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February 2023

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Focal Point

Bitton Churches' Magazine

February 2023

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

*Published by St Mary's Church, Bitton and
the United Reformed Church, Upton
Cheyney.*

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To advertise in Focal Point
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FOR ALL FOCAL POINT INQUIRIES

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*Deadline for the March
edition is:*

Thursday 16th February

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***Cover photo—Snowdrops
by Alison Wride***

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[www. e-voice.org.uk/uptoncheyneychapel](http://www.e-voice.org.uk/uptoncheyneychapel)

February 2023



There are no services this month

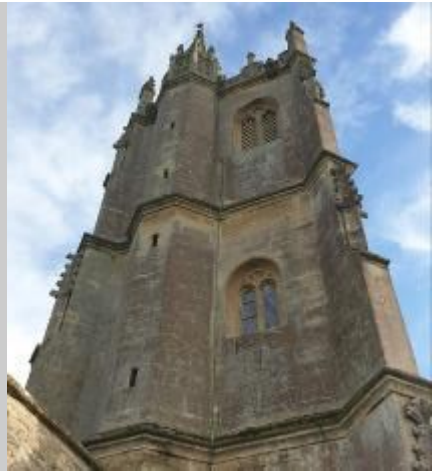
Due to the weather being so changeable and as we are only a small number, the Chapel will be closed until March. With the coming of spring our future will be more clear.

Kind regards Valerie



**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

Curate:

Rev Rosemary Radcliffe
revrosemaryradcliffe@gmail.com

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

Simon Harris
41 Combe Park
Weston
BATH

Services for February 2023

Services at St Mary's

You will be very welcome at all services at St Mary's .
More details on our website: www.stmarysbitton.org.uk

Sunday, 5 February

Third Sunday before Lent
10.30am Parish Communion
Preacher—*The Venerable Christopher Bryan, Archdeacon*

Sunday, 12 February

Second Sunday before Lent
10.30am Family Special Service
with the Bitton Scout Group & St Mary's Minstrels



Sunday, 19 February

Sunday next before Lent
10.30am Morning Worship

Wednesday, 22 February

Ash Wednesday
There is no general service at Bitton, but services are provided at other churches in the benefice

10.30am Holy Communion and Ashing—
St Barnabas Church, Warmley

7.30pm Holy Communion and Ashing—
St Anne's Church, Syston

**(At 6pm at St Mary's there will
will be a Thinking Day service for
The Guides.)**

Thursday, 23 February

10.00am Celtic Communion
followed by coffee and cake

Sunday, 26 February

First Sunday in Lent
8.00am Holy Communion
09.30am Family Café Church

Benefice Prayer Opportunities

Saturday 11 February at 9.00am

Prayer Breakfast in Bitton Church Hall

Tuesday 28 February at 7 to 8 pm

On Zoom

THE SISTERS OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH LOAVES AND FISHES MINISTRY

Gifts may be left in St Mary's Church Porch between 10.15 and 11.45 on the First Sunday of each month and will be delivered to the Sisters on the following Wednesday.

Non-perishable food and toiletries will be welcome and the Sisters' Top Ten requests are:

Tinned fruit	Long-life milk	Tinned custard	Tinned rice pudding
Shower gel	Toothpaste	Deodorant	Shaving gel
	Sanitary towels	Nappies	

Any other non-perishable gifts will be gratefully received

From the Register

23 January—Funeral
Robert George Willis - RIP



St Mary's Matters

Well, the lunch on 8th January turned out to be a great success with thirteen of us enjoying a meal together at the Swan. Jess Meale gave an inspiring talk at the Christingle service beforehand about the Children's Society. She even received a round of applause, a rare accolade for a speaker in a church service! Unfortunately she was unable to join us for the meal afterwards.



Pete Midgley

In response to my appeal last month, Douglas Macdonald has kindly agreed to organise this event on a regular basis. He is compiling an email list of contacts who might be interested. If you would like to be on the list please let him or myself know.

It's been really good to see the number of people coming into church growing again, particularly at some of the Christmas services, including the carol service. Also really good to have young families coming to services like the crib service, the Christingle service and family café church. Hopefully this is something we can continue to build on into 2023 and beyond.

