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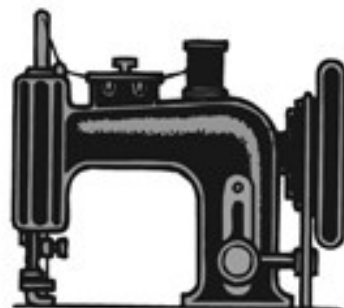
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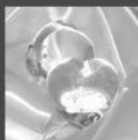
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USEFUL CONTACTS

Bitton AFC

(Western League Premier Division)
www.pitchero.com/clubs/bittonafc

Bitton AFC Juniors

Contact: Dave Fletcher
Tel: 0117 932 2521
Email:
fletchandcarol@btinternet.com

Bitton Archers

Shoot at Bitton AFC
www.bittonarchers.com

Bitton Bellringers

Practice night Mondays
Tower captain: Sue Jay
Tel: 0117 932 2424

Bitton Combined Charities

Contact: Ken Gibson
Tel: 0117 932 2122

Bitton Community Choir

Contact: Nicola Bennetts
Tel: 0117 932 4696

Bitton Cricket Club

Bitton Recreation Ground
3 Saturday senior teams, 1 Sunday senior team and 5 youth teams
bitton.play-cricket.com

Chairman: Tim Dyer
Tel: 0117 985 9139

Bitton Flower Arranging Club

2nd Tuesday afternoon of the month at St Mary's Church Hall
Contact: Janet Ballinger
Tel: 0117 932 4728

Bitton Gardening Club

St Mary's Church Hall, 3rd Monday in the month (plus garden visits)
Email: b.hetzel@btinternet.com

Bitton Ladies Football Club

Bitton Recreation Ground
bittonlfc.weebly.com/

Bitton Lunch Club

Last Thursday of each month
Contact: Jill Gibson
Tel: 0117 932 2122

Bitton Parish Council

www.bittonparishcouncil.co.uk
Clerk: Sharon Robbins
Tel: 01454 868 102
Email: bittonpc@blueyonder.co.uk

Bitton Parish History Group

www.bittonhistory.org.uk
Secretary: Mike Gates
Tel: 0117 932 8777
Email: mg122@btinternet.com

Bitton Pre-School

www.bittonpreschool.com/
Tel: 0117 932 6042
Email:
bittonpreschool@googlemail.com

Bitton Road Runners

Every Tuesday & Thursday - everyone welcome!
www.bittonroadrunners.co.uk

Bitton Sports & Social Club

Tel: 0117 932 3222

(More overleaf)

USEFUL CONTACTS

Bitton Village Residents' Association

www.bvra.uk

Contact: Andrew Ward

Email: andrew@wardandrew.com

Bitton WI

Second Monday of the month at 7.45pm at St Mary's Church Hall

Tel: 0117 932 2059

Flicks in the Sticks

Free film nights in St Mary's Church Hall on the 3rd Friday of the month, September to April (not December)

Email: b.hetzl@btinternet.com

Girl Guide HQ, Cherry Gardens

Guides, Brownies & Rainbows

Contact: Gill Boyes

Tel: 0117 970 8056

Email: gill.boyes@blueyonder.co.uk

Kingswood MP: Chris Skidmore

www.chrisskidmore.com

Tel: 0117 908 1524 (Constituency)

Tel: 0207 219 7094 (Westminster)

Email: chris@chrisskidmore.com

Royal British Legion

(Bitton & Oldland branch)

Contact: Jeff Dando

Tel: 0117 932 2608

Email: jeffjeffdando@gmail.com

Scouts: 34th Kingswood/1st St Mary's

Beavers meet Monday evenings at

St Mary's Church Hall. Cubs &

Scouts Thursday evenings at

The Meadows Primary School

Contact: David Harris

Tel: 0117 932 7755

Email: djaharris@hotmail.com

South Gloucestershire councillor for Bitton: Erica Williams

Tel: 0786 018 1215

Email:

erica.williams@southglos.gov.uk

St Mary's Baby & Toddler Group

(Wednesday mornings at St Mary's Church Hall)

