

Focal Point



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The Meadows
Primary School

Reception 

**Mr Owen
Edwards—
Head
Teacher at
The Meadows**



January 2024

£1-20

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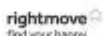
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Bitton Churches Magazine

January 2024

A monthly church newsletter serving
Bitton, Swineford, Willsbridge,
Upton Cheyney & Beach
Published by St Mary's Church,
Church Road, Bitton BS30 6LJ

Printed by The Mitre Press, Unit 2,
Fantasie Buildings, Waters Road, BS15 8BE

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*Deadline for the January
edition is:*

Monday 15th January

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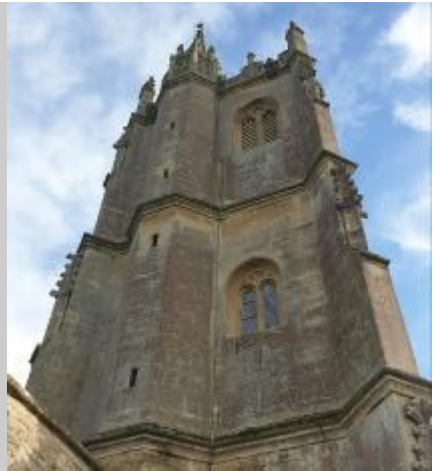
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0117 932 8949

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41 Combe Park
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BATH
07714 615817

Vacancy

Services for January

You are most welcome at St Mary's for all our services

Sunday, 7th January

***Baptism of Christ—
First Sunday of Epiphany***

10.30am Parish Communion

**Sunday, 14th
January**

Second Sunday of Epiphany

10.30am **Christingle Family Special**



with Jess Meale of the Children's Society the Bitton Scout Group and the St Mary's Minstrels



followed by lunch at the White Harte Bridgegate

Sunday, 21st January

Third Sunday of Epiphany

10.30am Morning Worship

**Thursday 25th
January**

10.00am Celtic Communion

10.30am St Mary's Tea and Coffee Morning



**Sunday 28st
January**

Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

8.00am Holy Communion

9.30am Family Café Church



Benefice Prayer Opportunities

Saturday 13 January at 9.00am

Prayer Breakfast in Warmley Church

Tuesday 23 January at 7.00pm

on Zoom

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).

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.

The Sisters have made a special request for toiletries:

Shower gel, toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, shaving gel, sanitary towels, nappies, wet wipes, toothbrushes.

St Mary's Matters

Simon Harris—Churchwarden



Happy New Year. Thank you for those many friends old and new who visited St Marys for our Christmas services. It was wonderful to see the church full to capacity, young and old, enjoying the good news of the Christmas message. I find it so uplifting to be able to belt out those favourite carols and be reminded of what Christmas is all about.

We have also been busy in looking after our church and its surroundings. After some time monitoring a bulge in the wall beside the main entrance to the church, we decided that something must be done otherwise the whole lot could come down so the builders have done a great job carefully dismantling and then re-assembling the stone wall with traditional lime mortar.

Not far away, by the church door, the tree has completely overgrown its location and is now threatening the boundary wall and the tower. We have taken specialist advice from our architect, South Glos council and a tree surgeon and have reached the conclusion that the tree will have to be reduced in size with a view to eventual removal. Photographs from the 1960's show that the tree did not feature so seems to be quite fast growing. On the plus side we recently planted two semi-mature trees in the western side of the churchyard which survived the hot Summer thanks to the efforts of our friends nearby who kept them watered.

Continued on next page

Focal Point, January 2024

The holes in the ground at the back of the church have also been back-filled and the area generally tidied up. Dug originally by an archaeologist in 2020 and then interrupted by the pandemic, the aim was to see what lay below. The shallow foundations to the church walls were revealed as well as the Southern boundary wall. Further information can be found in the Heritage section of the St Marys website.

I would also like to highlight the great work of Jill and Ken Gibson who secured a National Lottery Community Fund grant to install a replacement gas heater and re-decorate the Church Hall. Details of the Grand Reopening appear elsewhere in this edition but I would like to point out what a great facility this is. Mel and I hired the Hall for afternoon tea after our daughters were baptized at St Marys. It is a great facility and handy from the church!

