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March 2020

50 Years On — How the need to make this river safe shaped future plans and community consultation.

It's an emergency! Climate change - and why we should care.



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Focal Point

March 2020

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Deadline for the April magazine is:

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In this month's Focal Point:

- Page 8 *Cover feature:*
50 Years On—Planning consultation in the 1970s and its consequences
- Page 19 ***Vicar's Letter*** -
It's an emergency—why we should care about climate change
- Page 24 **Defibrillator Training** –
How the volunteers were trained.
- Page 26 A short tribute to John Evans—1932—2020
- Page 27 ***Say Yes to Life—***
The Bishop of Bristol leads a Lent discussion and reflection about our planet and the people on it,
- Page 28 **Garden Club—** Talk by Katherine Crouch
- Page 31 **BURN'S Night Supper—** a wee bit of Bonnie Scotland comes to Bitton
- Page 36 **Bitton Parish History Group** Remembering Oldland Common in the 1950s
- Page 38 **St Mary's Development Update**
- Page 41 WI News
- Page 42 Quiz
- Page 49 Last Word

Church Services and News pages 12 to 17

Focal Point, March 2020

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50 YEARS ON – MEETING IN MARCH 1970 HAD LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR THE VILLAGE

If this year's wild and wet February with its major weather warnings has not been to your liking, we can at least be grateful that plans laid half a century ago have prevented the prospect of any repeat of the flooding of the village in 1968. In that flood the Boyd burst its banks and homes in Mill Lane were destroyed. But the plans to improve the river were only one part of a much wider piece of work to look at how the village might develop and grow, as a delve into a fascinating archive owned by Marlene Gallop has revealed.

It was in March 1970, that the first meeting of the Bitton Development Committee was held to look at future development of the village and help the county council (Gloucestershire) to develop a local plan. Nowadays such local plans are commonplace and a requirement of local planners – both the South Gloucestershire Council and Bitton Parish Council have local plans on a whole range of matters from development to recreation. But, at the time, Bitton needed a plan to determine how local development should be managed around the work to be carried out to the river Boyd to divert and manage its course so that it would no longer threaten to flood the village.

The committee itself was not without its own controversy. It is unclear both how it came about and how its membership was selected as it was not made up of elected councillors and seems most likely to have been composed of people who already had some influence either as landowners (it was chaired by Jack Gready who was himself a farmer) or longstanding members of the village community. In fact, there was clearly a lot of concern that the committee may have had too narrow an interest and may have kept things too close. Interest was also being shown in development of the village by a then relatively small property company called Trafalgar House, later to grow substantially into a multinational conglomerate.

The whole committee walks out
 By Terence Pratchett

BITTON development committee quit en masse after a stormy meeting last night and angry villagers replaced it with a 15-man unofficial planning committee.

The new body was elected last night. "Start work on a new village plan immediately and we want to know everything you can tell us about it."

More than 300 people packed Bitton's little church for the meeting, which was held in a very unfortunate location. There were an awful lot of misunderstandings. "As a committee we had it to start from scratch. I think the new one will reflect the true feelings of the people of Bitton."

A new committee was elected last night. Though area planning officer Mr. Kenneth Jessop said Bitton was the need on a plan drawn up by a development committee, which was set up at a public meeting after Gloucestershire farmers asked for help in drawing up a new Bitton map.

But villagers heard that the plan published the entire committee decided to resign and withdraw its plan.

SECRET DEALS
 They heard claims that a re-man sub-committee, headed by chairman Mr. Jessop, had sent plans to the county council without consulting other members. And they heard the history of the development committee unfolded as a series of misunderstandings.

JACK GREADY
 Critics' target



When a group of residents met in Bitton on Monday night to discuss the development of the village, it was stated that no secret members of the parish council had been invited but declined to attend.

The reason according to Mr. Gready is that they don't know enough about the development of the village. "That's why this meeting has been called."

Council rap chair over Bitton plan
 Information on the new development plan sent to the council. These had been included in the plan.

Showdown over village plan
 Development plan sent to the council. These had been included in the plan.

Committee quit
 Development plan sent to the council. These had been included in the plan.

Long wait for plan
 Development plan sent to the council. These had been included in the plan.

end
 Development plan sent to the council. These had been included in the plan.

Bitton 'rape' is opposed
 A "secret" £8 million redevelopment scheme for Bitton would be "a rape of the village," Mr. Daniel Watkins, of High Street, claimed when a group of angry residents met this week to formulate plans to resist the proposals.

Their first step has been to lodge a petition of protest against the scheme.

Harsh words for 15 who quit
 By Elizabeth Willis

MR. JACK GREADY, chairman of Bitton Development Committee, has accused the other members of the committee of acting with unparalleled irresponsibility towards the villagers of Bitton, near Bristol.

The committee, formed a month ago to look after Bitton's interests in respect of development in the village, has decided to resign and will announce its decision to the public.

By Richard Collins
 Concern among villagers about the future of the village.

How the local and regional papers reported the matter.

Suspicions both of individual motives, links to Trafalgar House, and concerns that the committee might propose development that many villagers would oppose, reached a head at a public meeting in the church hall in March 1971. The events gathered much interest from the local and regional papers at the time. It was reported that over 300 villagers had packed the church hall for the meeting which had been preceded by some acrimonious exchanges between members of the committee itself. As matters reached a head all members of the existing development committee resigned and, with some changes, was re-elected but with a requirement to be completely open to the village as a whole.

