

Shirenewton Parish Magazine



February 2025

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OUR FIRST WELSH CHRISTMAS

Barney and I have been the Severn Wye Ministry Area Leaders for 8 months now, and are loving life in Wales.

We have got to know the community of Shirenewton much better and have enjoyed participating in local village life and meeting new people, as well as offering a bit more continuity and support to St. Thomas A Beckett church.

However our role as Ministry Area Leaders actually involves being responsible for 12 local Anglican churches in the area, of which Shirenewton is one.

We are able to do this because we work with a small but wonderful team of clergy and lay leaders who help us to ensure all churches have a Sunday service of worship as often as they are able, but it means we may sometimes be at other churches in the area on Sundays and during the week.

Our previous parish in Coventry was simply one church, so having gone from one church to 12, we were feeling slightly daunted about how Christmas - with all its extra services such as Christingles, carol services, concerts, midnight masses, multiplied by twelve!! - would be like, compared to just one church!

Here in Shirenewton, I - Zoe - got to enjoy the youth craft market, Carol Praise service (even singing in the choir!), carols round the tree (ditto - thank you Jane for roping me in!), the Shirenewton Primary school yr6 concert, the walking Nativity (which was wonderfully well attended and excellently organised by Glynis); with Barney leading midnight mass and myself leading the Christmas morning family service. Our Springer Spaniel Finwe has separation anxiety, which means she gets very distressed if left on her own. We can usually manage this with dogsitters if we both are out the house at the same time, but on Christmas morning we didn't want to burden anyone with this, so the only other option was to take her with me on Christmas morning to Shirenewton church. Luckily, one of the things we have discovered is all our local churches (and many local businesses too) are very dog friendly. In order to not surprise anyone with Finwe's presence I advertised the service as specifically dog friendly (dogs are family after all!), and to my joy and delight we had 5 four legged friends join us for a short celebration, and they all received a prayer of blessing. My slightly out of date milk bones on the other hand, not as popular!! I'll bring some real Turkey with me next year!

Between our entire clergy and lay leaders team, 48 separate Christmas services or events were run in December, and that is not including regular Sunday worship too. We are very blessed with our clerical and lay colleagues. A bit of a step up from one church but the warm welcome everyone has extended to us has been a huge boost.

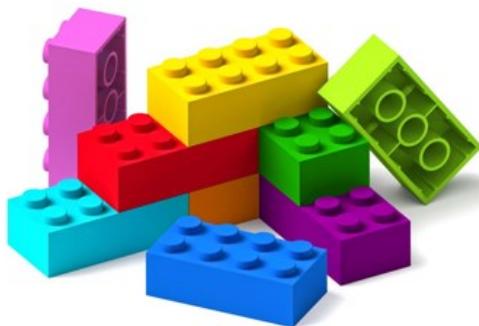
Thank you for all your kind words and support, we hope this will be the first Christmas of many here with you!

Every blessing

Zoe and Barney



Do you have any unused/unloved lego?



Saints Chepstow is hoping to start a "Lego Church" at St.Christopher's Bulwark, and we need a good supply of lego bricks before we can launch it.

Do you have any sitting unloved in a loft or cupboard? If so we'd be very grateful for anything you can offer!

Please contact Revd Zoe if so:
07754 306229 / severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com



You're invited to our

ST.DAVID'S DAY PANCAKE PARTY!

SUNDAY 2ND MAR
3:30PM-4:30PM

**Learn about St.David
through the medium of pancakes !**

- Plus -

**Join us for races, games, competitions and of course
all-you-can-eat pancakes and toppings!**



**GAMES
&
RACES**

**FREE
PANCAKES!**

Meeting in Shirenewton Church rooms

Contact Rev Zoe for more info: 07754 306229





Shirenewton Primary School are currently advertising for two positions. If you are interested in either or both positions, please email shirenewtonprimary@monmouthshireschools.wales or call 01291 641774

We are looking for caring, enthusiastic and positive people to assist and supervise children during the lunchtime and/ or breakfast club, to encourage healthy eating and good table manners, and to enhance the play activities of the pupils.



BREAKFAST CLUB SUPERVISOR

5 HOURS PER WEEK, 38 WEEKS PER YEAR
DAYS PER WEEK, TERM TIME ONLY

MIDDAY SUPERVISOR

8.75 HOURS PER WEEK, 39 WEEKS PER YEAR
5 DAYS PER WEEK, TERM TIME ONLY

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in December:

1. Carol Waite
2. Clair Johnsey
3. Philip and Bryn Price



Eileen O' Dwyer



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63 **Chepstow | Usk | Pontypool | Cwmbran**

Timetable from 1 September 2024

via Chepstow Community Hospital, Shirenewton, Earlswood, Gaerllwyd,
Llangwm, Gwernesney, Coleg Gwent, Croesyceiliog

Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

	Sch	HOL
Cwmbran Bus Station [Stand H]	0712	0712
Croesyceiliog Edlogan Square	0717	0717
Pontypool Town Hall	0725	0725
Pontypool Park Road	0726	0726
Pontypool opp Town Hall	0727	0727
Little Mill Pont-y-pia	0734	0734
Usk Coleg Gwent Main Road	0741	0741
Usk Twyn Square	0747	0747
Llangwm Bridge Inn Road	0755	0755
Earlswood West End	0803	0803
Shirenewton Road Junction	0813	0813
Chepstow Community Hospital Main Road	---	0820
Chepstow Comprehensive School	0820	---
Chepstow Bus Station	0825	0824
	1200	1200
	1205	1205
	1213	1213
	1214	1214
	1215	1215
	1222	1222
	1229	1229
	1436	1436
	1442	1442
	1450	1450
	1458	1458
	1508	1508
	1515	1515
	1519	1519
	1811	1811

Saturdays

	0712	0922	1200	---	1700
	0717	0927	1205	---	1705
	0725	0935	1213	1420	1713
	0726	0936	1214	1421	1714
	0727	0937	1215	1422	1715
	0734	0944	1222	1429	1722
	0741	0951	1229	1436	1730
	0747	0957	1235	1442	1736
	0755	1005	1243	1450	1744
	0803	1013	1251	1458	1752
	0813	1023	1301	1508	1800
	0820	1030	1308	1515	1807
	---	---	---	---	---
	0824	1034	1312	1519	1811

Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays

Sorry, there is no Sunday service on route 63

These timetables are updated for 1 September 2024 and show changes to assist college students

Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

	0805	1040	1320	Sch	HOL	1525	1526	1820
Chepstow Bus Station	---	---	---	1530	---	---	---	---
Chepstow Comprehensive School	0809	1044	1324	---	1530	1824	---	---
Chepstow Community Hospital Main Road	0817	1051	1331	1537	1537	1831	---	---
Shirenewton Road Junction	0825	1059	1339	1545	1545	1839	---	---
Earlswood West End	0834	1108	1348	1554	1554	1848	---	---
Llangwm Bridge Inn Road	0843	1117	1357	1603	1603	1857	---	---
Usk Twyn Square	0848	1122	1402	1609	1609	1901	---	---
Usk Coleg Gwent Main Road	0855	1129	1409	1616	1616	1908	---	---
Little Mill Bridge	0903	1138	1418	1625	1625	1916	---	---
Pontypool Town Hall	0904	1139	1421	1626	1626	1917	---	---
Pontypool Park Road	0905	1140	---	1627	1627	1918	---	---
Pontypool opp Town Hall	0913	1147	---	1635	1635	1925	---	---
Croesyceiliog Edlogan Square	0917	1151	---	1639	1639	1929	---	---
Cwmbraŵn Bus Station	0805	1040	1320	---	---	---	---	---

Saturdays

	0805	1040	1320	1526	1820
	---	---	---	---	---
	0809	1044	1324	1530	1824
	0817	1051	1331	1537	1831
	0825	1059	1339	1545	1839
	0834	1108	1348	1554	1848
	0843	1117	1357	1603	1857
	0848	1122	1402	1609	1901
	0855	1129	1409	1616	1908
	0903	1138	1418	1625	1916
	0904	1139	1421	1626	1917
	0905	1140	---	1627	1918
	0913	1147	---	1635	1925
	0917	1151	---	1639	1929

Sch Operates on schooldays only**Hol** Operates school holidays only**Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays** Sorry, there is no Sunday service on route 63



SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Extracts from the minutes of the monthly meeting held December 2024 & January 2025

Public Participation

Tony & Nerys Wilson, [Concerns regarding the RLDP for 26 houses in Shirenewton](#)

- (a) Traffic could impact on village with 26 – 52 additional cars during peak times
- (b) Roads are narrow and pavements are limited
- (c) Additional children walking on the road to reach school.
- (d) Suggested field for development suffers saturation in heavy rain. Development could increase run off and create localised flooding.

