

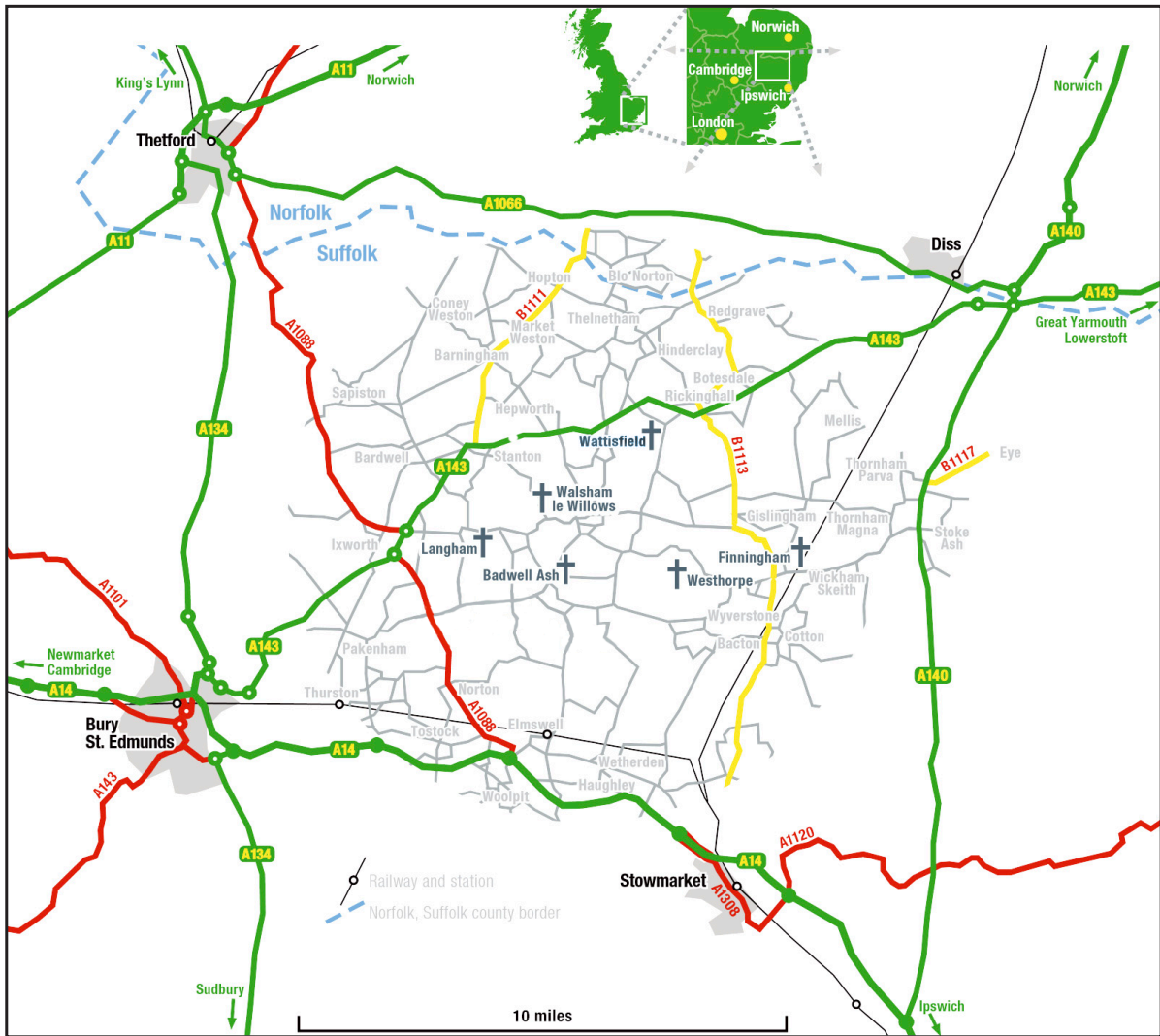


The Benefice Profile for Badwell Ash and Walsham le Willows Suffolk

Growing God's mission in a beautiful rural environment
with active communities

For the Parishes of Walsham le Willows, Badwell Ash, Finningham,
Wattisfield, Westhorpe and Langham.





