

Shirenewton Parish Magazine



October 2025

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CARLO ACUTIS

In 2023, Barney and I enjoyed a visit to the Italian city of Assisi, and we noticed in a lot of the side chapels of the churches there were framed photos of a teenage boy in modern clothes, surrounded by candles and seemingly a figure of devotion. We discovered later that his name was Carlo Acutis.

Carlo Acutis was born in London in 1991 but grew up in Italy. He enjoyed football, computer games, and spending time with friends—much like any other teenager. But he also had a strong Christian faith which shaped the way he lived his short life.

Carlo loved attending church and especially valued Holy Communion. He once said, “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.” He combined this devotion with a love of technology, using his computer skills to create a website that collected stories of miracles from around the world. He wanted to share his faith in ways people of his generation could easily understand.

At just fifteen years old, Carlo was diagnosed with leukaemia. He accepted his illness bravely and died in 2006. Many people who knew him were struck by his kindness, his humour, and his cheerful trust in God. His story spread quickly, inspiring people far beyond his own community.

In 2020, Carlo was declared “Blessed” by the Roman Catholic Church. This is called *beatification*—a way of recognising that someone has lived a life of remarkable goodness and faith. It is the step before sainthood. On Sunday 7th September, after two miracles attributed to him and his prayers were finally confirmed, he was officially canonised as Saint Carlo Acutis - the first person born in the 1990s to be given this honour.

Carlo’s story is a reminder that young people should never be underestimated. Even in his short life, he showed that faith, compassion, and creativity can flourish in someone so young. He reminds us that teenagers are capable of remarkable things, not just in school or sport, but also in the way they care for others and live out what they believe.

We are pleased to say there are many inspiring young people in our Ministry Area already – from our regular Youth Bible Study attendees, to Shirenewton church’s new organist, to a baptism candidate preparing for this November. Please keep them in your prayers, encourage them if you encounter them, and perhaps even be willing to learn from their example!

"SURVIVING A SABBATICAL" - FOR US WHO REMAIN!

It may surprise you to learn that all clergy are encouraged to take sabbaticals every 7-10 years, as an opportunity for rest, retreat, recreation and renewal. 'Sabbatical' is rooted in the ancient Israelite intention to let farmland lie fallow for one year in every seven. This instruction was not only good practice for agriculture, community provision and biodiversity, it articulated the deeper concept of 'Sabbath', the idea that timely rest and recreation are, in themselves, godly.

Sabbaticals are not annual leave or extended holidays - a cleric is still entitled to their full annual leave allowance during the same year as a Sabbatical. The Sabbatical is very much part of their vocation to the parish. It is a God-ordained period of withdrawal, rest and prayer, in order to revitalise them for their daily life in ministry when they return.

Barney, John, Fr Michael and Zoe wholeheartedly support Philip's sabbatical, as do our Lay Worship Leaders, which is why everyone has committed to offering more cover and leading more services than would be normal.

However, this does not mean that everything will stay the same as if Philip had not left at all! Being a full clergy member down on the team will have, and is designed to have, an impact.

Sabbaticals, for those of us 'left behind', give us an opportunity to reflect on the things we are truly grateful for in our churches, and to grow in patience, kindness, and generosity. We have already witnessed this among our lay and ordained colleagues stepping up and doing even more; but we also need churches to be gracious and understanding that this is a 'fallow time', where less can be done, and to be accepting that that is ok.

This also happens to combine with Fr Chris taking a step back in order to begin a more permanent move to France. This means that, for example - if you feel you don't see Barney or Zoe enough on the current rota 'rotation' - then I'm afraid you will be seeing even less of us over the next few months, as we add an average of 4 more services each week into that rotation! But instead you may well have the joy of hosting the Bishop or an Archdeacon, who have also offered to step in occasionally for us.

We look forward to being back to full capacity (with Fr Chris on an ad hoc basis) as we move into Advent and Christmas.

If you have any questions, or wish to offer additional help in any way, please get in touch.

Revds Zoe & Barney Pimentel

VISIT TO SHIRENEWTON BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF WALES

Sunday, 14th September 2025

A very unusual event took place on Sunday 14th September 2025 when the Archbishop of all Wales came to Shirenewton Church and took the Sunday morning service. Not only is the Most Reverend Cherry Vann the Archbishop of Wales but remains also the Bishop of Monmouth based at St Woolos Cathedral, Newport. The Most Reverend Cherry Vann took the 10 am service at Shirenewton on her own and despite having to leave almost immediately at the end of the service for another commitment she managed to shake hands with everyone in the congregation and to speak with most of the congregation at the end of the service. Despite a number of the regular congregation being away abroad the church was two thirds full and a lot of hands to shake! Fittingly, the Archbishop was able to congratulate Sally Saysell on her 23 years as the Vicar's Church Warden for Shirenewton Church. Sally stood down as Church Warden recently and Aileen Doggett has taken over this role. There are two Church Wardens – the other being Andrew Baker who is the People's Church Warden.



PEN PRTRAIT—JEZ PIPER

My name is Jez Piper, and I am an Ordinand in the Church in Wales on the 2-year pathway to ordination. I'll be studying full-time at St Padarn's Institute in Cardiff and am really excited to be on placement with you all in the Severn Wye Ministry Area on a Sunday and Monday until May 2027.

A little bit about me – I am husband to Marianne, father to two daughters – Bethany (22) and Freya (18), and also doggy-dad to our 3 ½ year old golden labrador, Ember.

I come from a hugely varied career in education: teaching in and leading both community and Church Primary and Secondary Schools in England and Wales. I am a musician: I've been a chorister, and I play lots of different stringed and percussion instruments; and I am also privileged to sing in the BBC National Chorus of Wales. I have a keen interest in carpentry and enjoy making things out of wood (even if I'm not very good!); I love being in and doing things outside – walking and hiking, and we love going on archaeological digs... I'm even a qualified Archery GB instructor!



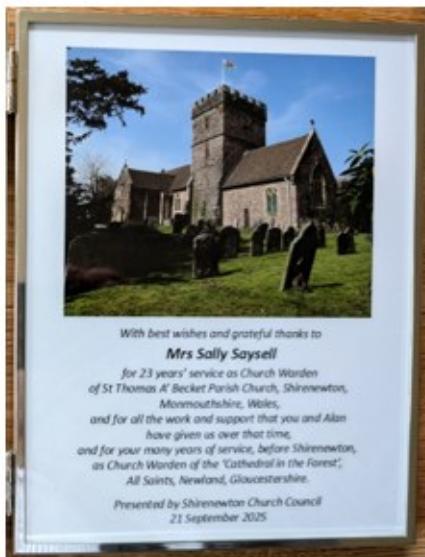
I've been a member of the Monmouth Diocese for more than 20 years and have been actively involved in lay leading in a number of different contexts from Morning Prayer and Evensong through leading assemblies, writing and leading youth services, holiday clubs and camps, to contemporary worship in café-services; and supporting people to explore lay leadership and different ways to approach sung worship in services. ... and Jez is short for 'Jeremy', but I haven't been known as that since I was 7... or unless I'm in trouble!

I am really looking forward to being able to get to know everyone in the ministry area, and to playing a small part in the great works that you are already doing.

**Sally Saysell retires as Church Warden of Shirenewton Church after 23 years
– with a flourish!**



A visit from the Bishop/Archbishop



A message from the Church Council,
as well as a special Welsh Love Spoon.



At the retiring reception for Sally Saysell on Sunday 21st September 2025, a week after the Bishop's visit, Sally reads out a letter from the Bishop of Monmouth (and Archbishop of Wales) to Sally on her retirement as Church Warden for Shirenewton.



