

Benefice Profile for
Bures with Assington and Little Cornard
in the Diocese of
St Edmundsbury and Ipswich



After a Benefice Service



One of our Benefice Weekends

Benefice Profile for Bures with Assington and Little Cornard

Welcome to our benefice.

Thank you for being interested in us, and taking the time to read this profile which we hope will give you a flavour of our life as a church family.

In these first pages you will find the broad picture followed by lots of detail about the parishes of our benefice, our church life and information about living here.

We are praying continuously that the right person is drawn by God to come here, and we do so, believing that you are praying too, about whether that person is you.

Who we are

Our mission statement is 'To help everyone to come into a living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ'. To this end we believe that God is at work in our midst – working in us, for us and through us. We believe that we matter to him, and that he has a plan for us, and for those around us.

We are passionate about worship as the 'powerhouse' of our Christian living. We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is often challenging, and not always easy to live, but it is always good news, and we try to communicate that with joy and relevance, across all ages and with a listening heart.

We want to share his story, as one worth telling – both to those who haven't heard it before, and afresh to those who have. We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to change us, and to equip us in all we do, both within the church, and outside it.

We care very much about the communities here, and are proud to be a part of them. We want to share God's love through hospitality of all kinds.

We feel we are neither 'high' nor 'low', but we try to use things we think will encourage people, in a relaxed way, on their Christian journey. We long to see our churches grow numerically and spiritually, and in age range, as we strive to build a church worth belonging to, and where the God who we believe to be in our midst will be evident around us.

Who are we looking for?

We are seeking someone with the following gifts:

- A collaborative and prayerful team leader, who will encourage and enable nurture and growth, both within the ministry team, the PCC's and the wider communities.
- A strategic and creative thinker, who can cope with complex decisions, is well organised and has reasonable IT skills.

- Someone with a flexible approach to worship in order to meet the needs of the individual parishes and enable the benefice to 'grow younger'.
- A good communicator, who can relate well to people across the community, whether they go to church regularly or not. We hope that you will become a familiar face across all three parishes, willing to attend non-church events that offer the opportunity to meet and encourage new worshippers.
- Someone with a sense of humour; laughter is a vital factor in our relationships with each other, and with God

We believe that, with these gifts, you will be able to help us to grow in faith, to spread the good news of the gospel, to care for those around us, and to be ready to meet the needs of the future.

What can we offer you?

We need a leader to help us sustain what we have and to move forward to meet the opportunities and challenges to come. To support you in this, we can offer you:

- Two SSMs and three Readers plus a further Reader who has completed her training and will be licensed in January, 2022. All these people work across the benefice.
- A team of five Elders based in Bures who are involved in pastoral care and leading worship across the benefice (if you're not familiar with Elders as used in Suffolk, please look at the Diocesan website for details about Elders ministry).
- PCC members, including dedicated Churchwardens, Treasurers and Secretaries, who are all church-going members of our congregations, and willing to serve in faith, rather than just trying to keep a well-loved building open.
- The support of a part-time Benefice Administrator who currently works 20 hours a week.
- A lot of committed, hard-working and enthusiastic support.
- Our congregations, who are friendly, welcoming and offer plenty of encouragement and help.

We know that your home life will be important to you; we can also offer you a four-bedroom purpose-built vicarage in Bures. (for details, see page 5)

We understand that effective ministry needs refreshing and reinvigorating, and emerges from a good work/life balance. We would seek to support you (and in fact would encourage you) in taking regular days off, holidays, retreats etc, and in general would want to help carry the load when pressures are building.

We are only human, and bound to make mistakes, but we love God and care for each other, and we hope we are a group of people you can work with, and feel at home with.

Living here

This is a very attractive place to live – people tend to move here, and stay. The benefice is between the market town of Sudbury and larger town of Colchester, but is surrounded by fields, hills, orchards and woods, and the River Stour also offers a beautiful landscape. The parish borders on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Needless to say, there are some lovely walks in the midst of all this.

