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Focal Point

February 2020

Cover Photograph:

Alison Wride—*Footpath from Fieldgrove Lane*

To advertise in Focal Point please contact the editor.

FOR ALL FOCAL POINT INQUIRIES

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Deadline for the March magazine is:

Friday 15 February 2020

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Focal Point, February 2020

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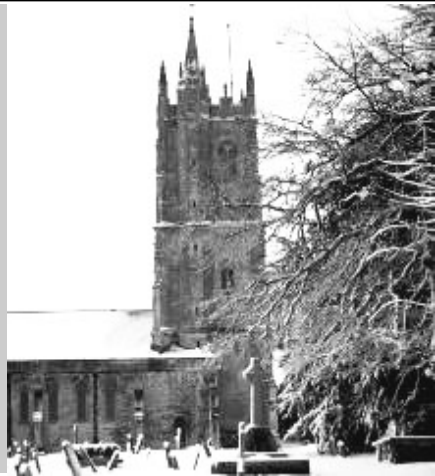
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- Churches & Services -



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Ordained ministers:

Rev Richard Humphrey
Splinters, Kenilworth Drive
Willsbridge 0117 949 0502

Rev Susie Bishop

revsusiebishop.uk@gmail.com
07415 831488

Lay ministers:

Ken Gibson, 8 Church Road,
Bitton
0117 932 2122

David Bailey, Westover,
Bath Road, Bitton
0117 932 8949

Churchwardens:

Pete Midgley
30 Kenilworth Drive, Willsbridge
0117 932 6898

Jacqui Harris
29 St Anne's Drive, Wick
0117 937 4706

Services in February

Sunday 2 February	THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (Candlemas) 10.30am Parish Communion
Sunday 9 February	THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE LENT 8.00am Holy Communion 10.30am Family Parade Service <i>followed by lunch at The Old Crown in Kelston</i>
Sunday 16 February	SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE LENT 10.30am Morning Worship
Sunday 23 February	SUNDAY BEFORE LENT 8.00am Holy Communion 9.30am Family Café Church
Wednesday 26 February	ASH WEDNESDAY 7.30pm Benefice Communion Service at St Barnabas Church Warmley
Friday 28 February	9.30am Celtic Communion <i>followed by coffee and cake</i>

St Mary's flower rota

1 February	Sarah Craddock
8 February	Judith Butson
15 February	Marlene Gallop & Pam Heyes
29 February	LENT

From the Register

Nothing to report this month





UPTON CHEYNEY United Reformed Church



Sunday services are at 3pm

Services in February :

Sunday 2nd Service led by Janet Hawkins

Sunday 9th Communion Service led by Steve Britton

Sunday 16th Bible Study led by Steve Britton

Sunday 22nd Service led by Elaine Pierpoint

In addition the coffee afternoon will be at 2pm on Tuesday 25th. As this will be Shrove Tuesday we will be making pancakes.



News from Upton Cheyney URC

The nights are drawing out again. The weather may be mixed but that seems to be ideal for many of our garden bulbs. They are shooting up and starting to flower already. I'm not sure whether this is earlier than usual, however it feels as though it is. It's as though Spring is with us. I can also hear cows so we must be approaching calving sometime soon. Is it a happy time for everyone?

For those alone or with problems or both? You may remember when we started supporting the Bristol Soup Run Trust several years ago. Well I thought I'd take this opportunity to remind everyone.



Stuart Turner

Every night of the year, come rain, hail or shine they try to provide food and other essential supplies, free of charge, to homeless and other needy people in Bristol. Everything is provided through donations. Around twenty groups of volunteers (there are no paid staff at all) provide this service. Each team has to prepare and gather the food. As an example one of our chapel members, Joy, provides gallons of soup once a month and yes I do mean gallons.

Each team visits two distribution points from around 9.30pm. Sometimes there is simply soup, tea, coffee, sandwiches and a few donated items of fruit or cake. On other occasions there can be socks and toiletries as well. It just depends what has been donated that evening. Guests turn up because they are hungry or lonely or for a bit of companionship. They are usually incredibly polite and grateful.

