

FROM THE VICARAGE Julian E LI White

Dear People of the Parish,

Book early to avoid disappointment!!

Yes, submit your name NOW to secure a place at the next act of worship to be held in your parish church! Contact the Churchwarden without delay to claim a seat for this exciting venture! Hurry – this opportunity is certain to be in demand!

Ok, so perhaps I exaggerate a little.

Nevertheless, it is true that the Church in Wales (blame them!) in their guidelines recommend this course of action in light of the recent health-scare situation due to Covid 19. It must be the first time that such a decree has been issued. I feel confident that the quality of preaching is somehow involved!

Whilst most people, as it were, endure the sermon as part of the deal of having their church open, it is uplifting to find the ancient foundation available once again. As I have said before, this is the place where so many of heightened human emotions – both depths of sorrow and heights of joy – find their focus. The nature of the building allows for a bitter-sweet environment. It is a spiritual home for many of us and it is good, once again, to feel the certainty of its purpose surrounding us. It is, as I believe the poet Philip Larkin reminds us, the place where 'all our compulsions meet'.

And so the churches in our group are reopening one by one. It has been something of a 'suck it and see' exercise working in conjunction with Diocesan mandates and assistance. At the time of writing, congregational singing and over-long eulogies are discouraged whilst frequent handwashing and social distancing, to name but a couple of innovations, have been introduced.

As a result, Shirenewton opened on July 26th by offering an unadorned Matins to be followed a week later with a more substantial service high-

Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in April:

- 1. Cynthia Smith
- 2. Lisa Valiant
- 3. Sandra White
- 4. Jenny Millar

lighted by a trumpet solo from the adjoining church room. A week after that, we were able to deliver a revised service of the Holy Eucharist including music played on an electronic key-board. It is heartening to report that Gilly Lambert has also officiated in the revised schedule.

In like manner, St. Pierre reopened in August and the first Eucharist service is scheduled for the 30th August. I believe that this is fully booked, but you are most welcome to contact Mrs Merran Higgins regarding future services to secure a place. We are anticipating that the next service will be on the 13th September. Special thanks again must be extended to Merran Higgins and Jen and Mark Marendaz for ensuring that the building was fit for purpose.

Mathern and Mounton are well advanced with their compliance of ecclesiastical and secular regulations and intend to welcome worshippers in the near future. All of the churches have been affected by limitations imposed on the number who wish to attend and I thank you for your understanding in the circumstances.

What other news? Well, obviously, a raft of social events needed to be put on hold and these include concerts, fetes and the majority of other traditional fund-raisers.

While funeral services have continued – albeit in a substantially modified manner – most of the wedding services have been postponed until next year. Virtually all the couples concerned, understandably, were not keen to jump through hoops in order to meet the constricting regulations presently in force.



Just a note, else it is overlooked in the present restrictions, that Mathern Church benefited, by a sum in the region of £1200 from the 50/50 Club, earlier this year. Once again, sincere appreciation is extended to all whose generosity made this possible.

I am glad to report that our respected minister, Nesta Marendaz, has now been transferred to Chepstow Community Hospital which has seen an improvement in her health.

It is also pleasing to report that our gifted organist, Dorothy Harries, has made a welcome return to her home following her operation.

Both Nesta and Dorothy are remembered warmly in our prayers.

Also in our prayers at this time is Jessie Keevil of Mounton. After indifferent health she is now a resident in a Surrey care home near to where her daughter resides. She will be sorely missed having been part of the congregation for over forty years.

Another Mounton resident to whom we are indebted, is Malcolm Lane, who – without being approached – stepped in to cut the churchyard grass. We are most grateful to him.

With every blessing, in what I hope will be a more tranquil future.

With all good wishes,

Julian E LI White (Rector & Vicar)

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Shirenewton And Mynydd Bach iLlumination Extravaganza is back for 2020!

Because, <u>let's</u> face it, we could all use something cheerful and uplifting to look forward to right now. <u>So</u> let's cut to the chase, here's everything you need to know for ShAMBLE 2020...

What is this 'ShAMBLE' thing again?

Shirenewton and Mynydd Bach iLlumination Extravaganza (or ShAMBLE to its friends) is an annual event in which the residents of the village are invited to decorate their windows at dusk over one weekend in October, with the aim of creating a spectacular outdoor gallery for everyone to enjoy. 2020 will be its third glorious year!

When is ShAMBLE 2020?

The evenings of Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th October – starting around 6.30pm. Get it in your diary!

Is there any charge to take part?

Nope, not a penny. It's free to take part in and free to walk around. The ShAMBLE crew are very grateful to Shirenewton Community Council for giving us a small grant

which allows us to cover the handful of costs that we incur.



Follow us on social media!

Instagram: shirenewton_shamble

Twitter: @ShireShAMBLE

Facebook: Shirenewton, Mynydd Bach and Earlswood Community Page

more about Shambles overleaf....

Is there a theme?

Yes, but it's completely optional, there to give you a little bit of inspiration; if you'd rather do your own thing that's fine – anything goes! This year we ran a poll on Facebook and Twitter to choose the theme, and the theme for 2020 is...





I'm interested – what do I need to do to take part?

If you'd like to decorate your window, that's great. So that we can include you on our map please follow this link and complete the very simple form:

www.shirenewtonshamble.org.uk

You don't have to decide what to do yet, just let us know you're interested. If you'd like to decorate a window but where you live isn't suitable, that's fine too. Perhaps you'd like to make a display in one of the public windows in the village or help someone to decorate their window. It's a great way to get to know people and we'd love to hear from you. Email us at shirenewtonshamble@gmail.com

Will there be a party at the Rec this year?

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic and the need to keep everybody safe, the party at the Rec is looking pretty unlikely – but we'll make a final decision as close to the time as possible.

Where can I get craft materials and ideas for decorating my window?

While we won't be holding community crafting sessions this year (because of that pesky virus) you will still do our best to supply craft materials to anyone who'd like them



and we're hoping to post a few videos on social media with ideas and tips for creating your masterpiece. Keep an eye on our social media channels for more information.

