

Elstow Parish Council



Magazine Spring 2022

ElstowParishCouncil.gov.uk

This magazine is produced twice a year by Elstow Parish Council.

As well as being delivered in printed form to all Elstow residents, it is also available as a digital file (handy if you want to share it with distant friends) on the Parish Council's website; <https://elstowparishcouncil.gov.uk/> and on the News page of the village website; elstow.weebly.com

Contributions of articles, ideas and loans of photos are welcomed - provided, of course, they are about Elstow or your experiences of the village.

Deadline for submissions to the Autumn 2022 edition is 30th August

Editor: cliverarnold@btinternet.com

Front Cover: Elstow May Festival. Oil painting by Terrence Cuneo, who was famous for his paintings of railway scenes, horses and military actions.

This picture was presented, by the artist, to Elstow school and was later given to the teacher who had assisted him - Miss Jeffs. She then gave it to Graham Clarke, who had performed in that festival and Graham donated the picture to Moot Hall in 2017.

"The History of Elstow May Festival"

May Day was originally a pagan festival, a fertility rite, performed to ensure a good harvest, but also to provide a bit of spring-time jollity and a chance for young men and women to meet.

A "May Queen" would be chosen and crowned, celebrants would dance around a Maypole and, at night, bonfires would be lit. The Maypole had a crown at the top, with ribbons hanging from down, each held by a boy or girl (or men and women). When the music started, they would weave in and around each other, until the ribbons were woven tightly around the pole, with the merry-makers gathered at its base. The movement of the ribbons represents the motion of the sun and the crowned pole is a fertility symbol. Little wonder then that the Catholic Church banned such rites. However, Rogation festivals often incorporated elements from pagan rites - so Christian May Festivals included offering prayers for good crops as well as providing opportunities for young men and women to meet.

From the 13th century, the nuns of Elstow Abbey held large scale commercial May fairs, attracting wholesalers, traders and shoppers from far and wide. Over the 4 days of the fair, they would raise about a quarter of the Abbey's (considerably large) annual income. Whether these fairs included maypole dancing is unknown.

In 1652, the puritan government (regarding this festival as idolatry and therefore immoral) banned Maypoles - but Elstow ignored this ban. Elstow fair is often regarded as having inspired John Bunyan with the idea for his 'Vanity Faire'.

The Festival lapsed in 1889 but, in 1925, it was re-established by the new Elstow school headmaster Bob Wadsworth. That year, over 1,000 people attended.



**Those were
the days
No. 38**

ELSTOW May Day, 1926, is the subject of this week's photograph, lent to the Bedford Record by Miss M. E. Fletcher, of 12 Winchester Road, Bedford. The names of those on the photograph are (from left to right), back row: Olive Devonshire, Gwen Turney, Stella Burr, Vera Osborn, Phyllis Lowe, Ruby Wagstaff, Vera Allen, Gladys Wilkinson, Margery Crowsley, "Herald" Clarence Cooper, Margery Greenaway, Joan Burr, Winifred Hartwell, Connie Chillery; front row: Joan Harris, Les Péstell, unknown, Norma Harris, Doris Bostram, Margery Cooper, two junior attendants Miss Fletcher does not remember, "May Queen" Mabel Crouch, Mrs. Bowler (the oldest inhabitant, who was 90 years old), Christine Hinde, Joan Fox, Phyllis Dudley, Connie Wilkinson, Audrey Bird, Jean Crouch.

The lady dressed in black (in the above 1926 photo) is Sarah Bowler, who was still curator of Moot Hall a year later, at the age of 92. (There is hope for me yet, then! Ed.)

May Queens were selected by a ballot of the girls in the school's top year. Children and parents made flowers out of red, white and blue crepe paper and fixed them onto twigs and boughs.

The Festival took place on the first Thursday in May - at 3pm for retired people and housewives, and again at 6pm, for workers and scholars.

The May Pole was carried from the school by six of the oldest boys, with other senior boys providing the 'horsepower' for the coach, covered with crepe flowers, which carried the May Queen, train bearers, and a Coachman/ Herald. Behind the coach, walked Maids of Honour, Jesters and the rest of the school's children, each carrying their colourfully decorated boughs.

On arrival at the green, they entered an arena surrounded by spectators.

The bearers would take the Maypole to a pre-prepared spot and slide it into a tube set into the ground.