The Vicarage is located centrally in the village of Bures, very close to St Mary's Church, but tucked away in a relatively quiet spot (postcode CO8 5AA). It was built 27 years ago in part of the old vicarage garden, and itself has a good size garden to the front and the rear, with a gate giving access to the recreation ground. There is a good size study off the entrance hall, as well as a cloakroom; a door leads into the rest of the ground floor, comprising a sitting room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, and utility room. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, a bathroom and a shower room.



Back of the vicarage



Front of the vicarage

There are many amenities in the village as mentioned in the Bures section of the profile, and the primary school has an excellent reputation. There is a small village shop, a delicatessen, a hair-dressers and two pubs. Sudbury is only 10 minutes away by car, and has a Tesco, Sainsburys, Waitrose and Aldi, as well as high street shops and banks, etc. Also in the town is a library, and a leisure centre. Most of the secondary school age children in our villages go to school in Great Cornard, which lies between Bures and Sudbury. There are also highly renowned grammar schools in the area.

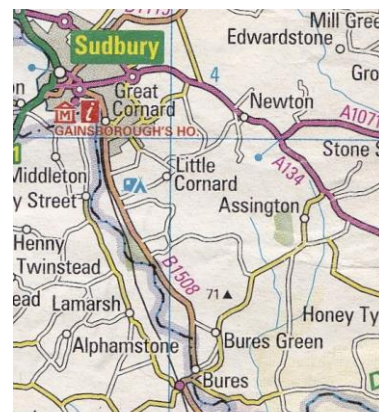
Further afield there are numerous places to explore; pretty villages, attractive market towns, and varied countryside, and of course the East coast which is less than an hour away. London is also within easy reach.

The Benefice

The benefice is made up of the three parishes of Bures, Assington and Little Cornard, forming a triangle, each some 3 or 4 miles away from the others.

Little Cornard joined with Bures in 1998, and Assington followed in 2000.

Each parish has its own traditional church buildings, all of which are in a good general state of repair. Finances are also sound in each parish, with no significant shortfalls. In recent years we have been able to meet our financial commitments and pay our full Parish Share.



However, the parishes offer contrasting churches and communities, and have their own identity. Each parish has its own PCC, and largely operates independently from the others. We have occasional joint PCC meetings, but these are not business meetings, rather an opportunity to meet socially and for general discussion. Prior to Covid our usual pattern of services was that we joined together for benefice worship on the first Sunday of the month, and on fifth Sundays when they occur; in other weeks each church had its own main morning service.

Every 18 months we have a Benefice Weekend away. The combination of teaching, worship, small groups, prayer ministry, laughter, and simply getting away and being together, young and old, is a wonderful experience – the eagerly awaited Saturday Night Revue is an added bonus!

The pattern of Sunday worship for the benefice prior to Covid is given in full in Appendix 2 at the end of this profile. We are pleased to have been able to offer this diversity with the help of the team here. Our present service pattern is documented in Appendix 3. Whilst we enjoy our current pattern of services, we are open to these being reviewed if required.

Prior to Covid, across the Benefice we had around 8-10 weddings per year, and a similar number of baptisms. Funerals can fluctuate hugely but average out at about two a month.

The Parishes

Bures

Bures has approximately 1800 residents, and straddles the Suffolk/Essex border, with the River Stour running through the village acting as the county boundary – the church is on the Suffolk side, and hence the whole parish is within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. The housing is mostly private, with a number of substantial properties.

However, there is some council/social housing too, and this is increasing. There are a number of professional families, and commuters to London, but it is by no means a 'dormitory' village. Many people work locally, and there is a healthy social mix. There is a considerable amount of farming in the area. It is a sought-after village to live in, however, many young people who grow up here find that they cannot afford to live here as adults.