Let's make ShAMBLE 2020 the best year yet. CRAFT ~ CREATIVITY ~ COMMUNITY

Jude, Paula and Hazel - a.k.a. the ShAMBLE crew xxx

Shirenewton Community Council

Extracts from the minutes of meetings on 6th July and 6th August 2020

Councillors were sorry to accept the resignation of Mrs Jane Smith-Haddon from 2nd June, and to learn that Councillor Ken Morton passed away on 24th June. Members had been pleased to see Councillor Morton when he attended the June meeting remotely. He was the longest standing member of the Council and will be greatly missed.

At the August meeting Councillors were pleased to welcome three newly co-opted members to the Council, being Councillor Eleanor Chapman, Councillor Keith Dunn OBE and Councillor Elizabeth Wixcey, all representing the Shirenewton ward. Council also accepted the resignation of Councillor Jayne McKenna from the Mynyddbach ward and co-opted her to the current vacancy in the Earlswood ward. This leaves the Council with one co-opted vacancy in the Earlswood ward and a vacancy to be advertised by Mon CC in the Mynyddbach ward.

Please see list of contacts at the back of the magazine for Councillors details.

Council considered the following planning applications (July):

1. DM/2020/00645 6 Tan House Court, Shirenewton Demolition of small side extension. Construction of extensions on front and side elevations and internal elevations.

Council noted that whilst the new gable roof is to be tiled to match the existing roof it is unclear what the new front elevation materials are to be; the drawings imply some sort of cladding to the new bedroom section and obscure glazing to the front door section. This would not however deviate significantly from the appearance of the other dwellings in Tan House Court, and the applicant site sits outside the conservation area. It was felt that the proposal was not out of keeping with the existing street scene and the recommendation was for approval.

2. DM/2020/00624 Woodland View, Old Road, Penycaemawr Proposed single storey extensions to provide additional bedroom. Council noted the previous planning applications for this property which enlarged it from one, to two and now to three bedrooms. Whilst the significant enlargement would ordinarily be a concern to this Council, the proposal is both modest and sympathetic and has minimal impact on the local scene. Council also noted that there is adequate on-site parking space for vehicles.

Council recommended a planning condition that Footpath 184 which runs through the site is kept open and accessible to the public at all times.

August

DM/2020/00712 Field 2140, Weyloed Lane, Mynyddbach Enlarge field entrance

Council noted that Weyloed Lane is a residential road in Mynyddbach which exits onto the main B4235 just above and on the opposite side of the road from the Carpenters Arms. The B road has a series of bends and is subject to a 40 mph speed limit, it is marked with double white lines and the road is used by all manner of traffic including bicycles and motorcycles. Visibility for vehicles pulling out of Weyloed Lane is already compromised.

The application site is the banked field adjacent to Weyloed Lane and the main road. The applicant seeks consent to replace a pre-existing 2m (2.5m?) farm gate close to the road edge with a 3.6m gate set back 10m from the road with a hard standing opening to 5m at the roadside intended to allow a vehicle and trailer to pull off the road, and to include a further area of hard standing to allow the vehicle to turn around on site so as to exit forwards. Little existing use has been made of the field in recent times and the development has already commenced.

Footpath 17 crosses the main road at that point and runs through the field. The position of the footpath is at variance with the applicant's plan and we await clarification from MCC of the official route. The applicant will need a footpath diversion order if the correct route is obstructed by the development, and the application will need to be advertised locally.

Six neighbours have opposed the application principally on the grounds that road safety is compromised. One neighbour further comments that the entrance to the field currently functions with 2.5 metre farm gate, that it is no different to any other field entrance in size terms, that to move a little further back would cause no issue but it would seem that to request a 5m gate only implies another function is required for the location, that the applicant managed to get an extremely large caterpillar digger in to the area and commence a large area of development and has moved rocks and broken areas of trees which have preservation orders on them.

Councillors recognised that the proposal to allow vehicles to pull off the road and rejoin in a forward facing direction may not be a sufficient highway safety consideration, to outweigh the potential for an increase in

vehicle movements. There is further lack of clarity on the footpath route and trees on the site safeguarded by preservation orders.

The recommendation was for refusal on the grounds that:

- 1. the application does not address the road safety concerns of the neighbours , therefore a Highways report should be sought.
- 2. the official route of the footpath has not yet been fully defined but on any view the route is crossed by the proposed works and there are no proposals as to how the footpath is to be accommodated.

The observations of the Footpaths Officer should be sought

- 3. the applicant has failed to show that there are no relevant tree preservation orders.
- 4. the hedgerows that were removed for construction of the access have not been restored. The observations of the Tree Officer should be sought on points 3 &4.

DM/2020/00881 Bushes Farm, Chapel Road, Earlswood Modification or Removal of Condition - Removal of condition 1 from planning consent 2314 (Date of Decision: 01/09/1975):- Occupation of the proposed bungalow shall be limited to a person employed or last employed wholly or mainly locally in agriculture as defined in Section 290(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, or a dependent of such person residing with him.

Council noted that the site consists of a dilapidated 3 bed bungalow (approx 100sqm) left unoccupied for some 11 years. The application asserts that the property has been on the market for over a year and interest has come from buyers who in the main cannot satisfy the agricultural occupation condition (AOC) and the two who could, did not make an offer. The applicant has not been able to secure a loan to renovate the bungalow because of the lack of a market for AOC properties.

There are a number of planning policies and requirements to be satisfied for MCC to discharge the AOC. There is now an enlarged definition of agriculture to include rural enterprise but no buyers have come forward who would satisfy this.

The vast majority of the land around the bungalow is designated as a site of importance for nature conservation (SINC), identified as such due to its biodiversity value and rare neutral and marshy grassland habitats. This means the land cannot be used for crops and only very limited grazing so any AOC occupier would have to work elsewhere in the locality.

Affordable housing is an alternative but MCC has to consider AOC. The applicant states that local (ie across Monmouthshire) established social housing landlords were approached but none have shown interest largely because of the unsuitability of the property to conversion to affordable housing standards and the high cost of renovation.

Councillors were aware that the 1975 planning consent with the AOC was an exception to MCC's policy not to permit residential building in the countryside because the need for an agricultural worker outweighed the rural impact. Given that the applicant has demonstrated there is no agricultural or rural enterprise need, the logic is that the bungalow should be removed and the land restored to its original state, and therefore be compliant with the SINC.