Geoff Andrews and Alison Wooder, Concerns regarding the RLDP for 26 houses in Shirenewton

- (a) Traffic and speed concerns over additional traffic and cars entering the village at speed.
- (b) Access no clear view of oncoming traffic from suggested site.
- (c) Is the village aware of this plan?

Robyn Mitchell Raised concerns over the planning process with MCC.

(a) Wished to raise concerns over the whole planning process identifying certain issues, especially regarding a recent planning application as an example. Asked if there was adequate scrutiny of the whole planning process. Noted some previous comments/policies regarding applications were inconsistent. Wanted his comments noted that he is unhappy with the current structure and system, and feels it needs to be reviewed.

In response to the above, **Cllr L Brown** stated there is limited time to respond to the RDLDP and it would be pertinent for the public to focus on question 10, as the questionnaire is quite long, specifying which item/area you are responding to. However,

this response forms part of the general view.

Cllr Brown reiterated if the public wish to raise specific points it would be wise to email them and in addition attend the consultation meeting.

Cllr Butterworth confirmed the RDLP had been highlighted by Cllr Brown at the last meeting and shared with the Parish magazine and on the SCC website.

Cllrs Butterworth and Brown discussed the issue of sewerage and current overflow and the impact this would have especially after significant rain, and whether there is sufficient capacity for this number of properties.

It was confirmed that Shirenewton CC on behalf of the village, are concerned about the impact on the village, roads and services, and will be discussing the Shirenewton council's response during this current meeting.

Participants were thanked for taking the time to attend and voice their views and concerns.

Earlswood Field Rental - Agreed to Notify first applicant and **Clerk to speak to SLCC and OVW regarding lease. Clerk** to complete planning application

Cllr Vacancy – Advert for vacancy has been put on website, Facebook and shared to local school and is ongoing.

Budget / Precept The budget precept was discussed. **Clerk** to update budget and circulate accordingly. It was noted that the war memorial sign at the Memorial path needs attention. **Clerk** to contact Llanfair to clean. A community reserve will also be instigated for future projects.

Grass Cutting/Collection – the costs for Grass collection are not affordable to SCC and the community and it was agreed to forward this on to the Rec Association for suggestions.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT DECEMBER 2024

Place Scrutiny Committee on the 7th of November 2024

The Place Committee covered a public forum with representations about a proposed RLDP site in Monmouth in relation to the traffic and water quality issues there. There was also a report on the importance of tourism for the Monmouthshire economy with 15% employed in this area.

According to Monmouthshire STEAM, in 2023, 2.29 million visitors came to Monmouthshire, spending 3.53m visitor days in the county, generating more than £329 million for the local economy, and supporting 3,462 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs. (Monmouthshire 2023 STEAM full report & summary).

The reports for this committee can be found at the following link where the meeting can also be watched:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/jelListDocuments.aspx?Cid=303&MIId=5828>

Performance and Overview Committee on the 19th of November 2024

The Performance and Overview Committee covered the subject of school exclusions, the Planning Service Annual Performance report and the Community and Corporate plan progress update.

In terms of school exclusions, the report shows that both fixed time and permanent exclusions have increased. For fixed term exclusions, 520 learners were excluded from Monmouthshire schools during the last academic year. Of these 59 were primary learners and 461 were secondary learners. Of the 22 PEX upheld at Pupil Disciplinary Committee (PDC), six were for cumulative reasons. Three were for joint participation in a one-off criminal event which is unlikely to be repeated. On this basis there is a reasonable expectation that a significantly lower figure of upheld PEX should be a realistic goal for this academic year.

The Planning service annual performance stated that " Enforcement performance improved for the measure relating to the percentage of enforcement cases investigated in 84 days (rising from 65% to 83%) which is now rated 'Good', and the performance significantly improved in respect of the average time to take positive action which fell from 123 days to 91 days, also rated 'Good'. We investigated 286 enforcement cases and served 13 notices."

The report includes a blue sheet headed the value of planning for 2023/24. It mentions the number of completions being 291 units with 26% affordable but at the bottom refers to 2021/22 so it is not clear whether or not the figures relate to 2021/22 or 2023/4, in either case, it clearly illustrates that the amount of housing proposed in the RLDP is significantly out of line with the actual build rate.

There was a discussion in the meeting about the concerns about planning enforcement and the meeting can be watched at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/jelListDocuments.aspx?Cid=305&MIId=5850>

People Scrutiny Committee on the 25th of November 2024

The above committee had a report on the Blue Badge scheme with a slide presentation providing information on it. 6043 badges were issued in 2022/23 which translates to about 6.5% of the

Monmouthshire population.

The link to the committee report where the meeting can be watched is here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=304&MIId=6311>

Performance and Overview Committee on the 3rd of December 2024

The Performance and Overview Committee will consider the Revenue budget for 2024/25 and the report proposes the following recommendations to Cabinet showing that the financial position of the Council is of concern:

“RECOMMENDATIONS (to Cabinet):

3.1 That Cabinet note the forecast revenue budget deficit of £4,353,000 which is a deterioration of £964,000 since the previous update.

3.2 That Cabinet note a forecast 80.1% delivery of the £10,940,000 budgeted service savings required for the year. This results in a shortfall in savings of £2,176,000 that is included in the above deficit.

3.3 That Cabinet note the budget recovery action of £1,019,000 drawn up by services that if delivered will reduce the forecast deficit to £3,334,000.

SUBJECT: 2024/25 REVENUE BUDGET – FINANCIAL UPDATE

MEETING: PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 3rd December 2024 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

3.4 That Cabinet note that the negotiation of national pay agreements for Local Government employees has concluded, and that the outcome is expected to be within budgeted allocations.

3.5 That Cabinet note the budgetary risks that are inbuilt into the forecast, namely; Ø The volatility of demand for high-cost services, particularly in Adults & Children’s Social Care and with Additional learning needs; Ø The risk of the increase in the rate of the employers contribution to the teacher’s pension scheme not being fully funded; Ø The potential impact upon the Council’s financial resilience from the forecast increase in the cumulative schools reserves deficit that is being carried on the Council’s balance sheet. Ø The risk of further non-delivery of the £10,940,000 of budgeted savings targets; Ø The trend of reducing debt recovery, particularly within Council tax where there is a significant increase in the number of discounts and exemptions awarded, and a slowing down in collection rates; Ø The severely limited reserve cover available to the Council.

3.6 That Cabinet note the forecast increase in the deficit on cumulative schools reserves as outlined in Appendix 3 of this report of £4,887,000. This would result in school balances ending the financial year in a deficit of £5,791,000, with twenty (59%) of thirty-four schools forecast to be in a deficit balance.

3.7 That Cabinet note that schools which are forecasting to end the 2024/25 financial year in a deficit balance have brought forward brought forward recovery plans outlining the proposed actions to address their budget shortfalls.

3.8 That Cabinet note a forecast Capital budget underspend of £93,000, alongside an indication of slippage in capital schemes of £9,298,000. The minor underspend is related to the Crick Road care home scheme and due to being financed by specific borrowing and does not subsequently represent a usable surplus budget.”

The report also covers Secondary school leadership funding and per pupil funding for Monmouth, King Henry and Chepstow schools with a consultation proposed on it. It is recognised that Chepstow school has the lowest number of pupils and therefore will see a reduction in funding, however there will be a transition period over 2 years to ensure a transition. The number of pupils in each school are: · Monmouth 1376 · Caldicot 1145 · Chepstow 665 · KHS VIII 3 – 19 1209. The numbers for Chepstow being lower because of not covering 3 to 19 years.

The full reports can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=305&MIId=6307>

Place Scrutiny Committee on the 5th of December 2024

The Place Committee will cover the following report:

Water Quality and Sewage Infrastructure To invite Welsh Water to discuss water quality concerns and sewage concerns, particularly related to the Monmouth and Shirenewton area.

The link to the meeting can be found here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=303&MIId=5829>

Extract from Meeting held 6th January 2025

Cllr Vacancies – Advert for original vacancy has been put on website, Facebook and shared to local school and is ongoing.

The council were sad to hear that Cllr K Dunn has decided to resign. The Council agreed he would be a sad loss to the council and thanked him for his long dedication to the role and all his achievements during this time. In addition to his skills and knowledge, it was also felt Mr Dunn gave a lot of humour to the meetings, which will be sadly missed.

