

Shirenewton Parish Magazine



June 2025

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Terry Walters (1938 - 2025)



Terry Walters was a lovely man and active in so many areas of Shirenewton village life and in Chepstow. Numerous front cover photographs of the Shirenewton Parish Magazine for decades were taken by photography enthusiast Terry Walters of Old School Hill, Mynyddbach. Terry and Barbara, married 62 years, lived in Mynyddbach for 40 years. Terry has served the village well, with humour, charm, expertise and enthusiasm.

Terry produced the Parish Magazine for 10 years using many of his photographs – and Barbara was active for decades in its distribution. Terry was involved in the Church Fete, putting up marquees and stalls and helping to cook the beefburgers. In the early years of the village pantomime he was in charge of electrics and making animated gadgets including a pop-up flower and a flying dragon! He helped look after the SAMFAL (now Gwent Wildlife Trust) green site by clearing up and cutting back overgrown vegetation and clearing the brook. He took monthly record photographs of the wildlife and nature.

Terry was born in Derbyshire and came with Barbara to the Chepstow area in 1975, first to Sedbury, and then in 1985 to Mynyddbach. Terry joined the Photography Group of Chepstow U3A imparting his knowledge and organising trips and produced the first U3A newsletter showing many of his photographs of U3A events. After retirement Terry pursued another interest of his in music and joined the U3A Ukelele band and set up the 'Wyenotes' band of the U3A which is still going today.

Terry's funeral is at Langstone at **2.00 pm on Wednesday 11th June 2025**. Afterwards, Barbara welcomes you to the Huntsman Hotel, Shirenewton.



Terry Walters (1938-2025)

SHIRENEWTON FETE WILL BE ON SATURDAY 14th JUNE 2025

Everyone—please make sure it is in the diary!

For those who have regularly carried out tasks, or run stalls, please, please, do so again—it is vital.

And for **new volunteers** to run events or stalls please contact us on—shirenewtonfete@gmail.com

We will contact all volunteers in June to discuss arrangements and needs.

Andrew Baker/John Burrows—shirenewtonfete@gmail.com

DEFIBRILLATOR LOCATIONS

(Cabinets do not require codes, they are unlocked although they have a key pad)

- Carpenters Arms (on the Usk road)
- Huntsman Hotel (on the Usk road)
- Recreation Hall (Shirenewton village)
- The Tredegar Arms (The Square, centre of Shirenewton)
- Great House Farm complex (off Old Road), Earlswood (north)
[repair.decrease.fussy]

Earlswood Hall
(Earlswood)



(House half way between Blethyn Close and the School in Mynyddbach)

Saturday 5 July between 10 am and 1 pm



Ymddiriedolaeth
Natur
Gwent
Wildlife Trust

The Great Big Balsam Bash!

Join Gwent Wildlife Trust for a day of pulling Himalayan Balsam from our beautiful meadows! Himalayan Balsam is highly invasive and each plant produces hundreds of seeds, so we need all the help we can get to remove them this summer!



July 5th
2025

Shirenewton Meadows

Please use the QR code to register interest on eventbrite

SUMMER FETE GRAND PRIZE DRAW

Raffle tickets are still available for the grand prize draw to be held at the Summer Fete on 14 June. Huge thanks to the many people who have already bought tickets, we are very grateful for your support.

For those who haven't yet bought tickets, don't miss out on the opportunity to win one of our wonderful prizes, which are listed below.

Please support this important part of our annual fundraising to help maintain our beautiful church, the churchyard and the Saysell Centre. Tickets cost just £1.00 each, £5.00 for a book of 5.

If you would like to buy any tickets then please just text me, ring me, email me or just ask me if you see me walking my dog around the village.

Thanks,

Aileen.

07814 451943, 01291 641459, aileendoggett@btinternet.com

Prizes:

£100.00 in Cash.

£100.00 Voucher for The Tredegar Arms.

Sunday Lunch for Two People at The Huntsman Hotel.

Sunday Lunch for Two People at The Carpenter's Arms.

Bespoke Spirit Hamper.

£50.00 John Lewis/ Waitrose Voucher.

£50.00 John Lewis/ Waitrose Voucher.

Beautiful Bentley Teddy Bear.

Neil Powell Butcher: Voucher for £20.00.

Four Ball Golf Voucher for St Pierre Golf and Country Club.

Deacon's Florist Voucher: £20.00.

Model of BMW Car.

L'Occitane Body Care Set.

Bottle of Superb Single Malt Scotch Whisky.

Fete Celebration Cake.

Bottle of "Ryder Reserve" Single Malt Scotch Whisky.

Large Tin of M&S Belgian Collection Biscuits.

£10.00 Voucher for Chepstow Garden Centre.

ZOE AND BARNEY'S TRIP TO AMERICA

As some of you know, Barney and I travelled to America after Easter and spent two and a half weeks there. The main purpose of the visit was to see Barney's best friend, Lewis and his wife Cat, and to become Godparents to their daughter, Heather Madelyn.

Barney met Lewis in 2007, at the London School of Theology during his first degree. They have bonded ever since over discussions of theology, ethics, technology, life and faith, as well as outdoor pursuits and boardgames. Lewis and Cat moved to America in 2022 and had Heather in 2023. They had always wanted us to be her Godparents and delayed the Christening until we were able to travel out there.

Lewis's wife Cat trained for ordination in the Church of England before moving to America and is now an Episcopalian minister in North Carolina. Cat took the baptism service, but she and Lewis asked Barney if he would be a guest speaker that Sunday. Despite the slight element of a busman's holiday(!) Barney readily agreed, and preached on the lectionary gospel reading for the first Sunday after Easter; Jesus appearing to the disciples in the upper room in John 20.

Barney's sermon, rather remarkably, reflected the same sentiment as was shared in the new pope's first address a few weeks later! (Great minds, eh?!), focusing on Jesus's words, which he repeats three times to the disciples: "Peace be with you". Barney encouraged Heather and the other two candidates, their parents, Godparents, and the whole church community, to be bringers of peace. Barney also explained that Jesus entered a locked room, just to see his disciples and share his peace. They were afraid, lost and doubting, and he met them where they were and shared his peace with them – a reminder of his unconditional love and welcome to each of us, and how he seeks us out.

It was a very special service and wonderful to be out there in person to make our vows and indeed to meet Heather for the first time. Our Christening gift to Heather was a Welsh love spoon! Our extended stay, and being hosted by Cat and Lewis in their home, meant we got to spend lots of quality time with Heather which was a great blessing. And as ever we are grateful for our clergy and lay team who covered services during our absence.





SERVICES AT SHIRENEWTON CHURCH IN JUNE

Sunday 1 st June	10.00	Morning Praise with Hymns
Sunday 8 th June	10.00	Pentecost Eucharist with Hymns
Sunday 15 th June	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns
Sunday 22 nd June	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns
<u>Group Service—no Service at Shirenewton Church</u>		
Sunday 29 th June	10.00	Group Eucharist Service at MOUNTON Church

All are welcome to join us and enjoy refreshments in the church rooms after Sunday morning service

Information of all services at eleven local churches that make up the Severn-Wye Ministry Area is at www.severnwyema.co.uk

SHIRENEWTON CHURCH FETE

(ON SATURDAY 14TH JUNE 2025)

Bottle Stall

COLLECTION DAYS

[From 6pm on Tues 10th June and Thurs 12 June teams will be collecting](#) bottles/cans - wine, spirits, beer, soft drinks etc. throughout Shirenewton and Mynyddbach for the Fete Bottle Stall. Please donate generously.

It would help us if you could check that the bottles and cans are within the recommended 'use by' date printed on the bottle or can.

If these dates are not convenient or if you are located in Earlswood or the wider area, please contact Janet/Seirian at shirenewtonfete@gmail.com or call 01291 641 845 (John) to arrange convenient drop/off or collection

THANK YOU

CAKE STALL

The legendary Shirenewton Cake Stall needs you! Bakes and makes (cakes, biscuits, bread etc as well as Jams and Preserves). See separate appeal.

BOOK & TOY STALL

We also need donations of Books/DVDs for the book stall, or any usable and complete Toys, Games or Puzzles

PLANT STALL

Donations of plants of all kinds also gratefully received - flowers, vegetables, ground cover - all welcome!

Please drop off Plants, Books, Toys in the verandah area in front of the Hall on the morning of Saturday 15th June between 9.30am and noon.

All contributions greatly appreciated.



SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Please find extracts from the minutes of the monthly meeting held 7th April and 12th May 2025. Also AGM held 12th May 2025

April Meeting:

Minute 5004 – To Consider 2 Planning Matters

1. DM/2023/01198 Coombe Farm Reconsultation Planning - Erection of 2 additional poultry units and associated infrastructure on established poultry farm.

Councillors may recall that planning consent has been given for the above notwithstanding SCC's request for monitoring of contamination to nearby water courses which has not been made a condition. However, the planning documents available at the time of the decision did not include an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Various reports, as to ecology, odour and ammonia, have been submitted. The planning consent was subject to SUDS approval and MCC's SAB officer has commented:

Surface Water Drainage The application has sort of identified a means of surface water discharge (rainwater harvesting, infiltration, watercourse, surface water sewer or combined sewer). The applicant should provide/confirm that they own all the land between the site and the Castorgi Brook over which discharge is proposed. We would prefer to see this overland flow directed with a swale across the field to direct flows to the Castorgi Brook. The details of the drainage will still be subject to SAB approval. Due to the area of the works they will require SAB approval so please include the informative below on the decision notice. We would advise they contact our team on SAB@monmouthshire.gov.uk as soon as possible to arrange a pre application discussion prior to submitting the SAB Application. SAB approval is a pre commencement requirement therefore this should be in place prior to any works commencing on site. The proposed discharge rate will need to be reduced to the greenfield rate for the site also which may impact the sizing of the pond feature. The pond also proposes what appears to be a 5m high embankment on one edge which would not be accepted

by the SAB. The routing of the discharge across the open fields will also need to be better managed and again could cause refusal of a SAB application. As per the note above we highly recommend that the applicant seek a SAB Pre Application discussion.

The preparation of the EIA has been delayed as will be seen from the following extract from applicant's surveyor to MCC's planning officer :

As discussed, NRW changed their guidance on ammonia emission last month. They have reduced the emission factor for broiler chickens by 30%, but are now allowing no reduction for heat exchangers. As a result, we need to alter the scheme which will involve new ammonia modelling, removal of the heat exchangers, and addition of air scrubbers to the new sheds.

Councillors may wish to consider whether to defer consideration of the issues when the full EIA is available.

Recommendation : SCC may have further comments and/or objections and reserves its position to do so when the full Environmental Impact Assessment and consultee comments on it are available.

Recommendation - agreed by unanimous vote

2. DM/2021/01398 Land near New Shire Farm, Usk Rd, Earlswood - Change of use of land to allow for the siting of a mobile home and installation of ground work and drainage. To provide a mobile dwelling adjacent to existing track and demolish and reconstruct existing shed to be used as Dairy and stable and for storage of relevant farming machinery. To enable the proprietor to manage her land and care for her livestock for local produce and ecology.

