

Mere Matters

*& so does
West Knoyle*

February 2024

Your community magazine
Including a guide to local events

COME & JOIN



THE Tower STORIES

Tuesday 20th February

6.30pm

St Michael's Church, Mere

Hear The Tower Stories explained. Mere's incredible community programme 2024-2025.

EVERYONE welcome - Clubs, groups, associations, volunteers! Quilters to Beavers!

See how you can help tell the stories, make a difference and have fun!

Register your interest at (or just turn up)
www.thetowerstories.co.uk

Christmas Lights 2023.

The Greatest Free Christmas Light Show in the area in my opinion. Mere and West Knoyle Christmas Light Results.

Nick and Debbie Beale have given the following information after judging Mere Christmas Lights:-

"Not a bad effort but the cost of electricity is obviously having some effect. Denes close still spectacular.

Judged on the same criteria as last year, creativity, effort and wow factor.

1st place this year is 26 Denes Avenue, amazing effort.

2nd place 2 Denes Avenue

We feel that a special recognition should go to Lambrook Cottage, Shaftesbury road, because as you come into Mere there is a lovely range of lights welcoming you. "

26 Denes Avenue, Amber and Billy Watson

2 Denes Avenue, Pat Adams

West Knoyle Christmas Lights results:-

1st, Emma Wareham, 4 Oderne

2nd Phil and Shirley Singer, 2 Stoney Bridge

Special recognition goes to Janet Howard, Dhuli Fou.

The Parish Council Chairman of West Knoyle Paul Yates presented a shield and prize for 1st place, 2nd place was awarded a prize. Mere Town Council Chairman John Jordan did the same for Mere.



Creative Mere 3

There have already been enquiries about a possible Creative Mere Event this year after our 2 previous successful weekends. (2017 and 2023) We are therefore holding a meeting to ascertain the interest and way forward on February 19th at 7p.m. in the URC> Church, Boar Street. We therefore invite any previous exhibitors and any new comers to the town with a craft or art skill to come along and help take the project forward. For further Information please contact Janet Way (860884) or Susanne Hayes our 'Sewing Lady' 07788595434

Janet Way ☎ 860884 jwaywitsend@gmail.com

Mere Town Council

I hope that this finds you well and having realised, like me, some of your resolutions for the new year but with still more to do. This is true for Mere Town Council also, where our biggest resolution is setting the budget for the coming year and the precept. My thanks to our Vice Chair and the budget committee for carefully balancing the demands of ever higher prices for what the council needs and what it hopes to achieve against the cost to residents through their council tax. The whole council adopted the recommendation made by the committee.

On a personal note, I had the pleasure of joining 83 other walkers on New Years Day taking part in the New Year New Bottom walk. As well as local walkers, I met people from the three local counties and hope that the experience brings them back to Mere to enjoy our town and its marvellous setting. My thanks to the team who served up a refreshing drink at the end of the walk and to George Jeans for taking photos while walking and getting Mere some more publicity.

While the weather has been drier but colder our groundskeeping staff have been installing pathways to extend the cemetery. We are fortunate to have staff who can do this 'in house' which means a considerable saving. There is still much to do but we will have, eventually, quite a large cemetery with an entrance in keeping with the 'old cemetery' and certainly fitting for the people of Mere.

Wiltshire Council have shown some residents of Lynch Close a first draft of plans for Fives Court. I am hoping that their plans will be available, in the very near future, for the rest of the community to see how this asset will be developed and how it will serve the people of Mere.

You may be aware that 6th June 2024 marks the Commemoration/Celebration of the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings on the five Beaches in Normandy, France, which took place on 6th June 1944. The Town Council will be considering how it may pay 'tribute' to the many, many thousands that sacrificed so much in helping to secure the freedom we all enjoy today. We would welcome any suggestions, involvement and volunteer participation from community members on how we might commemorate this event.

Finally, a resident has written in asking for others to bring their various bins back into their own property after collection. This is a good request – we do need collections but we don't need to have our public spaces filled with bins for the rest of the week. If you know you are going to be away, ask your neighbour to put your bins out and bring them back in for you. My thanks in advance for doing this small bit to make our town a more pleasant place.

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 'older young' enjoying a Christmas party at The Walnut Inn, Mere, a good time was had by all. Residents were transported to The Walnut Inn in a mini bus kindly provided by Seeds for Success, a local youth group



It has been a sad time for me recently with the passing of Jean Young, who did much for the community and was always there, ready to help at the Mere Post Office.

The Post Office "scandal" much in the national news, did impact on Mere Post Office however Mere survived where many Post Masters were "ruined"

The Parish and Town Councils of West Knoyle and Mere promote Christmas lights on private houses.. The Displays of West Knoyle and Mere were some of the best displays in the area in my opinion, well done to all, including those in other areas of Mere. I try to get the results recorded by the local councils for the use of future generations.

