

New era at Savoy

THE success of the Monmouth Savoy over the last two years has resulted in the appointment of a new director for the theatre in Church Street, which prides itself as being one of the oldest working theatres in Wales.

Chris Ryde, who has, until now, been the chair of the charitable trust that runs the building, has taken on the job as full time director with effect from 1st August.

He will be spearheading the trust's ambitions to make the Savoy a successful entertainment venue that breathes life into the local community by giving local groups a chance to use it, and also by giving the wider Monmouthshire audience the opportunity to see household names performing on their own doorstep.

Chris has taken early retirement from working for over thirty five years in the theatre and television industry and sees the challenge ahead as being an exciting one.

"All the volunteers who have helped to turn the fortunes of the Savoy round over the last two years deserve enormous

thanks," said Chris.

"Now, with their continued help, and that of the other two important staff members, we have to move the theatre to the next stage which means consolidating the current operation and planning for new developments such as digital projection, which we must have in 2013 if we are to keep in step with modern cinema needs."

In order to take up his new role, Chris has stepped down from the trust and the trustees are anxious to make new appointments.

So if anyone in Monmouth is interested in playing an important role in the future of the Savoy and being a key part of its continuing success, then in order to register an interest contact the trustees on monmouth-savoy@hotmail.com for an information pack or phone 01600 772467.

Chris is also more than happy to hear from people about what they want or what any group or individual can offer the Savoy without the need for any sort of ongoing commitment.

Studying the world's first Wikipedia town



Roger Bamkin of Wikimedia UK and Claudia Silva test some of Monmouth's QR codes

A JOURNALISM student from Brazil has been in Monmouth to study the world's first Wikipedia town.

Claudia Silva is a PhD student of an international digital media course run by the New University of Lisbon in Portugal and the University of Texas in the US.

As part of her research into location-based information, Claudia came across Monmouthpedia - a project which aims to cover every aspect of life in Monmouth in Wikipedia articles.

The articles can be accessed either by visiting the Monmouthpedia website or by using a smartphone to scan one of the QR codes that are scattered all over the town, taking you directly to the corresponding article.

Claudia said it was interesting to compare the project to location-based social networks such as foursquare, which use GPS to pinpoint a user's location and give them information about their surroundings.

The QR codes also differ from 'push noti-

fications', which are picked up automatically by phones without any interaction by the user.

"My research is about how mobile and context-aware technologies (eg smartphones) enable information and knowledge to be delivered locally and how it changes the way people consume information while on the go, in public spaces," said Claudia.

"Monmouth is a great case study for my research."

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Festival launches Maya's new album

A YOUNG Monmouthshire singer-songwriter, Maya Burchell-Haslett, is launching her second CD album of original acoustic songs at a popular local festival.

Maya Burchell-Haslett, aged 19 and from Usk, has been writing her own songs and performing them since an early age. Her debut CD album was released in 2008 and has been very well received by audiences.

Maya's long-awaited second CD album 'Too Many Love Songs' is to be released on Friday 10th August to coincide with her second appearance at the Croissant Neuf Summer Party, a local music festival near Usk.

In 2011, Maya kicked off the festival and shared the Friday night bill with Ed Sheeran, who has since hit the big time. This year the well-known contemporary folk singer, Seth Lakeman, is headlining.

"I'm really looking forward to performing again at Croissant Neuf. It was a great experience last year and it's cool that my new album is ready in time; I hope that my audience will enjoy the new songs" said Maya.

The nine new songs on the album include Maya's popular song 'Speechless', which she sang in the semi-final of the Open Mic

UK competition in London. The video of this performance has since been distributed widely across the internet.

The 'Too Many Love Songs' album has been a truly local production as the tracks were laid down in Usk at M4Music Recording Studios by engineer Mike Cornford and published by Usk-based Blackburn Books and Music.

Having attended Caerleon Comprehensive School, Maya has just finished her first year studying for a Music degree at University College Falmouth in Cornwall and wants to develop a career in the music industry. Maya also performs with local folk group Stormus, was principal cornet of Usk Youth Brass Band until last year, and sings in the National Youth Choir of Wales.

The CD album 'Too Many Love Songs' by Maya is available at the festival, or directly from the publishers at BlackburnBooks.co.uk, or the Amazon.com website.

Builders raise the rafters

'BUILDING Trades' is a newly created entry category for the Monmouth Raft Race on 2nd September. There are many building companies and suppliers over a wide area who have the resources and skills to build a raft and enter the race.

Hale & Co of Droyd brook have thrown down the gauntlet by being the first to enter a raft. Who is going to rise to the challenge? Many of the other companies have been contacted but not yet entered. Where are you? Three weeks to go - so enter and get building!

This is a great event which can help team building in an organisation, raise money for St David's Hospice Care while having a really fun day. At the finish there will be live entertainment and various family attractions, with the opportunity to erect a company gazebo to host friends and clients.

Entries are going well in the other categories and are ahead of last year at the same time. All the planning is on target to deliver another super event with great public support.

For more information go to the website monmouthrafttrace.com

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