



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich

# The Wrentham Benefice

Benefice Profile



# The New Vicar

The Wrentham Benefice is looking for a House for Duty priest for the four parishes of Wrentham, Covehithe with Benacre, Frostenden, and Henstead with Hulver Street.

We are looking for someone:

- ✓ To further the spread of the Christian faith in the benefice, engaging with all sections and all ages of the community.
- ✓ With a heart for living in and supporting a rural community and be prepared to be seen out and about and be part of village life.
- ✓ To be an enthusiastic leader and to encourage collaboration for mission and growth.
- ✓ To contribute to the life of the Deanery and collaborate with local clergy.

## What we can offer

A friendly and supportive community, living and working in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We have good local schools and enthusiastic deanery colleagues. We are looking forward to working with a new incumbent to spread the gospel in this beautiful part of Suffolk.

## The future

The patronage has recently been suspended and further reorganisation is envisaged.

# The Wrentham Benefice

The Wrentham Benefice comprises four rural parishes on the north Suffolk coast, with Southwold to the south and Lowestoft to the north:

St Nicholas Church, Wrentham;  
All Saints Church, Frostenden;  
St Andrew's Church, Covehithe with Benacre; and  
St Mary's Church, Henstead with Hulver Street.

## Where we are

Their exact location is shown on the maps which are annexed. The Benefice falls within the East Suffolk local authority and Waveney and Suffolk Coastal parliamentary constituencies.

Wrentham, the largest of the four villages, lies on the A12. The main junction in the centre of the village leads off, via Southwold Road, to the popular coastal town of Southwold. It also leads off, via Mill Lane, to what remains of the hamlet of Covehithe, right on the coast. A few miles south of Wrentham, on the A12, lies the village of Frostenden. The villages of Henstead and Hulver Street lie inland, some two miles north-west of Wrentham. Farming, both agricultural and livestock, is the principal activity in the area.

The benefice falls within the Suffolk Heritage Coast, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Both Southwold and Lowestoft are popular holiday venues and the whole of the Suffolk coast is busy with tourists and holiday makers from April through to September. Further south is Minsmere RSPB Reserve and beyond that, Aldeburgh and Snape, popular with tourists and music lovers alike. Southwold has its own summer theatre and concerts during the Summer months. Some 8 miles to the north west lies the lovely market town of Beccles, gateway to the southern broads. Ipswich, the county town of Suffolk, and Norwich are easily accessible.

## Transport Links

The main road link is the A12 running from Ipswich in the south up to Lowestoft and thence to Great Yarmouth and the Norfolk Broads. It runs through the centre of Wrentham village. The nearest regular railway service runs from Lowestoft (eight miles) down to Ipswich (for services in to London) and from Lowestoft up to Norwich (for services to Peterborough and beyond). There are regular bus services into Lowestoft and Southwold and further afield to Norwich or Ipswich. There is also a national coach station in the centre of Lowestoft and a local taxi service.

## Medical Facilities

The four villages in the Benefice fall within the highly-regarded Longshore Medical Practice catchment area. There are branch surgeries at Wangford, Wrentham and Kessingland. The nearest hospitals are the James Paget University Hospital in Gorleston, north of Lowestoft, and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital just outside Norwich.

## Schools

Although there are no state schools in any of the four villages, primary school children from Wrentham and Frostenden attend schools in either Southwold or Reydon. Those at Henstead and Hulver Street normally attend Kessingland school or Beccles Primary Academy, Beccles. Children of secondary school age normally attend Pakefield High School, the Sir John Leman High School in Beccles, or the Beccles Free School. A small number choose to go to private, fee-paying schools such as Henstead Old School, Woodbridge School (the Seckford Trust), St. Felix in Reydon or Framlingham College in Framlingham (Prep School is Brandeston Hall).

## Joint worship

In those months where there are five Sundays, the Benefice meets as a whole, each church taking it in turn to host the service. The service at these Sundays follows the tradition of the host church.

On Remembrance Sunday, Covehithe joins Wrentham; Frostenden and Henstead have their own services.



*Wrentham on Remembrance Sunday*

At Christmas, Covehithe joins Wrentham for a carol service; Frostenden and Henstead have their own services. Music for the two joint services at Wrentham is provided by the Wrentham Town Band.

## Retired clergy

We are fortunate to have a number of clergy resident in the benefice and another who lives locally who, during the interregnum, have generously helped provide Eucharistic services to the benefice.

## Governance

There is a nascent Benefice Council at which the churchwardens meet periodically to discuss collaborative matters, including future services and finance.

