

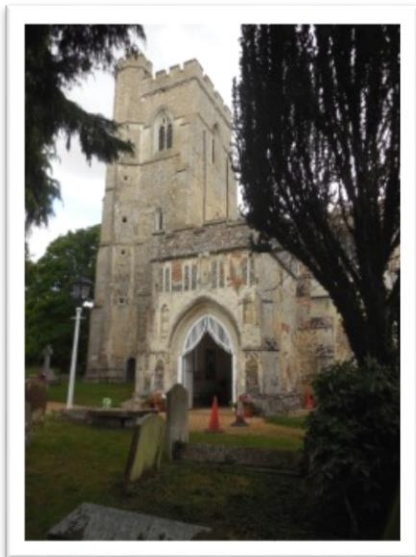


Parish Church of St John the Baptist,
Stoke-by-Clare

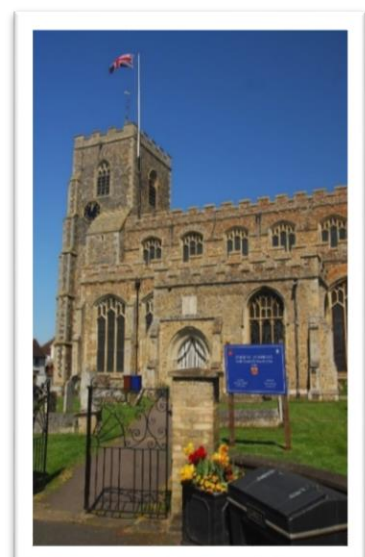


Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin,
Cavendish

The Stour Valley Benefice Profile 2020



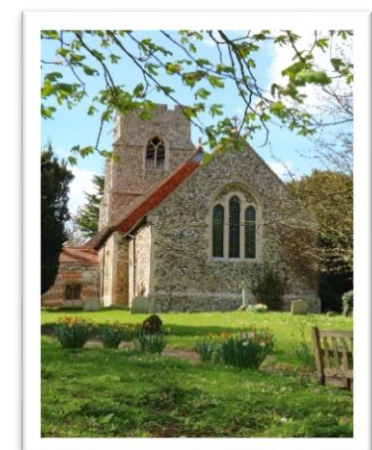
Parish Church of All Saints,
Hundon



Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul,
Clare



Parish Church of St Leonard,
Wixoe



Parish Church of St Mary,
Poslingford

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Welcome to the Stour Valley Benefice

We are seeking a full time Rector for our 5 parishes with 6 churches located within the beautiful Stour Valley amongst the farmlands of South West Suffolk, near the Essex border, an area of glorious natural beauty. The Stour Valley Benefice is within the Deanery of Clare and in the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Our Diocesan vision is to be “Growing in God” aiming to grow “**flourishing congregations making a difference**” in deepening our faith; bringing the contacts we have into the life of God’s kingdom; reaching beyond ourselves in our impact on the wider world and building churches whose age-range reflects our communities. We are looking for a Rector who can lead us to develop this vision spiritually, pastorally, and practically across the Benefice.

Our Prayer During the Interregnum

*We ask now that you will help us,
To share responsibility
Grow in faith,
Love one another
Care for those in need
Reach out to others
And welcome newcomers.
Lord Jesus, guard and grow our Churches,
As we serve you together in this period without a Rector,
Please guide those who are seeking the right person for us,
And those who are seeking the right church for their ministry,
That together we may discover your way for the future and see your
kingdom grow. Amen.*

A prayer from CPAS

A New Rector for our Benefice

What we are offering:

- Welcoming congregations with hardworking PCCs and a Ministry Team who are willing and open to change.
- An opportunity to join established networks at the heart of our communities in local charities and schools.
- The opportunity of living and ministering in this beautiful part of Suffolk with our fine medieval churches.
- Healthy ecumenical relationships in the area.
- Parishes that have paid their Diocesan share in full in recent years.
- Well located spacious rectory in the heart of the small town of Clare.
- A full-time stipendiary post with agreed expenses paid in full.
- Commitment to provide administrative support.

We are looking for a Rector who will:

- Lead us in a clear direction within the Diocesan vision of “Growing in God”.
- Develop new forms of ministry, to meet the different needs of young and old alike.
- Help our 5 parishes with 6 churches to become a more cohesive Benefice and form stronger networks including training our new Ministry Team volunteers.
- Understand the needs and challenges of a rural ministry.
- Be visible, available and willing to engage with our local communities, building on our existing links, particularly with our schools.

Personal Qualities and Skills we seek in our new Rector:

- A good teacher of the Christian faith who can nurture and encourage spiritual growth and stimulate thought and debate to help us grow in faith, prayer and numbers.
- Is contemplative, compassionate, courageous and an effective communicator and preacher.
- Has the organisational, pastoral and modern technological skills to work effectively.

Diocese

We are part of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, led by our Bishop, The Right Reverend Martin Seeley, the Bishop of Dunwich The Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison and the Archdeacon of Sudbury, The Venerable Dr David Jenkins. Full information is available on the website including the “Growing in God” vision: www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org

Deanery

Our Deanery of Clare comprises 29 parishes in South West Suffolk, all rural villages except for Haverhill (the main population centre) and Clare. At present there are two full time stipendiary clergy and two half time posts serving the five Benefices in the Deanery. The Deanery Plan is currently being updated and for details of the Deanery and its vision please contact the Acting Rural Dean, Revd. Dr Simon Hill on: mlima001@btinternet.com, or our Deanery Lay Chair, Justin Rabett on: justinrabett123@btinternet.com

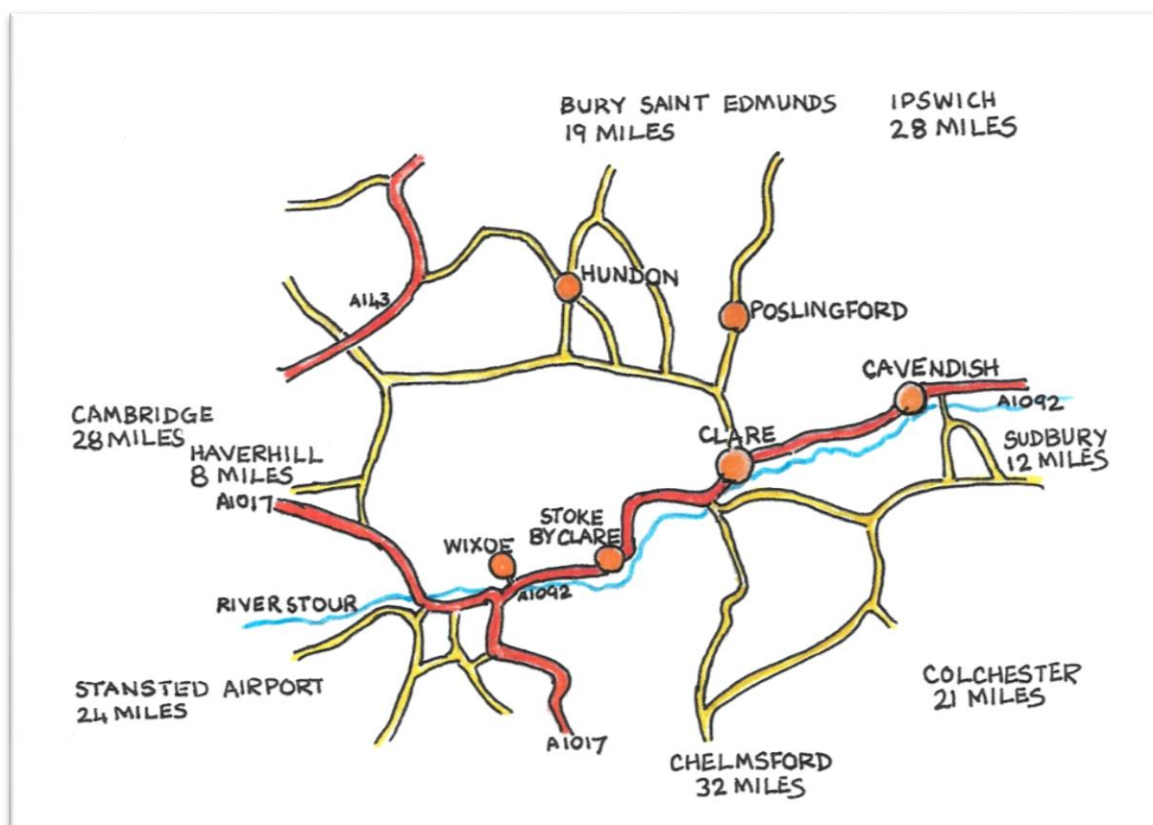
Patrons

Jesus College, Cambridge (for Cavendish and Hundon)

The Duchy of Lancaster (for Clare and Poslingford)

The Diocesan Board of Patronage (for Stoke-by-Clare and Wixoe)

Churches in the Benefice with distances from Clare



Details on the Benefice

Attractions

Our Benefice is in a beautiful rural area in the valley of the River Stour. It has a wealth of historic houses and buildings, many dating from the era of the prosperous wool trade. Most of our churches were built at the height of that period about 700 years ago.