There are a couple of barns next door, also owned by the applicant which have consent for conversion to a residence. This council objected to that application as the proposal was bigger than the original footprint; the barn is in an isolated position with poor access; the path to it would be inadequate and any upgrade may have privacy issues with the neighbouring properties (ie the bungalow the subject of this application and the old farmhouse which also has consent for refurbishment and enlargement). Councillors were further concerned at the loss of habitat for bats and barn owls and, as much vegetation would need to be removed, the potential loss of local flora and fauna. Another important concern was the detrimental impact on local infrastructure that every additional dwelling brings.

The recommendation was for refusal because:

- The 1975 planning consent was an exception to policy to permit accommodation for an agricultural worker and the applicant has shown there is no need for such accommodation nor for a rural enterprise and there is no viable affordable housing.
- The two adjoining sites already have residential planning consent and allowing an additional dwelling would create overdevelopment of Bushes Farm.
- In the event that MCC removes the AOC, it should be replaced with a requirement that occupation be restricted to inhabitants with a strong local connection.

Monthly police report -

<u>Crime - 29/07 – Burglary in the Shirenewton area – shed break.</u>

Public Safety — A few calls from people being scammed over the phone across South Monmouthshire. The police cannot stress enough the importance of not giving personal information over the phone. If you

have any concerns regarding your bank account being hacked, or money supposedly being removed from your account. Hang up the call and ring your bank directly for advice. Never given information to someone who rings you out of the blue. For more advice please contact our cyber Team at cybercrimeunit@gwent.pnn.police.uk or check the Action Fraud website at www.actionfraud.police.uk or ring them on 0300 123 2040 if you think you have been scammed.

<u>Operations</u> – The police continued with high visibly patrols in the Wentwood area every weekend for off road bikes. If you see any please get any Index Numbers and descriptions, if they are arriving in vans/ trailers or just coming from local areas.

Anti-Social Behaviour

A lot of the Anti-social Behaviour calls have been Covid-19 related and the police were warning, educating and issuing fixed penalties where appropriate, as well as off road bikes in the Wentwood Area.

Other items of interest

Responses to information on the LDP candidate sites – consultation has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Council will revisit in September/October once consultation period recommences.

Garden Waste Collection

A booking system for the Household Refuse Sites is still in place in order to manage the requirement for social distancing but the requirement for this to be just those with hazardous waste has been removed: Household Waste Recycling Information on booking a slot:

https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/household-waste-recycling-centres/

Wall at Tredegar Arms Car Park – concern was expressed from a local resident at the dangerous condition of the wall, the Community Council has a Land Registry map which proves ownership and has written to the TA twice drawing their attention to its need for repair, also to the owners, the EI Group plc at Solihull, with no response. Council agreed that the issue be passed on to the Highways Dept at Mon CC for progression.

Dates of future meetings are Monday 7th September and Monday 5rd October at 7.00 pm. Future meetings will be held on their usual monthly date and, if possible they will be held in the Recreation Hall and open to the public, but if government restrictions are not lifted they will

be by remote attendance. If open to the public, the September meeting will also be include the Annual Meeting.

Find more information in draft copies of the minutes on the Community Council notice boards. Previous, approved minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's website www.shirenewtoncc.org.uk

Contact the Clerk to the Community Council - Mrs Hilary Counsell Tel: 01291 421307 E-mail: Shirenewtoncc@gmail.com



SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1090167

Before the corona virus lock down the society had planned to install a plaque to commemorate *Martha Gelhorn, journalist/war correspondent,* who had lived for many years at Kilgwrrwg.

Of course this was delayed because of the virus but now we are back on track and have applied for a Purple Plaque to be installed, the purple plaque comes under the auspices of the Welsh Government and it is to commemorate women who have made worthwhile contributions during their lifetime. The plaques are coloured purple because it is one of the colours of the suffragettes.

Please see below a short biographical account of Martha Gelhorn, she was a remarkable woman lived in many parts of the world and lived in Kilgwrrwg for 14 years. This account of her life has been written by Nancy Cavill who has done considerable research into her remarkable career.

Shirenewton Local History Society, together with the Purple Plaques campaign which aims to mark the achievements of Wales's remarkable women, plans to unveil a plaque to one of the 20th century's greatest war reporters, Martha Gellhorn, later this year at her former home near Shirenewton.

Martha Gellhorn lived for 14 years in Yew Tree Cottage (she named it Cat's Cradle during her time living there), in Kilgwrrwg between Devauden and Shirenewton from 1980 to 1994.

Gellhorn was a renowned war reporter and journalist who was once married to Ernest Hemmingway but is best known for her own work as a fearless, independent-minded journalist. She was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1930 and died, aged 89, on February 17, 1998 in London.

She covered the great conflicts of the 20th century - the Spanish Civil War, the Normandy landings in World War Two, the aftermath of the war in Hitler's concentration camps, Vietnam, the Middle East and carried on reporting well into her 80s.

She made Britain her home after World War Two. Her connection with Wales is little known but she came to live in Cat's Cradle in 1980 while based in London. The cottage was her 'country retreat' but a place where she wrote every day and also developed a passion for gardening and cooking. She took regular exercise in her small, indoor heated swimming pool.

She only reluctantly gave up living at the cottage, aged 84, after saying she was too old to 'haul dustbins up the drive'. She is quoted as saying, "I've loved my time in Wales; the people are the friendliest in the world but the weather is generally filthy. I want to spend more time where it is warmer."

In the twilight of her career when asked by the BBC to report on any subject she wished to for a new series of foreign writers' views of Britain, Gellhorn, then 88, chose to revisit the scene of her last major piece of front-line reporting - in the village of Newbridge, near Risca in the Gwent Valleys, where she watched the Miners' Strike of 1984-85 unfold.

Gellhorn reported on the Miners' Strike for *The Guardian* and described being driven around the Valleys in a jolting, beaten-up old van talking to miners and their wives, watching charity workers prepare meagre food parcels for their families, witnessing at first hand how the then Prime Minister's determination to defeat the union was destroying a community's way of life.

Some of the most memorable reports of her career were during World War Two when she was the only women reporter to land on the D-Day beaches and one of very few women to report from former German concentration camps. The scenes she saw in Dauchau were deeply etched in her memory forever after.