The council wish Mr Dunn well with his ongoing commitments.
Clerk to notify Democratic services of additional vacancy for Shirenewton and Mynnyddbach

Defibrillators – Cllrs confirmed that SCC is not responsible for the maintenance or replacement of defibrillators in the area, but are keen to know anyone who is involved in the continued maintenance, for ongoing communication etc. If they could contact the clerk; shirenewtoncc@gmail.com that would be much appreciated.

Precept – Cllrs read, reviewed and resolved acceptance of the Precept Demand for 25/26 **Clerk to Notify MCC**

Meeting dates for 2025 – Cllrs confirmed the dates for current year, **dates uploaded to website. Clerk to add to calendar**

Mondays – 2025	
Feb 3 rd	March 3 rd
April 7 th	May 12 th AGM & monthly meeting
June 2 nd	July 7 th
August 4 th	Sept 1 st
Oct 6 th	Nov 3 rd
Dec 1 st	

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT January 2024

County Councillor Brown advised:

Place Scrutiny Committee on the 5th of December 2024 - Updated

The Place Committee covered the following report:

**Water Quality and Sewage Infrastructure
 To invite Welsh Water to discuss water quality concerns and sewage concerns, particularly related to the Monmouth and Shirenewton area.**

The Welsh Water slides can be found at the above link in the Supplementary agenda under the Pwllmyeric heading but relate to the main sewerage pipe which covers most of the Shirenewton ward area, the following points were made :

A slide on the investigations and investment including £482,00 invested over a 6-year period and £100,000 of additional lining work programmed.

In relation to the Deposit LDP consultation the response was on the basis of "No detriment to the wastewater network and requirement of HMA or surface water removal agreements."

Comment: The response from Welsh Water was very disappointing and the County Councillor argued that instead that there should be a moratorium on any development until the main sewerage pipe was either properly repaired or replaced, which so far despite years of trying, Welsh Water had not managed to do so.

The link to the meeting which can be watched on you tube can be found here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=303&MIId=5829>

County Council on the 12th of December 2024

The County Council on the above date included a presentation from local secondary schools in Monmouth on their deforestation project and Monmouthshire agreed to be a deforestation free council. The Hillsborough Charter for families bereaved through public tragedy was approved by the Council. There were motions on Storm Bert and supporting the Farmers great concerns on the removal of the Agricultural Property Relief and not to kill off family farms, together with a number of questions raised by members. Unfortunately, the administration sought to weaken the wording of the motions put forward.

The link to the meeting can be found here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/g5735/Agenda%20frontsheet%2012th-Dec-2024%2014.00%20County%20Council.pdf?T=0>

Financial support for flooded homes of Monmouthshire residents - Welsh Government Grant Scheme following the Recent Storms.

If your home has been flooded by Storm Bert or Storm Darragh, Local Councils are administering the Emergency Assistance Scheme on behalf of the Welsh Government. This financial support provides £500 for households with insurance or £1,000 for households that are not insured. To apply you need to complete a short application form with your council tax reference number. The details can be found in the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/g5735/Agenda%20frontsheet%2012th-Dec-2024%2014.00%20County%20Council.pdf?T=0>

Clrs agreed the date of the next meeting as Monday 3rd February 2025 at 7:00pm by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall or remotely.

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 E-mail: shirenewtoncc@gmail.com

Mobile: 07410 580961

Vacancy on Shirenewton Community Council

Shirenewton Community Council has 2 vacancies for a Councillor in the Shirenewton and Mynyddbach ward

If you think you would like to be a Councillor and are over 18 years of age, contact the Clerk by email at shirenewtoncc@gmail.com

What is a Councillor?

Councillors are elected to represent an individual geographical unit on the council, known as a ward or parish. They are generally elected by the public every five years. Between the elections if a Councillor seat becomes available it can be filled by the Council Co-opting the applicant onto the Council. 2 seats for Co-option are now available.

What do Councillors do?

Councillors have three main components to their work.

1. **Decision making** – Through meetings and attending committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.
2. **Monitoring** – Councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.
3. **Getting involved locally** – As local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities and duties often depend on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available, and may include:
 - Going to meetings of local organisations
 - Going to meetings of bodies affecting the wider community
 - Taking up issues on behalf of members of the public

How much time does it take up?

Quite often councillors say that their duties occupy them for about an hour a week. Obviously, there are some councillors who spend more time than this – and some less, but in the main, being a community councillor is an enjoyable way of contributing to your community and helping to make it a better place to live and work.

You will be supported in your role and will be expected to undertake training. You should be comfortable working electronically. You should have a positive outlook and a can-do attitude and be willing to work as part of a team. If after reading this notice you are interested in applying, please contact the clerk to the council using the above details.



Shirenewton
Community Council

Introducing



saints
chepstow

A new Anglican church at St.Christopher's, Bulwark



Led by Revds **Zoe & Barney Pimentel**, and Children & Families Pioneer **Clare Edwards**, the new church will have an informal style with an emphasis on reaching those under 40.

During the week Saints will be running activities aimed at children and families - a "Lego Church", a children's community choir, and a toddler group, with Sunday evenings set aside for more Spiritual input and time together over a meal.

If you are interested in learning more, or would like to volunteer, please get in touch!

saintschepstow@cinw.org.uk



Inclusion and equality are some of our core values as a leadership team. Our aim is for Saints to be LGBTQ+ affirming and to achieve the Autism Friendly award by the National Autistic Society.



SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE—2025

Welcome to a New Year of the Parish Magazine.

First of all, very many thanks to Aileen Doggett who has decided to step back from her role of co-ordinating the delivery of magazines and the collection and banking of subscriptions. Aileen has carried out this role super efficiently for many years and is a very hard act to follow. Many thanks as well to the dedicated band of local distributors who keep the whole process going.

Aileen's co-ordination role will be divided into two. Jane Smith Haddon will take on the lead role of co-ordinating the distribution process for the magazine and liaising with the magazine distributors who deliver the magazine to your door each month and receive the subscriptions; and John Burrows will co-ordinate the receipt of subscriptions from the local distributors for banking.

We will try and keep any hiccups to a minimum but please bear with us as we get to grips with our new roles.

We acknowledge the key place the magazine has in village life, and as a source of local information. To avoid too many changes this year we have decided to keep the cost the same as 2024 at £14 for the 10 monthly copies in 2025 although this does not cover all the costs of production which are closer to £20. We will be thinking of ways of closing the gap for future years.

We would encourage you all to pay promptly as this helps all the volunteers involved in distributing the magazine and collecting the subscriptions. If you can pay by bank transfer (details as laid out in the slip enclosed with this issue) please do so as this helps as well, but cheques and cash are still welcome.

If you feel you are able to do so any donation in addition to your subscription would be much appreciated to help fund and secure the long-term viability of this valued village resource.

Your principal contact for any matters relating to receiving or paying for the Parish Magazine is **your local distributor**. Other contacts if needed are:

Jane Smith – Haddon Co-ordination of Magazine distribution
01291 641 525; Mobile/Text 07816 233 554
dolly.shirenewton@gmail.com

John Burrows Co-ordination of Magazine subscription income
01291 641 845; mobile/text 07795 246 654;
email Johnburrows9@gmail.com

SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1090167

Our December meeting was held at Itton Church, our society was given a warm welcome and our speaker for the evening was John Burrows who gave a very interesting talk entitled 'Twenty Places of National & International Significance within Twenty Miles of Shirenewton'. After the talk we started the Christmas festivities with mince pies and mulled wine, a very pleasant evening was had by all.

On Friday the 27th December we held the Winter Solstice walk up to Grey Hill to see the sun rise over the standing stones. Once again this year the weather was not very good, between the mist and the rain, no sun rise was observed! The breakfast was well worth coming to this event though. I have to admit there were more at the breakfast than walked up Grey Hill! Better luck next year.

Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday, 28th January	Chepstow Roman Crossing Dr Lynne Davies
Wednesday, 12 th February	Archive Meeting at 2.00pm
Tuesday, 25 th February Peter Strong)	Annual Dinner (after dinner speaker, Peter Strong)
Tuesday, 25 th March	Potlets to Plaques with the odd Pub in Between Ned Heyward

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

Archive meetings start at 2.00pm – 4.00pm and everyone is welcome.



Takeaway or Eat In

COME AND CHECK OUT OUR WEEKLY MENUS FOR A TASTEBUD TREAT OR TRADITIONAL COMFORT FOOD BY ORDERING A TAKEAWAY OR DINING IN.

