



The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

COMPOSITE PROFILE OF THE FOREST HEATH TEAM BENEFICE

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Composite Profile for the Parishes of the Lark and Lee Group and the Forest Heath Team Benefice

Introduction

Details of the Post

Role title: Team Rector of the Forest Heath Team Benefice.

Deanery: Mildenhall.

Archdeaconry: Sudbury.

This is a varied, exciting and challenging dual role. The successful candidate will serve primarily the Lark and Lee Group, which comprises the 4 largely rural parishes of Barton Mills, Freckenham, West Row and Worlington, and will live in the vicarage at Barton Mills.

However, they will also assume the wider responsibilities of Team Rector of these parishes and the other 12 which together make up the Forest Heath Team Benefice.

In addition to the Lark and Lee Group, the Benefice has three other components, each with its own Team Vicar. These are –

- ✚ The parish of Mildenhall, which is led by the Revd Sue Leathley.
- ✚ The Brecks Group, comprising the parishes of Beck Row with Kenny Hill, Eriswell, Icklingham, Tuddenham with Cavenham, Herringswell and Red Lodge, and led by the Revd David Butcher.
- ✚ The Kennett Valley Group, comprising the parishes of Dalham, Gazeley, Higham Green, Kentford and Moulton, and led by the Revd Canon Chris Childs.

Moreover, the Lightwave Community, which aims to promote small missional groups and fresh expressions of Church and whose local representative is the Revd Diane Grano, operates a Rural Resourcing Hub in Red Lodge.

Individual Profiles are appended for each part of the Team.

Where We Are

The 16 parishes in the Benefice cover an area of roughly 65 square miles in north-west Suffolk, where it borders Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Taking Barton Mills as its approximate geographical centre, Bury St Edmunds, recently named by The Times as one of the top 20 market towns in the country and home to our Diocesan cathedral, lies some 10 miles to the south-east. Newmarket, which is the headquarters of the UK's horseracing and bloodstock industries, is about 5 miles to the south-west.

Further west, Cambridge with all its attractions is approximately 30 minutes' drive away and the A11 and A14 trunk roads provide ready access to the national motorway network. The cathedral cities of Ely, Norwich and Peterborough and the mediaeval wool towns of Clare, Lavenham and Long Melford can all be reached in less than an hour. Also within easy striking distance are Thetford Forest and several Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including those on the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Norfolk Broads and the Stour Valley.

Map of the Forest Heath Team Benefice showing the current groupings

Mildenhall

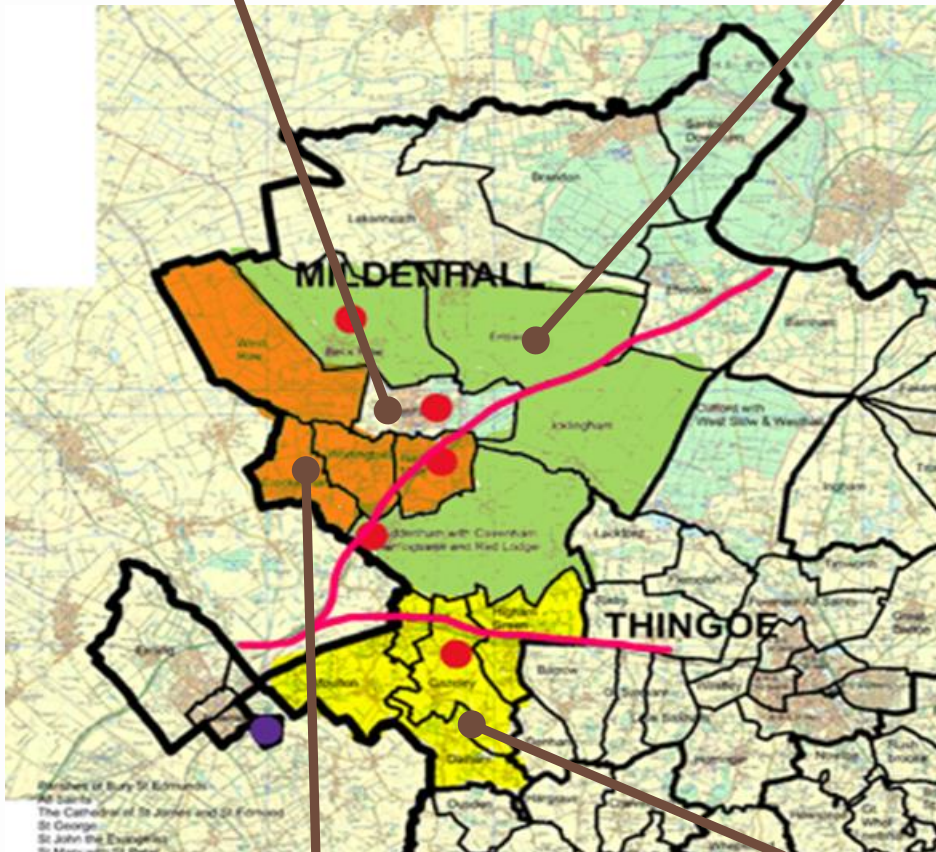
Population c.8,800.

Incumbent: The Revd Sue Leathley.

The Brecks Group

The parishes of Beck Row with Kenny Hill (population c.5,500*), Eriswell (4,300*), Herringswell (290), Icklingham (390), Red Lodge (6,300) and Tuddenham St Mary (420) with Cavenham (140). Total population, c.17,340. (*Includes USAF personnel at RAF Lakenheath/Mildenhall).

Incumbent: The Revd Dave Butcher



The red dots denote the locations of vicarages, although they are not all presently used as such.

The red lines show the routes of the A11 and A14 trunk roads.

The solid black line is the county boundary of Suffolk.

The Lark and Lee Group

The parishes of Barton Mills (population c.2,300), Freckenham (360), West Row (1900) and Worlington (675). Total population c.5,240.

