

Horringer Benefice Profile - 2024



St Mary Westley St Leonard Horringer St Peter Nowton
St Petronilla Whepstead St Andrew Brockley All Saints Hawstead

Horringer Benefice



St Mary Westley



St Peter Nowton



St Leonard Horringer



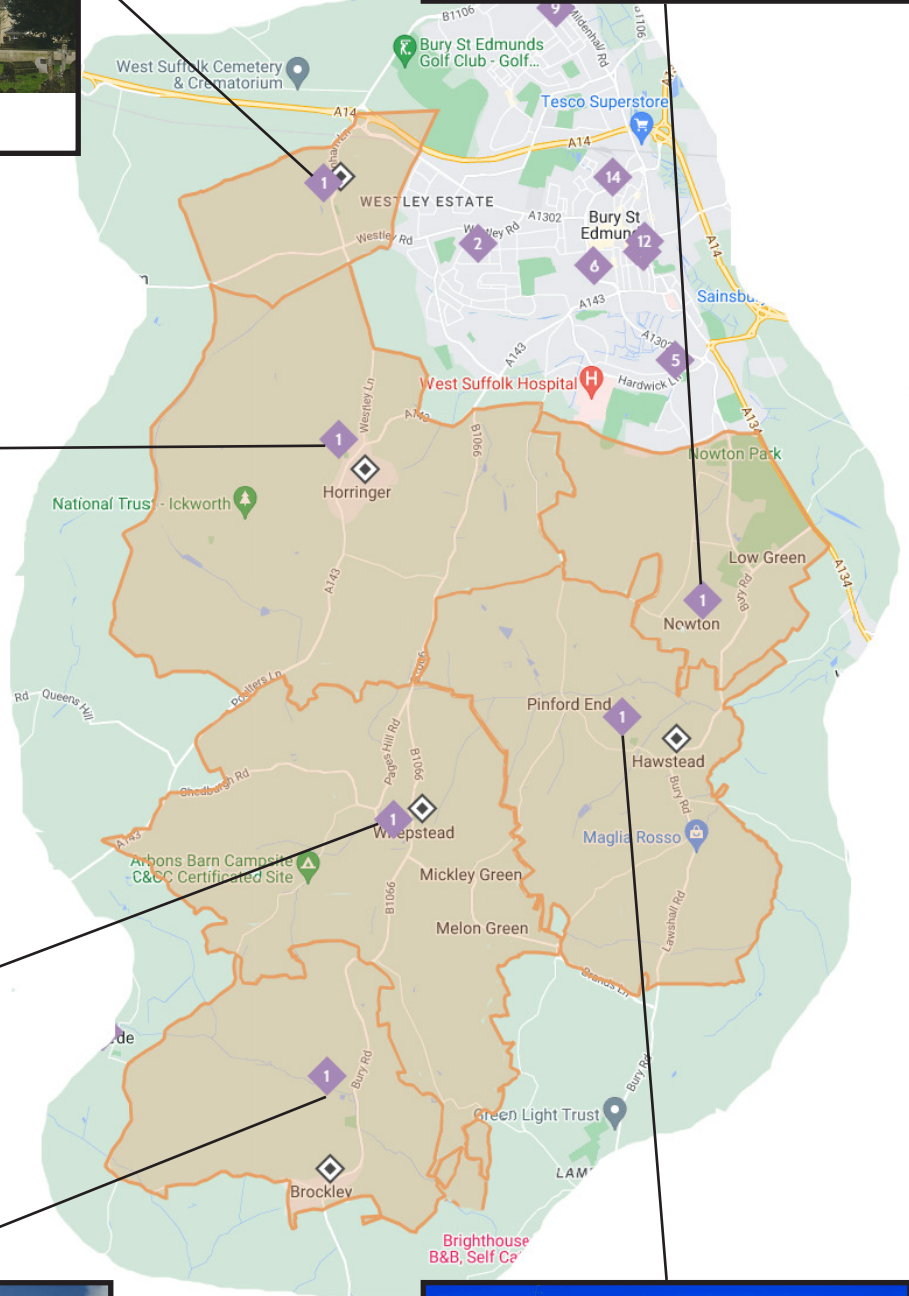
St Petronilla Whepstead



St Andrew Brockley



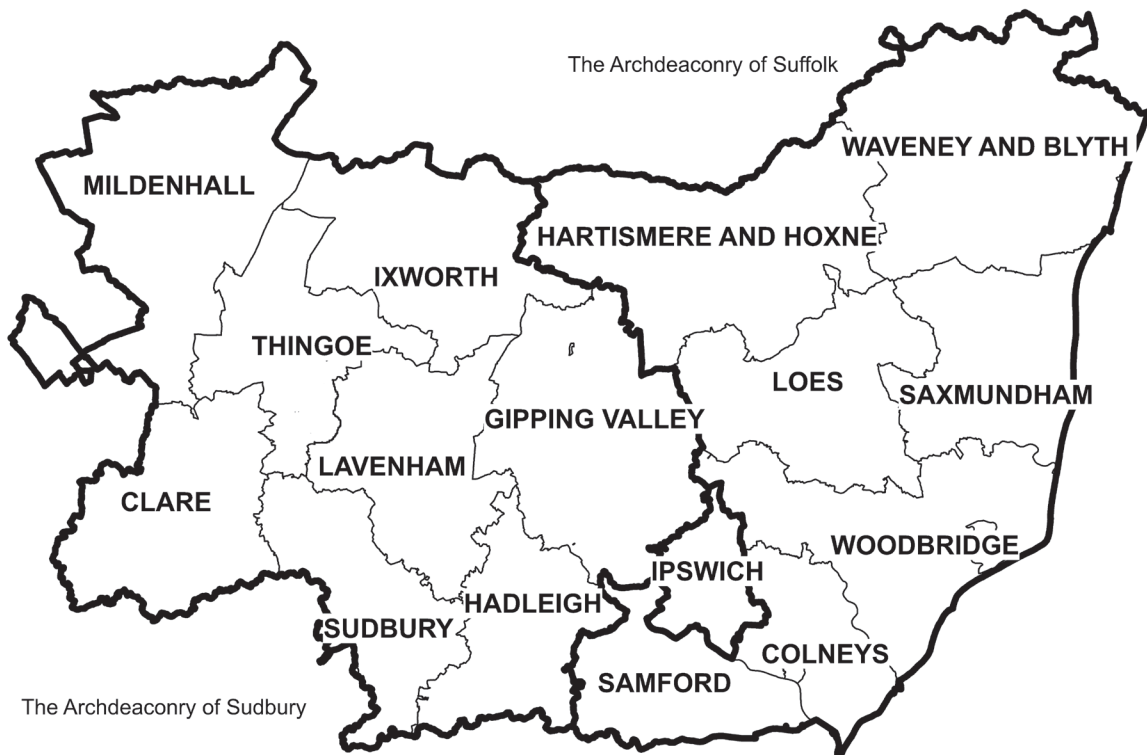
All Saints Hawstead



Thingoe Deanery



Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich



Horringer Benefice

Location

The Benefice is situated to the west and south of the historic town of Bury St Edmunds, the cathedral town of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, in the county of Suffolk. Three of the six parishes are adjacent to the town but the whole benefice is rural in character, and the National Trust Ickworth Estate is within the Benefice.

The Benefice

The Benefice of six parishes was formed in 2000 with four parishes, with two more being added in 2023. The total population is 2468 (2021 census data) – Horringer (1020), Westley (180), Brockley (324), Whepstead (518), Nowton (127) and Hawstead (299).

Horringer has the only school in the benefice – Ickworth Park Primary School (Ofsted rated Good in June 2019) – which has served a number of the surrounding villages since opening in 1990 to replace many smaller village schools. We enjoy a good relationship with the school, led by our Communities and Families Minister. A choice of excellent Secondary Schools is available in nearby Bury St Edmunds.

There is a willingness on the part of the six congregations to work together and benefit from each other's experience whilst recognising and maintaining the individual identity of the churches and the communities around them. A joint newsheet is circulated to all the churches monthly. Joint services are held on the fifth Sunday of each month at one of the churches in turn.

The church congregations are aware of the significant place the church has in the life of the villages and the church benefits from the considerable good-will from villagers and particularly their support at fund-raising events. Although numbers attending church are above the national average (average Sunday attendance across the benefice is about 40-50), we are aware of the need to attract families and young people. Worship across the benefice reflects both the desire for traditional worship and the concern that it is also more accessible to the young in a more modern idiom.

The Horringer Benefice is part of the Thingoe Deanery and was involved in producing the current Deanery Plan.

The Attributes of a New Priest

A person who relates well to people across the age range and who has a commitment to pastoral care, and spiritual development of the Benefice.

A person committed to being a visible presence in our communities, involved in the life of our villages, helping the church to become more accessible, encouraging church growth and outreach.

A good communicator who can delegate and who will develop and support a team.

A good, warm and challenging preacher.