Continued overleaf

Focal Point, March 2020

The development plan itself was published in draft form, for further consultation in 1972 by Gloucestershire County Council, just as the Redcliffe-Maud proposals for the restructure of local government were being enacted. Marlene has no copy of the final plan but a new county council, Avon, took over responsibility for planning in 1974 with Bitton part of new Kingswood Borough Council and it is surprising how closely the development issues tackled in the 1970s reflect current concerns and how the housing has been mainly confined to sites that were already in use at the time.

There has been a great deal of change. The picture of Bitton Village in the early 1970s is very different from now. The river has been diverted and deepened and much more housing has been developed. Before 1970, the only post war housing that had been built was Aubrey Meads. Most striking is that unlike today, when most people who live in Bitton go elsewhere to work, in the 1960s and 70s it was a place where people came to work, and much of the early planners concern was about the traffic that this was causing and its likely continued growth. Bitton could then be described as an industrial village including engineering (Torrance's) an iron foundry (Bush & Wilton), car seat manufacturing (latterly by Intier) and a factory making brake linings, all within the village itself. While the demise of these business was not expected 50 years ago, houses have now replaced these industrial units each of which has provided an attractive addition to the village without extending the development beyond the conservation area, largely as the 1972 plan proposed; the most recent being the Bitton Mill development which is due for completion this year.

It may be too early to judge the success of Bitton Mill, but all of the others have proved a success and provided homes that have been a very welcome addition to the village. One factor in this success may well be a spin off from the acrimony and argument that surrounded that first Bitton Development Committee in the 1970s. The committee having been reformed, following the meeting in March 1971, pledged to keep all matters open and invited villagers to attend meetings.

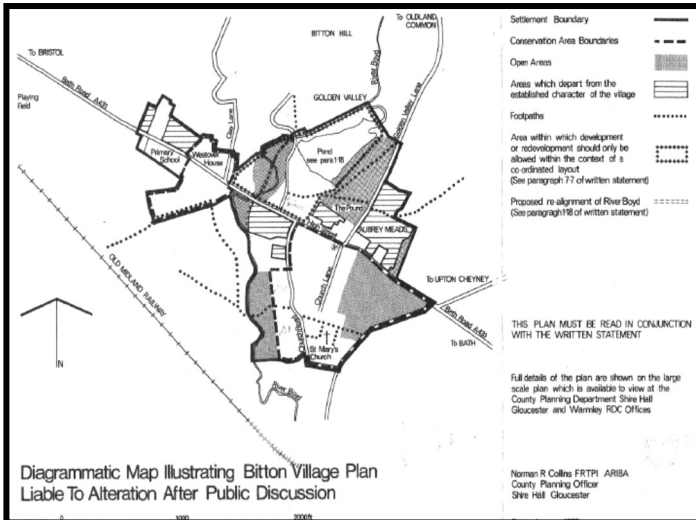
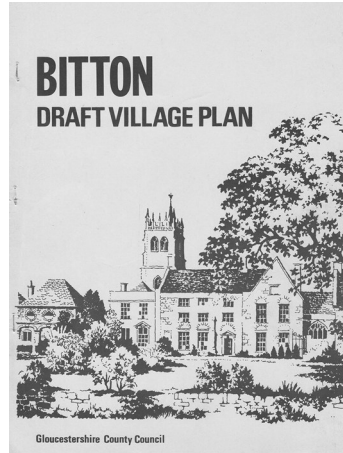
It also had influence on some key planning proposals as recalled by Barbara Merritt, the only surviving member of the committee in its early days. One issue she remembers well was a proposal to build the new

Focal Point, March 2020

housing in Mill Lane in a courtyard design with open access which she thought “most unsuitable for housing of that type”. Fortunately, Barbara’s advice was accepted as the building on the corner of the High Street and Mill Lane demonstrate.

It may also be because of the strong feelings that were aroused, that the committee continued in some form or another to represent the views of residents particularly about environmental issues. Marlene’s late husband, Christopher Gallop, was a member of the committee and the Bitton Environmental Committee which succeeded it in 1973 and which in turn, as Marlene recalls, led to the Bitton Village Residents’ Association (BVRA) in 1986.

Barbara perhaps summed things up the best as a series of “consequences”. The flood of 1968 meant there had to be some planning, but as the experience showed, having both a body to represent local views that was open to all has been pre-requisite to maintaining and improving the character of the village in the ensuing years.



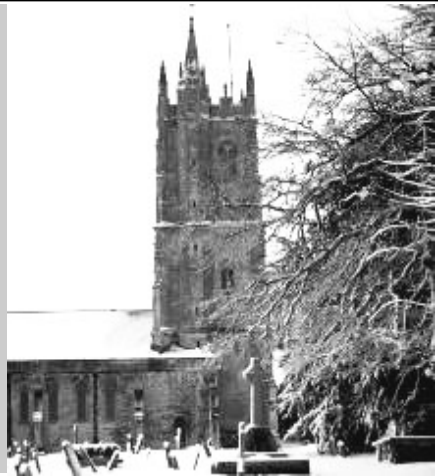
Above: The Draft Village Plan was published in 1972.

Left: An outline map of the village in the plan. Almost all of the house building that has taken place since 1972 has been within the boundaries it identified.