Shire Farm is accessed via a track from the lane that runs from the Gaerllwyd crossroads to Bully Hole Bottom and consists of 6.8 hectares (16.8 acres) of organic agricultural pastureland and some woodland with natural spring. There are three existing sheds that were used for hay and wood storage and shelters for sheep, pigs and horses. It was purchased in October 2018 from Mr and Mrs Lewis who used the farm to graze sheep. It sits in the upper Mounton valley and as such is not prominent in the landscape.

The application includes a bespoke timber relocatable mobile home (think park home) having 2 bedrooms both ensuite, a kitchen/diner and a utility room. The footprint is some 13m x 7m; construction is with SuperTherm Insulation in a timber frame and wooden cladding (colour not mentioned) to passive haus standard. The roof is grey metal cladding, and there is to be a package

sewage treatment plant. The applicant advises the proposal does not include the gain, loss or change of use of residential units as this is intended to be temporary accommodation. There is no existing accommodation on site.

The existing field shelter is to be demolished and replaced with Sheep Dairy and Stable with drainage, and a solar panel array installed over.

The applicant lives in Chepstow. The purpose of the mobile home is to provide temporary overnight accommodation during busy lambing periods. The proposal is not intended to be taken as an application for a potential dwelling, as the applicant appreciates that the land available to her limits the amount that she is able to physically produce and do on the farm. There is insufficient justification for a full time employee or permanent occupation.

A permanent dwelling such as this in the open countryside would breach MCC planning policy. The applicant seeks a temporary consent. Councillors might wish to consider whether it is a necessity to have overnight accommodation when the applicant lives within 20 minutes, although shelter from the elements and sanitary facilities might be. Councillors will also be mindful that a temporary planning consent can accidentally become permanent and that the laying down of a concrete foundation base for the home with no wheels might imply an inappropriate degree of longevity on site.

Recommendation: Refusal because the temporary mobile home is in fact a permanent structure and breaches MCC planning policy for building in the open countryside. SCC are not persuaded that the home is justifiable in support of an activity which appears to amount to hobby farming lacking current and future financial viability and employment prospect. Were MCC nevertheless minded to grant consent, SCC requests conditions :

- that the permission expires in 5 years from its date at which time the structure is to be removed and the land is to be restored to its original state of pasture

- that the mobile home shall not be occupied other than as temporary overnight accommodation and solely in connection with the rearing of sheep on site.

- that the external finishes and colours of the mobile home be subject to MCC approval.

Recommendation - agreed by unanimous vote

3. DM/2024/00131

Reserved matters for Eleven Dwellings adjoining Clearview Court to include - access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale

Councillors have considered various applications for this site for which planning consent for 11 dwellings has been granted subject to reserved matters. In summary SCC commented in March last year :

Access – lack of turning point and future maintenance

Appearance – box style housing lacking cohesion with the village

Landscape – provision of 2 copses welcome but need TPOs

Layout – comparative scale and height relationship only shown for 1 house; shared surface for parking impractical; service routes not shown

Scale – housing only very large with very small affordable homes not conducive to social integration and represents overdevelopment. Phasing should ensure the affordable housing is built first.

Electricity supply and main sewer inadequate

Revised plans have been submitted. In essence, there is now a single access off the narrow road and orientations of some of the houses have been changed. There is still no turning point on site for emergency or indeed any vehicles and no visitor parking provision.

Local residents have raised objections :

I would also like to highlight that this new plan relies on all properties accessing the site via what is basically our current easement. The applicant has made no attempt to contact us or our legal representative in the last 12 months to discuss this. These plans also incorrectly show our boundary and include part of the easement in the garden of a new plot. Furthermore, the Highways have strongly objected in the past to so many vehicles accessing the lane right on the junction so I am surprised to read that they now have no objections to this. I would be very interested to understand why what was once a significant safety concern for drivers and pedestrians is no longer a concern.

This site has had planning applications since December 1990, with 35 years of various incarnations and layouts. Full planning was approved in November 2016 with amendments December 2018 for 7 dwellings. A new application for 11 dwellings was posted also in December 2018. So the process started again. Outline permission was granted in May 2019, but ...the Section 106 document wasn't published until February 2021. Our biggest concern with this latest plan is regarding the safety of the access and exit onto the highways. The latest layout plan has suddenly

become a single access road for 11 new houses plus 2 existing, and also with the potential for the applicant to apply for planning for a further 3 houses in the future. The access has been an issue for the plan all along...yet it has reverted to the current design which was deemed inappropriate by Monmouthshire Highways. In 2019 Monmouthshire Highways department specifically highlighted that the existing access is unacceptable on the grounds that it is inappropriate in size and orientation and that this is their view regardless of the number of dwellings proposed. It was agreed after consultation with Highways, that the mouth of the access was moved away from the junction as per the approved application for 7 houses - 1662 PL-01 Rev B August 2016 Fast forward 6 years and all of sudden this decision has been forgotten about and the access is now considered safe and appropriate?! As we use the access every day we know it is not a safe and straightforward manoeuvre onto the highway and the visibility is very poor. Has anybody from planning stopped and looked at the site entrance which is also immediately adjacent to a track accessing 3 other houses and directly on the bend of a main entrance to Shirenewton? Another point regarding highways is the change for it to become an adopted road. This has previously been avoided, and is minuted in the Council outline planning meeting. I am presuming because it's on the edge of a rural village and the road in which this development will spur from is a little country road. It is therefore going to look and feel very out of character having an adopted road off a much smaller rural highway. Has any thought been given to this point? As the Application is so old, the Traffic surveys, wildlife surveys, surface water surveys are all out of date, and Planning have required the applicant to retake these surveys. The only responses to this are a rehash of the GIMP (Green Infrastructure Management Plan) from 2018, with no new evidence and an email saying the SUDS - surface water had been sorted. The latest documents which were published 12th February 2025, but dated 10th December 2024 don't include documents mentioned in the correspondence between the developer and Planning, Site Layout Plan RM-117 Rev 04 Surface water drainage plan RM-118 Rev - 01 Highway Engineers drawing MSL-XX-DR-C-SK02 Rev P-02 All of which are crucial to look at. Please can these be posted on the planning portal.

We accept that there will be a house on Plot 01 and have always requested that the siting of any buildings, is such as to minimise the impact on the facility and privacy of our main habitable room (lounge) on our eastern elevation which has patio windows

leading on to our eastern patio and garden area. The 10th December 2024 proposals now show a house which is positioned on the northwest side of a line extrapolated from the northern elevation of our property. We would request that any approval from the Council stipulates that there should be no further encroachment of that house in a southeasterly direction. The plan submission of 10th December 2024 shows that our legal access along our eastern boundary has been preserved by a strip of land between us and Plot 01 boundary. It would appear that the planned boundary of Plot 01 is in part to be a brick retaining wall. It is not clear whether the wall is inside a fence or has a low fence topping it. In any case it should be made unobtrusive and no higher in total than the 1.8 metres specified for the other fencing. Care should be taken to preserve visibility at the mouth of the driveway that we share with two other properties and the line of sight to traffic coming from the lane to the right and the new development. The proposed plantings at the northwestern corner of the development site should not be such that could grow into an obstruction to that line of sight.

County Councillor LB has raised the following objections :

ALTERATION OF OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION - A wholesale revision of the outline planning permission with a massing of the height, size and bulk of the larger houses (compare the site layout in the outline permission with the proposed site layout in the reserved matter stage). - Larger houses now have an integrated garage with bedrooms above as opposed to a single garage, creating a greater differential with the 4 x 2 bedroomed affordable properties which appear now to be much smaller in comparison, meaning they are less integrated into the development.

TYPE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING - MCC housing indicate the preferred mix is at least one 3 bedroom affordable properties and local residents have indicated that for young local families this is preferable as opposed to 4 x 2 Bedroom small affordable dwellings. - Whilst affordable housing is welcome in the village it is important it has a local criteria as the age demographics needs to encourage young families which require 3 bedroom properties as opposed to 2 bedroom ones. - Affordable housing should be integrated within the development and not seen as so significantly smaller.

MISMATCH HOUSING OPPOSITE - The bulk of the larger housing, height and lack of gaps impacts the residential amenity of a nearby property including the patio area of one residential property; - There is housing on the opposite side of the road but this is a new 11 house development on the entrance to the village, the problem

being that the road itself is very narrow and the road is higher on this new development side of the road meaning the lack of distance and the proposed heights will result in a development which is overbearing even further exacerbated by the increased bulk and size of the larger houses causing an overdevelopment of the site and an overdevelopment of the individual plots. 1 - No consideration appears to be given to lowering the foundations of the properties to lower the height differentials in view of that side of the road being much higher than housing on the opposite side or designing them as much needed bungalows. - Comments have indicated that the height differentials are incorrect as they relate to the plots and one and a half storey properties or bungalows would be more appropriate in this location. - The materials being proposed should not use timber cladding and the finish, colour and quality materials should match those in the houses on the opposite side of the road.

LANDSCAPING - A number of responses have mentioned landscaping concerns in relation to this proposed development.

LACK OF STREET LIGHTING IN SHIRENEWTON - There are generally no street lights in Shirenewton and consideration has to be given to the impact of such lighting on the horizon and this entrance to the village and on nocturnal animals.

UNSAFE EXTRA AND MAIN ACCESS CONCERNS - There are access concerns due to the main access being substandard and close to the junction, the access may be blocked by the array of refuse collection bins causing a further road safety hazard at this junction. - In addition there have been comments to indicate that the additional access is also unsafe and should spur off the main access to provide a better turning circle. - Access needs to be reconsidered so that emergency vehicles can turn and there is adequate bin provision which does not obstruct the access.

HOURS OF CONSTRUCTION AND KEEPING A TIDY AND SAFE SITE - Consideration needs to be given to the fact that the existing main access is used for walking primary school children to school from the existing properties at the top of the track and consideration of safety and hours of working need to ensure children's safety and residential amenity during construction works. - A construction statement needs to ensure that the site is kept in a safe, tidy and secure state during all of the period of construction with regular cleaning of any debris on the track and nearby road from construction vehicles for the residential amenity of nearby residents and any mud would be a traffic safety risk as access is close to the junction. - In view of the time lag between the outline and reserved matter application of 3 years there are concerns about the

staging and the time for the completion of the site and the impact on residential amenity for nearby properties and that the affordable housing is not left to the end stage.

WATER, SEWERAGE AND ELECTRICITY CAPACITY CONCERNS - Water already drains from the main access and runs down Spout Hill and it is noted that there is a holding objection in relation to surface water and sewerage disposal at this site, as no details are given. -The main sewerage pipe which covers Shirenewton, Pwllmeyric, Mounton and Mathern is at overcapacity and whenever the water table rises it still leaks sewerage out of the manhole covers in a field in Pwllmeyric despite some pipe relining work and adding housing to this main pipe whilst this pipe is not fully repaired, will result in even more sewerage spillage into Mounton Brook. 2 - There is no provision for EV charging in this development and it may be beyond the village capacity.