The children then sat in circles around the May Pole and stuck their boughs of flowers into the ground - symbolizing the springing up and flowering of May blossoms. The Herald then introduced the May queen and announced her coronation. Lead by a Crown bearer, she then processed to her throne, set beside the Maypole, to be crowned by the previous year's May Queen. She then welcomed everyone and requested "messengers of peace" whereupon four boys released four 'doves'. (These were actually white homing pigeons - which would return to their roost, ready for re-use in the evening.)

The children then performed a variety of dances around the May Pole, so that its coloured ribbons created intricate, decorative patterns - either radiating out from the crown at the top, or tightly wound around the pole.



Meanwhile, throughout the performances, the Jesters would lark about, trying to make the audience laugh.

All of the School's pupils had a role to play in the Festival - if not as performers, they would carry out tasks like selling programmes.

The Festival attracted considerable interest from local newspapers, photographers the BBC and Pathe news film crews. Crowds of people came from all parts of the county and some even came from abroad.

In 1935, the ten previous May queens took part in the opening ceremony.

The Festival continued through the War years and, in 1945, celebrated its 'coming of age' in the presence of its first (i.e. 1925) May queen, Laura Caves.

In 1948, headmaster Bob Wadsworth retired but the festival continued and, by 1952 was attracting a combined audience (across the two performances) of ten to twelve thousand people. At the end of the event, staff or soldiers would take blankets around the crowd, to collect coins for (during the war) military charities and then, after the war, to the school fund.

In 1968, Beds schools system changed and Elstow lost its three top years, so the festival stopped. In 1974, it was re-introduced, but on a much smaller scale, on the school's playing field, using a much smaller May pole.

In 2000 curriculum pressures forced them to stop again.

In 2006, the Festival was revived by Jeremy Crocker, the rector of the Abbey church and it was organized by various people from the church and village, just as it is today.



The modern May Festivals are very different to those held in pagan times, and to those held in the days of the Abbey, and those held by subsequent Lords of the Manor and then those organized by Bob Wadsworth. There is now: a funfair; performances by various musical groups; a fete; cheerleading; and dancing groups. But the festival still includes the coach, which still conveys the May Queen, in procession, from the old village school to the village green, where young children still carry out traditional Maypole dances. Sadly, there are far fewer children involved; the maypole is much smaller; there are no Jesters, Heralds, 'doves' nor decorated boughs. But everyone still has fun.

Most of the photographs from 1942 to the 1960s were taken by Bedford photographer Drake Sadler and his assistant Peter Burr - who grew up in what is now called 'Pilgrim House' on Elstow's High Street.

**The 2022 Elstow May Festival will be
held on the village green,
from noon until 4pm
on Saturday 7th May**

There is an extensive collection of May Festival photographs, and some youtube videos of the old Pathe news films, on the Elstow village website; elstow.weebly.com

If anyone would be willing to lend any of their own collection - of old or modern - photographs, for scanning and inclusion in the Elstow village picture archive, please contact the editor; clive.arnold@btinternet.com



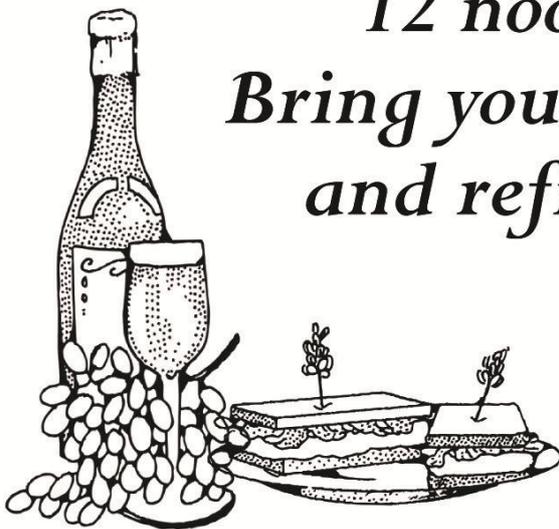
PICNIC ON THE GREEN

Elstow Village

Sunday 5th June

12 noon - 4pm

*Bring your own chairs
and refreshments*



Parish council news

NEXT MEETINGS Tuesday 19th April and Tuesday 17th May at 7.30pm, in the Playing Field Hall, to consider a range of local matters.