- Churches & Services -



**ST MARY'S
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Vicar:

Rev Jeremy Andrew
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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 March

Sunday 1 March

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

10.30am Parish Communion

Sunday 8 March

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

8.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Family Parade Service *followed by a cake sale for Scout Funds and lunch at the Chocolate Quarter*

Sunday 15 March

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

10.30am Morning Worship

Sunday 22 March

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

8.00am Holy Communion

9.30am Family Café Church FOR Mothering Sunday

Friday 27 March

9.30am Celtic Communion *followed by coffee and cake*

Sunday 29 March

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

10.30 Benefice Communion at St Mary's

St Mary's flower rota

Lent—no flowers

From the Register

16th January:

Funeral- Thomas Peter McMillan

Funeral- Geoffrey Michael Comer

2nd February:

Holy Baptism— Teddy James Phillimore



Focal Point, March 2020



UPTON CHEYNEY United Reformed Church



Sunday services are at 3pm

Services in March :

Sunday 1st Janet Donnelly

Sunday 8th Christine Jones

Sunday 15th Norman Palfrey

Sunday 22nd Des and Hilary Colechin

Sunday 29th Neville Lintern

In addition there will be a coffee afternoon on
Tuesday 24th at 2pm



News from Upton Cheyney URC

Is it really almost March? I always find the start of a new year races ahead at light speed, however this year seems to have zoomed along faster than normal. At the same time as we are contending with storms Dennis and Ciara we are seeing snowdrops, daffodils, winter aconites coming into bud and flowering. As we have to contend with the odd apple tree that has come down in the wind we appreciate planting new fruit trees.



Stuart Turner

As the long nights start to shorten we appreciate and are motivated by the longer days, and surprising given the storms, by the sunnier days. So at the

chapel we see another phase of growth and reinvigoration as we develop part of the quiet garden. Our contractors have been hard at work. Our neighbours have been very understanding. There is now a new ramped pathway and patio area looking out over Golden Valley. Already from there you can absorb the tranquillity and drift into a time of quiet and reflection.

Partly as a result of this we are seeing a new explosion in the number of couples appreciating the beauty surrounding us. The number of marriages is greater than any year in the recent past. Several couples are from different parts of the country but all have a connection to the area that draws them back for that all important day. With the help of Reverend Steve Britten once again this year we will start to witness the love marriage implies and that the chapel has witnessed over the past centuries.



Lent Course 2020

'SAYING YES TO LIFE' AS WE CARE FOR CREATION

During the 5 weeks of Lent the three churches of the Benefice are combining to follow this discussion course for groups in various locations. The course is based on Ruth Valerio's book 'Saying Yes to Life' which is recommended for Lent by both Archbishop Justin Welby and our own Bishop Viv.

In our groups we will be exploring how we can view big issues facing the world today through a Christian worldview.

Cards with details are available at the back of the Church. Please take one along with the free leaflet outlining the course.

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St Mary's Matters

Spring is a lovely time of year and the lengthening days bring with them a sense of anticipation of good things to come. Warmer weather, blossoming trees and opening flowers. Barbecues in the garden and summer outings. I'm sure it is no coincidence that the season of Lent takes place at this time of year as we spend time in reflection and anticipate the joy of Easter.

Traditionally Lent has been a time of giving things up – no chocolate, no cakes, no alcohol. In recent years I have come across an increasing number of people who have taken something on for Lent rather than giving something up. Here are a couple of suggestions.



Pete Midgley

House groups are something that happen at St Mary's all year round but some people prefer to take part only during Lent? Why not think about joining. In this year's Lent course groups will be studying a book called "Saying Yes to Life" by Ruth Valerio which has been recommended by Archbishop Justin Welby and our own Bishop Viv. We will be exploring big issues facing the world today through a Christian world view. Groups start early in March so get in touch soon. Full details are available on the church website (www.stmarysbitton.org.uk).

The Alpha course is something you may have heard of but you're not sure what it's all about. On Saturday 21st March there is a one-off Alpha breakfast in Warmley church hall where you can find out a little about how an Alpha course works without any pressure or obligation to sign up. Breakfast will be provided free of charge and creche facilities will be available. If anyone is interested in starting the course we will arrange one at the most convenient time possible. More details on the church website.

As always you are most welcome at any of our services.

Alpha Breakfast



Saturday 21st March, 9.30 – 11.00am, Warmley Church Hall.

- Heard of Alpha but not sure what it's all about?
- Interested in exploring the Christian faith but not sure where to start?
- This one-off event is an opportunity to find out a bit more about the Alpha course and see what it involves.
- Come and enjoy a free breakfast and get a taste of the Alpha experience.

If you would like to come or want to find out more contact Pete Midgley (Tel: 9326898; email petermidgley@talk21.com) or Les Willcox (Tel: 9405086; email leslie.willcox@blueyonder.co.uk)



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It's an emergency: Climate change and why we should care.



Some say that climate change is the biggest threat to our world today. Even the Diocese of Bristol has declared a climate emergency. Others question whether the climate is changing at all. Some are busy doing all they can: recycling, putting solar panels on their house, buying eco friendly cars. Others carry on their lives of consumption without a thought for these things. Why is there such a mixture of opinions and thinking and why should we care?