There is a Church of England primary school in the village (now taking over 200 children up to age 11), with all round 'Outstanding' results from Ofsted (including the separate Church of England inspection). There is also a Baptist chapel in the village, with whom we have good links, and who are active in the school, and in youth work, etc. St. Stephen's Chapel which sits above Bures, has an annual service hosted by the landlord, to keep it consecrated. There are sometimes private services held in this beautiful historic building, as well as a candlelit Carol Service.

There are shops, pubs, a post office, and a doctor's surgery and the mobile library attends once a month. There is a Community Centre, with a recreation ground where football, cricket and tennis are played, and in recent years the village has purchased a further plot of riverside 'common' land for recreational use. There are landing stages on the river for launching canoes, etc. It is a lively community, with many activities, societies and groups operating. There is a bus service to Sudbury and Colchester, and also a railway station which is on the Sudbury branch line, connecting at Marks Tey with the main London line.

Bures: Our Church and Church life



St Mary's Church in Bures is a 14th century Grade 1 listed building in the centre of the village, capable of seating up to 230 people.

It has been well maintained and there have been alterations to the tower and south porch to make meeting rooms and also install a kitchen and toilet. Pews have been removed at the back and in the south and north aisles, giving us much more flexibility in using the space. The church is centrally heated, and has a computerised lighting system and a good sound system with a mixing desk and hearing loop. We are currently in the process of installing Broadband and a phone line into the church, as well as equipment needed to live stream our services. There are eight bells in the tower, which are rung regularly.



Front Porch

The Electoral Roll of 147 reflects a lively congregation, often numbering 50-70 (pre-covid) at the main morning service. The worship is varied, both in terms of the liturgy and the music. Common Worship is the principal source of liturgy, but we make creative use of many other resources too. There is a small robed choir, who generally sing every Sunday and have also sung at weddings, funerals, carol services, choral evensong, St Edmunds chapel, and on occasions at Assington and Little Cornard. The organ is used for most services, but almost always in combination with our music group. Several members of the congregation contribute to our services through reading, leading intercessions and offering prayer ministry. We always offer refreshments after the main service.

Prior to Covid we provided a children's table at the back of the church and once a month Kidzone in the Tower Room although numbers for this were small. We hold regular Confirmation Services; some candidates are teenagers whilst others are adults – sometimes as a result of the Alpha courses we run.



Confirmation service led by the Bishop



We have a small, but consistent youth group that meets fortnightly on a Sunday afternoon, led by a dedicated group from the church and the Baptist church. They have been to Soul Survivor over the last few years and 5 of the group have recently gone on to confirmation. To offer something to the young people as they progress in their spiritual journey, the team are trying to set up an 18 – 25/30 group.

Some of the Youth Group Creating a Harvest Loaf



An informal service of Morning Prayer takes place on a Wednesday morning, led by our Elders, and usually attended by 25+. This is followed by 'Open Door' coffee morning to which all are welcome, and where Fair Trade products are also sold (attendance 40+).



The three C's on Wednesday Morning;
Coffee, Cake and Chocolates!

Bures: Other Church and Community Activities



School Assembly in Church



Carrying the Cross on Good Friday



Messy Church Picnic



Remembrance Sunday Parade



Church BBQ



Community Carol Singing during the Great Bures Lights Switch on!

Here is a snapshot of some of our activities throughout the year – several seem to involve food!

- 2 weekly Prayer groups
- Home Groups
- Monthly School Assembly in Church
- Alpha Courses
- Monthly lunch for those on their own
- Messy Church
- Church in the Big Top during the Bures Music Festival
- Church on the Common
- Good Friday pilgrimage carrying the cross
- Dawn Service at the Cross on Easter Day
- Harvest Lunch for Over 75's
- Harvest Supper
- Christmas Dinner for those on their own
- Ongoing support of European Partners in Christ
- Autumn Fair Charity Fundraiser
- Annual Bures Christmas Lights Switch On
- Ride and Stride
- BBQ's
- Informal Gatherings

Our hopes for the future and the challenges

Whilst the congregation in Bures is active, and very gradually attracting new members, the mission of the church is to all people. It remains a fact that we, as a church community, represent only a small percentage of those in our village. We are constantly looking for ways of making our prayer, worship and outreach more relevant as we share the gospel.