CONDITIONS IN OUTLINE NEED TO BE FULLY INCLUDED WITH ADDITIONS - The outline planning permission put in a number of conditions and it is important that the reserved matters does so as well and the concerns raised at the planning committee stage for DM/2018/ 02066 be fully considered.

TRANSPORT PLAN FOR 2018 OUT OF DATE AND CONTRARY TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY - The residents for the site will largely rely on car transport contrary to the national planning policy and the transport study is out of date being undertaken in 2018.

OVERBEARING AND OVERDEVELOPMENT In summary, the planning committee needs a site visit to witness the narrowness of the road and how the height of the proposed development and the size, bulk and height of the proposed housing may be considered to be both overbearing and an overdevelopment within the context of opposite and surrounding existing properties. For the above reasons and in view of the concerns/ objections I wish to refer this application to the planning committee.

Councillors may wish to support the residents' and LB's comments (and as added to by a local resident).

Recommendation : Objection. SCC repeats the objections set out in its previous response dated 8th March 2024 and supports and endorses comments of County Councillor Louise Brown and local residents recorded on MCC's planning file.

Recommendation - agreed by unanimous vote

Minute 5006 Cllr Vacancies – Geoff confirmed he would attend the next meeting.

Minute 5013 Footpath by Shirenewton School email – MCC now assisting the school to remedy

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT April 2025

County Councillor Brown advised:

Democratic Services Committee on the 10th of March 2025

The Democratic Services Committee looked at the Electoral Review Consultation, in view of the short period to respond. The review is examining the number of councillors per electoral ward. It will not impact Shirenewton ward as it is expected that the projected population size will still be represented by one ward Councillor in the forthcoming elections in 2027. The Committee supported the methodology that the number of councillors should be between 41 to 48, it is currently 46 councillors.

The Committee concluded that the council should be allowed flexibility in a suitable size of the Council once the electoral review for Monmouthshire starts. A consensus could not be reached on Welsh names but recommended that the Commission use bilingual names.

However, in relation to the consultation on the Senedd elections for 2026 the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales will use Welsh only names. So that Monmouthshire paired with Torfaen becomes Sir Fynwy Torfaen. It is not clear when the changes may be made for the County Council elections, whether or not it will be for the 2027 or 2032 elections. The Welsh name for Shirenewton Ward is Drenewydd Gelli-farch. I have argued in favour of bilingual names as I do not believe that the Welsh name for Shirenewton is locally recognised by the majority of local residents. The reports on this Committee can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=142&MIId=6345>

Individual Cabinet Member Decisions- 26th of March 2025

The decision was to increase the offer to Monmouthshire Foster Carers in view of the cost of private providers. The full report can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=147&MIId=5733>

Place Scrutiny Meeting 27th of March 2025

The Place Scrutiny meeting discussed the maintenance of the Nedern, particularly throughout the Castle grounds Caldicot. The Committee also discussed the Bats and Habitats regulations appraisal. It became apparent that there would need to be a bat report for the proposed site in the RLDP at Shirenewton at the planning report stage if approved as a site in the RLDP due to the location of hibernating bats near the Carpenters Arms. The meeting was largely one of discussion as opposed to reports and can be watched at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?CID=303&MIId=5831>

Cabinet Report on the 2nd of April 2025

Following on from the Democratic Services Committee as reported above, the Cabinet approved the consultation response as set out in appendix 1 of the report. The following link provides the detail of the response from Monmouthshire County Council:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?CID=144&MIId=5759>

Public Services Committee on the 7th of April 2025

The above committee will consider highways responsibilities and funding as well as potholes and repairs. The following is a link to the meeting:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?CID=260&MIId=5842>

County Council on the 10th of April 2025.

The County Council on the 10th of April 2025 will consider a report on the Constitution review and the Senior Leadership pay review together with motions and questions. The provision of services such as milk for schools and care contracts has to follow a procurement process. However, one of the motions is about promoting locally sourced goods and services prompted by the concern of care contracts in relation to a non-local provider. The following is a link to the meeting:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?CID=143&MIId=5746>

Police report

↑ Crime Category	# of Crimes
Total	7
Violence With Injury	2
Violence Without Injury	2
All Other Theft	1
Misc Crimes Against Society	1
Public Order Offences	1

The table above shows us the top crime categories for this month.

The Table breaks down for us the crime categories.

Violence with injury there are two reports of this.

The first report is of a dog on dog attack, no persons were Injured and both parties dogs are okay and no further police action is required, both dog owners are sorting this out amongst themselves.

The second report relates to a male turning up unwanted to an address. No person has been harmed and the unwanted person was swiftly taken away from the address by police.

All other theft, this is relating to a stolen Rolex watch from a hotel local to the area. A report has been made retrospectively so that the looser of the watch can claim through their insurance. The watch was stolen in December but only now being reported as stolen.

Misc crimes against society. This is a report of a male laying on the hard shoulder. This report did not match the incident details. A male driver has hit a wall this morning and as he was driving along the A48 he stopped and laid on the floor to change the tyre on his vehicle. The male was assisted in this by our traffic department who swiftly arrived to help the man.

Public order offences. A large black horse was startled by oncoming traffic in a single lane. This caused the horse to freak out and run loose. The horse was later caught up with by the owner and returned to the stables.

Last Month speed monitoring had taken place along the Earlswood road.

The average speed of vehicles was 20mph however there were a few vehicles that did travel along the road over the speed limit. These vehicles and drivers were pulled over and spoken to

regarding the manner of their driving. This was accompanied along with preforming vehicle checks to ensure they had insurance MOT and road tax etc.

All vehicles were to be in order just drivers speeding. After some words of advice drivers were then coming along the road the correct speed limit.

A total of 60 cars were checked through our speed monitoring gun and the average speed of these vehicles was 20 mph.

These speed monitoring checks will continue in to this month of April.

May 12th Meeting;

Minute 5021 – To co-opt Geoff Todd as a Councillor for Earlswood

The Council resolved to make the appointment, and the Chairman welcomed Cllr G Todd. It having been resolved at the Council's AGM held immediately before this meeting that Cllr C Martin be appointed as acting Clerk to the Council for the purpose of witnessing Councillors' acceptance of office in the absence of J McLagan being indisposed, Cllr G Todd signed his acceptance of office and Cllr C Martin countersigned.

Minute 5024 – Public Participation – Juliet Nicholls and Robert Hookway attended to make representations regarding planning application DM/2025/00474 The Grove Cottage, inter alia that their own neighbouring property would be overlooked and their privacy invaded, that the subject property could be seen from the road, that the new entrance encroached on a footpath and that the photographs in support were out of date and not currently accurate.

Minute 5026 – To Consider 3 Planning Matters

DM/2025/00474 The Grove Cottage Earlswood, replace existing single storey at front of dwelling with two storey extension to create entrance hall and office.

The Grove is a modern two storey 4 bedroom detached house set in extensive grounds to the south of Earlswood hall. The house faces northeast, the main gardens are to the south and not affected by these proposals. The ground to the front of the house comprises the parking area, garaging and steps down. Directly inside the entrance to the house is a study to the left and utility room and toilet to the right.

The proposal is to replace the utility and toilet with a two storey gable extension to provide an enlarged entrance hall and stairs to the upper storey, and a study/home office above. The new gable will be of similar size to the existing and neither gable exceeds the ridge height of the main roof. The front of the new gable is primarily large panel glazing. External walls are to be painted render and the roof is to be mineral slate tiles rather than concrete tiles as existing.

The access from the parking area to the house will be widened and provided with enhanced planting including a mix of grassed areas with wildflower mixes and gravel paths to encourage biodiversity. The house will be fitted with a bat boxes and bird nest box with bat access points along the ridge of the extension. External lighting will be in accordance with BCT Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting.

Councillors will wish to take account of a neighbour's objection to the windows for the extension that these are unnecessarily oversized, and totally out of keeping for the area, and pose a risk to wild birds inadvertently colliding with the glass.

Resolved by unanimous vote to object on the grounds that :

- a) MCC had refused a previous application in 2023 to which the current application is very similar
- b) The proposed glazing to the front elevation is out of character for the local landscape, presents a danger to wild bird flight, and will create light spill particularly at dusk to the detriment of the local bat population
- c) The development will have a detrimental impact on existing residences and amenities.

DM/2025/00486 Annex Rhewl Cottage, extension to existing annex.

This is a retrospective application for building works only recently completed.

Rhewl Cottage lies on the back road from Shirenewton to Mathern. The whole site has a long frontage to the road but the depth is relatively narrow. The site plan shows the main residence itself and a single storey annex which is the subject of this application. The annex was once a garage and Planning consent DM/2022/00263 approved an extension for the garage and change of use into a dog care facility. The submitted plans for DM/2022/00263 showed the internal garage layout at the time as

garage style timber double doors, behind which were 2 small bedrooms, a kitchen/diner and a living room with a toilet off. No detail of the internal layout of the proposed extension was shown. In 2024 there was an application to enlarge the car park. The new drawing, which includes the extension, shows 3 bedrooms, a kitchen/diner and a bathroom. There does not appear to be any provision for dog grooming or kenneling on either layout and the new application makes no mention of the dog care facility business. Whilst the former garage is described in the application as an annex, it is a completely self contained building.

In brief, the former garage appears to have been converted at some time past for residential accommodation. It is not clear whether there was any planning approval. Whether or not it had residential consent, the DM/2022/00263 consent permitted the extension and change of use into dog day care facility. The extension has been built and the applicant now seeks retrospective consent. The supporting layout plan shows a 3 bedroom residence. A surface water drain to a soak away is shown but no other services.

Councillors may query :

- 1.The usage in the application of the term "annex". An annex is ordinarily an attachment to an existing dwelling with shared facilities and services and not a detached and self contained building as here.
2. On what basis the dog care facility needs a 3 bedroom bungalow and no business accommodation.
3. Whether, if this were an application for the extension prior to the start of work, it would double the footprint and is thus excessively large.
4. Whether, were consent to be granted, it would in effect give consent for change of use to residential.
5. Whether, if this authorises residential use, the extension would comply with planning policy H4 (rural conversions), particularly e) f) and g) and H5 (see extracts below)
6. Whether the dog care business is continuing and if so from where.
7. How the extension as constructed differs from the plans in consent 00263.

Resolved by unanimous vote to object on the grounds that :

- a) the annex is de facto constructed as a residence involving an

increase in excess of 30% in footprint from the original garage and unsupported by any statement demonstrating how the annex for which consent was given only 2 years ago to use as a dog care facility is no longer fit for business purposes.

b) The development does not comply with policy H4 in that neither the garage as was nor the new extension have been used for a significant period of time, nor is the extension capable of providing adequate living space other than as an adjunct to the main dwelling Rhewl Cottage nor has any consideration been given of further outbuildings such as garaging.

c) There are no Green Infrastructure or Design Statements, bat reports and the like.

Should MCC be minded to grant consent then SCC request conditions that the annex should not be occupied at any time other than as and by a single family as part of Rhewl Cottage and shall not be independently occupied, and that permitted development rights be removed.

