

Focal Point



The Rev Maria Shepherdson

Bitton Parish Magazine February 2009 50p

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Editorial ~ The Wider World

As you will see from our front cover and from the 2 articles by Rev Maria Shepherdson, this month we are highlighting the recent tragic events in Gaza. We make no apology for commenting on the latest chapter in this 60 year dispute between Israel and Palestine. While the primary purpose of Focal Point is to keep our readers up to date with local events and activities, we cannot isolate ourselves from the world at large, particularly when violence and hatred of this nature have the power to escalate into much wider conflicts. We are fortunate that Maria Shepherdson has firsthand knowledge of both these countries, with many Christian, Jewish and Muslim friends and colleagues on both side of the border. She has only recently returned from this war zone and her concerns and prayers are based on her own observations and on those of the people who are witnessing and suffering from this ongoing tragedy.

Perhaps her prayers may be answered by an event which is about to take place thousands of miles away in Washington DC, where Barack Obama is about to be installed as the first black President of the USA. He takes office at a critical time in world history, with a huge weight of anticipation and hope on his shoulders. If anyone deserves our prayers at this time, it is President Obama. His book, 'The Audacity of Hope', published in 2006, gives rise to some optimism that he has the vision to seek new solutions to seemingly intractable problems. [The World holds its breath.](#)

Maria's Message for February 2009 Asks, 'Where is the Love?'

Make no mistake, the Gaza strip, under military occupation and all but destroyed, is a prison inhabited by 1.5 million souls, the majority of whom are children. While innocents on both sides suffer the consequences of bombs and rocket launches, those trapped in Gaza have no shelters to run to, no stockpiled food to see them through. Crying children and terrified adults, unable to sleep through night after night of blanket bombing, ask why the world stands by and does nothing.

Room for All. The majority of Palestinians cannot understand why they should all be punished for the violent actions of a few, and why their wish to remain in their homeland should give rise to such hatred and violence. Surely, I was asked, there is room for us all? Room for ALL of Abraham's descendents in the land that has been sanctified by God? Surely, our nation's youth should not be trapped in this endless violence for years to come? I have no answers for them except my prayers and my tears. I ask you, as they ask me, where is the love?

Gifts in the Name of Love. At the school I took a photo of one child comforting her friend who has found the sudden arrival of outsiders a bit too much! Their eyes move away from the camera towards the suitcases full of toys and equipment. Moments later the shy one joins the others in squealing with delight at finding a doll to dress in handmade knits. Things bought because people in Bitton, Warmley and Syston were moved to give in the name of Love to children and families they had never met, from another country, culture and faith.

Marvel at the Faith. When one Christian lady went for routine scanning at the hands of an untrained medic, she was mistakenly given the all clear. 12 months later the hospital recommended urgent transfer to Jordan. By the time the Israelis agreed, 6 months later, it was too late. The cancer was rampant and had spread to her head and bones. Praying with her some 7 days after her re-entry to Gaza following 23 days of surgery and radiotherapy, her serenity was startling. God, she was sure, would work some good out of the madness of the situation. As I sat in a room with her tearful husband, I heard her witness to God's love and goodness to three Muslim neighbours. The room was filled with laughter and the women left marvelling at the faith of their friend. She died on January 4th, sure of God's love.

Shared Humanity. What it boils down to is this: Christians, Jews and Muslims are all required 'to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God'. We too are also required to Love: to love God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. We are required to speak out against injustice wherever and whenever it is seen and to show, in how we live our lives,

that we honour one another as children of the same Heavenly Father. Thus violence can never be the answer. Love can be, if hearts and minds on both sides of any conflict are willing to look beyond the differences of philosophy, creed, race, and to celebrate together their shared humanity within the love of God.

Dig Deeper. As we celebrate love this month perhaps we can be radical in how we show and share love with each other and the world. Perhaps we can dig deeper within us and see beyond stereotypes of gender orientation, marital status, race, class or creed. Perhaps we can ask of ourselves: Where is the love? And take time to take action to bring that love to fruition, in a world where innocents suffer for the violent actions of a few.

No better place to start than to hit the ground kneeling.

Rev. Maria Shepherdson

(Maria has just returned from Gaza and Israel where she has many Christian Jewish and Muslim friends and colleagues)

Christian Aid at Christmas

The message on the envelopes this year was, 'We've been given hope,' and the focus was on the survivors of the 2004 tsunami. Christian Aid continues to support the flood survivors as they rebuild their shattered lives, for the charity not only gives help in emergencies but stays on for the long haul to recovery.

Currently Christian Aid has partners in over 50 countries, including Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gaza. The pictures on our television screens tell us that these people need all the hope and help we can give them. To that end the Christmas collections from the Methodists and St Mary's raised £519.