For me the key question about climate change is not whether the climate is changing. From what I have been lucky enough to read and study, science has fairly much proved that the earth is getting warmer. The climate is changing (we could almost call this a fact in my mind). The more important question for me is what is causing this change, and this is where people's opinion is divided. On the one hand is the warming of the planet a natural process and part of a natural cycle that the earth takes every couple of million years? On the other, has our industrial revolution and the way we use the earth's natural resources set in train a disastrous environmental reaction that is causing ice-caps to melt, the water levels to rise and weather systems to change. Put more simply is climate change our fault? Whilst some say no, I think the answer is probably yes.

For me it's yes because it can't be right to disregard all our rubbish and bury it in landfill, it can't be right just because a cabbage isn't a certain size and shape we throw it away rather than eating it, it can't be right that in order to clear the air over Beijing during the Olympics there, they stopped the traffic for a whole day. For me it isn't the science it is just the feeling that it can't be right. In many ways this is a far too easy and simplistic view about a complex and vast subject and argument.

Focal Point, March 2020

The subject raises more questions than it answers because it is not simply about science but much more about who we are as human beings. Dave Bookless in his book “Planet wise” explains that climate change isn’t really the problem but that it is a symptom of a far bigger problem...human beings.

Mike Hulme, professor of Environmental science at East Anglia university says “The real question is not climate change as such, but rather what do we mean by the good life (consumption and values); how many people do we think it right to enjoy the good life (population); and why we should care (ethics). The issue at hand is about resources, population, values and ethics.

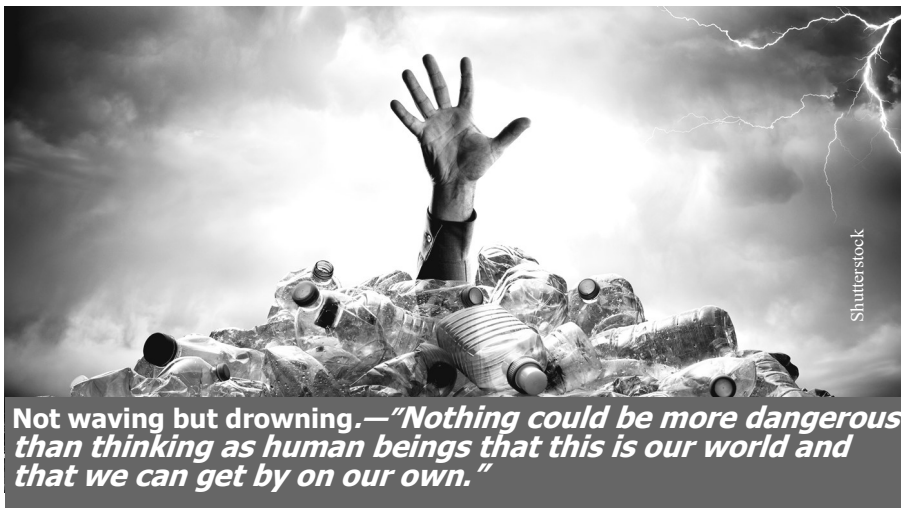
For the Christian though, I believe we need to start somewhere else. Imagine if no human being was going to suffer as a result of environmental mismanagement. Would we still care about the planet- about disappearing wildlife, polluted skies and poison seas? Is the Christian gospel simply about rescuing people from a dying world and telling them the good news of heaven? Or does God care about how we live on earth now? Do other species and the earth matter to God or are they simply here for human beings to enjoy? It’s these questions that must be our starting point as Christians.

Lets unpick this a bit.

Is the gospel simply about rescuing people from a dying earth and telling them about heaven? Well, it depends on your point of view. The heart of this question lies in our thinking about the end times...what scholars call eschatology and focuses on a phrase from the book of revelation at the beginning of chapter 21.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”

If you look at this phrase literally and understand what it is saying to mean there will be a new earth and our present earth will be no more then it follows that your motivation to care for the earth now will be low...why bother when the present earth, that is all that you have worked so hard to keep in good order will be destroyed. Many take this view and see the world as a store cupboard to be used and when things run out God will make a new one.



Compare this then to 2 Peter 3: 10ff where we get a vision of the refiner’s fire rather than absolute destruction of the world and a replacement world. 2 Peter describes refining, renewing, restoring this present world not a new world but a renewed world.

Some have even compared this renewed world to Jesus’ resurrection body pointing out clearly our responsibility for caring for the present world. Jesus’ resurrection body was a renewed physical body (not a replacement) and although renewed it still bore the wounds of suffering and crucifixion. The renewed world of 2 Peter might well be redeemed but what we do to the world today will still be evident and will still count.

If we take the text of 2 Peter as our view then what follows is a response, a response that is not carrying on the way we are but taking action to look after the world that we live in.

It is a well-founded theological principle that all of our lives as disciples of Jesus are lived as a response to his calling. From creation in Gen1&2 to Judgement in Revelation and everything in between tells of God seeking us and us responding to him. This brings me on to talk about the second point I want to make and that is Jesus’ command to love. What is our response to God’s call, Jesus says Love God with all your heart, soul mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself. Here is the material of a whole series of sermons but the interest for us now, is this idea of loving our neighbour.

Focal Point, March 2020

In the story in Luke 10:27 the lawyer poses a further question: "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus answers with the story of the good Samaritan and in doing so introduces a guiding principle. Today we live in a different world a world that talks about the global community, a world in which news in Australia is told as it happens in this country, a world in which we get a blow by blow account of the disasters that happen around the world. So the question, who is my neighbour is a much bigger question.