Looking ahead, the season of Lent will soon be upon us as we prepare for Easter day, the most important date in the Christian calendar. Lent discussion groups will be running during Lent as usual, which this year means they will fall in the month of March. There will be groups meeting on Wednesday morning, Wednesday evening and Thursday evening. If you would like to join in please contact myself, Ken Gibson or David Bailey.



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Church & Church Hall Bookings

The Church Hall is available for hire and is a popular location for children's parties as well as regular events.

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.

Rates from £12.50 per hour.

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

Rates from £25 per hour (2 hour minimum hire).

Lent Groups take a cue from West Side Story

This year we will be following 'A Place for Us' which is an original Lent course based on the recent film production of West Side Story directed by Steven Spielberg and featuring the songs of Stephen Sondheim and Leonard Bernstein.

Through study and discussion of key scenes from the movie, related to Lent passages from scripture, Lavinia Byrne and Jane McBride help us to reflect on fear, love, betrayal, death, and reconciliation. The course is based on five weekly sessions exploring the following themes: Belonging, Otherness and Difference, The Gift of Love, The Promise of a Place for Us and The Tragedy of Betrayal.

There are 4 groups to choose from and you will be very welcome at whichever suits you.

- Tuesdays at 7.30 pm at the Warmley Vicarage beginning on 28 February *Contact Jeremy Andrew 0117 967 2724*
- Wednesdays at 10.30 am at Westover, Bath Road, Bitton beginning on 1 March
Contact David Bailey 0117 932 8949
- Wednesdays at 7.30 pm at 8 Church Road, Bitton beginning on 1 March
Contact Ken Gibson 0117 932 2122
- Thursdays at 7.30 pm at Kenilworth Drive, Willsbridge beginning on 2 March
Contact Pete Midgley 0117 932 6898



Rev Jillianne Norman

A Changing Focus—from Jesus' birth to his death

It seems that only yesterday that it was Christmas. On the 2nd of this month we celebrate the Presentation of Christ at the Temple, which signals 40 days after the birth of Jesus. This is the time when Mary would have had to go to be ritually cleansed after the birth of Jesus. Jerusalem was only about half a day's walk from Bethlehem, and the Bible says this is where Mary and Joseph went to perform this ritual. It is not known exactly where this would have taken place, but the Pool of Siloam was not too distant from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and it would be logical that women like Mary, coming to be ritually cleansed, would have gathered together in the pool, fed by running water coming from the spring of Gihon, to perform the ceremonies of cleansing.

From there Mary and Joseph would have climbed up to the Temple Mount and bought two Turtle doves or pigeons, as they were too poor to afford a lamb. These would then have been taken to the Priests to be sacrificed on the Great Altar. With this action they redeemed their first born son, as the first born sons of the Israelites were saved in Egypt, where the people of Israel were being held in slavery. The night of the Passover, the Israelites in Egypt at that time sacrificed a lamb, and marked their doors to show their sacrifice had been made. Moses was then able to lead God's people to freedom. Eventually they reached their Promised Land, the land of Israel, where they became a nation in their own right.



The Presentation didn't go quite as expected. Mary and Joseph were walking across the Court of the Women, in the Temple, when they were stopped by Simeon, a man who had been waiting a lifetime for a sign from God that the redemption of Israel was beginning. He took Baby Jesus from Mary's arms and began to croon over him. To his parents astonishment he said,

'Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace, according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of every people, to be a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.'

If that were not strange enough, he was joined by Anna, who we are told was 84 at the time of her encounter with Jesus. She crooned over Jesus, as Simeon had done, then gave glory to God, and thanks for having lived long enough to see the redemption of Israel. Mary and Joseph must have had some idea by this point that God was not going to allow them to bring up his son incognito. There were people who somehow knew who and what Jesus was.

