



Shirenewton Parish  
Magazine  
May 2021

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## **FROM THE VICARAGE**

**Julian E LI White**

Dear People of the Parish,

This article, I suspect, will make for a somewhat arid read in years to come. Right now, however, what it concerns exercises the interest of many as it seeks to address the future of local parishes. In short, what does it hold, what is proposed and how does it affect us?

This is the result of a Diocesan/Church in Wales initiative which finds its origins in the Harries Report of some years ago which, basically, said that things could not continue as they had in the past. I know, from personal experience, that church attendance has decreased in at least the past forty years and (as I often indicated!) there was over one hundred 'dog-collars' serving the diocese then as opposed to less than fifty now.

The perceived feeling of what is proposed- *'working alongside other parishes and folk'* (please forgive the quoted platitude) and the loss of many traditional systems and positions currently held has caused much concern, trepidation and questioning within this group of parishes.

A Zoom meeting with our Bishop and the senior staff of the Diocese was held the other day in order to clarify the situation. I felt it a pity that the request to hold the meeting 'face to face' (not least in that many were far from confident in their ability to use such technology – if they had it in the first place - and that the constraints of Lockdown were apparently easing thus permitting more personal interaction) was denied.

It was felt, at senior level, that the grouping of the Mathern group (including Shirenewton), the Chepstow group and the Saint Arvans group into an Area Ministry, best suited the intention to establish new forms of ministry within this location. This set-up, it is felt, would make mission work more effective and render financial advantages with the introduction of a salaried Ministry Area Treasurer.

The reception of this scheme, to put it mildly, has been met with widespread contention by the parishes within this grouping. Our individual Parish Treasurers in particular were disturbed by the intention to create the post of an over-arching Area Treasurer as a number of our officers, presently serving in this role, were already highly qualified in this respect. Much of their observations – as witnessed in the Zoom presentation – were met with an ill defined and unconvincing response by the diocesan team. They agreed that this part of the proposal would be re-examined in greater depth.

The establishment of a Ministry Area, it was argued, would promote a new depth of shared experience, expertise and a stronger sense of the vision of the larger church body working together. There would be, it was asserted, a sharing of the various gifts to be found in the increased number of the overall membership.

There would arise the opportunity for creative collaboration within the Ministry Area and local variation would not be frowned upon. For example, the 1662 rite of the Holy Eucharist would continue to be offered at St. Pierre on a weekly basis.

When in receipt of optimistic reports from the diocese as to how well the implementation of Ministry Areas were doing elsewhere in Wales, there was little in terms of precise statistics on offer to support this claim. Some attending the Zoom meeting spoke of their direct contact with others who had previously experienced such an enterprise who often commented on their disappointment and frustration with such a process. It was felt that additional statistics were required before support of a local Area Ministry could be endorsed.

It would appear that some kind of Transition Committee would be appointed to alter the present structure and influence of parish church committees. No information was given about who would be involved. Would it involve 'outside' or parochial appointees or both?

It would also appear that a "central PCC" entitled Ministry Area Council, would be formed to administer the Ministry Area. This would almost certainly comprise of a reduced number of members than that currently in office, again with no indication of who this

would be comprised of.

There was concern expressed over the proposal to establish a 'central bank account' for the Ministry Area as it was felt that this restricted local parish church financial expenditure. It implied that parish churches would have to go 'cap in hand' to the Area Ministry for approval any time that substantial local church expenditure was considered.

Again, there was a strong feeling that provision to 'ring fence' certain finances (e.g. specific bequests to a particular church) should remain and that any variation in this position would result in less gifting than presently experienced.

It was strongly argued that fund-raising projects could be severely curtailed if there was no guarantee that monies raised would benefit a specific church. It was also felt that that the role of parish treasurers was in danger of being devalued.

There was no intent to limit the number of services presently offered although there should be provision made to explore new styles of worship.

The above is taken from notes made at the Zoom meeting and is believed to be an accurate reflection of what took place.

We join in thanking Bill Clark for his skill and commitment he brought to the position of PCC Secretary. Bill has recently retired from this post and we are indebted to him for his dedication and meticulous approach.

With every good wish and blessing,  
Julian White, (Rector & Vicar)

**Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in April:**

- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mike Pearce  | 2. Aileen Doggett   |
| 3. Olivia Ashby | 4. Alison Broughton |



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## Shirenewton Community Council

### Extracts from the minutes of the April meeting

The Council held a one minute silence at the start of the meeting in memory of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh who died on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021, aged 99 years.

#### **Appointment of co-opted Councillor for Shirenewton ward vacancy.**

Following an informal, socially distanced meeting with Councillors on 22.3.21 and observation of the April meeting, Mrs Hannah Adams was co-opted into the vacancy in the Shirenewton ward and welcomed by the Chair.

#### **Planning applications considered:**

##### **1) DM/2021/00319 Azalea Cottage, Old School Hill, Mynyddbach**

Modification of condition no. 2 of planning consent DC/2017/01122 (to be extended for a further 3 years).

Council recommended approval as outline planning permission had not yet expired.

##### **2) DM/2021/00483 Little Mill Farm Cottage, Bully Hole Road, Earlswood**

Proposed agricultural building to store agricultural machinery, animal food and haylage.

Council recommended approval.

##### **3) DM/2020/00390 Gaerllwyd Farm, Earlswood**

Change of use of existing agricultural building to B1 use.

Council acknowledged the amended proposals, however it was further noted that the applicant had not addressed policy RE3 nor concerns that the site is entirely unsuitable to the proposed business use being situated in a deeply rural land character, prominent in the landscape, lacking fibre broadband, locally

available labour and poor public transport. Nor did it address the concerns of local inhabitants who had objected because of the highway issues (narrow country lane used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders) and within 100m of the crossroads.

No evidence had been shown that there is a compelling need for this site to be converted to business use nor did it show any evidence of an available local labour force; in any case it is envisaged there would be few employees and thus it would make no significant difference to our jobs market or the local economy. It did not show whether there is any unmet demand for commercial sites nor did it show how any commercial activity would preserve the deeply rural characteristic of the area. The site is poorly served with public transport and has no fibre broadband. No mitigation was proposed for any industrial processes, vehicles supplying materials and removing products, noise, smell or other disturbance to neighbours.

Council recommended refusal of the application, however if Mon CC is minded to approve it, this Council suggests the following condition to limit time and operating restrictions:

The use hereby permitted shall take not place and no machinery shall be operated, no process be carried out and no deliveries taken at or dispatched from the site outside the hours 8am to 6pm nor at any time on Saturdays, Sundays, Bank or public holidays.

### **Monthly police report**

Council noted that Sergeant Damian Waite had moved on and is replaced as Neighbourhood Sergeant by PS 525 Chris Butt.

### **Operations/Our Work**

We have conducted 2 Warrants in the Chepstow area in the last month with an arrest and they are awaiting sentencing. We ask the public to continue to report suspicious activity via 101 or [control@gwent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:control@gwent.pnn.police.uk) so we can continue to targeted this behavior and improve the lives of local residents.

