

The cover of the magazine features a photograph of a lush field of purple bellflowers in full bloom. The flowers are tall and slender, with multiple purple bells hanging from their stems. The foliage is dense and green, with some leaves showing signs of being eaten. In the background, there are trees and a glimpse of a building. The text is overlaid on the image in a black, gothic-style font.

Shirenewton Parish Magazine

May 2023

Price £1:50



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BOB O'KEEFE

Bob O'Keefe would like to thank the kind person who put flowers on Wenke's grave to mark the anniversary of her passing.



The image shows a business card for Eileen O' Dwyer. On the left is a portrait of 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 of the card, the name 'Eileen O' Dwyer' is written in white on a dark red background, followed by 'Private Carer/Home help' and the phone number '07795 689791' in white.

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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 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.

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

For this year Easter has passed. But, of course, for the Christian the promise remains and we need to contemplate that the message of this Holy Season endures and every Sunday the assurance of eternity in the presence of God is reinforced.

Easter 2023 was memorable for us in a variety of ways. Not least it provided us with the company of our Bishop within the Ministry Area. We are most grateful that Bishop Cherry shared the spiritual richness of the occasion with us and, for us in this part of the deanery, her presence at Shirenewton (Compline), Mathern (Tenebrae) and St. Pierre (Stations of the Cross) was appreciated by fellow worshippers. Indeed, this is the first time in the forty-four years I have been ordained to this diocese, that I recall any ecclesiastical dignitary making time to share the Lenten pilgrimage with us. It was very much valued.

Also, in the pre-Easter period, it was a delight to officiate at the marriage of 'Dotty Osborne-Tanner and Edward Lewis. The event was characterised by light-heartedness and the good nature of the guests present. I was most touched, a few days later, to receive an effusive card from them and a bottle of red wine which I fell upon with glad cries. I wish them every happiness as they settle in Australia once again following a very special day.

There are those, of course, for whom this time has been demanding and we remember them with compassion. Among them we include Glynis who receives the best wishes from Shirenewton church following time spent in hospital. We are glad that she is back home and continues with her recovery. We hold her in thought and prayer during this period.

As we approach the summer months (despite the fact that it resembles the bleak mid-winter outside at the time of writing), our minds anticipate the future. Our church intends to offer a comprehensive range of activities and details will feature within the pages of this magazine in due course.

As the days lengthen and the weather improves (hopefully) I wish you all good health and increased vigour. With every good wish and blessing.

Julian White
(Rector)

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 Community Council Meeting on April 3rd 2023

Annual grants to local organisations

Application forms are now available for local organisations to apply for grants from the Community Council's 2023/24 budget. If you would like an application form, please email clerk@shirenewtoncc.org.uk. **Please note the closing date for returning completed applications is 26th June 2023.**

No Planning Applications were considered in April.

Items of Interest

The Community Council resolved to offer support by way of a financial donation to Shirenewton Church PCC who are hosting the Coronation Big Lunch on Sunday 7th May 2023 at Shirenewton Recreation Hall.

The Community Council resolved to purchase 6 Coronation lamp post signs/tags to place around the village for the Coronation weekend celebrations.

The Community Council noted the concerns raised by a local resident with regards to the parking of cars on Mynyddbach Green. The Council resolved to investigate the possibility of erecting a sign prohibiting parking.

The Community Council received a response to their enquiry regarding the status of the mobile post office. The communication confirmed the post office will not be extending the Outreach Network at this time and confirmed that additionally the mobile van that served the local area has been withdrawn.

The Community Council resolved to publish a series of Councillor Bios as an ongoing feature in the Parish Magazine. These will also be available on the Community Council website. The first bio is from Councillor C. Martin who joined the Community Council in September 2022.

Councillor Catherine Martin



Councillor Catherine Martin Catherine returned to her native Wales in April 2022 having lived in New Zealand since 2014.

Prior to her move overseas, Catherine was employed within the Banking sector having started her career with Barclays Bank in Queen Street, Cardiff in the 1980's. She then moved away to work and live mainly in London and the Southeast working for Barclays, RBS and then Lloyds Bank PLC where she finished her UK career as Sales Director for Lloyds Bank Commercial Finance Ltd. in 2014.

Whilst overseas, Catherine continued her role within the Banking sector working within the corporate sector and finishing as Head of Business Products for Bank of New Zealand.

It was in New Zealand that Catherine became involved with the Voluntary sector as a Trustee for Volunteering Auckland – an essential organisation that worked across business and public sector to source and train volunteers across Auckland and, working with Volunteering New Zealand, across the whole of the country.