A very big thank-you to all who gave so generously.

Nicola Bennetts

AROUND OUR BITTON CHURCHES



Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church

Elder – Muriel Williams

0117 – 961 6843

Services

Our Church will be closed during the winter months. Services will recommence in March

Bitton Methodist Church

Minister – The Rev. Denise Harding

20 Victoria Road, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3QH – 0117 961 5592

Correspondence Secretary – Mr Reg Pullin

113 Parkwell Road, Cadbury Heath, Bristol BS30 8HA - 0117 967 1073

Our 6.15 Sunday Services for February 2009

Sunday 1 Feb	Communion Service	Rev Den Harding
Sunday 8 Feb		Rev Angie Hoar
Sunday 15 Feb		Mr Tim Lansdown
Sunday 22 Feb		Mr John Creech

St Mary's Church Bitton

Vicar:	The Rev'd Canon Paul Denyer	0117 967 3965
	The Vicarage, Church Avenue, Warmley, BS30 5JJ	
Curate:	The Rev'd Maria Shepherdson	0117 9608442
	25 Poplar Rd, Warmley, BS30 5JX	
Lay	Mr Ken Gibson,	0117 932 2122
Ministers:	8 Church Rd, Bitton, BS30 6HH	
	Dr David Bailey, Westover House,	0117 932 8949
	Bitton, BS30 6HT	

Church Wardens:	Mrs Ann Willis, Yew Tree Cottage, 40 Church Road, Bitton, BS30 6LP	0117 932 3868
	Mrs Liz Midgley, 30 Kennilworth Drive, Willsbridge, BS30 6UP	0117 932 6898
Baptism Enquiries:	Mrs Jean Gray	0117 967 2964
Marriage & Funeral Enquiries:		To the Vicar

February Services at St Mary's Church

Sunday 1 February	10.30	Parish Communion
Thursday 5 February	9.30	Celtic Communion Service followed by coffee and cake
Sunday 8 February	8.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Morning Prayers
	10.30	Sunday-Funday in the Church Hall
Sunday 15 February	10.30	Family and Parade Service
Sunday 22 February	8.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Morning Prayer
Wednesday 25 Feb		Ash Wednesday
	7.30	Service at St Barnabas, Warmley, starting with pancakes in the Church Hall

Holocaust Memorial Day 2009

Tuesday 27 January

Vigil for Peace

St Mary's Church Bitton 7.30 ~ 9pm

All Welcome

This year Holocaust Memorial Day will be marked by a Benefice Vigil and Service, beginning with a time of prayer and reflection from 7.30 pm, followed by a short service at 8.30pm. You are invited to stay for as short or as long a time as you wish, perhaps participating in the various prayer station activities on offer.



All You Need is Love ~ on St Valentine's Day

This year, St Valentine's Day, February 14th, falls on a Saturday. To mark the occasion, St Barnabas' Church, Warmley, is holding a party in the Church itself! A cabaret ambiance will be created with subdued lighting, red roses on the candlelit tables, top level entertainment, mulled wine and a buffet. To complete the colourful picture, revellers are encouraged to wear something red for the evening.

The Valentine's Party promises to be an exciting event to which you can bring family and friends with confidence. (No under-14s, please).

7.30pm at St Barnabas Church ~ Tickets £7.50 each

Contact Paul (967 3965) or Nicky (985 8825) for tickets

Give Yourselves a Romantic Treat.

Support our Valentine's Party at St Barnabas' Church

Tea Club Meetings ~ February 2009

Tea-Club meetings take place from 2.30 ~ 4pm on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, in the Methodist Church Hall.



Tuesday 3 February

Reminiscences of a local reporter by Les Baker

Tuesday 17 February

Islands of the Indian Ocean by Kim Scudamore.

Everyone is welcome

From the Parish Register:



Marriage : 20 December 2008

Bradley George

Louise Mears

Congratulations and Best Wishes from all at St Mary's

Flower Arranging Classes for 2009 ~ 2nd Tuesday of Each Month

Commence on

10 February in St Mary's Church Hall

We meet at 2pm in St Mary's Church Hall and usually finish by 3.30pm. Our sessions are enjoyable, informal and hopefully informative. If you would like to join us, just turn up on the day, and make a start. I look forward to seeing familiar faces and some new ones as we start the new sessions.