A particular challenge in recent years has been to attract young families and children to our church. Messy Church has of course drawn several different families for those particular sessions but few, as yet, transition to become part of our wider church family. One of our aspirations for the future therefore, has been to appoint a part-time children and families worker.

In the past we have also run informal worship – The Space – on Sunday evening which was successful and we feel may be worth pursuing.

Websites:

Bures church: <http://www.parishchurch.co.uk>

Bures village: <http://www.bures-online.co.uk>

Bures primary school: <http://www.bures.suffolk.sch.uk/>

Assington

Assington was originally an "estate village" where, since Tudor times, the properties and the land in the surrounding area were owned by the Gurdon family, who were the owners of Assington Hall. The area was based on agriculture, and there still remain many farms in the village and outlying area, although some now in name only. Society Farm in The Street, (now renamed Willow Tree Farm), was one of three internationally known Assington Agricultural Co- operative schemes, instituted in 1830 and 1852 by John Gurdon.

After a recent surge in new housing, mainly where formerly a commercial Orchard stood, Assington now has more than 450 residents. The majority of housing is concentrated in properties along (and now off-) the main street. There is a mixture of styles and size of properties. Nowadays, many people commute to towns or cities, although there has been an increase in home-working.

There is a pub, a farm shop complex offering a cafe plus other outlets/services. We have an excellent modern village hall with recreation ground. Unfortunately, there is no longer a village school, as this was closed over thirty years ago; most children from Assington now go to Boxford Primary School.

Our Church and Church life



The Grade I Listed church of St Edmund, King and Martyr sits in the middle of parkland at one end of the village, surrounded by land belonging to Assington Hall. A church on this site was first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086; originally gifted to the Boys family in 1190, the Corbets looked after it from 1316 until 1547, from which time it was beneficently owned by the Gurdon family, who played a prominent role in every aspect of its governance.



Records of Vicars go back to 1349 on the Vestry wall, and there remain many items of historical significance within the building, including exceptional carved timber doors from 1766, some fine wall monuments to members of the Gurdon family and a memorial brass for Robert Taylboys and his wife Letitia, dating to 1506. However, most of the original interior was 'modernised' to a Victorian concept in 1827, during which a number of other original memorials, monuments and brasses were removed, and /or damaged beyond repair!

Similarly, the exterior was refurbished, ensuring a fine sound flint-dressed building with tower, in which reside six (currently un-rung) bells dating from mid-14th century to mid-17th century.

We have kept up to date with church roof repairs, and comparatively recent installations include electric heating beneath the pews, and a sound and Induction Loop system. Unfortunately, we do not yet have an in-house W.C facility, or refreshment point; we are currently working towards this goal.

The churchyard is still in everyday use and is maintained to retain a combination of Wildflower areas with a more tended part surrounding the building, path and walkways.

St Edmunds is a large building for the size of the usual congregation. We think we are fairly informal and welcoming in our general demeanor, and although open to technological change, we have a preference for some traditional aspects in the Services (perhaps owing to the age profile of the regular attendees). Our usual (pre-covid) congregation averaged around 14 people, and our third Sunday Family Services (which used to have a larger multi-age congregation, and include activities where possible), have now sadly fallen into abeyance, owing to the paucity of children in regular attendance, which is currently only one family of four children, and occasional families with babies/toddlers. Where possible we combine the family service with major calendar and other special celebrations such as Harvest Festival, Mothering Sunday and Christingle, in the hope of encouraging families to attend. We have a recently initiated Baby and Toddler Group which meets in the Village Hall under the aegis of St. Edmund's, which we hope to build on in the near future. We do, however, recognize that this is an area which needs urgent attention to improve family connection and interaction.