There's more to discover—

Our website is full of information about what the church has to offer today, its fascinating history and plans to renew its role as an active centre for the whole community.

Make use of its community pages and calendar of local events:

www.stmarysbitton.org.uk



Mid-week Home Groups

With Ash Wednesday on 14 February and the following Lent Course coming early this year there is no set programme until then although our three groups may arrange occasional meetings.

Details of the Lent Course will be in the February magazine.

Poppy Appeal 2023



The overall total for the Bitton and Oldland Branch for the Poppy Appeal in 2023 was £31,976.52.



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Vicar's Letter



Dear Friends,

This letter has ended up being a mixed bag of things; a reminder of the significance of the season and the theology it holds, an encouragement to begin anew and in that vein a discovery of an English mystic.

The start of the new year always encourages me to start something new. This year that has taken on a life of its own as many of you will, by now, know that I am moving to a new job in February. I am going to be working in the diocesan office as the advisor for ministerial development, a role that hopes to support licensed ministers and particularly with a new scheme that offers coaching to support their ministry development. This is one initiative, among others, of the transforming church together strategy for the Diocese that has begun in earnest. (See the Diocesan website for news of more ways parishes are being offered support.) I am very much looking forward to this new role and excited about working in this area of ministry.

Moving in ministry is always bittersweet and I am in many ways sad to be moving on from the privilege of serving these parishes and people. It is always people that I miss as we move, rather than difficulties with building maintenance or complicated faculty decisions about graveyards. I am excited for the benefice and its future as I have witnessed the hard work and determination of people in all three parishes as they have offered unstinting service to God and the church in all sorts of ways. I am grateful to God for calling me to this place and for the people I have shared in ministry with.

Theologically of course this time of year is all about new beginnings, we have just celebrated and remembered the birth of Jesus among us and are still waiting for the magi to appear on the 6th January when the Christmas season ends, and the season of Epiphany begins and lasts for four weeks ending at the celebration of Candlemas. Christmas and Epiphany are laden with the idea that in Jesus, God is doing something new, in Jesus a new covenant is brought in that will be for the salvation of all God's people. Doing something new is in the air. Perhaps over the Christmas season you have been to church and have been moved by the worship and want to explore what that might mean for you. Perhaps in the festive celebrations your faith has been renewed and refreshed and you are ready to go deeper in knowledge, service and faith. If that has been your experience please come along again and you will find a welcome and fellowship in the church.

I wonder what new thing you might do this year?

Jeremy



Churchyard Wall Repairs

Repairs are taking place on the south wall of the churchyard on the boundary with Grangechen. The wall had developed a bulge and it was decided that remedial action would prevent more serious damage occurring. The repair will be immediately obvious, but, over time, will discolour to match the rest of the wall.

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This is an opportunity for you to register your interest and find out more about the property.

For further information please contact:

Mr Jeff Dando via Email or Telephone.

Email : jeffjeff.dando@gmail.com

Tel : 07986 709549

The Meadows new Head – Teacher



Taking on a primary school in South Gloucestershire or setting up a school in Myanmar (Burma) are two very different experiences. Both have been part of the career of Owen Edwards, the new head-teacher at The Meadows School who took up post last September. He places great store by getting a range of different experiences and feels it is good for children to do the same.

Owen, who lives with his family in North Bristol, has also worked in amongst other places: Slough and more recently in Westbury on Trym and Hartcliffe. But, he says "the essentials are the same: it is relationships that matter the most and schools need to be seen as a part of the community".

As new families have moved to the village in recent years, the school has seen an increase in the number of children living nearby, but it has also started to become a popular choice for parents in Saltford and Keynsham.

Focal Point, January 2024

The school held a series of open days and evenings for potential parents in the autumn and they were fully subscribed. Serving a wider area is essential to maintain numbers at the 210 place school. It also means that the children make friends from a wider area.



Owen Edwards has taken over an improving school and has ambitions for its future

Owen is enthusiastic about the school: "It looks like a very small school from the road", he says, "but that is deceptive". The school has large grounds with ponds and trees. He has already made use of it, with the children encouraged to take a pride in the environment and to put themselves forward to become Eco Warriors – elected by their class.

