

Shirenewton Parish Magazine



February 2026

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A CHRISTMAS DEBRIEF

I know it feels a long time ago now, but I am still basking in the glow of the Shirenewton Christmas festivities!

We had our very first children-led Carol Service, entirely led by the many talented members of Shirenewton Primary. A few weeks beforehand I sent the Pupil Leadership Team (a group of school children on a committee who help make decisions and contribute to the school's leadership) a list of traditional Carol Service Bible readings, and a long list of traditional carols, and left the rest up to them - the running order, the carol and reading choices, the orders of service, and the choir contributions. And I couldn't have been happier with the end result - I was so impressed with their hard work, focus and skill.

The handmade mince pies as people arrived were a very thoughtful touch and greatly enjoyed. Everyone came wearing a festive accessory and we had a good sing song together as well as hearing the Christmas story. A huge thanks to everyone involved and everyone who came.

Likewise we found ourselves in the sort-of happy position of running out of Christingles at our walking nativity, such was its popularity - we will ensure we provide more this coming year!

The Advent Fayre and Carols round the tree were a wonderful occasion to both come together as a community, and raise money for important causes, ensuring we kept a proper perspective on those in need in the midst of our own celebrations.

The bell ringers rung in Christmas day for us at the midnight service, and Christmas Day morning had it's second "dog-friendly" Christmas service, much to my delight, despite unfortunately forgetting to bring gravy bones that morning but I went round and offered a pet blessing to each furry friend after the service instead. It is wonderful to welcome all family members to the celebration of the birth of Christ!

And now as February begins, we turn our focus to the life, death, and resurrection of the adult Jesus. May your journey through Lent be thoughtful, prayerful and spiritually nourishing - and to help, why not join one of our Lent groups this year?

Blessings

Revd Zoe



FEBRUARY SERVICES AT SHIRENEWTON CHURCH

Our 10.00AM Sunday morning services during February, will continue to take place in the warmth of the church room. Refreshments and fellowship follow each service and all are welcome to join us.

We plan to return to holding services in the church from Sunday 1st March, for a St David's Day service on the second Sunday in Lent.

All are welcome to join us and enjoy refreshments and fellowship after Sunday Morning Services.

Information of services at the twelve local churches that make up the SevernWye Ministry Area (MA) can be found at: www.severnwyema.co.uk and elsewhere in the magazine

FROM THE REGISTERS

The funeral service of Anthony Spencer Hughes (1969 - 2025) took place on Friday, 28 November 2025 at St Thomas a Becket Church, Shirenewton. The Reverend John Waters officiated.

The funeral service of Stewart Henry Hodges (1971 - 2025) took place on Friday, 12 December 2025 at St Thomas a Becket Church, Shirenewton. The Reverend Zoe Pimentel officiated.

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in December:

1. Jodie Johnsey-Smith
2. Amy Baker
3. Linda Dobson



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Our Sunday services for February 2026

	Service Time	1 st February	8 th February	15 th February	22 nd February
		Presentation of Christ in the temple	2nd Sunday before Lent	Sunday before Lent	1st Sunday of Lent
St Mary's Priory, Chepstow	8.00	Morning Liturgy	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
	11.00	Sung Holy Communion	Sung Holy Communion	Sung Holy Communion	Family service
St Christopher's, Chepstow	9.30	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
St Peter's, Newchurch	17.30	Holy Communion		Café church	
St Tewdric, Mathern	9.00	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion
St Peter, St Pierre	11.30	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
St Andoenus, Mounton	10.15	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
St Thomas a Becket, Shirenewton	10.00	Morning service	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
St Arvan, St Arvans	10.00	Sung Holy Communion	Sung Holy Communion	Sung Holy Communion	Sung Holy Communion
St Deiniol, Itton	11.30		Morning Prayer		Holy Communion
St James, Devauden	9.00			Family service	
	16.00	Family Communion			
St Mary's, Penterry	11.30	Holy Communion			
Holy Cross, Kilgwrwg	11.30				
Youth @ St Christophers	19.00	Young saints	Young saints	Young saints	Young saints
Saints @ St Christophers	19.00	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study

Services more suited to families and children highlighted in orange
 Holy Communion service is also known as the Eucharist. Services without Holy Communion are highlighted in green



SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Please find extracts from the minutes of the monthly meeting held 1st December 2025

Minute 5172 – 2 x Items for planning

1. DM/2025/01452 Garage Conversion to 2 Bed Dwelling House Yew Tree Cottage West Old School Hill Mynyddbach

Yew Tree Cottage sits on Old School Hill behind Pear Tree Cottage and is accessed via the agricultural holding at the top of Weyloed Lane where it meets Old School Hill. The garage/office building sits at the top of Weyloed Lane. Such is the gradient down from the road the front view is of a double garage behind which is an office on the same level and underneath the office is a second garage, though this would not appear to be accessible for vehicles. The plot sits within the village envelope (for planning purposes) which runs along the rear boundary.

The proposal is to retain the overall footprint but to add another storey. The double garage at the front becomes the living room, leading through to the kitchen. There is to be a bedroom above the living room, and another one below the kitchen (what is currently the lower garage). There is to be some minor biodiversity planting in the rear garden. The front elevation is to be natural stone, with remaining walls to be rendered, and tiles to the roofs, though materials and colours are not specified.

There were 2 previous planning consents for this garage. DC/2008/00253, the original application for the garage, was granted subject to condition 2 - notwithstanding the proposed elevations of the garage the height of the garage hereby approved is to be 4.5m high and remain as such in perpetuity unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority (so that it should be no higher than the adjoining property). DC/2015/01046, for extending the garage, was granted subject to condition 3 - the proposed extension is to be used for storage purposes ancillary to the main dwelling only and not for residential accommodation (this echoed SCC's comments at the time). Whilst it is for MCC to override these conditions should it choose to grant consent for the current application there have clearly been concerns as to the visual impact of the garage and to limit the use of the storage (now office) to ancillary to Yew Tree Cottage.

Councillors will be aware that both Weyloed Lane and Old School Hill are narrow and heavily used particularly at the beginning and end of the school day. Use of the garage as a 2-bedroom house can be expected significantly to increase traffic movements at this junction. Of further concern is the lack of provision for parking cars and there being insufficient space to turn vehicles around on site to enable entry and exit in a forward facing direction. Reversing out into the road junction is inherently unsafe.

For the assistance of Councillors planning policies H2, H3 and DES1 are annexed.

Recommendation: Objection on the grounds:

1. The application flies in the face of previous planning consents imposing conditions limiting the height of the garage to 4.5m and tying the use of the extension to storage purposes ancillary to Yew Tree Cottage.

2. The proposal does not satisfy policies H2, 3 or DES1 and in particular DES1 (l) in that it does not ensure that existing residential areas characterised by high standards of privacy and spaciousness are protected from overdevelopment and insensitive or inappropriate infilling.

3. Road safety is compromised. The site is on a very narrow lane at a busy road junction with a safe to school route without any provision for parking or turning around off road

4. The additional storey will render the rear of the building prominent in the rural landscape and prejudice neighbouring properties' privacy

5. Materials and colours for the roof tiles and rendering are not specified

6. The enlargement of the building changes the street scene from detached houses to a terrace row with the proposed additional storey standing out extraordinarily.

Policy H2 – Residential Development in Main Villages: Development boundaries have been drawn for the Main Villages [which includes Mynyddbach]. These development boundaries include sites identified for new rural housing that are listed in Allocations Policy SAH11. Elsewhere within the Village Development Boundaries planning permission will be granted for new residential development/redevelopment, or conversion to residential, or sub-division of large dwellings, subject to detailed planning considerations, including no unacceptable adverse impact on village form and character and surrounding landscape, and other policies of the LDP that seek to protect existing retail, employment and community uses.

Policy H3 – Residential Development in Minor Villages: Planning permission will be granted for minor infill of no more than 1 or 2 dwellings resulting from the filling in of a small gap between existing dwellings, or residential redevelopment, or conversion to residential or sub-division of large dwellings, subject to detailed planning considerations, including no unacceptable adverse impact on village form and character and surrounding landscape, and other policies of the LDP that seek to protect existing retail, employment and community uses. Exceptionally planning permission may be granted for up to 4 dwellings on an infill site that demonstrably fits in with village form (including not resulting in the loss of an open space that forms an important gap or open area) and is not prominent in the landscape.

