Coffee Morning</i>	
26	Sun			
27	Mon		<i>Scouting, Tiddlers &amp; Toddlers, Yoga</i>	
28	Tues	19:30	History Society <i>Little Angels, MADS Rehearsal, Zumba,</i>	GB

*Times, events and venues shown cannot be guaranteed as being correct*

## **Mere School**

When I wrote the last contribution for Mere Matters we had just had a visit from OFSTED and I promised to use this contribution to let you know more about it.

We are delighted that our school has retained its good judgement and that OFSTED recognised the very many strengths of our school.

OFSTED acknowledged how our vision is evident in practice and that we are ambitious for every child at our school.

The comments made about our children were tremendous. The inspector was impressed with the children's politeness, behaviour, positive attitudes to learning, willingness to collaborate and their sense of fairness. Our children are respectful and work hard in their lessons.

Our staff work hard and their commitment and dedication means that our children flourish and achieve. We have a great staff team who always put the children first.

Of the highest importance is our work to safeguard and protect children is acknowledged to be effective.

Our parental response to the OFSTED questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive and parents are delighted with our school.

The 2 minor action points have already been addressed.

It was a great way to end the term!

*Catriona Williamson. Head Teacher*



## **A Great Bottom**

On a damp new year's day of 2023 about 36 local walkers set out at 11am from The Town Clock in Mere, to walk around Great Bottom which is north of Mere. The walk was organized and financed by The Mere Footpath Group. Those who completed the near 4 mile walk (some of which was uphill on slippery ground) collected a "New Year New Bottom" badge and a tot. With helpers, more than 40 people were involved. It was clearly enjoyed by all. A grant was gained in 2022 from Wiltshire Council's South West Wiltshire Area Board to help finance



Picture shows those collecting their badges at the end of the walk. Facing forward front of picture is Johnny Fenn, a Mere photographer, a former British Army Officer who achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the army and served 16 of his 25 years' service with The Brigade of Gurkhas. He is now a professional photographer and explorer; he has

travelled the world on photographic adventures. He will be setting off in early January, heading for Nepal's western border to begin a journey that will see him walking for around four months. He knows the journey will cover up to 1400 miles and will involve 60 miles of vertical ascent. He hopes to raise £18,000 to be equally divided between The Gurkha Welfare Trust and Hello World.

Thanks to John Jordan from The Mere Footpath Group who worked hard to achieve the organized walk

*George Jeans*

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## **Shreen Harmony**

We are back meeting every Thursday evening in the United Reformed Church at 7.30 p.m. and it is now warm so if you would like to join us and sing please do come along. No auditions and no need to read music just a love of singing is needed.

We were able to donate around £300 to the Open Door charity this Christmas. It was a very cold evening and the choir performed in their coats and hats and unfortunately we did lose some of our audience half way through. We certainly will make sure the venue next Christmas is warm!

Thank you for your support and hopefully we will see you at our next concert in the Spring.

*Sandra Fisher* ☎ 861980

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**Mere Surgery** – additional services available to our patients in 2023

Our priority remains providing a dedicated team of GPs for our patients in and around Mere. For health problems please continue to call our reception (01747 860 001) who will ensure your needs are directed to the right health professional. You may remember that in 2019 our Patient Participation Group (PPG) undertook a survey of what health services our patients wanted as Mere continues to grow. The universal response was for more health and wellbeing services to be provided within Mere so that the need for travel was reduced. Despite a challenging period throughout Covid we have been working on what additional services we can offer in Mere. This work is ongoing (and must recognise the constraints of working within the modern NHS) however we are pleased to share the additional services that are now available to the patients of Mere Surgery in 2023 and welcoming back some which have returned in recent months.

**Paramedic**

Andy Wotton, a fully trained Paramedic has joined the surgery. You will recognise him in his green uniform. Andy manages the more urgent and acute presentations to general practice that require being seen on the same day. Andy will also be dealing with patients' initial discharge from hospital, managing minor injuries and home visits.