WEDNESDAY

DELICIOUS VARIETY ON THE MENU



FRIDAY

A WIDE RANGE OF FISH & CHIPS MENU OPTIONS

CALL 01291 641521

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SUNDAY LUNCH

£13 COLD OPTION

HEAT YOURSELF AT HOME

£15 HOT OR DINE IN

MENU CHOICES ARE ALL SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. REMEMBER TO CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AS MENUS CHANGE WEEKLY.

Shirenewton Fete will be on

Saturday 14 June 2025

Janet Horton and Seirian Orrell have done a fantastic job organising the fete in recent years and have handed over this task to *Andrew Baker and John Burrows*. We need a few more people to help plan the event, as well as, we hope, the continued input of the regular helpers in the weeks before the Fete and on the day itself.

If you would like to help in the forward planning for the Fete please come to a meeting on

Tuesday evening, 18 February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Carpenters Arms

to discuss ideas and input for the 2025 fete. Look forward to seeing you.



Tots and toddlers

Thursday 10 - 11:30
(term time only)

St Christophers Church
Pembroke Road, Bulwark

For pre school children, babies and their carers.
Join us every Thursday from 10 - 11:30 , during term time
for play, crafts, songs, friendship, refreshments, and fun!

Starting January 9th 2025!

Contact: saintschepstow@cinw.org.uk for more info.



HELP NEEDED

Would you be able to help us maintain one of the oldest buildings in Shirenewton?

We have a small and dedicated group of volunteers, working in pairs, who spend a few hours, three times each year, to keep the Church and the Church Room clean.

Our group has reduced in number during this year, which of course increases the frequency of cleaning for those of us remaining. Therefore, we would all be very grateful to hear from any new volunteers, both pairs and individuals, who feel they would like to contribute to maintaining our church in this way.

Please contact Mark Broughton at
mark_broughton@btopenworld.com

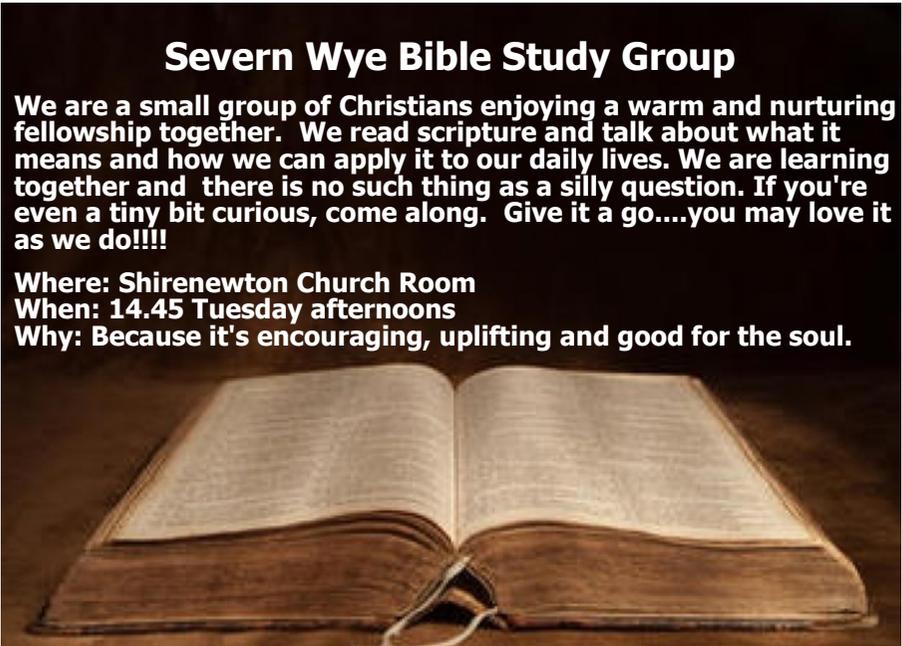
Severn Wye Bible Study Group

We are a small group of Christians enjoying a warm and nurturing fellowship together. We read scripture and talk about what it means and how we can apply it to our daily lives. We are learning together and there is no such thing as a silly question. If you're even a tiny bit curious, come along. Give it a go....you may love it as we do!!!!

Where: Shirenewton Church Room

When: 14.45 Tuesday afternoons

Why: Because it's encouraging, uplifting and good for the soul.



Shirenewton Church

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the Church Food Bank Collection. Just before Christmas, I received this email from Hilary, co-ordinator of the Chepstow food banks. Glynis

"My husband has just got home from his 'stint' at The Bridge Church Foodbank Distribution Centre - **112 People were provided with food TODAY!** I think that all the volunteers certainly deserve a rest now!



We are so grateful for all the donations given week by week, along with extras at Harvest and Christmassy items given over recent weeks. We have certainly been in need of the generosity of our churches, shoppers and other supporters - over the last few weeks, as fast as the donations have been coming in and extra food shops are being made, the food and other items have been bagged up and given to those who come through our doors/collected by the referral agencies.

So....as we head into 2025 **ALL the food items** shown on the foodbank website

- <https://chepstow.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/> - are very much needed to replenish the shelves and, in particular, boxes of cereal, bags of rice and tinned sweetcorn.

Thank you, once again, for your week by week generosity and support of the folk for whom our Foodbank is so important. With Blessings this Christmas

Hilary (on behalf of Chepstow Foodbank)"



Shirenewton Church

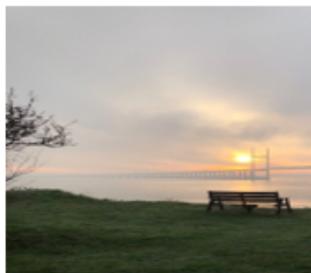


Thanks, folks, for your wonderful generosity this Christmas. Can I remember the busyness of December? I mean, that is like so last year. Let's see. Well, we kicked off with the **Advent Fair** which was very successful. We ran out of marmalade and lemon curd and had to take orders to make some more. We raised £657:80 for Medicines sans Frontières. The following Sunday it was **Carols around the Village Christmas Tree** but because of the extreme wild windiness of the weather, we all scuttled into the candlelit church and, with the help of the Chepstow Town Band we sang our favourite Christmas carols with enthusiasm and some... bravely- attempted descants. Despite that, we collected £217:87 for MsF.

The following Sunday we had our light-hearted **Come and Praise Service**, again with squawky descants and we collected £193:67. Jane and I are delighted to tell you that we were finally able to send **£1,067:80 to MsF**.

And there was more. The eagle-eyed among you will have noticed that I had some visitors staying in my garage. Yes, once again Mary and Joseph kipped down amongst my hay bales - and on Christmas Eve over 120 people joined our **'Walk to Bethlehem Christingle'** to meet the baby Jesus in his crib. And of course, everyone talked to Avis' lovely donkeys, Apple and Blackberry. The collection of £112:70 went to The Children's Society. Not finished! We rang the bells for Midnight Mass, we rang for the Christmas Morning Service and we also rang-in and James trumpeted-in the New Year. We and the donkeys, are very lucky to live in such a lovely, musical and supportive village! Glynis MacDonald

Shirenewton W.I.



New Year, New You

How can a Life Coach help you?

We kicked off our W.I.2025 programme with a most appropriate topic, Lin Marsh, came to talk to us in January about her work and the benefits of coaching.

Lin has 22 years' experience of working as a life coach. Having left a career in sales, she started work as a career coach before developing her role in Leadership and life coaching. Lin has worked with people from all walks of life. This includes leaders and managers in the NHS, Police, Civil Service, banking, technology, retail, leisure, automotive, pharmaceutical companies and Not for Profit Organisations, as well as people looking to make changes in their personal and working lives.

Coaching sessions help clients develop strategies to cope with issues such as stress, managing change, challenging relationship dynamics and changes of direction in life. Rather than being advisory, the sessions help clients to look into the future, working at their own pace to find for themselves answers to their own questions. Making life changes can be a challenging process as people's mindsets may be deep seated.

'We don't get change through thinking; we get change through doing'

Many of Lin's clients draw up a programme of between three and six, one-hour sessions to prioritise and move forward with the things they want to change or improve in their lives. A lot of the work to bring about these changes happens between coaching sessions.

Of course, a substantial part of Lin's work is to really listen to her clients. She set us the task of working in pairs to talk and actively listen to one another about a change, large or small, that we might want to make in our own lives. It was a good job that she had set a time limit on this exercise or it could have been a very late night!

Lin works from her home in Itton. If anyone is interested in finding out more about what a life coach can do for them, then contact Lin: lin@gravitas.co.uk.

W.I. Christmas Meal



We would like to thank the Huntsman Hotel for our splendid Christmas meal in December. The food was delicious and the service excellent. We enjoy these events which give us the chance to socialise and get to know one another better.

