

Shirenewton & Newchurch
Parish Magazine
February 2012



Sketch by Barbara Davies

Price: 50p

Dear Friends,

For some Christmas has begun to fade as everyone gets back to school or work of whatever kind; the decorations have by now been packed away, cards read and in some cases Christmas letters answered. Hopefully, thank you letters have been written and sent. My memories of Christmas remain fresh particularly the school carol service in which the children performed to their usual excellent high standard. Then the Christingle and Nativity, written, directed and produced by four of our very talented young women who also played their instruments superbly and I congratulate them for such an outstanding performance. The same evening, at the Midnight Service, we again celebrated God's gift to us of Our Lord Jesus. Christmas morning was also great joy as children brought some of their gifts to show us and to share in their excitement. On all these occasions it was good to see so many of you packing the pews and taking part in the celebrations in your Parish Church together with quite a few visitors who are always most welcome, some of whom told me they come every year.

This is clearly going to be both an exciting and busy year with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the Olympic Games as well as the Annual Church Fete. Some of you, I know are already meeting to plan Shirenewton's celebrations and the Church will be playing its part. Close attention to announcements will be essential as they appear in this magazine, in fact some events are taking place in Church or the Church Room very soon.

Now some of you, I know, are looking forward to half-term for a holiday break and I hear some will be ski-ing and some other seeking somewhere warmer. The Church, however, is now looking forward to Lent which begins on 22nd February, Ash Wednesday, followed by our Lent Course which will be held in the Church Room every Wednesday at 7.30.p.m. beginning on 29th February. We will be following another of the excellent York Courses titled, 'Rich Inheritance, Jesus' legacy of love'. We listen to a recording of some Christian teachers then discuss various aspects of each of the five talks; booklets with the talks are provided so that we can think about the subject in advance of each meeting. Perhaps you cannot get to every meeting but do come to those that you can where a warm welcome awaits you. These talks are not intended to test our Biblical knowledge but our approach to what we do or do not believe and how we apply our faith to everyday living.. I very much look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible.

Lent is a time not to give things up in order to make us feel good about ourselves but rather to either give things up in order to give to others in need, or to take on an extra commitment to benefit others. In the middle of Lent we will again celebrate Mothering Sunday when I hope some of our young people will be on hand to take part in the Sunday Service. Although it is a time to thank our mothers for all they do for us, it is also a time when we consider Mother Church which nurtures our spiritual needs through the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and by the example of His disciples who we Christians are today. His commands to us are to love one another and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

A brief reminder that we have a team of Church visitors who help me in visiting anyone who is lonely, unwell or would like to receive Holy Communion at home. Please let me or one of them know if you would like a visit, or you have a neighbour or you know someone in the parish who is in any kind of need.

Every Blessing, Rev. Nansi Davies. Parish Priest.

CHURCH MATTERS

Marriages and Baptisms — St Thomas à Becket, Shirenewton

The PCC welcomes all requests to use the Church for Marriages and Baptisms. In order to ensure the Church and facilities are available when you would like to use them, in the first place please speak to the Parish Priest, The Reverend Nansi Davies, before making any other arrangements. She will be able to provide the application forms for the ceremonies and the scale of fees, and discuss with the PCC invitations to clergy and lay preachers from other parishes to assist at the ceremonies if so desired.

From Shirenewton Church Sunday Club and Friends

We would like to thank everyone who supported the Coffee Morning and Advent Fayre on Sunday 4th December. It was a lovely happy occasion with jams and marmalades to buy, chutneys and jellies, mincemeat and Christmas puddings, Christmas cakes and homemade sweets. It all seems such a long time ago now – but it was a really lovely morning with so many people coming along to support Retrack – the charity that supports homeless children who live on the streets of Kampala. We raised £554.10 which was brilliant.

Carols Around the Village Christmas Tree – Sunday 11th December

Well, weather-wise this was a dismal evening with rain and wind and general coldness – but that didn't stop about 80 people turning out to sing carols. We abandoned the village Christmas Tree in the TA carpark and headed off into the church where we were warm(ish) and dry and where we sang a fine selection of our favourite carols. The youngsters went round with their tins and collected £151.44 So put that together with the money made at the Advent Fayre and Coffee Morning and we were able to send off a fantastic £705 to 'Retrack'

Later on in the year, we hope to invite someone one down from Retrack – to tell us about how this money is used and how they try to support the homeless children on the streets of Kamapala. Once again, thank you so much for all your support.

Shirenewton Church Christingle and Nativity Service

And finally a huge big thank you to Hannah Leney, Charlotte Moore and Rhiannon Osbourn Tonner. With Sunday Club feeling the pinch these days... we wondered if we would be able to have a Christingle. And yet it is so popular with young and old alike. And so Kerry, Jane and I were absolutely delighted when Hannah, Charlotte and Nanny came to us and said that they wanted to organise the Christingle Service, that it was all part and parcel of all that was important to them, that it was how Christmas in Shirenewton should be. And so despite having major school exams, they wrote the Christingle service, rehearsed the youngsters and organised everything. They even allowed Jane, James and I to take part as dozy shepherds.

It was a really lovely service and as ever, the church was bursting at the seams. I am sure everyone appreciated all the effort they put into it. The collection of £352:67 was shared between the Archbishops Fund and The Children's Society. Thank you so much!

FROM THE REGISTERS

The Funeral of

Malcolm Ostler 1937 to 2012

St Thomas à Becket, Shirenewton

HM THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

The Community Council would like to receive ideas and views from everyone about how to celebrate HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee over the long weekend of 2nd to 5th June 2012.

The outline of the official weekend celebrations for the Nation over the four day weekend is:

Saturday 2nd June – Derby Day

Sunday 3rd June – Big Lunch; Thames flotilla

Monday 4th June – Jubilee Concert; Beacons lit across the country

Tuesday 5th June – Service at St Paul's Cathedral and planting 6 million trees

The village fete usually takes place on the second Saturday in June (9th June in 2012), but because of the four day weekend it is likely that families will either go away for several days and miss the weekend completely, or be grateful that there is some local entertainment for their families and turn up in droves! Either way, when the fete committee met on 28th September they felt it was unlikely to be economic in terms of people's goodwill and spare time to get volunteers out on two successive weekends to arrange two events, and as the Jubilee weekend is unchangeable it seemed to make sense to them to move the fete to the Jubilee weekend. They suggested this to the PCC, and at their meeting on 10th October the PCC agreed with their proposal.

