

# Shirenewton Parish Magazine



May 2025

Price £1:50



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## **SHIRENEWTON FETE WILL BE ON SATURDAY 14<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:shirenewtonfete@gmail.com)

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

Andrew Baker/John Burrows—[shirenewtonfete@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtonfete@gmail.com)

### **SUMMER FETE GRAND PRIZE DRAW**

Raffle tickets will soon be available for the grand prize draw to be held at the Summer Fete on 14 June. **Don't miss out** on the opportunity to win one of our wonderful prizes, which include: £100.00 cash, 2 Prizes of £50.00 worth of M&S Vouchers, a voucher for newly reopened Tredegar Arms, a luxury spirit hamper, a 4 Ball Golf Day at St Pierre, vouchers for Chepstow Garden Centre, Neil Powell Butcher, Deacon's Florist plus other great prizes.

**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](mailto:aileendoggett@btinternet.com)

## GOOD FRIDAY WALK AND BREAKFAST

It was a bit of a drizzly day when about forty of us, adults, youngsters and dogs, all met up at St Thomas à Becket Church, Shirenewton at 9 o'clock in the morning for our Good Friday Walk and breakfast. The Reverend Zoe Pimentel briefed us all beforehand and gave out colourful collecting bags to the children and fluorescent jackets to others for her health and safety risk assessment. She had two rules – no one was to get ahead of her on the walk; and children had to ask an adult before picking anything up off the ground to put in their collecting bags.



We set off across the field behind Caepwcella collecting flowers, leaves, interesting twigs and all sorts of other vegetation, and then down on to Red House Lane which we followed until we came to the junction with the Green Lane. The foraging continued as we walked up the Green Lane and on to the Recreation Field where some of the younger ones joined in with Zoe's new game: when she shouted "Good Friday" we all ran away as the apostles had



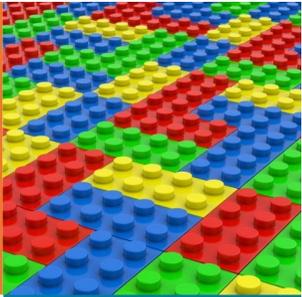
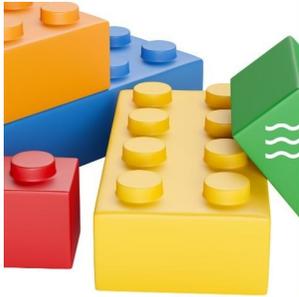
done when Jesus was crucified; then when she shouted "Easter Sunday" we all rushed back as the apostles had done to witness Christ resurrected. We walked across the field and up the steps in the far corner to make our way back to the Church Room – by which time the rain had pretty much stopped!



In the Church Room we were greeted with teas, coffees, bacon butties, vegan sausages in a bun, croissants and pastries, hot cross buns and orange juice. The younger ones were tasked with making a cross with all the stuff they had collected laid out on the floor, supervised by Zoe—see the picture on the front cover. Then they had the opportunity of constructing the cave where Jesus' body had been laid (see picture below) and the rolled-away stone out of biscuits and mini Easter eggs and this proved to be very popular. By 11 o'clock the dogs were restless, the youngsters were entertained, the adults were well fed, the bacon had run out and the rain had definitely stopped, and people began to drift off home.

Special thanks to Janet Horton and Jane Smith-Haddon for cooking the breakfast and to all the volunteers who helped to clear up afterwards.





# LEGO *Church*

*Come and create  
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your imagination  
and Lego!*

**(This activity is in no way endorsed by the Lego brand)**

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4-5pm  
(during term time  
only)

**\*\* Starting Monday 28th April \*\***



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welcome**

  
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Bulwark

[www.saintschepstow.org](http://www.saintschepstow.org)

## EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE AT SHIRENEWTON



## A PILGRIM OF HOPE

Many of you know by now that I am walking a pilgrimage from Chepstow to Rome starting on 27<sup>th</sup> July. I have had a variety of responses to this undertaking from, "you are barking mad", "why?" and "that's really inspirational". So why am I going to walk almost 2000miles? What do I hope to achieve? Well, I will not be able to cover the full depth of these questions, but hopeful this will give you a glimpse. I hope it will lure you to draw closer to God's love for you in your own way.

It is fitting that I write this on the day in which Pope Francis died. He is largely the reason I chose to go this year and to go to Rome. Some of you may know that this is a Jubilee year, a special year when we are encouraged to focus our attention even more intentionally on creating a more just world. Pope Francis proclaimed that the theme for this Jubilee year would be "Pilgrimage of Hope". This was a huge inspiration for me, as hope is what I live to engender, Love and Hope are at the heart of following Christ.

I am neither a pessimistic or optimistic person, I don't now if thing will get worse or will be ok in the end. In the last few years, I have pinched a phrase from one of my heroes in the faith, Dr Cornel West, to describe myself, "I am a prisoner of Hope". Optimism believes that all will work out for the best in the end despite all evidence to the contrary but not hope. Hope recognises that things might not get better but refuses to give into despair. Hope causes me to work tirelessly to try and create the world I wish to see, a world of justice, peace, reconciliation and love. This is the world we pray for every time we say the Lord's Prayer "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt 6:10). This is what Jesus meant when he proclaimed that kingdom of Heaven.

I wanted to be one of those pilgrims of Hope and this is why my journey looks a little different to some others. As a Franciscan I have taken inspiration from my spiritual father, St Francis, who said all Franciscans are "pilgrims of the world". So, in true Franciscan fashion I am not taking any money with me but just relying on the kindness of others to sustain and house me along my way; hence the "your barking mad" comments, ha!

To create the world I hope to see, creating deep connection with others is key, especially those who are strangers, who are different, who may even consider themselves my enemy. In relying solely on the kindness of others, I must learn to trust and be vulnerable and seek relationship with others. Like many of us I have become selective my relationships. I develop friendships with those like me, I

keep others at a distance, I close the door on my safe little house to keep the messy world at bay. This is not the way that Jesus showed us, he sought out and connected with everyone, especially those we would rather not have in our homes. Jesus entered the messiness of others' lives in order to love them fully and he calls us to do the same. This is one of the main reasons for my pilgrimage.

I will be spending 2000 miles walk with just me and God. I cannot escape myself or God, there will be no Netflix or YouTube or anything else to distract me or hide behind. So, a large part of pilgrimage is to seek deeper connection with God and learn more about yourself, to confront the shadow elements of your nature that we all have. It is also a time of discernment, seeking God as to what is to come next in your call to follow Christ faithfully. I have no doubt I will come back changed by the experienced. It will hopefully be time of growth; growth spiritually, personally, and in my love for God and others. There is no growth in any aspect of life without discomfort and challenge, I am sure this pilgrimage will provide plenty of both.

I hope this gives you a glimpse into the main reasons for my pilgrimage of hope to Rome. It is less about the destination and more about the process of becoming. The hardships I will face, the people I meet, the hours I will spend in prayer and time with God are all at the heart of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is never truly walked alone, your prayers will help sustain me, my prayers for you will mean that you will accompany me along my way.

Peace and every blessing

Philip

For more information you can follow me at:

[www.pilgrimofhope.co.uk](http://www.pilgrimofhope.co.uk) or

on Facebook: Philip Pilgrim of Hope

**Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in April:**

1. Brian Harper
2. Anna Reid (née Broughton)
3. Piper Dowell

## 63 Chepstow | Usk | Pontypool | Cwmbran

Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

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

Timetable from 1 September 2024

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

### Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays

	Sch	HOL							
Cwmbra 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

# Sunday 27th July

10am at St.Mary's Chepstow



Please join us for a single **joint** service, for **all** churches in Severn Wye Ministry Area - to bless Philip, hear more about his plans to walk from Chepstow to Rome in 90 days, and send him on his pilgrimage with our prayers

*Get it in your diaries early!*



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## **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*

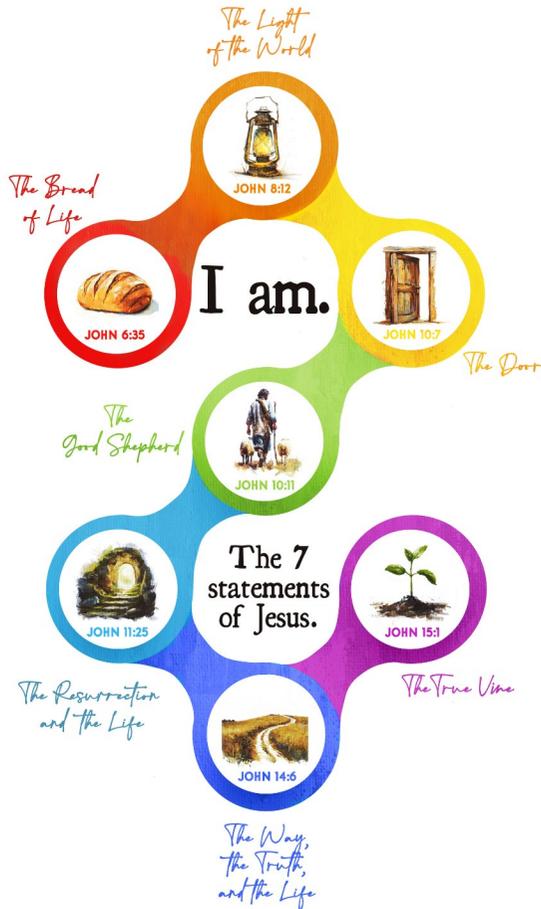
will be explored in a relaxed and engaging seven-week Bible study. Each week we'll unpack one of these sayings and discuss what it means for our lives today.