Contact: Ali Smith

Email: alismith241@gmail.com

St Mary's Church

www.stmarysbitton.org.uk/

Vicar: Rev Jeremy Andrew

Tel: 0117 967 2724

Curate: Rev Anika Gardiner

Tel: 0117 932 5305

Churchwardens:

Barbara Merritt

Tel: 0117 932 3926

Jacqui Harris

Tel: 0117 937 4706

St Mary's Church Hall

Bookings secretary: Jill Gibson

Tel: 0117 932 2122

Email:

kenandjill@gibsonuk.freemove.co.uk

The Meadows Primary School

Tel: 0117 932 2203

Upton Cheyney URC

Minister: Rev Meryl White

Tel: 0775 914 6645

Email: Meryl.white@btinternet.com

Churches & services



UPTON CHEYNEY URC

Elder: Muriel Williams
0117 961 6843

Minister: Meryl White
0775 914 6645

Sunday services are at 3pm

January 7	Service led by Meryl White
January 14	Service led by Philip White
January 21	Service led by Meryl White
January 28	Service led by Michelle Bates

There will be a coffee afternoon on Tuesday 23rd January at 2pm

ST MARY'S CHURCH

Vicar:
Rev Jeremy Andrew
The Vicarage, Warmley
0117 967 2724

Ordained minister:
Rev Richard Humphrey
Splinters
Kenilworth Drive
Willsbridge
0117 949 0502
Continued overleaf



Lay ministers:

Ken Gibson, 8 Church Road,
Bitton
0117 932 2122

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

Churchwardens:

Barbara Merritt,
32 Bath Road, Bitton
0117 932 3926

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

Message from the curate

So Christmas is over, and a new year lies in front of us all. But before we go any further into 2018. Let's just press the pause button! Grab a cuppa, and look back at the legacy of what Christmas has left us with.

How about a depleted bank balance? Or an expanded waistline?! Perhaps you still have the carrier bag full of Christmas cards waiting to be taken to the recycling? But be that as it may, what I really want to know is....

What is the legacy of Advent and Christmas on our souls? What stood out from a Christmas carol, a sermon, a conversation, or a quiet moment with God? What imprint has Christmas left on your soul?

Why not take a moment to pause, to ponder and reflect. Write down any advent or Christmas legacies that come back to you. They may well be important 'touch points' and encounters to take with you into 2018.

Let me share a couple of the 'touch points' left on my soul. The prayer attributed to St Patrick has long been a favourite of mine. Here is a small section of it.



Susie Bishop

*Christ be with you, Christ within you,
Christ before you, Christ behind you,
Christ on your right, Christ on your left,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ above you, Christ beneath you,
Christ around you, now and ever.*

I had the privilege to pray this over two people in Advent, one very close to death and the other recovering from illness. I was struck by the deep and profound joy that leapt up in me when I said 'Christ before you' to the person close to death. This was a person of profound faith. The joy of what would soon be her reality, to see Christ before her, overwhelmed me! For the other person, again that deep sense of God having been with him, on his right and his left as he came through his valley of suffering. These are not just beautiful, prayerful words but they are words that hold a deep and real reality. The reality of Christ being present is where hope lies, a leap of joy appears when we see a vision of Christ, and an awareness of consistent love is found only with God. For me, these two encounters echoed the words of a carol I had on repeat in the car during Advent.

*Love is raining down on the world tonight,
there's a presence here I can tell,
God is in us
God is for us
God is with us.....Immanuel!"
I have good news, God is still with us!
Immanuel is still here!
Christmas has gone but God is still very much present.*

As we engage with all that 2018 will bring us, let us remember we go into it not in isolation. But with Immanuel.
(Continued overleaf)

God is *in* us.
God is *for* us
God is *with* us.

What a difference that makes. To you and to I, to all the people, experiences, and places that we will encounter this year. What a difference when we remember, what a difference when we engage with God in us, what a difference when we look for God in the people that we will encounter.