After much discussion, the working group set up by the Community Council are suggesting a broad outline of events over the weekend along the following lines:

Saturday 2nd June – village fete on the Recreation Ground

Sunday 3rd June – Sunday service at St Thomas a Becket Church; cleaning up after the fete; preparation for Monday's activities

Monday 4th June:

5.00 p.m. – bell-ringing

5.30 p.m. – service on the Recreation Ground in the marquees

6.00 p.m. – bar opens on the Recreation Ground

6.30 p.m. – hog roast; everyone bring some salad and pudding

7.00 p.m. – activities start, designed to keep people entertained until it gets dark – these might include some or all of the following: a display by the Morgan owners club, vintage vehicles, Silly Olympics, the Shirenewton inaugural All Wales welly-wanging competition, a quiz and a raffle; activities to compliment the fete activities, but nothing in competition with what the fete will be doing

10.00 p.m. – parade of Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Brownies, school etc; symbolic passing of the torch/taper from the adults to the youth movements, who then pass the taper/torch to whoever lights the beacon. The parade could start at 9.30 or 9.45 p.m. and end up at the beacon at 10.00 p.m.

10.05 p.m. – fireworks display starts

The day finishes after the firework display

Tuesday 5th June – cleaning up after Monday; litter pick

Nothing has been set in stone, apart from the booking of the Recreation Ground for 2nd and 4th June, so please send your ideas to the Community Council so your views and thoughts can be considered during the next stage of the planning process. There is no deadline for sending in your ideas, but the sooner they are received the sooner arrangements can be made. In cases where the Community Council may need to make firm bookings, it may be wise to get your ideas in sooner rather than later. Please contact either Cllr Charles Eickhoff on 01291641716 or Cllr John Eede on 01291641257, with all your suggestions.

Shirenewton Church 200 Club

Your money and support helps to keep our beautiful church alive.

Some changes for 2012.

The collectors are:-

Mynyddbach :-Barbara Walters, Meg Driver

Shirenewton :-John Nicholas, Sue Philipson, Nerys Wilson

Earlswood :-Richard Matthews

In charge of finance:- Sally Saysell



For an annual subscription of **£10** collected in **February/March**, you will participate in ten draws a year starting from April. The draws take part in the church on the third Sunday of the month. Nine of the draws payout prizes of £40, £30, £20 and £10. At Christmas there is a **bumper** draw with prizes of £100, £50, and two prizes at £25.

Cheques should be made payable to:- Shirenewton Church 200 club.

If you're interested in joining or adding another family member please call me on 641935.

Thank you so much for your continued support.

Barbara Davies, Peter Jones and Auriol Horton have retired from the 200 club. I would like to thank them very much for their valued support and commitment .

Nerys Wilson (01291 641935).

Shirenewton Community Council Meeting, Monday 5th December 2011

Now, because there is no mag published in January, I thought I wouldn't turn out to the December SCC thinking that as 'yesterday's news is no news', last year's news is positively ancient history. But Carole said she would be providing a glass of red wine and some mince pies as a seasonal reward – and so being a shallow sort of a person, I was persuaded.

Police report for November

- Sun 6th A motorbike skidded on a wet patch on the B4235 by 'The Carps' but luckily the driver suffered only minor injuries
- Sat 12th 2 reports were received about off road bikes roaring around the forest in Wentwood and Earlswood but a search by officers found nothing.
- Sun 13th A horse was reported going for a jaunt on its own but later it returned home.
- Sat 26th More off road bikes were reported roaring around in the forest but no details of the bikes were provided
- Sun 27th Another motorbike rider was involved in another collision again on the B4235 – this time involving a blue car. Luckily once again, only minor injuries.
- Bit of déjà vu going on?

Planning

1. DC/2011/01069 Earlswood Hall.

Installation of photovoltaic panels on Village Hall roof

Recommend approval

2. D/2011/01063 Oxpool Farm, Earlswood

Change of use of annexe containing two units of accommodation into self contained separate dwelling. The original application way back in June 2006 had been approved but there was confusion now because the re-emergence of this planning application seemed to differ quite considerably to the original

Refusal was recommended. With comments.

3. DC/2011/00944 Hilltop, Earlswood

Extension to the existing bungalow in the form of the addition of new first floor with a minor extension at ground floor to improve the modeling of the front elevation

Recommend approval - by majority vote

4. DC/2011/00957 Dalimoore House, Shirenewton

Amendment (to garage) The cllrs felt that the amendment did not in any way address the previous points that had been made by SCC

Therefore Refusal was recommended

Items of local concern

To consider the idea and implications of shop site on Shirenewton Recreation Field SMILE (Shirenewton and Mynyddbach Initiative for Local Enterprise ...I think that's right ...and I'm involved in SMILE) have put forward a plan to consider the possibility of building a shop attached to the Rec Hall.

The play park would be moved to the other side of the tennis courts and the play park would then become part of an extended carpark. This would need an alteration to the existing lease agreement but as it happens this runs out in January 2013 so it is possible it could be amended.

SCC suggested that:

SMILE pursues the lease amendments

That they talk to the Rec association about these plans

That they continue looking at the Tan house to see if that is an option

That they look at the existing shop now that it is empty

That they look into the complexities of obtaining grants

The Skateboard Plan

Keen readers will remember how a month ago three young lads brought their proposals for a skateboard park along to the community council....Oh it's all happening up at the Rec. The Cllrs learnt that Woolaston Community Council pays for the maintenance and the insurance for a similar facility and so were keen to discover what the likely demand would be for a skatepark in Shirenewton, the cost of building one, plus what the ongoing costs were likely to be. They also agreed to look into the possibilities of other sites in the locality.

The Queen's Jubilee Plans

Well not actually the Queen's plans you understand but our own plans to celebrate on Monday 4th June. I think the plans already include a hog roast, a beacon lighting, some fire works and maybe even a bit of bunting. An ad will be placed in the parish rag asking for residents' suggestions.

