

A large, textured tree trunk stands in a forest. The base of the tree is surrounded by a dense carpet of bluebells and green grass. The background shows more trees and foliage, creating a lush, natural setting.

ST MARY & ST PETER
NEWSLETTER

May 2021

*Inside: Langham Community Survey
Your opinion matters!*

Cover Picture: *Bluebell Woods* Reproduced by kind permission of Andrew Stacey .

CHURCH SERVICES

2nd May

8.30am gathered at St Mary's - Eucharist or Morning Prayer *depending on availability of clergy*

10.00am Village parishes Holy Communion on 'zoom'

9th May

9.00am gathered at St Peter's - Eucharist followed by Annual Parochial Church Meeting

10.00am Village parishes Holy Communion on 'zoom'

16th May

9.30am gathered at St Mary's - Confirmation service (Eucharist)

10.00am Village parishes Holy Communion on 'zoom'

4.00pm gathered at St Peter's - D.E.E.P. service

23rd May - Pentecost

9.15am Village parishes Holy Communion on 'zoom'

9.30am gathered at St Peter's - Eucharist or Morning Prayer *depending on availability of clergy*

30th May - Trinity Sunday

9.30am gathered at St Mary's - Eucharist or Morning Prayer *depending on availability of clergy*

10.00am Village parishes Holy Communion on 'zoom'



Email Jo Russell, Church Administrator, for the Zoom link

(wb.wb.gh.parishes@gmail.com)

A recording of each service will be on the website on Sunday afternoon:

<https://lb-churches.co.uk/streamed-services/>

All services are subject to change depending on relaxation of Covid measures. In addition, there is Morning Prayer via Zoom at 9.00 am each Tuesday

Both St Mary's Langham and St Peter's Boxted are now open **for private prayer.**



In the centre of this issue, you will find details of a survey concerning Langham village.

Your comments will enable us to take into account your views about future planning of the facilities available to Langham residents.

Thank you for taking the time to look at the details.

The QR code for the survey is here



Deadline for submissions for the June edition: 15th May

Contact the editor via email: lwbnewsletter@gmail.com

Greetings!

As I write this, the last of the winter weather appears to be on the retreat and the sun has occasionally been spotted overhead, to the bemusement of many. Certainly, the birds in my garden seem to believe that it's time to fix up their nests with bits of moss and twig, and to get everything ready for the brood of hatchlings to come. The occasional bee has also been seen ambling lazily through the daffs and tulips.

Recently I have been researching the ancient time-reckoning methods used in early mediaeval England, including the so-called 'Julian calendar'. Because of the division of society into secular and ecclesiastical elements, they worked with two sets of month-names, one 'learned and liturgical' and the other 'practical and agricultural'. 'May', for example, could be given its Latin-derived name *Mai* or

Maius when dealing with saints' feast-days and the like, but the older name was still in use — *Þrymilce* 'three-milkings' because they had to milk their livestock three times a day from this month onwards. If that name had stayed with us, we'd soon be having a *Thrimilch Bank Holiday*.

We are fortunate to have in this issue the most recent in the **Langham Heritage Group's** series of occasional local history papers. The creation of an RAF base at Langham in 1941 changed the local topography and brought American airmen, their aircraft (and their exotic tastes) to our corner of England.

Simon Gallup offers an overview of the base's operational history. Each of the three groups that flew from the base was exceptional in some respect, as you will discover

Steve Pollington, Editor

BOXTED HISTORY GROUP

Providing the Government's road-map out of Lockdown continues, it is planned to commence the Group's 2021 programme of meetings with a 'Social Get-Together' on an afternoon **cruise on the River Orwell on Wednesday 23rd June.**

Originally planned for last year, the price will remain the same but subsidised for existing members at

£10 per person. Numbers are limited so please call **Derek Kirby** on 01206 231047 to reserve your place(s).

More details of this event and the future programme of meetings in 2021 will be included in the June edition of the *Newsletter*.

Your committee hope you are all well, even if rather bored, and look forward to seeing you again in June.

Keith Middleton, Chairman

Boxted Airfield

In October 1941 the Air Ministry told Colchester Borough Council that they intended to build airfields for heavy bombers in Langham and Earls Colne. Two months later, when America entered the war, the plan was dropped because of the need to build airfields for the use of the Americans.

