

# Shirenewton Parish Magazine



## March 2025

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## What makes you, you?

Hello everyone, Zoe here. I'm not normally one for New Year's resolutions, but at the beginning of 2025 I decided that I wanted to set myself the goal of being able to say a prayer or a blessing in Welsh, by St. David's day.

I got some Welsh language books for my birthday last year, but in order to enact this commitment seriously, I signed up to a Beginner's language course at the Crosskeys campus of Gwent college in January. I now have a weekly 2 hour lesson with 6 other learners and am really enjoying it.



Languages have always been a big passion in my life. My two highest GCSE grades were in languages (French and Spanish). I went on to study Spanish A-Level and travelled to Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua when I was 17, running Christian youth clubs, giving instructions for games and telling/reenacting Bible stories in Spanish to the gathered children. There is just something so exciting and so satisfying about communicating in a language different to your own, and being understood. It builds bridges, forms friendships, and is a demonstration of love and respect in action that one has made the effort to include another.

In my gap year I travelled to Romania. I picked up a couple of key phrases such as 'How are you', and 'Thank you', but I distinctly remember one of our visits on that first trip was to a HIV/AIDS unit in the local children's hospital. I sat on a bed with a young girl called Valentina, neither of us being able to speak to or understand the other. I noticed she had a cross necklace, so I pointed to it and smiled. She held it, put her hands together in a

praying position, and pointed to me in an asking gesture. I said yes, I prayed, holding my hands together and nodding. She responded, by putting her hands in a praying position again, pointing up to the ceiling, then shaking her head and wagging her fingers to imply she did not. And my heart broke. Her surroundings in that hospital unit were dire. There were no toys, no colour or joy, no hope or love - no wonder she'd given up on God, or on life, or whatever her gesture meant. I felt a wave of frustration that I couldn't tell her in her own language just how much God loved her; and in that moment I committed to learning Romanian.

I returned 7 more times, and each time I could communicate better with the children we met - including, luckily, Valentina, who became a recipient of our palliative care work and education out there and visited the (much more colourful and joyful) respite centre that we eventually built.

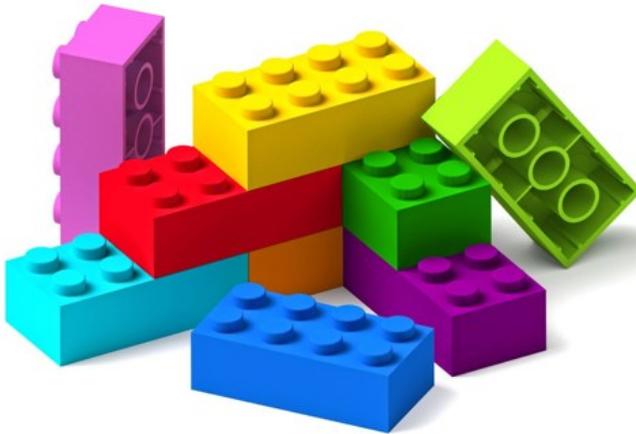
There is a famous line from the film Chariots of Fire, where the protagonist Eric Liddell says this: "I believe God made me for a purpose - but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure."

Likewise, whenever I'm speaking another language, I feel that same sentiment - I am doing something God created and designed me to do. I am being the most obedient disciple when I am being authentically myself, the person God made me to be. So my question is - what are your passions? What were you built to do? When you feel you are being the most authentic version of yourself? Because that is when you are worshipping and glorifying God the most, and being obedient to him, being the person he truly made you to be.

P.S. keep an eye out for a video on my facebook account on St.David's day!



# Do you have any unused/unloved lego?



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

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

Please contact Revd Zoe if so:  
07754 306229 / [severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com](mailto:severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com)



## **News from around the Ministry Area**

There has been a lot going on over the past few weeks! Across the MA our Christmas events were, as always, well attended. Many churches had 80 or more people at carol/Christingle/nativity services. The ever popular Chepstow town band played carols at several of our churches, and there were fun concerts in several churches too.

Clare and Zoe held lively pre-Christmas sessions with the children from the Mathern and St Arvans Nurseries and we hope these will be the first of a regular programme.

After months of expectation and planning, the "Hub" at St Christopher's is up and running, now called "Saints, Chepstow". Our Children and Families Pioneer, Clare, and a team of volunteers are hosting a weekly Tots and Toddlers group which has attracted up to 25 people, though numbers have been fluctuating considerably from week to week. Soon starting will be Lego Church, held in the afternoon after school.

The Warm Zone continues to flourish in St Christopher's too – often attracting up to 40 people on Mondays and Tuesdays. Another important pastoral care initiative is the monthly Tea and Chat session in St Arvans, which provides much needed friendship and company primarily for older and often more isolated villagers.

An Alpha Course commenced in January, with 15 attendees, about half of whom are new to faith / church and the remainder existing members looking to deepen their faith and understanding. A Lay Worship Leaders' course has been held for those already leading worship, and four new faces too (Catherine and David Carne, David Priddis and Hilary Hillier). The intention is to have more lay-led services around the MA – particularly during the summer, when Philip will be taking a sabbatical, and other members of our clergy team may be on holiday.

Our weekly Bible Study group continues to meet, and will be running a daytime Lent Course. An evening Lent Course will be arranged also. The Prayer Group also continues to meet every Thursday, in David Carne's home during the winter months, but from the Spring we will again be doing a circuit of all the churches. We have also been interviewing for an administrator, primarily at Saints, but also providing some support to the rest of the Ministry Area too. By the time this goes to Press, we hope an appointment will have been made.

As part of a getting to know you initiative, bi-monthly Birthday Parties are being held – if it is your birthday in the next couple of months, the next party will be held in early March – look out for posters!

Bishop Cherry has been very keen to find out how we are doing – she has been making the rounds of all the Ministry Areas in the past year. She visited us at the end of January, and a packed day included a meeting with the clergy team, and visits to the Toddler group and to Shirenewton Primary School. She had tea with the Fiveways walkers in Kilgwrrwg, and then a quick chance to at least see the location of Penterry church, before she had supper with members of the MAC and church wardens. The day was rounded off by a celebration of the Eucharist in St Arvans.

During her address, the Bishop reminded us of three key points:

it is more important to be faithful than to be successful: our ultimate success is gained by following God's plan, not our own agenda

little things matter, and they do make a difference: we can all contribute to growing God's Kingdom and spreading His love in the world even in small ways in our own communities

it is important to work as a team – we all have different skills and experience and together we can achieve far more than by each working independently, and we can support and encourage each other through difficult times.