DES1 – General Design Considerations : All development should be of a high quality sustainable design and respect the local character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire's built, historic and natural environment. Development proposals will be required to:

- a) ensure a safe, secure, pleasant and convenient environment that is accessible to all members of the community, supports the principles of community safety and encourages walking and cycling;
- b) contribute towards sense of place whilst ensuring that the amount of development and its intensity is compatible with existing uses;
- c) respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting and any neighbouring quality buildings;
- d) maintain reasonable levels of privacy and amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties, where applicable;
- e) respect built and natural views and panoramas where they include historical features and / or attractive or distinctive built environment or landscape;
- f) use building techniques, decoration, styles and lighting to enhance the appearance of the proposal having regard to texture, colour, pattern, durability and craftsmanship in the use of materials;
- g) incorporate and, where possible enhance existing features that are of historical, visual or nature conservation value and use the vernacular tradition where appropriate;

h) include landscape proposals for new buildings and land uses in order that they integrate into their surroundings, taking into account the appearance of the existing landscape and its intrinsic character, as defined through the LANDMAP process. Landscaping should take into account, and where appropriate retain, existing trees and hedgerows;

i) make the most efficient use of land compatible with the above criteria, including that the minimum net density of residential development should be 30 dwellings per hectare, subject to criterion l) below ;

j) achieve a climate responsive and resource efficient design. Consideration should be given to location, orientation, density, layout, built form and landscaping and to energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, including materials and technology;

k) foster inclusive design;

ensure that existing residential areas characterised by high standards of privacy and spaciousness are protected from overdevelopment and insensitive or inappropriate infilling.

Cllrs voted unanimously to object to this matter.

2. DM/2025/01431. Erection of 2 No. additional poultry units and associated infrastructure on established poultry farm at Coombe Farm, Cwm Mill, Shirenewton (revised scheme of DM/2023/01198) SCC discussed this application and resolved to object on the following grounds:

1. There is insufficient and/or lack of detail on the receivers of the wastewater and manure being transported off site.
2. The additional lorry movements will be considerable with significant impact on local roads and particularly junctions
3. Under the previous application DM/2023/01198 heat exchanger units were to be installed for both existing and proposed new poultry houses but there does not appear to be any such upgrade in the new application for the existing poultry houses.
4. Technical comment is awaited inter alia from MCC's Biodiversity Officer, NRW and Woodlands Trust and SCC reserves the right to comment further on receipt.

Cllrs voted unanimously to object to this matter

- Planters and verges – No new update Action: Clerk to chase
- Traffic events – none reported. Speed loops were actioned in the village for approx. 7 days.
Action: Cllr Brown to chase results.
- Budget – Cllrs read, discussed and approved the budget for 26/27.
- Noticeboard ordered and due to be delivered in January (Grit bin and sign chased with MCC).
Action Clerk to seek person to fit.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT NOVEMBER 2025:

County Councillor Brown advised:

Land at Mounton Road Chepstow Pre-application consultation

It is important to note that there is a preapplication planning consultation at the above site which proposes 146 houses, a hotel and a care home. The closing date for responses is the 19th of December. In the RLDP recent consultation there were 320 objections to this site, which is just next to the High Beech roundabout, this was the highest number of objections in the recent deposit plan RLDP consultation.

The illustrative masterplan fails to include land reserved for High Beech roundabout improvements which was included in the Deposit Plan RLDP consultation. Also, the planning pre-application consultation is premature because the strategic site has yet to be approved by the planning inspectorate. It mentions a previous failed planning application at the site of DC/2013/ 00571 but provides no further information.

The illustrative Masterplan will also cut down the number of lanes joining the roundabout from St

Lawrence Road due to the green island in the middle of the road before the junction. In my opinion, it is premature to have this preapplication consultation, as consultations are still ongoing in relation to High Beech roundabout improvements and the previous application DC/2013/00571 did provide a highway improvement map which the developer was expected to contribute to and refused to provide the section 106 monies, so the application was refused. This preapplication consultation does not provide any highway improvements to the High Beech roundabout and just deals with highway access to the site itself.

The problem being that it proposes to bring an outline planning application which deals with access highways matters which are then set in stone in relation to a later reserved matters planning application. It would be far better for this site to have a full planning application as opposed to an outline application so that all proposals are available. However, this should be at a much later stage when the highway proposals for High Beech roundabout have been agreed and when the planning inspectorate has decided whether or not to accept this as a strategic site as opposed to the alternative Bayfield site which is not in the green wedge between Pwllmeyric and Chepstow and on a traffic light basis scoring is a preferable site away from the roundabout itself.

If the site is then sold on with outline permission, then it may be possible that the new owner will argue on viability grounds that the 50% affordable housing is not feasible and/or cut down on the other site proposals. All of the details can be found at the following link, and the paper copies are available at Chepstow community hub/ library:

<https://www.carneysweeney.co.uk/consultations/land-at-mounton-road-chepstow.html>

Governance and Audit Committee 30 October 2025

The Committee covered the council's audited accounts and the Audit Wales- National Fraud initiative 2024/25. There was also a discussion with Social Services on a Call-in request on the My Mates internal audit which had given an unfavourable opinion. It was agreed to have a further internal audit following a presentation by officers. The meeting can be watched at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6414>

Place Scrutiny Committee 6 November 2025

The Committee considered Placemaking plans for Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor with Undy. Chepstow is further along with its Placemaking plans. The Committee also considered a Bridges Petition for Monmouth asking the Council to provide Bridges Centre with a Sustainable Long-term lease. Details of the reports can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=303&MId=6170>

Democratic Service Committee 13th November 2025

The Committee considered a report on a Welsh government consultation to extend the duty to broadcast meetings, which Monmouthshire County Council already does in relation to the majority of its meetings. In addition, the draft annual remuneration report 2026/27 was considered which deals with the allowances of Councillors. The reports can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=6127>

Cabinet 19th November 2025

The Cabinet reports noted the feedback from the Place Scrutiny on the destination management plan and the Performance and Overview Scrutiny on the financial side. The Cabinet covered reports for the medium-term financial plan update and the revenue budget update. The Cabinet were asked to note the updated projected revenue budget shortfall of £11.5 million for 2026/27 and a cumulative shortfall of £37.4 million over the medium period to 2029/30.

A summary of the details of the revenue budget update can be found at the beginning of that report under recommendations. School balances are expected to close the financial year at a deficit of £7,061,000, with 18 out of 35 schools expected to have a deficit balance. The full reports can be found at the following link including reports on ALN, Monmouthshire Car Parking review and Monmouthshire Destination management plan (meaning Tourism):

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MId=6108>

Governance and Audit Committee 27th November 2025

The Committee covered the Audit Wales report for Monmouthshire on arrangements for commissioning services and made recommendations to establish consistent commissioning arrangements and embed arrangements across the council. The Whole Authority annual complaints report and the Ombudsman annual letter were also reported on at this meeting, and the reports can be found at the following link: <https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6118>

Special Performance and Overview Committee 3rd December 2025

The Committee will consider reports on the economy, employment and skills strategy and the planning annual performance. Appendix A for the annual planning performance report provides the indicators for Monmouthshire looking at matters such as planning applications being determined in particular time periods. It provides figures on the percentages of member made decisions against officer advice. In Monmouthshire in 2024/5 this was 1 out of 20 or 5% compared to the latest Wales average in 2018/9 to 9%. This suggests that the Planning Committee are less likely to make decisions against officer advice than for the average in Wales as a whole. Unfortunately, the figures for Wales as a whole were last collected in 2018/9, so that is the only comparison currently available.

The planning report at the end provides a blue page which shows that there were 319 completions in 2024/5 with 22% affordable. On enforcement in 2024/5 there were 352 enforcement complaints, 4 planning contraventions, 7 enforcement notices, 1 breach of condition notices, 1 stop notices and 2 section 125 notices. The reports can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=305&MId=6644>

County Council on the 4th December 2025

The County Council will consider the annual report of the Standards Committee, the Gwent Regional Partnership Board Annual Report, the Annual Safeguarding Annual Report, Annual Directors Social Care Safeguarding and Health report and the appointment of the Chief Executive as an Executive Director of CCR Energy Ltd (with no remuneration). There are 2 motions one on the Marie Curie's UK wide campaign to ensure residents living with a terminal illness receive appropriate Council Tax relief and another on Storm Claudia including a motion suggesting the need for a plan to invest more in flood resilient measures. There were a number of questions asked by individual councillors. The reports can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=6085>

Police report – No report received due to a change in SPCO in the area. Action Clerk to contact PC Steve Hayward.

Meetings attended Cllr Butterworth and C Cllr Brown attended a meeting at The Huntsman with Cllr Sara Burch and MCC Cabinet Member, Cllr Burch has issued a statement which will be on the SCC website, and Facebook page.

AOB and ward reports –

Cllr I Martin – No issues to report

Cllr G Todd – Absent

Cllr Butterworth: Cllrs were sad to hear of the recent passing of Andy Williamson, who had been a keen Cllr previously for SCC before retiring from ill health.

There will be a tree planting ceremony of Japanese Sakura Cherry trees on Monday 8th December

Cllr G Mitchel – No issues to report

Cllr C Martin - No issues to report.

Cllr S Todd – Absent

C Cllr Brown – Confirmed that the Cabinet Member, Cllr Catrin Maby agreed that MCC be turning off the recently lit Ditch Hill lights in due course.

To agree the date of the next meeting

Councillors agreed the date of the next meeting on **Monday 5th January 2026 at 7.00pm** by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall or remotely via Google meet.