Continued overleaf

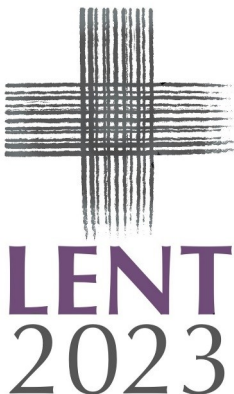
Focal Point, February 2023

Ash Wednesday on 22nd February sees the beginning of Lent. As soon as people realise Lent is beginning, many make resolutions to give up chocolate or wine, something that they know is not good for them, and might even help them to lose weight or generally reduce their alcohol intake. Those who are more faith focussed might choose to give up something and do something extra during Lent.

Whatever you may choose to do, the object of the exercise is that in the depriving of something you desire, your thoughts and actions will be turned to focus on God. For forty days and forty nights (not counting Sundays which are considered feast days in their own right) we are given time to prepare for what we know will be the climax of the story of Jesus Christ; his death and resurrection. As during this month we change our focus from birth to death let us take the time given to us to meditate on what God wants from us at this coming season, that we might be prepared for Easter Sunday, the day of Jesus' Resurrection and our salvation.

Rev Jillianne Norman

(I am a Hospital Chaplain working at the BRI. I also help to take some services at Syston)



Pews & Pancakes

Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) is on 21st February and St Mary's is inviting all Bitton residents to enjoy a pancake and give their views on the prototype pew that will have just returned from the carpenters.

The pews in St Mary's are unique, having been specially designed for the church with individual pew ends in the nineteenth century. But they are not the most comfortable and as fixed pews limit the flexibility of the building.

The church now has permission from the bishop both to reduce permanently the number of pews and to make those remaining mobile. This is one of the biggest changes to the church in many years and the Future Committee wants to hear the views of the whole community about what is proposed.

So why not come along to St Mary's on Shrove Tuesday, enjoy a pancake and a glass of wine. You can try out the new pew and give your views on it. There will also be a rolling presentation on the story of our pews and future plans.



 **Shrove Tuesday**
21st February

Pews & Pancakes
Evening
7.00-8.30pm
St Mary's Church
All welcome

Come and enjoy a pancake and a glass of wine and try out our new prototype pew. Don't miss this opportunity to give your views on the next stage of plans for the church as a centre for the whole community.

Christingle service shines light on child poverty

St Mary's Christingle Service took place on Sunday 8 January attracting a large congregation of all ages. The early new year Christingle service has become a tradition at St Mary's raising money for The Children's Society.

This year we were pleased to welcome Jess Meade, the society's communications officer for the West of England. In her short address Jess highlighted the plight of families in Britain today in which 4.3 million children live in poverty. That amounts to 3 in every 10 children and there has been a 107% increase in children seeking emergency food since 2020. The Children's Society campaigns for improvements but also provides many services directly. A recent successful campaign has led to a capping on



the price of school uniforms, a measure that will come into effect shortly and is aimed at ensuring that low income families have to struggle less to be able to afford uniform.

Christingle services, which use an orange, a candle and sweets as symbols of God's love, provide an essential annual boost to the society's finances.

Some members of the congregation at St Mary's also contribute individually through home collection boxes (available from Jenny Harris - djacharris@hotmail.com) which can be filled with loose change through the year. The total raised from the Children's Society boxes for 2022 was £453.

THE CHURCH HALL ARE NOW RUNNING

St Mary's

playgroup



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0-5 Years old

JOIN US FOR PLAY, CRAFTS, MUSIC, DRINK & SNACKS,

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Wednesday 10-11.30
Term time only

Bitton Gardening Club

invites you to
our next meeting on

Monday 20th February

in

The Meadows School Hall

Doors open 7.15pm

Meeting starts at 7.30pm

Our speaker at the meeting is

Nicola Hope

and the title of her illustrated talk is

Organic Gardening

Happy Plants, Happy Minds

Nikki studied Organic Horticulture at Pershore College and holds the title of Royal Horticultural Society Master of Horticulture. She has worked at Highgrove, Sting's Lake House, the Abbey House Malmesbury and Cole Park. Nikki specialises in wildlife friendly gardens.