Currently vacant.

The Kennett Valley Group

The parishes of Dalham (population c.220), Gazeley (780), Higham 150), Kentford (1,125) and Moulton (920). Total population, c.3,200.

Incumbent: The Revd Canon Chris Childs, Acting Team Rector and Rural Dean.

The railway stations in Cambridge and Ely have frequent mainline services to London and connecting services throughout East Anglia and to the Midlands and beyond. Our local airports are Luton, Norwich, Stansted and Southend and there are ferry services from Harwich.

What we are looking for

To fill this exciting position, we are looking for a person who is...

- ✚ An inspiring preacher and teacher, rooted in scripture and with a love for pastoral ministry.
- ✚ Experienced in and comfortable with team working in a multi-parish setting.
- ✚ A confident but flexible leader with a willingness to embrace the breadth of traditional and contemporary worship in the parishes of the Benefice and to honour their distinctiveness.
- ✚ Able to encourage and facilitate appropriate ways in which the diverse parishes may work harmoniously and productively together.
- ✚ An excellent communicator, with an ability to write clearly, accurately and succinctly and proficient in modern IT skills and the use of social media.
- ✚ Willing to be a highly visible presence in the parishes they serve and to engage with all aspects of community life and particularly with local schools.
- ✚ Able to relate to people of all ages and committed not only to ministering to our existing, often elderly congregations but also to attracting the next generations of worshippers - children, young people and families.
- ✚ Keen to nurture others in prayer and discipleship and to encourage and support any who may be seeking to pursue their own vocations or mission.
- ✚ In tune with and capable of taking forward the Diocese's vision for mission and evangelism, "Growing in God", with its four key priorities of growing in depth; growing in number; growing in influence; and growing younger.
- ✚ Supportive of and willing to work with complementary bodies such as the Lightwave Community and the Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church in Red Lodge.

What We Can Offer

The new Team Rector and their family (if any) will benefit from...

- ✚ The support and fellowship of the three Team Vicars, all of whom are highly experienced and well established in their present posts, and of a number of retired clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers.
- ✚ Friendly and welcoming congregations, enhanced in several cases by active choirs.
- ✚ A willingness on the part of our congregations to be flexible and to experiment with new styles of worship – particularly with a view to attracting more children and younger worshippers.
- ✚ A recognition that our congregations must be outward looking and innovative in order to interact more closely with the communities that we serve and to make our churches more attractive and relevant.
- ✚ The chance to live in a beautiful part of the country, with excellent transport links and close to all amenities.
- ✚ The use of a large, attractive vicarage.
- ✚ Access to good educational facilities. (Schools for all ages are to be found in Mildenhall and include St Mary's CofE Academy, which serves Early Years to Year 6. There are also 2 primary schools in Red Lodge, one of them CofE, and others in West Row and Beck Row).

- ✚ The care and support of the wider Diocese, which is keen to ensure that its clergy maintain a realistic and healthy work/life balance and are given the opportunities and resources to develop further their own vocations and ministries.

The Challenges

- As the Benefice was only created in late 2020, the new Team is still in its infancy. Whilst the clergy are already working well together, congregations have so far shown little desire to collaborate beyond the boundaries of their own parishes or groups of parishes. As the first among equals, the task of the Team Rector will therefore be to...
 - ✚ Define and develop the objectives of the Team as it evolves and ensure that it is firmly established.
 - ✚ Determine which of the objectives will be best served by parishes acting independently and which by their working collaboratively.
 - ✚ Identify the particular characteristics, gifts and strengths of the individual members of the ministry team and of the lay workers and congregations in each of the parishes so as to ensure that these are harnessed and deployed for the benefit of all.
- This appointment will bring the number of full-time, stipendiary clergy in the Benefice to 4, which unfortunately is unaffordable for these parishes on the basis of the current level of their Parish Share payments. If and when one of the Team Vicars retires or moves on, they are therefore unlikely to be replaced by another, full-time stipendiary. It will be for the Team Rector to...
 - ✚ Encourage a culture of generous giving so as to increase significantly the Benefice's total Parish Share contribution; and/or
 - ✚ To plan for and oversee a substantial re-organisation of the existing parish groupings and a redeployment of the available clergy.
- Other challenges for the Team Rector will be...
 - ✚ Helping to ensure that the Lightwave Community will continue on a permanent, sustainable footing once its current, national development funding expires in 2025/26.
 - ✚ Working (jointly with the Lightwave Community) to provide a new church building and facilities in Red Lodge which are adequate for the needs of its growing population.

THE LARK AND LEE GROUP

An Overview

The parishes of Barton Mills, Freckenham, West Row and Worlington are where the new Team Rector will be based (living in the vicarage in Barton Mills) and will be the primary focus of his ministry. They have been grouped together since January 2014 and, as we had not previously worked together, we felt it important to create a sense of identity and we took our name from the River Lark and the Lee Brook, which flows into it in West Row. These 4 rural and semi-rural parishes have a combined population of about 5,000 and lie to the south and west of Mildenhall. The Group is functioning very well, with a great appreciation of the diversity of worship on offer and a recognition of the greater strength to be gained through working collaboratively.

Our previous vicar, who has looked after us since 2020 on a house-for-duty basis, has now retired. Based in the Forest Heath area are 5 retired clergy, 1 Lay Reader, 1 Licensed Evangelist, 1 Licensed Pioneer and 6 Lay Elders and they, with additional support from a local retired Archdeacon, have enabled us to maintain a very full pattern of worship. There is also a strong tradition of active lay ministry, particularly in West Row and Barton Mills.

The statistics for Occasional Offices have been...

