

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

Parish Church Magazine

ONLINE EDITION FEBRUARY 2014



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Parish Church Magazine



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FEBRUARY 2014

50p

SUNDAYS AT ST MARY'S

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Parish Communion and Children Together
6.30 pm	Evensong
10.00 am	(second Sunday) Worship Together

WEEKDAYS AT ST MARY'S

Daily:	9.00 am - Morning Prayer (except Fridays and Saturdays) Morning Prayer on Tuesdays will alternate between St Mary's, St Thomas' and Holy Trinity Amblecote
Daily:	5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (except Fridays)
Wednesday:	1.30 pm - Noah's Ark at St Mary's (term time) parents & toddlers
Thursday:	10.30 am - Holy Communion in Lady Chapel
Thursday:	7.30 pm - Bell Ringing Practice
Friday:	Choir Practice and Youth Groups (in term time)
Saturday:	10.00 - 12.00 am - Open Church –refreshments available
Priest in Charge Day Off:	Friday

OTHER REGULAR EVENTS



Bible Study Group:	Monday, first in month at 2.30 pm	379972
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	392951
Outreach Group:	Occasional meetings	01562 851491
Music Group Practice:	Second Saturday at 10.00 am	375167
St Mary's Walking Group:	Last Saturday of the month.	Depart 9.30 am

Reader Emeritus:	Mr Roy Peacock	379972
Reader:	Mrs Kanthi Ariaraj	395115
Church Wardens:	Mrs Marjorie Ferguson	393454
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Organist / Choirmaster:	Mr Robin Walker	01905 353939
Treasurer:	Mr Russ Fowler	442684
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Magazine Editors:	Miss Gemma Sutton	423021
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661

Church Hall and		
Coach House: - Bookings	Parish Office	441003
Parish Administrator and		
Publicity Officer:	Mr John Sutton	441003
Parish Office:	Open 9.00 am -12.00 noon Monday to Friday	441003
Church website address:	www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk	
	E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com	
Magazine e-mail address:	stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk	

ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

Please come to the Church on Saturday morning between 10.00 am and 11.00 am for Vestry Hour. You will be warmly welcomed. Tea and coffee will be available.

DIARY FOR FEBRUARY 2014

Saturday 1	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 2	CANDLEMAS
	3.00 pm Baptisms
Monday 3	Open the Book team at Old Swinford Primary School
Wednesday 5	3.00pm Holy Communion at Oriel House
	7.30pm Baptism preparation.
Thursday 6	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 8	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 9	FOURTH SUNDAY BEFORE LENT
Monday 10	Copy date for March magazine
Tuesday 11	11.30am Holy Communion at Holly Croft
	2.00pm Mothers' Union meeting in the Coach House
Wednesday 12	7.30 pm Deanery Synod Meeting
Thursday 13	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 15	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 16	THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE LENT
	3.00pm Baptisms
Thursday 20	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 22	9.30 am St Mary's Walking Group
	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 23	SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE LENT
Tuesday 25	2.30-4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex
Wednesday 26	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge

The response to the invitation to contribute to the gifts and events that celebrated the ministry at St Mary's of the Revd Ruth Atkinson was much appreciated. Gifts of food provided for a very pleasant Bring and Share lunch on Sunday 5 January during which we were able to say our personal goodbyes to Ruth.

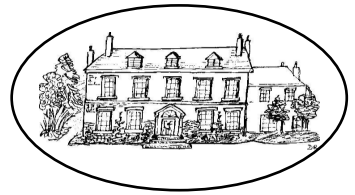
Generous financial contributions enabled us to present Ruth with a substantial cheque along with some flowers and a framed picture of the Grazebrook memorial window, as illustrated on the front cover of this magazine. This recorded:-

Presented to
The Reverend Ruth Atkinson
With the appreciation and fond good wishes of the
congregation and community groups of
St Mary's, Old Swinford,
in gratitude of her ministry and friendship
2009-2013

In recognition of the support given by Ruth to promoting the musical contributions at St Mary's a CD recording of 23 anthems sung by St Mary's choir completed the gifts.

