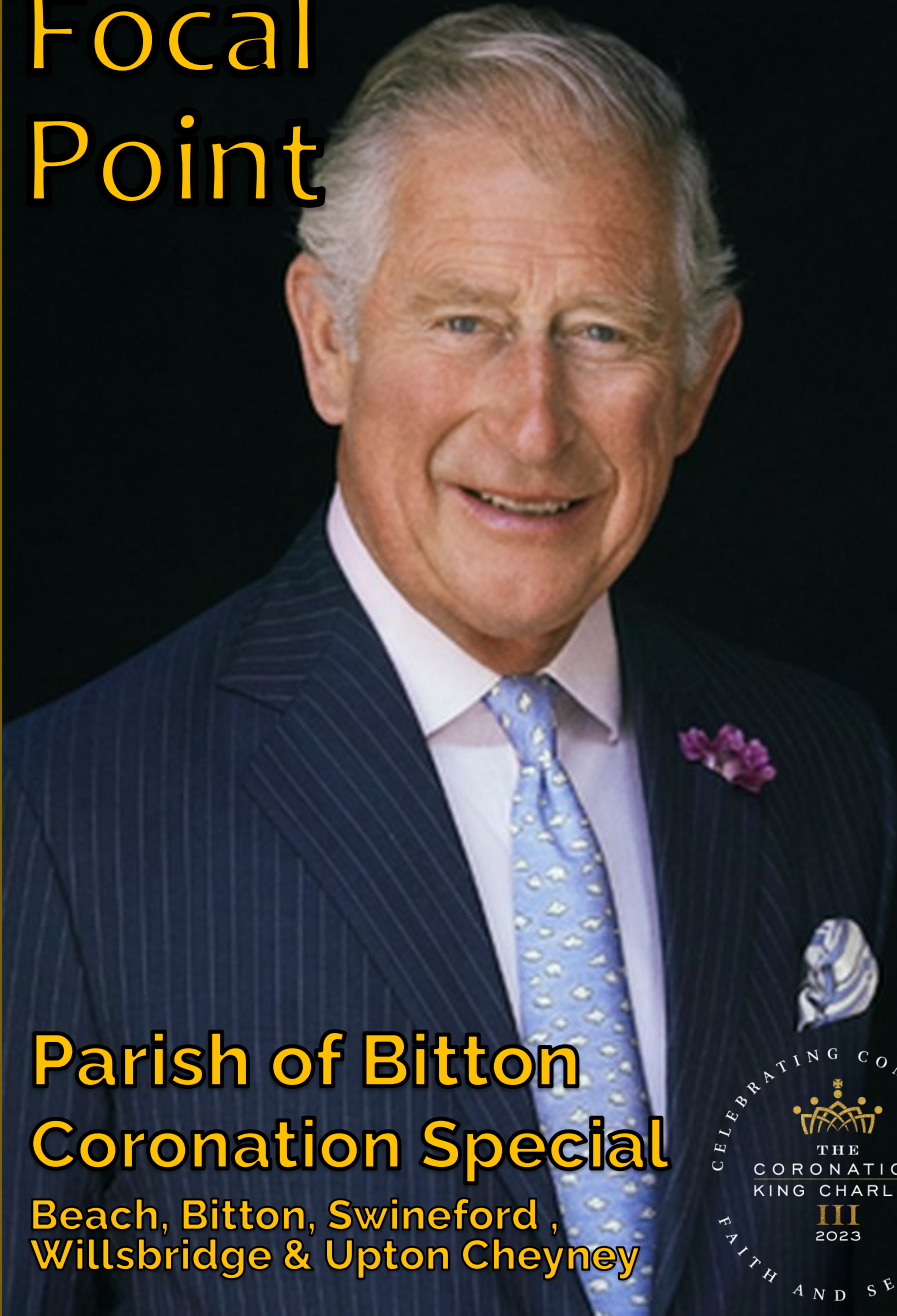


Focal Point



Parish of Bitton Coronation Special

Beach, Bitton, Swineford,
Willsbridge & Upton Cheyney



This special Coronation supplement of **Focal Point** is being issued free to all households in the Parish of St Mary's Bitton.