By 1945 there were 16 airfields in Essex used by the USAAF and 19 in Suffolk. During WW2 the American Air Force was part of the Army and so were called *United States Army Air Force*, (USAAF), and their rank structure was that of the Army.

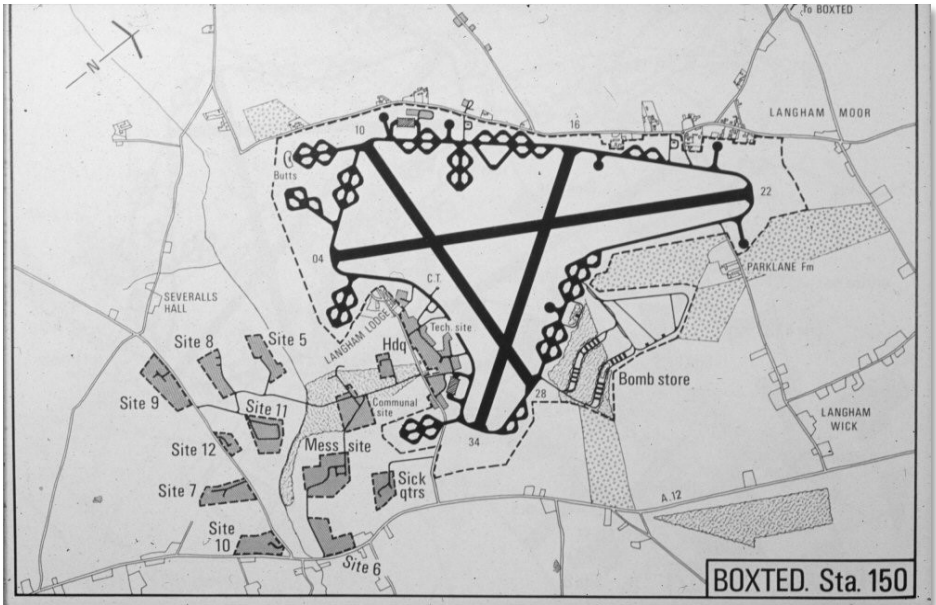
The first that Langham residents knew about the airfield was when farmers had land compulsorily purchased. Construction started in early 1942 with the main contractor being W.C. French but many

local men were also involved. The airfield was built to the normal plan with a main runway 1830m long and two secondary runways 1280m long. All three had a width of 46m. The perimeter track, 5.6km long, which marked the edge of the active airfield, ran around the outside giving access to the runways and the 50 aircraft hardstandings.

The active airfield was all in Langham. The technical site was in the Langham Lodge area. There were 8 different domestic areas to the south east reaching as far as Colchester Business Park. Logically, the airfield should have been called *Langham* but there was already an RAF Langham in Norfolk, so to prevent confusion the airfield was called *Boxted* or *Station 150*. At the north end of the main runway it crossed Park Lane and so the road was closed from 1942 and not re-opened until 1954.



Left to right: 386 Bombardment Group; 354 Fighter Group; 56th Fighter Group;



Map of the airfield produced by the late Edward Brawn.

During WW2 there were three Groups based at Boxted: an American Group consisted of three squadrons, or four for bombers. They were self-sufficient with their own engineers, admin, etc. The first Group arrived in June 1943 and was the *386th Bomb Group* with their B-26 Marauders which were light bombers. Initially they were practising medium-altitude bombing but they flew a few operations before they were moved to Great Dunmow in September 1943. In November 1943 the *354th Fighter Group* arrived. They flew the P-51 Mustang, which was the first fighter to have the range to

escort bombers to Germany and back and it built up a very good reputation. In April 1944 the Group moved to Lashenden, in Kent, to prepare for the invasion. Later in April 1944 the *56th Fighter Group* arrived. They were known as the *Zemke Wolf Pack* because their commanding officer was the dynamic Colonel 'Hub' Zemke. They flew the P-47 Thunderbolt which was double the weight of a Spitfire and certainly did not look like a fighter but proved very effective. The 56th remained at Boxted until September 1945.