When we think about this in terms of our care for creation, we suddenly realize that what we do here is not just affecting a local community but our neighbours across the world. An example of this in the past couple of years has been the stark rise in industrial production in China as its economy has grown so much so that other countries have been very concerned about emissions from coal powered factories there. What China has been doing has affected the air quality around the world in some shape or form. Britain and America are beginning to support and encourage the Chinese economy to use sustainable power and to build in sustainable plans as their economy grows. Who is our neighbour that we are supposed to love?

Climate change raises issues that are fundamental to the Christian message—about creation and love for our neighbour in a world of limited resources



Shutterstock

The third and final idea, and one which runs like a thread through all of this thinking is relationship. As I have just mentioned this is about the relationship with God and with neighbour but it is also about our relationship to creation around us because it is in creation that we recognize the creator.

We might be able to understand God better as we recognize that the created order is relational; nothing exists on its own but is interdependent of its context and environment. The planet's systems are amazingly fine tuned, from the way gases in the atmosphere balance each other, creating the perfect conditions for life, through to the millions of microscopic creatures that give fertility to the living soil. The science of ecology is all about how vitally important these links are. Plants, animals, human society and everything else relate to, and are dependent on, one another. As Christians this shouldn't surprise us because the universe was made by a relational God. All creation flows from the love that existed before time between the three persons of the Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit who were all involved as co-creators. We are dependent on plants, animals and, the systems God created to provide oxygen to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat. We are also interdependent, with the rest of creation, upon God. Nothing could be more dangerous than thinking as human beings that this is our world and that we can get by on our own. It is God's world and we depend on him, each other and the whole creation.

Climate change why should we care?

Because our future hope is in God who will redeem, transform and renew our world when he comes again but it will be this world and not a replacement.

Because we are commanded to love God but also to love our neighbour and we have a full understanding in our global society of who our neighbour might be.

Because of relationship and interdependence between God ourselves and the whole of creation.

I finish with some words from Dave Bookless and his book "Planet wise"

"Imagine creation set free from its bondage to decay, all things released from death and suffering, and earth and heaven reconciled to God. As followers of Jesus, let this be our vision, and let this be our mission."

Jeremy



36 volunteers train in defibrillator use

Following the installation of the defibrillator at the White Hart, thirty-six local volunteers got down to the business of training in its use and resuscitation in the Church Hall on a Saturday morning in early February

“The training session was fantastic” said Carolyn Russell, “The St John’s Ambulance trainer, Sarah, was knowledgeable, entertaining and great, I’m sure we all learned a lot.”

The defibrillator was purchased and installed following a local campaign to raise funds and followed the sad death of a customer at the White Hart last year.

Trainer, Sarah, keeps a close eye on everyone as the volunteers test out their new skills.

All photos—Carolyn Russell

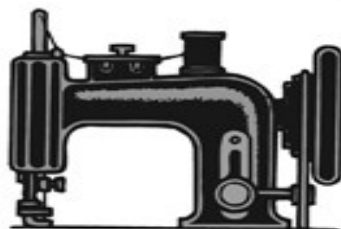


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Death of former editor of Focal Point

John Evans
1932—2020

It was with great sadness that Focal Point learned recently that John Evans, one of Focal Point's former editors had died in January. John edited the magazine up to 2010.

John was a man of many parts and in retirement not only took on such roles as editor but was the author director and general impresario for a number of dramatic features, not least the staging of an extensive *Son et Lumiere* in 2005 about the history of Bitton and how it linked to other changes in our national story. His last production, in St Mary's Church in 2010 *The Iniquitous Voyage* dealt directly with the issue of the eighteenth century slave trade, and raised funds both for the church and Anti-Slavery International.

Immediately before retirement John had been Principal of Soundwell College, but had also served as a Squadron Leader in the RAF, and represented his country, Wales in the 1958 Commonwealth Games in fencing.

We hope to have a fuller picture of his life in next month's issue.

Our condolences to his wife, Pearl, and family.



**Lent
2020**

*“Say Yes to
Life!”*

*Bishop Vivienne
Faull will lead a
series of reflections*



This year, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has identified Ruth Valerio’s book *Say Yes to Life* as his book for Lent. Ruth is a Director of the charity, Tearfund, which works with some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world. Her particular interest is in environmental change, and argues that caring for God’s earth should be an integral part of church life, rather than an optional extra.

Saying Yes to Life asks us to lift our focus from natural, everyday concerns to issues that are having an impact on millions of lives around the world. “As people made in the image of God, we are entrusted to look after what he has created: to share in God’s joy and ingenuity in making a difference for good.”

Drawing on the book’s theme, the Bishop of Bristol, the Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, will offer a series of reflections at Bristol Cathedral on the climate crisis, every Tuesday in Lent after evensong.

In Bitton, and in combination with the other two churches in the benefice, we will be meeting in small groups to explore how we can view big issues facing the world today through a Christian worldview. If you would like to join one of the groups for one or the series of weekly discussions, there are cards at the back of the church and more details will be appearing on the church website, and copies of the book will be available.

The book’s message is that *Saying Yes to Life* is what it means to be human and, in particular, to be a follower of Jesus. It draws on the experience of Voices from around the world and each chapter ends with discussion questions and a prayer to aid action and contemplation.

“Gardens are in my blood, and also under my fingernails.”



Katherine Crouch

Katherine Crouch, Gold medallist at Chelsea in 2013, and BBC Gardener of the decade in 2008, gave an enthusiastic talk on ‘Plants that should be better known’ to Bitton Gardening Club last month.