**Hearing Aid clinic**

This is held on the first Thursday of the month. It offers a service to patients for retubing/cleaning hearing aids and batteries. Patients can book appointments direct by contacting Gill Drayson on 01722 580014 or 07570 670 643

**Diabetic Eye Screening**

A monthly clinic offering patients a test to check for eye problems caused by diabetes. Patients are contacted direct and offered an appointment at the surgery.

**Specialist Diabetes Nurse clinic**

Crucial in providing good patient care and promoting self-care management, these monthly clinics take place on the third Wednesday of each month.

**Breast Screening Unit**

In late 2022 the unit visited for a period of two weeks and resulted in some of the highest attendance figures ever recorded in Mere.

**Health and Wellbeing Coaches**

Julia Cole works 2 days per week offering a Health and Wellbeing coaching service to support Mere Surgery patients in making changes to their lifestyle and behaviour. Working with patients with physical and/or low-level mental health conditions to improve their health. In early 2023 another Health and Wellbeing Coach will start to enable the surgery to provide an additional 2 days of service provision.

### **Elderly Care Facilitator and Age UK**

Responsible for patients over 75 years of age, the Elderly Care Facilitator visits patients in their homes and liaises closely with the patient's family co-ordinating services and ensuring the patients' needs are met. In addition, the surgery has access to several Age UK staff who are able to assist completing applications for benefits or accessing different services for our patients.

### **Care Co-ordinator**

Our Care Co-ordinator works closely with GPs in the surgery and our Elderly Care Facilitator however they mainly focus on the key younger age group.

### **First Contact Physiotherapist**

A Physiotherapist is based in the surgery one day a week offering the opportunity to discuss musculo-skeletal problems. Following a telephone triage call, the First Contact Physiotherapist may recommend an appointment with them directly.

### **Pharmacy Team**

As Sarum West Primary Care Network, we have appointed a team of Pharmacy Technicians to assist with monitoring medications. The team work remotely accessing patient records to ensure best practise for patients.

### **Online services**

Patients can now use Airmid, a new App to access the surgeries online services. This is an alternative to NHS App or System Online and does not replace any of the traditional methods for contacting the surgery, booking appointments or requesting prescriptions.

### **Women's Health**

We continue to hold specific clinics for Women's Health on a weekly basis dealing with matters such as contraception, menopause and HRT.

### **Minor surgery and Cryotherapy**

These sessions are held on alternate weeks.

For further information regarding any of our services, please do not hesitate to contact the surgery as follows:

 860001 Website: [meresurgery.co.uk](http://meresurgery.co.uk)

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### **Mere Social Club**

Mere Social Club presents Reunion Duo - professional guitarist and keyboard player back by popular demand.

*All welcome 25th February 8.30 'til late free entry.*

Christina Miles [flowjo123@gmail.com](mailto:flowjo123@gmail.com)

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**Mere Rivers Group Quarterly Nature Notes (covering Jan – March)**

January to March are the months disliked by most people because they are cold and dark. However, they are some of the best months for seeing wildlife and in Mere we are fortunate in having a variety of wildlife habitats. These are the Downs, farmland, our waterways and, within a short drive or walking distance, the Stourhead woods. Last, but definitely not least, are our gardens.

Residents have said how many types of birds visit their feeders. These have included sparrows, members of the tit family, starlings, blackbirds, blackcaps and small flocks of long tailed tits. The wren is often seen scurrying amongst plants and in hedges. A sparrowhawk was seen in a garden, resting on the top of a feeder, causing panic amongst the other birds. Where people have left the seed heads on their plants goldfinches had been seen clinging to the plants, eating the seeds.

In January there was a week of beautiful bright and crisp frosty days. Hopefully there will be more of these days in both February and March. Wrapping up and walking on this type of day can be a treat. With no leaves on the trees and bushes, their shapes stand out clearly against the sky. Also, with no leaves on the trees, it is an ideal time for spotting treecreepers, goldcrest and nuthatch. All of these are difficult to see within the normal tree canopy. Listen out for the mistle thrush which has a lovely song, not dissimilar to a blackbird. The other name for this thrush is stormcock because it will even sing in stormy weather from the top of a tree.

