

Magazine

February/ March 2020



Thoughts on faith

A 'transparent' coffee

Finding a new way forward



Zion
United
Reformed
Church

~ Northallerton ~

Zion and Community

Sunday 10.00 a.m.	Morning worship Communion every 3 rd Sunday Bright and early and a warm welcome every week
Monday 9.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. In term time	Tiny time Mums, come and join us in the Church Hall for a chat and a cuppa while the children play
Wednesday 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon	'Way In' A chance to get a coffee or tea and a chat
12 noon to 12.30 p.m.	A chance to sit and eat your packed lunch warm and dry
1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	Market Day service A time for quiet reflection in the midst of a busy day
Saturday 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon	'Way In' More coffee and chat

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Pastoral letter

'I've never seen that before!' Have you had that experience? Perhaps travelling down a very familiar road, a road you've gone along countless times, and suddenly seen something for the first time? Not something new, but something that must have always been there, but you just had not noticed it? Or like those optical illusions where for some time you see one image, but then suddenly a new image snaps into view? Maybe you've had a similar experience in understanding. Perhaps you've suddenly seen a new way of understanding a very familiar Bible story, or the meaning of a passage you've never really understood suddenly became clear. It's as though you've suddenly seen the light – an epiphany.

Although we in the Western Church associate the season of Epiphany with the coming of the Magi (and the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles), in the Eastern Church, where the Feast of Epiphany originated, it was a celebration of the Baptism of Jesus. Was this something of an epiphany moment expressed in the Gospels by the heavens opened, the dove alighting, and the voice saying, 'You are my beloved Son, with whom I am pleased'?



Soon, the church calendar will move into Lent, that familiar time of preparation. Recalling Jesus' time in the wilderness after his baptism by John, this time has traditionally been used to prepare converts to Christianity for their baptism and entry into the church at Easter. More often now it is often used as an opportunity for a series of ecumenical study groups to encourage the faith journeys of those already in the church.

Whether from seeing something for the first time, or gradually

discovering, testing, thinking around and developing a deeper understanding and faith, there is always change in life and in the life of faith. A year of change has begun for us all. As I write this, the day the UK 'leaves' the EU is still a couple of weeks away (and the new relationship is further away still). 'This year' Hilary and I retire, with all that means by way of change for us and for the churches of the pastorate yet to be fully recognised and worked out.

May God guide us all, revealing his way, supporting and encouraging us as we ask our questions of the future.

Stephen

The rule breakers

When unfair trade was the accepted norm, Traidcraft broke rules to challenge and change this. 40 years on, Fairtrade commodities line shelves of supermarkets up and down the country, but their work is far from done...

The ridiculously low commodity coffee price is currently driving hundreds of thousands of coffee farmers and their families into financial ruin and migration. Coffee plants are being cleared on a massive scale and replaced by cocoa cultivation or other crops. The consequence: **the loss of the livelihood of these families**. The coffee industry has not yet found any effective answers to this catastrophic development.

Traidcraft signed the Coffee Transparency Pledge in 2019, making 100% of their coffee costs transparent and public. They also registered two single origin coffees to the Transparent Trade Coffee Platform, declaring the exact amount of money which

goes back to origin.

Not content with just stopping there but stripping back everything you thought you knew about fair trade they are launching their very own 'Transparency' Coffee.

Traidcraft are breaking all the rules and **publishing publicly (on the front of the packet, for all to see!) exactly how much farmers are paid, how much goes into shipping, roasting and packing and how much profit is made.** This makes, to their knowledge, the first coffee in the world to do this. Yes, this could be seen as radical and revolutionary, however, it's simply real fair trade in its purest form, as it was intended to be. Traidcraft are reclaiming fair trade.



Did you know that the average price paid on the New York Coffee exchange for non-Organic coffee adds up to about **53p**, for non-Organic, Fairtrade coffee, the agreed

minimum price is **71p**, and for Organic and Fairtrade coffee, the agreed minimum price is **84p**. Traidcraft are publicly declaring that they have paid **£1.32** directly to the growers who harvested the beans for this coffee.

This Organic, fair trade and rule-breaking ground arabica coffee is a dark roast with a light, floral sweetness (strength 4), made using a blend of beans from Honduras and Sumatra. It's also roasted in the UK – just down the road from their HQ, at Ringtons in Newcastle, in fact.

It will be interesting to see if any other coffee sellers follow this transparency route!

Roger Tucker

The next Traidcraft stalls will be held on Sunday 23rd. February and 29th March.