Boxted was originally intended for heavy bombers



*Left: The **Republic P-47N Thunderbolt** was the heaviest single-seat piston-engined fighter plane in the world - when fully-laden it was heavier than some contemporary bombers! It was an ideal fighter for escorting them on strategic bombing missions Right: Insignia of the USAAF*

Photo: warhistoryonline

and so would have needed accommodation for 3000 men. When the 386th first arrived, lack of material had resulted in the accommodation blocks not being completed. As a result many of the men were sleeping in tents. By then it had been decided that heavy bombers would not come to Boxted and so there was not the need for some blocks. In practice the most men to be stationed at Boxted was just under 2000.

After the war Boxted was used briefly by the RAF, flying the Mosquito and Meteor, but the increased speed of aircraft and the proximity to Colchester led to

Boxted being closed in 1947. At the end of the war there were a large number of families waiting for Council houses in Colchester and some started to squat in the Nissen huts. The Council eventually allowed them to stay. The land was offered back to the original owners and most of the airfield became apple orchards but the runways still existed. Two aircraft from Woods of Colchester were based on the airfield and Wing Commander Percy Hatfield ran a crop spraying business and flying school which lasted until his death in 1965.

In 1992 the Langham Parish

Council leased a small area of land on Park Lane which was in line with the main runway and built a small brick Monument to the men who had served there. Many veterans were present at its Dedication. Over the years the Monument was damaged by large lorries entering the airfield and the plaque was stolen. When the airfield was sold in 2006 the Parish Council bought the area of land and started to plan a new Monument, which was Dedicated in 2008 and that is what can be seen today. There is now also the museum created by the *Boxted Airfield Historical Group*, formed in 2000, which is on Langham Lane.

In retrospect Boxted should be considered one of the most important USAAF bases in the country. The reason is that all three Groups based here had outstanding war records.

386th Group:

a) According to their battle honours at the end of the War they "attained the most outstanding record of all B26 Groups in the European Theatre of Operations."

b) Because of their bombing accuracy they were selected, by General Bradley, to be the last Group to bomb prior to the D-Day landings.

354th Group:

a) The 353rd Squadron, one of the squadrons of the 354th, was the highest scoring squadron of all USAAF squadrons in all theatres

b) The only Medal of Honor to be awarded for fighter operations over Europe was awarded to Major Howard, O.C. 356th Sqn, while operating from Boxted,

c) The leading Ninth Air Force ace, Capt Eagleston, was in the 354th.

56th Group:

a) The 56th was the top scoring group in the USAAF,

b) The two top scoring aces in the European Theatre of Operations, Col Gabreski and Capt Johnson, were both in the 56th ,

c) The only USAAF Air Sea Rescue squadron was formed here using "war weary" Thunderbolts.

Simon Gallup

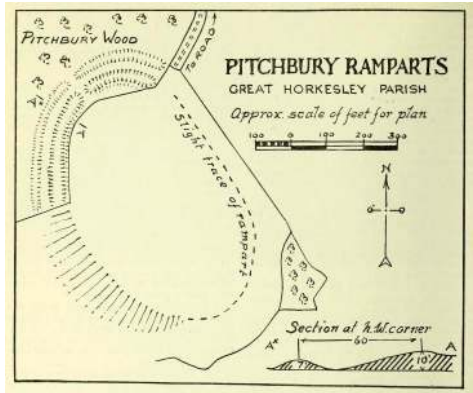
Chesterwell and Pitchbury

The *Chesterwell* name can now be found displayed prominently on the edges of Boxted and Great Horkeley where it refers to the large estates of new-build housing that are springing up close to the old Severalls hospital site. Despite sounding like a made-up term devised by marketing people to sell high-density housing, the name actually has a long history in this area. It is first used centuries ago in reference to Pitchbury Wood in Horkeley.

Chesterwell is a marriage of two terms, both well-known from other Essex place-names. The first element is *Chester-* from Old English *ceaster* meaning a fortified settlement. This name was given by the East Saxons to the Roman fort on the Colne, the *Colne-ceaster*, now *Colchester*. The Saxons actually took over the term from Vulgar Latin, where the equivalent *castra* meant at first a small military encampment and then, from the 4th century onwards when stone walls and towers were erected, a stronghold or fortified town. That explains the *Chester-* part of the name.