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

Mobile: 07410 580961

EDITING THE SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE

Sadly, I will be giving up editing the parish magazine after the July/August edition. I gave notice to the LCC last September that the decision by Microsoft to cease all support for Publisher (even to the extent of no longer allowing access to historic files) has informed this decision. I looked at the recommended replacement software, tried to make it work for me, and failed miserably. Microsoft, of course, recommend using Word and PowerPoint, but that is too time-consuming as a solution (I did this for another magazine some years ago which ran to about a quarter of the pages that we have).

The LCC is looking for a volunteer to take on or share the editorship, so please let me know if you are interested. Using the current software it takes me about three to four days maximum a month to edit and shape the magazine into pdf format so it is ready for the printer. There is about another half day a month involved in chasing advertisers for their annual payments. But you also get to communicate with interesting contributors, speak to the advertisers, and meet a whole new range of people in the villages of Shirenewton, Mynyddbach, Earlswood, Newchurch and beyond.

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SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Please find extracts from the minutes of the monthly meeting held 5th January 2026 7pm
Shirenewton Recreation Hall**

2 x Items for planning

a). Pre-Order Consultation – Public Path Order – Path17 Shirenewton - Wayside House
Wayside House sits at the bottom of Weyload Lane where it meets the Usk road. The proposal to revise the route of Footpath 17 has been triggered by the owner of the adjoining field having procured planning permission for a 10m drive in to enable vehicles and trailers to pull off the Usk road and turn.

Path 17 originally passed through the garden of Wayside House and into the adjoining field. That had not been shown on the online map and the owners of the house were not aware even though they had been there for 28 years. At some point in the past, the path's access from the road had been moved and steps installed. This change was not recorded on the footpath map.

This diversion is the only practical solution as owner of the field is insisting the footpath across the lower part of his field is returned to its original route through the garden of Wayside House.

Recommendation: No objection.

Cllrs Voted to unanimously for no Objection. Action Clerk to notify

b). Modified or removal of condition, DM/2025/01111 Oxpool Barn, Lower Argoed, Shirenewton

This application is for the modification and removal of conditions for planning decision M08655:

- 4 - Part of internal walls have been opened up - remove condition.
- 6 - Drawing 1649(10)C is to be replaced with dwg no 2437/202a - remove condition/ vary to include new drawings.
- 7 - Drawing 1649(11)D is to be replaced with dwg no 2437/203a, and we confirm that the ridge tiles will be dark grey to match the slate roof - remove condition
- 8 - Drawing 1649(11)D is to be replaced with dwg no 2437/203a, and we propose rainwater goods to be simple, half round black gutters with downpipes, which is a simple style that would be appropriate to a barn - amend/delete condition.
- 9 - Roof lights to be Velux Heritage Conservation roof windows - amend/delete condition.

This is a traditional Monmouthshire barn, probably centuries old, substantially of local stone with a corrugated iron roof with brick extensions added decades ago when remedial work was carried out.

Residential conversion was applied for in the 1990s but refused even on appeal, a further application initially in 2003 resulted in consent in 2005 subject to conditions which essentially tied the conversion works to the submitted drawings. SCC commented that the works should not increase the footprint. Revised drawings were approved in 2009, under consent M08655.

At that stage the conversion proposed 2 bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, lounge, and utility.

The current application seeks to provide, having removed the internal walls, a lounge, dining room, kitchen with utility, a downstairs bedroom (as before) and 2 ensuite bedrooms upstairs. The footprint is slightly increased to accommodate the utility room. The lean to brick extension roofs become pitched, with the southern elevation extension roof raised to just below the main barn roof to allow for the upstairs bedroom.

Condition 4 - required LPA approval for the removal of any part of any wall of the existing building. The application appears to say the removal of sections of internal walls has already taken place.

Condition 6 - Drawing 1649(10)C is to be replaced with dwg no 2437/202a - remove condition/ vary to include new drawings, thereby revising the layout.

Condition 7 - Drawing 1649(11)D is to be replaced with dwg no 2437/203a, and the applicant states that the ridge tiles will be dark grey to match the slate roof - remove condition. The condition was imposed as terracotta ridge tiles had been proposed.

Condition 8 - Drawing 1649(11)D is to be replaced with dwg no 2437/203a, and we propose rainwater goods to be simple, half round black gutters with downpipes, [in lieu of aluminium painted black] which is a simple style that would be appropriate to a barn - amend/delete condition.

Condition 9 - requires LPA approval of the roof lights but no particular type or manufacturer is stipulated.

Recommendation: SCC objects to the removal per se of any of the conditions set out in M08655 and requests that:

Condition 4 stands until MCC is satisfied that the removal of the internal sections of wall does not affect the structural integrity of the building.

Condition 6 be varied to substitute Drawing 1649(10)C with dwg no 2437/202a.

Condition 7 be varied to substitute Drawing 1649(11)D with dwg no 2437/203a but otherwise should stand as written since grey ridge tiles are stipulated.

Condition 8 be varied to stipulate the rainwater goods be black.

Condition 9 requires LPA approval of the roof lights, but no particular type or manufacturer is stipulated. The condition should stand as written

In Addition

MCC is further requested to take note that:

Work on the barn conversion is believed to have started only in July last year, beyond the 5 year period permitted by M08655, when the application site was stripped of undergrowth and the barn roof removed, which would have displaced flora and fauna including many protected species of wild life, particularly bats, great crested newts and dormice in the breeding season. It has been reported to SCC that there were in the immediate vicinity an abundance of bats, great crested newts and dormice prior to the work.

Given the lapse of time since the original consent, SCC would expect to see a retrospective planning application seeking to validate the work so far carried out so that all aspects of the conversion could be considered.

Furthermore, SCC is disappointed that the site works had commenced prior to the December report which was limited to a 'Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' and to species including bats with a

'Preliminary Roost Assessment' and 'Daytime Bat Walkover' survey, and that the survey was carried out in winter in daytime when there would be the least wild life and vegetation activity. A full appraisal should be conditioned, were MCC minded to approve the application, along with extensive remediation to compensate for the extensive loss of flora and fauna, its destruction having taken place in the midst of the breeding season, in contravention of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

SCC would be grateful to receive a copy of MCC's biodiversity and ecological comments and reserves the right to submit additional comments in the light of these.

Cllrs voted unanimously to object to this matter. Action Clerk to notify.

Other items:

Memorial clock repair – No new update. Action To monitor.

Traffic events – 2 accidents reported on the Usk road, during the inclement weather, it was noted speed and weather were factors. Recent speed loops' information showed the average recorded speed in the village was between 21 and 25mph. Cllrs discussed traffic calming options for the village, noting the difficult geography of the roads and lack of pavements. Action: Cllrs to arrange a subcommittee meeting to discuss traffic calming.

Muck Heap - Cllr L Brown reported a response from Environmental Health and confirmed it is currently being investigated. Action Environmental Health.

Noticeboard for Mynyddbach ordered and delivery due soon. Action: Clerk to seek person to fit. Discussed the Community Fund for street signs and other road signs needing replacement in the ward. Also discussed the benches in the play area. Action: Cllrs to make a list of signs and What3words locations. Clerk to submit list once completed

County Councillor Brown advised there was no report for January due to the Christmas break.

Police report

† Crime Category	# of Crimes	%
Total	5	100%
Criminal Damage & Arson	3	60%
Residential Burglary	1	20%
Violence Without Injury	1	20%

The chart above provides a breakdown of crime categories, highlighting the types of incidents that occurred in Shirenewton during the month of December.

Shirenewton recorded three incidents of criminal damage and arson during the reporting period, making this the most prevalent crime type in the area. Although they fall under the same category, none of the incidents are believed to be linked. Officers have completed their investigations into two of the cases, which are now closed, while the third remains under active investigation with ongoing enquiries to identify those responsible.

The next most common incident types were residential burglary and violence without injury. The residential burglary occurred shortly before the Christmas period, a time when properties can be more vulnerable due to increased travel and seasonal activity. The victim is currently working closely with officers as the investigation progresses. In addition to the investigative work, officers have provided practical support by issuing Smart Water property-marking kits and offering tailored home-security and crime-prevention advice to help the victim feel safer and reduce the risk of further incidents.

Information

Gwent Police are launching a new system called Neighbourhood Matters, a two-way community messaging and engagement service designed to keep you informed and connected.

This platform gives you instant access to local policing updates, including:

- Local incidents and investigations
- Crime prevention advice
- upcoming community events
- Local policing priorities

Whether you want to stay informed or get involved, Neighbourhood Matters puts your community at your fingertips. To learn more or sign up, visit www.GwentNeighbourhoodMatters.co.uk

Meetings attended - Multi Agency meeting – The police inspector reported there would be a new SPCO for the area in February. During the meeting it was also conveyed that recent speed recordings (in various areas) showed an average of 30 mph recorded in 20mph zones. An option of altering white lines to create an impression of narrower roads, (recently utilised in Llansoy to encourage slower speeds) was put forward for consideration. Go Safe are visiting the area on average once a month. The offer of speed gun training still stands.

