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Focal Point

Bitton Churches' Magazine

February 2022

*A monthly church newsletter serving
Bitton, Swineford, Willsbridge,
Upton Cheyney & Beach*

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Cheyney.*

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*Deadline for the March
magazine is:*

Thursday 17 February 2022

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*Cover photo by Jane Clapp of this
year's Christingle Service*

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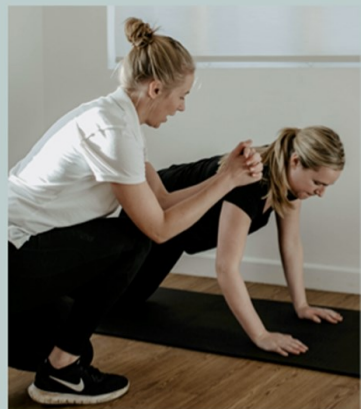
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Services for February 2022



Sunday services are at 3pm

Preachers for February:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| February 6th | Service led by Steve Britton |
| February 13th | Service led by Margaret White |
| February 20th | Service led by Norman Palfrey |
| February 27th | Service led by Steve Britton |

In addition there will be a coffee afternoon at 2pm on Tuesday 22nd February

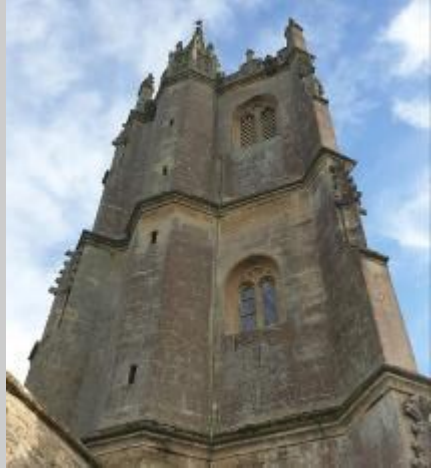


- Churches & Services -



**ST MARY'S
CHURCH,
BITTON**

www.stmarysbitton.org.uk



Vicar:

Rev Jeremy Andrew
The Vicarage, Warmley
0117 967 2724

Ordained minister:

Rev Richard Humphrey
Splinters, Kenilworth Drive
Willsbridge **0117 949 0502**

Lay ministers:

Ken Gibson, 8 Church Road,
Bitton
0117 932 2122

Churchwardens:

Pete Midgley
30 Kenilworth Drive, Willsbridge
0117 932 6898

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

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

Services for February 2022

Services at St Mary's

You will be very welcome at all services at St Mary's . For those who are unable to attend some services are provide on line .

More details on our website:

www.stmarysbitton.org.uk

Wednesday 2 February

***The Presentation of Christ -
Candlemas***

Sunday, 6 February

10.30am **Fourth Sunday before Lent**
Parish Communion



Sunday, 13 February

10.30am **Third Sunday before Lent**
Family Special with the Scout
Group and the St Mary's Minstrels

Sunday, 20 February

10.30am **Second Sunday before Lent**
Morning Worship

Thursday, 24 February

9.30am Celtic Communion
followed by coffee and cake

Sunday, 27 February

Sunday before Lent
8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Family Café Church

LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH



How do you feel about same sex marriage or people who wish to identify as neither male nor female?

Questions of identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage affect everyone, both inside and outside the church and the Church of England has launched its own initiative to help parishes to address such issues sensitively

Commissioned and led by the Bishops of the Church of England, *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF) is about encouraging the whole church to think more deeply about identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage in the bigger context of being human. It is an invitation to people, whatever their background and experience, to think more deeply about what it means to be human and to live in love and faith together. They hope it will change the way people relate to, understand, and love each other in the church, even when we disagree.

Bringing the initiative to the benefice we are going to run a course on two Saturday mornings 12th and 26th February from 9.30am-1.00 pm at St. Mary's. There is no compulsion to join, but those participating will be asked to a commit to a course designed to help people to listen and learn together and led by trained facilitators.