I sit on The Police and Crime Panel for WC. I note the Chief Constable Catherine Roper's public report to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Wilkinson, extracts below:-

"Last week we also launched our new operating model for frontline resources, which includes the reestablishment of dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) to improve the visibility and engagement with all our communities. It also included the realignment of shift patterns of our response officers, which means we can more effectively deploy and police the county, and better match resources to demand for our services." plus "an alarming rise we are seeing in the number of cases of livestock worrying. This is understandably causing real concern to our rural communities due to the significant impact on the welfare of their livestock, and on their livelihoods. Over the coming weeks we will be expanding our work in this area to raise awareness of both the impact on our rural communities, and how to report incidents of this nature."

Wiltshire Council spend around £1.5m dealing with litter every year and will soon be launching a new initiative dubbed Don't Mess with Wiltshire

Around 80 residents, partners, local councillors and senior representatives from Wiltshire Council gathered in East Knoyle on the 29th November for the Highways Matters themed event. Shaftesbury Road to West Knoyle roads I asked at a previous area board to highlight the condition of the road, a few repairs have now been done, however the senior representatives seemed not to know about the condition of the above, I brought to their attention and highways had been informed.

Wiltshire Council is continuing its recycling efforts to support and encourage people to 'Let's Sort It', by asking residents to sort their materials before visiting the county's Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). The council's data shows that more than a third

of the items put in the general rubbish skips at Wiltshire's HRCs could have been recycled. Note small battery collection is now part of Wiltshire's kerbside service, also small rechargeable electrical items can now be collected.

Wiltshire Council's draft budget proposals for 2024/25 have been published this week. The proposed budget for 2024/25 stands at around £486m, more than half of that is spent on adult and children's social care services. An extra £10m over the next two years to spend on filling potholes and a road resurfacing programme. The budget proposes an additional £1 million investment into extra gully cleaning work and reactive pothole filling. More than £26m of savings were identified to be made during 2023/24. Traditionally, the council's average annual capital spend has been more than £100m per year and is likely to be more this year due to some significant projects expected to be delivered. Some of the council's capital projects include: Schools maintenance and modernisation, Carbon reduction measures at council properties, Building new council houses, Drainage improvements, Major road improvements and Passenger Transport.

Wiltshire Council will be seeking to work with a specialist contractor to help deliver energy efficiency measures to up to 175 existing homes in the county. In March, the council was successful in securing more than £3.6m as part of the government's Department of Energy Security and Net Zero's Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 scheme. This additional funding will allow the council to support retrofitting owner-occupied and privately rented homes that are not connected to mains gas and have an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of band D-G, subject to household income levels.

Waste crews can now collect most small household batteries. You now have the option to simply leave used household batteries on top of your blue-lidded bin in a sealed, transparent plastic bag ready for collection.

On 19 December 2023 the government issued a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as well as a number of other policy guidance documents. This new NPPF (subject to a further minor revision on 20 December 2023) proposes some key changes that immediately impact upon the council's statutory planning function. Some "idea" of changes are listed below:-

For the purposes of the revised NPPF, Wiltshire Council is a 'paragraph 77 authority'; and, because Wiltshire Council has an emerging local plan that has reached an advanced stage, it is now 'only' required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of four years' worth of housing, rather than five years. Pragmatically, this means that fewer 'speculative' residential planning applications are likely to be granted.

The **MiPermit** app can be used to pay for parking in any Wiltshire Council pay and display car park, with app users also having the extra advantages of being able to pay for parking in advance or extend their stay without having to return to their car. It is also possible to book stays over multiple days and purchase season tickets. The council still accepts cash and card payments in its car parks. Wiltshire have installed additional signage for **Mipermit** users, detailing the tariffs around our car parks, which are clearly visible even when a faulty parking machine is covered. If a machine is not

working do not assume it is safe to park for free. To find out more about car parking information and charges, people can visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parking-information.

Recycle Now has estimated that recycling saves 18m tonnes of CO2 in the UK a year. I understand we should leave lids on plastic bottles such as cooking oil bottles, drinks bottles and bleach bottles.

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

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

New Year New Bottom

On a damp but dry New Years Day, 84+ local walkers set out at 11am from The Town Clock in Mere, to walk around Great Bottom 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 extremely slippery ground, collected a "New Year New Bottom" badge and a tot. It was clearly enjoyed by all. A grant was gained in 2022 from Wiltshire Council's South West Wiltshire Area Board to help finance The Mere Footpath Group, the grant was put to good use on this walk, in my opinion.

No competition was involved, however for the second year running Cathy Walsh collected her "New Year New Bottom" badge first.

Photos courtesy of George Jeans



The Tower Stories

You have seen how quickly the scaffolding has wrapped St Michaels tower, now it is time to reveal the community programme.

On **Tuesday 20th February** come to St Michael's Church at 6.30pm to hear our incredible plans for July 2024-June 2025. This will be a once in a lifetime experience for Mere and we want you, your organisation, your business or your group to be part of it. No one is excluded, everyone is welcome.

Come and hear what we are planning and join in! See how you can help tell the stories, make a difference and have fun!

Thank you to the national lottery players and the Friends of St Michaels for making this opportunity possible.