AOB and ward reports:

Cllr I Martin – Reported potholes in the area. Cllrs discussed reporting items on My Mon App
Cllr G Todd – Reported 2 traffic events noted above. Suggested several signs in the Earlswood needing refurbishment/replacement under the Community Fund.
Cllr Butterworth - ANPR Camera has now been installed in the village.
Cllr G Mitchel – No issues to report.
Cllr C Martin - Absent
Cllr S Todd – No issues to report.
C Cllr Brown – Reported the owner of Tan House Pub has been found guilty of non-compliance with the Section 215 Notice and fined a total of £25,350.00 accordingly (to be paid within 28 days).

To agree the date of the next meeting

Councillors agreed the date of the next meeting on **Monday 2nd February 2026 at 7.00pm** by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall or remotely via Google meet.

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

Mobile: 07410 580961

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

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

**Holy Communion in
the Welsh language**

Cymraeg



O ddydd Sadwrn Gorffennaf 12fed ac yn fisol bob ail ddydd
Sadwrn am 9.30 y bore, ymunwch â ni ar gyfer Cymun Bendigaid
yn yr iaith Gymraeg yn eglwys y Santes Fair Cas-gwent.

**9:30am on the second
Saturday of the month
at St.Mary's Chepstow**
Starting on 12th July

First language Welsh and
Welsh learners, all welcome!
Service sheets will be
bi-lingual. Excellent
opportunity for learners to
practice listening, reading
and speaking skills!

For more info please contact
Zoepimentel@cinw.org.uk



Vacancy on Shirenewton Community Council

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

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

What is a Councillor?

Councillors are elected to represent an individual geographical unit on the council, known as a ward or parish. They are generally elected by the public every five years. Between the elections if a Councillor seat becomes available it can be filled by the Council Co-opting the applicant onto the Council. 1 seat for Co-option is 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**

THE HUNTSMAN

Shirenewton Community Council has received the following statement from Councillor Sara Burch, Monmouthshire County Council Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing and Tourism.

"The Huntsman remains a thriving local pub, which offers Bed and Breakfast rooms. Currently the bed and breakfast accommodation availability is utilised by MCC to meet the need for temporary accommodation for a small number of homeless residents. The Huntsman continues to provide warm and caring accommodation for people who need it, for which we are very grateful.

Anyone can become homeless, and all the people housed by MCC have a connection with Monmouthshire. All people who have lived at the Huntsman in the last few years have experienced a housing crisis and include individuals from Shirenewton, people who are working, ex-service people and currently, people flooded out of other accommodation. Across Monmouthshire, MCC typically provides around 250 newly homeless households each year with temporary accommodation and housing support, together with help to secure a permanent home locally.

While we are developing more permanent affordable homes in Monmouthshire, it is important that MCC continues to have a range of temporary accommodation across the County in towns and rural areas, suitable for families and for single people whom we have a legal duty to house. Over the last three years we have built, bought and leased more self-contained and shared accommodation, but we still need additional capacity. We've made big strides over the last few years but there is more work to do.

Many of the people we house have support needs, as do some people in every community. MCC Housing Options and Housing Support teams work closely with health services, police and other agencies to support these residents and address risky or anti-social behaviour. We carry out a risk assessment before placing people, but we can't always prevent adults from making choices which impact on their neighbours.

Anyone who is concerned about suspected or actual criminality or anti-social behaviour should always contact Gwent Police at the time via 999 or 101. Gwent Police and MCC work closely together to quickly address any issues which are affecting our communities. "



The Severn Wye
Ministry Area

Join us this Ash Wednesday

All are welcome to begin their journey through Lent
with our quiet, reflective services of Ashing



Wednesday, 18th February:

St.Arvan's Church, 10am

St.Mary's Priory, 10am

St.Christopher's Bulwark, 7pm



Upcoming series...

Sundays 7:00–8:30pm

At St.Christopher's, Bulwark

15th Feb–22nd Mar: Join us to explore the
name of God, YHWH (in Hebrew, left:), and
the ancient Shema prayer:

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God,
the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your strength."*



Plus!
coming
soon...

24/7 prayer
room
27th & 28th
March



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

SATURDAY MARCH 21st 2026
St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow, 7.30pm

**“GLORIOUS MUSIC FROM VENICE TO
VIENNA!”**

A. VIVALDI -- “GLORIA”
T. ALBINONI - -Oboe Concerto Op 9 no 2
F. SCHUBERT --- MASS in G
W.A. MOZART --- Motets

CCS ORCHESTRA
(Leader – Paula Kempton)

MAISIE RAE O’SHEA (Soprano)
MOLLY BEERE (Mezzo-Soprano)
LAURIE STANDISH HAYES (Tenor)
MATTHEW WELCH (Bass)

ANGELA WILLIAMS -- Oboe

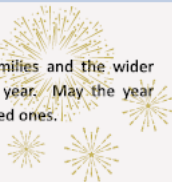
GRAHAM BULL -- Musical Director
Tickets £15.00, u/18s and students free, from Choir
members, Chepstow Bookshop, www.eventbrite.co.uk

Value of the Month

Determination



As we step into 2026, we want to say thank you to our families and the wider community for your incredible support throughout the past year. May the year ahead bring happiness, health, and success to you and your loved ones.



Value of the Month - Determination

Determination is the ability to keep going, even when things get tough. It means setting goals and working to achieve them, no matter the obstacles. At school, determination helps us learn new skills, overcome challenges, and grow as individuals. When we show determination, we don't give up easily, we try again, learn from mistakes, and celebrate progress.

Encouraging determination in our pupils means helping them believe in themselves and understand that effort leads to improvement. Whether it's mastering a tricky maths problem, finishing a creative project, or learning a new sport, determination is what turns challenges into achievements.

Reception - Week beginning 05.01.26

We welcomed the children back with a cold and frosty change in weather. The children were excited to share their experiences over the 2 week holiday. We started the week with a winter walk around the grounds to begin our theme 'Winter'. The children came up with lots of questions and they enjoyed looking for signs of winter.

In literacy the children have continued to practice sounds, blending and we are beginning to write simple words and phrases, we have been retelling experiences and events by using knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent.

In maths we have been showing what we know including number recognition, formation, counting an amount, 1 more and 1 less. We have also been distinguishing between day and night.



Newsletter



Year 1 - Week beginning 05.01.26

What a brilliant first week back we've had in Year 1! We've begun our new topic all about Winter and the children have thrown themselves into their learning with so much curiosity and enthusiasm.

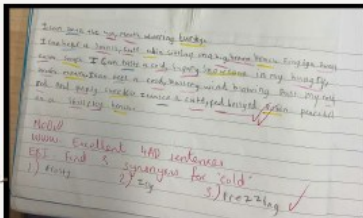
We started the week by exploring the frosty school grounds, making careful observations of the icy patterns and chilly changes we could see. This led to some fantastic questions about what we want to find out during our Winter topic.

In literacy, we have started our new book One Snowy Night. The children enjoyed making predictions about what they thought might happen in the story and used a wonderful range of adjectives to describe the different characters. Their ideas have been imaginative and thoughtful.

Year 2 - Week beginning 12.01.26

A wonderful week, full of really purposeful learning in Year 2 this week. We have continued our theme learning (Seasonal Science: What happens in Winter?) by discussing and exploring the risks associated with the winter months. The children have been so mature when identifying ways they could be responsible for their own safety at this time of year. I'm excited to see them apply this knowledge when making a digital poster next week.

Our literacy learning has seen us exploring lots of our senses and using them in descriptive writing. We have been using our synonyms and all of our exciting adjectives to develop ideas that will lead into our winter poems next week. I have been so impressed with the independent writing which has been happening this week.



SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1090167

Our society had a busy festive period, we visited St Mary the Virgin in Caldicot, historically the second house of Llantony Abbey known as Llantony Secunda, a beautiful church, well worth a visit. We had our Christmas supper at the Castle Inn, good food and good company.

On the 27th December saw the society meet at 7.30am in Llanfair Discoed in readiness to climb Grey Hill to see the sun rise at 8.10am, on the Winter Solstice. It was a good year, we saw a beautiful sunrise with a good number of members present. Members of all ages climbed Grey Hill from 4 years to 70 years, a really good turnout. We returned to the Church Room for hot coffee/tea and bacon baps, the climb certainly blew the cobwebs away after the festive excess.

Book of the Month: Excavations of the Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, hot off the press!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday, 11th February

Archive Meeting at 2.00pm at the Church Room

Wednesday, 25th February

Society's Annual Dinner at the Tredegar Arms 7.00pm for 7.30pm.

Why not come and check out our range of local history books, documents, tithe and census records and much more. Our Archive Meetings are open to everyone not only members. Check out the dates above.

Photographs of the walk up Grey Hill on the front cover and opposite page:

Front cover—the sun rising in the cleft of the hills to the east and over the standing stones

Opposite—the happy group on the summit; and breakfast in the Church Room afterwards.



SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dates for Meeting 2026

Date	Time		Title	Speaker
Wednesday, 11 th February	2.00pm/4.00pm	Archive	////////////////	////////////////
Wednesday, 25 th February		Annual Dinner	Tredegar Arms	Keith Tayton
Wednesday, 11 th March	2.00pm/4.00pm	Archive	////////////////	////////////////
Tuesday, 31 st March	2.00pm/4.00pm	Monthly Meeting	Alfred Russell Wallace	Prof David Collard
Wednesday, 15 th April	2.00pm/4.00pm	Archive	////////////////	////////////////
Tuesday, 28 th April	7.30pm/9.30pm	Monthly Meeting	Relics & Relic Cults in Medieval Wales	Prof Maddy Gray
Wednesday, 13 th May	2.00pm/4.00pm	Archive	////////////////	////////////////
Tuesday, 26 th May	11.00am 2.00pm	Visit	St Michaels, Llanfangel-tor-y- Mynydd St Tysoi's, Llansoy	Sue Hughes
Wednesday, 10 th June	2.00pm/4.00pm	Archive	////////////////	////////////////
Tuesday, 30 th June		Visit	Transporter Bridge	
Wednesday, 15 th July	2.00pm/4.00pm	Archive	////////////////	////////////////
Tuesday, 28 th July	7.30pm/9.30pm	Monthly Meeting	Festivals of Britain	Prof Ronald Hutton





homecare

Eileen O' Dwyer

Private Carer/Home help

07795 689791



A sale of quality pre-loved 'stuff' on Saturday 7th March at 2pm at Shirenewton Recreation Hall

In support of

READY STEADY GO
Activity Club Supporting Young Children with Autism

Clothes, Kids Clothes, Books, CDs, Toys, Games, 'Odds & Sods', etc.

No entry fee for buyers/visitors. Tea & Coffee available to purchase

Tables are £5. Limited availability. Contact Joanne by WhatsApp on 07715 764182 or email: joanneswc@hotmail.com for more information & to reserve a table.

Note: all proceeds to Ready Steady Go. Table allocation priority will be given to those who are donating their takings or at least a good percentage of their takings to the charity.

www.shirenewtonchurch.com

Welcome to 2026. I'm sure it's going to be an interesting year from a technical perspective and, perhaps, the year when AI starts to bed into normal life.

I have to say that, despite my initial cynicism, the 'AI Overview' at the top of the Google search results is moderately useful. In some cases, it's simply repeating the first hit, but in others it does provide a useful summary. Maybe 2026 is the year that AI just becomes part of normal life.

Remember you can add '-ai' to your search to remove the AI summary and AI results. The '-' is a negative keyword operator which can be used to refine search results. Google itself helpfully offers several examples, one being: You want to look up information on the animal jaguar, but search results are dominated by the car brand. A search query 'jaguar -car' should remove the clutter.

I suspect that Deloitte Australia wishes that they had known this when they were forced to refund the Australian government AUD 440K (~£222K) when a University of Sydney academic spotted numerous fake citations, phantom footnotes, and even a made-up quote from a Federal Court judgment in a report they had produced for Australia's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) – as reported by The Register. This is a classic example of AI 'hallucinations' which we have previously discussed.

In fact, again as reported by The Register, there a new name of such AI generated rubbish: workslop. A term coined by Stanford's Social Media Lab and behavioural research business BetterUp Labs which suggests that 40 percent of US workers are reporting such AI-generated workslop. With a recent study by the UK government finding no clear productivity improvement from introducing Microsoft 365 Copilot in the Department for Business and Trade, and research by MIT reporting that about 95 percent of organizations see no measurable return on investment from generative AI efforts, the jury is out.

Moving onto more basic stuff

Over the Christmas period a villager approached me over a Windows 11 PC which would no longer boot. It transpires that the 2nd hand PC was extremely slow so he decided to start deleting stuff in an attempt to speed it up. He deleted so much that he eventually deleted something important and it would no longer boot. I was able to fix it, but it wasn't straight forward.

Having established that there was no data on the PC that he wished to keep, downloading and reinstalling windows using the Microsoft Media Creation Tool kept producing a failed install. After reading several forums on the subject, I eventually worked out that I was trying to reinstall Windows into the existing Windows partition when I should have deleted the existing Windows partition and reinstalled in a fresh partition.

So let us briefly discuss what makes a PC faster. The answer is mainly RAM (Random Access Memory). RAM is short-term storage. Its capacity, in summary, determines how many programs/files/browser tabs you can have open at one time. The problem is that if the PC only has 4MB RAM (which this one did) there are major performance issue as Windows itself uses a minimum of 3GB RAM leaving only 1GB RAM for programs. This means the PC has extremely limited fast storage and has to store and retrieve stuff from a relatively slow hard disk. For example, my laptop has 16GB RAM.

If you had expected me to answer CPU (i.e. processor speed) then let me explain. While CPU is indeed important, you can have the fastest CPU in the world and, if there is only 1GB or workable RAM this will be the bottleneck. Other factors include a separate graphics card and so on.

The hard disk is purely storage capacity i.e. how many documents, photos and videos, etc. you can store. While there is a significant performance gain from using an SSD (Solid State Disk – using flash memory similar to RAM) compared with older technology HDD (Hard Disk Drive which uses spinning magnetic disks), this is not going to overcome the lack of RAM. So, deleting stuff to speed up the PC ain't going to work.

It is possible to upgrade some PCs and laptops and there are online tools, Crucial (<https://uk.crucial.com/upgrades>) is a good place to start, many components on the cheaper low specification laptops are 'hard baked' into the mother board and it is not possible to upgrade them.

Executive summary: for PC performance go big on RAM.

Finally, just before Christmas, The Telegraph reported that Amazon had blocked more than 1,800 North Koreans from infiltrating the tech giant as part of a large-scale scam. These job applications for remote working technical employees were very sophisticated and had included fake AI-created LinkedIn profiles and used live face-masking software to hide their identities during video interviews.

Scams are only going to get more sophisticated in 2026 – be on your guard.

Safe browsing

David Cornwell

Webmaster

www.shirenewtonchurch.com

THE BELLS, THE BELLS

As is now tradition we brought the ropes down into the nave over the Christmas period so that any assembled congregation could witness the art of full-circle change ringing. We rang for midnight mass on Christmas Eve and for Christmas morning. There was also ringing for the children's service. For New Year we rang either side of midnight, with before having the bells half-muffled to mourn the passing of the year.

The New Year heralded the first of our tours - the "Winter Tour". Visiting other churches to ring the bells is a common activity for ringers and the majority of towers welcome visitors. This year we decided to travel a bit further than usual and visit towers predominantly in West Berkshire starting near the river Thames at Purley, just west of Reading. The tower of the Grade II* church is positioned at the west end of the building and contains a fine ring of 6 bells. The 15 ringers in our party formed into various combinations of 6 (one ringer per bell) until our allotted time had expired. We then moved up river to the busy small town of Pangbourne, another Grade II* church housing another fine and slightly heavier 6 bells. Having rung these we travelled the very short distance over the toll bridge crossing The Thames (60p each way for a car and passengers) to yet another Grade II* church and another fine ring of 6, albeit in a rather drafty ringing room. Having rung these and worked up an appetite and thirst we headed to our pre-arranged lunch stop at the aptly named pub: The Bell at Aldworth.



The assembled band of ringers taken at Hampstead Norreys

Keeping up the listed building theme, The Bell is a Grade II listed pub with the only Grade II listed interior in the whole of Berkshire, making the interior of The Carpenters Arms look positively modern. It has been in the ownership of the same family since the 18th century (who are obviously not too keen on modern furnishings or fittings, preferring the original well-made and robust items), and what's more it has also retained its outside gent's loo – magic!

A very good selection of beers was on offer; however, the food menu was essentially hot filled rolls albeit with a vast variety of interesting fillings. Having dined we headed to the nearby Grade I listed church housing just 3 bells. This is a particularly interesting church famous for its "Giants" (effigies of the De La Beche family) which fill almost half of the floor space. The poet, Laurence Binyon ("They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old..."), moved nearby on his retirement in 1933. After his death in 1943, his ashes were scattered in the churchyard where there is a slate memorial plaque to him. The parents of Emily Tennyson, Lady Tennyson née Sellwood, the wife of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, are also buried there. In 2025 Marian Faithfull was also buried in the churchyard.



Some of the "Giants " pictured at Aldworth

Ringling on 3 bells to change ringling is rather limited as there are just 6 different permutations. However, it is possible to jazz this up a bit by ringling the front work to a very well-known multi-bell method named after a 17th century ringer – Fabian Stedman. He noted that there are 2 ways of ringling the permutations on just 3 bells which rather confusingly are known as quick or slow sixes (even though they have the same number of changes and take the same amount of time to ring). By another name the quick six would be called Plain Hunt on 3 and the slow six would be Reverse Plain Hunt on 3. By combining alternate quick and slow sixes the front work of Stedman is formed.

