

A close-up photograph of several purple crocus flowers and buds emerging from a layer of white snow. The flowers have six petals and are surrounded by long, thin green leaves. The snow is piled up around the base of the plants, creating a textured, white background.

**Shirenewton Parish
Magazine**

February 2023

Price £1:50



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FROM THE REGISTERS

The funeral of Howard Garnett Sheen (1947-2022) took place with the Reverend Julian White officiating.

The funeral of George Michael Horton (1931-2022) took place with the Reverend John Waters officiating.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who supported our fund-raising efforts over Christmas. Together we raised an amazing £983.64 for the following charities:

The Advent Fayre raised £559 to support the work of Friends of Rwandan Rugby ([Friends of Rwandan Rugby – When we play rugby everyone smiles..](#))

Carols round the tree raised £252.76 for Médecins Sans Frontières ([MSF UK | Médecins Sans Frontières](#))

The Christingle raised £171.88 for The Children's Society ([The Children's Society | UK children's charity \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#))

Huge thanks to everyone for contributing to these very worthy causes.
Graham Lambert, Church Treasurer

SANDRA MORRIS

To all my friends and neighbours may I say a heartfelt thank you for all your support, advice, offers of help - (and soup, cakes and walking the dog!) - during my time caring for Sandra, over the past 18 months. Many have stopped to ask me how things were going and every conversation helped me to cope. I cannot emphasise enough the positive impact of a few words and the offers of help.

The turn-out at both the Crem and the wake was humbling.

The real value of our community has been brought home to me in circumstances that I would have preferred were different, but I have been uplifted by how caring we are for each other.

Sally and Rebecca, our daughters, were also both helped by the knowledge that I had so much love around me.

We have a very caring community, which is precious, and I hope will be preserved.

Barrie Morris

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in December:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Harry Baker | 2. Emma Johnsey-Smith |
| 3. Hugh James | 4. Cheryl Lloyd |

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.

COST OF THE PARISH MAGAZINE

At a recent PCC meeting it was agreed that we will need to increase the annual subscription for the parish magazine from £12 to £15 in 2023.

The reason for this is that the various costs incurred in producing the magazine have increased. This increase in the annual subscription for the magazine is in line with that, so that we continue to cover our costs.

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 8th 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.

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SEVERN WYE MINISTRY AREA ESTABLISHED

Well, it's done! We are now formally the Severn Wye Ministry Area. The inauguration took place on Sunday 27th November. It was good to see so many from our 12 church congregations present to witness and celebrate this historic occasion. Bishop Cherry presided and pronounced the Decree, and licensed our clergy.

The Bishop reminded us that the differences between our various churches are irrelevant. We are united, as one, in Christ. We are to shine with the light of Christ, to share that light with one another and to share it with those who live and work in our communities, so that all can see and be drawn to the warmth and the glow that is Christ within us.

Musicians from several different churches took part, and at the end of the service we particularly enjoyed the choir's rendition of Howard Goodall's The Lord is my Shepherd (better known as the theme tune to The Vicar of Dibley!).

Our first Annual Vestry Meeting was convened on Wednesday 30th of November to elect the Council – our new Trustee body. Those elected were:

Church lay representatives:

Chepstow: (St Mary's and St Christopher's):	Kevin Higgs
Devauden:	Peter Kenington
Itton:	Anne Octon
Kilgwrrwg:	Cynthia Matthews
Mathern:	Ros Downs
Mounton:	Lynne Brierley
Newchurch:	Mathew Brown
St Arvans:	Verena Evans
St Pierre:	Catherine Timothy

Also elected were:

Lay co-chair: Hilary Hillier

Treasurer: Kevin Higgs

Nobody came forward for the important posts of Ministry Area Wardens or Secretary. Please consider whether you, or someone you know, has the skills necessary for any of these

roles. It is not too late, as we can co-opt additional members at any time.

There were also no representatives put forward for Penterry or Shirenewton. Verena and Ros have kindly offered to provide points of contact for these, but ideally we would like to have someone with us who is on the local church council.

So, now that the Ministry Area Council has been established, what's next? The first meeting of the Council will take place in early January. We will be seeking to allocate responsibilities, particularly for Safeguarding and for Communications – both vital roles. Also high on the agenda are the overall direction and priorities. The Representative Body (the central funding body of the Church in Wales) has agreed to provide an additional £6.7 million across the Diocese over the next 10 years, so that we can maintain the current number of stipendiary clergy, and to assist us in achieving a target of 4.5% growth per year. This sounds challenging, but for many of our churches it represents only one or two extra people in the congregation (though the target is for the MA as a whole, not church by church).

Our Ministry team will continue to meet regularly. We have already seen some of the benefits of this, with a new forward rota, and clergy covering for each other during absences. Our treasurers will also continue to meet as a group to discuss financial issues, although each church will continue to maintain and manage its own bank account.

But what of the rest of us? What can we do? Across the Church in Wales, on top of the long term decline in numbers, there has been a reduction of around 30% in those attending since just before Covid. Some do have to change, and change is not something we can just leave to the clergy and the MAC members.

It is very evident how deeply committed and hard-working so many people are within their own church communities. But up to now, churches have operated almost entirely independently. The whole idea of setting up the Ministry Areas is to enable churches to work together and support each other. An important first step is for people to get to know each other

better, so that we can build relationships and trust – it will be so much easier to work together, and to ask for help, if we know one another. So please consider attending a service or event at another church. Take the opportunity to meet and get to know people from other congregations. We have a new website: severnwyema.co.uk. This has information about each church, and links to existing church websites where these exist. Events that we have been told about are listed: further details can be added by contacting Anne Octon (anneocton@gmail.com). Please ensure that details about your Christmas services are added, because visitors to the area may be looking for these.