The Churchwardens

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

2013 was a funny year. It was my first year in Parish ministry for over 20 years with comparatively few weddings. Between us Ruth and I presided at just 14 wedding services, under half the number I have been used to taking. Was this some significant shift in people's desire to be married? Or perhaps it was a significant downturn in people's desire to be married in church, or maybe it was just that people had decided not to be married at St Mary's.

Fortunately none of those possibilities seems to be the case, as the wedding bookings for 2014 have doubled in number. It would seem that 2013 was deemed an unlucky year in which to 'tie the knot'.

It is a great privilege to conduct a wedding service, and in an imposing church like St Mary's I would expect to conduct many of them, and it is certainly looking like I will be busy with weddings over the next twelve months.

I believe that when I conduct a wedding service, that service should be a memorable event in the lives of the couple getting married, and not only should the service be memorable, but the whole process of getting married at St Mary's should be a most positive occasion. It should be an experience which will strengthen the couple's resolve to make the marriage work, even when things aren't as rosy as they are on their wedding day, and it should also encourage them to think of the church as a place to which they can turn in the future.

The clergy, administrator, organist and others spend a good deal of time and effort making sure that the marriage service is right for the couple. But I don't think that is enough. I believe that we ought to be offering to help couples think a little longer term than just the marriage service, and to consider married life in the future, thirty, forty or more years beyond the day that they make their marriage vows.

For this reason I am setting up a number of 'Marriage Preparation Days' over the Spring of this year to which every couple getting married at St Mary's are being invited. During the day we will take a 'light touch' look at married life together, at issues like communication and role. As part of

the day we will also share a meal in the Coach House. Why am I writing about this? Firstly, so that you know what is going on in your parish. Secondly, so that you can remember this initiative and the couples taking part in your prayers. Finally because you might like to offer to help with the running of this course or provide hospitality for the couples. If you would like to help in any way, please have a word with me.

With every blessing,



SERVICES IN FEBRUARY 2014

2 February Candlemas	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Malachi 3. 1-5	Hebrews 2. 14-end	John 1. 29-42
	6.30 pm Evensong	Haggai 2. 1-9	John 2. 18-22	
9 February Fourth before Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER		
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Amos 2. 4-end	Ephesians 4. 17-end	
16 February Third before Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Ecclesiastes 15. 15-end	1 Corinthians 3. 1-9	Matthew 5. 21-37
	6.30 pm Evensong	Amos 3. 1-8	Ephesians 5. 1-17	
23 February Second before Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Genesis 1. 1-2-3	Romans 8. 18-25	Matthew 6. 25-34
	6.30 pm Evensong	Proverbs 8. 1, 22-31	Revelation 4.	

RICHARD HARRIS
1927-2013

Someone remarked, as the pews of St Mary's filled at the approaching start to the Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Richard Harris, Richard might have observed, "Not a bad turn out. Should be a good collection." This wasn't any mercenary remark but an observation which reflected the constant care and attention given by Richard to the practicalities of ensuring the secure financial being of St Mary's during the 48 years he served as Parish Treasurer and to the wider financial acumen he displayed in his many years of valued guidance of the Diocesan investments.

In prayer, poetry, music, song and spoken words the many facets of Richard's rich life were portrayed and celebrated with the congregation during this service on Tuesday, 7 January. Family members, friends, and colleagues combined to share in words of their own, their particular memories and appreciations of Richard's generous, giving nature, his love of the good things in life and of the achievements that made him so much the character we knew. Music was an important element of the service which was reflected in the hymns, the anthem sung by St Mary's Choir and the personal contribution of the Nunc Dimittis (Stanford in G) sung by Martin Harris and the choir.

Among the tributes was a reading by Richard's grandson, Theo, of Rudyard Kipling's "If", probably Richard's favourite poem and a measure by which Richard may well have judged his own contributions to life. The tributes paid to Richard underlined his motivation and his success to be a good and faithful servant and confirmed the fullness of the life he had led and for which we thank God.

If

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream - and not make dreams your
master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run -
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man my son!

Rudyard Kipling

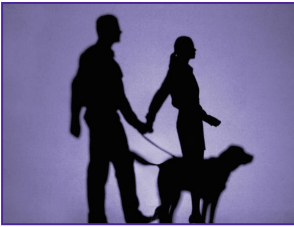
CHRISTINGLE 2013

My special thanks go to all those who took part in, and supported, our celebration. It was a joyous family occasion and the procession of lighted candles on the Christingles around the church was particularly poignant.