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](mailto:Severn.Wye.MAL@gmail.com)

7 week Puddings & Bible study  
on the “I am” sayings of Jesus



**St Christopher’s Bulwark, Sundays  
7:00-8:30pm, starting 11<sup>th</sup> May**

## 24/7 PRAYER

Age 18, at 2:45 one morning, I crept quietly out of my house so as not to wake anyone, got into my car and drove to church. The roads were empty and everything was silent and peaceful. There was no sign of life except one other car in the car park, and one light on at the back door. I waited until one minute to three, then made my way over. A stranger approached the back door from within, unlocked and opened it for me, and as I stepped in and they made their way out, we silently nodded a friendly and knowing greeting to each other.

I had signed up for the 3am-4am slot at my church's 24/7 prayer room. I felt a bit tired, but the adrenaline of being out in the middle of the night, and having this holy space all to myself, made it all worth it. To be praying at such a silent and peaceful time of night made it all the more special – I felt like me and God were the only two beings in existence, and his presence was more powerful than ever as He acknowledged the sacrifice of sleep and comfort I had made to spend time with him.

This was one of my first experiences of a 24/7 prayer room. They run every day, up and down the country, and all around the world, with a vision of ensuring that prayer is happening somewhere throughout the world, no matter day or night. They are places of inspiration, creativity and – obviously – prayer, designed to be a welcoming and encouraging space that enables anyone to spend time in prayer.

We are excited to let you know that we will be running a 24/7 prayer room at St. Christopher's Church, Bulwark, from 10am on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May (launching the prayer room with the weekly communion service), until 10am Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May.

24/7 prayer rooms have an abundance of art and craft materials, prompts, photos, pre-written prayers, CD/music players, comfy cushions and other aids to enable all visitors to engage in an act of prayer in a way they are most comfortable. They are the perfect place for prayer 'novices' and prayer 'warriors' alike! The way prayer rooms work is this environment is set up and then the prayer period is split into one hour slots, which people volunteer to sign up for, to try and ensure the full period (in our case, 24 hours) is covered.

Yes, this includes all night! Would you like to experience the same thrill of spending time in prayer in the stillness of the night? Or perhaps you would prefer a more reasonable hour and would be

intrigued to experience a prayer room for the first time? Anyone and everyone is welcome to sign up. There will be a physical sheet at St. Christopher's that you can put your name down on, or otherwise you can email me at [Severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com](mailto:Severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com) to reserve the slot you would most prefer: All are currently available from 11am on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May until 10am on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May.

Revd Zoe Pimentel



## **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](mailto:parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com)

### 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

### Vacancy on Shirenewton Community Council

Shirenewton Community Council has 1 vacancy for a Councillor in the Earlswood ward

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Shirenewton  
Community Council

## Shirenewton War Memorial Clock News



Last month, I showed a group of Year 7 and 8 pupils from St John's on the Hill around our church and our clock tower. They had kindly held a very successful Gwent House Charity Day and had raised over £200 towards the repairs of our Shirenewton War Memorial Clock. They were interested to see this not-working clock and so I gave them a guided tour of the church. I showed them the so-called 'pirates grave', once I had found it. Then inside the church, I pulled out all the stops and demonstrated how the organ works, even though, it quickly became apparent that I can't actually play the organ. Then they had a go. They couldn't play either. But we made a noise. And finally, I took them up to the bell chamber and had a go at explaining the intricacies of bell ringing. I showed them how to ring a bell up, I rang the tenor tunefully and then I rang it down again. Then they all had a go. At tolling the bells. And we made a lot more noise. It was a great afternoon. Thank you, St John's for your support.



Glynis MacDonald



UPDATE ON

# THE TREDEGAR ARMS

It's taken a little longer than expected, but all finishing touches are just about complete.

Furniture has arrived, completely new and very well equipped kitchen installed, cellar refurbished & beer pumps commissioned.

OPENING SOON

**Severn Wye Ministry Area  
Our services for May 2025**

	Service Time	4 <sup>th</sup> May <b>EASTER 3</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> May <b>EASTER 4</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> May <b>EASTER 5</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> May <b>EASTER 6 Rogation Sunday</b>
<b>St Mary's Priory, Chepstow</b>	8.00	Morning Liturgy (non Eucharist)	Said Eucharist	Said Eucharist	Said Eucharist
	11.00	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Family service
	18.30		Taize service		
<b>St Christopher's, Chepstow</b>	9.30	Said Eucharist	Morning Prayer	Eucharist with hymns	Said Eucharist
<b>St Peter's, Newchurch</b>	17.30	Eucharist with hymns		Café church	
<b>St Tewdric, Mathern</b>	9.00	Eucharist with hymns	Morning Prayer	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns
<b>St Peter, St Pierre</b>	11.30	Eucharist with hymns	Morning Prayer	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns
<b>St Andoenus, Mounton</b>	10.15	Morning Prayer	Eucharist with hymns	Morning Prayer	Eucharist with hymns
<b>St Thomas a Becket, Shirenewton</b>	10.00	Morning service (non-Eucharist)	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns	Eucharist with hymns
<b>St Arvan, St Arvans</b>	10.00	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Sung Eucharist
<b>St Deiniol, Itton</b>	11.30		Liturgy of the Word		Eucharist with hymns
<b>St James, Devauden</b>	9.00			Family service (non Eucharist)	
<b>St Mary's, Penterry</b>	16.00	Family Eucharist			
<b>Holy Cross, Kilgwrwg</b>	11.30	Eucharist with hymns			

Services more suited to families and children highlighted in orange      Non Eucharistic services are highlighted in green

## Thank you Sally!



**At the recent Vestry Meeting, long serving warden at Shirenewton Church, Sally Saysell, stepped aside from her duties. The LCC and congregation wish to express their heartfelt thanks to her for her long service to the church.**

**Even Sally herself is unsure when she took on her role in Shirenewton, but for more than twenty years she has been quietly and competently ensuring that everything runs smoothly Sunday after Sunday.**

Sally and her husband Alan, retired to Shirenewton in 1998. Having been a Warden at Newland Church in the Forest of Dean, Sally was looking forward to having more time to herself! However, after a few years, when John Nicholas stood aside, Sally was prevailed upon to take on the mantle of Vicar's Warden.

Sally, with Alan alongside her, until his death in 2015, has been a conscientious servant of the church, often unseen and unrecognised. We are all familiar with her smiling welcome almost every Sunday morning. We see her around the village and reach out to share thoughts and feelings about the church, to which she has listened carefully and reported faithfully back to the church council, ensuring local views are heard and taken into account.

Many are less aware that for many years Sally and Alan undertook most of the cleaning of the church, keeping it tidy and the brass gleaming. Or that she would change the frontals when necessary, as the liturgical calendar changed; that she organised readers each Sunday, has been responsible for setting up the tray of sacraments for Eucharist services, for ordering more supplies of candles, readings, wine and wafers, for maintaining the registers and tidying up before and after services. Not to mention her setting up for weddings, baptisms and funerals and supporting church events, particularly the Fete.