Since we have 12 churches, one idea is to have a featured “church of the month” when we encourage people to go along for one of their services or another event. Why not explore the beauty, history and traditions of these other churches, all of which are gems in their own way. I personally plan to visit each church over the coming weeks, though I hope you will understand it is going to take a while to get round them all.

One of our key priorities has to be to consider how to reach out to families, children and young people. Some initiatives are already in place with local schools, and we need to build on and extend these, and consider whether we can engage a youth worker. We will also be looking to the Diocese for support – on what is being tried elsewhere, what works, what ideas we could use here in Severn Wye.

I'm sure many of you have thoughts and ideas of your own. But perhaps you haven't put them forward because you don't have enough resources to carry them out in your church. Please do come forward with your ideas, because it may be that something it was hard to get going in a single parish could be achieved by a couple of churches working together. If you would like to contact me about any matter, please do so via: 07812 110628 or hilary.hillier@btinternet.com.

I wish you every blessing over the coming Christmas season.
 Hilary Hillier
 Lay Co-chair
 Severn Wye Ministry Area

SERVICES IN THE SEVERN WYE MINISTRY AREA FOR FEBRUARY

Services in February are planned as shown below. We hope you will join us in Shirenewton, but all are welcome at any church.

Date: February	Date:	5 th	12 th	19 th	26 th
Name of Church	Service Time	Sunday 1	Sunday 2	Sunday 3	Sunday 4
St Mary's Priory, Chepstow	8.00	Service	Service	Eucharist	Eucharist
	11.00	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist
St Christopher's, Chepstow	9.30	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist
St Peter's, Newchurch	14.30	Eucharist	No Service	Café Church	No Service
St Tewdric, Mathern	9.00	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Morning Prayer
St Peter, St Pierre	11.30	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist
St Andeonus, Mounton	10.15	Eucharist	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Eucharist
St Thomas a Becket, Shirenewton	10.00	Morning Praise	Eucharist	Eucharist	Service of the Word
St Arvan, St Arvan's	10.00	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist
St Deiniol, Itton	11.30	No Service	Eucharist	No Service	Eucharist
St James, Devauden	9.00	Family Service	No Service	Eucharist	No Service
St Mary's, Penterry	11.30	Eucharist	No Service	No Service	No Service
Church of the Holy Cross, Kilgwrwg	11.30	No Service	No Service	Eucharist	No Service

MINISTRY AREA NEWS

The first meeting of the Ministry Area Council took place on Thursday 12th January.

We are delighted that Ros Downs has agreed to be appointed by Rev Philip as Ministry Area Warden. We do need a second warden – please consider if you might be able to contribute in this way. You will be an important member of the new Ministry Area team, helping to shape our future and helping to bring all our churches together and make them feel part of our Ministry Area family. We are also still looking to fill the role of Secretary and it may be that we are able to offer an honorarium to someone who is able to spend about a day a week on the role.

Our safeguarding officer will be Peter Kenington, who will liaise with the safeguarding officers in each church and help to arrange training and DBS checking.

We are still seeking someone to lead on Communications and Publicity. Good communication is going to be vital now that we are a wider family of churches. Publicising all our new initiatives and services is also key. Ideally we would like to find someone to take on the role, or to assist, who has the necessary IT expertise to be able to update our MA website, and also exploit social media particularly as a way of reaching out to younger people.

We've agreed that our key priorities for the next year will be:

- Working together – encouraging the churches to get to know one another and support one another's events
- Reaching out to more people/Going for growth.

These ideas were top of the list in all the consultation sessions we held. To help take these forward a number of new initiatives have been suggested:

More sessions and new venues for Café Church: this more informal style of service is already proving popular in Newchurch and Devauden – why not try it in your church, if you haven't already?

We plan to set up a Messy Church team to assist in holding sessions in churches which haven't so far been able to do so. Holding Messy Church requires people to have the necessary safeguarding checks and training, and holding the same session in different venues will maximise the use of our scarce resources.

A particularly exciting new initiative is Forest Church. Since people won't come to our churches, we need to reach them in other places. What better way to do so than in the glorious countryside which surrounds us. Forest church is an informal outdoor gathering where people are invited to experience God in the beauty of His creation. Forest church be tailored according to who we want to attract – a shorter walk and more informal worship to attract families and younger children, a longer, more contemplative walk, like a mini pilgrimage. Our idea is to start and/or end the walk at one of our rural churches, perhaps with a picnic. We hope to hold a number of such sessions throughout the summer. The Itton/St Arvans/Penterry/Devauden/Kilgwrrwg group already holds a

Rogation Walk where we walk from church to church over the course of a day (you can walk just one section, of course!) – look out for details of this on 14th May.

We also want to consider how our existing initiatives to reach out to school students can be extended, perhaps by setting up a team to help with running assemblies. Our schools are receptive to this approach.

Other ideas include pet blessing services, family picnic services, outdoor Songs of Praise, new Home Groups.

We are extremely effective in attracting people to our Christmas events – the aim of these ideas is to try to extend this to other times of the year. We are asking all our local church councils (LCCs) to discuss these ideas and consider which of them they would be interested in taking forward. Also, letting us know of any existing plans which we can ensure are publicised more widely.

The Diocese has set us a target, challenging but achievable we think, of 4.5% growth per year. We will be discussing with them how this is to be measured, since clearly the conventional measure of average Sunday attendance would not cover our new initiatives (though we certainly hope to encourage more people to come on Sundays too).