It was also agreed that as the site sits on the boundary between Shirenewton and Mathern communities and our Clerk being indisposed, County Councillor L Brown be asked to refer a copy of SCC's resolution to Mathern Community Council for their information.

DM/2025/00406 Whitebrook Farm, proposed conversion of redundant agricultural outbuilding/cow shed into residential dwelling.

Councillors may recall Whitebrook Farm is subject to a planning application for replacement by a 2 storey house. SCC objected pending clarification on foul and surface water treatment, external paint and finish colours, bat mitigation and the lack of a Design statement justifying the development.

This further application is for the old cowshed which sits in the farmyard opposite the farmhouse. It is a single storey with various doors, windows, and other openings, corrugated roofing, concrete walls and corrugated cladding and floors variously of concrete, tiles and earth. The floor area is some 69 sqm. It has been unused in recent times and is stated to be unsuitable for viable alternative viable commercial/ business use nor for an office / small scale businesses /holiday let.

It is proposed to create a one bedroom dwelling, finished in insulated profile cladding roof, walls with corrugated sheeting in grey/black, and aluminium powder coated doors (colour unspecified).

Parking for 2 cars is provided.

The Bat report confirms the cowshed is a breeding home to lesser horseshoe bats and possibly some long eared bats. Mitigation is to include a purpose built bat roost.

Councillors may wish to consider:

1. Whether the applicant's statement that the conversion does not involve substantial reconstruction (which would be contrary to policy H4 c) below) is fair or results in a building which lacks longevity and costly to run and maintain.
2. Whether the conversion provides adequate living space (H4 f)) including outbuildings such as garaging and woodstore.
3. Whether the proposed finishes affect the local landscape and heritage
4. What purpose the conversion would serve given the cowshed is said not to be suitable for holiday lets and is self contained.

Resolved by unanimous vote to object for want of specific details on external materials and finishes, heating, lighting and landscaping. SCC will wish to make further comment when these are provided.

Minute 5030 - Clock- awaiting fund raising update from the bellringers.

Minute 5029 - Cllr Vacancies X 2 Shirenewton & Mynyddbach— one less now that Cllr G Todd has been co-opted.

Minute 5032 - Auditor — Cllrs agreed to engage the same internal auditor last year.

Minute 5034 - Biodiversity — Section 6 Reports 2025 (webinar). Cllr G Todd to be emailed a copy of our current report with a view to updating

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT MAY 2025

County Councillor Brown advised:

Performance and Overview Committee- 29th of April 2025

The above Committee received reports on the Key Stage 4 results for Monmouthshire Schools, the development of children's placements into accommodation and investment and Commercial interests update.

The reports on this Committee can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=305&MIId=5853>

Public Services Scrutiny Committee-12th of May 2025

The meeting is largely one of discussion as opposed to reports on the National Highways M48 and Severn Bridge 7.5t weight limit and to discuss the proposed changes to the operation of the Severn Bridges and the implications for Monmouthshire with Highways UK.

The meeting can be watched at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=260&MIId=6177>

County Council on the 15th of May 2025

The County Council meeting on the 15th of May, covers the appointments to committees and the political representation, appointment to outside bodies, members motions and questions. One of the motions about the impact of the weight limit on the M48 Severn Bridge and another on Direct payments for care. These details can be found in the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MIId=6080>

Regional Transport Plan Consultation

There is currently a consultation on the above regional transport plan for South Wales region. The consultation remains open **until 11:59pm on Monday 19 May 2025**, and you can review the draft plan and share your views using the online form here:

<https://regionaltransportplanccr.wales/>

You can watch a video of the presentation given at the Member webinars we have been conducting here:

<https://regionaltransportplanccr.wales/documents-and-downloads/>

If you have any questions or would like to speak to the team directly, please don't hesitate to get in touch via this email at info@regionaltransportplanccr.wales

B4235 Collision reduction scheme

The County Councillor and representatives from the community council have been regularly meeting online on a quarterly multi-

agency basis with the Police, Highways and Go Safe due to concerns about the accident prone B4235.

A grant has been obtained by MCC for a collision reduction scheme along the B4235 between Chepstow and Mynyddbach, where ten collisions, occurred between 2020 and 2023.

It is anticipated that all remedial measures, repairs, and investigations will be completed by the end of 2025-26. This proactive approach aims to enhance road safety and reduce the likelihood and severity of future collisions on the specified section of the B4235.

The Clerk being indisposed, Cllr C Martin reported that the War Memorial cleaning report had been received and is to be costed. A method statement is required by MCC; the new planter is ready and should be located on the Crick Road by Owls Barn.

Police report

↑ Crime Category	Crimes
Total	7
Shoplifting	2
Violence With Injury	2
All Other Theft	1
Criminal Damage & Arson	1
Violence Without Injury	1

The table above shows us the top crime categories for the month of April.

The Table breaks down for us the crime categories.

Shoplifting- There have been two recorded incidents of this. These shoplifting offences have taken place at the Chepstow garden centre on Pwllmeyric road. A female has been identified along with the registration of the vehicle used to leave the scene. Investigations are ongoing regarding this matter.

Violence with injury, this is something we have seen a slow increase in. However this particular reported incident relates to an altercation which resulted in a dog bite. The dog and the owner have been identified. The bite victim has no deep wounds and is okay after seeking medical attention. The dog and the owner will now be given an opportunity to go on a dangerous dog course, for education purposes. This course requires a payment amount which has been charged to the dog owner as a fine. Failure to comply with the dangerous dog

course will result in further police action.

The second report is an aggressive male who has been causing ongoing issues at a local hotel being aggressive towards staff barging and pushing his way past. This male has been identified and dealt with for his actions and is now banned from the local hotel.

Criminal damage, this is where a bump between two vehicles took place and a male drove off without exchanging insurance details. The victim has a small crack the bumper. A registration of the vehicle has been obtained and this has been passed to the victims insurance company.

The upcoming month of May local PCSO are hoping to conduct more speed monitoring checks along the Earlswood road area of Shirenewton.

There is no further to report and no incidents of late that require any additional information.

AGM May 2025

The Outgoing Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

Minute 4791 – To Elect the Chairman of the Council 2025/6 and to receive the Chairman’s Declaration of Acceptance of Office

It was resolved that Cllr C Martin be appointed as acting Clerk to the Council for the purpose of conducting the election of a new chairman and witnessing Councillors' acceptance of office in the absence of J McLagan being indisposed. Cllr P Butterworth was unanimously elected as Chair until the next annual meeting. He accepted the nomination, signed his acceptance of office and Cllr C Martin countersigned. The Council thanked Cllr P Butterworth for all his work during the last 12 months.

2. Minute 4792 – To Elect the Vice Chairman of the Council 2025/6

Cllr C Martin was unanimously elected as Vice Chair until the next annual meeting, and she accept the nomination. The Council thanked Cllr C Martin for all her work during the past year.

3. Minute 4793 – To receive apologies for absence

Cllr G Mitchell and J McLagan (through indisposition)

4. Minute 4794 – To receive any declarations of Interest from Councillors. None declared.

5. Minute 4795 – To Note Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 3rd May 2024 confirmed as a true record.

Noted

6 . Minute 4796 – Outgoing Chair’s Report on 2025/6

Cllr PB read his report as follows

Chair’s report 2025

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all the time and work they have put in over the past 12 months.

In January 2025 we were sorry to see the departure of Cllr Keith Dunn and I thank him for all the work he has done for the Council during his tenure.

Also, in January 2025 we were sorry to see the departure of Cllr Andy Williamson and I thank him for the work he has done for the Council during his tenure.

During this Council period the following activities were carried out:

There had been an issue with the drainage of the pit under the trampoline in periods of extensive rain which MCC had been aware of and have now resolved by the installation of additional drainage.

The Community Council was awarded planning permission for the change of use of the Earlswood Field to allow equestrian use, this followed offers to rent the field for keeping horses. Biodiversity and waste management reports have been requested from the Licensees.

Church clock. The Council did not receive the sufficient community support following a survey of residents to repair the clock.

Consequently, a group consisting of the bell ringers and other members of the community have taken on the role of raising funds to repair the clock.

Over the period of this Community Council, we received 22 planning applications for consideration. The ultimate decision on a planning application is made by Monmouthshire County Council however, we can make a recommendation after taking into account our local knowledge, the information presented to us in the application and the views of local residents presented at our meetings. The Community Council recommended approval for 12 applications, Monmouthshire County Council have approved 10

applications and refused 4 applications with 5 applications still pending consideration. The other applications having been withdrawn.

Minute 4799 – To note the appointment of the Internal Auditor P Brabon Noted

Minute 4800 – To Review Committee Structures and to Appoint Councillors to Serve on the Under Mentioned Committees 2025/6:

- a) One Voice Wales Area Meetings (2 Cllrs) – [Subject to Councillor Availability](#)
- b) Shirenewton Recreation Association – Cllr P Butterworth plus an additional Councillor as available.
- c) Monmouthshire County Planning - Cllrs I Martin and P Butterworth
- d) Monmouthshire Newport Area Committee (2 Cllrs) – Councillors as available.
- e) MoD Joint Meetings – (2 Cllrs) Councillors as available
- f) Footpaths Officer – Cllr G Mitchell
- g) Environment and Development (1 Cllr) – Councillor as available.

The appointments were approved by the Council.

Minute 4803 – To review the Council Asset Register

The Asset Register was approved by the Council.

15. Minute 4805 – To review and decide on amendments to Council policies –

- a) **Complaints Policy**
- b) **Financial Risk Assessment**
- c) **Publication of Documents**
- d) **Equality and Diversity**
- e) **Health and Safety**
- f) **Local Resolution Protocol (June 2019)**
- g) **Retention and Disposal of Documents**
- h) **Data Audit Schedule**
- i) **Removable Media**
- j) **Social Media**
- k) **Website Accessibility Statement**

There being no amendments proposed, the policies were reviewed and approved by the Council.

Minute 4807 - To fix the dates and times of ordinary meetings of the Council and Committees for the ensuing year.

The proposed schedule of meetings up to December 2025 are

approved by the Council and shown below:

June 2nd 2025

July 7th 2025

August 4th 2025

September 1st 2025

October 6th 2025

November 3rd 2025

December 1st 2025

Clrs agreed the date of the next meeting as Monday 2025 2nd June 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

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

Application forms are now available for local organisations to apply for grants from the Community Council's 2025/26 budget.

If you would like an application form, please email shirenewton@gmail.com

Please note the closing date for returning completed applications is 26th June 2025.



Vacancy on Shirenewton Community Council

Shirenewton Community Council has 2 vacancies for Councillors in the Shirenewton & 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.





Severn Wye Ministry Area Annual Vestry Meeting

The 2025 Annual Vestry Meeting will be held in

St Christopher's Church, Bulwark

on Monday 23rd June 2025 at 7.30pm

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

Please come along and join us.

