

Shirenewton Parish Magazine



June 2026

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SERVICES AT SHIRENEWTON CHURCH IN JUNE

Sunday 7 th June	10.00	Morning Praise with Hymns Followed by Congregation MA Feedback Meeting at Coffee
Sunday 14 th June	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns and Baptism Service
Sunday 21 st June	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns
Sunday 28 th June	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns

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

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

EDITING THE SHIRENEWTON PARISH MAGAZINE

NO ONE HAS COME FORWARD YET! THIS IS URGENT FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS MAGAZINE AS AN IMPORTANT VILLAGE COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

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.

Bill Clark parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com

SUMMER FETE GRAND PRIZE DRAW

Raffle tickets are still available for the grand prize draw to be held at the Summer Fete on 13 June. Very many thanks to the many people who have already bought tickets, we are very grateful for your support.

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

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 around the village.

Thanks,
Aileen.

07814 451943, 01291 641459, aileendoggett@btinternet.com

Prizes:

£100.00 in Cash.

£100.00 Voucher for The Tredegar Arms.

Luxury Spirit Hamper.

Meal Voucher for Two People at The Huntsman Hotel.

Meal Voucher for Two People at The Carpenter's Arms.

£50.00 Voucher for Tonic Beauty Salon, Chepstow.

Meal Voucher (£50.00) for The Two Rivers, Chepstow.

Cut & Blow Dry at Headrush, Caldicot.

Beautiful Bentley Teddy Bear.

Pet Portrait by a Local Artist.

Hand Carved Wooden Bowl.

Coffee and Cake Voucher (£15.00) for Castell Coffi, Caldicot.

Neil Powell Butcher: Voucher for £20.00.

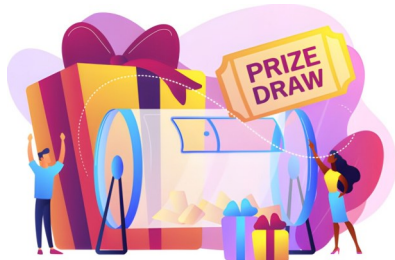
Four Ball Golf Voucher for St Pierre Golf and Country Club.

Deacon's Florist Voucher: £20.00.

Fete Celebration Cake.

Bottle of Rare Scottish Malt Whisky.

Selection of seeds from Chepstow Garden Centre.



SUMMER FETE GRAND PRIZE DRAW

Raffle tickets are available for the grand prize draw to be held at the Summer Fete on 13 June. **Don't miss out** on the opportunity to win one of our wonderful prizes, which include:

£100.00 in cash, generous meal vouchers for The Tredegar Arms, The Huntsman Hotel and The Carpenter's Arms, a luxury spirit hamper, a teddy bear, a golf voucher, a butcher's voucher, a cut and blow-dry at local salon, a pet portrait by a local artist, coffee and welsh cakes at Castell Coffi, plus other great prizes.

Please support this important part of our annual fundraising to help maintain our beautiful church and churchyard. 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 around the village.

Thanks,

Aileen.

07814 451943, 01291 641459, aileendoggett@btinternet.com

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in May:

1. Barbara Walters
2. Michael Baker
3. Luke Halliday

Shirenewton Fete will be on

Saturday 13th June 2026
1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

PENTECOST: THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH

Some birthdays are easy to remember. Others need a bit more explaining. Pentecost is one of those Christian festivals that can pass people by, but it is one of the most important days in the Church year. It is often called the birthday of the Church.

Pentecost comes fifty days after Easter (this year it was the 24th of May). Before that first Christian Pentecost, it was already an important Jewish festival. People had travelled to Jerusalem from many different places to give thanks to God. The city was busy, noisy, and full of visitors. And it was there, among ordinary people in an ordinary city, that something extraordinary happened.

The disciples had been followers of Jesus. They had seen his death on Good Friday and had met him again after he had risen from the dead on Easter Day. But he had now ascended to heaven, and they were still waiting. Jesus had promised that God would send them the Holy Spirit — his presence, help, and power with them.

Then, at Pentecost, everything changed. Acts describes the Holy Spirit coming like wind and fire and resting on each disciple. Wind speaks of breath and life. Fire speaks of warmth, light, and the presence of God. That is a remarkable thought. After the resurrection of Jesus, God's first choice of dwelling place was not a building, however beautiful or holy. God's first choice of dwelling place was people.

Of course, church buildings matter deeply. They are places of prayer, memory, beauty, worship, and welcome. Many people, whether they would call themselves religious or not, sense something sacred in them. Years, and sometimes centuries, of prayer seem to become woven into the stones.

But Pentecost reminds us that the Church is not only the building. At its heart, the Church is a people filled with the Spirit of God. The New Testament even describes Christians as a temple: a living place where God's Spirit dwells.

That is both comforting and challenging. It means God is not distant. God draws close, not only in sacred places, but in ordinary lives. It also means our lives matter. How we speak, welcome, forgive, serve, and love can become signs of God's presence in the world.

So perhaps Pentecost invites us to explore a simple question: what does it mean for us to be God's dwelling place today? And this is what we try to explore each Sunday at 10am at church - you are welcome to come and join us in that exploration.

Blessings

Rev Zoe



The editor would like to congratulate all the pupils from Shirenewton Primary School who entered the poster competition for the Village Fete, and their teachers. Harry from year 6 was the winner, and his poster appears on the front cover. The runner up was Amber, also year 6, and her poster appears above.



SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Please find extracts from the minutes of the monthly meeting held 11th May 2026 7.25 pm Shirenewton Recreation Hall & also Shirenewton CC AGM on the 11th May at 7 pm

AGM

Chairs report 2026

I would like to thank Jan, our Clerk, for all the work she has done and for the assistance and guidance she has given me over the past 12 months.

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

At the beginning of the Council year the Community Council had 3 Councillor seats which had been vacant for some time. We were therefore pleased to co-opt Cllr Geoff Todd in May 2025 and Cllr Sophie Todd in October 2025 to the Community Council.

In December 2025 we were sorry to hear the passing of Andy Williamson. Andy had worked tirelessly as a Councillor for the Community Council before having to resign due to ill health.

During this Council period the following activities were carried out: -

1. Speeding - Surveys were carried out by MCC using traffic loops at 6 locations on the B4235 either side of the Gaerllwyd junction and at 3 locations in the village of Shirenewton. The results of the surveys showed that there was a significant number of vehicles exceeding the speed limits, 60mph on the B4235 and 20mph in the village. Unfortunately, since the survey there have been several serious accidents on the B4235 by the Gaerllwyd junction and also near Mynyddbach. Whilst there hasn't been an accident in the village, with no pavements to keep pedestrians safe the Community Council is due to have a meeting with MCC to discuss traffic calming measures.

2. Noticeboard - The old wooden noticeboard by the junction of Old School Hill and The Laurels in Mynyddbach could no longer be repaired and has been replaced with a new metal noticeboard using the same design as the others in Shirenewton, Earlswood and at Gaerllwyd junction.

3. Street lights - After several years of not working the streetlights on Ditch Hill Lane were repaired by MCC when they were upgraded to LED bulbs. Following requests from local residents the Community Council were happy to support the application for the these street lights to be turned off.

4. Church clock - Following the lack of sufficient community support following a survey of residents by the Community Council to repair the clock, a group consisting of the bell ringers and other members of the community took on the role of raising funds to repair the clock. They were successful in raising sufficient funds which are being administered by Community Council. The quote from The Cumbria Clock Company was accepted by Community Council and the work order placed with them. The clock was removed from the church tower in the autumn and taken to their workshop for detailed analysis and repair. In April 2026 the clock was re-installed in the church tower and is now waiting for the work to replace the final set of hands and calibration of the mechanism.

5. Over the period of this Community Council, we received 20 planning applications for consideration. The ultimate decision on a planning application is made by Monmouthshire County Council however, we can make a recommendation after taking into account our local knowledge, the information presented to us in the application and the views of local residents presented at our meetings. The Community Council recommended approval for 5 applications, Monmouthshire County Council have approved 10 applications with 10 applications still pending consideration.

Cllr C Martin resigned her seat and Cllrs thanked her for all her contributions to the community over the past years and wished her well.

Monthly Meeting

3 Planning matters were discussed:

DM/2024/00131 Clearview Shirenewton – Reserved matters - drainage
MCC has replied to SCC's query as to the state of the reserved matters in relation to drainage, that this application is a very long way from being resolved. At present no detailed drainage details have been submitted to the planning application, so they can not be uploaded to the public folder . The layout needs to be completely amended in line with the Surface Water Drainage requirements (SAB) and also the parameters of the out-line application.

DM/2025/00153 – Replacement Dwelling, Whitebrook Farm, Bully Hole Road, Earlswood, NP16 6SA

Councillors will recall considering the original application in March last year, and further consideration at this February's meeting. We objected pending further details of finishes and in particular a design statement justifying the new build. Whitebrook Farm, it will be recalled, sits in the

upper reaches of the Mounton valley in some 0.4 acres. The immediate surroundings are mainly small traditional fields enclosed by hedgerows with occasional scattered dwellings and farm buildings. The farmhouse is a traditional smallholding with 2 bedrooms upstairs. The structure of the house continues to the left with a large store with a pitched roof slightly higher than the main roof as it stands on rising ground. Beyond the store is a further, single storey store and carport, roofed with corrugated metal sheet.