Foreword

Our rural Benefice is fortunate enough to be in a classical rural East Anglian setting, in North-West Suffolk, yet within easy reach of the key regional centres of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge. The 15th century cathedral and outstanding facilities of the historic, yet growing, modern market town of Bury St. Edmunds are close by, allowing easy access to Hospitals, Theatres, Sports, Education and amenities, whilst the Kings Forest at Thetford and the Suffolk Heritage coast enhance the extensive local countryside and are also conveniently located. Both Norwich and London Stansted Airports are an hour away, along with good fast rail links to the capital.

Introduction

The Badwell and Walsham Benefice is in the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich and is part of the Ixworth Deanery. It consists of six distinct parishes in the heart of East Anglia. We have a beautiful rural environment with active communities. Our tradition is broadly central using a mix of Common Worship and BCP services.

The Churches

The churches are St.Mary's Walsham le Willows, St.Mary's Badwell Ash, St.Bartholomew's Finningham, St.Mary's Langham, St.Margaret's Wattisfield and St.Margaret's Westhorpe. We have a ministry team of one reader and one elder and the help of several retired priests in the Deanery. Supportive PCCs and parishes, each with their own character are also very happy to work together.

Our Hopes

- * A priest who will act as a Shepherd to our six congregations and villages.
- * Somebody who enjoys pastoral ministry and is happy to be a visible presence in our community.
- * A guide who will help us to grow deeper in our faith.
- * Somebody who will help us to develop and encourage our links with each community, and between our small congregations.
- * An inspirational spiritual leader who will help the Benefice to fulfil its strong potential in all the areas identified in the diocesan vision for growth 'Growing in God.'
- * Someone who will help us build upon the strong pastoral legacy left by our last incumbent.

What we can offer

- * Welcoming and hospitable congregations.
- * Assured support for your ministry.
- * Parishes with a strong commitment to work together.
- * Full support in Governance matters.
- * A spacious modern Rectory.

The Rectory

The Rectory is in Walsham le Willows. It is a modern detached house with a large lounge, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, utility room, four bedrooms and a benefice office in an annex with separate outside entrance.

Walsham le Willows is about 11 miles from Bury St.Edmunds with its Cathedral that plays an active and important part in the work of the church in this area. The hospital and crematorium are also in Bury. There are Doctors surgeries in the neighbouring villages of Ixworth and Rickinghall. It is essential that any applicant can drive. (Expenses are paid in full)



Our Strengths

- * The Benefice Services (which are held in a different parish each month) are linked whenever possible to a special event in that parish such as a Flower Festival, Concert, or a Harvest Picnic.
- * The bi-monthly Benefice magazine Hexagon that is distributed free to every household in the six parishes with a circulation of around 1,700 contains details of all the services and other events.
- * The benefice benefits from the services of 3 organists and all the churches in the benefice support the Stowmarket food bank.
- * The church has strong links with a thriving Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School in Walsham. It is the only school in the Benefice and has 117 children aged 4-11 drawn from neighbouring villages. There is a strong RE lead who works closely with other members of the community and in the past the choir has performed at the Carol Concert in the Cathedral. The last incumbent came in most weeks to lead Collective Worship to the school community. This partnership is strengthened by joint celebrations for Christian festivals. The latest Ofsted report found it to be a 'Good' school in March 2023, and states that "pupils live up to leaders' high expectations. Pupils benefit from a curriculum that typically allows them to develop the school values: discover, inspire, and grow." The school's most recent SIAMS Report from June 2022 states "the friendly, family atmosphere is valued and the Christian vision has fostered a belief that every child deserves a chance to flourish. Pupils are encouraged to think and act for others and pupils have time for reflection and prayer in class and at key points in the school day." [Website: Walsham le Willows CoE VC Primary School](#)
- * Walsham has a church hall 'The Priory Room' used for many Benefice events, as well as a village hall. Badwell Ash and Wattisfield have village halls and Westhorpe has a new village hall recently opened with the help of a major lottery grant award.
- * Several of our churches are already pro-active in the Eco-church scheme. Getting our churches involved in environmental projects is an excellent way to invite new people into the local community.

[Website: Church of England - Suffolk - Become an Eco Church](#)

Our Challenges

- * Engaging children and young families in church life.
- * Congregations made up of mostly older people.
- * Finding and encouraging representation on PCCs and as Church Officers.
- * St Margaret's Wattisfield which at present has no PCC or Churchwardens.

