



**Shirenewton Parish  
Magazine**

**April 2023**

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## **STU DUTTON**

Pauline and family would like to thank our friends and neighbours for their support when Stu was in hospital and everyone who sent cards, flowers and messages. Also thanks to those of you who attended his funeral, whose lives he touched in some way and who helped us celebrate his life.

### **JOINT SERVICE IN APRIL**

The joint service in April will be held on Sunday 30th April at 10 a.m. in Mathern church.

### **MESSAGE FROM SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

The Clerk of the Community Council is moving on and we will therefore be starting the formal process of appointing a new Clerk.

The Clerk is employed for a total of 15 hours per week. There is a requirement to attend a Monday evening meeting every month and to ensure the local noticeboards alert the public to the agenda of this monthly meeting. Otherwise, a reasonable amount of the work per week can be undertaken at home on a flexible basis.

The information pack and application form can be downloaded from our website.

For more information about the Community Council please see our website: - [www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk](http://www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk)

Cllr Philip Butterworth (Chair)

Email: - [philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk](mailto:philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk) or Tel : 01291 641704

#### **Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in February:**

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Chris Sturke | 2. Claire Lewis  |
| 3. Beth Baker   | 4. Angela Miller |

#### **Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in March:**

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sebastian Cornwell | 2. Clair Johnsey  |
| 3. Penny Francis      | 4. Simon Lockhart |

## **CHURCH SERVICES**

Please note that all Church services start at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the church of St Thomas à Becket, Shirenewton. Times may vary for Remembrance Sunday and the periods over Easter, Christmas and New Year, but they will be reported in this magazine.

## **CHURCH SERVICES ON ZOOM**

Some services will be available to join via Zoom, if you cannot attend in person. Please contact Gilly Lambert (see contact list) if you would like to be included on the distribution for Zoom service invitations.

## **SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL (SCC) GRANTS TO THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL (PCC)**

The PCC is delighted to report that Shirenewton Community Council (SCC) approved the following grants at their meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August 202:

£500 contribution to the Parish Magazine printing costs

£800 contribution to grass cutting and maintenance of the churchyard and grounds

£80 contribution to the Christmas Event

The PCC is very grateful to the SCC for these grants.

## **SHIRENEWTON FOOD BANK**

Thank you to the many people who leave donations for the Bulwark Food Bank. Donations can be left in the church but sometimes the church is not open and so the donations can be left under my veranda or by my front door or in the plastic box on my bench and then I can take them down to The Food Bank. Now more than ever, things are getting tight and your generosity is hugely appreciated by the people who operate the Food Bank from The Bridge Church in Bulwark. Thanks again,

Glynis MacDonald, The Chantry, 641 818

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## FROM THE VICARAGE

Julian E LI White

We stand on the point of the most important date in the Christian Calendar. Easter Day.

One of the earliest descriptions of the Christian community was that of 'The Easter People' and this indicates the centrality of their belief that the message of Easter – the triumph of life over death – has defined their faith more than anything else.

You could be forgiven for thinking that this assertion has been somewhat diluted over the centuries.

The poet Steve Turner reminds us that sentimentality, platitudes and general 'dumbing-down' have all played their corrosive influence in this respect. In his work *Christmas is Really For The Children* he argues the following:

*Christmas is really  
for the children.  
Especially for the children  
who like animals, stables,  
stars and babies....*

*Easter is not really  
for the children  
unless accompanied by  
a cream filled egg.  
It has whips, blood, nails...  
It involves politics, God  
and the sins of the world...*

*Or they'd do better to  
wait for a re-run of  
Christmas without asking  
too many questions about  
what Jesus did when he grew up  
or whether there's any connection.*

No one should pretend that the journey of Lent into Easter, if taken seriously, is an easy ride. It makes demands of us. Not least a confrontation with the deepest part of our character and the willingness to meet God face to face. Are we able to handle such an encounter? It is small wonder that it is said that one of the most

difficult things to achieve is silence in our daily prattling and the ability to listen. It is only then that we stand in the presence of God and that is the whole point of the Easter experience.

We welcome Revd. John Waters to a regular position on the rota of services offered by Shirenewton Church. This is part of the restructuring of the Severn Wye Ministry Area and we look forward to his priestly contribution as we seek to meet the needs of contemporary society. In particular, John will be well known by many members of Saint Thomas a Beckett and we look forward to his ministry among us.

With every good wish and blessing for the Easter Season.

Julian E LI White (Rector & Vicar)

### **FROM THE REGISTERS**

The funeral of Stu Dutton (1943-2023) took place on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 conducted by the Reverend John Waters.

The funeral of Maria Theresa Angela Davis (1932-2023) took place on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 conducted by the Reverend John Waters.

## **S&B Newspaper Home Delivery Service**

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**Severn Wye Ministry Area  
Annual Vestry Meeting**

The 2023 Annual Vestry Meeting will be held in

Shirenewton Church Hall

on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7pm

followed by refreshments.

The meeting will receive the annual accounts for all the churches, and elect the Ministry Area Council members. It will also ratify the appointment of local church wardens.

Please come along and join us.

SEVERN WYE MINISTRY AREA

# Praying Together

JAMES 5:16

"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."

2ND AND 4TH MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
7.30 TO 8.30 PM

PRAYING TOGETHER FOR OUR MINISTRY  
AREA AND OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

**St Christopher's Church,  
Bulwark, NP16 5AF**



## **Includes updates from the Community Council Meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023**

**No Planning Applications were considered in March.**

### **Items of Interest**

The picnic bench on Mynyddbach Green has now been repaired and a clear preservative has been applied. Hopefully, this should enable it to be used for some time to come.