## The Wren Letter

Edited by Lindsay Hanger and published monthly, the Wren Letter is a primary source of information about events and activities in the four churches, as well as St Lawrence Church, South Cove (part of the Sole Bay Team). It also includes information on local, non-church related matters. The incumbent of the Benefice is usually invited to contribute to the Letter each month.

## The Rectory

Please see the annex attached.

# Wrentham

## The parish

The main part of the village lies on the west side of the A12, spread either side of Chapel Road which eventually leads to the parish church at a crossroads on the edge of the village. The remainder lies beside the A12 and along the Southwold Road. Population is about 950, of which 15% are of school age and 60% are of working age. Although within an agricultural environment, most are employed in the towns in the retail and leisure sector and in light industry. Around 25% are of retirement age. There are about 480 properties in the village of which 65% are owned, 29% are privately rented and 15% are social housing. More houses are being built. For the last two years we have held a Village Arts and Crafts Exhibition in St Nicholas, as a means of raising the profile of the church. A substantial new build of some 65 residences is currently under construction to the west of the village

## Amenities

The village has its own store with a limited Post Office facility several days a week. There are two public houses: one on the A12 and another on Southwold Road at the border with South Cove (with a caravan park at the rear), both serving food. There is also a village café, an antiques shop, a gentleman's barbers, an excellent wine shop, a wood burning stove shop, an upholsterers, a shabby chic shop, a Chinese takeaway and a branch of the Original Factory Shop – a popular retail outlet. For more substantial shopping needs, there are a variety of supermarkets within easy striking distance: Morrisons and Aldi in Lowestoft and Morrisons, Tesco and Lidl in the market town of Beccles (Gateway to the Southern Broads).

Wrentham has a thriving Village Hall used by a range of clubs and societies, including a badminton club, pilates, arts and crafts groups, a youth club, and a monthly cinema club, to name but a few. There are also well-supported village bowls and tennis clubs. Every Monday, some forty or so villagers, mainly over 50s, attend the very popular 'Time 4Tea' Club – an informal social club run by volunteers from the village. Some of the locally retired clergy find it helpful to spend time chatting with others in this relaxed environment. The village is fortunate to have its own Brass Band. Wrentham also has its own Fire Station.

Much more information about these activities can be found on the Wrentham Village website:  
<http://www.wrentham.org.uk/page38.html>

## The Parish Church



The 15th Century Church of St Nicholas is the largest of the four churches. Only the tower reveals its position; the rest is almost hidden by trees and shrubs. The church is in a reasonable state of repair, with substantial work being done on the roof and south side in recent years. There are issues with the tower and the bells; the latter are currently out of commission. There is now a roof alarm system as there have been lead thefts, and items have been stolen from inside the church. Despite this, the church is open most days. There are electricity, water and mains gas facilities but no toilet – something that would be welcomed when funds permit. The churchyard is closed. A new, spacious Local Authority cemetery is next to the church with a car parking area which can be used by those attending church. A new crematorium and memorial park has been established on the outskirts of Beccles.

*Wrentham church tower*

## Worship

There is currently a service every Sunday at 11.00am. Normally, Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday in the month and a service of Morning Prayer is held on the other three Sundays. Attendance at these services is about 10. They are relatively informal using Common Worship. Music is provided by an organ or electric piano. New families are moving into the village and we are looking at ways of encouraging them to attend church.

## Parochial Church Council

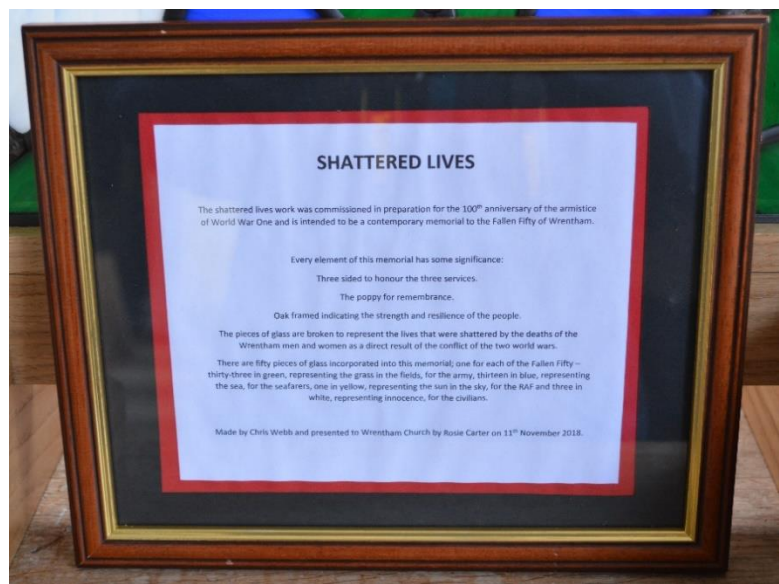
The PCC meets four times a year in the Wrentham Village Hall committee room.