She has seen us through some turbulent times, through the coming and going of several incumbents and the inevitable interregnums, (during which her stalwart support of Rev Nansi Davies helped to ensure the church thrived in the village) the Covid Lockdowns and the transition into the Severn Wye Ministry Area. She hands over her role to Aileen Doggett, who has assisted her recently.

We are truly grateful to Sally. As a token of our appreciation of all Sally has done for us, we are organising a card and gift for her. Anyone who wishes to contribute a message or donation, should contact Gilly Lambert during May. (Gilly's contact details: [lem.shirenewton@gmail.com](mailto:lem.shirenewton@gmail.com), 07821 725690, 01291 641175)

**PARTY  
IN THE  
PRIORY!**

**SAT  
31<sup>ST</sup> MAY**

1pm-4pm



- **Bouncy castle**
- **Candy floss**
- **Giant games**
- **Lego corner**
- **Snacks & drinks**

**Free - all  
welcome!**

For more info contact  
Revd Zoe Pimentel  
07754 306229  
[ZoePimentel@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:ZoePimentel@churchinwales.org.uk)

## **SHIRENEWTON CHURCH—GENEROSITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP**

Shirenewton Church belongs to us all and it plays an important part in the thriving and supportive community we all appreciate about our villages.

### **Our Impact and Community Involvement**

We are trying to emulate the generosity that God has shown us, care for what we value, and ensure its sustainability for future generations.

We are proud of the diverse activities and groups that our church supports. From fellowship after services, to hosting the U3A art group, Pilates, yoga, table tennis, and the History Society, our church is a hub of community engagement. Special events like Carols round the Christmas tree, Christingle and the annual Church Fete bring us all together in celebration and fellowship and support other good causes. Our church also plays a vital role in hosting significant life events for all, offering baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and providing a reflective peaceful space for thought, prayer and memorials.

### **Financial Challenges and Sustainability**

Maintaining our church and its activities comes with financial and other challenges. The volunteers who look after the church and its grounds have done a lot of work to try and reduce the costs, but we are running a deficit. Did you know it costs about £100 per day to keep the church open and in good order?

Shirenewton church relies entirely on local support and its only income comes from donations, fund-raising, and from fees for services such as weddings. We rely on volunteers to run and maintain the church, and we are committed to passing it on to future generations in good condition.

### **Ways you can give support**

We need your help to close the financial gap and ensure the sustainability of our church. Here are some ways you can contribute:

- Regular giving via Gift Direct or Standing Order (please also think about increasing your regular giving if you already do so)
  - Making full use of tax concessions like Gift Aid
  - Contributions towards specific costs (of your choice) such as grass cutting, heating, insurance, flowers etc
  - Joining the 200 Club
  - Taking responsibility for running a fundraising activity
- Setting up a bequest or legacy to support Shirenewton Church

## Enhancing Stewardship

Beyond financial contributions, there are many other ways to support our village church and enhance stewardship:

- Joining the cleaning rota
  - Bell ringing – come along and learn how, or brush off your skills and become an active ringer
  - Offering your skills to help with specific projects
  - Helping to keep the churchyard tidy
  - Providing and serving refreshments after services
- Helping at the Fete or other events

## Thriving

We all have roles to play in this shared task of stewardship. Whether it's setting up regular giving, sharing fundraising ideas, or getting involved in church activities, your support is invaluable and is very much appreciated. Together, we can ensure that our church remains a vibrant and welcoming place for all.

To take action, or to receive further information or to find out more, please contact Graham Lambert, Treasurer, via [glambert123@googlemail.com](mailto:glambert123@googlemail.com).

Thank you for your continued support and generosity.



**HOMECARE**



**Eileen O' Dwyer**

Private Carer/Home help  
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MENU CHOICES ARE ALL SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. REMEMBER TO CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AS MENUS CHANGE WEEKLY.



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You can call us

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OUR MENUS CHANGE WEEKLY

You can find us at  
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You can contact us by email  
HUNTSMAN.SHIRENEWTON@GMAIL.COM

You can check out our website  
HUNTSMANHOTEL.CO.UK

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SUNDAY LUNCH

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WE ARE AVAILABLE FOR:

- ANNIVERSARIES
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# Tots and toddlers

Thursday 10 - 11:30  
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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!**

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**30 years experience – DRB checked**

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*This is a fair share scheme where seasonal produce is shared among subscribers.  
We guarantee a minimum of 8 items in the medium boxes (suitable for 2-3)  
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### **To advertise in this magazine contact**

Bill Clark: 01291 641783; [parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com](mailto:parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com)

The editor reserves the right to print free content and  
free advertisements in black and white

### **Advertising Rates for Commercial organisations**

12 months 10 issues

Full page £100; £150 for a designated page

Half Page £50

Quarter Page £25

**Advertising for Local and Charity organisations is free.**

## THE BELLS, THE BELLS

The tradition is that church bells are not rung during Holy Week. As our practice night is held on Friday evening, then in Holy Week we take the opportunity to do a "spring clean" of the tower. This includes the ringing room, belfry and spiral staircase, So on April 19<sup>th</sup> this annual difficult task was undertaken by those ringers unable to provide a believable excuse as why not to attend. Over the years we have compiled a list of pathetic unaccepttable excuses, thus requiring from the workshy evermore fantastical newer ones to be concocted. Very few get past close scrutiny.

Cleaning the belfry is the biggest challenge as crawling under the bells often uncovers nuts and bolts jettisoned from the swinging bells.. This year just one nut and washer was revealed and was quickly replaced to its origin on the 4<sup>th</sup> bell wheel.

In May there are a couple of events looming. The first is on Thursday May 8<sup>th</sup> - VE Day. There is a national request that church bells ring out at 6.30 pm – a request for which we will willingly comply. The second is the annual Branch (Monmouth Diocese) striking competition .This is a completion in which teams (in ringing jargon "bands") of ringers from churches within the Diocese of Monmouth ring for a set period or number of changes at a specified church – this year being Michaelstone -Y-Fedw. An independent pair of judges from a different Diocese from Wales or England assess the quality of the ringing performance "blind" (that is not knowing which band is performing) and then awarding a score. It is a little bit like the Eurovision Song Contest but much more interesting and as stated is "blind", so not influenced by other factors!. This event will take place on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May, and Shirenewton will be entering band to both categories – call changes (lasting 5 minutes) and method ringing for 120 changes (also lasting for about 5 minutes or so). Both sequences of ringing will be performed on 6 bells. So if anyone wishes to come along and support the Shirenewton bands in this endeavour then please do so. The competition starts at 3.30 pm. There is a pub next to the church – The Cefn Mably Arms – should one require further inducement.

M.D.Penney.

## **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)

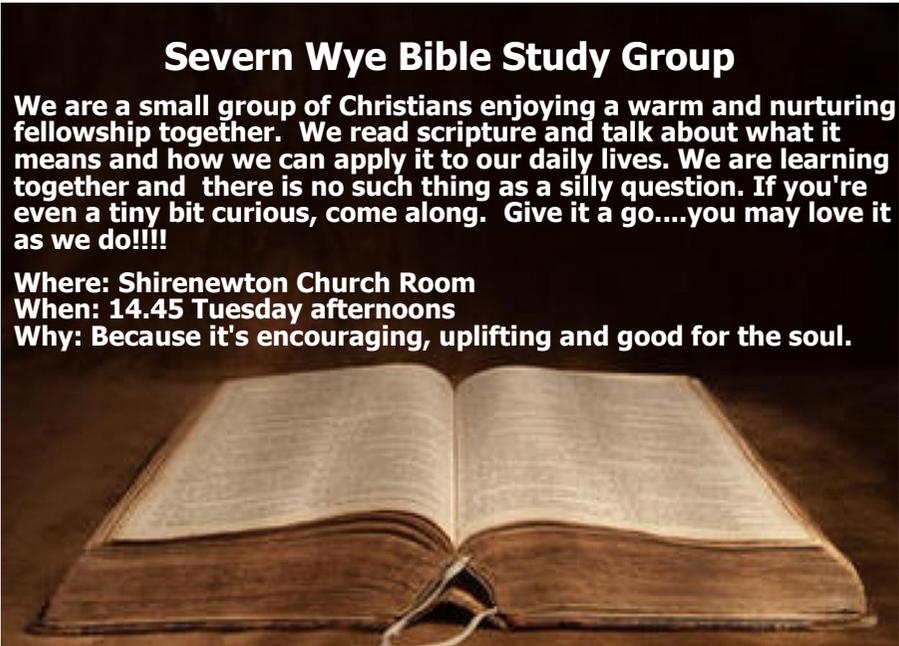
### **Severn Wye Bible Study Group**

**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.**



# SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*Registered Charity No. 1090167*

A full house for our March meeting, the speaker for the evening was Ned Hayward, '*potter of this parish*'. His *Blue Plaques* are found in every corner of the country, you will even find one in New York. He has made two for our society one blue plaque on the gate of Shirenewton Hall to commemorate Edward Lowe, who lived at the hall. He made us a purple plaque (only for women) to commemorate Martha Gellhorn who lived at Kilgwrrwg, wife of Earnest Hemmingway.