Since returning to Wales, Catherine has been keen to get involved in her local community and was co-opted to the Shirenewton Community Council in September 2022.

Catherine is married to Andy and lives in the village together with her two labradoodles called Millie & Alfie

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT APRIL 2023

County Councillor Brown advised:

County Council on the 9th of March 2023

Budget 2023/24

Changes to the Budget on the 9th of March 2023

The revisions to savings and pressures are summarised as follows as a result of negotiation with the main opposition group, with the council tax increase remaining at 5.95%:

- To remove the £70k saving that had been proposed for an additional charge for before school clubs on reflection of impact upon working families who rely on the service.
- To remove the £81k saving in relation to the Education Psychology Service, and the £30k saving in Additional Learning Needs (ALN) administration in order to maintain the level of support for our most vulnerable pupils.
- A reduction in the proposed saving in relation to the Gwent Music Service subsidy of £39k that will allow Schools to maintain projects and creative classroom activities. This enables whole class tuition in all disciplines across Monmouthshire Schools effectively free of charge. This will include pupils eligible through benefits for free school meals and refugees.
- To reduce Neighbourhood Services savings by £40k in order to maintain the services provided by the Community Improvement team and to work with Town and Community Councils to continue to develop the valuable grounds maintenance, street cleansing and clearance services across the County and with a wide range of projects across Monmouthshire.
- A commitment to undertake an operational review of littering and dog fouling with up to £25k earmarked for implementing a range of proposals for tackling verge side and town centre littering, along with enhanced monitoring and enforcement measures such as cameras at known litter and fly tipping hotspots being considered.

Empty and Second Homes Council Tax Premium

The County Council on the 9th of March considered a report on empty and second homes and the minority administration approved council tax premiums for these types of properties, taking account of the feedback from the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee (as reported in the March 2023 minutes for the County Councillor report).

The following is the link to the County Council meeting on the 9th of March 2023:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=143&MIid=5014>

Welsh Government Proposals for a council tax revaluation

David Davies, MP has set up a Senedd petition calling on the Welsh Government to reject their proposals for a council tax revaluation. This consultation shows that nearly 4 out of 10 homeowners in Monmouthshire will move up a band and face paying £100s more each year in council tax, while less than 1 out of 10 would pay less by moving down a band. You have until the 19th of April to sign this petition should you wish to do so. An upward change in banding and/ or revaluation is likely to mean more council tax on top of the yearly increases. Residents already face an unfair council tax burden because it is the lowest funded local authority area in Wales. The shortfall between what is received from the Welsh Labour Government and what the council spends is made up by council tax. The Welsh Government contributed £1300 per head of population to Monmouthshire County Council 23/24, compared to an average sum of £1756 over the 22 Local Authorities in Wales.

The link for the petition can be found here:

<https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/245288>

Dates of next meetings - Thursday 4th May 2023 and Thursday 5th June 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

**Contact the Clerk to the Community Council
E-mail: shirenewtoncc@gmail.com**

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in April:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Diane Marlowe | 2. Cynthia Smith |
| 3. Michael Baker | 4. Frances Gray |

Calling all residents and friends of Shirenewton, Mynydd-bach and Earlswood!



YOU'RE INVITED!



TO: Shirenewton Coronation Big Lunch

St Thomas A Becket Church, supported by the Shirenewton Community Council and the Recreation Hall Committee, are organising a Coronation Big Lunch

Why not make a day of it and come along to our Coronation Praise all Age Service at 10:00?



WHERE & WHEN:

Shirenewton Recreation Hall and Field

Sunday 7th May - Gates open 12:30 Grace at 1pm



RSVP:

No need! Just bring yourself and a plate of food to share - sit at tables inside or picnic on the field - meet your neighbours, make new friends, watch out for more details via the village Facebook page and Church website!



eden project



[CoronationBigLunch.com](https://www.CoronationBigLunch.com)
@edencommunities | #CoronationBigLunch

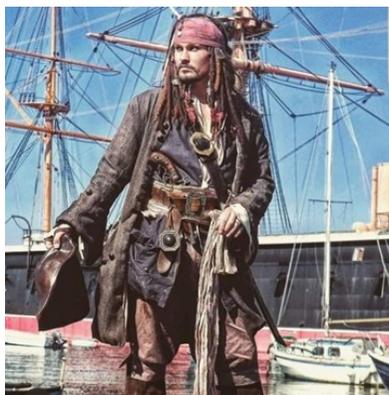
Shirenewton Church Fete

Saturday 10th June at The Rec

Pirate themed Parade leaves the School at 1.30pm

Fete to be opened at 2pm by everyone's
favourite pirate

Capt. Jack Sparrow



obedience

fancy dress

oldest

best trick

naughtiest

**Cakes, Fun Dog Show, Welly Wanging, Skittles,
Coconut Shy, Plants, Grand Raffle, Bottle Tombola,
Books & Toys and more**

Beer, Pimms, Burgers, Ice-creams, WI Teas

Local Bands, Displays of interest to the community, Vintage vehicles

Bring your friends and family for an afternoon of



Save the date!