She described how before early 1960s plants could be purchased from Chelsea Flower Show, seed catalogues and old established nurseries; purchases were carefully planned many months in advance. Then garden centres became popular, enticing customers with dazzling displays of plants ready to buy and plant immediately. Beautiful plants appealing to customers worn out with winter lead to countless sales of camelias, forsythias, hellebores and magnolia.

Hot tips

She went on to discuss different categories of plants which she has had great success with, but which are not usually available from garden centres, but can be purchased from specialist nurseries. Inexpensive annuals in unusual colours such as *Limnanthes meringue* were recommended. She shared her tip of planting seeds in a noughts and crosses format with a stick in the middle so that they would not be pulled up as weeds. She suggested some ‘ugly babies’ which grow up to be stunning plants such as *smynium perfoliatum*. Her ‘cute babies’ section included miniature hostas – with the best anti slug devise – sprinkle them with chilli powder! ‘Tender plants’ include the striking seven foot tall *Leontis leonarus*. ‘Slow growers’ such as *Hebe Boughton dome* can be bought as a replacement for box from Triscombe nurseries. In her ‘Don’t Grow that, grow this’ section, she recommended trying *aconitum napellus* instead of delphiniums as being far easier to grow. It is poisonous, but then so are daffodils!

Everyone was fascinated by her knowledge and enthusiasm and keen to get out into their own gardens and start planting!

The next meeting is on Monday 16 March, when Susannah Applegate will talk on “All you need to know about peonies”.

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Burns night supper - a traditional Scottish night comes to Bitton

Bitton may be some way south of the border, but this year's Burns night supper, on 1 February, had all the trimmings of the traditional Scottish even. Organised by Ken and Jill Gibson and with a delicious meal cooked and served by Tim and Jacqui Harris, - the event was sold out well in advance. In accordance with ritual, the haggis was piped in and Burn's own poem of greeting to the "pudding" was read out. A toast was made to the "lassies and returned, as well as Scottish dancing display



Above: Haggis, neeps and tatties was served to a delighted guest.



Left: Scottish country dancing was on display by locally based enthusiasts



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and

Juan Camillo Roman Estrada

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everything.

This Icelandic, foreign language film with subtitles, is like nothing we have shown before. It is quirky, thrilling and we thought just brilliant.

We loved it and we think you will to.

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 16th March

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

Our speaker at this meeting is
Susannah Applegate

The title of her illustrated talk is
All you need to know about Peonies

Susannah has worked with plants for over 40 years. Since 2007 she has
run
her own business producing bearded iris and various types of peonies.
She will include a brief history of peonies, how to choose and plant them,
and feature a practical session on how to propagate them to
maintain their health and vigour in your garden.

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

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Bitton Parish History Group

Remembering the community of Oldland Common in the 1950's

What a wonderful trip back to our childhood David Noble provided with his DVD of Oldland Common!



The film brought back the enduring friendship and public spirit of people at that time. We saw how everyone has looked after each other, working hard for the good of the local community. Anyone on their first visit to the local post office in the High Street is struck by their friendliness.

My favourite part of the film is where David brought together members of the original Oldland Football Club team that won the Gloucestershire FA cup in 1950, to replicate their original photo.

Another incredible section is seeing the Oldland Horticultural Society Show where in some years there were more than 6,000 visitors.

Thank you so much David for making such an important historical record of the past.

Mike Gates, Secretary Bitton Parish History Group
<http://www.bittonhistory.org.uk>

Next meeting 8 April



For our next meeting Professor Alan Jocelyn will talk and show slides about how in 1831 Bristol was consumed by a riot that was the greatest act of civil disobedience of the 19th century within the UK. After three days, much of the city lay in ruins and, perhaps, as many as 500 lay dead in and around the City Centre. Alan will show us why the normally peace-loving Bristolians rioted, why it was so ruthlessly quashed and discuss the cover up of the massacre.

8 April, 7:0 for 7:30pm

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VE Day anniversary street party

Plans are at an early stage for a street party in Church Road in Bitton to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day on Friday 8th May, which is a special bank holiday. Please keep the date free and see next month's Focal Point for more information!

St MARY'S DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Plans for the future development of St Mary's, are continuing to receive interest and comment following consultation over the past year. As a result, it has now been decided not to place glass doors between the Lady Chapel and the main nave. Although this was the first idea that was put forward some years ago, so that the two spaces could be used independently, the removal of the rear pews has shown how beneficial the open space between the two areas has been and it has been difficult to design a wholly satisfactory engineering solution.



Otherwise, work is continuing to address the needs of both the local planning authority, South Gloucestershire and the church authorities who have responsibility for different aspects of the plans and have very different priorities and conditions for approval. The Future Committee, through its fundraiser, has also been in contact with some large donors who have expressed an interest in supporting the project once planning permission has been given; some have already made some small donations.

Outside the building some archaeological investigative work now has to take place on the south side of the church before plans for the building work can be submitted. We have appointed an archaeologist, Dan Miller, but he cannot start the work until we get the go ahead from the Diocese. Assuming permission is granted soon, Dan Miller hopes to involve the village in some of the archaeological work.



Plans are being altered so as not to include glass doors between the Lady Chapel and the nave. The open space has proved to be beneficial

Questions & Answers on some issues raised in the consultation

Isn't this all too ambitious?

