

Shirenewton

Parish Magazine

April 2016



Price: £1

## FROM THE VICARAGE

Julian E LI White

Dear People of the Parish,

The other day I down-loaded some statistics from the computer. Actually, you will determine that this statement is a pack of lies not least (a) I know absolutely nothing about how a computer operates (OK, so Sandra grabbed the information from the ether for me) and, (b) I know even less, or care not a jot, about statistics. Indeed, my idea of hell is spending eternity in the sole company of a non-smoking actuary.

Please bear with me. I did in fact end up with a heap of statistics fresh from the Diocesan Office (so the data must be irrefutably true and accurate then). I want to 'share with you' – as I believe current diocesan jargon would have it – what I perceive to be some of the findings.

Did you know, for example, that our Diocese of Monmouth comprises of 123 churches? Out of that number 57 have a weekly attendance of less than 20 whilst an additional 30 have a regular attendance of under 10. In other words, out of a total of 123 churches in regular use (presumably), 87 of them claim a regular attendance of 20 or less.

From my time as Area Dean I know that some of these figures are exaggerated to imply a healthy regular church-going membership, and others are recorded on an artificially low basis in a forlorn hope that the numbers present will not attract an increase in Quota (sorry, I mean 'Parish Share'). If I, severely handicapped in understanding anything mathematical beyond ' $2 + 2 = 4$ ', how is it to be hoped that diocesan officials – yet alone those in the dark labyrinths of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales – are blinded by such tactics? Oh yes, while I am on a rant, in my Area Deans day more that one group of parishes kept an undeclared bank account to prevent 'them in Newport or Cardiff' getting to know precisely how much money they had at their disposal.

I know that it has been said that there are 'Lies, damn lies and statistics' but I must admit that the situation in this respect troubles me.

For example – and I have droned on about this before – statisticians would have it (and they have been beating this drum for some years now) that it is essential, if not vital, that church communities attract children as they represent 'the church of tomorrow'. What about 'the church of today' I wonder? In our own group of Mathern, Mounton, Shirenewton and St. Pierre, for example, it is St. Pierre which appeals to the greatest number of attenders on a regular basis. Interestingly, they proffer an archaic ("No, no! we must be seen to be 'contemporary' and 'relevant'") 1662 rite most Sundays and, with the rare exception, there is not a child to be seen on Sunday.

I acknowledge that I am putting my personal 'spin' on what has been said above and I am certain that others will argue cogently, and with more statistics to hand, in the opposite direction. Certainly I am getting old and increasingly prickly, but I have been ordained to this diocese long enough – about 35 years – to recall that these statistics (falling worshipper numbers and constrained financial considerations) are nothing new. From the time I was a fresh-faced and enthusiastic young curate to the present day these concerns have occupied all who served on endless deanery and diocesan committees. I just hope there will be enough cash left in the retirement pot.

With every good wish and blessing,

## **200 CLUB**

**Winners of the Marchdraw were:**

1st David Johnsey

2nd Hattie Leaf

3rd Tony Davies

4th Jane Eickhoff

## **VILLAGE DEFIBRILLATORS**

As some villagers maybe aware Phil Moles has been leading the way to raising money to purchase defibrillators for the village. For a village our size we would ideally need 4 which can be placed in key locations around the village. Therefore as a way of raising some more money to achieve this I am using my place on this years London Marathon to raise money to contribute to reaching this target. The primary school will be conducting a competition to design my running vest. However, the whole village can help to achieve the aim by visiting my Just Giving page. The link is [http://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/laura-saysell?utm\\_id=101](http://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/laura-saysell?utm_id=101). Any contributions will greatly be appreciated. The link will also share with readers my own personal motivation for completing this challenge and raising money for this particular cause. I feel that it is an ideal opportunity for the community of Shirenewton to come together and do something that could and will ultimately save lives.

Laura Saysell.

## **Problems getting around without a car?**

The Grass Routes transport scheme is a responsive flexible bus service that makes trips on request. It operates low floor, fully accessible vehicles with volunteer drivers.

The scheme is operated on a membership basis and is open to all members of the community of any age and can be used for day time journeys for all sorts of purposes, such as shopping, medical appointments and visiting friends and family.

To meet the needs of our community, St Thomas's Church has decided to cover the cost of membership for those in our communities without access to a vehicle.

Come and find out more at an open afternoon on 21<sup>st</sup> April at 2:30pm in the Saysell Centre (also known as the Church Room)

Grass Routes would particularly like to hear from potential volunteer drivers too. Please come along and have a chat.

Organised by St Thomas a Beckett Church

## **SUNDAY PAPERS AVAILABLE IN THE VILLAGE!**



From Sunday 3rd April for a trial period of 4 months, Sunday newspapers will be available by pre-order.

Papers will need to be collected from the Saysell Centre (also known as the Church Room) between 10am and noon.

Coffee and cake will be available between 11am and noon.

Please sign up now!

Please email [shirenewtonpapers@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtonpapers@gmail.com)

or call Janet Horton on 641783

If you have already contacted us, we will be in touch prior to 3rd April to check which paper's you want and run through the arrangements

Organised by St Thomas a Beckett Church



*St. Peter's Church, St. Pierre*

*presents*



*Words & Music  
for All Seasons*

*with*

*Gary Branch  
Spinet*

*&*

*Monnica Williams  
Poems*

*Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 7.00 pm*

*Refreshments in the interval*

*Tickets £10.00*

*Book your ticket now from:*



*Ann Evans ~ 01291 621949  
Margaret Cracknell ~ 01291 430138  
Wendy Sinden ~ 01291 622295*