The report for February's meeting follows below.

The applicant has submitted a design statement and ecology plan. In a nutshell the design statement gives the following reasons for the new build :

Pre-application accepted the character of the house was affected by the external finishes and shallow pitch lean to to such a degree that [the house] is no longer important to the visual and intrinsic character of the landscape

The north facing wall of the outbuilding is leaning and there is cracking clearly visible in the west gable wall.

The existing house has uninsulated stone walls

Access to the 3rd bedroom is through the 2nd

The bedroom windows are small and do not comply with emergency opening sizing

The bedrooms have low ceilings

New build is less expensive than repair and extending.

Existing hedges and other vegetation will be retained and a planting scheme established.

By way of comment, it may assist Councillors to mention that no structural report has been submitted to demonstrate the full condition of the existing farmhouse nor the cost of repair and extending. Whilst the footprint of the new build is no larger than existing (assuming you omit the new garage from the calculation), the internal volume is greater and the roof line higher by 2m, thus making the new build far more prominent in the landscape.

MCC has asked if SCC wish to attend the planning committee meeting.

Recommendation: SCC objects to this application because:

It does not satisfy Policy H5's requirements for a new build as the existing house is of traditional character and important in the open landscape in which it is set, and the new build is larger in volume and an additional 2m in height and would thus be considerably more prominent in the landscape.

There is a lack of detail on the external wall paint and colours, and The Design Statement lacks any structural report on the viability of the existing house and a comparative costing of its renovation and repair against the proposed new build.

We question the need for a two storey garage which if considered together with the proposed new house amounts to entire sight redevelopment.

SCC regrets, with apologies, that it is unable to provide a representative at committee.

Extract from February's meeting

The proposal is to replace the structures with a modern 2 storey house with 4 bedrooms, 2 with dressing rooms and en suite facilities, and a lounge, study, kitchen/diner and utility room. The roof will be natural slate to east and west elevations and dark grey standing seam metal roof to north and south. Dark grey ply or grp flat roof to dining room, plant room and utility. Walls will be natural stone with mineral paint finish, smooth painted render to kitchen, with horizontal timber cladding natural finish larch boards.

A 2 storey garage is also proposed for 2 cars and a large garden store reusing the old barn doors, with a home office/studio upstairs. The garage will have natural slate roof, with roof lights, and smooth painted render walls.

The Bat report reveals the large store is a breeding home to lesser horseshoe bats and possibly some long eared bats. To mitigate for the loss of the existing maternity roost, it recommends like-for like replacement roost (as close as possible, or better), the new roost must be available and used by bats in the summer season before original removed, the new roost must be constructed of concrete block or brick with a slate roof and bitumen felt roof liner ideally having a roof void with an apex height more than 2.8m and a length and width of 5 m or more, minimal or no removal of vegetation, and subdued or no lighting near the roost.

MCC SUDS have objected that the application has not demonstrated a means of surface water discharge (rainwater harvesting, infiltration, watercourse, surface water sewer or combined sewer). However, as there is a watercourse within the site boundary, their view is the worst case scenario for surface water drainage will be discharge to a watercourse. Councillors objected pending clarification on foul and surface water treatment, external paint and finish colours, bat mitigation and the lack of a Design statement justifying the development, adding they will wish to make further comment when these details are provided.

The following comments have now been made :

Surface water drainage will be captured initially in rain butts. The overflows will be channelled to a new water detention and drainage basin with any excess going to the existing watercourse (presumably Mounton Brook).

NRW states that the site lies within 3km of the Wye Valley Lesser Horseshoe bats SSSI and Mwyngloddfa Mynydd-bach SSSI, part of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC. Given the proximity to these sites and that the proposals have implications for lesser horseshoe bats, a notified feature of the SAC, NRW advise that a European protected species (EPS) Licence is required. The applicants had already proposed a separate building dedicated as a bat roost and this is now to be relocated under the flight path, closer to the trees to the North. It will be 6m long x 4m wide internally with a ridge height to apex of at least 2.8m and have

an earth floor. The external walls will be clad with horizontal timber boarding. The roof will be natural slate on Type 1F bitumen underfelt. A letterbox roost entrance, baffled internally to reduce light ingress into the roost and heat loss from the roost and fitted with a cowl to prevent predators and bird entry.

There is still no indication of external wall and opening colours or finishes, nor is there a Design Statement or GI proposals.

MCC's Landscape Officer has commented extensively as appears in the annex below. In brief the proposal is not acceptable because:

The existing farmhouse and attached barn are important to the visual and intrinsic character of the landscape and should not be demolished. The buildings can be viewed from the nearby lane and public footpath and contribute visually to local distinctiveness within the valley setting and to Monmouthshire's valued rural character.

The existing farmhouse and barn have not been demolished, abandoned or fallen into such a state of disrepair so that it no longer has the appearance of a dwelling. The structures are intact, albeit aging.

The replacement dwelling is not of a similar size to that replaced. The existing dwelling has a ridge line of 5.7m. The proposal is for a dwelling with a ridge line of 7.75m, a 2m increase in height and accompanying increase in architectural mass and volume. The immediate area of the site is a settled rural landscape typical of that found across rural areas of Monmouthshire. There appear to be few traditional farmhouses of the Whitebrook farmhouse and associated barn character retained within the landscape. Traditional farmhouses and barns contribute to the distinctive character of Monmouthshire. Policy H4 – Conversion / Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Residential Use, should guide the retention of the character of the existing farmhouse and barn through sympathetic conversion and appropriate modest extension.

It is also considered that the current application should be supported by a design and access statement that explains the rationale for design approach and response to current policy, together with GI statement describing how green infrastructure will be incorporated into the proposal and the step wise approach adopted as part of the design process. Light spill will need to be considered carefully and a lighting strategy will need to be provided to ensure that all external light fittings and glazed areas are appropriately designed.

Recommendation : Objection for the want of a) detail on the external wall cladding, paint and finish colours and materials, and (b) a Design statement justifying the development and (c) a Green Infrastructure Statement. SCC will wish to make further comment when these details are provided.

Annex (MCC Landscape Officer's comments)

It is considered from a Landscape and GI perspective that the proposal is not acceptable hence an objection for the following reasons:-

- *The existing farmhouse and attached barn is considered from landscape perspective as being a traditional farmhouse and outbuilding that is important to the visual and intrinsic character of the landscape and should not be*

demolished. The front and rear extensions do not necessarily contribute to value however the main building and its relationship with the attached adjacent barn are similar to a small linear combination of farm barn and cow house. The structures which can be viewed from near proximity from the nearby lane and PROW provide:-

- a visual contribution to local distinctiveness within the valley setting and that of Monmouthshire's valued rural character and farming history of a contribution to the cultural landscape of Monmouthshire and visually relay how farmsteads and their buildings have developed over centuries, illustrate the story of farming and settlement that can be read in the landscape
- The existing farmhouse and barn have not been demolished, abandoned or fallen into such a state of disrepair so that it no longer has the appearance of a dwelling. The structures are intact, albeit aging and showing signs of settlement, ref plan 1779(PL)02, and contribute to the intrinsic landscape setting and character.
- The replacement dwelling is not of a similar size to that replaced. The existing dwelling has a ridge line of 5.7m. The proposal is for a dwelling with ridgeline of 7.75m, a 2m increase in height and accompanying increase in architectural mass and volume. The immediate area of the site is a settled rural landscape typical of that found across rural areas of Monmouthshire. There appear to be few traditional farmhouses of the Whitebrook farmhouse and associated barn character retained within the landscape. Traditional farmhouses and barns contribute to the distinctive character of Monmouthshire. It is suggested that from a landscape and GI perspective that a more appropriate approach, guided by Policy H4 – Conversion / Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Residential Use, is to retain the character of the existing farmhouse and barn through sympathetic conversion and appropriate modest extension that seeks to adapt the buildings appropriately.

It is also considered that the current application should be supported by:-
An appropriate design and access statement that explains the rationale for design approach and response to current policy.

The provision of a Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS). PPW12 chapter 6 highlights that a GIS should be submitted with all planning applications and will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development. The statement will describe how green infrastructure will be incorporated into the proposal and the step wise approach adopted as part of the design process.

A landscape plan that demonstrates how development will integrate with setting, responds to the GI statement, includes SUDs and contributes to net GI and biodiversity benefit. The provision of a Landscape / GI Management. The site is in a rural location and benefits from being in a shallow valley landform. Light spill will need to be considered carefully. A lighting strategy will need to be provided to ensure that all external light fittings and glazed areas are appropriately designed.

CONDITIONS - Should the application progress to be approved it is anticipated that the following conditions should apply if not satisfactorily provided during the application process prior to determination.