Short Reports

Now I could cope with the first of these reports. Holes in the roads were filled in....' the potholes in the Cwm Road have been filled in and a very good job has been done and a fantastic job has been done on the main school route and the footpath in Newchurch West has been cleared'

But then the following non-news sapped the will to remain awake. Apparently, the Lower Wye Charter Liaison Meeting was very poorly attended, the county councillors were not committed and that 'there was some chaos demonstrated but all parties must keep working at it....' (What???) The Lower Wye Area Committee Meeting (which I presume is different from the Lower Wye Valley Liaison Meeting) 'threw up more questions than it answered', The Cwynel Cymru plans to foster sustainable development throughout Wales 'appear to be 'totally ineffective' and finally our Cllrs who went on the OVW financial Training Sessions were not impressed at all as 'it was far too basic.'

Was this worth a mince pie I wondered.... NO. And I was completely beyond untangling the following – so I have 'cut and pasted' for you. Make of it what you will. Pay attention. You will be tested at the end of it

Shirenewton Play Area

The previous quote from MCC to carry out necessary work was £1310 plus VAT which amounts to £1572 (VAT reclaimable). But to try and get some reduction in costs it was decided to find someone else to give quotes but this has taken some considerable time.

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The costings from MCC included treating moles (the moles, the moles) which it was decided previously was not cost effective. The removal of this item (the moles, the moles) would have reduced MCC's quote to £1190 (not including VAT). There were also two items on the list that the other 'quotee' was unable to carry out - replacing of the single bay cradle swing and the single bay flat swing unit which were quoted for by MCC as being £165 and £75 respectively. For comparison, removing these two items reduced the quote of work from MCC to £953 (not including VAT) whereas the other charge was £350 (not VAT registered) Effectively this means that the two swing seats (one cradle and one flat) still require replacing. MCC's opinion is that they will require replacing in the current year. If MCC carry out the work it will cost £240 (not including VAT) so the total for the work would then amount to £590 (not including VAT) instead of the original quote of £1190 (not including VAT) so this would still be a considerable saving.

So what was the colour of the postman's hair? It must have been a jumbo-marathon meeting because even the TA was shut

Shirenewton Community Council Meeting January 2012

It was Carole Jones' last meeting as Clerk to Shirenewton Community Council. She was given a bouquet of flowers from the councillors and a large vote of thanks for all she has done over the last few years. I have to add that I think she has worked extremely hard as Shirenewton's Clerk and has done brilliant work in an area that, quite frankly, would have driven me bananas. I have admired her doggedness in pursuing the often complex and baffling issues that crop up between a small community council and a mighty County Council. And she has often helped me out when, having fallen enthralled to the cut and thrust of local politics, I have failed to take notes as I should have done. (OK ... all right... when I have fallen asleep.....she has bailed me out...)

The Council then welcomed our new clerk, Mrs. Hilary Counsell who will start in Feb

There didn't seem to be a police report relating to our local area

Planning

1. DC/2011/01142 The Gatehouse, Pen y Cae Mawr

Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of two storey dwelling and attached garage

The cllrs noted that this amended plan now excluded the planned garage and the utility room and that had they been included as would seem they should have been, the new plans would have extended the site by more than the permitted 50%. Also they were not really convinced by the stated 'ecofriendliness' as it seemed the build did not do anything above and beyond what could normally expect. **Approval - not recommended.**

2. DC/2011/00169 Trem Hafren, Earlswood

Installation of a 20m x 40m manege with all weather surface, fenced by timber rails. Land currently pasture. **Approval Recommended**

Items of Local Concern.

To respond to new amendments / additions in Draft local Development Plan

First of all, it was reported that there had been an extremely well attended meeting on Friday 6th January when over 80 people had come to the Rec to discuss the Local Development Plan. These plans are proposing that two sites to the west of Shirenewton (one field just beyond the Rec, the other field adjacent to Redd Landes) are developed to the point whereby the village could double in size. If you wish to find out more details about these plans or to express your opinions you have to give MCC your views in writing or on line by 4.30 on 3rd February 2012. You can find out how by going on to the church website and using the links to the Community Council.

Meanwhile our community councilors discussed the plans and, to say the least were less than enthusiastic. It was very strongly pointed out that it would completely change the nature of the village to have possibly up to 500 houses built here. And that despite the developers views to the contrary, the infrastructure of the roads couldn't cope with the increase in traffic, the local water supply and drainage system was already struggling, the local school and playschool couldn't cope with the increase in children, there were no footpaths for safe access to the school or around the village, there would be traffic bottlenecks, within the centre of the village, there was feeble public transport, there was no shop. It would change the nature and outlook of the village. The developer's plans to put in 'parklands' 'cricket pitches and 'football pitches' showed how out of touch they were with the existing village amenities. MCC's statistical analysis had originally been that Shirenewton and Mynnyddbach could accommodate 10 additional new affordable (social) housing... so councilors wondered how suddenly their statistical analysis could be suggesting a possible need of up to 500 houses. It was suggested that this new plan was out of synch with their policy and based on 'statistically illiterate information'

Understandably, these plans generated a enormous amount of discussion at the meeting. I was glum really think that despite Governmental noises suggesting otherwise, it will be the Anonymous Planning People in MCC who will decide for us. I suppose we will have to be satisfied that we can choose who gets to mend the wooden horse in the children's playground.

And I was surprised to learn that even though we have a dozen or more councilors representing our community – their objection will only count as one objection.... Bonkers.

And so, back to items of really important local concern

Grass Cutting. The cllrs agreed to use MCC to cut the grass at the Rec for £958.80 plus VAT

To appoint Vice Chair for period January 2012 to May 2012. Any takers? A resounding silence greeted this question. Only the tapping of my laptop could be heard. I'm not surprised really....I think a general air of disillusionment had settled on everyone. Well it had certainly settled on me.

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Mobile One Stop Shop Bus.

Due to staff shortages and the lack of use of the LSB bus (sometimes known as the Mobile One Stop Shop), the service has been stopped being... mobile... for the time being. (To avoid any misunderstanding – and we wouldn't want that would we...the vehicle is not the Local Authority's but is actually managed by the Local Service Board.

Grab a Grant - New Competition On the 9th January 2012, the Big Lottery Fund launched the Grab a Grant Competition . The Clerk has full details but basically, The South Wales Argus has teamed up with the Big Lottery Fund to dish out up to £25,000 worth of grants to community groups in south east Wales. Grants will be awarded of up to £5,000 each to projects which will help change and improve the lives of people in their local communities. Deadline date 3rd February.