Continued overleaf

Many are happy just to see someone who cares and doesn't try to judge them. Some of the guests are homeless and sleeping outside whilst others have a hostel place. These teams of volunteers always have a friendly smile and a willing ear.

If you would like to know more, to donate or to volunteer just let me know.

APOLOGY

In last months Focal Point we carried an article about Bitton's Hair and Beauty Salon *One Two 7*. in which it was reported that Melissa and Joseph's mother had died. In fact, we are now pleased to report that their Mum is very much alive and well. We apologise for this error and any distress it may have caused readers who know the family.

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St Mary's Matters

I closed January's St Mary's matters with an invitation to the Christingle service on January 12th. We have just enjoyed this service, followed by lunch at the Upton Inn. It was a great pleasure to welcome Jill Ford of the Children's Society to the service to explain the symbolism of the Christingle and to speak to us about the important work of the society.



Pete Midgley

This service always brightens up January a little and serves to remind us of the need to reach out, both as a church and as individuals, to those who face real difficulty in life on a daily basis. The scouts were in attendance at the service as always on a second Sunday and this is perhaps an opportunity to say how much we appreciate their commitment not just to attending but also to taking a significant part in family services through the year.

As many will know, it has become a regular feature to have lunch out together on the second Sunday in the month. As with many such events there tends to be a self-selecting bunch of people who come along on a regular basis. This is very much an open event and it would be lovely to have new faces coming along. We visit a wide variety of venues as well as sometimes having a bring-and-share at the back of church.

Sunday is an obvious day to go to church, but don't forget Celtic Communion on 4th Friday of the month. You would of course be most welcome.



Lent 2020

There will be weekly meetings during Lent starting with our Ash Wednesday Benefice Ashing and Communion service on 26 February at 7.30 at St Ann's Syston and ending with the Maundy Thursday Benefice Communion of the Last Supper on 9 April at 7.30 at St Barnabas Warmley.

During the 5 weeks of Lent there will be a number of House Groups who will be studying the book recommended for Lent by both Archbishop Justin Weldon and our own Bishop Viv. The book by Ruth Valerio is called 'Saying Yes to Life'. In our groups we will be exploring how we can view big issues facing the world today through a Christian worldview.

Details will be available on the Lent Card which will be available in Church from 16 February.



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Jillianne Norman

A time to take stock



February is a funny sort of time of year. We have Candlemas at the beginning of the month, which sees the end of the Christmas season. Then the last Wednesday of the month is Ash Wednesday, and we are off towards Easter. In between, we have the Sundays before Lent. It has always seemed to me that this is a time for us to take stock between feast and fast, to change gear.

Much of what we celebrate at Christmas is about a baby, born in Bethlehem, laid in a manger visited by shepherds and kings. The change of gear in the Christmas story comes with Candlemas, the celebration of the visit of Mary and Joseph to the Temple in Jerusalem. In accordance with instructions in the book of Leviticus, a woman needed to be purified after the birth of a child. She should present a lamb, dove or a pigeon, depending on her financial situation, as a sin offering, 33 days after the circumcision of a baby boy. Mary and Joseph came to the Temple to fulfil the law. Her ritual washing and the presentation of the sacrifice should have been an end to it. She was free to rejoin society again, but no, they are now greeted by Anna and Simeon, people completely unknown to Mary and Joseph. Both of them step forward to celebrate and welcome the baby.

Anna is 84 years old, so we are told. She never leaves the Temple, but worships day and night fasting and praying. She is waiting for the redemption of Israel. In the tiny baby she gathers to her, she sees and foresees the redemption she has been waiting for.

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But she is not the only holy person living in Jerusalem at that time who is waiting to see the fulfilment of God's promise to the people of Israel. Simeon is also waiting. He comes to the Temple, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and also sees the salvation of Israel in the form of a baby. He speaks to the people around him;

“Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

Mary and Joseph are overwhelmed by these words, on top of all that has happened so far in the short life of their son. Then the warning from Simeon for the baby's mother:

“A sword will pierce your own heart”.

The consolation of Israel will come at a cost, and a large part of that cost will be born by the mother, Mary.