As you have reflected on your soul's experience of Advent and Christmas, what touch points of God come with you into 2018? Whatever has been your soul's legacy of Christmas, chat it over with God, He loves listening to you.

Sit in His presence, talk over your fears, share your disappointments, ask for His hope to rise up within you; if you don't feel that you have encountered God this Christmas, talk to God about that, ask Him to reveal where He was present. Take time to reflect on your dreams, enjoy His presence, His presence that is full of love, His presence that brings peace. Be still in His presence and listen.

Remembering with St Patrick, that he is always on your left and your right, behind and before, and the essence of life within you. May 2018 be truly blessed by a deepening awareness of Immanuel...God with us.

Susie Bishop

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Sunday 14 January at 10.30am

Candles fill the church for this historic service which has been revived by The Children's Society.

Gill Ford, the regional secretary,
will be our guest speaker



Services at St Mary's in January

Sunday, January 7	10.30: Parish Communion
Sunday, January 14	8am: Holy Communion 10.30am: Christingle Family Service, followed by lunch at The Upton Inn
Sunday, January 21	10.30am: Morning Worship
Friday, January 26	9.30am: Celtic Communion
Friday, January 26	8am: Holy Communion 9.30am Family Café Church

Mid-week events up to Ash Wednesday

A card with details of all the mid-week events up to Ash Wednesday will be available in church from the start of 2018 but highlights include:

Wednesday Morning Group on 10th and 24th January and 14th and 28th February.

Wednesday and Thursday Evening Groups will have four sessions looking at Elijah.

Celtic Communion followed by coffee and cake in the Lady Chapel at 9.30am on Friday 26th January.

Benefice Prayer meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 9th January at the Vicarage and a **Benefice Prayer Breakfast** at 9am on Saturday 20th January at Syston Church Hall.

Ash Wednesday Service at St Mary's on Wednesday 14th February at 7.30pm.

St Mary's Matters

January comes again in darkness and rain, or cold and snow, but we can lighten it up with our Christingle service on Sunday 14th January, *writes churchwarden Barbara Merritt.*

Christingle was revived by The Children's Society of the Church of England, to which we give every year. They are providing a speaker to tell us more of their work. We are having lunch afterwards at the Upton Inn. Call Pete Midgley on 932 6898 to reserve a place.

We have our new space at the back and front of the church and have already used the back for Family Café Church and for a baptism around the font. On Saturday 20th January Jill and Ken Gibson are arranging a Burns Supper. There will be haggis and neeps, singing, Highland dancers and of course, a bagpiper which should sound extra special with the high roof. We hope to have many events, religious and secular, in the coming year.

Family Café Church on 28th January is about Joseph the Dreamer. We look forward to seeing everybody for breakfast, an informal service with crafts for the children, discussion and reflection for the adults.

We have not yet held all our Christmas services at the time of writing, but we decorated a beautiful tree before the Advent service that was supplied by Jacqui Harris. We gave Christmas presents to the Sisters of the Church for distribution, which had been collected at the Family Parade Gift service. Afterwards we enjoyed a cake sale in aid of Scout funds.

Jacqui and I hope and trust you all will support the work that has gone into creating our new spaces in church. We hope you will enjoy many of the events which take place there during 2018.



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From the Parish Register

20th November
FUNERAL SERVICE
Edith Winifred Hetzel

26th November
HOLY BAPTISM
Freya James

29th November
FUNERAL SERVICE
Christopher Joseph Edward Baber

St Mary's flower rota

A reminder that I shall be in church on Saturday 13th January to arrange the rota for 2018.

Please join me for coffee and biscuits at 10.30am. Any queries, call me on 932 4986.

Look forward to seeing you all then.