**Advance Notice:**

**Mounton Church Fete** takes place at  
Mathern Vicarage

On

Saturday 18 June

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDOENUS MOUNTON

# **GREAT ANNUAL DUCK- RACE**

**Sat 9<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2016 AT 12.00  
NOON**

**PRIZES FOR THE WINNING DUCKS**

**and BEST – NAMED DUCK**

**£1.00 per duck**

To be held in the stream adjoining the church

(by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Alun Morgan)

**All proceeds to benefit the Church of Saint Andoenus**

**EVERY POUND COUNTS TOWARDS THE UPKEEP OF THIS  
ANCIENT BUILDING**

**Location:**

**Starts at the bridge next to the church parking area**

**Followed by refreshments in the Church**

**Home-Made Soups & Ploughman's Lunch**



## **"BRING AND SHARE " EVENING**

An informal evening to meet old friends and  
make some new ones

Friday 15th April: 7:30 pm in the Saysell Centre  
(formally Church Room)

Speakers will be from SAMFAL your local nature reserve

The event is open to all – just turn up with a plate of food  
and possibly a drink and enjoy an evening of good company  
and food

## **ALLOTMENTS NOW AVAILABLE**



**IN**

**SHIRENEWTON VILLAGE**



**INTERESTED IN GROWING YOUR OWN  
FLOWERS OR VEGETABLES AND YOUR GARDEN IS NOT  
LARGE ENOUGH?**

**ALLOTMENTS ARE COMING TO SHIRENEWTON**

**CONTACT MARK ON 641005**

# **SHIRENEWTON CHURCH FETE**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

A fun day out for all the family  
games, activities, stalls,  
entertainment, grand prize draw,  
refreshments and lots of lovely local cakes!

Planning for the fete is underway and the new fete committee would really welcome any offers of help as we have a number of stalls in need of manning. Full support & training will be given!

If you would like a chat about how to get involved or to understand what it is all about, please email or call:

Mark Tomlins

[marktomlins@me.com](mailto:marktomlins@me.com)

07545 189464



## HARMONY – THE WORLD IN SONG

St Thomas à Becket Church

7.00pm Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

No time to take a world tour this year? *Harmony*

(based in Berkshire, but whose musical director has family connections with Shirenewton!) is a well-travelled choir with a diverse, international repertoire including:

New Zealand's stirring Maori folk songs

American gospel music

The vibrant sounds of Spain

The rich harmonies of Africa (by way of Japan, Romania, Haiti, and others)

Excerpts from the UK's 'Last Night of the Proms'

Tickets £8 a head, £5 concessions, (including a glass of wine and nibbles served during the interval) available from Bill Clark 01291641783 or

[williamjhclark@btinternet.com](mailto:williamjhclark@btinternet.com).

To find out more about *Harmony* visit the website

<https://sites.google.com.site/harmonychoirnewbury/gallery>



# Shirefest 2016

Sat 4th June 2016

2pm - 11:45pm

Huntsman Hotel

Shirenewton

Adults £10

16 & under FREE

All proceeds to charity.

**Bands to be  
announced!**

Free parking or  
late-night buses available.

For more info visit:-  
[www.shirefest.org](http://www.shirefest.org)

## SHIRENEWTON CHURCH WEBSITE

Well this month I promised to talk about private data. It is kind of scary how much various companies know about you and your online life. Conveniently, the Telegraph had an article on 18th March entitled 'How to see the terrifying thing google knows about you'. You can read it here: <http://tinyurl.com/zzebex2>

In short, if you remain logged in, Google, Facebook, et al will be tracking your browsing history and see exactly where you have been and what you are looking at. This is why, if for example, you've browsed a couple of holiday in Spain adverts pertaining to Spain will suddenly start appearing in your browser.

There are some basic things you can do to reduce the amount of information out there. I always logged off from Facebook and Google. Facebook makes this quite hard. The log-off option is hidden under a tiny dark blue down arrow to the far right of the menu items. Google's is under the far right picture of you or a face outline. Clearly this means you need to log into each site again when you want to use it and, if you don't have a password manager, then it's a pain.

A similar approach is to using 'private' or 'incognito' browsing which always opens a 'clean' window and then kills all history when you close it. Not all password managers are loaded in such windows and thus it can be a pain.

Another strategy is to use different browsers for different things. Use one browser purely for Facebook, another for Google another for general internet browsing. Thus you are separating your browser histories. You can use Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, Safari and Opera to give you five spate internet bubbles each separated from each other.

Of course, as I have discussed many times, using something like ccleaner (free – download it from <https://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download>) to remove your cookies on a regular basis is not a bad idea although it does mean you'll have to log in again to your favorite websites.

There is a website run by the Digital Advertising Alliance (DAA) which is a self-regulating body (<http://www.aboutads.info>) via which you can opt out of various sites from interrogating your web browsing history to serve your personalized ads. The basic problem is that, to do this, it installs a cookie which other websites read. Therefore it won't work any private window (not such as issue) or in any browser where you regularly delete the cookies.

You can also opt out on both ipads/iphones and Android via the operating system. For the former go to General>Restrictions>Advertising (under the "Privacy" section) and turn on 'Limit Ad Tracking'. If you're using Android, it's Google Settings>Ads>Opt Out of Interest-Based Ads. As always plenty of information available on the web.

Safe browsing --- David Cornwell [webmaster@shirenewtonchurch.com](mailto:webmaster@shirenewtonchurch.com)

# SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Extracts from the minutes of the March meeting

There are still two vacant positions for the co-option of Community Councillors' for the ward of Shirenewton – **if you are interested in applying for one of these vacancies, please contact the Clerk** (details below).

## Planning applications considered

1. DC/2016/00 Hillside House, Usk Road, Earlswood  
Erection of stables, tack room and feed store, including a change of use to permit equine use as well as agricultural use.

Council noted that pre-application advice had been sought and a site visit made by a Planning Officer, also that no objections had been made by neighbours. Council also observed that there is existing stabling on site and noted that there was no provision made for the disposal of waste.