The Finance subgroup will be meeting soon, chaired by MA treasurer Kevin Higgs. They will be agreeing the allocation of the Ministry Share between our parishes and also how clerics' expenses should be shared out in the most equitable manner.

Reverend John Waters is the chair of the Fabric subgroup. This is purely an advisory group, which is available to assist on request. John has a list of contractors and also has experience of faculty applications. Any church which is planning building work is welcome to contact John for advice or information.

The Ministry subgroup will be discussing how to take forward some of the new initiatives.

Bishop Cherry will be coming to the MA during Holy Week – please look out for the details of this when they are confirmed. It will be a good opportunity to meet her if you haven't done so already.

Our Standing Orders (the rules by which the council will operate including for example voting rules and what is the quorum for attendance) have been agreed. These also include spending limits – since the MAC is now the trustee body, they are responsible legally for all items of expenditure. However, churches have delegated authority to spend up to a limit of £3000 without going through the Finance Subgroup or MAC. And plans for major work should already have been flagged up in the budget at the start of the year.

If you have any questions or comments on any of the above, please speak to any of our church representatives, clergy or to Philip Averay or Hilary Hillier.

PARISH MAGAZINE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

It's that time of year again when you are requested to pay your annual subscription for the ten copies of the parish magazine which will then be delivered to your home throughout 2023.

Unfortunately, due to rising costs incurred in producing the magazine, we have had to increase the annual subscription for 2023 to £14.00 per annum.

A payment slip with advice about who and how to pay, together with an envelope addressed to the person who delivers your magazine, is included in each of your copies this month.

Thank you for your continued support of our parish magazine.

Aileen Doggett
aileendoggett@btinternet.com
01291 641459

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

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**

Shirenewton Community Council

Includes updates from the December and January Community Council Meetings

Planning Applications Considered in December

DM/2022/01070 Wentwood Mill, Buckwell Road To Gaerllwyd Baptist Chapel, Earlswood

Refurbishment and extension to existing cottage and erection of new detached garage and associated extension to residential curtilage.

Recommendation: Objection based on the grounds that the proposed new building is not sympathetic to either the existing cottage or the local landscape, the colour/finish to the walls and the materials and the colour of the roof is unspecified.

Shirenewton Community Council require further clarification, (as requested by Landscape Green Infrastructure Urban Design) and the opportunity to comment further when this clarification is available.

Pre-order Consultation – Path Extinguishment and Creation – Buckwell Farm, Pencaemawr

Recommendation: No Objection

Planning Application Considered in January

DM/2022/01777 Westend Cottage, Shirenewton To Wentwood Mill Road, Earlswood, Shirenewton

First Floor Extension over existing Ground Floor to create two bedrooms.

Recommendation: Unanimous no objection (one abstention).

Shirenewton Play Area and Mynyddbach Green Update

In the January meeting of the Community Council, approval was given to purchase and replace a swing seat on the large swings in the play area and to initiate the repairs required to the picnic bench on Mynyddbach Green.

Excerpts from the County Councillor Reports for December 2022 and January 2023 – due to the delay in publication, some out of date information regarding public consultation and Severn Bridge closures has been removed. The full reports are available in the respective Minutes on the Community Council Website.

County Councillor Brown advised:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=144&MId=4983>

County Council on the 1st of December 2022

There were various reports to the County Council including the RLDP report on the preferred strategy which council agreed to go out for consultation, see note below.

The link to the County Council report can be found here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?Cid=143&MIId=5012>

Cabinet Report on the 7th of December 2022

It will be noted that the month 4 revenue report detailed in the November 2022 County Councillor report noted a £8.8m shortfall in the MCC budget. The funding shortfall in month 6 has increased to £9.15 million.

The link to the Cabinet reports can be found here including the revenue report:

Green Waste Collection.

A consultation on the green waste bin collection is/has been undertaken which closes on the 12th of December, with existing users being directly contacted. This consultation mentions, the £23m funding shortfall forecast for next year for MCC. The consultation asks for various options including keeping the collections the same but charging £50 per bin as opposed to £28 per bin. Garden Waste collection was subsidised previously and the £50 per bin is to cover the costs, as collecting garden waste is a discretionary service provided by the County council and not part of its statutory duties.

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/garden-waste/>

Bristol Clean Air Congestion Charge

Charging started on the 28 November 2022 for some vehicles for the Bristol Clean Air Zone, it is possible to check the registration of your vehicle to see if you must pay a charge on the Government website. See Bristol.gov.uk site.

County Councillor Report January 2023

County Councillor Brown advised:

Special meeting of the People Committee on the 3rd of January 2023

The Cabinet member decision to close the Tudor Street centre for adults with learning disabilities in Abergavenny with plans to build

affordable housing in place of the centre were called in due to the lack of scrutiny of the decision. This decision has been referred to the full County Council meeting on the 19th January 2023. The reports for this meeting can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=304&MIId=5636>

Place Committee on the 12th of January 2023

The Place Committee will consider various reports including the local toilet strategy, rural broadband update, and the garden waste collection consultation. The consultation results showed an overwhelming 67% of respondents supporting a continuation of the service at £50 per bin. The Service is expected to be £50 per bin for 20 collections March through to November 2023. The reports for this meeting can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=303&MIId=5320>

Additional information provided by County Councillor Louise Brown since the January Community Council meeting:

Cabinet on the 18th of January 2023

The Cabinet reports include documents on the forthcoming budget with a public consultation open from the 18th of January and public consultation events in person or online. The proposals include a 5.95% rise in Council tax and a £11.4 million other cuts to meet the unprecedented budget pressures. The details of the proposed cuts can be found at paragraph 3.13 of the following report:

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2023/01/20230118-Cabinet-Draft-2023-24-Revenue-Capital-Budget-for-consultation-Covering-report-Final-v2.pdf>

The details of the consultation events and to have your say on an online form can be found at the following link on the budget 2023/24 and the consultation which is open from the 18th of January until noon on the 16th of February 2023:

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/budget-2023-2024/>

Dates of next meetings - Monday 6th February 2023 and Monday 6th March 2023 both at 7.00 pm, by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall.