She later covered the Vietnam War and the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. She continued to work and travel the globe into her 80s. Her war reporting always focused on telling the stories of the victims of war – the displaced, the refugees, the tortured – rather than the politics.

As well as her war reporting, Gellhorn also wrote five novels, 14 novellas and two short story collections. The Martha Gellhorn prize for journalism is awarded annually to journalists whose work has appeared in reputable English-language publications.

The society will be hoping to plan a fund raising event as soon as the Covid restriction ease.

FUTURE COMMUNITY EVENTS

All planned events are, unfortunately, very much subject to the progress of the coronavirus-covid19. As far as we are aware, all future events have been postponed and will take place at a later date, and some may be cancelled. We have been in discussions with Mark Smith from the Antiques Roadshow and he has suggested that we postpone his talk on the Victoria Cross, Scheduled for Friday 9th October and re-arrange a date when we know we will be allowed to use the Church Room.

REGULAR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CHURCH

A number of people have recently asked how they can make regular contributions to the church when perhaps they are unable to attend e.g. because they are shielding, or because they prefer not to use cash or cheques. There are two easy ways in which you can make a regular financial contribution to the church:

- 1: The Church in Wales runs a "Gift Direct" scheme which collects your contribution by direct debit on a monthly basis. The scheme also allows you to Gift Aid your donation so that the church can claim a basic rate tax refund, making your money go even further. Details of the scheme can be found here: https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/1798-Gift-Direct-English.pdf. Alternatively please contact me and I will email the leaflet to you.
- 2: You can set up a standing order with your bank. Please contact me and I will let you have the bank details. You then need to contact your bank to set up the standing order.

Graham Lambert

PCC Treasurer e: <u>glambert123@googlemail.com</u> t:01291 641175



Gardening Corner

This year's 'mid-summer break' from the Parish Mag seems to have dragged by. Due no doubt to the fact that we have continued shielding and so apart from a quick weekly shop for me when it was quiet in the evening, and a single trip out to celebrate our 42nd wedding anniversary (a stroll around the grounds at Tyntesfield, iust outside Bristol), we have been nowhere else. Shielding has ended, and the assistant head gardener has been summonsed back to work, a situation that is causing some considerable trauma and is no doubt being repeated in many households around the country. We hope that everyone has remained safe during this difficult time and that you have not been touched by too much sadness in your greater family. We count our blessings at times like this, that we live in the countryside and have a very large garden. It has meant we have always been busy, and have actually managed to start a very long list of jobs - you know - the ones that you have been meaning to do for a long time but never seem to ever find the time to do them. There are still plenty to do, so hopefully now we are inspired, the work will continue until there is no list, but as always, it seems as one is knocked off the list another one or two are added on the end as you discovered something else that needs your attention!

Sales of seeds and gardening paraphernalia apparently went through the roof during the lockdown, which hopefully means that many people who had a garden, but did very little with it, have at least experimented with doing their own thing and have enjoyed the experience enough to continue into the future. Unfortunately, because we are working with (or should that be against!) nature, it sometimes isn't easy. After over 60 years of gardening I have learnt that you have to accept the failures, put it down to experience and start again next year. When I first started gardening in my dad's garden and allotment (in London), there never seemed to be so many pest problems and especially no problems with the weather. Whether this is just my failing memory, or it is a fact, that things weren't so difficult in 'them days'. I suspect the latter, as we always went on holiday Wimbledon fortnight and we (nearly) always had good weather. You had a few days of temperatures in the 70's and then a good thunderstorm(s) to settle everything down again and give the ground a good watering. These days the weather is a major problem as it swings wildly from one extreme to the other and this year has been no exception. The amount of watering required this year has been well above normal, and I'm dreading the metered water bill arriving any day soon, with the dreaded wording "You owe us £xxxx"! I always wonder why the water bill has to be so sympathetically worded and it always conjures up the impression that you have to 'pay up or else'. This always strikes me as a bit odd for a 'not for profit' company. Having said that, I'm sure if they were far more efficient than they are, they could threaten us with a much cheaper bill and still not make a profit! Testimony for which is the reservoir at Wentwood which they emptied and have seemingly been working on now for five years, with still no definite date when they may start filling it back up again – although I haven't been that way for a long time, so maybe they have actually started that process now – but then again maybe not.

As well as the weather being a foe, gardeners are faced with a range of pests and diseases which can be enough to break even the keenest gardener at times. Most of my pests have two or four legs, although we also do get the usual problems with slugs and snails. Each year it seems to be one or the other and thankfully not all at the same time. In the past we have had endless problems with squirrels, usually biting holes in fruit cages and strawberry covers and then destroying the crop. I always control the numbers whenever possible, but they soon get replaced by others, so it is a never-ending war of attrition. I thought that this year was going to be exceptionally bad for such damage, but so far this has not proved to be the case. They have started on the apples and pears, but by far the biggest problem for these fruits are jays and carrion crows. These have an awareness and intelligence much higher than squirrels, which is why I guess they are so successful. They don't just peck at the apples, but peck at the branches too so that they shatter and then break, meaning that they don't have to expend energy trying to hang onto a branch. They then simply stand on the ground and help themselves. Annoyingly, the squirrels have taken my four walnuts. These were still green and very hard, so hopefully they choked on them whilst trying to find something worth eating in the middle! Mice, voles and occasionally rats can also do some serious damage some years and with one deaf cat, but both with dementia (they are 18 years old), the toll on such pests is never going to be high. They have always been good, but have had their day. We desperately need a couple of farm cats to control numbers, but Covid put an end to this. Time to pick this thought up again, I think. This year the problem was unexpected in that by far the biggest problem has been down to moles. They have been everywhere, virtually destroying my new area of grass (I won't call it a lawn), and doing untold damage in the flower borders and vegetable beds. They may not eat anything that we grow - unlike the other pests, but the damage can still be immense as they undermine plants, which in hot dry weather then collapse as their roots have been damaged or they have literally been lifted out of the ground. It took a huge amount of time to push plants back down, and to water enough to keep them growing and to re-establish, only for the mole to come back again. Carrots and other root crops that should be long and straight, are now two or three inches long where the root has hit the moles tunnel and can't grow any further. They still taste as good, but preparing two carrots for dinner is a lot easier than seven or eight! It is impossible to control moles in loose soil, but in the end, I did find some of the more permanent 'runs' and the level of damage did start to fall, but is still ongoing.