Judith Butson

Family Café Church

2nd Birthday Party

Sunday 28th January at 9.30am

**Do come and join in the celebration when
we will be hearing about
'Joseph the Dreamer'**



News from Upton Cheyney URC

Carols in the Barn at Manor Farm went well again this year. Francesca and Sarah were brilliant on the crafts for the children. They made lanterns and decorated biscuits. The biscuits must have been really good as there was no evidence left behind!

David, Cathy and their team kept the adults well supplied with mulled wine, soup, bread and mince pies, whilst Oldland Brass provide music for the carols and as background for everything else. The church ladies ran the stall and the raffle, and Peter's family sold all the tickets.

The biggest star was Hans, who read out a Christmas poem, Meryl read out a story called 'Gift to the World' which included glow sticks, bubbles and love hearts. It was all about hope, joy and love to share with people everywhere. It was probably more chaotic than usual but it was good to see so many people and to hear people being introduced to each other.

There was a lovely communal spirit and the barn was tidied and cleared just as quickly as it was filled. Apart from the doves....they didn't move from the rafters. What a pleasant way to build up to Christmas. Thank you everyone.



Stuart Turner

Stuart Turner



**Bitton's
beautiful
Christmas tree**

Foodbank collection point

Linden Homes, who are building the new Bitton Mill development, are inviting the community to get involved in collecting for Keynesham Foodbank.



The foodbank collects supplies and provides three days' emergency food and assistance to local people who are referred to them in crisis.

For those able to donate, non-perishable food can be dropped off at Bitton Mill's sales and marketing suite on Saturday 30th December or between Tuesday 2nd and Sunday 7th January, ahead of the housebuilder's team hand-delivering the gifts to the foodbank in the new year.

The items most in need include long-life milk, long-life fruit juice, savoury and sweet biscuits, tins of tomatoes, tins of meat, mayonnaise and condiments – salt, vinegar, pepper, etc.

Sue Scholfield, sales and marketing director for Linden Homes Western, said: "There is often a drive to help charities during Christmas and so we wanted to offer some additional support just afterwards.

"We also thought people may have some spare items to donate to the foodbank after Christmas and the time to do so.

"We would like to invite local schools, residents and businesses to work with us on this project and help us to help those in need this year.

"The Bitton community is one with real spirit and we are pleased to be tapping in to this to support such a worthy cause."

The sales and marketing suite at Bitton Mill is open for food bank donations on the dates mentioned above between 10am and 5pm.



You are invited to a
BURNS SUPPER

on
Saturday 20th January at 7.30pm
at St Mary's Church, Bitton

Piper & Scottish Dancers
Two-course haggis supper
Bar available

Tickets £10 for adults, £5 for children
from the Gibsons on 932 2122
kenandjillg@gmail.com

In support of St Mary's Church

FOR ALL INQUIRIES CONTACT:

Becky Feather

Editor

Phone: 0117 932 5037

Email: bittonfocalpoint@live.co.uk

Website: www.stmarysbitton.org.uk



Looking Back...to January 1974

In this month in 1974, vicar Harold Wood thanked the many helpers for the beautiful decorations in the church at Christmas and Mr A Hawking for the gift of the tree.

In the 'Home Notes' section it was reported that the Bath & Wells Diocese had been one of the first to declare in favour of the ordination of women.

Meanwhile the church membership welcomed Mr & Mrs Barclay, who had moved to Gatleigh in Upton Cheyney. And sick friends were remembered, including Pauline Elcock and her neighbour Miss Jones, Mrs Rushforth and Mrs Wakefield.

Also in this month in 1974: New speed limits were introduced on Britain's roads in an attempt to save fuel. Prices had risen after the Middle East oil embargo during the Arab-Israeli war.

Next month: Bitton in February 1968

Bitton Parish History Group

Bitton Parish History Group's next meeting is on Wednesday 10th January at 7pm for 7.30pm at Oldland Common URC.

The speaker will be Shirley Hodgson, who has written and talked extensively on the subject of the vagrant children of Bristol.

Everyone is welcome. There is no charge, but a small donation would be welcomed. Refreshments will be available.