Quick Six	Slow Six
123	123
213	132
231	312
321	321
312	231
<u>132</u>	<u>213</u>
123	123

If you wish to see the whole method on 3 showing all 36 changes (Stedman Singles) then try searching:
<https://fortran.orpheusweb.co.uk/Bells/Diagrams/StedmS.pdf>

After Aldworth we headed to another Grade I church at Hampstead Norreys. The tower housed the heaviest ring of 6 for the day, with the heaviest bell (tenor weight 11 cwt) about twice the weight of the Shirenewton tenor . Thence onto the final ring of the day at the beautiful Grade I church at Stanford Dingley. This church held the oldest bell of the day, the third bell dated 1448 and cast in the reign of Henry VI. With just 4 bells the maximum permutations are only 24 taking less than a minute to ring. However, we were able to ring some unusual methods (for us) including Double Bob and Double Canterbury Place. Some enthusiastic parishioners had come to meet us and ply us with tea, coffee and biscuits – which was most welcome. Returning back to South Wales post-tour celebrations were held at Lower Lodge, Earlswood, courtesy of Chris and Melissa Jones. Overall a great day out.

M.D.Penney.

January 2026

Nothing is more of a
Dr Rachel Cross
lonely for her own all her
(DipABRSM, CELTA, LMusTCL,
MISM, BA (Hons), MA, PhD, FHEA)

both itself and friend. And
love. **English tuition from**
secondary school level
husband by all.
to postgraduate
and
music theory, piano and strings
tuition

And it must follow as the
night the day. Thou canst
07906 195098
rachelcross.co.uk
rachelecross6@gmail.com
not then be taken for any man.

LIFE SAVING DEFIBRILLATOR



DEFIBRILLATOR LOCATIONS

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

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

Gardening Corner

Happy New Year to you all. Hopefully you had a wonderful time over the festive season. You won't need me to tell you that continuous rain has all but stopped any gardening activity outdoors for the last month or more. Normally we would have our heads down doing all the weeding, pruning and preparing the ground for the coming seasons plantings. Apart from a couple of days when we had it really cold and dry, we have all but given up outside. On the days I was able, it was a case of secateurs out, and give the roses a good, hard prune. I managed to get two thirds of them pruned without getting onto the actual flower beds. The rest will have to wait until dryer weather hopefully arrives. So long as they are pruned by the end of February, they will be fine. The wet weather has also delayed the hedge cutting. The majority were cut in November, and would normally be finished before December is out. Again, there is still time but I prefer to have hedges cut before any new growth for the year starts. With wildlife legislation in place, you really do need to have the job done before the birds start nesting. The legislation is really aimed at farmers and the use of mechanical tractor mounted flails, and correct timing and practice is encouraged by the various farm stewardship schemes (although Wales has only recently introduced it's updated scheme). I've noticed that various papers etc. have carried articles about gardeners potentially falling foul of the same legislation by warning about cutting hedges at the wrong time. One thing the UK has always been good at is 'gold plating' legislation, especially that introduced by the EU when we were members. In the last ten or more years of my Forestry career, one of my key roles was to red through the base legislation and then introduce guidance for staff, contractors and managers to ensure that we kept work going, but in compliance with the legislation. I always tried to be pragmatic, and I cannot honestly believe that the EU had gardeners in mind when they drafted the European Protected Species legislation. This thought reminds me of when the EU wanted to introduce a ban on all two stroke engines. That was until they were made aware that their proposals would mean all tree felling, grass cutting, hedge cutting, etc would all be stopped overnight! At the time, the technology was not around for hand held, battery operated, machines. They had a rethink, and it was just boat owners who felt the effects, as all two stroke boat engines were banned and all new engines had to become four-stroke. You can't make four stroke hedge cutters, chainsaws, or strimmers, as they need to work at all angles, including upside down (although that's not always advisable!). If I want to trim hedges when bird's may have started nesting, or may still have young from a second brood, I always steadily walk along a hedge, inspecting it closely to try to ensure that there are no active nests. The use of handheld tools or machinery is not intrusive when trimming hedges, and any birds will soon return to their nests once you have passed. On the same lines I do try not to get wound up when I see some activities being carried out which are meant to be compliant with the various legislation. Anyone travelling from Monmouth to Ross on Wye will know about the long delays there have been due to a landslide that happened what seems



like years ago! The Local Authority and Highways Agency used the excuse that the required works couldn't be carried out last summer because Dormice were present on site. Instead, they chose to carry it out this winter. Which seems to be completely ludicrous to me. In the summer Dormice are at their most active. By starting in the middle, or one end and working in one direction, any self-respecting Dormouse will simply move away to quieter ground. By carrying the work out in the winter, all Dormice will usually be in a state of torpor (hibernation), and in no state to move anywhere. I wonder which operation proved the most damaging to Dormice numbers?

Back to gardening! The garlic, shallots and pickling onions that I planted in pots well before Christmas, have now all shot out and appear to be growing well. Correct watering is essential, as too much

will simply mean the plants rot off. I also planted some broad beans in pots just before Christmas. It was a bit late really for an early crop, but all seeds have germinated well, without any heat other than that generated by the greenhouse. All of the above will be the first plants to be planted out, once the worst of the winter has passed. They are all pretty hardy and will withstand all but the hardest frost. I never did get around to sowing any early sweet peas, but this will be my next job. Again, I don't intend to use any artificial heat. It is noticeable that the sun is already getting higher, and the sun, assuming we ever see it again, soon heats the greenhouses. My next job is to get some early potatoes into pots, which will be covered with horticultural fleece when a cold night is due. Once they are shooting out well, they will be transferred into a tunnel to provide a really early crop, often the beginning of May if the weather is warm. At the same time, I will sow some greens such as calabrese, and might also get the first salad crops like tomatoes and peppers sown as well, but these will be placed in a small electric propagator, for extra warmth and protection. Hopefully, by the time the next Newsletter is due, the rain will have stopped, the sun will have come out and we gardeners will be feeling a little more positive! We have our first daffodil showing colour, and this will definitely be in colour well before St David's day, which was always the usual day our first "daffy" came into bloom. For now, we will try and visit some of the very good snowdrop gardens that we have around us, in an effort to 'get in the gardening mood'.

As usual, happy gardening until next time, Steve and Felicity Hunt.

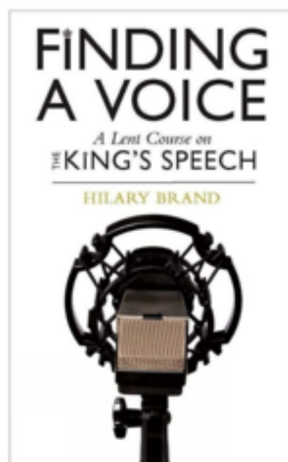
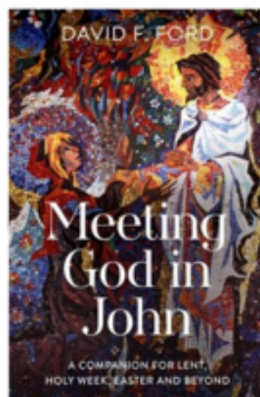
Severn Wye Ministry Area

Lent Courses

“Meeting God in John”

Monday Evenings
23rd Feb until 23rd March

7pm @ St Christopher's
Church



“Finding a Voice”

Every Tuesday
24th Feb until 24th
March
2:45pm

Contact Carol for meeting
location each week: 07380 992494

SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE - 2026

**Welcome to a New Year of the Parish Magazine
and thank you for taking the Parish Magazine over the past 12 months.**

Your subscription is vital to continue a Parish Magazine for the village and its local community information - as is the volunteer time and effort of our local distributors for each of the roads in the area as without them we couldn't get the magazine to you.

Subscriptions for the 2026 magazine are now due. There are 10 issues of the Parish Magazine each year – there is no issue in January or August. We hope that you will find the magazine useful and interesting.

The subscription for 2026 is £15.00 which covers the 10 issues for 2026.

The cost of production for 10 copies is nearer £19 a year so if you want to give more please do so as it will help us balance the books and secure the long-term viability of this valued village resource - but £15 is still very welcome!

We would encourage you to pay promptly as this helps all the volunteers involved in distributing the magazine and collecting the subscriptions.

Payment by Bank Transfer is the most convenient method of payment for us if you can, but we can take cheques or cash to be returned in the envelopes provided if you don't use Bank Transfer. Thank you for your continued support of the parish magazine.

Your principal contact for any matters relating to receiving or paying for your magazine is **your local distributor**. Their name and address is on the subscription envelope enclosed with the Magazine in February. Other contacts, if needed are:

Enquiries regarding magazine delivery can be made to:

Jane Smith- Haddon 01291 641 525 Mobile / Text 07816 233 554

Email: dolly.shirenewton@gmail.com

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John Burrows 01291 641 845 Mobile / Text 07795 246 654

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For Bank Transfer payments, the Account is an HSBC Business Account.