Our communities extend a warm welcome and offer a pleasant and safe environment in which a new Rector would enjoy living and ministering. Our congregations are very committed to active worship and pastoral care, and non-churchgoers also contribute generously to the maintenance of the fabric of our Churches. They all have excellent acoustics and enable us to host various concerts and singing groups across a wide spectrum.

Location and Transport

The car is essential for local journeys to towns close to Clare, such as Haverhill (15 minutes), Sudbury (20 minutes) and our cathedral city of Bury St Edmunds (30 minutes). Cambridge, Newmarket, Colchester and the M11, are all about 40 minutes away, and Ipswich about one hour. There are bus routes via Clare, Cavendish and Stoke-by Clare and near Wixoe, but not Hundon that link to Sudbury and Bury going east, and to Cambridge, Haverhill and Bury going west and north. Main line trains run from Cambridge, Colchester and Ipswich, and there are local connecting trains from Sudbury to Colchester and London via Marks Tey. So, we are in a secluded and beautiful area, but not remote or cut off.

Vicarage

This is a good-sized family house in a prime location, situated in Clare High Street, a few steps from the Church and a short walk to the shops. Accommodation comprises four bedrooms, a shower room and family bathroom, a kitchen and utility room, dining room, sitting room and a study/office with its own entrance door and lobby. Outside there is a double garage, parking for several cars and a large back garden with a gate onto common land.



Parishes

Our Benefice comprises five Parishes, namely Clare with Poslingford, Cavendish, Stoke by Clare, Hundon and Wixoe. Clare is a historic market town, Cavendish, Stoke by Clare and Hundon, largish villages and Wixoe and Poslingford, small villages. More detail is given in the Individual Parish Profiles Section.

Church Administration

We are committed to providing the new Rector with some administrative support in the complexities of organising five parishes and the day to day workload this involves, so they can be relatively free to engage in pastoral and spiritual work. We envisage that this will be a combination of contracted effort together with volunteer help, as to be agreed with the new Rector.

Trusteeships

The Rector of the five Stour Valley parishes is normally a trustee of several active and well established local charitable groups, that serve the communities. These are:

Clare Combined Charities – manage the Allotments, Upper Common, Lower Common and Almshouses. The previous rector was chair for 5 years.

Clare Ancient House – located between Clare Church and the Vicarage, this Grade I Listed 14th Century house is a museum that tells the story of Clare and its inhabitants and is run entirely by volunteers and trustees.

Foundation Governor - Cavendish Church of England Primary School. Previous rectors have been active in this role and the Head has requested that this continues.

Cavendish Endowed Trust – a small charity with links to Cavendish Primary school offering grants to past pupils. The rector automatically becomes a Trustee

Thomas Rogeron Hundon Trust (including Education Trust) – this fund generates dividends and rents, which are shared with an “in need fund”, the PCC and Education Trust, the latter giving away funds for the educational needs of children and young people in Hundon. The rector has been appointed a Trustee since the 18th Century.

Shops

Clare has good local shopping and it is easy to be self-sufficient there, and it really lives up to its claim to be Suffolk’s smallest town. The numerous shops include a butcher, the co-op store, pharmacy, newsagent and post office, an independent bookshop and several specialist boutique shops. In addition, there are several hairdressers, cafes, restaurants and pubs, a furniture auctioneer, antique warehouse and two picture galleries, all within walking distance of the Vicarage.

Cavendish has a community shop, tea rooms, a Sue Ryder Charity Shop, a cane furniture shop, a hairdresser, a beauty salon, two pubs and an excellent restaurant.

Stoke by Clare and **Hundon** both have community shops and post offices.

More comprehensive shopping is available in **Haverhill, Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge** and **Colchester** which have all the major supermarkets and department stores.

Schools

Clare has a community primary school, with 185 children (age 4-11) and the Stour Valley Community School, with 570 pupils which is an academy catering for pupils between the age of 11 to 16.

Cavendish has a thriving C of E Primary School with about 100 pupils and the Head Teacher wishes to continue the tradition of the Rector being a Governor and maintain close links with the Church, typically with weekly prayers and seven school services a year.

Hundon has a Community Primary School with 84 pupils aged 4-11.

Stoke-by-Clare has a private school (Stoke College) of approximately 120 pupils from 4 to 18-year olds and has expressed its wish to engage more closely with the church and village community.

Doctors/Hospitals

Clare has two Doctors' surgeries and a physiotherapy practice.

The West Suffolk NHS hospital is in **Bury St Edmunds**, but the major regional hospital is Addenbrooke's in **Cambridge**.

Employment

Much of the Benefice is farmed but few are employed on the land these days. The main employment centres are **Haverhill, Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge**. There are a surprising number of small businesses and a growing number of self-employed. Unemployment numbers are low.

Clergy/Readers

The Rector has been supported in recent years by local retired clergy, two lay readers and a curate. One lay reader continues and the other will on an occasional basis. The Benefice is seen as a good place for the training of curates and it is hoped that this will continue.

Aspirations for the Future

- To maintain the relevance of the Church's teaching, both spiritually and in everyday life, in an increasingly materialistic and secular world.
- To balance the more traditional preferences of the elderly with those of the younger generation to encourage growth.
- To devise ways and means of attracting younger parents and their children to Church.
- To co-ordinate the work and worship in the Benefice and develop and encourage community use of our churches.
- To nurture the relationships with our Patrons with their willingness for closer links.

Individual Parish Profiles

St. Peter and St. Paul, Clare *(with St Mary's, Poslingford)*

CLARE

It is said that Clare is the smallest town in Britain, but it has the 'feel' of a large village, with buildings spanning the last 600 years.

Clare, with its castle, was the seat of the lords of Clare who arrived with William the Conqueror. There is little left of the Norman castle, and since 1971 the area around the castle has been designated a country park. To the south of the park is the Priory which was established in 1248, suppressed in 1538, but re-established in 1953.

Over the last 50 years the town has gradually increased in size. There are several private housing developments and there is housing for lower income renters. Housing association and sheltered accommodation is also available.

Clare supports four well-established churches: the parish church of St Peter & St Paul, the Roman Catholic Church at the Priory, the Baptist church, and the United Reformed church.

Clare has both a primary school and Stour Valley Community School (11–16 years) which takes children from primary schools in the surrounding area. It is also well served with two doctor's surgeries, a physiotherapy practice, an optician, solicitors, pharmacy, post office, library and fire station.

There is a good selection of shops which include a butcher, and a comprehensive but compact Co-op, three cafes and a deli, restaurants and takeaways, three pubs and a small hotel. There is a small open-air market from April to October on Market Hill.

The listed town hall is used for private and community functions, antique and craft fairs, and auctions. The social club, situated next to the bowling green, holds various private and community functions. The old Victorian C of E School has been turned into a small complex of three halls used by many community groups, clubs and societies including a nursery school. All are available for hire.

Clare Country Park has a fenced off children's play area, public toilets, and a cafe. The recently refurbished Old Goods Shed (a remnant of the Cambridge to Sudbury railway) is used for further education classes. The park is popular with the community for park runs, walking groups, dog walkers, and general outdoor activities.

There are several clubs and societies in the town including the W.I., Clare Community Choir, Clare Amateur Dramatics, Bowling Club, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides. CLASP, the Clare Liaison and Support Project, was set up to provide practical help for anyone in need in Clare and the surrounding area, and the Seekers Social Club was formed for the visually impaired.

The Church (listed, Grade I)

The Church of St Peter and St Paul is a fine example of perpendicular architecture: it is the largest building in Clare, and one of the oldest in origin. There has been a church dedicated to St Paul in Clare since 1090, and it received a mention by Daniel Defoe in his early 17th Century *'a tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain'*. It remains a fine church—amongst the largest and best of the churches in Suffolk's wool villages—and is much admired by visitors who write appreciatively in our visitor's book.