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in May:

1. Michael Baker
2. Beth Baker
3. Bill Benjamin

Severn Wye Ministry Area - Our services for June 2025

	Service Time	1 st June	8 th June	15 th June	22 nd June	29 th June
		Easter 7	Pentecost	Trinity Sunday Fathers Day	1st after Trinity	St Peter and St Paul
St Mary's Priory, Chepstow	8.00	Morning liturgy (non Eucharist)	Said Eucharist	Said Eucharist	Said Eucharist	Said Eucharist
St Christopher's, Chepstow	11.00	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	All Age worship	Sung Eucharist
	9.30	Said Eucharist	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns	Said Eucharist	Group service at Priory
Saints @ St Christophers	19.00	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study
St Peter's, Newchurch	18.30	Eucharist with hymns		Café church		
St Tewdric, Mathern	9.00	Eucharist with hymns	Morning prayer (non Eucharist)	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns	Group service Eucharist with hymns
St Peter, St Pierre	11.30	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns	Morning Prayer (non Eucharist)	Eucharist with hymns	At 10am in Mounton
St Andeonus, Mounton	10.15	Eucharist with hymns	Morning liturgy (non Eucharist)	Eucharist with hymns	Morning liturgy (non Eucharist)	
St Thomas a Becket, Shirenewton	10.00	Morning service (non-Eucharist)	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns	
St Arvan, St Arvan's	10.00	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist
St Deiniol, Itton	11.30		Liturgy of the Word		Eucharist with hymns	
St James, Devauden	9.00			Family service (non Eucharist)		
	16.00	Family Eucharist				
St Mary's, Penterry	11.30	Eucharist with hymns				
Holy Cross, Kilgwrwg	11.30			Eucharist w hymns		

Services more suited to families and children highlighted in orange

Non Eucharistic services are highlighted in green

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The Cake Stall at the Shirenewton Church Fete - Sat 14th June



Glynis, Gail and Annabel have volunteered to run the
Cake Stall again this year and we would very much
welcome your help! So:

Cookies and slices and muffins,
Breads and biscuits and cake,
Buns and bagels and tiffins,
Please, put on your pinny and bake.

Chutneys, preserves and some pickle.
Make marmalades, jellies and jam,
Or loaves, large, medium or liddle...
Cheese straws and crumbly meringue.

I like a Welsh cake with a pinch of mixed spice
And I'll try a Swiss Roll if I can.
Melting Moments I remember were really quite nice
And I so love a Gingerbread Man.



You can deliver your goodies to me on the Friday
before the fete to The Chantry or you can bring your
delights on the day.

Glynis 01291 641 818 07531 425 006
Glynis.macdonald@btinternet.com



Shirenewton Church Fete

Saturday 14 June 2025

Family Fun Dog Show

Entries from 1.30 at the dog show ring - £2/dog/class

- 2.15 The Prettiest Girl and the Most Handsome Boy
- 2.35 Dog with the Waggiest Tail
- 2.45 Best Child Handler – 2 Age Groups;
SCHOOL YEAR 3 OR BELOW
SCHOOL YEAR 4 AND ABOVE
- 3.05 Dog with the Best Trick
- 3.20 Best Dressed Dog to include;
DOG THAT LOOKS MOST LIKE ITS OWNER
- 3.40 Best Six Legs (Dog's 4 and Human's 2)
- 4.00 Dog judge would most like to take Home

Thanks to our sponsor



63 Chepstow | Usk | Pontypool | Cwmbran

Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

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

Timetable from 1 September 2024

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

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

63 Cwmbarn | Pontypool | Usk | Chepstow

Timetable from 1 September 2024
via Croesyceiliog, Coleg Gwent, Gwenesney, Llangwm, Gaerllwyd,
Earlswood, Shirenewton, Chepstow Community Hospital

Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

	Sch	HOL					
Cwmbarn Bus Station (Stand H)	0712	0712	0922	1200	---	1650	
Croesyceiliog Edlogan Square	0717	0717	0927	1205	---	1655	
Pontypool Town Hall	0725	0725	0935	1213	1420	1713	
Pontypool Park Road	0726	0726	0936	1214	1421	1714	
Pontypool opp Town Hall	0727	0727	0937	1215	1422	1715	
Little Mill Pont-y-pia	0734	0734	0944	1222	1429	1722	
Usk Coleg Gwent Main Road	0741	0741	0951	1229	1436	1730	
Usk Twyn Square	0747	0747	0957	1235	1442	1736	
Llangwm Bridge Inn Road	0755	0755	1005	1243	1450	1744	
Earlswood West End	0803	0803	1013	1251	1458	1752	
Shirenewton Road Junction	0813	0813	1023	1301	1508	1800	
Chepstow Community Hospital Main Road	---	0820	1030	1308	1515	1807	
Chepstow Comprehensive School	0820	---	---	---	---	---	
Chepstow Bus Station	0825	0824	1034	1312	1519	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

JOIN US AT "SAINTS CHEPSTOW" FOR A NEW BIBLE STUDY COURSE

In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes seven remarkable statements beginning with the words "I am,". This echoes Exodus 3:14 when God reveals himself to Moses at the burning bush, stating "I AM WHO I AM," and instructs Moses to tell the Israelites, "I AM has sent me to you." Through these words, Jesus connects Himself directly to God's identity, giving us powerful insights into His character and the kind of relationship He invites us into.

These seven sayings:

I am the Bread of Life

I am the Light of the World

I am the Door

I am the Good Shepherd

I am the Resurrection and the Life

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

I am the True Vine

will be explored in a relaxed and engaging seven-week Bible study. Each week we'll unpack one of these sayings and discuss what it means for our lives today.

You are warmly invited to join us at St Christopher's on Sunday evenings, beginning Sunday, 11th May at 7pm. Each session starts informally with delicious puddings, along with tea and coffee. After refreshments, we'll enjoy a couple of modern worship songs before moving into friendly, open group discussions about the evening's "I am" saying. Each session will end with a short time of prayer and finish by 8:30pm.

Whether you're exploring faith for the first time or seeking to deepen your relationship with God, all are very welcome. Come and journey with us as we discover how these extraordinary sayings of Jesus speak powerfully into our everyday lives.

We look forward to welcoming you! If you have any questions please contact Barney or Zoe on 07754 306229 / Severn.Wye.MAL@gmail.com

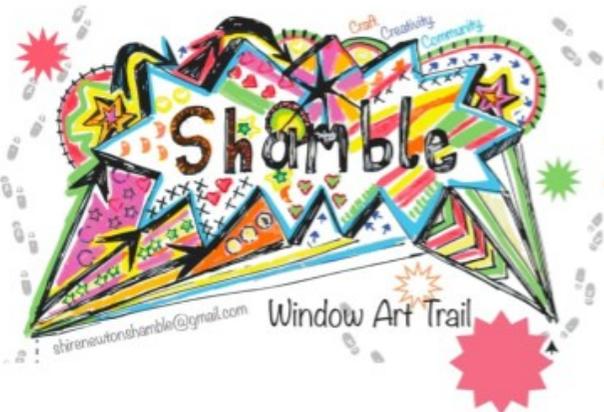
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SHAMBLE AGM 26TH JUNE

Do you love Shamble?

Shamble is looking for new committee members. Please come along if you'd like to see Shamble continue. Without new members, we will not be able to do Shamble this year.

The AGM will be on Thursday the 26th June, at 7:30 in the Tredegar Arms.

If you want more information please contact us at shirenewtonshamble@gmail.com. More detail on what's involved will be available at shirenewtonshamble.org.uk soon.



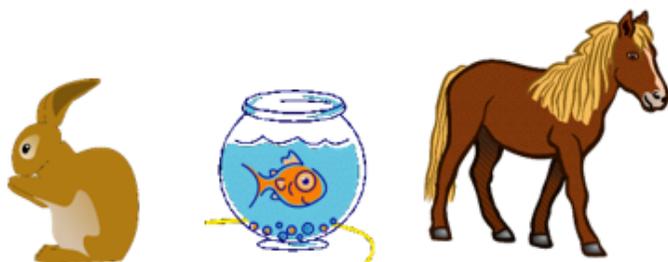
***All are very welcome to
our Animal Blessing Service
at St Deiniol's Church, Itton***

on

SUNDAY 8th June

11.30a.m.

***Bring your pets to be blessed, or bring a
photograph or draw a picture
to be blessed***





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SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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We visited the village of Trellech in April, with a walk around the village visiting the main historic sites, we were accompanied by the archaeologist Kate Churchill, who gave us an in depth history of the area, visiting Tump Turret, the Stones and ending up in the church, with lot of archaeology in between. We had a very pleasant afternoon, squeezing in lunch at the Lion Inn beforehand.

We are looking forward to our Chairman's talk in May, the title being 'Auguste Piccard, Life & Legacy'.

Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday	27 th May	May Meeting, title of talk ' <i>Auguste Piccard, Life & Legacy</i> ' Speaker, Les Ashton-Smith
Tuesday	8 th July	Visit to St Fagans (note, change of usual meeting date)
Wednesday	9 th July	Archive Meeting
Tuesday	29 th July	July Meeting, title of talk ' <i>The Great Civil War</i> ', Prof Ronald Hutton

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.

FROM OUR ARCHIVE

The **book** of the month from our Archive is: *Mounton House Garden*, by Helena Garrish, a recently published book, beautifully illustrated, a recommended read, a very local history book.

The **Photograph** of the month:



This is a photograph of the Admiralty Armaments Factory at Caerwent during the II World War, 7,000 people worked there, it supplied a huge amount of armament for the Navy and covered a vast area.

There are plenty more interesting photographs and a large local interest book collection to be viewed at our Archive Meetings.



Eileen O' Dwyer

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JUNE

Sunday 1 st 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Monday 2 nd 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Thursday 5 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Peter's Newchurch
Sunday 8 th 11.30 a.m.	Animal Blessing Service St Deiniol's Church, Itton
Sunday 8 th 12.15 a.m.	Annual Church Meeting St Deiniol's Church, Itton
Sunday 8 th 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Thursday 12 th 7.15 p.m.	WI Meeting—Table flower decorations and wine with cheese tasting by Hannah Brooks Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Thursday 12 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Mary's Church, Penterry
Saturday 14 th 2.00-5.00 p.m.	Village Fete Shirenewton Recreation Field
Sunday 15 th 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Thursday 19 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group Church of the Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg
Sunday 22 nd 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Monday 23 rd 7.30 p.m.	Severn Wye Ministry Area Annual Vestry Meeting - St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Wednesday 25 th 7.00 p.m.	Chepstow Choral Society Summer Celebration Chepstow School Arts Hall
Thursday 26 th 7.30 p.m.	ShAMBLES AGM The Tredegar Arms
Thursday 26 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Deiniol's Church, Itton

JULY

Thursday 3 rd 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St James's Church, Devauden
Saturday 5 th 10.00 a.m.—1.00 p.m.	Great Balsam Bash Shirenewton Meadows
Monday 7 th 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Tuesday 8 th tbc	Shirenewton Local History Society visit St Fagans
Wednesday 9 th 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.	Archive meeting Shirenewton Church Room
Thursday 10 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Mary's Church, Penterry
Thursday 17 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow
Thursday 24 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Peter's Church, Newchurch
Sunday 27 th 10.00 a.m.	Service of Blessing for Reverend Philip Avery St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow
Thursday 31 st 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Peter's Church, St Pierre

AUGUST

Monday 4 th 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Thursday 7 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Deiniol's Church, Itton
Thursday 14 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Tewdric's Church, Mathern
Thursday 21 st 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Arvan's Church, St Arvans
Thursday 28 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	St Arvan's Church, St Arvans St Thomas a Becket Church, Shirenewton

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (continued)

SEPTEMBER

Monday 1 st 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Thursday 4 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Andoenus' Church, Mounton
Thursday 11 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St James's Church, Devauden
Thursday 18 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Peter's Church, St Pierre
Thursday 25 th 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Christopher's Church, Bulwark

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MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTORS WANTED!

