

RATTLESDEN BENEFICE

This Benefice is looking for a new Rector.

Could you be the Priest we are looking for?

The Rattlesden Benefice is made up of four rural parishes: Rattlesden, Brettenham, Hitcham and Thorpe Morieux. It is in a particularly beautiful part of the Suffolk countryside. These are busy, lively, friendly communities and the churches are well supported although, as always there is scope for development. There are teams of people working hard in their individual parishes and also across the Benefice who will give the new incumbent plenty of help and support. The post has become vacant on the promotion of the former incumbent in October 2022 after 10 years in the Benefice.



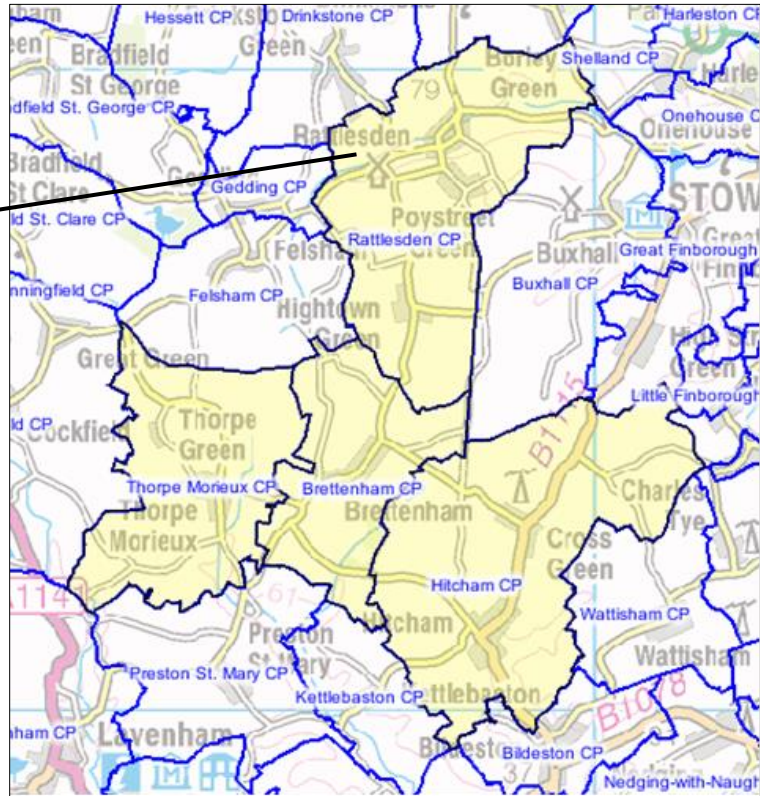
Could our new Rector be you?

This is an excellent opportunity for someone with a strong calling to work in a rural, four parish Benefice.

All four parish churches are Grade 1 listed buildings, each in its own way a beautiful example of English architecture. They are all in good repair.

All four PCCs are proactive and supportive, we hold a wide variety of fund raising events to ensure we pay our way.

You could not live in a better rural location and you are still within an hour's drive of Colchester, Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich and the coast. Bury St Edmunds with its Georgian theatre and new concert hall is just a short drive away and London is less than two hours by train from Stowmarket Station which is 15 minutes from Rattlesden.



What this Benefice can offer you:

- The help and support of 2 Readers (one of whom will also take funerals) and 2 Lay Elders ready to give the new Priest all the help they may need.
- A modern Rectory, built around 1987 with 4 bedrooms set in a quiet location just off the High Street in Rattlesden at IP30 0RA, about 200 metres from the church.



- The Rectory has an entrance hallway, a main hall with stairs and a galleried landing. There is a kitchen, utility area, cloakroom, study, dining room and sitting room with French doors leading to a split level patio and lawned garden surrounded by mature hedges and trees. There is oil fired central heating and a double garage.
- The Rectory Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating is 'D' and the Diocese plan to upgrade the windows at the rear of the house shortly so the whole house will be double glazed.
- Excellent Primary and Secondary schools in the locality.