## **County Councillor Report March 2023**

**County Councillor Brown advised:**

### **Budget 2023/24**

### **Cabinet on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2023**

In terms of changes on the budget as a result of the consultation the current changes in the final proposals are set out in paragraph 3.32 of the Cabinet report.

a) Cabinet is fully aware and acknowledging of the risks regarding deliverability of savings within adult social care, and in the face of demographic challenge and the ongoing ripple effects of the pandemic and pressures within health. To that end and consistent with concerns raised by residents and member scrutiny, £1m of savings

will now be delayed into 2024/25 and subsequently reassessed.

b) To now limit the increase in before school clubs from £1 to £2 per day to only the first child, thus ensuring that families with more than one child are not disproportionately impacted.

c) To remove the proposed increase in the concessionary fee for home to school transport.

d) To remove the proposal for an annual subscription of £30 for users of the Grass Routes bus service, and in light of recent funding announcements causing uncertainty on what type of bus services can be sustainably delivered in Monmouthshire.

e) To remove a proposed increase in the licence fees for pavement cafés and to ensure that businesses are supported to flourish in our town centres and across Monmouthshire.

f) To remove a proposed reduction in opening hours in leisure centres during the summer months, leaving it to the service to undertake ongoing review and to ensure that services are responding to customer demands.

g) To confirm that opening hours at community hubs will now no longer be reduced, albeit community hubs will still be operated with reduced staffing levels as planned.

h) The removal of a proposed saving to delete a post in the internal audit team resulting from feedback received from the Governance & Audit Committee and concern that the level of audit coverage will fall below acceptable levels.

i) Further investment is made in the capital programme, and that will result in additional investment in our highways infrastructure and specifically £500k in 2023/24 and each of the subsequent three years of the capital MTFP for pothole repair.

j) Capital investment of £50,000 to allow for surveys and assessments to be undertaken of bridges across the Council's public rights of way network, and to ensure that a risk-based approach is being taken to maintain assets and keep the network safe.

The proposals currently include a 5.95% rise in Council Tax.

The following is the link to the Cabinet report of the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2023:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MIId=4986>

The end of the meeting discussed ECO4 and ECO4 Flex energy efficiency and the eligibility for low-income households to ask for help.

## **Home to School Transport Savings Proposals**

### **Current Policy**

As per the Learner Travel Measure and Monmouthshire's Transport Policy free home to school transport is now only provided to pupils who attend their catchment or nearest school and live more than 1.5 miles from their Primary School and more than 2 miles from their Secondary School. These distances relate to the shortest available walking route between home and school, accompanied by an adult if necessary.

### **Proposed Savings Policy**

The above proposals for school transport changes means limiting free home to school transport down to the statutory distances. It would then apply to children who live more than 2 miles from their Primary school and more than 3 miles from their Secondary school.

## **Impact in the Shirenewton Ward**

### **Restriction to Statutory Distance with Walking Route Available**

This first change which may impact 131 pupils across Monmouthshire of which 3 pupils are currently in the Shirenewton Ward, 2 at Pwllmeyric and 1 at Mounton for the primary school.

### **Proposed Restriction to Statutory Distance with no available walking route- 24/25**

In the second phase of school bus cuts, which may impact 197 pupils across Monmouthshire of which 18 are currently in the Shirenewton Ward, 9 in Mathern for the Secondary school, 2 in Pwllmeyric and 1 in Mounton for the primary school and 1 in Shirenewton and 5 in Earlswood for the primary school.

The aim would be to take active travel measures to make such routes available walking routes by highways measures.

Concessionary places on school buses may be available when statutory places are allocated at a current cost of £440 per annum per pupil.

***The Final Budget proposals are to be considered by a full council meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, so potentially subject to change.***

When I raised concerns at the meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March about cuts in school transport, the response from the administration was that it is in line with other Local Authorities on restricting to statutory distances.

*Despite the proposals being in the budget there will be a consultation later in the year on these proposals prior to any implementation when residents can make representations.*

### **Performance and Overview Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2023**

#### Empty and Second Homes

Pre-decision scrutiny of the Council Tax Premiums Consultation: Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes - To consider the findings of the public consultation exercise on introducing council tax premiums from 1st April 2024.

This committee considered a report on empty and second homes with the recommendations:

- That the Council use its discretionary powers to introduce a council tax premium for long term empty properties on a sliding scale from 100% to 300% effective from 1st April 2024. With a 100% premium applying to properties empty for 1 year, a 200% premium to properties empty for 2 years and a 300% premium to properties empty for 3 years or more.

That the Council use its discretionary powers to introduce a council tax premium for second homes of 100% from 1st April 2024 and will give further consideration to the impact on the local economy before utilising that power.

The premium would be in addition to the full council tax, the idea of which is to get properties available for occupation. There are 400 empty properties and 190 second homes in Monmouthshire. There will continue to be the following exceptions:

- Class 1 - dwellings being marketed for sale - this exception is time-limited for one year.
- Class 2 - dwellings being marketed for let - this exception is time-limited for one year.

- Class 3 - annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling.
  - Class 4 - dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation.
  - Class 5 - occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings (second homes only).
  - Class 6 - seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited (second homes only).
- Class 7 - job-related dwellings (second homes only).

The Committee discussion was centred upon the Council using its discretion in addition to the above general exceptions and any appeals process for example where progress on the property was delayed by planning. The Committee considered this report as part of pre-decision scrutiny.

The following is the link to the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=305&MIId=5645>

**Dates of next meetings - Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 and Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 7pm, by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall or remotely via Microsoft Teams (a link will be provided on emailing the clerk).**

**Find more information in a draft copy of the minutes on Community Council noticeboards. 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 Natasha Jones  
Tel: 01291 650133      E-mail: [shirenewtoncc@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtoncc@gmail.com)**



## For Shirenewton Fete

Are there any local business owners in the community who would be willing to offer a small amount of financial support in the form of sponsorship to help cover some of the unavoidable costs?

Does anyone have any vintage or other interesting vehicles they would be prepared to bring to the Fete and to have on show for visitors to look at?