Continued on next page

Focal Point, January 2024

The children had to put forward their proposals and reasoning for what they wanted to do in the role. He had clearly been impressed by the high quality of the presentations and effort they had put into this. The children are also encouraged to make their views heard through Pupil Voice which Owen and the other school leaders manage and there is a school council. Owen has also introduced a house captain system.

The school itself has been on a journey over the past few years having been run as part of an educational trust, Futura. In 2022, the school was graded by Ofsted as a Good School following an inspection. Owen himself sees many benefits of trust management, particularly in respect of professional standards, and mentoring and partnering for teachers, providing opportunities for them to develop their knowledge.

So, what of his ambitions for the school under his leadership? He says he obviously wants the school to be Outstanding (Ofsted's highest grading). That will mean addressing some areas of understanding and application of high-level knowledge amongst others. But he wants more than that and returns to his opening remarks to me about the importance of relationships and the school as a source of good relations with the community and a rich educational experience for the children.

As he showed me out it was clear how good his relations with the children were. There were smiles as one year filed down the corridor with one boy proudly displaying his badge and telling Owen that he had been made House Captain and receiving a congratulatory response.

Owen does not underestimate the challenges for his and other schools at present. Covid he senses was something of a judgement test for education, both at the time and how well children can be supported to develop afterwards. But these and other challenges he seems keen to turn to opportunities and see The Meadows flourish.

A special Christingle

This year's Christingle Service on 14th January is set to be an extra special one. Unlike most churches which celebrate Christingle as part of the build up to Christmas at St Mary's we celebrate the Christingle in early January, close to Epiphany and in many ways its message is much more suited to that season than it is to Advent or Christmas.

Central to the symbol is a candle inserted into an orange representing Christ as the light to the world, which is the message of Epiphany – the God had sent a saviour, for all humanity.

The word although anglicised as Christingle, was originally Christkindl meaning Christ child in German. It was a symbol developed in the Moravian church and incorporated into church services in this country in the 1960s in an effort by the Children's Society to raise funds.

Please join us on Sunday 14th January at 10.30am for our Christingle when candles will fill the Church. This year we will also be joined by Jess Meale of the Children's Society.



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on
MONDAY 15th January

in
THE CHURCH HALL, Church Lane Bitton
Doors Open 7.30pm

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 annual Teams Quiz with prizes.

We will also have a speedy AGM and present our new 2024 Gardening Club programme in detail.

The programme for 2024 is, as usual, bursting at the seams, with five meetings with guest speakers, five amazing gardens to visit, a Quiz Night, our annual visit to Fonthill and Bitton Open Gardens.

Our speakers will cover such diverse topics as Fragrant Plants; Growing Veg all Year Round; Hidden Gems (gardens) off the Beaten Track and an insight into the life of garden designer Rosemary Verey.

Garden visits are on different days of the week and include Charlton Down House; Cadenham Manor and Batcombe House. Full details at the meeting.

Bitton Open Gardens will take place on Sunday 9 June (*if anyone is interested in opening their garden that day please let me know*), and **Fonthill have invited us back in April to shop 'til we drop at their garden centre (with a 10% discount).**

The Garden Club Annual Membership Fee remains the same at £12 and all our meetings will continue to be FREE to members. If anyone would like to join the committee, please contact me asap before this meeting.

For more information, come to the meeting on Monday 15th January or contact Bridget Hetzel by e-mail b.hetzel@btinternet.com

Everyone is welcome

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Invites you to

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on

Friday 19 January

when we will be screening



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West Side Story

We have a spectacular start to our New Year season with **Steven Spielberg's** stunning new musical West Side Story.

The sets of 1950's New York are brilliant, the dancing is breathtaking, the singing is exquisite, the costumes beautiful and **Leonard Bernstein's** music is even better than ever.

This is the perfect film to entertain us this January

Doors open 7.30pm. Film starts 8pm.