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
St Mary's, Barton Mills (since January 2022)	2	4	3 (and 1 memorial service)
St Andrew's, Freckenham (since January 2019)	2	4 (and 1 blessing)	13
St Peter's, West Row (since January 2019)	5	1	12
All Saints', Worlington (since January 2022)	1	1	3 (and 2 interments of ashes)

The Vicarage



This is located in Barton Mills, next to the church. Downstairs it has a large kitchen and utility area, lounge, dining room, study and external office, cloakroom and separate accessible WC and wet-room. Upstairs it has 4 bedrooms, all with built-in cupboards, and a family bathroom.

Barton Mills – The Church and its Community

Barton Mills is a village of approximately 2,300 residents on the southern outskirts of Mildenhall. There are no shops or schools but two pubs, a village hall, a well-used playing field and playground, and a newly established football club with a refurbished clubhouse. The village continues to grow with a new housing estate having recently added roughly another 80 homes.

St Mary's church is 12th Century and Grade II* listed but has been adapted to modern usage with glass entrance doors and the replacement of pews with chairs. An electronic organ has replaced the pipe organ and the resulting space has been turned into a side chapel for prayer. The organ has been fitted with a Midi system with about 120 hymns recorded on it and more to follow. The church is open every day during daylight hours and, as well as worship, hosts a range of social and community events. The prefabricated church room is nearing the end of its life but is used by several community groups, including AA, and we are currently exploring ways to develop a new, purpose-built facility. There is an open graveyard attached to the church which is well maintained and much appreciated by Barton Mills residents.

Statement of Individuality

Our motto is: *"Know God; Show God; Share God"*. We see the mission of the church as being to preach the gospel and heal the sick and we seek to do this for all through the rich variety of our worship, our open church, and our engagement with the community.



The electoral roll is 35 and the average congregation 35-40. Our style of worship is evangelical. It is an elderly congregation with few younger people regularly attending Services. (We did run Messy Church sessions which were well supported but were discontinued a few years ago in favour of Café Church which sadly did not generate much enthusiasm. Further attempts at outreach were disrupted for some time by COVID-19 and have not fully recovered).

The present pattern of Sunday worship and average attendances are as follows...

1 st Sunday	9.30 am	CW Holy Communion	(35)
2 nd Sunday	9.30 am	Celebration Service	(30)
	5.00 pm	Healing Service	(15)
3 rd Sunday	9.30 am	CW Holy Communion	(35)
4 th Sunday	9.30 am	Morning Praise (Informal worship)	(30-35)
5 th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.		

The congregation values the fact that there is a range of worship styles available to suit all tastes.

The church gives 10% of its income each year to home and overseas missions. Our Parish Share has been paid in full in recent years.

A Recent New Initiative

We have recently started a joint "Praise and Worship" service with the other churches in the Group. It takes place roughly every 6 weeks on a Sunday evening.

For the past 2 years, Lent groups have been organised jointly for the 4 parishes in the Group. Previously, there were home groups within the parish, but these had tended to dwindle and closed altogether during the pandemic and we would like to rebuild them.

The church seeks actively to engage with the community. It produces a monthly magazine, "The Barton Miller", which carries news of church and village activities and is delivered free to every home in the parish. A weekly coffee morning in the church rooms attracts about 25 regular

attendees (mostly elderly). The Preservation Charity Trust, which raises money to keep the fabric of the church in good order, organises a wide range of social activities. There is also an active Good Neighbour Scheme in the parish which, although not run by the church, includes many church members.

Freckenham – The Church and its Community

Freckenham is the smallest village in the Group, having only around 360 inhabitants. It is a rural community with a largely settled population and a strong agricultural bias. There is a pub/restaurant and a playing field and playground. The very active village hall is a thriving hub of rural arts, regularly putting on professional theatre or music productions and a monthly film night.

The 12th century church of St Andrew is Grade II* listed and in generally good order. Particular features are the interesting carved mediaeval pew ends. There is an open graveyard attached to the church where we have installed an outdoor, composting toilet.

We have paid our Parish Share in full for the last few years. The electoral roll stands at 12.



Tradition and stability are important to us and to our village. At the same time, we understand the need to make the gospel known to every generation. Therefore, although we hold fast to the BCP and to our beautiful old building, we are also open to trying newer forms of worship.

There is often a Lent group in the village which usually takes the form of a book or film study and is attended by approximately 15 people from across the Group of parishes. This gathering is greatly enjoyed, and we are presently trying to extend it throughout the year on a fortnightly basis.

Our style of worship is "low Anglican", generally using the BCP.

The present pattern of services is as follows ...

1st Sunday	9.30 am	BCP Holy Communion	(8 to 10)
2nd Sunday	9.30 am	Matins	(8 to 10)
3rd Sunday	9.30 am	Informal worship	(8 to 10)
4th Sunday	9.30 am	Matins	(8 to 10)
5th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.		

One of our strengths is that the community has a real sense of ownership of the church. Although relatively few attend our weekly services, everyone turns out on special occasions. We host a Shoebox service every November to which other local churches bring their offerings for “Operation Christmas Child”. Until it was halted in 2020 by Covid-19, our annual flower festival attracted visitors from far and wide and we hope to re-start it next year. Church members are fully engaged in the life of the village, with some serving on the Parish Council and on the Village Hall Committee. The church works as closely as possible with these bodies for the good of the community.

West Row – The Church and its Community

West Row is one of the larger villages in the Group, with a growing population of just under 1,900. It has a primary school, a general store, a cafe, a hairdresser, a pub, and a village hall and playground. There is also a well-attended Baptist church.

In April 2019, West Row became a separate parish, having formerly been part of the parish of Mildenhall. It is home to the Mildenhall Stadium which is used for speedway and other motor sports. The Mildenhall USAF airbase adjoins the village.

Statement of Individuality

The church motto is “Welcome, Warmth, Worship” and the congregation aims to offer a friendly welcome to all. There is a strong emphasis on collaborative ministry that is not clergy-dependent, and the style of worship is relaxed, open and informal. We look upon ourselves as a family.