To help cheer you up during these cold days look out the first sign of spring plants. The snowdrops bloom in February, after these come the lesser celandines and primroses, both cheerful yellow plants. Pussy willow catkins provide vital food for bees out foraging. The blackthorn will be the first blossom in the hedgerows.

Finally, back to our waterways. They are now at full flow again. Walking along the Shreen at Waterside you are likely to see the little egret and the kingfisher. Soon the ducks and moorhens will be having their young. At this time of year it is wonderful to be anticipating the joys of spring.

Lynne Bann [lynnebann@btinternet.com](mailto:lynnebann@btinternet.com)

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**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](mailto:jane.kennedy83@btinternet.com) ☎ 860450

### **Mere Toddlers Foodbank :**

Unwanted Christmas shower gel? Too many tins of biscuits? We can help...

On **Saturday February 11th** we are holding a collection of all dry food goods, tins, toiletries, cleaning products on behalf of the Foodbank.

We will be stationed outside the Co-op in The Square from 9:00 am – 11.00 am.

Please support this very needy cause if you can .

*Fareshare/ Trussell Trust affiliated*



Anne Rich : ☎ 07413512023 email: [arich4@icloud.com](mailto:arich4@icloud.com)

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### **PennyBank Writers**

We took a break over Christmas and the New Year but our Wednesday meetings resumed in January.

2022 ended on a high note with several honourable mentions in national short story competitions.

Mark Grant gained Highly Commended in the Letter Press competition and in Globe Soup's competition for historical fiction, he received an Honourable Mention.

Jane Wade was short-listed in the Blandford Rotary Club competition and Adrienne Howell long-listed for the Exeter story prize.

Every member contributed to PennyBank's booklet of flash fiction which was produced for the relaunch of Creative Mere in November. *Merely Flash* proved a popular buy and has been well received.

Adrienne Howell ☎ 860475

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### **Mere Annual Carnival**

The committee will be meeting at 7:30pm at the **Walnut Tree Inn** on the **7<sup>th</sup> February**. We will be preparing for our AGM in March and are looking for new members to come along and join us. This is a splendid opportunity to take part in the planning and the realisation of a big event in Mere, our Carnival on the 16<sup>th</sup> September. Devote a bit of your time and energy to a good cause.

John Jordan ☎ 07840722835

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## Healthy Mere Walking

We were very pleased to have 36 walkers on New Years Day make the tour of Great Bottom. It was not the best of days with a lot of rain about until just before the start. A bracing walk and a good time was had by all, and the warm drinks at the end were much appreciated – as well as the New Year, New Bottom badges. Many thanks to Jean and Bridget for taking care of the drinks, to our hosts Rodney and Shirley, to John for bringing up the rear of the group and to Rosie for help throughout.

A few people missed the walk and have asked... ..well, yes, there will be a reprise on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. New Year, New Bottom badges will be available to walkers but you will have to bring your own hot drinks! I shall set off from the Clock Tower at 10am – hopefully with better weather.

Keep an eye on our website ([hmw.org.uk](http://hmw.org.uk)) for further announcements and articles.

John Jordan  07840722835

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## Link Scheme

As we enter 2023 we are able to look at the 2022 statistics for the Link Scheme. Link drivers did 975 trips in 2022 (982 in 2021) covering 36,761 miles (31,313 in 2021) and our volunteers worked 3,541 hours (3,893 in 2021). A big thank you to all our volunteers for providing this valuable service.



We always need new drivers so Community First, who oversee all the Link Schemes for Wiltshire Council, will be visiting Mere on **Tuesday 21 February** for a day of door knocking and leafleting to encourage more volunteers. If you would like to find out more about volunteering as a driver please call our co-ordinator on 01747 860096.

Our volunteer drivers are available to take you to medical appointments, including Covid vaccinations, and even shopping, if 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. Please try to give us 48 hours notice, if possible, as we cannot guarantee to arrange last minute requests. Also, please remember that our co-ordinators work in their own homes so keep calls to 9-5 Monday to Friday and only use the 01747 860096 number. Any other number you have recorded will most likely be a co-ordinator's private number. Please do not use it when phoning the Link Scheme..

