



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**



The Bansfield Benefice





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For more information on the Bansfield Benefice, visit:

<http://www.bansfieldbenefice.org.uk/>

Welcome from the Churches and Lay Elders

Welcome to this profile for the Bansfield Benefice in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. We hope that you will enjoy finding out about us and that the information you need is here, as you discern the will of God for the next stage of your ministry.

We are a rural benefice of seven churches in a stunning, undulating part of Suffolk close to the Cambridgeshire border with a combined village population of 4,023 people. We have the normal joys and challenges of a rural setting, but as one of our team of retired priests who is helping out in the vacancy commented, we are not all grey-haired. We reflect a variety of Christian worship styles, but in the years since our parishes came together as a Benefice, we have drawn close spiritually, socially and organisationally. Now we want to continue that evolution and are seeking someone to help us in that process.

The seven churches in the Benefice are amongst the most beautiful in Suffolk. They are mostly Grade 1 listed buildings and their upkeep is a challenge. However, we are definitely not looking for a church custodian; the upkeep and condition of each church being the responsibility of each parochial church council (PCC). The incoming rector is blessed with seven PCCs who look after the buildings, including the fundraising. What we are looking for is someone who will lead us spiritually and help us to grow our congregations. We are keen to play our part in the Diocesan vision 'Growing in God', and ensure the Benefice achieves sustainability for future generations.

We pray that God will send us the right person to be our Rector for the next stage of our journey as a Benefice. Whether or not you have a part in that journey, please pray for us too.

Dr Paul Bevan
(Wickhambrook)

Dr Philip Draycott
(Wickhambrook)

Fiona Evans
(Denston)

Jane Helliwell
(Stradishall)

Nicola Nunn
(Ousden)

Hugh Douglas-Pennant
(Stansfield)

Vanessa Watchman
(Lidgate)

Josie Wreathall
(Cowlinge)



Our New Rector

Personal Qualities

We are seeking someone who will be able to demonstrate that they are prayerful and theologically reflective, for whom Word and Sacrament are central to their spiritual life.

He or she will also be able to demonstrate strong communication skills as well as competent and sensitive liturgical skills and, of course, be able to write and deliver a good sermon.

She or he will also need to have good leadership skills, with the ability to inspire and support rather than dictate. An outgoing engaging personality who enjoys meeting people, follows a ministry of visibility and possesses a good sense of humour.

Experience

Ideally the new Rector will have experience of working in a benefice with a number of parishes, but it does not need to be within a rural community. Being able to demonstrate how she or he has developed a benefice as a community, whilst appreciating and cherishing the differences in parish worship traditions, would be an advantage.

The Role

We need someone who can help us to:

- ❖ think strategically and develop a vision for the future; and
- ❖ move us forward to work more creatively, closely and collaboratively, including considering whether a different organisational model will help us to be more missional and outwardly focused as a way of growing our congregations.



Growing in God

There are specific tasks for which our new Rector needs to have the skills and enthusiasm to help us reflect the Diocesan Vision for Growth entitled ‘**Growing in God**’.

Growing in Depth: responding to the call of Christ in every part of our lives

- ❖ We need someone who enjoys teaching the faith through study groups and preparation for baptism, marriage and confirmation.

Growing in Number: drawing the contacts we have into the life of God’s Kingdom

- ❖ We are looking for someone who enjoys visiting new households, the sick and housebound and engaging with those with no previous church connections.

Growing in influence: reaching beyond ourselves to impact on the wider world

- ❖ Our new Rector needs to be an outgoing personality who enjoys working in the community and follows a ‘ministry of visibility’ i.e. attending events, talking to people and ‘being seen’.

Growing Younger: building a congregation whose age-range reflects our communities.

- ❖ We need someone who enjoys working with children. There are fantastic opportunities to build closer ties with the primary school in Wickhambrook.