Until the late 1800s, there was no Anglican church in the village and residents had to walk to Mildenhall to worship. In 1875, the village school moved to larger premises and the building became St Peter’s Church. In recent years, we have removed the pews and replaced them with chairs, creating a much more flexible space. There is an open graveyard at the back of the church and the grounds also house a small, ageing church hall. Discussions are ongoing as to whether to replace the hall and/or to build a kitchenette at the back of the church.

The church hall is used for Parish Council meetings and by our lunch club and we have started a monthly women’s breakfast. We hold a barbeque after our St

Peter’s Day celebration around 29th June. We also have an annual Harvest lunch, and we recently hosted a Burns Night supper. This level of hospitality means that we urgently need to consider how best to go forward with the building.

There is a bible study group that meets fortnightly and weekly during Lent. Prayer ministry is available after every Sunday service. Once a month we have a worship group to learn new hymns/songs and practice older ones that we will be singing in upcoming services.



The current pattern of our Sunday services is as follows, with the attendances in January 2023 shown in brackets...

1st Sunday	11:00 am	Sunday Celebration	(26)
2nd Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion	(24)
3rd Sunday	11:00 am	Sunday Celebration	(17)
4th Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion	(23)
5th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.		

A Recent New Initiative

We are always ready to try new ideas, such as Messy Church at separate times, but our services are now more adaptable and informal, incorporating play for children within the service and refreshments afterwards. This approach reflects our belief that children are part of the church now, rather than the church of the future. Baptisms are also encouraged within the service. With the increased building in West Row, we hope to welcome more into St Peter's.

In recent years, we have been privileged to be able to encourage and assist in the training of 2 ministers who were active members of St Peter's.

We have paid our Parish Share in full for the past 6 years and have sometimes made an additional contribution to support other parishes in the Deanery.

St Peter's is a "gathered" church and at least half the congregation comes from outside the village but, with the amount of new housing that has been added over the past few years, West Row has become a much younger community and we would very much welcome new members. Unfortunately, our links with the primary school have tailed off because the new head teacher has not encouraged them and has even stopped visits by the "Open the Book" team. We hope that our new incumbent might be able to rebuild this relationship.

We very much look forward to the future and what it holds for us.

Worlington – The Church and its Community

Worlington is a small, rural community of about 675 residents. Amenities include a pub, a country house hotel, a golf course and a village hall. There is also a thriving cricket club. Worlington is home to a number of professional artists and to "The Worlington Movement", which is dedicated to

keeping alive the techniques used by the old masters. One of the artists is a Lay Elder at the church and each year we host a show of their work which contributes to church funds.

Statement of Individuality

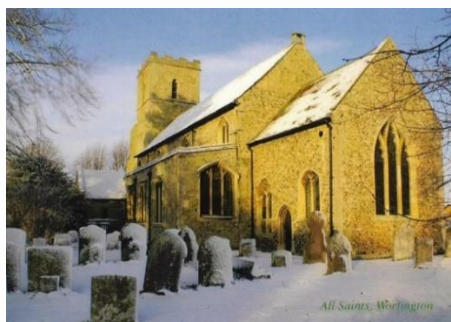
We value our beautiful 13th century church and the important history it contains. However, we recognise the need to be relevant to the younger families and other newcomers to the village and to maintain our place at the heart of the community.

We are deeply committed to the C of E's Fifth Mark of Mission, which is to safeguard God's creation. This is reflected in our careful management of our old churchyard and our leading role in the Diocese's campaign to install nest boxes for swifts in churches and we now have one of the largest colonies in Suffolk.

We work closely with the Parish Council and six times a year we produce a magazine called "The Pump" that is delivered to every household. We hold monthly coffee mornings which are the only free social gatherings to take place in the village.

We support other groups and organisations, such as the cricket club, whenever possible. Fund-raising events have included afternoon teas and quiz nights with fish and chip suppers. We have also held concerts and educational evenings with lectures about swifts and bats. Our Harvest Festival supports the local food bank and this December we were able to make a generous cash donation to them.

Due to a lack of facilities in the church, we are unable to host as many events as we would like. We have plans for the installation of a kitchen unit and toilet but these are on hold at present.



All Saints' is Grade 1 listed and a church on the site is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Parts of the existing building date from the Norman era and we receive many visitors interested in our mediaeval graffiti. The tradition of the church is rather more formal than the other churches in the Group, but the congregation is friendly, open and willing to experiment. For two years we held Messy Church in the village hall.

The church is open every day during daylight hours. There is an open graveyard extension a short distance from the old churchyard.

The electoral roll stands at 32. Congregation numbers vary widely.

The current pattern of services is...

1st Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion
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3rd Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion
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5th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.	
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We enjoy the occasional choral evening with the Group Choir.

A building that is over 700 years old inevitably needs regular maintenance, but we are not aware of any major outstanding issues. We have installed an alarm to safeguard the lead-covered section of the roof and electric heating under the pews.

We have always paid our Parish Share in full.

We would welcome a Team Rector who is sensitive to our traditions, patient with our shortcomings and will help us to formulate an approach which will keep All Saints' relevant to the changing village demographic. Above all, we need someone who will lead us in faith and worship to share the love of God.

THE BRECKS GROUP

An Overview

The 6 parishes of the Brecks Group are Beck Row with Kenny Hill, Eriswell, Icklingham, Tuddenham with Cavenham, Herringswell and Red Lodge. They first came together as a Group in January 2014. We took the name of the adjoining area, which is known as “Breckland” or “The Brecks”, in order to give ourselves a common sense of identity within the larger Forest Heath Team.

The Group is working well, although the number of worship services has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Our churches take turns on 5th Sundays to host joint Group services and they share other activities such as Lent courses and fund-raising events. Two of them, Cavenham and Herringswell, are now used primarily as Festival Churches.