Hope to see you on the 20th February



Elaine Stallard The Tower Stories

Hello; some of you may remember that I was taking on the challenge of walking 50 miles with my dog back in November to raise money for the Samaritans....

I am pleased to say that I actually walked 65 miles and raised a total of £220!!

Thank you so much to everyone who sponsored me and who wished me luck with my challenge.

By taking part in this challenge, I not only raised a fantastic amount for a very worthy charity but I also made myself get out and walk in a month in which I normally struggle because of the short days, dark nights and usually rubbish weather.

I had the support of my little boy and of course my dog on the challenge and we walked a variety of different walks!!

Again thank you and look out for my next challenge coming later in the year.



Ann-Marie Long

From Times Gone By!

A Mere Man with Nelson at Trafalgar

At the Battle of Trafalgar there were men on board HMS *Victory* from Wiltshire towns such as Warminster, Trowbridge, Westbury, Salisbury - but only one came from Mere itself.

He is listed as 'Joseph Giddice', a.k.a 'John Goddice' and he was twenty, meaning he would have been born around 1785. No families bearing either surname appear in the Mere parish records then, but perhaps his West Country accent caused a misunderstanding. A 'Gatehouse' family *did* live here then, and a John Gatehouse was born in 1784. I believe he must be our man.

Joining the *Victory* as a ship's boy, he soon rose to be an ordinary seaman, and by Trafalgar, an able seaman. Depending on his station during the battle, it's not impossible that Gatehouse actually saw Nelson fall. But when a man o' war went into action most sailors were assigned to gun crews, and the majority of *Victory's* 104 cannon were on her gundecks below. Down here in battle the noise was deafening, the smoke choking and blinding, the carnage from cannonballs and flying splinters the size of baseball bats devastating and bloody. It was not unknown for sailors involved in a single action to be left with permanent hearing loss from the concussion of the big guns.



The heavily engaged *Victory* was virtually a wreck after the battle. Initially towed to Gibraltar for basic repairs to allow her to limp home, she was out of action for a long time. This is perhaps why Gatehouse was transferred to the 74-gun warship HMS *Fame* in 1806. Sadly, his life at sea was not destined to be a long one. He was still a young man when, in 1811, he died at sea. We do not know the cause of death, but the *Fame* was returning from winter convoy duty in the Baltic and one newspaper report states: 'Of the Baltic fleet we have received the most distressing accounts, in consequence of the heavy gales lately in the north seas.'

Assuming he wasn't swept overboard, John Gatehouse was probably buried at sea in the time-honoured naval fashion - meaning that there would be no grave in St Michael's churchyard to mark the passing of Mere's hero of Trafalgar.

Martyn Beardsley

MERE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY: CATHOLIC MASS IN MERE ONCE MORE

Over the years, the Catholic community of Mere has been able to attend Sunday Mass celebrated by visiting priests in a variety of locations. In the early 1900s Mass was held at St Benedict's Chapel in Bonham Manor and then in a room behind the Butt of Sherry pub and, during the war, in The Milestone a house in Castle Street until an army surplus Nissen Hut was erected in the centre of Mere in 1946. This became St Mary's Mass Centre and in recent years was served by priests from either Warminster or Wincanton until it closed in 2022 after the untimely death of Fr Louis-Beesley Suffolk who had been coming from St Luke's in Wincanton to say Mass in Mere for many years.

Following the Bishop's decision to close St Mary's, Mere's Catholic community has dispersed attending weekend Mass in the nearest churches in Gillingham (Dorset), Warminster or Wincanton. A monthly coffee morning helps us to keep together and when Fr Francis Eyo MSP, the new Parish Priest at St Luke's, suggested a weekday Mass in Mere we jumped at the idea. We believe that a weekday Mass will further strengthen the Community and enhance the Catholic presence in Mere.

Mere is very lucky to have St Michael's, a magnificent Anglican church parts of which date back to medieval times, and there had already been thoughts of celebrating Mass there. Initial discussions with Judith Thompson, a retired vicar, helped to develop proposals for a Mass on the last



Friday of each month in St Michael's. These were embraced by the majority of Mere's Catholics and St Michael's PCC. Fr Francis, having consulted Bishop Delcan Lang of Clifton Diocese on the need for Mere Community to have a Mass centre in St. Michael's received the necessary support to proceed with the arrangement.

Fr Francis celebrated the first Mass in Mere at St. Micheal's on Friday 27 October 2023. It was a great joy that so many people attended the Mass, including some of St Michael's congregation, on a lovely sunny day. We were warmly welcome by Kit Stallard, one of St Michael's church wardens, and Ann Dethick who also provided tea and coffee after Mass. We hope this is the start of a regular Mass at St Michael's. The second Mass was celebrated by Fr Francis on Friday 1 December and more Masses are planned in 2024.

John FitzGerald - fitzgerald.jns@sky.com (Mere Catholic Community Coordinator).