It celebrates the Coronation of HM King Charles III in the spirit of **faith, community and service** that the King has placed at the heart of his coronation plans.

Focal Point

is a monthly church newsletter serving **Bitton, Swineford, Willsbridge, Upton Cheyney & Beach.**

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

Focal Point is available by annual subscription of £12; or monthly from the church porch or shop for £1.20. To subscribe please email **bittoncm@outlook.com.**

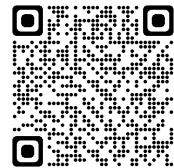
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Recent issues and further church information are provided on the St Mary's Church website at: **www.stmarysbitton.org.uk**

Or use this QR code:



United
Reformed
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Cover picture by **Alexi Lubomirski**. The picture of the King and Queen on the inside back page is by **Chris Jackson**. Both pictures have been graciously provided for non-commercial use.

A Message from our Ordained Minister



Dear Friend,

Welcome to this very special supplement edition of Focal Point, as we celebrate a definitive moment in our history. Some of us may well remember the Coronation of Elizabeth II; but for many this is a unique event.

King Charles III will be crowned on 6 May 2023, along with the Queen Consort, at Westminster Abbey, a place steeped in royal history, whose walls have seen the coronation of every Monarch, (bar two), since Edward I in 1274. The exceptions were Edward V and Edward VIII, who were never crowned. There have been 62 monarchs of England and Britain spread over a period of approximately 1200 years. And we have our own small piece of history here at St Mary's with the visit of the then Prince of Wales in February 1991.

As you will see, the coronation weekend will be a time of celebration here, and across the country, so please do come and join in the many events that you will find featured in this supplement. In particular we would be delighted to welcome you to St. Mary's on Sunday May 7th. as we seek God's blessing for the reign of a new monarch and a new chapter in our nation's long history.

Richard Humphrey

The Last Coronation

Where were you?



Queen Elizabeth II is crowned in Westminster Abbey on 2nd June 1953

Picture: Alamy

It is nearly 70 years since the last coronation; the longest period in history there has been between such ceremonies. We asked some people with long enough memories of what they can recall about the day Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in June 1953.

Janet Ivens was training as a nursery nurse at the time and was living in Longwell Green. She remembers walking down Kings Hill Lane and across three fields (there were no houses then) to the house of a dentist where she crowded, with many others, into a room to watch a very small television set. She saw the Queen being crowned but doesn't remember much other celebration in Longwell Green.

John Underwood had recently been discharged from his National Service in the RAF, having had it extended for the Korean War. John had recently had an operation on a TB gland in hospital in Manchester having returned to live with his family in Cheshire. They did not have a television and decided to take a short holiday in Scarborough during the coronation celebrations. John remembers watching the television in the hotel in which they stayed and being dazzled by the Queen's clothes, particularly the jewels shining brightly as they were hit by the huge television lights that were used in the filming of the ceremony.

The event was not without its interruptions though as nearby someone who may not have been so loyal to the monarchy decided it was a good time to use an electric drill, which affected the television reception!

Eric Cooper was living in Ashby de la Zouch, in Leicestershire and newly married. He and his wife, Joyce, did not have a television and visited one of Joyce's cousins who did. The four of them watched the small television and saw the ceremony. Later they attended a coronation party in the grounds of the school where Joyce worked which was very close to their home.

5

What memories will you have from this coronation weekend to share in the future?



Follow the King, and Visit St Mary's

The Church and its fourteenth century tower in a picture taken in the 1960s before a large yew tree partly obscured the view

In 1991, 2nd February was a Saturday. The Gulf War was raging and a few days later the IRA would launch a mortar attack on 10 Downing Street. It was also the day that the then Prince of Wales stopped off to visit St Mary's Church in Bitton. He looked around the church, was shown items of interest and, before leaving, signed the visitors' book.

Bitton is quite conveniently placed less than half an hour away from the Prince's country home at Highgrove and it was a private visit. Yet St Mary's was probably also selected for a visit because of his interest in architecture and history.