For more information

contact Bridget at b.hetzel@btinternet.com

or just come along to the meeting

New members and guests are always welcome

This meeting is **FREE** to members. Guests £4

Remember to bring a cushion to sit on

if you find the chairs hard



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January rains force closure of Bath Road



Following December's cold snap, the new year began with a period of unusually heavy rainfall. As the A431 at Swineford flooded, South Gloucestershire Council closed the road and mounted a continuous patrol to stop cars trying their luck through the floodwater. The Swan became the final stop on the route that was open to traffic.

The closure placed added pressure on other routes, mostly the main A4 road through Salford, but traffic also made greater use of both Marshfield and Golden Valley Lanes.

The lower of the roads, Golden Valley Lane, at times itself became a river as ditches and drains failed to deal with the deluge.

The only remaining bus service to the centre of Bitton, the No 19, was diverted through Keynsham, dropping travellers to Bitton at Cherry Gardens. Following five days of closure over the second weekend in January the road reopened as normal.

Right The field directly opposite The Swan inn (the ancient Mickle Mead) was flooded. The extra water was no help to anglers.

Fields were flooded elsewhere too.



Left- Golden Valley Lane at times ran like a river, but received additional traffic as the main road was closed. As a result, the road surface was left with large pot holes and the surface breaking up in places.

Bitton Village Residents' Association

Invites you to

Flicks in the Sticks

on

Friday 17th February

when we will be screening

Official Secrets

starring

**Keira Knightley, Matt Smith, Matthew
Goode and Ralph Fiennes**

Based on true events, Official Secrets tells the story of Katharine Gun, a British intelligence specialist who receives a shocking memo in 2003. Unable to ignore the information, she leaks it to the press, beginning an explosive, international chain of events.

What follows is a breathtaking story of how Katharine risked everything to stop an unjust war.

Doors open 7.30pm. Film starts 8pm.

At the Meadows School Hall, Bath Road Bitton

Drinks will be available from the Bar,

Choc Ices will be served in the interval and

there will be time to chat with friends

in the warm, cosy hall.

Admission £3

Everyone is welcome

CHRISTIAN AID CHRISTMAS APPEAL

The focus of this year's Christian Aid Christmas appeal was on the effects of climate change. A picture of Fyness smiling broadly was a measure of the help Christian Aid is giving in Malawi and we were asked to support their work with our donations.

The Christmas collections from St Mary's raised £230 and the carol singers round the village and at the White Hart raised a further £25. A total of £255. Very many thanks to donors and singers.

Nicola Bennetts



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An appreciation

Bob Willis 1934-2022



Bob in medieval outfit at the fete

If anyone saw the world in terms of a glass half full rather than half empty, it was Bob Willis. Bob had a natural tendency to look on the bright side of life.

Born in Hanham in 1934, Bob grew up above the shop that his grandparents had opened in the High Street. Originally a general store, Bob's father specialised as a newsagent and tobacconist.

After National Service in the RAF, Bob joined BAE and worked on aircraft for the remainder of his working life. In 1960, he married Ann and together they lived in a succession of houses in Hanham, Willsbridge and Bitton as well as for a short time in Bath.

Bob enjoyed a lengthy retirement and it was one in which he and Ann gave great support to St Marys. Ann served as churchwarden for 6 years, supported by Bob who also took on a role as vergger. They both loved St Mary's and worked together as a team to ensure that the church was run well, devising a number of fund raising activities and not least the impetus for the 2005 Son et Lumiere. Bob loved a good story and delighted in their telling and re-telling most often with an added twist to extend the humour. He revelled in a sense of fun and wanted others to share his appreciation of life and events.



Bob and Ann celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary in 2020

He was also not averse to a sense of drama and could be persuaded to dress up and play many parts. He was particularly keen to turn up in a medieval outfit for the annual fete. Having shown many people around St Mary's he volunteered for and obtained a role as a guide to Bath Abbey – an added benefit must have been the fact that the job required the wearing of a special outfit.

Bob was diagnosed with a degenerative form of dementia some years ago and eventually had to move into a care home. In spite of his illness Bob remained cheerful, pleased to welcome visitors and remained a man who had lots of stories to tell.

Bob died two days before new year. His funeral at St Mary's was very well attended and included an entertaining poem about Bob written by our former vicar, Paul Denyer.