The plans are ambitious, but they are intended to give the church a future as a place of worship and as a place for the local community to use for other activities. A major overhaul of some of the church's utilities (electricity and heating for example) is required and it needs modern and safe facilities whatever role it takes in the future. We want to make sure it has a future and is not just used for occasional services or festivals but has a continued role in the community it has served for over 1000 years.

Why do we need to change the floor?

It is intended to raise the level of the floor. This will improve disabled access and may enable us to provide a more cost effective heating system. But the compelling reason is that as we found when we remove some of the pews and choirstalls, there is no ancient floor over much of the nave at all. Most of the pews sit on raft over rubble and under the choirstalls was found an old vault that protrudes above the current level of the floor, which would limit activity if we were not able to raise the floor to accommodate it. Most of the floor at the front (east) end of the church is currently made up of good quality concrete slabs installed in the 1960s.

Why do we need to clean the walls?

As a part of the work the walls and windows will be cleaned and, where necessary repaired. At present most of the walls are covered with soot and dirt that is harmful to the stone. Cleaning the stone will make it much lighter and improve the look of the church as well. Until the nineteenth century the walls were actually covered in plaster some of which is still in place behind the older wall monuments which often set slightly away from the wall.

Do we have to move the pews?

Nothing has been more contentious over the years than the pews. It is intended to remove some but leave in place roughly about the number we have now. The plan is that they should in the future be mobile with lockable wheels.

How does this help meet the C of E target for carbon neutrality by 2030?

Bristol Diocese has set its own target to be carbon neutral in 10 years' time and we take that very seriously. Replacing our boiler and upgrading other utilities means that we will improve our carbon footprint, but the challenge is considerable in an old building and we are seeking further advice on this point.

Will we get planning permission?

Indications have been that the plans are broadly acceptable, but with any significant work in a grade 1 listed building immense care has to be taken to ensure that the right materials and procedures are used, and we recognise that some compromises and changes may have to be made.

Can we really raise over £600,000 from large donors?

It is estimated that £600,000 will cover the first big phase of the work. It won't all be from large donors, but we don't want to seek local and other contributions until we have planning permission. But it is our intention to raise the lion's share of the money this way, and there are funds often dedicated to this type of work.

If we can raise all this money – aren't there better things to spend it on?

We can try and raise money for other purposes but what we raise will be specific for this type of work. St Mary's gives about 10% of its unprotected income to charity and the outcome of this work is that its income will rise and benefit these charities more, as well as looking after the building in years to come.

This is a historic church – should we really mess with it like this?

It has changed many times before as religious practices change and as it has been maintained and altered. The church we see today is probably a very different shape and interior design to what existed a few hundred years ago. As much as these plans provide for change, they are also intended to make sure that its historical aspects are properly looked after.

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News from Bitton WI

The weather was very stormy, so it was a nice surprise that so many members braved the wind and rain to attend the February meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting and a list of future events were read by Jean and the resolution slips collected to be taken to WI house.

Jean then introduced the speaker Clive Brett who is a volunteer at REMAP. Clive who is retired but still active, joins with other volunteers making and adapting equipment for people with disabilities. REMAP which was formed in 1964 and officially stands for Rehabilitation Engineering Movement Advisory Panel, but is unofficially known by the volunteers as: Retired Engineers Make Anything Possible.

The aim of the volunteers is to make equipment for people with physical disabilities enabling them to live independent, fulfilling lives. They try to make equipment that cannot be made commercially by large companies. There are groups all over the country with over 900 members, with 27 based in Bristol. The volunteers are not only engineers, some help with fund raising, and also accompany trained OT workers to a disabled person's home to find out exactly what is needed.

The challenges for the group are varied, from making adaptations to wheelchairs so that the user can join in hobbies and sports, to making simple inventions enabling the person to peg clothes on a washing line, or a tool to adjust the controls on a shower etc. The things that we take for granted can seem impossible for people with disabilities, and that is when REMAP finds a solution, providing free advice and equipment.

Clive is now working on a project with Uganda Kyaningo Mobility attempting to make wheelchairs from bamboo, because steel wheelchairs are not suitable for the conditions in Uganda. The plan is to sell the wheelchairs to people that can afford them, and use the money to provide wheelchairs for the poor.

Members had several questions that were put to Clive, and then Lesley thanked Clive for a very interesting talk.

The evening ended with tea and cake, and a reminder that the next meeting will be on Monday 9th March, and that the meeting on Monday 13th April will now be on Monday 20th April.

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While the weather in February may have been exceedingly wet, the moderate temperatures saw daffodils coming fully into bloom two or three weeks earlier than usual—this clump was in St Mary's Churchyard.



February's quiz answers

Last month's quiz was on breeds of dog. The correct answers are:

1. Dalmatian; 2. Portuguese Water Dog; 3. Cain Terrier; 4. Dachshund;
5. Afghan Hound; 6. Great Dane; 7. Chihuahua; 8. Borzoi; 9. Bulldog;
10. Shetland Sheepdog; 11. Beagle; 12. Greyhound; 13. Papillon; 14. Border Collie; 15. St Bernard; 16. Collie; 17. Corgies; 18. Staffordshire Bull Terrier;
19. Lhasa Apso; 20. Newfoundland.