The sum of £183.31 was raised at the service, which will help the Children's Society in its work to support many thousands of vulnerable children every year.

Wendy Tranter

DOG WALKING WITH CARE



St Mary's churchyard is a place through which many people walk each day. Several people use the churchyard paths on a regular basis as a means of quickly getting from one place to another, for quiet walks away from traffic, and as an area in which to exercise their dogs. With consideration and courtesy such use should not conflict with these grounds being the resting place of loved ones, a place for peace and reflection, where funerals frequently take place and

the privacy of such occasions should not be intruded upon.

Sadly, not everyone treats the land in this way. A few dog owners allow their pets to run free, out of control, with the result that floral tributes left by other visitors are scattered and people are frightened by over-exuberant pets. One of the greatest concerns, most vocally expressed by other more responsible dog owners, is for those who allow their dogs to foul the land. This is a very inconsiderate action which impacts on everyone walking in the area and causes particular difficulties for those working in and trying to keep the grounds tidy and cared for.

Such has been the extent of this concern that the local authority Enforcement Officer is now making regular visits to the site to observe how it is used and to talk with those who are passing through. The Enforcement Officer is intent on identifying those responsible for the misuse of this land and will use the powers available to him to encourage or enforce observation of acceptable standards.

Please help in this important matter by using the facilities with care. Responsible dog owners always carry bags that enable them to meet the requirements of the law to collect and properly dispose of all dog waste and they ensure their dogs are under control. Observation of these and other courtesies in the way that we all use the churchyard grounds will ensure that we can all enjoy and benefit from this important community facility.

The Churchwardens

TOP CHURCH TRAINING

Supporting Young People

Many people are aware of Marjorie Ferguson's involvement with a charity that provides support for young people facing very challenging circumstances. The magazine committee enquired further about the activities of this charity and below is a description of its work.

Top Church Training (TCT) provides a one to one intense practical support and mentoring service to young people in the Dudley Borough between the ages of 16 – 24 who are NEET (not in employment, education or training), at risk of becoming NEET or who are homeless.

These young people often have multi-complex needs including mental health issues – including self harming, depression and anxiety. Some have drug and alcohol dependences, some are young offenders or others may have left the care system and cannot cope with life by themselves. For others they are often estranged from their families due to fleeing domestic violence or family relationship breakdowns.

They live in total isolation, not accessing any main stream services, live in poverty and are unable to afford to eat a healthy diet. Many of our young people have learning difficulties and disabilities and are easily exploited by others into a lifestyle of crime and drug dealing. They have low aspirations, low confidence and self-esteem. They feel unloved and unworthy, they do not look forward to their futures.

We provide an immediate response service with the aim of assisting a homeless young person straight away. We do this through a “hand hold” approach and will identify and take them to suitable permanent supported accommodation. We will assist with moving them in to the property; set up their benefit claims and advocate where necessary; help them with form filling; take them to the Foodbank and set up a bank account for them.

We then focus the support on building their confidence and self-esteem to encourage them to make better life choices and raise their aspirations in life which then motivates them to consider their career choices and return to education or training.

We also provide a basic life skills programme which is incorporated into our weekly drop In, with the aim of encouraging young people to take an interest in living a healthy lifestyle, becoming more job ready and to prevent re-homelessness. In groups young people learn together how to cook healthy meals on a budget. This has proved to be very successful and we have discovered hidden talents in some young people who are now considering returning to college to do catering.

We also provide a work club where young people can access the internet to do job searches to satisfy their universal job matches.

To complement the drop-In further we invite local relevant youth agencies including local training and college providers to talk to our young people.

We also have a drugs and alcohol support worker and a sexual health worker operating a floating support service to young people. In April 2013 we started running a pilot art project which was funded through the Dudley NHS Mental Health Small Grants Fund. This has been well attended by the young people with many considering a career in the arts. Almost all the young people have enjoyed attending the tie dye, abstract painting, clay modelling sessions which have been carried out by local artists.