Finally, an encouraging story from Rev John Waters. John is the main driving force behind the Warm Zone and has been taking school assemblies in Shirenewton for the past 16 years – a result of which is that he is often recognised by former pupils around the town. Recently two former pupils of the school dropped in to the Warm Zone and were delighted to find John there, and they asked for Baptism for their children!

If you want to find out any more about any of our initiatives, or better still would like to volunteer to help, please contact one of the clergy, or churchwardens.

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Many thanks to all of you who have paid this year's subscription already. If you haven't paid the 2025 subscription for the Magazine (£14) please could you send the subscription as soon as possible by Bank Transfer, or by cheque or cash to your local distributor.

## **SUSAN CHAPMAN**

We wish to thank all those kind people who sent Sympathy Cards to us on the sudden death of our daughter Susan Chapman nee Morris and also all who attended the Memorial Service at St Mary's, Usk on 3rd December and all those neighbours and friends who have shown such help and sympathy during this time

Minelta and Derek Morris



You're invited to our

# ST.DAVID'S DAY PANCAKE PARTY!

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

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

- Plus -

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



**GAMES  
&  
RACES**



**FREE  
PANCAKES!**

**Meeting in Shirenewton Church rooms**

Contact Rev Zoe for more info: 07754 306229





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

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



### **BREAKFAST CLUB SUPERVISOR**

5 HOURS PER WEEK, 38 WEEKS PER YEAR  
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## 63 **Chepstow | Usk | Pontypool | Cwmbran**

Timetable from 1 September 2024

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

### Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

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

### Saturdays

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

**Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays**

Sorry, there is no Sunday service on route 63

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

## Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

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

**Sch** Operates on schooldays only**Hol** Operates school holidays only

## 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

**Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays** Sorry, there is no Sunday service on route 63



## **SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

Extracts from the minutes of the monthly meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025

### **Public Participation—J Eickhoff**

Discussed the path to school, in particular Ditch Hill Lane to school has some tarmac to board walk (across 2 fields) with one area that gets very muddy. There is a safety concern that children may slip or fall, or that families may use the road to avoid this muddy area. The area concerned is approximately 4 meters long, and it was proposed that an extension of the boardwalk would be the practical solution. The path is believed to be public footpath and therefore managed by MCC. Jane asked what SCC could do? During discussions, Cllr Brown put forward that the path may be part of the Welsh government's Active Travel remit. Jane also confirmed that works improving other paths on the school grounds had been completed.

It was also noted that the path (on the other side of the school from the boardwalk path), by the ramp is very steep. The ramp is part of the public footpath which leads from opposite Weyloed Lane Mynyddbach to Tan House Court Shirenewton, it is steep but in a good state of repair.

**Clerk to contact/chase MCC** regarding the public footpath muddy area, and **Jane** to contact the LA to see if they could help. It was noted that MCC has very little funding.

It was also noted nothing could be done regarding the steep area.

### **Councillor considered the following planning matters**

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

Planning permission (at Appendix 1) was granted subject to conditions on 2<sup>nd</sup> October last year. At that time there had not been

an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) but this was submitted by the applicant's advisers in January. In the light of the further information it provides, our County Councillor LB has requested re-consultation and reference back to the planning committee to obtain an independent view. Cllr LB has asked that all statutory consultees (which includes SCC) be reconsulted prior to consideration by the committee. **Deferred to April 2025**

**DM/2024/01473** - Well House Farm, Shirenewton to Wentwood Mill Road, Earlswood - proposed single storey side, and two storey rear extensions to existing detached dwelling, with various internal alterations to the property. Well House Farm is a two storey house providing 4 bedrooms, kitchen, dining and snug. To the left-hand end there is a large brick store. The proposal is to rebuild the store to provide for a kitchen/diner. The rear elevation of this will be extended across the rear of the house to meet up with a new 2 storey outward extension with a pitched roof, though this will not extend to the same degree as the existing 2 storey gable end on the right rear of the house. The new 2-storey extension and extended store enable a utility room and staircase to the upper storey. The existing front porch is to be moved to the right and remodeled as open sided to match a new porch to be built to enter the new kitchen. The internal alterations sacrifice one of the bedrooms.

No calculations are provided for the volume increase nor the larger footprint though neither appears to be nominal.

The house is currently roofed in slate with rendered walls though the store is brick.

There are no neighbour objections. MCC currently awaits clarification on drainage. There is a high-pressure gas pipeline in the road. No footpaths are shown within or adjacent to the property. Councillors may wish to take a view whether there is any significant impact on the landscape.

Recommendation: **No objection provided the external colouring walls and plastic goods match the existing - Resolved by unanimous vote.**

**DM/2023/01670** Sand gallop at Home Farm Stables near Shirenewton

Councillors may recall that SCC objected to the above retrospective application a year ago questioning whether the site had lawful use as a business. MCC's Planning Officer has responded as follows :

*You responded to our consultation on the 10th January 2024 saying that your community council "objected to the gallop pending clarification whether the site and The Stables already has lawful business planning use, in the absence of which the application should be resubmitted for planning approval for change of use to that business." After a lot of negotiating with regards to landscape and ecology we are now in a position to present the application to members of the delegation panel, this will be done in the next few weeks. I can confirm that Grace Harris Racing has been running an established business training racehorses on the site for more than 10 years. The function and financial viability of business was fully tested and independently reviewed as part of applications DC/2014/00667 and DM/2018/01378. The current application is looking at the merits of the sand gallop.*

There has been some delay as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was required and this needed clarification, and some amended landscaping plans were submitted. However, the application was granted consent on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025. As our query regarding business use has been resolved, it follows that there is **no further comment for SCC to make.**

### **Cllr Vacancies**

The council were sad to hear that Cllr A Williamson has decided to step away from the position of Cllr for Earlswood, due to health reasons. The Council wish to thank him for his commitment to the council, all his work in general and especially his contribution to the Biodiversity policy, the hard path project and his help with the remote communication project. He will be much missed. The council wish Mr Williamson well and hope he recovers soon.

**Local Defibrillators** Cllrs noted that Ben Allen has kindly taken over as coordinator. Ben has kindly confirmed he can be contacted via email [ben.w.allen@outlook.com](mailto:ben.w.allen@outlook.com)

## **COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT**

County Councillor Brown advised:

### **Democratic Services Committee 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

The Committee covered proposed changes to the constitution, which subsequently have to be agreed in full council. It proposes to include the Planning Committee protocol within the constitution which will help to formalise procedures. The democratic services committee also covered a report by the independent remuneration panel for Wales draft report. Items on the agenda can be found at the following link :

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=142&MIId=5861>

### **Cabinet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025**

The Cabinet considered the proposed draft revenue and capital budget for 2025/26, there was a report on members considering options for a new school improvement model and the development of supported accommodation in Abergavenny for care leavers. There is currently a public consultation on the budget as detailed below. The Cabinet reports can be found at the following link which provide more details of the proposed budget:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=144&MIId=6305>

### **County Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025**

The County Council on the above date included reports on the Council reduction scheme, Gwent Regional Area Plan and the Council Diary. In addition, there was a motion passed which Regrets that Monmouthshire, the lowest funded council in Wales, has again received from Welsh Government the lowest increase in funding of any council in Wales.