Conditions

1.LANDSCAPE CONDITION Prior to the commencement of development full and comprehensive details of soft and hard landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Details shall include: - #

Detailed scaled plans, showing existing and proposed levels - Proposed and existing utilities/services above and below ground. Soft landscape details for landscaping to include planting plans, specifications including species, size, density, number and location, cultivation and other operations associated with planting and seeding establishment. Hard landscape materials to include surfacing, SUDs, location of proposed lighting, fencing, gates, minor artefacts and structures (e.g. signs, bins, stores).

Lighting strategy Reason: In the interests of visual and landscape amenity; in accordance with Policies DES1 & LC1/5 of the Local Development Plan

2.LANDSCAPE WORKS IMPLEMENTATION All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and to a reasonable standard in accordance with the relevant recommendations of appropriate British Standards or other recognised Codes of Good Practice. Planting of Trees shall be in accordance with BS8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs and ensure the provision afforded by appropriate Landscape Design and Green Infrastructure LC5, DES 1, S13, and GI 1 and NE1.

3.LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE A schedule of landscape maintenance for a minimum period of five years shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to works commencing and shall include details of the arrangements for its implementation inclusive of roles and responsibilities. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the building (s) or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species. Reason: To ensure the provision of amenity afforded by the proper maintenance of existing and / or new landscape features. **INFORMATIVES**

C) DM/2026/00235 - 4 Home Farm Court Shirenewton NP16 6RL - to replace two existing kitchen windows with a set of bifold doors to improve daylight, outlook, and access to the garden.

The application states that the bifold doors will be white in colour and proportioned to reflect the scale of the existing openings; and the materials and finish are consistent with the host dwelling and neighbouring properties, ensuring the proposal integrates sensitively with the surrounding area. The works will not result in overlooking, loss of privacy, or harm to residential amenity. A structural steel beam will be installed internally to support the enlarged opening. This will not alter the external appearance of the dwelling beyond the proposed bifold doors.

In 2017 no. 7 Home Farm Court was given approval for a non-material amendment to DC/2004/00816 (MM10363) -for lowering of cill height to original opening size with introduction of glazed full height windows to replace existing windows. There were no objections.

There have been 8 comments on the current application, some in support and some to object. There are 10 properties on site.

Those in favour consider that the proposed bifold doors are in keeping with the character of the house and align with changes already made to other properties within the development, where multiple sets of similar doors have been successfully installed. The alterations will not be visible from the main public viewpoint and therefore will not disrupt the visual harmony of the development. This would be well suited to the surrounded area and will make the house into a family home.

Objectors consider that No. 4 forms part of a group of four dwellings with a consistent and symmetrical frontage reflecting the design character of Home Farm Court, which resides within the Shirenewton Conservation Area and countryside designated a Special Landscape Area.

Objectors further comment that the overall objective when HFC was developed was to conserve and introduce attributes contributing towards and enhancing the heritage already present, its visual presence and maintain both for the future. Major structures were retained; principle elevations were configured optimising visual presentation, and features were added or restored such as the centre quadrangle, the fountain and the tower in the East elevation, resulting in the architectural balance currently existing in each of the four main facades. The adoption and prescription of window size, proportion and type for each elevation was controlled being seen as contributing significantly to the final visual impact. Therefore, alterations to front elevations are particularly sensitive, as they are the most visible aspect of a property within the wider setting. Approval of this alteration could set a precedent for similar changes to every other property within the development.

Opinions as to the visibility of the proposed bifolds vary, some considering that the front of no 4 is visible as residents access their properties and that it is visible from Red House Lane.

Recommendation: Objection for the reasons that

Home Farm Court lies in the village conservation area and the application does not fully address the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area.

The installation of bifold doors disrupts the original design and concept of this facade of Home Farm Court.

Other items:

Memorial clock repair – Email from Clock makers received and discussed regarding quotation for further works. **Action** Clerk to contact Church regarding stone wall, and fundraisers.

Traffic events, (speeding etc) Traffic control Meeting with MCC. No new incidents reported. Meeting due with MCC. **No Action**

Cllr Vacancy – Cllrs interview 3 applicants. One post has now been filled.

Accounts 2025/26 – Accounts were presented to Council which have been audited and were read approved. **Action** Clerk to commence full audit.

“No Parking” sign quotes – Ongoing

Earlswood field rental – Grazing Agreement received, edits noted. **Action** Clerk to amend the agreement and contact potential tenants.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT MAY 2026

County Councillor Brown advised:

Note that all the Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) meetings below can be found and watched on you tube by pressing Your Council at the top of the Monmouthshire County Council website and then press meeting Calendar and adjusting the date and pressing the relevant meeting.

Individual Cabinet Member decisions 8th of April 2026

The above meeting considered the schedule of applications 2025/6 – meeting 4 for grants for the Welsh Church Fund and in the local area awarded £1,300 to assist with the replacement of old and inefficient lighting for the Mathern and District Village Hall in the Mathern community council area. In the Shirenewton community council area, the Welsh Church Fund awarded £500 towards the repairs to the solar panels and rectifier for the Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial Hall.

The meeting also approved a permanent order for the prohibition of driving except for access for Goldwire Lane Monmouth.

Public Services Scrutiny Committee 20th of April 2026

The meeting considered a report from MIND on how mental health services in Monmouthshire are impacting both positively and negatively on the individuals they support. There was also a presentation from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHU) to provide a progress update on the distressing subject of understanding suicide in Monmouthshire.

Democratic Services Committee 20th of April 2026

The meeting reported on the Final Annual Remuneration report 2026/7 for both County Councillors and Community Councillors from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales which is now undertaken by the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru. There was also a discussion on the review of My Monmouthshire and the Planning portal.

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee 21st of April 2026

The Committee was provided with an update on the development of in-house children’s residential and 16+ supported accommodation

placements. There was also an update on the current performance of the Council's commercial and investment portfolio, including Castlegate Business Park and Newport Leisure Park investments, MCC's County Farms and retail and industrial portfolio.

Special People Scrutiny Committee 29th of April 2026

This meeting considered the Monmouthshire County Council Public Libraries Strategy 2025-30.

Let's Talk Public Consultation Puffin Crossing Survey

Monmouthshire County Council proposes to install a signal-controlled crossing in Pwllmeyric, subject to funding at the top of Pwllmeyric Hill on the A48.

This plan is subject to funding. A crossing is needed for walking between Chepstow, Mathern and Pwllmeyric, as there is only a footway on the northside of the A48 between Pwllmeyric and Chepstow, and there is no accessible crossing point at all along the A48 within Pwllmeyric village.

Note the consultation closes at midnight on the 24th of May 2026 and can be found on the Monmouthshire County Council website either by a link on the front page or by a search of Let's Talk.

Police report:

Welcome to the April 2026 Edition of the Shirenewton Community Council Report

Crime in Shirenewton:

During the month of April 2026, a total of three incidents were recorded within

Shirenewton and the surrounding areas.

Encouragingly, none of these incidents were classified as serious offences, which reflects positively on the safety of our community.

Overall, the area has remained relatively calm and free from significant criminal activity throughout this period.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team remains committed to working in close partnership with the community and the local council to ensure transparency, accountability, and the continued safety of residents.

Summary of Recent Incidents in the Shirenewton Area

Road Traffic Collision - USK Road

A road traffic collision occurred on the Usk Road involving a motorcycle and a BMW vehicle. The motorcyclist sustained injuries; however, these were not life-threatening.

Due to a significant spillage of fluids, including oil and petrol, the road was temporarily closed to ensure public safety. Police officers and Roads Policing Support Officers (RPSO) attended the scene to manage the incident,

implement road closures, and divert traffic accordingly.

Ambulance services were deployed to assess those involved and transport the injured party to hospital for further treatment. The Fire and Rescue Service also attended to assist with clearing the roadway and ensuring the area was made safe.

While the collision was serious in nature, it is confirmed that neither party sustained life-changing injuries.

Incidents - The Huntsman Hotel

There have been a number of reported incidents at The Huntsman Hotel. Police have attended each occurrence and have dealt with the matters appropriately.

This location remains a priority area for policing, and it continues to be closely monitored. Officers will maintain a visible and proactive presence to address any ongoing concerns and ensure public safety.

Residential Burglary and Vehicle Theft

A local resident reported a burglary at their home, during which a set of car keys was stolen. Subsequently, the homeowner's BMW vehicle was taken. No additional items were reported stolen, and there was no further damage to the property. Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) and police officers attended the scene to carry out initial enquiries and provide assistance. At this stage, the incident appears to be isolated and is believed to involve a single suspect. Investigations remain ongoing.

Continued Plan of Action:

To support ongoing community safety and engagement, the following measures are in place:

Monthly speed monitoring will be conducted in the area to address traffic-related concerns and promote road safety.

Proposed Community Engagement:

To further strengthen engagement with residents, I propose holding Police Surgeries every two months.

These sessions would provide members of the community with an opportunity to:

- Raise any concerns
- Seek advice
- Speak directly with their local police representative

I will be raising the matter of hosting Police Surgeries at Shirenewton Recreational Hall at the upcoming meeting. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss potential dates and availability, where appropriate.

These initiatives are part of my continued commitment to maintaining a safe and connected community.

AOB and ward reports:

Cllr I Martin – No issues to report

Cllr G Todd – No new issues to report

Cllr Butterworth - Reports of Dog walker not complying with the picking up of dog waste on the Recreation field. This has been reported.