Church services

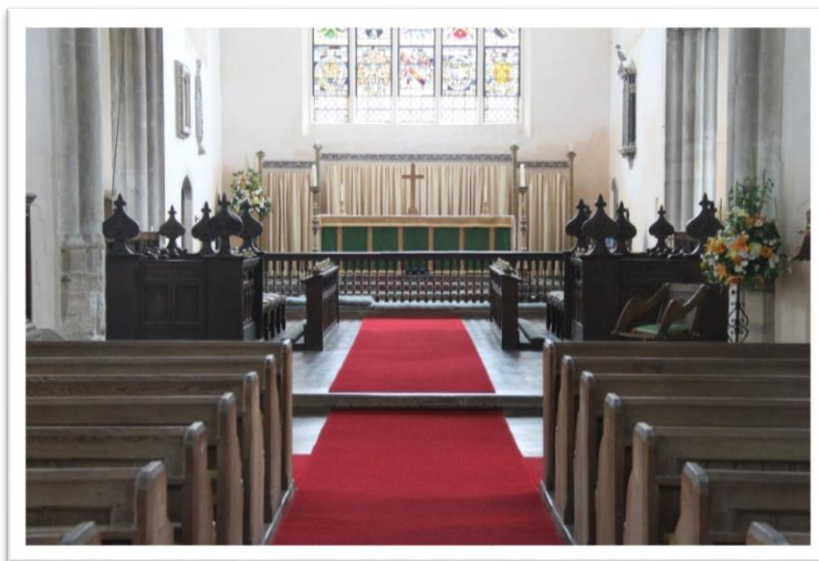
The current pattern of church services is Sung Eucharist every Sunday morning at 10.30am and a said Eucharist on Wednesday mornings at 10.00am in the Lady Chapel. We use *Hymns Old and New*. Periodically during the year there are bible study groups following recognised courses of study.

There are about 35–45 worshippers at a typical Sunday service, most of whom are retired. We would very much like to have more younger members in the congregation

and would welcome moves which would encourage families to come to church. The services are traditional but there is a feeling that a greater variety of current services and a more modern approach would be welcomed; at least on some of the Sundays.

We would welcome a Rector who feels we should engage more with the younger generation and those new to the Christian faith, tailoring the service presentation to aid them in their journey of faith.

The church has three servers, five parishioners who administer the chalice, a rota of 15 who read the lessons, and 10 church members who lead the intercessions. There are 17 sides men/women. Many members of the congregation take some part in the maintenance of the church, ranging from cleaning, brass polishing, organising the shop and arranging flowers, etc, and others who draw up the rotas for such activities.



The choir has 11 members including the choir mistress. The choir rehearses in the church on Friday evenings. As well as singing the responses and hymns at the morning service, they also sing an anthem or hymn during the distribution of the sacraments. The choir takes part in choral evensongs, church festivals, Remembrance Day, and Advent and Christmas carol services. On request, the choir will attend weddings and funeral services. We aspire to have a children's choir one day.

The church has a fine organ, and we are thankful we have an organist and an active deputies list. An organ scholar initiative has been proposed.

Music is important in our church, and over the years it has become a popular venue for concerts. We have been very fortunate to have attracted many fine musicians both singers and instrumentalists to give concerts here. The music has ranged over many genres and has attracted different audiences to come and enjoy beautiful music in a beautiful building. Of late, our concert platform has provided an opportunity for local young musicians to perform.

There are eight bells in the tower which have been recorded as the heaviest in Suffolk. We have seven bell ringers, and the bells are usually rung before Sunday services, at church festivals and on other special occasions during the year. We often get visiting groups of bell ringers, especially in the summer months, to enjoy ringing our bells.

The church has a small MU branch, a flower guild, second-hand bookstall and a church shop.



Confirmation service 2019 at Clare Church

Ecumenicalism and outreach

St Peter and St Paul works closely with the other churches in Clare. The annual Christingle (popular with young families) and Remembrance Day services are held in the parish church with the other denominations participating in the service.

During the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity', each church chooses a day, and hosts a prayer group. Similarly, the World Day of Prayer Service, formerly known as the Women's World Day of Prayer, is hosted by each church in turn.

On Good Friday, all four churches and others from the Benefice participate in the 'Walk of Witness' starting at the Priory and ending at the Baptist church. And on Good Friday afternoon, the Priory holds a service of prayer and meditation with the participation of the other churches.

Members of the parish church are involved with a group from the Baptist church in the summer holiday bible club, and with the 'Open the Book' project which visits both Clare and Cavendish primary schools.

From the Growing in God initiative, the parish church holds a monthly coffee morning on the first Saturday of the month from 10am to 12pm, where coffee, tea, soft drinks and delicious homemade baked treats are served. There is no charge, but there is an opportunity to give a donation if anyone wishes to do so. This is a popular event and well supported by the people of Clare even in the most inclement weather. Quite frequently visitors who have come to explore the church will join us too.

Our church has an open-door policy so anyone can visit during the day and we feel that the well-supported second-hand bookstall and church shop are another form of outreach to our community and indeed to our visitors, many of whom come from all over the world as our visitor's book shows.

Members of our Mothers Union collect used Christmas cards and recycle them for prisoners in local prisons. Between 800 and 1,400 cards are produced and distributed each year. Members of the congregation and MU members also knit hats, cardigans, and

shawls for premature baby units at local hospitals. Hats are knitted for the Mission to Seafarers at Felixstowe Docks.

Our biggest fundraising event of the year is the Christmas fair which usually takes place on the last Friday and Saturday of November: this is done in conjunction with the Town Council. The church is beautifully decorated and filled with 40+ stalls all selling crafts and gifts. The church runs a Christmas raffle and a refreshment stall catering for visitors and stall holders, and the church shop is decorated and sells Christmas gifts, traditional Christmas cards, and small toys and games for children's stockings. Many of our visitors, some of whom have travelled quite a distance, comment on the beauty of the church when seeing it for the first time and imply that they would like to visit it again at a later date, and many have said what an unusual venue it is for a Christmas fair.



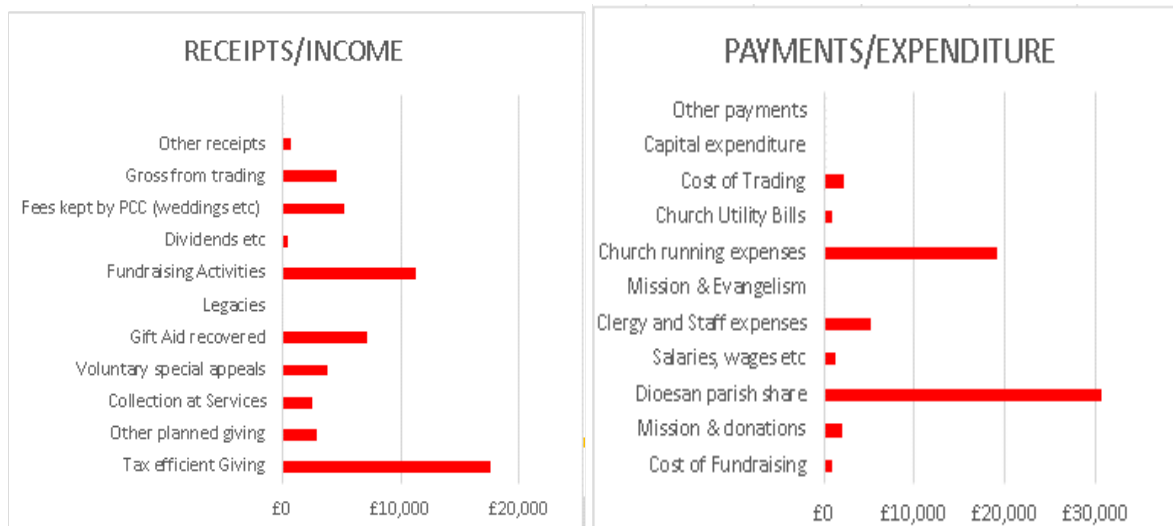
Our former curate at the blessing of a parishioner's new canoe

In 2019 we began a Facebook page with encouragement from our curate. This has increased the church's presence within the local community. It can be found on Facebook@ClareParishChurch. Posts from the St Peter and St Paul page regularly get shared to the 3,000 members on the local community Facebook group. This has proven particularly useful in advertising special services. It has been an invaluable means of communication with the local community throughout the Covid 19 lockdown. At the same time the church launched a benefice website: <https://stourvalley.org.uk/>

Organisation and Finance

The details below are taken from the Annual Finance Statement for Clare with Poslingford, for the year ending 31st December 2019. The income and expenditure below exclude all restricted funds. The Parish paid its full Parish Share as in previous years. The financial affairs are complicated by two trusts, the Clare Church Estate and the Gregory Charity.