There were various questions raised at this meeting including concerns about the naming of Monmouthshire in the Senedd elections next year and a question on an update on the High Beech roundabout. WEITAG2 stage is now in process for the High Beech roundabout but no report on it yet. There are normally three WeITAG stages, so unfortunately progress is slow for much needed improvements to High Beech roundabout which is the responsibility of the Welsh Government, as is the trunk A48 road into Chepstow town centre.

The link to the meeting can be found here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=143&MIId=5744>

### **Cabinet Member Decision on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

This cover the precept regulations which indicated that the following schedule of payments is determined: (i) The Police Authority precept is paid from the Council Fund by twelve monthly equal instalments on the third Tuesday in each month. (ii) The Community Council precepts are paid by three equal instalments on the last working day in April, August and December in each year. The link to the report can be found here: <https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=147&MIId=5729>

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=147&MIId=5729>

## **Garden Waste Collections.**

The Garden waste collection begins on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March and runs fortnightly to the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2025, the day of collection varies according to where you live in Monmouthshire. You can now register online for this optional service which will cost £55 per bin.

[https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/garden-waste/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMATAAR1pzQ\\_ivpWp6lIaOlzW\\_KQOY24rb\\_NYYrHFkrA2DHHcIkMrWIPJJKFPrsfQ\\_aem\\_Y8JDgFzPINL5bTQcmVu\\_h9Q](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/garden-waste/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMATAAR1pzQ_ivpWp6lIaOlzW_KQOY24rb_NYYrHFkrA2DHHcIkMrWIPJJKFPrsfQ_aem_Y8JDgFzPINL5bTQcmVu_h9Q)

## **Draft Budget Consultation**

The Draft Budget consultation will run from 9am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January until midnight on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2025. There are details on the MCC website where you can register for an online team's session at 6pm on Thursday the 30<sup>th</sup> January, 10am on Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> February and 6pm on Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> February. In addition, there are face to face meetings at Caldicot Hub Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> February 10am to 1pm, Chepstow Leisure Centre Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 3 -6pm, Monmouth Leisure Centre Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025 3-6pm, Abergavenny Hub Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> February 10am -1pm and the Usk Hub Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2pm-5pm. Please see my X account at Louise Brown@ClouiseBrown82 where I have reposted.

The link to this consultation with more details on the proposed draft budget can be found here: <https://www.letstalkmonmouthshire.co.uk>

The Labour administration has proposed a council tax increase of 7.8 percent and set out cuts and changes to services totalling £5.1 million which still leaves it short by £2.8 million of achieving the £8m savings needed to produce the legally required balanced budget. Monmouthshire's allocation under the local government revenue support grant only increased by 2.6% (or 2.8% when separate grants are included) way below the average 4.3 percent. It is hoped that the Welsh Government will provide more funding through a funding floor, but it is not expected that any such floor will fund the remaining budget gap of £2.86 million. It is said that all services the council currently provides will still be provided from April such as Leisure centres, libraries and waste collections. It is making changes such as reducing opening hours of community hubs which will also mean libraries opening hours reduce.

There is concern In Monmouth that the library may be moved to Shire Hall with less space and plenty of stairs. There is an increase in the fees for those who obtain a concessionary place on a school

bus. How the proposals will impact community hubs/libraries will become more apparent when the budget proposals are scrutinised at the meetings in February. The first meeting being the Place Scrutiny Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

### **Place Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

The Place Scrutiny Committee includes the draft budget consultation slides which provides more information on the budget proposals.

The link to the meeting can be found here:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ielListDocuments.aspx?CId=303&MIId=5830>

**Cllrs agreed the date of the next meeting as Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 at 7:00pm by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall or remotely.**

**Find more information in a draft copy of minutes on the Community Council notice boards. Previous, approved minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's website [www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk](http://www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk)**

**Contact the Clerk to the Community Council E-mail: [shirenewtoncc@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtoncc@gmail.com)**

**Mobile: 07410 580961**



### **Village Mobile Hairdresser**

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**(29 years' experience)**

### Vacancy on Shirenewton Community Council

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

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

#### What is a Councillor?

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

#### What do Councillors do?

Councillors have three main components to their work.

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

#### How much time does it take up?

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

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



Shirenewton  
Community Council

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

1. Jamie Williamson
2. Emily Ashby
3. Linda Dobson

## SERVICES AT SHIRENEWTON CHURCH IN MARCH

Sunday morning services return to being held in the church in March

Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns
	3.30	Café Church (in the church rooms) – Pancake party
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	10.00	Morning Praise with Hymns
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> March	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns
Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup> March	10.00	Mothering Sunday Service

All are welcome to come and join us and share in refreshments in the church rooms after the service

*Information of services at the other eleven local churches within the SevernWye Ministry Area is at [www.severnwyema.co.uk](http://www.severnwyema.co.uk)*

### Calling all 200 Club Members- Annual Subscription is Due!

200 Club subs for this year are now due. Many people will be due to pay by standing order (thank you!), but for those of you who prefer to pay by cash or cheque ***please contact Aileen Doggett at Church House, Shirenewton, Chepstow, NP16 6RL, 01291 641459, [aileendoggett@btinternet.com](mailto:aileendoggett@btinternet.com)***, as soon as possible. If paying by cheque, please make the cheque payable to "Shirenewton PCC".

If you are new to the area and are wondering what the 200 Club is all about, then read on...

For each £10 subscribed you are allocated a unique number which is entered into the monthly draw. You can sponsor as many membership numbers as you like in your own name, on behalf of family members or even a pet!

There are 10 draws per year, August and January being the exceptions, and each draw will pay out prizes of £30, £20 and £10. The draws take place on the third Sunday of the month. The three lucky winners will be announced in church and are notified in the Parish Magazine.

Where does the money go? It goes to you as prize winners and towards the upkeep of the church.

Thank you for your support.

Aileen

## **Shirenewton W.I.**

### **Musings on Monmouthshire**



Shirenewton W.I. members were a lot more informed about our beautiful county after a talk by local historian, Peter Strong at our February meeting. Peter first became interested in the identity of Monmouthshire when he began teaching history at Caldicot Comprehensive School and after discovering his Welsh heritage.