We know the ending of the story, we know that the baby grows up to be a man, that he has a three year ministry around Israel teaching, preaching, healing and proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God. We know that this challenged the authorities, and religious and secular conspired together to put him to death. We know God triumphed and Jesus rose again from the dead on Easter Day.

On Ash Wednesday we are asked to suspend all that we know about Jesus' life and ministry. We are asked to walk alongside him for 40 days. We are asked to share his joys and sorrows, his teaching and preaching as we trace his steps to Jerusalem, to whatever God has in store for him there. We are asked to trust in our lives as he did in his, as he puts one foot in front of another on the road to Jerusalem, that whatever happens this is God's plan for him, and that no matter how it appears God does not and will not desert him or us. So let us prepare ourselves to reflect, give up and give in to all that God has in store for us, knowing that he is always with us.

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Christmas Services well attended

A range of services were available for churchgoers to attend this Christmas in both St Mary's and the Upton Cheyney Chapel. From traditional to modern and some aimed particularly at children or families. The Advent Carol Service (picture above) was held on Sunday 22 December was candlelit with its traditional format of nine lessons and carols and special pieces by both the church and community choirs.

But less sweet Singing in the Choir

Yes, as reported in last month's Focal Point, it's true – the community choir is disbanding after six wonderful years under three amazing leaders.

Lovely, quirky Indigo who, bouncing as she sang, knocked us into some sort of shape. We learnt African chants, traditional folk songs and we even attempted something in Japanese. We gave our first performance at the 2013 Christmas carol service and in the Spring she took us to St George's in Bristol for a natural voice convention where we mounted the stage and sang to an audience of hundreds. Applause! We'd arrived as a choir.


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Next was Douglas, a charismatic whirlwind, who expected fast learning. The first song he taught us was Anything Goes. A misleading title – Douglas expected high standards. His career (and the community choir) was nearly wrecked when he was knocked over by a taxi on the eve of the carol service. Battered and bruised, Douglas survived to tell the tale (though we never got him to tell us the full story of his accident).

When Douglas left we floundered, rudderless. The choir was sinking fast and members were jumping ship. Then Jane came forward and saved the day. Once again we were singing and there was more. Jane spotted potential suggesting to Lyn Amos that she might compose something for the carol service. Lyn rose to the challenge with music and words – The Angels' Message. It wasn't easy to learn but Jane pushed us and we were proud of Lyn's carol, Jane's leadership and our performance. We went out on a high.

We owe all three leaders huge thanks for their inspiration and hard work. Members past and present have enjoyed new songs, new challenges and new friends. The choir is disbanding for a cluster of reasons (and we wish Jane bon voyage as she sets out to address a conference in New Zealand). Perhaps I should say the choir in its present form is disbanding. It certainly doesn't mean that there's no more singing in Bitton. Who knows what lies ahead.

Nicola Bennetts



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Shrove Tuesday

A very traditional day of Festivity



**It was the day whereon both rich and poore,
Are chiefly feasted with the selfe same dish,
When every Paunch till it can hold no more,
Is Fritter-fild, as well as heart can wish,
And every man and maide doe take their turne,
And tesse their Pancakes vp for feare they burne,
And all the Kitchin doth with laughter sound,
To see the Pancakes fall vpon the ground**

Pasquils Palinodia, 1619

The period before Easter known as Lent, marks the time that Jesus spent fasting in the desert before beginning his ministry. Traditionally, this was a time of prayers and fasting, abstaining from meat, eggs, fish, fats and milk. The word 'shrove' comes from the practice of being 'shriven' – when you made a full confession of your sins before Lent began. In the medieval church a shiving bell would be rung on Shrove Tuesday to call people to church to confess.