Involving The Young

Each parish has identified a key task to increase the involvement of young people in the church. We wish to celebrate and build on the work we do such as the Children's Choir and the development of creative participation with all ages in the local CEVC Primary School.

Young adults tend to drift away from the church but there may be opportunities to maintain contact through the Walsham Sports Club whose total membership is currently around 300 with almost half that figure aged 18 or under. The Youth Football and Cricket age groups are extremely well-run and cover the 6-18 age demographic with high quality coaching and facilities together with clear opportunities to play their sport regularly at senior level.

We realise that this is asking a lot of anyone when there are six distinct parishes to manage. We wish to provide help to the incumbent and believe that skills in delegation and team building will be essential.

The Parish Share

The total population of the Benefice is about 3755 ranging from 1,650 in Walsham to 90 in Langham. We have managed to meet the Diocese's share each year with much fund raising; we see the paying of this very much as a collective effort between all our Parishes.

The Benefice of Badwell & Walsham - PARISH SHARE														
	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Target	Paid	Target	Paid	Target	Paid	Target	Paid	Target	Paid	Target	Paid	Target	Paid
Badwell Ash	12,270	5,000	8,000	8,000	8,500	8,500	8,500	8,500	8,750	8,750	8,750	5,470	9,010	9,012
Finningham	7,160	7,160	7,160	7,200	7,500	7,500	7,850	7,850	8,350	8,350	8,350	8,350	8,610	8,610
Langham	1,530	1,530	2,000	2,000	2,300	2,300	2,410	2,410	2,600	2,600	2,600	1,600	2,860	2,860
Walsham	19,430	15,680	25,000	25,000	27,000	27,000	27,820	27,820	28,320	28,320	28,320	28,320	28,637	28,637
Wattisfield	7,160	3,000	3,120	3,120	3,500	3,500	4,500	4,500	4,700	4,700	4,700	4,700	4,960	4,960
Westhorpe	3,600	3,600	4,800	4,800	5,800	5,800	6,100	6,100	6,343	6,343	6,343	6,343	6,603	6,603
Benefice		2,651	1,101	1,061	1,761	1,761	500	500	500	500	174	174		
Other Benefice			3,000	3,000										
	51,150	38,621	54,181	54,181	56,361	56,361	57,680	57,680	59,563	59,563.00	59,237	54,957	60,680	60,682

The Pattern of Services

The pattern of services in recent years has been flexible, providing each church with at least one Holy Communion each month. There was a regular weekly 8am BCP Holy Communion at Walsham and the services around the benefice included Evensong, Morning prayer, and Songs of Praise, with special services for festivals.

A typical pattern of services over 6 months across the benefice was as follows with a reduced number of services at present.

BENEFICE OF BADWELL ASH AND WALSHAM LE WILLOWS – SERVICES IN 2024								
	8am	Walsham 11am	Badwell 9.30am	Finningham 11am	Langham 11am	Wattisfield 11am	Westhorpe 9.30am 3pm	
07/01/2024		Benefice Communion						
14/01/2024	Communion						Communion	
21/01/2024			Communion	Communion				
28/01/2024		Communion					Communion	Evensong
04/02/2024	Communion			Morning Service				
11/02/2024	Communion	Songs of Praise						
18/02/2024	Communion			Benefice Communion		Morning Prayer		Evensong
25/02/2024		Communion	Communion					
03/03/2024	Communion			Morning Service			Communion	
10/03/2024	Communion	Songs of Praise						
17/03/2024	Communion			Communion				Evensong
24/03/2024	Communion		Benefice Communion			Communion		
27/03/2023							Benefice Communion	
31/03/2024	Communion							
07/04/2024	Communion	Songs of Praise			Communion			
14/04/2024	Communion			Communion				Evensong
21/04/2024		Communion	Communion					
28/04/2024	Communion			Morning Service			Communion	
05/05/2024	Communion	Songs of Praise				Benefice Communion		
12/05/2024	Communion			Communion				Evensong
19/05/2024		Benefice Communion						
26/05/2024	Communion		Communion	Morning Service				
02/06/2024	Communion	Songs of Praise			Morning Service		Communion	
09/06/2024	Communion			Communion				Evensong
16/06/2024		Communion	Communion					
23/06/2024	Communion			Morning Service			Communion	
30/06/2024	Communion	Songs of Praise				Communion		