At the last Quinquennial carried out in March 2019, there were a number of items listed under Grade B "Priority Major Repair Works" totalling (incl. fees and VAT) £199,400, of which £1,399 has been spent on urgent lead roof repairs. A sub-committee had been formed in the autumn of 2019 to progress the repairs but illness and then Covid 19 meant work has been suspended.



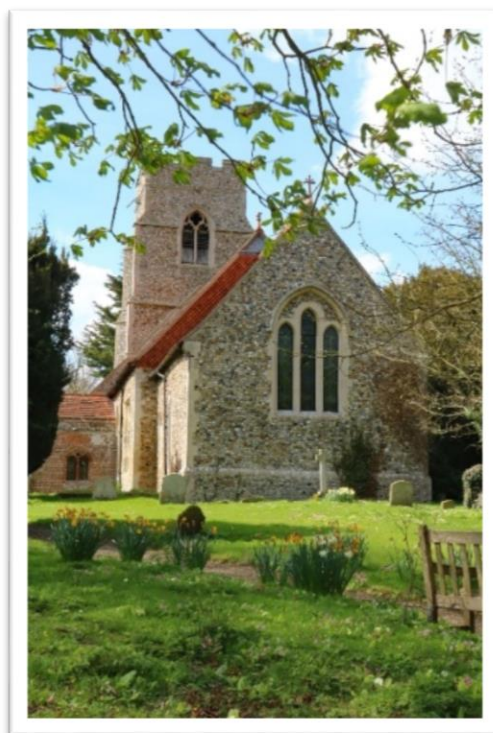
Unrestricted Income 2019: **£56,529**

Unrestricted Expenditure 2019: **£62,133**

Unrestricted Balance at 31/12/2019: **£17,471**

St Mary the Virgin, Poslingford (*Listed, Grade II*, Chapel of Ease*)

POSLINGFORD



The Village

Poslingford is a small village two miles north of Clare. The 2011 census gives its population as 187. It is geographically a large parish with several outlying communities that are distinct from the small central core. Poslingford no longer has a school, shop or pub leaving St. Mary's Church as the only public building. With the cessation of a bus route between Clare and Bury St. Edmunds more than ten years ago, there is no public transport through the village. Poslingford has its own very active Parish Council that takes a pride in the village's appearance and is continually working hard to improve the village.

The People

As is the case with many communities, people come and go and in the last six or seven years an influx of newcomers has seen a stronger sense of community develop in Poslingford than had been the case ten or twenty years ago. This is reflected in many new friendships and a village barbecue now takes place each Summer, which is held in the churchyard, itself the only public open space in the village. Another popular communal activity that brings people of all walks of life together is the allotments, which belong to and are managed by the Church.

The Parish

Church attendance has been small for many years and in 2003 the parish was merged with Clare, when St. Mary's became a chapel of ease. This is unusual within the Diocese and presents challenges. In the past the church was allocated its own quota of the Benefice Parish Share, which it paid in full. More recently its finances have been merged with those of St. Peter and St. Paul, Clare.

Despite the merger, St. Mary's Poslingford maintains a separate identity. Regular worship is Evening Prayer on the first Sunday of each month. The congregation though small (6 to 8 regular worshippers) is faithful and dedicated.



Carol service 2019



Congregation 2020

In addition, each year sees two special well-attended services, Compline on Good Friday evening and a Carol Service early in the week before Christmas. The Carol Service can have a congregation of sixty with most coming from the village itself.

The churchyard is closed to new burials but as a calm and beautiful space is a real asset to local people. The churchyard is well maintained by the Parish Council and in recent years also by some villagers' voluntary efforts. A public cemetery that remains open for burials is located beyond the churchyard.

As well as being used for regular worship, the church sees infrequent funerals, typically one or two a year. It also hosts an occasional wedding.

The Church

The church building is historic and includes a 12th century Norman doorway, with a nationally recognised semi-circular tympanum carved in an interlacing pattern with stars and rosettes, an original 15th century chancel screen and the oldest dated church chest in Suffolk.

Other notable features are its Tudor brick south porch and peal of bells. While the building needs some work, particularly to the bell-chamber windows and their surrounds, it is in a reasonable condition. Recent maintenance and improvements have included an overhaul of the electric heating, repairs to the roof and a new exterior light.

The Future

While present activity is small the average congregation size has noticeably grown since 2010. The prominent presence of the church in the village gives us hope that one day there will be spiritual revival and attendance will further increase. The option remains for St. Mary Poslingford again to become a distinct parish if enough people were to attend the church and to step forward to constitute a PCC. Currently it is a Chapel of Ease and its accounts are included in those for Clare.

At St. Mary Poslingford we are looking for and would welcome in our new Rector someone who would cherish our church and see within it a potential for growing God's work within the village. Also, recognising that with five parishes to look after the Rector's time will always be at a premium, perhaps he or she will be able to socialise with the friendly villagers in the hope that some of them may come to God and participate more in the work and worship of St. Mary's church.

St Mary the Virgin, Cavendish (listed, Grade I)

CAVENDISH



The Village

Cavendish lies further down the valley of the River Stour, just over two miles east of Clare and three miles west of Long Melford on the A1092. It is seventeen miles from Bury St Edmunds the major town in the area and six from Sudbury, both with railway stations and bus services.

Centred on the large village Green it is one of the most attractive and frequently photographed villages in Suffolk. Our Church sits atop this green, with the pink painted Alms-house cottages in the foreground, as seen in the picture above, familiar from the front of many Suffolk Calendars. Our population is about 1,000. There was some development in the 1960s but little since. The village consists mainly of privately owned properties, with a small number of affordable houses and several large mainly arable farms. Many of the residents are retired, though there is also a significant number of families with children.

For such a small population we are well supplied with amenities including our own community shop staffed by volunteers. It sells a wide range of essentials including newspapers. There are two public houses, a tea-room, and an excellent restaurant (The George) that also provides accommodation. There is a shop selling cane furniture that has several small units attached including a beautician and a hairdresser. There is a large Sue Ryder Charity shop near the Green, where there is also a large and comfortable residential Home for the Elderly – Devonshire House, run by Anchor Homes, formally the old Sue Ryder Home. There is a Victorian Memorial Hall, partly used by Cavendish pre-school daily, though its main hall hosts a range of other activities such as keep fit, badminton and village society meetings. There is a Church of England Primary School, adjacent to the Green with over 90 pupils, which in 2019 achieved good Key Stage 2 results. It is close to the Church which it uses for 7 or 8 services a year. These services are open to relatives as well as members of the congregation and are lovely events as they are put together by the children themselves, who participate fully in them. The school also uses the Church to display some of its project and artwork activities. Recent Rectors have been Foundation Governors and visited regularly. This and the volunteers who read to the children have been a tremendous support to the school and the current Head has requested that these roles carry on and develop.

Village Life



Cavendish is a very sociable and friendly village where people know each other and are mutually supportive. There are many activities organised by various clubs and groups e.g. The Horticultural Society, the Local History Society, and the Stour Astronomical Society. The Memorial Hall is used for these club meetings and also by the badminton club, various fitness groups and some church activities including Harvest Supper and Beetle Drives.

Many people meet at the recently refurbished Five Bells Public House on the Green. Elderly people gather for coffee once a week at the Cavendish Care Coffee mornings usually hosted in various private homes. Cavendish Care also offer lifts to people needing transport, for example to the local hospital. A monthly quiz night happens at our local restaurant, the George, with proceeds going to local clubs and organisations, including the Church and its Bell Ringing. There is an excellent playing field with pavilion, which hosts the Football and Cricket Clubs, both very well supported. An active Bowls Club is also nearby. The Cavendish Community Council organises events for the village during the year, including a New Year's Day Walk (*as in photo above*), the Village Fete and Horticultural Show (*in which the Church participates*), 5th November Fireworks display, and Village Open Gardens every 2nd year. Musical and theatrical events are often held in the Church and The Cavendish Illuminators provide Christmas lighting around the village including a large Star of Bethlehem on the Church Tower. Many of these events help support St Nicholas Hospice in Bury St Edmunds. They also provide excellent ready-made opportunities to engage with the parishioners of Cavendish in an enjoyable social setting that can also be pastoral.