Could you run a Coconut Shy at the Fete? All equipment will be provided. You will be responsible for setting it up on Friday evening or Saturday morning (your choice), running the stall with as many helpers as you want and then packing it away at the end

Could you organise a Book and Toy stall? Coordinate the collection of donations (the community is always very generous), set up the Stall on Friday evening or Saturday morning (your choice), run the stall with as many helpers as you want and then pack it away at the end.

To offer help with any of this or with any other ideas or suggestions,

please contact

[shirenewtonfete@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtonfete@gmail.com) or call Janet on 641783.



Looking for something to do in the school holidays?

## Free Fun Family Event

Outdoor Easter Egg Hunt with activities and an Easter gift.  
Meet at the Glade Tearooms at Wentwood Forest  
Monday 3rd April for a 1.30pm start to the trail  
Includes free drinks and cake on finishing!

Sponsored by The Glade Tearooms and  
Penyaemawr Methodist Chapel  
Like and follow the Penyaemawr Chapel Page on Facebook

## SUNDAY MAY 14<sup>th</sup> 2023

### 'Rogationtide' Walk

Rogationtide is the time of year when the Church prays particularly for the rural community and for the well-being of crops and animals for the coming year. Some parishes also 'beat the bounds' – walking around their ancient boundaries to ask a blessing for the growing season ahead.

Because of the large size of our parish grouping, we are going to walk from Church to Church, using public footpaths wherever possible, pausing at each churchyard and church building both to pray and to rest before the next stage.

Everyone is welcome to join us – whatever your beliefs – for any particular stage or stages, or to walk the whole way. Please dress appropriately for the weather conditions and bring water and refreshments.

Dogs are very welcome, but please keep them on leads.

**Stage 1: St Deiniol's Itton to St Arvans Church**  
- we will be setting out after a short 8.15 a.m.  
service of Morning Prayer at 8.45 (approximately)

**St Arvans Church**  
*After the 10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
there will be*

### **AN ANIMAL & PET BLESSING at 11 a.m.**

All welcome - bring your pets along for a blessing!  
*If the weather is fine in the churchyard, otherwise in church*

**Stage 2: St Arvans to St Mary's, Penterry**

**Stage 3: St Mary's, Penterry to St James Devauden**  
– setting out at 1.30 p.m.

**Stage 4 St James', Devauden to Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg**  
- setting out at 2.45 p.m.

**The walk will end with Evening Prayer said at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg**

*\* Due to the nature of the day, all times are approximate*

## Shirenewton W.I.



Shirenewton W.I. celebrated its 71<sup>st</sup> birthday in March. To mark the occasion, our members joined together for a fish and chip supper, provided by The Huntsman Hotel. Our quiz masters for the evening, Ruth and Claire, organised a great selection of questions and there was good humoured rivalry amongst the quiz teams. Congratulations to the winning team, 'Universally Challenged'.

At the end of the evening, everyone was given a Primula to take home. These were made even more special as Jane, our Secretary, had made 20 + colour coordinated Crochet plant pot covers to go with the Primulas. They were a lovely surprise and brightened everyone's evening.

Thank you to all of our members who contributed to making our birthday such a successful event.

Next Month's W.I. meeting is on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April at 7.15pm at Shirenewton Recreation Hall. Our speaker then will be Janet Baker, with a talk on Aromatherapy. We welcome any new members or anyone who wants to try out the W.I. and find out whether it is for them. If you'd like to know more about us, please contact Jane Butterworth at [janeb247@gmail.com](mailto:janeb247@gmail.com) or Diane Ashton Smith (01291 628838)

Jackie Broughton



### Advance Notice: Special Services in Holy Week

We are very lucky to have **Bishop Cherry** joining the Severn Wye Ministry Area for services through Holy Week, and also to have some exciting services planned already – look out for more details of all services across the Ministry Area in the April magazine when full details of all activities have been confirmed!

Palm Sunday	2nd April	10:00	<b>Morning Praise</b>	<b>Shirenewton</b>
			Palms and donkeys! Palm Sunday procession from Chepstow Methodist Church to St Mary's Priory and joint service.	St Mary's Priory, Chepstow
Services across the Ministry Area				
Monday	3 <sup>rd</sup> April	10:00	<b>Compline</b>	<b>Shirenewton</b>
Tuesday	4 <sup>th</sup> April	19:00	Taize at St Mary's Priory, Chepstow	St Mary's Priory, Chepstow
Wednesday	5 <sup>th</sup> April	19:00	<b>Eucharist</b>	St Arvans
Maundy Thursday	6 <sup>th</sup> April	19:00	<b>Tenebrae</b>	Mathern
			Agape	St Mary's Priory, Chepstow
Good Friday	7 <sup>th</sup> April	10:00	<b>Family walk on Gray Hill with Bible readings and hot cross buns from reservoir car park</b>	<b>Shirenewton</b>
			Stations of the cross	St Christopher's Chepstow
			11:00 <b>Stations of the cross</b>	St Pierre
		15:00	Final Hour	St Mary's Priory, Chepstow
Saturday	8 <sup>th</sup> April	19:00	<b>Easter Vigil</b>	St Arvans
Easter Sunday	9 <sup>th</sup> April	10:00	<b>Eucharist</b>	<b>Shirenewton</b>
Services across the Ministry Area				

Services to be attended by the Bishop are **highlighted**, services at Shirenewton are in **bold**.

The BishopSS is keen to meet and speak to as many members of the Ministry Area as she can, and particularly to anyone who has concerns about the formation of the Ministry Area and will be staying after the services for as long as she is needed.

All the churches of the Ministry Area will come together at the Easter Vigil for the blessing of Pascal Candles.