Patrols are still being carried out by Response Officers and Neighbourhood Officers in relation to dwelling/outbuilding breaks in our area. We are still asking residents to be vigilant, use CCTV,

Lighting if you have it, ensuring you lock any outbuildings and report anything suspicious to Gwent Police on 101. We have launched our “We don’t Buy Crime” initiative that was introduced to West Mercia in 2015 and is now being brought to Gwent. We are asking local residents along with local businesses to complete the short survey to help us acquire information from our communities in relation to acquisitive crime and their perceptions of this, surveys were posted online for this last week.

### **Other items of interest**

#### **Annual grants to local organisations**

Application forms are now available from the Clerk for local organisations to apply for grants from the Community Council’s 2021/22 budget. **Please note the closing date of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

**Bus shelter at Earlswood** – Mon CC has advised that the damage was greater than expected and the rebuild should be completed in three weeks.

#### **Update on hard path project on recreation field**

No further progress with Mon CC. The Chair encouraged Councilors to visit the recreation field at Caerwent to look at that path and the new boardwalk installed on the footpath to Shirenewton school. Council agreed that there is a need to gather information from the community regarding their wishes then hold a public meeting (when current restrictions allow). Suggestions were to have an online survey and use the website for responses. Also to have a suggestion box at the recreation hall, or email the Clerk.

Due to the length of the April agenda a second meeting was arranged for 19<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm to discuss items 8, 10, 11, 12 -

- To approve the updated Five Year Plan (2019-2024)

- Update on 20 is Plenty Road Safety Campaign

- To develop a Local Biodiversity Action Plan

- To consider producing an Annual Report on the Council’s priorities, activities and achievements.

**Dates of next meetings - Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May (including Annual Meeting) both at 7.00 pm**, by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall, if possible, or by a remote meeting if government coronavirus restrictions still apply.

**Find more information in draft copies of the minutes on the Community Council notice boards. Previous, approved 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)**



## ***Gardening Corner***

I can see the way things are going weather-wise, that this year is going to be a challenge in the gardening world. We have now had nearly a month of hardly any wet stuff at all, and with some 16 days out of 23, where we have had an overnight frost, the signs are not looking good. This number of frosts in so many days would almost be unheard of in the middle of winter, but April? Not surprisingly there has been no sound of the cuckoo as yet and the arrival of the first swallow is also likely to be later than usual. That said, I do need to get up and paint the house walls where the artificial house martin nests usually go. Not because they make that much mess (although they can do!) but because the rest of the house desperately needs painting, and I don't want to be left with some patches at the end of the season (when the nests come down again). Hopefully, we will have a better breeding success this year, as one nest was never used, and several others had dead chicks in when I removed the nests to clean them all out ready for this year. The temperature difference between night and day in the greenhouses and tunnels is proving particularly challenging as it varies from just above 0 degrees to over 30 degrees Celsius – even with doors and windows open during the day. Most of our young plants are showing stress in some form or other and it is proving very difficult to manage the water levels in the compost. I'm beginning to wonder whether this has been manufactured correctly because with some bags of compost it is proving almost impossible to get it to take up water properly. Instead, it just sits on the top and doesn't appear to soak in at all. We have had this problem in the past and when we complained to the manufacturer, they admitted that they had a batch slip through, following a malfunction, where the 'wetting agent' was not added. So, we are wondering if the same has happened again. If not then it can only be down to the sun baking the surface hard, which wouldn't surprise me.

Fortunately, most of what we have planted outside has survived. The garlic and shallots are all fine, but surprisingly the sweet peas, which had established into very strong plants are looking decidedly sick. They will survive and shoot out again, but I think that we have lost the advantage of sowing them over winter to produce early flowers. Instead, they will probably come into flower the same time as the more recent sowing – which of course was not the plan! With no sign of the cold nights disappearing any time soon, we are going to be struggling with many of the vegetable crops many of which are needing to get out of their pots and into the ground. The potatoes in particular are looking really good, but they desperately need to be planted out. They are currently in the large tunnel and we cover them over at nights with fleece, but we are going to have to bite the bullet and get them planted and then cover them outside with a double layer of fleece instead. Any hint of a frost around would soon burn the leaves off and again we would lose any advantage of

getting them growing sooner. I will also get on and plant all of the 'greens' plants which are ready. They will usually withstand a touch of frost and I'm hoping that really penetrating frosts for us down here are now a thing of the past. Fingers crossed. Remarkably we are still eating our own potatoes from last year, which is normally unheard of, and even the shallots and onions that have been stored all winter are still firm and showing little signs of shooting out at present. These supplies have been topped up with fresh pickings of purple sprouting broccoli and now some over-wintered cauliflowers. Because of lockdown, nearly all of the vegetable beds in the kitchen garden area and the flower beds have now been weeded and pruned over. I removed some flower plants that were simply in the wrong place and potted these up and divided them where necessary. These have now made lovely strong plants and are ready for being re-planted back out into the gaps elsewhere in the borders – hopefully in the right place this time! These will be bolstered by other flower plants which have been grown from cuttings that I took in the Autumn, and which have grown on in the greenhouse over Winter. What I really need is a good supply of (preferably) well-rotted horse manure or cow manure from a stable to put on the flower beds as they desperately need some organic matter being applied. As with many gardens around here, ours is derived from the red sandstone and tends to be free draining, quite stony and very hungry for all things organic matter! If anyone has a supply that can be collected then please let me know (650604).

Everything is now pretty well flat out when it comes to seed sowing and planting out. In the small greenhouse the hot-bench for seed sowing will be full for the next few weeks. I try to sow 'little and often' so that hopefully we don't get gluts of any one crop, but this never works out as nature has other ideas. Greens are the worst as they tend to be all or nothing, especially when planting out F1 hybrids. Although the quality of plants is usually superior to the older 'open-pollinated' varieties (although taste wise this may not be the case), the fact that they are F1 means that they all tend to mature at the same time, which of course is what farmers and growers want. Root crops are easier as they will 'stand' for a lot longer once they reach maturity, so I do tend to sow these all at once. All our carrots are now in the ground. I have sown them in a new bed that hasn't grown carrots before. This is in what was a cold frame, and the bed has been surrounded by old Perspex roofing panels that were salvaged off our old conservatory that we took down several years ago. Hopefully, this will be enough to keep the carrot root fly away, which does untold damage to the roots. Something else that I'm trying this year is to sow some fast-maturing carrot seed into very large pots and I have left these on one of the benches in the big greenhouse. These are about four feet off the ground, and the pots are nearly 18 inches high. The root fly can only manage to fly around three feet apparently, so fingers crossed the experiment works. There is still advanced, I think because they do not like any hint of cold weather and are slow to get going. Hopefully they will suddenly take off soon.

plenty of time to sow carrots and most of the other crops now, directly into the ground, so don't panic if you haven't got around to this job yet. As I said earlier the soil is still quite cold, so any late sowings will soon catch up. It is getting a bit late for sowing some crops though, mainly those that have a long growing season such as parsnips and some winter maturing greens, or those that have to mature and crop quickly, such as tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. Our tomato plants are about a foot high at present and need moving into larger pots, which we will do this weekend. They can then grow on for another three weeks or so, before hopefully they can be planted into their final resting place, in this case growbags in the large tunnel. The peppers are not so In the fruit garden, the raspberry canes are spring back into life and the flower buds are starting to form. One job I need to do pretty soon is to pull the top netting back over the fruit cage. This was rolled back in order to avoid any snow damage, but as it happened, we only had one incident, where we had enough snow that could have caused damage, but better to be safe. The blueberries in their pots are still outside, where we will allow them to flower, and hopefully be pollinated, before moving them inside one of the tunnels. They only get moved inside to protect them from bird attention, rather than need the extra warmth as they are very hardy generally. The peach and nectarine trees in the tunnel flowered very well earlier in the year, but we are sure all of the blooms were caught by a particularly penetrating frost one night, so it looks very likely that we won't have any fruit this year. The top fruit in the field is now coming into blossom, starting with the pears, and followed by the apples. As these are much later than the peaches to flower, we are keeping our fingers crossed that any frosts we have had in recent days will not be hard enough to do any damage. Again, time will tell.