Cllr S Todd – No new issues to report

Cllr G Mitchel - No new issues to report

**** Clerk reported that anyone/groups wishing to apply to SCC for a grant or donation can email shirenewtoncc@gmail.com for an application form, which need to be completed & returned by 26th June 2026**

Agreed the date of the next monthly meeting

Councillors agreed the date of the next meeting on **Monday 1st June 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

CHURCHES UNLOCKED

St Thomas à Becket, Shirenewton

From 6th June to 21st June there is an initiative to encourage more people into unlocked local churches.

The fete will take place on 13th June which is during this period. Services on Sundays will continue to offer coffee and fellowship following the service all are welcome to both or either.

New initiatives on Tuesday 9th June 10am to 12noon the church are establishing a permanent toy box in church for children, join us for the introduction, play, coffee, cake and a chat

Saturday 20th June 2pm to 4pm Bring along your exploring teddy bear and we will parachute them from the tower followed with a picnic more details on the poster in the magazine. If wet in the Church rooms.

Opening our new

CHILDREN'S TOY BOX

in the church!

Tuesday 9th June
10am-12pm

Come and explore the children's toy box with coffee and cake!



Children and
parents welcome



Permanent
feature from
today



Books, jigsaws, buiding
blocks, colouring,
vehicles, animals and
more

St Thomas a Becket Church,
Shirenewton



TEDDYBEAR PARACHUTING



ST THOMAS A BECKET CHURCH
SHIRENEWTON



Free event, but
donations welcome!

Watch your teddybear
parachute from the
church tower!

Bring your own teddy bears wearing a
parachute or make one on the day.
Hot drinks and snacks provided but please
bring your own picnic, chairs and blanket.



**FOLLOWED
BY A FAMILY
PICNIC!**

SATURDAY 20TH JUNE
2PM – 4PM

SHIRENEWTON NATURE

Shirenewton and Mynydd-back Meadows are full of bird song in spring. We use the Merlin App, a free App to identify the birds singing. As the birds sing, the App displays the bird's name. We have heard as many as a dozen birds singing over a two minute period. Many birds you might expect; Wren, Robin, Chiffchaff, Dunnock, Blackbird, Wood-Pigeon, Blackcap, Greater Whitethroat, Greenfinch, Thrush, Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Woodpecker, House Sparrow, Pheasant, Buzzard, House-Marten, Carrion crow.

But on the 6th of May, we recorded the Ring Ouzel. That is the last bird I expected to hear here. My one and only sighting was a wonderful day I spent watching them in Glen Tilt, behind Blair Atholl, a few miles north of Pitlochry, in the Highlands of Scotland. Ring Ouzels are thrushes that migrate to the UK from Africa to breed. They arrive from late March, nesting in upland areas. Males have distinctive black plumage with a pale wing panel and striking white breast band. They are slightly smaller and slimmer than a Blackbird. They can have up to two broods before flying back to Africa in September.

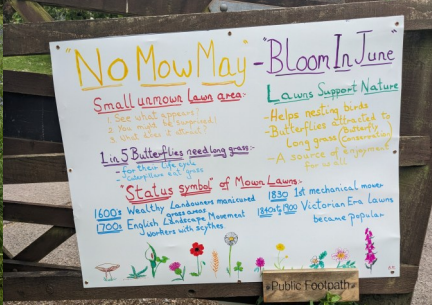
Turning to what each and everyone one of us can do to help our fellow planetary companions, our nature and wildlife. The popular 'No Mow May', has just passed, we are encouraged to keep going and let it bloom in June and July.

I wondered why the British are so obsessed with mowing our grass areas? How did it all begin? Google tells me we are imitating the wealthy. In the 1600s wealthy landowners had small manicured lawns. By the 1700s the followers of the English landscape movement, big houses and wealth employed workers with scythes. The first mechanical mower was invented in the 1830 and this allowed the less well off to participate. During the Victorian Era mowing areas of grass no matter how small became popular and we have been mowing ever since.

What we do in our gardens makes a difference, no matter how small an area it all adds up. Butterfly Conservation tells us that gardens with some areas of long grass attract more butterflies. One in five of our butterflies need long grass as part of their life cycle. If you think nature is important, lock the mower away, or mow strips for paths through the lawn, and enjoy seeing what appears. Nature will too.

Our combined gardens make up an area bigger than all of the UK's nature reserves put together. So each little bit we do, no matter how small adds up. What we do in our gardens can provide a vital source of food and shelter for pollinators and other insects. Even a small area of your garden will help, you might be surprised by what plants appear. You can use Google lens on your phone to identify the plants. I find it fascinating learning plants I had never heard of before. I hope you will too.

Photos of Shirenewton and Mynydd-back Meadows opposite page



SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1090167

At our April meeting Prof. Maddy Grey gave us a talk entitled 'Relics & Relic Cults in Medieval Wales', Maddy is Prof Emerita of Ecclesiastical History and has written and researched this subject for many years, needless to say the talk was excellent.

In true tradition nine trepid members plus one dog, set out to 'Beat the Bounds' of our parish taking the west route along the Cwm, everyone seemed to enjoy the walk when they returned to the Church Room for a cup of tea. Please see photograph. Perhaps, we should have had a before and after photograph!

During the Summer months we will be holding our meetings in the afternoon.

Dates for your Diary:

*June Archive Meeting
2.00pm*

*Wednesday, 10th June
Church room*

Our meetings are held at the Church Room, unless otherwise stated, Summer months 7.30pm

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



Beating the Bounds—Sunday 10th May

DOG FOULING IN THE CCHURCHYARD

The volunteers who care for our village church and churchyard give many hours of their time each year and juggle the spending of significant funds to keep these much-loved surroundings maintained and welcoming for all.

Unfortunately, the grounds maintenance team has recently reported an increase in dog fouling within the churchyard. As consecrated ground, and a place of remembrance for many families, we ask that the churchyard and its memorials are treated with the respect they deserve.

Dogs are welcome in the churchyard, provided they are kept on a lead and under close control. We ask all dog owners to clear up after their pets and take any waste home or dispose of it appropriately off church premises.

Thank you for helping us keep the churchyard a clean, peaceful, and respectful place for everyone.

Value of the Month

Tolerance

Year 5 and 6 Digital Forensics

Our Year 5 and 6 pupils were fortunate enough to travel to Thales Ebbw Vale (a cyber security and research centre) where they took part in retrieving digital evidence from a crime scene. Wearing crime investigation suits, they worked in groups where each person had a specific role to play in discovering, photographing and logging digital evidence. They then used the evidence to create a crime report and had the opportunity to present their reports in a courtroom at the University of South Wales. It was all very exciting and has gave them the opportunity to find out more about job roles within digital forensics and law.



Mini Marathon

Inspired by many families who took part in the London Marathon, some of our older pupils completed their own mini marathon



Newsletter

Year 6 Swimming Gala

Well done to our Year 6 pupils who proudly represented the school at the recent swimming gala. The children showed great determination, teamwork and sportsmanship throughout the event, giving their best in every race and supporting one another from the sidelines. We were especially impressed by their positive attitudes and willingness to take on a challenge, which truly reflects our school values. Congratulations to all involved, you should be very proud of your efforts!



Shirenewton Primary School are currently advertising for a Midday Supervisor position. If you are interested in further details regarding this position, please email shirenewtonprimary@monmouthshireschools.wales or call 01291 641774.

MIDDAY SUPERVISOR

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



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

SHIRENEWTON FETE
(ON SATURDAY 13TH JUNE 2026)

Bottle Stall

COLLECTION DAYS

From 6pm on Tuesday 9th June and Thursday 11th June

teams will be collecting

bottles/cans of wine, spirits, beer, soft drinks etc.

throughout Shirenewton and Mynyddbach for the **Fete Bottle Stall**.
Please donate generously. **Please put outside your door or gate by 6pm**

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

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

CAKE STALL

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

BOOK & TOY STALL

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

PLANT STALL

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

***Please drop off Plants, Books, Toys in the verandah area in front of the Hall
on the morning of Saturday 13th June – between 9.30am and noon.***

Thank you - All contributions greatly appreciated.

SHIRENEWTON

FETE 2026

Shirenewton Recreation Ground

The Village Summer Get Together

Saturday

13 June

Fancy Dress Parade around the Ring at 12.50

1pm to 5pm

**Events, Stalls, Children's entertainments, Food,
Bar, Music, Raffle, Dog Show, and much more!
An afternoon for all ages – not to be missed.**

Proceeds help maintain the fabric of the historic 800 year-old church, and the village churchyard.

The Cake Stall at the Shirenewton Church Fete - Sat 13th June



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

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

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

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



You can deliver your goodies to me on the Friday
before the fete to The Chantry or you can bring your
delights on the day. Glynis 01291 641 818.