As Lent was a significant period of fasting, all temptations needed to be removed. This took place over a period of days known as 'Shrovetide', a period of festivity before the abstinence began. Meat such as bacon would be eaten up on 'Collop Monday' (a collop is a thin slice of meat) and on Shrove Tuesday eggs, butter and stocks of fat would be used up. One of the easiest ways to dispose of these items was to turn them into pancakes or fritters. It is said that the ingredients themselves symbolise four points of significance at this time of year – the eggs for *creation*, the flour as *the staff of life*, salt for *wholesomeness*, and milk for *purity* – although it seems more likely that the ingredients for pancakes largely depended on what was available at the time. Whatever may be the case, the pancake has a very long history and featured in cookery books as far back as 1439. The tradition of tossing or flipping them is almost as old as demonstrated by the quotation above.

This year, **Shrove Tuesday** falls on 25 February. We have no recipes for **Collop Monday** if you were thinking of celebrating, but we do have a traditional one for pancakes on the Tuesday on the next page.

Did you know?

There is a reason why they taste different elsewhere.....English pancakes differ from both their American and continental counterparts. American pancakes are made fluffy with the addition of bicarbonate of soda; while French and Belgian crêpes (although delicious) are thinner and made with much less flour.

—PANCAKE RECIPE—

To make 8 or so pancakes you will need 4 tablespoons of plain flour, 2 large eggs, 1 pint milk and a pinch of salt.

Mix all together and whisk well. Leave to stand for 30 minutes. Heat a little oil or butter (or if you want to be more traditional any other fat such as lard or dripping) in a frying pan. Pour in enough batter to cover the base of the pan and let it cook until the base of the pancake has browned. Then shake the pan to loosen the pancake and flip the pancake over to brown the other side. Add whatever topping you desire.



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In 1956, Ruth Bader Ginsburg joins five other women in her class at Harvard Law School. They are definitely in a minority if not unwelcome. Years later, despite having graduated at the top of her class and being editor of the Law Review, no New York law firms would hire her, because she was a woman. She settles on teaching law but this is just the beginning of her remarkable career, as we will discover.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg has achieved so much in her lifetime and aged 86, is still working as an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. We found this film remarkable and inspirational we loved it and we think you will too.

Doors open 7.30pm. Film starts 8pm.

The Church Hall, Church Lane, Bitton.

Drinks will be available from the Licensed Bar, Choc Ices will be served in the interval and there will be time to chat with friends.

Admission £2.50 everyone is welcome

BITTON GARDENING CLUB

Invites you to
Our next meeting

on
MONDAY 17th February

in the
Church Hall, Church Lane, Bitton
Doors Open 7.20pm. Meeting Starts 7.30pm.

Our speaker at this meeting is
Katherine Crouch

The title of her illustrated talk is

Plants that Should be Better Known

Katherine is a very experienced gardener and this is her second visit to our Gardening Club. You will remember she was the winner of the first BBC *Gardener of the Year* award in 1999. She was then the winner of *Gardener of the Decade* in 2008 and is a gold medallist at the Chelsea Flower Show.

For more information
contact Bridget Hetzel - b.hetzel@btinternet.com or
just come along to the meeting

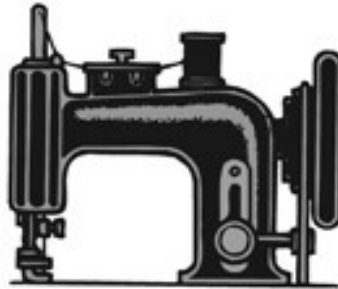
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Christian Aid Christmas Appeal 2019 raises £280

Help mothers use their God-given gifts to escape poverty – the Christian Aid envelopes reminded us that, for many women, life is a struggle against poverty, inequality, violence and injustice.

The Christmas collections from St Mary's raised £227; the carol singers round the village and at the White Hart raised a further £53. A total of £280. That's enough to provide women in Afghanistan with materials for weaving four silk carpets to sell, and to provide training for nine women in India with the skills to set up their own businesses – and live independent lives. On their behalf very many thanks to those who gave to the Christmas appeal.