YOU ARE INVITED TO A

QUIZ &



PANCAKE

EVENING

WITH LICENSED BAR, ON

Shrove Tuesday

13th Feb at 7.30pm

IN THE

GROVE BUILDING, MERE

+++in Aid of Suchana+++

Tickets £7.50 including pancakes (Children £3)

Please book in advance - judithvthompson@aol.com

or Phone 860553 or 863324 or 861168

or sign list at back of St Michael's Church

Mere Theatre Club

As we shiver through winter, we shall shortly be planning our spring outings, probably including a trip to somewhere interesting as well as a couple of theatre visits. So, members do keep an eye on your inboxes, including junk boxes!

And if you fancy getting out and about this spring, do join us, still only £6 per year.

Madeline Morris 📞 861833 madsmorris@gmail.com

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

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.

Mothers' Union and Open Members' Group

We were delighted that so many new people attended our January meeting for a Social Afternoon with time for a chat and an amusing quiz put together by Christine Marsh.

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 13th February at 2.30pm** in the main hall in **The Grove Building**. It is very spacious and we invite anyone who would like to join us for a short service followed by an interesting talk by Margaret Tinsley, her subject is "Camping on The Mall" from Diana and Charles to the Coronation of our King and Queen. This will be followed by time to get to know each other and have a cup of tea or coffee, nice biscuits and sometimes cake.

We look forward to seeing many of you again. If you would like to contact one of us to find out more please do.

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

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

Mere School

The Friends of Mere School provided some wonderful Christmas events for our children due to their successful fundraising throughout the year. Mere School Fireworks raised over £4000 and we are so grateful for the wonderful community support which was evident in many forms from sponsorship to attendance.



Mere Town Council have very generously awarded the Friends of Mere School a grant to help with the costs of putting on such a large-scale event. The council was successful in bidding for a sum of money from Wiltshire Council earlier in the year which was to be used to promote Mere. The idea of the grant was to increase footfall into Mere and we certainly achieved this goal.

The planning has started for November 2024. Mere School Fireworks 2024 will be on **SATURDAY 9TH NOVEMBER** – please make a note in your diaries. The event will be free again.

The committee are always looking to improve year on year and we will be providing more loos and endeavouring to ease the parking situation in the town.

If you would like to be a sponsor for our next event please do contact the school office – admin@mere.wilts.sch.uk.

We look forward to seeing you then!

Catrina Williamson Head Teacher

Mere Mortals Petanque Club

Petanque (boules) has been played continuously through the winter at the old swimming pool site next to the Primary School on Saturday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. We have a lot of fun and if it isn't raining, we play. When the clocks



change Tuesday evening play will again be possible. The Mere Mortals Petanque Club formally came into existence last month at an inaugural General Meeting held at the Social Club. Numbers are slowly building and new comers are always welcome. Spare boules are available and tuition is free but petanque is not a difficult game to play. The game is widespread in the UK and may get a significant boost in publicity if it becomes a demonstration sport at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Colin Senneck ☎ 706008 colin2423@sky.com

Shreen Harmony

A New Year and a New Term.

Our Christmas Concert last year was a lovely evening and very well supported. We were able to raise the sum of £600 for the Dorothy House Hospice and thank you to all who came along that evening.

We are back meeting every Thursday at 7.30 p.m. in the United Reformed Church in Mere. Everyone is very welcome to come and join us.

Sandra Fisher ☎ 861980

Mere & District Link Scheme

The Link Scheme is a local charity and our volunteer drivers take clients to medical appointments, including Covid vaccinations, and even shopping when resources allow.

In 2023 our volunteer drivers took 236 people (225 in 2022) from Mere and surrounding villages on 1,094 trips (975 in 2022) covering a total of 46,121 miles (36,761 in 2022) in their cars and giving up 4,057 hours (3,541 in 2022) of their own time for free. A big thank you to all our volunteers for this phenomenal service to the local community.

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 remember that our co-ordinators work in their own homes – we do not have an office - so please keep calls to 9-5 Monday to Friday and only use the 01747 860096 number.** Also, please try to give us a minimum of 48 hours notice (not including Saturdays and Sundays) as we cannot guarantee our co-ordinator will be at home to arrange last minute requests.

New drivers are always welcome. Why not make a late New Year's resolution to find out more about volunteering as a driver by calling our co-ordinator on 01747 860096

John FitzGerald Chair ☎ 860096 🌐 merelink.org.uk

The Mere Literary Festival

The Mere Literary Festival is looking for someone to take over the running of this annual event from 2025. A great opportunity to raise funds for local charities and promote the town'. If this is of interest, please email



contact@mereliteraryfestival.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 - 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