The village attracts many visitors from all over the UK and from overseas, and they almost always visit the Church. Entries in our Visitors Book show that some years there may have been more than 5,000 church visits. Its prominent position as a local landmark at the top of the village green and its proximity to a number of footpaths and cycle routes means it is easily accessible by those taking local recreation.

The Church Building

St Mary's Church is a Grade I listed Church of England building that goes back about 700 years. It is now the only remaining active Church in the Village. It is a fine late medieval gothic structure. In 1381, Sir John Cavendish, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, bequeathed £40 for the construction of the Chancel; Sir John lost his head in the Peasants' revolt after being dragged from his mansion here in Cavendish. He is an ancestor of the Cavendish and the Devonshire dynasties. The north Aisle was re-built in 1425 and the nave and clerestory in 1485. Of particular note, is the 16th century Renaissance Flemish altar piece carved in alabaster. It was presented by Athelstan Riley, one of the compilers of the English Hymnal, in

1953. On the South wall there is a commemorative plaque to Lady Sue Ryder and her husband Sir Leonard Cheshire VC, who lived in the village for many years. In the lower Tower Room there is a display of thirteen “Flemish Crosses” which are wooden crosses brought back from the First World War, commemorating some of the 32 from the Village who died in that conflict. This is one of the largest collections in the country.



The church is open daily and attracts many visitors both as a destination and casually arriving while on a walk or bike ride. Improvements about 20 years ago provided a modern toilet area and a fold-away kitchen facility which enables us to offer coffee and cakes after services, at Charity coffee mornings and other fundraising events including in the Church.

The church has a good set of six bells in the Tower and after about 20 years with no regular use, there is now a new group from the village who have been learning Bell ringing on Fridays, for two years and they can now ring on a Sunday under our new Tower Captain.

The Church is generally in good condition as noted in the Quinquennial of March 2016 and is well maintained. We recently completed a significant restoration project largely on the Church Tower which was started in October 2019 and completed in May 2020. It was triggered by the Bellcote and weathervane structures being condemned as unsafe in September 2018. These have now been replaced with new wood to the original design. A new flagpole has been installed and the clock faces and the weathervane have been restored. Furthermore, the Sanctus Bell in the Bellcote was made operational again as part of the restoration. The congregation, the many friends of the Church and several major charities have helped us achieve the £110K net needed for this and it is now safe again. In the March 2016 Quinquennial, the Priority A & B work was estimated at £70K + VAT and of that only £17K + VAT still needs to be done. The lighting also needs improvement, particularly in the Chancel.

St Mary's has its own Flower Guild which ensures a high standard of displays in the Church weekly, and for special occasions.

Worship and Church Activities

Cavendish church is a friendly caring community and takes part with enthusiasm in Benefice and Deanery events. It is fully involved with local community affairs, offering a venue for concerts and fundraising as well as regular spiritual activities.

St Mary's currently offers a weekly Sunday Morning Service at 10.30 two per month being Common Worship Sung Eucharists, one Matins (BCP) and one a Morning Worship. On the fourth Sunday of the month there is an additional 8.30 Communion Service (BCP). There are rotating Benefice Services on the Fifth Sunday. The Church has 41 on the Electoral Roll for 2019. We are fortunate to have a Lay Reader who usually takes two services a month and supports the Rector in taking other services e.g. funerals. We have an excellent and longstanding organist for all services except the 8.30 Communion. The hymn books used are the "New Hymns and Worship Songs" and "The New English Hymnal". The organ, which is Victorian is regularly maintained and is in good working order.



The church is also fortunate to have a Sacristan who participates in most Services. Members of the congregation and the PCC read the lessons, offer intercessions and act as sides men/women.

The attendance at the traditional main Morning Services averages 21 in the congregation and the 8.30 Communion Service about 6. Tea and coffee are served after the main Sunday Services. In 2019, the Christmas Carol Service had approximately 130 and the Crib Service 75 attendees. The seven Primary School Services typically attract in excess of 130 children and relatives.

Other activities in the Church

There are periodic home study groups, e.g. for Lent, which follow a set course. There are fund raising and social events during the year, some to raise money for charity, e.g. Christian Aid, Macmillan Coffee Morning and Harvest Supper where we usually donate to the Children's Society.

There are usually two or three concerts a year. The Jesus College Choir from Cambridge & a Welsh Male Voice Choir from Aberfan typically come every two years and the former often invite us to the College for Tea and Evensong. Local Choirs and visiting Musicians also frequently perform. We organise a Sale Trail around the Village and operate several stalls at the Village Fete to raise money for the church. Some years we organise Beetle Drives and Tea parties in villagers' gardens. We occasionally run children's one-off Holiday Clubs.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Church

Strengths

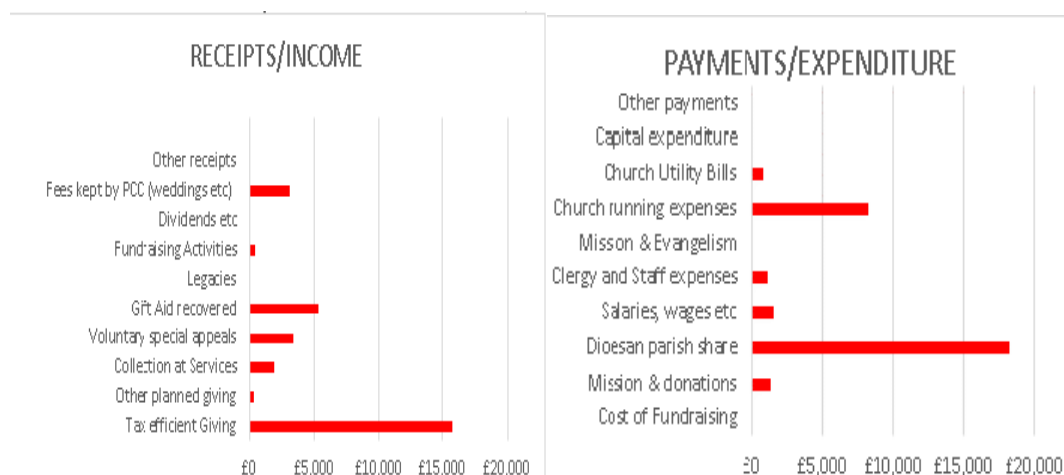
- People in the Church are very generous with their time and their giving
- They form a strong support network and with other volunteer help in fundraising, social events and help with maintenance
- They value the traditions of the Church but at the same time are open to changes that will help engage better with the wider community
- There is a village website www.cavendishvillage.uk “A village nestling in the Stour Valley” and this features a St Mary’s section.

Weaknesses

- Day to day management of the church relies on a small number of people
- The average age of the congregation is high and in recent years the attendance has reduced, and the church need to grow in numbers
- The current pattern and range of services does not meet the needs of those we would hope to attract, namely younger families and those with little or no church background
- There is a need to increase the quality and quantity of communication with the outside world

Organisation and Finance

The details below are taken from the Annual Finance Statement for St Mary’s Cavendish for the year ending 31st December 2019. The income and expenditure below exclude all restricted funds. The Parish paid its full Parish Share as in previous years.



Unrestricted Income 2019: **£30,176**

Unrestricted Expenditure 2019: **£30,963**

Unrestricted Balance at 31/12/2019: **£21,140**

St John the Baptist, Stoke-by-Clare

STOKE-BY-CLARE



The origins of the word 'Stoke' come from the Anglo Saxon for a stockade place. Stoke-by-Clare was little more than a hamlet until the Benedictine Monastery of St. John the Baptist moved here in 1124. This institution had out grown its small buildings contained within Clare Castle, arriving with the Norman invaders. It was given all the land in Stoke-by-Clare in exchange for its lands in Clare.

By the fourteenth Century bequests meant it held land all over East Anglia. The church in Stoke benefited from this expansion in wealth and has been rebuilt three times. War with France put Alien Priors such as Stoke in a dangerous situation. Anti French feeling resulted in the Priory Church being attacked and burnt down in 1395. Part of this earlier church may make up the present church's fabric.

In 1415, instead of the Priory, a College of Secular Priests was established here. Originally the function of such an institution seems to have been to pray for the founder's family. Endowed with considerable wealth, it soon became the rural retreat for Masters of Cambridge Colleges. The last of these before its suppression in 1549 was Matthew Parker, later Archbishop of Canterbury (1559-1576). He revised the founding Statutes of the College and established a Grammar School, which sent boys to Cambridge Colleges.