The recommendation was for approval.

2. DC/2016/00094 Coombe Farm, Shirenewton  
Erection of 4 no. agricultural buildings for broiler rearing together with associated feed bins, hard standings, access and attenuation pond.

Council noted the following points:

- that the enterprise is planned to be self-sufficient with a wind turbine used to generate energy for the units and burning straw to provide heat, the chicken manure is to be spread on the land. These points will reduce the carbon footprint dramatically;
- several assessments have taken place, all concluding with no objections;
- there appear to be no problems with access;
- no Rights of Way are affected.

The recommendation was for approval.

## Items of local concern

Community Speedwatch initiative – County Councillor Down advised that a Public Meeting to gauge local interest will be held week commencing 9 May 2016 in either the Recreation Hall or the Saysell Centre. He will confirm date and venue as soon as possible.

Grant applications from the 2016/17 budget - Organisations within the community are invited to submit a grant application for the £1,200 available from the Council from the 2016/17 budget (please contact the Clerk for a form). All applications will be considered at the June meeting of the Council.

Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations on Thursday 21 April 2016 – the Council is looking to arrange some activities to celebrate the Queen's birthday. The PCC has agreed to arrange a village treasure trail ending at the Recreation field where we will have a picnic type tea (hopefully everyone will bring a plate to contribute to it). We will be inviting the oldest and youngest resident of the community and hope the Guides to be involved with organising games and maybe a singalong, ending with the lighting of the beacon and a quarter peal of the church bells. We are conscious that it is a school night, so all will be ended soon after dark.

We don't have a lot of time to organise this event, but it is coming together. Any offers of help would be very much appreciated. Please contact the Clerk.

## **Best Kept Village Competition 2016**

Can you help?

The Community Council will be entering Shirenewton in the competition again this year and I need to rally the troops.

Judging will take place between 1st – 30th June and marks are given for the appearance and condition of the village, village hall and playing field, war memorial, churchyard, bus shelters and surroundings. The condition of hedges, fences, walls and grass verges is also taken into account, as well as the tidiness of flower and vegetable gardens, outhouses and sheds. Bonus marks are given for the general appearance of the village, noting the absence of litter and refuse dumps. BUT, marks are deducted for any unsightly areas.

Last year Shirenewton won Best Kept Village, Best Kept War Memorial, Best Kept Village Hall and was joint winner of Best Kept Churchyard, with the Tredegar Arms being Highly Commended. Can we do as well again this year? Of course we can. It will mean everyone in the village helping, not only with their own gardens, plant pots and hanging baskets, but also by being aware of their surroundings and taking care of the public parts of the village - the entrances to the village, weeding and clearing verges and footpaths and picking up litter near your home.

Planting of flower troughs will take place in mid-May and if you are able to donate plants, they will be very welcome. If you can help with planting or would like to sponsor a trough, please let me know, offers will be gratefully received.

Shirenewton has entered this competition for several years and scores well because residents are proud of their attractive village and take care of its environment. Let's make a special effort this year and aim to walk away with all the Best Kept Village prizes in our category.

Find more information in the draft copy of the minutes on the Community Council notice boards. Previous minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's website [www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk](http://www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk)

Contact the Clerk to the Community Council -  
Mrs Hilary Counsell  
Tel: 01291 421307 E-mail: [Shirenewtoncc@gmail.com](mailto:Shirenewtoncc@gmail.com)

## Take the plunge into creativity



There's a fabulous, fast-flowing programme of community events in the run up to the Wye Valley River Festival which has already featured half-term tales from the deep at Puzzlewood in the Forest of Dean and the first tune-up by the Festival Choir.

And there are still plenty of opportunities to take the plunge by singing along with the choir at sessions in Ross-on-Wye, Llandogo and Monmouth or getting involved in creative and storytelling sessions up and down the valley between now and the launch on April 29.

At the magical ancient woodland site of Puzzlewood, families had their first chance to dip a toe in the rising waters of the festival when Coleford writer, performer and storyteller Roger Drury invited everyone to share stories about the Wye and its tributaries.

Children and adults were also encouraged to write and play with words in The Caravan of Myth and Legends – Babbling Books, sponsored by Puzzlewood. It was the first outing for the caravan before it takes its place alongside two other themed vehicles to provide entertainment at the Wye Valley River Festival as it flows through venues between Hereford and Chepstow from April 29 to May 15.

Joining in further flights of fantasy at Puzzlewood, half-term visitors helped make more than 60 Origami birds to help populate the Festival arts installation One Thousand Birds, by Kathy Hinde, which will be on show at Tintern Old Station Signal Box from May 6 to 15. Children got excited about getting their schools involved in making more, with one exclaiming: "I'll get my school to make millions!"

Puzzlewood's Helen O'Kane said: "This little taster of the Festival at Puzzlewood has been a great success. Our visitors thoroughly enjoyed Roger's fishy stories, meeting The Desperate Men and making the origami birds. We are delighted to be sponsoring The Caravan of Myth and Legends and can't wait to see the role it plays in the Festival itself."

Roger Drury's next creative session for the Wye Valley River Festival is a walking and storytelling event on February 25 at Llandogo Church (10.30am to 1pm). It's the first of a series of workshops to explore the hidden stories of the Wye, its small brooks and tributaries. Writers, walkers, storytellers and anyone else who's keen to be involved are invited to create fascinating short walks to complement the locations of the Festival.