The 6 parishes serve 7 villages in an arc to the north, east and south of Mildenhall, with a combined population of approximately 15,000. The largest of these villages is Red Lodge - a rapidly growing new development.

The US air base at RAF Mildenhall is a huge presence in the parish of Beck Row, as is RAF Lakenheath in Eriswell, and the economy of the whole area is closely linked to the fortunes of these bases. The latest position is that, in view of current world events, the bases are safe from closure for the time being but this issue seems to be constantly under review under successive U.S. Presidencies.

The village church in Red Lodge is a shared Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church. They own the church building but relations between the 2 denominations are very good. Red Lodge and to a lesser extent Beck Row also have links to the “Lightwave” project.

Since January 2019, the statistics for Occasional Offices have been –

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
St John's, Beck Row	8	9	25
St Laurence's, Eriswell	3	3 (and 1 blessing)	5
St Ethelbert's, Herringswell	4	2	3
St James's, Icklingham	0	0	7
St Christophers, Red Lodge	9	0	1
St Marys', Tuddenham	2	2	5
St Andrew's, Cavenham	2	1	0
Totals	28	17/1	46

Ministers

Since February 2021, we have been led by a husband-and-wife team, the Revds David and Caroline Butcher, who are respectively the Team Vicar and Associate Priest. They enjoy the full support of one very engaged PTO priest and a Lay Elder. The Lightwave project is represented in this area by the Revd Diane Grano, with 1 Licensed Pioneer and 1 Lay Elder.

Beck Row with Kenny Hill

The Community

The village has a rapidly growing population, with many starter homes occupied by young families. As it abuts RAF Mildenhall, a large proportion of residents are US service personnel and their dependants.

There is one state pre-school and primary school and one privately owned pre-school/nursery. Other facilities are the Parish Hub in the former Rose and Crown pub, a hotel and two pub/restaurants, and a few small shops. The main sources of employment locally are on the airbases but many people commute elsewhere.

St John's Church

St John's was the daughter church of St Mary's Mildenhall, and marriages have only been performed here since 1957. The building is late Victorian. During the war years, the church had strong links with the local RAF stations and the churchyard contains a large Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery. One notable burial is that of an Australian, Pilot Officer Ron Middleton, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.



With the handover of RAF Mildenhall to the USAF, the links diminished. Most of the Americans tend to worship in their own chapel on the base. We do, however, maintain close contacts with Beck Row Methodist church.

St John's considers its strengths to be congregational participation in a wide range of activities and a willingness to try new things and new forms of worship. Our church family is friendly and welcoming of newcomers. The church is actively involved in the pastoral care of the village. The church building is in good repair and adjacent to it is a church hall with kitchen and toilet facilities.

St John's main challenge is reaching out into the community and attracting young families into the church.

Eriswell

The Community

Historically, the village mostly served the nearby Elveden Estate, which is owned and managed by the Earls of Iveagh. The village now has a mixed population of just over 1,000, ranging from retirees to younger people of working age, many of whom commute to Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket or even Cambridge, and also a number of families of USAF personnel from the air base

at RAF Lakenheath who live in rented accommodation. The village has several retail units and a pub but no school.

St Lawrence's Church

This is a 13th century building consisting of chancel, nave, south aisle and Lady Chapel. The church and the churchyard are well maintained. It has an excellent refurbished organ and gifted organist. Fortnightly services at 9.30am are mainly traditional in nature with one monthly Communion service.



St. Lawrence's considers its strength to be the depth of its congregation's commitment to the church and willingness to take part in services. The church is actively involved in the pastoral care of the village. The congregation enjoys a healthy social relationship with the village.

St Lawrence's considers its challenge to be encouraging new members into the church family.

Herringswell

The Community

Herringswell is a small village of about 275 inhabitants which retains its quiet, rural character. Evidence has been found in the parish of settlements dating back to Roman times. There is a village hall but no other facilities.

St Ethelbert's Church

The church, which is Grade II listed, stands on a prominent site in the centre of the village. The original mediaeval building was largely destroyed by fire in 1869 and had to be rebuilt. The reconstruction included some stunning stained-glass windows in the style of the Arts and Crafts movement. The church is often visited by window enthusiasts, especially for the three windows by Christopher Whall. St Ethelbert's is also frequently visited by bell ringers and has an interesting and unmodified (but refurbished) chamber organ. The churchyard attracts swifts with a calling system and nest boxes. The church can be opened at almost any time for visitors by available key-holders, who live close by. There are 6 on the Electoral Roll.



Although the church now has only 4 or 5 regular services each year, it is much in demand for weddings and baptisms and is considered an attractive alternative to the church at Red Lodge. St. Ethelbert's has no Churchwardens but has a fully functioning body which acts as the PCC. The regular services are designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all and child friendly. Attendances at the festival services can be 30 or so and, on occasion, many more. The church is also used whenever possible for social gatherings to enable people to feel welcome. Such events are always well attended by villagers.

Icklingham

The Community

With a population of about 400, the village lies along the A1101 road between Bury St. Edmunds and Mildenhall. There is a large flour mill adjacent to the church but, apart from this, there is little employment in the village itself other than in agriculture or at the village pub, with many of residents commuting to work in Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds or Thetford.

Being on the southern fringe of the Breckland area of sandy heaths and forests, the parish is home to a number of important natural habitats and the village is surrounded by Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There is one pub but no school or shop. There is a privately owned community centre which can be hired. A quarterly newsletter called "The Villager" is delivered to every house.

St James' Church

This is a 13th century building consisting of chancel and nave. The building is in good order. Lead has been stolen twice off the church roof in the last eight years, but has been replaced on both occasions. Worship is traditional in nature and is fortnightly.

St. James' considers that its strength is in being welcoming without being intrusive. The church has two dedicated Churchwardens, and one Lay Elder. There is a regular congregation, although not large in number.