Shirenewton
Community Council

SHIRENEWTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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

Public Participation:

S Todd discussed works that had been completed in regard to Planning matter DM/2025/0092, safety changes to the gate & access to field.

Items for Planning – 4 Items

DM2025/01018 – Front double storey extension, rear dormer extension and rear porch - The Rosary Earlswood NP16 6AS

The Rosary is on the top road from Shirenewton to Gaerllwyd, the first house before the dip down to the crossroads. It is a bungalow with a rear-ward dormer roof section, laid out with living room, kitchen, dining room, 2 ground floor bedrooms (1 ensuite) bathroom and utility. Upstairs is a further bedroom bathroom and study/bedroom. The house sits in a substantial plot. The front faces across the upper reaches of the Mounton stream and is prominent in the landscape.

Externally, the existing roof ridge line will be increased from approx 5.6m to 6.5m to accommodate 2 large fully glazed gables at the front. The original side entrance is relocated to the rear with the addition of a porch, the existing narrow side rear 2 storey extension is to be matched with a 2 storey extension to the front adding a further 2m to the depth of the house. The internal volume will increase by 39%.

Roofs are to be finished in slate, the flat roof having a standing seam; the walls will be stonework, render and anthracite grey cladding, and windows with dark grey upvc. There will be a new shrub bed in front of the house and a hedgehog house. There is no comment on bats or other protected species.

The proposal would alter the internal layout to place all 4 bedrooms (2 ensuite) upstairs and provide a snug and an office/study downstairs.

Councillors may wish to consider :

- a) the impact on the landscape of the higher roof ridge and large gables which will be prominent to view from the road and across the valley
- b) whether the increase in volume at 39% is justified, given that the house already provides (in effect) 4 bedrooms and two bathrooms plus study.

c) Policy H6 requires the protection of the character of the countryside by making extensions subordinate to the existing building and to respect its

existing form including the pattern and shape of openings and materials. Although the existing building is not a traditional farmhouse, its structure might be considered typical of the residences constructed over the last century in the locality.

d) the proposed exterior finish colours.

Recommendation: Objection on the grounds that :

1. The proposed mass of the design and in particular the excessively prominent gables the ridges of which are as high as the main roof ridge which is itself to be raised by approx 1m are not subordinate to the existing building.
2. The design, particularly of the fully glazed gables together with the excessive increase in volume and footprint, imposes an uncharacteristic dominance over the open countryside and would be clearly visible from the public highway and beyond. The proposed gable windows bear no resemblance to the existing house nor to the neighbouring properties and the original form of the dwelling is unrecognisable.
3. Insufficient details are given in regard to the external timber finishes including paint colours, landscaping, bats and other protected species known to inhabit in the vicinity, and external lighting. In particular, no details have been given for the use of a specialist glass coating to prevent bird strikes on the glazed gables.

SCC reserved the right to make additional comments when these further details are provided.

Cllrs voted unanimously to object.

DM/2025/01069 single storey extension which is effectively a porch to our front door area and a utility room behind the porch; dormer conversion with rear ground and first floor extension – Willowbrae 8 Orchard Rise Shirenewton

Willowbrae is a dormer bungalow with a kitchen/diner, living room, study, bathroom and 1 bedroom downstairs, with a further 2 bedrooms and a toilet upstairs.

SCC considered a previous application DM/2024/00643 in June last year , and raised no objections save for requesting clarification of the materials and colours or a condition requiring these to be the same as existing. A neighbour registered an objection to the then proposed dormer windows to the front due to privacy concerns and the design was subsequently amended and approved by MCC.

The current proposal adds a porch and utility room on the front to the left hand side of the building. As in the previous application the kitchen/diner is to be enlarged at the rear under a new gable roof which now shares the same ridge height of 6m as the main roof, allowing the extra bedroom with en suite upstairs. The recessed glazing on the rear elevation's gable end proposed in the previous application has now been removed, and replaced with flush glazing on the gable end. A pitched roof dormer window is to be added also at the rear. The east facing ground floor rooms will have the windows replaced with patio doors.

There is a public sewer in the vicinity of the property though it is not thought the extensions will encroach within 3m. Welsh Water have however asked that no additional surface water be drained into the public sewer.

The property borders onto part of the Gwent Wildlife Trust's fields from the rear elevation.

Councillors have the opportunity to give fresh consideration to the application and may wish to consider in the context of the neighbouring properties gardens and the fields whether the proposal satisfies Planning policy DES1 (set out in annex 1 below) which requires developments to :

- a) maintain reasonable levels of privacy and amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties,
- b) respect built and natural views and panoramas where they include ...attractive or distinctive built environment or landscape foster inclusive design;
- c) ensure that existing residential areas characterised by high standards of privacy and spaciousness are protected from overdevelopment and insensitive or inappropriate infilling.

Councillors may also wish to have further detail on exterior finishes and colours, and the landscaping scheme, together with further consideration of the fully glazed gable and the number of roof lights impacting on the neighbouring properties, birds bats and other nocturnal fauna and the night sky.

Recommendation: Objection on the grounds that :

1. The proposal, particularly the dominant glazed gable end, does not conform to policy DES1 as it does not maintain reasonable levels of privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties nor respect the natural views and panoramas.
2. Insufficient details are given in regard to the external finishes including roofs, materials, paint colours, landscaping, and lighting.
3. The recessed glazing on the rear elevation's gable end proposed in the previous application has now been removed and replaced with flush glazing on the gable end. No details have been given for the use of a specialist glass coating to prevent bird strikes on the dominant glazed gable.

SCC reserves the right to make additional comments when these further details are provided. **Cllrs voted unanimously to object.**

DM/2025/00902 - Change of Use application – Gaerllwyd Farm
Councillors will recall this application is submitted by fellow Councillor G Todd in relation to his field at the Gaerllwyd Crossroads for change of use from agricultural to equine, with construction of an L shaped stable block and hard standing. The entrance to the field is on the junction and the hard standing of some 500sqm will enable vehicles to pull off the road and turn to exit forward. There is some ranch fencing to secure the horses during vehicle movements.

MCC Highways initially expressed concern that the field gate should be set back some 6-12m from the highway to allow vehicles to pull off the high

way or leave before having to open/ close the gate, and to form the access a short distance further south from the road junction for greater safety. Councillors raised no objection subject to MCC Highways first objection.

Revised plans have now been submitted which show the field entrance still at the crossroads but with the field gate set back 8.2m to allow 6m horse van to pull in off the road. Inside the gate there will be a turning area sufficient to allow vehicles to be turned to permit forward facing exit. MCC Highways have yet to comment further. Councillors may consider :

- a) Highways earlier suggestion to move the entrance further away from the crossroads, opposite the chapel or beyond, also had safety considerations having limited visibility being on the inside of the bend in the road.
- b) Whether some hedging on either side of the field entrance should be removed to improve highway visibility.

Recommendation:

No objection subject to planning conditions providing for

- a) a traffic mirror as proposed by the applicant
- and
- b) keeping the hedging adjacent to the field entrance trimmed back to ensure clear vision for vehicles entering and leaving the field.

Clrs voted unanimously no objection with Cllr Todd abstaining

DM/2024/00456 – Reconsultation - Demolition of cottage and out-buildings, construction of replacement dwelling, replacement of corrugated iron parking shed with double garage/bat loft, bin store and excavation for pond at Ostrey Bully Hole Road Earlswood.