1	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
2	Fri	19:30	Shreen Harmony (every Thurs)	URC
		10:00	Walking Zumba	L
3	Sat	13:45	Duplicate Bridge (14:00 start. Every Fri)	GB
		10:30	Coffee Morning (every Sat)	URC
4	Sun	18:30	Oasis Bingo	L
5	Mon	09:30	Tiddlers and Toddlers (every Mon)	L
		18:00	Scouting	GB
		18:00	Yoga	L
		19:30	Slimming World (Book with Sally) (every Mon)	L
6	Tues	08:00	Foot Clinic	GB
		09:00	Little Angels (every Tues)	GB
		18:20	Zumba (every Tues)	L
7	Wed	09:30	Tai-Chi (every Weds)	GB
		14:30	Pilates (every Weds)	L
		18:30	Karate (every Weds)	L
<i>Railway Modellers</i>				
8	Thurs	14 :00	Mere Short Walks (Janet Way)	StM
		19:30	Ukulele	Butt of Sherry
<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony, Guiding</i>				
9	Fri	10:00	Merely Women	GB
<i>Dup Bridge</i>				
10	Sat		<i>Coffee Morning, Fair Trade Stall</i>	
11	Sun			
12	Mon		<i>Scouting, Slimming World, Yoga</i>	
13	Tues	14:30	Mothers Union	GB
		19:30	Suchana Pancake Evening	GB
<i>Zumba, Little Angels</i>				
14	Weds	14:00	Fitness & Friendship	GB
		19:30	Gardening Club	GB
<i>Tai-Chi, Railway Modellers</i>				
15	Thurs		<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Rubber Bridge, Shreen Harmony, Guiding</i>	
16	Fri		<i>Dup Bridge</i>	

17	Sat		Fair Trade at Coffee Morning <i>Coffee Morning</i>	URC
18	Sun		Fair Trade Stall after morning service	StM
19	Mon	19:00	Creative Mere 2024 Meeting	URC
		19:00	Walkers Group Planning Mtg(Laidler & Wilson) <i>Tiddlers and Toddlers, Slimming World, Yoga</i>	George Inn
20	Tues	08:00	Foot Clinic	GB
		18:30	Tower Stories <i>Little Angels, Zumba</i>	StM
21	Weds	19:00	Merekits Womens Institute <i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	GB
22	Thurs		<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Guiding, Shreen Harmony</i>	
23	Fri	10:00	Merely Women <i>Dup Bridge</i>	GB
24	Sat		<i>Coffee Morning</i>	
25	Sun			
26	Mon		<i>Scouting, Tiddlers and Toddlers, Slimming World, Yoga</i>	
27	Tues	19:30	Historical Society <i>Little Angels, Zumba</i>	GB
28	Weds	14:00	Fitness & Friendship	GB
		14:30	Pennybank Writers <i>Tai-Chi, Karate, Pilates, Railway Modellers</i>	L
29	Thurs		<i>Rhyme Time, Art, Quilters, Guiding, Shreen Harmony</i>	
			<i>Times, events and venues shown cannot be guaranteed as being correct</i>	

Mere Bowls Club

A date for your diary. There will be a 60s & 70s charity dance in the Grove Building at **7pm on Saturday 30th March 2024**. Details are still being finalised but there will definitely be a fully stocked bar and a raffle.

It is planned that there will also be a fish & chip supper, a prize for the best male and female fancy dress and a door prize, all as part of the entrance fee. Of course, there will also be the wonderful music of The Rebbels to entice you on to the dance floor, a local band whose drummer is a member of Mere Bowls Club. Tickets will be available on the door, on the night, from Mere library or from Don Butchers who may be contacted as below.

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 numbers or email below and he will take it from there.

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

Ukes at The Butt of Sherry

Our next session is on Thursday 8th February 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!

You can check out our Facebook page 'Ukes at The Butt' for our song list.

Maggie Holmes maggieholmes101@gmail.com

Fair Trade in Mere

I will be at the URC Coffee morning on January 17th and after the Morning Service at St Michael's on Sunday 18th. Come and see what new products are now available and I will also have Easter cards and some goodies ready for the early Easter this year

Janet Way ☎ 860884 jwaywitsend@gmail.com

Mere Short Walk (J Way)

Mere Meander: Thursday 8th February I have been asked to organise another 'Mere Meander' outlining some of the historical aspects of our Town and their fascinating buildings. Therefore this month's Short Walk will follow a walk all on pavements around the town centre. As usual we will end at The Angel Tea Rooms where there will be the opportunity to look at some old photos and views. There will be a limit of 10 people in order for everyone to benefit from the walk and talk so please phone to book a place. It would be of particular interest to newcomers to Mere. We will meet at 2p.m. outside St Michael's Church

Janet Way ☎ 860884 jwaywitsend@gmail.com

Mere Day Centre

A very happy New Year to all our friends and supporters. We left last year feeling saddened by the loss of some of our folks during 2023, including Jean Young who was one of our wonderfully loyal and committed volunteers. We will miss them all greatly. However, we are looking forward to a happy and bright 2024 – as they would want us to.



Guests have been telling me how much the day centre means to them. They say the centre 'is such a happy place', and that it motivates them to get up and out in a morning. Even when they don't initially feel like it, they always return home after a session feeling uplifted physically and mentally. In particular, they mention how well they are looked after by skilled people they trust, so they can confidently enjoy the varied programme of activities. The relaxed atmosphere where each guest feels free to join in, just quietly observe, or chose an alternative activity, is an aspect they appreciate.

We have a few vacancies, so do please consider joining us if you are feeling a bit isolated. For further details, please contact the manager, Sandier Hawkins on 07835 272406; email: manager@meredaycentre.org.uk

Jane Mason: Chair of Trustees

Mere Carnival Committee

Well here we are in a brand new year and carnival preparations have started already for this year's events.