So what of Monmouthshire's identity – firstly its name: I can't be the only one to struggle to find Monmouthshire on the 'drop down' address when shopping on line. Sadly I'm not a Welsh speaker but even I can identify Sir Fynwy as Welsh for Monmouthshire, but Gwent is often still there too.

Peter explained that Gwent was the name of the land between the rivers Wye and Usk from the post Roman period to the Norman conquest. After the Norman invasion it became known as the County of Monmouth or Monmouthshire. Between 1974 and– 1996, it returned to the name of Gwent following the Local Government Act of 1972, only to become the Unitary Authority of Monmouthshire again following the reorganisation of local government in 1996.

Despite its official title, the name Gwent was still in use by local newspapers in South East Wales in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and in 1913 the Newport Monmouth Infirmary was renamed The Royal Gwent Hospital.

Confused? Well then Peter tackled the thorny subject of whether Monmouthshire was in England or Wales in the past? The motto of Monmouthshire County Council is 'Faithful To Both', which seems a pretty sensible approach if you live in turbulent border country!

Henry VIII created new counties in the Welsh Marches, including Monmouthshire, making them akin to English shires. The Acts of Union in the 16<sup>th</sup> century brought Monmouthshire under English jurisdiction. They gave Monmouth county two M. P.s (like the other English counties) while the rest of Wales only had one M.P. per county.

But what did the people of Monmouthshire think? As ever it wasn't that straightforward. Should a boy from Ebbw Vale play rugby for England or Wales? In the 19<sup>th</sup> C Newport RFC was affiliated to both the English and the Welsh Rugby Unions.

An Act in 1881 required pubs in Wales to close on a Sunday, yet pubs in Monmouthshire were allowed to remain open, as in England. The uncertainty of Monmouthshire's English versus Welsh identity is portrayed in Monmouthshire County Council's Coat of Arms featuring a rose-wielding English lion and a leek-brandishing Welsh dragon.

Peter's talk gave us a greater appreciation of our county. Our members were encouraged to bring Monmouthshire memorabilia and documents to the meeting which sparked some interesting discussions. Peter's talk confirmed what we already knew - that despite the ambiguities and confusion, Monmouthshire is indeed a very special place to live.

Jackie Broughton

At our next meeting at **7.15p.m. on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March at the Huntsman Pub**, we shall be celebrating Shirenewton W.I.'s 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday with a fish and chip supper followed by a quiz. If you are interested in joining Shirenewton W.I. or would like to find out more about our group, then please contact Jane Butterworth at [janeb247@gmail.com](mailto:janeb247@gmail.com) or Angela Gray at [angela.deepweir@btopenworld.com](mailto:angela.deepweir@btopenworld.com)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### MARCH

- Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup>  
3.30—4.30 p.m. St David's Day Pancake Party  
Shirenewton Church Room
- Monday 3<sup>rd</sup>  
7.00 p.m. Shirenewton Community Council meeting  
Shirenewton Recreation Hall
- Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>  
2.00-4.00 p.m. History Society Archive Meeting  
Shirenewton Church Room
- Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>  
7.15 p.m. WI Meeting  
Shirenewton Recreation Hall
- Monday 17<sup>th</sup>  
7.30 p.m. Shirenewton Recreation Association AGM  
Shirenewton Recreation Hall
- Friday 21<sup>st</sup>  
7.00 p.m. Mal Pope, Steve Balsamo, Lena and Ceri  
St Peter's Church, St Pierre
- Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>  
7.30 p.m. History Society—Potlets to Plaques with the  
odd Pub in Between Ned Heyward
- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>  
7.45—9.00 p.m. Ministry Area Prayer Group  
Contact David on 07887 853479
- Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>  
7.30 p.m. The Gift to Sing  
St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow

### APRIL

- Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup>  
7.00 p.m. Annual General Meeting  
Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall
- Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup>  
7.30 p.m. Duke's Yard Singing Club Spring Concert  
St Tewdric's Church, Mathern
- Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m. Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Christopher's Church, Chepstow
- Friday 4<sup>th</sup>  
7.00 p.m. Quiz Night  
St Peter's Church, Newchurch
- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m. Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Peter's Church, St Pierre
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m. Maundy Thursday, Ministry Area Prayer Group  
See Church services
- Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m. Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Andoenus Church, Mounton

## **MAY**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Arvans Church, St Arvans

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>  
7.00 p.m.

The Story of the Two Ronnies  
St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>

VE Day

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>  
10.30 a.m.-1.30 p.m.

Plant Sale and café  
Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Thomas à Becket Church, Shirenewton

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Tewdric's Church, Mathern

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow

## **JUNE**

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Peter's Newchurch

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Mary's Church, Penterry

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>  
2.00-5.00 p.m.

Village Fete  
Shirenewton Recreation Field

### **The Big Spring Clean 2025**

In support of Keep Britain Tidy Day, Shirenewton W.I. plans to take part in the Big Spring Clean by organising a litter pick around the village between the dates of 21<sup>st</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> April.

If you would like to find out more about this or would like to join us (you don't have to be a member) then please contact Jane Butterworth at

[janeb247@gmail.com](mailto:janeb247@gmail.com) for further details.

Introducing



**saints**  
**chepstow**

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



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

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

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

[saintschepstow@cinw.org.uk](mailto:saintschepstow@cinw.org.uk)



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





UPDATE ON

## **THE TREDEGAR ARMS**

New floor – complete  
New windows – one complete  
New bar – complete  
100-year-old front door – being refurbished

**OPENING SOON**

## Swift Action Needed!



Firstly, thank you for the positive feedback from the first article in this series. There is clearly still a lot of love and appreciation for swifts in our villages. Thanks also for the people who have already contacted us (see contact details at bottom of this article), offering support and help. We plan to organise an informal meeting with those offering help once the weather improves. We will keep you posted.

### **Common Swifts: Aren't they amazing?**

As discussed last month, common swifts are sadly, not common anymore. The 'common' refers to their wide-ranging "Old World" breeding distribution from Northern Europe, south to Africa and right across Asia to China in the east.



*Map of the breeding range of the common swift*

Swifts are being impacted throughout their range, but the decline is particularly marked on their northern edge. This is not uncommon for a species whose population is under pressure. Many other species of UK breeding bird are suffering similar declines, think cuckoo, nightingale and spotted flycatcher to name three. The good news is that local initiatives in communities throughout Europe have been successful in protecting and

boosting their numbers. So, there is real hope for our villages' population, believed to be just six breeding pairs, if we take swift action now.