John FitzGerald Chair  860096  [merelink.org.uk](http://merelink.org.uk)

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### **Pop-Up Christmas Thankyou.**

Lynn and her team would like to thank all those merry men & women that attended the event and raised funds. £100 for Brainwave ,£100 for Dementia UK, and £100 first Michael Church Fund

We'll done to all! And Many thanks.

Lynn

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### **Mere Historical Society**

Just one talk this month, but it's a corker. On **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February**, at 7.30 p.m., Captain David Parsons will speak about Britain's historic light-house organisation, Trinity House. This will be followed by a morning talk on 7th March, at 10.30 a.m., by Tony Davies, on "Game-changing warfare".

Details of the Programme to the end of April 2023 can be found at [www.merehistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://www.merehistoricalsociety.org.uk).

All talks are in the Grove Building, opposite St. Michael's Church. We look forward to welcoming our current Members as well as Non-members for whom a charge of £3 is payable on the door. Joining the Society costs just £10 and gives entry to all talks. New Members joining in the next 2 months will be given 14 months membership, i.e. for 2023/24.

Anyone wishing to join may do so at any of the forthcoming talks or may contact the Membership Secretary at [membership@merehistoricalsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@merehistoricalsociety.org.uk).

Peter Landymore 📞 228819 [plandymore@outlook.com](mailto:plandymore@outlook.com)

🌐 [merehistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://merehistoricalsociety.org.uk)

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### **Short Walk**

Join me for a wintry walk around the paths and lanes of Mere of about 3 miles on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February**. Meet at 2:00p.m. in the Surgery Car Park and warm up afterwards with a cuppa at the Angel Tea Rooms.

Janet Way 📞 860884 [jwaywitsend@gmail.com](mailto:jwaywitsend@gmail.com)

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Copy date for the **March 2023** Issue

Closing deadline is: **16:00hrs on Thursday 21st February**

Email contributions are preferred, to the Editor, Richard Jefferies 📞 863425  
[editor@merematters.co.uk](mailto: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.

## **Letter from the Churches**

February Mere Matters goes to press in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, so our 'letter' for this month takes the form of a blessing attributed to the Franciscans, which is quoted in this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity booklet:

MAY GOD BLESS YOU with discomfort,  
at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,  
so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger  
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,  
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears,  
to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war,  
so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them  
and to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness  
to believe that you can make a difference in the world,  
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done,  
to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

'A Franciscan Benediction' contributed, on behalf of Churches Together  
in Mere and District, by Judith Thompson ☎ 860553

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## **Fair Trade Stalls:**

The world-wide economic situation is hitting many producers and smallholders around the world especially hard. Support them by coming to buy something from one of Fair Trade Stalls – even a bar of chocolate, jar of coffee or packet of tea can make all the difference! And it will soon be time to order those Real Easter Eggs made with Fair Trade chocolate and the only egg to contain the Easter story.

Many of you will have possibly heard that **Traidcraft** is going into administration. It is a sad day for all of us who have been involved over the 40+ years but we are hoping that a part of this unique, pioneering organisation will survive. I will continue to hold my stalls for as long as my stock lasts and continue to champion the need for Trade Justice in the world today.

Janet Way ☎ 860884 [jwaywitsend@gmail.com](mailto:jwaywitsend@gmail.com)

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## St Michael's Fete - It's Coming Back!

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023** - Make a note in your diary now

St Michael's Church will be holding the Fete again, after an absence of 3 years. Plans are beginning to take shape and the organisers thank everyone who has already offered their help to man stalls, procure raffle prizes and organise exhibitions.

So far, we are hoping to have the following stalls:-

Preserves, Plants, Fairtrade, Cakes/Biscuits, Bric-a-Brac, Toiletries, Paperback Books, DVD/CDs, Ice Cream, Coconut Shy, Jewellery & Accessories, Children's Games, Bouncy Castle.