SCC considered this application in May last year and objected in the following terms :

Objection on the grounds that the proposed house is too prominent in its setting given :

1. its visibility from the B4325 and
2. the roof ridge height being 2.2m (plus chimney) above the existing house roof ridge height, consequent upon the existing house being 1 ½ storeys and the new house being 2 storeys
3. the lack of compatibility of the utilitarian appearance of the new house with the surrounding traditional Monmouthshire farm building landscape, particularly in the scenic upper reaches of the Mounton valley.

County Councillor Louise Brown also objected and attended a site meeting, the outcome of which can be considered in Monday's meeting. For the assistance of Councillors the summary from the meeting last year is set out in annex 2 below.

Annex 1

Planning Policy DES1 - General Design Considerations

All development should be of a high quality sustainable design and respect the local character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire's built, historic and natural environment.

Development proposals will be required to:

- a) ensure a safe, secure, pleasant and convenient environment that is accessible to all members of the community, supports the principles of community safety and encourages walking and cycling;
- b) contribute towards sense of place whilst ensuring that the amount of development and its intensity is compatible with existing uses;
- c) respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting and any neighbouring quality buildings;
- d) maintain reasonable levels of privacy and amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties, where applicable; e) respect built and natural views and panoramas where they include historical features and / or attractive or distinctive built environment or landscape;
- f) use building techniques, decoration, styles and lighting to enhance the appearance of the proposal having regard to texture, colour, pattern, durability and craftsmanship in the use of materials;
- g) incorporate and, where possible enhance existing features that are of historical, visual or nature conservation value and use the vernacular tradition where appropriate;
- h) include landscape proposals for new buildings and land uses in order that they integrate into their surroundings, taking into account the appearance of the existing landscape and its intrinsic character, as defined through the LANDMAP process. Landscaping should take into account, and where appropriate retain, existing trees and hedgerows;
- i) make the most efficient use of land compatible with the above criteria, including that the minimum net density of residential development should be 30 dwellings per hectare, subject to criterion I) below ;
- j) achieve a climate responsive and resource efficient design. Consideration should be given to location, orientation, density, layout, built form and landscaping and to energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, including materials and technology;
- k) foster inclusive design;
- l) ensure that existing residential areas characterised by high standards of privacy and spaciousness are protected from overdevelopment and insensitive or inappropriate infilling.

Annex 2

Ostrey is situated off the Usk Road in the upper reaches of the Mounton valley. According to the Design & Access Statement, Ostrey is a one bed detached farmworkers dwelling constructed in the late 1800s set in its own grounds within 11 acres of agricultural land. It is double-fronted with 1.5 storeys, the upper windows being set immediately below the low eaves line. Single storey extensions have been made to the sides and rear over the years, and the roofs have a mixture of pitched and lean-to forms with a combination of concrete tiles and corrugated metal. The walls are random rubble stone, some with a render finish originally cream/white. The buildings are of no architectural significance and the cost of renovation is uneconomic so a new four bedroom house is proposed. Downstairs there will be a kitchen, dining room, snug, and living room with a single storey addition for a piano room/playroom abutting and connected to the main house. Provision has been made for a future lift and modifications

can be made to make the second bathroom into a future ensuite. The house exceeds Nationally Described Space Standards for a 4-bed 2 storey dwelling. The design is a modern interpretation of a traditional farmhouse, the roof pitch and materials similar to the existing house.

The existing house has very low ceilings, incompatible with modern living standards. Much of the volume of the proposed house is generated by an increase in ceiling heights. The existing house has a volume of 578m³ and the outbuildings 426m³. The new house volume is to be 958m³ and the new outbuildings 320m³. This equates to a 65% increase in volume for the house (much of it attributable to having modern ceiling heights) and a 43% decrease in volume for the outbuildings. In contrast, the footprint of the existing house is 152m² whilst the new house has a footprint of 158m² (+ 4%).

As the roof pitch of the proposed is similar to the existing, the house sits higher in the landscape [by 2.2m – see comment below]. The new ridge line will be similar in height to the existing chimney and does not break the skyline set by the trees in the background.

Most of the outbuildings on the site will be removed as they are in a poor state of repair, save for the stone barn and the corrugated metal barn on the west side of the house which are to be repaired and will remain. A double garage is to be built.

The south facing roof will have a photovoltaic array. Heating and hot water will be provided by an air source heat pump. The design maximizes internal levels of daylight and complies with the Simplified Method when assessed against Approved Document O, Overheating. Rainwater will be stored for use in the garden, with any excess draining to the new pond or to the soak away. An EV charging point will be located in the garage.

The north and east walls will be faced with random stone (from the existing house), the window lintels and cills provisioned in cast stone. The west and south sides are more modern in elevation and window design but the walls are to be rendered being typical of other buildings in the landscape. The windows are uPVC throughout to match the existing, with windows in the stone façades coloured white, whilst those in the render will be Chartwell Green. The roofs will have a similar pitch to the existing house but will be finished with artificial slate, and the roofs to the single storey addition and the garage having standing seam metal roofs to match the existing outbuildings.

A new natural pond will be formed in the lowest part of the garden, providing a habitat for frogs, toads and newts, and nest-building materials for swallows and House Martins. The pond will also attract insects for foraging bats. A new bat loft will be accommodated above the proposed garage, sized for Lesser Horseshoe bats, and bat boxes will be incorporated into the gable walls on the North, East and West sides suitable for Pipistrelle bats. A range of bird box designs will be fixed to the trees in the gardens to accommodate sparrows, robins, nuthatches, and owls.

MCC Planning Policy H5 permits the replacement of dwellings provided that:

the original dwelling is not a traditional farmhouse, cottage or other building that is important to the visual and intrinsic character of the landscape and has not been demolished, abandoned or fallen into such a state of disrepair so that it no longer has the appearance of a dwelling; the design of the new dwelling is of a form, bulk, size and scale that respects its setting; the proposal does not require an unacceptable extension to the existing residential curtilage; the replacement dwelling shall be of similar size to the replaced; any outbuildings should be modest in size and sensitively located and it can be demonstrated at the time of the original application that adequate ancillary garage and storage space can be achieved for the dwelling. Where the replacement of an existing dwelling can be considered acceptable in principle under Policy H5, the replacement dwelling shall be of similar size to that replaced.

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Replacement Dwellings and Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside (2015) advises that it is reasonable to take into account the size of extension that might be permissible under Policy H6 (Extension of Rural Dwellings). While SPG regards up to a 50% increase in volume to comply with Policy H5 it does recognise that exceptions to extensions can also apply to replacement dwellings.

The applicant's Design & Access Statement asserts that the cottage has a constricted room layout with shared bedroom access so is by no means generous in size or representative of a typical modern-day house hence an increase above 50% is justified and can be accommodated within the context of the site and the surrounding landscape.

Councillors may be concerned that the roof ridge height of the new house will be 2.2m above the existing and the impact this will have on the landscape. The existing house is of 1 ½ storeys and Councillors may wish to consider whether the replacement house should be similar given that although the existing house does not sit on the skyline, it is visible from the Usk Road. Councillors might also wish to give thought to the compatibility of the proposed utilitarian monoculture building design with the surrounding traditional Monmouthshire farm building landscape.

Recommendation : SCC have reconsidered this application and whilst it still has reservations on the grounds set out in our response last year, SCC has no further objection provided planning consent is subject to the terms and conditions set out in the attached emails with the MCC Planning Officer.

Cllrs agreed to no further objection.