To find out more contact the group's secretary Mike Gates on 0117 932 8777 or visit <http://www.bittonhistory.org.uk>



News from Bitton WI

On a cold but dry Friday we set off on our group Christmas trip which was to Longleat.

We had a coffee stop on arrival at the giraffe enclosure, then a ride through the safari park. We saw most of the animals but not the tigers as their enclosure was under repair, nor the monkey enclosure, as they would do much damage to the coach (we could see them climbing over the cars.).

We were then left to have lunch and look around the house and grounds before the lights were switched on.

We had a Home Skills & Garden Day at Chipping Sodbury and there were two speakers in the morning and a fashion show in the afternoon.

On 4th December, after having a Christmas lunch, we attended the WI Federation Carol Service at St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol. The WI had a Christmas tree decorated with beautiful baubles made by members.

Our Christmas party took place on 11th December and it was a great evening. The meal of turkey salmon and asparagus quiche, followed by fruit salad, several truffles, coffee and chocolates, was cooked by Ros Knight, Janet Ballinger and myself. Then there was the pantomime - Aladdin & his Wonderful Limp - organised by Lesley Brain, which was hilarious. We had a sing-song and the evening ended with a Secret Santa and raffle.

The next meeting will be on January 8th but there is no flower club in January.

I wish you all a very Happy and Peaceful New Year.



Jean Hook

**BITTON VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
GARDENING CLUB**

Our next meeting is
MONDAY 21st January
in the
Church Hall, Church Lane, Bitton
Doors Open 7.30pm

We will be celebrating the beginning of our ninth year. Come along and join the Gardening Club and this evening enjoy a free drink and nibbles, meet friends and check out your gardening knowledge with our teams' quiz with prizes.

We will also present our 2018 Gardening Club programme, bursting at the seams with seven meetings and five gardens to visit. Our speakers will cover such diverse topics as growing meadow flowers in your garden; herbaceous borders; plant hunting; everything you need to know about hardy geraniums; and a first for us, a 'hands-on' workshop on willow weaving.

Garden visits are on different days of the week. Visits include Biddestone Manor near Chippenham; Chisenbury Priory near Marlborough; Hanham Court; Sally Gregson's Cottage Garden and Stourhead.

Bitton Open Gardens will be on Sunday 10th June (if anyone is interested in opening their garden please let Bridget Hetzel know). And Fonthill have invited us back in April to shop till we drop at their garden centre (with a 10% discount).

The Garden Club Annual Membership Fee remains at £12 and all our meetings will continue to be FREE to members. Meetings are held in the Church Hall. If anyone would like to join the committee, contact Bridget ASAP before the meeting.

For more information email b.hetzel@btinternet.com

Everyone is welcome

Letters to the Editor

Dear Becky

I work for a local charity called 1625 Independent People (www.1625ip.co.uk) helping young people leaving care and/or those either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We are looking for people with a spare room who would like to support young people aged 16+ leaving care or home who aren't quite ready to live on their own. They may need help with cooking, budgeting or may need help getting to grips with their new community and learning general life skills.

The scheme will provide young people with somewhere safe and affordable accommodation to ensure their wellbeing.

Following a successful assessment and application process, we pay hosts up to £175 per week to cover rent and costs, and offer comprehensive training and support throughout a person's stay.

We welcome people from all walks of life, single people, families, working or unemployed.

We are trying to raise the profile and reach the local people who may want to do something amazing but didn't know this was possible.

We also offer support and advice and drop-in sessions to young people who are worried about their housing situation.



Christina Nicholls
Supported Lodgings Coordinator
Tel: 0117 9695763
email: christina.nicholls@1625ip.co.uk

Dear Becky

I and my family would like to thank everyone for their concern shown to Chris over the last few months.

Since he passed away we have received so many cards and offers of help, all of which have helped us cope and are very much appreciated.

Jacynth Baber

The Christmas quiz answers

The December quiz was a mouth-watering mix of ingredients or foods associated with Christmas.