Judith Butson ~ 0117-9-324986



St Mary's Flower Rota for February 2009

February 7 ~ Pam Heyes

February 14 ~ Karen Smith

February 21 ~ Anne Heyman

February 28 ~ Stephanie Bailey

Local Ladies Model Exciting Fashions

The St. Mary's Church aisle provided an ideal catwalk at a recent fashion show where seventy people saw a dazzling display of party-time ideas and winter warmers – all in aid of the Living Stones Appeal. Twenty beautiful outfits were provided by Eleganza Clothing Company and elegantly modelled by our four local 'volunteer' models: Stephanie Bailey, Shirley Day, Bridget Hetzel and Cheryl Wright. Marlene Gallop, the unflappable dresser, calmly kept the models in order and on time, ensured there were no last minute hitches, and kept the lid on the fun and giggles behind the scenes. Bob and Ann Willis welcomed everyone with glasses of wines and mince pies, and then assisted as floor managers for the show which raised almost £400 for the Appeal. Congratulations to everyone who helped to stage this slick, professional and enjoyable event which was reported in the Evening Post on December 11th.

Cheryl Wright



It has been a good start to nearly half way to our target

appeal which will be the topic at the prayer and praise meeting on the 11th February. You are very welcome to join us at these regular prayer breakfasts. At the last one several of us, including Paul and Maria, enjoyed coffee and croissants together then committed the work of the Living Stones appeal to God. We particularly prayed that God will show us how to open up the church building for use by the wider community. A recent and excellent example of this was the wonderful evening's entertainment at St Mary's, when we had a church full of people listening to Noel Edmonds, but more on that on the next page.

Paul helped to relieve the post-Christmas blues with an excellent sermon on January 4th. He painted a picture of taking the Christmas decorations out of the loft, descending the ladder with the baubles and tinsel and the figures of the nativity scene. He had climbed the loft ladder to bring Jesus down. Then he realised that Christmas is the other way round; Jesus came down the ladder to take **us** back to heaven.

Paul had also written a play called the three wise camels. This was performed by an amazing group of thespians of all ages. We started at the Church Hall and made our way through the churchyard following the star that had been spotted by the three kings (and the mad professor). We had to ignore wicked King Herod at the Church entrance and watched the three kings with their extremely handsome camels bring their strange gifts to the baby king Jesus. We then celebrated the death and resurrection of this very special baby in the communion service.



We can look forward to our Sunday services (the card showing all services up to Easter is available at the back of church); mid-week groups both morning and evening (these are outlined on a yellow card); prayer and praise and the book club meetings. It would be great to see you all there.

Happy New Year to you all.

Liz Midgley

Church Warden

News from Bitton W.I

Upton Cheyney Group Carol Service This uplifting event, held in St. Mary's Church, was organised by the Group Secretary, Jean Hook, and attended by enthusiastic WI members from Bitton, Hanham and Longwell Green branches. Canon Paul Denyer and members from each W.I branch gave readings reflecting differing perspectives on the Christmas story. The talented 'Choir Ablaze' led the singing with some moving seasonal renditions. A total sum of £180 was raised during the evening to be divided equally between the Avon Air Ambulance and Living Stones Appeal.

A Night with Noel, 9 January. Largely through the efforts of Gabriel Frankcom (speakers secretary) and Jean Hook (president), Bitton W.I were delighted to secure the generous support of our talented celebrity neighbour, Mr Noel Edmonds, for an evening's entertainment in aid of the St. Mary's Living Stones Appeal. This extremely successful evening was attended by 253 people, raising £2530 in ticket sales for the Appeal, a sum which Noel kindly doubled to £5060. The strange and wonderful raffle prizes, also donated by Mr Edmonds, caused a ripple of excitement, and brought in additional funds for the appeal.

PS I know who won the *'Loud Shirt as worn on TV by hairy telly chap (laundered)'* but my lips are sealed!!!!

Our January Speaker

The Train at the Bottom of our Gardens. At our January WI meeting, our guest speaker was David Cole, the Development Manager for Avon Valley Railway (AVR), who gave an extremely interesting talk on the history of this very special and remarkable facility, now in its 35th year, which we have on our doorstep.

Historical Background. David traced its development from the Midland Railway, established in 1869 and closed in 1966, which ran from St. Philips in Bristol to Bath Green Park station, now lovingly restored alongside Sainsbury's.... 'the train now arriving at checkout number 3' !!! The closure gave a group of local railway enthusiasts the opportunity to establish AVR, to acquire a small piece of track and to run their first passenger steam train from Bitton Station in 1974.

It has been a remarkable success story. With the assistance of South Gloucestershire Council, a small group of private owners who rent their trains to AVR, and a much enlarged group of local volunteer enthusiasts, an enormous amount of refurbishment and restoration to buildings, track and carriages has taken place. Public interest has been spectacular. Annual ticket sales are currently in the region of 45,000; the station is open 364 days a year, and with a current annual turnover of approximately £550,000 AVR is contributing a great deal to our local economy.