Bee-wise we have managed to get twelve hives through the winter out of the fifteen that we went into it with. They were weak and might have survived if they had been combined together but as I have said before, I have never been that successful with combining hives together, so I tend to let them get on with things. A number of hives are very strong, so no doubt a few will swarm in the coming month. There are ways of trying to stop them swarming, but I think the ones that I have are just a 'swarmy' type, as they seem determined to swarm at every opportunity! More of them next month. As always, happy gardening until next month. *Steve and Felicity Hunt.*





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# SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Our March meeting was well attended our speaker for the evening was Naylor Firth who's talk was entitled '*Chepstow in World War II*'. As usual well researched, presented and very interesting, it just shows how much Chepstow has changed in the intervening years.

Our April talk is entitled '***The right place at the right time - Chepstow and its history in 20 pictures***'. The 20 pictures or 'events' cover: the Ancient Stones; the Romans; the Normans and the Castle; the Marshal; the Civil War; the Regency Chepstow Bridge; the Victorian Brunel Rail Bridge; the First World War; the Second World War; and photographs of aspects of Chepstow life in the 2010s. The speaker for this meeting will be John Burrows.

With Covid regulations easing we hope to hold our Beating the Bounds walk this year on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May meeting at the church gate at 2.00pm, everyone welcome.

This month the snippet from our archives is an account of the Beating of the Bounds on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> June 1745, which was Whitsun Tuesday, see opposite page.

If anyone would like to join us for our virtual meetings they are very welcome, just get in touch with me and I will send you the relevant details.



*Perambulation of the Bounds of the Parish of Shirenewton  
From the Survey of 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> June 1745 being Whitsun Tuesday*

(Note the extensive use of capitals and variations in spelling).

*The Bounds of the Parish that were surveyed this Day viz. June 4<sup>th</sup> 1745, were from the Lady Mill to the Stone Stile at the Lane leading to Chepstow, from thence along the Lane to the Dancing Knap, from thence thro' Gosty Close to a great oak in the road leading from Shirenewton to Matherne, from thence thro' Prado Wood by certain great oaks lying in a line thro' the wood, from thence thro' the Stanch Wood, & Cae Pant to Whitsons Barns, and by the end of Caty Dee leading to Dinwood, thro' the middle of Dinham Land to the Lane leading from Shirenewton to Caerwent.*

*The Bounds of the Parish that were surveyed this Day viz. June 5<sup>th</sup> 1745 were from the above ver'd Lane leading from Shirenewton to Caerwent from a Stone in the said Lane to the Boltsie Wood, and from thence round a Piece of Ground called many Pits, from the Many Pits to Pen-keiroog, and from thence crossing the Lane leading from Cross-way to Kilpale, and from thence crossing the Lands and Woods belonging to the Lanmelein Farm to the Coombe Mill.*

*Names of the persons: - Rector. Edward Harris; Samuel Howells; John Howells; James Hancocks; William Reece; John Jones; William Beech; William Richards; William Morgan.*

Further notes exist for another survey dated 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1819. These cover the area of the Parish to the west of the above notes.

*The Bounds of the Parish which were surveyed this day viz. May 21<sup>st</sup> 1819 were from Corn Mill along the inside of the Brook to Pioche Bridge, from thence to Cribba Mill continuing along the Brook to Wentwood Mill - from then following a piece of water through the land of Reece of Wentwood Mill taking in about half an acre and somewhat more of his Meadow - following the same line to the crossroads - again following the same mill to the back of Little Gaerlwyd House-then coming out at the further corner through a fold in front of William Morgan's Barns to a great stone in the ditch - thence in a line to an old Beech standing in the field of the said person, thence a young beech tree joining Earlswood Common taking in about half an acre of the said field. Then taking the side of the hedge to the Stone Standing on the Green near Gaer-Llywd - hence crossing the fields to an oak in the hedge adjoining the lane along by the road & a well.....*

## **SHIRENEWTON W.I. CHEPSTOW IN WORLD WAR II**

We were transported back to the days of the Second World War for our April Meeting. Our speaker, Naylor Firth, was able to tell us about life in the Chepstow area and his childhood memories during this unique period of our history.

In 1938, Chepstow's streets were gas lit, with horse drawn carts and men pushing handcarts being the chosen methods of transporting goods. A siren was installed on the fire station in Lower Church Street to warn the local residents of approaching enemy aircraft and gas masks were issued to everyone, even babies. A variety of local defence units were formed. Naylor's father joined the Royal Observers Corps and would go to the top of Mounton Road to watch for approaching enemy aircraft. Shirenewton had its own Home Guard. Garden City was devoted to allotments as everyone was encouraged to grow their own vegetables as most food was rationed, along with petrol and clothing.

The Chepstow area played its part in the war effort. From building floating cranes and tank landing craft used in the D Day landings, to helping raise, along with the Monmouth and Forest of Dean area, £7,675 to fund the building of a Spitfire. The Glascoed Munitions Factory provided armaments throughout the war and Dinham provided all the explosives needed by the Royal Navy. In preparation for the D Day landings, 4,800 U.S. troops were billeted in Chepstow.

Italian and German prisoners of war were held at camps in Bulwark and Sedbury, and you can still see the huts from the camp in Sedbury. Mount Pleasant hospital had been built to treat patients suffering from Shell Shock and gas poisoning from World War I. Naylor can remember seeing the patients in Chepstow in their blue serge uniforms.

What a different place Chepstow would have been during those days. For those of us who are not locals, it made us realise how much activity there had been in Chepstow during the Second World War. Naylor's talk also reminded me how important it is to write down my parents' memories of this tumultuous period in our history.

Jackie Broughton

If you would like to join us, then please contact either Jane Butterworth-[janeb247@gmail.com](mailto:janeb247@gmail.com) or Diane Ashton Smith (01291 628838). Our next meeting is on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May

## **REGULAR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CHURCH**

A number of people have recently asked how they can make regular contributions to the church when perhaps they are unable to attend e.g. because they are shielding, or because they prefer not to use cash or cheques. There are two easy ways in which you can make a regular financial contribution to the church:

1: The Church in Wales runs a "Gift Direct" scheme which collects your contribution by direct debit on a monthly basis. The scheme also allows you to Gift Aid your donation so that the church can claim a basic rate tax refund, making your money go even further. Details of the scheme can be found here: <https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/1798-Gift-Direct-English.pdf>. Alternatively please contact me and I will email the leaflet to you.