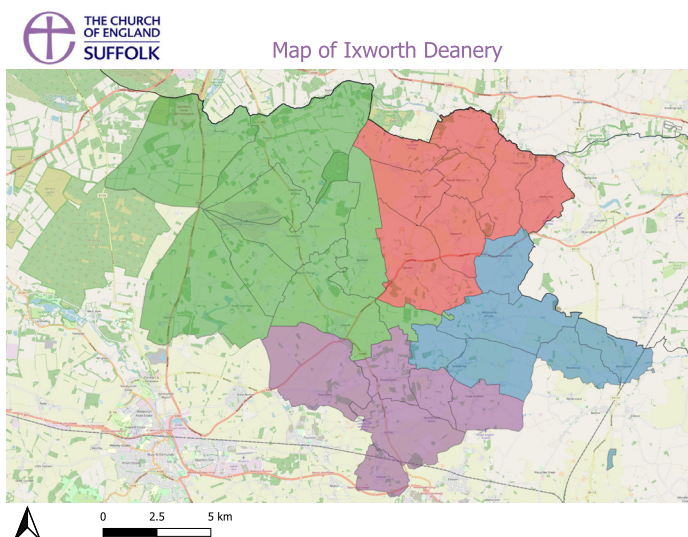
Apart from these services pre-covid there was also a Communion service on Wednesdays in Walsham's Priory Room. This service was well attend by folks rarely seen on Sundays. Hymn books used across the Benefice are Ancient & Modern New Standard and Mission Praise.

Attendance

Walsham	Finningham	Westhorpe	Badwell	Langham	Wattisfield
8am: 10-15 11am: 20-40	10-15	10-15	15-20	10-15	10

The Deanery

The Ixworth deanery is a small and friendly Deanery with thirty parishes grouped into four benefices; Badwell and Walsham (6 parishes), The Blackbourne Team (8 parishes), Pakenham Benefice (6 parishes) and The United Benefice of Stanton (8 parishes) The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee deals with the day-to-day business of the deanery, and plans deanery synod meetings. These aim to provide support to parishes by looking at matters of local concern and encouraging Benefices in their Growth Plans. Recent topics have included Church Schools, Eco-Church, Safeguarding, Foodbanks, and Making the most of our buildings.



There are five stipendiary posts in the Deanery and two SSMs plus a good number of retired priests with PTO who help on a regular basis across the Deanery. Lay ministry is also highly valued and there are three Readers and fifteen lay elders across the four Benefices. Deanery Chapter meets monthly to catch up, usually over a light lunch, and provides a high level of pastoral support

The Diocese

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich covers the county of Suffolk, excluding the area around Lowestoft in the north-east, and including 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 242,000. Suffolk's population is c 760,000. The county embraces historic places of interest such as Sutton Hoo, culture at Snape with the famous annual Aldeburgh music festival and 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.

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.

Growing in God

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*

[Website: Church of England - Suffolk - Growing in God](#)

The benefice continues to engage with this Diocesan initiative using it to focus on deepening our faith, our work with the school, projects such as Eco Church and the needs of the communities we serve. We recognise the need to build on all areas of this in the future, growing deeper, in influence, in number and younger.

Centenary Remembrance Sunday





Saint Mary's – Walsham le Willows

Population 1260

The village has mixed housing with a recent major development providing 'affordable homes'. There are two pubs and an award winning butchers shop and delicatessen. The major employer is an agricultural and builders merchant serving many regions of the country. Many people work in Bury St.Edmunds and other local towns.

There is a well-equipped Church Hall 'The Priory Room' used for many benefice functions, groups such as the WI and History Group, as well as other social events. There is also a separate Parish office that houses a copying and printing machine for the printing of the bi-monthly Benefice Magazine 'Hexagon' and service sheets.

A much larger hall the Memorial Village Hall, managed by the Community Council hosts a Satellite Post Office and Coffee Shop on Thursday mornings; a Parent and Toddler Group; Carpet Bowls; Digital Cinema Screenings; Musical and Theatrical productions.

There are many other societies including an Allotment Society and an annual Horticultural show. Details can be found on the village website. There is a well-attended Congregational Church.