Our next meeting will be on **Thursday 13th February at 7.15pm at Shirenewton Recreation Hall**, when **Peter Strong from Gwent County History Association** will give a talk on 'Musings on Monmouthshire'.

If you are interested in joining Shirenewton W.I. or would like to find out more about our group, then please contact Jane Butterworth at janeb247@gmail.com or Angela Gray at angela.deepweir@btpenworld.com

Jackie Broughton

Swift Action Needed!



Welcome to a short series of articles on one of our most iconic visitors. The swift is frequently used as the image and sound of a British summer, but we are in danger of losing it from our skies, unless we act now. Our aim is to raise the profile of swifts within the community, explain their amazing life history and ultimately protect and increase their nest sites within Shirenewton and Mynyddbach.

So where have all the swifts gone?

Swifts visit these islands for only three months a year (May/June/July) to raise their young before departing for sub-Saharan Africa. But all is not well with the swift numbers in Britain; their numbers have dropped significantly over the last 2 decades. For those lucky enough to have lived in these villages over this time, have you noticed a decline? Where once the screech of swifts was an everyday memory of summer, do you notice them less and less now?

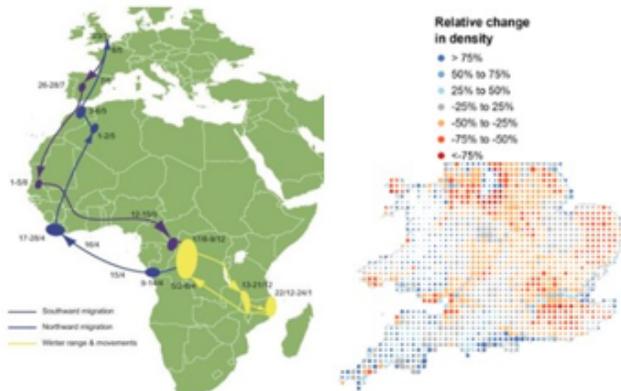


Figure of migration route and abundance change (source BTO.org)

Nationally swift numbers have decreased by 66% (BTO 1995-2022). This equates to an estimated breeding population of just 59,000 pairs in the UK. This decline is masked as swifts are a wide-ranging bird and can often be seen flying high above the villages, but these are likely not our local birds. The real tragedy is that once lost from a village, they are unlikely to return as they are extremely nest-site faithful. Almost unnoticed, there are communities where swifts have gone extinct locally as a breeding bird. Can we work together and stop this happening to our Shirenewton and Mynyddbach swifts?

What do swifts need?

Like all birds, swifts can suffer from our changeable climate and poor summers cause natural fluctuations in breeding success. They feed on the wing on insects and prolonged cool, wet summers can lead to a decline of this insect food. However, swift are amazing flyers and will happily undertake long daily migrations to find food, even travelling to the continent if necessary. They have an ability to store the food in a pouch meaning they only need to return to the nest site infrequently. This makes identifying and protecting nest sites tricky and many people are unaware that their home is also a home for a family of swifts.

By far the biggest issue impacting swifts is the loss of suitable nesting sites. They are almost exclusively dependent on holes and crevices in buildings. Existing sites are being destroyed, and new sites are increasingly rare as we insulate and draft proof our homes. But there are things that we can all do to help swifts – more information in future articles.

Become a swift champion

All is not lost if we act now. Swifts are very successful and are one of the earliest bird types in the fossil record. Around 80% of adults survive year to year, so the potential to stop these declines would be in their hands, or should I say wings, if enough nesting sites are provided and protected.

I hope this short article has sparked your imagination. It's winter outside but by May these iconic birds will be returning to our shores and the skies above our villages. Over the coming months, we hope to get people interested in these birds and become swift champions for the villages. Through coordinated effort, existing nesting sites can be protected and new sites (in the form of nest boxes) installed, thereby [future-proofing](#) the villages' population.

It is estimated from our observations last year that there are only 6 active nest sites left in the villages meaning a total breeding population of just 12 birds. Please help and keep our summer skies alive with this most magnificent bird. If you would like to help, please send an email to shirenewtonswifts@outlook.com [Facebook Group to come]

Look out for more amazing swift facts next month!



Gardening Corner

Happy New Year everyone. We hope that you had a good Christmas with family and friends. We did something that we haven't done for at least 50 years – we went to the circus. A small one, but still very entertaining none the less. It rekindled a few childhood memories for me, whilst for Felicity it was a whole new experience! You are never too old to go to the circus!! Thinking of acrobatic tricks, I'm looking out of the window, not just for inspiration, but watching all the birds fighting the weather conditions – and each other, to secure themselves a meal for the day. We are being battered by yet another storm, although it looks like we are missing the worst of it. We have the regular visitors on the feeders, which are dominated by goldfinches, then chaffinches and the various blue, great and long tailed tit family. Greater spotted woodpeckers are also regular visitors, but I wonder sometimes how they actually survive. They land on the tree, spend ages looking all around to make sure things are safe, often only to be frightened off by an influx of smaller competitors for food arriving 'en masse! They arrive back five minutes later, only for the same saga to be played out yet again, without a single peanut or fat ball being damaged in the process! Nuthatch are also frequent flyers, but more so when things have quietened down a bit. Blackbirds, thrushes and robins usually spend their time picking up what falls to the ground. We generally get a pair of sparrowhawks paying the feeding tree a speedy visit, hence the hesitation of the woodpecker I guess, but we haven't seen these now for at least six months. Maybe they will be back with us in the spring. They are lovely to see in flight, the way they twist and turn whilst their intended victim tries everything to avoid capture. But we'd prefer to see them in someone else's garden given the choice!

We have been experiencing a much colder and longer spell of weather than we have become used to in recent years. But being grey and damp with it, means that the soil has hardly dried out enough to be able to get on it and work the flower beds. At a push, we could work the raised beds in the vegetable garden now, but with heavy rain forecast in the next few hours, any chance to get on with things will swiftly disappear. All we can hope for is that the cold will have seen off at least some of the slugs and snail population that made last year so difficult from the gardening perspective. Apart from repotting some perennial plants in the large greenhouse, we have done very little in the garden. I need to clean out the greenhouses but with the cold and grey weather, it has been very difficult to get motivated. You would think it would be nice and dry in there for working, but the one disadvantage of tunnels

is the amount of condensation that can be generated, which then invariably drips right down your neck on a regular basis. The covers that we use are meant to be 'treated' on the inside, which is meant to make the moisture run down the sides rather than form droplets. This is pretty effective to be honest, but no guarantee that you don't suffer the inevitable – especially when the wind is strong enough to make the cover jump about a bit. I got fed up with singing the old "raindrops keep falling on my head" song, and nowadays I just grumble, or give up in the end and go elsewhere. Last year we met up with one of our dear, ex Shirenewton buddies, who was waxing lyrical about a new item of clothing they had bought to help when walking the dog. It was a padded waistcoat which had a removable and rechargeable lithium battery and heating element built in to it. You simply insert the battery and switch it on and hey presto, a nice warm feeling. I decided I must get one, mainly for when I am woodturning in the garage, but it has proved very good if you are doing any work where high energy isn't helping you to keep warm. I can well recommend them. The poor weather has meant that we have had to seek other works that needed doing. We had planted a number of trees in our field, and since all forms of stock have been removed, we noticed an awful lot of natural regeneration of ash, cherry and oak growing. Over the years these have turned the area into what was becoming a nice woodland. That was until ash dieback arrived and took out virtually all of the ash, which have been gradually dying. It was such a shame as we had wild snowdrops, daffodils and of course bluebells, naturally colonising the area, along with primroses, cowslips and also fritillaries gradually seeding down (although the latter were originally planted by us). Due to the lack of any real management, brambles and bracken from neighbouring land and hedges had started to invade, along with raspberries and blackthorn thanks to the many birds taking shelter in the branches. The last few weeks we have been removing all of the dead trees and thinning out the others, as well as cutting down all of the brambles. We are about two thirds of the way through, and it is starting to look much better now. The first snowdrops and daffodils are now starting to push their way up, so we want to try and finish our work before it is too late and we damage the emerging growth.