Meanwhile more than 50 people have attended singing sessions at Llandogo Village Hall and Shire Hall, Monmouth run by Eleanor Holliday, whose 'George Choir' from Newnham will be a core part of events during the festival, performing some very special river songs from around the globe. Following on from these sessions, on Saturday February 20, at their first get-together, members of the Wye Valley River Festival choir were in fine voice. Led by Helen Vincent from Singplicity, the choir will be gathering regularly in Ross-on-Wye, Monmouth and Llandogo to learn songs about water and rivers from a variety of genres. Anyone over the age of 16 who wants to sing and be part of the choir can join up at any time. The fun sessions are free, there is no need to book and singers can mix and match which venues they attend. Groups from all the venues will be brought together for two final, joint rehearsals in April before the choir's festival performances, which will include singing at the launch of the Wye Valley River Festival in Hereford on April 29; at Monmouth on May 7, and at the grand finale in Chepstow on May 15.

Join in the fun – the choir will meet at Shire Hall, Monmouth on March 14, April 4 and April 11, 7pm to 9pm; at The Larruperz Centre, Ross-on-Wye on February 26, April 1 and April 8 (7pm – 9pm) and on March 12 from 2pm to 4pm; and also at Llandogo Village Hall on February 28, March 13 and April 2 from 2pm to 4pm.

The Wye Valley River Festival, from its spectacular launch in Hereford on April 29 to the fabulous finale at Chepstow Racecourse on May 15 will celebrate the River Wye and its connections to other rivers and people of the world, under the theme Global Arteries. The biennial event, inspired by the landscape of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is led by the Wye Valley AONB unit and arts professionals collaborating with local communities. Visit the website [www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk](http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk) for more information about the Wye Valley River Festival; follow on Twitter: @wyebeauty #wyevalleyriverfestival or like the festival on facebook: [www.facebook.com/wyevalleyriverfestival](http://www.facebook.com/wyevalleyriverfestival).

*The Festival's artistic directors Desperate Men also made an appearance, showing off an eight-foot model of a sturgeon, an ancient fish that until quite recently was prolific in the rivers Severn and Wye.*



## THE BELLS, THE BELLS

As I write this Easter approaches. Apart from World Wars 1 & 2, when for a time ringing was suspended only to be revived to warn of imminent invasion, the only other time bells traditionally remain silent in some towers is during Holy Week. Attitudes to ringing in Holy Week differ a lot throughout the UK. In many churches there is no ringing at all, but in some there is ringing for extra services and maybe half muffled ringing on Good Friday morning. In a few churches normal ringing continues uninterrupted. In Shirenewton we take the view that there is no ringing at all. This means that from Palm Sunday until Easter Sunday the bells remain silent except for the automatic chiming of the hour bell for the clock. Thus the normal open practice held each Friday evening is cancelled during Holy Week; however, this does not mean the ringers stay at home with their feet up. This opportunity is used to meet up as usual but to use the time cleaning and carrying out some basic maintenance.

The spiral staircase collects dust over the year so this is swept from top to bottom. For those who have never visited the ringing room this has a wainscot of stained moulded pine planks with painted plaster above, a wooden ceiling and fitted carpet on the floor. The room is dusted, the waste bin emptied and the carpet vacuumed. Up in the belfry the floor under the bells is swept and the sweepings examined for nuts, bolts and washers. The bell mechanism consists of a galvanised steel frame bolted together which contains the six bells. Each bell is attached to a headstock which is held between bearing housings on each side. To the headstock is bolted a large wooden wheel allowing the bell to swing through 360 degrees (known as full-circle ringing). These hardwood wheels are constructed as two half wheels which are bolted to the headstock and to each other – they have to be constructed this way as otherwise it would be impossible to get them up into the belfry without taking the tower roof off. It is not unknown for the bolts joining the half wheels together to come loose and scatter nuts, washers and sometimes the bolts around the belfry – hence examination of the sweepings! As well as this all the frame bolts are checked for tightness. The bearing housings for the bells are sealed so are maintenance free, but the pulley block wheels for the ropes require greasing. Although there are six bells, four of the bells require double pulleys so ten pulley wheels require attention. Whilst up in the belfry the netting over the louvres is examined for breaches. This netting is very important as it keeps wildlife out of the belfry - nesting birds can create large amounts of debris and nests with eggs or chicks are in grave danger when ringing occurs. We also check the ropes for fraying and splice when necessary. As ringing on Easter Sunday in Shirenewton takes place in the nave, the ropes are dropped down into the church. Once all the work is completed then the team reverts to the normal post-practice custom and repair to the pub to plan the next ringing event.

M.D.Penney.

## Open Gardens in Shirenewton and Mynyddbach.

Saturday 14th May



Would you like to open your garden for a good cause? The money raised will go towards the upkeep of our lovely village church.

Your garden doesn't need to be huge, immaculate or even particularly tidy. People just love looking at gardens!

Contact:

Jane Smith Haddon on 01291 641 525

[dolly.shirenewton@gmail.com](mailto:dolly.shirenewton@gmail.com)

or

Glynis MacDonald on 01291 641 818

[glynis.macdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:glynis.macdonald@btinternet.com).

Please can you let us know by Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April so that we can begin to draw up a programme and a route map.

Help at home

## **Lougher Home Care Ltd**

*Companionship, Personal Care*

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**We can help with the things you find difficult.**

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Contact Sadie or Hywel Lougher

Tel 01633 88 11 77

Email [sadie@lougherhomecare.co.uk](mailto:sadie@lougherhomecare.co.uk)

Web site [www.daycarewales.com](http://www.daycarewales.com)

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UKHCA (United Kingdom Home Care Association) #

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## **CARERS WANTED**

*Contact Sadie or Hywel Lougher#*

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## FAIRTRADE NEWS



An acquaintance of mine recently tried to explain to naive, idealistic (i.e. idiotic) me that cocoa is an internationally traded commodity and that therefore if cocoa farmers in Africa are paid poorly, very poorly, and work in pretty dreadful conditions the problem lies in Africa, and there is little that we could or should do about it. I believe that the various machinations of multi-national corporations in the pursuit of profit are often at the root of the growing inequality in the world. And clearly, I believe that we can and should do something about it.