Find more information in a draft copy of minutes on the Community Council notice boards. Previous, approved minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's website www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk

Contact the Clerk to the Community Council - Mrs Natasha Jones

Tel: 01291 650133 E-mail: shirenewtoncc@gmail.com

The Shirenewton Fete



will be held on Saturday 10th June 2023

At the Recreation Ground

Parade from the School at 1.30pm, Fete opens at 2pm

Offers of help with the planning or to help on the day (however small)

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THE BELLS, THE BELLS

The Shirenewton ringers had a full programme over Christmas. As is tradition we brought the ropes down into the nave so that any assembled congregation could witness the art of full-circle change ringing. We rang for the school children's service on 19th December, for midnight mass on Christmas Eve and for Christmas morning. For New Year we rang either side of midnight, with before having the bells half-muffled to mourn the passing of the year.

The New Year heralded the first of our tours - the Winter Tour. Visiting other churches to ring the bells is a common activity for ringers and the majority of towers welcome visitors. This year we decided to visit the area around the vicinity of Newbury where 3 counties meet - Wiltshire, Berkshire and Hampshire. So on the 14th January bright and early 14 ringers set forth to All Saints in Liddington (south of Swindon on the way to Aldbourne) to sample the 6 bells. This was an interesting tower as the original 5 bells had been pronounced "unringable" for about 70 years prior to the restoration. However, instead of restoring this original set, in 2016 a brand new ring of 6 was installed beneath this original 5, with the new bells rung from a beautifully constructed glass-fronted mezzanine floor within the tower with views over the nave and altar. Thus the tower now contains 11 bells but only the new 6 are heard. Quite why this was done was a mystery as the 5 bells will over time will require periodic maintenance to ensure their safety, with all the costs that will ensue. The only local comparison to this in Monmouthshire was the retention of the 3 bell frame at Trellech, these 3 original bells being incorporated into the now augmented ring of 6 in 1999.



The band at Little Bedwyn

After Liddington we travelled a few miles further south to the village of Baydon. The church of St Nicholas contains just 3 bells, rung from the ground floor at the base of the tower and has no local band to ring them. We were made warmly welcome but struggled a little to control the bells, not assisted by the fact a kitchen had been constructed at the base of the tower and the rope of the 3rd bell was positioned over the sink! After this we travelled to ring the 6 bells at St Mary at Great Shefford, another recent restoration. The tower was circular and the rope circle "anticlockwise" meaning when ringing the diatonic scale instead of following the bell to one's right the bell to the left is followed. Thence onto The Ascension, Burghclere – another 6 bell ring. This was the last ring of the morning so we headed for our lunch stop at The Furze Bush Inn at Hatt Common.

In the afternoon the first tower was at St Mary, Kintbury a ring of 8. Ringing 8 bells requires an uplift in the skill set but several of our own ringers regularly ring on 8 bells and joining us for the tour were 4 ringers from other towers in Monmouthshire to strengthen our band. We rang a very acceptable touch of Grandsire Triples. For anyone interested this was recorded at the time and can be found on YouTube https://youtu.be/oajpD_IFrig . Then onto St Michael, Little Bedwyn - another recent restoration of an original ring of 4 augmented to 5 bells. Entrance to the tower was unusual with an external stone staircase instead of the more usual internal spiral staircase. Finally we headed to our final ring of the day at St Andrew, Wootton Rivers –a fine ring of 6 bells rung from the ground floor of the west tower.

At the conclusion of ringing the band headed back home and in the evening to Earlswood Old School as guests of Christine and Simon Stanley for a post-tour celebration.

M.D. Penney.



After the final ring at Wootton Rivers



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SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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We ended our 2022 year celebrating our society's 21st birthday, Naylor Firth was our speaker for the evening and he gave us a talk entitled 'John Upton, Rouge & Genius', we all agreed a well researched subject of interest. Our members then viewed the heritage boards that the church had produced with a heritage grant while we were in lock-down, they are on display at the church, well worth a visit, I am sure you will find something of interest regarding our local history on these boards. We finished the evening with a glass of fizz and mince pies and wishing all our members a happy Christmas.

Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday, 31 st January	Nelson's State Funeral	Susan Amos
Tuesday, 21 st February	Annual Dinner	Huntsman Hotel
Tuesday, 28 th April	Henry VII	Prof Ronald Hutton

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

February

Monday 6 th 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council Meeting Recreation Hall
Thurs 9 th 7.30 p.m.	WI Meeting—Round the World clipper Race Sue Baldwin Recreation Hall
Monday 13 th 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark
Tuesday 21 st 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Local History Society Annual Dinner, Huntsman Hotel
Monday 27 th 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark

March

Monday 6 th 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council Meeting Recreation Hall
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CALL MY BLUFF – THE RETURN OF THE BLUFFERS

After a break due to Covid, the village Call my Bluff wine tasting returned on November 18th in the church room continuing a decade long tradition. Forty guests filled the church room and tasted six different wines – and had to guess which of Kevin, Charles and Dave were describing the actual one. There was the usual quiz from Charles with Penny provided the nibbles as well as some of the heckling!