But then... what was this I'd written? 'Organ and Tissue transplants members are requested - entertainments element....' I've absolutely no idea what that was about. Sometimes I think I ought to be put out to grass...

Dimming. To save money there has been an ongoing programme of street light dimming after a certain time in the evening when no good person should be out'n'about anyway but should be tucked up in their beds. Apparently, where this has already happened, no-one has noticed .And we had obviously reached that time because I felt particularly low in energy, my laptop battery had died, my pencil had broken, my interest had plummeted to zero. Yes, I was officially feeling dim. And no one had noticed.

Next meeting is Monday 6th February 2012 – at the Rec. And Carole skipped out into the night.

**Village Green Mynyddbach
Public Inquiry March 26th - 28th 2012
Earlswood Hall**

In August 2010 Shirenewton Community Council made application to Monmouthshire County Council to register the land at Blethyn Close as Village Green. If successful this will mean that the land will remain for the use of residents in perpetuity.

A Public Inquiry is now to be held on behalf of the Registration Authority (MCC) in Earlswood Hall. The Inquiry is expected to last three days.

The criteria require that a 'significant number of the inhabitants' have indulged in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for at least twenty years'

At the time of application several residents provided information which indicated that the land has been used for recreational activities for more than twenty years. However more 'evidence' can only be helpful.

If you have used the land or have knowledge that the land has been used for recreational purposes would you please contact your Councillor or Clerk.

It would also be helpful that as many people as possible attend the Inquiry.

This could be your last chance to prevent future development of this area

Carole Jones	elorac123@aol.com	641791
Suzi Squires	suziquires@btinternet.com	641787
Bill Clarke	williamjhclark@msn.com	641783

SAMFAL JANUARY 2012.

Another year begins and so far we have been spared the extremes of weather that tormented us last year and kept us indoors in the warm, and therefore it was a pleasure to sit outside on the night of my birthday and toast the full moon and smile at Orion lying on his back. Almost immediately my peace was shattered by the yelp of a vixen which seemed to be only the other side of my garden hedge; my dog and I sat still and quietly while she continued at intervals to advertise her availability to any dog fox in this parish and the next, until the breeze must have changed direction and she got wind of us and trotted off through the sheep pasture into the sanctuary of our reserve. It was almost like daylight and I was able to observe that she looked fit and healthy with a thick winter coat and luxurious brush; so different to the mange-ridden urban foxes I have disturbed in gardens when I did pest control in Bristol. It is probably due to diet- it cannot be good living on discarded burger cartons and licking up recycled vindaloes from the pavement.

Speaking of vixen yelping, I was driving down the Crick road early the other day when just past the Coalpits farm I had to brake hard to avoid hitting a group of three Muntjac deer who ran in front of me in the mist and jumped into the adjoining field. These are known as "barking deer" and are slowly colonising Wales via the M4 corridor. It would be nice to think that they visit our fields on their travels; whether the ponies would tolerate their presence though is another thing entirely. If anyone would like to familiarise themselves with the dog-like call of these non-indigenous ungulates, google "muntjac" and you will be able to watch a short video clip.

Staying on the theme of nocturnal noises, now is the time of year when tawny owls are vociferous, they like to get their nesting done early to take advantage of the long hours of darkness to find food for greedy owlets and it is good that our reserve has a healthy population of short tailed field voles, as is evident by the return of the kestrel and the ever present buzzards. Round the clock predation by wild avian hunters is one thing but I wonder how it compares with the onslaught from another non-indigenous species, the domestic cat? Don't get me going on that one. It is a good thing that rodents have a rapid and productive breeding cycle.

Visitors to the fields will have noticed that things in the natural world are already on the move; trees are budding and shoots of perennial plants are poking through the ground and I was inspecting our new hedgerow with a plan of cutting the tops to encourage bushiness and low growth but I see the ponies are helping by nibbling the saplings down to rabbit guard height. Give it a few years and we will have good thick hedges providing habitat for all manner of flora and fauna, which I think is great considering so many hedgerows are being ripped up countrywide to gain more space for planting the crops that we cannot live without. Anyone with enquiries about what is going on in the association please call any of the committee on the usual numbers or call me on 641773 or email mike@shirenewton.org Smile, it will soon be spring.

SHIRENEWTON CHURCH WEBSITE

www.shirenewtonchurch.com

I've now added a community calendar to the church website (look for it under 'Forthcoming events' in the right column). The idea is that this will become a single resource for the Shirenewton, Mynyddbach, Earlswood communities to which everyone can add events. We welcome all community events. I consider a community event to be an event run by and on behalf of the community regardless of whether it is a commercial event. However the calendar is not intended to provide an opportunity for individual personal gain. Thus whilst a community event would include, for example, a special event at a local pub, it would not include a 'party plan' direct marketing activity designed to raise money for an individual.

To add an event please contact me (webmaster@shirenewtonchurch.com) and provide full details. Or, if you are representing a community organisation, I can provide you with the ability to add and remove events yourself. Please contact me for more details.

Other than that the website continues to provide local community information. For example, information on the proposals which may more than double the size of Shirenewton have been available on the site since shortly after the community council meeting.

Over 2011 the main church website (not the shop) has 3,087 visits (~59 visits per week) from 1,781 unique visitors. A total of 10,120 pages were served. The UK provided 88% of visits, the USA 3.7% and then Russia, Brazil, Canada, Australia, India, France, Ireland and South Africa being the others in the top 10 in that order!

For the techies, it's interesting that Internet Explorer account for 66% of all visits, Firefox 13%, Safari 9.5% and Chrome 8%, the remainder being mobiles and other things.

The website raised £1,254 for the church in 2011. Many thanks for all your support and please continue to shop through www.shirenewtonchurch.com.

On a general note of safety & security, please be aware that a significant number of scams are targeting Facebook users. Just google 'Facebook scams' to find the Facebook 'Fraud and Scams exposed' page. Be ever vigilant.