# Severn Wye

## Holy Week Services

### With Bishop Cherry

### 2nd - 8th April 2023

#### **Palm Sunday**

**10am - Joint Service with Chepstow Methodists**, Starts at Methodist Church with procession through town, finishing with Eucharist in St Mary's Priory

#### **Holy Monday**

##### **7pm - Service of Compline at Shirenewton Church**

Compline: The ancient office of Compline derives its name from a Latin word meaning 'completion' (completorium). It is above all a service of quietness and reflection before rest at the end of the day. It is most effective when the ending is indeed an ending, without additions, conversation or noise.

#### **Holy Tuesday**

##### **7pm - Taize Service at St Mary's Priory, Chepstow**

Taizé (pronounced: tay-zay) is a prayerful form of music known for its simple, yet rich and meditative character. Taizé music often takes the structure of an ostinato (a simple melody that repeats over and over) and is meant to serve as a kind of musical centering prayer.

#### **Holy Wednesday**

##### **7pm - Eucharist Service at St Arvan's Church**

Holy Eucharist: The Eucharist is at the heart of Christian worship. It is celebrated by Christians around the world as a memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus, in response to his words at the final meal he shared with his disciples, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' In the Eucharist, God invites us to his table as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet which he has prepared for people of all

#### **Maundy Thursday**

##### **7pm - Tenebrae Service at Matherm Church**

A tenebrae service typically takes place in a dark room lit by a number of candles. A series of Scripture readings chronicles Jesus's final week, ending with his burial. After each reading a candle is snuffed out, until only the Christ candle remains lit.

#### **Good Friday**

##### **11am - Stations of the Cross at St Pierre Church**

The Stations of the Cross have formed part of Christian devotion at Passiontide for many centuries because they enable us to engage actively with the path of suffering walked by Jesus. They originated when early Christians visited Jerusalem and wanted to follow literally in the footsteps of Jesus, tracing the path from Pilate's house to Calvary. They would pause for prayer and devotion at various points. Eventually, those pilgrims brought the practice back to their home countries and ever since then Christians of differing traditions have used this form of devotion.

#### **Holy Saturday**

##### **7.30pm - Easter Vigil Service at St Arvans Church**

Easter Vigil, also called the Paschal Vigil or the Great Vigil of Easter, is the first official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus & renewing baptismal vows. It is held in the hours of darkness between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Day – most commonly in the evening of Holy Saturday or midnight – and is the first celebration of Easter, days traditionally being considered to begin at sunset.

**For other services across the Ministry Area please check with the individual churches**



# Severn Wye

## Holy Week Services

**With Bishop Cherry**

**2nd - 8th April 2023**

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**Holy Saturday**

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**For other services across the Ministry Area please check with the individual churches**

## My Take on the Lent Course Held in Shirenewton Church Room



To my surprise, I have enjoyed the Lent Course this year. We have had the opportunity to discuss all sorts of questions, to agree and also to disagree - and that is positively refreshing. Yes, it's true that wherever one or two people are gathered together, one or two will rumble on a bit, but when was that ever not the case?

But parking that to one side, I sometimes (often) find that Sunday morning church a bit of a one-way dialogue and so I am enjoying the time and the space to hear other people's ideas on things scripture, and yep, we are all different, with really quite different views. It's been interesting to discover what we like and what we dislike, say, in terms of a church service. For example I myself am not a 'peace giver'. I'm definitely not a warm, cuddly, hugging sort of a person nor even the hand-shaking type, but hey I can appreciate the sentiment. Just don't come too near me.

And the meetings have been really quite light-hearted at times.

Best joke so far? From Father Michael:

A stalwart of the church tries to persuade a friend to come to church.

Stalwart: Why not come along and see what it's like?

Friend: No way, they're all hypocrites in church.

Stalwart: True but we've always got room for one more.

Glynis Macdonald

## ITTON CHURCH EVENTS

- 14<sup>th</sup> May 8.00 a.m. Rogation Walk starting with Morning Prayer at Itton Church. Walk to St. Arvans.  
10.00 a.m. Eucharist at St. Arvans with Pet Blessing after service.  
11.30 a.m. Walk to Penterry Church then to Devauden. Finishing at Kilgwrrwg Church.

Walkers (with dogs on leads) welcome to join in for all or part of the Rogation Walk.

31<sup>st</sup> May time tbc Jazz Night in church.

22<sup>nd</sup> June time tbc Talk on the life and work of Arthur Purchas in Meeting Rooms.

24<sup>th</sup> June Open Day at St. Arvans Church.

## Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall

# Annual **G**eneral **M**eeting

of the Executive Committee is

to be held at the Hall on

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023

at 7.30pm

New members are always welcome.

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# SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*Registered Charity No. 1090167*

Our March meeting will take place on 30<sup>th</sup> March, the speaker for the evening will be Prof. Ronald Hutton who will give a talk entitles 'Henry VII'.

Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March

'Henry VII', Prof Ronald Hutton

Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> April

Chepstow Priory Church, Monmouth Antiquarian Association, President, Jeremy Knight will give a talk on the history and architecture of the priory, donations towards the up keep of the church.  
1.45pm for 2.00pm

Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> April

'Chepstow Castle, the Magna Carta, Ireland, America and the Moon' by John Burrows in the Church Room, 7.30pm

Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> April/  
Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May

The Battle of Monmouth, by The Sealed Knot

Our meetings are held at the Church Room, unless otherwise stated, we start at 7.30pm and everyone is welcome.



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**Eileen O' Dwyer**

**Letter from E.I. Jones, dated 16th April 1852.(D 1128)**

Quotes the Norton, architect's report:

"The nave roof which is very ancient is now (so) completely decayed in parts that it must be replaced, nor do I think it desirable to use any of the old materials in its reconstruction. The windows in most cases are very ill restored, with wooden mullions in lieu of the ancient stone ones; these require to be entirely renewed.

He (the architect) then goes on to mention the decayed state of the walls and the necessity for repewing - but from the small size of the church and the removal of the unsightly gallery, which blocks up the west window, he is not able to increase materially the number of sittings without adding to the sacred edifice."