Star of the show was a Ukrainian red whilst the disappointment was a poor St Emilion. The Moldovan white got an honourable mention whilst my own favourite was the Chablis. It was great to see so many people enjoying a village evening with a mixture of old and new faces plus a fair spread of the generations. It appears that a repeat next year is a popular request so watch this space.

Kevin Bounds

An advertisement for Homecare. On the left is a portrait of Eileen O' Dwyer, a smiling woman with short blonde hair. To the right is the Homecare logo, which consists of a red heart shape with a white house icon inside, and the word 'HOMECARE' in red capital letters below it. At the bottom, on a dark red background, is the text 'Private Carer/Home help' and the phone number '07795 689791' in white.

Nerys's Natty Nosh.

Do you still prepare a Sunday dinner?

I do most winter Sundays.

This is roast beef with leek sauce, goose fat Swede, parsnips, and roast potatoes. Cauliflower cheese, steamed broccoli, and sprouts.



I made the leek sauce by frying the leeks in a little butter until soft then added cream and a little chicken stock.

Leeks are widely known vegetables that have been used in local cuisine for hundreds of years. Their incredible properties make them a preferred ingredient for cooks and anybody trying to stick to a healthy diet.

This superfood in fact contains high levels of flavonoids, vitamins A, E, and K, and fibres. Leeks are a good source of soluble fibre, which feeds the beneficial bacteria in your gut. In turn, these bacteria reduce inflammation and promote digestive health.

Leeks are considered a lower-carb vegetable in the full spectrum of vegetables.

My cousin made this delicious pudding recipe copied from my Facebook page.

Happy Recipes to Share.

Sticky Toffee Pudding 🍮

Ingredients

For the sponge:

200g/7oz soft dried pitted dates, roughly chopped

200ml/7fl oz water from a freshly boiled kettle

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

75g/2½oz unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing



2 tbsp black treacle
50g/1½oz dark muscovado sugar
2 large free-range eggs, at room temperature
150g/5½oz plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
For the sauce:
150g/5½oz unsalted butter, softened
300g/10½oz dark muscovado sugar
1 tbsp black treacle
200ml/7fl oz double cream, plus more to serve

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4 and lightly grease your dish.

Put the chopped dates, boiling water, and bicarbonate of soda into a bowl, stir and then leave for 10 minutes.

Cream the butter and black treacle together in a stand mixer until well mixed, then add the sugar and mix again, beating out any lumps. Beat in an egg and keep beating – scraping down as necessary – until completely incorporated, then do the same with the other egg. Beating more gently, add the flour and baking powder until you have a smooth, thick batter.

Using a fork, stir the soaked dates, squishing them a bit, then pour the dates and their liquid into the batter and beat gently to mix in.

Pour and scrape into your prepared dish or cake tin and bake for 30–35 minutes, or until a cake tester comes out clean.

Meanwhile, to make the sauce, melt the butter, muscovado sugar and treacle over a very low heat in a heavy-based saucepan. Once the butter's melted, stir gently until everything else is melted too. Now stir in the cream, then turn up the heat and when it's bubbling and hot, take it off the heat.

As soon as it's out of the oven, prick the cooked sponge pudding all over with a cocktail stick and pour about a quarter of the warm sauce over, easing it to the edges with a spatula so that the sponge is entirely topped with a thick sticky glaze. Put a lid on the remaining sauce in the pan to keep it warm.

Leave the pudding to stand for 20–30 minutes, then take to the table, with the rest of the sauce in a jug, and cream to serve.

Recipe Tips

It shouldn't be eaten piping hot, but warm; once the sponge has been topped with a glaze of the sauce, and had its 30-minute waiting time, it should be at an optimum temperature. And cold – should you have any leftovers – a slab of it cut from the dish tastes like the most magnificent sticky gingerbread. Enjoy!

SHIRENEWTON W.I. –

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AND NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

We rounded off 2022 with a Christmas meal at the Woodland Tavern, Llanvair Discoed. Twenty seven of us joined together for a fun evening celebrating friendship, community and a successful year for Shirenewton W.I.



With New Year's Resolutions in mind, we kicked off our 2023 W.I. programme with a pilates session run by Jo Bolland. Jo started the evening with an explanation of the benefits of pilates. Not only does it improve general fitness but also balance, bone and muscle strength, flexibility and the alignment of the whole body. Jo showed us some exercises that concentrated on strengthening our internal core muscles to support this alignment. These exercises could be done either lying down or in a seated position, and everyone joined in at their own level. Age was no barrier as our eldest participant is in her 90's.

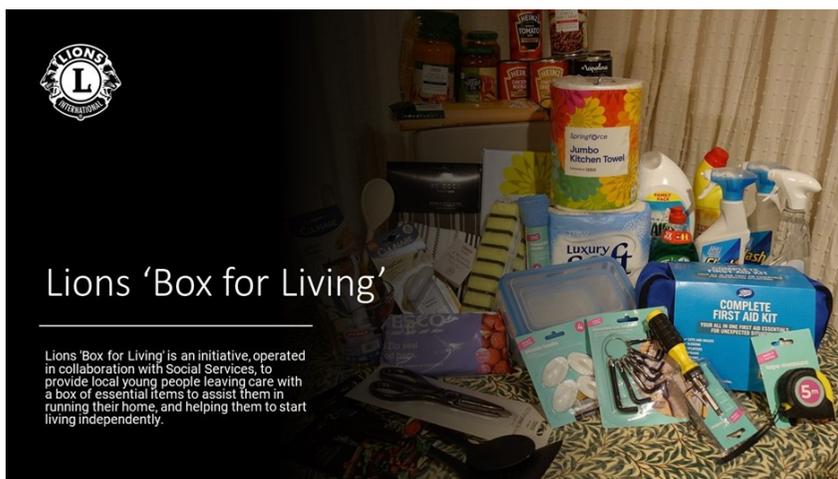


Jo runs pilates classes on Monday and Friday mornings, 9.30 – 10.15am at Itton Village Hall and is also considering starting an evening class in Shirenewton. For further details please contact Jo Bolland – jo.bolland@hotmail.co.uk or on 07852132997.