Lidl has apparently just launched jeans at £5 99. The main thrust of an article by Gethin Chamberlain in The Observer (13/3/16) suggests that the garment workers in Bangladesh subsidize these prices - the estimated labour cost is 2-9p per garment! Workers are generally paid the minimum wage - (about £48 a month - that is about 23p per hour) which is about a fifth of the amount estimated by the Asia Floor Wage Alliance to be the minimum required for a living wage (in 2013). And what about the workers who produce the zips, thread, and the cotton? And the environmental costs? Dyeing and washing denim is often a vastly polluting process. (Incidentally, another acquaintance, upon hearing about the 2-9p payment for assembling a garment, remarked that 'food was probably cheaper there' - I expect she is right!)

The article ends with 'Times are tough. Customers demand the cheapest possible clothes. Lidl's success is built on this: that is how it racked up £4 billion of sales in 2014. Lidl does not buy its jeans from Bangladesh because Dhaka's factories are the finest in the world: it does so because they pay their workers a pittance. And that, ultimately, is how it is possible to sell a pair of jeans for £5 99'

I would urge you to consider the provenance of all the products you buy! Have a look at Ethical Superstore or Traidcraft, or indeed the website of the Fairtrade Foundation for info or indeed to order goods.

Marion McAdam 641 316 msm316@gmail.com (naive, idealistic, idiotic)

## STARGAZING IN MARCH 2016

The seven stars of the Plough lie pretty much overhead. It is one of the “circumpolar” constellations that are always above our horizon. Its classical name is Ursa Major, the Great Bear.



American slaves in the southern States of the USA were taught a song in childhood.

The first verse runs:

When the Sun comes back  
And the first quail calls  
Follow the Drinking Gourd  
For the old man is a-waiting for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the Drinking Gourd

The song gave a time, after the December solstice, when the Sun begins to climb higher into the northern sky and the calls of migratory quail can be heard in the southern United States, and a direction – the Drinking Gourd is the Plough and lies to the North. This gave slaves the vital information which allowed them to escape to the North and to freedom.

The second star from the left of the seven stars in the Plough is called Mizar. On closer inspection it can be seen to have a close companion called Alcor. Like many other stars, Mizar is a double star. It is a true double star since the two stars orbit each other under the influence of their gravity. Some doubles appear to be close together but are at very different distances from us, and are called optical doubles. Some true double stars vary in brightness because as they rotate about each other, one of them obscures the other periodically and so reduces the overall brightness.

In the evening sky, the bright planet Jupiter is to the South and is joined by the Moon which is not quite full on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Early in the morning, a pair of planets can be seen just above the horizon in the South. Saturn is to the left and slightly orange-coloured Mars is to the right of the pair. They form a fine sight on the 25<sup>th</sup> when they are joined by the almost Full Moon.

On clear nights, when the Moon is new and seen as a fine crescent, the rest of the Moon can often be seen as a very dark grey against the black sky. Whilst the bright crescent is directly illuminated by the Sun, the rest of the Moon is in its own shadow. The shadow is dark grey rather than black because of “Earthshine”, where light reflected from Earth illuminates the Moon very faintly.

Dave Thomas

## SHIRENEWTON W.I JANUARY '16



This month we celebrated the 64th birthday of Shirenewton W.I.

The food was ordered in from the Huntsman, and what a culinary delight it was. Our compliments go to their chef; most of us took a 'doggy bag' home filled with these culinary delights to enjoy again the next day. Good company, good food and home spun entertainment in the guise of a quiz and 'pass the parcel', proved to be a winning combination for a successful evening. Well done ladies!



The next meeting will be **April 14<sup>th</sup>**; our own Barbara Walters will be teaching us how to make '**a flower gift**'.

The instructions are to bring the following:

- \* Bunch of smallish assorted flowers – colours of your choice, e.g. roses, spray carnations, freesia, alstromeria etc.
- \* 9-11 medium sized Ivy leaves
- \* A small bunch of foliage

You do not need to bring flower vases as Barbara will provide everything else.

Ladies, you are very welcome to join us, remember tea and biscuits are **free!** How can you resist

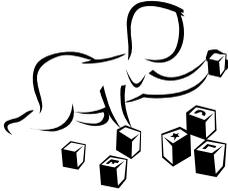
Contact:

Carole Jones (President) 641791

Jane Butterworth (Secretary) 641704



## SHIRENEWTON TODDLER GROUP

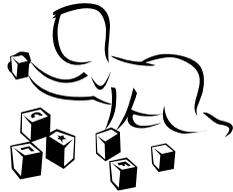


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## SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

We held our Annual Dinner at the Huntsman Hotel in February, as usual we sat down to a very enjoyable evening thanks to the Huntsman Hotel who served an excellent meal enjoyed by all our members. The after dinner talk was given by Henry Hodges who talked on St Mary's Priory Church at Chepstow.