07531 425 006 Glynis.macdonald@btinternet.com

Shirenewton Church Fete

Saturday 13 June 2026

Family Fun Dog Show

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

- 2.15 The Prettiest Girl and the Most Handsome Boy
- 2.40 Dog with the Waggiest Tail
- 3.00 Best Child Handler – 2 Age Groups;
SCHOOL YEAR 3 OR BELOW
SCHOOL YEAR 4 AND ABOVE
- 3.20 Dog with the Best Trick
- 3.40 Best Dressed Dog OR Looking Most Like its Owner
- 4.00 NEW FOR 2026 – ‘Over or Under’ Show Jumping
4 Jumps - Prizes for Style/Entertainment Value
- 4.20 Dog Judge would most like to take Home

Thanks to our Rosette Sponsor



www.shirenewtonchurch.com

Hello all

Following last month's theme of eSims and travel, I thought I'd concentrate on matters closer to home this month.

Given the concerns around local break-ins, etc. I've taken the opportunity to review my CCTV coverage and add a few extra cameras. I also have comprehensive CCTV coverage of my padel club (26 cameras from four different suppliers) and our Spanish apartment (a different supplier again). So, my experience of these multiple and different systems (all installed by me personally) gives me, I believe, reasonable experience in this field.

When I first installed CCTV at home (as a summer project in 2017) I went with a HikVision IP camera system. This was, at the time, 'state of the art' and a commercial, professional grade system which was primarily sold via authorized distributors to authorised installers. That was nearly 10 years ago and since then Hikvision has taken a bit of a reputational hammering not, it must be stressed, for the quality of their kit, but from political concerns re data privacy (they are part owned by the Chinese government) and ethical concerns re the use of HikVision cameras for surveillance in China. There are also concerns that technically they are overly complex technically but, in this respect, they are not designed for the end user. Having said that, they are still viewed as high performance, value for money commercial kit.

The good news is that now there are plenty of consumer options and, in the last ten years, the technology has moved on especially in the areas of AI & Smart detection, resolution and night vision, local vs cloud storage and, finally, battery technology – more of which later. So, if you are looking at installing CCTV for the home you can't go far wrong looking at the offerings from Ring, Blink and Tapo. All easy to self-install. I wouldn't recommend Hikvision or even consumer targeted IP systems such as Reolink unless you particularly want a wired set-up with local, central NVR storage – more of which later.

I like playing around with 'stuff like this' so will try out different eco systems but your best and most cost-effective bet is to stick with one supplier especially if you are happy to have your video storage in the cloud. This is because you pay for cloud storage under a plan. Annual plans range from £30per annum for Tapo, £80 for Ring and Blink multi-device plans – Ring and Blink are both owned by Amazon. Tapo also offers subscription-free local storage which can be played back via its free app.

So, let's take a look at some of the decisions you need to think about: Wifi or cable: if the former, the camera will obviously need to be in a position which has a decent wifi signal (note that this differs slightly for Blink – see below). If the latter, then you will need to run a physical cable from the camera into your network. This is typically to a POE switch which also powers the device (see below). Clearly, this decision is fundamental and

will affect camera choice.

Storage of video: local or cloud. If local, centrally on an NVR (Network Video Recorder or 'hub') or in individual cameras with an SD card in the camera. Both can be accessed via an app on your phone so, once set-up, physical access isn't really a consideration. If cloud, you'll be needing to subscribe to a plan (as noted above) for storage. The advantage of cloud storage is, of course, that the data cannot be physically stolen by anyone breaking in. Local storage has the implicit weakness that theft of the NVR/hub and/or cameras takes away the video footage with it.

Power supply. Battery or cabled. Most current IP cameras support POE (power over ethernet), so a single data cable (RJ45), to a central point on the network, is adequate for power and data. Non-IP cameras frequently require a USB power supply. Conversely, there are multiple battery-powered (rechargeable) cameras on the market which operate over WiFi and therefore require no cabling. The downside is that you need to recharge the batteries from time-to-time and therefore they must be somewhat accessible.

I have two external battery-powered (not rechargeable) Blink Outdoor 3 cameras as part of my system in Spain. The battery life is given as approximately 2 years. I simply change the batteries annually. In Mynyddbach I've just installed some additional Tapo TC82 rechargeable battery cameras in which the batteries seem to be lasting about 2 months. Despite claims of 'up to 180 days', I installed one of the cameras on 23rd April with battery power at 90%. At the time of writing, one month later, battery power is 41%. These are, however, very different systems with the Blink having no local storage and the Tapo having local storage. It's also worth noting some ecosystems (notably Blink) need a local hub/sync module and therefore the camera must be able to 'see' the hub. This can add up, so, in many ways Blink is more suitable to the smaller home. My son has Blink cameras on his house in London (covering the front and back of the house) and they can both see the same hub so are perfect for the purpose.

Finally, I have a Ring doorbell which I should really consider changing out for a Tapo doorbell to save me the annual subscription. But then it works, and, if it works, don't fix it. If you have a Ring subscription (for the doorbell) it's only another £30 per annum to upgrade to multiple devices.

All these modern systems have the ability to specify detection zones, detection sensitivity, etc. One of the reasons I chose Blink for Spain is the ability to 'arm' or 'disarm' the system as a whole. Meaning, when we are in residence, the system is disarmed and doesn't send movement notifications. When we are not in residence it is armed and I know if a bee gets too inquisitive. The most recent Tapos I've installed have the ability to distinguish between humans, pets and general movement and easily set detection zones. I'm sure the current versions of the other brands do as well.

The key point is, if you are thinking CCTV may be a good idea, a self-installed system need not cost the earth, need not have wires everywhere, will only cost a few hundred pounds and, potentially, an annual subscription. As always, I'm happy to have a chat with my avid readers over the articles I write and to provide advice, etc. Best way to pick my brain is to find me in one of the locals and buy me a drink!

Moving on and at the same time trying to keep this article to reasonable limits

As forecast last year, there is now a move to ban VPNs or, in political parlance, 'more effectively regulate them'. This is because the easiest way around the government's Online Safety Act is to use a VPN and I explained that, after the Act was introduced, the download of VPNs went through the roof. There are now moves afoot to force VPN providers to implement mandatory age verification.

The governments (not just the UK, The EU and the USA) are sloping their shoulders and simply looking at placing the onus on the websites to verify the age of users. This is fraught with difficulty for the websites. It's generally easy enough for a website to identify whether someone is using a VPN (as those trying to get BBC iPlayer to work from abroad will know), but, as a result, there is a VPN arms race with advanced VPNs implementing means of bypassing the website VPN checks. Then there is the question of overreach by regulatory bodies. If this is of interest, try a search for 4Chan vs Ofcom. The UK's Ofcom trying to fine USA websites for breaching the OSA (Online Safety Act).

In the meantime, happy holidays and safe browsing. Remember to look at eSims for travel if free roaming is not included in your plan. Also remember that there are very suspect wifi connections out there so never connect to a system without being 100% sure that it is legit.

Safe browsing

David Conrwell

Webmaster www.shirenewtonchurch.com

Oakfield Veg Boxes

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Larges boxes £22 and Medium boxes £17

email leighayland@gmail.com

call on 01291 428604/07889 247361

Read more about us on Facebook

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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)
and 10 items in our large boxes*

25 places of international or world significance within 25 miles

15. The Pyramids – and Peter James

Most of the articles in this series so far have been about C19th subjects. For 15-20 let's go back further in time. Chronologically, we should start with pre-historic sites in South Wales. We do have pre-historic burial chambers sites at Gaerllwyd, Shirenewton; Thornwell; and Heston Brake at Portskewett. They are wonderful examples of structures 5,000 years old and are of regional and national significance but not of 'world significance' like Stonehenge or the Egyptian Pyramids - but **Shirenewton does have a resident who is 'of world significance' for saving the world's oldest pyramid and first major structure.**

The Shirenewton resident is **Peter James** – the saviour of Egypt's, and the world's, oldest pyramid, the Step Pyramid, from collapse using technology developed in South Wales through his Newport based CINTEC company.

I heard Peter James give a talk at the Shirenewton Recreation Hall about 5 years ago and it was absolutely fascinating as he described how he and his company had worked on buildings as diverse as Windsor Castle, Westminster Abbey, the White House in the USA, Egyptian temples and finally the Pyramids.



World's first high rise – the Step Pyramid 205 ft (62.5 m) high near Cairo 2,670-2650 BC

Quoting from Peter James's own book (2018) -

'Standing there for the first time in front of the Great Pyramid, one of the world's most celebrated monuments, the subject of study and wonder for centuries which captured the imagination of great men as diverse as Newton and Napoleon, I never imagined that I would play a part, however small, in its history'

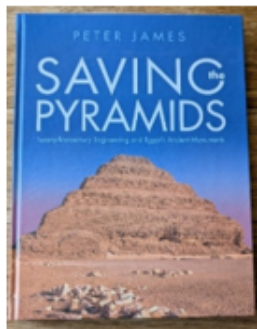
Peter went on to say that it was barely conceivable when he was at Cardiff City Council's Engineer's Department dealing with the Council's entire building stock and resolving problems with pre-Second World War housing in Cardiff's

suburbs the he would end up working on the edge of the **Sahara Desert** overseeing the repair of **the first high rise structure in the world** – the oldest Egyptian pyramid, the *Step Pyramid*, 4,700 years old!