Bring and Share Supper - **7p.m. Friday 12th May**
in the Saysell Centre with speaker Roger Hirons

The delicate balance between maintaining our gardens and preserving wildlife

Roger Hirons is The Plant Doctor. Published author of "Hedges & Living Boundaries" horticultural expert Roger has over 35 years' experience in the horticultural industry and is a popular and enthusiastic speaker on all things plant related! As a Christian he is passionate about God's creation and our natural environment especially preserving our ecosystem for the benefit of wildlife. Originally qualified at Pershore college of horticulture , during his 30 year talking career he has given advice about plants on radio stations, presented seminars to garden designers, and led coach parties to gardens of interest. He now talks to a large network of clubs, societies and U3A in the south of England where he lives. Roger & his wife have been on holiday in Shirenewton several times and love this area especially the stunning scenery and friendliness of the locals who have made them very welcome.

Services in the Severn Wye Ministry Area for April 2023

Services in April are planned as shown below. We hope you will join us here in Shirenewton, but everyone is welcome at any church.

Holy week services are detailed separately. Bishop Cherry will be joining the Severn Wye Ministry Area for Holy Week and will be in Shirenewton for Compline at 7pm on Monday 3rd April. She 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.

Date: April		2 nd	9 th	16 th	23 rd	30 th
Name of Church	Service Time	Sunday 1	Sunday 2	Sunday 3	Sunday 4	Sunday 5
St Mary's Priory, Chepstow	8.00	Service	Service	Service	Service	Eucharist
St Christopher's, Chepstow	11.00	Joint Service with Methodists 10am	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist
St Peter's, Newchurch	9.30	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist
St Peter's, Newchurch	14.30	Eucharist	NO SERVICE	Café Service	NO SERVICE	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Andrew's, Matherm	9.00	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Peter, St Pierre	11.30	Service of Word	Eucharist	Service of Word	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Andrew's, Mounton	10.15	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Service of Word	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Thomas a Becket, Shirenewton	10.00	Morning Praise	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Arvan's	10.00	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Deiniol, Itton	11.30	NO SERVICE	Eucharist	NO SERVICE	Eucharist	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St James, Devauden	9.00	Family Service	Eucharist	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
St Mary's, Pentery	11.30	Eucharist	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	Group Service Eucharist Matherm
Church of the Holy Cross, Kilgwrwg	11.30	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	Eucharist	NO SERVICE	Group Service Eucharist Matherm



Coronation of King Charles III

On TV

Saturday 6th May

in



The Tin Shed Bar

BBQ Supper

With a PINT

Or

Glass of Wine

£10pp

Hot Dogs, Burgers

etc

4pm to 6pm



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I also carry a range of handmade Soy Wax Candles

SUNDAY MAY 14th 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.

Aromatherapy



Jan Baker, a clinical aromatherapist from Blackwood, gave us a most interesting and entertaining talk at our April meeting. Aromatherapy is the modern name given to the ancient art of healing and improving health using fragrant natural materials. Essential oils used in aromatherapy are found in herbs, plants, flowers, fruits, bark and roots. We probably all have some of these plants growing in our gardens - lavender for burns, peppermint for headaches, chamomile for allergies and insomnia, marjoram for muscle sprains and arthritis, to name just a few. Jan explained that almost all essential oils should be diluted using a carrier oil e.g. sunflower or almond oil, before being applied to the skin. Anyone with high blood pressure, epilepsy or who is pregnant should seek advice before using any essential oil.

Jan's presentation included a fun 'Who wants to be a Millionaire' Quiz through which we learnt about the many benefits of Aromatherapy. Jan also demonstrated how the essential oil is transported around the body. Having applied some eucalyptus oil to the crook of the arm of some of our willing volunteers, many were surprised to find that they were then able to taste the eucalyptus shortly afterwards. Not only did the winner of the quiz, Diana Such, go away with a prize donated by Jan but we were all given two chamomile teas and instructions to make tea, not to drink but to apply to aching muscles and to act as an anti-inflammatory treatment instead of ibuprofen gel. Well worth a try after my next hike.