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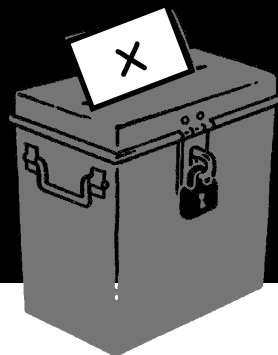
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Voter ID IS COMING – MAKE SURE YOU CAN VOTE



The Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections and will apply at the local elections this May. In order to vote you will need to confirm your identity with the polling officers.

Not all forms of ID are acceptable, although the following will be:

- Passport
- Driving licence (including provisional licence)
- Blue badge
- Certain concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards

You can find out more about which forms of photo ID will be accepted, by visiting electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID or calling their helpline on 0800 328 0280.

If you do not have an accepted form of photo ID

If you don't already have an accepted form of photo ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate. *Continued overleaf*

Focal Point, February 2023

You can apply for this at voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk or complete a paper application form and send this to the electoral services team at South Gloucestershire Council.

You can get further help via the electoral services team:

- call: 01454 863030
- email: electoral.services@southglos.gov.uk
- write to: Electoral Registration, PO Box 1953, Badminton Road, Bristol, BS37 0DB

St Mary's Family Café Church

Fourth Sunday of the month at 9.30 am

An informal café style event with time to relax and listen to music from keyboard and flute. Café Church is designed for families with primary and pre-school children. A Bible story is followed by a craft session and refreshments are available throughout.



**Join us on
Sunday
26th
February**

News from Bitton WI

Hope you all didn't miss us too much in the January edition. Unfortunately, due to poor weather conditions way back in December, we were unable to go ahead with our much anticipated Christmas party for our WI members. However, we did enjoy a fabulous Christmas meal early in December which was attended by over 20 members.

Our January meeting took the form of a celebration of a new year. We had rather a lot of mince pies to eat up as these had already been purchased for the December "Do"! We were entertained by Les and Gina who provided a sing along session. The "Guess the singer" stumped a few of us, though most of the songs were familiar to the majority.

As in previous years, there are still lots of events and outings for members to enjoy throughout the year. Our area WI newsletter will now be sent out by email rather than hardcopy to save on money and trees. All forthcoming events are mentioned at our meetings where members can put their names down if they wish to attend.

In this WI news, and as I've nothing to report on our January meeting, I thought I would take the opportunity to give you a little more information about the WI and becoming a member.

I've had lots of conversations with family, friends and colleagues at work and it seems that many still believe that WI all about "Jam and Jerusalem". Women who love to bake, make jam and sing! Some believed it was for, shall I say, the more mature woman!

Whilst this is true of quite a few of our members, not all fit into these categories. Many come along just to enjoy the company of other women, to listen to speakers or to enjoy an outing or two. I'm sure there are others who come for a different reason too!

Continued overleaf



Focal Point, February 2023

In Bitton we have a small group of around 20 members attending each month, but there is always room for more. We are mostly “young at heart”, but would love to see women of all age groups come along and bring with them some new ideas and views. We would like to think that our speakers will appeal to women of all ages, and I must say that those we’ve had throughout the past year have been both interesting and entertaining. We are always open to suggestions for speakers and will try to accommodate any request when there is an opening in our calendar.

We meet the second Monday of each month, but sometimes this might change due to bank holidays or other significant events taking place. One of these being the new bank holiday for the King’s coronation. Our May meeting will therefore take place on Monday 15 May rather than the 8 May.

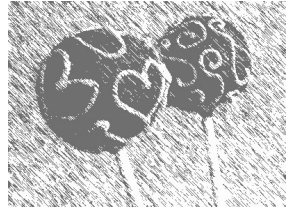
If you aren’t currently a member and are at a loose end on a Monday afternoon, do please come along and join us. Your first few meetings are free so you’ve nothing to lose. If you wish to become a member, the fee is £46.00 per year, paid in April. (If you join later in the year, you pay a pro rata fee). We will offer you a warm welcome as well as tea and cake (homemade of course!).