Later in the letter: Shirenewton is I am sorry to say the poorest, and the most overburdened with a pauper population in the Chepstow district - the exposed situation and shallow soil afford no encouragement to wealthy occupiers; the rate payers generally are small tenant occupiers, a class quite unable to bear any heavy expenditure. We have two large landed proprietors residing in the parish but from one of them we have no hope of receiving assistance - I do not think he will offer any serious opposition but he will do nothing to forward the work - the other has very munificently given £100 for the new aisle and £50 for repairs.

**Letter from William Lawley, of Bryngwyn, dated 20th April 1852.**

"The parish of Shirenewton lies upon a continuation of the same wild hills as Devauden Green which was brought so much into notice by the self denying labours of the good old schoolmaster James Davies. The population is generally of the like scattered and very poor who live in cottages built on generally upon the waste and surrounded by a few pockets of unproductive land which have been claimed by their industry from the surrounding common. It is only in the last 13 or 14 years that a parsonage house has been built and the rectors have residence on the spot, and their efforts to improve the people have been greatly impeded by the want of substance and sufficient accommodation in their parish church. I shall very deeply regret if the present attempts should fail for want of sufficient funds. The necessity of very extensive repairs contemporaneously with the important addition of a north aisle will add greatly to the cost."

---

One other letter comments that no-one has a living memory of any repairs being undertaken to the church. If this includes recollections from long dead parents, then it would take us back about a century, so it is unlikely that anything had been done since about 1750 at least.

The bells were hung in 1757 - so this would suggest that a restoration was carried out then.



**SHIRENEWTON  
VILLAGE  
SPRING  
MARKET**

**Saturday  
29th April  
10.30-12.30  
At the Rec  
Hall**

## Shirenewton Village Spring Market

After a fabulous Christmas market which was so well supported by the community, we're back with a Spring Market on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 10.30-12.30 at the Rec Hall. Put the date in your diary – you don't want to miss it!

I can't believe the take up for stalls – we were pretty much full after initially putting details on the Market Facebook page & contacting previous stall holders!

Stalls include Fair Trade, Handbags, Plants, Pickles & Preserves, Jewellery, Hand Woven items, Honey, Cards, Forever Living, Cider, Flowers, Hand crafted items, Cake & more! Our "Posh Coffee" pop up café returns – back by popular demand!

At this market we're also raising money for the Turkey/Syria Earthquake Appeal – we're having a raffle with all proceeds going to the appeal, together with 50% of all stall fees being donated.

If anyone would be interested in taking part in the organisation of the market, helping on the day, or going on our reserve list for stalls, please contact Shirley on 01291 641161. Come along & support your local market!

## **Shirenewton Recreation Association Survey 2023 Results Feedback**

A very big thank you to all those residents who took the time and trouble to complete the above survey last month. The survey was distributed to 480 households across Shirenewton, Mynyddbach, Earlswood and Newchurch with a response rate of 28%. We are very pleased with the constructive feedback received and the responses are summarised below.

1. The principal uses by respondents, which can be for more than one purpose, are currently:

- Attending organised village events - 84%
- Taking in the views and wide open space - 68%
- Using the children's play area - 35%
- Dog walking - 34%
- Exercise - 34%

2. Frequency of visits to the Recreation Ground by respondents:

- Daily - 21%
- Weekly - 32%
- Monthly - 22%
- Less often - 25%

3. 60% of respondents were happy with the Recreation Ground in its current form.

4. The things that mattered most to respondents and would make them use the Recreation ground more were:

- Seating areas / benches / picnic tables - 80 respondents
- Improve drainage to field - 67 respondents
- Improve current sports ground for community use - 59 respondents

5. The vast majority of respondents skipped the any other comments question but from those that did comment there was a clear feeling that the current facilities (recreation field and hall) are under - utilised and could be improved for all age groups. Suggestions were wide ranging from enhanced parking / accessibility, resurfacing of the tennis court, cycling / jogging areas and improved play areas. There was also a clear appetite for more community events in the hall including coffee mornings / afternoon teas together with table tennis and bridge clubs.

The next step will be for the Committee to explore improvements and related funding in the light of the feedback received before consulting residents further.

Thank you again to all those who completed the survey.  
Beverly Lindsay, Chair Shirenewton Recreation Association

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### April

Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1.30 p.m.	Easter Trail, Glades Tea Rooms Wentwood
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> 7.00 p.m.	Compline, Thomas à Becket Church. Shirenewton
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council Meeting Recreation Hall
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> 7 p.m.	Taize service, St Mary's Priory Church Chepstow
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> 7 p.m.	Eucharist service at St Arvans Church, St Arvans
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> 7 p.m.	Tenebrae service at St Tewdric's Church, Mathern
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> 10.00 a.m.	Family walk up Gray Hill Reservoir car park
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> 11.00 a.m.	Stations of the Cross at St Peter's Church St Pierre
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> 7.3– p.m.	Easter Vigil service at St Arvans Church St Arvans
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> 10.00 a.m.	Eucharist, Thomas à Becket Church. Shirenewton
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark
Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.	Annual General Meeting, Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> 1.45 p.m.	Tour of St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow Lead by Jeremy Knight
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> 7.00 p.m.	Chepstow LIONS annual dinner Mounton Brook Lodge
Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark
Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Local History Society Chepstow Castle, etc —John Burrows

### May

Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council Meeting Recreation Hall
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> 8.15 a.m.	Rogation Walk, St Deiniol's, Itton to Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

### June

Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup>	Shirenewton Fete
---------------------------	------------------

## Amazon Smile may be gone but you can still support Chepstow and Caldicot Lions with Easyfundraising!

We have some important news regarding the Amazon Smile program. Unfortunately, Amazon has discontinued this program, which means that we can no longer receive donations through it. However, we have some good news too! You can still continue to support Chepstow and Caldicot Lions by signing up for Easyfundraising. By doing this, you can help us raise funds for our community projects and initiatives, without any extra cost to you.