The *-well* part is misleading though. Usually places with ‘well’ names refer to natural freshwater springs (such as Chalkwell or Chadwell). But the earliest record of the name is from 1181 where it is spelled *Cestrewald* and clarified as *boscum* ‘open woodland’ usually exploited for building timber, firewood etc. The *wald* part is the Old English for woodland, still found in the ‘Weald’ of Kent and Surrey.

So *Chesterwell* is actually ‘the woodland by the stronghold’. In 1249 it was described as ‘*foresta regis de Cestrewald in Kingeswod*’ – *foresta regis* is ‘the king’s wood’ in medieval Latin, and the equivalent English name is *Kingeswod* with the same meaning. The implication



1923 ground-plan of Pitchbury ramparts’ (Royal Commission)

is that the woodland close to the town walls of Colchester (*Cestrewald*) formed one part of the larger royal forest which then covered a large part of Essex from the Stour down to the Thames.

The *Chesterwell* name remained in use into the early modern period. A document dated 1671 gives the boundary of an estate which is said to pass ‘under Chesterwell along the rampiers by Horkeley Heath’. The ‘rampiers’ are the ramparts in Pitchbury Wood, Late Iron Age in origin judging by the various 20th century excavations conducted there.

These ramparts still stood to an impressive height (about 3m or 10 feet) over six acres until the 19th century when the landowner ploughed them out to use the land for agriculture. They may perhaps be all that is left of the pre-Roman fortified settlement that was replaced by the more impressive port area to the south, Roman *Camulodunum*.

Steve Pollington

From the Parochial Church Council

Dear Neighbours,

Following my letter in the March issue of *St. Mary and St. Peter's Newsletter* in which I reported that the PCC had been involved in pre-vacancy discussions with the Bishop of Colchester after Rev Mandy's premature retirement, I am pleased to be able to give you some further information.

As you must be aware, our church finances are currently thinly stretched as are those of the Chelmsford Diocese. Nevertheless, Bishop Roger is resolved to enable us to find a new Priest as soon as is reasonably possible. Inevitably some economies will need to be made but this will not be at the expense of losing our identity as a parish or our traditions of worship. His plan is as follows:

Instead of there being a single stipendiary priest serving three parishes, the new pattern of ministry will be that the new incumbent will be the leader of a team which will include other ordained clergy as well as Licensed Lay Ministers (formerly known as Lay Readers). Rev Anne Mason, who recently moved to live in Great Horkesley, will be a key member of this team and it is hoped that, when

finances permit, it will also include a House for Duty Priest.

As well as operating across the parishes of Langham with Boxted, Great Horkesley and West Bergholt it is proposed to include the three parishes of Mount Bures, Little Horkesley and Wormingford and, for this arrangement to be successful, some changes will need to be made.

Firstly, we shall need to relieve the clergy of much of the administration that currently takes up so much time. For example, we shall not expect them to attend PCC meetings when business matters are under discussion. Secondly, we shall need to adjust our pattern of services so that celebrants are regularly able to spend time with our congregation instead of hurrying off to the next village. (For this reason the Church Wardens are already beginning to explore the feasibility of holding some Holy Communion services on weekdays.)

At present representatives from all six parishes are working hard to complete a joint Parish Profile. If all goes well, we could be interviewing an applicant in the not too distant future. Meanwhile, we do realise that you may have some concerns or questions that you would like to ask us. If that is the case, you are most welcome to contact any one of our Parish Representatives all of whom are involved in the interview process - Stephen Whybrow, Dominic Sheil and myself.

Kind regards,

Patsy Ann Maggs

Vice Chair, LwB Parochial Church Council.



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DEDHAM VALE SOCIETY

Boxted Bridge was built in 1897 by George Double (1840-1916), the piers and bridges contractor who assisted in siting Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment in London.

It sits in the centre of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The surrounding fields are water meadows, where cattle and sheep graze and plantations of willow trees for cricket bats are growing.

The bridge is an important heritage feature of the village. In the 1930s the views from the bridge inspired many paintings by both Sir Alfred Munnings and John Nash.

The **Dedham Vale Society** was set up in 1938 to protect the heritage and villages of the Dedham Vale, which stretches for nearly 14 miles on either side of the River Stour, from Manningtree in the east to Wormingford in the west.

The Society's influence has been

widespread and many campaigns have been fought with success. Bodies such as the water and electricity-generating companies, building-developers and, most recently, the Civil Aviation Authority have all been persuaded that their proposals have not been in the interest of the fragile nature of this tiny AONB.