A person who will enable the development of the work among young people and children in worship and other activities.

Develop the use of social media and relevant technology.

To work alongside people in the Benefice to encourage further opportunities for hospitality and fellowship.

Our Commitment to a New Priest

Warm and friendly congregations who are ready to welcome their new priest in a spirit of friendship, and who will assist your integration into the various communities.

A small team of laity willing to assist across the benefice, including some pastoral visitors.

We are a group of churches committed to learn and grow, and as a benefice we are open to change, and willing to accept new ideas from someone who can make a difference.

Expenses of office are fully met.

We recognise the Church of England's Covenant for the Well-being of Clergy, and are keen to support our new rector in his or her work. There are initial plans in place to look into the provision of some administrative support to enable the new person to concentrate on their priestly ministry.

Current Pattern of Services

Sunday	Brockley	Hawstead	Horringer	Nowton	Westley	Whepstead
1st			11am Morning Prayer	11am Morning Prayer	9.30am All-age Service	11am Eucharist (CW)
2nd	9.30am Eucharist (CW)	11am Morning Prayer	11am Eucharist (CW)			8am Eucharist <i>with Breakfast</i>
3rd	6.30pm (<i>summer</i>) 3.30pm (<i>winter</i>) Evening Prayer (BCP)		11am Coffee & Prayer (<i>May-Sep</i>) <i>Oct – Harvest</i>	11am Eucharist	9.30am Eucharist (CW)	11am Matins (BCP)
4th	9.30am Eucharist (CW) (<i>alternating with Whepstead</i>)	11am Eucharist	11am Eucharist (CW)			9.30am Eucharist (BCP) (<i>alternating with Brockley</i>)
5th	10am Benefice Eucharist (CW) held in the six churches in rotation					
Thursday 9.30am – Morning Prayer via Zoom						

The Rectory

The Rectory, located in Horringer, is a modern purpose-built four-bedroomed house, recently refurbished, with sitting room, dining room, study and large garden. There is good access to transport links and schools.



Ministry and Services

The Benefice has until recently had an Assistant Curate, who moved to a new post in June 2024. There is a Reader (Craig Young), Communities & Families Minister (Helen Woodroffe) and Pastoral Assistant/Lay Elder (Heather Corbell) and the Deanery is well-served with retired clergy, some of whom help maintain the present level of Sunday worship. There is an established lay involvement in the churches for reading, intercessions and assistance with Holy Communion, and pastoral care.

Ecumenical and Other Links

Where opportunities exist there is co-operation with the Baptist Chapels in Whepstead and Brockley. A number of joint services are held, eg Remembrance Sunday, World Day Of Prayer, Christmas Carol Service. Ecumenical Lent Groups are shared with the Baptist Chapel. There is contact and involvement with Ickworth Park Primary School in Horringer. The whole Benefice, and separately agreed by each Parish, is affiliated to Churches Together in Bury St. Edmunds and District.

The Churches

The six Anglican churches, one in each parish, are well maintained and cared for. There is a Baptist Chapel in both Brockley and Whepstead.

Church Tradition

Churchmanship does not vary significantly between the churches and is best described as central.

Parish Share

The Parish Share is agreed with the Deanery to the Benefice, and is apportioned to the six parishes.

St Leonard's Church, Horringer

Horringer-cum-Ickworth Parish

The village of Horringer lies to the south-west of Bury St Edmunds on the A143 road.

St. Leonard's Church occupies a commanding position in the centre of the village overlooking the village green and the entrance to the National Trust property, Ickworth Park, which attracts many visitors. There is a good relationship with the redundant and privately-owned St Mary's Church in Ickworth Park, and the Rector is a trustee of the Ickworth Church Conservation

Trust and the Horringer Charities. In many ways St Leonard's is at the heart of the village community with firm links through this to most of the village activities and organisations. The Rector is also a trustee of the Horringer Charities, which provides a small payment to residents of the village who are on a low income (currently 8 recipients receive an average of £80.00 each year)

There are approximately 1000 adults in the population with 450 houses. Employment is provided by school, farms, two public houses, Ickworth Estate (National Trust), and the Ickworth Hotel.

There is one primary school for ages 5-11, and a pre-school with a new building for ages 2½ to 5. A mother and toddler group meet weekly in the nearby Community Centre, which also has a meeting room available for hire. The school serves nearby villages, including Brockley and Whepstead.

The Community Centre, Social Club, and Scout HQ share the large Church car park adjoining the green. Numerous social organisations for all ages are well supported, including an active Good Neighbour Scheme.

