

March 2010
50p

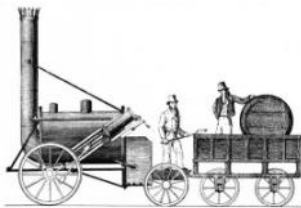
Focal Point



The 'Rocket' replica: Bitton

Photo: Geoffrey Mackay

Bitton Parish Magazine



Welcome

I have surrendered my vice (chocolate) for Lent, as always. I know it's not exactly an original sin to give up, tame in fact compared to the family I know who abstained from watching TV for the whole of Lent a couple of years ago.

And last year in Italy priests urged young people to give up texting and Facebook. I wonder how successful that was!

As you will have seen from our great cover picture taken by Geoff Mackay, the replica of Stephenson's Rocket was put through its paces at Avon Valley Railway in Bitton in February, causing much interest. From here it was taken to the National Railway Museum in York.

In Focal Point this month we have Paul Wigmore sharing his memories of his friend the brilliant musician Sir John Dankworth, who died in February. There's also a report on the Venetian ball held at the Guildhall in Bath in aid of St Mary's, which was attended by nearly 100 people.

Jon Heyes kindly shares a recipe with us from his grandmother's cookbook which is more than 100 years old. We will be publishing some more in the months to come. There are some real treats that I intend to try, as well as some canny household hints from Granny Thompson.

With her bees dormant, Brenda Claxton turns her attention to birds this month! Meanwhile votes have been flooding in throughout February for your top 10 hymns. The results will be announced in April.

Becky

Message from the vicar

For me, the whole thing about the Christian faith hinges on what we believe about baptism.

Baptism is a two-way street: we enter into the life of Christ and He enters us. It is as simple and awesome as that, and we spend our whole lives fulfilling its implications.

It follows that the two greatest Christian festivals – Christmas and Easter – must either happen inside us or they do not happen at all. At Christmas, Jesus is born into the Bethlehem within us, and, at Easter, Christ rises triumphant in our hearts and minds.

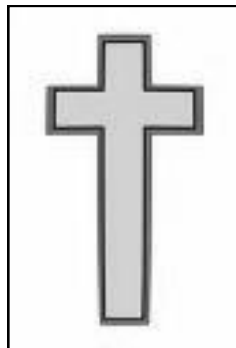
Historical events these may have been, but if we believe in a *living* faith, they must be happening now, and they must be happening to change you and me.

I know a lot of people who sit and look at their television and say, 'Isn't the world a terrible place – and it's getting worse!' And, as I grow older, the temptation to become grumpy and cynical grows ever more appealing! But it is the devil's work and it must be resisted.

The light shining in the darkness with which St John begins his Gospel is the same inextinguishable life-force that cannot be contained and explodes from the tomb. (That's why champagne may be the proper accompaniment to lunch on Easter Day!)

No Mr Osama bin Laden! No Mr Richard Dawkins! No Mr 'I can't make any difference!' You have not proved your case. You have not won the victory.

For every example of trouble in the world, there are numerous and heroic cases of good people leading sacrificial lives that demonstrate that Jesus is alive and well and redeeming the



Christians in the Saxon era depicted a warrior Christ going down into Hell on the eve of Resurrection Day to vanquish sin and death. We need that warrior spirit now, and it starts with vanquishing sin and death in the hearts of you and me.

I know I am writing this on the eve of Lent, a time of prayer and self-denial. This is quite as it should be. But we are heading for the light at the end of the tunnel – the light which already glows within us! Remember: through baptism, you have been born into the life of Christ.

Have a wonderful Easter and may you rise to the occasion!

Paul Denyer

Decorating St Mary's for Easter



Please make a note in your diary that we shall be decorating St Mary's from 9.30am on Saturday, April 3.

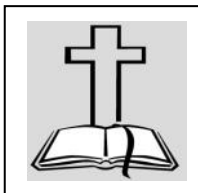
Anyone who would like to help is welcome to join us. Any foliage you can spare would be appreciated.

We will have Easter lilies for Remembrance in the church. If you would like to make a donation in remembrance of a loved one this Easter, please contact Judith Butson or Maureen Perrett.



