* Ladies & gentlemen, distinguished guests, family and friends may I take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to join us here today.
* It is a great honour to be elected Mayor of Caldicot Town Council and I would like to thank residents of the Dewstow ward for voting me back onto the council for my second term of office and my fellow councillors for electing me to this prestigious position.
* Caldicot is the youngest of the five Monmouthshire towns but we are the second largest in population and growing. There has been a lot done over the years to improve the facilities within the Town but I think you will agree there is a lot more to be done.
* I was born in Caldicot 65 years ago when Caldicot was a small village with a population of less than 1500 people. Caldicot was a wonderful place to grow up. Every one knew everyone, including Sergeant Parsons who kept us all on the straight and narrow. We had lots of fields and orchards to play in. We made rafts on the Neddern during the rainy season and spent hours train spotting at Caldicot Halt.
* I remember an incident when I and some friends got up early one morning to pick mushrooms from a local farmers field. It took a long time to collect a bagful. As we finished someone called out our names to stop where we were. It was SGT Parsons. He confiscated the mushrooms and then gave us all a clip around the ear and sent us on our way.
* I’m sure he had been watching and waiting until we had collected enough mushrooms for his breakfast.
* This was certainly a case when it’s not always best to be known by everyone.
* Some of you might remember some of the old iconic places in Caldicot like the Gunpowder house built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1872 to store gunpowder when building the Severn Tunnel. I don’t know if he realised what a wonderful den he had constructed for the children of Caldicot to play in during the 50’s and 60’s.
* Dally’s sweet shop, the horses stable turned into a shop with the original half swinging doors, Mr & Mrs Dally kept our favourite sweets but their cat was always laid out on top of them.
* We didn’t mind, the sweats tasted great with or without the hairs.
* And of course Ray’s wooden cinema known as the ‘sit and scratch’ absolutely packed with children every Saturday morning and the old wooden YMCA building next to the Cinema built during WW2 as a British restaurant and used by the cubs and scouts until the late sixties.
* I don’t think any of those buildings would be declared safe today and health and safety well I ask you.
* Great memories!
* I with my brother and sister attended this [St Mary’s] church and joined the church choir. We were not particularly religious but Mum and Dad thought it a good idea to send us off on a Sunday morning to church.
* They gave us money for the collection but they never knew we spent the money on sweets.
* I don’t think if they knew know what we did they would mind as it gave them a few hours peace and we did gain another sister.
* I attended the ‘village college’ as it was known then and then finished my education in Newport at a pre-apprenticeship school on Corporation Road.
* I had a varied career which includes being in the Merchant Navy and teaching Technology at Chepstow School. I loved working with children and it gives me great pleasure when I meet ex students and they tell me how well they have got on in life. They also tell me that I had a nickname and I shouted a lot.
* But I cannot remember doing that.
* I believe it is important that we all give something back to our community and I do this by being a volunteer driver for ‘Grass Routes’. In the two years I have been doing this many people have got to know me and I am often asked when driving the bus to stop and run into the surgery to post their repeat prescriptions.
* I have also given help to the friends of Caldicot Castle working waist deep cleaning out the pond within the Castle grounds.
* It is important we protect the great Town in which we live and I would like to pay tribute to the many volunteers who give their time freely for the benefit of others. The Churches, clubs and society who give our youngsters a firm start in life and the emergency services who have shown across the country the courageous way they have acted to save life in some of the most dangerous situations imaginable.
* I intend to use my year in office by pushing the Health & Well being for all initiative.
* Part of which is to inspire young people. Barriers still exist for young people through physical or psychological issues. Young people often do not have the confidence in showing their own abilities.
* I shall be making lots of visits to the many local clubs and societies to promote and support new ideas and with the help and support from my fellow councillors I hope to push forward the KGV playing fields community project.
* Where youngsters and families could receive help and advice on domestic and social issues also to further advance outdoor activities which will benefit everyone within our community.
* Finally, but not least my chosen charity for the year is Barnardo’s and I ask your support throughout the year to support me in raising funds for this well-established charity.