Our next W.I meeting is on Thursday 9th February at 7.15pm, Shirenewton Recreation Hall. It will be a truly inspiring talk by Sue Baldwin about her experiences of sailing in the Round the World Clipper Race.

If you would like to find out more about this talk, and /or Shirenewton W.I, then please contact Jane Butterworth at janeb247@gmail.com or Diane Ashton Smith (01291 628838)

Jackie Broughton



'Box for Living' appeal

Every year at the run up to the festive season we run our main appeal. Last year we donated £3,000 to two food banks in our area. This year we are focusing on young people who are leaving care at the age of 18. Lions 'Box for Living' is an initiative, operated in collaboration with Social Services, to provide local young people leaving care with a box of essential items to assist them in running their home, and helping them to start living independently.

This is a terrifying experience for many youngsters who have no experience of living in the wider world. They have no family to support them and no frame of reference for how to embark on setting up and running their own home. It can be a desperately lonely and scary experience.

Please help us in this effort. We aim to provide around 20 'Box for Living' at an estimated cost of £100 each. It has been a difficult couple of years for many of us but whatever you can donate to this appeal will help enormously.

DONATE HERE> <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/boxforliving>

Alternatively, cheques made payable to **Chepstow and Caldicot Lions Club**, can be sent to The Lion Secretary, Chepstow and Caldicot Lions, Box for Living Appeal
31 Edmond Locard Court, Chepstow, NP16 6FA

www.shirenewtonchurch.com

Firstly, happy New Year to my reader (s). Apologies for missing the December issue. Once again time ran away with me.

We live in interesting times in techie land. Towards the end of last year the news was full of Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter. I'm sure that you will be aware that he immediately fired lots of people (about 3,700 people or nearly half the workforce), many others resigned (apparently around 1,200 people) and so the workforce is a fraction (~33%) of its former self. There had been reports of outages and technical issues but Musk also reported that the company had "just hit another all-time high in Twitter usage" – presumably lots of twits tweeting about Twitter.

Due to all the adverse publicity in the MSM, you may be thinking that Twitter is dying. The latest stats don't support that view. There are approximately 450 million monthly active Twitter users worldwide and around 200 million daily active users. Depending on which report you read, Twitter is either poised for continued growth or will start losing members over 2023. One report suggests it will lose about 4% of members this year. If that is all, given that Musk has significantly reduced the cost base via the staff cuts and resignations, then he's done a cracking job in terms of profitability.

There is no doubt that some of the major tech companies have got bloated over the last few years and there is evidence of 'correction' taking place. Last year the tech sector has laid off around 120,000 – 150,000 people (depending on which report you read) as tech stocks plummeted. Nasdaq lost over 30% of its value in 2022. Individual stocks are far worse. Meta (Facebook) stock fell 65% and most other major tech companies were down between 25% and 45% on the year. Bitcoin reached its peak in September 2021 at over US\$68,000 for a Bitcoin and it's now down to below US\$19,000. Someone somewhere is taking a hammering.

How do I tie this back into Twitter? Well, whipster it, there are allegedly several of the larger tech companies looking rather wistfully at Twitter and thinking, 'if they can survive with about 33% of their present staffing level, can we substantially reduce staff without it materially affecting our performance?' Investors are also getting in on the act asking the same questions and putting pressure on the Boards of the tech companies (some of whom rapidly expanded during the pandemic – think of Zoom who went from 10 million users in Dec 2019 to more than 300 million daily users in April 2020)) to start thinking about slimming down. So, it will be interesting to follow this and see whether it has a wider impact on the industry.

Secondly, there is the whole 'misinformation' industry which makes extensive use of social media such as Twitter. We recently discussed the story of the chap who sent a picture of his baby's rash to a doctor and as a result was flagged for child porn by the AI software and lost his Google accounts. Companies such as Twitter and Facebook have similar AI algorithms to search out false news. Controversial decisions have been taken. Donald Trumps Twitter accounts was famously closed for 'misinformation'

speech. However, he shut down the account which tweeted the location of his private jet and promptly suspended the accounts of journalists who were critical of that decision. Following an outcry he restored the journalist's accounts just before Christmas. The question becomes when does free speech become a free for all? When is free speech serving the propaganda interests of hostile states?

The dissemination of false news (or, sometimes a particular narrative around events) is, of course, a key element of not only war but also the ongoing standard propaganda issued by hostile states trying to influence things like elections. Viktor Zhora, who leads the Ukraine's cybersecurity agency, points not only to the standard cyberthreats such as ransomware, data-wiping malware, and DDoS floods, but also the propaganda battle Russia is raging with both the West and Ukraine. The spreading of fake news and false information is increasingly being seen as a major threat to countries. With respect to the Ukraine war, it is all about Russia trying to demoralise Ukrainian troops and soften the West's support for Ukraine.

What does the future hold? Who knows. I certainly don't. Watch this space.