Not many people get close up with a swift, unless you are lucky enough to have a licence for their scientific study. Often we glimpse them flying fast and low over the village as a black arrow-like bird, particularly against the bright blue of a summer sky. However, they are not black, but a most amazing dark brown, with white under their necks.



People often group them with our other iconic summer visitors like swallows and house martins and although they superficially look similar they are in fact evolutionarily far removed from these species. Surprisingly, their closest living relative is the tiny and equally amazing hummingbird family. Swifts have the longest (by some way) ratio between wing length and body, a characteristic it shares with the tiny hummingbirds (if they would ever stay still enough to truly observe this).

It is the swift's body shape that resulted in its Latin name *Apus apus*, which means footless. Their long wings hide their feet, which are pretty much useless, apart from gripping onto vertical surfaces. This explains why swifts never land apart from breeding and why they need nest sites that they can fly directly into: i.e. buildings, inside caves, cliff faces and a single

population that apparently nests inside trees in the old growth pine forest in Scotland. Swifts' love of the built environment means even people living in the middle of cities get to witness these truly wild birds. In fact, distribution and abundance maps show a close match to the built environment, with highest concentrations in urban areas.

No one can fail to appreciate how fast swifts fly across the sky; they are the fastest bird in powered flight (needle-tailed swift), unlike peregrine who tries to claim this prize but actually uses terminal gravity/velocity to reach its amazing speeds as it plunges, rather than flies, towards the ground.

Young swifts, never touch ground for the first 4 years of their lives. They still migrate back and forth from Africa each summer to their village of birth and will examine possible nesting sites, but actually head to the heavens each evening, thousands of feet above the ground to sleep on the wing, flying in circles. In those four years, the young swift might have flown the equivalent of fifteen times the circumference of the earth – without landing once! This permanent flight is completely unique to swifts – no other bird species can even approach such a feat

A French Airman in the 1914-18 war was gliding down in his plane with engines turned off so as to avoid detection when at 10,000 feet he found himself amongst birds which were apparently motionless. One of these birds was found the following day caught in the engine and found to be a swift.

I mentioned last month that adult swifts will happily fly large distance to find food for their young and our village swifts will even fly back and forth to France, if necessary. The young swifts survive these long periods of being left alone by becoming semi-comatose (vastly decreased heartbeat and temperature) whilst their parents are away. If only children were so accommodating!

Again, if you would like to help keep our summer skies alive with this most magnificent bird. please send an email to [shirenewtonswifts@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtonswifts@gmail.com) and we will be in touch.

## Shirenewton Bell Ringing News



On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March it was Dudley Surman's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and we rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles to celebrate. Dudley, a tower captain down in Mathern and who has been ringing for most of his life, even longer than Mike Penney was key in setting up a band of ringers, here in Shirenewton. This includes me. If I'm honest, I had never thought about becoming a bell ringer. Not on my list of things to become - same as being a ballet dancer or a brain surgeon. Anyway, even if I had wanted to, the bells in Shirenewton were unsafe and un-ring-able. But in the mid-1990s, our then organist, Martyn Cole spotted a grant opportunity to get the Shirenewton bells fixed as there was a grand plan for all the bells across the country to ring The Millennium in. So a small working party was formed and we had our bells rehung, retuned and ring-able. But that was the easy part. The Big Problem? We didn't have any ringers. And it was Dudley who came to our rescue. He was instrumental in recruiting and training up a Shirenewton band. And yes, we rang the Millenium in! So our  $\frac{1}{4}$  peal on Sunday was to celebrate his birthday and to mark his contribution to bell ringing in general and to Shirenewton in particular. Mathern Tower also rang a surprise quarter peal for him and then they laid on a terrific cream tea for us all to celebrate! It was a grand afternoon! Thanks Dudley!!

*Glynis MacDonald*

# SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*Registered Charity No. 1090167*

Numbers at our Archive Meetings are picking up again, everyone is welcome, not only members, so please come and join us on the second Wednesday of the month. During 2024 we have had visitors from as far as Wisconsin, researching their family history and actually, finding living family members still in the area.

Our January meeting saw Dr Lyn Davies give a talk entitled 'Chepstow Roman Bridge', this was well attended. Chepstow Archaeological Society have been busy researching the location of the bridge and in the last year have discovered the remains of the foundations. As you can imagine the river is not an ideal place to have an archaeological dig! The Wye has the second highest tidal flow in the world, with only ten minutes in between ebb and flow. More research is being done regarding the site of the bridge and we look forward to hearing more detail on this subject.

Our society was very pleased to receive 'Year One' from our primary school as our guests for a walk around the village. We had a good time, I think they enjoyed it, we certainly did.

We are looking forward to our 24th Annual Dinner this month, our after dinner speaker is Peter Strong.

Dates for your Diary:

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Archive Meeting

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

Potlets to Plaques with the odd Pub in  
Between Ned Heyward

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

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



## Takeaway or Eat In

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

WEDNESDAY

DELICIOUS VARIETY ON THE MENU



FRIDAY

A WIDE RANGE OF FISH & CHIPS MENU OPTIONS

SUNDAY LUNCH

CALL 01291 641521

CALL OR TEXT

07961 522393

OR 07766 237915

£13 COLD OPTION

HEAT YOURSELF AT HOME

£15 HOT OR DINE IN

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

**Shirenewton Fete will be on**

**Saturday 14 June 2025**

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

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

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

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



# Tots and toddlers

Thursday 10 - 11:30  
(term time only)

St Christophers Church  
Pembroke Road, Bulwark

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

**Starting January 9th 2025!**

Contact: [saintschepstow@cinw.org.uk](mailto:saintschepstow@cinw.org.uk) for more info.