A very interesting talk from an accomplished craftsman

We are off on a visit to Trellech for our April meeting, we are squeezing in lunch beforehand.

Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> April

Visit to Trellech, Lunch at the Lion Inn and tour with Kate Churchill

Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> May

Archive Meeting, Church Room

Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> May

Beating the Parish Bounds, meeting at the Church door at 2.00pm

Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May

May Meeting, title of talk '*August Piccard, Life & Legacy*'  
Speaker, Les Ashton-Smith

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 THE SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
ARCHIVES**

ORDER OF SERVICE  
FOR  
UNVEILING OF  
WAR MEMORIAL TABLET  
1939-1945

CHURCH OF THOMAS A BECKET  
SHIRENEWTON

22<sup>nd</sup> SEPTENIBER, 1946



Homecraft Section of Chepstow Show

Invites you to a

# Coffee Morning

on

Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025, 10am - 12 noon

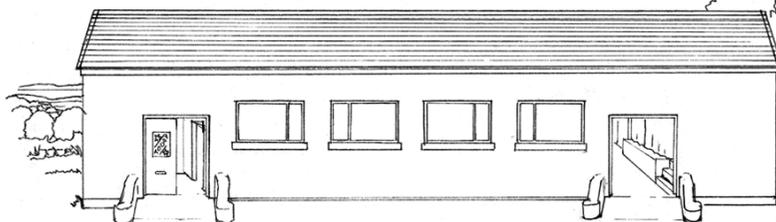
At The Hood Memorial Hall, Devauden

Bring and Buy, Cake Stall, Raffle

Entry £5



## Earlswood & Newchurch West Village Hall



# Plant Sale & Café

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May, 10.30am - 1.30pm**

Come to see what plants and flowers are for sale, stay for soup, cake and a chat!

- ❖ Plant donations welcome
- ❖ Tables available for traders: £5

**More information:** 07889 762 840 / 07855 301 806

[info@earlnew.com](mailto:info@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

Visit [www.earlnew.com](http://www.earlnew.com) for more information about the Hall and facilities. We have a mailing list! Email [booking@earlnew.com](mailto:booking@earlnew.com) to join!

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### MAY

Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Arvans Church, St Arvans
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> 10.00-12.00	Chepstow Show Homecraft Coffee morning The Hood Memorial Hall, Devauden
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
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> 7.15 p.m.	WI AGM Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> 10.30 a.m.-1.30 p.m.	Plant Sale and café Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Thomas à Becket Church, Shirenewton
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Tewdric's Church, Mathern
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> 2.00 p.m.	Beating the Bounds Meet at the door of Shirenewton Church
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> 7.00-8.00 p.m.	Puddings and Bible Study St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.	SLHS talk—August Picardy, Life & Legacy Shirenewton Church Room
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> 7.45-9.00 p.m.	Ministry Area Prayer Group St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow
Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> 10.00 a.m. to	24/7 Prayer Room St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Saturday 31 <sup>st</sup> 10.00 a.m.	
Saturday 31 <sup>st</sup> 1.00—2.00 p.m.	Party in the Priory Contact Zoe Pimentel for details 07754 306225

## **JUNE**

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>  
7.00-8.00 p.m.

Puddings and Bible Study  
St Christopher's Church, Bulwark

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

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Peter's Newchurch

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>  
7.00-8.00 p.m.

Puddings and Bible Study  
St Christopher's Church, Bulwark

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

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>  
7.00-8.00 p.m.

Puddings and Bible Study  
St Christopher's Church, Bulwark

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
Church of the Holy cross, Kilgwrrwg

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>  
7.00-8.00 p.m.

Puddings and Bible Study  
St Christopher's Church, Bulwark

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Deiniol's Church, Itton

## **JULY**

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St James's Church, Devauden

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Mary's Church, Penterry

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

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

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Peter's Church, Newchurch

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup>  
10.00 a.m.

Service of Blessing for Reverend Philip Avery  
St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup>  
7.45-9.00 p.m.

Ministry Area Prayer Group  
St Peter's Church, St Pierre

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

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

Following up on the discussion last month re losing access to your email account (such as Gmail), it occurred to me that I'd focused on what would happen if you were locked out of the account by the service provider (e.g. Google) and I had failed to mention that many people lock themselves out of their own account by forgetting their password or similar and therefore can't get the account back. To prevent this, you should always ensure that your account recovery information is complete. This is typically found under the 'security' section in settings. Also, be sure to enable two factor authentication (2FA) which makes it hard to hack your account.

While on this subject, an interesting article on Gmail account theft passed my way during the month. The scam goes like this: you start getting Google notifications that someone is trying to log into your account. The notifications ask "Is this you?". You presumably hit the "no, it wasn't me." Option. However, the scam then relies on you panicking and deciding to change your password.

This is because, when you change your password, Google asks "Is this you?" & you click "Yes, this was me," because, after all, you are changing your password. Sounds fine? Well, the problem is that the hacker is undertaking multiple attempts and generating multiple alerts/notifications in the hope that you accidentally click one of the hacker's login alerts instead of your own password change alert. Just because someone is trying to log-in and generating these alerts doesn't mean you have to change your password, especially while the attack is happening. Don't panic is the answer. Just make sure you have a secure password in the first place, enable 2FA and watch them waste their time.

An interesting article crossed my inbox the other day regarding research the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) have undertaken. As The Register reports: "its latest effort is an online "rogues' gallery" showcasing more than 100 tech products that no longer function properly or were effectively junked after manufacturers ended support". The so called Electronic Waste Graveyard can be found here:

<https://pirg.org/edfund/resources/electronic-waste-graveyard/>.

This is a subtle way of reminding you that Windows 10 will expire in October this year. If you are running a Windows 10 PC it won't just stop but it will not benefit from security upgrades leaving you increasingly vulnerable to attack if connected to the internet. I mentioned a while ago I had several small Windows 10 PCs which had been used as TV 'set-top' boxes for streaming. I've converted

all these to Linux Mint which was a fairly easy process. I've also converted my old Windows 10 laptop (which was too old to upgrade to Windows 11) to Linux Mint and use it to stream to the TV. So, there is life after Windows 10 for PCs which can't be upgraded to Windows 11 – it's called Linux Mint!

And so, to one of the more ubiquitous tools, WhatsApp. I am an avid user of WhatsApp for Windows. This links my Windows PC to WhatsApp on my phone. Using WhatsApp on my PC is so my easier as I can type with the keyboard. There are some drawbacks. WhatsApp for Windows doesn't support communities or broadcast lists but is a useful tool for the basic communication. However, it was recently reported by The Register that it can be exploited and fool users into executing malicious code.

WhatsApp's simplistic handling of attachments is to blame. An .exe file can be passed off as, for example, an image file. The user thinks they are opening an image but, in reality, are opening a malicious .exe file. The exploit is fixed in version 2.2450.6 and higher. You can find your version number under the hamburger menu (three horizontal lines) and settings. Updating is a pain. You need to uninstall your current installation, reboot and then re-install and re-link.

PC World drew my attention to another ingenious way of enticing the user to run malware via a fake CAPTCHA. We are all used to clicking a little box saying 'I'm a human' or identifying all the squares with a bus/bicycle/traffic light/etc. However, on some compromised sites the CAPTCHA asks you to undertake a series of key strokes, specifically: Windows key + R. Second, press Ctrl + V. Third, press Enter. This actually opens the windows run command, pastes in some malicious code (suitably hidden so you can't see it) and the 'enter' runs the malicious code. It relies on people following the CAPTCHA instructions either without thinking or without the knowledge to understand what is going on. So, be aware of this scam and watch out for it.