Memorial Clock Repair – Progressing, awaiting CCCo to visit on site. Thanks to Cllrs Todd & C Martin for their ongoing support with this project.

Risk Assessment – Reviewed Ongoing **Action Clerk & Cllrs**

ANPR: Awaiting news from Gwent Police **Action** Clerk to Chase .

Planters & Verges: MCC confirmed that SCC can fit 2 x planters in agreed locations in Mynyddbach. **Actions Clerk** to contact A Orrell.

Planter opposite the Tredegar Arms – **Action:** Awaiting contact from Pub.

Verges, Action: Quote in progress.

Traffic events & Date results: Data received from the 6 x traffic loops in the area which now needs to be reviewed. Cllrs discussed having similar loops in the Village to look at speeding.

No speeding events reported.

Grant Earlswood – Resolved to pay £250 donation towards electrical costs.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cllr L Brown had nothing to report for August due to MCC not meeting.

Police report – No report received.

To agree the date of the next meeting

Councillors agreed the date of the next meeting on **Monday 6th October 2025** at **7.00pm** by public meeting in Shirenewton Recreation Hall or remotely via Google meet

Contact the Clerk to the Community Council

E-mail: shirenewtoncc@gmail.com **Mobile:** 07410 580961



ST WOOLOS SINFONIA

Autumn Concert 2025

7:00PM Saturday
1 November

Newport Cathedral

Conductor
Rhys Herbert

Soloist
Teagan Craggs

Mozart
Overture to Marriage of Figaro

Mendelssohn
Violin Concerto

Haydn
Symphony No 104 'London'

Tickets £15
(under 16's free)
via the website
or at the door

www.stwoolossinfonia.com



Vacancy on Shirenewton Community Council

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

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

What is a Councillor?

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

What do Councillors do?

Councillors have three main components to their work.

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

How much time does it take up?

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

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



Shirenewton
Community Council

Holy Communion in the Welsh language

Cymraeg



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

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

First language Welsh and Welsh learners, all welcome!

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

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



Severn Wye Ministry Area
Our services for September 2025

	5 th October	Service Time	Trinity 16	Trinity 17	12 th October	19 th October	26 th October
St Mary's Priory, Chepstow	8.00	Morning Liturgy (non Eucharist)	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Joint service at St Christopher's at 10am	Trinity 18	Trinity 19 Bible Sunday
	11.00	Pet service	Sung Holy Communion		Combined service w St Mary's Priory at 10am		Holy Communion
St Christopher's, Chepstow	9.30	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		Café church		Family service
	17.30	Holy Communion			Holy Communion		Holy Communion
St Peter's, Newchurch	9.00	Holy Communion	Harvest Communion		Morning Prayer		Morning Prayer
St Tewdric, Mathern	11.30	Holy Communion	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer		Holy Communion
St Peter, St Pierre	10.15	Harvest service	Morning Prayer		Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
St Andoenus, Mounton	10.00	Morning service (non-Eucharist)	Holy Communion		Holy Communion		Holy Communion
St Thomas a Becket, Shirenewton	10.00	Sung Holy Communion	Sung Holy Communion		Sung Holy Communion		Sung Holy Communion
St Arvan, St Arvans	11.30		Morning Prayer				Holy Communion
St Deiniol, Itton	9.00				Family service (non Holy Communion)		
St James, Devauden	16.00	Harvest Communion					
St Mary's, Penterry	11.30	Holy Communion					
Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg	11.30				Holy Communion		
Youth @ St Christophers	17.30	Youth service			Youth service		Youth service
Saints @ St Christophers	19.00	Puddings and Bible Study	Puddings and Bible Study		Puddings and Bible Study		Puddings and Bible Study

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

Movember is an annual event involving the growing of a moustache during the month of November to raise awareness of men's health issues such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention.

Movember was born in 2003 when two mates in Australia decided to grow a moustache and raise some money for charity.

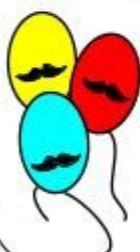
Movember is now a global event raising millions each year.

**Gentlemen, why not treat your lady this November by growing a moustache
"it's sure to tickle her fancy"**

Open to all - guys / girls / young / old / whatever
If you self identify as a moustache, now is your time to shine.

If you don't want to grow one, get a stick-on,
I know that's what my wife will be doing!

Movember Party Night
At the Carpenters Arms
You're invited



Join us on 29th November from 7pm onwards

Bring your Mo (real or stick-on)
And enjoy food, beer and live music
Whilst raising money for this charity

You can donate by raising sponsorship or simply making a donation for the privilege of being part of our illustrious team - **The Shire Ticklers**.

The Shire Ticklers' aim is to raise money for a great cause whilst having a laugh and remembering an old friend and former Movemberer, Gary Williams.

To donate....use QR code

Or contact me, Tony Prout, on
tony.prout@hotmail.co.uk 07517 806159



SERVICES AT SHIRENEWTON CHURCH IN OCTOBER

Sunday 5 th October	10.00	Harvest Thanksgiving Morning Praise with Hymns
Sunday 12 th October	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns. Service to be taken by the Very Rev'd Ian Black, Dean Newport (St Woolos') Cathedral
Sunday 19 th October	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns. Service to be Taken by Bishop Cherry Vann of Monmouth, Archbishop of Wales
Sunday 26 th October	10.00	Eucharist with Hymns

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

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



Congratulations to our 200 Club winners in September:

1. Jenny Peirce
2. Glynis MacDonald
3. Cynthia Smith

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SHIRENEWTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1090167

We start our 2025/2026 year off meeting at our usual time (7.30pm) but we intend to meet during the Winter months in the afternoon (2.00pm) as this seems a sensible decision, this will be a trial for this year, we will see how we get on.

Our **September** meeting will be on **Tuesday, 30th September** at **7.30pm**, at the Church Room. The speaker for the evening will be Annie Rainsbury who will give a talk entitled '**The Piercefield and Nathaniel Wells**'.

Our **October** monthly meeting is entitled '**Mari Llwyd**', I hope the title has whet your appetite, so come along and find out just who (or what) the **Mari Llwyd** is or was!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday, 9th September, Archive Meeting, Church Room, 2.00pm

Tuesday, 28th October, Monthly Meeting, 7.30pm, Church Room,

**Title of Talk: Mari Llwyd,
given by Sue & John Exton**

Book of the Month: '**Thomas Cromwell**', **Robert Hutchinson.**

Documents: **Registers of Caerwent, 1569 - 1812**

Registers of Llanfair discoed, 1680 - 1812

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



SHIRENEWTON VILLAGE MARKET NEWS....

CHRISTMAS MARKET
22ND NOVEMBER AT 11.30 – 1.30
AT THE REC HALL.

We're back with our fabulous Christmas Market on Saturday 22nd November at 11.30 – 1.30. Lots of lovely stalls & our ever-popular café with delicious coffee & cakes. Come along & buy your Christmas wares, take a pit stop & catch up with friends over refreshments.
Free entry.

Please note the new time – later start so we don't clash with Saturday morning football!



Harvest Thanksgiving Service 10:00 Sunday 5th October

Come and join us at an all-age service to celebrate our many blessings from a fruitful year.

At the service we will collect offerings for the **Chepstow Food Bank**.

Suitable donations include:

- Tinned and dried goods
- Feminine hygiene products
- Toiletries
- Food which can be prepared with little energy required

No fresh food or produce please.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

OCTOBER

Sunday 5th
10.00 a.m.
Monday 6th
7.00 p.m.
Thursday 9th
7.15 p.m.
Saturday 18th
6.30 p.m.
Sunday 19th
6.30 p.m.
Tuesday 28th
7.30 p.m.