A village website with particular pages dedicated to the church includes much information (www.horringer.org.uk), and there is a quarterly village Diary and a monthly Podcast.



The Church

This is an 11th Century church, in good condition. Situated on the village green adjacent to the entrance to Ickworth Park, the church is equipped with a PA and loop system. A portable ramp is available for disabled access. There is a large car park available. A new kitchenette was installed in January 2022. Eight new bells and a new steel frame were installed in 2017 after considerable support from the community and grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Life of the Church

There are currently 46 on the Electoral Roll. The laity assist in worship at all services.

Worship Average Attendance is:

1st Sunday (11am Morning Prayer) – 10/12
2nd & 4th Sundays (11am CW Eucharist) – 20/22
5th Sunday –
(10am CW Benefice Eucharist in rotation) – 40
Thursday Zoom Service – 4

Hymn book used is Hymns Old & New (1996 edition)

Baptisms - 4, Weddings – 2 in 2023; occasional Funerals and Burial of ashes

Bellringers usually practice on alternate Thursday evenings. The new bells have



attracted much interest from the bellringing fraternity.

Other activities include an annual Holy Week concert with the Horringer Singers, and an annual Lecture by a speaker of prominence.

Christian Aid Week is well-supported, with a village-wide collection.

Assessment of Parish Strengths

We have links with Ickworth Park Primary School, led by our Community and Families Lay Minister.

The church community is friendly, spiritually-committed and supportive of each other. The laity assist in worship at all services and in organising activities in the parish, including social and outreach events.

Good communication with the village is maintained via the monthly Newsheet and the village Podcast, and the church news is included in the Community Council's quarterly booklet, the Horringer Diary.

A church representative serves on the Community Council.

Christmas Crib Service, which is traditionally well-attended.



Lay ministry team lead monthly Morning Prayer.

A small Benefice Pastoral Team is led by the Lay Pastoral Minister, and would welcome further development and support from the new Rector.

Christingle Services.

Lent courses.

Community events supported by St Leonard's include religious and secular concerts in the church by the Horringer Singers and others, and the annual St Leonard's lecture Christmas Fair and themed Exhibition.



St Petronilla's Church, Whepstead

Whepstead Parish

Whepstead is a dispersed village of about 200 dwellings with a population of some 430 situated between 3 and 5 miles southwest of Bury St Edmunds. It lacks a well-defined centre, but it possesses a strong community spirit.

We are an enthusiastic village, and although we have many elderly, both those who have lived here most of their lives, and others who have chosen to retire here, there is now a growing number of younger families with children, for whom we wish to explore ways to attract them to Church.

Many of the dwellings are privately owned, but a new development of 5 mixed affordable rental homes was completed in 2014, to provide homes for local people wishing to stay in the village. A very few new "infill" dwellings have also been built since then.

The surrounding farmland is mainly worked by the farmers themselves. Other employers and employees commute to Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, and even further afield. Increasingly, people are working from home, and also running businesses from home.



The Community Centre in the village celebrated its 50th year in 2019, and recently refurbished, it is a first-class facility which is used by a number of organisations, both from the village, and outside.

The Community Association's committee, which includes a representative from the parish church, arranges several social and fundraising events during the year. There is also a well supported Baptist Church which has good links with the Parish church, participating in a number of ecumenical services throughout the year, for example Remembrance Sunday and the annual Carol Service.



The Church

St Petronilla's is a 12th century building (with a dedication unique to the Anglican church in England), seating about 120 and boasts an indoor flush toilet! Its last major re-furbishment took place in the 1920s although major repair work was also carried out in the 1980s. It is probably in the best state of repair for many years and a recent quinquennial inspection found no major work necessary, although what is required will be done in 2024.

In 2014, pews were removed from the rear of the nave to create a space which has been put extensively to a variety of uses, from regular breakfasts after an early morning Communion service, to coffee mornings, Lent lunches, summer suppers, meetings, and making Christingles, and a space to service mulled wine and minced pies after the Christmas Ecumenical Carol service.

A coffee morning, to accompany the annual May Plant Sale usually takes place here. Other fund raising/ community events have been morning lectures in the church,

with copious coffee served from the back of the church, with a full lunch at the Community Centre. Up until last year, our Harvest Celebrations have taken the form of a Harvest Festival service in the church, attended by many from the local farming fraternity, followed by a traditional Sunday roast beef lunch at the Community Centre, with both buildings to near capacity.