In 2006 the ceiling of the burial chamber in the centre of Djoser's (Step) Pyramid was collapsing. It was a mass of huge rocks hanging perilously above a burial chamber void over 100 feet (34 metres) below and with 100 ft of masonry pressing down above that void- and the person the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities trusted to go in and rescue Egypt's and the world's oldest pyramid, and first major cut stone structure, was **Peter James** '*of this Parish*'!

When Peter showed us pictures of the rocks hanging down over this void in the centre of the Step Pyramid, in his talk, I couldn't imagine how anyone would dare to go in there even for a few seconds for a quick look, let alone work on scaffolding high up hoping that the rocks above wouldn't move before the honeycomb of fabric covered stainless steel anchors pioneered by CINTEC of Newport, South Wales, could be drilled into them to prevent them moving. It was incredibly dangerous but so important. There are photographs of CINTEC's huge airbags holding up the ceiling of the world's oldest major building while the steel anchors were being inserted, with '*Made in Wales*'!

The Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities had been very impressed with Peter's work on: stabilising the *Al Ghuru Mosque* following Cairo's earthquake of 1992; and work on **20 other historic buildings in Cairo** and on the extremely important **Temple of Hibis**, 700km south of Cairo, which protected unique historic wall carvings; and his work on the burial chamber of the **Red Pyramid**.



Peter James's book (2018)

Peter receiving the
International Award
for Conservation
from the
Chartered Institute
for Builders.

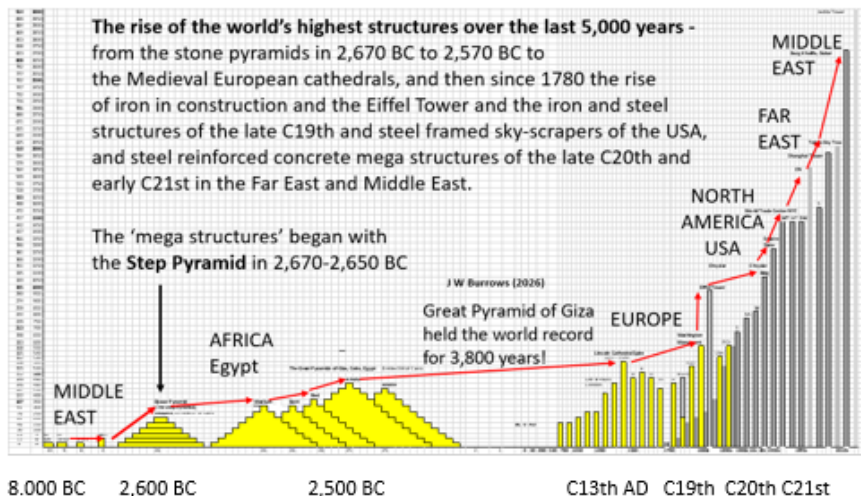


The world significance of 'Peter's Pyramid'

The pyramid that Peter James of Shirenewton, and Newport and Cardiff prevented from collapsing – the Djoser Pyramid (also known as the Netjerykhet Pyramid or Step Pyramid) is not only a UNESCO World Heritage site but also-

- 1. The first Egyptian Pyramid.***
- 2. The example for the Great Pyramids of Giza which followed 80 years later.***
- 3. The work of Imhotep, Chancellor to King Djoser, an important figure of the time***
- 4. The earliest large scale 'cut-stone' construction made by man***
- 5. The first major structure of 5,000 years of construction - in stone, and recently in iron and steel, from the Pyramids to the European cathedrals, to the skyscrapers of the USA, the Far East and most recently the Middle East – a continuous succession.***
- 6. When the Step Pyramid was completed it was far larger than any structures before it. There were some structures like the walls of Jericho and the Anu Ziggurat but nothing on the monumental scale of the Step Pyramid.***
- 7. No other building in history has achieved such a dramatic relative increase in scale as the Step Pyramid. The closest in 5,000 years of construction is: the Eiffel Tower which was nearly twice as high (1.8x) as the previous world record holder (the Washington Monument); the Burj Khalifa in Dubai which was 1.6x the height of its predecessor; the Red Pyramid 1.7x the Step Pyramid; and the Great Pyramid of Giza 1.4x the Red Pyramid; but the Step Pyramid was 3 to 5 x the height and size of the world's previous tallest structure.***

An important structure to save - and Peter James 'of this Parish' did it!





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

WEDNESDAY JUNE 24th 2026
at
The Arts Hall, Chepstow School, 7.00pm

“JUST AS THE TIDE WAS FLOWING”

***A celebration in music and words of
our famous rivers and bridges***

***Including items by John Rutter, Vaughan Williams,
Gilbert and Sullivan, Mendelssohn and
arrangements of standard popular classics with
appropriate readings***

Musical Director – Graham Bull

Accompanist – Richard Kubiak

**Tickets £12.00, u/18s and students free, including
post-concert refreshments**

**from Choir members, Chepstow Bookshop,
www.eventbrite.co.uk**

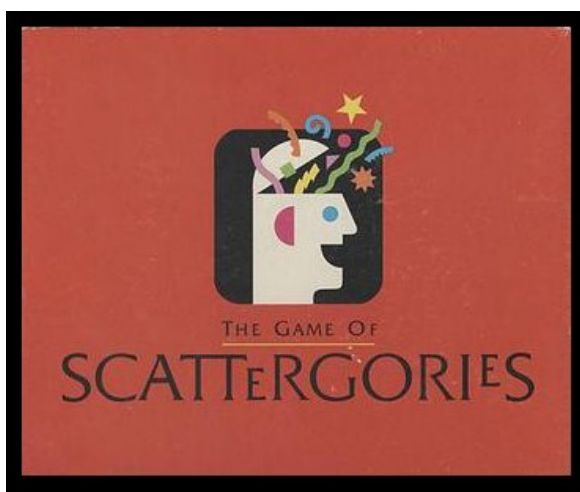
Collection and merchandise in support of SARA

REPORT FOR THE W.I. MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 14th MAY 2026

The first part of the meeting was taken up with our AGM for 2026, in which the current officers and committee were re-elected:

President – Angela Gray
Secretary – Jane Butterworth
Treasurer – Gill Duckham
Committee members
Alison Jenkins
Diane Ashton-Smith
Jackie Broughton
Kha Koon Cornwell

Once the AGM was concluded, we held our branch meeting, after which we enjoyed playing Scattergories, with a nice cup of tea and biscuits.



For those who do not know this game it was originally published by Milton Bradley in 1988, who was an American, businessman, game pioneer and publisher. The objective of the game is to score points by uniquely naming objects, people, actions, and so forth, all within a set of categories, given an initial letter, within a time limit. We managed 3 rounds of the game and had a great time trying to think of various categories beginning with a specific letter – it was great fun and we all had a good laugh at some of the answers.

If you would like to come along and find out about Shirenewton W.I., our next meeting is at the Recreation Hall on the 9th July at 7.30 with our speaker being Jenny Morgan (Wild at Heart), floral artist.

Angela Gray.



Painter and Decorator
Quality work at sensible prices

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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**





*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



TAKE AWAY
OR DINE IN

TIN SHED &
LOUNGE BAR



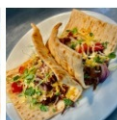
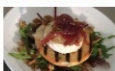
THE HUNTSMAN
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SPECIALISTS
FOR 40 YEARS

OUTSIDE
CATERING



MORE THAN JUST A MEAL - IT'S AN EXPERIENCE!



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NEWS FROM EARLSWOOD

On Saturday, 16th May, Earlswood and Newchurch West Memorial hall hosted a very successful Plant Sale, Coffee and Cake morning in aid of the upkeep of the Hall, whilst also giving an opportunity to locals to meet up. Entry was FREE!.

Visitors were greeted by a fantastic array of healthy and varied plants displayed along two sides of the hall. There was something for everyone, including bouquets of cut flowers, vegetables, fruit plants, flowering perennial shrubs and colourful bedding plants.

Away from the plants there was plenty of opportunity to relax and enjoy refreshments so no matter whether a gardener or not choosing from the delicious selection of homemade cakes proved no easy task! Temptations included a glossy looking monster of a chocolate cake, a 'towering' coffee and walnut cake, traditional jam and buttercream sponge, fruit cake, carrot cake and a gluten free lemon drizzle cake.

A raffle with many lovely donated prizes added to the enjoyment of the morning with folk eagerly waiting to see if they were the lucky winners – a basket of gardening items, an attractive RHS water bottle, branded toilet-tries, plants, wine being among the prizes.

The morning was a resounding success! Thanks to the generosity of everyone involved a profit of £626.96 was raised!!

The committee would like to thank all who came along and supported the event, together with:

Mr and Mrs Hunt (of Parish Magazine fame!) who purchase tables from us to sell their plants and who kindly donated a plant for the raffle. Thanks also go to Crownhill Nursery, Gemini Nursery and Chepstow Garden centre for their support in donating plants.

Please look out for details of future events in the Parish Magazine, social media and local signage – your support is crucial to us.