- The Priest's expenses are paid in full.
- All four PCCs are active and supportive. We have a commitment to the well-being and good mental health of our new incumbent and it is important to us that our Priest takes their rest days.
- There is a Benefice children's worker team which will need a refresh as some of them are moving on. Lenten and other study groups have been running on a Benefice wide basis, these have scope for a fresh approach.
- A volunteer team in the Benefice funds and operates a house in a neighbouring village for a refugee family from Sudan.
- There is currently a part time Benefice Administrator employed by Rattlesden parish but paid for by the whole Benefice.
- All churches are kept open during the hours of daylight making church space available to visitors and those seeking spiritual solace.

What we are looking for in our new Rector:

- A commitment to preaching and teaching the Good News of Christ and all that He offers.
- Someone who is open to both modern and traditional forms of worship.
- Who has a passion and commitment for rural ministry and is keen to maintain the current pattern of services across the benefice. Who is looking to develop their own spiritual life encouraging our parishes to do likewise and can share an intellectual understanding of scripture.
- Someone who enjoys team work and is skilled at collaborative working.
- A person who is keen to regularly attend a wide range of the popular secular village events so they become a known face in the community and a go to person when help is needed.
- Someone who will take an interest in building and maintaining strong links with our local schools.
- A community minded person who has good interpersonal skills at all levels; who is proactive about visiting village people in their homes, not just those from the congregation.
- We are looking for a good communicator, someone who uses social media, has good IT skills or is willing to be taught them.
- Someone who is down to earth, has a positive outlook and a sense of humour!

Parish Share

Parish	£	% paid
Brettenham	9,754	100
Hitcham	19,509	100
Rattlesden	24,060	100
Thorpe Morieux	11,705	100
Rattlesden Benefice	65,028	

Village Profiles

St Mary's Brettenham



A Grade 1 Listed building dating from 1300s, being a simple building with a tower over the porch. There is no vestry or hall (the village hall is an excellent venue). The church can comfortably seat about 100/120. There is a hearing loop and a sound system. Electric under pew heating was installed in 2017 and major works were done on the tower roof in 2021. The quinquennial inspection has identified that the tiles on one side of the nave roof need to be replaced, and plans are in place to raise funds and grants over the next few years to make this possible.

The Family Service on the first Sunday of the month is a relaxed version of Common Worship. The Carol service on Christmas Eve is attended by up to 150.

Approximately 20 attend regularly. The electoral roll stands at 20. There are people from outside the Benefice who attend regularly along with some from other faiths.

Church Organisations

The PCC has 8 members, including some younger members with families who have become very involved, and is a very proactive group. It runs an annual fête, which raises a large proportion of church funds and is well supported by the village. Many of the games and stalls are run by people who attend other churches or none and it brings together the whole village community. Other recent successful fundraising ventures were an illustrated lecture in the village hall and an Auction of Promises, both of which attracted a lot of support. The new church stall in the churchyard beside the road has raised £2000 for church funds in the last year. The churchyard grass has been cut by a contractor but from next year will be done by volunteers. The graves, hedges and flowerbeds are maintained by volunteers; the churchyard is frequently used by visitors who want a peaceful place to wander through or sit quietly and enjoy.



Employment

Mainly rural (5 farms, 3 of them family owned and run) and other small businesses including several IT based firms run from home. Some residents are employed at the two schools. Many people in the village work in London or local towns. Unemployment is low. Several young families have recently moved into the village.

Schools

There are two private schools. Services and assemblies are given at both and The Centre Academy also uses the church on a weekly basis. The Centre Academy caters for children with special needs, 4-18 years and Old Buckenham Hall is a mixed preparatory school with a pre prep department. The boarders from OBH attend our family service when it coincides with a weekend in school. Most local children attend the Rattlesden CE Primary School, Gt Finborough CEVC Primary School or Bildeston Primary School and move on to either Thurston, Stowmarket or Hadleigh High Schools and then to a choice of 6th form colleges including Thurston 6th Form College.