All you have to do is sign up through our Easyfundraising page at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/chepstowandcaldicotlions> and shop online as you normally would. The retailers you shop with will then make a donation to us, at no extra cost to you. It's as simple as that!

So, if you want to continue supporting our cause, please consider signing up for Easyfundraising today. Your support means the world to us, and together we can make a real difference in our community. Thank you!

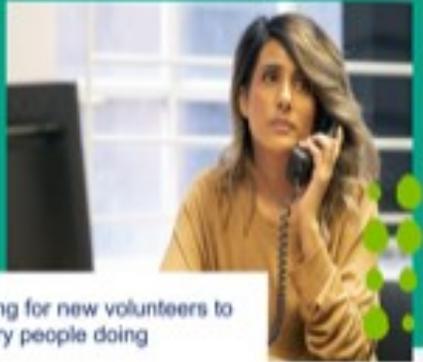
The graphic features a man with a beard, wearing a light-colored shirt, smiling as he looks at a smartphone. He is also holding a laptop. The background is a light yellow gradient with a large yellow circle behind the man. The text 'easyfundraising turns your online shopping into everyday magic' is written in a dark teal font. A yellow button with the text 'Support us' is positioned above the man. At the bottom, there is a dark teal banner with the Easyfundraising logo and the text 'easyfundraising You shop, brands donate to us'.

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Support us

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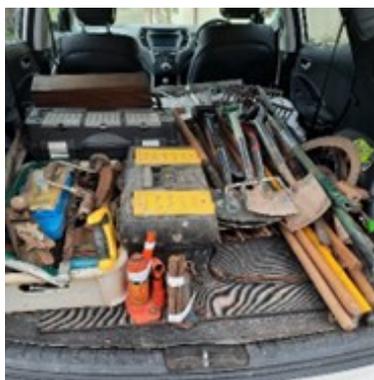
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## ***Gardening Corner***

I'm writing this month's article feeling a little battered and bruised – literally. 11 March saw me go into hospital for a new hip operation. Fortunately, everything went well with the surgery and I'm now at home on two sticks and learning to walk again. We managed to catch up pretty well with all of the outstanding jobs in the garden, so hopefully there won't be a big backlog waiting my return. It will be novel not to be able to drive for six weeks, but I won't be missing the relentless madness of or major roads! Regular readers may remember that I have always been a bit of a nurd when it comes to garden tools. So long as it is wooden handled with stainless steel workings then I'm a mug to buy the latest 'must have' tool.

Over the years this has meant that I have built up a bit of a collection of what I would refer to in my eyes as 'sub-standard' tools – so they are either plastic handled or aren't stainless steel! We pride ourselves on re-cycling as much of anything that we lay our hands on. A trip to the Monmouthshire recycling depot at Five Lanes has been a regular trip about every three months or so. We stack everything together in piles until we have enough to make a trip worthwhile. It has always amazed me, especially in the metals skip, just how much seemingly very good equipment gets disposed of, from pushchairs, bikes, tools; the list seems to be endless. Although this has improved greatly recently with the re-cycling shop open and doing brisk business – always worth a nosey around after you have dropped a load off! I had already been down to dispose of a lot of bits and pieces, and they often really are just that. With a mixture of electrical wiring, old horse shoes (there seems to be a lot around here), bucket handles, lumps of iron from an old railway carriage as well as more recent additions, the biggest being our old wood burning heating stove that gave up the ghost over a year ago. This had languished in our conservatory since it was taken out. Recently it was dismantled / destroyed depending on how difficult it was to-dismantle. Some bits were saved, as the new stove is – on purpose – the same colour. So heating drawer, doors and various flaps have been stored, just in case the new bits might fail one day. Having spares will save a fortune. One good thing with the German manufacturer is that they have changed nothing design wise, since we bought our first stove of the same model, some 35 years ago. It looked smart then, and still looks the part now. Looking in the skip at the recycling centre, there still appeared to be a mix of what appeared to be really good, functional tools as previously. We wanted to get rid of our old tools, but they were still perfectly serviceable and so I was reluctant to throw them into the skip. Enter TWAM. 'Tools With A Mission', a church-based charity. Look at their website at [twam.co.uk](http://twam.co.uk). They send around 300 tonnes of tools and other items to Africa each year, and their aim is to train individuals in their use, as well as how to establish a business. Often those in receipt are young, and sadly very often, they will have lost their parents, and be trying desperately to support their siblings. The website carries a list of things they want and include carpentry, plumbing, gardening, mechanics, and farming for the men, and sewing machines (hand, electric it makes no difference), knitting machines, or any of the fore mentioned for the women. There is also a clear list of what

is not acceptable. Computers, and appropriate books are also welcome – so long as they can be used to help individuals grasp an understanding of creating a business and then running it successfully. The charity is based in Ipswich, Suffolk but they have a couple of depots about the country, where they give the tools a bit of love and attention before putting them into 'packs' for the individual end user. So, a carpentry pack will include saws, hammers, chisels, measuring equipment, etc. The packs then get loaded into a container ready for shipment once full. They can't repair broken tools however, as they simply don't have the time or resource for this. The best though is that they do have a very good spread of local collection points all around the country. The nearest to us is a very friendly individual called Alan Parker on the outskirts of Croesyceiliog. All you need to do is check the website for the tools they want, arrange a suitable day and time to deliver to Alan, bung them in the car and drop them off. We had a full car load, as our fishing club was recently closed down, so many of their unwanted tools were included as well. It was extremely satisfying to know that what were good and still very serviceable tools were going to a very good home. You can contact Alan at [alan.parker10cbr@gmail.com](mailto:alan.parker10cbr@gmail.com)