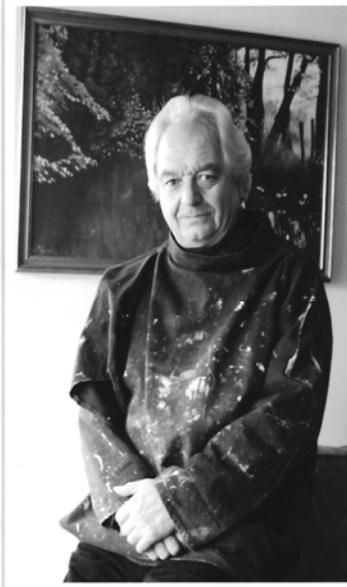
### Dates for your Diary:

Monday, 11th April      Archive Meeting, Recreational Hall,  
2.00pm – 5.00 pm

Tuesday 25th April      A talk entitled 'Japanned Ware' given  
by Robin Williams, at the Huntsman  
Hotel at 7.30 pm

Everyone welcome at the above events

Further information on our web-site: [www.shirenewtonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.shirenewtonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk)



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## GARDENING CORNER

I promised myself that this month I wouldn't start this article with reference to the weather, but as everything we do in the garden is influenced by what is descending upon us from the heavens, I'm struggling not to! With the ground still wet from the soaking we have had since before Christmas, digging and weeding is out of the question at the moment. I did try the other day, but the soil was really wet and cold, so after a few fork-fulls I decided that common sense should prevail and I retreated to the greenhouse to find something else to do to. Actually whilst I'm writing this now, we have had a number of dry days and things are looking up, especially as we have had several days of sunshine as well. So the first opportunity I get I'll be out there with the fork and start the annual spring dig.

So with the ground wet I have been busying myself with doing a lot of odd maintenance jobs - not odd as in funny, but just all the random jobs that you always want to do, but somehow never get around to doing! Most of these have been up in our top field, where there have been loads of 'odd jobs'. I managed to finish putting new posts in to help support the post and rail fencing so that's all neat and tidy. Often what I'll do with jobs like this is to do the bulk of it and then not quite finish - like cutting the tops of the posts all level. But this time I was determined to finish properly, so everything is cut off tidy and all the off-cuts are now in the log shed - the boss was very impressed. I've been busy knocking some fence posts in one of our boundary fences as most of the existing ones were either rotted through or on the verge. I've strimmed all the bramble off, cut a lot of over-hanging branches and even more impressive is I've had several bonfires and cleared everything up as well, which really put me in the good books. Whilst I was burning up, I took the opportunity to trim off any branches that would be suitable for pea sticks and then bundled these up and tied them for carrying down to home. One area of the field has been left unmanaged and over the last seven years or so, trees have seeded in and it has started to turn into woodland. In some areas there are far too many trees and as a result they are growing tall and spindly. Looking at them the other day I decided that they would be ideal for sweet pea and bean sticks, so when I get five minutes I'll be heading up there with a billhook in hand and hopefully cut enough sticks for this coming years crops. Down in the garden I have finished cutting the last of the hedges, so all our boundaries are currently looking neat and tidy.

In the flower garden it has been a funny year so far for the flowers with some way earlier than usual, such as daffodils, but others like snowdrops seemingly right on schedule. The primroses started early with a few hardy souls in January, but not many. They are really just getting going now, along with the celandines, so several areas are starting to look lovely, especially as the hellebores are also seemingly having a great season. These along with the cyclamen are an absolute mass of colour. The assistant head gardener has started cutting down all the old growth from last year, which usually means I have the job of following on behind with the weeding and forking over to loosen the soil up. There is still plenty of time to sort these out. Regular readers may remember that some of the garden areas had fallen into a bit of a wild area as work had reduced the hours I had

available to weed regularly. These have all been cut now and I need to start managing them again as well otherwise they will get away from me again. One or two got so bad that there are very few actual garden flowers left growing, so I may just bite the bullet and spray the weeds of, leave them dormant for a couple of months, weed again and then start all over again. One larger area I have decided to plant up with some Japanese acers and will just strim in between, whilst another area I have decided to spray off and rotovate and then I'm going to plant up with a nice wild flower mix and slow growing grasses to form a meadow area that will be attractive to the bees. I have already brought a seed mixture ready, but the soil needs to be a bit warmer before this can be sown. Hopefully these will help reduce the work a little.

Things are moving on in the greenhouses at the moment, and with it cold and wet outside, I have been busy sowing seeds and pricking out the young plants. The tomatoes are growing on well, although a little slow, as are the hot and sweet peppers. The early broad beans and the mangetout peas are looking really good and will need planting out in the next day or two. I planting the shallots and pickling onions into pots several weeks ago so that they got a good head start. These are now well rooted and have started growing well, so these will also have to find their way outside. I'll stand them out in the air for a number of days to get them acclimatised as they won't take kindly to being plunged outside in the frosts straight away. I'm just in the process of sowing the first courgettes, pumpkins, melons and a first for us – water melons. We are still eating our own potatoes from last year. As we work our way through the bags, I'm looking out the smaller ones and storing them in trays as these will be the 'seed' potatoes for this coming season. They will be left in a cool light place in the garage, so that they start to 'chit'. They will be planted sometime next month, when conditions permit.

In the tunnel I have cleaned the strawberry beds and removed all the old leaves. I have now laid out some soaker hose, so that the plants can be watered, without getting the leaves and fruits wet, which causes them all to rot off. I have also purchased a couple of bales of straw, so in a few weeks when the plants have grown and just when they are sending out flowers, I will spread the straw among the plants and hopefully encourage some nice fruits this year – so long as the squirrels leave them along. If not World war III will be declared!

The apricot and nectarine trees are looking really good at the moment and are in full flower. With a few sunny days, the tunnel has been very warm, which has encouraged the bumble bees out to do their work. Hopefully this will bring about a good fruit set. Last year we had problems with woodlice and various other creepy crawlies attacking the fruits, so this year I'm going to try putting an old fashioned remedy – grease bands – around the trunks.