Much of the glory of this institution was lost at the Reformation and the Church at length came under the Patronage of the miserly family of Elwes, who are buried in front of the altar and in the vault under the church. Stoke College remained a private house under the Loch Family until 1950's. The first Lord Loch, Baron Drylaw was a leading administrator in the British Empire and Governor General of South Africa and Australia. The College adjacent to the church is now a private school for pupils aged up to 18 years.

Of particular interest inside the church are the small mediaeval pulpit, with an internal diameter only 20 inches, a wall painting of the Last Judgement behind the organ, and mediaeval glass in the Elwes Chapel. The church was extensively re-ordered by Reverend William Joel Denman, who was Vicar here during the reign of Queen Victoria. Land sold to the railway, which almost cut the village in two, endowed the village with a primary school, vicarage, and several charities; one of which, 'The Mary Barnes Charity', is still able to grant monies to young people of Stoke for their career and further educational needs. One of the Churchwardens is now chairman.

A significant bequest has enabled the PCC to fund ongoing maintenance of the church fabric in line with the 2016 Quinquennial Report. This has included replacement of flooring in the choir and at the rear of the nave and extensive rewiring including the provision of overhead heaters in the Chancel. We have recently relocated the ancient choir pews and replaced them with chairs and are developing a scheme for the sympathetic provision of an equal access toilet and a servery with a view to wider use of our historic church during the week.

The Village

Stoke by Clare is situated around a village green and lies to the North of the river Stour about 2 ½ miles to the West of Clare. It comprises approximately 500 inhabitants of mixed ages and includes several families with a comfortable mix of newcomers and lifelong residents. We are a welcoming and an active village, which has managed to significantly improve the quality of village life

Stoke College school which has pupils from 4 – 18 years of age and has recently come under progressive new ownership and management and is proposing using the church for morning assemblies, festivals and as part of the curriculum delivery. The school has expressed a wish to be more involved with village life which the church membership sees as an opportunity to foster a closer relationship with the school, its pupils, parents and staff and we hope this may encourage the young to research faith in their lives.

The Church Community

Our Electoral Roll is 26, although its profile is younger than neighbouring parishes. The PCC comprises the Rector, two Churchwardens, the secretary, treasurer and two other members. Church attendance is always open to everyone and we feel it is very important to maintain the Christian witness in our village. The church is open every day and in the Lady Chapel, the Collect for the Saint's Day and other prayers, are displayed.



We currently have Parish Eucharist services at 9.00am on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month and at 10.00am on the 4th Sunday with Morning Prayer led by the Lay Reader at 9.00 am the second Sunday. A benefice service is held on the 5th Sunday. We like Baptisms to take place during Sunday Services, if possible. The sacraments are very important to some of us.

The average Sunday attendance is 16-20, when the congregation sits together in the chancel. The Church is prepared before the Rector arrives, with altar preparation, lesson readers

and frequently members of the congregation lead the intercessions. There is a loyal band of people willing to arrange flowers and read lessons which are provided as part of the service sheet. We appreciate and like a thought- provoking sermon. We follow Common Worship Order One and worship in contemporary language using the Hymn Book, 'Hymns Old and New'. We have two organists whom we can on call and are able to organise a choir and bell ringers for special occasions and love to sing together.



We like to encourage families and children to take part in our Parish Carol service where the attendance is normally around 80 and although we do not currently have a Sunday School, we would like to have a monthly service catering for families and school age children. As a rural parish, services which follow the agricultural year from Plough Sunday through to our Harvest Festival are well attended.



Plough Sunday



Harvest

We are an independently minded and capable Christian Fellowship which we want to share with others. Our Church tradition is Central and we follow the Benefice Policy regarding Baptisms and Weddings. We support Churches together in Clare and Cavendish. We have a mid-week Bible Study group which is ecumenical and held as a house-group. We have a member of the congregation studying for a PhD in Theology at Cambridge and expressing interest in ministry.

The Churchyard is closed to new burials which now take place in the Cemetery a short walk from the church.

We undertake Charity fundraising for international and other good causes including Carol singing around the Village for St. Nicholas Hospice, a Pancake Tea on the Sunday before Lent, Charity boxes and jars are available to raise funds during Lent and Advent for the Bishops' Appeals and Mission Organisations.

In previous years the village fete has been run by church members and we continue to organise a village Sunday lunch twice a year. In the past the church has organised an Art/Craft exhibition, a barbeque and a garden party and hope to organise concerts and other events in the church in the future. The church membership is represented on all of the committees of the village life as well as on the Parish Council and members also actively support the village 'good neighbours' group, and publication of the bi-monthly village newsletter as well as the social and fund raising events run by the village hall committee, the community shop, and the village bowls, tennis and football clubs.

Opportunities for our new Rector

The P.C.C. feels there is huge potential, given sensitive and facilitating leadership. There is a need to develop pastoral care; improve visiting the elderly and the sick; encourage younger families and to develop the relationship with the College School. We see the development of lay ministry as very important; also the sharing with and building on the strengths of each Benefice Parish

The P.C.C is looking for the new Rector to be a person of prayer, humour and knowledge of ordinary life. A good communicator with a breadth of vision and the ability to inspire regular worship and encourage new membership, particularly families. Someone who will contribute to the life of our rural village and foster a community spirit.

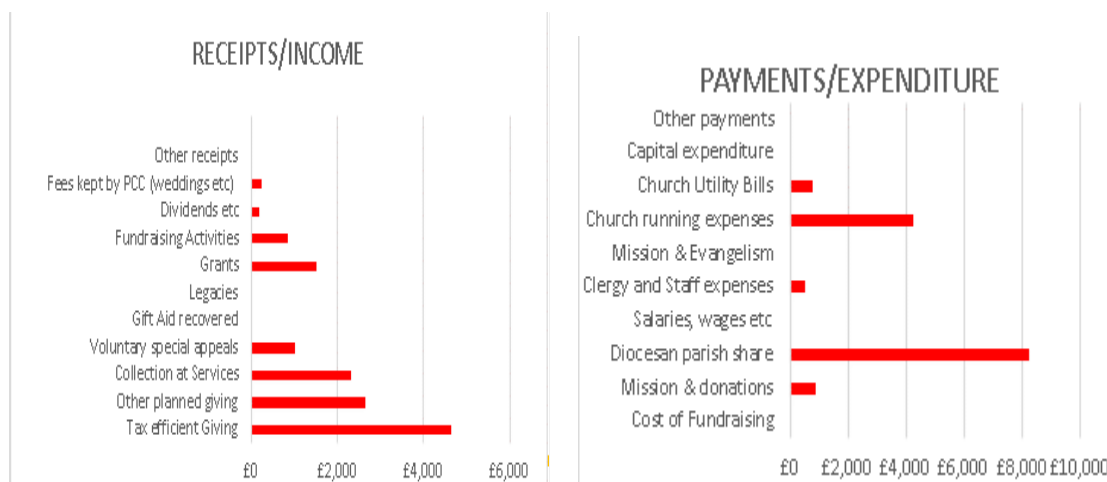
Looking ahead

Although our present numbers are small, we are a strong well-knit community with a happy relationship within the village. We offer a warm welcome, flexibility in ideas of worship, support and fellowship in order to foster and develop parish life and provide a Christian focus in the village.

We are full of energy and hope.

Organisation and Finance

The details below are taken from the Annual Finance Statement for Stoke, for the year ending 31st December 2019. The income and expenditure below exclude all restricted funds. The Church paid its Parish Share and the Rector's expenses in full as in previous years.