Finally, for those with Android phones, an update last November installed the 'Android System SafetyCore'. Google says "Google described the service's functionality: "Sensitive Content Warnings is an optional feature that blurs images that may contain nudity before viewing and then prompts with a 'speed bump' that contains help-finding resources and options, including to view the content. When the feature is enabled, and an image that may contain nudity is about to be sent or forwarded, it also provides a speed bump to remind users of the risks of sending nude imagery and preventing accidental shares". Google further states,

"Sensitive Content Warnings doesn't allow Google access to the contents of your images, nor does Google know that nudity may have been detected". So, this is a good thing – right?

However, what has upset some users is that Google hasn't told anyone that this software is being installed on their phones and it doesn't have an icon or show up on the list of running applications. It is possible to uninstall it, but it seems that it will reinstall itself every system update. The original ZDNET article is here: <https://tinyurl.com/bdda5bp8>.

So, is it a good thing? In many ways, yes. Apple offers similar functionality. The main difference is that Apple was open about the functionality and allows users to turn it off.

On that happy note, safe browsing until next month.

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



  
**Shirenewton Primary School**  
Ysgol Gynradd Shirenewton

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.

**We're hiring!**

**BREAKFAST CLUB SUPERVISOR**  
5 HOURS PER WEEK, 38 WEEKS PER YEAR  
DAYS PER WEEK, TERM TIME ONLY

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

## 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!

The graphic features a man with a beard, wearing a light-colored shirt, smiling as he looks at a smartphone. He is also holding a credit card. In the background, there is a large yellow circle. The text 'easyfundraising turns your online shopping into everyday magic' is written in a dark teal font. A yellow button with the text 'Support us' is positioned above the man. At the bottom, the Easyfundraising logo and the slogan 'You shop, brands donate to us' are displayed on a dark teal background.

easyfundraising  
turns your online shopping  
into everyday magic

Support us

 easyfundraising You shop, brands donate to us

**Shirenewton W.I.**  
**A Walk on the Wild Side**  
**The History of the High Line, New York**

At our April meeting, Lesley Kelly transported us to

This 1.45 mile long, 6 acre, elevated, linear park was erected on a former New York Central railroad, on the West side of Manhattan and opened in 2009. It is an icon of contemporary landscape architecture, with the new perennial movement developing the use of grasses rather than shrubs to create a series of contemplative gardens.

The history of this disused railroad lies in the mid-1800s, when freight trains ran at street-level, in lower Manhattan, straight to the meat packing warehouses, delivering products from the harbour. However, even with cowboys riding in front of the trains, waving red flags, more than 540 people had been killed by trains by 1910, with 10th Avenue known as "Death Avenue."

By 1924, the West Side Improvement project began, which led to the removal of street level tracks and the creation of a 13-mile raised railway which opened in 1933. The line was completed in 1934. However, the success of this venture was short lived, as the gradual use of road haulage overtook the railroad and, in 1960 a section of the railway was demolished. By 1978, the railway was only delivering 2 loads a week and was shut down in 1980, with the last train carrying a cargo of frozen turkeys for Thanksgiving!

During the 1980s developers were busy lobbying for the demolition of the entire structure in order to build real estate, however, in 1983 Peter Obletz formed The West Side Rail Line Development Foundation, in hope of preserving the structure. At the same time, Congress passed the Natural Trails System Act, allowing people to transform old rail lines into recreational areas.



Urban explorers and local residents discovered that grasses and wildflowers had taken over the site however, Mayor Giuliani signed an order for its demolition This prompted Joshua David and Robert Hammond to found the Friends of the High Line, a non-profit organisation, which campaigned to reopen the railway as a public, open space.

The owners had given a photographer permission to publish photographs of the High Line and, due to its meadow like natural beauty, more than \$150 million was raised by public donation. This included £50 million pledged by the new mayor, Mayor Bloomberg.

In 2006 the Friends of the Highline promoted a competition for ideas of how to develop the High Line, these included such unrealistic ideas as a roller coaster and a very, very long swimming pool!

The question now was how to plant, to what design – architectural or wild planting? Landscape architecture firm James Corner Field Operations, along with planting designer Piet Oudolf, were chosen to transform the High Line. They wanted to recapture the essence of nature taking over the ruins. Architecturally, the High Line a marine steel and concrete structure, with a sheer abundance of plants and grasses, with over 500 species to date. Virginia Bluebells, Rattlesnake Master, Pennsylvania Sedge and Culver's Root *Veronicastrum virginicum* to name but a few. The name of the latter plant was derived from an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Dr Culver who sold his medication derived from the plant for "purgative purposes)!

The High Line has been developed into several zones, with many of the old wooden sleepers and rails used for seating in the sundeck and water garden area. Walks along the High Line pass through and alongside the buildings and people come to promenade, do Yoga, view the artworks on display and it is a popular spot for marriage proposals!



There are several ongoing challenges of accessibility for adding soil, getting rid of weeds and watering. These are addressed during in March each year, when hundreds of volunteers gather to cut back overgrown areas, with all the cuttings chipped on site and used as mulch to help protect the plants against dry, hot New York summers.

Lesley ended her talk with a delightful insight into some of the rare plants to be found at the High Line with interesting stories of their historical uses.

**Our next meeting is our AGM at 7:15pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May at 7:15pm at Shirenewton Recreation Hall.**

If you are interested in joining 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), Or just come along on the second Thursday of the month, you will be most welcome.

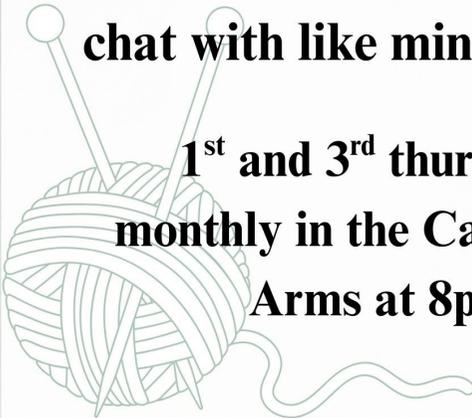


would you like to  
**knit & natter**



*or*  
**crochet & chatter**

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



**1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> thursdays  
monthly in the Carpenters  
Arms at 8pm**



# STARGAZING

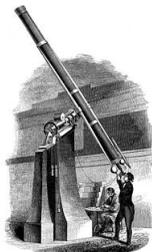


The five stars forming the “W” of Cassiopeia lie to the north in the evening night sky. Constellations usually have Ancient Greek names – the name Cassiopeia was used by Ptolemy, a great Greek astronomer living in Egypt when it was part of the Roman Empire around 100 AD. On the other hand, the majority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

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

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

At the beginning of May, the bright planet Jupiter is setting just after the Sun in the west. Orange-coloured Mars is in the west to the left of the bright stars Castor and Pollux and to the right of the star Regulus. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> May, the Moon and Mars are very close together, and the Moon is just to the right of Mars on the 31<sup>st</sup>.



## ***Gardening Corner***

Some days ago, our Somerset based son-in-law mentioned that he had seen the first swallow flying over Exmoor. This was the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, which seemed a little early, but not really a surprise given that we had been experiencing such good weather and Southerly or South easterly winds to help them on their way. The following morning, I pulled back the bedroom curtains to be welcomed by the sight of house martens flying around the house. I had been contemplating for several days whether to put the artificial nests back up, so the decision had been made for me. Later that day, I put them up in their usual positions, and by the next morning, the first little heads were peering out. Since then, the period of dry, sunny weather has given way to cold and wet again, and any further bird action has been very subdued. Whether they are sitting on eggs already or moved on to houses further North I don't know, but hopefully in the next couple of weeks we will have plenty more martens flying around. As yet there has been no sign of the cuckoo. There was a time when it always arrived on or very close to the 14<sup>th</sup> April, but these days it could be any time within the next month or later even, as happened last year. There certainly seems to be a lot less of them visiting than there used to be, and not sure why cuckoos seem to be particularly low in numbers these days.