A 'moving' Nativity

Being a parent and a primary school teacher nativity plays have always meant to me learning repetitive songs with children, desperately trying to find a suitable outfit for my child to be an angel (complete with wings which don't droop) and comforting the child (or her parent!) who desperately wanted to be Mary and ended up being a sheep. In my past experience nativity plays have never really moved me or made me think more deeply about the Christmas story, but this year was different.

After expressing wishes to explore different ways to worship and to use our Secret Garden more, a group of people came up with the idea of a "walking nativity". Loosely (very loosely) inspired by the classic episode of *The Vicar of Dibley* when their nativity took place on Owen's farm, our nativity was acted out in various places around our church – starting in the hall, moving to our small back garden, into the secret garden, out to the front to our small fenced garden and finally into the church building itself. In these places, the audience were witness to young Mary being visited by a disembodied angelic voice and her breaking the



news to Joseph. We visited the wise men's home only to hear they had left to follow a star. We shared the angel visitation to the shocked shepherds and heard King Herod discussing events with the wise men. Finally, everyone gathered together at the birth in Bethlehem.

I will confess that, originally, I had my doubts. I have witnessed too many cringe-worthy attempts at drama in various settings and dreaded the thought of adults with tea-towels and neck ties for headdresses. I truly dislike the mindset that

because it is church and open to all, we have to lower our standards to be inclusive. How could this project be any different? We are a small congregation with few younger members. How could such an ambitious project be carried out well? What a doubting Thomas I was.

Thanks to some very experienced direction and a genuine desire to make the Christmas story relevant and accessible, an extremely thoughtful script was put together and the plans made. It was no mean undertaking, rushed into a matter of weeks. The worship group diligently planned over 11 months, a number of people put together appropriate and original costumes (many of the headaddresses came from Bethlehem itself and there wasn't a tea towel in sight). Our wonderful secret garden benefited from the expertise of another member who put together a lighting system which was perfect for the winter dusk in which the performances took place. And who would bear the brunt of playing Herod? Inspired casting – you choose one of the nicest, kindest, most generous men of the church family who has to play completely against type.

So, after only a few rehearsals, we were ready for our audience. At the last moment, due to the illness of a member of the cast, I was promoted to “walking narrator”, accompanying a group of people around the various tableaux and was honoured to be able to wear her long black cassock. I cannot tell you the difference that made. Suddenly I felt the responsibility of passing on the good news of Christmas in a way I never had before. Escorting a mixed group of adults, children, church members and visitors around the various parts of our church was a such a moving experience for me. The twilight, the fires, the fairy lights, and the emotion expressed by the actors all combined to make this an almost magical afternoon. The words I was reading, making connections to this long-ago experience and our current world had never had such an effect on me. When we all gathered in the church, at 'Bethlehem', singing *Silent Night*, it took a great deal of control not to shed a tear.

The end result? Getting to know many of our church family better, learning and appreciating skills we didn't know many of them had, and sharing in an experience which will stay with us all for a long time. And requests from members of other churches in the area to make it a larger ecumenical event next year! Watch this space!



So – to answer my own previous question - How could such an ambitious project be carried out well with all our limitations? How foolish I am to forget that God will be in every part of our lives if we let him and if we truly put it in God's hands, **anything** can happen!

Alexa Barber

To recycle or not?

The seasons of Advent and Christmas are behind us. They can, however, be times of over-indulgence and waste. The challenge at the start of a New Year is to try to buy only what we want and not what we think we will need. We can all use our LOAF (local, organic, animal friendly and fairly traded) when buying; it's not too hard to do if we try to find the time. I am sure we all can try, however busy we are, to re-cycle the waste we generate in our families large or small.

It is knowing what can or cannot be recycled that is the difficult thing, which items of plastic can be put in the recycling or put in the general waste. What do we do with mixed material packaging, recycle or general waste?

In the Green Corner you will find a box. We would like to see it full

of questions you would like to ask the representative of Hambleton District Councils Recycling Department who is coming to talk to us on 11th February and your questions would be gratefully appreciated. You could put plastics into the box to find out whether to recycle or not together with anything else (clean!) you are not sure about. So many Councils have differing takes on recycling of plastics, it would be a great help to know just what we can and cannot put into our recycling in Hambleton.

A blessed and happy re-cycling New Year to you all.

Lesley Bustard

Pride comes before a fall?

The coat...a bit like a horse-blanket but made of Donegal Tweed so it must be all right. Fringes and startling panels of high- quality variations of red/orange velvet nestle slashed in big panels down front and sleeve edge. In Northallerton, this year, it passed between me and Joseph, of Nativity fame and provenance, in preparation for Zion's life-size 'walking' Nativity around the Secret Garden. (Worn inside out naturally as he is not to appear striking - yet of course he was amazing!)