Finally, I launched a 'sister' website with information on the proposed village shop. Browse over to www.shirenewtonshop.com

Safe Browsing
David Cornwell
webmaster

THE BELLS, THE BELLS

As has become a tradition over the Christmas and New Year periods the bell ropes were dropped down from the ringing room and into the church so that the ringers were now in full view of the congregation. The bells are more difficult to handle from this position because of the length of unguided rope and the relative mass of rope to bell, however, everyone coped well. On New Year's Eve the bells are rung prior to midnight half-muffled (each clapper having a leather pad attached on one side so that the bells sounds alternately open and muted) which is a haunting sound traditionally used at times of national mourning. At this time we are mourning the passing of the old year. Just before midnight the muffles are removed whilst the last post is sounded from the tower top (this year performed by James Leney and Merrick Stanley) and then after the strike of midnight open ringing ensues – open to celebrate the birth of the New Year. An estimated 70 people were present in the church to witness this tradition. The ropes have now been returned back into our sumptuous ringing room but will descend down into the church at Easter – so come along and have a look.

The first Saturday of the New Year has become established as the date of our Winter Tour. On the Tour we visit different churches to experience their bells. There are over 5000 churches with ringing bells in the British Isles so there are plenty to choose from. This year we headed for the South Cotswolds starting at Sherston Magna just south of Westonbirt: a very fine ring of 6 bells. Then we travelled on to two nearby 6 bell rings at Shipton Moyle and then Long Newton, before heading to Tetbury. We could hear the bells chiming at Tetbury as we looked for parking spaces and the reason for this became clear once having climbed the 55 steps of the spiral staircase and entered the ringing room. Tetbury church has a very fine ring of 8 bells and also has a rare instrument – a barrel chiming mechanism which is a bit like a musical box in operation but on a grand scale. With an octave of bells it is possible to chime out tunes with each of the 8 bells sounded by a sprung hammer – a similar hammer system is used at Shirenewton to strike just the tenor bell on the hour. We raised the bells and had a most enjoyable ring after which we descended to view the church which is simply breathtaking and highly recommended for a visit to anyone appreciates beautiful buildings. The body of the church was completely rebuilt in 1777 and is a perfect example of Georgian Gothic architecture. It is complemented by the medieval tower and magnificent spire – the fourth tallest in the UK. Lunch was held in the Snooty Fox Hotel where we had our own dining room reserved, then we drove over to Horsley another fine 8. After this we visited the excellent 6 bell rings at Coaley and finally Leonard Stanley where the bells are rung from the transept. A post-tour celebration was held at Chez Penney in Earlswood where plans were hatched for the summer tour in August.

We are now considering recruitment to our band during 2012. So if you are fed up with mindless TV, bored with pointless computer games and X-boxes, feel ridiculous on your Wii and dread even more emails or virtual friends then consider joining a truly active and absorbing British tradition. Just contact the Tower captain (as listed under Local Contacts) or just come along one Friday evening between 7.30 and 9.00 pm. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Mike Penney

**SHIRENEWTON
COMMUNITY
LUNCHEON CLUB**

**Tredegar Arms
Shirenewton
01291 641274**

Please book early to secure
your place for lunch on
Wednesday :

February 22nd 2012

March 28th 2012

**SHIRENEWTON
PARENT
&
TODDLER GROUP**



Every Thursday
1.30 to 3pm term time
Drinks, Snacks, Crafts,
& Songs. £2

Shirenewton Recreation Hall

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/
groups/181560798590317](https://www.facebook.com/groups/181560798590317)

**CHEPSTOW BUMPS N
BABIES GROUP**

MONMOUTH & DISTRICT NCT

Every month parents and
mothers to be get together
at another parent's house or
a local child friendly venue.
It is an opportunity to make
friends and extend a support
network in the area. Parents
volunteer to host this event
in & around Chepstow.

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NCT member to attend
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venues in the Chepstow
area organised for January,
February & March so please
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to be added to our mailing
list.

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ter@yahoo.co.uk

SHIRENEWTON WI

We celebrated Christmas and the end of 2011 with a lovely meal at the Huntsman on the 8th December. Sixteen ladies enjoyed good company, good conversation and a very excellent dinner. The service was fantastic with turkey and pork etc. carved before us and each person served individually, it was difficult not to get carried away with the choice of vegetables and the offer of extra meat. Every course was as lovely and the meal rounded off with mince pies, mints and coffee/tea during which we passed the present box for Secret Santa and each chose a gift. It was all a very nice end to our years programme.



January 12th at the Rec. Hall

Wishing each other happy new year for 2012 we started our new programme with an illustrated talk on the Hawaiian Islands by Dr. Naylor Firth. We were very happy to welcome back Dr. Firth and his wife Ire and to hear of another of the fascinating places they have visited.

One might expect Dr. Firth's talk to be all about tourist spots and wildlife, but Dr. Firth is into Geology and the islands of Hawaii are all about a very active geology which effects everything. His photographs were spectacular and his explanations of how and why very informative. The islands are beautiful with an amazing range of climates and habitats. The history of human activities is fascinating, they must be wonderful islands to call home, but I'm not sure I would want to be one of the farmers who have lost most of their land and crops to lava flows, even though it is the volcanic nature of the ground which makes it so fertile.

We were certainly inspired by Dr. Firth's talk and would love to visit such a fascinating set of islands.

Our next meeting is on the 9th February 7:15pm at the Rec Hall, our speaker is PC Louise Thorpe on her experiences in the police force. Why not come along for the evening and try us out.

MOTHERS' UNION



On 11 January we had the AGM for our Branch at Shirenewton with a review of the past year and our plans for the new year.

Our next meeting in Shirenewton Church Room is on Wednesday 8 February at 2.30 p.m.. We will prepare for the annual Women's World Day of Prayer which is on Friday 2 March. The Service has been prepared by women in Malaysia, highlighting not only the positive aspects of their lives, but also the problems they are addressing. EVERYONE WELCOME.

Mothering Sunday is on 18 March and again MU has great suggestions for gifts that can be purchased to help "make a mother's day" in a developing country. We will make these suggestions available in church to anyone interested.

Rosemary Carey, Branch Leader 01292 425010

1ST SHIRENEWTON GUIDES



Guides celebrated the start of 2012 with the customary party – this time on a pyjama theme. Traditional party games such as “Pass the parcel” were played along with the less traditional, but far more robust, game of duster hockey. Food was also of the traditional variety including cheese and pineapple on sticks and party rings – there was very little waste!

Since then the patrols have worked on a variety of Go for It activities that the girls organise themselves including a relaxation session, leaflets on animal welfare and Spanish omelette making. Several Guides were able to finally claim the Tanzania Challenge Badge after a very interesting talk on Fair Trade by Marion McAdam.

