

## Geography Group Report for December 2025

Gerald Blake's talk on "The Geography of the Nativity" has become something of a Christmas tradition and on this occasion there was a full house. Whilst the theology and history of the nativity of Jesus have been much discussed, the geography of the gospel stories has been largely overlooked. It adds a grittier dimension to the magic of the story.

Having set the geopolitical scene, Gerald used photos, paintings and cards to describe Mary and Joseph's arduous 95-mile journey to the census count in Bethlehem. The route would have been challenging at any time of year. In winter time it would have been cold and wet. The exact date of the census, however, is unknown.



Using his original maps, Gerald then discussed the layout of Bethlehem and the land use of the surrounding countryside, focussing on the shepherds and their flocks. He finished by looking at the likely route taken by the Magi from Babylon to Bethlehem and the origins of frankincense and myrrh.

The meeting concluded with thanks and words of appreciation to Gerald, for running the Geography Group for seven years. Gerald is now stepping down as lead convenor, although he will continue in an advisory role. He will no doubt deliver more excellent presentations! Gerald was presented with gifts, including two books on maps, for which Phil Johnson had created unique book plates.



Phil, in his role as the new lead convenor, gave a short introduction to future meetings. These will include more talks and activities organised by group members. Topics related to Physical Geography will be explored in more detailed. The convenors are keen to tailor the programme to reflect the interests of the members, so would welcome suggestions. We look forward to welcoming you on the third Thursday of each month.

Next meeting in The Witham at 2pm: 19th February, Ian Royston "Reservoir Mania 2".