My turn... (promises to get it back for the dress rehearsal); to be able to wear it to London on my way to Westminster Cathedral Christmas Music to adore the forth-coming of the Christ-child and also to hear and see Elliot, my grandson, just doing what he does day after day. I was very tired by the time it happened as I had met another grandson, Oliver and a son, Tim, in London to explore the Tutankhamun exhibition.

The coat, more or less unremarked in Yorkshire suddenly made a

celebrity appearance in King's Cross Station. Travelling light for an overnight stay in Forest Hill, with only my yellow satchel for luggage, I am greeted by a gorgeous young black woman, who says, 'I hope you don't mind me commenting, but I love to see an old lady in distinctive clothing. What a fabulous coat and scarf.' The scarf is bright yellow silk and embroidered colour of every hue on the other side. Hand stitched and fringed, thought to be part of a sari. (It features Kantha embroidery I am reliably informed). We began to converse as she asked me if I was an artist, but I said I had written a book on the spirituality of clothing. Whereupon she contacted Amazon on her phone and ordered a copy immediately of 'Naked and you Clothed me.' Vastly cheered I went on my way! An unexpected gift to me and a happy shared and unexpected encounter!

The following day, on my return stroll along the concourse and up the escalator from King's Cross, an elegant young woman turned to me on the ascending stair and said, 'You look wonderful in that coat and scarf. The colours together are stunning,' and this sentiment was instantly echoed by the American couple, upwardly gliding behind me, both of them! What is going on I thought but happily and giggling to myself as I plunged into the tunnels of the underground.

Phew. I settled on to my train northbound to fully appreciate my first-class seat to York. What is that horrid searing pain I sensed? It grew and grew and then I knew.... my digestive system was making its presence felt!

I finally staggered into my G.P.'s surgery as an emergency several hours later. Shortly to be admitted for three days and tests to hospital. I had, Paul now tells me, been outwardly groaning in the waiting room. The excellent compassionate young doctor reached out to help me on to the couch, saying, 'That coat is amazing. You look like someone famous or infamous.' I rest my case!

Ann Bowes

Church Diary

FEBRUARY

Sat 1 st Feb	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 2 nd Feb	10.00 am	Morning Worship (Revd Stephen Collinson)
Mon 3 rd Feb	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	10.30 am	Funeral – David Calvert (Church) followed by
	11.45 am	Cremation service (Darlington)
	7.00 pm	Cottage Crafters – Craft Group (Cottage)
Tues 4 th Feb	12.30 pm	Elders' Meeting (Cottage)
Wed 5 th Feb	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time “Drop-in” (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Soup & Roll Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Mrs Esther Witts)
Thurs 6 th Feb	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
	7.30 pm	WIZI - Women's Group (Cottage)

Sat 8 th Feb	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 9 th Feb	10.00 am	Morning Worship (Revd Hilary Collinson)
	11.15 am	Church Meeting
Mon 10 th Feb	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	2.00 pm	Jane & Paul's Housegroup (Dunnas House, Brompton)
Tues 11 th Feb	7.00 pm	Recycling explained by Ms Tracy Flint (HDC) (Church)
Wed 12 th Feb	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Soup & Roll Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Mrs Iris Miller)
Thurs 13 th Feb	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
Sat 15 th Feb	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 16 th Feb	10.00 am	Communion Service (Mrs Iris Miller & Mrs Christine Roddam)
	7.00 pm	<i>Commitment for Life Sunday</i> Bible Study (Cottage)

Mon 17 th Feb	7.00 pm	Jo & Judith's Housegroup (Cottage)
Tues 18 th Feb	2.00 pm	Sue & Liz's Housegroup (Rivendale)
	2.30 pm	Reading Circle (Cottage)
Wed 19 th Feb	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Soup & Roll Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Miss Lesley Bustard)
Thurs 20 th Feb	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
	2.30 pm	Bible Study (Cottage)
Sat 22 nd Feb	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 23 rd Feb	10.00 am	Morning Worship (Revd Stephen Collinson)
	11.00 am	Traidcraft Stall
Mon 24 th Feb	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	7.00 pm	Men's Group (Cottage)
Wed 26 th Feb	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)

26 th cont...	12.00 pm	Lent Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Mr Roger Tucker)
	6.30 pm	Lent Course (Coffee Lounge/Cottage)
Thurs 27 th Feb	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
Sat 29 th Feb	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In