It has been a really funny year success wise. As usual some of the seeds I buy are for 'showing' purposes — so very much the biggest and best looking, but of course all vegetable and flower shows have been cancelled this year. Having

bought and sown most of this seed early, the produce continued to grow despite Covid and so I now have a large number (of very large) show onions, one of which would last the normal family a good week! Fortunately, there was time not to plant runner beans in the usual quantities and this seed can be saved for next year but then maybe things still won't be back to normal. We have had copious amounts of other vegetables with calabrese and cauliflowers doing well. Similarly, top fruit has also done well and blueberries, blackberries and raspberries have all helped to fill our three freezers up. We try to freeze or preserve as much as we can, but already have a good stock of pickles and preserves. Jam has never been high on our list, but a simple recipe for blueberry jam sparked a trial. This can be made in a large saucepan and makes about three jars a time - but only takes about 25 minutes. We have another recipe which does not use sugar but rather a small addition of a gum used in gluten free cooking, which achieves the set required, but this has yet to be tested. We have made our usual damson and cherry gin, and a good crop of blackcurrants led to an experiment in making cassis (crushed blackcurrants and vodka). All in all, it sounds like we could be having some very cosy nights in front of the fire this winter! We have also had a lot of success in the cut flower department as well and the house (as well as some of our neighbours) has been heady with the smell of sweet peas or very colourful with alstroemarias and gladioli in abundance. The sweet peas in particular have been amazing this year and never before have we had to use a step ladder to cut them for the vase! The scent has almost been overpowering at times with up to five or six vases filled with some 200 to 300 blooms.

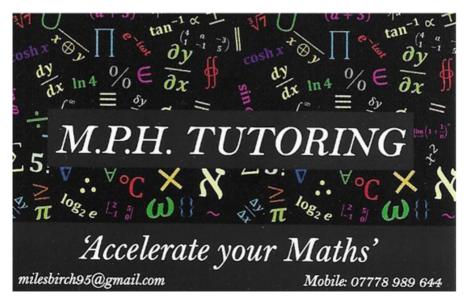
As always, there have been a few failures. Some of the greens have simply bolted and gone to seed due to the excessive heat on occasions, including many of the quick growing 'catch' crops. A noticeable exception to this was the Swiss chard, which has done really well. The spinach, pak choi and stir-fry calabrese mixes have all been condemned to the compost heap. I tried some new tomato varieties this year but wished I hadn't. One lot has grown well, but the rest which we would normally use for cooking – especially passata sauce have been pretty woeful. We have manged to keep ourselves supplied with a cucumber throughout summer, but the two plants I have must be the sickliest looking that I have ever grown. I am still nursing these on – but only just. The one lot of tomatoes will I think be pulled up and chucked on the compost heap as well as these have tonnes of top growth and no tomatoes. I've really struggled to know what to do with these. Just as well we still have a supply of frozen sauce from last year which is still good for cooking with.

In much the same vain, the bees have been very much 'up and down'. Pretty well all came through last winter, and some hives had loads of bees to start the year —

in most cases too many, as the first warm weather in May saw several hives swarming. They then settled down, but more started to swarm in June. I managed to collect most of the swarms, but as usual, the odd one had different ideas and chose to fly off elsewhere despite having the use of an empty hive with new wax. We have a few hives which as usual are struggling for various reasons. Two of these on inspection had gone gueen-less. I've tried to sort this out, but the weather has meant I have not been able to go back to check if I have been successful or not. Unfortunately, bees and thunder do not go together well due to the higher air pressure which makes them very fractious - so best left well alone if you don't want to upset them and end up being a pin cushion full of bee stings. We did take some early honey but this proved to be oilseed rape based and set like glue, so difficult to deal with. We've been lucky in the past in that no-one grew this crop anywhere near to us, but guess it had to happen eventually. The later honey was our usual flower, tree and fruit-based product, which is much easier to deal with and tastes fantastic. This is currently being bottled, and it looks like we will have around 150 - 170lbs of honey to find a home for, so don't forget where we are if you are a honey fan!

Unfortunately, the weather has turned bad in the last few weeks and I need to check the bees to make sure that they have enough in the way of supplies. But the rain and wind has made this impossible. First job on the 'to do' list as soon as we get a reasonable day.

Please continue to keep yourselves and your families safe as and, as always, happy gardening until next time. Steve and Felicity Hunt.





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Contact Jackie Broughton (01291 641797)



BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Shirenewton Bible Study Group is a friendly group who meet on one evening a month in the home of one of our very hospitable members to study the bible.

We focus to the readings from the lectionary for the Sunday preceding our meeting, so you can come along at any time, you won't have missed anything! Although many benefit from attending regularly, there is no obligation to do so and many members come when they can.

The Bible Study Group will not be meeting during the current coronavirus-covid19 outbreak, but will start again as soon as possible

If you would like to join the group or to be kept informed of the location of meetings, please ask to be added to our distribution group by contacting me via lem.shirenewton@gmail.com or calling 01291 641175.



MUSICAL DIRECTOR: GRAHAM BULL

CCS is affiliated to Ty Cerdd & Making Music, and is a Registered Charity (no. 112798)

www.chepstowchoralsociety.org.uk

CHEPSTOW CHORAL SOCIETY UPDATE

Like every other choral society or singing group, CCS has inevitably been out of action singing-wise since mid- March. At the time of writing we cannot say when rehearsals will resume.

CV19 has devastated the Performing Arts sector, with musicians, orchestras and particularly choral groups very badly affected. It is good to now see that small groups (6 persons) are to be allowed to sing in church services with stringent social distancing, other measures etc - so still a long way from 65+ singers together!

CCS committee has been meeting on-line and sent newsletters to our members. We are pursuing the possibility of trying some "Zoom rehearsing" in the autumn, although we know that is no substitute for normal serious rehearsals.

Importantly, on resumption, we will be actively promoting a membership recruitment campaign and would welcome anyone reading this now who would like to join us, or learn about what is involved, to make contact via the details below.