Talking of bees, I had a quick look through ours the other day. The sun was shining and warm so no time like the present I thought. All six hives were alive, although a couple were short of food. So I topped them up with some sachets of bee fondant and a pollen substitute, which will hopefully see them through. In all but one hive the queen had started laying so all the signs are good at the moment. What we don't want now is a cold, damp spring. Happy gardening until next month. Steve and Felicity Hunt. –

## ***Nerys's Natty Nosh***

### ***Sweet Pepper and Courgette Risotto Serves 8***



#### **Ingredients**

- 1 large onion peeled and finely chopped
- ½ bottle of Italian white wine
- 2 large peppers, cored and coarsely chopped
- A large courgettes, trimmed and cut diagonally
- 170g (6oz) favourite mushrooms, trimmed and thickly cut
- Spring of thyme, rosemary and a 4 bay leaves
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed
- Seasoning
- 1 red chilli, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon vegetable stock powder
- 115g (4 oz.) Italian risotto rice
- 340ml (12fl oz.) carrot juice
- Pinch of saffron
- A large handful of fresh basil leaves, shredded

#### **Method**

1. In a large pan cook the onion in the wine, until softened. Top up with water if the liquid evaporates too quickly.
2. Add the peppers, courgette, mushrooms, all the herbs, garlic, and chilli.
3. Cook for 5 minutes, then add stock powder, rice, carrot juice, saffron and 600ml/ 20 FL oz. hot water.
4. Simmer the risotto for about 15 minutes, (stirring occasional to prevent it sticking to the bottom of the pan) until most of the liquid is absorbed,
5. then top up with half again of hot water, (different kinds of rice absorb liquids differently, keep the rice moist).
6. Simmer for another 15 minutes or until the rice is tender.
7. Season to taste. Add a little more chilli for a fiery taste.
8. Add the shredded basil leaves and black pepper.

Enjoy!



## Vegan

**What** is a vegan? A Vegan diet excludes meat, [eggs](#), [dairy products](#) and all other animal-derived ingredients. Many vegans also do not eat foods that are processed using animal products. Vegan refers to either a person who follows this way of eating, or to the diet itself.

## Chocolate-Avocado Mousse Serves 6

### Ingredients

- 1 Very ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
- 1 teaspoon agave nectar/maple syrup/ coconut syrup or honey
- 200 gram dairy free chocolate
- 1 carton of single cream Soya milk
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- A little almond milk to loosed if needed
- Fresh fruit for decoration

### Method

1. Place the chocolate in a small bowl.
2. Place over a small saucepan of barely simmering water.
3. Stir until the chocolate is melted and smooth, about three minutes. Cool
4. Place the melted chocolate, avocado, agave, cream, almond milk, vanilla in a food processor.
5. Blend until smooth and creamy. Taste.
6. Spoon into glasses and refrigerate for at least three hours.
7. Decorate with fresh fruit. Enjoy!

### Tips

Agave comes from the originally grown Blue Webber Agave cactus plant from Mexico. It's a healthier alternative to refined sugar and artificial sweeteners. It has a very low GI that banishes sugary highs and lows.

Coconut Blossom Syrup comes from the sweet sap of the coconut palm tree. Glycaemic index is a numerical value to represent how fast a certain carbohydrates turns into sugar. The glycaemic index of coconut syrup is considered very low (35). Other sweetener like cane sugar (68), honey (55) and agave (42). A study conducted in the University of Sydney in Australia showed that consuming low glycaemic index food will help us avoiding chronic diseases, such as type 2-diabetes.

Coconut syrup is also home for many useful nutrients, such as vitamin B complex, vitamin C, amino acids essential as well as important mineral.

Chocolate: - my favourite dairy free chocolate is Moo free organic chocolate. It is expensive but worth it for that extra special taste.

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Telephone 01291 641338 or email [terencewalters@hotmail.com](mailto:terencewalters@hotmail.com)*

### Church of St. Thomas à Becket Shirenewton

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Parish Priest	Revd. Nansi Davies	01633 400519
Lay Eucharistic Minister	Gill Lambert	01291 641175
Parish Visitor Co-ordinators	Revd. Nansi Davies	01633 400519
	Diane Marlow	01291 641407
Church Wardens	Sally Saysell	01291 641369
	Andrew Baker	01291 641925
PCC Secretaries	Bill Clark	01291 641783
PCC Treasurers	Kevin Bounds	01291 641818
PCC Members	Mark Broughton	01291 641797
	Charles Eickhoff	01291 641716
	Janet Horton	01291 641783
	Dr James Leney	01291 641271
	Jane Smith-Haddon	01291 641525
	Frances Gray	01291 622465
Gift Aid Secretary	Ruth Savagar	01291 641411
Organists	Karen Millar	01291 650521
	Ruth Savagar	01291 641411
Sunday Club	Kerry Baker	01291 641925
Tower Captain	Mike Penney	01291 650653
Church Hall Booking	Glynis MacDonald	01291 641818
Safeguarding Officer	Dr. Kerry Baker	01291 641925
Church Flowers	Maureen Moody	01291 641524
Parish Magazine Editor	Terry Walters	01291 641338
200 Club	Graham Lambert	01291 641175

### Church of St Tewdrics's Mathern

Secretary and Church Warden	Monnica Williams	<a href="mailto:monnica.williams@virgin.net">monnica.williams@virgin.net</a>
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#### Shirenewton Ward:

Vacancy	
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Mario Lenza	01291 641333
Richard Kopp	01291 641581
Beverley Moore	01291 641532

#### Mynyddbach Ward

Lynne Prosser	01291 641666
Ian Moore	01291 650766

#### Newchurch West

Ian Martin	01291 650014
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#### Earlswood Ward

Paul Harris Chair	01291 650871
Ken Morton	01291 650268

#### MCC for Shirenewton

Graham Down	01291 621846 <a href="mailto:grahamdown@monmouthshire.gov.uk">grahamdown@monmouthshire.gov.uk</a>
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#### Member of Parliament

David Davies	020 7219 8360 <a href="mailto:daviesd@parliament.uk">daviesd@parliament.uk</a>
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## **Police Neighbourhood Watch Contacts**