The bird boxes are now complete and are awaiting delivery so that they can be put in place before the birds start house hunting in the spring!

All have now recovered from a very strenuous, but highly enjoyable, session at the Boulders climbing wall in December which saw (and heard) some of our younger Guides achieve “great heights” – literally, and some older hands challenge themselves on the overhangs. The instructor was brilliant and I would recommend it to any family looking for an indoor activity.

Yours in Guiding

Kestrel Helen Cann 01291 650835

Kitten Amanda Moreton 01291 650763

Karen, Debbie and Jess

FAIRTRADE NEWS

The Fairtrade movement is gearing up for the annual Fairtrade Fortnight : February 27th- March 11th, which aims to promote Fairtrade. Last year's successful Guinness Book of Records attempt for the world's longest piece of (fairtrade!) bunting must be trumped this year with something equally eye-catching (i.e.bizarre!). 2012 marks the 20th anniversary of the Fairtrade Foundation although the first product went on sale in 1988. In Britain Fairtrade sales topped £1 billion last year and globally there are 1,000 Fairtrade towns who have made an ongoing commitment to use and promote the products.



Gold is an exciting new addition to the range. Chichester Cathedral has a gleaming new gold leaf covered weather vane atop its spire - the first public building in Britain to make such a demonstrative gesture in favour of fairly mined and fairly traded gold. Small scale miners in the developing world generally work in very poor often dangerous conditions, with low wages and little support.

2012 is of course, for us, the year of the Olympics. I think the main sponsors are McDonald's (!... I am however grateful they have not relinquished their apostrophe!), Coca-Cola(!) and Cadbury(!). I shall stifle my initial thoughts! However McDonald's fish is now wholly from accredited sources and SOME of Cadbury's products are fairly-traded.

We can only be grateful for these small positive steps. I hope everyone will embrace the rallying cry of Fairtrade Fortnight:

TAKE A STEP IN 2012!

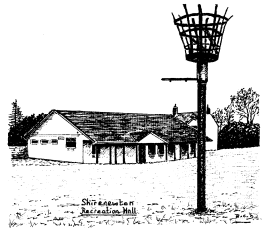
. . . . towards a fairer future.

Marion McAdam 641 316 msm316@gmail.com

SHIRENEWTON CHURCH FETE MEETING 2012

A meeting will take place in the Church Hall on February 15th at 8pm.
We will be planning this years Fete which will be held on June 2nd.
Please come along and support the Church and Village to make this the
best Fete ever
Diane Ward Fete Co-ordinator

Quiz and Social Evening at Shirenewton Recreation Hall



Friday 17th February

Doors open 7:30pm

Quiz begins at 8pm

£2 per Person

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Nerys's Natty Nosh

On occasions the best of us have disasters in the kitchen. What do we do? Are there remedies or useful tips to help us? We learn by our mistakes and try to rectify and salvage our creative masterpiece!!!

As a Home Economics teacher I was at times asked by students to resolve their mistakes. I always taught my pupils to taste their dishes. As their teacher I would also sample every dish in the classroom.



There are so many tips I can share with you, these are a few of them.

Too Salty.

Some people drop a raw potato into the mixture. This draws liquid out of the dish but doesn't always rectify the problem. The best thing to do is to add more liquid, some sugar or even better some honey and a little vinegar or wine to balance out the brine.

Underdone Cake.

If it's too late to return the cake back to the oven, take out the gooey middle and fill the centre with fruit, whipped cream or ice-cream.

Stale Cereal.

Stale cereal can be revitalised by placing in the microwave for 30- 45 seconds. Rest for a few minutes and enjoy as usual. Crush or blend into breadcrumbs, or replace half the quantity of cereal with flour in muffins or biscuit recipes.

Overcooked Pasta.

When pasta is over cooked it's not the end of the world. Simply sauté in olive oil and butter for a few minutes, then sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese, or pesto. Alternatively heat some cream in a pan, add some cheese and gently add the pasta. Sprinkle with fresh herbs.

Hard Cheese.

Hardened cheese can be grated and added to baked potatoes, soup, pasta, mashed potato or made into a sauce.

Over baked biscuits.

If your biscuits are harder than you like, pop them into a plastic bag or container with a few slices of apples. Leave for 24 hrs and they should soften. You can place the biscuits in the microwave for a few seconds and they will soften, but they must be eaten immediately.

Enjoy cooking

STARGAZING

The planets should provide some good views this month. The reddish planet Mars is in the evening sky below the constellation of Leo in the south-east. On the 9th the Moon is just to the right of the planet. Bright Jupiter is in the west. On the 27th the crescent Moon lies just above Jupiter. On the 26th, the Crescent Moon forms a triangle with Jupiter and Venus. Venus is the brighter of the 2 planets. In the morning sky the yellowish planet Saturn is to the south near the bright star Spica. Saturn, Spica and the Moon are in close formation on the 13th.

The constellation of Orion the Hunter lies directly to the South. Four bright stars represent his shoulders and legs whilst a further three form his belt. Above Orion and to the right is a very bright orange star called Aldebaran. It's the brightest star in the constellation Taurus, the Bull. Looking further upwards and to the right you will see a small cluster of stars. These are called the Pleiades. With the naked eye, people can usually see six or seven stars in Pleiades. However, some people with better eyesight can see more. The cluster contains more than 200 young stars born some 50 million years ago, which means they are only one hundredth of the age of the Sun, our local star. Aldebaran means "the follower" in Arabic, as it rises above the horizon after the Pleiades. Sirius, the sky's brightest star lies to the lower left of Orion. It appears particularly bright because it happens to lie nearby compared with other stars, at a distance of a mere 9 light years. Sirius is close compared with Aldebaran which is 65 light years away from us and the Pleiades star cluster which is 400 light years away.

Astronomy produces beautiful images. NASA selects a "picture of the day" which can be found at <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/>
Dave Thomas

WHIST DRIVES

Don't forget to support our Drives held on the first Thursday of each month at the Recreation Hall starting promptly at 7.30 p.m. – the next being on the 2nd February followed by a St.David's Day Special in March. New players are always made welcome, please join us; our Table fee is £1. per person which includes light refreshments. We also have a Raffle that raises funds for the upkeep of the Hall. Auriol Horton. 01291 641844



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SEVERN VIEW "MUSIC FOR CARE" CONCERT

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 25th, 7.00pm
Chepstow Methodists Church, Albion Square

Very few people can now be unaware of the growing national concerns regarding the plight of our increasing elderly population who are becoming unfortunate victims of Dementia, Alzheimers Disease, and other ailments for which the requirement is 24-hour care. Great demands are now focussing on the needs of care provision. Residential centres and care homes are often the only hope for so many frail and seriously ill persons.