Harvest Thanksgiving Service
St Thomas à Becket Church, Shirenewton
Shirenewton Community Council meeting
Shirenewton Recreation Hall
WI meeting: Cyber/On Line Security by David
Cornwell—Shirenewton Recreation Hall
ShAMBLE
Shirenewton and Mynyddbach
ShAMBLE
Shirenewton and Mynyddbach
Shirenewton Local History Society: Mari Llwyd by
Sue and John Exton—Shirenewton Church Room

NOVEMBER

Saturday 1st
7.00 p.m.
Sunday 9th
10.00 a.m.
Saturday 22nd
11.30 a.m.—1.30 p.m.
Saturday 22nd
1030 a.m.—1.30 p.m.

Chepstow Male Voice Choir concert
St Thomas à Becket Church, Shirenewton
Remembrance Sunday
Earlswood and Newchurch West Village Hall
Christmas Market
Shirenewton Recreation Hall
Chepstow Choral Society—Dream of Gerontius
Christmas Craft Fair
Earlswood and Newchurch West Village Hall

DECEMBER

Saturday 13th
7.00 p.m.
Saturday 13th
Sunday 14th
3.00 p.m.

St Woolos Sinfonia Concert
St Deiniol's Church, Itton
Christmas Quiz
Earlswood and Newchurch West Village Hall
Christmas Music from the Chepstow Choral Society
St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow

severnwyema.co.uk

Shirenewton And Mynydd Bach iLlumination ^{Craft. Creativity. Community.}
18th & 19th Oct Extravaganza



18th & 19th Oct

shirenewtonshamble@gmail.com

Window Art Trail

OPENING NIGHT PARTY

On 18th October **only** refreshments will be available from 6.30pm-8.30pm at The Rec Hall.

From Friday afternoon you can pick up a map from the **old telephone box** in Shirenewton or **the Rec hall** (Sat only) and then 'shamble' around the village with friends, neighbours & family. You can also borrow our hi-vis jackets for the night which will also be in the old telephone box & the Rec hall.

**Make sure you can see and be seen on the night,
bring a torch and wear hi-vis!**

This is a family friendly community event. All welcome!

SHAMBLE: Shirenewton And Mynydd Bach iLlumination Extravaganza!

*Not only does she a
lady for language
MISM, BA (Hons), MA, PhD, FHEA
both itself and friend. And
born English tuition from
secondary school level
to postgraduate we all:
and
music theory, piano and strings
tuition
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night the day. You cannot
not this. 07906 195098
rachelcross.co.uk
rachelcross6@gmail.com*



Earlswood & Newchurch West Village Hall

Christmas Market

Stallholders Wanted!

Saturday 29th November 10.30am - 1.30pm

After the success of last year we're keen to find more talented local makers. Whether you produce food, jewellery, pictures, wood items, or something else, please get in touch!

- ❖ Six foot table (with chairs): £10
- ❖ Why not share a table with a friend?
- ❖ Hot drinks & homemade cake for sale

Enquiries: 07889 762 840 / chair@earlnew.com

Upcoming Events

Sunday 9 th November	Remembrance Sunday
Saturday 29 th November	Christmas Craft Fair
Saturday 13 th December	Xmas Quiz
2026	
Saturday 16 th May	Plant and Cake Sale

Visit www.earlnew.com for more information about the Hall & facilities.
We have a mailing list! Email info@earlnew.com to join!

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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)
Recreation Hall (Shirenewton village)
The Tredegar Arms (The Square, centre of Shirenewton)
Great House Farm complex (off Old Road), Earlswood (north)
[repair.decrease.fussy]



Earlswood Hall
(Earlswood)

(House half way between
Blethyn Close and the
School in Mynyddbach)



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THE HUNTSMAN HOTEL NEW PAGE



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- ANNIVERSARIES
- HOG ROASTS
- PARTIES
- WAKES



Shirenewton WI

Fascinating Flamenco. A dancing journey through Southern Spain. This was the topic for our September meeting, where Lesley Mills took us on a journey through time and history of this fascinating art form.



The evening started with a welcome flavour of Spain, a glass of Sangria! Lesley then talked us through the origin of flamenco, which was not in the north of Spain but in the hot, dusty, sun scorched land of Andalusia. The derivation of the name flamenco, is a hot topic of discussion with many stating that it comes from the Arabic term Fela-Mengus, meaning fugitive or wandering peasants.

Lesley explained how flamenco contains a blend of traditions from the Moorish, Jewish and Romani (Gypsy) cultures. Following centuries of Muslim rule, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella completed the Reconquista of Spain in the 15th Century, a lengthy campaign by Christian kingdoms to reclaim

territory from Muslim rulers. However, as Catholic rulers, they insisted on compulsory baptism into their faith or death by burning. Many took refuge in the mountains, thus it was here that flamenco first began to take shape as an improvised, outdoor art.

During the 19th Century, the support for all things Spanish grew and fuelled by the popularity of flamenco, Café Cantantes sprang up with singing, music and dancing. These cafes were seedy places with much brawling but Flamenco in its crudest form thrived here. Gradually, in the early 20th century, the popularity of flamenco saw it move to larger venues and become ever more popular. Artists and writers were championing flamenco, raising it to a theatrical art form with La Argentina, a pioneering Spanish dancer, performing flamenco on the theatre stage as a professional paid performer.

During the Spanish Civil War, flamenco was seen as embodying rebellion, a tool for voicing dissent and opposition to authority. Following the death of Franco in 1975, flamenco became popular once again embracing electronic music and becoming more fluid and diverse.

Important areas for flamenco include Granada, with the Sacromonte caves having a long tradition through the gypsies of Sacromonte. This form of flamenco is known as Farruca, a dramatic, masculine-style flamenco dance with intense, fast footwork and hand movements. These cave performances can still be enjoyed today.

Seville flamenco or Sevillanas, is taught in schools in Seville and has its own radio station devoted to its music. However, purists say this is not pure flamenco but a more regional folk dance. Lesley performed 2 of these dances for us, with castanet accompaniment.

Cordoba flamenco is linked with the Cordoba hat, traditionally worn by male flamenco dancers. Here flamenco incorporated the use of props such as hats, castanets, walking sticks, even hammer and anvils to strike a rhythm. Shawls, fans, clapping and shouting are all part of the flamenco experience.

Flamenco is made up of 50 different styles, some being light hearted such as the Bulerias traditionally from Jerez, the Fandango with a festive and spirited nature and the Cante jondo – telling of pain and loss.

Lesley brought some beautiful traditional dresses with her and some exquisitely embroidered shawls, which she wore to dance for us. We handled the Bata de Cola, or robe with a tail, which was very heavy and would affect the dancer's balance, requiring great skill to enable the dance to look elegant.



We were given a pair of castanets and taught how to clap them in rhythm to Viva Espania and a Spanish fan to show how the dancers use the fan to enhance the expression of the dance.

Flamenco is now an international phenomenon, with the highest concentration of Flamenco schools being in Tokyo! This art form continues to fascinate and adapt itself to whatever the future may hold.

Our next meeting is at Shirenewton Recreation Hall on Thursday 9th October at 7:15pm when our speaker will be David Cornwell speaking on Cyber/Online Security. All are welcome to join us. Please just come along or contact Angela Gray at angela.deepweir@btopenworld.com or Jane Butterworth at janeb247@gmail.com (641704).