Moving onto a more immediate subject - that of backups. I had noticed that my local NAS back-ups had been failing (I wasn't too worried as I back up to 3 different cloud accounts in addition to the local NAS) and had the opportunity over Christmas to investigate. It turns out that My Book Live (A Western Digital product) had stopped responding. Further investigation revealed that it went out of support in 2015! After much endeavour I concluded that the drive was fine but the electronics were not responding to network access requests. It seems that this could have been the result of a power trip or surge which fried the motherboard, etc.

What to do. After much time watching YouTube videos and reading blogs, disassembly was the only option. So after half an hour or so of 'fun' I ended up with a disassembled unit complete with hard disk and motherboard, etc. Isn't it pretty?



The various suggestions on how to access the data on the drive (which is based on a version of Linux) didn't work for me. So, the final throw of the dice is to purchase an old working My Book Live from eBay, take it to bits, removed the drive it came with and stick mine in there. Then, theoretically, I'd be able to access the data.

Why? You ask. It's back-up data. It is true that there is nothing on the drive (to my knowledge) I haven't got elsewhere, but it's a challenge. So I purchased a My Book live from eBay Did it work? You'll have to wait for next month's exciting episode as the eBay source device arrived yesterday!

On that note, safe browsing

David Cornwell
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**THE MARKET WILL RETURN IN
THE SPRING....**

Gardening Corner

Happy New Year to everyone. We hope that you had a lovely Christmas and enjoyed your time with family and friends. Most of our plans worked out Ok, but we did have the odd hiccup on the way. We didn't get to see our Somerset grandchildren in their nativity play, but everything else went well. Les Miserables was fantastic, if not a little odd. Not the show I mean, but the company we kept, or rather didn't keep when we sat in our seats. We had pretty good seats but were in the middle of a row – I always like to be on the end if I can as with bad hips, I can then stick my legs out of the side into the aisle and feel a little more comfortable! So, we expected it to be cosy, and got there well to time so we didn't have to disturb anyone getting to our seats. There was a clear warning on the show programmes that there was only one opportunity for late comers to enter the theatre – about 15 minutes in when the curtain came down whilst scenery was changed. It was a sell-out show but we had five empty seats to my left, and Felicity had six empty seats to her right, no one turned up late, and so there we were in the middle of a row, with no one else! Talk about Billy no mates – very bizarre!

Christmas was great, and for the first time since we had kids (which is a considerable length of time), we didn't have to cook dinner nor do any washing up, which was very nice indeed! This did catch up with us the day after Boxing Day as they all descended on us, so it was pay back day.

With the incessant rain we have been having, it has been impossible to do anything outside in the garden. It has meant that we have been able to catch up on a lot of inside jobs though. First on the list was to remove all of the old plants out of the greenhouses and tunnels. The really hard frosty spell before Christmas had finished most of these off, but just before it did, we managed to pick all of the tomatoes and peppers that we could. The tomatoes were stored in the green, and as they gradually ripened, we made use of them as and when, with the last being used in the New Year. The peppers wouldn't have lasted, so instead we cut these up into fine and coarse cut and then froze them. The coarse cut peppers are used for casseroles, and the fine for when we have Fajitas. In the large tunnel, two of the raised beds were cleared, as well as all of the large grow bags. These will be planted in time with early calabrese. The seed will be going in shortly, and the aim is to provide an early crop about the beginning to middle of May. I might also try a couple of rows of mangetout peas as an experiment – we've never grown them early indoors before.

We do have some Autumn sown sweet pea plants that will be planted along the one side of each bed, a single row, that will hopefully ensure that we get some very early flowers. Once these early crops are removed, will then be removed and replaced with the summer crop, either green peppers or tomatoes. The rest of the beds in this tunnel still have greens growing, so early cauliflowers and a few purple sprouting broccoli. We also have calabrese, which had the main heads harvested in the Autumn, but are now growing multiple side shoots. These are a summer crop, but we have found that, by covering over with horticultural fleece when it is cold, we can manage to get them to produce a crop 'out of season', which is a very welcome addition to the dinner menu. In the small tunnel, everything was cleared out, the soil was lightly tilled, and some Growmore fertiliser spread, before being planted up immediately with all of the shallots, garlic, and elephant garlic. These were started in growth back in late October, by placing the individual corms into 5-inch pots. They had developed very good roots and were looking good. Normally garlic and shallots will be ready for harvesting in June, following a late Autumn planting, so again, the plan is that they will be harvested in time for the summer crop to replace them. This might well be calabrese and cauliflowers, but I've yet to decide. They don't need the protection for growing, other than it does help to keep off all the unwanted butterflies and moths, the caterpillars of which can wreak havoc if they find their way to the plants. If not these I may plant melons, but we'll see how things go. The large greenhouse just has some over-wintering plants in and these will shortly be moved outside as they are all hardy, so can withstand some cold nights. Half of the main growing bed does have some chrysanthemums growing in it, these were fancy ones, that continued to flower almost up to Christmas. These have recently been cut down, and the plan is to pot the bases on into large flower pots and bring them back into growth in the spring. As they shoot out, we will take cuttings from the young growth in order to start new plants off for next year.

We are just about to start sowing the first seeds of the year. These will be the show onions and the early calabrese that I mentioned earlier. I have moved the one heated propagator into our conservatory for now as we have an issue with the power supply to the garage and then onto the greenhouses. I think we must have damaged the armoured cable some years ago when we extended the cottage, so we are currently in the process of laying a new cable to the garage which will hopefully solve the problem. If not, our main seed sowing may be delayed until things start to warm up, so not sure how things will turn out at present.