Between January 2013 and December 2013 85% of our referrals were of homeless young people. We found all the young people accommodation with many eventually returning to training courses and one has now completed her first term at university.

Contact details for Top Church Training are:-

**Brierley Hill Baptist Church, The Café, South Street, Brierley Hill,
West Midlands, DY5 2RR**

Tel: 01384 262114. Email: topchurchtraining@btconnect.com

Charity No: 1062241. Company Reg. No: 03328704

COACH HOUSE SECRETARY

As the month of the Annual meeting approaches the need to appoint a new secretary for this valuable community charity becomes ever more urgent.

After many years of loyal service the current secretary needs to step down and therefore the Coach House Charity committee needs someone willing to undertake this important but not too onerous task. This is an unpaid role which would require a commitment of a few hours each month. There are four to six meetings a year where minutes are taken and agendas prepared for each following meeting. Work would normally be undertaken at home or at the Coach House when meetings are held.

For further details please contact Joan Barwick, 01384 395319 or speak to a Coach House committee member.

The AGM will be held on Thursday 27 March, at 7.30 pm in the upstairs room of the Coach House. All are welcome to attend.

FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

COULD DO BETTER

In a few weeks time it will be Lent. Lent starts on Ash Wednesday. Before that we have a day of feasting and merry making, Shrove Tuesday.

During Lent people have always fasted, which meant they only ate plain food. They tried to spend the six weeks of Lent putting God first.

They had to eat up all the meat, eggs and butter (rich foods) before Lent so on the Tuesday they had a great feast. It became known as Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras. We know it as Pancake Day.



PANCAKE RECIPE

In a bowl, mix together:
4 tablespoons of plain flour
2 dessertspoons of sugar
A pinch of salt.

Crack two eggs in a bowl.

Beat them and then add
A teaspoon of warm butter.

Stir this into the flour mixture.

Stir in enough milk, slowly, until it is like cream.

Beat it until it bubbles.

Let an adult then fry your pancakes.

Enjoy!



'PAN' WORDS

Fill in the missing letters:

1. Pan _ _ A food store
2. Pan _ _ A flower
3. Pan _ _ A bear
4. Pan _ _ _ An animal
5. _ pan _ A smack
6. _ _ _ _ pan You cook in it
7. _ _ _ pan _ _ A friend
8. Pan _ _ _ _ _ A show
9. _ pan _ _ _ A dog
10. _ _ pan _ Get bigger

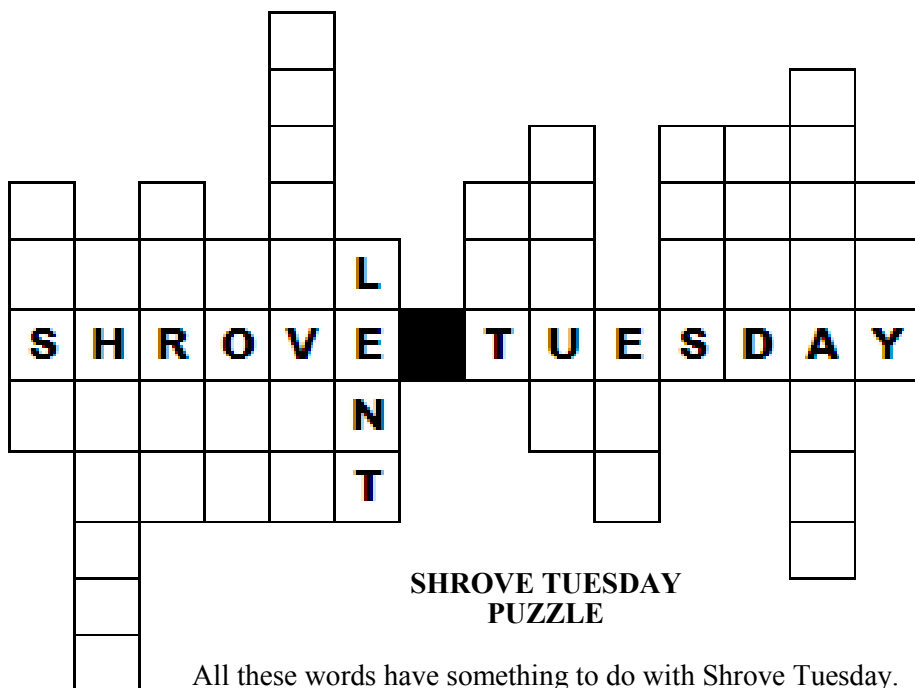
JESUS KNEW PEOPLE WHO COULD DO BETTER

Can you name two tax gatherers who did better?