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If that doesn't work, or you are paying this subscription by BACS for the first time you will need to enter a **Reference**. Your reference should be **Your initials and surname** and the word **Magazine** all as **one word** eg. EGMJonesMagazine

Shirenewton Fete will be on Saturday 13 June 2026

Linen in ancient Egypt (and Tutankhamun's pants)



We were all intrigued to learn more when Angela (Shirenewton W. I's President) announced the title of this talk and we were not disappointed. Angela had prepared a fascinating and beautifully illustrated presentation which highlighted the importance of linen in the ancient Egyptian kingdoms.

Flax was grown on the fertile banks of the Nile. The flax was harvested, soaked in water then dried in the sun. After the drying process the flax stems were beaten to produce fibres. These were then spun and woven to produce linen. Linen is a fabric that can quickly absorb and then release moisture and so, as we know today, is ideal for hot climates. In Ancient Egypt linen was used for clothing, bedding and soft furnishing, as well as for wrapping the dead. Linen was seen as a 'gift from the Nile' and was one of the most expensive items of daily life. Its production, distribution and consumption were highly regulated.

In the Old Kingdom of Egypt, the men wore kilt like skirts and women wore sheath dresses made from a tube of linen. By the time of the New Kingdom, clothing had become more elaborate and the linen could be pleated as the illustration at the top shows. The finest linen was the preserve of the wealthy and powerful.



Linen was used to make the 146 loincloths that were found in Tutankhamun's tomb along with some 5,000 other items.

Clothing has long been a way of making a statement and no outfit is complete without the shoes. These beautifully

decorated leather sandals, also found in Tutankhamun's tomb, held their own message. The sandals have the images of Tutankhamun's enemies on their soles. So, wherever the Pharaoh walked, he was treading on his enemies and subduing them.

Some fashion is timeless. Princess Nefertabet's leopard skin dress would not look out of place on a night out now in Cardiff. Her outfit denoted that she was a priestess.





And then of course, to complete 'the look', there is the hair styling. Below is Princess Kawit at her version of the hairdressers, having her hair dressed while enjoying a drink. Some things don't change that much.



We are extremely grateful to Angela for all the work she puts into her talks for us at the W.I. Her enthusiasm and knowledge of Ancient Egypt is so impressive. All the illustrations above are courtesy of Angela and taken from her presentation.

Not to be outdone here is Mo modelling her Egyptian headwear. We don't take ourselves too seriously at the W.I.

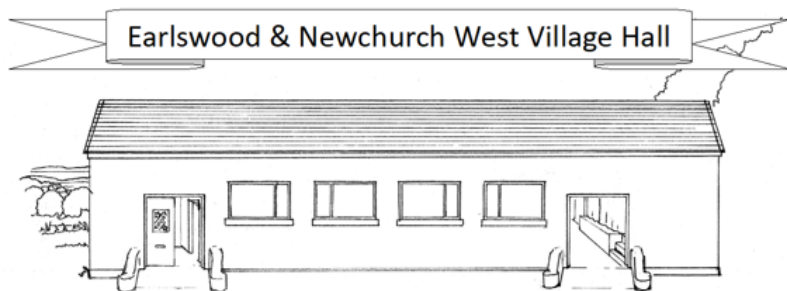


Our next meeting is at Shirenewton Recreation Hall on **Thursday 12th February at 7.15p.m.** when our speaker will be **Jackie Strong, The Older People's Champion for Wales**. All are welcome to join us. Please come along or contact Angela Gray at angela.deepweir@bopenworld.com or Jane Butterworth at janeb247@gmail.com (641704)

Jackie Broughton



WI CHRISTMAS MEAL IN THE TREDEGAR ARMS



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Saturday 14th March

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

Sorry, there is no Sunday service on route 63

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FEBRUARY

Monday 2 nd 7.00 p.m.	Shirenewton Community Council meeting Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Wednesday 11 th 2.00 p.m.	Shirenewton History Society Archive meeting Shirenewton Church Room
Thursday 12 th 7.15 p.m.	WI—The Older People's Champion for Wales Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Sunday 15 th 7.00—8.30 p.m.	Explaining the Name of God St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Wednesday 18 th 10.00 a.m.	Ash Wednesday Reflective Service of Ashing St Arvans Church, St Arvans
Wednesday 18 th 10.00 a.m.	Ash Wednesday Reflective Service of Ashing St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow
Wednesday 18 th 7.00 p.m.	Ash Wednesday Reflective Service of Ashing St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Sunday 22 nd 7.00—8.30 p.m.	Explaining the Name of God St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Wednesday 25 th 2.00 p.m.	Shirenewton History Society Archive meeting Shirenewton Church Room

MARCH

Sunday 1 st 7.00—8.30 p.m.	Explaining the Name of God St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Saturday 7 th 2.00 p.m.	Ready Steady Go—sale of pre-loved stuff Recreation Hall
Sunday 8 th 7.00—8.30 p.m.	Explaining the Name of God St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Wednesday 11 th 2.00 p.m.	Shirenewton History Society Archive meeting Shirenewton Church Room
Saturday 14 th	Sea Shanties Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall
Sunday 15 th 7.00—8.30 p.m.	Explaining the Name of God St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Saturday 21 st 7.30 p.m.	Chepstow Choral Society Concert St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow
Sunday 22 nd 7.00—8.30 p.m.	Explaining the Name of God St Christopher's Church, Bulwark
Tuesday 31 st 2.00 p.m.	SLHS Alfred Russell Wallace by Prof David Collard Shirenewton Church Room

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FAIRTRADE NEWS JANUARY 2026

How much do you really know about coffee?

More than a billion people drink coffee every day. It's one of the most traded commodities globally. 125 million workers are dependant on the industry. The market is extremely volatile for many reasons: weather (increasingly unpredictable and extreme because of climate change) disease (again much more of a threat because of climate change), and speculators exploiting the instability of the price of the product on stock markets. Massive fortunes can be made. But as ever the workers growing and producing the coffee see little of these huge profits. And much of the more lucrative processing is done elsewhere by powerful multi-national corporations.



There are approximately 870,000 farmers involved in Fairtrade production. A very significant number. As usual this means that there is a set minimum price (of course the price can go up, just not down below the minimum price) and the farmers receive a small extra premium which they can choose to use eg for community development, and they receive advice for improving the quality of their soil and their trees and for coping with climate change.

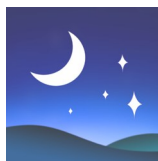
Ironically coffee trees were historically shade grown in the forest, with no need for fertilisers but during the great Green Revolution (!) of the 70s and 80s the US Agency for International Development gave \$80 million to plantations in Latin America for a general shift to industrialised agriculture. The yields went up initially as the forests were cleared, with the help of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Of the 50 countries with the highest rates of deforestation from 1990-1995, 37 were coffee producers. But now shade grown coffee is growing in popularity as producers see the benefits and consumers understand the value of organic coffee.

Coffee shops are now ubiquitous. But I would urge you to consider the provenance of the coffee they sell and the ethics of their business practices : Starbucks are fighting hard (and in my view dirty!) against unionisation, Café Nero (and others) seem to pay little or no tax here, through opaque off-shore arrangements. Generally B Corp status is a good indicator of sound ethical principles but I was discombobulated to read that Nespresso is a B corp – and I've spent 30+ years agitating about Nestle's aggressive marketing of baby formula in poorer countries (+ criticisms of child labour and price fixing) but I read that they 'have high standards in specific areas' – oh well it's a start I suppose!!!

Many companies have their own environmental credentials, electing not to be subject to the rigours of acquiring the Fairtrade mark. In my mind sticking a picture of a frog or a tree on a product might not actually mean much. The Fairtrade mark is a guarantee of good practice. Do look out for it!

Marion McAdam 641316 msm316@gmail.com

STARGAZING



The constellation of Orion the Hunter lies directly to the South in the evening. Four bright stars represent his shoulders and legs whilst a further three form his belt. The reddish star at the top left is called Betelgeuse and is one of the larger stars that can be seen. It is a red super-giant star and is destined to blow up as a supernova. If it were to explode today, it would become as bright as the Moon. The bright white star at lower right is called Rigel and is a blue super-giant. This is an extremely powerful star but at great distance, and is at least 60,000 times more luminous than the Sun.

Most bright stars have Arabic names. Very old star names originated among people who lived in the Arabian Peninsula more than a thousand years ago. Some are later Arabic translations of ancient Greek names. Betelgeuse is an Arabic name meaning the "hand of Orion" whilst Rigel translates as the "Foot of the Central One".

In the evening, the bright planet Jupiter lies above and to the left of Orion. The Moon is close to Jupiter on 26th February.

NASA has some beautiful images relating to astronomy on the internet at apod.nasa.gov/apod/.

December in Shirenewton

That's December of last year. No, I'm not planning already for next December. That would be ridiculous.