## Finances

The church is currently in funds and has been able to meet its commitments, including the parish share in full. We are seeking ways to improve our financial income.

## Charity

The incumbent is a member of the Wrentham Charity which administers the Poor Law funds in the village.



*New glass commissioned for Wrentham Church*



# Frostenden

## The parish

Frostenden is a scattered rural parish split by the A12, three miles south of Wrentham. The population is about 170; some 10% are of school age, 60% of working age, and 30% of retirement age. The number of dwellings, about 100 properties, has remained largely the same for 150 years. Some of the properties are now second homes purchased for holiday purposes or to rent as holiday homes. Although Building Regulations restrict the construction of new houses in the village, some more modern housing has replaced old stock and others have been modernised, with some semi-detached properties being made into one dwelling. Recent figures show that around 70% of the properties are now privately owned, 11% are privately rented and 16% are social housing.



*The Frostenden Tithe map*

## Amenities

There is a four-acre playing field in Gipsy Lane which is leased from East Suffolk District Council, with a small committee responsible for its management and fund raising. The freehold Village Hall, also in Gipsy Lane, was the first post-war hall built entirely by voluntary labour and opened in June 1952. Once a venue for regular weekly functions and an active W.I, changing leisure needs has left the Hall little used. But it is still run by a small committee and used occasionally for local fund-raising events for the parish church and local amenities, and for private hire.

There are no village shops and the nearest public house is the Wangford Plough, with an adjacent filling station and garage, a mile or so south on the A12. There are weekday newspaper deliveries, milk is delivered three times a week, and the major supermarkets deliver in the area. The village stores in Wangford and Wrentham are also used.

## Charities

There is a small village civil charity; the trustees being the incumbent (ex-officio) and two others appointed by the Parish Council. The Children's Society is also supported in the village by boxes which are opened annually, and the amount is recorded in the "Wren Letter".

## Local Government

The Frostenden, Uggeshall and South Cove Group Parish Council of 12 members serves the three villages with seven members representing Frostenden.

## The Parish Church

All Saints Church is one of many round-towered churches to be found in Norfolk and Suffolk. The date of the tower is a matter of conjecture. The main body of the Church is dated 1220, with the south aisle being added in 1440.

## Worship

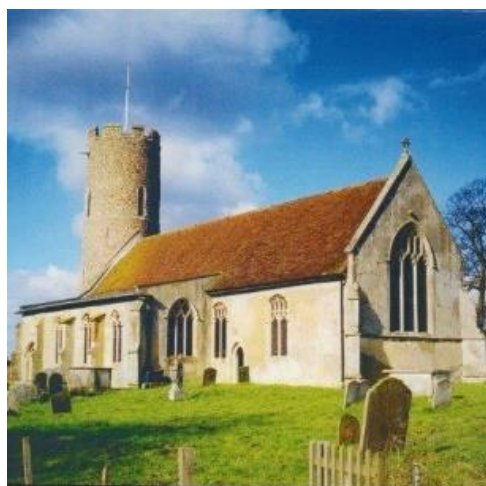
A pattern of weekly services has been maintained, with two Holy Communion services at 9.30am and two services of Morning Prayer at 11.00am, alternately each month. All services follow the Book of Common Prayer. Some of the morning services have been lay led by one of the churchwardens since 1988. There is a regular organist for morning prayer services but the first Holy Communion Service of the month is said. Special arrangements are made for Festivals as required. There are increased congregations at Easter, Christmas and Remembrance Sunday, with the latter normally being lay led.



The average attendance on a normal Sunday in 2021 was five people and there are variations in those who attend the Holy Communion Service to those attending Morning Prayer, with some coming from outside the village. There are currently 14 on the Church Electoral Roll.

## The Parochial Church Council

The PCC meets at least four times a year, normally in the afternoon in the Village Hall.



## Finances

Our Parish Share for 2022 has been met in full. Fund-raising events, donations and fees form much of the Church's income, which is irregular. Two cyclists have participated in the annual "Suffolk Historic Churches Bike & Stride" event for many years and the church is stewarded during the day from 9.00am to 5.00pm. 14 cyclists checked in to the church this year. The church subscribes to the Round Tower Churches Society, the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, and the United Society for the Promotion of the Gospel. Part of the Remembrance Service collection is donated to the Royal British Legion.