Due to Nerys Wilson moving out of Shirenewton to Cardiff, and Steve Hunt about to move out of Earlswood for Somerset, we need contributors for our monthly **recipes** and our monthly **gardening tips**. If you feel you have sufficient expertise or experience to fill either of these positions, please contact the editor of the magazine at parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com

IN SEASON NOW

Look out for a new regular feature coming next month! Lots of us want to eat more seasonally, reducing our food miles and supporting local growers or are growing our own veg, but we struggle with finding interesting ways to use up a glut of produce or that unusual thing in our veg box. Our new feature "In Season Now", in conjunction with Oakfield Growers, will help you pick what is good to buy now and include a tried and tested (and usually healthy) recipe for seasonal produce to use it in ways that you maybe haven't tried before.

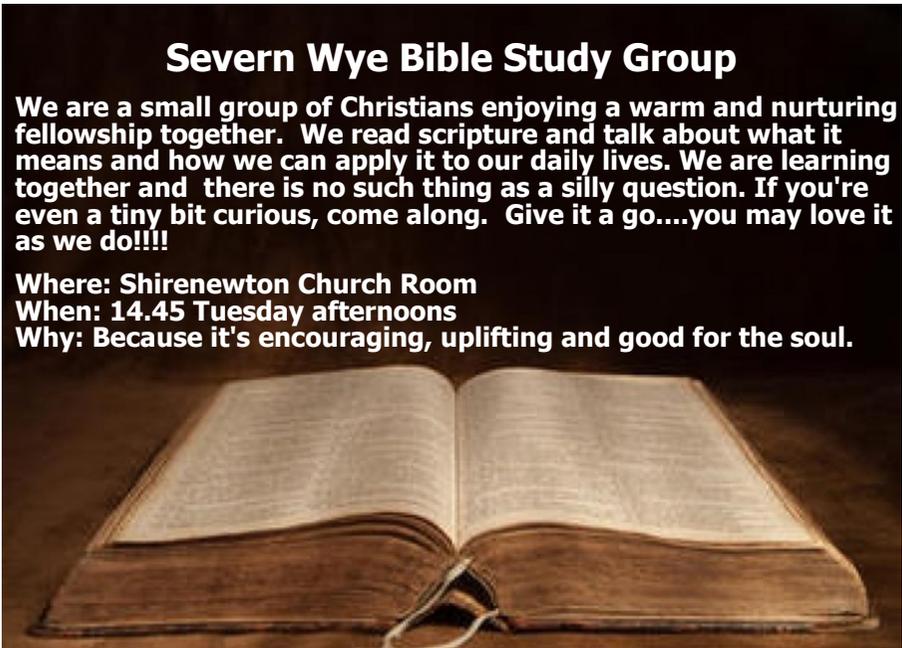
Severn Wye Bible Study Group

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.



www.shirenewtonchurch.com

In previous articles, I've mentioned and warned to be aware of, the issue of sim hijacking/swapping.

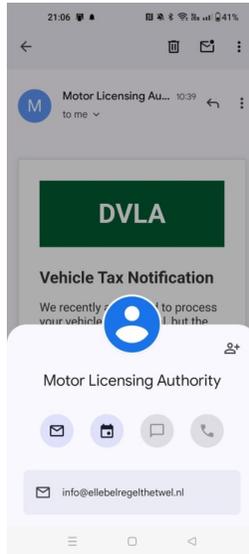
The way this works is that the scammer persuades your mobile phone operator that they are you (using personal data) and gets the operator to send them another sim to a different address with your number. Note: with e-sims they don't even need to send out a new physical sim card. Once they have this sim/e-sim your sim/phone will be deactivated and you will no longer have access to the phone number. This, of course, means they will receive all those 2FA (two factor authentication) texts which means that they can take over your accounts.

Obviously, they will not have your physical phone, but they will have all your calls and texts. It not always obvious that your sim has been hijacked/swapped, etc. But, typically, your mobile phone provider will deactivate your current sim and you will suddenly be unable to make or receive calls or texts. WhatsApp may continue to work unless the scammer uses the new sim to log into your account and deactivates your device. So, if your phone suddenly doesn't have the signal and rebooting it doesn't work, get in touch with your service provider quickly, explain the situation and find out whether someone has requested a new sim to a 'new' address.

To try and prevent such swaps, ensure that, if you have online access to your mobile sim provider, 2FA is enabled. If not or, in addition, ensure that the account has a 'verification password' in place. This is a password you'll be asked for if you phone them to provide it to you. Needless to say, such a password should not be something easily guessed or readily available on social media, such as the name of grandchildren, pets, etc.

Why do I raise this? Because The Times had an interesting article suggesting that 'sim swapping' was an integral part of how hackers got into M&S's systems. M&S are forecasting a £300 million hit to their operating profit in this financial year and recently noted that they hope that all their systems are back up online in the July timeframe.

Obviously, we are all under attack all the time. Recently my lovely wife received an official looking email from the DVLA noting that her car tax had failed to process. It generously offered a link to make payment. Needless to say, this was a scam and not a particularly sophisticated one at that as, by simply by clicking to look at the sender, it was clear it didn't come from the DVLA – see the picture.



So, if your phone suddenly doesn't have the signal and rebooting it doesn't work, get in touch with your service provider quickly, explain the situation and find out whether someone has requested a new sim to a 'new' address.

Moving on. You may recall a recent article on AI and how it is used to fake online interviews. This is typically done by North Korean infiltrators seeking to obtain remote working IT roles in Western companies. They fake IP addresses, operate through US based 'laptop farms' and generally mask their true selves. You may further recall that one technique for working out if you were interviewing an AI image was to ask them to pass their hand in front of their face. In a further development, a recent article from The Register, noted that Adam Meyers, a senior VP CrowdStrike's counter adversary division, suggested the ultimate interview questions which outs them. Asking them 'How fat is Kim Jong Un?' apparently causes them to hang up immediately as saying something negative about their 'beloved' Supreme Leader is not advised!

Finally, remember while you are all off on your summer holidays, don't connect to any dodgy wifi connections in public places and guard your phone and other IT kit as you travel.

On that happy note, safe browsing until next month.

drc
webmaster
www.shirenewtonchurch.com

SHIRENEWTON W.I.

Not all Jam and Jerusalem

I suspect that many of us may have had preconceived ideas about what the W.I. involves, myself included before I joined our local group. In the 6 years I have been a member, we have never made jam and while we do enjoy our craft sessions there is a lot more to the W.I., both locally and nationally.

This spring has seen our members volunteering for two environmental campaigns. In March many of us volunteered for a local litter pick, in support of the Keep Britain Tidy Fortnight, with one group collecting six bags of litter on the road between the Huntsman and The Carpenters Arms in one session.

Our president, Angela, litter picking on
the Crick Road



April saw 11 of our members contributing to important research assessing the level of pollutants in our rivers, streams and lakes, in support of the Great UK Water Blitz. This is a bi-annual campaign that asks members of the public to test local freshwater including streams, rivers and lakes in order to build up a national picture of freshwater quality across the UK. We were provided with kits and precise instructions. Tests were carried out by our members on the River Usk and Nedern, Castroggi and Mounon Brooks, together with the Angidy river which flows into the Wye at Tintern.



Jean and her granddaughter, Ffion, testing water from the River Usk.

This activity was particularly relevant to the W.I. as in 2023 the National Federation of W.I.'s selected 'Clean rivers for people and wildlife' as their national resolution. Every member of the W.I. has the opportunity to vote each year for a national W.I. resolution. Once a resolution has been chosen the W.I. takes action to raise awareness and campaign for change. This year's national resolution is 'Bystanders Can be Lifesavers'.

So, with all of this activity, it was particularly apt that the speaker at our A.G.M. in May was Nicola AwriS, a trustee for the Gwent Federation of W.I.s.

Nicola explained the various teams of trustees in the Gwent Federation including membership, sports, combined arts and public affairs teams. Nicola's role in the public affairs team is currently focusing on the Violence Against Women campaign, which the National Federation of Wales W. I.'s is strongly supporting. The Gwent Federation works to support the women's refuge in Usk.

Nicola was also keen for us to share our strategies for increasing the membership of our W.I. as Shirenewton W.I. has recently been awarded a certificate and a £200 prize for achieving the biggest increase in membership of a W.I. in Gwent with more than 25 members.

Our next meeting is on **Thursday 12th June at 7.15pm at Shirenewton Recreation Hall**. This meeting will be a relaxed evening, making table flower

decorations for the Church Fete and cheese, wine and chat. Also, that evening, we shall be welcoming **Hannah Brooks from Brooks Farm** who is coming to talk to us about cheese making and bringing some samples of her cheese for us to taste.

If you are interested in coming to join us, then please contact Jane Butterworth at janeb247@gmail.com or Angela Gray at angela.deepweir@btopenworld.com. We always welcome new members. We meet on the second Thursday of each month.

And who knows, we might even get to sing Jerusalem and make jam on one of these evenings!

Jackie Broughton



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.

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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!

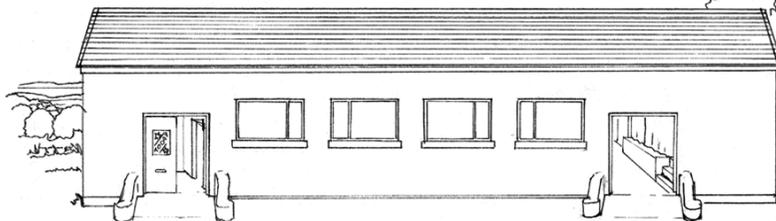


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Earlswood & Newchurch West Village Hall



Plant Sale and Café - **What an amazing success!!**

This was the first time we had 'journeyed' into the realms of the 'green fingered brigade' so it was with some trepidation that we ventured forth.

On the morning though our doubts were quickly allayed as the hall soon took on the guise of a Garden centre.

What an assortment of goodies there was; all types of vegetable plants, fruit bushes, shrubs, bedding plants, seeds, house plants, and even cut flowers and bouquets along with wood turned items and garden pots. Many donated and others provided by people having 'bought' a table for £5.

Doors opened at 10:30am, there was a steady trickle of 'early birds' and by 11am the hall really began to fill up as folk arrived on the hunt for good deals and interesting plants.

