

## *Rita's Ring*

*One of the duties of a churchwarden is to carry out a 'stock-check' of the inventory of the church, especially the silver. During my time as a warden, the archdeacon, Roger Combes, paid a visit and witnessed the check. One unusual item included was a gold wedding ring, not particularly old or valuable. Our minds turned to how it could have got there and Roger suggested that we could run a short story series in Bosham Life with some fictitious possibilities. Why not have a go? To get the ball rolling, here is a contribution from me. If anyone knows the actual history to the ring, please write in—truth is often stranger than fiction!*

Rita had always been somewhat on the large side; she was born weighing nearly nine pounds and, according to her mother, started on her food shortly after birth and rarely stopped thereafter.

By the time she met George at a friend's wedding in 1975 she was 14 stones in weight, and very happy about it. Rita enjoyed life for what it had to offer, and that included chocolate and cakes. She bumped into George, quite literally, entering the church in Bosham and they soon found they had plenty in common, as they chatted and tucked into the food and drink at the reception afterwards. George was also keen on his food, as his stomach showed, although weight was not a topic of conversation as they talked about their shared interests, and fell in love.

George and Rita were married six months later. They lived in Dorchester; he worked as a salesman and she at a travel agents. A gregarious couple, they entertained friends and travelled extensively together, especially when their son had left the nest. Over the years they both added more than a few pounds to their waistlines and were perfectly content.

In 2005, George had a heart attack. It was sudden and deadly. Rita recalled how he was cooking breakfast chatting away with Radio Two in the background at 9:00am, and was gone by 10:00am.

With the loss of her soulmate, Rita lost her appetite. Whilst she continued to see her many friends and discovered some new interests, her passion for food went. Gradually the weight fell off, and after a couple of years she was some six stones lighter.

One weekend, Rita went to stay with the friend in Bosham whose wedding she had attended those many years before.

She decided to attend the main church service on Sunday, before driving home to Dorset. Sitting in the beautiful surroundings, she reflected on how blessed she had been to have so many years of happy marriage. The offertory hymn commenced, and the sidesman came round. Shaken out of her reverie, Rita rummaged in her pocket and found a note to put into the offertory bag. As she put her hand into the bag, her wedding ring caught on the fabric. The ring had become very loose, as the formerly chubby third finger had shrunk. Rita had meant to get the ring reduced in size, but never got round to it. The wedding ring slipped off imperceptibly and fell to the bottom of the bag.

By the time the offertory bag was emptied after the church service, Rita was on the M27. She didn't notice it had gone until much later in the day, and was surprised how unconcerned she was. Never one for love of possessions, the memories of joyful years were more important to her than the band of gold. She also saw it as a sign to move forward to a new stage in her life. She was sure George would smile and approve.

**Chris Pexton**