There is a committee called "Project St James", who are now in their 26th year of fundraising to maintain the fabric of church and help keep it open. They have been able to install under pew heaters and a kitchen and a toilet and contribute to roof repairs and the running costs of the church. St. James' considers its challenge to be in drawing younger people into the church and encouraging them to take an active part in church life.

Red Lodge

The Community

In the last decade, Red Lodge has grown from a small settlement into a large village of over 6,000 people. Major development, which includes a number of affordable homes, is still taking place. The village is situated alongside the A11 and residents mainly commute away for work. Community facilities include a large, modern venue known as the "Millennium Centre", a sports pavilion with sports fields, play areas, and a small shopping centre. There are two primary schools. St Christopher's CEVC School opened in 2012 and The Pines in 2018, reflecting the growth of the village.

St Christopher's Church

This is a relatively modern building which frankly is already far too small for the community that it serves. It operates as a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church. Alternate weekly services are held and the 2 denominations work closely together. They currently have a part-time lay youth worker, who lives and works in Red Lodge and whose post is funded until August 2024. Ministry in this growing community has been enhanced by it's becoming a Rural Resourcing Hub for the Lightwave Project.



Services and activities, several of which are run by Lightwave groups, include monthly Café Church at the Sports Pavilion, Junior Church, a weekly after-school group, an evening youth group and monthly Messy Church.

Average congregations for services at St Christopher's are about 25, typically up to 10 of these being children. The church has links with St. Christopher's Primary School and a C of E assembly is held fortnightly.

The Lightwave Rural Resourcing Hub

In 2019, a Rural Resourcing Hub was established in Red Lodge as part of the Diocesan-wide Bishop's Mission Order known as "the Lightwave Community". It is now led by the Revd Diane Grano, assisted by 1 Licensed Pioneer and 1 Lay Elder. The focus is on promoting and enabling fresh expressions of Church in this area and making Jesus known to the unchurched and to people living on the margins. The project has been funded until 2025/26 by the Strategic Development Fund. To date, the Hub's activities have centred primarily on Red Lodge and Beck Row. Examples have been...

- ✝ Opening a Lightwave Café in Red Lodge three days a week which offers different gateways for building relationships with people with varying needs.
- ✝ Collaborating closely with St Christopher's church in Red Lodge and with St John's and the Methodist church in Beck Row.
- ✝ Reaching out, in partnership with St Christopher's, to the two primary schools in Red Lodge and, with "Newmarket Youth for Christ", to local secondary schools.
- ✝ Coordinating deliveries of food and medicine across 6 villages during lockdown and setting up a well-used foodbank.
- ✝ Supporting 6 other parishes with particular outreach events and/or mission consultancy.

The outcomes of the Hub's efforts have so far included establishing...

- ✝ 12 discipleship groups for adults, meeting weekly with an average attendance of 6.
- ✝ A discipleship group for children and young people with an attendance of 40.
- ✝ Monthly "Breakfast Chats" ("Let's talk about Jesus") in Red Lodge and in Beck Row which attract an average of 60 adults and children.
- ✝ Messy Church sessions, run jointly with St Christopher's, which are attended by 50 children and adults each month.
- ✝ A Sunday evening Encounter worship with an average attendance of 20 adults.



The Hub has also...

- ✚ Hosted seasonal outreach events and holiday activities in Beck Row and Red Lodge, which have each attracted over 80 children and parents.
- ✚ Brought 5 adults to baptism and 7 to confirmation.



Going forward, Lightwave is looking to ensure the financial sustainability of this ministry beyond 2026. The next phase of development in Red Lodge will add 300 more houses at the northern edge of the village and the plans include the provision of a new, multi-use community facility. Negotiations are therefore underway for St Christopher's LEP to move out of the existing church building and to join with Lightwave to share a designated space in the new building. Lightwave's other specific aims are to create a worshipping community for children and young people from across the Forest Heath Team area and to increase its role in resourcing missional opportunities in the other parishes.

Tuddenham with Cavenham

The Communities

The villages of Tuddenham and Cavenham lie very close together between the A11 and A14 trunk roads and are effectively treated as one community. Tuddenham has a population of about 420 and Cavenham only about 140. They are surrounded by farmland and most of those of working age commute to jobs elsewhere.

Amenities are concentrated in Tuddenham....

It has a new village hall and a good-sized playing field with football, cricket and bowls clubs. There are also a nursery/cafe, a pub/restaurant, and a country house hotel in the former water mill which has become a well-known wedding venue. Like Icklingham, Cavenham has several Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a section of the Anglo-Saxon "Black Ditches" earthworks runs through it.

St Mary's, Tuddenham

This is a substantial mediaeval church in the centre of the village. It is in fair order and provision has been made at the back of the church for an accessible toilet and kitchen area. The spacious nave has been used for events such as concerts and art shows. Our style of worship is traditional, using Common Worship. Average attendances for our regular services are about 8-10. Family Services, at which a children's singing group performs, are usually held at the major festivals and



attract an average of 21 adults and 8 children. Our Carol Service in 2022 included a nativity play and was well attended and much enjoyed. We are keen supporters of Eco-church and in the past year we have hosted 3 events for families, with talks on bats, wildlife in churchyards and swifts.

St Andrew's, Cavenham

This too is mediaeval but is now used mainly at the principal festivals. Harvest Festival and Christmas are celebrated annually and are reasonably well attended, with the Christmas Carol services in particular attracting congregations of 30 or so. The village community uses the church every other Saturday morning when 20-30 people gather for their well supported Cavenham Community Café.



THE PARISH OF MILDENHALL

St Mary's Church

This is a large, 800-year-old, Grade I listed church which attracts visitors from around the world to see the carved angels on the ceiling and the east window. We are open every day from 10.00am for visitors and prayer times on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. There are emergency store boxes for people to take food and toiletries when in need.