Jan blends oils for individual people with various ailments and she particularly recommends essential oils to relieve the symptoms of stress. If you would like to know more about Jan's work go to her website - janbakerwellbeing.co.uk

Our next W.I meeting is on Thursday 11th May at 7.15pm, Shirenewton Recreation Hall when Angela Gray will be giving a talk on Egyptian Mummification. Those Ancient Egyptians also knew a thing or two about essential oils.

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

The Bells.

The coronation approaches. All of our ringers either have no recollection of the last coronation in 1953 or were born well after the event. It is worthy of a special ringing event and indeed churches all over the UK will be ringing in some form – so called “Ring for the King”. It is our intention to attempt to ring a peal on the morning of Saturday May 6th, a pinnacle of ringing achievement.

The term *peal* has two meanings in ringing jargon. One is a shorthand description of a set of bells such as “Shirenewton has a fine peal” (of six bells). The second is a description of a long duration of ringing permutations on a set (peal) of bells. In this meaning a peal refers to a continuous non-stop ringing of over 5000 permutations – in ringing jargon permutations are “changes”.

Now we will be ringing changes on 5 bells with the heaviest 6th bell ending each row of changes. This is known as “Doubles” as on 5 bells only 2 pairs of bells can swap positions.

Thus to start	123456
becomes	214356
then	241536

and so on until all permutations on 5 have become exhausted. For the mathematicians amongst you there are 120 permutation (factorial 5), so to achieve over 5000 changes, methods of attaining these permutations will be repeated 42 times.

Peals take time and not every ringer enjoys the experience. However, some do and I explain to non-ringers that for some it can alter the mental state into a transcendental experience!

How long does it take? On Shirenewton bells, which are relatively light, it will take of the order of 2 hours and 40 minutes. We intend to start just after 9 am so listen out.

M.D.Penney.



STARGAZING



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

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

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



PALM SUNDAY IN CHEPSTOW





*Shirenewton Local
History Society.*

*Walks in and
around Shirenewton*

*£3.00 Contact
641376*

Six Historical Walks
around Shirenewton



Shirenewton Local History Society



GWENT ARCHIVES NEEDS YOU

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

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

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

Any questions or queries, please contact enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk. More information on submitting the diaries will follow.



Nerys's Natty Nosh



Cupcakes or fairy cakes are now one of the most popular sweet treats in the world, and there are many bakeries dedicated solely to making them. Some brides choose to have cupcakes as an alternative to the traditional fruit cake as their wedding cake.

The making of cookies started in ancient Egypt with a mixture of flour and water that was baked on both sides on a griddle, resulting in a flat, hard cake. To this mixture, leaveners were added to make the cake rise, and then sugar to sweeten it. Wood-burning and coal-fired ovens were developed, and from these humble beginnings, cookies, and other treats such as cupcakes, muffins and pastries have evolved. Today every country has its own favourite recipe.

The main ingredients are caster sugar (it dissolves easily), butter for its flavour, self-raising flour to help it rise and eggs to bind it together.

If I were a cupcake, what flavour would I be?

Chocolate or vanilla swirled marble maybe.

The choices are endless.

This is a recipe for the basic cupcake.

Iced Cupcake

Ingredients for 16 cupcakes



100g (4oz) butter softened or margarine
100g (4 oz) caster sugar
2 medium sized eggs (room temperature to prevent curdling)
100g (4 oz) sifted sponge self-raising flour

Topping

200g (8 oz) icing sugar sifted
About 2 tbsp warm water
Decoration e.g. chocolate drops, flake, cherries, sugar flowers etc.

Method

- 1 Preheat the oven to 190C, 375F, Gas Mark 5.
- 2 Line bun tins with 16 paper cases.
- 3 Place the butter and sugar in a large bowl or mixer and beat together until light and fluffy.
- 4 Gradually add the beaten egg to the mixture.
- 5 Sift in the flour and fold gently into the mixture (do not use your electric mixer when adding the flour).
- 6 Spoon the mixture into the paper cases.
- 7 Bake in the preheated oven for 15- 20 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

To make the icing.

Sieve the icing sugar into a bowl and stir in just enough warm water to mix into a smooth paste that is thick enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon.

- 2 Carefully spread the icing over the cold cupcakes and decorate.