The church is one of the features of our village, with its large churchyard and the traditional stone buildings around it. It is definitely a destination for walkers. Its exterior beauty is topped by its 14th century tower which was described in an understated fashion by the architectural historian, Sir Nicholas Pevsner as "*very satisfactory*".

The church's story goes back much further than the fourteenth century, however. There was a church on this site in the centuries before the Norman Conquest in 1066 and parts of that Anglo-Saxon Church are incorporated in the building that we see today.

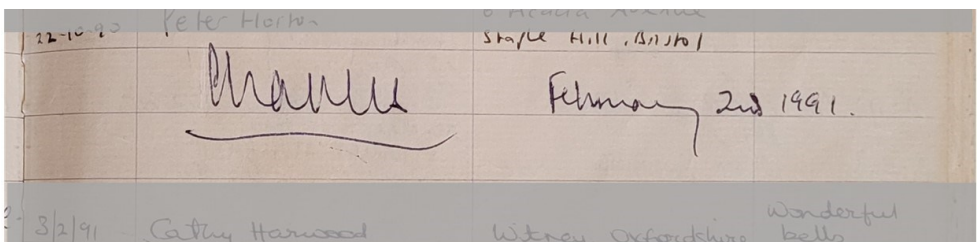
In 2020 archaeology on the south side of the church identified that parts of the wall of the church dated from the early medieval period but that some of the foundation stones showed signs of having been used in previous Roman buildings. Entering the church you can also see large blocked in arches on the north wall to your left, which are of a similar age.

Today, the church *Futures Committee* is engaged on a major development project for the church, part of which takes a new look at St Mary's extensive heritage and has uncovered a number of fascinating stories about some of the objects and treasures items in the church and the churchyard.

If you have time, why not take a look over the coronation weekend?

The church is now open every day from 10am to 5pm and welcomes all. Take a look round. There is a display with the next steps for development and you can use your phone to access the audio descriptions of some of the church's most interesting objects.

Prince Charles' signature in the Visitors' Book





CORONATION WEEKEND 2023



Saturday 6th May CORONATION DAY

09.00am **RING FOR THE KING**
At St Mary's
The Bell Ringers will be ringing a quarter peal of plain bob doubles

Coronation Day is set aside as a day for family and friends to watch the Coronation Service and celebrate in their own way.



Sunday 7th May THANKSGIVING & COMMUNITY

10.30am **Coronation Thanksgiving Service for the Community at St Mary's Church**

*Following the service refreshments will be served and a **Toast to Their Majesties** will be drunk.*

11.30am **The Queen's Green Canopy**— A short prayer to commemorate *HM Queen Elizabeth II* around the two recently planted trees
In the Churchyard

11.40am **Coronation Village Photograph** A Commemorative photograph will be taken of all assembled.
In the Churchyard

12 noon **THE BIG LUNCH** Picnic in the Poundfield (see back page for details) onwards

Monday 8th May COMMUNITY & SERVICE

THE BIG HELP OUT

The King has expressed his wish that the Bank Holiday Monday after his Coronation will be a day to celebrate community activities and think of others:

- **Please give generously to the Sisters of the Church** in their efforts to provide for the homeless and needy (see page 10).
- **Help tidy the churchyard** Could you spare a couple of hours from 11am this Bank Holiday to help tidy the churchyard?
- **Meeting Point**—The church will be open all day. Local voluntary organisations are free to use the church as a place to meet.



THE CORONATION KING CHARLES III 2023



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND





**There is
more to
read in
May's
FOCAL
POINT**

**Available in the
Village Shop and
Church.**

Also published online

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.stmarysbitton.org.uk



A Weekend of Memories

National events tend to stay in the memory and this coronation is likely to be one we will all remember.

A long weekend is planned starting on **Saturday 6th May**. There is nothing local planned for that day other than a special coronation peal of bells, so that people can watch the coronation ceremony.

All Bitton residents are most welcome to all of the church activities on **Sunday 7th May**. If you would prefer not to come to the church service you will still be equally welcome to participate in the events in the Churchyard, including the **Village Photograph** —the first time this has been done since the Millennium.