1. _____
Luke 19. 7-8
2. _____
Matthew 9. 9-10

How many times did Jesus say we were to forgive?

3. _____
Matthew 18. 22



SHROVE TUESDAY PUZZLE

All these words have something to do with Shrove Tuesday.
Fit them into the squares to read downwards.
One is done for you.

MARDI
GRAS
CARNIVAL
FAST

FOOD
EGG
FRY
FLOUR

LENT
TOSS
PANCAKES
FAT

THANK YOU – FROM REVD RUTH ATKINSON

A huge thank you for all the cards, gifts and best wishes sent to me over the past few weeks as I concluded my time with you as a parish. Since I returned to the Anglican church in 1999 the colours of the liturgy have always been important to me as they hold within them the breadth of life with all its joys and sorrows. I have had the privilege of sharing those same joys and sorrows with you both individually and in church and parish.

My first memory of visiting St Mary's was of Greville opening the vestry door and me seeing the Grazebrook window in all its beauty; my second was seeing the church as a whole inside and thinking, 'Grief, its enormous!' The beauty of the building has fed me on many occasions and been an inspiration in my preaching. When I came to church the following Sunday the choir sang a Mozart mass; an appetiser for all the gifts of music that I would receive over the next few years. Learning the parts the priest sings was nerve racking but became a joy; many thanks go to Robin for his help and support especially during the interregnum when his knowledge of liturgy and attention for detail kept me on track. Thanks also to Judith who regularly acted as a third hand when I just didn't have enough.

I remember in the first year, if not well into the second, the feeling that if I was stood on my left foot I should have been on my right and vice versa and the same was true of the microphone; it was always off when it should have been on and on when it should have been off. I think Greville must have despaired at times – certainly I would never have learnt to be so organised in worship without him.

There were also many times in the first year, such as signing the baptism register, leading in a coffin and certainly when I took my first wedding when I would think why isn't the priest taking this; however; my confidence grew and thrived on all that ministry has to offer. I can still remember most of the funerals I took and in particular the stories their loved ones told. Equally being a member of the hospice chaplaincy team was a delight and the place where I most clearly found God and the space between heaven and earth was often so thin you could put your hand through it.

Going into school was another joy, especially once I had mastered the art of being visual and learnt the key to a small child's heart is to arrive with a surprise in a carrier bag. Thanks go to headteacher Ross Workman, Steve Pepper before him and the staff for all their support. Most of all thanks go to the children who have been my biggest teacher.

Whatever I have done I can think of very little that I have not enjoyed. The variety of parish ministry has given me a new understanding on where my future ministry might lie and whether taking baptisms or weddings, leading a eucharist, a funeral or worship together, taking Holy Communion to someone's home or to one of the care homes, working with Anchor, the bereavement care group, visiting Noah's Ark or working with the Children's Together leaders all of it has been a privilege.

If you think in colours the interregnum was a whole raft of them. When I was priested someone asked me if I felt different. My answer was, 'I feel like a Year 7 in September.'

During the interregnum whilst I would never be casual about ministry I grew in skill and confidence and by half way through the third year I remember saying to my sending parish priest I feel like I am ready to leave the 6th form- nervous about flying the nest but ready to go. Sadly it was not to be. It has however been my privilege to help Stephen settle in and I am grateful to him for his help in the past 2 years not least in filling in some of the gaps. I am grateful to those of you who have known of the pain and difficulties of the last couple of years and have supported me through them.