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Timetable from 1 September 2024



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via Croesyceiliog, Coleg Gwent, Gwemesney, Liangwm, Gaerllwyd, Earlwood, Shirenewton, Chepstow Community Hospital

Timetable from 1 September 2024

Monday to Friday except Bank Holiday Mondays		Saturdays	
		Sch	HOL
Cwmbran Bus Station [Stand H]	0712	0712	0922 1200 ... 1650
Creweyceiling Edlogan Square	0717	0717	0927 1205 ... 1655
Pontypool Town Hall	0725	0725	0935 1213 1420 1713
Pontypool Park Road	0726	0726	0936 1214 1421 1714
Pontypool opp Town Hall	0727	0727	0937 1215 1422 1715
Little Mill Pont-y-pia	0734	0734	0944 1222 1429 1722
Usk Coleg Gwent Main Road	0741	0741	0951 1229 1436 1730
Usk Twyn Square	0747	0747	0957 1235 1442 1736
Langwm Bridge Inn Road	0755	0755	1005 1243 1450 1744
Earlswood West End	0803	0803	1013 1251 1458 1752
Shirenewton Road Junction	0813	0813	1023 1301 1508 1800
Chepstow Community Hospital Main Road	0820	0820	1030 1308 1515 1807
Chepstow Comprehensive School	0825	0824	1034 1312 1519 1811
Chepstow Bus Station			0824 1034 1312 1519 1811

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

www.shirenewtonchurch.com

You may recall that in last month's article we discussed some of the challenges of AI and the so called 'AI model collapse'. As it happens, no sooner had I sent Editor Bill my article a couple of relevant items appeared in my inbox.

For example, The Register reported that "MIT's NANDA (Networked Agents and Decentralized AI) report, revealed that 95 percent of companies that have adopted AI have yet to see any meaningful return on their investment." The report continues that "only 5 percent of custom enterprise AI tools reach production". An example is given of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA), which is asking its former call centre frontline employees to return to work as the introduction of AI in their place meant that the call volume increased. The Register reports also notes that this AI model collapse is being reflected in AI centric company share prices.

Also, the Telegraph reported that "A taxpayer has been scolded by a judge for using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot to fight his £13,000 tax case". Apparently, "HMRC noticed the three fictitious tribunal decisions when reading through his skeleton argument, which was submitted the day before the hearing". This is a classic case of AI hallucinations which we have previously discussed. Also, remember, a lot of these hallucinations make it into print which then become input to the AI models. It's this GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out) problem which, as I noted last month, means that the model becomes poisoned with its own projection of reality.

There is no doubt that AI is a major development. But the hype behind it means that it is being used in inappropriate ways and has yet to find its sweet spot. We should remember that all that glistens is not gold.

Following on from last month's discussion regarding the impact of the implementation of the UK Online Safety Act, it's now the EU which is wrapping itself in all sorts of trouble with the controversial proposal for legislation called "Chat Control 2.0". This would require the scanning private messages for child abuse material. To be clear the proposals involve automated scanning on the devices. It seems that they envisage that the scanning would automatically take place after the message has been decrypted. Critics, of which there are many, point to the legislation opening the door to mass surveillance and the privacy issues which arise.

There is also the issue of false positives. Some may recall the case a couple of years ago (mentioned more than once in my previous articles) of the case of a father who was asked to send his doctor a picture of his child's rash. The Google AI algorithm falsely identified this as child abuse material and he was reported to police, etc. The upshot of it was that he lost access to his Google account and no amount of evidence that the report was a false positive would unlock the account. I used this case to illustrate why it is necessary to have back-ups of your online accounts, but it neatly also illustrates the issues around false positives.

The vote will take place in October. Obviously, it is unclear what any final law would look like and how it would operate. The major concern is that, while the aim to combat child abuse is very laudable, once the technology is in place, it is relatively trivial to start expanding its remit and using it for scanning for 'incorrect' political opinions, etc. A number of operators have indicated that they will leave the European market if they are forced by law to undertake such development.

And, just as there are a number of ways around the UK Online Safety Act (VPN usage reportedly up 1,800%), there will be ways around this. There is rarely any benefit when politicians get involved in making laws about technology they simply don't understand.

Moving onto more mundane matters

Microsoft Will Stop Supporting Windows 10 on 14th October 2025. This means that there will be no more updates or security patches or anything really. If you continue to run a Windows 10 PC you will be opening the door to security risks. I have covered the alternatives in previous articles and have no intention of repeating myself other than to say, again, if you continue to run a Windows 10 PC you will be opening the door to security risks.

Finally, as if to emphasise my repetition of security risks above, The Daily Mail recently reported that "Hackers have breached a major Google database, putting the accounts of 2.5 billion Gmail users at risk of being hijacked by scammers". They apparently stole personal information including names and phone numbers but, allegedly, not passwords. This has massively increased phishing attempts with people getting texts and even phone calls from scammers masquerading as Google trying to get them to divulge their passwords (be tricked into resetting the passwords on sites controlled by the scammers which ask them to input their current passwords to 'validate' their account). Google will not call you. If someone claiming to be from Google calls you they are a scammer.

If someone calls you claiming to be from Google ignore them, they aren't. Hang up. Or, if you are like me have fun with them and, if they swear at you before they hang up, you've won the game! Top tip to get them to swear at you: ask them if their mother knows they scam people for a living. Likewise, generally ignore texts from Google and visit their website by typing it input your browser before doing anything.

Safe browsing

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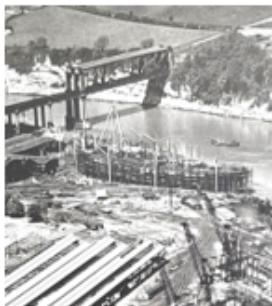


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25 places of world significance within 25 miles of Shirenewton

8. 'A Bridge to India'



1852-1962



1962 removal of top structure



2025

Four miles to the East of Shirenewton is a railway bridge carrying the Gloucester to Newport railway line across the River Wye at Chepstow. Partly hidden by the 1988 A48 road bridge which runs parallel to it, the Chepstow Rail Bridge was a famous bridge in its day and Brunel's cast iron piers that supported the railway deck in 1852 are still there supporting the weight of the bridge deck today although Brunel's tubular suspension structure above the deck was removed in 1962 in favour of an under-deck steel truss structure.

At 2pm on 14 July 1852 Isambard Kingdom Brunel, with top hat and cigar, was in Chepstow, just 4 miles away, and stood at the middle of his new bridge at Chepstow to measure vibrations of the first train to cross the bridge.

Unlike the crowds who came to watch, when Brunel gazed south and westwards from his new bridge down the line towards Chepstow Station and Newport he didn't 'see' Newport - he saw New York; he saw the Atlantic Ocean; he saw Canada, he saw the Indian Ocean; he saw India, the most populous part of the British Empire; he saw shipping lanes to all these places; and he saw the ships that would travel them, and he knew how to build them.

10 years earlier, 14 miles away in Bristol, he had built the world's largest transatlantic liner, the *SS Great Britain* and was planning another far greater, the *SS Great Eastern* (a paddle steamer, but also with sailing masts which were made at Finch's yard in Chepstow, next to his rail bridge) and he planned to sail the ships from Milford Haven – the western end of his Great Western Railway.

But, until 1852 there was a gap – not in his thinking but in the railway track and the gap was the River Wye at Chepstow. For Brunel the only gap between London and India (13,000 miles) was at Chepstow!

Brunel had built the track from London Paddington to *Chepstow North Station* and the track from *Chepstow South Station* to West Wales but in 1850 passengers needed to walk or take a horse and carriage between *Chepstow North* and *Chepstow South* stations crossing the 1816 Chepstow iron bridge.