In contrast to our 'moderate' average congregation, services held on major festivals, (and in particular, the Carol Service by candle light) are extremely well attended, the latter service often by 100+ people. There are 24 on the Electoral Roll.

Recent zoom services have kept us all in touch, and often have more participants than an actual (non-covid) service would have done!

We are fortunate that one of the Benefice Readers and an Associate Priest reside in Assington. However, despite key church members performing a great lay-role in the village, we would welcome more input and help to enable us to be less self-sufficient, and to be able to interact with the immediate community more meaningfully.

Other Church Activities



- Our Harvest weekend includes a Harvest Supper, held in the Village Hall. All money raised is donated to a charity, usually emergency relief.





- In the run-up to Harvest we organise a food-bank Collection in the village.
- Our main annual fundraising activity is a village Church fete.

- A recent and popular addition is the Bring and Share family BBQ/open mic evening after the fete.

- We participate in the Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride event.

- An Alpha course is usually run annually in the village, which includes people who don't attend the church,



- A Lent home group also takes place.

- We have a St Edmund's Website, providing updated information and news.

- There is a "Parish Church News" page in the monthly Assington News village magazine, which provides the opportunity for the message of Christianity to be delivered in the wider community.

- There are a number of volunteers involved in church cleaning, flower arranging, 'car parking' stewards and grass cutting.

- The church is often able to play host to one (or more) weddings each year.



- The Secretary to the PCC is currently our representative on the Board of Governors for Boxford School.

The Churchwardens try to keep on top of the day-to-day issues presented by the large church building and its somewhat isolated situation. We work hard to maintain a welcoming, friendly and peaceful "church" (both people and building) and atmosphere for all, and are keen to explore new avenues for making Assington Church more mainstream.

The PCC is currently a little below full-strength, but we meet regularly to manage the business, whilst enjoying the hospitality of (often) the Secretary, and each others' company. The PCC as a whole is keen to welcome and work with the new incumbent to accelerate our progress to capitalize on the new opportunities provided in our village.

Little Cornard

Little Cornard is a rural parish lying between Bures and Sudbury in the Stour Valley. We have a population of about 300 with most of the houses being to the south of the village around Workhouse Green. There is no shop or pub in the village, the only other public building is the village hall. There is a regular bus service which links us with Bures and Sudbury.

Our Church and Church life

All Saints Church is a Grade I listed building of Saxon origin, which can seat up to about 100 people. Its quiet rural location is one of its main attractions.

The building is well maintained. We currently have some work to do on the tower roof but with good reserves available and access to grants these repairs should be in hand shortly. The heating, lighting, organ, sound system and hearing loop are in good repair. Up until 2018 the bells had been silent for nearly 200 years but after four years of fundraising the five existing bells were refurbished and a sixth bell added. We now have a keen group of local ringers and bellringing enthusiasts from all over the country are frequent visitors. The oldest bell is of national importance and dates from 1399.



The peaceful and secluded churchyard is still used for burials and a footpath running through it provides a point of contact with villagers and visitors. There is an ample car park.

Situated in the churchyard close to the Church is the 'schoolroom'. The original Victorian Sunday School was destroyed by a falling tree in the 1980s and was consequently rebuilt. It now has a well fitted out modern kitchen, plus a recently built accessible toilet with its own stained-glass window!

Worship

There are currently 32 on the electoral roll and average regular attendance is about twenty, with more at festivals, and the church is usually full for the carol service. In normal times regular weekly services are Morning Prayer alternating with Holy Communion, and Evensong twice a year following the Spring and Harvest Festivals. Mothering Sunday, a Thank You service and Songs of Praise give us other opportunities to invite people in during the year. In the past Pet Services and Taizé style services have proved popular. Home groups are run during Lent and Advent.

We are fortunate to have a regular organist and while there is no choir, there are a number of enthusiastic singers in the congregation.