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St Mary's Matters

For all of us, emerging from the pandemic and getting our lives back on track is a great blessing. It feels as though we are gradually regaining a certain amount of freedom and we have increasing control over our lives. Nevertheless, it is not without its challenges as we come to recognise that things are not exactly the same as they were before and that we still not entirely out of the pandemic's control.



Pete Midgley

These conflicting influences are certainly in evidence at St Mary's as we proceed through the early part of 2022. It is wonderful to enjoy increasing freedom in worship as restrictions on our practices are gradually removed. Hopefully it will not be too long before we are able to ditch our masks and even greet one another physically during the sharing of the peace (although I know not everyone will relish the return of this practice). In contrast it was disappointing (although the correct call) to have to cancel the Burn's night supper in January.

One particular challenge facing us at St Mary's is finding volunteers for certain aspects of church life. We have always encouraged as many of the congregation as possible to find a way of being involved in the running of the church and in worship, but with the interruptions of the last couple of years this has been hard to maintain. Maybe you (yes, you!) feel you would like to be more involved than you are? We need people to be welcomers at the start of services (formerly known as sidespersons), people to read the bible passages, lead prayers and lead the singing. We also need people to help with refreshments after our services. Do you have a talent which you are keeping to yourself? Maybe you've helped out before and would like to step back in, or maybe you want to do something new. If you feel there is something you can help with then get in touch with me, Jacqui, Barbara or any of the leadership team.

Dates for your Diary

Saturday & Sunday 12 & 13 March	The Mouse Fest <i>Life in Bitton as portrayed by knitted mice</i>
Saturday 9 April	Get to know your Sewing Machine <i>With Barbara Merritt</i>
Saturday 14 May	<i>Westerly Winds</i> Concert
Saturday 21 May	Canon Ellacombe 200 Exhibition
Thursday to Sunday 2-5 June	Queen's Platinum Jubilee
Saturday 3 September	Annual Church Fête

Church & Church Hall Bookings

The church hall is available for hire.

For larger events such as community meetings or concerts the church itself may be more suitable.

For Church Hall bookings contact Jill Gibson on 0117 932 2122

For Church bookings contact the Social Secretary, Jenny Harris by email on **djacharris@hotmail.com**

David Bailey

Living in Love and Faith



Dear Friends,

The pattern of relationships in society is changing, big time. When I first became a GP in Hanham 36 years ago, the children under my care lived with both parents who were married and lived at the same address. Today, there are many more single parent families. More adults are living on their own, fewer are marrying. Marriage without first living together, is now as unusual as premarital cohabitation was in the 1970s. The number of same-sex couples is growing, as is the proportion who have married. More couples are being born and nurtured in families headed by couples of the same gender.

Why has this happened, why the big change? The answer is likely to be multifactorial. There have been changes in marriage law, advances in birth control & life expectancy. There have been changes in the traditional role of men and women in parenting and increasing business, educational and professional opportunities for women.

When I started my career, most of my professional colleagues were men. Now, more than half are women. There have been changes in tax regimes, changes in wealth distribution, changing patterns of religious commitment.

One of the drivers for change has been an increased 'open culture': where it's OK to admit to mental health problems; where it's OK to admit to problems in a relationship; where it's OK to admit to being gay; where it's OK to have a gay couple getting to the final of Strictly!

Continued overleaf



Singles

There is an increase in singleness. This includes the widowed, the separated, the divorced and those who have never married. For some, this is a choice. For others, it's a result of circumstance. For most, it is something between.

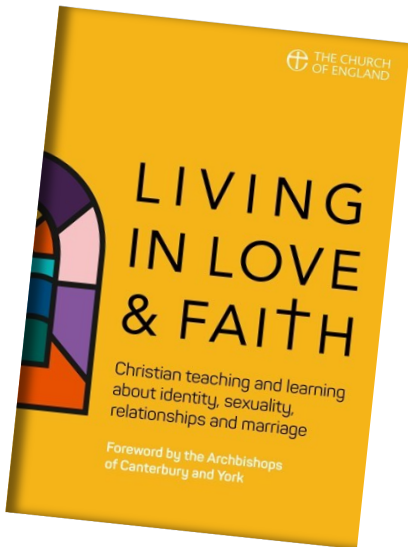
Identity

Identity refers to a person's deep rooted sense of themselves: their habitual, often automatic ways of understanding who they are and how they fit into the wider world around them. It is shaped by all the ways in which they have been classified and positioned within their family and society. To understand people's identity, we need to listen to their stories. There are many aspects of identity, including class, race, nationality, sexual orientation and gender.