**Comm. Police Officer** Louise Thorpe 01633 642068  
louise.thorpe@gwent.pnn.police.uk  
**Shirenewton & Mynyddbach** Beverley Moore 01291 641532

**Earlswood** Sue Leat 01291 641207

## **Other Local Organisations**

**Beavers** Julie Hitchcock 01291 650548

**Brownies** Bev. Leaf 01291 641680

Jaci Crocombe 01291 641681

**Church Fete** Seirian Edmonds 07980 757802

andyandseze@aol.com

**Earlswood Hope** Mrs Sylvia Jeremiah, Mr Raymond Jeremiah 01291 641726

### **Earlswood & Newchurch West Memorial Hall**

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glynis.macdonald@btinternet.com

### **Earlswood Valley Methodist Chapel**

Avril Smith 01291 650733

**Gaerllwyd Baptist** Mrs E Remnant Brooklands, Usk Road NP16 6SA

**Girl Guides** Helen Cann 01291 650835 cannhelen@gmail.com

**Recreation Association** Gordon Hughes 01291 641356 gordon.hughes3@tesco.net

**Recreation Hall booking** Beryl Saysell 01291 641637

### **St Peters Church Newchurch**

Enid Heritage 01291 622708

### **Shirenewton Local History Socty**

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### **Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Fields Association Ltd (SAMFAL)**

Alison Broughton: alison.broughton10@gmail.com.

### **Shirenewton & Mynyddbach Initiative for Local Enterprise (SMILE)**

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### **Caerwent Group Mothers Union**

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**Treasurer** Auriol Horton 01291 641844 aur10l@btinternet.com

### **Shirenewton Operatic and Dramatic Society (SODS)**

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**Shirenewton Play Group** Beverly Lindsay Shirenewtonplaygroup@gmail.com

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### **Shirenewton Tennis Association**

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**Shirenewton Toddler Group** Jude Langdon 07981 368213

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**Fairtrade/Traidcraft** Marion McAdam 01291 641316

**Womens Institute (WI)** Carole Jones (President) 01292 641791

Jane Butterworth (Secretary) 01291 641704.

## DIARY DATES

<b>April</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
2nd	Harmony The World in Song	St Thomas à Becket Church Shirenewton
3rd	Sunday newspaper trail begins	Saysell Hall
8th 7.00pm	Words & Music for all Seasons	St Pierre Church
9th	Theatre trip	Theatre Royal Bath
9th 12.00	Duck Race	St Andoenus Church Mounton
11th 2–5pm	Shirenewton Local History Society	Recreation Hall
14th 7.15pm	Shirenewton Women's Institute	Recreation Hall
15th 7.30pm	Bring and Share	Saysell Centre (Formally Church Room)
16th 10-12am	Shirenewton Village Market	Recreation Hall
21st 2.30pm	Grass Routes Transport Scheme	Saysell Centre
25th 7.30pm	Shirenewton Local History Society	Huntsman Hotel
<b>May</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
14th	Open Gardens	Shirenewton
19th 10-12am	Shirenewton Village Market	Recreation Hall

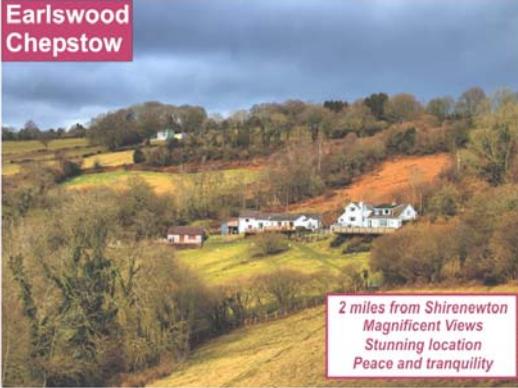
St Thomas á Beckett Church, Shirenewton

Date	Sunday Service	Readers	Sides Persons
03 April 2016	First Sunday after Easter	Mark Broughton Joanne Tomlins	Mark Broughton Joanne Tomlins
10 April 2016	Second Sunday after Easter	Bob Grattan Diane Marlow	Bob Grattan Diane Marlow
17 April 2016	Third Sunday after Easter	Pat White Frances Grey	Pat White Frances Grey
24 April 2016	Fourth Sunday after Easter	Bill Clarke Janet Horton	Bill Clarke Janet Horton
01 May 2016	Rogation Sunday	Mark Broughton Margaret Lock	Mark Broughton Margaret Lock
08 May 2016	Sunday after Ascension Day	Bob Grattan Glynis McDonald	Bob Grattan Claire Lewis
15 May 2016	Pentecost - Baptism Service	James Lenev Cynthia Smith	James Lenev Cynthia Smith
22 May 2016	First Sunday after Pentecost	Mark Broughton Jane Smith-Haddon	Mark Broughton Jane Smith-Haddon
29 May 2016	Second Sunday after Pentecost	Andrew Baker Kevin Bounds	Claire Lewis Kevin Bounds
05 June 2016	Third Sunday after Pentecost	Bob Grattan Ruth Savagar	Bob Grattan Graham Lambert
12 June 2016	Fourth Sunday after Pentecost	James Lenev Pat White	Claire Lewis Graham Lambert
19 June 2016	Fifth Sunday after Pentecost	Mark Broughton Jane Smith-Haddon	Mark Broughton Jane Smith-Haddon
26 June 2016	Sixth Sunday after Pentecost	Bill Clarke Janet Horton	Bill Clarke Janet Horton

*Learn more at the Bring  
and Share evening  
15th April  
See page 7*



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## **SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE EDITORIAL INFORMATION**

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Editorial policy is to print what you provide, space and technology permitting.

The views expressed are those of the contributor.

**Deadline for May 2016 issue is 9:00am 25th April 2016**

**Deadline for the Wider Parish Magazine is 30th April**