## Voluntary Work

There is a monthly rota for brass cleaning and for flower arranging, undertaken not necessarily by members of the congregation. This applies to the man, who with the aid of a ride-on mower (which was donated) cuts most of the churchyard regularly. The Group Parish Council makes an annual grant towards maintenance costs. The grass area outside the churchyard wall is maintained by the neighbouring farmer who also provides additional parking space when required. A new set of gates to the churchyard has recently been erected, the cost being met by a donation.



# Covehithe with Benacre

## The Parish

Covehithe is a small hamlet in an isolated position right on the coast, some two miles from Wrentham. Covehithe now comprises several working farm buildings, a house and a few cottages owned and let by the Benacre Estate, all dominated by St Andrew's Church and surrounded by farmland. In isolation, it has a population of around 20, mostly of working age and older. For administrative purposes, Covehithe has now been combined with the village of Benacre just north of Covehithe. There is a church in Benacre, which is privately owned by the Gooch family. In addition to Benacre Hall, Benacre village comprises several farms and a range of estate cottages and houses let by the Benacre Estate. The combined population is 110, split between agriculture and retail and light industry in the surrounding towns.

## Amenities

There are no shops or community institutions in either Covehithe or Benacre. However, the hamlets are close to Wrentham and within easy striking distance of Lowestoft, Southwold and Beccles.



## The Church

The parish church of St Andrew's, Covehithe is an imposing building as you approach it from a distance. Nestled inside the ruins of the original fourteenth century church is a small thatched church. In 1670, permission was given to the two churchwardens, James Gilbert and Enoch Girling, to dismantle the remains of the original church, which by all accounts was too large for them to maintain, and build a small nave against the tower of the older church. This was completed in 1672. The ruins of the old church, including the tower, are the property of

the Churches Conservation Trust. Electricity is laid on to the church but there are no water or sewage services. There is no church hall. The church is open every day for visitors from 9.00am to dusk. The church is popular with tourists and the overwhelming comment in the Visitors' Book is how peaceful and quiet the church is, away from the stresses of modern life. Parts of the thatched roof of the nave were replaced in 2013 and the rest repaired; some windows were replaced in 2017 and works are currently being undertaken on the outer fabric of the Church. There are 19 on the Electoral Roll.

## Worship

St Andrew's is a Corporate Member of the Prayer Book Society and uses the King James Bible and the Ancient & Modern New Standard hymnal. It has signed the resolution on Women Priests and comes under the pastoral care of the Bishop of Richborough. Services are held at 9.30am every Sunday. A service of Morning Prayer is held on the first and third Sunday and Holy Communion is celebrated on the second and fourth Sunday. Our services are sung. We celebrate Easter and Harvest Festival and have an early morning Holy Communion service on Christmas Day. We hold a separate short Act of Remembrance on 11th November. Our traditional form of service attracts a regular congregation from a wide area.

## **The Parochial Church Council**

The PCC meets four times a year.

## **Church Fund-raising**

Various events are held ranging from Plough Days to concerts to help fund this delightful church perched on the edge of the cliff.

## **Finances**

We try to pay our quota in full each year. This is only possible because of the generosity of visitors who are able to visit this beautiful little church daily and often comment in the visitors book how nice it is to find the church open and how calm and peaceful it is.



# Henstead with Hulver Street

## The Parish

Henstead with Hulver Street is a spread-out rural community of approximately 325 people living in some 190 houses. The properties in Henstead are mainly concentrated in the Toad Row area and along the Sotterley Road, whilst Hulver Street has a more compact area of housing. 83% of properties are owned, 9% are privately rented and 4% are social housing. 16% are of school age, 67% are of working age, mainly in the wholesale and retail trades and light industry, in and around the towns, 17% are of retirement age.

## Amenities

There is a Village Hall in the centre of Hulver Street, It is used on a regular weekly basis. It is occasionally used for Songs of Praise service. The church has good links with The Old School and they use the church for services several times during the year. The Old Rectory has a modern well-equipped barn which we use for supper after occasional midweek Services. Henstead Exotic Gardens, although relatively small, is known nationally and is open to the public regularly during the summer. The Henstead Craft Barns are open Tuesday to Sunday all year round. There is a café and a wide range of retail outlets showcasing several crafts.