CCS is hopeful that we will be able to find a way of presenting some carol singing for the people of Chepstow and surrounding areas in December – although this is <u>very</u> unlikely to be our usual "Christmas Music" presentation!

Please watch this space for more news and log on to our website for updated information, contact details, or telephone the number below ----Thank you

Marjorie Duerden – on behalf of CCS. Tel 01291 623310

www.chepstowchoralsociety.org.uk

FAIRTRADE NEWS AUGUST 2020

Wine – always a delight and perhaps too accessible a solace in these trying times!

11 million litres of Fairtrade wine were sold in the UK in 2013. 50 manufacturers and plantations employ



5,000 farmers who enjoy the benefits of Fairtrade production: a fair wage, reasonable working conditions and a chance to improve their standard of living and create a sustainable environment. Fairtrade wine is produced in South Africa, Argentina, Chile and Lebanon. It is easy to understand that workers under apartheid were generally not encouraged to improve their working conditions and although there was a long history of cooperatives in Chile many of these groups went bankrupt under the Pinochet regime.

It is encouraging to note that Fairtrade wine is available in many well-known supermarkets: Waitrose, M&S, Morrisons, Sainsbury, Tesco and of course the champion of Fairtrade and all things ethical - the Co-op! There are of course many other suppliers. Unfortunately not me!

I seem to spend my life trying to persuade people to buy Fairtrade beyond tea, coffee, sugar, chocolate and bananas – rice, pasta, fruit, nuts, biscuits, cereal, cosmetics, clothes, gold, etc etc! There is so much on offer now. I CAN supply quite a bit via Traidcraft, but do look at Ethical Superstore for a large range of products AND have a look at Fairtrade wine when you next dare to venture out shopping!

Marion McAdam 641 316 msm316 gmail.com



MARTYN COLE

Last week I heard that Martyn Cole had died. Martyn was responsible for reinstalling the bells in Shirenewton Church. In the 1990's grants became available to get the church bells all across the country ringing to celebrate the dawning of the New Millennium. Martyn had spotted this funding opportunity in one of the broadsheets and he worked tirelessly to get our bells in a ring-able condition so that we too could ring-in the New Century. Our tower had long been recorded in Dove's Bellringers Guide as un-ringable but Martyn was determined. He applied for the grant and Shirenewton became the first church in Wales to receive this Millennium Funding. Some of the bells had to be sent off to Whitechapel to be re-tuned and it was quite exciting watching them being lowered to the ground floor and carted off by lorry to the London Foundry. Then the frame up in the belfry had to be repaired, strengthened and made good and this was all Martyn's work. He drew up the plans and managed the project from start to finish.

And of course, he didn't just project- manage the reinstalling of the bells, he organised a recruitment drive to find and to train local people to ring those bells. I was one of those recruited. And I remember that Millennium night - 6 older ringers rang out the old millennium and then the 6 younger ringers rang in the new. It was very moving. And our band has gone from strength to strength.

Martyn was also an accomplished musician and an amazing organist. He played here in our church as well as in St Mary Redcliffe Bristol. Music was hugely important to him, and it was wonderful listening to him play. Thank you, Martyn, you have left a lasting legacy. Glynis MacDonald





MIKE BARNES

We were very sorry to hear that Mike Barnes has died. He had lived in the village in the 80s and had been a founding member of SODS (The Shirenewton Operatic and Dramatic Society). Then, some while later, he and Anna moved away and the SODS 'rested'.

In the year 2000 , SODS were reformed to put a 'one-off' panto to celebrate the Millennium and when, a year or two later, SODS were short of a Dame, Mike who had moved back into the area was tracked down and asked to step into her shoes which he did with aplomb and panache. Mike was a natural on the stage — in whatever part he was cast and he often stole the show. He went on to direct several SODS pantos. I remember he created the best ever SODS opening number for Aladdin with 'Steam Heat', complete with travelling washing lines full of the Dame's capacious underwear, revolving washing machine drums, bursts of steam and of course, a well-scrubbed cast. Mike just knew how panto worked!

Music was central to his life and he was a stalwart member of the Chepstow Male Voice Choir. At his funeral, at the Forest of Dean Crematorium, because no singing is permitted, we listened to some taped music from the Chepstow Male Voice Choir. He was singing tenor section. It was very poignant. He will be hugely missed, by his family and his friends alike. Glynis MacDonald

Nerys's Natty Nosh

Spanish tapas are Spain's signature snacks and small plates. They range from a simple bowl of olives or a wedge of cheese with bread to a recipe of shrimp and garlic or a slow-cooked beef dish. They also vary by region—you can travel throughout Spain and experience many different offerings of tapas.

PATATAS BRAVAS

Ingredients

is one of the classic Spanish tapas dishes and is served in bars all over Spain. Fried potatoes are covered in a tomato-based sauce which has a slight bite from Tabasco, hence the name bravas, which means "fierce" in Spanish.

For the sauce

3 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
227g can chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp tomato purée
2 tsp sweet paprika
good pinch chilli powder
chopped fresh parsley
to garnish

For the potatoes

4 medium potatoes cut into small cubes 2 tbsp olive oil



Method

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Pat the potatoes dry with kitchen paper, then tip into a roasting tin and toss in the olive oil and some seasoning. Roast for 40-50 mins until crisp and golden.

OR USE AN AIR FRYER.

Use half the amount of oil and cook the potatoes until light and crispy. 15/20 minutes.

Sweat the onion for about 5 mins until softened. Add the garlic, chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, sweet paprika, chilli powder, and a pinch of salt, then bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Lower to a simmer and cook for 10 mins until pulpy. Tip the potatoes into serving dishes and spoon over the tomato sauce. Sprinkle with some fresh parsley to serve.

NECTARINE AND HAM

Ingredients

1 juicy nectarine small packet of serrano ham or bacon Basil

Method

Slice the nectarine.

Wrap a basil leaf and a slice of Serrano ham/ or bacon around each peach slice and put a small cocktail stick through each.