### **Car partly loaded for delivery to TWAM**

So, what about gardening, well, as I said, we were busy making the most of the dry weather (if you can remember that), by spending most of our time weeding and turning the ground. All of the vegetable areas have been cleared, some have had black weed matting put over them to ensure that they remain weed free for planting time, and some have been covered with large cloches. The majority of the flower borders have also been cleaned, although time did run out in the end, so those that didn't get 'done' will have to wait for now until I am mobile enough. Most of the roses got pruned as well, bar four climbers. March is the last month for pruning, so if you haven't done your roses by the time you read this, then leave them until next year – just as these four will be! The first sowings of broad beans, peas and lettuce were put on the hot bench a month ago, and were planted out in the large tunnel as the

very last job on the list before my operation. Apparently, these are establishing well! I planted some really early sweet peas in their as well, so hopefully we will get some much earlier flowers from these than anything planted outside. All peas and broad beans are pretty hardy, so they should all shrug off any cold nights – unless we get something really exceptional. In which case they will get the horticultural fleece treatment. I had sown a few of the really early half-hardy annuals and a few perennial flowers seeds as well and as I write this the assistant head gardener, is down in the greenhouse potting these on into individual cells. Other various crops were also sown earlier, so the onions and tomatoes for the shows, along with mixed herbs and these will be planted on into larger pots as and when it becomes necessary. The other job I wanted to complete prior to my incapacitation, was to sort out the first and second early potatoes. Half of the early potatoes were planted direct into the large greenhouse border, with the rest in one of the large tunnel beds. The idea being that the greenhouse will crop four or five weeks before any outside planted potatoes, and the tunnel ones would be two or three weeks earlier – thus extending the cropping period for as long as possible. The second early potatoes were all placed in 5 litre pots and are currently standing on the ground between the first earlies. This makes best use of the limited space and best use of water as well. Any excess water from the pots will drain into the ground and water the first earlies. At least that is the theory. Once things start to grow, the pots will simply be moved on and planted outside as and when appropriate (or necessary). As I recover, the next few weeks will see sowing and repotting duties expanding exponentially. But more of that next time.

One job I was very pleased to complete at the start of March was all of the pruning in the orchard. This is the first time I have ever managed to prune everything and was well overdue. As with the roses, if you haven't done this by the time you read this, it is too late. The sap will be rising well in the trees and pruning will allow the wounds to seep too much.

So far, all of the bees appear to have survived. I have fed them with fondant, but they need more. Unfortunately, they will have to wait until I can manage to move about well enough again. Happy gardening until next month, *Steve and Felicity Hunt*.



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For those of you who were waiting with baited breath over whether I'd managed to recover my data, I'm sorry I missed the last deadline for the magazine. My year has been extremely busy. So busy, in fact, that the WD drive I purchased from eBay is sitting unopened on my desk. I will get around to it one day and report back when I do.

I thought I'd dedicate this entry to a question I know I've asked, you may have as well. Just what is ChatGPT?

You may have read about ChatGPT in the MSM. People have allegedly used it to cheat on essays, write computer programs, appear more intelligent than they are, masquerade as poets, etc. So I thought I'd investigate. Perhaps I could use it to write my parish mag entry? So I tested it. I registered an account and entered the following request into it: "Write a 500 word article on current technology interests for a church magazine"

I've included the result at the end of the article (if Bill has room for it). It's interesting to note that 339 words in there was a 'network error' and it all stopped working. The key point is that after I 'regenerated' the article, it did complete an article but a very different one. So, every answer is different. A tentative start. However, after more fiddling, the result I got from the request 'write a poem about a parish magazine', was stunning:

--starts--

In every quiet corner of the town,  
There's a little piece of paper to be found,  
It's filled with news and tidings of the day,  
And it's known to all as the parish magazine.

With stories of the latest local fairs,  
And events that happened down the lane,  
It's a treasure trove of gossip and affairs,  
And a way for people to stay in touch again.

The church announcements and the prayer list,  
Sit proudly on its pages side by side,  
With recipes for cakes that can't be missed,  
And adverts for the local shops to buy.

It's a humble little publication,  
But it serves the community so well,  
Bringing people together, in congregation,  
And telling the tales that the town has to tell.

So if you're ever wandering through the streets,  
And you happen upon this little mag,  
Take a moment to stop and read,  
For it's a window to the town's heart and soul, indeed.  
--ends—

Is that brilliant or what?

OK, so what is ChatGPT? It essentially an advanced version of the chatbots you get on website masquerading as 'customer service'. But it's so advanced it can do just about anything. Microsoft is so impressed that they are already spending billions to incorporate ChatGPT in its products, such as its search engine Bing and its collaboration tools. This could seriously shake up the internet search market which is dominated by Google and hasn't materially changed for the last 20 or so years. In fact, its so important, that Google has announced a competitor called 'Bard'.

Some argue that ChatGPT should be considered a malevolent AI and be destroyed. We'll look at some of the arguments around this in months to come. In the meantime, if Bill has room, here is the 339 words which ChatGPT produced in response to my first request.

-- starts 339 words generated by ChatGPT in response to the request 'Write a 500 word article on current technology interests for a church magazine' –

Technology has become an integral part of our daily lives, and it continues to evolve at a rapid pace. It has changed the way we communicate, work, and even worship. As we navigate this ever-changing landscape, it is important to keep up with current technology interests, especially as a church community.

One area of technology that has seen significant growth in recent years is social media. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become powerful tools for churches to connect with their congregation and reach out to the wider community. These platforms allow churches to share updates on upcoming events, post sermons and teachings, and engage with their followers in real-time. Social media has also become a way for churches to address important issues and offer support to those in need.

Another technology interest for churches is online giving. With the rise of e-commerce and digital payments, many churches have adopted online giving platforms to make it easier for their congregation to give financially. This not only provides convenience for

church members, but it also allows churches to receive donations from people who may not attend in-person services. Online giving platforms also provide churches with detailed financial reporting and analytics, making it easier to track donations and budget accordingly.