## Church





The parish church St Mary's Church is at the Henstead end of the parish. It is an attractive thatched church built approximately 900 years ago. It has an impressive Norman archway and the porch has been rebuilt during the last ten years to help protect this. The church has no electricity or water supply and is lit by battery power in the winter. The organ is hand-pumped and heating is provided by portable gas heaters. The church holds approximately 120 people. The churchyard is divided into two by the B1127 Beccles road and, in the spring, is a sight to behold when it is carpeted in daffodils. The village war memorial is in the centre of the churchyard and is the focus of the Remembrance Sunday service. There are 13 on the Electoral Roll.



## **Worship**

The congregation for regular Sunday services numbers between 12-14 people. We have one service each Sunday at 6pm. The present pattern of services is Holy Communion on the third Sunday and Evensong on the other Sundays. Services are sung and the book of common prayer is used. We use the Book of Common Prayer. During the last interregnum the church held monthly Midweek Services followed by supper at The Old Rectory. Attendance at these usually numbers mid to upper teens and has attracted people who rarely attend church on a Sunday. Harvest Festival and Mothering Sunday services attract larger congregations. The Candlelit Christmas Carol service is the best attended, when the church is packed and supported by a local children's Wind Band. There are occasional weddings and baptisms in the church as well as funeral services.

## **Parochial Church Council**

The PCC meets four times a year.

## **Finances**

The church pays its parish share in full.

## **Fundraising**

Beyond the regular congregation, the village has a band of supportive parishioners who sometimes attend but have also organised major fundraising events, including a large traditional village fete which helps us to stay afloat financially. Our annual Daffodil Festival was a huge success and brought many parts of the village together to showcase our varied talents. The church has good acoustics and is sometimes used for concerts.

# The Rectory



## Ground Floor

Entering through a wooden door into:

### Entrance Hallway

With double panel radiator, smoke detector, telephone socket, small understairs storage cupboard and stairs leading up to the first floor. Doors lead off to the



### Study 20'10 (max) x 16'7 (max) (6.35m x 5.05m)

West. A spacious L-shaped room fitted with a range of wall mounted shelving, two double panel radiators, TV aerial socket and telephone socket.

## Cloakroom

Fitted with low flush WC, corner mounted wash hand basin, extractor fan and wall mounted coat hooks.

### **Sitting Room 17'9 x 13' (5.41m x 3.96m)**

West and south. A light room with central open brick surround fireplace and windows overlooking the front and side of the property. Double panel radiator, TV aerial socket and satellite lead in. Glazed double doors lead from the hallway and an open archway leads through to the

### **Dining Room 13' x 10'3 (3.96m x 3.12m)**

East. With fully glazed patio doors giving access to the rear garden, two double panel radiators, TV aerial socket and door leading through to the

### **Kitchen 18'1 x 11'6 (3.51m x 3.50m)**

East. Fitted with a good range of base and eye level kitchen units with formica rolltop worksurface over, inset with a double bowl single drainer plasticised sink. Space for electric cooker. Space for fridge freezer. Double panel radiator, Manrose extractor fan and TV aerial socket. The kitchen can also be accessed from the hallway.

### **Utility Room 13'8 x 8'7 (4.16m x 2.61m)**

Fitted with base level kitchen units with section of worksurface over inset with a single bowl single drainer sink. Space and plumbing for washing machine and tumble dryer. Door to the rear garden and further door to



### **Shower Room**

Fitted with low flush WC, wash hand basin and separate fully tiled shower cubicle with Mira Shower. Double panel radiator and extractor fan.

Stairs from the entrance hallway lead up to the galleried landing  
With hatch to attic, single panel radiator and doors leading off to:

### **Master Bedroom 18'10 x 10'5 (5.74m x 3.17m)**

West. A good size double bedroom with window overlooking the front of the property. Mirror fronted hanging cupboards, double panel radiator, TV aerial socket and telephone socket. A door leads to the:

### **En-suite Bathroom**

Fitted with three-piece suite in white comprising low flush WC, pedestal wash basin and plastic panelled bath. Double panel radiator and extractor fan.

### **Bedroom Two 13' x 11'6 (3.96m x 3.50m)**

East. A further good size double bedroom with views over the rear garden. Double panel radiator, TV aerial socket and telephone socket.

### **Family Bathroom**

Fitted with three-piece suite comprising low flush WC, pedestal wash basin and panelled bath. Separate fully tiled shower cubicle with Mira shower. Double panel radiator, extractor fan and shaver socket.



**Bedroom Three 11'6 x 10'6 (3.50m x 3.20m)**

East. A double bedroom with window overlooking the rear garden and double panel radiator.