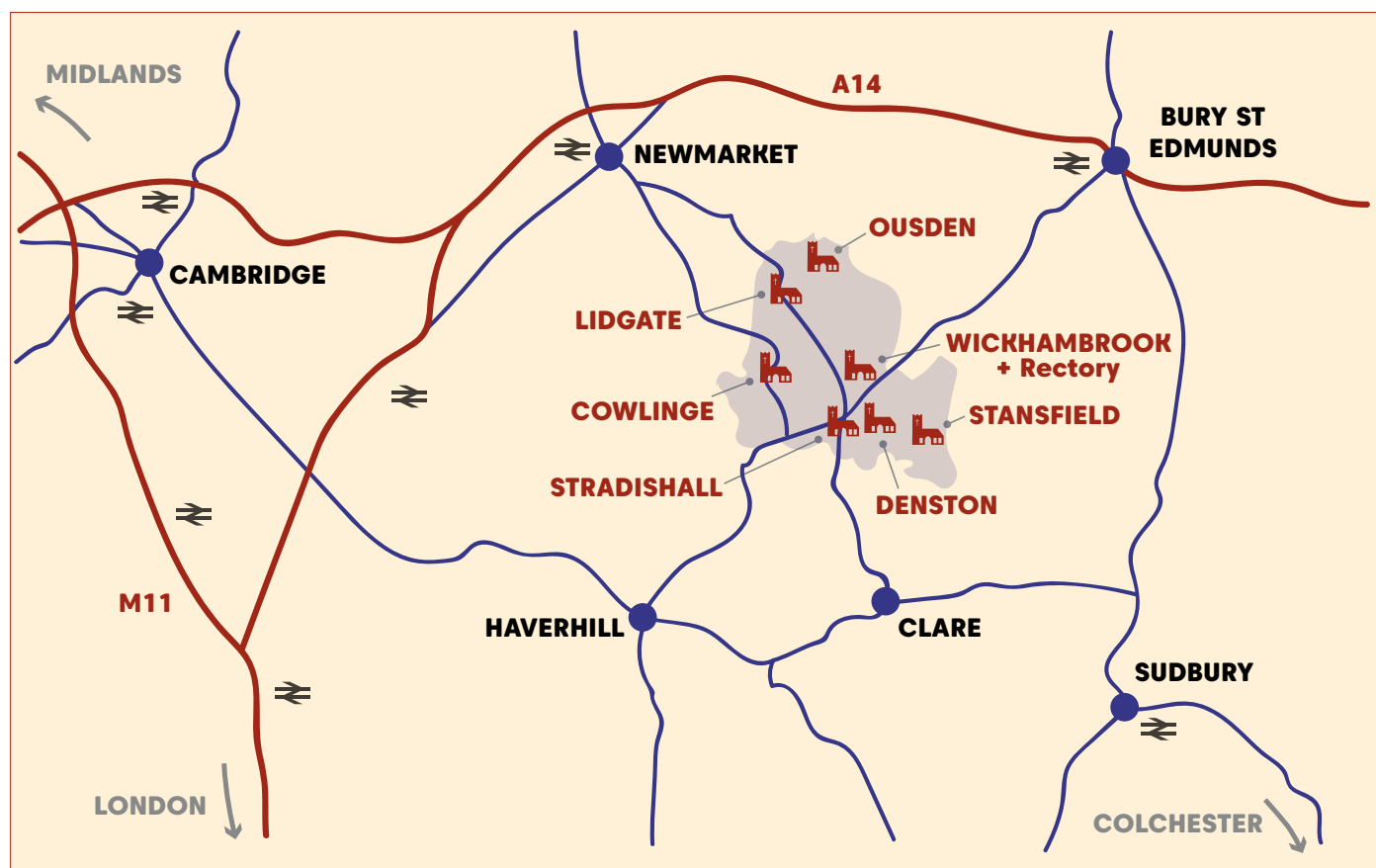


The Benefice

Geography

The Bansfield Benefice is in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Set in a beautiful, undulating rural setting, it is close to Cambridge (25 miles), Newmarket (8 miles) and Bury St Edmunds (10 miles) with easy links to London (2-hour drive). There are good rail links to the capital and other regions from Newmarket, Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds. Stansted International Airport is also only 30 miles away.

There is an excellent range of shops in Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds, both of which have a variety of supermarkets, independent food shops and street markets. There are good sport facilities for tennis, football, swimming and other sports including, as may be anticipated, horse riding. The cinemas, theatres and concert venues in Cambridge, Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds are also all within easy reach. Wickhambrook boasts an excellent primary school (<http://wickhambrookschool.co.uk>) and there is a choice of good local state and private secondary schools in Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Haverhill and Cambridge. A bus service operates between Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill.