Particular thanks also go to the church wardens. Edward said when I was deaconed, 'if you have a problem you come to us and we will sort it' – he was true to his word. Along with Roy and Kanthi, Marjorie and I made a formidable team during the interregnum. I think it was Robin, Marjorie's son who queried whether or not the church was ready for two straight speaking Yorkshire women. Both Marjorie and Tony have always been ready to listen and to be a sounding board. John Sutton was also another strong part of my support team. Without the work of the laity I could not have seen my ministry develop. Experience Harvest was certainly a highlight. I know that Jan Sutton's group regularly supported my ministry through prayer and Jan's home was a frequent stopping off place for tea and a reflective chat.

There are many others too many to name who have worked alongside me not least those who are no longer here but are part of the great communion of saints. Alongside Edward, Ian and Jane stand out.

There is one couple who will not be known to most of you but whose hospitality and support has been invaluable. Whether looking after my cats when I was away, coming running when the boiler threatened to blow up, cutting the grass or speaking sternly to the plants, Anne and Martin Harris, neighbours over the road have been, in the language from around here, 'golden'.

In the profile Greville sent me about the curacy it said this is a church who understands its responsibilities towards curates. He was right it has been a blessing and a privilege to serve you.

Sadly despite all that has been good I leave you without a post and not knowing the next step. I think the snowdrops will be out in the churchyard now; whilst I hate winter I love the promise that the spring bulbs bring. Bishop John Keble said about the snowdrop, *'I am come to calm your fears: I am come to console you in the absence of bright days, and to reassure you of their return.'* Here's hoping that it will not be too long before I can tell you good news.

CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS

Thanks to the generosity of those who attended services and contributed to the special events throughout the Christmas period the following organisations have benefitted from goods and/or financial donations.

Dudley Women's Refuge, The Food Bank,
Water Aid and The Children's Society

SOUNDING BOARD CARERS SUPPORT GROUP AT THE COACH HOUSE - VISIT TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE

On a sunny day last autumn, members of Sounding Board, together with Dudley Carers Forum, set out for London.

After a whistle-stop tour of the city, when our driver gave a very informative commentary, we arrived at the rear of the palace. Confirming our identity, we enquired which coach space we had been allocated. "Oh yes", said the attendant, "they are expecting you at the front gate." As we must have looked completely puzzled, he confirmed the instructions and we set off for the front gates. We were immediately admitted through the right hand gate, towards a large archway. First problem! The space was very tight and we were on a brand new coach. As our driver inched his way through, with the aid of two police officers, we heard one of our younger members say, "I can't watch, we are not going to make it", but we did, arriving in the quadrangle of the palace to the applause of everyone, including the policemen.

Amazingly we were the only visitors in the square and were welcomed by members of staff and moved through security, given yellow badges and proceeded to the Royal Mews.

Here a very friendly guide took us to see the various horse-drawn coaches and vehicles used by the Royal Family, ending with the magnificent Golden State Coach. The size and workmanship was quite breathtaking. Unfortunately, there were only two horses in the stables: apparently the others were on holiday.

Returning to the palace, we were given an informative tour of the Magnificent State Room, through the "Coronation Exhibition" with all the coronation regalia, including the beautiful dresses worn by the Queen and her attendants. We then arrived at the rear garden where we enjoyed refreshments in the marquee.

All the time during our visit we were asked by palace staff if we needed assistance (hence the yellow badges).

At last it was time to return home, at the end (so we thought) of a truly memorable day. But there was more to come! As we settled in our seats, once more on our coach, a palace official thanked us for visiting and informed us that due to the problems encountered on our arrival as we passed through the narrow arch, they would make an exception to the rules and allow us to exit through the main gates. As we approached the gates police officers parted the crowds as we slowly passed through. Tourists immediately started taking photographs. Who did they think we were? What else could we do but nod and give the 'royal wave.' Everyone felt so special, but then carers are special aren't they?

Diana de Souza

FEBRUARY FILL DYKE

After the recent weeks of storms, rain and flooding across the country the weather-lore of February fill dyke brings little comfort. The old adage is based on the expectation that rain and snow will 'fill the ditches'. An early reference in a book of English proverbs in 1670, the complete saying is quoted as "February fill dyke – be it black or be it white; but if it's white, the better to like". The colour reference implies black for rain and white for snow – apparently snow being preferable to rain. Though February is notoriously associated with floods as expressed in this adage, it is statistically one of the drier months of the year (R Whitlock – Calendar of country customs 1976).