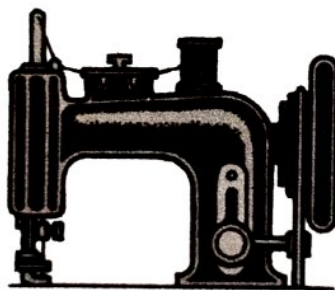
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Admission £3

Everyone is welcome

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Development Programme: Looking for your support

If you attended the Carol Service last month you may have left with a **Newsletter** about the Development Programme confirming that sufficient money had been raised to start work on the pews – work which the Futures Committee plan to complete in 2024. Funds are also being sought for the conservation and cleaning of the walls.



But the biggest plea was not for your money but your support!

Most of the funds to undertake work on the church, to increase its use as a community hub and to celebrate its heritage, will come from large donors, trusts and special funds such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. The process for bidding for funds is highly competitive, but what can often make the difference is the demonstration of community support.

That's where the Future Committee needs your help by signing up as a supporter.

The most helpful way you can do this is by going online and scrolling down to the box on the church website **www.stmarysbitton.org.uk**. It doesn't take a minute and costs nothing.

If you can't go online, please pop a message into the church mailbox (by the gate) with your name and address and mark it supporter. Or you can send it to St Mary's Church, Church Road, Bitton, BS30 6LJ.

Focal Point, January 2024



A grant from the National Lottery Community Fund has enabled the hall to be redecorated and repairs and a new heater installed.





Church Hall Open Evening

Thursday 11 January from 7 to 8pm

The refurbishment and enhanced heating of the Hall, generously funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, has been completed.

To acknowledge and give thanks for this grant and to provide an opportunity for everyone to view the Hall you are invited to come in and look around and drink a toast to the Hall's future.

The Hall is available for group meetings and is a great venue for parties. Jill Gibson welcomes enquiries on

0117 932 2122 or at
kenandjillg@gmail.com



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Upton Cheyney Christmas Fair



For those shoppers still in need of a purchase during the countdown for Christmas, the Upton Cheyney Christmas Fair was just the thing. Held on Monday 11th December, with just two weeks to go the event proved popular with a great range of gifts and Christmas items.

There was a raffle and tombola and mince pies and drinks to warm you up. All in the beautiful medieval barn at Manor Farm courtesy of David and Catherine Hawking.

Proceeds from the fair this year were in aid of the Trussell Fund for Foodbanks

Bitton really does Love Music

It was proved once again that Bitton really does love its music with an event held in the church on 25th November. The programme was a glorious feast of different musical styles and content. The Jazzbeanz provided a great opening to both parts of the show and the St Mary's Minstrels played a supporting role to others as well as performing their own pieces. There were some excellent performances by children and young people.

Songs from the shows and a rendition, by Pete Midgely, of Flanders and Swan hits – *The Hippopotamus and the Gas Man Cometh* provided light entertainment. Liza Cook also provided some beautiful vocal accompaniment to a number of pieces as well as a vibrant rendition of *Get Happy* performed with her son, George Friend (one of the evening's highlights).

For those with more classical musical tastes, the programme included part of an Oboe Concerto by Marcello, played by Jon Booth who was later joined by Jenny Harris to perform *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*. The evening ended with a selection of choral music sung by The Magpies.

A licensed bar provided refreshments and there was a retiring collection for church funds, which raised £414..

Focal Point, January 2024



Bitton loves Music was a musical feast. *Top*—The Magpies; *Right*—Lisa Cook and son George Friend; *playing the Oboe*—Jon Booth and *bottom left*— Anne Carrington and Owen Cole "Remembering it well" - or not!

Advent Services



The season of Advent was unusually short in 2023. With Christmas Day falling on a Monday, Advent lasted only 22 days with our traditional service of lessons and carols being held over a week before Christmas not to clash with other favourites such as the Christmas Eve Crib Service.

Our Gift Service on the Second Sunday of Advent was well attended, with donation of gifts to the Salvation Army for needy families in the Bristol area. Each Sunday was marked with the lighting of an Advent Crown, completed on Christmas Day with the lighting of the central candle.