2: You can set up a standing order with your bank. Please contact me and I will let you have the bank details. You then need to contact your bank to set up the standing order.

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## THE BELLS

Things are at last beginning to ease and as services have recommenced within the church ringing has also commenced, albeit still observing social distancing. At St Thomas a Becket it is possible to ring the 6 bells either from the upstairs ringing room or from the ground floor at the base of the tower. Ringing all six bells from either place would not be compliant with social distancing rules as ringers stand only approximately 1 meter apart. However, if 3 alternate bells are rung from either place compliance is achieved. Thus we ring bells 1, 3 & 5 from the ground floor and 2, 4 & 6 from the upstairs ringing room. Visual cues are lost so ringing has to rely solely on auditory inputs, and even simple commands which regulate the start, finish or change in order of the bells has to be achieved by codes. Thus although ringing is considerably simplified and achieving true change ringing (ringing permutations) is not possible it is highly likely we are one of only a handful of churches in the UK that can ring their complete complement of bells during these times.

With the above arrangement we commenced ringing on 28<sup>th</sup> March and subsequently were able to ring on Easter Sunday and for every Sunday service held since. With the announcement of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh on the 9<sup>th</sup> April, Glynis was able to toll the tenor bell 99 times on the 10<sup>th</sup> April in commemoration and the bell was tolled again, this time half-muffled just before the funeral service on 17<sup>th</sup> April, and all six bells rung half-muffled at the end of the service.

We have yet to commence our Friday evening practice but will consider this as restrictions are eased. Keep safe.

Mike Penney.

## STARGAZING

The five stars forming the “W” of Cassiopeia lie to the north in the evening night sky. Constellations usually have Ancient Greek names – the name Cassiopeia was used by Ptolemy, a great Greek astronomer living in Egypt when it was part of the Roman Empire around 100 AD. On the other hand, the majority of stars have Arabic names – Arabic Astronomy was centred on Baghdad from about 800 to 1200 AD. Unusually the middle star of Cassiopeia is called Tsih, named by Chinese astronomers. This star has been used as an easily identifiable reference during space missions. Its traditional name in Welsh is Llys Dôn, which means the Court of Dôn, a character in the Mabinogion folk tales.



Other prominent spring constellations are the familiar seven stars of Ursa Major, commonly called the Plough (a traditional Welsh name is Y Sospan, which hardly needs translating), which is now overhead in mid-evening, and Leo the Lion in the southern sky.

Our constellations are formed by connecting stars together. Australia’s Aboriginal peoples use the dark areas of sky, absent of stars, to construct outlines of objects. One of these dark areas is called the Emu.

Mars is visible in the evening sky in the west. It is orange-coloured and at the end of May it is close to the twin stars Castor and Pollux in the constellation Gemini.

On 13<sup>th</sup> May the very faint crescent Moon can be seen above Venus and just next to Mercury. This conjunction can be seen just after sunset, low on the northwest horizon.

The best so-called “supermoon” of the year is visible on 26<sup>th</sup> May. This is where the Full Moon appears larger because it is at its closest to Earth. There are a number of supermoons each year.

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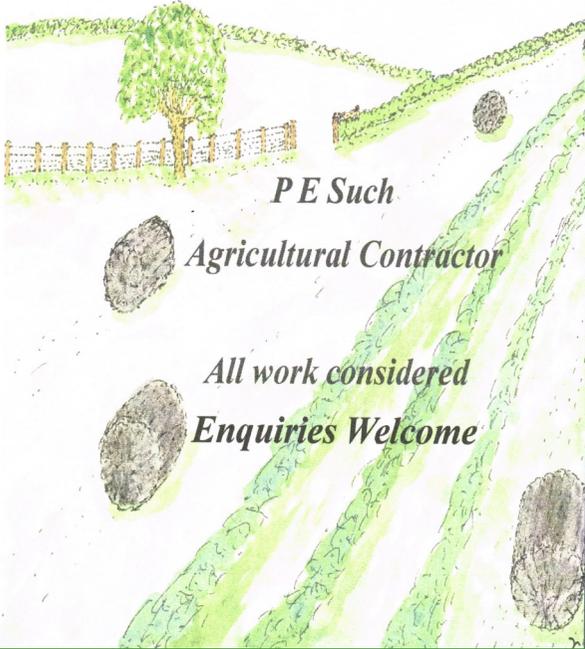
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## **FAIRTRADE NEWS April 2021**



I like the word FAIR. Pupils in school know exactly what the word means. If they have been naughty and they are caught, it's a fair cop. If they are told off for no reason they are out-raged; quite rightly so. The problem is, our planet is in such dire straits, climate destroying industries so entrenched, that I think we are going to need a bit more positive discrimination (an idea that is anathema to some in other situations).

Early signs from our government, now liberated from the constraints of EU membership (!), are not very encouraging. Within a month the government has rejected attempts to ensure that food imports will meet the environmental (and safety and animal welfare) standards required in the UK; and they overturned the ban on of a bee-threatening neonicotinoid insecticide to treat sugar beet seeds. In 2018 Michael Gove had implied the insecticide was gone from the UK for ever. But apparently the NFU had been secretly encouraging farmers to lobby for the insecticide while in the same letter asking them to 'refrain from making the letter public'. Publicly pretending to be responsible (in this case, to care for the environment) while privately lobbying to resist any restriction that will impact profits, is just what the oil, tobacco and pharmaceutical industries did so effectively for decades. There was a huge public outcry and a last minute withdrawal of the permission to use the insecticide because the level of infection 'didn't meet the thresh-hold for its use'. No guarantee for next year though. Many banks, including Barclays still massively fund the fossil fuel industries. Meanwhile the climate crisis grows (not to mention the numbers of deaths caused by pollution - which dwarf Covid related deaths).

Fairtrade tries to support farmers already coping with climate change, which is worsening year by year. And now of course producers face the tragedy of Covid which has virtually closed their markets. In the UK we run the risk of gloating over our vaccine rollout success, (NHS to thank, not really Boris and his pals), and forgetting that elsewhere the tragedy continues which could affect all of us in the end. A fairer response would surely benefit everyone.

Buy Fairtrade (you know it makes sense!!)

The world is worth it!

Marion McAdam 641 316 [msm316@gmail.com](mailto:msm316@gmail.com)

Oxfam Chepstow sells a selection of FT products. And Traidcraft and Ethical Superstore have a wide range.

I would like to thank the kind anonymous friends that recently left such lovely flowers at Wenche's grave on the anniversary of her death.

Helen, Paul and I were greatly touched and moved by your kindness and thoughtfulness on this difficult day for our family.

We feel well blessed in this special thoughtful community.

Bob O'Keefe

## SHIRENEWTON CHURCH WEBSITE

[www.shirenewtonchurch.com](http://www.shirenewtonchurch.com)

Last month I started on privacy - why change? Over the last month it has come to light that the phone numbers and email addresses of 533 million Facebook users have been exposed in a data breach. Note that it wasn't a 'hack'. Apparently, the data was harvested by the abuse of a flaw in a Facebook contacts import feature. As I understand it, the data harvesters simply created an address book which contained every phone number on the planet and then asked Facebook if their 'friends' were on FB. Crafty.