The Dedham Vale Society is highly supportive about Boxted Bridge and the need for adherence to the proper planning process and a fair evaluation of all options, including repair and strengthening of the existing structure.

A petition has been launched to save the present bridge, see

www.change.org/p/essex-county-council-save-our-bridge

If you are interested in joining the DVS, contact

info@dedhamvalesociety.org.uk

or visit

<https://dedhamvalesociety.org.uk/>

CHILDRENS SOCIETY BOXES

Despite the past year having been difficult for everyone, we at last have a communication from the Childrens Society that we can organise to collect the House Boxes.

Please would you either drop them round to me or Denise, or phone to arrange for

us to collect them from you. Thank you all for your generous donations; they are much appreciated by the young people who need support.

The phone nos. are **Gill Pullen** on 273804 for **Boxted**; and **Denise Hobday** on 230918 for **Langham**.



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Boxted Parish Council Report – April 2021

The Parish Council didn't meet this month. Due to some archaic (1972) legislation surrounding official mourning days not being recognised as workdays, our meeting would have been unlawful, which is a first for me as a Parish Clerk!

We are slowly emerging through the lifting of Covid restrictions and you will see the **Village Hall** and **Recreation Ground** get busier. We are hoping that the 'no earlier than 17th May' step will see the **Hub Café** open again.

The car parking situation in the village is frustrating. We don't like to nag but *please avoid parking near the school at peak times and don't park near road junctions.* Please don't park on pavements when the children are trying to get to school. Don't park across people's entrances but also don't park on the opposite side of the road to a house entrance when the road is only single track (Cage Lane). The **North Essex Parking Partnership** are aware of the problems in Boxted and will visit soon (hopefully not with their ticketing machines). We do have bike racks at the Village Hall – why not cycle and walk the last bit?

Seven pieces of outdoor gym equipment will be installed on the **Recreation Ground** in May. They will sit alongside the children's play area. We have additional rubbish bins coming to the Recreation Ground, but the Council pays for these bins to be emptied and it is a cost on your council tax

bill. If you can, please take your rubbish home with you.

We have seen some petty vandalism at the Recreation Ground in Boxted. Luckily, we have good neighbours who have intervened and stopped specific incidents. The Police are aware, and the **Community Safety Policing Team** have spoken with the Council. We may see more of the Police in the village as a result.

We have completed all the paperwork to take on the '**Village Green**' - the corner grassed area of the Hill Farm development at Boxted Cross.

Local elections for Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner are taking place on 6th May. These will be normal elections with polling stations but if you want to stay safe, especially if you are shielding, then please apply for a postal vote. You download the form from this site : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote>

The Parish Council facebook page seems popular so do pop along and send us a like. We shall try and make sure that posts are also shared to other village groups.

Please stay safe and continue to enjoy your lovely village.

If you want to get in touch with the Council, please drop an email to boxtedparishcouncil@gmail.com

Langham Community Survey

As we gradually but positively emerge from the winter lockdown, it goes without saying that we are all very keen for some good news... allow us to provide some for you!

As of Spring 2021, a small but highly dedicated working group has formed to collate and implement ideas which will improve the services and amenities within our beautiful

village. The existing members of our group include parish councillors and member of the Langham Community Council (LCC) but we are very eager for that to be an open and inclusive group; we would warmly welcome anyone that would like to contribute or who is actively seeking to further their involvement in village life.

To date, many motivated villagers have enacted change by creating

Your Village
Your Vision
Your Voice



YOUR VOICE CAN HELP SHAPE **YOUR** VILLAGE
Langham is launching a consultation on village amenities

- Where do we fall short?
- What services/activities would you like to see in the future?
- How can we enhance village life?

Your voice matters!

Lets make our community a special place.

A survey will soon be delivered through your letterbox.

We are really looking forward to receiving your ideas and if you are too excited to wait to tell us, use the QR code overleaf and fill in the survey online.

some of the fantastic facilities which already benefit our village. The Village Shop, Community Centre, children's play area and the Tennis Courts are just a few of the projects which would not have taken off without the support of the local community – projects that we can all get behind and be proud to be part of.



What can you do?