LOCAL PLAN 2040 UPDATE – WHERE WILL THE NEW HOUSES GO? EPC have been advised, by Planning Officers, that the next stage of the consultation process (for this strategic planning framework document) will be considered by the Borough Council Executive Committee on 27th April - ahead of the subsequent formal consultation period. Papers for these meetings are available to view usually a week in advance at:

<https://councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=116T>
The Parish Council will be monitoring the publishing of the documents closely.

LOCAL POLICE There continues to be regular communication with the local Police on a range of matters. There has been a new PCSO join the team; PCSO 7013 Stephen TARABELLA has taken over the areas that PCSO Chloe DYMOCK used to cover. It is important that residents feed to the Police: team any local intelligence and resident concerns. Do feel free to contact the team if you wish to ask or discuss anything that concerns you.

LOCAL MATTERS UPDATE

East West Rail –Jon Miles attended the first of the quarterly stakeholder meetings on behalf of EPC. We are monitoring this important project, engaging whenever possible with East West Rail.

Community Safety cameras – the Parish Council have considered all the resident feedback and explored various locations so as to maximise the coverage, whilst maintaining value for money. We have agreed to have cameras installed at the entrances to the village. Communications with the appointed contractors are ongoing with installation expected to commence shortly.

Christmas lighting in the village – the Council have considered the feedback from residents and decided that there will be some changes this year, with additional colours and designs being explored. Also, that lighting will be placed along Abbeyfields as well as the High Street.

Village enhancements

1. A new village entrance gate will be installed where Meadowsweet Drive becomes Abbeyfields.
2. There will be an ecological survey of the Elstow Brook area to ensure protection of the many species and habitats.

3. There will be regular communications with Highways Officers to improve the safety on Elstow's roads.

Elstow South planning applications – Two applications have been made to infill the pits/lakes and restore them. This involves draining the lakes, then filling them with waste which would be transported into the site. For a long time EPC and local residents have fought to stop this change of use, on many environmental, ecological and highways issues that would arise. We have submitted a very strong objection to this. Contact the Parish Clerk to find out more; lizzie_barnicoat@hotmail.com (01234) 771702.

Borough Councillor Tim Hill's Report

I reported the following to Borough Highways:

- State of A6 A421 roundabout and road surface.
- Hillesden Avenue and Progress Way junction road surface.
- Main West End road surface by entrance to West End and St Marys Close.
- Hillesden Ave Progress Way junction road markings.
- Potholes on Abbey Fields.

Police Action Day in Elstow - It was great to hear that the North Rural Community Policing Team were going to host a "Day of Action" in Elstow from 9am to 12pm on Wed 2 Mar 22. The Team was planning to have mobile patrols around areas where Anti-Social Behaviour has been reported in the past. They were also going to be carrying out have "Your Say" Surveys at the Premier shop.

Chestnut Trees in Wilstead Road too large – A Wilstead Road resident reported that the Chestnut Trees outside her row of houses, are too large and are blocking any light going into her house. I reported the issue to the Borough Council, asking for the Chestnut Trees to be pruned and pollarded.

Small Elstow Brook Bridge Not Accessible – The small bridge off "bumpy lane", beyond Pilgrims Way, was re-built with new materials. A concerned resident told me that the first step was too high to be accessible for those with limited limb functions. After my request to Borough officers to review it, I'm pleased to advise the concerned resident told me the new work has been done and the bridge is now fully accessible.

Elstow Parish Council Meetings

All of our meetings are advertised on the village notice-boards, with the agendas.

Also on our website;

<https://elstowparishcouncil.gov.uk>

you can sign up to receive email alerts when updates are made - just enter your details and press 'subscribe'.



They are open meetings, so please come along to hear what is planned for your village.

We meet 11 months out of 12, in the evenings, in the Playing Fields hall.

Parish Councillors will have plenty to discuss in 2022, since we shall have CCTV to consider, how we progress with traffic calming measures in Abbey Fields and Progress Way, and much more.



All these projects have to be paid for so the Parish Council has to raise all the money to continue with our agreed plans; the main way we do this is by a PRECEPT. This is a small amount from your Council Tax being paid into our bank account so that we can continue to make improvements to our village. We also sometimes receive money from property developers.

We would like you to attend our meetings so you can be aware of how your Parish Council makes its decisions and how we spend the money.