The railway had to cross the River Wye but it was very difficult to achieve the crossing because one side was low lying marsh land and the other side was a vertical rock wall nearly 100 feet high blocking the line of the railway. It would require an embankment on the south side and blasting through the rock on the north side and a bridge structure 600 feet long of which 300 feet was to be a clear span over the River Wye 80 feet below as the Admiralty would not accept a lower bridge, or any mid-stream piers interfering with access to Chepstow port. For heavy trains 300 feet without any supporting piers below was a big ask. Most railway viaducts have multiple arches to take the train weight

The only bridges at that time with longer spans were the early suspension bridges like Brunel's planned Clifton Suspension Bridge or the Menai Bridge or the Stockton to Darlington Railway extension suspension bridge to Middlesbrough, where support was from above in the form of suspension cables but the weight of trains would be much greater than the road bridge traffic so long span suspension bridges were not ideal for trains. Nevertheless, a suspension structure was the only option for the 300 foot crossing of the River Wye with another 300 feet of railway supported on cast iron piers on the south side. Brunel used two wrought iron tubes arching upwards to give strength and from these horizontal tubes chains supported the bridge deck from above. It worked for 110 years but by 1962 the Admiralty had lost interest in Chepstow as a port, as it no longer functioned as one, so the upper suspension structure could be dismantled (one section of the tubes remains outside the Maltings Building in the Brunel Quarter housing development). An under-deck truss structure in steel could be constructed to support the bridge deck and trains - although all the weight is still taken by Brunel's original cast iron piers on the Chepstow side of the river and by the cliffs on the North side.

But what of the bridge to India? Well, Brunel went on to build the *SS Great Eastern* liner – a ship 7 times larger than any ship in the world at that time and capable of sailing these great distances either across the Atlantic or around Africa to India but Brunel died soon after its launch. The logical port to start transatlantic and India sea passages became Southampton rather than Milford Haven. Southampton was nearer to London and a much shorter rail journey. Even with the Severn Tunnel (1886) the prospect of Milford Haven taking this trade was unlikely. It was a dream of Brunel, and of course Brunel had to push for a port served by his Great Western Railway.

Brunel was not only a great engineer but a great visionary, linking all the pieces together. Could you imagine going to the ticket office at Chepstow Station today and asking for a through ticket to Delhi? Brunel could!

John Burrows

Next month – 9. *The Chains of Pontypridd*

“

Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.

ANONYMOUS

Gardening Corner

Since last month it has seemingly done nothing but rain! Of course it was extremely welcome for many of us, but probably not for those who still had kids on school holidays and perhaps were still away on their 'holiday' away. As I mentioned last month, we only watered the vegetables, so the beds used for cut flowers, and the herbaceous borders had to fend for themselves. Plants were starting to look very sick, despite occasional watering with wastewater from the washing up bowl etc.

The initial couple of weeks of bits of rain here and there and fortunately thunderstorms that never materialised – for us here, anyway, were a waste of time. It wasn't until we got some 'proper' rain before things really started to respond. It was only a matter of days before green shots started to emerge from our grassy areas which are loosely described as lawns. Felicity had been spending a lot of time going around the flower borders cutting back what were seemingly dying plants. A late version of the 'Chelsea chop' where you cut herbaceous plants back around the time of the Chelsea Flower show – hence the name, to encourage bushier plants, more prolific flowering and to get flowers over a longer period. The idea was to try and protect the roots and the crown of the plants – an early dormancy period if you like. The results have been incredible. Nearly all of the herbaceous plants started to shoot out again and have already got masses of succulent new growth. The ones that got the chop early on – mostly the early flowering plants such as astrantia and geraniums, have grown so well that they have started flowering again already. We had expected a mass loss of plants, but the current signs are very promising. Yes, there will be some losses, but these generally appear to be plants that were old and probably seen better days anyway. There has been a lot of talk about gardeners having to learn to live with climate change and to make the necessary changes to what we grow and how we grow them. The thought of having to grow a lot of mediterranean type plants doesn't really do it for me. The odd succulent plant might have a place, but I conjure up thoughts of succulents, thick leaved herby types and maybe even cacti everywhere, which doesn't 'hack it' for me I'm afraid! Hopefully I will be long gone before such extremes are necessary. Instead, I will start with the basics such as increasing the amount of organic content in the soil, the use of more mulching material as a top dressing, or more hoeing of the beds (especially the vegetable beds. All these are meant to increase the retention of water in the soil, and to minimise any evaporation through loss of water to the atmosphere. Hoeing is a good way not only to remove weeds (and therefore competition for the precious water available to our plants), but also to prevent water loss by breaking the transpiration of water from the soil. A layer of dust on the

top is extremely good at ensuring the lower soil retains its moisture. We always struggle to produce enough compost from waste material such as plant cuttings, leaves, shredded paper etc. I have tried, albeit half-heartedly, to grow green manures with little success. There has been a lot talked about their value in recent years. I have therefore decided to make a conscious effort to give them a serious try this year, and currently five of the vegetable beds have been sown, with various seed mixes to see what performs best. Different mixes are best sown at different times of the year, so I have chosen those that need sowing now, are good at over-wintering, and that will then be ready for cutting down, and digging into the soil come next spring. If you are interested in giving it a go, there is still time to sow. The soil will remain warm enough to get good germination results, and of course it is damp enough as well! Most suppliers look to be selling three packs for the price of two, if you shop around.

In the vegetable garden we are making a conscious effort to try and reduce the amount we grow at any one time. In the past we have either sold excess produce, frozen it or given it away. Freezing vegetables is a good way to provide food out of season, but it is never quite the same as eating fresh produce. We have the facilities with the greenhouses and tunnels, to grow produce 'out of season' and in recent years, with milder weather at the end or the beginning of the year extending the growing period, we think we could grow a lot more things, perhaps at times you wouldn't expect. Yes, there is a risk to this, but one we think worth taking. I have mentioned before about growing French beans early in a tunnel. This year we were picking beans in June. A time when normally you would only just be planting young plants outside (after the last late frost). We have tried other options too. We cropped calabrese in early summer but sowed a new crop and planted these in the large tunnel in late July. These have been growing exceptionally well, and all the plants now have heads on them, the first of which will be ready for cutting in the next week or so. In addition, I sowed some more calabrese seed at the start of August, the seedlings were transplanted into pots and in the last couple of weeks, these have been planted out into a tunnel bed and are already getting well established. The last couple of winters have been mild enough that, with a little bit of extra cover, will mean these plants should thrive, and provide us with a very early spring crop, probably in April. So, it is very much a case of taking every opportunity that climate change might bring, as well as adapting to the downsides. Talking of which, onions, shallots and garlic were usually started by planting out the 'sets' or bulbs in Spring. It is recognised now that many varieties benefit from being planted in the Autumn. This means that they establish roots quickly, due to the inherent warmth still in the soil, but more importantly, it is

acknowledged that they benefit from a period of cold. Overall, this means that they are ready to get growing when the weather warms up in the Spring. This will be my next job, although I do still cheat a little bit in that I plant them in pots and keep them in either one of the greenhouses or tunnels over Winter. They are all unheated, so the plants get the cold temperatures they need, yet I can cover them up if the weather should turn particularly bitter. So, a bit of an insurance policy.