February fill dyke provides the title for a Victorian oil painting by Benjamin Williams (1830-1923) reproduced here. The original is in Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

Alec Beevers

CANDLEMAS

Candlemas commemorates the ritual purification of Mary, forty days after the birth of her son Jesus. Following the birth, for forty days for a boy, and sixty days for a girl, women weren't allowed to worship in the temple. At the end of this time, women were brought to the Temple or Synagogue to be purified. After the ceremony women were allowed to take part in religious services again.

This day also marks the ritual presentation of the baby Jesus to God in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Gospel of Luke says that Jesus was met by Anna and Simeon. Simeon held the baby Jesus and called him a Light to the World.

The festival is called Candlemas because this was the day that all the Church's candles for the year were blessed. On Candlemas night, many people place lighted candles in their windows at home.

Like some other Christian festivals, Candlemas draws some of its elements from Paganism. In pre-Christian times, it was the festival of light. This ancient festival marked the mid point of winter, half way between the winter solstice (shortest day) and the spring equinox.

Traditionally, any Christmas decorations not taken down by Twelfth Night (January 5) should be left up until Candlemas Day and then taken down.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

SPAGHETTI CARBONARA

This dish is named for the coal burners, (carbonara) of Rome. The amount of black pepper is said to be reminiscent of a typical charcoal carrier's meal, the little black specks presumably having fallen into the dish.

Most restaurants add a little cream but it's not considered authentic.

400 grams spaghetti or tagliatelle
1 tablespoon olive oil
225 grams freshly grated parmesan
4 egg yolks
225 grams pancetta or bacon bits
Black pepper & salt



Method

1. Cook the pasta in a large saucepan according to the instructions on the packet.
2. Whilst the pasta is cooking, heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat, add the pancetta and fry for 2-3 minutes until crisp. If the pancetta is quite fatty, you won't need the oil, as it will release its own fat.
3. Drain the spaghetti, reserving a little of the cooking water in the pan. Return the pasta to the saucepan and, while it is still steaming hot, add the parmesan cheese, egg yolks and cooked pancetta. Season with salt and lots of black pepper.
4. Quickly stir everything together to give a creamy coating to the pasta.
5. Serve straightaway, as the pasta can become a bit stodgy if it is left in the pan for too long.

Ann Jennings

CHRISTMAS COLOURING COMPETITION

Thank you to everyone who sent in a completed picture. They have been on display in the church and have been much admired by visitors.

We are sorry that not everyone can be a prize winner, but on this occasion a special mention is given to Esme (aged 6), Rachel (aged 6) and Anna (aged 7) in appreciation of their special artwork. A little prize is on the way to say well done and thank you for your creative ideas which added a good deal to the original picture.

AND FOR THE WINE.....

Embarking for Italy, we can contemplate many options to drink with our spaghetti carbonara. Its creamy flavours and olive oil suggest a crisp dry white. Such wines abound in Italy. However we need to take a little care. Bianco di Custoza, Garganega, Arneis and a host of Trebbiano based wines all represent the style of fresh clean with reserved fruit character which would work perfectly well alongside a fish linguini but would be a little light for this dish. I often place Vermentino into this category but I have recently tasted the example stocked by Tesco which uses fruit from Sicily. This is further south than most Vermentino vineyards and displays bolder more prominent fruit. As Sicily overhauls its grape plantings and replaces great swathes of the less inspiring catarratto grape, perhaps we may see more wines like this.

However the pancetta which lies at the heart of this dish demands a wine with an extra dimension. The peach-scented Viognier and Fiano which are also being planted in Sicily and the southern regions of Italy are probably too aromatic here. The classic match for spaghetti carbonara is Frascati which strikes a lovely balance. A blend of the more characterful Malvasia and the crisp fresh Trebbiano, it is worth paying a little extra for a Frascati Classico. However, if you want to follow a more modern route, try a Falanghina - its heartland lies further south but as the appeal of some of Italy's older traditional wines diminishes, Falanghina is making a name for itself. Track down a bottle for a taste of the new Italy.....

Enjoy your wine-sipping.