Apparently, the data harvested includes complete usernames, dates of birth, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and sometimes relationship status. Experts predict that this data will be used in phishing attacks as, when personal information such as email addresses and associated phone numbers are used, the risk of people falling for fake emails increases because they can be made more authentic. It is also likely that such information may be used for identify theft and to attempt to gain access to other online accounts.

Unfortunately, FB itself has not covered itself in glory over this and has tried to suppress all publicity explaining that the data is about 2 years old (from 2019) and has said it has no plans to alert users. This Forbes article (<https://tinyurl.com/j7254h63>) has a good summary of the situation and makes recommendations which in summary are: (i) visit HaveIBeenPwned.com to check if your data has been pwned, and then (ii) if you use your FB password on other sites (very naughty), change it on all sites it is used to a site specific unique password. It goes without saying that be on guard for phishing emails and texts.

It was only last month I reminded everyone that, when you set up an account and answer security questions, lie! So even if they know your mother's maiden name, which football team you support, where you went to school, etc. they can't get past the security questions. My recommendation was to use a random word generator to create answers and to store these answers in an online password manager.

Interestingly, I put my most frequently used email addresses into HaveIBeenPwned.com and found both email addresses have been pwned but not from the FB breach. They have been exposed via other sites I've registered on being breached.

It's not only FB in the wars here. LinkedIn has confirmed that the data of at least 500million LinkedIn users was scraped from the platform and is currently for sale online. It's worth noting that this is different from the FB harvest as this data was 'scraped' by a bot copying the information displayed in a web browser. As such, it was only the publicly viewable member profile data and LinkedIn further notes that the data for sale "is actually an aggregation of data from a number of websites and companies".

Talking of phishing texts, The Sunday Times had an interesting article on the methodology behind the text message phishing texts one constantly gets. I'm sure that you are familiar with the texts which purport to come from a delivery company and suggest that the parcel you were expecting is held up in customs and you have to pay £2.99 (or something similar) to release it. Texts also purport to come from banks, NHS, HMRC and the national census, offering rebates or threatening fines. The texts urge urgent action and invite you to click on a link.

For example, a member of the Cornwell familiar recently receive a text allegedly from HSBC suggesting that he had authorised a payment of "£240.00 to Mr C Jones" and suggested that if he hadn't authorised this payment to cancel it via the link\* at which point, no doubt, he'd be asked to enter his bank account details, passwords, etc. Another text suggested that "a payment was attempted from a new device" and if he didn't recognise it a different link\* at which point the same data would be requested.

\*Note: In my first draft of the article, I explicitly provided the links by way of example. This plan failed when Google bounced my email to our esteemed editor, presumably on the basis that, as it contained a phishing url, it was a phishing email ;-)

In our case, it was easy to ignore the texts as no one in the household has an HSBC account and, in the cold light of day, it seems silly that people may be taken in by such obviously wrong urls. However, people **\*are\*** taken in and that is why the scammers keep going. UK Finance, the trade organisation for Britain's leading banks, noted that the loss last year was £53.7 million.

The ST article notes that it is cheap to set-up a text scam operation. A Sim card reader (used by legitimate businesses to contact their customers) cost less than £100 and can send 4,800 text messages an hour. Sims cards themselves cost ~£35/100 on eBay. So, be warned. They are out to get you.

In other news, the Cornwell family has taken delivery of a 100% EV, had a EV charge point installed and has lots of new apps to monitor it all. So we've joined the green revolution. What next? Vegetarianism? Not a chance – I'm too addicted to bacon sarnies.

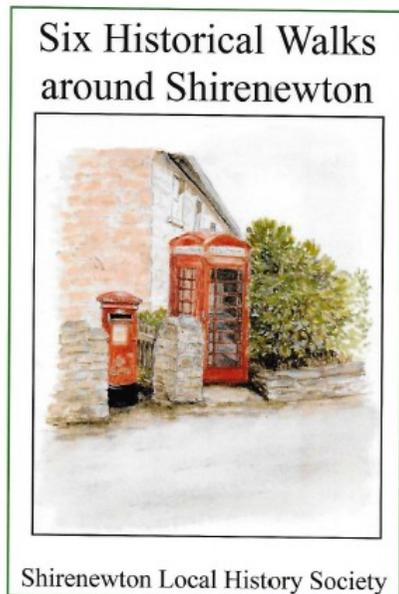
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## THE TREDEGAR ARMS



Julie and her team have left the Tredegar Arms due to the end of their lease and the TA is currently empty with the lease on the market. Clearly this is not a great time to take over a pub lease, but of course we hope that someone will see it as a business opportunity once lockdown ends.

The TA's freehold is owned by the Stonegate Pub Company (which purchased the EI Group on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020). We have spoken to the area manager and he has made it clear that the future of the pub has yet to be decided and will not be decided until the pub trade reopens in Wales. This is currently looking like late April but, as that target is apparently for outdoor operation only, it is not clear whether this will constitute the 'pub trade reopening'.

However, we do know that the whole hospitality trade has taken a hammering and have no knowledge of what pressures the Stonegate Pub Company are facing (in retrospect it was an inopportune time to buy a pub group). So, we

simply cannot predict what the Stonegate Pub Company will decide to do.

However, forewarned is forearmed, and as a community we must be prepared to fight for the TA if we wish to keep it open. Therefore, a small group of us have been exploring the possibilities and worrying as to what would happen if the TA freehold came on the market as we understand that it would be of interest to a property developer who would, presumably, seek to convert it to a house and build on the car park.

There are various options which we have outlined at [www.tredegararmspub.com](http://www.tredegararmspub.com). Any effort would need to be a community effort and therefore we'd welcome the community's feedback to explore what appetite there is in the community to keep it open and keep any developers out.

Please take a look at the website ([www.tredegararmspub.com](http://www.tredegararmspub.com)) and give us feedback. You can email us at [tredegararmspub@gmail.com](mailto:tredegararmspub@gmail.com) or simply call one of us for an informal chat.

If there is enough interest, we will arrange a virtual meeting to consider next steps.

David Cornwell, Janet Horton, Bill Clark.

## **Update on the status of the TA—May 2021**

1. As far as we can tell the new Sydney Phillips boards are simply standard 'estate agent' boards. The previous 'Fantastic Business Opportunity' boards took one to the freeholder website whereas these are Sydney Phillips specific. There is no change to the listing on the Sydney Phillips website.

2. Dave is in touch with Sydney Phillips and they are aware of our website ([www.tredegararmspub.com](http://www.tredegararmspub.com)). He has also sent these website details to the area manager with whom he had a conversation earlier in the year. So they are well aware that there is community interest.

So, in summary, no change. The freehold is not currently for sale so we are currently in a watching brief.

We are in touch with the individual leading the Woodlands Tavern initiative in Llanvair-Discoed and sharing ideas, etc.

Dave, Bill & Janet.

## Farewell to SAMFAL and Hello to GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST

Back in the early 2000's the villages of Shirenewton and Mynddbach came to hear that the four fields between the two villages were going to be auctioned off. Rather than lose this green area the late Mike Sayce with the help of local benefactors and supporters came up with a plan to buy two of the fields for the benefit of the community. The two fields were purchased at auction and in 2006 the Shirenewton & Mynddbach Fields Association (SAMFAL) Nature Reserve was created to protect the biodiversity and special ecological value of the area. Consisting of eleven acres of mixed habitat, the two fields are divided by a small stream with meadow areas occupying around 50% of the site.