In Chepstow we have several care homes providing this much-needed help. These include Severn View Residential Home & Resources Centre. Whilst the care of all residents is funded, the Centre has an Amenity Fund which consists solely of money raised voluntarily to provide some of the many extras that we –as readers –take for granted which range from money for Christmas, birthdays, outings, new & more mobility items, comforts of every description –the list is truly endless. It is all about making life as good as possible for those who have so little to look forward to in their situation.

I have very special & personal reasons to be thankful to Severn View, and since 2010 have desired to help. With the full support of the Centre & council, I have persuaded some of my musical friends to join together for a concert to raise some vital funds for the Severn View Amenity Fund. Every penny raised in this concert will go to the Fund. All the performers are giving their services voluntarily -- and there will be no expenses!

Tickets are £5.00, to include light refreshments and programme. They can be obtained by telephoning me on (01291) 623310, or from Chepstow Bookshop. Please come and support us if you are able to do so –and enjoy an evening of lovely music as well!

Thank you ----Marjorie Duerden.

Performers to include:

ALISON WRAY (Soprano) PETER COOK (Organ) ROGER MARTIN (Baritone)

MOIRA FRASER-HOOK & CORRIN GREEN (Recorders)

MARJORIE DUERDEN (Piano/Keyboard)

PAULA KEMPTON (Violin) & the Kempton family String Ensemble

Music to be performed will include solo as well as ensemble items by Franck, Mozart, Jommelli, Telemann, Vila Lobos, Handel, songs by Warlock, Butterworth & Stanford, Saint-Saens ----

also. a touch of Harry Potter, some Moonlight & Roses –and more -----!!

Earlswood Hall and the VCFCIP

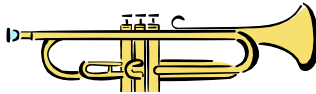


So, ever heard of VCFCIP? Well no, not many people have... but it stands for 'The Village Community Facility Capital Investment Programme'. OK, so it's not the snappiest title in the world – but it is a fund using European money (yes, European money...) and it's administered by MCC. It allows rural communities to improve the facilities it can offer to local people. And the committee of Earlswood

Hall has reason to be grateful to VCFCIP as we have just received a grant of £3,700 to help us purchase a new electric oven, a new fridge and a new bar-beer-chiller-cooler (and Bob the Barman is really quite excited by this last gadget). Anyway these energy-efficient appliances will use our very own electricity which we have generated from our newly installed Solar panels. Joined up eco-thinking or wot!

And not only that, but we have been able to purchase some lovely blue 'zoning' curtains which will help us to divide the hall up into more user friendly areas and which will help us to keep the hall warmer for smaller groups. We would also like to thank SODS for their match funding of £350 (or as VCFCIP prefer to call it 'leverage funding') to help us towards this project

Shirenewton Church Trumpet Concert



Sat, 25 February, 19:30 – 21:30

Philippe Scharz is one of the most exciting trumpeters of today. He has developed a highly successful career as an orchestral and chamber musician as well as a soloist. He will play a concert for us in the church room at 7.30 pm followed by refreshments in church room

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GARDENING CORNER

Happy New Year to one and all. Hopefully you had a good Christmas with family and friends. So much for dry weather! I was looking forward to getting out in the vegetable garden but continuing mild and wet weather put paid to that notion. With family staying Christmas was a time to reflect on the year gone by and make plans for the year ahead. Whilst reflecting my mind started to drift back over my working life so far (yes bad sign I hear some of you say). It dawned on me that this year I will have spent 40 years living and working in the countryside, the last 30 of which have been spent in Monmouthshire. I am a forester by profession. I love trees (although swear that I have never hugged any – well at least not been caught by anyone!) and my life has been involved with planting, caring for and yes, ultimately, cutting them down. When I'm on my travels through the county, I can now see the fruits of my labour. Many of the younger woods I have either directly or indirectly been responsible for them being planted. A lot of the more mature woods I have had a hand in prescribing management work that has ensured their value for bio-diversity, as well as timber, has been maintained, or in the case of some where no management had been undertaken for years, seen their value increase. Sad though it may be to some, I look with interest at what I have created, satisfied that I have truly left my mark on this earth. I muse and wonder just how many people can say that, satisfied, smug even.

During these years I have seen many changes, not just in the way that we work, but in the type of people that now own woodlands. When I first started there were many rich investors, whose money was responsible for planting areas that should never have been planted. But this land was cheap, readily available and it seemed like a good idea at the time. Bio-diversity was unheard of, peat was something you dug out of the ground in vast quantities, and heathland was a nuisance that regularly caught fire. My work these days now involves reviewing such cases and in many, agreeing that our (Forestry Commission) local staff give approval to turn these same areas back from forest to their original semi-natural vegetation. Heathland in Dorset, peat areas in the Peak District are now being deforested, with new woodland replacing them, but now in areas where it makes sense to plant. Same with harvesting the timber, a necessity, as managed woods are the richest when it comes to conservation value. I have seen horses disappear, only to be replaced by extremely expensive harvesting machines. The harvesters are still there cutting and trimming trees in the coniferous woodlands, but the horses are coming back as the demand for more sensitive management in our richest habitats is an essential element of our work.