From the parish register

**The funeral of John Ward, of Mill Lane,
Bitton
February 1, 2010**



Our churches and services

UPTON CHEYNEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Elder: Muriel Williams

☎ **0117 961 6843**

3pm Sunday services for March

7th Mrs M White (Communion service)

14th Mr B Saunders

28th Local arrangement

BITTON METHODIST CHURCH

Minister: The Rev Denise Harding

20 Victoria Road, Hanham, Bristol, BS15 3QH

☎ **0117 961 5592**

Correspondence secretary: Mr Reg Pullin

113 Parkwall Road, Cadbury Heath, Bristol, BS30 8HA

☎ **0117 967 1073**

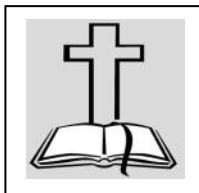
6.15pm Sunday services for March

7th Rev Angie Hoare

14th Rev Den Harding (church anniversary)

21st Rev David Hardy

28th Mrs Joy Harris



ST MARY'S CHURCH

Vicar: The Rev Canon Paul Denyer
The Vicarage, Church Avenue, Warmley, BS30 5JJ

☎ **0117 967 3965**

Curate: The Rev Maria Shepherdson
25 Poplar Rd, Warmley, BS30 5JX

☎ **0117 960 8442**

Lay ministers: Mr Ken Gibson, 8 Church Rd, Bitton,
BS30 6HH

☎ **0117 932 2122**

Dr David Bailey, Westover House, Bitton, BS30 6HT

☎ **0117 932 8449**

Churchwardens: Mrs Ann Willis, Yew Tree Cottage,
40 Church Road, Bitton, BS30 6LP

☎ **0117 932 3868**

Mr Jim Heavens, Eastover, High Street, Bitton

☎ **0117 932 5376**

Baptism Inquiries: Mrs Jean Gray

Marriage and funeral inquiries:

☎ **0117 967 2964**

To the vicar

St Mary's services for March

Thursday, March 4	9.30am	Celtic Holy Communion, followed by coffee and cakes
Sunday, March 7	10.30am	Parish Communion
Sunday, March 14	8am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Family service for Mothering Sunday
	10.30am	Sunday Funday in the church hall. (Following the morning service and Funday there will be a bring and share lunch in the church)
Sunday, March 21	10.30am	Morning Prayer
Sunday, March 28	8am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Family service preceded by Palm Sunday procession with donkey. Meet at the church hall at 10.15am

Sunday Funday

Sunday Funday is on March 14, Mothering Sunday. We will meet in the church hall at 10.30am and then at 11.15am go to the church where daffodils will be provided for the children to give to their mums.

Sunday Funday is for under-sevens and their parents. The children get to do fun activities while parents relax over the newspapers and coffee.

We had a ball!

A Ballo In Maschera was held on February 5 in the chandelier-lit Guildhall banqueting suite in Bath.

The event promised an Italian themed dinner, fine wines, entertainment and the chance to test one's prowess in Venetian dancing, ably compered by the Rev Maria Shepherdson and assisted by anonymous masked parishioners (sorry, Pete Midgley – great mask, but the Titian beard was a complete giveaway!).

A surfeit of sartorial Venetian elegance was apparent as 95 guests arrived, carefully negotiating the grand staircase in cloaks, gowns and a vast array of masks of outlandish and glamorous design. The impressive masquerade included a plethora of sequins, silk, ribbons, feathers, rhinestones and glitter (that was just Bob Willis's shoes!).

The ambience was further enhanced by a musical mascheranda provided by The Ammonites choir, a string quartet from Bristol Music Group and soloist Natalie.

Additional highlights included the entrance of the Doge and Dogaressa, accompanied by the Emperor and Empress of Bitton. Just before midnight, everyone quaked as the Venetian inquisitors stormed in, calling for the guilty souls named in their book of sins (which looked full!) to be unmasked and present themselves to receive their penance. Some familiar faces lined up at the front to be admonished, but discretion prevents disclosure!

With gondolas at midnight, those who escaped the inquisitors wound their way home, having wined, dined and danced the night away in decadence and style.