Nicola Bennetts



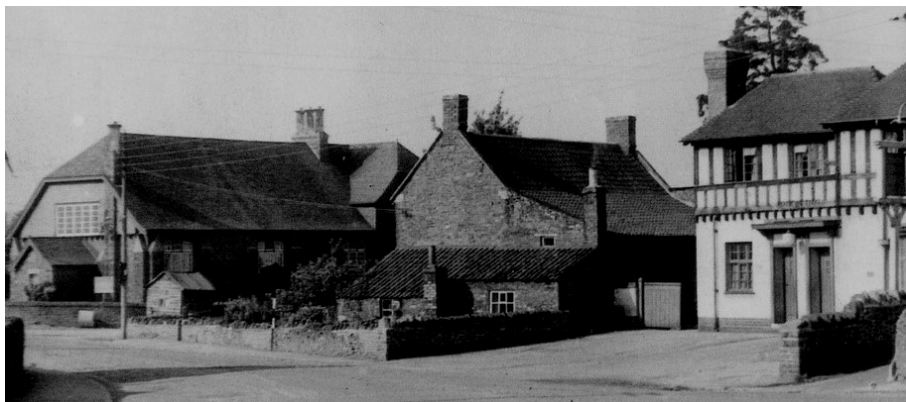
ST MARY'S FAMILY CAFÉ CHURCH

Sunday 23 February at 9.30

An informal café style event aimed at families with primary and pre-school children. There are refreshments and music and a Bible story.

This month's story—Why was Moses amazed by a Burning Bush?





Oldland Common in the 1950s— remembered

The next meeting of the Bitton Parish History Group will hear an account of life in Oldland Common in the 1950s.

David Noble will present a short video and talk about life in Oldland Common from his childhood and how things compare. The absence of traffic in the photograph above (thought to date from 1950) is just one indicator of the significant changes that have taken place during the past 70 years.

The meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 18 February, at the Oldland Community & Youth Building behind Redfield Edge Primary School.—7:00 for 7:30 pm.

The full address is:

Oldland Community & Youth Building
79a High St
Oldland Common, BS30 9TL

There is a large car park behind Redfield Edge Primary (keep going until the community building is in sight). As always, entry is free and everyone is welcome.

January saw a profusion of snowdrops in Bitton. The mild wet weather encouraged their growth. Although lovely, these specimens are not Bitton snowdrops – the “Galanthus nivalis ‘Bitton’” so named by Canon Ellacombe, then Vicar of Bitton. Whether it should have this claim to fame is also slightly dubious as it was not bred or developed in Bitton but was simply a plant that Ellacombe received from a James Atkins of Painswick who himself had been given by a friend in the 1860s. That did not stop the Canon from naming it and distributing it widely



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News from Bitton WI

The weather on the evening of January 13th was awful, but that did not deter our members who came through wind and rain to attend the first meeting of 2020.

The evening started when Jean read a letter of thanks for an enjoyable meal from the WI Strummers who provided the entertainment at the Christmas party. Jean also reminded everyone that Bitton WI will be hosting the group meeting at Longwell Green on Friday 27th March, so that is a date to put in your diaries.

Jean then introduced Sue Hawkins who gave an interesting talk on her mobile safari organized by British Horse Society. Sue has taken several holidays on horseback so she was prepared for camping with few luxuries.

On arrival in Botswana, a land locked country in South Africa, she was taken to the Okavango Delta, which should have been a lush, well watered area, but due to the lack of rain was very dry and dusty, so the planned canoe journey was cancelled and the journey to the first camp site was by truck and donkey.

The facilities at the camp site were basic, the food however was very good. Sue rode for about six hours a day with a break for lunch. The advantage of being on horseback was that they could get really close to the animals so they saw a mother and baby elephant, a family of warthogs, hippos, buffalo and baboons, fortunately there were no snakes or insects in camp. Sue so enjoyed her holiday she has booked a horse riding holiday to Argentina in March.

The evening ended with the raffle and our next meeting will be on Monday 10th February.