Please keep your eyes out for our notices about these events and of course we must start with a favourite of ours, good old Bingo at the Social club (Eyes down 7-30pm Friday 22nd March) but also a new event for your calendars.

Please keep Saturday 23rd March clear when we will be holding our Children's Easter hat competition and fundraising event in the Grove Building.

However we have a particularly important request this year. As you know we have been going through a bit of a transition period with members of the committee and as is human nature people come and go. This has though left us short of active committee members which is again putting our carnival at risk. Please can we ask if anyone can spare the time to join us ? We are hoping to assign specific tasks to all the committee which will be your project for the season. It may well be running quizzes or fundraisers or even organising road closures but whatever you wish to do we have something with your name on it.

Please contact our secretary via email if you are interested and willing to help no matter how much or how little time you have available. We are a friendly and hard working team that would love to hear from you. Please contact Jaine via her e mail address:- secretary@merecarnival.co.uk and Thank you in advance.



Mel Wilkinson melvinwilkinson@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

4 th	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Communion Family Service including CONFIRMATION with Bishop Andrew
11 th	Sun	10:30	Parish Communion
14 th	Weds	10:30	Ash Wednesday Service
18 th	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Communion Parish Communion
23 rd	Fri	10:00	Roman Catholic Mass
25 th	Sun	08:00 10:30	BCP Communion Parish Communion

West Knoyle Parish Church St Mary the Virgin:

Priest in Charge: Vacancy

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

4 th	Sun	09:30	DIY Service
11 th	Sun	09:30	Communion
18 th	Sun	09:30	Communion
25 th	Sun	09:30	Matins

The United Reformed Church

Minister - Vacancy

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

4 th	Sun	11:00	TBC
11 th	Sun	11:00	Mr James Hepburn
18 th	Sun	11:00	Mr Dudley Coates
25 th	Sun	11:00	Gwilym Hitchcock

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

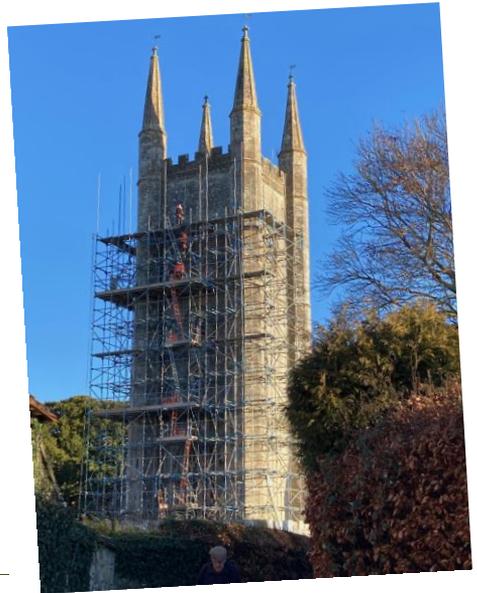
Mass at St Michael's the Archangel at 10am on Friday 1 December.

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

Contacts: Carole Marshall ☎ 861905 or John Fitzgerald ☎ 860867

St Michaels – The Tower Stories

In August 2023, The Friends of St Michael's Church received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £247,843 for a heritage project named The Tower Stories. St Michael the Archangel Church in Mere which is an important Grade I listed church. The project is now underway. The start of the work on the tower can be seen in the picture, the work on the tower will last until July 2024. Restoring the pinnacles of the Church and building plus further the community project named The Tower Stories. The Friends bid made clear that The Tower Stories will not only restore the Church pinnacles but also offer new and practical opportunities relating to the history, heritage and community involvement in this building for those of all ages in Mere.



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

Sshh ... Silent Disco For Seniors



Grove Building, Church St., Mere, BA12 6DS

Tuesday 5 March, 2-4pm FREE!

An afternoon of 50's/60's/70's music and a dance too if you fancy, from your chair or on the dance floor. We serve mocktails!

Headphones let you listen or not, you choose, chat, watch, listen, or dance.

No need to book but if you have any enquiries please contact Karen Linaker:

karen.linaker@wiltshire.gov.uk

Kindly supported by:

Wiltshire Council

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Copy date for the **March** issue

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

Email contributions are preferred, to the Editor, Richard Jefferies ☎ 863425
editor@merematters.co.uk or deliver to 16 Underhill, Mere, BA12 6LU.

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

Multi-million pound boost to environmental protection in Dorset and Wiltshire

- £8 million towards improving water quality around Shaftesbury and Mere
- Projects will beef up removal of harmful chemicals from wastewater
- Wessex Water to enhance towns' water recycling centres throughout 2024



The battle to protect the ecology of waterways around the Dorset/Wiltshire border is being stepped up a level courtesy of an £8 million investment in the two counties in 2024. Sewage treatment sites at both Shaftesbury in north Dorset and Mere, across the border in south Wiltshire, are being upgraded to ensure that the wastewater that arrives there continues to be properly dealt with before being safely released back to the environment.