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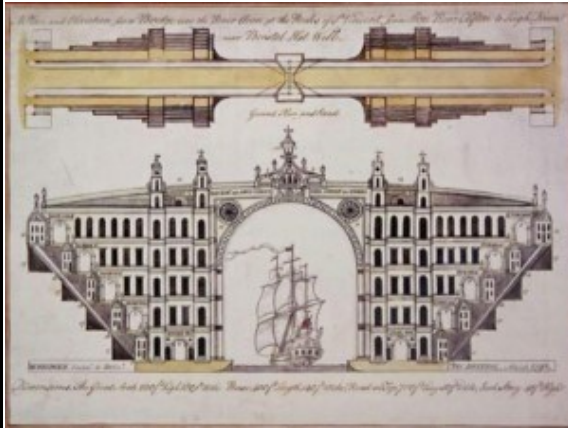
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Unbuilt Bristol: the city that might have been

That's the subject of this month's *History Group* meeting in which the speaker, Eugene Byrne, identifies those schemes, planned but never built – from the perfectly sensible to the completely insane. Focussing mostly on the post-war period he will also try to tease out some morals and lessons and wonders if we're any wiser nowadays.

7:00 for 7:30pm 23rd January 2024. Venue: to be advised



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News from Bitton WI

Hope you didn't miss us too much last month. Back now for a new year with Bitton WI and with news from our AGM which was held in November 2023. We now have a new President elected, along with the re-elected Bitton WI Committee. Our new President is none other than myself! Another honour for me to be entrusted with the title for the next year. At our December meeting a big Thank You was extended to Jean Hook, who has held the position for the past 4 years, as well as to the Committee for agreeing to stand for another year.

Our December meeting took place on Monday 11 December, where instead of our usual meeting, we enjoyed some Christmas entertainment provided by Bonner & Blake. Mince pies, homemade cakes and a good sing along filled our afternoon. Bonner & Blake kept us amused with some very humorous variations to some popular Christmas hits, as well as a song written by them specifically for WI.

Members were reminded that they are at the heart of WI Campaigning, and, as usual at this time of year, we are asked to think about the campaign we would like the WI to take forward. This year the resolutions for the Campaigns to vote on are:

- Dental Health Matters
- Impacts of poor housing conditions
- Say "no" to gambling advertising
- Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system.

Focal Point, January 2024

Our members are asked to ensure they look at these and vote on the campaign they would like us to put forward from our Group. Completed voting forms need to be returned at our January meeting please.

We are still looking for new members to come along to our group in Bitton. We meet every second Monday of the month at 2 pm in the Church Hall, Church Lane. If you would like to see what we do, please come along. Your first two meetings are completely free to attend. (Although we do make a small charge for refreshments and a raffle ticket). We have had some really interesting speakers during 2023 and are looking forward to welcoming speakers again next year as well as some planned activities to enjoy. For more information do please get in touch by email to bittonwi@gmail.com.

Our next meeting will take place on Monday 8 January 2024 at 2 pm, in the Church Hall, Church Lane, Bitton.

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy New Year.

Karen Davidson – President.



Our recipe this month comes courtesy of WI Recipes which is perfect for those of you who have lots of chocolate and nuts left after Christmas. It's also great for children to make on a rainy day and aptly named as-

After-Christmas Cake

Ingredients (Serves 10-12)

- .225g Self-Raising Flour
- pinch of Salt
- 100g Margarine
- 75g Granulated Sugar
- 50g Plain or Milk chocolate, fairly finely chopped
- 25g Brazil Nuts, chopped
- 1 Egg
- 1 tbsp Milk
- 1/2 tsp Vanilla Flavouring



Method:

1. Heat the oven to 200C mark 6.
2. Lightly grease a baking tray. Sieve the flour and salt; rub in the margarine until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar, chocolate and Brazil nuts.
3. Beat the egg lightly; combine with almost all the milk and add the vanilla flavouring.
4. Mix thoroughly with the dry ingredients to form a very stiff mixture which will just bind together. Add the extra milk if necessary.
5. Shape into 10-12 rough mounds on the prepared baking tray.
6. Bake for about 12-15 minutes or until firm to the touch. Place on a cooling rack

Enjoy!