Our next meeting is **Monday 13th February at 2 pm in St. Mary’s Church Hall, Church Lane**. We will look forward to seeing you.

Our recipe this month comes from the WI online recipes and is very appropriate for February and Valentine’s Day. These fun, small cake bites are very popular and show your creative skills. Ready made cake and frosting from a variety of flavours can be used.

Karen Davidson

Valentine Cake Pops



Serves: 20

Ingredients

800g Victoria Sponge mixture - made from cake using 200g Flour

Buttercream icing -(stiff) made from 200g Icing Sugar

200g Candy Melts, pink

200g Candy Melts, white

Pink and white Sugarpaste for decorations

White and pink Sugar Sprinkles

Cake Pop or Lollipop sticks

Method

1. Crumble the cake into a large mixing bowl, as finely as possible.
2. Begin to mix it with the buttercream icing a tablespoon at a time until you get a fudge-like consistency.
3. Cover the mixture and chill for at least 1 hour. When the mixture is firm but not hard it is ready to work with. Break off a small piece of the mixture, about the size of a ping pong ball and roll into a smooth ball. Refrigerate until firm, about 15 mins.
4. Melt the candy melts.
5. Take a pop stick and dip one end (2cms) into the candy.
6. Immediately and carefully stick the pop stick into the centre of the cake ball, about halfway through. Allow 1 to 2 mins for the candy to set.
7. Dip each ball of cake into the candy melt. Ensure you cover right to the top of the stick to secure the pop on the stick.
8. Dip in sugar sprinkles if you are using them and allow the candy to set, 1 -2 mins.

Enjoy.

Puzzle Pages

Our monthly prize quiz has proved to be particularly popular so we thought that we would try some additional puzzles. No prizes but strictly for entertainment.

SUDUKO CHALLENGE

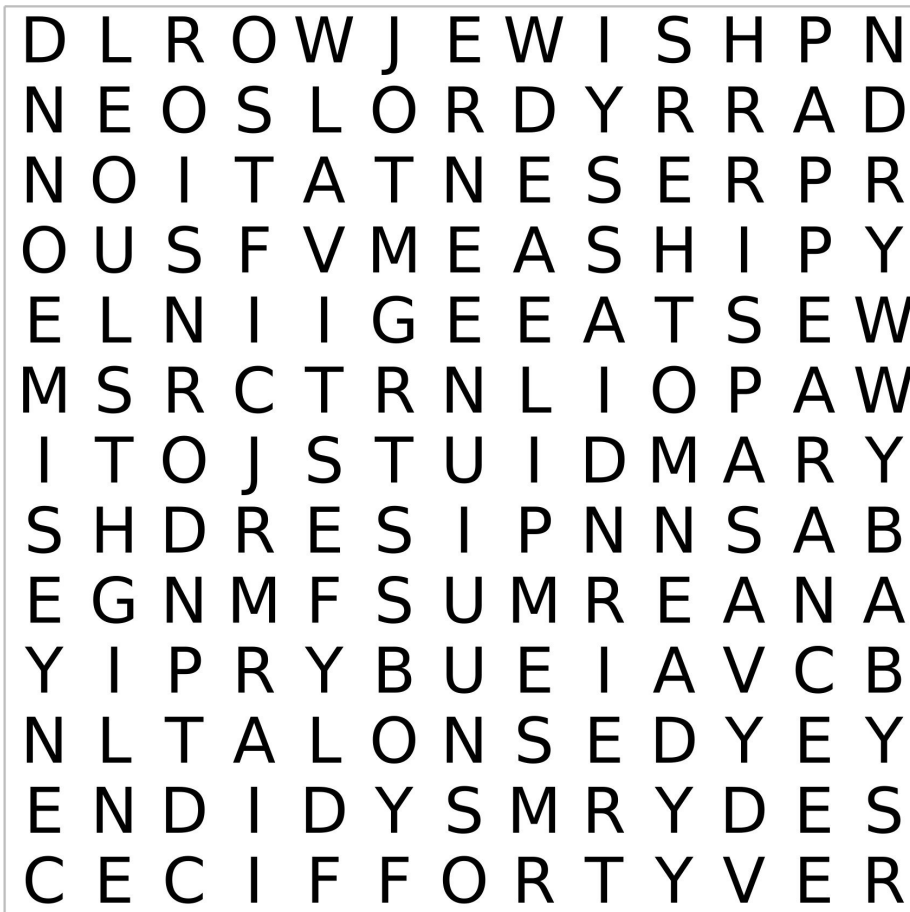
							7	2
					9	5		3
6	7			3	2	9		
9				1				
4	1	6				7	9	5
				6				1
		3	1	8			4	6
2		7	4					
8	4							