Imaginative programme. Perhaps more importantly, in spite of serious setbacks, including arson attacks which have destroyed valuable assets, and coal which has to be transported from Russia at £186 per ton (one day's supply), the railway is providing a recreational facility which gives enormous enjoyment to

people of all ages. AVR is to be congratulated for its imaginative programme: 'Thomas the Tank Engine' days, 'Santa Specials', Dining trains, Beer Festivals, Murder Mystery evenings, links with cream tea River Boat trips in Hanham and even special weddings!!

Unique Facility. We thanked David for his fascinating talk. It made us realise how fortunate we are to have such a unique, nostalgic, thriving recreational facility within our midst, all made possible by volunteers, enthusiasts and a few paid staff who will be celebrating the 140 year anniversary of the Midland Railway and 35 years of Avon Valley Railway during 2009.

[Cheryl Wright](#)

The Gaza Tragedy ~ Eye Witness Accounts

While in no way condoning the Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli communities, it is an absolute given that life in Gaza is, quite frankly, a living hell. Speaking to Christians living in Gaza city by telephone on days 11 and 12 of the ground offensive, I could hear the sound of bombing and artillery fire obviously at close quarters to their apartment block. They confirmed details of the humanitarian crises described by Colin Gunness, Director of UNRWA operations in the Gaza Strip in live broadcasts on January 6th:

Food supplies ran out in days. 80% of the population already face starvation, the majority of whom are children. The sewage system is at breaking point and water is scarce. No heating, no cooking facilities, no electricity, no lights, and little in the shops. 45% of the injured treated in hospitals are women and children. Medical supplies had virtually run out with two or more patients being operated on in the same cubicle. The streets are unsafe. People are confined to their homes or temporary shelters in UN buildings. The leaflets/ telephone calls from Israelis to Gaza citizens telling them to flee certain areas is a nonsense. There IS nowhere to go, and there are no safe havens, something I can confirm from personal experience.



Palestinians returning to Gaza after spending Christmas in Bethlehem did so against the advice of the Israelis at the Erez border crossing. What, in God's name, were they supposed to do? Remaining in Bethlehem illegally results in a permanent ban. Deserting their family and school responsibilities was not an option. The sister of my friends, whose story is told in the monthly message, died on Saturday 3rd January. Burying her was very, very difficult because of the ferocity of the ground offensive. She died in the hospital

very close to the church. They said that had she died at home, a normal burial would have been impossible.

The UN funded American School was completely destroyed. The staffs are at a loss as to the reason. Other schools have been targeted allegedly because of Hamas rocket activities, something strenuously denied by UNRWA aid workers located in the bombed sites.

The Christian Community ask us to pray but are incredibly positive, thanking God for continued safety, hoping for the world-wide church to sit up and take notice and go to their aid. However, the Christian community in the West Bank, especially those Gazans left behind unable to return home because of the conflict, are in urgent need of encouragement. I just wish with all my heart I could be alongside them! It feels as if my own sisters and brothers, Christians and Muslims alike, are in trouble and it physically and spiritually hurts to think of what they are suffering.

How can I answer the question of why the world is standing by doing nothing when innocents suffer for the actions of the few? How can you?

If you want to hear more,
Why not join our discussion at St Barnabas Church
7pm on Monday 2nd February
'Gaza Now - Broken Promises and Shattered Dreams'
Maria Shepherdson

The Start! Course
Discovering Christianity in six small-group sessions.

Life – what's it like? Some say it's a dream; others call it a joke. If you have questions and are looking for answers, then why not make a Start! The Course begins on Wednesday 11th February and continues on the following Wednesdays: 18th February, 11th March, 25th March, 15th April and 22nd April. Meetings take place in the Vicarage They start at 7.30 in the evening and finish by 9.30pm. The material is easy to understand and encourages you to ask questions. We are giving this course a trial run with a view to it becoming a missionary tool for us in the future.

Would you like to be one of the Group?
If so, get in touch with Chris on 957 4512 or Paul on 967 3965.

Spotlight on Bitton People

Kazimirz Zeilinsky

Our spotlight this month falls on 83 year old Kazimirz Zeilinsky (Gus to his friends), a Polish exile now living quietly in Aubrey Meads with his second wife, Cicely. As you watch this frail but cheerful gentleman walking through Bitton Village, it would never occur to you that he had played a part in some of the major historical events of his generation.

Germany Invades Poland. Born and brought up on a small peasant farm near Posnan in West Poland, Gus was accustomed to hard work from infancy, but he had a home, the love of his family and friends, and enough to eat. For Gus real hardship began with Hitler's invasion of Poland and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Almost immediately, 15 year old Gus and his father were forcibly conscripted into an Infantry regiment of the Polish Army, and marched off across country to the Russian border. His mother and younger brother remained on the farm.