MARCH

Sun 1 st Mar	10.00am	Morning Worship (Revd Michael Webster)
Mon 2 nd Mar	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	7.00 pm	Cottage Crafters – Craft Group (Cottage)
Tues 3 rd Mar	2.00 pm	Elders' Meeting (Cottage)
Wed 4 th Mar	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Lent Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Mrs Esther Witts)
	6.30 pm	Lent Course (Coffee Lounge/Cottage)

Thurs 5th Mar	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
	7.30 pm	WIZI - Women's Group (Cottage)
Fri 6th Mar	2.15pm	Northallerton Churches Ladies Together World Day of Prayer (St James' Church, Romanby)
Sat 7th Mar	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 8th Mar	10.00am	Morning Worship (Revd Hilary Collinson)
Mon 9th Mar	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	2.00 pm	Jane & Paul's Housegroup (Dunnas House, Brompton)
Wed 11th Mar	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Lent Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Mr Roger Tucker)
	6.30 pm	Lent Course (Coffee Lounge/Cottage)
Thurs 12th Mar	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
Sat 14th Mar	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
	10.00 am	Northern Synod Meeting (Roker URC, Sunderland)

Sun 15 th Mar	10.00 am	Communion Service (Revd Stephen Collinson) <i>Commitment for Life Sunday</i>
	7.00 pm	Bible Study (Cottage)
Mon 16 th Mar	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	7.00 pm	Jo & Judith's Housegroup (Cottage)
Tues 17 th Mar	2.00 pm	Sue & Liz's Housegroup (Rivendale)
Wed 18 th Mar	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Lent Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Miss Lesley Bustard)
	7.00 pm	Joint Pastorate Elders' Conference (Church)
Thurs 19 th Mar	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
	2.30pm	Bible Study (Cottage)
Fri 20 th Mar	Last date for items for April/May magazine	
Sat 21 st Mar	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 22 nd Mar	10.00 am	Morning Worship (Revd Hilary Collinson)
	7.00 pm	Bible Study (Cottage)

Mon 23 rd Mar	9.30 am	Tiny Time
Wed 25 th Mar	10.00 am	Way In
	12.00 pm	Lunch-time "Drop-in" (Large Vestry)
	12.00 pm	Lent Lunches (Church Hall)
	1.00 pm	Midweek Worship (Mrs Iris Miller)
Thurs 26 th Mar	6.30 pm	Lent Course (Coffee Lounge/Cottage)
	1.00 pm	Contemplative Prayer Meeting (Cottage)
Sat 28 th Mar	9.15 am	Prayer Meeting (Church)
	10.00 am	Way In
Sun 29 th Mar	10.00 am	Morning Worship (Mr Jo Kennedy)
	11.00 am	Traidcraft Stall
Mon 30 th Mar	9.30 am	Tiny Time
	7.00 pm	Men's Group (Cottage)

On reflection ...

I have just changed my screensaver images on my computer and the subject I picked was *Reflections*. They are the sort of pictures that you would expect – beautiful mountains reflected in

crystal clear lakes.

I've also been berating myself for my inability to be absolute in my faith. I've been comparing myself to those who seem to have absolutely no doubts at all, and I've come up wanting.

Well, obviously the two topics must have been wandering around in my mind because it occurred to me that faith is a bit like reflections. Some are mirror images with absolutely no deviation from the originals, most have a clear but fuzzy outline, sometimes the water is very stirred up and restless and the image is hardly discernible and then there are the times when the water is whipped up by storms and there is no image to be seen at all.

So how does that relate to my faith - or lack of it. Well, the clear images must be when I can accept completely that God is the overriding, all powerful creator of the universe and beneficent ruler of all who want to believe in Him. I don't believe that He orders our fate, I think he leaves that up to us even though we are rubbish at the task, but he is there if we care to approach him and ask for help. It must also be when I can accept the actuality of an afterlife and a heaven in some shape or form.



The 'fuzzy' times are when I just lose sight of the complete picture and wonder whether there are valid arguments for saying that those of a religious faith are too easily accepting of the failures of our lives. Of accepting that if a prayer isn't answered as we wish then it's OK because God knows best. As a sceptic once said to me "*You're just hedging your bets so that you win either way*". And is there really a heaven in any way that I can visualise?

What about the 'stirred up' waters? Those are probably the times when I look at man's inhumanity to man and wonder how this can possibly be a world in which God has a part. It will be tempered with the knowledge that even in the worst situations there will be counter influences working away to restore the

balance but some of the horrors that occur must surely test even the strongest faith.