Ann Willis, Maria Shepherdson and helpers deserve huge accolades for making the evening such a success, raising £2,330 (half from a very generous donation) for St Mary's Living Stones Appeal.



St Mary's Matters

Sermons, history shows, can be among the most revolutionary forms of human speech. “*From John Calvin to Billy Graham, preaching has had the power to topple princes, to set nation against nation, to inspire campaigners to change the world and impel people to begin life anew*” - so went an article in The Times recently.

In all churches this should be the most ‘vibrant of moments’ but, in some, it has withered to be a shadow of its former self. Yet, it seems, to recent research from Durham University, most of Britain’s 3.6 million regular church goers feel a sense of expectation for the Sunday sermon!

Evidently some 96.6 per cent of those surveyed ‘look forward’ to the sermon with 60 per cent saying it gave them ‘a sense of God’s Love’. The article went on to put forward a suggestion that different denominations each have their own preferences. The group that look forward most to sermons are the Evangelical Christians, which is hardly surprising as this movement was started by John Wesley.

Roman Catholics are the most keen on sermons that educate, rather than challenge. Baptists wanted sermons to convert them and Anglicans wanted to be entertained! (I personally favour sermons which manage a balance between being educational and have an element of humour).

The ideal length of a sermon also seems to differ between denominations. Anglicans wanted less than 10 minutes—although up to 20 minutes was fine - as long as there was no ‘waffle’.

Catholics also wanted their homilies to be completed

within 10 minutes. But some Baptists wanted to sit through at least an hour and a quarter! If you have a preference it would be good to hear from you.

Even today most sermons are still structured along the lines laid down centuries ago by the preaching pioneers, such as Wesley. They are based on the Biblical text of the day and still follow a three or five point structure and are preached from a pulpit or a lectern at the front of the Church.

We at St Mary's are blessed with good preachers and, as Richard Humphrey is in the process of becoming a lay minister, this can only strengthen the preaching team.

Ann Willis
Churchwarden

See me to book your place for the church visit to Marshfield Farm on April 28 for a talk and delicious ice cream tasting!

Passion play

As a benefice we are privileged to be included in the 2010 tour of Neville Boundy's passion play, *Father & Son: Son & Father*.

The play is a series of imagined conversations between Jesus and his Father during Jesus' earthly ministry, starting at his baptism and concluding at the crucifixion.

Neville is chaplain to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. The 75-minute performance is at St Barnabas' Church, Warmley, on Saturday, March 27 at 7pm and will include a post-performance discussion.

Admission is £6, but we are offering a group booking discount of two free tickets for every 10 bought. Contact Leslie Willcox (0117 967 5215) or Sally Sibley (0117 937 2933) for tickets.

History in the making



As you will have seen on our cover this month, a working replica of the world's most famous early steam locomotive has been successfully tested at Avon Valley Railway.

The Rocket, built by Stephenson, *pictured*, was the engine which set the standards for design adopted around the world as railways revolutionised transport. The replica was built by engineers from the Flowermill Workshop in Bream and is now in York at the National Railway Museum.

Coffee morning at golf club

Lansdown Golf Club is holding an open coffee morning on Tuesday, March 23 at 10.30am

Everybody is welcome – you don't have to play golf! There will be a variety of stalls including cakes, groceries, toiletries, bottles, cookery and gardening, bric-a-brac, plants, toys, clothes and household.

A scone and cream, coffee and a free raffle ticket are included in the £2 entry price on the door.

Proceeds are partly for the Dorothy House Hospice. If anyone would like to make donations for stalls please deliver them to Di Garry at 10 Church Road, Bitton.

Cricket dinner

The 5th annual benefice cricket dinner is on Saturday, March 20 at 7.30pm in the church hall in Church Lane. International cuisine will be provided by Janet Ivens.

Tickets are £7.50 from Paul Denyer.
(Please bring your own drink)

Bitton author launches new book

As we went to print, Bitton author Chris Skidmore was preparing for the release of his eagerly-awaited book, *Death & The Virgin*.