Richard W. B. Ryan

Children's Page Answers

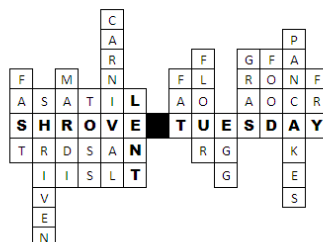
Panwords:

1. Pantry
2. Pansy
3. Panda
4. Panther
5. Spank
6. Saucepan
7. Companion
8. Pantomime
9. Spaniel
10. Expand

Could do better:

1. Zacchaeus
2. Matthew
3. 77

Shrove Tuesday Puzzle:



PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

15 December Felicity Jessica Kiera Smith
Ivy Elizabeth Carr
Charisma Louise Downing

5 January Isabelle Grace Healey

Weddings

No Weddings

Funerals

16 December	Margaret Dunn	aged 89
20 December	Richard Harris	aged 86
7 January	Christina Webb	aged 101
10 January	Ken Price	aged 71

KEN PRICE

It is with sadness that we record the death of Ken Price whose funeral was held at St Mary's on Friday 10 January.

Following a long career at Round Oak, Ken was made redundant when the steelworks closed. He then became involved with the Youth Training Scheme and supervised a group that began work to tame the then very overgrown churchyard at St Mary's. When the YTS programme ended Ken pursued the challenge he had undertaken and he was employed to care for the grounds of St Mary's for three mornings a week. If not keeping the lawns neat and tidy Ken continued the battle with the overgrown areas of the churchyard, bringing the land under such control that, with regular attention, this has been maintained to this day. Even after he retired as gardener, Ken continued to work in the grounds on a voluntary basis until ill health prevented him from doing so.

Throughout his time generously given to St Mary's Ken was a character with whom passers-by much enjoyed a chat. He took great pride in the work he undertook and many people have been very grateful to Ken for his commitment and care.

Ken is now buried in the churchyard he cared for. As Revd Stephen Agnew observed in the funeral service, "Thank you, Ken, for all you have done for this church."

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER, ROGER MORRIS LOVE TO THE LOVELESS

Our first dog was a rescued border collie who'd suffered ill treatment and neglect. She was quite a nervous dog when she first arrived (and even bit an Archdeacon when he came to my house). Gradually, as we showed our border collie the love and care that had been absent during her troubled past, she became as warm and as loving a dog as you could ever hope to meet.



When I think of the transformation that our dog underwent, I am reminded of the hymn by Samuel Crossman that begins with the words 'My song is love unknown, My Saviour's love to me; Love to the loveless shown, That they might lovely be.' I know of no other hymn that makes such repetitious use of the word love in its opening few lines. Samuel Crossman wrote the words to the hymn as one of nine poems printed in 1664.

Samuel Crossman was a Puritan writing just two years after the Book of Common Prayer was published. The English Reformation had reinforced a desire for moral purity and this can be seen in various passages in the Book of Common Prayer, for example: 'Now seeing that all they are accursed (as the prophet David beareth witness) who do err and go astray from the commandments of God; let us (remembering the dreadful judgement hanging over our heads, and always ready to fall upon us) return unto our Lord God with all contrition and meekness of heart; bewailing and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of penance'.

You would think, given when Samuel Crossman was writing his poems, that there would be an echo of this kind of language in the hymn but nothing could be further from the truth. Instead the hymn speaks of love being shown to the loveless that they might lovely be. Gone is the language of curse and judgement; of bewailing and lamenting our sinful life. Instead Samuel Crossman speaks about the loveless being made lovely through being shown love. It is about Jesus coming to those who are lacking in love and loving them. Not that they might be saved or pure or righteous (these are not the words that are used) but loved that they might lovely be. I think I would struggle to find a better expression of the gospel than this: that Jesus loves the loveless and that, through them receiving that love, they (we) are made lovely.

The gospel or good news has never been about us getting our act together and then presenting ourselves as pure and loveable before God. It is about God loving us as we are and not as we should be - because none of us is as we should be. The good news is also that, as we receive God's free gift of love, we are transformed. Love, shown to the loveless, makes them lovely (and also loving - as evidenced by my old Border Collie). May all our lives speak of the transforming power of God's love and may God continually expand our role as agents of that love.

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