Trans

The adjective 'trans' or 'transgender' refers to any individual whose sense of their own gender identity does not match the gender that they were assigned at birth. The adjective is increasingly used to name a wide range of

different kinds of identity. The most common is those assigned female at birth but who identify as male (or vice versa). It can also be used for someone assigned male or female at birth but who do not identify as either. They are referred to as 'non-binary' or 'gender-fluid', if they identify their gender as fluctuating.



Recently, the Church of England put together some resource material 'Living in Love & Faith'. It includes a book, a collection of short story videos and a course where we can learn more about the Christian teaching relating to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. Much of this resource material is available free online, just google 'Living in Love & Faith' and go to the churchofengland.org website. The book is £15.99 & can be obtained on line.

St Mary's Church is hosting a 2 half-day course on Saturday mornings this month. The dates are Saturday 12th Feb 9.30am-1pm and Saturday 26th Feb 9.30-1pm If you are interested in signing up for the course and learning more, simply email Jeremy Andrew, the Vicar, on j.andrew.102@btinternet.com or ring him on 0117 9490502.

David Bailey

Christingle 2022



After being ‘on-line’ in 2021 we were delighted that this year we were back in St Mary’s for our annual Christingle Service. This ancient Moravian service centres round the theme of Jesus the Light of the World and is symbolised by an orange representing the world surmounted by a candle reminding us of Jesus. Wrapped around the world is a red ribbon symbolising Jesus’ loving care for all of us.

Our first task on arrival was to make a Christingle and to take it to our seat. Then during the service we lined the aisle as the candles were lit and we joined in a song and a prayer celebrating the good news of the Christingle – a special and colourful moment as you can see from Jane Clapp’s photo.

It is good to see the Bitton Scout Group up and running and their participation in the service with Bible reading and prayers was much appreciated. The talk was given by the Revd Judith Lee and ambassador for the Children’s Society which is one of the 5 charities to whom St Mary’s send annual support. We heard that the need for their help has increased through the pandemic and Judith gave moving examples of children who had been supported such as the eleven year old girl who provided care both for her disabled mother and for a younger sibling.

If you have never been to a Christingle then you will be very welcome on Sunday 8 January 2023!





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70th Anniversary

One notable anniversary this month happens on 6 February, the day that marks the seventieth anniversary of the accession of Her Majesty the Queen; a milestone no other monarch has reached.

As is well known, the Queen was in Kenya when news reached her of the death of George VI, which meant she was the first monarch in over 200 years to have not been in the British Isles when they acceded.

Understandably, the day of her father’s death is not one the Queen marks with a celebration, but we look forward to a Platinum Jubilee year of celebrations in 2022.



**Come and join us on:
Sunday 20th March 2022
To walk between the three churches of our
benefice.**

Start 9.00am at St Mary's Church Bitton,
walk to St Barnabas Church for the Climate Sunday service at
10.30am (where we can share lunch)
and on to St Anne's Syston where we can have tea and cakes
together.

You will need to wear stout shoes or boots and there are some
uneven steps and stile or two!
All covid precautions will be observed.
All welcome

Christian Aid Christmas Appeal 2021

Clean water for families in Sudan – that was the focus of this year’s Christian Aid Christmas appeal. We were asked, as we decided on Christmas presents, to think of families who have to choose between dirty water or not having a drop to drink. Our gifts will help to transform lives by providing village boreholes.

The Christmas collections from St Mary’s raised £312.50 and the carol singers round the village and at the White Hart raised a further £62.50. A total of £375. Very many thanks to donors and singers.