It looks into the death of Amy Robsart, wife of Queen Elizabeth's favourite courtier Robert Dudley, whose body was found dead at the foot of a staircase in 1560. Her neck was broken but there was no other mark on her body. It has been one of the most famous unsolved mysteries of Tudor times.

Death & The Virgin is an investigation into an unsolved death and is a portrait of a frenetic period in the life of the young Queen. Chris will be talking about his book at the church hall at 7pm on Friday, March 26 to raise money for St Mary's. See Ann Willis for more information.

Pub one step closer to reopening

Plans to revamp the White Hart have been approved by South Gloucestershire Council. The inn was forced to close at the end of 2008 after the company that owns it ran into problems.

A tenant is lined up and Peninsula Inns has been granted listed building consent to make the ground-floor space more flexible, which involves taking down part of a wall but keeping any loss of "historic fabric" to a minimum. Watch this space.



Tea Club

Meetings are held at Bitton Methodist Church Hall in Mill Lane from 2.30-4pm on the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

On March 2, On the Shelf is the title of a talk by Kim Scudamore. On March 16 the club will be making Easter cards with Sandra.



Spotlight on sport

The sports pages over the last few weeks have been full of the Terrygate affair which, for you who restrict your reading to the financial pages, is about the alleged misdemeanours of the Chelsea and England football captain John Terry, with the chief concern being whether he should retain the England captaincy.

It is at this cutting-edge interface between morality and professional sport that your correspondent has decided to direct his musings this month.

The nature of captaincy is crucial to solving this dilemma of whether he should remain captain. To highlight the importance and high moral standing of the role, the Bible describes God as our Captain (*Book of Chronicles*) and Jesus as the captain of our salvation (*Letter to the Hebrews*).

Following on from this in the early days of cricket when there was a distinction between gentlemen (many of whom were ordained) and players AKA amateurs and professionals, county and England Test captaincies were exclusively the preserves of amateurs who were regarded as capable of leadership, making decisions and upholding the spirit of fair play, unlike the hard-nosed professionals with their sharp tactics.

Doug Insole, a former England cricket captain, defined captaincy skills as a PR officer, agricultural consultant, psychiatrist, accountant, nursemaid and diplomat, although Richie Benaud, ex-Australian captain and TV pundit, reduces greatness to the ability to win the toss at the right time.

Opinions I have read suggest that, whereas cricket, needs an

on-field director of operations, in football the role is chiefly honorary, no more significant, one article suggested, than the role of the regimental goat.

For most of us, experience of the influence of captains is limited to the childhood memory of being lined up against the garage door while 'two captains' pick the teams. These captains were the peers we *respected* for their ability or some other indefinable quality. If John Terry has lost respect, maybe we should agree with Fabio Capello's decision to relieve him of the England captaincy.

Rovi Retsoc

News from Bitton WI

At the February meeting of Bitton WI we welcomed several new members and visitors.

Group rep Keron Wilshire informed members of forthcoming events, and Cheryl Wright spoke about the visit planned to Kilver Court Gardens on June 17.

Our speaker arrived with three friends to a give a talk on Hemp: The Wonder Plant. They arrived with hemp stalks, fibres, seeds and home-made sweets for us to taste!

We were given a 'potted' history of hemp, the use of it as a food source, medicine, fuel and fibre. We learnt that banknotes were made from hemp fibres, amongst other interesting facts.

The speaker's opinion was that plants cannot be illegal – those present may have thought differently!

It was another entertaining evening, followed by tea and cakes.

Our next meeting is on Monday, March 8 when David Ilsley's talk will be entitled Tales of a Coastguard.



Elaine Skidmore

Birdwatch with Brenda

Early in January it snowed, cushioning everything with a soft blanket about four inches thick. Walking the next day in bright sunshine along the hills above Lansdown the air was full of children's laughter as they tobogganed and explored a magically transformed world.

My bees are dormant but the birds are active on this cold Monday morning. We normally feed the birds peanuts from a squirrel-proof hanging feeder; in addition over the past few days I have been whizzing up stale cake and mixing this with the ground-up remains of mixed nuts, bought at half price, being past their sell-by date. They are now providing essential nutrients for all the wild birds in the vicinity.