## **HELP NEEDED**

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

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

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

Please contact Mark Broughton at  
[mark\\_broughton@btopenworld.com](mailto:mark_broughton@btopenworld.com)

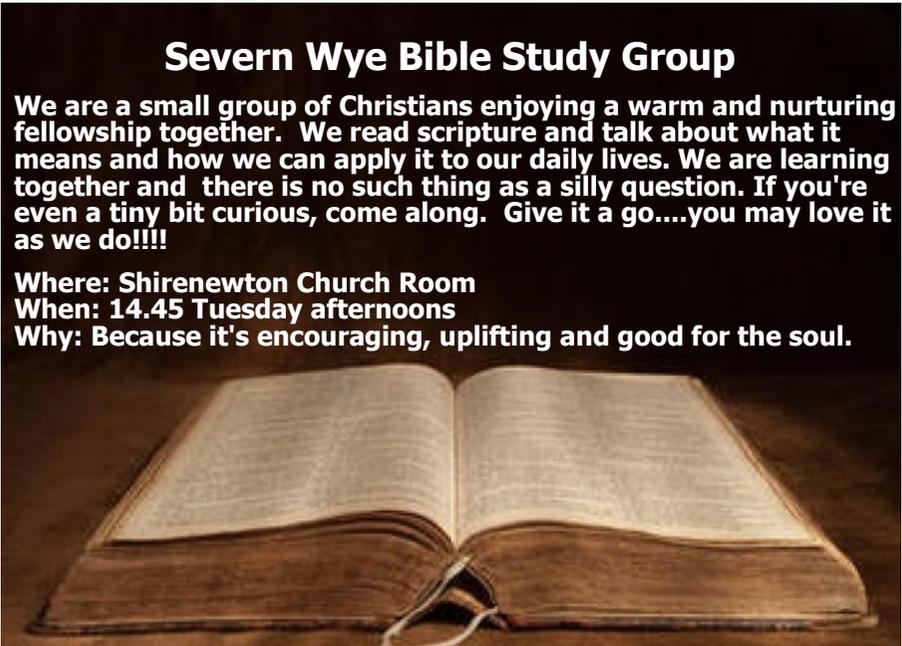
### **Severn Wye Bible Study Group**

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

**Where: Shirenewton Church Room**

**When: 14.45 Tuesday afternoons**

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



[www.shirenewtonchurch.com](http://www.shirenewtonchurch.com)

Already this year, there has been a lot of press regarding the use of AI technology in scams. AI technology allows the scammers to use 'deepfake' technology for impersonation which makes them seem more credible. This deepfake technology is not only being used to part people from their money.

I read an article where foreign spy agencies from the Far East (suspect to be North Koreans) were applying for remote working tech jobs and using deepfake AI in online interviews. The technology is so good now that it is hard to tell if the person on the Zoom/Teams/meetings call at the other end is real or a deepfake. The face of the person on the call has another superimposed by the AI software. There are apparently tell-tale signs to watch out for including a less than perfect head neck joint. Another trick is to ask the person at the other end of the call to pass their hand in front of their face. The current generation of AI technology can't handle this and the hand doesn't appear on the AI generated fake headshot. And, if you are wondering how they get away with answering questions, again AI is the answer. Answers to questions are typically sourced from AI technology and 'read' by AI technology with an accent the scammer wishes to use. The purposes is, of course, to plant foreign operatives into companies to steal their intellectual property.

The key point is, of course, that if AI technology can seem credible on a live remote meeting, it can seem more than credible at the end of a phone!

Going back to scammers who may target you, remember that large companies such as Google, Microsoft, et al are not going to be calling you to tell you that your account has been compromised. Treat any such call with the suspicion it deserves. Likewise, do not click on links from emails unless you are 100% certain that they are genuine – remembering that scammers have access to the last AI technology and are able to create highly believable emails. It is no longer possible to identify scam emails by the spelling errors, poor grammar and English.

On this subject, a recent article in The Register noted that 2024 saw a drop in ransomware payments by companies of around 35% compared with the previous year. Some this was attributed to law enforcement agencies taking down a couple of big gangs in December 2023. However, a large part was attributed to better business preparation to recover from successful attacks. Having secure backups which allow an organisation to restore their data quickly

makes it cheaper to restore than pay the ransom.

Which brings me onto the subject of backups. There was an interesting article on the fact that people make backups and don't test the restoration process. The article pointed out that the process is called 'backup' and not 'restore' which is unfortunate because, without the ability to restore, you don't actually have a backup! Of course, just like an insurance policy, one hopes that there won't be a need to 'claim'. But, if there is a necessity to claim, you do need to be confident that payout (or in our case, restoration) will be made. So, not only should you backup but occasionally, you need to test the backup and restore a file or two to be sure that the process is working.

Finally, about this time last year we had a home battery energy storage system (BESS) installed. The idea is to power the house using free solar generated electricity or low-rate electricity. It works. A year on I'm pleased to report that it is a resounding success. The basic idea is that, in the winter, the battery is charged up overnight on low-rate electricity and then powers the house during the day. In the summer, when the solar panels are generating more than the house is consuming, rather than export the surplus to the grid, it is automatically directed to charge the battery to provide 'free' electricity.

I'm actually typing this on the 1<sup>st</sup> sunny day in February and can see that the solar panels are generating 228 Watts – it would be considerably more in summer. The house is consuming a steady 388 Watts and the 160 Watts draw over and above the solar generation is being provided by the battery which was charged on the low rate overnight. The app is really quite addictive! The investment was ~£4,500 and payback should be well under 5 years. Feel free to contact me if you want to know who we used.

Safe Browsing

David Cornwell  
webmaster



## ***Gardening Corner***

Some years ago, a large oak branch tore off in a storm and landed on the end of our metal potting shed. It crushed the doors and the end of the shed. Not completely, but it did reduce the height to one that would be comfortable for a hobbit! I managed to jack the roof up, and then prop this up with a length of timber, enough that I could get in and out to take or put back the supply of pots, as and when needed. However, since then we have had successive storms, each of which has acted as another nail in the coffin of the said shed. I was in the large tunnel, working on the main vegetable beds yesterday. It was windy, and all I could hear was the shed creaking and groaning, with large clangs every time there was a particularly strong gust of wind. As I write this, there is another yellow wind and rain warning for tomorrow and I have a feeling, that it might just bring an end to the tenuous life of the said shed! Unfortunately, being made of steel, there has been little option in respect of repairs. So instead, it will be a dismantle, and then recycle the steel to Five Lanes recycling centre, with a mental note to buy a timber shed next time!

With the weather continuing in what can only be described as an unsettled state, things are already getting behind in the garden. A couple of days dry did allow me to work on some of the raised vegetable beds, which were weeded, lightly dug, and then covered with black ground cover in order to prevent weeds coming back through before they are planted up again. I would have likely to have put some manure down prior to the cover, but, even though we have six large compost bins, we never manage to produce enough material for all our needs manure wise. A couple of weeks ago a kindly neighbour rang up and offered me a trailer full of fresh 'manure' which I jumped at the chance of. Once delivered, I soon made short work of wheelbarrowing the said manure, down the garden to the bins, which soon filled up. At 135 paces from point of loading, to point of unloading, and then back again, I soon fulfilled my 10,000 paces challenge for that day. Within a matter of days, the heap was steaming well and had already reduced in size by probably a quarter. Fresh manure like this really does produce a lot of heat, and is the best way to produce weed free compost if you are able. Unfortunately, most of the time we have 'cold compost' heaps, as material is added in small quantities over an extended period of time, which is why you have to be very careful what material you load them with. Any material that contains seeds or has spreading roots (like couch grass) are a definite no-no when it comes to what can, or cannot be added. You can purchase insulated compost bins these days, which are designed to run at high

temperature, thus killing seeds and roots off, but are very expensive. They are meant to be effective, but at some £300 each, for the largest size, we would need several tens of them to cope with the garden waste material we produce. So not really a viable option.