Nicola Bennetts



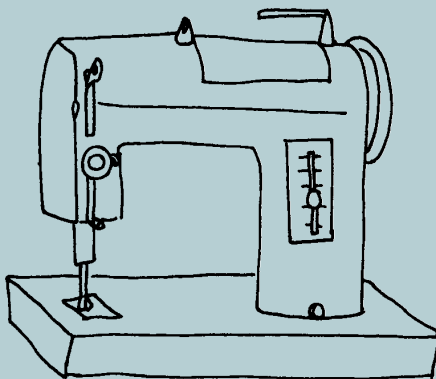
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Rex Allen

We are sorry to record the death of Rex Allen of Warmley who for 40 years was a Licensed Lay Minister serving our Benefice. Rex died peacefully on Sunday 16 January aged 93.

We send our sympathy to Muriel and to all the family and Muriel and the family have asked us to give their thanks for the many cards and letters which they have received from Bitton.

Rex's funeral service will take place on Wednesday 16th February 12 Noon at St. Barnabas Church Warmley followed by Committal at 1.15pm at Westerleigh Crematorium.

If anyone would like to know Muriel's address please contact me.

Ken Gibson

Henry Nicholson Ellacombe 1822- 1916



Next time you walk into St Mary's churchyard through the lych gate, give a thought to Henry Nicholson Ellacombe. The gate, built in 1930, was erected as his memorial. Canon Ellacombe, as he later became known, was vicar of Bitton from 1850 to 1916 and was born 200 years ago this month in the old vicarage next to the gate itself. It was also there that he died, some 94 years later.

Henry Nicholson Ellacombe was born on 18 February 1822, the son of the then curate, Henry Thomas Ellacombe and his young wife, Ann Nicholson. He grew up in the vicarage and would have attended services at St Mary's from an early age. His early education is likely to have been at home, as his father took pupils himself at the vicarage. He later attended King Edward's Grammar School in Broad Street in Bath, where he studied under the then headmaster, Dr James Pears. At the age of 18 he went up to Oxford, attending Oriel College, as his father had before him.

He graduated in 1844 and in 1847 was licenced by the Bishop of Lichfield as a curate in the parish of Sudbury in Derbyshire, a parish under the influence of the Anson family, which also had connections to Oriel College. He was there for a very short time before returning to Bitton, and is thought to have been curate to his father before succeeding him as vicar in 1850.

Focal Point, February 2022

As vicar, there is no doubt that he had a lasting influence on the church and the village.

St Mary's church today, is much as he left it. It was he who tore down the old gallery at the west end of the church, installed the oak pews we sit in today and gave us the cedar roof. He re-laid the floor of the chancel and the reredos marble that sits behind the altar.