Thank you to everyone who came along to the Advent Fair in the Church Room. So many people came that we ran out of mincemeat, marmalade and lemon curd. (Note to self) But we were able to send

£794:45 to Medicins sans Frontiers which was an amazing result.

Then Carols around the Village Christmas Tree. Thank you to the Chepstow Town Band for accompanying and encouraging our enthusiastic lusty singing. We raised **£319:45** for St Davids Hospice and Ty Hafan. (More carol sheets needed for next year)

And finally, where would we be without 'Walking to Bethlehem' on Christmas Eve? Well, we'd be walking from the church to my garage to see Mary and Joseph, the Baby Jesus and two very well behaved donkeys. Thank you to Avis for bringing along Apple and Blackberry. And thanks to your generosity we were able to send **£97:66** to The Children's Society. And we apologise for not having enough Christingles. (Order more oranges for next year)

Planning already? No! Not me.

Glynis and Jane

25 places of world significance within 25 miles of Shirenewton

11. *The Severn Tunnel*



Statue of Thomas Walker at Black Rock looking at the line of the Severn Tunnel

3.7 miles due South of Shirenewton Church is the Welsh entrance to the Severn Tunnel, and 6.5 miles South East from Shirenewton is the portal for the English side of the 4.35 miles (7 km) undersea railway tunnel between England and Wales. The mid-point of the tunnel is 4.9 miles South East of Shirenewton. So what? Well, this tunnel within 4 to 7 miles of Shirenewton remained the world's longest undersea tunnel for 100 years from 1886 to 1988

The railway tunnel was designed as the most direct route to South Wales and work started in 1872 and completed in 1887 but in the following 100 years no-one attempted a rail or road undersea tunnel in excess of the length of the Severn Tunnel. Most of the undersea tunnels constructed in that 100 year period were half, or less than half, of the length of the Severn Tunnel.

There are even parts of the Severn Tunnel water management arrangements even closer to Shirenewton near Earlswood as the Tunnel famously had to contend with the Great Spring – a fresh water spring leaking huge amounts of fresh water into the tunnel and this water came from the hills around Shirenewton. Ironically the world's longest undersea tunnel didn't flood from the sea water above it (except in 1883 when there was a very high tide) but from fresh water from the Shirenewton area, hence the need for the large pumping station at Sudbrook. There were benefits from all this surplus spring water for the industries of South East Wales including the paper mills at Sudbrook, steel works at Llanwern, and the brewery at Magor.

Sir John Hawkshaw designed the Severn Tunnel and Thomas Walker was the Chief Engineer on site to supervise the construction of the tunnel. Thomas Walker wrote a book in 1888 about the construction of the Severn Tunnel (1872-1887) which is still available as a reprint. In the preface to his book Walker mentions the jobs he had worked on before the Severn Tunnel and this is a fascinating list of a C19th engineers' work.

Walker had worked on railway surveys for Parliament at the height of railway mania in the UK in 1845, and then for the North Staffordshire Railway in 1847; then the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada; railways for the Canadian provinces; then surveys for railway work in Russia, Egypt, and Sudan; then back to England to work on the construction of the Metropolitan line across central London and extension of the East London Railway from the Thames Tunnel; then work on Barry Dock, Preston Dock; and finally constructing the Government Docks at Buenos Aires, in South America; and back in England to start construction of the Manchester Ship Canal.

It seems incredible that no rail or road tunnel matched the 7 km (4.35 miles) Severn Rail Tunnel for 100 years. Undersea tunnels were built: in 1881-86 and 1925-34 under the Mersey; in 1920-27 under the Hudson River to Manhattan, New York City; two in Japan in the 1930s; but nothing greater than half the length of the Severn Tunnel. In the 1960s San Francisco Bay had a 5.8 km undersea tunnel but it was not until Japan's Seikan Tunnel of 1971-88 that the Severn Tunnel record was broken and that was by a staggering 53.8 km rail tunnel 7 times the length of the Severn Tunnel and then by the Channel Tunnel (1988-94) which at 50.4 km is also 7 times longer than the Severn Tunnel. The Channel Tunnel has a longer undersea stretch than the Seikan Tunnel. Those two tunnels remain the only mega undersea tunnels but there are now 11 tunnels longer than the Severn Tunnel (mostly 8km to 15km long) with Norway leading the way in the C21st for the construction of new undersea tunnels.

Thomas Walker's Severn Tunnel was not only a world record holder for 102 years but is still in daily use and vital for South Wales. Thomas Walker settled in this area during the tunnel construction years and his fine house next to David Broome's Event Centre near Caldicot is 3 miles from Shirenewton and is still visible from the Crick to Caldicot Road. Thomas Walker is buried 2 miles from Shirenewton in Caerwent Churchyard.

John Burrows Next month: 12. *The Telegraph, Marconi, and the Titanic*



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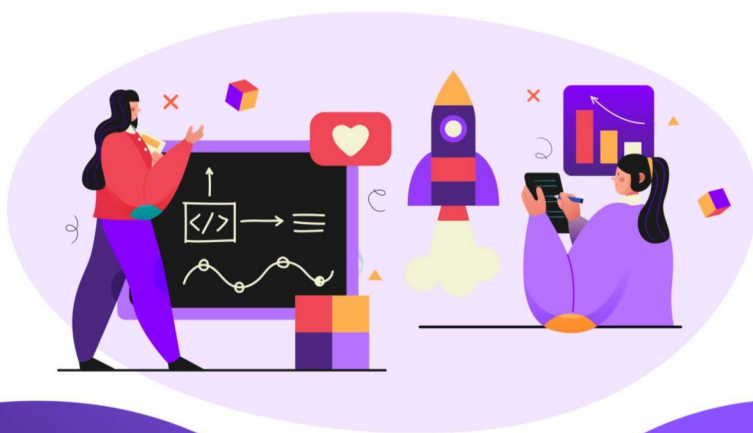
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Ministry Area Leader's Warden	Ros Downes	
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Ministry Area Lay Co-Chair	Hilary Hillier	
Ministry Area Treasurer	Kevin Higgs	

Church of St Thomas à Becket, Shirenewton

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Church Warden	Aileen Doggett	01291 641 459
Church Warden	Andrew Baker	01291 641 925
LCC Secretary	John Montague	01291 329 481 jmontyvet@hotmail.co.uk
LCC Treasurer	Graham Lambert	01291 641 175
LCC Members	Janet Horton	01291 641 783
	James Leney	01291 641 271
	Wendy Montague	01291 329 481
	Sally Saysell	01291 641 369
	John Burrows	01291 641 845
	Jane Smith-Haddon	01291 641525
Organists	Karen Millar	01291 650 521
	James Leney	01291 641 271
Tower Captain	Mike Penney	01291 650 653
Saysell Centre Booking	Will Smith-Haddon	07977 281 147 churchroombooking27@gmail.com
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 (as at October 2025)

Shirenewton Community Council

Clerk: Jan McLagan

shirenewtoncc@gmail.com

Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Ward

Philip Butterworth (Chair)	01291 641704	philip.b@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
Catherine Martin (Vice Chair)	01291 329610	cathie.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
Gary Mitchell	07979 913555	gary.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
Sophie Todd	07766 524709	sophie.t@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
Vacancy		

Earlswood and Newchurch Ward

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Geoff Todd	07855 301806	geoff.t@shirenewtoncc.org.uk

MCC for Shirenewton

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Catherine Ann Fookes	catherine.fookes.mp@parliament.uk
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Member of the Senedd

Peter Fox MS	Peter.Fox@senedd.wales
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Other Local Organisations

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Church Fete	John Burrows	shirenewtonfete@gmail.com
Earlswood Hope	Mr Raymond Jeremiah	01291 641726
Earlswood & Newchurch West Memorial Hall		
Chairman	Becca Allen	07889762840 chair@earlnew.com
Treasurer	Geoff Todd	07855301806 treasurer@earlnew.com

Earlswood Valley Methodist Chapel

The Reverend Gordon Gresswell 07570992890

Gaerllwyd Baptist Recreation Association Mrs E Remnant Brooklands, Usk Road NP16 6SA
Beverly Lyndsay 07798 780971

Recreation Hall booking beverlylyndsay@btinternet.com
St Peters Church Newchurch Beryl Saysell 01291 641637 saysellberyl@gmail.com

Enid Heritage 01291 622708
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Shirenewton Toddler Group Sarah Parker 07971 783434

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SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE EDITORIAL INFORMATION

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Monthly copies are available at the Church.

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**To order your regular copy, contact Jane Smith-Haddon
01291 641525/07816 233554 dolly.shirenewton@gmail.com**

The editor reserves the right to print free content and free advertisements in black and white and at a size to fit the pagination of the magazine.

Editorial policy is to print what you provide, space and technology permitting. The views expressed are those of the contributor.

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Monday 23rd February for the March issue

Monday 23rd March for the April issue

Monday 27th April for the May issue

Monday 25th May for the June issue

Monday 22nd June for the July/August issue

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