Initially the birds were wary but soon started to descend, with numbers growing each day. We have a courtyard garden secure against intrusive cats and foxes. Blue tits and great tits in greater abundance than usual are now joined by long-tailed tits, beautiful, delicate birds which rarely visit us. The blackbirds are aggressive. I have two bowls of food out and tell them not to waste energy as I have plenty for them all, but still they pursue each other, with the strongest gaining and maintaining dominance of the bird table. At least half a dozen blackbirds, male and female, are now patrolling the garden, feeding in a frenzy whenever they have a chance.

Small brown birds, dunnocks, creep along the ground picking up leftovers. A robin struts his stuff. He uses his intelligence, waiting for a lull to hop down and feed, his innate aggression bestowing a boldness which keeps him safe and well fed.

A mistle thrush appears, his breast whitish with large, black spots. He was very timid at first but becomes bolder, needing large quantities of food to keep up his body weight if he is to survive. We stand very still as even the slightest movement the other side of the window will frighten him away.

The mistle thrush is considerably larger than the song thrush,

making the blackbirds look slight. He dominates the table during his short residency, unable to tolerate even the small blue tit's presence. On the other hand the tits are gregarious, feeding in mixed groups, their only aim being to get as much food in as little time as possible whilst the table is free of larger foe. A couple of magpies parade along the wall but they rarely visit the table, though one morning I did find a flurry of tiny blue tit breast feathers there; a meal for some predator no doubt.

Twice I have been lucky to be in the kitchen when a rook visited; elegant and sleek when seen this close, majestic in grey feathers with black markings. Quite the opposite to the untidy colony on a neighbour's chimneys.

The RSPB is concerned that previous severe winters have decimated bird populations. Let's hope that with spring now almost upon us, we find our garden birds alive and well.

Guides' 85th anniversary



The 1st Bitton Guides and leaders welcomed former members to their HQ at Cherry Gardens on January 30 to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the founding of the unit, writes Sylvia Brown.

Guides from as far back as the early 1950s attended. Today's Guides interviewed the visitors to find out what Guiding was like years ago, and will be making a scrapbook. It was a very enjoyable afternoon meeting old friends. A celebration cake was cut by the County Commissioner for Bristol and South Glos.

It is an achievement that 15 years after Girl Guides were formed in London, our village has had a Guide company. It has log books and photos recordings its history since 1925, and has only had four Guiders in charge.

The unit is always looking for volunteers so if you are interested please call 0117 967 9869.

In the garden

Well, when the year of 2010 is recorded in gardening memoirs, we can already state with confidence that it was a 'concertina' year.

What does this mean? Quite simply, for the first two months of this year we have been unable to do anything in the garden, due to the hardest winter for at least 25 years. Believe it or not as I write this, more hard frosts and snow are forecast, but by the time you read this I am sure things will have picked up and March could be one of the warmest. Anything's likely!

Therefore it is going to be major catch-up time in the garden, hence 'concertina' year. I am sure like me you will only be too pleased to finally get outside and enjoy the fresh air. To say the garden needs a tidy-up is an understatement, but I am sure all the hard work will pay dividends.

Thinking back 12 months, we had a hard winter and a beautiful spring; if this year is as good as last, or better, then the 'suffering' will have been worth it. There are bound to be a few plant casualties — perhaps nature's way of saying things need freshening up.

I could give you a list of jobs to do in March, but it would be endless. Hopefully by the time you read this we will all be well on the way to catching up, in addition to seed sowing, planting, pruning, mowing and, of course, weeding. Though your back may be aching and hands blistered, isn't it a joy to be able to get out and get on with the gardening.

Rob and all staff at the Chief Trading Post

***PS.** I would like to advertise a coffee morning and cake sale on Saturday, March 6 from 10am to noon at 51 North Street, Oldland Common. Proceeds will help fund pioneering stem cell treatment in Germany for little Lauren Heal (Lolly) who at two developed cardiomyopathy and was left with brain injury.*

February quiz answers

February's quiz must have been tricky because we had just two entries – from Jon and Pam Heyes, and Jan Wookey and her friend Diane. Neither got all the answers correct but the Heyes were the closest. Well done! Here are the answers. (See over the page for this month's quiz)

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Deadline for April edition

Please get your copy and quiz answers for the next edition in to me by March 13.