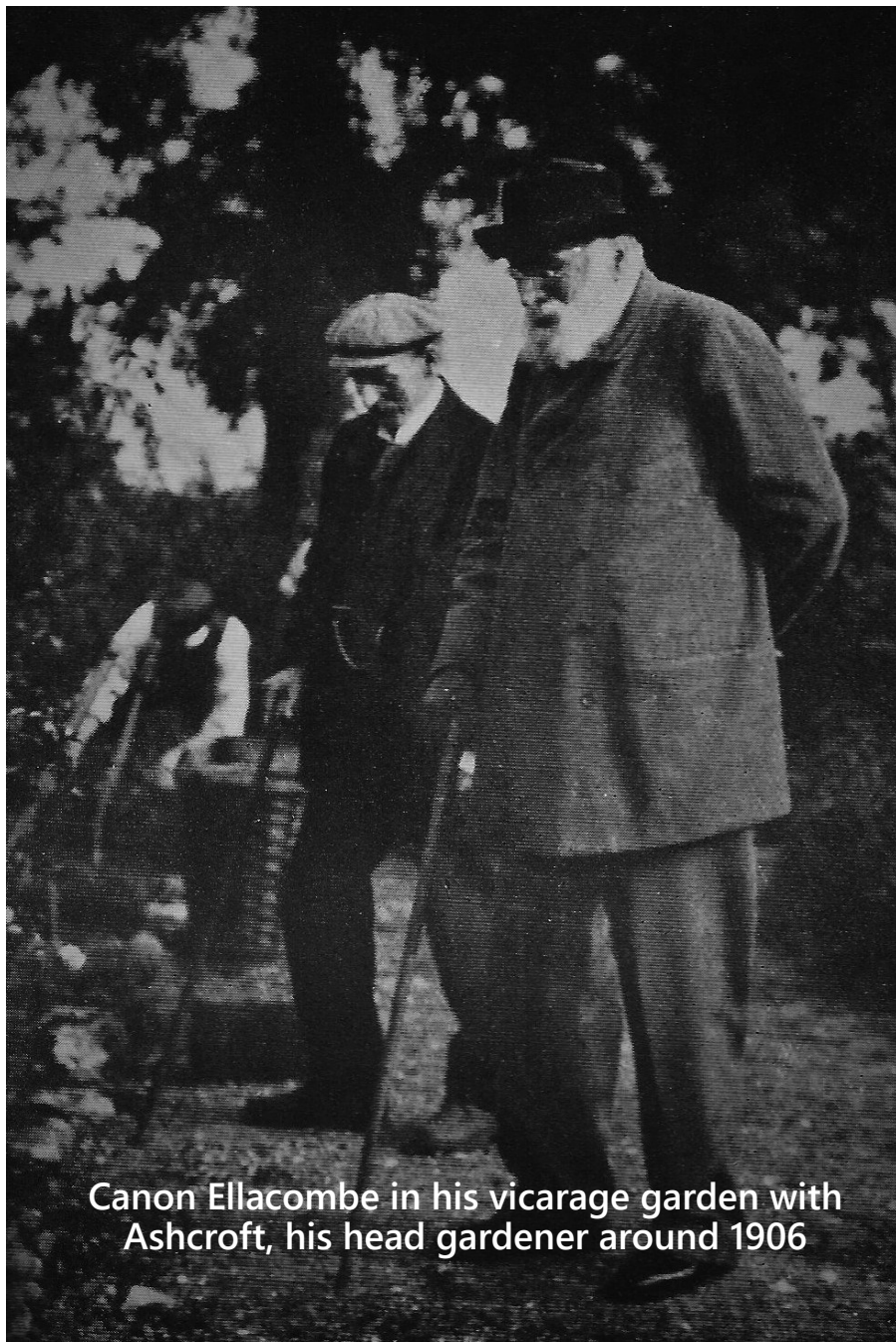
In the village, and beyond, there was scarcely a committee on which he did not have a place. He pressed for more education, sat on the board of the Bristol Reformatory School, and (especially in his earlier years) rode extensively around what was then a large parish acquainting himself with all aspects of parish life. The parish, which still included Longwell Green, was largely rural, but had significant industrial activity taking place including coal and other mining.

In 1852, he married Emily Aprila Wemyss, the daughter of an army colonel and together they had ten children (although not all survived). This must have made even the substantial vicarage feel a little cramped, as it would also have housed a small retinue of servants. The Ellacombes were not short of money; in addition to the money he received as vicar, the family had independent means.

In later years he was appointed as Rural Dean and Canon of Bristol Cathedral. Yet, it is not as a churchman that Ellacombe is remembered so much as for his passion of gardening and horticulture as a traveller and as a writer. His books covered his various interests.. His love of Shakespeare was reflected in his first book (published in 1878) on *The Plant Lore and Garden Craft of Shakespeare* which drew out the various plants in each play and their use and a few years later, *Shakespeare as an Angler*, seeking to prove that the playwright was also fond of fishing.

Like his father, H N Ellacombe was a man of considerable energy and enthusiasm. He exploited his connections and took advantage of the huge changes that were taking place in the times in which he lived. The increased speed of communications as railways were built in this country and overseas, and the expansion of the British Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century created connections and opportunities that were previously impossible.