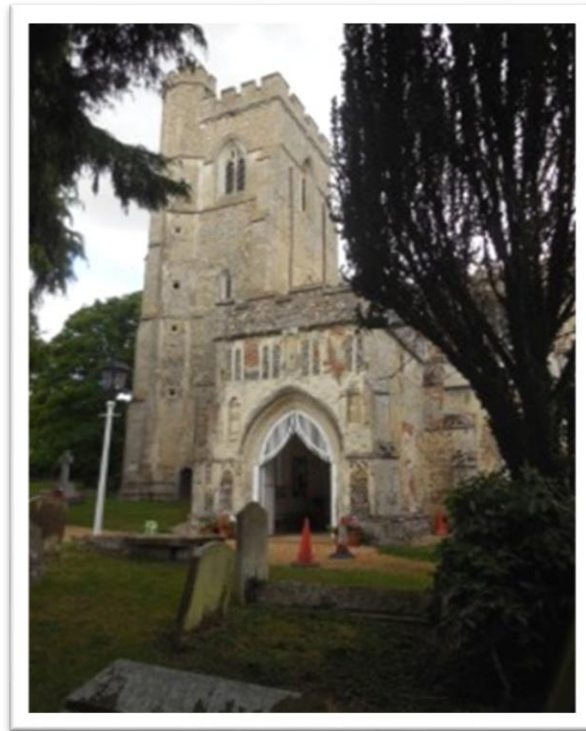
Unrestricted Income 2019: **£12,368**

Unrestricted Expenditure 2019: **£13,804**

Unrestricted Balance at 31/12/2019: **£10,185**

All Saints, Hundon

HUNDON



The Village

Hundon, a very welcoming village, is set in attractive countryside, 3 miles from Clare. It has a population of approximately 1800 residents with a community run shop with post office, a community primary school and a pre-school called Hundon Hedgehogs.

There are a large number of very active community groups and they use a well-maintained village hall. Groups include, Women's Institute, indoor bowls, curling, keep fit classes, Tai Chi, Flicks in the Sticks, Hundon Harmony (local choir) and wine group. Hundon has twice won the Most Active Village competition for Suffolk. There is an all-weather pitch, football field, a cricket pitch on glebe land and a children's play area. There is a monthly newsletter, the Hundon Herald.

The Church

We are proud of our church is pre-Conquest in origin and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The earliest surviving fabric is early C14 and there is a lot of evidence of C15 and C16 work and it is Grade II* listed. The first vicar of the parish is listed as 1306. Sadly, it was severely damaged by the Great Fire of February 1914 but was rebuilt over the course of the Great War. The pews were not replaced at this time, so today, with just chairs, we are able to utilise a large space for concerts, festivals and displays. A servery is shortly to be added to the church facilities. New heating has recently been installed and is greatly appreciated! A lack of toilet facilities is something we aim to resolve.

In September 2015 the lead on the north and south aisles' roofs, was stolen but we were fortunate in obtaining a grant from the Listed Places of Worship Roof Fund of £65,000 to replace the lead. In addition, a grant of £2500 was received from Suffolk Historic Churches Trust enabling a roof alarm to be installed. The church is open every day of the week and has a dedicated team of flower ladies who not only donate their time but also their flowers.



Opportunities

- An active primary school with 81 pupils in the pre-school group
- A significant number of young families living in the village
- A small but willing and committed congregation
- The PCC, although small in size, is very committed to the life and maintenance of the church
- Our various events are always well supported by the village
- We actively encourage the wider community to use the church for community events i.e. concerts, flower festivals, 'Pimm's and Hymns' and some village groups use it when the village hall is not available. With new heating installed we hope that groups can make more use of it in the colder weather.

Challenges

- A limited congregation: there are seventeen persons on the electoral roll.
- An ageing congregation and at present a complete lack of engagement of younger people, although there are plenty of families within the village.

We are looking for a Rector who can lead, inspire and work with us to grow our church community. It is important to be welcoming, approachable, outgoing with a sense of humour, and a good business sense. They must understand the needs and challenges of rural ministry and how vital it is to be a visible and pro-active presence in our communities.

Worship

There are two services a month, Eucharist (CW) on the second Sunday and Evensong (BCP) on the fourth Sunday. This occasionally varies in consultation with the Rector and the PCC; after Evensong we always serve tea and cakes giving the congregation time for fellowship and to welcome visitors.

Our calendar covers the major annual celebrations of Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Advent and a Crib Service, these are all very well attended. Our village choir, Hundon Harmony, supports us at our Christmas and Easter services. We normally have a congregation of approximately 100 for our Carol Service and 60 for the Crib Service.

Hundon Community School uses the church for the main Festivals with parents and grandparents attending services at Easter, Harvest and Christmas.



The Organ

We have recently completed £5000 worth of restoration work on the organ. £3000 of this was a grant from Jesus College Cambridge with whom the parish has a link as a former Living of the college. We also received a £1000 grant from the Broxted Solar Community Fund. With the restoration work completed the organ has taken on a whole new life much to the delight of our regular organist and congregation. We have a small bookstall with donations going to the organ fund.

Activities in the Church

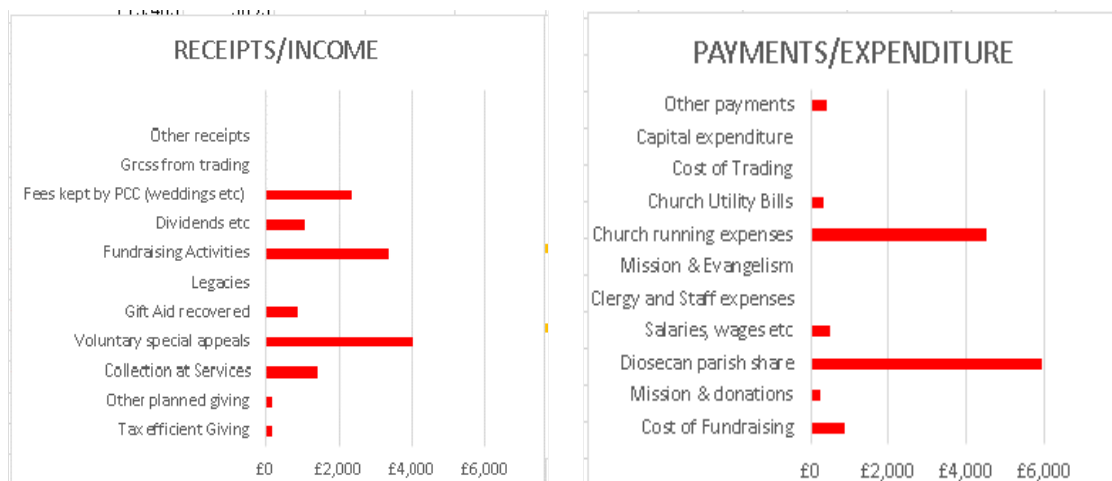
- Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge, - concert
- Christmas Tree Festival with all the village groups participating.
- Christmas Angel Festival
- Pet Service
- Christmas Fair
- Flower Festivals with themes.
- In 2018 we had a wonderful display of memorabilia to commemorate the end of the First World War, with many residents providing much of the cherished items.
- Community Lunch (in the village hall)
- Cheese and wine evening

Burial Ground

Is within the village conservation boundary and is always beautifully maintained. The south and north graveyards are maintained by volunteers whilst the rest of the grass cutting is paid for, this being supported by a yearly grant from the Parish Council.

Organisation and Finance

The details below are taken from the Annual Finance Statement for Hundon, for the year ending 31st December 2019. The income and expenditure below exclude all restricted funds. The Church paid its full Parish Share as in previous years.



Unrestricted Income 2019: **£13,485**

Unrestricted Expenditure 2019: **£12,756**

Unrestricted Balance at 31/12/2019: **£9,375**

Our finances are now viable and our Parish Share has been paid in full. The Parish Giving Scheme commenced in 2019 leading to an increased monthly giving.

Much more information about the village and its history can be found on our village website: www.hundon-village.co.uk

St. Leonards, Wixoe

WIXOE



The Village

The name of Wixoe means Viduc' Hoe, or spur of land, its strategic position on the banks of the River Stour and adjacent to the road from Cambridge to Colchester making it an early trade route. A site of Christian worship has been here for 1000 years. Domesday Book records *Witeskou* as being 575 acres, today the Parish is some 600 acres. In late Medieval Times and subsequently the importance of Wixoe declined to a small agricultural community of perhaps 6 or so large halls/houses with a mainly tenant population. Entry into the village is via a single narrow road with the ford (in use from pre-Roman times until the 1970's) as the only exit making it peripheral to the main traffic and trade routes. In 1958 the school closed, to be followed by the railway line in 1967. The last shop and public house closed in the 1960's and the number of farms came down to a single turkey and arable farm.

The People

In 1870, the population peaked at 170 (87 male 83 female) in 30 dwellings, thereafter the long decline in agricultural employment meant that by 1951 the population had fallen to 91; since then with no significant employment opportunities in the village, residents for the most part travel (by car) to Haverhill and beyond for employment. The recovery in the number of inhabitants was spearheaded by building more council houses (1950/1960) followed by private sector construction in 1969 of 12 houses. St Edmundsbury BC has designated the whole Wixoe village as "Countryside". In any event expansion is limited by the River Stour on one side and the railway embankment on the other. The cumulative result has been that to-day the village is home to 140 persons living in 60 dwellings. A notable feature has been the increase in young people under 16 from relatively few in 1985 to some 15 or so in 2020.