**Bedroom Four 12'4 x 6'10 (3.75 x 2.08m)**

West. A good size single bedroom with wall mounted shelving and double panel radiator.

**Airing Cupboard**

Fitted with fully lagged hot water tank and partially slatted wooden shelves.

**Outside**

A driveway leads directly off Southwold Road from which there is parking for at least two cars. The driveway gives access to an attached single garage with up and over door. The front garden is enclosed by mature hedging with an area laid to grass and floral borders. A high level gate gives access to the rear of the property with a concrete pathway leading to the main area of garden. The split level garden is mainly laid to grass, with a raised paved seating area where there is a wooden storage shed. A further paved seating area adjoins the rear of the property which can also be accessed from the dining room.

**Services**

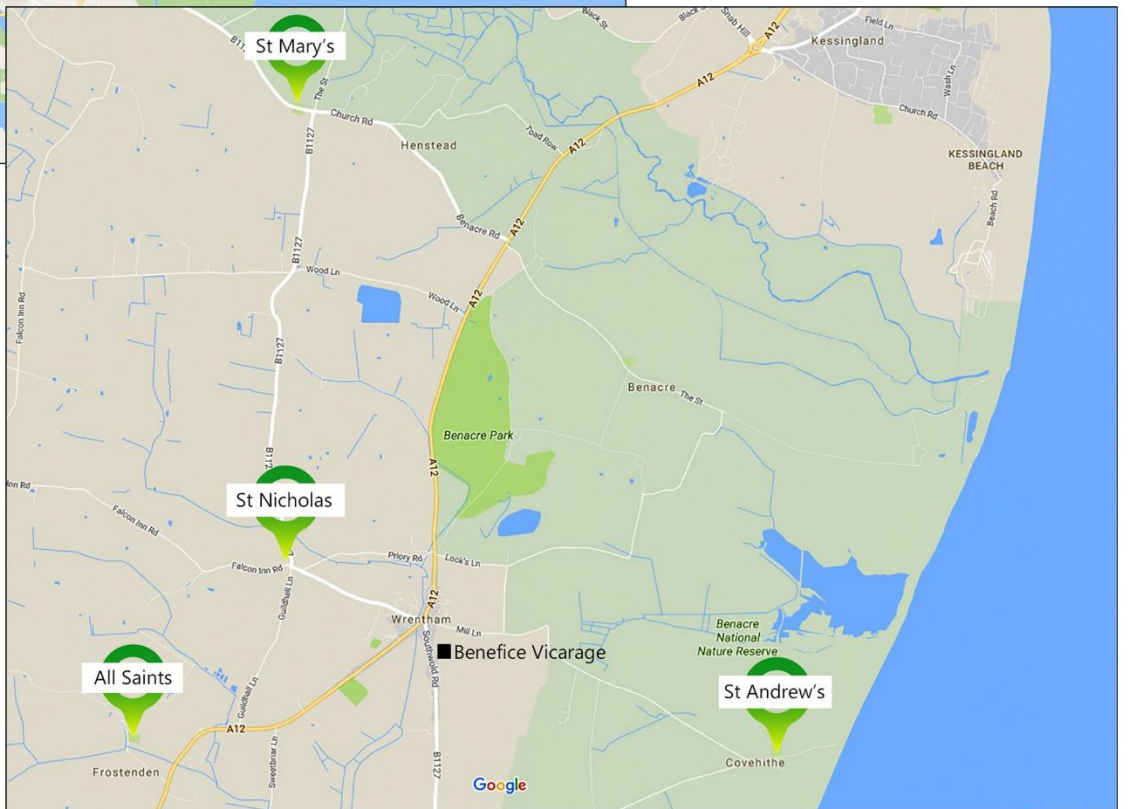
Mains water, electricity, drainage and gas connected. Gas fired central heating.

# Suffolk Heritage Coast



# Suffolk Heritage Coast and the Wrentham Benefice

The Wrentham Benefice



# Waveney and Blyth Deanery



The Waveney and Blyth Deanery sits in the north east corner of Suffolk and comprises 51 parishes. There are four principal areas of population, Beccles, Halesworth, Bungay and Southwold with Reydon. Lowestoft is the nearest large town, but it is in the Diocese of Norwich. Norwich itself is a popular city for shopping, culture and football.

The Deanery is predominately rural. Farming is very important and so is tourism with the coastline between Lowestoft and Felixstowe being an area of outstanding natural beauty. Employment opportunities are provided by light industrial and commercial areas on the outskirts of Beccles, Halesworth and Reydon. The many parish churches in our Deanery are, like most of East Anglia, listed medieval buildings with much historic interest.