Parish Life

Weekly services are attended by some 10–20 people, with an almost half to half mix of services taken from the BCP and Common Worship. Major festivals attract a greater number of villagers, up to 60 to 70, or so. There is

widespread support for the church's fundraising events by villagers and friends, both in and out of the village, including many who are not regular churchgoers.

The support given by the village extends to the offer of premises, facilities and help as well as attendance. Regular events are part of the social life of the village.

We realise that we need to rebuild and extend our congregation and would like to do this through the establishment of Family/All-Age services or some such, possibly within our strong links with Brockley, and using the expertise of the recently appointed Community and Families Minister to the Benefice.

We have the challenge of attempting to invigorate our Church life in Whepstead, and we certainly need younger people to join our congregation. We have various initiatives in mind and have already begun to recruit interested assistance; we need energy and resilience.

The combination of regular giving and fund raising has produced a sound financial position in recent years enabling the PCC to meet its parish share in full each year.



St Andrew's Church, Brockley

Brockley Parish

The village of Brockley lies on the B1066 about 7 miles south of Bury St Edmunds and St Andrew's Church is approximately half a mile north of the village. Most of the housing is post-war and most houses are owner occupied. The population is around 300. There is an active village community and the Village Hall is well used with a variety of clubs, activities, talks and social occasions taking place there. Refurbishment to the Village Hall was completed in 2021 when a new roof was constructed and improvements were made to the interior to a high standard.

A monthly Newsletter is produced which provides news and information regarding events in Brockley.

There is a Baptist Chapel with whom St Andrew's shares a Christmas Carol Service and other special services. The pub and shop are now closed and the former school is now two private houses. Brockley is a friendly village with an excellent community spirit.

Setting

The Church is one of the oldest buildings in the Parish although the adjacent Hall may be of similar age. It is certainly the tallest, being a part of the landscape seen from the surrounding fields and the B1066, the Bury St Edmunds to Long Melford Road.

The church is distinct from the main body of the village. It is reached by a minor unclassified road from the B1066 by car. By foot it can be reached by the parish right of way network via



footpaths from several directions. The Church surroundings are rural in nature with a grass churchyard. The grass area close to the church is kept in neat order. The paths are of coarse gravel, in reasonable order although difficult to traverse for those with limited mobility. Boundaries are generally marked by hedges which are kept under control. There are no TPOs on the trees, none of which are mature.

The PCC are currently undertaking a project to improve the grass carpark in front of the church. It is hoped to lay a strong crete layer to improve the quality of the ground for parking.

Building History

The Nave dates from about 1300 the chancel slightly later 14th Century although there is some evidence of earlier work on the north wall. The tower appears to be contemporary with the Nave. The South Porch is 15th Century (timber framed).

The details of the 19th Century restoration are not known although the Parish records that the Nave north doorway was closed in 1866 and the window inserted. At the same time a choir gallery was removed. The flooring scheme, benches and sanctuary arrangements are all plausible from a similar date and the vestry also.



A rood screen was installed in 1907, the upper stage removed in 1986. The 19th Century pulpit was reconstructed in reduced form in 1986.

The organ is a chamber organ of the 1880s, with a softwood case. It is recorded by Church guide to have been brought here from Rutland, and placed in the church in 1985

Other items of significance are: Stained Glass - Window CE - 1869, unsigned but appears to be by Ward and Hughes; 14th century timber door to south of nave survives with original handle and escutcheon; Font 13th century plain octagon with central shaft and eight columns – the bowl is unlined; 13th century double drained piscina in chancel; 14th century tomb recess on south wall of nave with cusped ogee arch hoodmould and finial

The medieval stonework, the timber south porch, the south door and the medieval font make this a significant building in regional terms.



Parish Life

Eucharist Services are held at 9.30am on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. The service on the fourth Sunday is shared with Whepstead and takes place alternately in Brockley and Whepstead. On the third Sunday there is a service of Evening Prayer using the BCP.

The Church is well supported at Easter, Christmas and Harvest Festival.

A Candlelit Crib Service is held on Christmas Eve and has proved very popular. A combined Christmas Carol Service takes place each year with Brockley Baptist Chapel.

We link with the Benefice for Lent and Advent courses.

St Andrew's continues to pay the Parish Share in full each year.

We have a loyal and regular congregation and attendance at services has increased slightly over the last two years. Over 30 parishioners contribute financially with planned giving.



A Plough Sunday Service is held in January each year. The farmer whose land surrounds the church brings his plough to the churchyard where it is blessed.