Other Church Activities



Hospitality is one of the hallmarks of the parish. On the First Tuesday of every month we open the church from 10.00am to 4.00pm to make it available for anyone to go in for peace and quiet contemplation, while in the schoolroom we provide constant refreshments and lunch. This is open to everyone to come and go as they please, offering friendship and hospitality. On Easter morning after 8am Communion we offer breakfast in the schoolroom, and another regular event is the Harvest Supper.

Easter Breakfast

In May we have a two-day Flower Festival; this usually raises about £2000 which is generally given to charity. In September there is a Harvest Fair which raises money for the Church. These are well supported by all villagers.

Singing in the churchyard



Our hopes for the future and the challenges

Our PCC is passionate about our future, and the wellbeing of our congregation and of the ministry team. We are open and excited by any ideas that a new incumbent will

bring. Regular PCC meetings are held which although are of a serious nature are also convivial and usually accompanied by drinks and nibbles!

We, as Churchwardens, take our responsibilities seriously and would look to support and be supported by the new incumbent and would welcome regular meetings. We would also like to increase our congregation size and to involve more people locally in the life of the church

Some final thoughts

We are excited about what the future may hold. We are sure that all things are possible, if we work together with a passion for Christ, and a serving heart. We would like to invite you to consider if you are the right person for taking us forward on that journey.

In short, we would like someone who can:

- ✓ lead, but also join in
- ✓ teach and also learn
- ✓ doesn't mind taking a risk and introducing new things to reach out and engage and encourage lots of different people
- ✓ facilitate and encourage work with children and young people
- ✓ encourage and support us all on our spiritual journey together

We are really looking forward to meeting you...

Appendix 1 – who we are

Clergy – SSMs:

Revd Simon White
Revd Mary Cantacuzene

Readers:

Murray Emerson
John Symons
Andrew Clifft
Sylvia Gaspar

Elders:

Andrea Carter
Sue Emerson
Carol Barnham
Sarah Pryor
Sue Ryman

Church Wardens:

Bures – Chris Tomkinson and Paul White
Little Cornard – Jeremy Apter and Brenda Pentney
Assington – Roger Britcher and Bronwen Stacey

Administrator:

Nicola Hurley

Appendix 2 – This was the regular pattern of Sunday services pre-Covid

BCP: Book of Common Prayer, CW: Common Worship

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 st Sunday | 8.00am | Holy Communion (BCP) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Benefice Communion (CW) | Bures |
| 2 nd Sunday | 8.00am | Holy Communion (BCP) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Holy Communion (CW) | Assington |
| | 10.30am | Family Breakfast Church | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Holy Communion (CW) | Little Cornard |
| 3 rd Sunday | 8.00am | Holy Communion (BCP) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Family Communion (CW) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Family Service | Assington |
| | 10.30am | Holy Communion (CW) | Little Cornard |
| 4 th Sunday | 8.00am | Holy Communion (BCP) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Holy Communion (CW) | Assington |
| | 10.30am | Morning Prayer | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Family Service | Little Cornard |
| 5 th Sunday | 8.00am | Holy Communion (BCP) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Benefice Communion (CW) | Ass. or LC alt. |

Appendix 3 – This is our present pattern of Sunday services during the Vacancy – we welcome discussing your thoughts and ideas on service patterns going forward

BCP: Book of Common Prayer, CW: Common Worship

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1 st Sunday | 8.00am | Holy Communion (BCP) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Morning Prayer | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Holy Communion | Assington |
| 2 nd Sunday | 10.30am | Holy Communion | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Morning Prayer | Little Cornard |
| 3 rd Sunday | 10.30am | Holy Communion (CW) | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Morning Prayer | Assington |
| 4 th Sunday | 10.30am | All Age Service | Bures |
| | 10.30am | Holy Communion | Little Cornard |
| 5 th Sunday | 10.30am | Benefice Communion (CW) | Bures |

NB This pattern of services is subject to change but there is a Holy Communion somewhere in the Benefice every Sunday.