Just before Christmas we visited the National Trust property at Dyrham Park, just North of Bath. We couldn't believe our eyes to see not only snowdrops and hellebores in full flower, but also daffodils as well. They truly had to be the earliest daffodils we had ever seen, and it wasn't just the odd one or two, but whole clumps. Hopefully once this next storm passes, we will get some

settled weather. We don't mind it cold, but we do want it dry. We can then start in earnest on the 2025 gardening year. First to receive attention will be the roses, which need their annual pruning. They can be cut now, just so long as you can reach them without walking on the flower beds themselves. We have a number of climbing roses, so these will be attended to first. They will be followed by the fruit trees – apples and pears only. I am resisting turning on the hot benches in the tunnels at the moment. They are so expensive to run and when we were attending the local shows, their use was essential in order to get the biggest and best crops. We are having a rest from these for now, we have been there done that, and each of us were successful. It is now time for others to experience the joy of winning. It has taken many years, but at long last I am getting a better idea of just how much to grow for our needs and more importantly what varieties are best. One of our best discoveries, which came as a result of the show circuit, was potato Casablanca. This is a white, round shaped potato that is really a first early, but we have grown as a main crop as well. With potatoes not always a cheap vegetable, this one is worth growing. The flavour is superb and at their best when used as mash or baked. Blue Danube, is a blue skinned and very disease resistant variety (especially blight). This has a nuttier flavour and is best as a main crop, and used as either a roaster (after being par boiled and the outer surface 'fluffed up' by shaking the par boiled spuds together in the saucepan before going in the roasting pan (or air fryer I guess), or as chunky chips still with the skin on drizzled with oil and sprinkled with salt, pepper and chopped garlic. Tomato wise, we use 'Big Mamma' as our go to cooking sauce variety. We make all our own cooking sauces, with 100% of ingredients (bay leaves, basil, onions and garlic) coming from our garden. The grandchildren prefer nanny and granddad's sauce over anything shop bought with spaghetti bolognese always being top of their wish lists, when they visit! So we must be doing something right. We have also decided this year not to persevere with some crops, which are always relatively cheap, but nowadays prove almost impossible to grow, due to pests and diseases, and there being no real effective way of preventing damage. These are mainly root crops such as carrots, parsnips and celeriac. Despite growing these under fine net covers, they still get badly damaged by root flies and bacterial canker to the point of being inedible, so why waste the time and expense of even trying to grow them.

Happy gardening until next month, Steve and Felicity Hunt.

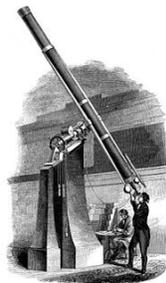
STARGAZING



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.

It's a great time for planet spotting! At the beginning of February at dusk, the brilliant planet Venus is just above the new crescent Moon with slightly yellow Saturn below the Moon and close to the horizon. The bright planet Jupiter is just above the bright star Aldebaran and the constellation of Orion. The orange planet Mars lies to the East. As the month progresses Jupiter and Mars move higher in the sky.

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



www.shirenewtonchurch.com

Welcome to 2025. A new year and new fun and changes in techie land!

Firstly, a warning. Apparently, the latest scam doing the rounds is scammers calling claiming to be from your GP's surgery 'updating their records' which, conveniently for the scammer, involves you divulging personal information which they can use for impersonation scams. If you receive a call which purports to be from your GP's surgery the advice is to hang up and call the surgery back on the number published on their website.

I had a similar call just before Christmas. It was allegedly my credit card company wanting to verify some transactions. Once they started talking to me about 'taking me through security', I told them I don't answer security questions to random callers and would call the company back via the number on the back of my card. They were entirely happy with this and, as it transpired, it was a genuine call. But the point is that scammers will try and persuade you not to call the real number and try and convince you that you'd be wasting your time, etc. Genuine callers from your bank will fully understand and be happy for you to hang up and call back.

You may recall a few articles I wrote in the days of yore re the UK's Online Safety Act 2025 and how everyone was waiting for the regulator (Ofcom) to publish guidance. Well, they have published, and they require sites which publish adult content to have age-checking processes immediately and other sites such as social media, to have this in place by July 2025. So, this affects a wide range of organisations and information providers. Will, for example, the Daily Mail website require age verification? A brief visit to the 'Female' section of the website confirmed some degree of adult content including an article questioning whether "a £600-an-hour Hollywood orgasm coach (*could*) really improve my sex life". Most other online national newspapers feature similar articles in their 'wellness' pages.

The act identifies 'Harmful Content' From which children need to be protected as: (i) Pornographic content, (ii) Content that promotes, encourages, or provides instructions for suicide, self-harm, or eating disorders, (iii) Content that depicts or encourages serious violence, (iv) Bullying content. So, the question will be 'What defines pornographic content'? Will an article on eating disorders be deemed as harmful even it is factual? What is bullying content?

Many American and European based sites will simply geoblock UK users. Last year, after Florida's new law requiring age verification for adult websites, one of the top three adult websites 'exited' Florida by geoblocking i.e. not permitting users with a Florida based IP address from accessing their site. The result was a 1,150% rise in demand for VPNs which, inter alia, permit users to spoof their location. As of 1st January 2025, the site is now geoblocking 17 US states which have implemented age verification laws for viewing adult sites.

It will be interesting to see how this plays out. I think the two things we can be pretty sure of is (i) it will drive certain websites and forums out of business or offshore, & (ii) there will be a surge in demand for VPNs.

Finally, AI looks like it is changing the market in long range weather forecasting. Google DeepMind (a Google AI company) has revealed that its long range weather forecasting model, GenCast, outperforms ENS, the forecasting model developed by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), in "predicting both daily weather and the trajectories of extreme events like hurricanes and cyclones".

Apparently, the ECMWF model takes up to 4 hours to run on a supercomputer while GenCast requires a standard Cloud TPU (Tensor Processing Units) – TPUs are AI accelerators optimised for AI models – and runs in 8 minutes! Read more about it here: <https://deepmind.google/discover/blog/gencast-predicts-weather-and-the-risks-of-extreme-conditions-with-sota-accuracy/>

Safe Browsing

David Cornwell
webmaster



FAIRTRADE NEWS

Our western economic system runs on turning a profit. Corporations' raison d'être is maximum profit. The only constraint is staying legal. Highly complex opaque financial arrangements can also help hide the true level of profit; off-shore havens (surprisingly often our ex-colonies) enable tax avoidance (legal) tantamount to tax evasion (illegal) in all but name. We need clear international legal rules and regulation, and more especially appropriate enforcement and And so, to . . . honey!



The World Beekeeping Awards will not award a prize for honey this year after warnings of widespread fraud in the global supply chain. Apimondia, the International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations says it will showcase honey from around the world at its congress in Denmark, but for the first time make no awards for the product. About 45% of honeys were rejected at the awards in Montreal in 2019 for a variety of reasons, including suspected adulteration, using cheap sugar syrup. At the Istanbul congress in 2022 39 out of 145 honeys were withdrawn for suspected adulteration.

An EU investigation published in 2023 found 46% of imported sampled products were suspected to be fraudulent, including all 10 from the UK. Samples used by the UK branch of the Honey Authenticity Network for a novel form of DNA testing found that 24 out of 25 jars from big UK retailers were suspicious. When the initiative 'Clean Up the Honey Market' filmed undercover in France its investigators were told that the lowest priced product was for the UK market because 'it was less likely to be subjected to rigorous testing'.

When you consider it takes about 50,000 flower visits to make one gram of honey – it is hardly surprising that genuine honey is costly. Supporting our local beekeepers is an obvious way to avoid adulterated honey or buying Fairtrade honey which supports farmers abroad and enables them to improve their lives, whilst guaranteeing the quality of the product and their care for the environment. Equal Exchange Fairtrade honey (purchased from Ethical Superstore) from Mexico is my family's favourite. Not cheap, but delicious. It's pretty basic stuff - does the jar labelled HONEY contain only honey? Should the consumer have to check?! (Much of the info in this article comes from 'Honey Supply Chain' by Jon Ungeod-Thomas. The Guardian 9/11/2024)

Marion McAdam 641 316 msm316@gmail.com and sanctions

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FEBRUARY

Monday 3 rd 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Saturday 8 th 10 a.m.	Working Party St Tewdric's Churchyard
Wednesday 12 th 2.00 p.m.	Archive meeting Shirenewton Church Room
Thursday 13 th 7.15 p.m.	WI meeting—Musings on Monmouthshire Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Friday 21 st 7.00 p.m.	Quiz Night Chepstow Priory Church
Tuesday 25 th 7.30 p.m.	History Society Annual Dinner Peter Strong

MARCH

Monday 3 rd 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Tuesday 25 th 7.30 p.m.	History Society—Potlets to Plaques with the odd Pub in Between Ned Heyward
Saturday 29 th 7.30 p.m.	The Gift to Sing St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow

severnwyema.co.uk





MUSICAL DIRECTOR: GRAHAM BULL
CCS is affiliated to Ty Cerdd & Making Music, and is a
Registered Charity (no. 112798)
www.chepstowchoralsociety.org.uk

CHEPSTOW CHORAL SOCIETY is proud in 2025 to celebrate being the only Society in our area to offer four-part choral singing concerts featuring orchestras with fully professional instrumentalists, and soloists often from RWCMD commencing their fully professional careers.