Throughout the year fundraising events take place within the village in support of the church. The Burns Night Supper and the Hotdog and Pimms Summer Party have been particularly successful. As well as raising much needed funds the events have proved a very good way of engaging with the community. The redundant telephone box in the village has been refurbished as a joint project with the Church and the Parish Council. It is now used to raise funds for the church by selling donations of books, DVDs and toys etc and is managed by church members.

There are currently 25 people on the Electoral Roll.

In 2018 we were fortunate to receive a grant from a Government Fund to repair the church roof. The roof was completely re-constructed and the drainage systems were improved.

Although not many children live in the village we would like to do more towards involving children and young people in the life of the church.

We have a team of bellringers who can be called upon to ring the bells at weddings, Christenings etc and other special occasions.

Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals take place occasionally with usually not more than one a year.

All Saints' Church, Hawstead

We are a welcoming and hospitable Anglican church enjoying worship and fellowship together and dedicated to being a Christian presence within our village and the wider community.

The Church

It is probable that there has been a church on this site since Saxon times. Certainly there was one here at the time of the Norman Survey (Doomsday Book). Hawstead Church is a Grade 1 listed building. It is historically important, and contains a large number of notable monuments. Church historian, Clive Paine, describes it as the Westminster of Suffolk.



South Porch

The dog-toothed pattern of the doorway arch is typical of the Norman style. The windows either side contain the armorial shields of the three local families who were the Church's major benefactors: the Drurys, the Cullums and the Metcalfes.

Bell Tower

From this position, the church interior can be fully appreciated. There are three bells in the tower; one Mediaeval and two from the 17th century.

The 13th century font shows traces of the iron fastenings which were used to lock it against the use of holy water for witchcraft.

At the base of the tower is a 14th century iron-bound chest with a slot



at one end which was used for contributions towards the maintenance of the poor.

On the Rood screen (late 15th century) is the Sanctus Bell, a very rare survival from pre-Reformation days.

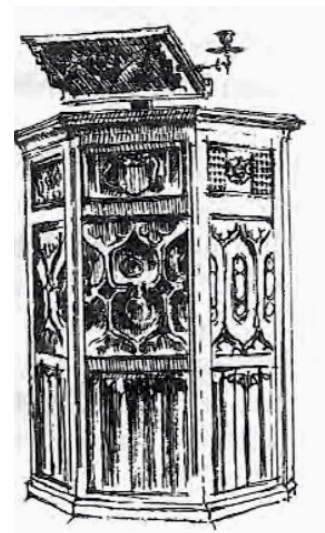
Nave

The mid-16th century angel hammerbeam roof was mutilated during Cromwellian times and restored by William Dowsing in 1858.

The pulpit is a rare pre-Reformation survival c 1520 and includes a carving of the Drury coat of arms. The lectern is of a similar period.

The Drury family lived at Hawstead Place. A ruin of the house and its court still remains. Contained within its court is the renovated Suffolk Barn which is now used for hospitality and weddings.

There is still a Trust that runs the Metcalfe Alms Houses, a church member being a trustee.

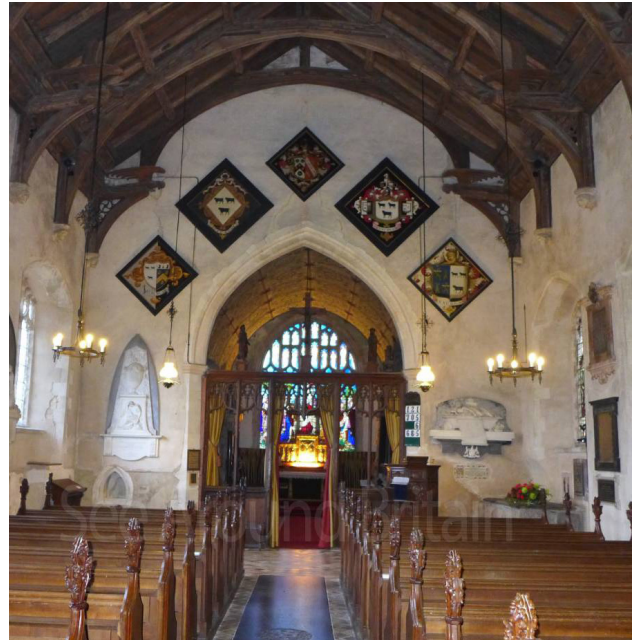


Parish Life

Our congregation is small. There are 17 on the Electoral Roll. Special services are well attended and we pay our proportion of the Parish Share.

We share a lot of services with Nowton parish, including Remembrance, Easter, Mothering Sunday and Carols; this arrangement works well. Between the two churches we run a 100 Club to boost funds.