Here are the answers with alternatives that were allowed:

1. Christmas Cake, 2. Mulled Wine, 3. Brussels Sprouts, 4. Stuffing/Sultanas, 5. Trifle, 6. Mince Pies, 7. Port, 8. Glazed Ham, 9. Currants, 10. Mincemeat (Mandarins, Macaroons,, Meringues), 11. Mixed Spice (Ginger Spice), 12. Cranberries, 13. Wassail Cup, 14. Dates, 15. Icing (Champagne), 16. Glace Cherries, 17. Brandy Butter, 18. Bread Sauce (Pigs in Blankets), 19. Stilton, 20. Chocolate Log, 21. Clementines, 22. Marzipan, 23. Ground Almonds, 24. Cinnamon (Devils on Horseback), 25. Sausage meat.

No one got them all correct but two entries scored 24 out of 25. Well done to Jon & Pam Booth and Alan & Sue Murtagh - you share the special festive (and appropriately edible) prize.

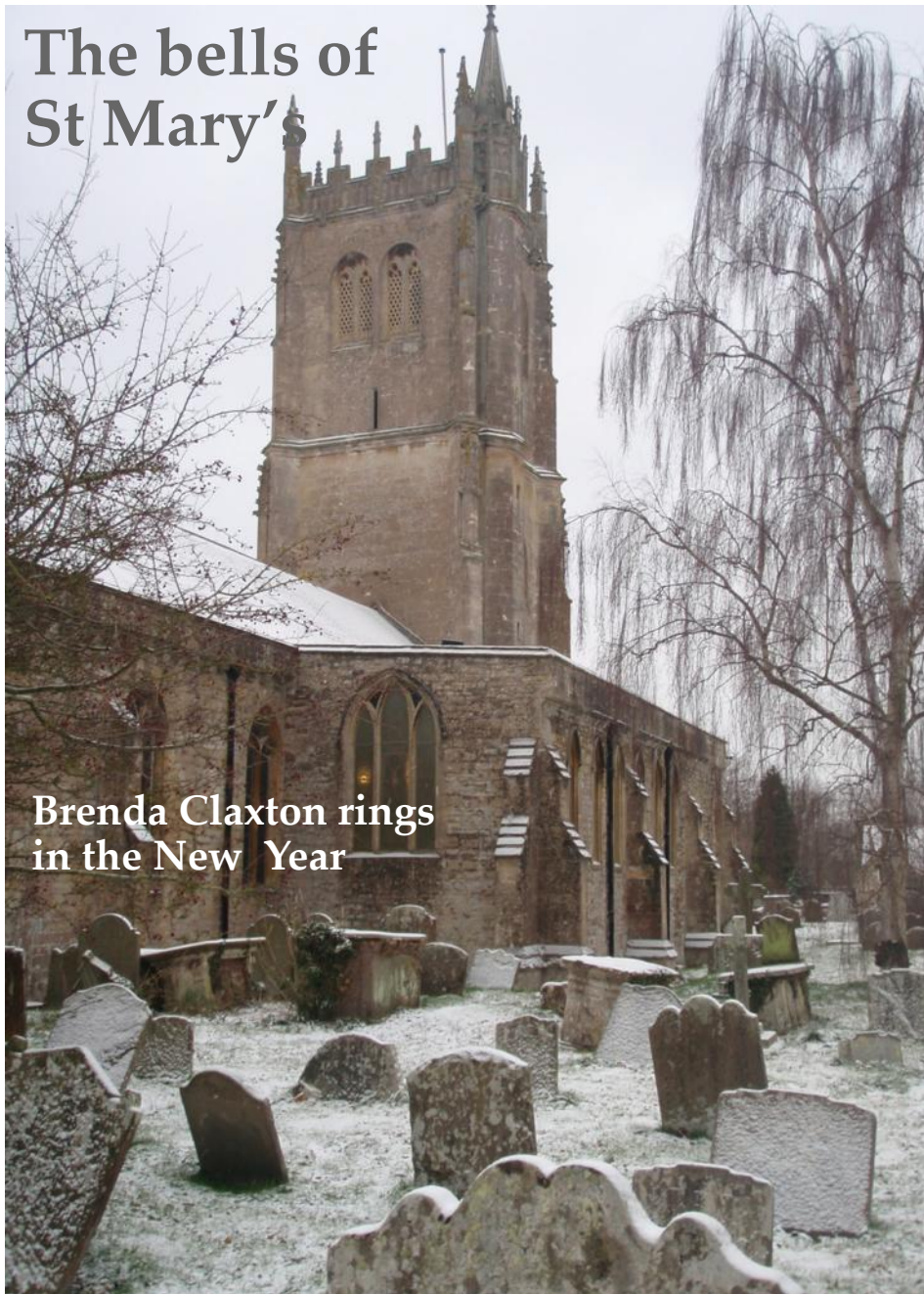
Now turn the page to have a go at the January quiz.