The Bank Holiday on **Monday 8th May** is intended as a day for community activities and consideration of others.

In the **Churchyard** volunteers organised by the BVRA will be continuing their work to improve its out look by clearing bramble and cleaning grass away from stones, It's only for an hour or two and the more volunteers the better.

SISTERS OF THE CHURCH

The church is also supporting a special request from **The Sisters of the Church** who provide for the homeless and needy in Bristol, with small food and toiletry packages. They are particularly short of toiletries at the moment—shower and shaving gel, toothpaste, and toothbrushes, toilet rolls, sanitary products, nappies and other items for babies. They are also pleased to receive tinned items such as soup, rice pudding, custard and tinned fruit as well as baked beans.

All donations, however small, can be left in the church porch over the Coronation weekend.



Commemorating the Queen's Green Canopy

Following the church service and toast on 7th May, there will be a special moment in the churchyard to mark the planting of two trees as a part of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee last year. The initiative, was extended to the end of March 2023 to take account of the full planting season for trees (October to March) and as a mark of respect to the Queen herself who died last September.

The two trees in the churchyard are a flowering plum and an oak; the oak being planted in memory of Bob Willis, our former verger. These are in addition to the mountain ash tree planted last July at the entrance to Bitton Mill by the BVRA.

The Queen's Green Canopy initiative was not just about planting trees, but also about the identification of ancient woodland and the training of young foresters for the future. The aim was to plant 1 million trees – a target that was far exceeded because over 3 million trees were planted as part of the canopy by the time the initiative closed. The trees are registered on the QGC map, although for a data protection reason, they are not necessarily shown exactly where they stand.

Tree planters: Becky Feather in July last year and the Vicar with Tim Harris in the churchyard in March



One coronation tradition that will be marked this May is that of a peal of bells. Bells have rung for coronations over hundreds of years and we know that previous coronations have been marked in this way at Bitton.

For this coronation our bell ringers will be starting the coronation celebrations with a gam peal that is likely to last about 45 minutes. They are planning to base it on the changes used in the 1953 coronation, a copy of which they still own.

And if that is not enough, the bell ringing team plans to travel to other churches in the area where the bells are not rung so often to make sure that the bells ring out for a new reign across the area.

The above picture of Bitton Bell Ringers was taken on 22nd June 1911, the day of the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary.
In the picture are:

H Short

A. Millar

C Higgins

G. Hillier (Capt.)

F Beer

Rev DW Mattie
(Curate)

Canon Ellacombe
(Vicar)

C. Beer

Things you may not know about coronations

1. The script: The main elements of the coronation are drawn from the service devised by St Dunstan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who crowned the first English king, Edgar, in Bath Abbey in 973. That ceremony confirmed the coming together of the former Anglo Saxon kingdoms to form the England we know today.