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January's quiz answers

Last month's quiz was an anagram about garden plants designed to lift your mood and think about warmer days to come. It seems to have helped as there were a record number of entries. The correct answers are:

1. Gladioli; 2. Fuchsias; 3. Begonia; 4. Magnolia; 5. Petunias; 6. Bluebells;
7. Clematis; 8. Buddleia; 9. Hydrangea; 10. Geraniums; 11. Water Lily;
12. Lavender; 13. Hibiscus; 14. Tulips; 15. Rhododendron; 16. Primrose;
17. Snowdrops; 18. Daffodils; 19. Aconites; 20. Peonies

Correct entries were received from:

Jan & Diane, Pearl & Debbie Evans, Sue & Rod Nethercote, Sarah Craddock, Pam & Jon Booth, Margaret & Bryan Garlic, The Kesterton Family, Joyce Dorsett, Anne Burmester, Sue & Alan Murtagh, Mary Younie, Ken Gibson, Ros & Charles Knight.

The winner chosen at random is Ros & Charles Knight

December

Focal Point went to press early in December so it was not possible to announce the winners in last month's edition. Carolyn awarded 2 prizes as they were both very close, to Mary Younie and Sue & Alan Murtagh

The random entry prize was given to Sue & Rod Nethercote

The February Quiz

This month's quiz is on breeds of dog

Clues

1. in a 1956 book Pongo is this spotted breed (D)
2. The Obama family dog, Bo, that moved into the White House in 2009 (PWD)
3. The dog that played Toto in a 1939 film (CT)
4. Nicknamed Sausage Dog in the UK, in German this means Badger Dog (D)
5. Snuppy, born in 2005, it's claimed this is the first successfully cloned dog (AH)
6. The breed of the cartoon character Scooby-Doo (GD)
7. Milly, in 2013 earned the Guinness world record for the shortest living dog (C)
8. The Russian aristocracy wolfhound, gets its name from the Russian word for swift (B)
9. Winston Churchill was depicted as this breed in a 1940 cartoon, Go For It (B)
10. Nicknamed Shelties (SS)
11. Charles Darwin's ship 1831 - 1836 was named after this breed (B)
12. This USA bus company shares this name (G)
13. French for Butterfly, also the title of a 1973 film (P)
14. Shep, who appeared on Blue Peter with John Noakes in the 1970's (BC)
15. Beethoven, appeared in the title role of a 1992 film (SB)
16. Lassie, appeared in many films from 1943 (C)
17. Queen Elizabeth has owned over 30 of these during her reign (C)
18. Britain's favourite breed 2019, nicknamed Staffies (SBT)
19. Originally bred in the mountains of Tibet, and its name is taken from the capital city (LA)
20. With water resistant coats and webbed feet these were originally bred as fisherman's helpers (N)

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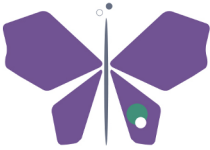
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The last word



The number 40 appears frequently in the Bible. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness before beginning his ministry; the people of Israel spent 40 years in the desert before being led to the promised land and the rain fell on Noah's ark for 40 days and nights. I think we know what that felt like after the very wet December and January which has seen rivers rise and some, fortunately not too serious, local flooding as pictured by Alison Wride for this month's cover. This period is reflected in some of the customs of the church and its liturgical calendar for which there are two periods of 40 days that end and begin in this month of February.

The first is that of the presentation of Christ in the temple which is celebrated on 2 February, 40 days after Christmas and which, by tradition is also called Candlemas Day. This date is midway exactly between the winter solstice on 22 December (the shortest day of the year) and the spring equinox on 21 March which suggests that the date may also have some ancient pagan significance. Why it is called Candlemas is less clear, but it was certainly a day on which candles were brought into the church to be blessed on a day when it could be noticed that the days were at last lengthening from the winter gloom.

The second 40 day period is that of Lent which, this year, begins on 26 February and lasts until Easter Sunday on 12 April. Lent actually lasts for more than 40 days as Sundays are not included (something who those abstaining from a chosen desirable often overlook) and is a time of reflection based on the 40 days spent by Christ in the wilderness.

Meanwhile, the many clubs societies and events have now come into full swing. January's Flicks in the Sticks (a delightful film called Fishman's Friends about a group of Cornish singing fishermen) played to a packed house and this year's Burns Night Supper had sold out well in advance. Places are limited at present due to space in the church, but that is one of the reasons why the developments are planned, so that events such as the supper have the opportunity to expand.

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