**ON SATURDAY, MARCH 29th at ST MARY'S PRIORY CHURCH,
CHEPSTOW, the Society will present a very special concert.**

SATURDAY MARCH 29th 2025, 7.30pm

“THE GIFT TO SING”

With CCS Orchestra (leader Paula Kempton)

Sing in a Season – Choir & Orchestra – Bob Chilcott

St Paul's Suite -- Orchestra – Gustav Holst

The Gift To Sing –Choir & Orchestra – Graham Bull

***Fantasia on Greensleeves – Vaughan Williams
Orchestra***

A Sprig of Thyme -- Choir & Orchestra -- John Rutter

*This Concert features music by British
composers –including a major work for Choir and
Orchestra by our Musical Director, Graham Bull.*

(see over)

Chepstow Choral Society is proud and excited to be offering a different style of Spring Concert this year, with music featuring a programme theme loosely built on what we can learn from nature and the natural world through music –two of the compositions specifically focus on this in the compositions.

Sing in a Season, by *Bob Chilcott*, was commissioned for its premier performance in 2023, using words by poet Charles Bennett and urges us to look at the diversity and richness of the surrounding natural world using our voices. ***The Sprig of Thyme***, by (Sir) *John Rutter*, is a delightful collection of eleven well-known folk songs of styles and genres and set to various orchestral accompaniments

Chepstow Choral Society is excited and immensely proud to be giving the first performance of ***The Gift To Sing***, by our own Musical Director, *Graham Bull*. Graham commenced this project during lockdown, and used four powerful poems – “*The Gift To Sing*” (*James Johnson 1917*), “*The Birds Will Sing Again*” (*John O'Brien 1921*) “*Everyone Sang*” (*Siegfried Sassoon 1919*) and “*I've Learned to Sing*” (*Georgia D Johnson 1941*)—as the words for the setting of this composition. The work demonstrates the joy of singing and use of orchestra to do so, making music such an integral part of our lives.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE! –MARCH 29th AT ST MARY’S PRIORY CHURCH, CHEPSTOW, 7.30pm --and offer YOUR support to YOUR CHORAL SOCIETY, SINGERS, ORCHESTRA - AND OUR MUSICAL DIRECTOR GRAHAM BULL FOR HIS TIRELESS COMMITMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR CHORAL MUSIC FOR OUR AREA.

Tickets (£15, u/18s and students free) will be available from Chepstow Bookshop, choir members –information on website etc

CCS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS!! *If you would like to join a friendly four-part vocal group who perform with first-class musicians, CCS is for you! For further information, please contact Marjorie (01291 – 623310, bduerden@doctors.org.uk) or visit our CCS website (www.chepstowchoralsociety.org.uk) and follow us on Facebook & X (Twitter) @ChepstowChoral* M. Duerden



Quiz Night at Chepstow Priory!

with Quizmaster Graham Witchard

Friday 21st February 2025, 7pm

£5 per person to play

Bar open – bacon butties served!

(and vegan burgers)

Rollocking Raffle!

Heating on!

Proceeds to Friends of
St Mary's Church





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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!

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The graphic features a man with a beard, smiling and looking at a smartphone while sitting at a laptop. The background is a light yellow circle. The text is in a dark teal color. A yellow button with the text 'Support us' is positioned above the man. At the bottom, there is a dark teal banner with the Easyfundraising logo and the slogan 'You shop, brands donate to us'.

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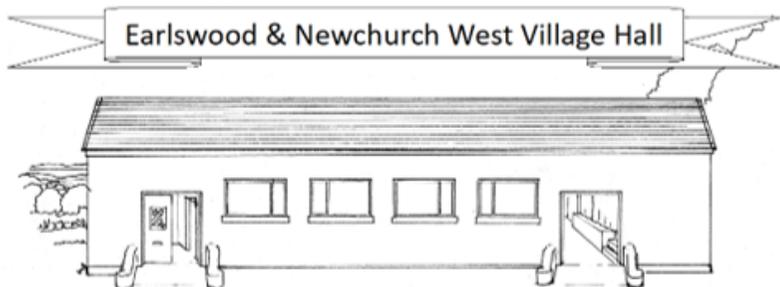
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Christmas Quiz... yes, 2024!

Not content with holding their **first** Christmas Market and Chat event, the Hall committee thought it would a great idea to run a **second** Christmas Quiz, following the great success of the 2023 version.

So, Dec 14th saw the doors open early evening to welcome all those who could not resist an opportunity to **pit their wits** whilst also having a **tasty curry** served to them.

Of course there were prizes – Best team, Wooden spoon team and the inevitable **Best Christmas jumper** - outfits were SO impressive that there were two winners of this!

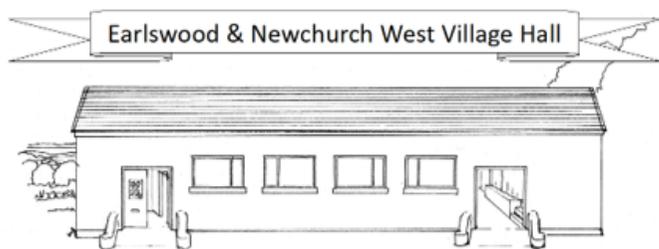
Do YOU know:

- the average natural lifespan of a **TURKEY**?
- the name of the romantic hero in a pantomime traditionally played by a girl?
- the vitamin that is contained in pine leaves?

Just a few of the wide-ranging questions thrown at us as we battled with a page of **images of stars** from an array of TV series – identification needed. Others in the teams turned their attention to working out the **ingredients** in a **Christmas** cake given **ONLY** the **amounts** used.

What a **great evening** of food, wine (bring your own) and **BRAINS** – and I am one who hates a quiz!!

SEE YOU AT THE NEXT ONE!



What *has* been happening?

Such a shame - if you missed our **Christmas Market and Coffee + Chat event?**

It was a **brilliant** opportunity to find the most gorgeous gifts. All good quality, sold and many handmade, by crafters living very locally.

The variety of stalls was **amazing**, Christmas 'foodie' hampers, **cakes and pickles**, beautiful **handmade pottery**, colourful **quilted items** from bottle holders to bed covers and **wood turned** products made using locally sourced wood of many varieties. Wonderfully **tactile** Christmas tree decorations, wooden bowls and hand painted wooden snowmen to name a few items.

We had **sparkles** too! You've all heard the expression '**too much choice**' well this was **IT!** So many rings, bangles, necklaces and earrings how could anyone resist?

Moving around the room something for **your wall perhaps?** Oil paintings of local country scenes being sold by **the artist herself!** Next door, a double fronted display by **Green Bee Blooms** of eye-catching **Christmas arrangements and wreaths** alongside fragrant, **hand poured candles**, tastefully presented in gift boxes.

Unique handmade greetings cards for all occasions and children's wooden toys, also handmade, may have caught one's eye – a good chance to top up your card cache!

Oh, I must not forget the stall of **our youngest contributor** – a rail of lovingly **hand crocheted tops in pastel and earthy colours**, tote bags, and a collection of crocheted soft animals – who could resist? **All designed by the young crafter herself** – how does she manage her studies?!

Feathers for your hat madam? Oh, yes please!

How easy to change an ordinary **lady's trilby into something VERY STYLISH!** Just through the purchase of a brooch made from colourful feathers pinned onto the hat band. The ladies from **Wentwood Young Farmers** were also promoting their 2025 Calendar - **one up on the famous WI Calendar!**

What about **the lady who arrived laden with boxes** of 'branded' body products and even more boxes of mugs, tea towels, and more? If you were on the hunt for a gift with a **touch of humour**, country feel, or other, then this was the stall for you?

Shopping all done – time to head for a hot drink and a cake. Oh, and time to write and post, a special letter to Santa (one ‘little’ girl asked for a ‘new man’ – I wonder if Santa managed that !!!)

Thankfully the children had much more reasonable requests and we hope Santa obliged.

The hall was **buzzing with conversation and laughter** as our visitors met up enjoying coffee, hot chocolate or a cold drink. Most could not resist a slice of homemade cake (better and cheaper than ‘well known’ brands), while chatting. **It was truly a brilliant community event.**

The Hall committee would like to thank **all** those who supported us. Such an event is dependent on stall holders but **also** those come to view, hopefully purchase goods, and partake of refreshments and chat.