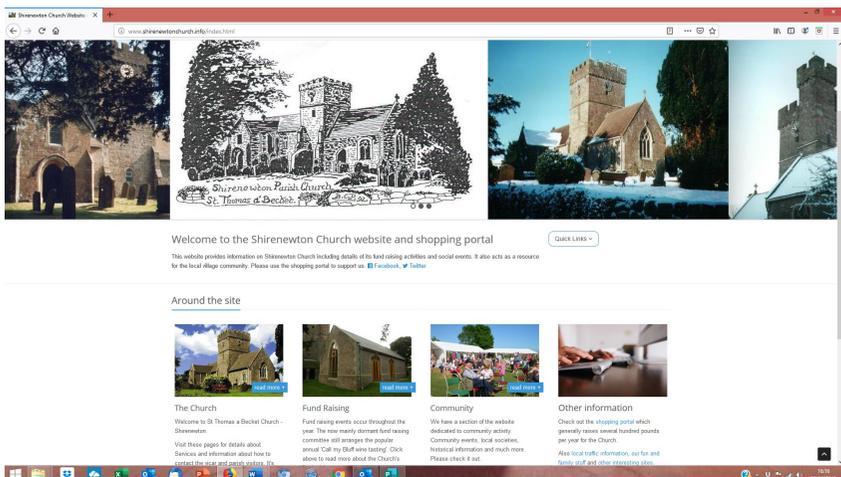
Virtual and hybrid events have also become a technology interest for churches in recent years. With the pandemic forcing many churches to temporarily close their doors, many have turned to virtual events to stay connected with their congregation. Virtual events such as online prayer meetings, Bible studies, and worship services have become a way for churches to continue to engage with their community despite physical distancing requirements. Hybrid events, which combine in-person and virtual components, have also become popular as churches begin to reopen.

Technology has also transformed the way churches manage their operations. Church management software, or ChMS, has become a popular tool for churches to manage everything from attendance and donations to scheduling and communication. ChMS platforms can also provide churches with insights into their ...

-- ends --

Safe browsing

David Cornwell  
webmaster



## Lions Club Charity Event: Don't miss the Chepstow and Caldicot Lions Charter Night

Exciting news! The Chepstow and Caldicot Lions Club are hosting their annual Charter Night celebration dinner on **Saturday, April 22nd, 2023**, at the beautiful Mounton Brook Lodge in Chepstow. The event promises to be a night of great food, music, and entertainment.

The event, which was a great success last year, is an opportunity for members of the local community to come together and celebrate with the Lions, while also supporting their charitable efforts. The cost of attending the event is £32 per head, with a formal dress code and arrival time of **7 pm for 7:30 pm**.

The Lions Club is a well-known organisation that supports various charitable causes in the local community. They have been working tirelessly to make a positive impact on people's lives through fundraising and community service. By attending this event, guests will have an opportunity to show their support for the Lions Club and its efforts to make a difference in the community.

The event will be held at **Mounton Brook Lodge**, a stunning wedding and events venue located in Chepstow. Mounton Brook Lodge offers a beautiful setting with excellent facilities that are sure to impress guests. Interested attendees can take a virtual tour of the venue at <https://youtu.be/rKD90uHOjKE> to get a sneak peek of what to expect.

To attend the event or to learn more about the Lions Club and their charitable efforts, interested individuals can contact

**Lion President Denise Harrison** on **0345 833 9565** or email at [mtanddharrison@btinternet.com](mailto:mtanddharrison@btinternet.com).

The Chepstow and Caldicot Lions Club's Charter Night celebration dinner is an event that should not be missed. It promises to be a night of fun, music, and entertainment while supporting a great cause. So, mark your calendars for April 22nd, 2023, and join the Lions in their efforts to make a difference in the community.



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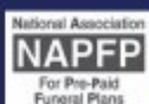
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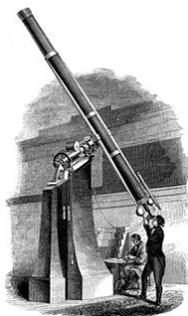
In the evening the brightest planet Venus is near the horizon to the west and is just below the very fine crescent Moon on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. The orange-coloured planet Mars is higher in the sky above the constellation Orion. Mars is near the crescent Moon on the 25<sup>th</sup> April.

The seven stars of the Plough constellation are directly overhead and Leo, the Lion can be seen to the South. Orion the Hunter is just above the Western horizon whilst W-shaped Cassiopeia is to the North-West. The Plough and Cassiopeia can always be seen at our latitude, but Leo and Orion are only above our horizon during the Winter months.

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. Mizar and Alcor together are sometimes called the "Horse and Rider", and the ability to resolve the two stars with the naked eye is often quoted as a test of eyesight.

The two stars furthest from the handle of the Plough point to the North Star. The North Star or Polaris is approximately 400 light years away. This is a distance of approximately 2,000,000,000,000,000 miles! The light we now see from this star left the North Star 400 years ago.

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.



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## LOCAL CONTACTS

*If you know of any changes or omissions please contact the Editor Bill Clark  
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– People's	Andrew Baker	01291 641 925
PCC Secretary	John Montague	01291 329 481
PCC Treasurer	Graham Lambert	01291 641 175
PCC Members	Janet Horton	01291 641 783
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	Peter Pope	01291 624 453
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	Ros Downs	

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**Member of Parliament** David Davies 020 7219 8360 [daviesd@parliament.uk](mailto:daviesd@parliament.uk)

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**Neighbourhood CSO** Andrew Jones Andrew.jones@gwent.pnn.police.uk

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**Earlswood Hope** Mr Raymond Jeremiah 01291 641726  
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Published: by The Church of St. Thomas à Becket Shirenewton

Editor: Bill Clark 01291 641783 email: [parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com](mailto:parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com)

The cost of the Magazine is £1.50 per issue/10 issues for £14.

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

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**Deadline for the May 2023 issue is  
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