To make the buttercream, whisk 150g softened butter until super soft then add 300g icing sugar, 1 tsp vanilla extract and a pinch of salt.

Whisk together until smooth (start off slowly to avoid an icing sugar cloud) then beat in 3 tbs milk.

If wanting to colour, stir in the food colouring now. Spoon or pipe onto the cooled cupcakes.

Did you know?



When baking cupcakes and muffins, try to resist the temptation to open the oven door during the first half of the cooking as cold air can cause the mixture to sink in the middle. Cupcakes are the perfect choice for a mid-morning coffee, celebratory occasion afternoon tea at a children's party or at a Church Fete.

Enjoy!



Gardening Corner

I blame the firewood, whilst the assistant head gardener blames the cat. Either way, our list of visitors that decide to wander around the house has increased this week with the addition of a young common newt wandering across our living room floor! I stress the word common – we are not talking of its cousin the great crested newt here, which of course is a protected species. As I write this month's tome it is early morning of the 23rd April, and as yet, we have still not heard the first cuckoo. 9 times out of 10 we will hear it for the first time on a Sunday, so I am confident (as much as you ever can be) that today will be the day. Fortunately, I put our house marten nests up early this year – before I went in for my new hip. Just to be certain that they were up before the first birds arrived. In the past, if they went up too early the occasional sparrow would take up residence, but for some reason (and I never understand why) we have very few sparrows around these days. These squatters soon get removed when the first martens arrive. This year the first birds arrived on the 9th April, which seemed exceptionally early to me. They remained alone for a couple of weeks and we felt so sorry for them as the weather has stayed stubbornly cold and the number of flying insects about must have been minimal. They have survived though and now been joined by more of their clan. As I write this, we are not sure how many of our 8 artificial nests have been taken, but we think at least six. We are hoping that they are all taken soon, and maybe even some extra nests are constructed as well. Numbers in recent years have not gone over the 8, so fingers crossed.

The continually cold seasonal weather is starting to cause problems in the gardening department. Seed sowing has been continuing in the small greenhouse and the 'hot bench' has been on for a number of weeks. Usually, we have a slick operation in that as plants get pricked out into pots, and grow on, these eventually get planted out into their final growing spot, and the room left behind in the big greenhouse or tunnel, is then filled up with the next newly potted on plants. This year is starting to be a bit of a challenge. The crops destined for the tunnel or large greenhouse border are being planted OK, but anything half tender that has to go outside are getting caught up in the plant jam. Plants under cover can easily be protected with fleece should the night be colder than we expect, but it is almost impossible to cover over the plants if they have to go outside. Some, such as broad beans and peas, as well as greens, such as calabrese or cabbage, are reasonably hardy, so will withstand the occasionally cold night, even a slight frost should this happen. But this is not the case with most other

crops. So currently we have potatoes planted up in 5 litre pots that are desperate to go out, but it is just too cold at present, as well as numerous flower plants, which we use for cut flower production. Some crops such as beetroot, spring onions and lettuce are being sown in cells, but these will be a problem if we can't get them planted outside soon. I need to get on and sow the parsnips and carrots as well, but the ground is too wet and cold at present. We keep telling ourselves that they will catch up, and they will once the weather warms up, but for now it remains stubbornly cold. The smaller greenhouse that we use for propagating, is bursting at the seams with tomatoes and other very tender salad crops such as melons, cucumbers, peppers, courgettes etc. I started these off in March, but everything has been very slow in getting growing. They are now looking much better, but they need potting into larger pots as soon as possible, but they need to go where the potatoes are currently still sitting. So, the potatoes may have to go outside and we will have to devise a way of covering them over to protect them from any cold nights.

Meanwhile, the seed sowing continues apace in the hope that things warm up eventually. To some degree the delay is a godsend in that, although my new hip is now really starting to get back to some normality (I no longer need a stick most of the time), it is still difficult to bend over to plant things. So, I kneel instead, but I then struggle to get up again! I'm not complaining though as it is just nice to be pain free now.



My new found friend!