Local Police



The current Community Policing Priority for Elstow and the surrounding villages is around Motor Vehicles.

This covers anti-social use of motor vehicles and criminality, both in terms of trying to prevent vehicle crime offences taking place and being proactive to prosecute those using motor vehicles illegally.

This priority came into effect as of the 1st February and will run until 30/04/2022.

The team have carried both speed enforcements in and around Elstow as well as attending the Lower School to educate road users about parking at school drop off and pick up times, so as to increase the safety of all.

Please would all Elstow residents take a minute to complete this mini survey, to let the local Police team know of your issues and concerns in Elstow;

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BedsPoliceHaveYourSay

You can also follow our Facebook Page for: information as to what the team are up to, e.g.; upcoming engagement events and; crime prevention advice. Our page is called;

‘North Bedfordshire Rural Community Policing ‘

Elstow Post office

The post office now has new owners, a very friendly couple of chaps called Den and Peter, who have made the place much more welcoming.

They have removed all the glass barriers, have cleaned and re-arranged the shop, which now stocks useful items like fresh milk and bread.

They are open every weekday, from 9am to 5.30pm (There is No early closing day.)



Circular Walk - Elstow - Cotton End- Shortstown - Bunyan Birthplace - Elstow

Start and finish: The Green, Elstow. Distance: 7.2 miles Time: 2.5 to 3 hours.

Terrain: Flat, mainly along farm tracks and minor roads. A short section through fields - which can be easily avoided if it's muddy.

From the village green (Point 1 on the map), turn right onto High Street and follow the road through the village for half a mile, passing the cricket club on your right before crossing over the A421 dual carriageway (you won't see it but you'll almost certainly hear it). Immediately after this, turn left into Medbury Lane (2).



The road soon becomes a private lane leading to a farm and beyond, and is part of the John Bunyan Trail long-distance path. Follow this for the next 2.5 miles as it meanders south past farm buildings, over 2 cattle grids and through a couple of gates. The lane starts paved, and although it deteriorates a little

after the farm, it remains passable in all but the wettest periods.

At the end of the track, turn left onto Cotton End Road (3), and follow the road for about a quarter of a mile as it takes a sharp right.

Before the road curves left, take the footpath that's clearly signposted to the left (4). (If it's too muddy to take the field path, stay on Cotton End Road until it reaches the A600 and then turn left - it will add 5 minutes to your walk but may save cleaning your boots later!) This path follows the edge of several fields for around half a



mile before emerging quite suddenly (take care here) onto the busy A600, where you'll need to cross the road and head left (5).



The next 1.5 miles is a mundane stretch on the pavement along the A600, although you do get a nice view of the Cardington hangers.

As you enter Shortstown, go past the first roundabout and then turn left onto The Highway (it's a road for buses and bikes only, with rising bollards to keep out prohibited traffic). This is a good time for refreshments, and the Friendly Nettle Cafe in Beauvais Square is a good option for light snacks, and hot and cold drinks (6). Their opening hours are quite short so it's worth checking these before you set off. There's a Tesco Express next door if you get stuck.

From here head back to The Highway and when you reach the roundabout, go straight on and follow the A600 again as it heads down what is a rare hill in the Bedford landscape.



Towards the bottom of the hill, take a left into Old Harrowden Road (7), and follow this lane to its end, outside Bunyan Farm.

Here you'll take the track (Bumpy Lane) to the right.



After a minute or so you'll see the colourful signposts pointing to John Bunyan's birthplace (8), which is about a 5- minute detour off Bumpy Lane. You can find more on the birthplace site at