The spell of dry sunny weather continued a lot longer than expected, which at least meant that we could progress with weeding all of the flower beds and raised vegetable beds. It has remained cold at nights though, which has kept soil temperatures down low and so plants are growing very slowly at the moment. This is no bad thing though, as if it is too warm, too early, the new growth gets drawn up too quickly, making for soft stems which either fall over in strong winds, or are readily attacked by slugs and snails. Slower growing conditions make for much more robust material, which is definitely more resistant to damage. As often happens with no rain for several weeks, the soil has dried up, on the surface at least, which has resulted in a rock-hard crust, making it almost impossible to dig over, without having a detrimental effect on established plants. As a result, weeding had to stop and our attentions turned elsewhere in the garden. In the greenhouses things were moving on apace, with seeds germinating within days. It became almost a daily routine to prick out the young seedlings into trays or individual pots, and as they grew quickly, then potting them on into the next size pots. The main salad crops such as cucumber and

tomatoes, have already been transplanted into 2 litre pots. They will all be transplanted once more into even larger pots, after which time, they will be planted out into their final position in either the large tunnel or greenhouse, when hopefully the risk of further frosts (at least penetrating ones, will have passed us by for another year. I usually plant them straight into the ground these days, but rotate where each year to avoid a build-up of disease. I always used to grow them in either special 'ring' pots on top of the ground or in growbags, but I found that they didn't always perform that well, especially if I forgot to water them on a regular basis. Growing in the ground means that generally, watering on a daily basis is not quite so critical, especially if the weather is hot and sunny.

Once the raised beds were weeded, they were covered over with black, woven ground cover material. This lets any rain through, but prevents weed growth. This is going to be a very funny season for us, as, after some 37 years, we have decided that it is time to move on to pastures new. With our top field and garden, we have approximately 31/2 acres of land. As we get older and bits of us ache more, it is becoming increasingly more of a challenge. We will hopefully be moving in the coming months, to a new home in Somerset. It has a half-acre garden, much of which has been managed, but not necessarily to our taste! So, there is a bit of work required in the short-term, but hopefully less effort required on an annual basis. We didn't want to give up gardening just yet, as our love of fresh, home-grown vegetables, and the ability to fill several vases up with cut flowers at any time, is still strong in both of us. It also helps keep us active, which is important, as we want to spend more time on ourselves and to do other things that we have never had the opportunity for. The property we are in the process of buying, looks out onto the Quantock hills one side, and out over the coast to Wales, on the other, so landscape wise it is very similar as here.

Planting of some of the earlier crops outside has already taken place, with several rows of broad beans, mangetout peas, and sweat peas, filling up one of the larger raised beds. I managed to dig up our chrysanthemum plants last Autumn, and kept them in boxes of slightly moist compost over the Winter. These were then potted on into individual pots once they showed any sign of growth, and then watered. I have taken some new cuttings, which soon took root on the hot bench, and have since been potted into their own pots. Despite this there were plenty of other shoots on the plants, and so we took the decision to plant these outside to hopefully produce some early flowers. This isn't necessarily good

practice if you want to grow specimen plants, as they can be prone to diseases, but we thought we would give it a try. Hopefully there will be some earlier flowers for the new owners to enjoy when they arrive. Chrysanthemums can be quite hardy, and despite recent frosts over-night they have showed no sign of any damage. The growth does in fact look very robust as a result.

In the large tunnel, the earlier planted crops (sweet peas, garlic, shallots and cauliflowers) are looking really well, and we think they are benefitting from the harder growing conditions. Many of the beds are filling up with other varieties which accept a bit of cold, but not direct frost, so at night time, when a frost is likely, we cover everything over with a horticultural fleece to prevent any damage. These include courgettes, squashes, sweet corn, the first French beans as well as more peas and broad beans. We find French beans are better as an early crop in the tunnel as they are self-pollinating. We have tried runner beans under the same conditions, but the end result is that a lot of the flowers just fall to the ground. We have germinated runner beans, but they won't go outside until the risk of frost has virtually disappeared. Then if we get a cold night we simply cover them up with the fleece. If you haven't sown anything yet then don't panic. There is still plenty of time. We are spoilt here in that we have all the infra structure in place to get things moving early, and to protect them as necessary. Really cold susceptible plants are still in the warmth of the propagating greenhouse. These include the tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, as well as salad leaves.

I have been contemplating giving up keeping bees for quite some time, and with moving on the horizon, now seemed the right time. Bee-keeping has become a very expensive hobby in recent years. Not only has the cost of equipment soared, it is necessary to ensure that the health of the bees is a priority and with the cost of medicines rising exponentially, the threat of Asian Hornet just around the corner, along with other pests and diseases already a factor (varroa mite, small hive beetle, American and European foul brood etc.). I had lost two weak hives over the Winter, which wasn't a surprise. The advice is to combine weak hives together before going into Winter, but I have never had any success with doing that, as I have mentioned previously. I decided to give them the benefit of the doubt, but clearly there were just not enough bees in each colony, to keep the two hives functioning. Being in contact with other beekeepers, it was clear that the number of losses during the last Winter had been quite high. The final nail in the coffin so to speak in respect of keeping the bees, has been the difficulty

in selling any honey that was produced by them. Although we use honey as much as we can at home (such as cooking with it, mixing it with stewed fruit or porridge, as a sweetener, rather than sugar, cold remedies etc.), it no longer seems to be a commodity that every home uses any more. Either that, or with costs rising, cheaper alternatives from the supermarket are used instead. As I've said before, the alternative, cheap supermarket product is often flavoured sugar syrup often produced in China, and the product cannot be compared with 'proper' honey. But everyone's budgets are stretched these days, and things can be difficult, so inevitably costs have to be taken into consideration. So, with the decision made, work started on clearing up all of the equipment, and sterilizing everything with the intention of trying to sell everything off. Fortunately, the decision coincided with a sale of beekeeping equipment, by the local beekeeping group down in Taunton. Two carloads were driven down to the sale, and I'm pleased to say that everything was sold on the day. I still have a lot of hive equipment to sell off, but hopefully this will go in the coming weeks/months. There are seven hives that are still active, and I'm hoping that buyers can also be found for them as well. One problem is that potential purchasers have to be more than three miles away, otherwise the bees with their inbuilt homing instinct, will always head back to where they came from!

Don't forget the plant sale at Earlswood Hall on the 10<sup>th</sup> May at 10.30 – 1.30. Proceeds to help with the upkeep of the Hall. If you have any spare plants you would like to donate, or looking for something to buy, then please come along and support the Hall committee. The Hall is a jewel that needs to be kept alive.

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



## FAIRTRADE NEWS APRIL 2025



The constitutional historian Peter Hennessy described the 'good chap' theory of UK government – a shared understanding of what constitutes good behaviour in public and political life. (Some commentators have suggested that Boris Johnson killed that one off for good.) No doubt the pious beneficiaries of the vast fruits of the slave trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries held a similar idea of their own moral rectitude. As my less judgemental friends put it 'different times, different times'. In addition much of what now passes for legal in the complex shenanigans of large corporations to 'avoid' tax ('evade' crosses the legal threshold) seems to have little to do with morality or 'good chaps' or the era of 'my word is my bond'.

And so to the hugely profitable business of producing bananas and pineapples. Currently many thousands of workers, predominantly men, who worked in the plantations of Central America and Hawaii for companies such as Dole (previously Standard Fruit), Chiquita and Del Monte are trying to claim compensation for being rendered sterile by the chemical DBCP (1,2-Dibromo-3-Chloropropane), a soil fumigant to control nematodes, developed by Dow and Shell. In 1961 Dr Hine reported that 'it was moderately to highly toxic', 'repeated exposure to DBCP could affect human reproduction'. Shell's official in charge of registering chemicals with the authorities responded 'Leave out speculating about possible harmful conditions to men. This is not a treatise on safe use.' That was in 1961. It was licensed in 1964! In 1979 the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency – whose activities are currently being curtailed by you know who) cancelled the registration for DBCP for the US (as a result of claims by American workers) but exempted pineapple growers in Hawaii until 1985! Shell and Dole stopped manufacturing DBCP in 1977 but continued legal exports of stored stock. Workers were supplied with little or no protective gear. The chemical was pumped repeatedly into the ground around each tree or

plant. It was so successful killing off the pests that profits soared and companies refused to stop using it.

The inherent injustice, immorality and straightforward greed exemplified here is scarcely believable: the pursuit of profit at any cost. Workers in poorer countries, especially in the demanding business of banana production, still run many risks from chemicals administered inappropriately, and the urge to cut costs can still result in illness, poor environmental management and miserable working conditions. As ever, Fairtrade is not the total solution, but buying Fairtrade bananas enhances workers' lives and their environment.

Bon Appetit!

Marion McAdam 641316 msm316@gmail.com.