Other Community Institutions

Residents largely rebuilt the village hall, which is now a centre of activities, run by the Brettenham Village Association. As there is no pub, volunteers open the village hall twice during each month, as 'The Village Inn', serving meals to an average of 40 people on the first Friday of the month and drinks only on the 3rd Sunday at lunch time. Twice a year the church members provide the food with the profits going to church funds. The Village Association run a bar at the church fete, and the Garden Club has run stalls and games, with a donation to the church.

The link to the Brettenham village website: <http://brettenham.onesuffolk.net/>



The Altar on Remembrance Sunday

The Church Fête



All Saints Hitcham

The strengths of this rural parish lie in the small but dedicated team of church workers drawn from within the congregation led by a hard working PCC. We provide a wide range of activities designed to involve non church goers ensuring we have a lively presence in the community.

The parish is keen to build on this to promote spiritual growth. To find ways to promote 'life' events in our church, particularly weddings and baptisms as well as improving our limited contact with young families and children.

The new kitchen and WC are enabling us to experiment with a wider range of activities in the church.

All Saints Church



Situated to one end and slightly apart from the village, All Saints is a magnificent C14th Grade One listed building in excellent condition and much loved by the community. The majority of the cost of maintaining the building comes through the Friends of Hitcham Church who have raised £560K in the last 20 years. On entering it is immediately obvious that it is a well cared for, welcoming building with a special sense of light and space enhanced by an impressive double

hammer beam roof. This link gives more information but was compiled before our latest building work <http://www.suffolkchurches.co.uk/hitcham.htm>

The Village

Hitcham is a typical Suffolk long, linear village, its 320 houses are occupied by all ages and backgrounds. It is not a high net worth area. The community is spread out, making it a challenge for one end of the village to know the other; social media has helped achieve a wider reach but there is scope to develop this. The majority of volunteers for any village event tend to come from the older half of the population. We have a busy village hall with plenty of activities for adults, including a popular monthly 'pub' evening. There is an exciting children's play area but there are no children's clubs in the village. We are lucky to have an excellent and popular village shop with a post office. There is a good network of footpaths which are well used by our significant number of walkers. <https://hitchamsuffolk.org.uk>

Employment

Most employment is in the local towns, some residents are self employed working from home, others commute to London. The village is surrounded by farm land managed by six family farming businesses however there is little other agricultural employment.

Schools

There is a well subscribed pre nursery group held in the village hall which meets on week days but no schools. Children attend Bildeston Primary School (5-11yrs) and Hadleigh High School (11-16 yrs).

The Friends of Hitcham Church

The Friends of All Saints Church Hitcham is a secular registered charity supported by 140 members. In 2004 the Friends funded a major restoration of the church. In 2020 they completed the Tower Project which involved restoring and enhancing the bells, rebuilding the organ and creating a tower room with kitchenette and equal access WC. The £340k for the Tower Project was raised in just two years. Some grants required community involvement which was going well until Covid, after which we had to form a small volunteers 'bubble'. There is a strong appreciation for the church building by the villagers.



Volunteers after the first day of cleaning down the tower in 2019

and (the delayed) celebration of the completion of the Tower Project in 2021



The Churchyard

We maintain our churchyard with financial help from the parish council. It is a tranquil place that is beautiful. It is managed to encourage wildlife. With three footpaths converging on it is a popular place both to sit and to meet friends. We have an easy to search record of all the graves which is on the village website and in the church.

The Congregation

Regular churchgoers number over 35 but they rarely all come together with Sunday services attended by 16 -20 worshippers. We bring together a much wider group for the major festivals and Remembrance Sunday with congregations of 60 plus. We are a friendly and supportive lot! We benefit from an organist and a newly formed band of bell ringers. We have a scratch choir for festivals but no regular choir at services, although that does not stop us enjoying singing.