We can offer various sizes of adverts in *Focal Point* to suit your needs. Contact the editor on 932 5037 or email bittonfocalpoint@live.co.uk

The bells of St Mary's

Brenda Claxton rings
in the New Year



In late November whilst walking my puppy across the fields just up the hill from Bitton, the melodious notes of the bells from St Mary's floated towards me on the evening air. It felt as if the air was singing in harmony with the universe.

I quickly made my way down into the churchyard as I wanted to hear the bells more distinctly. Outside the bell tower I happened to meet up with Pam Hacker who explained to me that on this particular Sunday evening, Bath Abbey bellringers were ringing a peal'. To my surprise I discovered that this would involve 5,040 changes and take about three hours' solid ringing; bell ringing is a continual process.

It is difficult to describe the chimes of bells; St Mary's bells are very old and have a beautiful tone. I heard no distinct melody but each bell played its place with rhythm. I could have listened forever.

After climbing up steep winding steps, you reach St Mary's bell tower. St Mary's has eight bells covering an octave; different bells have different tones, depending on their size and weight. At each session before bellringing starts, the bells need to be 'rung up', which then allows them to ring free. A pull by the bellringer on the rope beneath swings the bell down so that it engages with its clapper to create the wonderful vibration which echoes around in the surrounding air. The skill of the bellringer is inestimable. S/he needs to pull on the rope with just the correct weight and energised timing so that its tone will fluidly combine with all the others, in a rhythmic melody.

I have experienced just a few rings myself attended by Sue who takes the Monday evening practice session. I find Sue kindly and practical and with her attentive support, I gain some beginner's idea of the process of bellringing, which I do enjoy.

Next time you hear the bells of St. Mary's playing on a Sunday morning, you might allow yourself to feel some of the joy, dedication and very intelligent ability of the ringers. How they co-ordinate their playing I still have to learn and understand. I am simply now left with a beautiful experience of lovely music being created in an ancient bell tower.



The January quiz

Here are the first letters of well-known international (NOT European) landmarks - natural and man-made.

Entries by 13th January to the Editor, 18 Church Road, Bitton, BS30 6HH or email bittonfocalpoint@live.co.uk

1. T - - - - M - - - - - - -
2. C - - - - - P - - - -
3. S - - - - N - - - - - S - - - - -
4. R - - S - - - - -
5. G - - - - - G - - - - B - - - - -
6. G - - - - P - - - - - O - G - - - -
7. U - - - -
8. T - - W - - - - H - - - -
9. M - - - - R - - - - -
10. I - - - - - F - - - -
11. T - - T - - - - - - - A - - - -
12. A - - - - - W - - -
13. E - - - - S - - - - B - - - - -
14. M - - - - - V - - - - -
15. C - - - - T - - R - - - - - S - - - - -
16. B - - - A - A - - - H - - - -
17. S - - - B - - - - C - - - - - M - - - - -
18. G - - - C - - - - -
19. S - - - - H - - - - - B - - - - -
20. E - - - - I - - - - S - - - - -

Name:

Contact:

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