Correct entries were received from:

Jan & Diane; Pearl & Debbie Evans; The Booths; Sue & Alan Murtagh; Anne Burmester; Mary Younie; Sue & Rod Nethercote; Catriona & Giles Kesterton ; Sarah Craddock

This month's winner is Sarah Craddock

The March Quiz

This month's quiz is on units of measurement of length, I have given the initial(s) and the length. e.g. F 4 - Equal to 12 inches - Answer: Foot

No.	Initial & length	Clue
1.	Y 4	Equal to 3 feet
2.	M 4	Equal to 1,609,344 meters
3.	P 5	Used for measuring font size, the smallest unit of measurement in typography
4.	I 4	It's name is from the Latin 'UNCIA' meaning 'twelfth part'
5.	L 6	Old measurement varying throughout history, but generally estimated as 3 miles
6.	P 6	Distance used in Astronomy, about 3.26 Light Years
7.	F 6	Equal to 6 feet
8.	F 7	Originally denoted the length of a Furrow in a field, equal to an eighth of a mile
9.	L 4	Equal to a hundredth of a surveying chain
10.	H 4	Used to measure a horse's height, about 10.16 cm
11.	K 3	A Japanese unit of about 1.82 meters
12.	LY 5 4	An astronomical distance of about 5.88 trillion miles
13.	S 7	Ancient Roman measurement of about 185 meters, about the
14.	A 8	Named after a 19th century Swedish physicist, equal to a hundred-millionth of a centimetre
15.	C 5	Based on the length of the arm from elbow to tip of middle finger, generally taken to be 18 inches
16.	S 5	Used in October 1985 as a prank to measure the Harvard Bridge, Massachusetts, equal to 1.7m
17.	R 3	A surveyor's tool and unit of length, equal to 5.5 yards
18.	B 10	Old measurement based on the length of a grain of cereal
19.	N M 8 4	Used in sea or air, originally defined as a minute of latitude along
20.	V 5	A Russian measure equal to 3,500 feet

Name:

Contact:

Please send your answers to Carolyn Russell at Martin House, Church Road, Bitton (the yellow house) or email mrscrussell@icloud.com by 15 March



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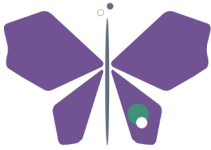
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ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

ACCOUNTANTS

Norton Tax Shops Ltd (page 51)

ACUPUNCTURE

Alison Pickering—*Leaf Green*
(page 16)

BUILDERS

Wilton Building Contractors
(page 48)

CARE HOMES

Collingwood (page 45)

CHIMNEY SWEEPS

Bristle Chimney (page 32)
Soot n Sweep (page 44)

CHIROPODIST

Absolutely Feet (page 25)

DECORATING

Steve Painter Decorating Services
(page 50)

ELECTRICAL

SM Wilkins Electrical Services
(page 7)

ESTATE AGENTS

Davies & Way (page 2)
Homes of Bath—Fine & Country
(page 3)

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Alderwick (page 46)
Roy Preddy (page 29)

GARDEN CENTRES

Fonhill (page 4)

GENERAL STORES

HRD Hardware (page 34)

HAIRDRESSING

Just Kim (page 18)

MOTORING

Bitton Motor Company (back page)
MC Auto Repairs (page 50)

PLASTERERS

Matt Bressington Plastering
(page 29)

PLUMBING

RJ Pearce Plumbing (page 44)

PUBS

Crown Inn (page 6)

TAILORS

Parker's Sewing Services
(page 25)

TIMBER

Bendrey Bros (page 40)

VETS

Oldland House (page 7)

WASTE REMOVAL

K1 Klearance (page 46)

WELDING

Hanney (page 44)



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The last word



The first story in the Old Testament is that of the creation. While the Book of Genesis is still read as part of the lexicon, neither the Church of England nor the United Reform Church would take the account of the creation being completed in seven days, nor of the story of Adam and Eve as a historical event; both churches have long accepted a more modern view of the creation of the universe and of evolution. Moreover, for much of the twentieth century Christianity had far more pressing issues to deal with than that of the natural world. God's Creation has not been something at the top of anyone's list compared to human rights and their restriction and the suffering caused by hunger and disease.

All that seems to have changed very rapidly. World leaders have started to acknowledge that our actions over the past two and a half centuries of industrialisation and the model we have for economic growth have had so marked an effect on our planet, that they are threatening its very existence and the future both of mankind and the other life forms with which we share it.

Over the past year there have been a growing number of articles in Focal point that have dealt with the issue of the environment and how it should create a challenge for Christians, particularly those living in developed western societies. They have been echoed by others across the globe about the destructive and health impairing effects of the use of fossil fuels, warming the planet and the further pollution that our waste creates. The response has been to make efforts to curb pollution and seek alternative technologies so that we can stop depending on fossil fuels for transport or heating.

The challenge that is presented to us now, and particularly in his season of Lent, through the suggested book by the Archbishop of Canterbury *Say yes to Life*, by Ruth Valerio (page 27) or in the Vicars letter (page 19) is whether that is enough or should we look at this from other angles and not least those who are the poorest and the least empowered to speak for themselves? The choices are not easy nor are we best placed to suggest to others that their industrial revolution must be held back, because we created a mess. If we are to develop a Christian view of the environment, it must start with responsibility for the damage we are doing to Creation and how we can, responsibly manage to reduce our impact. The challenge is both immense and daunting but one for which a recognition of our individual responsibility to each other, to future generations and the planet have never been more required.

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