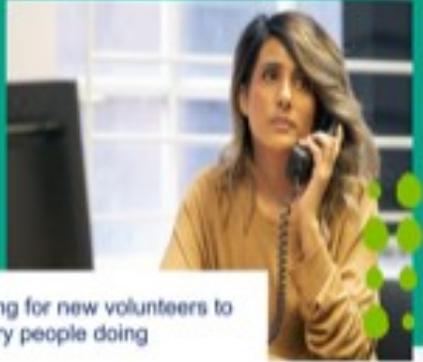
The wet weather has meant that we have been able to catch up on a lot of tidying up jobs – mainly in the garage, which is good. We had a large stock of honey which for some reason unknown to us, had started to ferment in the jars, so was no good for selling. I had thought of trying to make some mead from it but reading through things I decided that this was going to be very time consuming and probably not worth the effort. You don't actually use a lot of honey, and because the fermentation would have been started using 'wild' yeasts, the honey would have had to be boiled for some considerable time to kill all of these yeasts off. So, the decision was taken not to bother. The honey couldn't be fed back to the bees either as it wouldn't have done them any good. The only way that an online forum said it could be disposed of was to melt the honey in the wood burning oven, pour it out into a bucket, and then dig a hole in the garden and bury it. It broke my heart to do this, but there was nothing else that we could do. On the bright side, it meant we could recover the jars, which are now very costly to buy, so these were washed out and sterilised, before storing away for future use. They will be washed and sterilised again before we do use them, but hopefully this time the honey won't ferment.

The weather has improved lately, although cold, so we are hoping to get outside and tidy up all of the hedges. The other key priorities will be to prune the roses and the fruit trees. The roses are best pruned in January or February but can be done as late as march if you aren't able to do them before then.

Whilst we were busy cutting the firewood the other day, it was warm enough to see some bees flying around which is always re-assuring to see. Hopefully all of the hives will survive the Winter, but it reminded me that there are still a load of bee frames needing cleaning in my garage work room. They will have to wait for another rainy day or rather days, but we don't really want any more of these for a bit yet!

Happy gardening until next month, *Steve and Felicity Hunt.*

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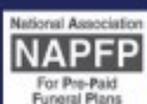
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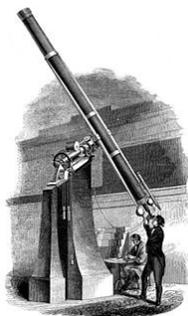
STARGAZING



The constellation of Orion the Hunter lies directly to the South. Four bright stars represent his shoulders and legs whilst a further three form his belt. Above Orion and to the right is a very bright orange star called Aldebaran. It's the brightest star in the constellation Taurus, the Bull and marks its eye. In classical times, the Greeks saw the constellation as Zeus disguised as a bull. Taurus is a member of the Zodiac, the twelve constellations which the Moon and planets travel through in a year. Looking further upwards and to the right you will see a small cluster of stars. These are called the Pleiades. With the naked eye, people can usually see six or seven stars in Pleiades. However, some people with better eyesight can see more. The cluster contains more than 200 young stars born some 50 million years ago, which means they are only one hundredth of the age of the Sun, our local star. Aldebaran means "the follower" in Arabic, as it rises above the horizon after the Pleiades.

In the evening sky the orange planet Mars lies to the South above the bright star Aldebaran. It is close to the Moon on the 27th February. The bright planets Venus (the brighter of the two) and Jupiter lie in the south-west just above the horizon. They become closely separated towards the end of the month. They form a triangle with the crescent Moon on the 22nd .

NASA has some beautiful images relating to astronomy on the internet at <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>. They change each day.



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FAIRTRADE NEWS January 2023



The annual effort to promote fair trade starts at the end of February. Fairtrade Fortnight is 27th Feb – 12th March this year. The theme this year is climate change and the threat it poses to some of the planet's most popular and beloved products as well as the livelihoods of farmers and agricultural workers. As you might recall environmental sustainability is a key criterion for the award of the FT mark. Our planet's most vulnerable communities are being left to the mercy of the forces of climate change. Extreme temperatures, Devastating droughts, Catastrophic hurricanes, Overwhelming downpours. This is the future that the world's agricultural producers now face. And it is a future that imperils the very existence of the world's food supply.

Take bananas for example. The world's most popular exported fruit – worth \$7 billion p.a. Climate change has exacerbated the threats of plant diseases such as fusarium TR4. The two main types of banana are the dessert variety with which we are all familiar and the plantain, which is of a firmer texture and is cooked. Nearly all exported dessert bananas are basically clones, of one type : the Cavendish. They are genetically identical and therefore extraordinarily susceptible to disease. In the race to cut costs to the bone some cheaper non-Fairtrade bananas are sometimes produced with scant regard for appropriate measures to control the use of pesticides, to the detriment of workers' health and environmental sustainability. If low prices are really the only consideration corners may well be cut all along the chain of production and transport; right up to the supermarkets here who are often willing to attract customers with bananas as a loss leader.

This sorry tale is all too common in our era of vast international corporations. It is virtually impossible to hold such huge organisations to account – like trying to trace certain politicians' and businessmen's financial holdings in off-shore accounts! The number of certified B corps (see my March 21 Parish Mag harangue!) is growing but at a glacial rate. (Not an appropriate metaphor in the current climate catastrophe!) This at least shows some businesses are trying to trade and make a profit in an ethical manner.

Do support Fairtrade in these difficult times! Chepstow is a certified Fairtrade town and there will be a Town Trail during Fairtrade Fortnight (with FT goodies as a prize). Entry forms available from Toytastic or Tesco.

Look at Ethical Superstore for a large and varied range of FT products.

Marion McAdam 641316 msm316mail.com



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