We want to capitalise on the facilities in our new tower room to help us grow our church, finding new ways to attract people through the door as the more people use the building the more they



have an affinity with it. Like so many parishes we struggle to attract young people from the parish to our monthly special family service although Brettenham's Old Buckenham School attend in term time. Last year we held a popular 'Children's Christmas Games' on Christmas Eve which ended with the Christmas story round the crib.

We also held our first pet service which worked well with dog biscuits on offer at the end of the service instead of the usual refreshments.

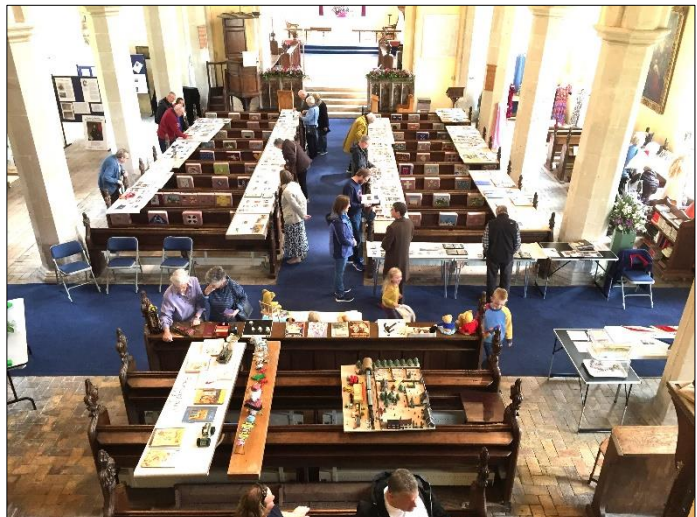


The Jubilee Concert

The Jubilee Exhibition

We know we need to spread our net wider when asking for volunteers to help with events, as a way of drawing people in.

We also need to find more innovative ways to use social media and the parish web site to back up the monthly printed multi parish 'Roundabout' magazine.



This is the link to Hitcham Noticeboard Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/625839684150242/>

St. Nicholas Rattlesden



A fine, handsome church, dating back to the thirteenth century and magnificently set on the north side of the valley. <http://www.suffolkchurches.co.uk/rattlesden.htm>

The building is Grade 1 Listed and has a magnificent hammer beam roof. A hearing loop and sound system, with internet access are all in place. There is a roof alarm for added security. Plans are about to be implemented (funds are in place) to provide toilet and a kitchen servery, with a re-ordering of the West end. The church electoral roll stands at 52 and an average of about 34 attended Sunday

services during the first six months of 2022. Dedicated teams see to church yard maintenance and church cleaning. A library of books is set at the back of the church and a monthly Book/Coffee morning is held in the building.

The current pattern of services includes two communion services, a service of morning prayer and a family 'breakfast church' service. As there are chairs in the nave the church is a very flexible space for a wide range of fund raising events, including our harvest supper.



A fund raising concert given by the St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir.

Other church buildings

There is a village hall owned by the PCC (Barney Trust). The hall is currently run by a management committee registered with the Charity Commission and is used each day by Rattlesden Pre School. There is also a wooden building adjacent to the church available for children's meetings.

Church Organisations

The PCC currently comprises 17 members and meets four times a year at quarterly intervals.

The Benefice Mothers' Union consists of 6 Diocesan members who are joined by friends at monthly meetings.



There is a dedicated team of bell ringers (6 bells) who ring before the start of each service. There is also a hand-bell ringing team.

A robed four part choir (around 12 voices) supports most services.

The north aisle chapel is dedicated to the USA Air Force 447th Bomb Group which was stationed at Rattlesden Airfield during WWII. There is a strong link with the veterans' organisation.



Relationships with other churches/denominations

There is a Baptist Chapel in the village with which good relationships are maintained and also cordial links with the Roman Catholic community meeting in the adjoining village of Woolpit.