The Church, together with the Diocese and Hawstead Community Council, worked to fund a third share to pay for the new Village Hall. We benefit from being able to use it free of charge for a certain number of hours annually. We use it for our Lent Lunch, Plant Sale, Harvest Supper and Advent Service.



The Church and the village community create Lent Boxes that are given to the Vineyard Church for distribution.

Our church is open.

A village-based volunteer work party, 'The Jammie Dodgers', maintains the churchyard, attending the churchyard monthly April–October to cut grass and maintain the hedges.

Last year we hosted two funerals, one wedding and one renewal of vows. This year we have hosted one baptism and have four weddings booked.

We need to work on planned giving and/or a 'friends of' scheme.

The Village

Although only 4 miles from Bury St Edmunds, our parish is very rural and farming focused. Properties are a mix of large and medium-sized

houses, with some social housing too. There are a few second homes and Airbnbs.

Positioned next to the village green is Maglia Rosso, a cycle shop and restaurant. It also hosts 'Wigwam Holidays'. The Great War Huts Military Museum is located on the other side of the village green. Hawstead Village Hall and the adjacent playground are also situated on the village green. The Four Bells Glamping Field is located on Church Road. Pinford End Nursing Home closed recently but

is being refurbished. Members of the Church community used to visit residents to take communion.

The Village Voice is our quarterly village newsletter which is emailed to the majority of villagers. We use it to help promote Church events and services and to publish the Benefice News.



St Mary's Church, Westley

St Mary's Church

St Mary's is a small, much-loved village church. It has a well-maintained exterior and its interior is simple yet welcoming. The plain glass windows allow in plenty of light, a delight in the summer when the sun is shining. Small congregations do not find themselves 'lost' in the pews and yet there is space to accommodate larger services, especially weddings. An area has been created at the west end of the church which is used to serve refreshments after services.



Church Life

The two churchwardens firmly believe that a warm, friendly welcome at the door is the essential starting point for all services; not far behind is the belief that offering excellent chocolate biscuits, tea and coffee after each service allows everyone the opportunity to stay a while and share news, chat and to feel part of the church community. We especially welcome children of all ages at our services with toys and books available if needed.

St Mary's holds two services each month, both starting at 9.30am. Our All-Age Service, held on the first Sunday of the month, has grown in popularity and although numbers can fluctuate, we usually welcome 15–20 adults and up to 7 children. There is a service booklet (which



requires updating) and songs are chosen from the Children's Hymn Book or Junior Praise. It is a very relaxed service to which everyone is welcome. We have a box of small musical instruments for the children (and adults!) to play, and children do the readings. On the third Sunday there is a Eucharist Service (CW) attended by a small congregation averaging 6, lower than pre-covid. A fifth Sunday Benefice Service is held in rotation with the other churches. Occasional services vary; in 2023 there was one funeral and one baptism.

Services are held to celebrate Easter Sunday, Harvest Festival and Christmas Day and a Christingle service takes the place of the December All-Age Service. A Crib Service on Christmas Eve has proved popular since being introduced 3 years ago and we are keen to build on it.

There is an electric organ in good condition but unfortunately, we have no regular organist. CDs are used for musical accompaniment to hymns. We have Hymns Ancient & Modern New Standard and limited copies of Hymns Old and New.

The Church Electoral Roll is 29 with 18 being resident in the village, which has a population of approximately 190. St Mary's has an active and supportive PCC. To date the full contribution has been paid to Benefice Parish Share and expenses; fundraising is, however, firmly on the PCC's 'to do' list.



A group of volunteers, some of whom are non-churchgoers, willingly help when called upon to maintain St Mary's churchyard and the old churchyard of St Thomas à Becket, which is a peaceful space accessible to all. There are some village residents who hold strong views and will not get involved in any church-related activities, and we respect that.



St Mary's church guide, which can be located on: shct.org.uk/guides-to-suffolk-churches, gives the history of the church together with photographs.

Parish Life

Ideally an incumbent would be prepared to take a proactive pastoral role in the village as we believe the work of the Church should go beyond holding services and maintaining the building.

A monthly 'walk and chat' morning followed by cake and coffee maintains contact with village residents in a non-church context and attracts a small but regular group. Visits to local gardens are also organised when time and weather permit. These events, together with service details, are advertised on the monthly paper-based church news sheet which is delivered to every village home.