Incredibly I can still order some Palestinian products : olive oil, soap, almonds, za'atar etc

## SERVICES AT SHIRENEWTON CHURCH

Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> April	10.00	<b>Group Eucharist</b> Service at <b>ST PIERRE</b> (No Service at Shirenewton Church)
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> May	10.00	<b>Morning Praise</b> with Hymns
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> May	10.00	<b>Eucharist</b> with Hymns
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> May	10.00	<b>Eucharist</b> with Hymns
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> May	10.00	<b>Eucharist</b> with Hymns

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](http://www.severnwyema.co.uk)*

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

### **4. *The Bridge – Chepstow Bridge 1816***

Chepstow Bridge, next to Chepstow Castle, 5 miles from Shirenewton, and known locally also as the Old Wye Bridge, is not only a rare Grade 1 Listed Bridge but also one of the most beautiful Regency bridges in Britain and the world, and with a fascinating history with associations of world significance - and yet it has been largely forgotten for most of its 200 years of existence.



Chepstow Bridge (1816) also known locally as the Old Wye Bridge.

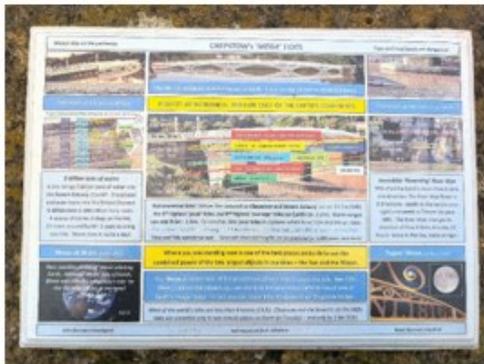
It could hardly be any more significant given the importance of iron and steel to construction across the world from 1750 onwards. The skyline of all the world's major cities today is dominated by iron, then steel, framed structures but none predates Ironbridge, now a World Heritage Site, built in 1780 and no city skyline is older than Chepstow Bridge as iron and steel for construction did not come into its own for buildings and steel framed skyscrapers until the late C19th and early C20th by which time Chepstow's iron Bridge was already 100 years old. The oldest iron bridge in London is the famous Westminster Bridge by the Houses of Parliament, built in 1865, 50 years after Chepstow Bridge.

Ironbridge is the world's oldest iron structure and Chepstow Bridge is the largest iron arch road bridge still surviving from that same period, the first 50 years of iron construction - 1780 to 1830. Chepstow's 5 arch iron Bridge is the only multi-arch iron road bridge in the world built before 1820, all the others are single arch bridges. Chepstow Bridge is unique.



Chepstow Bridge is of world significance for **five different reasons**.

**First, is the site of the bridge.** Chepstow Bridge crosses the world's highest tides. No bridge in the world crosses higher tides. There are slightly higher tides in the Bay of Fundy, Canada (up to two metres or 6 feet, higher than at Chepstow) but there are no bridges over the Bay of Fundy. There is a plaque down by the bridge which explains all about Chepstow's phenomenal tides in a world context. The River Wye changes its direction of flow 4 times a day and millions of tons of water surge past the piers every day and every night in both directions and can rise and fall by over 40 feet in 4 hours. How many bridges in the world have to cope with that – and it is still standing 200 years later!



**Second, is the date of construction.** When Chepstow Bridge was built in 1816 it was the third largest iron arch road bridge in the world behind one in London and one in Paris. It was brand new technology using iron for construction and crossing an extremely dangerous river rising and falling 20 feet to 60 feet below. No-one knew for sure that it would work. Now of course we know that

it does – all the world's major cities are dominated by buildings and bridges framed with iron and steel but in 1816 Chepstow had the third largest iron arch bridge in the world. The date of construction of 1816 is so significant because the dramatic change in bridge technology from stone and wood to iron happened almost in one decade in the last 2,000 years of bridge building and that decade was the 1810s – Chepstow Bridge bears the date 1816. It is almost the most significant date in bridge building history.



**Third, is the designers.** Two of the most prominent bridge builders in world history – John Rennie and Thomas Telford - were involved in the making of Chepstow Bridge, as was the iron master of Cyfarthfa Iron Works at Merthyr, the world's largest ironworks at the time.

**Fourth, the final designer and builder of Chepstow Bridge, John Urpeth Rastrick,** was himself a famous mechanical engineer although this was a civil engineering contract. Rastrick worked with Trevithick on some of the world's earliest steam locomotives and built the first steam locomotive to run in the USA and was the chair of the judging panel for the Rainhill Steam Engine Trials in 1829 and famously awarded first prize to Stephenson's '**Rocket**' which set the pattern for almost all the world's railways for the next 200 years. Even today 250 mph trains in France and China run on a gauge of 4 feet 8 and a half inches and they don't even use feet and inches! It all goes back to Stephenson's Rocket and the Rainhill Steam Trials of 1829 chaired by John Urpeth Rastrick who lived for 2 years at the Beaufort Hotel in Chepstow and who designed and personally supervised the building of Chepstow Bridge whilst at the same time was the Managing Director of the Bridgnorth Foundry, where Chepstow

Bridge's arches were made, and was the building of static steam engines for use all over the world including the Peruvian silver mines.

**Fifth, the legacy of Chepstow Bridge** is that of the 10 largest iron arch road bridges in the world built in the first 50 years of iron as a building construction material (as distinct from 3,000 years of swords, hinges, tools, locks, pots etc) only Chepstow Bridge survives – the other 9 have all been demolished. It is truly a world heritage bridge but as yet does not have that world recognition although it is Grade 1 Listed in the UK. Of London's many Thames bridges only Tower Bridge is Grade 1 – most of the famous ones are Grade II or Grade II\*.



Today, Chepstow Bridge is the world's largest iron arch road bridge surviving from the first 50 years of iron construction in world history.

**Why isn't Chepstow Bridge more famous?** Because at the time, Rastrick left bridge building in 1817 after building Chepstow Bridge and went back to locomotive building. Neither he nor his old company in Bridgnorth promoted their outstanding bridge at Chepstow as they fell out over it. John Urpeth Rastrick was very secretive and didn't like publicity. There are no paintings or photographs of him. His civil engineering work wasn't written up by others in the C19th (although his mechanical engineering achievements were); and his bridge at Chepstow straddles two counties and two countries so no-one promotes it. Furthermore, it is often called the '*Old Wye Bridge*' so no-one knows where it is. It should be called '*Chepstow Bridge*' (which Gloucestershire does but not Monmouthshire) which is the name on the 1814 contract and has been so for over 800 years! Ironically, Tintern Abbey, Chepstow Castle, and the Wye Valley AONB aren't really of '*world*' importance although they are of great

'national' importance but John Urpeth Rastrick's Chepstow Bridge of 1816, which is never mentioned on any tourist signs, is of 'world' significance!

John Burrows

Next month – *The Gorge* – Clifton Suspension Bridge

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## Swift Action Needed!



This month I am going to start with some swift myths. Swifts rather strange appearance and the short time they are with us each summer has led to some bizarre myths and explanations.

### Some swift myths

They were often referred to as the “Devil Bird” in folklore: this is believed to have come from their use of churches and cathedral as nesting site, their black appearance, the absence of visible legs and their call being compared to the screaming souls of the dead people departing this world to Hell. All very imaginative!

Before bird migration was studied, swifts’ annual disappearance was thought to be a result of them hiding away in hibernation, some even believed they simply disappeared into mud or pools for the winter before reemerging the following spring. Edward Jenner (1749 to 1823 inventor of vaccination) was convinced that swifts must migrate away from our shores each autumn and set out to prove it. Jenner achieved this by marking some swifts that nested near him by cutting the claws of their feet (well at least he knew they had feet!). He found that the same birds with shortened claws returned the following year to breed in a fattened and healthy condition, which made him certain (quite correctly) that his theory of migration was correct.

Prior to this many people thought they must hibernate under roof tiles as that is where they were last seen each summer, although removing tiles looking for them revealed nothing, not even their nests as we now know they make hardly any nest and leave no visible mess behind at the nesting site.

Some people still say that swifts are messy, but this is confusion with other birds like house sparrows, house martins and starlings that use crevices and walls in ours homes to breed. Swifts are tidy nesters and rather horribly

they even consuming the faecal matter from their young to keep the nest site clean leaving no splattered mess on the ground below unlike starlings for example.

In Wales, the swift was seen as a weather cock: if it is feeding high up in the air the weather is settled fair, and if low down, rain from the west is approaching. There is probably a grain of truth to some of these old tales, but not much. Swifts' screaming is also supposed to indicate a change of weather from fair to rain, but this screaming happens most nights once young are in the nests.