Purchases made; a coffee stop was next. The homemade cakes, of many varieties, were just too tempting, "Oh, what shall it be.... a muffin, a flapjack, lemon drizzle, chocolate sponge, coffee and walnut slice, lemon gluten free... ..?". A hot drink and a delicious piece of cake costing just £3 – beats Costa every time!

What an amazing 'community' atmosphere was created as folk sat and chatted with family and friends and even met new neighbours. We were so pleased to welcome familiar faces from Shirenewton, Earlswood and surrounding areas along with one VIP guest. This lady remembers her mother being very involved in raising funds to build the Memorial Hall following a very kind donation of the land by a local businessman.

The building of the Memorial Hall meant so much to the local people and became the centre for social life for many years. It is a great asset to have in the locality and just as previous committees have worked hard to maintain and even improve the hall, the present committee strive to do the same.

Very Many Thanks to all of you who supported this event, **£430 was raised!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Visit www.earlnew.com for more information about the Hall & facilities.

We have a mailing list! Email booking@earlnew.com to join!



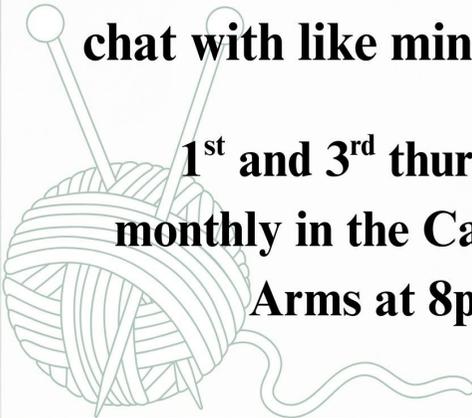


would you like to
knit & natter



or
crochet & chatter

**whether you would like to learn or
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years, bring your yarn and come
chat with like minded people**



**1st and 3rd thursdays
monthly in the Carpenters
Arms at 8pm**



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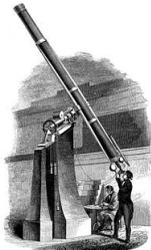


The Constellation of the Plough lies high in the evening sky to the north-west. The curve of the handle of the Plough points down to a bright red star called Arcturus. Above and to the left of Arcturus can be seen a semi-circle of stars making up Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown. The W-shape of Cassiopeia lies in a north-easterly direction. Leo the Lion, its head shaped rather like a reversed question mark, can be seen in the west. Cygnus the Swan lies in the eastern sky. It is one of the most distinctive constellations, often nicknamed the Northern Cross.

The orange-coloured planet Mars can be seen in the western evening sky. It is joined by the Moon on the 1st and 29th June.

Sometimes it is possible to see satellites in the night sky. The International Space Station (ISS), carrying a crew of astronauts orbits the earth constantly. It is particularly bright since it is about the size of a football field. You can check a satellite is not an aeroplane – planes carry their own lights so provided it is clear it should be possible to follow a plane to the horizon. Satellites can only be seen when they are in sunlight – so they appear and disappear well above the horizon quite abruptly as they leave and enter the Earth's shadow. The time zone used on board the Space Station is GMT. The windows are covered during night hours to give the impression of darkness because the station experiences 16 sunrises and sunsets a day.

On the 21st June the Earth's axis is tilted towards the Sun to its greatest extent giving the longest day or summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere



Gardening Corner

We have been resident at Barn Farm for just over 37 years. We have always watched the seasons come and go and tried to time everything that we do in the garden, to be as 'in step' with nature as much as we could. When we moved this way from my first 'place of work' in West Wales over 40 years ago, the expected weather was very different than it is nowadays. In the west we expected drenching rain or just a drizzle, two days out of three, with the average rainfall being some 80 odd inches per year. Talking to the late Ernie Jones, a local farmer and amateur weather recorder many years ago, his records showed that the average rainfall for Shirenewton at that time, was on a par with Tel Aviv. Just 21 inches of rain per year. My geography lessons at school would support this as I well remember this area being in a 'rain shadow' of the Brecon Beacons (as it was called then). Wind on some 20 years, and the amount of annual rainfall on average, had more than doubled to some 46 inches per year. I haven't a clue where the amount of rainfall might be these days, only that it, and temperatures as well, seem to swing from one extreme to the other due to an ever-warming planet. We now live in times of extremes as the weather swings from one extreme to another. In the 'old' days the timing of seed sowing was almost set in stone, and I certainly remember both my late dad and father in law, sowing seeds outside on the same day year in year out. I have never been quite so rigid and have tended to sow seeds as early as I thought was sensible. It dawned on me the other day, that I am now at least a month in front of the dates that they traditionally used, and often, now with the benefit of a greenhouse and warming bench, I might be up to two months earlier than they were. This does mean you run the risk of losing crops due to unforeseen, and inclement weather, but I can't remember any times when such a failure has happened. Sowing seeds early or later in the year does of course means that we are able to produce some fresh vegetables almost every week of the year, albeit by using some extra shelter such as the tunnel, greenhouse or horticultural fleece, should the weather dictate. For example, we have been picking our own salad leaves for at least the last six weeks and have also cut our first mini cucumbers and stir fried our first courgette and mangetout peas, last week. We are still eating our own potatoes from last season, although they are

about to end, but for the first time ever, will probably dig up our first early potatoes, just as the old crop runs out. Similarly, I traditionally presented Felicity with her first fresh picked strawberry on her birthday, 1st June. This year she ate her first bowl full nearly 3 weeks ago! I often get asked when to sow this or that, but nowadays it seems you can virtually sow anything at any time, provided that you have the facilities to plant them or grow them on somewhere where you can protect them from the bad weather should it happen. It is therefore more important to think of how you do things, rather than when. It is always worth experimenting. Sowing and planting early also means you can maximise production from your plot, especially if you have the benefit of a greenhouse or tunnel. We plant say garlic, or calabrese as early as we can in the year in the tunnel, so that we harvest in May or June. By starting peppers and tomatoes as early as you can, and transplanting them into a good size pot, they can be brought on in the same tunnel, often between crops, and then planted out in the same ground after harvesting. Many of you will not have a big garden, but it is amazing what you can still achieve with a little thought. For example, we have some 'mini' tunnels, which are approximately 5 feet long, 4 feet wide and 4 feet tall. Some are covered in plastic film (the same as a big tunnel would be), or with a very fine mesh that keeps all the nasty insects off. It is amazing what you can achieve with just one or two of these in a corner of a garden.

There is a downside to all of this weather change of course in that nature seems to have difficulty in being able to keep up with the pace. The house martins arrived earlier than usual, but only by about a week. As yet, we have still not heard a cuckoo in Wentwood forest, which we overlook from our garden. They have arrived in the country, as last week I did hear them whilst I was fishing at Blagdon Lake, just south of Bristol. A couple sang their hearts out virtually all day. There clearly are just not enough around to fill our countryside with their distinct call. Which must be a worry. No one seems to know if the decline is due to the changes to weather or if there are other things going on. Clearly we need to help out wherever we can in order to avoid species disappearing from our lives. In a similar vein, our artificial house martin nests are all full and to date we have just one pair building their own nest, giving a total number of nine nests. We love to see and hear

them chattering to each other, especially first thing in the morning. Yes, they can make a mess, but guaranteed that, if the weather stays fine, each artificial nest will have a double brood of chicks, whilst the self-builders will only get one brood of chicks to flying stage, before having to head back south again. We just think that everything we can do to help with the population numbers must be a good thing.

We both dislike hot weather, especially when it is too early in the year. With young plants establishing quickly, watering becomes a never-ending chore. We could automate this task, saving many hours over a week, but prefer not to do this. Too much watering can be as bad, if not worse, than too little. I know I have moaned about modern composts before, but I just don't think that they are up to the job, as they make things very difficult. No matter what I try to do, individual pots are either too dry or too wet. Worse still is when the compost seems to set hard, as concrete, on the top, making it almost impossible to get the pots to take up water. We have considered automatic watering systems but are not convinced that they are necessarily the answer. We think they will just make matters worse as the system can't tell how dry or wet the plants are at any given time. They probably do have a role if you are away for a few days, just by fact that it will keep plants alive whilst you are away – just, but I'm yet to be convinced that this is the answer all of the time. They probably use more water overall, as when watering with a hose or a can, you can react to the 'look' of the compost and give what you think is the right amount. In an effort to try and beat this problem, I have started to mix things up with our compost literally and now buy a mix of 'peat free' composts and pure peat (which are still available to the horticultural trade). I then mix the two together, much as they have been until recent years. The addition of the peat makes it easier to achieve much better results with the watering, as water retention is greater, but without saturating the plants and so avoids them rotting off, or being subject to compost fly attack. These are annoying little midge type flies who lay their eggs in the compost and which hatch into little maggots that eat the plants roots. They thrive in wet compost. You can always tell if these are a problem as they will always fly close to the compost and watering will disturb them. They eat virtually anything!

Most of the sowing and planting for this year has now been completed here. We will continue to sow some varieties in the coming couple of months to ensure we get continuing crops (successional crops). These will include regular sowing of lettuce, for cut and come again cropping, and spring onions. We also sow further runner and French beans. The latter will be planted in the tunnel, probably when the garlic has been harvested, so that we get a late crop (often that extends into October or possibly November if we have an 'Indian Summer'. Because the beans will fix nitrogen in the soil, in their roots, we will then look to plant calabrese in the same ground, once the beans have finished, which will generally over winter (with some protection from horticultural fleece if the weather is really bad), and which will give us a crop of lovely green heads in early May. So three separate crops from the same ground in one year.

Happy gardening until next month, Steve and Felicity Hunt.

View in our tunnel this week, cauliflowers at the front right are almost ready for cutting. Tomatoes, peppers and maize are growing and will provide the first crops by the end of June, French beans which will be ready for picking in two weeks, sweet peas which we have been picking for three weeks already and garlic and shallots which will be ready for harvesting end of June.



FAIRTRADE NEWS MAY 2025

When meeting up with friends, without us actually articulating the thought out loud, we nevertheless try to avoid negativity. So that, generally, puts paid to most political discussion! In fact many of the events of the world around us are off limits. So, gardens, family, weather, local activities, holidays are often the most acceptable topics. The idiocy and injustice in the world can easily seem overwhelming.



And yet 'the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.' This is an often repeated phrase, wrongly attributed to Edmund Burke. But the gist is true! As ever I urge you to consider doing something to effect change : buy Fairtrade of course!

And apropos of Fairtrade there has recently been a positive bit of news. In 2017 Sainsbury's withdrew its products from the accredited Fairtrade label, to launch its own fairtrade alternative. At the time (in a Parish mag article) I bemoaned the fact that individual company initiatives are not evaluated in the rigorous manner applied by the Fairtrade Foundation – phrases such as 'we spend a percentage of our profits ethically' mean next to nothing. But now Sainsbury's have announced that they have returned to the official original Fairtrade initiative.