Puzzle Pages

SUDUKO CHALLENGE

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

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Answers to both puzzles are available on the church website www.stmarysbitton.org.uk - click on **News & Focal Point** or use this QR code



WORD SEARCH

This month's word search takes us back to the story of Moses.

o	w	n	m	m	g	r	a	s	s	b	y
r	l	s	i	p	o	x	c	l	z	a	i
d	p	i	r	l	k	t	n	a	o	s	e
e	w	h	i	o	e	p	h	v	s	k	d
r	g	d	a	u	g	h	t	e	r	e	h
e	k	y	m	r	m	r	c	s	r	t	e
d	i	e	p	s	a	n	d	a	e	m	b
o	l	b	o	t	i	o	c	v	e	o	r
f	l	o	u	r	i	s	h	e	d	s	e
i	e	d	p	s	b	a	b	y	s	e	w
l	d	y	g	r	o	w	n	q	b	s	a
r	i	v	e	r	v	n	b	u	u	a	v

You are looking for:

Sand	Pharaoh	River	Daughter
Mother	Flourished	Son	Ordered
Grown	Reeds	Moses	Miriam
Grass	Nile	Scared	Body
Save	Egyptian	Basket	Baby
Princess	Slaves	Killed	Hebrew

January Prize Quiz

by Kim Scudamore

This month's quiz is ***For the Birds*** as most (but not all) answers refer to members of the bird family.

GOOD LUCK!

1. Who killed Cock Robin?
2. Which duck broke a speed record in 1938?
3. In chess what is the alternative name for the castle?
4. Which bird was usually gave Rod Hull a very hard time?
5. Who wrote Gulliver's Travels?
6. Which doctor developed a particular food recipe because his wife was allergic to eggs?
7. Which US Vice President couldn't spell potato?
8. In the Lady Chatterley trial, which company was prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act?
9. What usually starts on August 12th and finishes on December 10th?
10. Which architect designed London churches including St. Georges Bloomsbury and Christ Church Spitalfields?
11. Who has been named as Time Magazine's Person of the Year for 2023?
12. Who was the Captain of The Black Pearl?
13. Who 'tawt he saw a puddy tat'?
14. In which city is the traditional Goose Fair held every October?
15. Which bird regularly turns up in The Repair Shop?
16. Which programme did ITV launch as an alternative to Blue Peter?
17. Who was the 1991 Embassy World Snooker Champion?
18. Which bird connects Adam Faith and the Duchess of York?
19. Whose statue stands outside St. Thomas's Hospital?
20. What is the smallest British bird?

Please return your answers by Wednesday 17th January by email to
bittoncm@outlook.com

Christmas Quiz Answers

Last month's quiz was about Christmas Carols and Songs.

Answers: (1) O Little Town of Bethlehem; (2) God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman; (3) In Excelsior Gloria; (4) We Three Kings; (5) Silent Night; (6) Mary's Boy Child; (7) All I want for Christmas; (8) Rocking around the Christmas Tree; (9) Joy to the World; (10) Hark the Herald Angels sing; (11) White Christmas; (12) Baby, it's cold outside; (13) Jingle Bells ; (14) Here comes Santa Claus; (15) O Come, All Ye Faithful ; (16) Deck the halls; (17) Away in a manger; (18) It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas; (19) Do they know it's Christmas?; (20) Good King Wenceslas; (21) Let it snow

Correct answers :

Correct answers were received from Alison Wride, Alan and Sue Murtagh and Sarah Craddock

This months winners are:

Sarah Craddock

Prize Quiz winners receive a £10 John Lewis or other shop voucher.

All entries with fully correct answers are listed and the winner is than chosen at random.



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The last word

Jeremy's Departure



Although it may not feature prominently in this edition, (it is mentioned only in the Vicar's own letter) the big church news this month is the forthcoming departure of our Vicar, Jeremy, who, in February, will be taking up a position as the Diocesan Adviser on Ministerial Development. As such he will have oversight and responsibility for work to support all church ministers as part of the bishop's strategy for Transforming Church Together.

It is good news for the diocese and for Jeremy, but some sadness for the congregation.

Jeremy has been with us and the two other parishes in the benefice for nearly ten years, during which St Mary's has seen some changes in its layout and practices. Family Café Church, in particular, was very much his initiative and has reached out to wider congregation than previously.

A new vicar will be appointed in due course, although that process is likely to take some time. In the intervening period, both Bitton and the benefice can rely on our strong ministerial team. We wish Jeremy success in his new role

May I wish all our readers a very happy and prosperous new year.

Jim Heavens



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