Rattlesden CE Primary Academy

The school serves the village and three surrounding villages. There are currently 120 pupils on the roll, ages 5 to 11. There are strong links between the Church and school with weekly assemblies and there are several occasions during the year when the children have services in the Church (Easter, Harvest, Christmas, Leavers). The link with the school is considered very important. The Church is represented on the Governing Body of the school by the Rector, who is ex-officio, and a Foundation Governor representing the PCC. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2018 and was judged to be “Good” in all areas.

Employment

Mainly rural – the area is extensively farmed. There are some local small businesses but many people in the village work in London or local towns. Unemployment is low.

Other Community Institutions

Rattlesden has two Public Houses, one for social drinking (Five Bells) and one for high class dining (The Brewers), a Post Office and Community Shop run by volunteers. There is also a Badminton Club and a Football Club.

The Community Council (a local voluntary charity) raised funds for a magnificent pavilion on the playing field. The site also includes a new children’s play area. The church runs a monthly informal service “Praise and Donuts” in the pavilion.

“Rattlesden’s Revelations”, is a monthly, professionally printed, colour magazine produced by a church member and distributed free of charge to each house in the village. In addition to church news it includes information items from other village organizations.

Rattlesden Village website is found at: <https://rattlesden.suffolk.cloud/our-village/>

St Mary's Thorpe Morieux

Thorpe Morieux is a very rural parish with 124 houses spread over a wide area. Limited development has occurred in the last 20 years. Recent changes to the main farm in the village has released some previously tied or rented property into the market, and we are proud to have provided nine new housing association affordable houses in the last 10 years to allow local families to stay in the village.

There is a good community spirit fostered by support and cooperation between village organisations. When St Mary's flooded in 2021 we had a dozen willing helpers after only few phone calls.

Thorpe Morieux has firm links with neighbouring villages and pupils from Thorpe attend Cockfield CEVC Primary School, going on to Thurston Community College, Stowmarket Upper School and Sudbury Ormiston Academy depending on geographic location in the village. Pupils from Old Buckenham School in Brettenham parish attend St Mary's church. Events put on by church and village hall are well attended. There is a good cross section of ages and backgrounds in the village.



The 2021 Garden Party at Thorpe Hall

St Mary's Church

The church was built in the 13th- 15th centuries and there was some considerable restoration work done in 1869.

The church is beautifully situated in the south of the parish amongst a cluster of houses. The capacious nave can seat 140. There is a good single manual organ.

Weekly services are valued and supported.



The church is also a venue for concerts, exhibitions and activities, hosting joint events with the village hall.

The Church draws on the Benefice team as required.

The churchyard is a valuable wildlife area, carefully managed by volunteers.

The village has a growing population of young families and St Mary's is mindful of the need for good pastoral care amongst them.



Church Organisations

There is an active PCC and Deanery Synod representative. The PCC cares for the village including non church goers. PCC members work as a team and with the other village organisations in a variety of activities. Thorpe Morieux is the smallest of the four parishes but it is a truly close knit community and one that provides mutual support for all.

Relationships with other churches

There are no other churches in Thorpe Morieux but a good relationship is maintained with the other churches in the Benefice. People from all other denominations are made welcome at St Mary's.

Employment

Almost half the adult population are retired; many of those working work from home or locally. Thorpe Morieux is a busy agricultural parish, although offering limited employment.

Schools

There are no schools in Thorpe Morieux. LA schools which the children attend are Cockfield CEVC Primary School, Thurston Community College, Stowmarket Upper School and Sudbury Ormiston Academy. Some children attend independent schools. There are around 40 school age children.

Other Community Institutions

There is a Village Hall and a small sports field. The Hall is run and maintained by the Village Hall Committee and is well maintained. The Hall is used regularly for Gardening Club, Art Exhibitions',



Yoga and private functions and fund raising activities. The village has a bimonthly village magazine, 'Thorpe Times' which is funded by the Parish Council and advertisements, delivered free to all households.