There is still plenty of time left to go, so no need for any of us to panic just yet. I did manage to get a quick look at the bees last week. There was just one day that the weather warmed up enough to open them up to make sure things were OK. The results were unexpected in five of the hives, but unexpected in the sixth. The unexpected first was that it appears the queen had died as there was no sign of any brood whatsoever. I had half expected this as standing outside on several days, watching the flying bees arrive, it was clear that they weren't bring any pollen much back to the hive. Balls of pollen on the bee's legs always signifies that there is young brood. I always take the queen excluders out in the autumn as this then allows the queen to move around with the brood cluster, as they move around for food during the winter months. The queen excluders must go back on as soon as possible in the spring, but of course this has been delayed this year. This, along with boredom (days when bees couldn't get out to fly) has resulted in the queens going mad in four of the hives (the strongest size wise) and they have been laying eggs absolutely everywhere, at a level I have never seen before. At the moment I'm not sure what to do with them. I did manage to take two frames of young eggs off the one hive and transfer these to the hive that had lost the queen. Hopefully the bees in this hive will understand what has gone on and turn at least one egg into a new queen and all will be well. It has worked numerous times in the past, but the cold weather may not help this time. Hopefully by next month things will have improved. Happy gardening until then, *Steve and Felicity Hunt.*



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

May

Thursday 4 th 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council Meeting Recreation Hall
Saturday 6 th 9 a.m.	Ring for the King St Thomas a Becket Church
Sunday 7 th 12.30 a.m.	Coronation Big Lunch Recreation Field
Monday 8 th 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark
Saturday 25 th 7.30 p.m.	Music for a King, Chepstow Choral Society St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow
Thursday 11 th 7.15 p.m.	WI—Egyptian Mummification, Angela Gray Recreation Hall
Friday 12 th 7 p.m.	Bring and Share, Roger Hirons Church Hall, Shirenewton
Sunday 14 th 8.15 a.m.	Rogation Walk, St Deiniol's, Itton to Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg
Monday 15 th 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark
Tuesday 20 th 2p.m.	Open Day Gigal Chapel

June

Monday 5 th 7.30 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council Meeting Recreation Hall
Saturday 10 th 2 pm	Shirenewton Fete Recreation Field
Monday 12 th 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark
Monday 26 th 7.30 p.m.	Ministry Area Praying Together St Christophers Church, Bulwark



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There was standing room only at the March meeting of the society when Prof Ronald Hutton gave us a first class talk on 'Henry VII'. He's an accomplished speaker, no need for any equipment, such as lap top, screen and projector, he just required a glass of water and a lectern!

The planned archaeological dig at Caerwent had its initial meeting early in April. At least 25 volunteers turned up on the day from all parts of South Wales. Where ground radar was used to ascertain the depth of the proposed dig, we will continue in May with the actual dig, and look forward to the results of this project.

The paddle steamer 'The Waverley' is back in action again, it will be in the Bristol Channel from 2nd June to the 18th June with some really exciting sailings. One especially, is 'Cruise River Severn & under the two Bridges' leaving Chepstow via Penarth, Clevedon and Portishead. If there are enough interested we could go as a group, let me know if you fancy a cruise!

Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday, 25th April
Church Room, 7.30pm

Chepstow Castle, the Magna Carta, Ireland, America and the Moon' by John Burrows

Sunday, 30th April/Monday 1st May

The Battle of Monmouth
The Sealed Knot

Tuesday, 30th May
2.00pm, an afternoon visit

Tour of St Mary's Church Yard,
Susan Amos

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

Rogation Walk or Cycle

Sunday 14th May 2023

Last month we published details of the Rogation Walk:

*Stage 1: St Deiniol's Itton 8.15 a.m Morning
Prayer, leaving c 8.45am for St Arvans
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans followed by ANIMAL & PET
BLESSING at 11 am*

*Stage 2: St Arvans to St Mary's, Penterry (departing c
11.30am)*

*Stage 3: St Mary's to St James Devauden – setting out at
1.30 pm after a break for lunch*

*Stage 4 St James', Devauden to Holy Cross,
Kilgwrrwg setting out at 2.45pm
Finishing at Holy Cross Kilgwrrwg with Evening Prayer.*

Full details can be found in last month's magazine, or on our website under Events at: severnwyema.co.uk

Now you can also join us on bicycle !



The Rogation Cycle will be led by David & Ros Downs, following a similar route to the walkers. It will be on relatively minor roads & a forest track through Chepstow Park Woods. It will be hilly & the surface will be mainly tarmac so Mountain bikes, hybrids, electric bikes & sturdy road bikes with a good range of gears are suitable. It will include a route back from Kilgwrrwg to St Deniol's Church, Itton afterwards. (for further details about the cycling, please contact Ros Downs on 07928 483789)

As with the walk, you will need to bring your own refreshments, and you can join for the whole route, or any individual stage. Please dress appropriately for the weather conditions and terrain. This is not an official 'organised event' - we all cycle or walk independently, and at our own risk.

We look forward to seeing you!

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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!



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