New equipment to help to reduce the impact of potentially harmful chemicals found in sewage from homes and businesses will be installed as Wessex Water continues to invest millions of pounds across its region to help safeguard the health of rivers and watercourses.

With £5 million being invested into a year-long scheme at the water recycling centre just south of Shaftesbury – the work will focus on tackling the issues caused by chemicals like phosphorus, ammonia and nitrogen, concentrations of which are often found within sewage arriving at water recycling centres.

Farm slurries, agricultural fertilisers and septic tanks are a regular source of these nutrients, which are also found in many household products, and can cause large growths of algae in waterways such as streams and rivers.

This algae damages plants and animals in those areas by depleting the amount of oxygen in the water – a process known as eutrophication.

The Shaftesbury enhancement will continue until December of this year and project manager Jim Wheeler said: “By completing this work we will be able to ensure we help to protect the environment around Shaftesbury by stripping chemicals out of the wastewater that arrives.

“We’ll be carrying out this work within our existing water recycling centre and upgrading many of the treatment processes at the site to ensure we’re continuing to meet the highest environmental standards.”

More than £3 million is being invested towards reducing these chemicals from entering a tributary of the River Stour – Shreen Water – near the Mere site.

Commitment to the environment

The projects continue Wessex Water’s commitment towards protecting the environment close to the border between both counties, with millions of pounds already invested in the last 12 months.

The water recycling centre near the village of Bourton is being enhanced by a £4 million investment that will boost the capacity to treat arriving sewer flows, reducing instances of untreated wastewater being discharged automatically.

A £3 million investment in the water recycling centre at Gillingham is doing likewise, while further south more than £7 million is being invested at Ringwood and Wimborne to protect waterways such as the Stour and Avon.

Mere project manager Jason Gammon said: "As our population increases, the challenge to prevent nutrients from causing damage to our waterways increases and we can help meet that challenge by upgrading the treatment processes at our water recycling centres.



"Removing chemicals from wastewater can help to protect nearby rivers and streams and Wessex Water is investing hundreds of millions of pounds to do just that throughout rural environments across the region."

The company has also proposed a commitment of more than £900 million towards stripping out nutrients from wastewater as part of around £3.5 billion of new investment between 2025 and 2030 – more than double the current five-yearly spend – in its recently-published Business Plan.

The plans will be considered by industry regulators Ofwat before a decision next year.

Owen Houlihan Senior Communications Adviser

Mere Gardening Club

Considering the weather, we had a good turnout for our January talk titled "Natures Garden". An excellent presentation by David Boag. Our next meeting is on **Wednesday 14th February, 7pm** for a 7.30pm starts in the Grove Building. The topic for the evening will be Companion Planting by Castle Gardens. An in depth look at the way plant communities and associations can have positive and negative results including some tried and tested tips for using combinations off plants to alter or control pests on the vegetable garden.

Membership is £10 per annum which entitles you to 10% discount at Plantworld and many special offers throughout the year at Castle Gardens. Guests are welcome at £3.00.

The committee is just finalising our programme for 2024/25 including "The Hidden Gardens of Mere" (open gardens) on **15th and 16th June**. If you would like to participate in this event please get in touch as soon as possible.

Les Manwaring Chai ☎ 861 941 lesmanwaring@yahoo.com

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

Cinema returns to Mere

The excitement of a night at the movies is set to return to Mere as a group of enthusiasts is working to establish a new cinema club for the local community.

To fill the gap left by Mere's 'Moviola' the new independent CineClub Mere plans to show a mix of classic, recently released and maybe even foreign-language films in a social setting – something for everyone and accessible to all.

'Going to the pictures' can't really be replicated at home, so if you are a movie-lover and enjoy getting out to watch and talk about films in the company of others then we'd love to hear from you, as our next steps depend on us having an idea of the likely level of support.

We expect membership fees will be in line with other local clubs and societies but we are also inviting interest from enthusiasts who may feel able to support us as Founder Members with a donation of £25 towards set-up costs.

Please register your interest* as a potential club or founder member by **February 16**, including any suggestions you may have for the kinds of films you'd like to see or film-related events you might be interested in. We can then keep you informed about membership details and plans for the coming year.

Email to rjordanbarr@hotmail.co.uk

Or post your details to CineClub Mere, The Cottage, Castle Street, Mere BA12 6JF

Or add your name to the sign-up sheet in Mere Library.

We look forward to welcoming you as a member.



Spence Gunn spengunn@aol.com

Historical Society

Do you prefer to eat lying down? Ever fancied trying larks' tongues? Now that the Grove building is once again able to offer a warm welcome, the Historical Society talks continue this month, with just one presentation:

27 February 7.30pm: Dr Mark Grant 'Dining at the Villa Ventorum: ancient Roman Cookery at the Newt'.

Looking ahead, save the date for a morning talk:

5 March 10.30am: Adrian Green, Director, 'Past Forward at the Salisbury Museum'.

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 Art Group

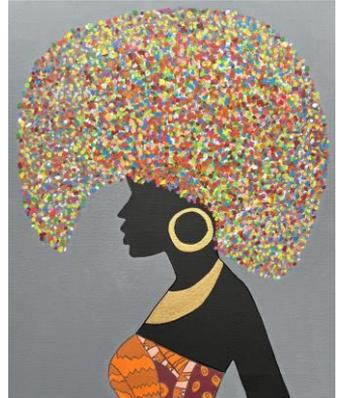
Our Christmas Lunch went well with some 17 attending, numbers sadly affected by illness and holidays abroad.