The main Sunday service is at 11.00am – led by the Team Vicar, the Revd Sue Leathley, or the Lay Reader, Andrew Borrett. We also record the service for Facebook and the local radio. The main service may be Holy Communion or Morning worship, plus all-age times with an informal style. There is a monthly, very informal, interactive afternoon service for families.

Since January 2022, we have had 5 baptisms (and 2 thanksgivings); 4 weddings (and 1 re-dedication); and 19 funerals have taken place at St. Mary's with another 3 at the crematorium.



We have very good ecumenical links with 4 other churches in the town which serve the population of around 12,000.

A number of our activities have not resumed fully since the pandemic, and we are rebuilding in many ways. Links with the 2 primary schools and secondary school were re-established during the "Amazing Angels" festival last Christmas. Class assemblies and class visits, and Christmas and Easter trails have re-engaged children from St. Mary's C of E Academy.

The following is a summary of our most recent Growing in God plan.

Growing Deeper and Younger:

Our aim is to encourage faith and prayer by...

- ✝ Engaging with families and St Mary's academy school by using "Any Time, Any Place, Any Prayer" books and activities through the year.
- ✝ Focusing on a book of the Bible every month at the main service, with "give-aways" as reminders and opportunities to share.
- ✝ Re-vamping the prayer area.

Growing in Number:

Our aim is to develop warm spaces in the church and the Cottage Rooms that adjoin the church by...

- ✝ A long-term project to provide a screen under the tower, which will create an enclosed room; and

Our mission statement is
"Jesus is Lord. We seek to
share His love and care".

- ✝ Installing improved, economical heating in the Cottage Rooms and opening this as a warm space to welcome the community for refreshments, time to chat, or to do crafts or puzzles or similar activities.

Growing in Influence:

Our aim is to engage with the town community by...

- ✝ Making more of the beauty of the church and churchyard.
- ✝ Celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the angels on the ceiling of the nave which started with an “Amazing Angels” festival in Advent and will continue throughout the year.
- ✝ Following through our Eco-projects and applying for the Gold Eco-Church award.
- ✝ Inviting the community to an Open Tower and Open Churchyard Day which took place over the Coronation weekend.

THE KENNETT VALLEY GROUP

An Overview

Prior to the formation of the Forest Heath Team Benefice in 2020, our Group of 5 small, rural parishes was known as the Dalham Benefice. It forms the southern portion of the Forest Heath Team area. Our Team Vicar is the Revd Canon Chris Childs, who has been with us since January 2021 and is also the Rural Dean of the Mildenhall Deanery. He is assisted by a Curate, who has now completed his training, a retired priest and one Lay Elder.

Our churches hold an average of 9 Sunday services per month, in addition to the major festivals and occasional midweek services. All styles of worship are catered for, from the traditional to the more modern. Several times each year we come together for Group services which rotate between our churches and are greatly enhanced by the singing of the enthusiastic Group choir under the leadership of our talented organist, Philip Asher.

Our parishes have a long tradition of close cooperation. Examples of collaborative working are...

- ✚ A Group Council consisting of the Ministry team and the Churchwardens and treasurers of each parish meets at least twice a year to agree the Worship Diary and to discuss other topics of mutual interest.
- ✚ A weekly Group Newsletter.
- ✚ A Bible study group which meets every fortnight.
- ✚ An annual Lenten discussion group.
- ✚ Frequent fund-raising and social events which are always well supported by people from across the 5 parishes.
- ✚ A willingness to be mutually financially supportive, with the wealthier parishes helping the less well off.

We look forward to even closer co-operation, not only amongst ourselves but also between us and the clergy and congregations of the other 11 parishes in the Forest Heath Team Benefice.

Our area is particularly attractive and is criss-crossed by a number of scenic footpaths. The Icknield Way long distance trail passes through it and the churches in Dalham, Gazeley and Moulton make up "The Three Churches Walk" - a popular circular route which features in several guides.

Since January 2022, the statistics for Occasional Offices have been...

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals (in Church/Interment of Ashes)
St Mary's, Dalham	1	3	1
All Saints', Gazeley	3	1	6/3
St Stephen's, Higham	1	0	0
St Mary's, Kentford	3	0	1
St Peter's, Moulton	2	10	6/1
Totals	10	14	14/4

Dalham

The Grade I listed church of St Mary the Virgin was built in the 14th century and stands high on a hill about a quarter of a mile from the village, overlooking the mature parkland in front of Dalham Hall. The tower has a peal of eight bells.



The parish of Dalham is a thriving community with some 210 inhabitants of all ages. There is a popular pub, The Affleck Arms, and a modern village hall which is run by an energetic management committee. It hosts monthly film shows and meetings of the Gardening Club and also regular Pilates and Zumba classes.

Dalham is a traditional parish. A Holy Communion service (Common Worship Order Two) with hymns, Bible readings and a sermon is held once a fortnight on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month with average attendances of about 8-12. St Mary's also regularly hosts Group services. An annual candlelit carol service on the Sunday before Christmas is attended by some 125-140 people.



Dalham PCC meets three or four times a year. A rota of volunteers keeps the church clean, decorated with flowers and cared for. The fabric of the building is regularly inspected. Financially, our position is reasonably secure. Our Parish Share has been paid in full for many years.

Gazeley

The parish of Gazeley is in the middle of the Group and has a population of about 700.

The 14th century church of All Saints', which is the largest of the 5, is Grade I listed and is the focal point of the community, standing in an elevated position in the centre of the village. It was one of the 24 founder members of the "Angels & Pinnacles" network of notable churches in the Diocese and contains a number of architectural treasures.



Barely 20 years ago, the church was at a very low ebb but since then its fortunes have been transformed, with average attendances for our regular Sunday services having risen from single figures to 25 or more and extensive works of repair and improvement being undertaken. We were about to embark on a project to install a WC and kitchen in the church but sadly this has had to be shelved temporarily because we have discovered that yet more repairs are required, this time involving complete re-roofing of the chancel.