Currently, we are working on clearing up all of the greenhouses and tunnels. The big tunnel is the first in line, where we are removing all of the old tomatoes, peppers and other remnants of last years crops. I then intend to water all of the wood chip paths with Jeyes fluid in an effort to kill of any harbouring pests or diseases. This is a garden disinfectant that I have always used, but as with every similar product that is now available to the amateur gardener, they are nowhere near as effective as they used to be. Based on coal tar, the effective ingredients have been replaced, so they may smell the same (just like the 'proper' Wrights coal tar soap used to be), they are no longer as effective. Unfortunately, there is nothing quite the same obviously available. That said, I was talking to my fishing 'buddy' the other week, who also has a large garden and land to manage. I was bemoaning the fact that the so-called Creosote (yet another tar oil-based product – you can see that there is a theme happening here!) you buy these days is rubbish when it comes to using as a wood treatment to prevent it rotting. When I first started my long forestry career, alongside, as it happens, the assistant Head Gardeners dad, one of our jobs was to creosote all of the oak stakes that we produced on the estate we worked on in Hampshire. You may be conjuring up a picture of two men with brushes, painting each stake, one at a time. Lovely! But no, this was job was done on a more industrial scale. Picture an underground tank with some 250 plus gallons of creosote, which was then hand pumped (not quite so industrial but there was no electric supply at the time) into a tank above ground. Underneath this tank, was a fire pit and chimney. Bundles of stakes were lowered into the tank by tractor first, and then filled up with cold creosote, enough to cover the stakes. The fire was then lit, and stoked up until the liquid started to bubble, after which the fire would continue to be stoked for at least a day and then left to cool down for several days. The heat would thin the creosote, and drive out any air in the stakes. As the liquid cooled down the wood sucked in the creosote, treating the timber. Once cold, the tank would be emptied of creosote, this time using gravity, back into the underground tank. Once emptied, the stakes would be left in the now fluid empty tank for several days, to drip and dry off, before then removal and stacking, after which they would be used as and when. I digress. Back to buying these days!

My buddy said he had just bought genuine creosote off E-bay, which I assumed was no longer possible. He thought it had come from Poland originally, but he had definitely bought 25 litres On-line. I had a look, and sure enough, there it was, readily available for professional use only, but anyone could buy it. So next time I need to treat timber 'properly' it will be back to the old tried and tested method. This reminded me of a recent trip to the farm suppliers to buy 5 litres of Round-up, a very effective broad-spectrum weedkiller that I use occasionally. I was horrified at the price, but even more horrified when I was told that I needed an agricultural holding number in order to buy a five-litre bottle. I was however, allowed to buy a one litre bottle, at twice the price. After some discussion, I was allowed to come away with the larger product, but it was at twice the price I paid for the last one! After the E-bay lesson on creosote. I decided to have a look to see if Glyphosate was readily available on-line. Sure enough, there it was for professional use, 5 litres at **half the price** I had just paid, delivered free to the door, no need for a holding number. Now let me just add that, having spent over 50 years in Forestry, where Glyphosate was a staple product to kill competing vegetation when planting trees, I regard myself as a professional user. I've had all the courses, know how to handle and what to wear, but I was taken aback by how easy these products (creosote and Glyphosate) could be bought On-line, but guess this shouldn't be a surprise when you think what else is available these days. On that sobering thought, it is time to get back down the tunnel, there is ground to be cleared and sweet pea plants, garlic and shallots to be planted out (not all in the same place I hasten to add), as well as the hot benches to be turned on ready for the first seed sowing to be done in earnest.

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



# STARGAZING

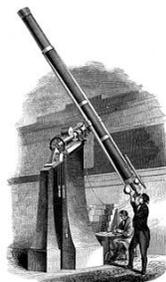


In the evening sky in March, the Constellation of Leo the Lion can be seen to the South-East. It is one of the few constellations that looks like its namesake. It commemorates the giant lion that Hercules slaughtered as the first of his labours. Leo is dominated by his head, which looks like a back-to-front question mark. The bright blue-white star Regulus is at the base of the question mark.

On the evening of St David's Day, the faint crescent Moon is setting in the West the very bright planet Venus just above. Jupiter is higher and to the South, whilst orange-coloured Mars is in the South-East. The Gibbous Moon is close to Jupiter on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March and Mars on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

In March 1781, William Herschel of Bath was observing stars in the constellation Gemini when he discovered a new planet. This was the first new planet to be seen since the beginning of history and resulted in Herschel being knighted and given a royal pension. In gratitude to the king, he wanted to call the planet George! However good sense prevailed and it was finally named after the god Uranus, conforming to the tradition of naming the planets after characters in classical mythology. Incidentally, Herschel's house in Bath is open to the public, and well worth a visit.

The Vernal Equinox occurs on 20th March, when day and night are equal, with exactly 12 hours between sunrise and sunset. This is a useful day for getting your bearings right as the sun rises due east and sets due west wherever you may be.



## FAIRTRADE NEWS



Perhaps it's time for a recap on the ethics and value of Fairtrade.

FT is an ethical movement that aims to ensure farmers and workers in developing countries receive fair prices for their products, decent working conditions and have greater control over their livelihoods by setting social, economic and environmental standards throughout the supply chain, essentially advocating for a more equitable system of trade compared to conventional market practices: this is achieved through certification labels on products that meet Fairtrade criteria, allowing consumers to actively support these principles when making purchases.

### Key Aspects of Fairtrade

#### 1 Fair Prices

Guaranteeing producers receive a minimum price for their goods, which is higher than the conventional market price, protecting them from price fluctuations and poverty.

#### 2 Fairtrade Premium

An additional sum is paid to producer organisations that can be used for community development projects like education, healthcare and infrastructure.

#### 3 Social Standards

Ensuring safe working conditions, no child labour and respect for workers' rights.

#### 4 Environmental Standards

Promoting sustainable farming practices to protect the environment and biodiversity.

#### 5 Producer Empowerment

Supporting farmer cooperatives and giving them a voice in decision making processes.

## How it Works

### 1 Certification

Products that meet FT standards are certified with a recognizable FT label, allowing consumers to identify ethical choices when shopping.

### 2 Auditing

Independent auditors verify that producers are adhering to FT standards throughout the supply chain.