Churchill Intervenes. At some stage in this long march, all of the regiment's officers were summarily shot. It is still not clear to Gus whether the Russians or the Germans were responsible for this early atrocity. Had it not been for the direct intervention of Winston Churchill, Gus and his father would have spent the war in the Russian army or a Russian labour camp. When Hitler declared war on Russia in 1941, Churchill was able to convince Stalin that the Polish regiments could be used more effectively against Rommel's forces in North Africa.

Gus alongside Monty's Desert Rats. Now separated from his father, Gus and his Polish compatriots fought alongside Montgomery's Desert Rats in the successful campaigns at Tobruk and El Alamein. They trudged behind the tanks in the sweltering heat, engaging the enemy at regular intervals, snatching short hours of sleep in the cold desert nights. They were frequently short of water and food; showers were a rarity. In their few spare moments the Polish soldiers challenged other allied units to football and drinking matches. All of this Gus recounts with a wry smile as if desert warfare was a minor inconvenience. A broader smile emerges when he recalls the part he played in Montgomery's plan to hoodwink Rommel's intelligence officers by scattering large numbers of cardboard tanks across the desert.

The Battle of Monte Cassino. But if the desert was unpleasant, life for Gus became grimmer still when, in the spring of 1944, the Polish Units from North Africa took part in the Allied offensive against the strategic stronghold at the Monastery of Monte Cassino, south of Rome. Again Gus was in the thick of it. Four incredibly bloody battles were fought against Kesselring's German forces

between January and May 1944 before finally, the 2nd Polish Corps raised its improvised regimental victory pennant over the ruins of Monte Cassino. A victory, but at what cost: 54,000 Allied and 22,000 German casualties.

The Final Push. But there was no respite for Gus. He and his colleagues were quickly shipped to a training camp in Scotland to prepare for the Allied invasion, another historic phase of the war. They were soon on the move, not to Normandy but to Belgium, where they pushed back the German forces towards the Rhine, frequently fighting from fox-holes and bombed out farm-houses, finally meeting up with the Russian forces from the east. Eventually the war was over. **From the day when his father was sent to a separate Polish Unit, Gus has had no news of his mother, father or brother, all of whom were presumed killed in the war.** It was virtually impossible to obtain such information from the Polish Communist Government.

Some Choice! At the end of the war, Gus says that the Polish soldiers and airmen who had fought with the British, were presented with two unpalatable alternatives: return to Poland where they faced the probability of the firing squad from the Russian or Polish Communists, or settle in Britain where they would find work in the mines. So Gus became a Welsh Collier, and for 9 or 10 years worked underground at the Blackwood and Bargoed pits in South Wales. He married a local Welsh lady and had a daughter, Helen.

Pit Collapse: But life was never simple for Gus. In the late 1950s he was buried for several desperate and painful hours in a pit collapse. Gus says he prayed more in those few hours than he had done for years. His injuries prevented a return to the pits and after a few more jobs in South Wales, Gus, by now divorced, moved to Bitton where he was employed by the Bath Bus company. More importantly, here he met and married Cicely, a long time village resident, (who still finds difficulty in spelling Gus's name), and they are now enjoying their retirement years with regular outings with Cicely's children and grandchildren, holidays in Spain, eating out in country pubs, and visiting Crackow and Warsaw. It was very evident that Gus regards his recent reconciliation with his daughter Helen, a tax officer in the Revenue Office in Cardiff, as a highlight of his later years.



Gus celebrates 80th birthday with Helen

It was a privilege and a pleasure to interview Gus and Cicely, and we wish them many more years of happiness in our Bitton community. **JJE**



**Bitton Methodist Church
150th Anniversary**

Come and join us for these special events:

**Saturday 14th March 10am ~ 4pm:
Exhibition and Light Refreshments**

The exhibition will focus on
The whole of Bitton over the past 150 years
including a display by children from
The Meadows Primary School.

If you have items to display, please contact
Revd Den on 0117 961 5592

**Sunday 22nd March 6.15pm
Celebrating with Unity Brass Band**

We look forward to seeing you!

If you would like to have a stand in the exhibition,
please get in touch.