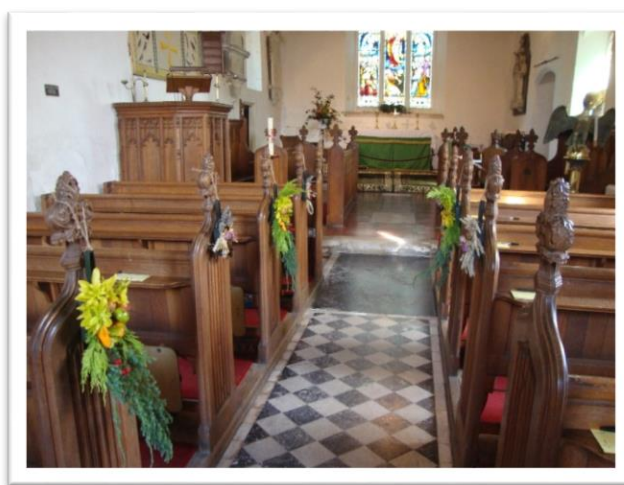
Wixoe does not have a Parish Council but operates through a "Village Meeting" financed by the village precept, with a volunteer Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, elected annually. Well attended meetings are held twice a year in the church. The sale, to tenants, of most of the council houses, the rise in property values and the relative isolation of the village has

encouraged a community with a concern to maintain high standards of care for the village and its surrounds.

The Church

As the only public building in the village, the church is the focal point for all communal activities. This has generated a strong feeling that the church is the residents' church, resulting in generous support to maintain the building and help to keep costs under control. In 2006 major repairs, rewiring and heating system were undertaken at a cost of £20,000, of which 60% was funded by the residents.

For over 15 years members of the PCC, their families and friends have organised a barbecue held in the churchyard, the prime objective being to unite the village. On average approximately 90 people attend and it is always a joyous occasion. Around £900 to £1,000 is raised towards church funds.



The Building

Originally, this was site of a Saxon wooden church, built in the late 10th, early 11th Century with links to the Abbey at Bury. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as having five acres of land.

The present church was built in about 1160, probably the oldest in the Benefice, and was rebuilt and extended in the fourteenth century. The Victorians added an enlarged vestry and totally reordered the interior of the church, thereby removing most of the medieval church fittings that had survived the reformation and the Puritans. It is not known when or why the church is dedicated to St Leonard, recent research favours the view that it was because the son of Jeffrey de Capra, Lord of Wixoe (1175) was obligated in some way to the Prior of St. Leonards's Abbey in Essex.

Since the Quinquennial report, good progress has been made with a number of items completed and there are plans evolving for other items in the years ahead. The Building is in sound condition.

For some years regular worship has been limited to a single monthly family service with an average attendance of adults of 6-10 people including children. Easter, Harvest and Christmas see much higher attendances. With the aid of the new rector our aim should be to increase the importance of the church to both older and younger people alike.

The churchyard is open but burial plots are generally limited to residents. There is no Glebe Land. The church has no water supply or kitchen and is suitable for meetings, small scale concerts and recitals. It is also used as a Polling Station.

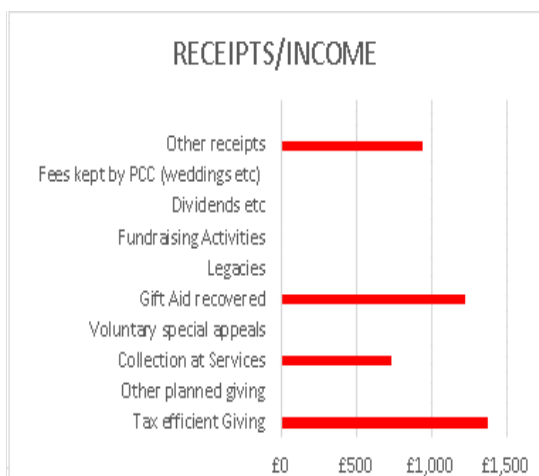
What the Parish is looking for in the new Rector?

A Rector who will respect our form of worship, which reflects the generally conservative tradition of the majority of the residents of Wixoe: who will undertake house visiting if necessary; who will help to maintain the church as the focal point for village wide activities for young and old alike.

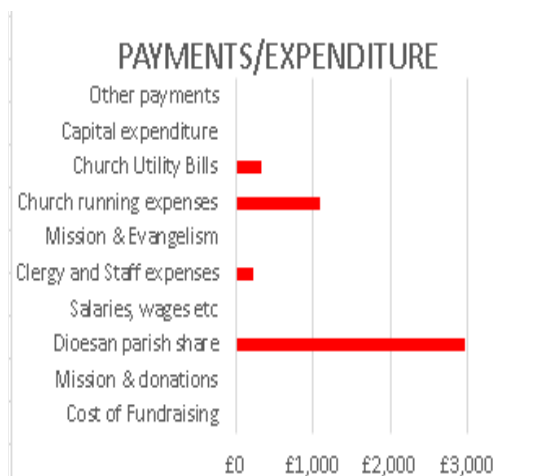


Organisation and Finance

The details below are taken from the Annual Finance Statement for Wixoe, which has been audited and filed with the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Diocesan Board of Finance, Church of England.



Unrestricted Income 2019: **£6,333**



Unrestricted Expenditure 2019: **£4,639**

Unrestricted Balance at 31/12/2019: **£8,347**

APPENDIX

Benefice Service Profile under recently retired Rector

Note: *This pattern of worship was supported by the curate, who has now taken on her new incumbency. It is recognised that a new pattern will be needed to be supported by lay ministry, volunteer retired clergy and hopefully a curate in the future. The new rector will not be required to officiate at more than 3 services on any one Sunday.*

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

CAVENDISH	10.30am	Parish Eucharist
CLARE	10.30am	Parish Eucharist
STOKE	9.00am	Parish Communion
POSLINGFORD	4.00pm	Evening Prayer
WIXOE		No Service
HUNDON		No Service

SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

CAVENDISH	10.30am	Matins taken by a Lay-Reader
CLARE	10.30am	Parish Eucharist
STOKE	9.00am	Morning Prayer by a Lay-Reader
POSLINGFORD		No Service
WIXOE		No Service
HUNDON	9.00am	Holy Communion

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

CAVENDISH	10.30am	Parish Eucharist
CLARE	10.30am	Family Eucharist
STOKE	9.00am	Parish Eucharist
POSLINGFORD		No Service
WIXOE		No Service
HUNDON		No Service

FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

CAVENDISH	8.00am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Morning Service taken by a Lay-Reader
CLARE	10.30am	Parish Eucharist
STOKE	10.00am	Parish Eucharist
POSLINGFORD		No Service
WIXOE	11.15am	Parish Communion
HUNDON	4.00pm	Evensong

FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

CLARE/CAVENDISH	10.30am	Group Sung Eucharist for the entire Benefice
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Benefice Statistics

Population per Parish (2018)

	Population	% of Total Population		
		Under 18	18-64	65 & over
Clare	2,131	17.9	49.3	32.8
Poslingford	215	18.6	54.4	27
Cavendish	860	15	42	43
Stoke-by-Clare	522	18.6	55.2	26.2
Wixoe	138	13	55.1	31.9
Hundon	804	16.5	50.9	32.6

Church Statistics 2019

	Attendance at main Sunday Service	Attendance at Additional Sunday Services	Attendance at week day services	Electoral Roll
Clare	40	10	4-6	100
Poslingford	7	-	-	-
Cavendish	25	-	-	41
Stoke-by-Clare	16	-	-	26
Wixoe	6	-	-	10
Hundon	10	-	-	19

Festival Attendance 2019

	Attendance at Christmas	Attendance at Easter	Other festivals e.g. Harvest or Remembrance
Clare	125	104	70
Poslingford	5	7	-
Cavendish	96	30	70
Stoke-by-Clare	80	40	50
Wixoe	18	16	50
Hundon	65	38	20

Yearly Occasional Services 2019

	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals	Cremation/Burial of Ashes
Clare	8	1	12	2
Poslingford	-	1	0	0
Cavendish	3	-	9	1
Stoke-by-Clare	0	0	1	0
Wixoe	0	0	1	0
Hundon	1	1	2	1