Continued overleaf



Canon Ellacombe in his vicarage garden with Ashcroft, his head gardener around 1906

This meant that in his vicarage garden in Bitton he had the opportunity to attempt to grow many unusual plants from around the world, often supplied to him by the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, its directors becoming regular correspondents.

The proliferation of national newspapers and periodicals, which in an age before radio and television were cheap, and plentiful was his route to national and international fame. Ellacombe became a columnist for a paper called *The Guardian*. This was not the same as today's national newspaper, but a church periodical which had a very wide readership and in which the Canon wrote mainly about plants and plant management. He also wrote about his travels across Europe sightseeing, which often also included botanical trips to special gardens or plant searches in the Alps. In many ways he was something of a Monty Don or Alan Titchmarsh of his day.

His most famous book, however, which is still in print, focused on his own garden. *In a Gloucestershire Garden* he brought together several articles



New plants and correspondence from around the world arrived at the Vicarage in Bitton. Plants were grown in the garden, often for the first time in this country.

Focal Point, February 2022

focusing on his own vicarage garden and on the practicalities of gardening on a lime based soil. It could be said that his “no dig but mulch” approach to the soil and a refusal to import peat into the garden put him well ahead of his time.

His time was long. Vicar for 66 years he died at the age of 94 in 1916. Repots of his visitors in his final few years speak of a man who while less mobile had certainly not lost his wits and intellect. He is buried in Bitton churchyard close to the chancel.

This summer, to commemorate his two hundredth birthday, St Mary’s is planning to put on a small exhibition, in the church, celebrating Cannon Ellacombe’s life and works. In addition to items already held by St Mary’s, we have also been given access to his papers in the archives of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew and a number of facsimiles of his writings and correspondence will be on show.



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March

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Janet Ivens' Knitting Group Mice
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Bitton History Group

What lies beneath?

So much of the industrial history of the past two hundred years has been lost in the past half century due to a lack of interest from planners and government. This seems particularly the case when it comes to the coal mining industry which was once an important part of the local economy. That was the claim of local industrial archaeologist, Dave Harding, of South Gloucestershire Mines and Research Group, in his presentation to the Bitton History Group in January.

In the talk which had to be moved online for COVID safety, Dave set out the story of the volunteers who had set out to preserve and record information about former coalmines and their support services, which had once been very apparent in the landscape. Clues to the mining history of the area live on in street names such as California Road named after the California mine and New Pit Lane.

While various interest groups including the Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society and the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust battled to preserve buildings and mine entrances in the



Not all remnants of the mining industry are below ground. But they are rarely preserved or listed

Focal Point, February 2022

1970s and 80s, they were met with some resistance but largely indifference. Much had been achieved by John Cornwell, something of a pioneer in the field, but clearly a larger than life character who had acquired a substantial archive of Coal Board papers that were due to be disposed of. John had turned them into a series of books about mining in Somerset and Gloucestershire and had worked with other volunteers to restore and recover a number of buildings and mine entrances that would otherwise be lost.

The tale was also not without some rivalry between the volunteers and the various groups. Nor was there any lack of dispute about interpretations. David himself raised the question of whether the Dramway (a much signposted feature in Bitton and Oldland) had been wrongly named. The route, that brought coal across country to be loaded onto barges on the River Avon, was not, he claimed, called a Dramway for much of its existence. Drams were (as their name implies) small carts, while the carts used on the so-called Dramway, were large and pulled by horses.

What was apparent, however, is that the number of local mines was very large. Most were for coal but other minerals were also mined. What was also clear was how extensively they are now hidden.

The next meeting will be a talk on ‘Famine and Plague in Early Modern England’ from Professor Ronald Hutton on Tuesday 24th March at 7.30pm.

Venue: North Common Village Hall, Millers Drive, North Common, Bristol BS30 8XX

BVRA Gardening Club

A packed programme for the gardeners' year

Members of the Bitton Gardening Club are looking forward to a packed and exciting year of talks and garden visits in 2022.