Legal Oddities

It is generally agreed that in the western world we have legal systems to be proud of. Nevertheless, from time to time the law and its lawyers come in for criticism and denigration. For example:

'It is no coincidence that only lawyers and people suffering from severe mental illness are automatically exempt from jury service.' *George Bernard Shaw*:

'To be a successful lawyer no brilliance in law is required – only common sense and relatively clean finger nails.' *John Mortimer QC*

'What's the definition of waste? A coach load of lawyers going over a cliff with three empty seats.' *Will Rogers (famous American comedian)*

A major stumbling block for law-abiding citizens is that so many laws and by-laws remain on the statute books, long after they have outlived their original purpose. This seems to be particularly true of the USA, where individual states and cities retain a nostalgic reverence for their outdated laws. For example:

Maryland: Illegal to take a lion to the theatre.

Fairbanks – Alaska: Illegal for two moose to have sex on a city sidewalk at any one time.

Chicago: Illegal to eat in a restaurant which is on fire.

Hollywood: Illegal to drive more than 2000 sheep down Hollywood Boulevard.

Parliament itself is still governed by some very peculiar laws. Under a law passed in 1313, MPs are forbidden to wear armour in Parliament. Also, because the Palace of Westminster still has the status of a Royal Palace, no one is allowed to die there (if they did they would be entitled to a state funeral); bars may stay open after hours, and MPs are permitted to play roulette in the lobbies should they so wish.

Perhaps someone who has suffered at the hands of the law should have the last word. Sentencing a man for frequent appearances for drunkenness, a magistrate commented, '*You must spend most of your money on drink*'. The offender instantly replied, '*Don't you believe it, sir. I spend most of **my** money on **your** fines.*'



Gardening in February with Rob Allen

Belated New Year's greetings to you all, and let me begin by thanking my mum, who recently discovered this lovely piece of old country philosophy in a gardening magazine. It's amusing and thought-provoking and, more importantly, I'm told that it originated in Gloucestershire.

How To Be Happy

If you want to be happy for a day, get drunk.

If you want to be happy for a week, kill a fattened pig.

If you want to be happy for a month, get married.

If you want to be happy for a lifetime, become a gardener.

So, if you're getting married this year, enjoy a drink at the reception; make sure there's pork on the menu; take up gardening and you're guaranteed to live happily ever after. There's a certain amount of truth in it. You don't often see an unhappy gardener....well not very often. Seriously, if you enjoy gardening, a smile will never be far from your face.

As I write this we are experiencing the coldest winter for many years. Optimist as I am, I feel certain that if we have a 'proper' winter for a change, we might be blessed with a 'proper' summer, and this could possibly lead to a very good gardening year. Long overdue, I hear you say. Too true. A good summer would not only cheer up all the gardeners amongst us, but everyone else too, and it might even kick-start the economy. Here's hoping!

Of course, February can often surprise us with the occasional beautiful day, giving us an early opportunity of getting a few jobs done in the garden which is beginning to awake very slowly. Spring bulbs will be getting ready to break through with their promise of the year's first colourful displays, and the cycle begins again.

Jobs for February

- ✚ Now is the time to move deciduous trees and shrubs, to prune autumn fruiting raspberries and to plant new canes.
- ✚ Try to prepare soil in the vegetable patch ready for sowing seeds, planting shallots and Jerusalem artichokes.
- ✚ If you are lucky enough to have a greenhouse, some vegetables can be sown to produce earlier crops.
- ✚ Enjoy your primroses, hellebores, dwarf iris and of course snowdrops.

Best Wishes from Rob and all the Staff
at Chief Trading Post

'Flicks in the Sticks' Presents

'Waking Ned'

Friday 27th February

Doors open 7.30 for drinks, snacks and chat.

Film starts 8pm and there will be an interval.

Waking Ned is a raucous, yet thought provoking comedy, set in the tiny Irish hamlet of Tulaigh Morh. The film traces the reactions of a close knit community as they attempt to discover which of their neighbours has won millions on the lottery. A hilarious film guaranteed to have you laughing your socks off

Starring

Ian Bannen, David Kelly, Fionnula Flanagan, Susan Lynch,

James Nesbitt, Robert Hickey, James Ryland

Tickets can be bought in advance from Bridget by phone 932 9939

or e-mail hetzel@tantraweb.co.uk

or just turn up on the night

If anyone has difficulty getting to and from the film but would like to come, please contact Bridget as transport may be available.

Tickets £3.50

Certificate PG

Focal Point Deadline for March Edition

12 February 2009

Contributions to the editor, please, handwritten, typed or preferably emailed in

Tahoma 10 or 11 font: at:

The Gailes, Upton Cheyney, Bitton, Bristol BS30 6LY

Tel: 0117 9322164

Email: john70gailes@btinternet.com

Important Notice

Focal Point Subscriptions for 2009 Now Due

We would like to thank everyone who has already responded to our notice regarding subscriptions for 2009. If you have not yet paid, we would be grateful if you would forward your £6 either to your local distributor or to Jenny Bailey, 150 Bath Road, Bitton, Bristol BS 30, making sure that you write your name and address clearly. Cheques made payable to Bitton Parish Magazine.