### **The population in the villages of Shirenewton and Mynyddbach**

Swifts are still regularly seen in the skies over our villages, which is lovely to see. However, this may not be telling the whole story. As we said previously, swifts can fly huge distances each day and happily congregate in large groups where there is an adequate food resource. If you have ever gone to a river in the evening, like in the centre of Usk in summer as the flies emerge, you may see hundreds of swifts in the air at any one time, quite a spectacle but few of these swifts will actually be nesting locally, but will have travelled large distances to find this particularly good food resources. The other thing that can mask population declines is the relatively long-lived nature of the birds and their site fidelity, so you will continue to see returning adults, even if productivity (young successful joining the breeding population) is declining. This decline is masked by the longevity of the adult birds. The first you might notice is a previously used nest site suddenly becoming quiet the following year as the resident swifts fail to return. This is becoming more common sadly for a host of reason.

Organisation like the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) have devised, through sound scientific investigation techniques ways to calculate a breeding population. This requires only counting swifts that are flying at roof top level just before dark. These swifts undertake their screaming during low flight, investigating their own and others' nest sites, while the non-breeding juveniles depart for the skies, as high as 20,000 feet to sleep on the wing. The breeding swift will roost in their nest cavity with their young overnight. By positioning yourself in a good vantage point you just count the maximum number of swifts you can see at any one time as an estimate of your village population.

Last summer the maximum number of swifts seen flying at roof top near the centre of Shirenewton was 12. By careful observation 5 nest sites were confirmed with a further one likely, which backs up a population of just 12 birds. Sadly, it appears that no breeding sites now exist in Mynyddbach, in fact the last known breeding site was used in 2019. However, Mynyddbach is still in the home range of the Shirenewton population. So non-breeding swifts can still be seen investigating possible nest sites in Mynyddbach towards the end of the summer, so there is hope. Earlswood and Newchurch were not surveyed, so if you know of active nest sites please get in contact.

By the time this article is printed we will be nearing the end of April. Generally, the first swifts will be seen in our skies from early May, so keep your eyes to the skies for the distinctive arrow shape profile of the birds in flight. Seeing the first swift of the year always brings joy to my heart. When you see the first swift in the villages, please let me know by recording the date, time and location at the email address below.



Image taken from Woodland Trust website

Next month I will tell you what you can do to help maintain and expand the population of swifts in our villages.

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



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*(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)
- Shirenewton Sultan (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)

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### **Severn Wye Ministry Area**

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

Ministry Area Leader	Zoe and Barney Pimentel	07754 306229
	<a href="mailto:severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com">severn.wye.MAL@gmail.com</a>	
Team Vicar	Fr Michael Gollop	01291 622 064
	<a href="mailto:frmichaelgollop1@gmail.com">frmichaelgollop1@gmail.com</a>	
Team Vicar	Reverend Philip Averay	01291 620980
	<a href="mailto:revphilipaveray@gmail.com">revphilipaveray@gmail.com</a>	
Associate Priest	Reverend John Waters	07836 585 250
Ministry Area Leader's Warden	Ros Downes	
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	
Ministry Area Treasurer	Kevin Higgs	

### **Church of St Thomas à Becket, Shirenewton**

Lay Eucharistic Minister	Gilly Lambert	07821 725 690
Rector's Church Warden	Sally Saysell	01291 641 369
People's Church Warden	Andrew Baker	01291 641 925
LCC Secretary	John Montague	01291 329 481
	<a href="mailto:jmontyvet@hotmail.co.uk">jmontyvet@hotmail.co.uk</a>	
LCC Treasurer	Graham Lambert	01291 641 175
LCC Members	Janet Horton	01291 641 783
	James Leney	01291 641 271
	Wendy Montague	01291 329 481
	John Burrows	01291 641 845
Organists	Karen Millar	01291 650 521
	James Leney	01291 641 271
Tower Captain	Mike Penney	01291 650 653
Saysell Centre Booking	Glynis MacDonald	01291 641 818
Safeguarding Officer	Andrew Baker	01291 641 925
Church Flowers	Maureen Moody	01291 641 524
Parish Magazine Editor	Bill Clark	01291 641 783
Parish magazine distribution	Jane Smith-Haddon	01291 641 525
200 Club	Aileen Doggett	01291 641 459

### **Ministry Area Council Representative**

Wendy Montague 01291 329 481

### **MP/Monmouth CC & Community Council Representatives**

#### **Shirenewton Community Council**

Clerk: Jan McLagan

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

#### **Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Ward**

Philip Butterworth (Chair)	01291 641704	<a href="mailto:philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk">philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk</a>
Catherine Martin (Vice Chair)	01291 329610	<a href="mailto:cathie.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk">cathie.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk</a>
Gary Mitchell	07979 913555	<a href="mailto:gary.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk">gary.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk</a>
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#### **Earlwood and Newchurch Ward**

Ian Martin 07467 176977 [ian.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk](mailto:ian.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk)

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#### **MCC for Shirenewton**

Louise Brown 07598 979719 [louisebrown@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:louisebrown@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

#### **Member of Parliament**

Catherine Ann Fookes [catherine.fookes.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:catherine.fookes.mp@parliament.uk)

#### **Member of the Senedd**

Peter Fox MS 01291 674898 [Peter.Fox@senedd.wales](mailto:Peter.Fox@senedd.wales)

## **Police and Neighbourhood Watch Contacts**

**Neighbourhood Police Officer** Matt Scree [matthew.screen@gwent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:matthew.screen@gwent.pnn.police.uk)  
**Neighbourhood CSO** Andrew Jones [An-](mailto:drew.jones@gwent.pnn.police.uk)  
[drew.jones@gwent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:drew.jones@gwent.pnn.police.uk)

## **Other Local Organisations**

**Beavers** Julie Hitchcock 01291 650548  
**Church Fete** John Burrows [shirenewtonfete@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtonfete@gmail.com)  
**Earlswood Hope** Mr Raymond Jeremiah 01291 641726  
**Earlswood & Newchurch West Memorial Hall**  
**Chairman** Becca Allen 07889762840 [chair@earlnew.com](mailto:chair@earlnew.com)  
**Treasurer** Geoff Todd 07855301806 [treasurer@earlnew.com](mailto:treasurer@earlnew.com)

## **Earlswood Valley Methodist Chapel**

Avril Smith 01291 627677  
Mrs E Remnant Brooklands, Usk Road NP16 6SA  
**Gaerllwyd Baptist Recreation Association** Beverly Lyndsay 07798 780971 [bever-](mailto:bever-lylindsay@btinternet.com)  
[lylindsay@btinternet.com](mailto:lylindsay@btinternet.com)

**Recreation Hall booking** Beryl Saysell 01291 641637 [saysellberyl@gmail.com](mailto:saysellberyl@gmail.com)  
**St Peters Church Newchurch**

Enid Heritage 01291 622708  
[enidheritage@gmail.com](mailto:enidheritage@gmail.com)

## **Shirenewton Local History Society**

Dorothy Brabon 01291 641376 [brabonnl@hotmail.com](mailto:brabonnl@hotmail.com)

**Gwent Wildlife Trust Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Meadows**  
(previously SAMFAL) 01600 740600

## **Caerwent Group Mothers Union**

Rosemary Carey 01291 425010 [crcandkili@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:crcandkili@tiscali.co.uk)  
Treasurer Bridget Evans 01291 408125 [bridget.caldicot@gmail.com](mailto:bridget.caldicot@gmail.com)

**Shirenewton Play Group** Beverly Lindsay [Shirenewtonplaygroup@gmail.com](mailto:Shirenewtonplaygroup@gmail.com)  
**Shirenewton Primary School**

Mr Nick Penn, Head Teacher 01291 641774  
[shirenewtonprimary@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:shirenewtonprimary@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

**Shirenewton Toddler Group** Sarah Parker 07971 783434

## **Shirenewton Tennis Association**

Andy Orrell [shirenewtontennis@gmail.com](mailto:shirenewtontennis@gmail.com)

**Fairtrade** Marion McAdam 01291 641316 [msm316@gmail.com](mailto:msm316@gmail.com)

## **Womens Institute (WI)**

(President) [angela.deepwier@btoopenworld.com](mailto:angela.deepwier@btoopenworld.com) Angela Gray  
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## **SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE EDITORIAL INFORMATION**

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