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Answers to both puzzles are available on the church website
www.stmarysbitton.org.uk - click on News & Focal Point

WORD SEARCH

The word search is seasonal and reflects Biblical and church traditions from Candlemas (the Presentation of Christ) through Lent. There are 25 words hidden here, how many can you find?



You are looking for:

Forty
Days
Baby
Boy
Public

Appearance
Mary
Jewish
Mothers
Temple

Jesus
Purified
Present
Lord
Festival

Presentation
Light
World
Candlemas
Simeon

Nunc
Dimittis
Office
Evening
Prayer



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The February Prize Quiz

By Carolyn Russell

This month's quiz is about things named after places in the UK.

For example C Pasty length 7 - is Cornish Pasty

No.	Clue	Length
1.	Y Pudding	9
2.	B Tart	8
3.	E Salts	5
4.	L gin	6
5.	C Cheese	7
6.	E Rock	9
7.	E Mess	4
8.	C Cakes	7
9.	B glass	7
10.	W Sauce	14
11.	F Mac	9
12.	E Cakes	6
13.	B Pickle	8
14.	B bun	4
15.	P Pottery	11
16.	K Mint Cake	7
17	M M Pie	6,7

Focal Point, February 2023

- 18. L Trucks 7
- 19. H Tweed 6
- 20. S Ponies 8

Name:

Contact:

Please send your answers by email, if possible to bittoncm@outlook.co.uk or drop in at **Eastover, 153 High Street** (corner of Golden Valley Lane) by Friday 17 February.

January Quiz Answers

Last month's quiz was on New things; all answers start with the word New

Answers:

(1) New South Wales; (2) New Testament; (3) New Look; (4) New Orleans; (5) New Amsterdam; (6) New Moon; (7) New Statesman; (8) New Delhi; (9) New Romantics; (10) New Mexico; (11) New Cross; (12) New Zealand; (13) New Order; (14) New Caledonia; (15) New Vic Theatre; (16) New Kid; (17) New Guinea; (18) New England; (19) New Holland; 20) New York Stadium.

Correct answers were received from:

Team Frank; Pam and Jon Booth; Margaret Garlick; Terry Matthews; Jon and Pam Heyes; Alan and Sue; Sarah Craddock and Janet Hillier

This month's prize goes to:

Margaret Garlick

The last word

Seasonal Change



Between the January and February editions of Focal Point there is a larger than usual gap. The January edition has to go to the printers some time before Christmas, whereas February's is put together towards the end of January. One is therefore written as Christmas approaches while the next is covering the start of Lent. It feels like a significant seasonal shift, as it is.

Commercially, I regret to say that the shift came earlier this year – the earliest I had previously spotted a Cream Egg on sale was 5 January – this year I saw one on New Year's Eve, although I am pleased to report there were no takers. Do the supermarkets take their cue for the changing climate and the seemingly earlier coming of spring? Perhaps. But if you find it far too early for an Easter egg, at least we can enjoy the many spring flowers that are starting to nudge their way up and the promise they bring of warmer times ahead.

This month a new puzzles section has been included in Focal Point. I hope you enjoy it.

Jim Heavens

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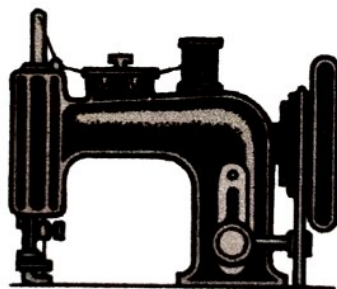
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