### 3 Direct Trade

FT encourages direct relationships between producers and buyers to ensure fair pricing and transparency.

## Criticisms of Fairtrade

### 1 Price Premium

FT products may be more expensive potentially limiting access to some consumers.

### 2 Potential for Exploitation

Concerns exist that large corporations might use FT as a marketing tool without truly benefiting producers.

### 3 Limited Reach

Some argue that FT only impacts a small percentage of producers and can be difficult to scale up.

In my view the very real benefits of Fairtrade totally outweigh these criticisms. It's not a perfect solution of course. But thousands of hardworking hard-pressed producers have radically improved their lives and their communities using the benefits of Fairtrade – because some people in richer developed countries have chosen to spend a few extra pence on the goods they regularly buy. Simple!

Marion McAdam 641 316 [msm316@gmail.com](mailto:msm316@gmail.com)

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

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

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

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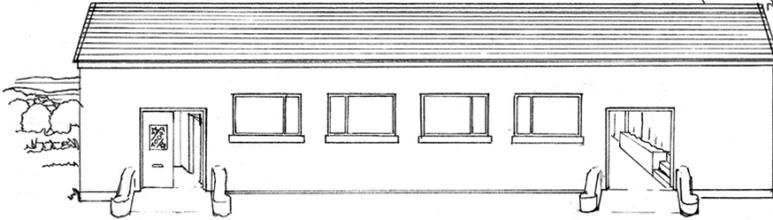
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## Annual General Meeting (AGM)

**Tuesday 1st APRIL, 7pm**

You are welcome to join us at the Hall for the AGM of the Executive Committee. New volunteers are always especially welcome.

**Any questions?** 07889 762 840 /  
07855 301 806 [booking@earlnew.com](mailto:booking@earlnew.com)

### Upcoming Events

2025

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May

Plant sale and café

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November

Christmas craft fair

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December

Xmas Quiz

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**Friday 4<sup>th</sup>. April 2025 at 7.00 p.m.**

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## 25 places of international or world significance within 25 miles

### 2. *The Gondola* – Newport Transporter Bridge (1906)

Only 4 bridges built in the 100 years of the C20th have been given Grade 1 Listed Status – the Severn Bridge, the Humber Bridge, an Ove Arup designed bridge at Durham, and the Newport Transporter Bridge – so two of the four C20th Grade 1 Listed bridges are within a few miles of Shirenewton.

Most people associate Gondolas with Venice but Venice has probably a thousand gondolas. Newport's gondola is something much rarer as it is only one of 8 in the whole world and it takes passengers and cars across the River Usk suspended from a Transporter Bridge.



In fact, the Newport Transporter Bridge isn't working at the moment because it is undergoing repairs but will re-open in 2026. A new visitor centre opens this year on the west bank of the river. There is a Friends of Newport Transporter Bridge organisation and there is a journal 'The Flying Gondola'!

Only 18 Transporter Bridges were built world-wide, all in the late C19th and early C20th (1893 to 1916). Only 8 remain of which Newport is the largest with a main span of 196.6 metres (645 feet), designed by the French engineer Ferdinand Arnodin with Newport Borough's engineer Robert Haynes.

Of the remaining Transporter bridges one is in Spain, one in France, one in Argentina, two in Germany, two in England; and one in Wales The remaining Transporter Bridges are: **Portugalete** (1893), near Bilbao, Spain; **Rochefort-Martou** (1900), between La Rochelle and Bordeaux, France;

**Newport** (1906), Wales; **Osten** (1909), Hamburg, Germany;  
**Middlesbrough** (1911), England; **Rendsburg** (1913), near Kiel, Germany;  
**Riachuelo** (1915), Buenos Aires, Argentina; and **Crossfields** (1916) Warrington, England.



Newport Transporter Bridge looking East

The first Transporter Bridge was built in 1893 by Arnodin and Palacio near Bilbao in Spain so the idea was relatively new at the time Arnodin brought the idea over to Newport at the invitation of the Newport Borough Engineer as a means of solving a problem of how to cross the River Usk 2 miles south of the Town Bridge in order to get workers over to the new Lysaght Steel works.

High masted ships and high tides precluded an ordinary bridge because the deck would have to be high above the water and the ramps either side would have to be enormous to reach the appropriate height so a moving gondola was the answer. The very high beam 54 metres (177 feet) above the river (main span 196 metres), supports a 16-ton traveller mechanism from which the 36-ton gondola is suspended. It is a suspension bridge structure, as was the first Transporter Bridge, the Portugalete Bridge near Bilbao (main span 160 metres); and Rochefort- Martrou bridge in western France (main span 140 metres).

The Spanish transporter bridge near Bilbao is a UNESCO World Heritage Site on account of it being the first and oldest Transporter Bridge but the Newport Bridge is larger and arguably finer in appearance.

When the Newport Transporter Bridge is back in action it will be possible to cross the River Usk on the Gondola again and it is also possible to walk across the main beam 54 metres (177 feet) above the river but that is not for those without a head for heights as you can see down through the walkway!



On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Newport Transporter Bridge on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1906, the Newport City Footbridge was opened across the River Usk in the centre of Newport - 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

'12<sup>th</sup> September' has another significance for Newport as on that day in 1914 Welsh actor Desmond Llewelyn was born in Bettws, Newport. After a spell in Colditz in the Second World War Llewelyn was later known all over the world as 'Q' in 17 of the 19 James Bond films between 1963 and 1999.

Newport has another global link with the world of films – through Welsh actor, from Port Talbot, Sir Anthony Hopkins. For many years Anthony Hopkins' parents ran the Ship Inn at Caerleon. John Williams of Ditch Hill Lane, Shirenewton, recalls seeing and meeting Tony Hopkins there just after Hopkins had finished playing Richard the Lionheart in the film *the Lion in Winter* (1968). In the 1990s Hopkins' mother lived in Firbank Avenue, St Julians, Newport. In 1992 Anthony received an Oscar for '*Silence of the Lambs*'. The Oscar he held in his hand at the Los Angeles Awards Ceremony, watched by millions across the world, spent the next few years on a sideboard in a house in Newport!

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[severnwyema.co.uk](http://severnwyema.co.uk)

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Ministry Area People's Warden	David Carne	<a href="mailto:david-carne@outlook.com">david-carne@outlook.com</a>
		07887 853479
Ministry Area Lay Co-Chair	Hilary Hillier	
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LCC Secretary	John Montague	01291 329 481
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Clerk: Jan McLagan

[shirenewtoncc@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtoncc@gmail.com)

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## **SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE EDITORIAL INFORMATION**

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