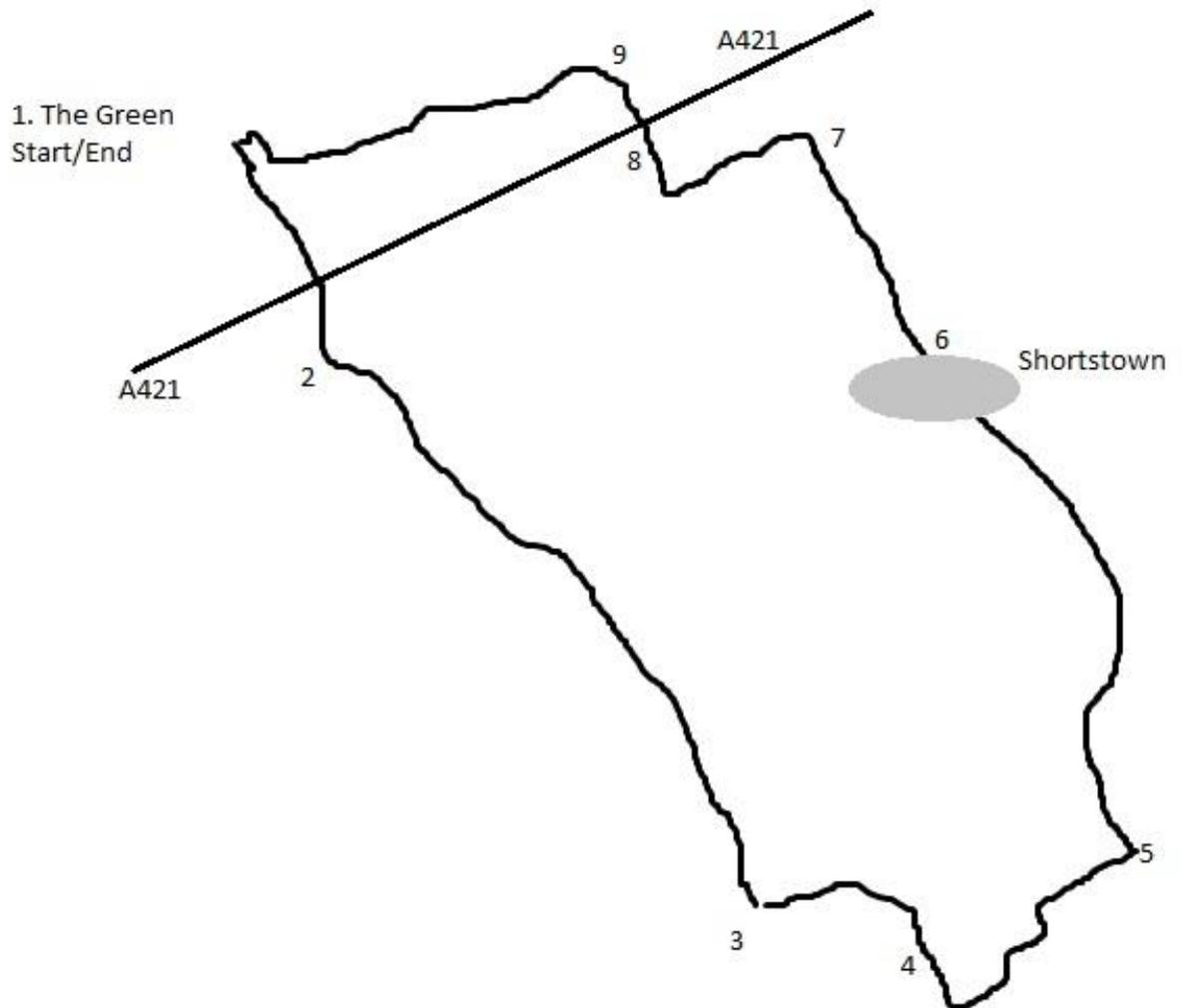
bunyanbedford.weebly.com/bunyan-birthplace.html

Back on Bumpy Lane, keep on the path as it passes under the A421 and then emerges onto Abbeyfields. Cross the road and follow the bridleway signs as the path drops to the left. From here you can follow the path for around a mile as you head back to Elstow (9).



There aren't many signs but as long as you keep the brook to your left you won't go wrong. You'll eventually emerge onto High Street, and from here it's only a minute before you cross the road to return to the green.

Map of the walk



This walk was written by Andy Jarosz, who can be seen in the photographs, which were taken by Sameena Jarosz.

NB. Local farmers ask that, if taking your dog on any walk on or near farmland, to please keep it on a lead.

Article – “Our Elstow”

I was brought up, mainly, in Kempston and my husband in Wootton.

As with many schools in the area, one of our school trips was to Elstow. Of course, it was for a history lesson and we were taught a lot about John Bunyan and his most famous book *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. This was in the early 70’s. We visited: the Church of St Mary and St Helen (Elstow Abbey) where we were shown where John Bunyan was baptised; the Moot Hall and the green where John played.