King Edgar

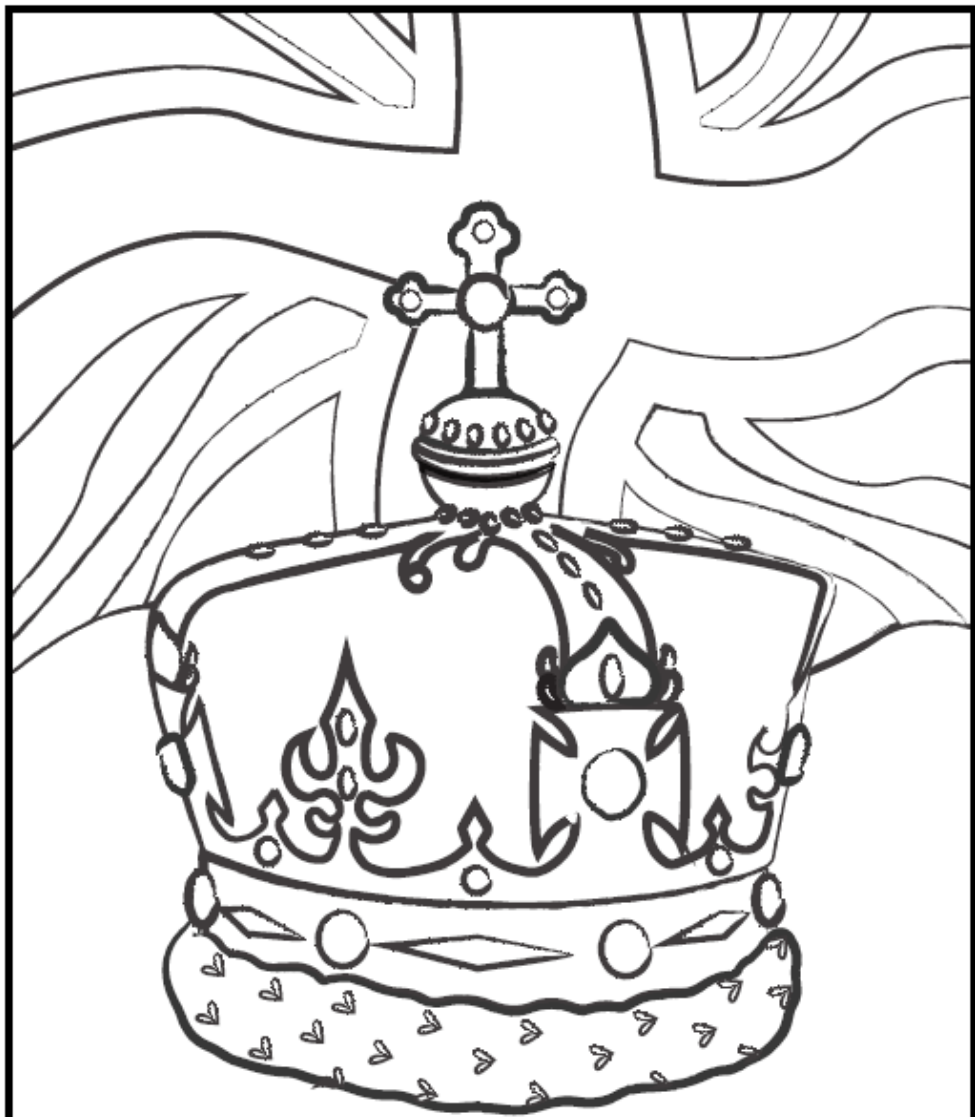
2. A coronation does not make a king: The coronation ceremony mixes tradition with elements of Britain's unwritten constitution, including the king's coronation oath, but Charles became king by law on his mother's death, his coronation is an affirmation of that fact.



King Charles II

3. Charles I and II were crowned twice: At least Charles III only has to go through this ceremony once. Both Charles I and, his son, Charles II were crowned twice as kings of England and separately as kings of Scotland. The Act of Union between the two nations made it no longer necessary. But what happens if the Scottish nationalists get their way....?

4. Claims of Right: Surely one of the most bizarre aspects of the coronation are the hereditary rights to undertake very often minor duties on the day. These could include assisting the King to put on his left glove—on the basis that an ancestor had performed such an act in past coronations. A special court used to be convened to hear such claims. This year it has been decided that such claims could be dealt with by a small committee, largely of civil servants, and that most minor claims will not be upheld.



GOD SAVE
The King



A page for children—Colour in crown



Celebrating Community

Living God, you bring us together in community and teach us to love one another as you have loved us. May we be beacons of your light in the communities in which we are set, that through truth, justice and action we may see your kingdom come upon earth, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen





BITTON VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

BIG LUNCH IN THE PARK

COME AND JOIN US IN
THE POUND GROUND TO
CELEBRATE THE KING'S CORONATION

**Sunday 7th May
12 noon - 5pm**

The Big Lunch will take place from 12 noon
with live music starting at 2pm, including:

**Band of Pilgrims
Bits 'n' Pieces • Iron Overload
Jazzbeanz • St Mary's Minstrels**

FREE ENTRY

**PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN FOOD AND DRINK
NO BARBECUES OR CAR PARKING ON THE POUND GROUND**