The conversion of a big supermarket brand will increase the amount of Fairtrade tea sold in the UK by almost 50%. In 2024, about 7% of tea sold was on FT terms, but it was now on track to hit 10% by 2026 (figures, which in all honesty, I still find depressingly low!) The commitment to FT is welcome news for growers at a time when extreme weather is causing misery. Last year harvests in Kenya and India, which together supply half the UK's tea, were disrupted by heat, drought and flooding. In January and February tea growers in Kenya experienced a 13.5% drop in tea production compared with the same months in 2024. The fall was steeper, at as much as 24%, for some smallholders in the west of the Rift Valley.

At £6m in 2024, Sainsbury's generates the most FT premium of any UK retailer, and the addition of its big-selling own-label tea-bags will add about £1m to the sum generated by tea sales. Of course, as well as avoiding negativity my friends would also prefer to avoid my constant harangues about the value of FT! Hard luck!

You may well realise that Chepstow is an accredited FT town and this year members of the FT forum will be running a stall at the riverbank on July 13th to raise the profile of FT. Bring a picnic and support our efforts to improve the lives of producers and farmers in developing countries!

Marion McAdam 641 316 msm316@gmail.com

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25 places of international or world significance within 25 miles

5. *The Gorge* – the Clifton Suspension Bridge (1864)

The first article in this series of 25 places of international or world significance within 25 miles of Shirenewton was about the Severn Suspension Bridge and its world significance. Only 14 miles from Shirenewton is another suspension bridge with international significance which is 100 years older and that is Isambard Kingdom Brunel's *Clifton Suspension Bridge* across the Avon Gorge.



The spectacular Clifton Suspension Bridge is Bristol's iconic image and it is fitting that it was designed by Brunel who went on to set world records in ship building in the C19th as well as building the Great Western Railway, Taff Vale Railway, Paddington Station, Chepstow Rail Bridge, Chepstow Station, and many other projects, and is identified so much with Bristol and South Wales.

Strictly speaking the Clifton Suspension Bridge holds no world records but it was a structure of world significance when Brunel first designed it. Had the bridge been built when Brunel designed it in 1829, and intended it to be built in 1830-1832, it would have been the world's longest free span bridge at that time, and at a very exciting time in the rise of suspension bridges.



Replica of the 15th ship The Matthew (John Cabot) under Clifton Bridge

In 1820 the next 3 world record beating bridge spans would all be in the UK: Union Bridge between England and Scotland near Berwick; Menai Bridge in NW Wales; and Clifton Suspension Bridge at Bristol, England. They would have been successive world record holders. However, design changes were forced on Brunel, particularly by Telford who was chair of the Judging Panel for the Avon Gorge bridge, and then the Bristol Riots took place, and the Clifton Bridge was delayed. A bridge in Switzerland at Fribourg designed by a French engineer J. Chaley and built in 1834, exceeded the proposed span of Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge design of 1829 so the record never came to Bristol. Brunel's Clifton bridge wasn't completed until 1864, 5 years after Brunel's death, and 35 years after he designed it. The world's longest spans had moved on.

The photograph

The influence of the Severn Bridge and the Clifton Bridge, at the time of its design, are of such importance to the world history of bridge engineering that I set out to try to get a photograph of both bridges together.



I worked out that from the Dundry ridge south of Bristol it might be possible to see both the Severn and Clifton Bridges together in line. It took a number of visits to Dundry (at £6.70 to cross the Severn Bridge each time and a 40 miles round trip from Shirenewton) and I finally found the place in a field where both bridges could be seen together in line but I couldn't get the light to fall on both bridges without shadow. The Avon Gorge cast a shadow on Brunel's bridge most of the day but there was one moment in the day, on a sunny day, when the sun shone directly up the Avon Gorge and there were no shadows.

On my 5th visit in 3 years I discovered the exact time and the exact place to get the picture but there was scaffolding on the Clifton Bridge and it remained for a whole year! On my 6th visit in 4 years I got the picture I wanted!



100 years of suspension bridge history – and No use of 'Photo Shop'; just patience!

I gave a copy to the Clifton Suspension Bridge Museum and they told me they had received over 16,000 likes in the first week they put it on their website. Some believed it to be a fake photograph but fortunately I had taken a picture, with a small camera, of my main camera in line with the bridges and I could prove that the picture, which took 6 visits over 4 years to get, was true!

John Burrows

Next month – The Liner



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CCS closes a memorable season, which has included a Spring Concert that featured a Premiere performance of a work written by our Musical Director Graham Bull, enthusiastically received, and entitled “The Gift To Sing” for full SATB Chorus with orchestra. The Society now looks ahead to joining with Monmouth Choral Society at their invitation for a memorable evening with a performance of Sir Edward’s Elgar’s choral masterpiece *Dream of Gerontius* on Saturday November 22nd.

*Future dates – Christmas Music from Chepstow CS, with Alison Wray (soprano) – **SUNDAY DECEMBER 14th**, St Mary’s Priory Church, Chepstow --3.00pm*

SATURDAY MARCH 21st 2026 – **SPRING CONCERT WITH CCS ORCHESTRA**, St Mary’s Priory Church, Chepstow – “Venice to Vienna” ---music from Vivaldi, Albinoni, Mozart and Schubert!

Swift Action Needed!



Hopefully by the time you read this article our skies will once again be blessed with swifts, so what can you do to help them? We spotted the first swift back quite early this year at the very end of April and since then we have been keeping our eyes to the skies in the recent beautiful weather and regularly see groups of 8 or 9 birds and possibly as high as 14 over the villages in the evening. This is encouraging as it looks like many of our birds have survived their migration to return to their nest sites and possibly also a few juveniles as well who will be looking for their first home. It is hard to confirm nest selection this early in the summer, but already 3 previously used sites have shown signs of swift entering them. Have you seen them or heard their high pitch scream in the sky? Let us know what you have spotted.

How can you help swifts?

Firstly, protecting existing nest sites: we would be happy to advise you if we suspect your home hosts one of the few remaining active nest sites. Once you know you have swifts, think about the timing of any home improvement / maintenance. Swifts are only here for 12 weeks a year, so this period is easily avoided. If emergency work is required, make sure flight paths to the nest site are kept clear. Swifts are relatively tolerant of work and are very site faithful, so will not abandon a nest site if they can still access it. If major work, like renewing a roof or changing all the fascia boards is planned and you have an existing swift nest on your house, please make sure that no work is carried out in the immediate location of the entrance hole. I know this is a big ask, but even slight modification to the entrance hole will lead to abandonment of the nest site when they return the following summer and, in all probability, that pair will be lost from the village.

How to get more swifts?

As said previously, juvenile swifts will return for four subsequent years after fledging before attempting to nest themselves. The main aim of this is to find a partner and suitable nesting site. The easiest way to ensure nesting sites are available permanently is to install purpose made swift boxes at roof height. Swifts will readily investigate these and remember them for future years. The more nest boxes put up the greater the chance of increasing the number of swifts in our village. This has been proven successful in many villages throughout Europe arresting the local decline of these amazing birds.

Swift boxes come in several designs so there will be something suitable for every house.



Type A (front on entrance),



Type B (vertical entrance)

We are happy to advise on box types, position, location and where to purchase them from. Typically, they cost around £50 but will last a lifetime. We also have a reserve of 5 boxes (Type B see above) that we will happily gift to suitable houses and advise on their installation to kick start the process. Please get in contact. There are some natural hotspots in the village that are on regular swift flight paths, particularly along the roads around the Tredegar Arms pub in the old heart of the village, but many other builds are also suitable if swifts have a clear flight path to them. Please be patient if you do put up a swift box, as unlike say a blue tit nest box that will quickly be used, it may take many years for a young swift pair seeking their first home to find it, but it is equally important that more potential sites are provided to compensate for lost sites and to give young birds a choice of sites if swifts populations are to remain stable and hopefully increase in the villages.

If you have scaffolding up for any works, this is the ideal opportunity to install swift boxes, so please consider putting up at least one box up at this convenient time. If you are doing a more major extension/new build, please incorporate several swift bricks in the build, even if it is not a condition of the planning permission. Swift bricks are easy to install in the walls and provide a purpose-built cavity for swifts to nest in, without them having any internal access to your house. This requirement should be standard practice on all new builds but is yet to be placed into law, so until then please make this comment in all planning permission consultation in the villages. It will cost pennies for the builder but will safeguard swifts for future generations.



Swift brick installed in a new build/extension

The other great thing about swifts' nests is it is not necessary, indeed it is bad practice, to clean a swift nestbox out at the end of the breeding - so once up, you just walk away.

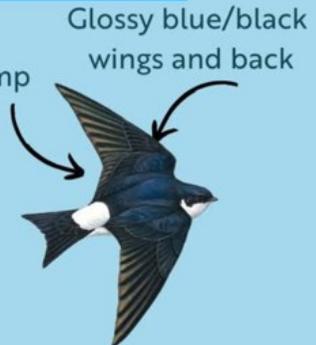
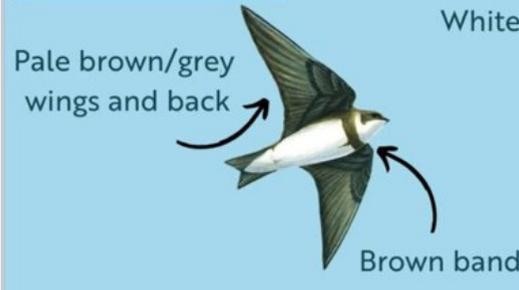
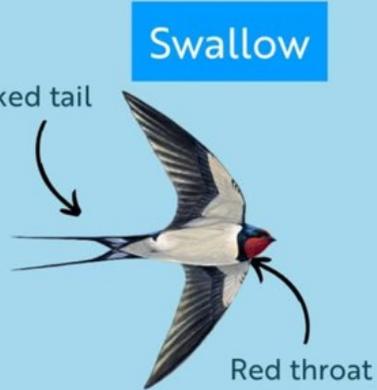
If you are moving and have swift nests or swift boxes on your property, please inform the new owners in your sellers pack, as one of the biggest risks to swifts is ignorance, with the new owners keen to get on with possible improvements, unaware that in Africa the other home owners are due to come back and will find their home blocked up. As we said, swifts are very tidy and there really is no conflict in sharing your house with them, some would say it is an honour and blessing to have them. Nest boxes have the added benefit that there are clearly obvious to future owners, so it is easy to make them aware of them.

Please help and keep our summer skies alive with this most magnificent bird. Now an apology, if you have sent an email to us in the last month, the email address in the last article was incorrect. I know at least a couple of you had bounce back messages. The email address below is definitely correct, so if you want to get in contact, report sightings, possible next sites or just wish to help, please send an email to shirenewtonswifts@outlook.com



Keep an eye out for this distinctive shape in the sky Photo © Marc Guyt





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Published: by The Church of St. Thomas à Becket Shirenewton

Editor: Bill Clark 01291 641783 email: parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com

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

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

Monthly copies are available at the Church.

Previous editions of the magazine are available online on the Church website at www.shirenewtonchurch.info.

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**Deadline for the July/August 2025 issue is
9:00 a.m. Monday 23rd June 2025**

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