Cream Teas will be served in the Grove Building and we would like to repeat the successful exhibition of flowers in jam jars from the community.

If you are making preserves, re-organising your garden, or having a spring clean and de-cluttering, please store your goodies for the Fete.

To make the Fete a success, we need lots of volunteers to man stalls, put up gazebos and generally help.

If you have any ideas for a sideshow or a stall that isn't mentioned above, please do speak to one of the organisers or give them a call.

Ann Dethick ☎ 863498, Jean Knapp ☎ 860142

Angela McDonald ☎ 861602, Julia Rankin ☎ 861405

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### Mothers' Union and Open Members' Group



We very much enjoyed our bring and share afternoon tea in January. It was a welcome opportunity to catch up with friends and discuss our plans for the year ahead.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February** at 2.30pm in The Grove Building. It is St. Valentine's Day but who was St. Valentine and why do we celebrate him on this particular day ?

To find out more please join us. You will receive a warm welcome.

There will be a small service and refreshments will be served.

Carol Lord ☎ 861923. Christabelle Kriticos ☎ 861065 Christine Marsh ☎ 861212

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## **Church Contact and Service Details**

### ***The Parish Church St Michael's the Archangel:***

Priest in Charge: TBA [vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk)

Churchwardens: Mrs Elizabeth Howden ☎ 863424

Mr Richard Wilson 📞 07966 244373

PCC Secretary: [office@stmichaelsmere.org.uk](mailto:office@stmichaelsmere.org.uk)

5 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Communion Family Service
12 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Communion Parish Communion
19 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Parish Communion
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Wed	10:30	Ash Wednesday
26 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Parish Communion – Bishop Andrew Rumsey

### ***West Knoyle Parish Church St Mary the Virgin:***

Priest in Charge: TBA [vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk)

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

5 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	09:30	Lay Led Service
12 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	09:30	Holy Communion
19 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	09:30	Holy Communion
26 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	09:30	Matins

### ***All Saints Church, Maiden Bradley***

Priest in Charge: TBA [vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stmichaelsmere.org.uk)

Contact: [diana@dianabourne.co.uk](mailto:diana@dianabourne.co.uk)

5 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	10:00	Catch up in the Village Hall
12 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	10:00	Morning Worship - Lay Led Service
19 <sup>th</sup>	Tue	10:00	Morning Worship
26 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	10:00	Holy Communion

**The United Reformed Church**

Minister - Rev'd Duncan Goldie

Mere Contact: Elaine Laurence ☎ 0740 3845711 [elainelaurence57@gmail.com](mailto:elainelaurence57@gmail.com)

5 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	11:00	TBC
12 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	11:00	Mrs J Hurd
19 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	11:00	Rev J Thompson
26 <sup>th</sup>	Sun	11:00	Mr P Kershaw

**The Roman Catholic Church: St Mary Queen of Peace.**

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

Parish Office: 01963 34408 [hope.stlukeswincanton@outlook.com](mailto:hope.stlukeswincanton@outlook.com)

Contacts: Carole Marshall ☎ 861905 or John Fitzgerald ☎ 860867

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**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

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**Booking Meeting Venues**

Grove Building:	<a href="mailto:admin@grovebuildingmere.org.uk">admin@grovebuildingmere.org.uk</a>	☎ 0771 471 8625
Lecture Hall:	Sally Johnson	☎ 861063
URC Church Hall:	Mrs E Laurence	☎ 07403 845711

**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](http://merewilts.org)

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YOU ARE INVITED TO A



# QUIZ & PANCAKE EVENING

WITH LICENSED BAR, ON

**Shrove Tuesday**  
**21<sup>st</sup> Feb at 7.30pm**

IN THE  
**GROVE BUILDING, MERE**

+++in Aid of Suchana+++

Tickets £7 including pancakes (Children £3)

Please book in advance - [judithvthompson@aol.com](mailto:judithvthompson@aol.com)

or Phone 860553 or 863324

or sign list at back of St Michael's Church

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