Travelling from Beccles to Norwich takes about 25 minutes by car, whereas Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds are at least an hour away. The East Suffolk Railway Line passes through the Deanery with stations at Beccles, Brampton and Halesworth. London Liverpool Street is about two hours twenty minutes by rail from Beccles.

The charm of the Deanery is the physical beauty of the countryside and coast. The geographic location can contribute to a sense of being a long way from everywhere, which some might consider a good thing!

## The Deanery Churches

Many of the rural parishes are characterised by the faithful few sustaining witness and worship in small villages. Our medieval heritage is such that, in common with neighbouring Norfolk, there are more than we really need and most are still open. We are still committed to a Christian presence in every community and there are vibrant shoots of change in many of our churches.

There is a high level of second home ownership in some parts of the Deanery and rural de-population because of falling agricultural employment.

The reduction in stipendiary clergy is leading to a growing awareness of the importance of Lay Ministry in leading worship. There is a growing openness to change and an awareness that we must all embrace a new future together if the church is to survive, flourish and grow.

In many parishes SSM's, Readers, and particularly Lay Elders, share the pastoral work of the church in the community. We are also blessed by the help of a number of active retired clergy.

## Clusters

In recent years the Deanery has been considering at Synod, Clergy Chapter and PCC level the options for offering the best possible ministry and mission with the resources that we have available.

The mix of formal team ministries and informal groupings, have the generic title of "Clusters". This implies a larger centre, e.g. Beccles, Bungay, Southwold and Halesworth, in which a certain vibrancy of Christian life, witness and worship might offer support and resources for smaller rural parishes to access. It is hoped



that clergy will be encouraged and sustained by working in a collegiate system, formal and informal, rather than alone.

**Our Cluster partnerships are -**

Beccles with Worlingham, North Cove & Barnby | Hundred River & Wainford

Bungay | The Saints + Lightwave Rural Hub

Blyth Valley Team | Heveningham, Huntingfield & Cookley

Sole Bay Team | Wrentham Benefice

In 2019 we developed a deanery plan that is a working and evolving document. The plan reflects the diocesan priorities in our context and highlights that through clergy chapter, deanery synod, and the deanery learning hub, how we seek to be collaborative and missional as we work together, sharing gifts, talents, and resources where possible.

A copy of the deanery planning document is available from the rural dean.



Revd Canon Rich Henderson  
Rural Dean  
[richhenderson@btinternet.com](mailto:richhenderson@btinternet.com)



Mr George Fisher  
**Deanery Lay Chair & Secretary**

# The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

## Where are we?

The Diocese covers the county of Suffolk, excluding the area around Lowestoft in the north-east, and one parish in Essex. It is a mainly rural Diocese with a large number of small villages, plus market towns including Woodbridge, Halesworth, Sudbury and Beccles and the cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds with its historic ruins of the old Abbey. Ipswich is the county town with a population of about 137,000. Suffolk's population is c 650,000. The county embraces historic places of interest such as Sutton Hoo, culture at Snape with the famous annual Aldeburgh music festival, is on the Heritage coast and is a haven for lovers of natural history and birdlife. The busy port of Felixstowe is at the end of the A14 which runs via Cambridge to the Midlands and the A12 which gives access to London and the Norfolk Broads.

## Who are we?

We are often known as 'the Church of England in Suffolk'. The diocesan bishop is the Right Reverend Martin Seeley, and the suffragan bishop is the Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison. Both work from the Bishop's House in Ipswich. They work together closely to help us shape our vision and strategy, and amongst a plethora of other tasks offer regular teaching mornings to nurture the faith of people in our congregations – and a regular Vlog which can be found on Facebook. There are 3 archdeaconries and over 450 churches where visitors will find a wide range of worshipping styles, from the traditional to contemporary, as well as Fresh Expressions and growing numbers of 'Lightwave' groups for those who haven't connected with traditional church previously. The Cathedral of St Edmund and St James in Bury St Edmunds is the mother church of the Diocese and is proactive in offering support to clergy and parishes including welcoming parishes on pilgrimage. We also work closely with our 88 Church of England primary schools. All this is, of course, supported by a small and committed diocesan staff based in the diocesan office in Ipswich.