Your early payment would be greatly appreciated.

Rugby Union ~ A Whimsical Replay of the 2007 Rugby World Cup

In early November 2008, by means of judicious phone calls and wheeling and dealing, I found myself in possession of four tickets for the England v South Africa Rugby Union International at Twickenham. This was to be the first international against the Springboks since our narrow defeat 15-6 in the World Cup final in Paris on 20th October 2007. Would we avenge that defeat?

I contacted the usual suspects for travelling companions. Unfortunately the Rector had a wedding ceremony to perform but I ended up with two sons and a friend in the party. Which of course meant that I would fail to recoup half of the £167 ticket fee because of the immutable fatherhood law, that Fathers always pay, but heck, a great chance for father and son bonding!.

The journey for three of us up the M4 was made interesting by a series of warnings about things on the carriageway, the best of which was, "50 animals on carriageway", which led to much musing on what the animals might be. OK if they were wood lice, but a problem with elephants. After parking by the London Scottish ground in Richmond, we joined the throngs wending their way to Twickenham albeit via the White Cross hostelry on the banks of the Thames for liquid lunch and to add the second son to the party.

It was wonderful to be at the new Twickers stadium with its increased seating and so full of sound. Where else do you sing the National Anthem so loudly? The stands were packed and colourful, the green and gold of South Africa contrasting with the red and white trimmings of England, and everywhere the sound of friendly banter between the two groups of supporters. As to the result ~ revenge was not exacted, England going down 42 points to 6 - a record 36 points margin. The Springboks seemed fitter, faster and more committed.



I would like to finish by commenting on the giant steps the South African team has made on the long road to reconciliation since the dismantling of apartheid. Six of the starting line up were black as were the team manager and coach. The black scrum half, Ricky Januarie, was voted man of the match, sharing a magnificent victory with other outstanding performers, including those whose pigmentation would not have allowed them to fit into the Springbok Team of the apartheid era. We pray that a similar breaking down of barriers might occur in other trouble spots of the world.

Rovi Retsoc ~ Our Roving Sports Correspondent

Puzzle Corner

The February Quiz

They are all capital cities of countries around the world. Can you find them?

1. Wander around
2. Horse ridden by Wellington at Waterloo
3. Type of sprouting vegetable
4. Do they bury vehicles here?
5. Called "the Venice of the North"
6. Sounds as if they are all crazy here!
7. Where they put father in a sack?
8. Heavy weight belonging to a queen's husband
9. Where cigars come from
10. Brown paper envelopes
11. The 1988 Olympics held here
12. Two capitals on longitude 0°
13. Is this capital made of plaster?
14. Two towns on either side of the Danube make this city
15. Is this town multiplying by two?
16. You don't need to pay for anything here!
17. Footwear
18. Capital city and state – smallest country in the world
19. Type of bean
20. Where to arrange a nice, quiet holiday?

Answers please to the Editor by 12th February 2009
John J Evans, The Gables, Upton Cheyney, Bitton, Bristol BS30 6LY
Tel: 0117-9322164 : email: john70gables@btinternet.com

Answers to the January Numbers Quiz

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Who do we appreciate | 2. Baker's Dozen |
| 3. Cards in a Pack (Except Jokers) | 4. Black Birds in a Pie |
| 5. Wonders of the World | 6. Two Fat Ladies |
| 7. Holes on a Golf Course | 8. Degrees in a Circle |
| 9. When I'm | 10. Great Lakes in North America |
| 11. Pieces of | 12. L in Roman Numerals |
| 13. Man and his dog | 14. Magna Carta |
| 15. Cat's Lives | 16. Squares on a Chessboard |
| 17. Signs of the Zodiac | 18. Green Bottles hanging on the wall |
| 19. Deadly Sins | 20. Catch |

Results: Rona & Helen Wagstaff 18 ; Judith Butson 20; Margaret & Bruce Sutton 20; Jon & Pam Heyes 18; Pamela Mann 20; Clare/Stone consortium 20 Jan Wookey 18: Congratulations to **Judith Butson**, first all-correct solution out of the editor's hat.