I remember clearly how beautiful it all was and I developed a fascination for all things “Bunyan”

Over the following years, I found out more and more information about Elstow and John Bunyan and his life. I gained a deeper understanding of the village and the books and attended the Abbey often.

Years later, my friend Joy Brodier sent a postcard to Terry Waite whilst he was held captive in Lebanon - it was the first, and only, post he received from the outside world. The postcard was of one of the windows in the Bunyan Meeting church, depicting John Bunyan in jail writing and receiving this gave Terry great comfort and hope. Some time after his release, Terry visited Bedford and Elstow and expressed his thanks to Joy and the community who had prayed for him.

Eventually, when my 3 sons had grown up, my partner and I were looking to move. I had 2 friends who lived in Elstow and were very happy here. So, as soon as a property came up for sale, we bought it and moved here in 2010. Thus, my dream of living in Elstow became a reality. What a delight it has been!



We got married at Elstow Abbey and had a lovely reception at Moot Hall – with the help of Jeremy the vicar and curator Clive who helped us arrange our reception.

It was a cool but sunny day and family and friends were delighted, and fascinated, by the Abbey and enjoyed their visit to Moot Hall very much.

My son Alexander, who was doing a theology degree in Canterbury, was inspired to do his project on John Bunyan and took many photographs, studied John Bunyan's books and went on the Bunyan Trail.

We are very involved with Elstow and care deeply about the village and its residents. I have become a friend of the Abbey and we embrace the village wholly. We often visit the Tea garden – I took my in-laws to visit. My father in law and his friend now play live music on Fridays there and they too enjoy the area greatly. We are so happy that the Moot Hall has reopened and we look forward to the May Fair every year

We walk and cycle around the area and, on special occasions, we go to the St Helena restaurant with our family and friends. We also enjoy the cricket and football at Elstow Playing field.

We now run a small airbnb in Elstow and encourage our guests to visit everything that Elstow has to offer. They love the area and enjoy a visit to the Red Lion for some pub grub. The florist and the Post Office are both life savers! We have also enjoyed a coffee or two at Elstow Bunyan Christian Fellowship's chapel.

We love showing people around and have included taking them to Bumpy Lane to see the birthplace of John Bunyan. We are proud to live in such a historic area. Now that we are grandparents, we love to take our grandchildren to all the lovely play areas.

It was brilliant to have some Christmas decorations up in the High Street last year and we are grateful to all who make Elstow such a lovely place to live. Thank you so much.

Deanna and Gareth Jones

If you would like to write an article for this magazine, or to have your club or voluntary organisation featured, please contact the editor: cliverarnold@btinternet.com

Elstow Bunyan Christian Fellowship

At the time of preparing this piece, like everyone else, we at Elstow Bunyan are exploring life in the 'new world' of fewer Covid 19 restrictions, but higher infection rates.

We continue to meet for Coffee Morning on alternate Thursdays, from 10:30am to 12 noon. Our website: <https://elstowbunyan.org> gives the dates for these. At the Coffee mornings, we raise money for various charities, through donations and the sale of quality selected 'pre-loved' items.

Our Sunday services continue to be held each week at 11:00am. Afterwards there is the option to stay a while for fellowship / tea / coffee / biscuits.

All are welcome to either, or both, of these gatherings.

While Covid infection rates remain high, we will continue to keep in place some Covid precautionary measures. We appreciate that attendees are willing to comply with these, so that we can continue to meet, and all do our bit, to limit the spread.

Brian Addington

~~THE BREAD PROJECT~~



Stock up on food and essential items... And it's **FREE!**

Get referred to shop online for delivery and collections
Every 1st Saturday of the month.

Check us out and get referred at :

www.loffs.org.uk

LOFFS is a free food shop. It differs from many other organisations, in that it minimises food waste. Traditional food parcels are often wasteful, as they contain food that families don't, or can't, eat.

We have gone to great lengths to stock the shop with a wide variety of products, thus ensuring that as many varied tastes as possible are catered for.

LOFFS seeks to empower people to make their own choices, by choosing what they need from the shop - all free of charge.

To refer someone whom you know may be in need of support every month with food and household goods. Please get in touch with us via our website; www.loffs.org.uk

FIREMEN COME TO YOUR HOUSE

A Safe and Well visit is a free service carried out by Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

It involves a pre-arranged visit to your home to offer advice on how to make it safer and, where appropriate, fit smoke alarms or other specialist fire detection equipment free of charge.