Keep a look out for the date for 2025!



THE BELLS, THE BELLS

As is now tradition we brought the ropes down into the nave over the Christmas period so that any assembled congregation could witness the art of full-circle change ringing. We rang 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 stay closer to home visiting Brecon and the nearby towers. First stop was Brecon Cathedral. The massive central tower houses a ring of 10 bells, a challenge for many of our ringers more use to 6 bells (as at Shirenewton) or possibly 8 bells (as at Usk). For those who have paid attention to past reports, change ringing involves exploring the permutations allowed without repetition. So for 6 bells the maximum number of ways of reordering the sequence 1 to 6 is 720. However, for 10 bells this raises to a staggering 3,628,800. Exploring even a small fraction of these makes life much more complicated. Brecon Cathedral was founded in 1093 as a Benedictine Priory. The architecture of the tower is more akin to a castle – a type of building style rife in Wales at this time. The ringing room situated high in the tower is accessed via narrow stone staircases set within the walls of the tower (rather than the usual spiral staircase), giving scale to how thick the walls are. The ring is relatively light for 10 with a tenor (heaviest bell) weighing 16.6 cwt - compare this to Wells Cathedral, also a 10, with a tenor of 56.3cwt. Our ringers coped well ringing rounds and called changes and ventured into Grandsire Triples (on 7) with 3 covering bells making up the ten. Next we went down into the centre of Brecon to ring at St Mary's - a pleasant ring of 8, and thence to the outskirts of Brecon to Llanfaes, a ring of 6. We completed the morning ringing just north of Brecon at the excellent ring of 6 at Llandfaelog Fach. Lunch was pre-booked at the Old Ford Inn at Llanhamlach where we were made welcome and seated at a single table accommodating all 15 ringers together.

After an excellent lunch we travelled to Llangasty Talyllyn where the church is set against the backdrop of Llangorse Lake. We were met here by the vicar who was also meeting a couple planning their marriage ceremony – this presumably being a very popular venue due to the idyllic situation. The 4 bells (maximum permutations 24) were presumably *maiden* (meaning as cast and untuned) resulting in an unusual sound. Amongst other methods we managed some Double

Bob Minimus - a new method to most of our ringers. Finally we headed to another very pleasant ring of 6 at Llanbedr Ystrad Yw. Dusk was now falling and a chill was in the air. On leaving the church the lights of the nearby Red Lion and the smell of wood smoke drew us in for a "quick one" in this very cosy and homely pub, before heading back for home. The post tour celebration was held that evening hosted by Christine and Simon Stanley at Old School House, Earlswood. Overall a great day out.

M.D. Penney.



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SHIRENEWTON VILLAGE MARKET NEWS

Our Christmas markets raised a fabulous £254.06 for LATCH – a big thanks you to all our stallholders, organisers, helpers, our pop-up café crew & to the village for supporting us – we couldn't have done it without you!



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Apologies for the lack of photos & write up – I'm moving house, sadly out of the village, but rest assured I'll still be helping to run the market!

Shirley Ayres

25 PLACES OF NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, OR WORLD SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN 25 MILES OF SHIRENEWTON

This new series of articles each month, are all set within 25 miles of Shirenewton, and include events, places, structures and people who had an impact of national, international and even world significance and includes: the names of great engineers and great engineering structures; Roman legions and medieval knights, battles, and acts of courage, diplomacy, and long lasting influence; and ships, trains, cars and planes of world significance; and much more - and of course the world's fastest rising and second highest tides. Some months may have two subjects depending on the length of the articles.

1. The Span
2. The Gondola
3. The Canal
4. The Railway
5. The Viaduct
6. The Bridge
7. The Bridge to India
8. The Chains
9. The Gorge
10. The Tunnel
11. The Telegraph and Titanic
12. The Fortress
13. The Castle and the Magna Carta
14. The Ship
15. The Tudors
16. The Flood
17. The Stage
18. The Game
19. The Cup
20. The Name
21. The New World
22. The Liner
23. The Plane
24. The Song
25. The Most Amazing Photograph Ever Taken

25 PLACES OF INTERNATIONAL OR WORLD SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN 25 MILES

There are many things around us of great interest locally and regionally but very few have national, international, or even world significance. These articles look at 25 places or features within 25 miles of Shirenewton which do.

1. *The Span* – the Severn Bridge (1966)

Where better to start the series than the Severn Bridge as it is the largest and most prominent of all the local features and visible from Shirenewton and is on the badge for Shirenewton School and on Chepstow School's badge – and by the way it is not the 'Old Severn Bridge' it is the 'Severn Bridge' as the newer bridge was called the Second Severn Crossing, now the Prince of Wales Bridge. The Severn Bridge is no ordinary suspension bridge it is a world leader, and in the history of world suspension bridges it has a special place. It is also one of the most beautiful and graceful suspension bridges in the world and there is a reason why that subjective view is in fact objective and it is all to do with the feature which makes the bridge a bridge of world significance, although not many people in the world realise that the revolution in ever longer suspension bridge spans began with an innovation first tried on the Severn Bridge in 1966.



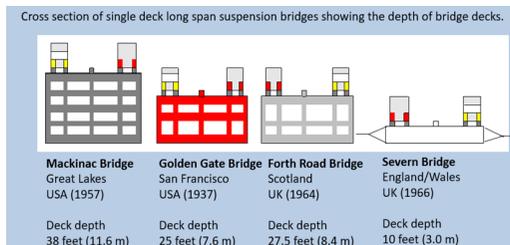
A 40 - ton lorry appearing to fly over the Severn on the sleek deck of the Severn Bridge

Before the Severn Bridge was built most of the world's long span suspension bridges were American and they used very deep heavily trussed metal bridge decks which weighed a lot and limited their span and looked quite heavy and were expensive to build. Then a Swiss- American engineer Othamar Ammann in New York produced two much lighter road decks in 1931 and 1939.

The second of Ammann's bridges in 1939 looked just like the Severn Bridge but that design had a flaw. It was copied in 1940 on the other side of the USA near Seattle and the high winds up the Tacoma Narrows waterway blew the whole bridge to pieces but no-one was hurt. No-one would try to build a suspension bridge with a light thin deck again but eventually they did and it was a British Consortium that tried it at Chepstow – and it was by accident. The new design, however, was fundamentally different from the American designs.

The Severn Bridge was originally designed to look like the old style heavy truss American suspension bridges but the bridge model broke in the wind tunnel tests. Whilst waiting for repairs to the model the engineers at Freeman Fox Partners (Sir Gilbert Roberts and Mike Parsons) tried out an aerodynamic box girder deck shaped in cross section like an aircraft wing and it worked. It worked so well and was so stable compared to the American experiments with thinner decks that Freeman Fox Partners used the innovative deck design for the first time on the superstructure of the Severn Bridge. Not only was it more stable but it was much lighter and much more graceful and, critically, much cheaper than the American heavy metal truss suspension bridge decks.

The new and innovative bridge deck was assembled in Chepstow at Fairfield Mabey's works. The 80 aerodynamic sections of the bridge were fabricated there and launched down one of the slipways of the former shipyard and floated out to the Severn Bridge site. American single deck bridges were over 30 feet deep. The deck on the Severn Bridge was 10 feet deep but aerodynamic.



Freeman Fox Partners and the UK's Associated Bridge Builders were so pleased with the Severn Bridge they did it again in Turkey for the first Bosphorus Bridge connecting two continents - Europe and Asia - at Istanbul, and the UK-built, first copy of the Severn Bridge, is still shown today on TV adverts for Turkey.



The UK consortium which designed and built the Severn Bridge and Bosphorus Bridge then did it again for the Humber Bridge in the UK which took the world record for the longest central span ever built, and held it for 18 years.

The rest of the world certainly took notice of the two successor bridges to the pioneering Severn Bridge and in particular the Chinese who became the leading builders of long span suspension bridges using the Severn method.

Of the world's 30 longest span suspension bridges built in the 50 years since the completion of the Severn Bridge at Chepstow in 1966, 24 of the 30 bridges (80%) used the sleek aerodynamic road deck design first assembled and piloted on the Severn Bridge 5 miles away in Chepstow. The elegant sleek deck changed the shape of almost all the world's suspension bridges.



The Severn Bridge's balanced proportions and striking white colouring makes it one of the most beautiful bridges in the world – and to think we used to complain about paying £6.70 a day to cross it!

John Burrows

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