SMOKED PAPRIKA PRAWNS

Ingredients

Handful of raw prawns
½ tbsp smoked Spanish paprika
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tsp cumin seeds, toasted and ground
couple of oregano sprigs leaves finely chopped or 1/2 tsp dried oregano
zest of 1 large lemon
2 tbsp olive oil

Method

Devein the prawns. To do this, run a sharp knife down the back, making a tiny incision just enough to remove the visible black vein. Wash the prawns and pat dry with kitchen paper.

In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the paprika, garlic, cumin, oregano, lemon zest and 1 tbsp olive oil. Add the prawns and leave to marinate for



15 mins at room temperature.

Heat the remaining oil in a roomy frying pan and fry the prawns for 3-4 mins, turning halfway through until just cooked. Season, squeeze over some lemon juice and serve

SPANISH STUFFED AUBERGINES Serves 2

Ingredients

I only had one Aubergine so I used one aubergine and one red bell pepper instead.

2 Aubergines

2 tbsp Olive oil

1 Medium onion finely chopped

2 Garlic cloves, finely chopped

1/2 red pepper, seeded and chopped

1 tsp Freshly ground cumin seeds

1/2 tsp Ground cinnamon

1/2 tsp smoked sweet Spanish paprika

1/2 red chilli

250 g Minced lamb

3 tbsp Tomato sauce

50g Manchego cheese, coarsely grated pinch salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas 6. Cut each aubergine lengthways through the stalk, then score the flesh in a tight criss-cross pattern, taking the knife through the flesh down to the skin, but taking care not to cut through the skin.

Place them side by side on a baking tray and drizzle each half with 1 teaspoons of the oil, season with salt and bake for about 30 minutes or until the flesh is soft and tender but not browned.

You can also do this in the airfryer. It will take less time.

Heat the remaining oil in a large non-stick frying pan. Add the onion, garlic, red pepper and spices and fry gently for 10 minutes. Add the minced lamb and fry for 3-4 minutes or until all the meat is lightly browned. Stir in the tomato sauce and leave to simmer for 5 minutes.

Remove the aubergines from the oven and increase the temperature to 220°C/gas 7. Using a dessertspoon, carefully scoop most of the flesh out of the baked aubergine halves, leaving the skins with a layer of flesh about 1cm thick. Spoon the mixture into each aubergine shell and sprinkle with the grated cheese. Bake for 9-10 minutes until golden brown.

STARGAZING

The seven stars of the Plough can be seen in the northern evening sky whilst the "W" of the constellation Cassiopeia lies to the northeast. The constellation Pegasus includes a large square that lies to the south. The Summer Triangle made up of the bright stars Deneb, Vega and Altair continues to dominate the night sky to the



South. Deneb forms the tail of the constellation Cygnus, the Swan which lies pretty much overhead. Its brightest stars form a cross against the background of the Milky Way. The head of the Swan is a beautiful double star called Albireo. Viewed through a small telescope it can be seen to be a striking pair of stars, one coloured blue the other gold.

In the evening, the planets Jupiter and Saturn are close together and to the south. Jupiter is the brighter of the two. The slightly orange-coloured planet Mars can be seen in the east. On the 5th September, the Moon joins Mars, whilst the Moon lies close to Jupiter and Mars on the 25th.

James Bradley was vicar of the parish of Bridstow, near Ross-on-Wye in Monmouthshire until 1721, when he changed vocation and became a full-time astronomer. Isaac Newton considered him to be the "best astronomer in Europe" and he was eventually made Astronomer Royal. Bradley carried out measurements that proved the Earth orbits the Sun, and that led to the first estimates of the distances of stars.

Autumnal Equinox occurs on the 22^{nd} , when day and night are both 12 hours long.



Shirenewton W.I. Summer Afternoon Tea



Well not quite what we had scheduled for our Summer Party, but a few determined members of our W.I. met up for a 'socially distanced get together' on 13th August. It was a case of bring your own food, drink and chair but everyone really appreciated seeing one another again.

Our next meeting will be on Zoom on Thursday 10^{th} September when John Burrows will be giving us a talk on The Bridges of Chepstow. Further details to be sent to members. Please contact either Diane Ashton Smith (01291 628838) or Jane Butterworth (01291 641704) if you are interested in joining us.

Jackie Broughton



THE BELLS

Like all church rings we ceased ringing for any occasion at the start of lockdown. During April the cessation of ringing allowed for certain outstanding works to be carried out which included removing all the clappers for painting with the special rubberised paint for our recently acquired Big Wilf's Muffles, then refitting them. Also addressed was the lack of emergency lighting in the ringing room and improving the lighting in the belfry. This latter work was carried out by Simon Lockhart who also positioned a CCTV camera in the belfry so in future a monitor in the church will be able to show the bells in action. After this flurry of activity lockdown continued and the only sound made was the hourly strike of the clock bell which slowly lost time (the ringers normally regulating the clock) so by the middle of July it was 10 minutes slow! A visit sorted this problem.

As restrictions on lockdown began to ease emails began to fly as to when the church could be opened. After a couple of attempts final permission was given for the 25th of July but significant restrictions were to be followed. No specific mention of ringing was made but the 2 metre rule would restrict ringing to a maximum of 3 bells. Then a request came through that we should ring the bells on 15th August for VJ day so starting up ringing had to be planned. Conveniently a sample pro-forma risk assessment for ringing was received from the Chairman of the Llandaff & Monmouth Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers. A modified risk assessment was prepared specifically for Shirenewton based on the pro-forma and booted off to the PCC Secretary on 29th July which included a note we might attempt to ring 6 bells within the rules (more of that later). An enthusiastic "go ahead" was received the same day.

Now for those unfamiliar with the history of ringing at Shirenewton, the original 5 William Evans' bells were installed for full circle ringing in 1756. Ringing was originally from the ground floor central nave but the installation of an organ in the early part of the 19th century required the construction and panelling of an upstairs ringing room duly fitted with gas lighting. The ring was augmented to 6 in 1918 and this arrangement pertained even though the organ was eventually repositioned in the North West corner of the church. Ringing ceased during the 1960s and the bells became unringable. With the announcement of funding through "Ring in the Millennium" scheme restoration the ring was completed by the end of 1997 with the ringing reverting to the ground floor position. The

continued overleaf...

restoration project was managed by Martin Cole (who recently passed away and whose obituary also appears in this edition). The original specification of the restoration included rope guides with the church but these were never commissioned as, I believe, it was considered they would be unsightly. The relatively light bells thus proved to be tricky to control even for experienced ringers and especially for novice ringers. Therefore, a plan was hatched to restore the upstairs ringing room which included reconstructing the ceiling as this had been demolished during the restoration project. However, not all ringers agreed and after lengthy negotiations it was concluded that upstairs ringing should be the norm but on special occasions (Christmas, New Year and Easter) ringing would be from the nave.