The library van calls every fortnight. There is a Coppicing team who work with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust who maintain Bulls Wood in neighbouring Cockfield. Thorpe Morieux Wood is privately owned but open to the public.

The Jubilee Flag painted onto Thorpe village hall.

Benefice Population & Housing

The Benefice population is 2243 (source Diocesan website).

Census figures are not yet available so working on the distribution of parish magazines the Benefice can be summed up as:

Parish	Population	Households	Owner Occupied	Social Housing	Private Landlord
Brettenham	245	125	108	2	15
Hitcham	766	310	272	18	20
Rattlesden	987	450	351	50	49
Thorpe Morieux	245	124	88	16	20

The populations of all four parishes have increased recently with new housing being built in all four parishes.

Benefice Services

At least one service is held in each of the four churches (except Brettenham) every Sunday except when there are five Sundays in the month and then a United Benefice Service of Holy Communion is held at each church in rotation. Services have been shared between the incumbent, the two readers and the elders of the Benefice Team.

All parishes use Common Worship and Anglican Hymns Old & New. There is established lay participation in services in all churches. Our tradition is 'middle of the road' Anglican.

Occasional Offices held in the last 12 months

Parish	Baptisms	Confirmation	Weddings	Funerals
Brettenham	1		1	1
Hitcham	1		3	4
Rattlesden	3		3	4
Thorpe Morieux	2	1	1	3
Total	7	1	8	12

There were 5 confirmation candidates this year.

There were also a number of cremations.

Typical Monthly Pattern of Services and Annual Average Attendance

	1 st Sunday	2 nd Sunday	3 rd Sunday	4 th Sunday	5 th Sunday
St Nicholas Rattlesden	9:45am Holy Communion	9:45am Morning Prayer	9:45am Holy Communion	9:45am for 10:15am Breakfast Church	10:00am United Benefice Holy Communion (Streamed) Av Nos: 34
	Av Nos: 33 +Streamed to 8/10 people ¹	Av Nos: 30 +Streamed to 8/10 people ¹	Av Nos: 35 +Streamed to 8/10 people ¹	Av Nos: 40 +Streamed to 8/10 people ¹	
	6:30pm Praise & Donuts			11am Quiet Service	
	Av Nos 15			Av Nos 10	
St Marys Brettenham	11:15am Family Communion	8:30am BCP Holy Communion		8:30am BCP Holy Communion	
	Av Nos: 18	Av Nos: 6		Av Nos: 6	
All Saints Hitcham	11am Morning Prayer	11am Holy Communion	11am Informal Family Service	11am Holy Communion	
	Av Nos: 12	Av Nos: 20	Av Nos:24	Av Nos: 22	
St Mary's Thorpe Morieux	10 am Morning Prayer	10am Family Communion	10am Morning Prayer	6pm BCP Evensong	
	Av Nos: 11	Av Nos: 21	Av Nos:11	Av Nos:11	

¹ Streaming has had to be stopped during the interregnum

The Lavenham Deanery

The Lavenham Deanery comprises 7 benefices made up of 28 parishes, all in rural villages (see map).

The Deanery Chapter is well attended and meets on a regular basis for worship, lunch and sharing of news. Chapter members support each other in providing ministry across Benefices when required. There is a real sense of common purpose and shared vision for the Deanery.

It is expected that the person appointed would be committed to being part of the Chapter and thereby bring their skills and experience to benefit the wider Deanery and enjoy the fellowship of colleagues.

Deanery Synod meets three times a year.

For further information regarding the Deanery please contact:

The Reverend Canon Sharon Potter:

The Rectory, Howe Lane, Cockfield, IP30 0HA.

Tel: 01284 828599 or 07825 086063

Email: revsharon2@gmail.com

(Rest day: Friday)

The Role Description

To Follow