Hopes of getting entirely back to normal were dashed in January when the planned membership meeting, including the drinks party and Quiz, had to be put off for Covid safety reasons. Instead, an open event was held in the garden of Bridget and Martin Hetzel where visitors were able to renew their subscriptions and book the first visit on offer to Colesbourne Gardens in Gloucestershire, which boasts a spectacular annual display of Snowdrops.

Membership for the year, which costs £12 is still open and available. The next meeting will be the AGM on 21 March to be held in either the Church Hall or the Church itself, with a talk by the Head Gardener at the Bishop's Palace at Wells

Bitton Open Gardens will be held on 19 June, so let's hope for some good weather.

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ST MARY'S CHURCH DEVELOPMENT APPEAL



Further update on plans for St Mary's

There have been no further large donations offered or promised in past month. That may be partly because trusts, like many others, tend not to meet in December and January, but also because no new funding is expected until the next stage of permissions is sought and obtained.

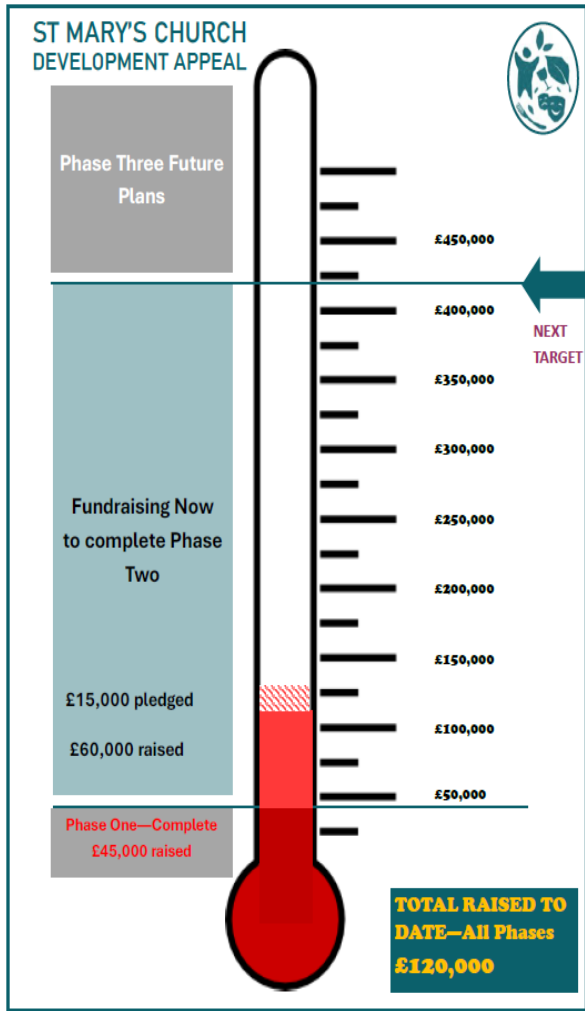
In January, the Futures Committee and our architect George Chedburn had a long meeting in the church to look at each of the proposed changes and how they would affect the operation of the church.



While there have been no dramatic changes to the plans outlined in previous editions of Focal Point, it does seem that we need to adjust the level of the chancel floor as well as the nave, by just a few centimetres. The proposal is to retain the existing floor of the chancel with its tessellated marble tiles. These can be lifted, cleaned, restored and re-laid. All the necessary documents are being pulled to together with the intention of submitting our application for a faculty in February to the church planning authority, the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). Recent communication with the DAC has been encouraging, although it is expected that the application will take some months to complete its process.

A banner with a dark teal background. On the left, there is a white logo featuring a stylized figure and leaves. In the center, the text "ST. MARY'S CHURCH DEVELOPMENT APPEAL" is written in white. On the right, there is a quote in white text: "...to make St Mary's a thriving hub for the community, an inspiring place of worship, heritage, pilgrimage and activity - welcoming, accessible and well-resourced." The banner is framed by decorative leaf motifs.