[Website: Walsham Le Willows](#)

Every August Bank Holiday weekend some thirty-five village gardens are opened to the public and lunch and refreshments offered to visitors in the Memorial Hall and Priory Rooms. The church is beautifully decorated and hosts music recitals and an art show. Half the proceeds from the Open Gardens event are donated to the fabric fund of the church. This event raises significant funds for the village and is now in its fortieth decade.

St. Mary's, Walsham le Willows

A church stood here when the Domesday Survey was made in 1086. That building has long gone, though the materials have been used and reused over the centuries. The tower and the font belong to the 1300s, but the church had its greatest make-over from about 1400, when the builders were busy, on and off, for a century, leaving a splendidly impressive legacy that survives the ages.

We have Six Bells, which are rung most Sundays and frequently visited by other ringers. We have two churchwardens and a very active PCC.

When there is no Benefice Service, Walsham holds its own parish services on a Sunday. An 8am BCP service still has a loyal following, interceded with a later communion, or a monthly, less formal, Songs of Praise.

One of the highlights of our year is the annual visit of the Epiphany Singers, an ad hoc group of international-class singers and musicians who gather in early January, staging a Carol Concert on Saturday evening, followed by a traditional Eucharist on the Sunday morning. Meanwhile, our vibrant primary school pupils are regular and welcome visitors, staging several gatherings and celebratory services throughout the academic year.

Music plays an important part in the church calendar as several concerts are regularly staged by visiting musicians and singers. Our organ has recently been replaced with a complete refurbished younger instrument. We also have a baby grand piano which enables us to stage the series of fund-raising, mid-week lunchtime concerts which are always well attended.





Saint Mary's – Badwell Ash

Population 820

Badwell Ash boasts a thriving public house, The White Horse Inn, a busy village shop, a fish and chip shop and a village hall, all of which are well-used. The Parish Council hold their monthly meetings in the smaller of the two halls. There is also a Silver Ash Club, a popular group for the over 60s, that has run for many years and meets in the Village Hall on a regular basis.

Over the past 5 years, the village has expanded with the addition of two new housing developments with some 50 new houses whilst a further 98 houses are planned in the next few years.

St. Mary's, Badwell Ash

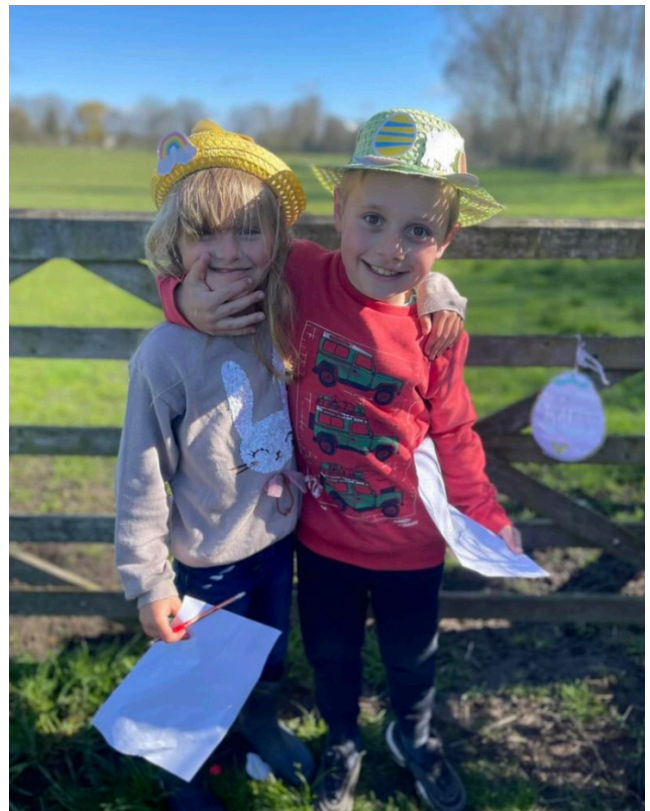
The church of St. Mary's stands in a prominent position in The Street in the heart of the village. Most of the building is 14th and 15th century. There is a fine hammer-beam roof in the Nave with fifteenth century angels looking down on the congregation. There is an attractive eight-sided medieval font which unfortunately seems to have been damaged by the iconoclasts during the reformation. Both the tower and porch built in the 15th century contain some of the finest examples of flint flush-work to be found anywhere in East Anglia. Marian monograms can be seen as well as representations of rural agricultural life.