The one thing that has disappeared though, which I know will never come back, is

the characters that lived, worked and died in the countryside. I look around these days and I rarely see the 'true characters' of old. When known as 'the boy', I worked with many of these men, most had never been to school, and when they signed for their pay (yes in those days the forester came round with his pay bag every Friday, with wage packets holding cash), they signed with a scrawled 'x', because they couldn't read or write. They were hard, because they had to be to survive. They survived by helping each other, both at work and outside. It was in this harsh training school that I learnt how to plant trees, how to nurture them, how to look after wildlife, how to grow vegetables, all the things I now do on a day to day basis. I sit and ponder, and think how rich I am to know all these things and things what satisfaction that brings. These characters have gone and yes it's obviously great that most can now read and write etc, etc. but I do still miss those characters, as life was one big joke to them, it had to be to help them overcome what the world threw at them. Their very existence depended on it. There are so many stories that I could fill a book, but one will always stay in my mind as it gave the rest of the 'gang' (that's when this meant a working gang as opposed to today's understanding!), so much pleasure for so long. Henry and his wife had lived in an old farm cottage – no electricity, no running water and no modern sanitation. A bucket was the order of the day! The house was condemned and they had to move into what was then a modern council house in the nearby town. The electricity was amazing, but the water machine was equally fantastic, although neither Henry nor his wife knew what it was meant to be for. Describing it to us, the rest of us noticed a twinkle in Frank, our 'Ganger's' eye and then a wink followed. "Come on Henry, everyone knows that's a washing machine", he said. Frank described what it was for and how it worked, with a big smile on his face Henry went home that night. He came into work the following morning, took his coat off ready for work, to reveal his holey string vest. Frank looked at him and asked why he didn't have a shirt on today, although we thought we all knew why. "That's thanks to that blasted new machine", he said. "I put my shirt in, just as you said, pulled the handle and around it went but then it disappeared"! Yes you guessed. The 'washing machine' was his brand new toilet, but neither Henry nor his wife knew any better. Of course he only had one shirt, which stayed on his back all week until the weekend when his wife washed it in a tub, and he wore his vest Saturday and Sunday. Needless to say the rest of us were in fits, and Frank explained to Henry. We were described as being fatherless as you can imagine, but the tears were rolling down our cheeks! Two days later Henry came to work wearing an almost brand new shirt that almost fitted him. Frank had given him one of his best shirts to wear as a replacement, but that's what folks did.

Continued on page 34

Continued from page 33

During my time in the countryside I have seen some amazing things that stay in the memory, some of which I have relayed to you through these pages. In my old age I can sit and ponder and remind myself of these, satisfied that I have had a 'good life' over the years. One of my favourite animals has to be the dormouse, with so much 'cute factor' they are impossible not to love. I have seen glimpses of them whilst working, but they are usually active at night. I was trimming one of my hedges over Christmas, when the hedgecutter rolled over a small bundle of dry grasses. I knew immediately that this was a dormouse nest, but I assumed that, as it was so high up in the hedge (the last 10 centimetres or so) that it must be a summer nest. Rather than carry on I picked the nest up very carefully, and to my amazement found two beautiful little dormice curled up inside, fast asleep. Now it is illegal to handle dormice, unless you have a licence from the Countryside Council for Wales. This was an emergency however, so I took one last look, knowing that I would never see the like again. I placed the nest gently back in the hedge and then sat for probably ten or so and minutes. I noticed the nest moving after a while, and then saw the two little dormice sniffing the air before moving slowly away, presumably to find another home. Another priceless memory to add to the library of life.

Happy gardening until next month. Steve and Felicity Hunt.

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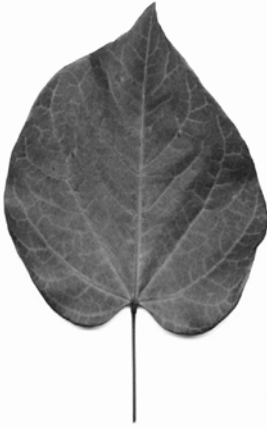
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LOCAL CONTACTS

*If you know of any changes or omissions please contact the Editor Terry Walters
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Parish Priest	Revd. Nansi Davies	01633 400519
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	Andrew Baker	01291 641925
	Mrs Susan Lenthall	Newchurch 01219 626389
PCC Secretaries	William Clark	01291 641783
	David Heritage	Newchurch 01291 622708
PCC Treasurers	Kevin Bounds	01291 641818
	Enid Heritage	Newchurch 01291 622708
PCC Others	Mark Broughton	01291 641748
	Charles Eickhoff	01291 641716
	Janet Horton	01291 641783
	Peter Jones	01291 641627
	Dr James Leney	01291 641271
	Mrs Diane Marlow	01291 641407
	Allan Saysell	01291 641369
	John Nicholas	01291 641368
Gift Aid Secretary	Ruth Savagar	01291 641411
Maintenance & Safety	John Nicholas	01291 641368
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	Ruth Savagar	01291 641411
	Kath Whittington	01291 641600
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	John Eede	01291 641257
	David Adams	
	Beverley Leaf	01291 641680
	John Harvey	01291 641279
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DIARY DATES

For further details see inside the magazine

Feb	Event	Location
2	Whist Drive	Recreation Hall
6	Community Council Meeting	Recreation Hall
8	Mothers Union Meeting	Church Hall
9	Women's Institute Meeting	Recreation Hall
15	Church Fete Meeting	Church Hall
17	Quiz & Social Evening	Recreation Hall
25	Trumpet Concert	Church Hall
25	Music for Car Concert	Chepstow Methodist Church Albion Sq
March	Event	Location
2	Women's World Day of Prayer	
18	Mothering Sunday	
26	Mynyddbach Village Green Public Enquiry	Earlswood Hall

SHIRENEWTON CHURCH - READERS AND SIDES-PERSONS

SERVICES START AT 9.30 AM

Feb	Service	Readers	Sides-persons
5	Third Sunday before Lent Holy Eucharist	Mark Broughton Kevin Bounds	Mark Broughton Kevin Bounds
12	Second Sunday before Lent Holy Eucharist	Bill Clark Janet Horton	Bill Clark Janet Horton
19	Sunday Before Lent Holy Eucharist	John Nicholas Annabel Hancock	John Nicholas Annabel Hancock
26	First Sunday of Lent Holy Eucharist	Diane Marlow Cynthia Smith	Diane Marlow Cynthia Smith
Mar			
4	Second Sunday of Lent Holy Eucharist	Margaret Lock Wendy Baker	Margaret Lock Wendy Baker
11	Third Sunday of Lent Holy Eucharist	Bill Clark Janet Horton	Bill Clark Janet Horton
18	Mothering Sunday Family Service	The Children	The Children
25	Fifth Sunday of Lent Holy Eucharist	Mark Broughton Kevin Bounds	Mark Broughton Kevin Bounds

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Chepstow



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EDITORIAL INFORMATION

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The views expressed are those of the contributor.

**Deadline for contributions to the March 2012 issue
is the 20th February 2012**