Gardening Corner

It is early morning (very early), the morning is beautifully still, and there are numerous house martens flying around our valley as I start to type. Our 8 artificial nests have been 'taken' and the first arrivals are now feeding their young. We have just one pair that have 'missed the boat' and are having to construct their own nest, using a floodlight connection box as a foundation for the bottom of the nest. They are getting there but probably have another week to go, before they can settle into their temporary accommodation and start to rear their brood. The early arrivals will hopefully have another brood, if the weather is kind. It just shows how much help these artificial nests can be, and the martens, along with nature generally, certainly needs all the help we can give it. The frogs and toads never arrived this year which is a big worry. This is the first time in nearly 40 years at Barn farm, where they have failed to turn up. I read somewhere that there is currently a disease going around that is impacting all amphibians, which is not good news. Worse still, I haven't heard a single cuckoo in this area yet. I went fishing this week, and usually the woodland surrounding Blagdon lake comes up trumps with at least one cuckoo, but sad to say it remained ominously quiet all day long. It is easy to blame the unpredictability of the weather, but these migrating species are clearly coping it somewhere. We did hear a single cuckoo on one of our many trips to Somerset. We hope he found a mate, but with their breeding strategy of just one egg per year, and all the dangers they encounter in life, it is not a strategy that I would ever put my money on.

In the garden, things had been moving on apace. I had taken a gamble by sowing and planting things earlier than normal, and it appeared to be working. The theory being that we wouldn't get any late frosts thanks to global warming! The last two weeks or so has seen us down the tunnels just before bedtime, covering over all the tender crops with horticultural fleece, to ensure that they didn't get damaged by the now regular cold nights warning. For us, there wasn't meant to be an actual frost, but we didn't want to take the risk. There had been a lot of hard work to get things growing and planted out, and the last thing we wanted was for this to all be in vain. There were two nights where the car windscreens were frozen, but fortunately the fleece did its job and kept everything snug underneath it. The outdoor potatoes were covered over as they were well out of the ground, and we left the fleece on them all the time, daytime as well so the cold wind wouldn't slow them down. I was talking to a gentleman at the recent Earlswood plant sale, and he showed me a picture he had been sent of a potato field in Peterborough. The spuds were about the same growth as ours, so about 12 inches above the ground, and the entire field was black. The chances are, that new shoots would develop below ground, but the crop will be set back weeks and will not be as good as expected. So, a big loss for this farmer. As I am typing this, we are now in the middle of an unseasonable heatwave. The fleece has come out

again, but this time it is to try and save the most tender crops from the damage caused by the sun's direct rays. Crops that have been planted out for some time are not so at risk, as they have had a chance of 'hardening off'. The most 'at risk' are the runner and French beans. The leaves will get scorched by the strong rays and will simply drop off. Worst case scenario is that the plants will wilt and die, best case is that they will start to produce new leaves, but this only happens where the plants have become semi established, and one or two leaves remain undamaged enough to keep firing up photosynthesis and for the plants to continue to grow. From our perspective most of the seed growing for this year is complete, apart from the regular 'repeat' sowing of salad crops such as cut and come again lettuce, or later crops, such as winter greens. For the average 'normal' grower like yourselves, there will still be plenty of sowing to do, and I'm sure you don't need any advice from me as to what to do and when. We have the benefit of the two tunnels and two greenhouses, which help us to extend the growing season, both early and late in the year. We have been eating our own cut and come again lettuce for about two months now. Our stock of potatoes has come to an end, as the milder weather has made them all shoot out, and they are now a wrinkly mess, unfit for any human consumption! The early potatoes in the big tunnel are growing well but aren't quite ready for digging up. A little bit of cheating is therefore required to help the food bills, so I get down on my hands and knees, and thrust my hands into the ridge to extract a couple of potatoes, before pushing the soil back. It's not meant to be a long-term strategy for harvesting, but boy, do those potatoes taste nice, cooked just minutes after being harvested. We are now regularly harvesting our own courgettes, and broad beans, which, with asparagus, gives us some addition fresh produce for the stir fry, along with some fresh broccoli leaves snapped off here and there to add a bit of 'green'. The first calabrese heads are now forming and it will only be another week or so before we start picking them. This is one crop that really benefits from the little extra protection that a tunnel can provide. They were planted back in early October. We also have cauliflowers and mini sized calabrese that are hopefully timed to start cropping once the main calabrese has been harvested. We already have the next crop pricked out into small pots, and these will be ready for planting out, probably in about a month's time. I will sow more seed, in a few weeks' time, which will then hopefully be ready for planting out in September/October, and the whole cycle will start again. The tomato plants have been planted out into their final resting place. They are now between three and four feet high (1 – 1.2 metres), and the first fruit is already well formed. We are growing just the two varieties this year, a yellow cherry type for salads etc. and a red plum variety for our passata sauce factory! We do love a good

passata sauce, and we love it even more when all four of the grandchildren all request dinners made with our homemade sauce. It kind of makes all the hard work worthwhile. When you benefit daily, it is easy to forget all the work and planning that has gone into producing dinner, but we wouldn't change it for the world, although we realise that one day we probably won't be able to do it. For now, we will continue to make the most of it and enjoy the little pleasures in life!

It is now nearly 7.00am, the sun is well up, the house martens are having a five-minute rest and the cat has come in for a bit of breakfast and to snooze the daylight hours away. A woodpecker is trying to muster up the courage to raid the bird feeder on our weeping beech tree outside our window, and a pair of pied wagtails are picking up the scraps underneath the feeders to feed their young brood. They had five eggs, which have now hatched. It is most inconvenient, in that they have built their nest just inside our log shed, on the side I was going to start taking the logs from next. Instead, we are having to use and replenish the same side of the shed until the finish their work. It reminds me of the time I drove back and forth to work in a Landrover. Every time I came home, I noticed a little robin sitting there waiting for me. I thought that was very sweet, until a bit of investigating found that the robin had built a nest over the top of the tail of the exhaust pipe of the Rover! A few words with my boss, and it was agreed that the vehicle would stay parked up until the eggs hatched and the chicks had flown! Remember that it is the nests that are protected by wildlife law, not the hedge, shed or structure that the nest might be sitting in. So, you can trim a garden hedge at any time provided you have checked that there are no nests that you might damage, destroy or disturb. The house martens have suddenly all come back again. Must be time for a coffee! As usual, *happy gardening until next month, Steve and Felicity Hunt.*



THE BELLS

Some of you reading this may recall a long past episode of *Midsummer Murders* in which there were multiple deaths of bell ringers leading up to an event called a "Striking Competition". What, I hear you ask, is a Striking Competition. As in most human endeavours if there is a skill attained then there is a desire to test the skill level against others to judge relative expertise – a competition. Ringing is no different to classical team sports, music, dance, literature, horticulture, viniculture, cider making, ploughing and all other skilled human activities, and I even include golf for a good reason.

A Striking Competition is the comparison of the skill level of bands of ringers from different churches. The basis of the competition is a set piece of ringing which is judged by independent examiners, who at the time have no knowledge of the identity of the band ringing. In practice bands assemble at a predetermined church on a specific day and draw lots as to the order in which the bands perform. The independent examiners, who are appointed from outside the locality, are positioned so they cannot observe the bands entering and leaving the ringing chamber, so have no knowledge as to the origin and identity of each band until the order is revealed after judging has occurred. Once the competition begins the bands in turn enter the ringing chamber, ring a short practice piece lasting 3 minutes and then with a predetermined signal to the examiners (usually 4 strikes of the lightest bell) begin the ringing to be judged, which usually lasts for about 5 minutes. Once completed the band leaves the ringing chamber and the process begins with the next band. Now why am I telling you all this?

The 2026 Striking Competition of the Monmouth Branch of the Llandaff & Monmouth Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers was held at Mathern on May 16th 2026. There were 2 sections, the first of call changes competing for the Audrey Bruton Trophy, and the second of method ringing competing for the Gordon Wilkinson Trophy. Shirenewton entered both sections supplying one team for the call changes and two teams for the methods. We came 2nd in the call changes (of 4) and came 5th and 6th (of 8). However, this year a handicap system was applied on a trial basis, taking account of the combined experience of the bands. When applied Shirenewton came 1st and 2nd – hence the golf analogy. But striving for perfection requires no handicap system, so we continue to train and practice every Friday 7.30-9.00 pm. If you are curious as to what the ancient art of ringing entails just come and see on practice night.

Mike Penney.

May 2026

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JUNE

Monday 1st
7.00 p.m.

Shirenewton Community Council meeting
Shirenewton Recreation Hall

Tuesday 9th
10.00-12.00 a.m.

Permanent toy box established in the Church
St Thomas à Becket Church

Wednesday 10th
2.00 p.m.

Shirenewton History Society Archive meeting
Shirenewton Church Room

Saturday 13th
1.00—5.00 p.m.

Village Fete
Recreation Field

Saturday 20th
2.00-4.00 p.m.

Parachuting teddies from the Church tower
St Thomas à Becket Church

Wednesday 24th
7.00 p.m.

Chepstow Choral Society concert
Arts Hall, Chepstow School

Tuesday 30th
tbc

History Society visit to the Transporter Bridge
Transporter Bridge

JULY

Thursday 9th
7.30 p.m.