We started 2024 on 4 January with a good turnout, a topic of interest being the planning of the Exhibition in The Grove Building on 7 September 2024.

This month's submission is a portrait by Aubrey Colman. The media was acrylic-on-card.

The Group meets every Thursday 10.00 till 12.00, £3.00 includes coffee, tea and biscuits - and company of a very sociable Group. The first session is Free! What more do you want?

Helge Brock helgewallenbrock@gmail.com



Friends of Mere Museum

By the time you read this the new exhibition about The Mere Manor Youth Band will be on show in the library. In addition to this, plans are also underway for the group's ever-popular plant sale and quiz. The plant sale will be on Saturday 11th May in the Grove Building. On Friday 17th May there will be a quiz from 6:30pm. More details will follow about both events, and your support will be most welcome for both. All profits go towards supporting the work of Mere Museum. If you would like to get involved as a volunteer, then please message me. We would love to hear from you!

Rose Jordan-Barr 📞 861567 rjordanbarr@hotmail.co.uk

Mere Walking Group

Our group had 12 walks last year and we are now looking forward to many in 2024. With this in mind we are having a 2024 planning meeting on **Tuesday Feb 20th, 7.00pm at the George**. All walkers, even if you haven't joined in a walk with us before, are welcome and, if possible, come along with a suggestion of a walk.

Roger Laidler 📞 863447 roger46laidler@talktalk.net

Mary Wilson 📞 229609 wilsonsmere@gmail.com

Mere Museum

The new exhibition will be open from **5th February** to the public celebrating the history of the Mere Manor Youth Band founded by Adrienne Howell. The information covers their tours abroad and contests held locally. Were you a member of the Band, if so, do come along and revisit those days.

Rose Heesom 📞 meremuseum@btinternet.com

Merekits - Womens Institute

Since the last edition of this magazine the Mere Women's Institute has been very busy! At our December meeting we enjoyed Christmas festivities and heard a rendition of a unique version of The Twelve Days of Christmas, the last verse of which, I feel, shows the variety of things we get up to and sums us up pretty well:

"12 forever friends, 11 raffle tickets, 10 speakers speaking, 9 country strolls, 8 buns for icing, 7 coffee mornings, 6 theatre trips, 5 CUPS OF TEA.....4 meals out, 3 local fetes, 2 hours of fun and a craft item made for me". Note that the "2 hours of fun" happens EVERY month, and lots more besides!

January's meeting sadly had to be cancelled due to the heating problems at our normal venue and the difficulties in rearranging an alternative meeting place at such short notice but we really hope to be able to invite Janet back soon to hear her talk on the Fair Trade charity.

Our next meeting is **February 21st** when we are pleased to welcome Prof Helen Pankhurst (great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst) who's talk is entitled: 'Women's lives and Women's rights: How far have we got?' This promises to be an exceptional evening and we are truly privileged to host such an eminent speaker. It will be an open meeting and £5.00 tickets should be reserved by calling the number below (evenings).

Verena Cooper  07971790256 verenacooper2@gmail.com

Mere Social Club

A belated Happy New Year everyone.

The good news is that we should be in a position to reopen on Sundays from next month! Watch this space, facebook and notices on the doors for the exact date and times!

Membership Subscriptions are now due. Membership is only £10.00 a year. We also welcome any new members so come on in and try us out!

As nobody has claimed the contents of our lost property box, we will be donating the contents to our local charity shop. Also unnamed pool/snooker cues will be offered for general use in the club.

Tickets are now available for the **Easter Draw** with lots of Easter themed prizes waiting to be won. I will post the date of the draw in next month's offering!

We are holding the **Summer Skittles** competition again this year. This is open to everyone who can put together a team of four players. Entry is £16.00 a team and entry forms are available at the club.

Live music this month will be supplied by **Tom Clements** and takes place on **Saturday 24th February**

Elaine Laurence, club steward.

Mere Amateur Dramatic Society

As you would expect, as the New Year reluctantly trickled over the December 31st deadline, MADS was well up to speed in preparation for its first production of 2024! Casting is sorted, and rehearsals have begun - everything in fact is in place as we start work towards our always-eagerly-awaited **Spring Production**. The important facts to know now - and to pop into your new diaries - are the production dates. These are the **21st, 22nd and 23rd of March**. Do be sure to keep at least one of these dates free! Further details, including when and where you can acquire your tickets, (and maybe even the title of the play we are planning to present!) will be announced in the next issue of Mere Matters. Make it a New Year's Resolution: don't forget to look!

Jenny Wilding 📞 860908 jenny@flaxmill.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



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