In spite of the cost of all these works, we have generally been able to pay our Parish Share in full.

Gazeley is a thriving village and its residents greatly value their church. The church is open daily and, as well as for services, it serves as the venue for a wide range of events such as concerts, art shows

and even displays of owls, which are able to fly freely around the church. We make frequent collections for the “Open Door” foodbank in Newmarket and we have recently opened a free “pantry” of essential items in the church for those in need.



The other main facilities in the village are a large and well-equipped village hall and a pub/restaurant which sells its own beers that are brewed on the premises.

Members of the church are heavily engaged in the life of the village and assist with and support events such as coffee mornings, community lunches, visits by the Rural Coffee Caravan, quiz nights, and one-off celebrations (such as for the Queen’s Jubilee).

Higham Green

This is numerically the smallest parish in the Benefice with a population of only about 150. The village is divided between the Upper, Middle and Lower Greens. Its origins are largely Victorian, as an estate village. Nowadays few estate workers remain and most residents work in neighbouring towns.



St Stephen’s church is Grade II listed. It is a beautiful little Victorian building in the Gothic revival style and was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, who is better known as the architect of the grand façade of St Pancras Station and the Albert Memorial. He was also responsible for all of the interior fittings and decorations and for some fine stained-glass windows. The church has an East Anglian flint round tower with a small conical pinnacle which is covered with wooden shingles. Unfortunately, these have been severely damaged by woodpeckers and now have to be completely replaced at a cost of over £80,000. We have always been able to pay our Parish Share in full but the urgent need to raise funds for the repairs to the roof of the tower has made this increasingly difficult.

The monthly BCP Communion is well supported by villagers, supplemented by worshippers from the wider benefice who prefer the traditional liturgy. The congregations for most services exceed a dozen, swelling greatly for the main feasts. The candlelit Christmas carol service is always crowded.

The churchyard is maintained co-operatively by the whole village as a wildflower meadow and, particularly in the spring, is a riot of colour.

Kentford

Although the smallest (in area) of the 5 parishes in the Group, as a result of recent, significant development within the village, Kentford has quickly become the largest in terms of population. It has a Post Office and general store and 2 pubs. The neighbouring village of Kennett has a railway station and is also undergoing rapid growth. Although Kennett lies over the Cambridgeshire border and the parish falls within the Diocese of Ely, the two villages share a playing field with a pavilion and well-equipped hall. and we have recently started to hold events jointly with their PCC.

Kentford stands on the ancient crossing point of the Ickniel Way over the River Kennett. Our church, which is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, is Grade II* listed and remains an important landmark on this route.



Until recently, our congregations could be as small as 2 or 3 but they have recovered rapidly since the arrival of the Revd Chris Childs and are now routinely in double figures, with over 40 attending civic and Group services.

We hold a BCP Evensong on the 1st Sunday of the month and a BCP Communion on the 3rd. Each year, we host a popular Christingle, a carol service with the Lakenheath Silver Band, and the Group midnight Communion.



The church, which houses mediaeval wall paintings and unusual box pews, is open every day. In response to the cost-of-living crisis, we have set up a free pantry of essential items and we make regular collections for the local Food Bank. The open churchyard is very well maintained and is home to much wildlife and a beautiful display of oxeye daisies.

For the first time in more than a decade, thanks to our increased congregations and a variety of fund-raising events, we managed to meet last year's Parish Share in full.

Since 2011, when it was just 420, Kentford's population has grown to well over 1,100. Money that the developers were required to pay towards community facilities has enabled us to provide a new car park, level access and a water supply for the church. Our next project is to install a WC and kitchen. These will play a vital part in our mission to serve the wider community because, since the demolition of the former village hall, the church is the only public space in the village and it is used, for example, by the Parish Council for its meetings.

Moulton

Moulton is the most westerly parish in the Group and has a population of just over 900. The village lies on the River Kennett which is spanned by a fine 15th century packhorse bridge. The church of St Peter dates from the 12th century and has a commanding position overlooking the river valley and surrounding countryside. It is open every day.

Our regular pattern of Sunday worship includes one Family Service and one Communion Service each month. Group services are shared between the 5 churches. The Group's main Family Service on Christmas Day is traditionally held in Moulton and usually attracts a congregation of over 140. It is followed by a shortened Communion for those wishing to stay. Our Christingle and seasonal services for Moulton CEVC Primary School are also very popular and the local Scout and Cub groups have taken part in Remembrance Day services.



By dint of successful fund-raising campaigns over the past few years, we have been able to complete Phases 1 and 2 of our long-term project to restore and enhance the church. These have seen the installation of a new heating system and a roof alarm and the creation of a community space with a WC and kitchen. In Phase 3 of the project, we aim to refurbish the walls and decorate the interior but, before that, we need to carry out significant repairs to the roof and tower to ensure that they are watertight.

The church enjoys strong support from the village. Fund-raising events for the church are always very well attended and we have a "Team St Peter's" whose members apply their time and talents freely to the many tasks involved in running the church and maintaining the churchyard, a proportion of which is set aside as a nature reserve. The churchyard is open and a large extension was consecrated in 2018.

The population of the village includes a broad mix of ages, households and occupations. The main amenities in the village are the Primary School, the Pre-School Group, Moulton Stores and Post Office, and the award-winning Packhorse Inn. There is also an excellent village hall alongside the sports field, which is home to senior and junior football teams. Moulton Parish Council provides strong leadership and publishes a quarterly magazine, "Moulton Matters", to which our Churchwardens and the Vicar contribute articles.

In spite of our successes, we recognise that we cannot simply stand still. Our congregations are mainly elderly and we realise that we have much work to do to enhance our mission and outreach to all age groups. In particular, we intend to improve our communications and enhance our skills so that we can explore new missional opportunities and ways of expressing "church" differently.