WI Meeting: Jenny Morgan, Floral Artist 'Wild at Heart' - Shirenewton Recreation Hall

severnwyema.co.uk



The advertisement features a portrait of Eileen O' Dwyer, a woman with short blonde hair, smiling. To the right of the photo is the HomeCare logo, which consists of a stylized house icon with a heart shape inside, and the word 'HOMECARE' in red capital letters below it. At the bottom of the advertisement, the text 'Private Carer/Home help' and the phone number '07795 689791' are displayed in white on a dark red background.

Eileen O' Dwyer

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 Recreation Hall (Shirenewton village)
 The Tredegar Arms (The Square, centre of Shirenewton)
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 Earlswood Hall (Earlswood)
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FAIRTRADE NEWS April 2026



One of the many conundrums of modern western life is that all our leaders extol growth as the answer to all our problems and yet it is clear that our finite world is all but exhausted. The burgeoning industry of fast fashion – a rare example of actual physical production (as opposed to tech, AI etc) should be a good news story. Apparently it represents \$178 billion p.a, 36% of all clothing. But the environmental and social costs are absolutely catastrophic. Companies utilize advanced supply chains to take designs from the drawing board to store shelves or e-commerce sites in weeks, fuelling a constant cycle of new trends. Fast fashion relies on FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out!). It seems we buy more clothes per person in the UK than any other country in Europe: 26.7kg p.a. as opposed to an average of 15.6kg per person. In the UK we send 1 million garments to landfill every week. And I am sure you have seen those photos of rivers of garments spread out over the land in many other countries.

Apparently customers tend to treat cheaper clothes as disposable – wearing them only once or twice before dumping them and buying more. Although the popularity of internet sites selling second hand clothes is growing and charity shop finds have largely lost their stigma the fast fashion industry marches on.

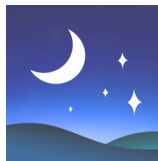
This industry accounts for 10% of carbon emissions. Exploitation of labour is common, with poorly paid workers producing garments often in unsafe conditions. I'm sure you recall the Rana Plaza tragedy when the collapsing building killed 1,134 garment workers in Bangladesh. Production of the fabrics is also extremely problematic. Cotton requires enormous amounts of water (bamboo less so)- it is estimated that 1 cotton T shirt takes 2,700 litres of water in production – growing the cotton, preparing the material, dyeing etc. The toxic water post-production often simply pollutes the local environment. Cotton is often grown in countries where water shortages are a regular problem, exacerbated by climate change of course. However the majority of fast fashion garments are made from synthetics produced from the fossil fuel industry which of course has its own massive drawbacks and recycling these complex materials is often well-nigh impossible.

Some of the solutions are obvious – buy fewer garments of better quality, recycle where possible, check the provenance of the clothes. Look for the Fairtrade mark – guarantees ethical labour and environmental arrangements. Look out for B corps or companies with a proven ethical record – but watch out for greenwashing! - Schein were fined 1 million Euros for misleading environmental claims!

(If we all buy less I'm not sure what happens to the growth whirligig . . . do we all fall off!?) (I can still get Palestinian goods – incredibly)

Marion McAdam 641316 msm316@gmail.com

STARGAZING



To the south the constellation of Boötes the Herdsman, has the fourth brightest star in the whole sky, Arcturus. It is a red giant star and the curve of the handle of the Plough points down to it. Arcturus is at a distance of 40 light years, which means it takes light 40 years to cross space from the star to Earth. As light travels approximately 200 thousand miles in 1 second, Arcturus is at quite a distance! Even so it is one of the closest of the bright stars. The name Arcturus is derived from Greek and means "guardian of the bears". Above and to the left of Arcturus can be seen a semi-circle of stars making up Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown.

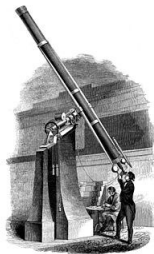
The W-shape of Cassiopeia lies in a north-easterly direction. Leo the Lion, shaped rather like a reversed question mark, can be seen in the west. Cygnus the Swan lies in the eastern sky. It is one of the most distinctive constellations, often nicknamed the Northern Cross.

On the 21st June the Earth's axis is tilted towards the Sun to its greatest extent and the Sun reaches its highest position in the sky at noon. This is the longest day or summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere. In Wales it is called Gŵyl Ifan Ganol Haf (St John's of Midsummer). Great agricultural fairs used to be held at this time, along with merriment and dancing. A bonfire was also kept this night. Its observance finally died out in SE Wales by the end of the 19th century.

Joke: After his first meal on the Moon, the astronaut said the food was good but the restaurant lacked atmosphere!

The Full Moon appears on June 29th.

The great Italian scientist Galileo used his telescope or what was then called an "optic tube" to map the Moon, and estimated the height of its mountains to be roughly 5 miles. This is surprisingly accurate considering his measurements were made 400 years ago.





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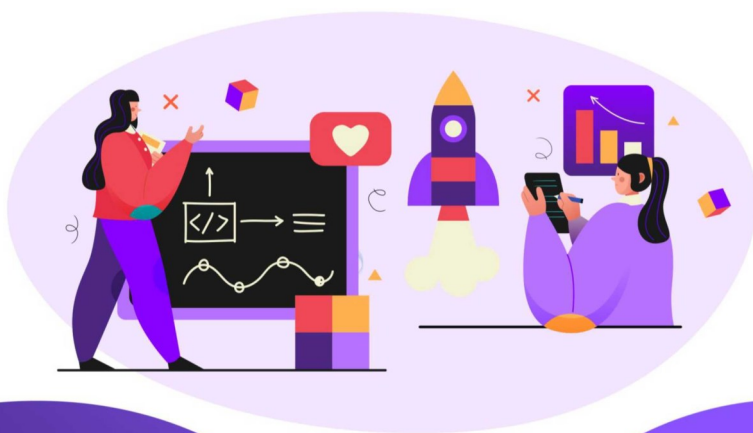
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A photograph showing a large pile of stacked firewood logs, with the ends of the logs visible, showing various wood grain patterns and some bark. The logs are piled closely together, filling the frame.

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LOCAL CONTACTS

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Team Vicar	Fr Michael Gollop	01291 622 064 frmichaelgollop1@gmail.com
Team Vicar	Reverend Philip Averay	01291 620980 revphilipaveray@gmail.com
Associate Priest	Reverend John Waters	07836 585 250
Ministry Area Leader's Warden	Ros Downes	
Ministry Area People's Warden	David Carne	david-carne@outlook.com 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
Church Warden	Wendy Montague	01291 329 481
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
	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
Gary Mitchell	07979 913555	gary.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
Sophie Todd	07766 524709	sophie.t@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
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Earlswood and Newchurch Ward

Ian Martin	07467 176977	ian.m@shirenewtoncc.org.uk
Geoff Todd (Vice Chair)	07855 301806	geoff.t@shirenewtoncc.org.uk

MCC for Shirenewton

Louise Brown 07598 979719 louisebrown@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Member of Parliament

Catherine Ann Fookes catherine.fookes.mp@parliament.uk

*If you know of any changes or omissions please contact the Editor Bill Clark
Telephone 01291 641783 or email parishmagshirenewton@gmail.com*

Members of the Senedd

Donna Cushing MS
Peter Fox MS
Laura Anne Jones MS
Matthew Jones MS
Lynne Neagle MS
Stephen Senior MS

donna.cushing-ms@senedd.wales
peter.fox-ms@senedd.wales
laura.jones-ms@senedd.wales
matthew.jones-as@senedd.cymru
lynne.neagle-ms@senedd.wales
stephen.senior-ms@senedd.wales

Police and SPCO Contacts

In an emergency

999;

To report an incident to the Police

111

To contact the Local SPCO

Toby Wall

[email:Toby.Wall@gwent.police.uk](mailto:Toby.Wall@gwent.police.uk)

Other Local Organisations

Beavers

Julie Hitchcock

01291 650548

Church Fete

John Burrows

shirenewtonfete@gmail.com

Earlswood Hope

Mr Raymond Jeremiah

01291 641726

Earlswood & Newchurch West Memorial Hall

Chairman
Treasurer

Becca Allen
Geoff Todd

07889762840
07855301806

chair@earlnew.com

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

beverlylyndsay@btinternet.com

Recreation Hall booking

Beryl Saysell 01291 641637

saysellberyl@gmail.com

St Peters Church Newchurch

Enid Heritage

01291 622708

enidheritage@gmail.com

Shirenewton Local History Society

Dorothy Brabon 01291 641376

brabonn1@hotmail.com

Gwent Wildlife Trust Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Meadows (previously SAMFAL)

01600 740600

Shirenewton Preschool

Morgan Baker

morgan@shirenewtonpreschool.com

Shirenewton Primary School

Mr Nick Penn, Head Teacher 01291 641774

shirenewtonprimary@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Shirenewton Toddler Group

Sarah Parker

07971 783434

Shirenewton Tennis Association

Andy Orrell

shirenewtontennis@gmail.com

Fairtrade

Marion McAdam

01291 641316

m316@gmail.com

Womens Institute (WI)

Angela Gray (President)

angela.deepwier@btopenworld.com

Jane Butterworth (Secretary) 01291 641704.

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