A Holy Communion is held each month at St. Mary's, but traditionally much of the church's outreach to the community happens at festival times. There is a Candlelit Carol Service held on Christmas Eve each year which is an extremely popular event with hardly any standing room left with people coming from the surrounding villages. We also hold a Harvest Service each year which is well attended together with a Remembrance Day service in conjunction with the Parish Council.

Art Exhibition, St. Mary's Church 2023



There are a number of regular fundraising events in the church including an Art Show, a History Exhibition run in conjunction with the Local History Society, Jumble Sales and a Plant Sale to name but a few. Additionally, for the children there is a very popular Easter Egg Hunt organised with the neighbouring parish of Langham.





Saint Bartholomew's – Finningham

Population 500

Finningham is a small, charming yet lively village of just under 500 residents centred around a picturesque village green. It has a pub but no village hall; the church has a toilet and kitchen so it can be used for village events.

Our enthusiastic "Friends of Finningham" organise exciting events, working with the church. Recent events have been a Coronation Day celebration with fancy dress, a dog show, magic show and much more. There was a big Summer Family Fun Day with stalls, games and competitions.

The arrival of the Coffee Caravan is an important monthly date in our village calendar. We provide lifts for those unable to attend independently.

Monthly church tours and talks have been well attended by our villagers with some unexpected discoveries. St. Bartholomew's is a key part of the village much loved by villagers whether they attend services or not.

St. Bartholomew's, Finningham

The church is one of only six in Suffolk dedicated to St. Bartholomew. On entering, it has been described as a homely, welcoming little church. Mentioned in the Domesday Survey, much of the structure is 13th century. Restoration occurred in the 15th and 19th centuries. Our treasure is the beautifully carved 15th century font cover.

We have a devoted group of villagers making sure the church is well cared for and well loved.

We have Bible Study with Dwelling in The Word during Advent and Lent; with help we hope this will

continue. Our Christian fellowship after each service is very important to us where, over coffee and treats, we share ideas and concerns making sure everyone is safe. Children are welcome to attend all services, with activities available both during and afterwards.

Our special services and festivals are very well attended by villagers who look forward to the village coming together. These include Harvest, Remembrance, Stir Up Sunday, Carols and Christingles, and the Pet Service.



Our regular services are attended by a smaller congregation, but what we lack in numbers is made up for in faith and devotion.

We would like help in reaching out to more of the community to encourage them to come and see more of what goes on.

Finally, St. Bartholomew's famous annual Flower Festival is renowned throughout the county and beyond and has been reported on Radio 4's Gardener's Question Time and in the press. It is a joint undertaking, with participation from the church and wider village.

The sun always seems to shine on the first bank holiday in May: a time when a caring community comes together.





Saint Margaret's – Westhorpe

Population 195

Apart from a small cluster of houses around the village green, Westhorpe lies on either side of an attractive country lane of some 2.5 miles in length. The church stands almost central to the village. The population is largely comprised of retired people along with a number of families with young children. Most of the housing is privately owned.

There is a strong sense of community in Westhorpe. A new village hall which was opened in 2015 offers an excellent meeting place in the village and is used by the church for fundraising events. The village hall is also the venue for a number of clubs, exercise classes, music nights and social occasions. The Westhorpe Trust annually donates a third of its income to the church.

St. Margaret's, Westhorpe

Our parish church is remarkable for its lack of Victorian restoration. There are brick floors, remains of wall paintings and in the chapel of the south aisle the original medieval tiles remain on the floor. Henry VIII's sister, Mary Tudor, Dowager Queen of France, lived in the village with her second husband, the Duke of Suffolk, until her death in 1533. Our history draws many visitors to the church.

The church is opened every day by a team of local people, not all churchgoers. Our regular congregation is small, in the region of 10/15. The Friends of the Church was established in 2007 and their financial support is invaluable in maintaining the church building.

Currently, the church is involved in a project for the restoration of the bells which is part-funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund. The Bell Appeal is very well supported by the villagers and has certainly raised the profile of the parish church. It is evident that the church is highly valued by the

number of volunteers who have come forward to help with the work.