Areas for development

Although we pride ourselves on making everyone feel welcome and part of the church community, there are areas which do need improvement. Together with the new Rector we would hope to work towards achieving the following:

- Continued growth and encouragement in church participation of young families and children, building on the well supported All-Age Service.
- Revision of the All-Age Service booklet with input from the families who attend.
- Building the Eucharist Service congregation.

Our goal is to adapt to change where we can, build on the hard work of our predecessors, and ultimately to pass on a thriving, cared-for church to the next generation.

St Peter's Church, Nowton

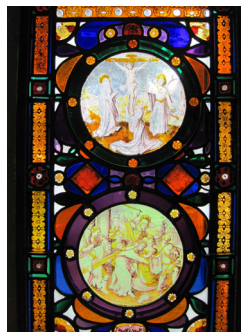
A church has been on this site for most of the last millennium - one was listed here at the time of the Domesday Book in 1085. It is a Grade II listed building.

The north and south doorways are late Norman and the lancet window in the east wall of the north aisle is also Norman.

A back porch was added in 1730 and the top of the tower was embattled in 1749.

84 roundels of painted glass from the low

countries were installed in 1820. These are considered to be the second or third most important in the country. Two of the nave windows have been restored and protected recently. The church has the one last remaining August Gem organ (1890) and is historically significant. The church also has an 18th century 'vinegar bible'.



The belfry contains six Whitechapel bells – however, these can only be chimed.

According to a local Suffolk church historian, the churchyard is the best kept one in Suffolk and probably beyond.



Worship

The congregation is generally between ten and fifteen.

There are fifteen people on the Electoral Roll. Services are held on the first and third Sundays of the month.

In the year of 2023, there was one baptism, two weddings and three funerals.

Parish

The village of Nowton has around one hundred residents and 43 houses. The village does not have a real centre, having no school, shop or public house and the houses are spread throughout the village. There is a Retirement Residential Home (Nowton Court), a thriving Cricket Club and a very busy Village Hall.





THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

SUFFOLK

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

The Diocese covers the county of Suffolk, excluding the area around Lowestoft in the north-east, and one parish in Essex. It is a mainly rural Diocese with a large number of small villages, plus market towns including Woodbridge, Halesworth, Sudbury and Beccles and the cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds with its historic ruins of the old Abbey. Ipswich is the county town with a population of about 137,000. Suffolk's population is about 650,000. The county embraces historic places of interest such as Sutton Hoo, culture at Snape Maltings with the famous annual Aldeburgh Music Festival – Snape and Aldeburgh are on the Heritage Coast, which 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.

The Church of England in Suffolk

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, Bishop of Dunwich. 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

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

As part of this vision, we have recently received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Archdeacon of Ipswich which aims to grow the church in Ipswich through church planting and reaching out to those who live in the town, and 'Growing God in the Countryside',

overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission. This focusses on nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups and hubs such as the one being established at Bungay. (more information about the Growing in God in the Countryside project plan is available at www.cofesuffolk.org/about-us/our-vision/).

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

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

Fulfilling the Vision

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

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

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

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

Thingoe Deanery

Situated in the west of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Thingoe Deanery encompasses the parishes found both within and around the Cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds. As such our deanery mirrors the diocese in offering a wonderful mix of both urban and rural life and ministry. Bury St Edmunds itself is a historic market town with a range of shops, businesses, schools, and housing. And there are many new and growing housing estates in and around the town, offering the various challenges and opportunities that new populations present to both the church and others alike. Equally many of our parishes are based around villages found in the beautiful countryside of Suffolk, with the joys and other issues that such smaller communities bring.

As a deanery we have a good and supportive chapter made up of both incumbents and ministers engaged in chaplaincies located in Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area. We meet every other month, to offer mutual support and a listening ear to one another. And at least twice a year we gather for purely social reasons. Deanery Synod meets three times a year and is well attended. As well as engaging in discussion of issues of import in the life of the church in the deanery and beyond, synod members hear from a variety of speakers invited by our Deanery Officers to offer insight into mission and social action in our region. In recent times this has included such topics as local chaplaincy, help for those who are sleeping rough and safeguarding. The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee has just begun to meet again in a new form to discuss the Deanery Plan and its further development as we continue to engage with the Diocesan Missional Strategy of Growing in God. Our aim is to discern together where God is leading us as his people in Thingoe Deanery.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to our deanery to join us as we seek to learn more of God and His plans for growth of the kingdom here in our delightful part of Suffolk.

Revd Dr Andrew Miller Rural Dean

Dr Sarah Cooledge Deanery Lay Chair



*View across Ickworth Estate (National Trust) towards
Horringer, with St Mary's Church Ickworth bottom right*