With our intention to move on, I had to take the decision to give up the bees. They couldn't have gone with us, and in recent years it has become much more difficult to sell the honey, which covers the cost of keeping the bees going. It is no longer a cheap hobby. So, I started to sell everything, including the bees and hives ready for the sale of the house. As you know, this didn't happen in the end. I do have one bee hive, with its colony, and this years honey crop, which I now need to find a home for, if there are any takers out there?!

Happy gardening until next month, Steve and Felicity Hunt.

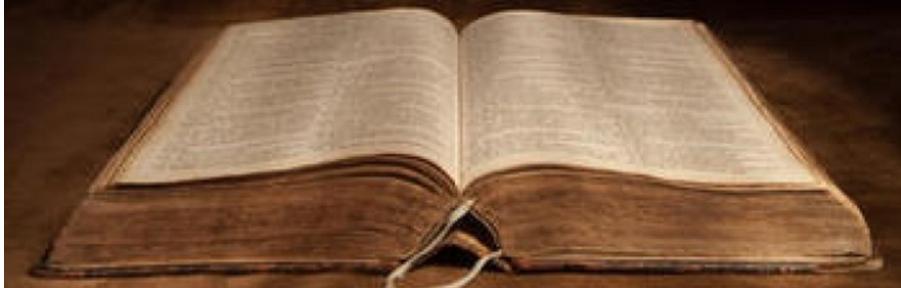
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CHEPSTOW CHORAL SOCIETY 2025/2026

CCS closed a memorable 2024/25 season at the end of June 2025 with a lovely “Summer Celebration” concert featuring a whole range of varied music followed by drinks and refreshments. We now look ahead to our new season which will commence at the Chepstow School and Leisure Centre complex, commencing **Wednesday September 3rd, 7.30pm.**

The Society will be joining with Monmouth Choral Society- at their invitation- for a truly memorable evening with a performance of Sir Edward's Elgar's choral masterpiece Dream of Gerontius on Saturday November 22nd.

Future dates – Christmas Music from Chepstow CS, with Alison Wray (soprano) – SUNDAY DECEMBER 14th. St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow – 3.00pm

SATURDAY MARCH 21st 2026 – SPRING CONCERT WITH CCS ORCHESTRA, St Mary's Priory Church, Chepstow – “Venice to Vienna” ---music from Vivaldi, Albinoni, Mozart and Schubert! – and also with full vocal quartet who performed at St Mary's Tidenham Concert on June 14th. A treat and date to put down in the 2026 diary!

As always, CCS, like all smaller choral societies, welcomes new members. Choral societies cannot survive without singers, and like all societies, we especially welcome tenors and basses!

Please contact Marjorie Duerden for further information – 01291 623310 (bduerden@doctors.co.uk) or access the CCS website (details above). THIS IS YOUR local Choral Society –do come and join us!! Marje Duerden

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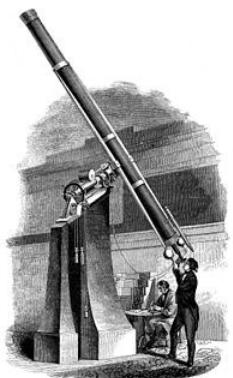


As it is now getting darker earlier there are more opportunities for stargazing. This is particularly true after the clocks go back on 26th October, giving extra darkness in the evening.

The constellation of Cygnus the Swan lies pretty much directly above. It is in the shape of a cross – in fact it is sometimes called the Northern Cross. According to legend, Jupiter the king of the Gods changed himself into a swan when he wanted to visit Leda, the wife of the King of Sparta. In memory of the episode, he placed a swan in the sky. Deneb, the brightest star in the constellation, is at the tail of the swan, whilst Albireo forms the "head" of the Swan. Albireo is worth looking at through a small telescope. It consists of 2 separate stars, one gold in colour the other blue.

The planet Saturn is slightly yellow and can be seen in the evening to the south-east, and is close to the Full Moon on 5th October. Bright Jupiter is just above the eastern horizon. It is joined by the Moon on the 13th.

Looking at Jupiter with binoculars or a small telescope should give a good view of Jupiter's four largest moons: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto – they form a line with the planet. In 1610 the Italian scientist Galileo used a telescope for the first time and discovered the moons of Jupiter. The four moons have been called the Galilean Moons ever since.



FAIRTRADE NEWS OCTOBER 2025



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 22/9-5/10

This Fairtrade Fortnight thousands of individuals, schools, community groups and companies across the UK will unite under Fairtrade's 'DO IT FAIR' campaign to celebrate and stand with the people around the world behind the everyday products we love. The campaign this year will shine a light, specifically, on the tea industry and the workers who deserve to live with dignity, and encourage consumers to demand fairness from crop to cup. But for some of the people growing our food, that's not the reality. The simple act of buying Fairtrade products like tea, coffee, bananas, chocolate, offers a powerful way to change the world for the better.

Community groups will be calling on the government to take stronger action in the tea industry and will be asking their local MP to join the growing calls for new legislation to require businesses to protect human rights and the environment in their food chain. With the UK government having just launched a review of its policy on responsible business conduct Fairtrade Fortnight is an opportunity this year to push for meaningful policy change that will improve the lives of the people who produce Britain's tea, coffee and more.

As volatile pricing, climate pressures and economic instability deepen global inequality and impact farmers worldwide FT Fortnight calls on the public to act. Choosing FT products like tea – as well as other everyday essentials produced overseas including bananas, coffee, chocolate etc – ensures farmers receive the FT Minimum Price as a vital safety net and are empowered to invest their FT Premium in their farms, families and futures in ways that they themselves choose.

Research highlights the strength of public demand for Fairtrade.

7 out of 10 UK adults purchased a FT product in 2024

85% believe farmers in low-income countries should receive stable, fair pay.

This overwhelming support is reflected in the more than 350 leading UK retailers and brands who champion FT sourcing and who are committed to transforming global trade for the better. Businesses behaving responsibly is not just good ethics – it's what customers expect. FT delivers real impact for the people around the world who are growing our food - people here in the UK want to see that change!

WHEN YOU SEE THE FAIRTRADE MARK:

The FT producer group received a price that aims to cover its average costs of production
Plus the FT Premium, an extra sum of money to invest in their business or in community projects of their choice
Workers have rights to decent wages, to join unions and to work in safe conditions
Farmers and workers, including women, have the opportunity to have their voices heard

It's time to consider FT purchases for that fandango of consumerism in late December! A friend bought 4 bottles of Palestinian olive oil for her relatives – an excellent choice – delicious, ethical and USEFUL!

Oxfam has some FT - food and crafts. Local supermarkets have a few FT products but ETHICAL SUPERSTORE has many, many more! (I can order for you so you don't incur postage!)

Marion McAdam 641 316 msm316@gmail.com

A composite image. On the left is a portrait of a woman with blonde hair, smiling. To the right is the logo for "HOME CARE", which consists of a stylized heart shape with a house inside, and the word "HOME CARE" in red and blue. Below this is a red banner with the text "Private Carer/Home help" and a phone number "07795 689791".

Eileen O' Dwyer

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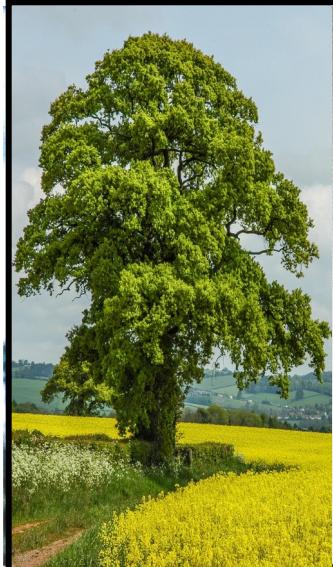
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