Email rebecca.feather@ukonline.co.uk or call me on 0117 932 5037. Alternatively post or drop off your articles to 18 Church Road, Bitton BS30 6HH.

My friend, John Dankworth



Paul Wigmore, of Tayman Ridge, has been sharing his memories of his old friend Sir John Dankworth, who died in February.

The jazz composer, clarinettist, saxophonist, conductor and all-round musician was married to Dame Cleo Laine, and during his career worked with greats including Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald. He was also a prolific composer, writing the theme tune for TV shows *The Avengers* and *Tomorrow's World*, and films including *Modesty Blaise*.

Paul recalls how he first met him in 1991: "Canterbury Press had commissioned me to write three lyrics for their new publication *Worship Songs Ancient & Modern* (1992). Canterbury were the publishers of the very old hymnbook *Hymns Ancient & Modern* (the standard hymnal in almost all Anglican churches). This new book was compiled especially for children and young people generally.

"I wrote them, all the while trying to think of a composer who wrote in the 'song' style. I forget who suggested John but I wrote to him and immediately he agreed. He set the three, they were published and one of them has taken off and appears constantly in my PRS returns. They are on two or three CDs by cathedral choirs and others.

"He and I had always got on well together and a year or so ago he came to see us here to talk about writing some more things. Barbara and I greatly enjoyed his company that day – spent much of the time laughing."

Paul remembers Sir John's wry humour and says he was self deprecating with a "warmth of character that came through in his music". He adds: "A lovely character, absolutely nothing of the 'star' about his manner."



Granny Thompson's recipes

We are starting a new cookery feature with recipes from a gem of a book penned more than 100 years ago by Jon Heyes' grandmother, Emily Thompson.

Contained in the pages are scores of recipes, including coconut cup cakes, rabbit pudding, pear marmalade, anchovy toast, banana jelly, baked onion pudding, cough mixture and beef tea for an invalid.

There are also some marvellous hints from Granny Thompson, who died before Jon was born, but he understands that she was a formidable woman! We'll be sharing some of her pearls of wisdom too.

As we have been through a recession, it seems appropriate to start with this recipe.

An Inexpensive Dinner

Slice half a pound of beef kidney and half a pound of liver and season well. Put in the frying pan with enough dripping to fry. Slice two onions and fry in some fat. Peel and grate a parsnip and carrot. Put contents of the frying pan into a stew jar and spread over all the grated parsnip and carrot. Then add water to cover and cook for one hour. Thicken with flour and serve with mashed potatoes.

Window adornment

Get a large sponge and sow it full of rice, hemp, canary, linseed and grass seeds. Place in a shallow vessel containing clean water. In a few days seeds will begin to sprout. Then support the sponge where the sun can catch it. In a few weeks it will be a mass of lovely foliage. Refresh daily with water.

Flicks in the Sticks



Bitton Village Residents' Association
invites you to Flicks in the Sticks at the church
hall, Church Lane, on Friday, March 19 to see

An Education, starring Carey

Mulligan, Alfred Molina and Dominic Cooper. Doors open
at 7.30pm for an 8pm start. Admission is free. Drinks are
available and choc ices will be served.

*We are extending the season for a month to show a
foreign language movie, so keep Friday, April 16 free!*

Missing letters quiz

Fill in the missing letters to make 20 stage plays:

- 1 T-- M-----
- 2 A- I----- C----
- 3 M----- F-- M-----
- 4 T-- C-----
- 5 P-----
- 6 T-- D---'- H----
- 7 P----- O- T-- W----- W----
- 8 T-- R-----
- 9 L--- B--- I- A----
- 10 P----- L-----
- 11 A----- A-- C-----
- 12 T-- A-----
- 13 C-----
- 14 A S----- N---- D-----
- 15 T-- C----- O-----
- 16 T-- I----- O- B---- E-----
- 17 T-- B----- P----
- 18 S-- S----- T- C-----
- 19 W----- F-- G----
- 20 A--'- W--- T--- E--- W---