The Rt. Rev. Dr Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich, came to St.Margaret's in August 2023 to bless our five bells before their journey to the Foundry for repair. Around 75 people including many children attended the service which was a very special event in the life of our church. St.Margaret's PCC would like to make the most of this upsurge in interest in our church and would seek a Rector who would be prepared to take an active role in helping us to reach out to our village community.

St.Margaret's has given consideration to God's creation in the environment and seek to help, in some small way, to reduce the causes of climate change. To this end, the PCC decided to get involved with A Rocha's UK Eco Church scheme and we have just received our Bronze Award.

Our ancient churchyard is carefully managed in partnership with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and we are looking for ways to bring awareness to the biodiversity it contains. Children from local Brownie and Cub packs have visited this summer to investigate the flora and fauna and thoroughly enjoyed themselves filling their specimen pots with plant material and bugs!

Families are encouraged to join in the Festival services and children always take an active part in these events.

[Website: Westhorpe Bells](#)





Saint Margaret's – Wattisfield

Population 500

Wattisfield is a charming village with the main street weaving down to the church past a mixture of old traditional housing and some newer developments. The majority of homes are privately owned, and the residents are mainly middle-aged and elderly, with a growing number of younger families as more affordable housing is being built.

Most children in the village attend Walsham-le-Willows CEVCP School which has a strong Christian presence. A few of the children attend Botesdale CEVCP School.

The local high school is at Thurston. There is a large Community Centre and an excellent playing field and recreation ground, complete with a well-equipped children's play area.

On the border with Walsham village is a Showman's Site whose owners actively participate in both the Parish and community councils. They also provide temporary mobile caravan accommodation for the homeless. In collaboration with these owners Wattisfield church has forged proactive links with the Probation service, Housing agencies, and the Job Centre to positively support those without stable housing.

Over the past seven years, there have been notable changes in the parish and community councils, with new councillors bringing fresh interests and expertise, and the production of a free village newsletter. The recreation ground has evolved to include re-wilding areas, shaped recreational walks, a community garden, and a picnic area. Money from the Parish Council has been allocated for innovative plans to renovate and refurbish the community centre, with the help of an award-winning community architect. Wattisfield is a village with a rich history and a commitment to enhancing its facilities and services for its residents.

St. Margaret's, Wattisfield

St. Margaret's Church, a historic building dating back to the 12th-13th century, stands at the heart of the village. It features five bells which are rung at the beginning of most services. Despite a small congregation, it continues to uphold traditions at festivals plus the occasional Holy Communion service (CW) with the benefit of a regular organist. The church has also recently seen increased involvement from residents, such as the 'flower fairies' who now decorate for festival services and maintain a church cleaning rota. In recent years the Wattisfield Town Trust has generously supported the church by helping towards the Parish Share.

The United Reformed Church (URC) plays a significant role in the community, working closely with St. Margaret's Church on various events and services throughout the year and running The Puddle Duck Cafe.





Saint Mary's – Langham

Population 90

Langham is a very friendly and welcoming village. The population is very diverse with people of all ages and walks of life; recently there have been a number of new families move into the village. We have enjoyed support from families, who live in nearby villages, who have supported the running of the church for many years.

St. Mary's in the Field, Langham

The church's unique rural, unspoilt and peaceful setting located in the grounds of Langham Hall, situated approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the road, surrounded by sheep. St.Mary's is a particularly pretty church with a hand pumped organ and a delightful rood screen, which is a masterpiece of the 15th century woodcarver's craft. We have no electric or water, therefore services are usually held from Easter to Harvest Festival, around six in total, which also include a Christmas service in December which is usually very well supported by local families. We have a great support from the Benefice.

We also have marvellous support from Langham Hall, who open their grounds for a Summer Garden Fete which contributes heavily to the church fundraising. Every Easter, St.Mary's in Badwell Ash come together with Langham and hold an Easter egg hunt another means of bringing everyone together.

We are keen to maintain this wonderful church and encourage everyone to support us. This year saw the repairs to the church cross and remedial work to the roof. The work was funded by fundraising and a grant from Suffolk Historic Church Trust.

Langham strives to explore how the church could be used further as a place of worship and as a community facility as we have no village hall. This year we arranged a local village gathering for the Coronation, following a service which was very successful.

Walsham le Willows CEVC Primary School