Visits are tailored to the specific needs of the household - they normally last around one hour.

Email: safeandwell@bedsfire.gov.uk

The service is aimed at people who may be more at risk of fire.

Someone may be more at risk if they:

- have a disability
- smoke or have a substance or alcohol dependency
- have adult social care needs
- are over the age of 65
- live alone or in a cluttered environment

To request a visit for yourself or someone else:

Online: <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/Community-safety/Home-safety/Safe-and-Well-visits.aspx>

Phone: [0800 043 504](tel:0800043504)





Introducing the Anne Robson Helpline

If you, or someone close to you, are dying, you can talk to us.

At the Anne Robson Trust, we aim to be there to listen to anyone who is struggling with the imminent death of someone they care about.

We know that facing the end of life can leave you isolated and alone.

Being able to access support, whilst a loved one is dying, is really important - for a number of reasons:

- Gaining knowledge of what may happen towards the end;
- Having a sense of 'preparedness' - this helps both the person dying and their family to gain as much control as possible.

To find out more, please visit;

www.annerobsontrust.org.uk/helpline-service

Calls are free and confidential – **Call us on 0808 801 0688**

Wixams Town Centre - Public Engagement Event 4th May 2022 12.00 to 19.00 at Lakeview Village Hall

LSP Developments have been appointed as development partner to L&Q Estates, to deliver the new Town Centre at Wixams, which sits within village 3.

This is an opportunity to create a well-designed centre, with a range of uses to serve the surrounding residents.

At the heart of the development will be a community facility which will help create a real vibrancy.

The aim of the engagement event will be for LSO and L&Q Estates, to present our initial ideas for the Town Centre and listen to comments and observations.

Speeding drivers on Wilstead Road

Despite the clearly signed Average Speed Cameras, inconsiderate drivers are still being caught. Here are the latest figures;

Month	Speed	No of Fines
Nov	39mph & under	9
	43mph	1
	Total	10
Dec	39mph & under	10
	40mph	3
	51mph	1
	Total	14
Jan	39mph & under	12
	41mph	1
	Total	13





Elstow Short Mat Bowls Club

New Members, of All Ages, Welcome

Are you new to the area, want to make new friends,
looking for a new sport?

Then why not come along, have fun, give it a go?

– No experience needed –

We play on Wednesday Evenings; 7.30pm to 9.30pm
and most Thursday Afternoons; 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

If interested, then contact Don,
on 07836 276835 for further information.

There is no need for special footwear;
flat-soled carpet slippers, or socks, are fine.

The club has a variety of Bowls that can be used.

We will also supply the Tea/Coffee and Biscuits!



Local Contact Information

Elstow Parish Council

Chairman	Jon Miles	Bunyan's Mead	0770 987 9245
Vice Chair	Lloyd Allison	Wigram Close	0778 974 1933
Councillor	Sue Anderson	Wilstead Road	0787 632 5567
Councillor	Allison Clooney	Hillesden Av	0787 665 4146
Councillor	Richard Fitzmaurice		0790 351 1104
Councillor	Tony Hare	Abbeyfields	01234 358883
Councillor	Helen Konstantinos	Abbeyfields	0758 378 1383
Councillor	Jacque Manners		0797 121 6014
Parish Clerk	Lizzie Barnicoat		01234 771702
	Lizzie_barnicoat@hotmail.com		

Other Organisations

Abbey Church Andrene Kerr-Wilson	Elstow.Abbey.org.uk ChurchWarden@Elstow-Abbey.org.uk
Bedford Borough Council	Bedford.gov.uk 267422
Borough Cllr for Elstow	Tim.Hill@Bedford.gov.uk 0790 715 0923
Bunyan Christian Fellowship Brian Addington	https://elstowbunyan.org 216080
Elstow Parish Council	ElstowParishCouncil.gov.uk
Elstow Playing Field	Margaret Hinson 349028
Elstow Village website- Picture and History archives	Elstow.weebly.com
Local Police - Phone 101	Kerry.Jones5324@Bedfordshire.pnn.Police.uk Facebook.com/NorthBedsPoliceRural/?ref=py_c
John Bunyan's Bedford	BunyansBedford.weebly.com
Moot Hall	MootHall.weebly.com Moot.hall@bedford.gov.uk
Village agent	0800 039 1234