Now it had been suggested before, almost certainly in jest, that we could ring half the bells upstairs and half down. Now social distancing made this a desirable aim. So on Friday 31st July at somewhat short noticed we managed to entice 6 ringers to the church for a short practice to check the feasibility of this aim. Bells 1, 3 & 5 would be rung from the nave and bells 2, 4 & 6 from the upstairs ringing room. To aid those upstairs the ropes passing through the ringing room of bells 1, 3 & 5 were marked with coloured insulating tape to indicate sally and tail end positions. A short video of this very first practice can be viewed on the L&MDACBR Website. Although the quality of the rounds overall was not high, occasional rows were of good quality and practice makes perfect. The following Sunday the 6 bells were again rung and we have now started up regular ringing albeit much shortened practice sessions from now on. The 6 bells were rung for VJ Day on 15th August and the photos opposite show the bells in action on that day. Who knows if restrictions continue we may attempt some more complex ringing - suitably socially distanced of course. Keep safe. Mike Penney.





RINGING THE BELLS AGAIN—UPSTAIRS AND DOWNSTAIRS



SHIRENEWTON CHURCH WEBSITE

www.shirenewtonchurch.com www.shirenewtonshop.com

I hope everyone had a good summer. By the time you read this I¹l be in the middle of 2 weeks self-isolation having returned from Spain – unless, that is, the rules have changed since I wrote this in early August! Apart from the mandatory facemasks, social distancing and severe lack of foreign tourists, Spain is entirely normal. The good news is that the beaches are not busy and consequently there is plenty of street parking, etc. The bad news is that some of our favourite beach bars haven't bothered to open this year. It is more akin to an early or late part of the season than Augusto during which, where we are, you normally can't move for French, Dutch and German tourists!

Anyway, moving onto stuff relevant to the village. The shopping portal is no more! I managed to get two of the affiliate schemes to pay us out what we were owed (which was below the payment threshold) and, thanks to Kevin Bounds and his purchase of some HP kit via the portal, we've earned enough commission on the final scheme to bounce us over the payment threshold and therefore should get paid after which I can cancel the account. This should give us a total of around £85 this year. I've kept the Amazon scheme open and there is a link to it from the 'fund raising' page. It normally delivers circa £20 per year depending on use. So, if you do use Amazon, clicking through from the Church website will continue to help us!

The shopping portal was conceived in the early 2000s and over the course of its life has delivered over £11,000 to Church funds. Not bad at all, even if I say it myself.

Moving onto my other favourite topic, that of fraud and fraud prevention, below I've copied the entire text from a Facebook posting doing the rounds. I can't recall from whom it came but, if you do a search, it's kind of viral on FB. I've highlighted in bold the real important bit:

Just got a call from my banks fraud prevention unit. Nice fella called Lukas. Kind enough to send me through a text under my banks umbrella text number to prove he was genuine and legitimate. Told me how my account was being fraudently used in Birmingham and confirmed the last 4 digits of my account number. Reiterated that he didn't need my full account number or pin as he was going to cancel my card, for my own safety. I'd get a new card out in 3 days. As I said, very nice, very genuine sounding and very convincing. All he needed me to do was call out the code sent to my phone.

If I had've called out the code, which my actual bank had sent me as a warning that someone was trying to authorise a large purchase through my account, that code would have allowed him to proceed with the transaction and I would have been up the proverbial creek without a paddle.

As such, when I told him I'd ring him back, he became much more insistent, saying that he hadn't asked me for my full account number or pin and was in fact helping me.

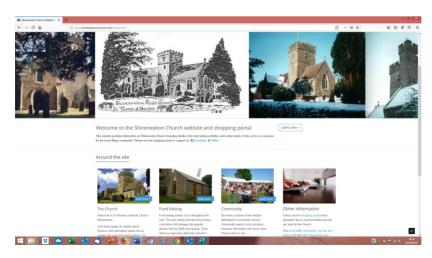
I reiterated that I would ring him back and eventually he hung up the phone very abruptly.

Checked with my bank who confirmed it was indeed a scam.

So folks remember that they are out to get you and their frauds are ever more sophisticated. I continue to regularly get calls from the Microsoft Support Department and, mostly recently, an 'online trading group' who would make me a millionaire in weeks. Apparently all I had to do was install a program on my PC for them. I explained to the caller that I was shopping with my wife and bored so please carry on – and she did! Maybe these scammers get paid for how long they keep you talking. Anyway it provided a bit of entertainment during one of my least favourite activities – grocery shopping.

Over the next month or so I'll be removing the COVID-19/lockdown stuff from the site and returning it to 'normal'.

Safe browsing drc Webmaster



RE-ENGAGE

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, we at Re-engage (formerly Contact the Elderly) suspended our regular social gatherings and created a new service for older people called call companions. Our call companion volunteers make regular telephone calls to lonely and isolated older people providing a lifeline of friendship. The regular chat and companionship offers a vital link with the outside world to older people, many of whom are at risk of falling further into social isolation as a result of social distancing measures.

This free service is available across the UK and is aimed at people who:

- are 75 or older
- live alone or in sheltered housing with little or no contact with family or friends
- struggle to leave their house in normal times

As the member for Shirenewton ward , we would really appreciate your help in letting the relevant staff members at your council know about the call companions service so that we can reach as many isolated older people as possible. Please also feel free to share this information with any of your constituents who you feel might be interested in having a call companion. Our website provides further information about call companions, including a leaflet and an online form for referrals.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this email. If you have any questions about this service, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Warmest Wishes Marion Lowther

development officer Wales (Monday – Wednesday)

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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



Tredegar Arms (Shirenewton village)

(House half way between Blethyn Close and the

School in Mynyddbach)
Earlswood Hall (Earlswood)
Shirenewton School

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