The fields have been managed by a group of local volunteers for the past fifteen years. Financial support has come from the community through your membership of SAMFAL, and from donations. During this time the area was fenced, gates added, along with the planting of mixed variety hedges. The introduction of ponies through the winter months allowed for a natural way of controlling the growth within the meadows. Regular work parties ensure that the fields were continually being maintained.



With careful management, the fields flourished and nature took full advantage of the work of SAMFAL volunteers. Sadly, it has become increasingly difficult to manage the

fields in a way which would ensure them remaining as 50% meadows. Nature was beginning to overwhelm us as volunteers. So the committee and directors made a decision to look for another organisation, who would take on the fields for the community.

When the fields were bought for the community a number of strict covenants were rightly put in place by our solicitors. To build on them would be financially unviable to any owner and secondly the fields could only be transferred or sold to a 'like minded' organisation. One of our members, Jane Smith—Haddon already volunteers with the Gwent Wildlife Trust (GWT), so we made an approach to GWT to see if they would take on our fields, to which they agreed.

Gwent Wildlife Trust based in Dingestow, Raglan, is the leading conservation charity in Gwent. The Wildlife Trust has been in existence for over 50 years, with 33 Nature Reserves, 9000 countrywide members and 250 volunteers. Compared to our single figure group of volunteers, you can see that they are more than well placed to look after the SAMFAL fields.



At the start of April 2021, after many months of research and planning, the Directors of SAMFAL legally signed over the ownership of the fields to GWT. We are assured that nothing will change for us as a community. Both villages will still have access to the fields, yet we will now benefit from the expertise and better management for the future. Jane Smith-Haddon will continue to volunteer and remain as our local representative within GWT.

GWT has already been caring for The Fields during the transition period, clearing willow and balsam; fencing and gate maintenance; hay cutting; and organising pony grazing.

For those who support SAMFAL through membership and donations, you will be contacted by our treasurer in the next few months to cancel your Direct Debits. We propose to wind up SAMFAL, with all remaining monies left in our account being donated to GWT.

We would encourage SAMFAL members and all members of our community to join GWT. Subscriptions will help to pay for core and Reserve Officer funding across their nature reserves in Gwent and Monmouthshire. GWT members receive the magazine and discounts to the many day courses and evening talks that will begin to take place again once Covid restrictions allow.

[www.gwentwildlife.org/membership](http://www.gwentwildlife.org/membership)

We would like to thank you for your support for the last fifteen years, this was a difficult decision for us to make, but we feel the right decision for us to ensure the vision that Mike Sayce had for the SAMFAL Nature reserve for our community continues.

Neil Fuller Chair SAMFAL



Contact Rebecca on  
07889 762 840

[info@greenbeeblooms.co.uk](mailto:info@greenbeeblooms.co.uk)

images of our work can be seen on



[www.greenbeeblooms.co.uk](http://www.greenbeeblooms.co.uk)

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### **THE HUNTSMAN OUTSIDE BAR OPENING TIMES:**

MONDAY TO FRIDAY EVENINGS: 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

SATURDAY LUNCHTIME: 11 a.m. to 12.30 a.m.

SATURDAY EVENINGS: 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

SUNDAYS: 11 a.m. 8 p.m.

Please see The Huntsman Facebook page for food services and other details as we slowly reopen up

## **Some reflections on Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh**

It was good to be back in church at Shirenewton for the Sunday Service as we had been to celebrate Easter Sunday the previous week. On 11 April there was a particularly special occasion as it was the opportunity to remember the astonishing service to the nation of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, husband to the Queen for 73 years, who died at the age of 99 on Friday 9 April 2021.

At the end of the service Church Warden Sally Saysell said that she was aware that at least two people in the congregation had met Prince Philip and perhaps they would like to say something of their experience.

The first to speak was John Burrows. He recounted how as young policy officer at the Scottish Development Agency in Glasgow he was summoned to the Chief Executive's Office and asked what the population was of the inner East End of Glasgow following the massive slum clearances of the 1960s and 1970s. We don't know yet, he said. The CEO said he needed a figure now. He didn't say why. John made a guess of 45,000. The following morning, he turned on the radio at 7am and the Duke of Edinburgh was being interviewed about his Award's Study Tour of Glasgow and said that the population of the inner East End of Glasgow had declined from 250,000 to only '45,000! A figure barely 12 hours old and now he knew what his estimate was for. A year later the estimate was shown to be fairly close. What is surprising is the timescales. At that time, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme was already 21 years old, and the Duke had been married to the Queen for 30 years and yet that incident was 43 years ago! More recently John recounted that he had met the Duke for a one-to-one chat for a quarter of an hour on a building site for the opening of the Falmouth Maritime Museum. The Duke was very easy to talk to and highly amusing. John met him again when the Duke came with the Queen to see the early construction work on the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay in June 2002. They also came to the opening of the Centre in November 2004. It was incredible that when the Duke retired in 2017, he had been working continuously

for the country for 77 years since being a Midshipman on a battleship in the Mediterranean in 1940 and then a Lieutenant on a variety of ships throughout the Second World War before 73 years of being in the public spotlight married to the Queen, 81 years of public service and prominence.

Chris Sturcke then told us about the times when he had met the Duke. Chris's career in the Merchant Navy had started at the Incorporated Nautical Training College, HMS Worcester cadets. The Duke of Edinburgh was at the head of the Cutty Sark organisation which moved the clipper ship from its site alongside the Worcester in the Thames at Greenhithe to Greenwich. He came to the college and formally took over Cutty Sark. He was shown round HMS Worcester and inspected the ship's company. Chris was at the time a senior cadet captain and Prince Philip approved the smartness of his division! Chris's career at sea progressed and in 1983, as an experienced captain, he was invited to become a Younger Brother of Trinity House, a Guild or Fraternity of mariners since 1514. Prince Philip was the Master.

Trinity House holds various functions and ceremonies which the Master attends. Chris was proud to be present at some of these when his seafaring duties permitted. The Master greeted all the Brethren with a handshake and a few words – usually quite humorous. As the Master, HRH wanted to meet and find out all about new Brethren so at one of the Trinity House luncheons Chris found himself on the seating plan at the head table on the Master's left. He was instructed by an Elder Brother that the Master usually spoke to the person on his right during the first course of the meal and Chris was advised to eat as much and as fast as he could during course one, as during the second he would have no chance to eat! This proved true. Prince Philip questioned Chris on his career and on the state of the Merchant Navy, and why so many old and famous companies were disappearing. At all functions HRH would make a speech to all attending, usually in a humorous manner, (having ensured no press representatives were present.)

Prince Philip retired as Master in 2011 and Chris was present when Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal took over as Master. She obviously inherited his sense of humour.

Chris Sturcke also mentioned the Duke's views on long speeches and sermons. He must have sat through an astounding number. He was not a fan. He was heard to remark that the mind couldn't absorb what the bottom couldn't endure!