Don't Miss the Social - Sporting Event of the Year Saturday 21 February ~ 7pm

Join the tyros of the Bitton Churches Cricket team at their annual dinner in St Mary's Church Hall, where you will be guaranteed a convivial evening with our local sporting super-stars. Top-rate cuisine created by our very own internationally renowned celebrity-chef, Madame Jan Ivens, will titillate your taste buds. As a special no-expense-spared-after-dinner entertainment, you will listen to an expert examining one of the great, and until now unresolved mysteries of the past 2000 years. 'Did Jesus play cricket?' This is a deadly serious matter. In the light of recent state-of-the-art internet research, he will reveal that, as a boy, Jesus might well have played a form of cricket on the Galilean seashore. Hear the evidence first hand from Paul, our local cricketing guru who keeps his copy of Wisden alongside his Bible.



There will also be the usual (tantalising but not difficult) quiz compiled by ex-captain, super-star Ivor Coster, now sports editor of a prestigious popular glossy.

Tickets £7.50 from Paul (0117 967 3965).

Don't miss it!

How To Fill Up Blank Spaces in a Monthly Magazine?

Dig Out the Old Schoolboy Examination Howlers.

Ancient Egypt was inhabited by mummies and they all wrote in hydraulics. They lived in the Sarah Dessert where the climate was such that the inhabitants had to live elsewhere.

William Tell shot an arrow through an apple while standing on his son's head.

Homer's Iliad was not written by Homer, but by another man of that name.

The Greeks were a highly sculptured people, and without them we wouldn't have any history. The Greeks also had myths. (A myth is a female moth).

Beethoven wrote music even though he was deaf. He was so deaf he had to write loud music. He expired in 1827 and later died of this.

The Sun never set on the British Empire because the British Empire was in the East and the sun sets in the West.

A Fossil is an extinct animal. The older it is, the more extinct it becomes.

To Remove Dust from your eye, pull your eye down over your nose.

Artificial Insemination is what the farmer does to the cow instead of the bull.

A Vacuum is a large empty space where the Pope lives.

Blood flows down one leg and up the other.

Poetry Corner

At a time when all news seems to be bad, we thought a dip into the joys of poetic love might brighten the February gloom as St Valentine's Day approaches. We couldn't afford the copyright fees for more recent poems!!

The Confirmation

Edwin Muir 1887 – 1959

Yes, yours, my love is the right human face.
I in my mind had waited for this long,
Seeing the false and searching for the true,
Then found you as a traveller finds a place
Of welcome suddenly amid the wrong
Valleys and rocks and twisting roads. But you,
What shall I call you? A fountain in a waste,
A well of water in a country dry,
Or anything that's honest and good, an eye
That makes the whole world bright. Your open heart,
Simple with giving, gives the primal deed,
The first good world, the blossom, the blowing seed,
The hearth, the steadfast land, the wandering sea.
Not beautiful or rare in every part,
But like yourself, as they were meant to be.

Love's Philosophy

Percy Bysshe Shelley 1792 ~ 1822

The fountains mingle with the river
And the river with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix forever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle –
Why not I with thine?
See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother:
And the sunlight clasps the earth:
And the moonbeams kiss the sea –
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me.

Progress on the Redevelopment of the Intier Site at Bitton

On 15th December a party of local residents, Parish and County Councillors, representatives from the local churches and representatives from the Bitton Village Residents Association (BVRA) were given a tour of the site and then attended a workshop in the evening to present their views on what might be a suitable development for the site. The meeting was led by Colliers CRE (<http://www.collierscre.com>) on behalf of the owners, MI Developments (<http://www.midevelopments.com>) and South Gloucestershire Council. The site has been empty for some time and the owners are now working with South Gloucestershire Council and a variety of consultants, led by Colliers CRE, to develop a 'Concept Statement' as to how the site might be sold and developed.

The current status of the site is described in a 'Position Statement' which was distributed at the meeting. This is a 22 page illustrated document and if anyone would like a copy please e-mail Andrew.ward1@btconnect.com to request one.

The purpose of the meeting on the 15th December was to seek the views of local residents as input to the 'Concept Statement'. Following short presentations from the Colliers CRE and their consultants the audience was asked to discuss the following topics

- ✚ What is the vision for Bitton?
- ✚ What is the vision for the site?
- ✚ What are the key features / constraints of the area?
- ✚ What are the features / constraints of the site?
- ✚ What type of new homes should be provided?
- ✚ What approach should be taken to traffic circulation?
- ✚ What level of car parking should be provided?
- ✚ What materials should be used?
- ✚ What treatment should be given to site boundaries?
- ✚ What should be done with the land to the rear?
- ✚ What approach should be taken to the road frontage?

The organisers appeared most receptive to the views of the meeting which will now be used in the development of the draft 'Concept Statement' that will be discussed at an open village meeting sometime in February – date still to be confirmed. If anyone would like to receive more details of the December Meeting, please contact me.

Andrew Ward
Chairman Bitton Village Residents Association
Andrew.ward1@btconnect.com