We are eager to hear residents' ideas and views on anything that can improve village life and increase the already inclusive sense of community within the village. No ideas are off the table, all projects great and small will be considered... we want your ideas, the ones inside and outside the box!

Here are some of the initial questions and answers we seek; we thought this would be a good place to start:

How can we create a real “village hub” to build on the existing village community?

What does it need to have a consistent and noticeable impact?

What are your children's views?

What additional events would you welcome to the village?

Can we encourage events that will further knit our community together?

How do you feel about current events?

Are there any infrastructure projects that are needed?

We hope you agree that this could be such a great opportunity to be part of shaping your village for your family and for future generations. We have new homes and additional residents coming to the village that will change the dynamics of our populace and we want to ensure there is a close-knit community to welcome these new families to village life, encouraging them to be part of a cohesive and fruitful village life.

Please let your creative juices flow and speak up loud and proud! There will be a short survey coming through your door shortly so please do take a few moments to share your thoughts.

Alternatively, use the link below the get in touch straight away.

<https://www.langhamparishcouncil.co.uk>

The logo for Palmer & Partners features a stylized 'P' and '&' symbol inside a square frame. To the right of the logo, the text reads: "Colchester Ipswich Sudbury Clacton Thorpe-le-Soken", "01206 572233", and "colchester@palmerpartners.com". Below this, the company name "Palmer & Partners" is written in a large, serif font, and at the bottom, "Independent Estate & Letting Agents" is written in a smaller, sans-serif font.

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by 11am to place your order

Thank you for your continued support

100 Club Draw

The 100 club March draw was made on the Random Number generator again and the lucky March winners are:

1. Juliette Ackerman (56)
2. John Kimberley (2)
3. Jutta Brawn (69)
4. Andrew Stacey (19)

Some numbers available.

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01206 271127

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That's it. Let's each give a tip to the NHS workers as a thank you for our "jab" and for all they have done and continue to do for us.

Here is the QR Code to the JustGiving page where you will find a little more detail and the chance to make a donation if you would like to.



<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/TheOnePoundNHSAppeal>

Robert J. Spittal
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2021

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If new members are not elected or co-opted to bring the Council up to its full capacity, there is a possibility that the Council could be disbanded. This would result in the interests of the village being passed over to others, with no representation from the village residents. This could be the end of Langham as we know it, an independent rural village, not just another village that is swallowed up by Colchester.

We need enthusiastic residents of Langham to step forward and join the Council before it is too late.

If you want to find out more please contact the Parish Clerk on

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Tel: 01206 271127 or 07741 284132
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LANGHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL requires a **NEW SECRETARY**

The Community Centre is at the heart of the village and, as well as three rooms for hire, houses Langham Community Shop and Langham Pre-School.

We are a busy Centre with many local and commercial bookings dealt with by our Marketing Manager.

We would welcome someone with fresh ideas and enthusiasm. If you would like to be part of a team of Trustees who volunteer their time to keep Langham Community Centre well-maintained and financially viable, please contact Interim Secretary **Paul Armstrong** on **01206 616604** or email

langhamccsecretary@gmail.com

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Lay Minister Denise Hobday 230918

Church Administrator (for the parishes of
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Email: lwb.wb.gh.parishes@gmail.com

Churchwardens

St Mary's Langham

Stephen Garner 272599

Sgarner.22@btinternet.com

Denise Hobday 230918

hobdaylangham@hotmail.com

St Peter's Boxted

Dominic Shiel 273324

Zone Youth Group

Dominic & Linda Shiel 273324

The Edge Youth Group

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oOo

St Mary & St Peter Newsletter

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Contact

Debbie Eley

Telephone:- 01206 870266

Email:- boxted@community-centre.org.uk

Home to a number of local clubs and regular activities, it is also available for hire for parties and functions, with a capacity of 120 seated in rows or 100 seated at tables.

If you have any new clubs or events planned in the future, please consider using the village hall as your venue.

Deadline for submissions for the June edition:

15th May

Contact the editor via email:

lwbnewsletter@gmail.com

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Please telephone the number(s) shown for the DAY ON WHICH YOU MAKE YOUR CALL (not the day of your appointment). If there is no reply, please do not leave a message but RING ANY OTHER NUMBER.

Revised 13/04/2021. Organizer Arabella Brentnall, 01206 272013