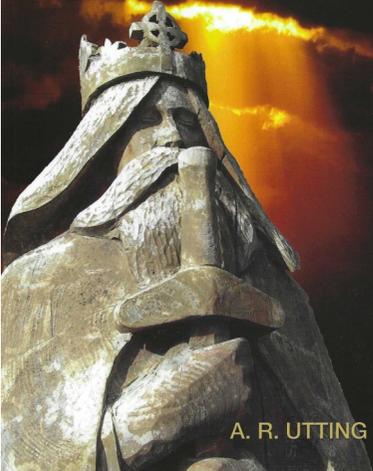
Glynis MacDonald



HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at the Royal Albert Hall for the Festival of Remembrance, November 2006

# TEWDRIC OF WALES

SAINT, KING, WARRIOR, MARTYR



A. R. UTTING

“

Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.

ANONYMOUS

## GWENT ARCHIVES NEEDS YOU

Gwent Archives is not just concerned with preserving the past but also with documenting the present. It is our duty as a service to ensure that our collections reflect the history of Gwent and the experiences of our communities. But to do this, we need your help.

We are asking you, the people of Gwent, to consider keeping a diary or journal in the coming weeks and months and to deposit it with the archives in the future. They can be recorded as pen-and-paper or digitally. They can include photographs, sketches, or poetry. You may want to record your experiences as audio, rather than handwritten. We want to hear about how current events are impacting on you and your local area, what things are you hearing in the news, how it is affecting people you know?

We have already asked our staff and our volunteers to participate but to truly reflect our history, your history, we need you.

Any questions or queries, please contact [enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk). More information on submitting the diaries will follow.



## Are you putting your online shopping to good use?

The **Lions Club of Chepstow and Caldicot** are raising funds for the local community even during these lockdowns. With us all being confined to home for work and play, most of us have had to utilise online shopping, and this is looking set to continue as the new normal.

The Lions Club of Chepstow and Caldicot serve local communities including our own, and like everyone else have had to modernise through the use of technology. Some of their fundraising used to take place in supermarket doorways, but now a number of online mechanisms support their fundraising efforts.

One such fundraising tool is **Amazon Smile**. Every time you shop online at **smile.amazon.co.uk** Amazon will donate a percentage of the purchase to The Lions Club of Chepstow and Caldicot.

To find out more about this and other ways to support The Lions Club of Chepstow and Caldicot including **Amazon Smile**, **Easyfundraising** and **Just Giving**, please go to: [www.chepstowcaldicotlions.org.uk/page-8.php](http://www.chepstowcaldicotlions.org.uk/page-8.php)



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When you shop online at **smile.amazon.co.uk**, Amazon donates to the **Lions Club of Chepstow and Caldicot**.

Type the URL below into your internet browser, or scan this QR code with the camera of your mobile device.

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1182562-0>



## MESh and Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Volunteers from Shirenewton, Mynyddbach and Earlswood have set up a community self-help group to look after people's shopping and other needs if they are required to self-isolate or restrict their movements. They are reaching out to let everyone know they are there and can provide help if needed.

They have arranged leaflet drops to every part of the Mynyddbach-Earlswood-Shirenewton Community (MESh) and a copy is included on page 6. They have used the template from the BBC at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-51880695>.

So if anyone needs help, just call the number or text a message to the number on the postcard you have received and help will be at hand. If you have not received a post card/leaflet drop please contact Jeni Harper at [jeh45\\_wales@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jeh45_wales@yahoo.co.uk).

**HELLO!** If you are self-isolating, I can help.

**My name is**  
.....

**I live locally at**  
.....

**My phone number is**  
.....

**If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19 I can help with:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Picking up shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> Posting mail
<input type="checkbox"/> A friendly phone call	<input type="checkbox"/> Urgent supplies

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

**Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep.**

**#ViralKindness**

## The PT Shed – Why can't I lose weight?

Hi everybody, your local Personal Trainer is back with the second episode of the PT Shed.

I hope that you have all been enjoying the recent pleasant weather. It has been lovely to get out and about in t-shirt and shorts and not be cold! It has also been great to speak to many of you in the village about the previous episode regarding daily activity! Thank you all for taking the time to talk to me!

On to this week's episode - A few weeks ago, I ran a poll in the local Facebook group to ask you, the local community, what you wanted me to write about. The winner was "Why can't I lose weight?". Many people have tried, with varying degrees of success, to lose weight. Often, we achieve a weight loss, but before we know it, it creeps back on and we end up where we started, or even further back.

The truth is, we can all lose weight. The challenge can be finding a balance where we can lose weight and maintain that weight loss at a point that we are happy with as an individual.

Let's consider how we gain or lose weight. Imagine your body is your bank balance. If you put more money into your bank than you spend, your bank balance will grow. Alternatively, if you spend more than you put in, you will go into the red.

If you replace money with energy (calories), your body works the same way. If you recall my previous episode, we all require a certain amount of energy to exist and operate our vital organs. Think of that expenditure as an essential bill that must be paid (mortgage/rent, water, electric etc).

As humans, we cannot get away from the fact that we are adapted to survive. Our bodies just love to store up excess energy. If you consume more energy (calories) than you pay out, then the excess will be stored. This will be firstly in muscles and then, if unused, as body fat. Consequently, weight will increase. This is a calorie surplus.

Similarly, if you use more energy than you consume, then you will lose weight. This is referred to as a calorie deficit.

In summary, weight fluctuation is essentially a balance between calories in versus calories out. **If you are in a calorie deficit, you will lose weight.**

Let's look at what happens when we lose weight. First, what is "weight"? Weight is the culmination of every part of you: Bone, Muscle, Organs, Fat, Water, Undigested Food etc.

Weight is lost from different areas at different rates. There are certain things that will not change (e.g., Bone and organ weight). Slower weight loss will come from body fat reduction and muscle loss. This happens over a period of weeks and months. Rapid weight loss (and gain) will be associated with factors such as undigested food, hormone fluctuations and water retention. This will be a daily fluctuation and is subject to several external factors.

It is important that we are aware of the daily fluctuations. If you are trying to lose weight, have been 'good', and yet have seen a slight increase, there can be many reasons for this. It will often be down to water retention. Water is heavy. 500ml of water will weigh approximately 500g (1lb). Any issues with sleep or stress can cause a hormonal release that will initiate water retention. So, please do not be disheartened if you see an increase on the scales from one day to the next. There are many factors at play. Instead, track your progress over a period of weeks and months. Be consistent in your actions and be patient!

It is important to note that when following a diet, the focus is often on reducing food and putting you into a severe calorie deficit. The issue is often that this is unsustainable longer-term. My preference is to maintain a gentle calorie deficit where you can still eat foods you enjoy and feel full. You would be amazed at the amount of food that you can eat and be in a calorie deficit!

Remember that scale weight does not define you. It is just a number and is one metric that can be used to measure health. Sadly, there is a media fixation on weight that can lead to an unhealthy relationship with the scales. Consider using other methods to track progress (e.g., how your clothes fit or tape measurements). However, if you want to use the scales, aim for a weight loss of approximately 1lb a week. This will be sustainable and allow you to build habits that support your goals. I have personally been in a gentle deficit since the start of 2021 and have lost 23lbs so far. I've still eaten takeaways (in moderation) and Sunday Roasts. It can be done!