And then there is the total loss of image in the storm tossed waters – the sort of situation where a natural disaster has occurred; a tsunami has wiped out thousands of lives, an earthquake razed a thriving bustling city to the ground, a cherished friend has died through a terminal illness.: the sort of situation where those sceptics say" *And where was your God in all this?"*

I don't know where you stand in all my speculations. If your faith is always a crystal-clear reflection, then that is truly wonderful, and I envy you, but I suspect that others may be able to relate to at least some of my thoughts. I can't believe that I am the only one who wavers.

I don't know how one finds answers in all the bad times but strangely it seems that even though I can't do that and I don't understand why things happen as they do, I do still have faith in God. If I take that away then there is a gaping hole in my life, a hole that can't be filled with anything else. And heaven – well, it is either there or not and one day I will find out but until then I'm not really bothered. I just want to make this life count.

But to return to those reflections - however poor I may be at reflecting my faith, it is still there through all the vicissitudes of life and is waiting just under the surface to once again reflect that clear and perfect image if I will only let it do so.

Sue Kennedy

*My faith it is an oaken staff, the traveller's well-loved aid;
My faith it is a weapon stout, the soldier's trusty blade.
I'll travel on and still be stirred by silent thought or social word,
By all my perils undeterred, a pilgrim unafraid*

Thomas T Lynch (1818-1871)

O.C.S.R., Malawi

It is JOY to be able to say **thank you** here to individual givers and to the whole Congregation through the Charitable Fund for your consistent, generous giving to Orphan Care and Social Rehabilitation in Lilongwe these past 20+ years. Praise God for it.

When I was called to serve in Malawi, 'the warm heart of Africa', 25 years ago now, I found myself in a lovely, welcoming, faith-full country that was also one of the materially poorest on earth - of its, then, 11 million population, well over 90% were 'subsistence farmers', i.e. living in clay and thatch hamlet huts, surviving by saving what seed-corn they could from one year's harvest to sow for the next. Surviving also because virtually everyone belonged to an 'extended family' of relatives that pulled together in every time of need or crisis.

The members of the dual-language capital-city Lingadzi congregation that I went to serve were different, in two ways. As Government civil servants, domestic house servants, and rare professionals or businessmen/women, they had one foot in the "western" world, i.e. worked specified hours and earned tiny cash incomes [from which frequent rural relatives came seeking loans]. Also, the few towns were then the first places where the AIDS epidemic was biting hardest, with the young-parent age group suffering most, destroying incomes and leaving numerous orphans [among many funerals taken, my sharpest memory is that of the man who was the country's only infectious diseases specialist, dead at age 44].



April 1995 was also the point where, Lingadzi elder and water engineer, Crosby Mphande and his wife, school secretary and

Women's Guild leader, Jenny started OCSR. Serving Lilongwe township areas 25a and b, with no financial resources but great faith, at first in a rented bungalow along with volunteer helpers who just turned up, they welcomed every pre-school age child genuinely an orphan [the local headmen did the vetting], feeding and teaching them, training them socially [first, hand-washing] with Christian love and peace [no such nonsense as political correctness in Malawi, just say and do what's needed and right]. With the collapse of the extended family's care for so many in these townships, Jenny and Crosby's vision was to get the local community to start caring for **all** the children in their area, whether actual relatives or not - and for his to become a model for **every** town area and rural village/hamlet in the land. Vision indeed.

Over these years, our gifts and those of many other 'outsiders' have helped OCSR buy a sizeable piece of land sufficient to cultivate vegetables and maize, surround it with a 'fence' [a brick wall], install electricity and water, erect a kitchen, toilets, two classrooms, and dining room/hall large enough to rent out for wedding receptions and other social activities, and set out a sports area - in other words, create a permanent base to work from.

Mrs Cynthia Feather, a URC elder and worship-leader in Halifax, who visited OCSR first when staying with me and subsequently twice on her own, took over as secretary of the [UK] Friends of OCSR some 10 years ago. Now the time has come for her to retire. Mr Enoch Mphande, son of Jenny and Crosby, has taken on the leadership. We can all give thanks for the privilege of having helped the vision to mature to a well-established reality.

Malcolm Smith

Elders' duty rota

If you have any problems and would like to speak with someone please contact the Ministers, Secretary or the Duty Elder as given below

Week beginning

February

2nd	Jo Kennedy
9th	Judith Puttock
16th	Christine Roddam
23rd	Liz Styan

March

1st	Paul Bowes
8th	Sue Bush
15th	Jane Haslam
22nd	Jo Kennedy
29th	Judith Puttock



Contact us



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We hope you have enjoyed the magazine and invite you to worship with us at High Street, Northallerton at our 10 a.m. Sunday service.

Please note that the closing date for items for the April/May issue is 20th March