## What is our vision?

Our diocesan vision is to be 'Growing in God', aiming to grow 'flourishing congregations making a difference'. This vision was accepted by Diocesan Synod in 2014 and since then we have been focussing on four key priorities:

- Growing in Depth: responding to the call of Christ in every part of our lives
- Growing in Number: drawing the contacts we have into the life of God's kingdom
- Growing in Influence: reaching beyond ourselves in our impact on the wider world
- Growing Younger; building churches whose age-range reflects our communities

Parishes are encouraged to use a simple Mission Action Planning tool to help us all to focus on these priorities and how they might be worked out in each different context. We are trusting God that this vision, underpinned by a commitment to Christian stewardship, will bear fruit as we look to the future.

As part of this vision, we have recently received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Archdeacon of Ipswich which aims to grow the church in Ipswich through church planting and reaching out to those who live in the town, and 'Growing God in the Countryside', overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission. This focusses on nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups and hubs such as the one being in Bungay within the Waveney and Blyth Deanery.

We have also been part of a pilot scheme exploring how we can use our church buildings more creatively both for those who worship regularly and for the benefit of our communities and many churches have benefitted from this.

We are broadening our vision through a growing partnership with the Diocese of Kagera in Tanzania, with fruitful visits and links being established.

### **How can we fulfil our “Growing in God” vision?**

We value our huge range of different ministries: we have over 100 stipendiary clergy, plus many SSM and PTO clergy as well as lay and ordained chaplains who can be found in such diverse places as schools, prisons, hospitals, hospices, the army, RAF and the police. Some clergy are ordained to serve in their local benefice through our pioneering 'auxiliary ordination pathway' which enables people's vocations to ordained ministry to be discerned within the Diocese.

All clergy work alongside lay ministers – Readers, elders, and the growing number people exercising recently introduced licensed ministries: pioneer ministers, evangelists, youth ministers and children's and family workers. Our ministry deployment principles encourage teams or clusters of lay and ordained ministers to work together so that clergy feel less isolated and ministry resources the mission of the church more effectively. We are just beginning to develop the principle of 'local ministers' in our benefices, releasing people's gifts to serve in their locality.

We are excited about these new developments which are playing an important part in our diocesan vision of Growing in God.

### **So, in summary:**

As our Growing in God vision states, we aspire to be people who know that 'God is with us, gathering us as Christ-centred communities, calling us to make Christian disciples, sending us in loving service, empowering us by the Holy Spirit'.



**God's Light Shines in Suffolk**



The diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich strongly encourages all incumbents to promote the growth of small missional groups and fresh expressions of Church in their benefices. “Lightwave” has been created with a diocese-wide Bishops Mission Order in order to support clergy and lay people to work together in mission-shaped communities, reaching out in innovative ways.

The Lightwave Community meets in small groups in homes, pubs, offices, schools and other places and complements other ways of being church. The name of the community comes from the idea of lightwaves being the way in which light spreads into dark places. Lightwave is committed to shining the light of Jesus in Suffolk through acts of kindness and practical service as well as worship and witness.

Each lightwave group aims to do one activity together to bless their local community and to share faith in their locality or network. Each group receives support and training in their outreach through a growing network of coaches. Each is mainly concerned to bless people who are exploring faith for the first time, while simultaneously cooperating closely with local parish churches and others. The Lightwave Community is being developed through a Project called “Growing in God in the Countryside” funded by the Strategic Development Unit of the Church Commissioners until 2025. While both urban and rural Christians are part of this community, there is a particular focus on helping 1500 new disciples come to faith in rural areas in the period of the funding. Many Lightwave groups are planting fresh expressions of Church. The understanding is that such fresh expressions of Church will be new or different ways of being established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

The Lightwave Community is developing three Rural Resourcing Churches, in different parts of Rural Suffolk to create and support the development of the small missional groups in their area and to intentionally provide sufficient critical mass for particular ministries which are currently under-represented in rural churches, for example with young adults and those in lower income brackets. Every part of the Lightwave Community has a vision for the great wave of God’s love, bringing light to our county.

# loverural

## Making Jesus visible through loving action

Loverural – is about “making Jesus visible through loving action” in the Suffolk Countryside. It is part of the diocese’s strong commitment to rural areas. Loverural has 3 strands:-

- a) Drawing attention to the enormous role of the rural Christianity in building social capital
- b) Acting as a convenor for projects and congregations in the countryside including those of different streams and denominations so that good rural practice can be shared and mutual support offered
- c) Enabling those engaged in Christian-based social action to gain confidence and wisdom in how to make exploration of the Christian faith accessible to those engaging with their initiatives

[www.light-wave.org](http://www.light-wave.org)