As a final point, weight loss is never as simple as the cliché "Eat less and move more". There are so many more factors at play. My recommendations for you to get started on a healthier journey in a sustainable manner are as follows:

Increase daily activity (see episode 1!)  
Do not restrict food types but identify healthier choices (e.g., whole foods instead of processed food)  
Consume protein at every meal  
Be aware of portion sizes (except vegetables – go crazy on vegetables!!! Nobody became overweight from eating too many peas!)

Just remember to maintain a healthy balance. Nobody will maintain a regime that is overwhelming or completely unenjoyable!

I hope that this article has helped you to understand a little more about weight loss. Everybody can lose weight. Losing it sustainably is the key part. The secret to that is developing habits that support that goal!

If anybody wants to share their progress with me, please feel free to do so. My email is at the end of the article. Please do not hesitate to stop me and talk to me if you see me around. I love talking all things health-related! I'll usually be in my Optimal Exercise gear and will often be accompanied by Winston, the resident Fitness Frenchie. I would love to hear how you have applied the advice in this article.

If you have any specific topics that you would like me to cover in future articles, please email me at [alex@optimalexercise.co.uk](mailto:alex@optimalexercise.co.uk). If you want to see more regular content from me, please follow my Facebook page (Optimal Exercise) or my Instagram (@alex\_hopkins\_optimal\_exercise)

Enjoy the warmer weather and I will see you all next month!

Alex Hopkins – Optimal Exercise

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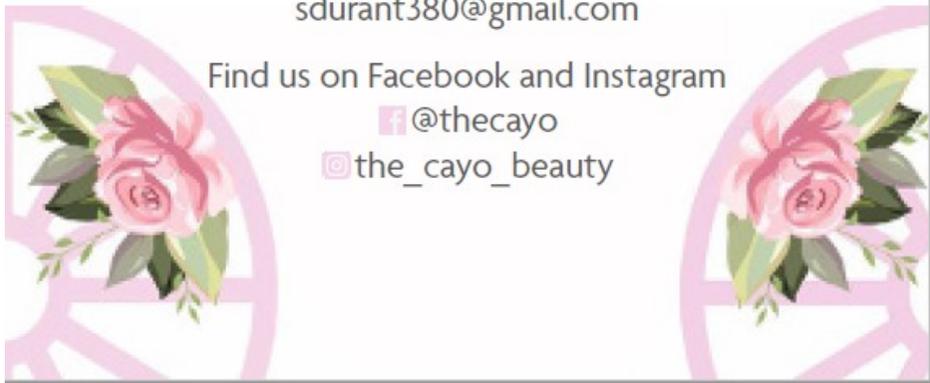
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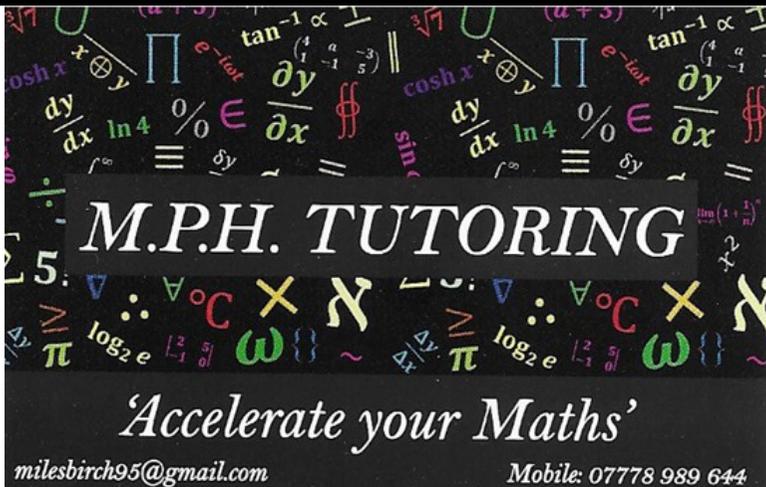
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### **Inheritance tax – Are you making the most of your allowances?**

I recently visited a widow who lived just outside Usk. She didn't consider herself to be wealthy, but like many of us had worked hard throughout life to pay off a mortgage. She is now retired and in a comfortable financial position. She has three children and you could probably understand her disbelief to be informed that when she passes away the tax man will receive a higher amount in tax than the share of her estate left to each of her three children! The continued rise in house prices in this area means that these days you don't have to be hugely wealthy to be affected by Inheritance tax (IHT). According to HMRC inheritance tax receipts 2019, a record £5.38 billion was collected in inheritance tax in the 2018/19 tax year and this is set to rise. There are many things you can do to reduce your inheritance tax liability and keep more of your wealth within the family.

The current IHT nil-rate threshold is £325,000 for individuals and £650,000 for a married couple or civil partners. Beyond these thresholds, IHT is usually payable at a rate of 40%. In order to help with aforementioned increasing house prices we recently saw the introduction of the main residence nil-rate band, which applies if you want to pass your main residence to a direct descendant, this now provides an additional £175,000 for individuals and £350,000 for a married couple or civil partners. However, it is important to be aware that for larger estates this extra relief is tapered when the estate is over £2m.

There is a range of options to help mitigate your potential inheritance tax bill, but as a starting point, you should consider the following allowances:

Annual gifting allowance – each year you and your spouse can each gift up to £3,000 in total. You can also carry this forward for one year. Furthermore, gifts of up to £250 to any number of people are exempt.

Wedding gifts – Parents can give up to £5,000 to a bride or groom, for grandparents this reduces to £2,500. Other well-wishers can give up to £1,000 before it becomes liable to IHT.

Gifts to registered charities and political parties are exempt

Gifts can also be made out of surplus income, however a number of conditions apply to this allowance and so I would suggest you seek advice in relation to this.

Assets left to your UK based spouse or civil partner are also exempt.

Remember planning pays and there are several routes which can help with such taxes. If you would like to come along to my free inheritance tax seminars just drop me a line. ([info@iscawealth.com](mailto:info@iscawealth.com)) Isca Wealth Management Limited is an Appointed Representative of Vision Independent Financial Planning Ltd which is Authorised and Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Firm reference number 487395. Please note that the FCA does not regulate inheritance tax advice.



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The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) do not regulate Inheritance Tax Planning, Tax and Trusts.

The benefits to the treatment of tax will depend on your individual circumstances and may be subject to change in the future.

## LOCAL CONTACTS

*If you know of any changes or omissions please contact the Editor Bill Clark  
Telephone 01291 641783 or email [parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com](mailto:parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com)*

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Chair	Philip Butterworth 01291 641704	<a href="mailto:philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk">philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk</a>
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## **Police Neighbourhood Watch Contacts**

**Neighbourhood Police Officer** Matt Scree matthew.screen@gwent.pnn.police.uk  
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## **Other Local Organisations**

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## **Shirenewton Local History Society**

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## **Caerwent Group Mothers Union**

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## **Shirenewton Play Group**

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jayneedwards@monmouthshire.gov.uk

## **Shirenewton Toddler Group**

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Paula Rimmer rimmerpaula@mac.com

## **Shirenewton Tennis Association**

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Copies are delivered free by local distributors to those who have pre-paid.

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