STILL A LONG WAY TO GO but progress is being made — Initial estimates for the cost of the Phase II work (more details overleaf) were for £375,000. That figure is likely to be revised as the details of the work are fully established and some actual quotes obtained. Thus far some £75,000 has either been donated or pledged since fundraising began for this phase. **A BIG thank you to all who have contributed .**



How to Support the Appeal

You can make a donation through our *Give a Little* donations page, which you can access using the QR code above.

If you would prefer to give a cheque, please make it payable to **St Mary's Church Bitton**. and send it to—

John Bennetts, Treasurer, Springfield Villa, Brewery Hill, Upton Cheyney, Bristol, BS30 6LY.

The February Quiz

This months quiz is on Roman Gods and Goddesses, I have also provided the equivalent Greek God

No.	God or Goddess of	Greek equivalent
1.	Goddess of Agriculture	Demeter
2.	Goddess of Crossroads and Magic	Hecate
3.	Goddess of the Dawn	Eos
4.	God of Fire	Hephaestus
5.	Goddess of Flowers	Chloris
6.	Goddess of the Hunt	Artemis
7.	Goddess of the Hearth	Hestia
8.	King of the Gods	Zeus
9.	Goddess of Love	Aphrodite
10.	God of Love	Eros
11.	Messenger of the Gods	Hermes
12.	Goddess of the Moon	Selene
13.	God of the Sea	Poseidon
14.	God of Time, Wealth and Agriculture	Cronus
15.	Goddess of the Underworld	Persephone
16.	God of the Underworld	Hades
17.	Goddess of Victory	Nike
18.	God of War	Ares
19.	Goddess of War and Wisdom	Athena
20.	God of Wine and Fertility	Dionysus

Name:

Contact:

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

January's Quiz Answers

Last month's quiz was on magazines:

The correct answers are:

1. OK; 2. Reader's Digest; 3. Focal Point; 4. House and garden; 5. Prima; 6. Cosmopolitan; 7. Vogue; 8. Ideal Home; 9. National Geographic; 10. Good Food; 11. Delicious; 12. Tatler; 13. Hello; 14. New Statesman; 15. Time; 16. Good Housekeeping; 17. What Car; 18. Slimming World; 19. Country Living; 20. Vanity Fair.

Correct answers were received from:

Sarah Craddock; Ros & Charles Knight; Bridget & Martin Hetzel; The Wakefields; Jan Wookey & Diane Stinchcombe; Jan Wookey & Diane Stinchcombe; Pam & Jon Booth; Alan & Sue Murtagh; Sue & Rod Nethercote; Margaret & Bryan Garlic; Frank, Sue, Sophie & Lucy FitzGibbon.

This month's prize goes to:

The Wakefields

Apologies to the following people who were missed from the list of December correct answers

Terry Matthews; Sue & Alan Murtagh; Alison & Nigel Wride; Mary Younie



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The last word



“The past” wrote LP Hartley, *“is like another country, they do things differently there”*. How true. As we begin to commemorate the 200th birthday of Canon Ellacombe, one can only wonder what he might have made of our intended changes to the church or indeed that a weekend display would be given over to knitted mice. He probably would not have allowed it—but in general he recognised that change had to come and would take place.

Ellacombe lived in a time of greater certainty about moral behaviour in a century in which matters of sexuality and moral license were largely drawn in or covered up.

By contrast we have lived through a period of what was originally called *permissiveness*, but which has effectively been a succession of changes that has moved from permissions to rights, challenging long held notions and values. They cannot, however, be ignored; least of all by a church with a mission to be open to all.

Living in Love and Faith is mentioned a number of times in this edition and the events planned for this month will no doubt be challenging and thought provoking. One can only wonder what the future will make of us.

Jim Heavens, Editor



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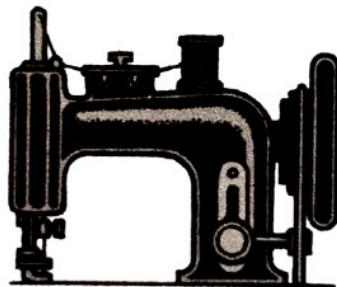
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