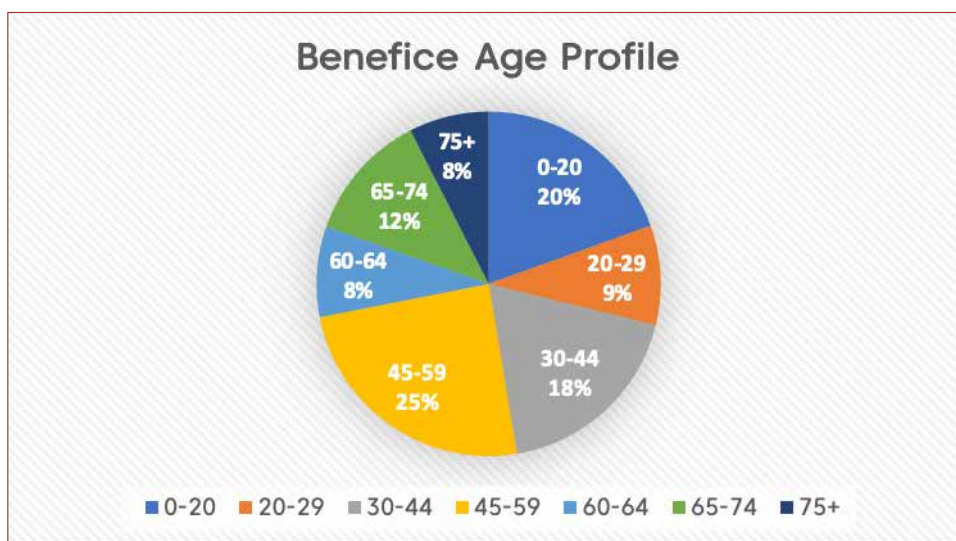


The Benefice is part of the Clare Deanery (<http://www.cofesuffolk.org/directory/deanery/49>) The seven churches of the Benefice are highlighted on the map above. The Benefice Hall and Rectory are both next to Wickhambrook Church. (An interactive map is available at <https://goo.gl/9Mbvc9>)

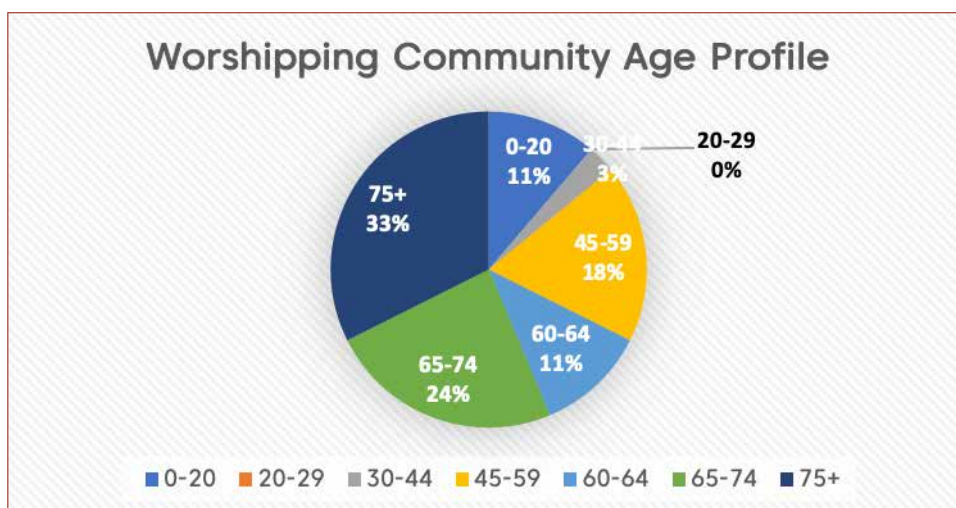
The area is mainly agricultural with arable crops, some sheep farming and chicken production and, of course, given our proximity to Newmarket, stud farms. The majority of people commute to Newmarket, Cambridge, Haverhill or Bury St Edmunds for work.

The age distribution of church attendance and electoral roll membership does not reflect the wider community. As you can see from the charts below; there are a large number of families with young children living in the area.

The excellent primary school in Wickhambrook has 165 pupils. There is a nursery in Stradishall, and many children attend independent schools. The state upper schools for the area are based in Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds.



Based on 2011 Census



Based on 2018 Benefice Questionnaire

The villages are popular places to live with growing populations – Wickhambrook currently has a new estate being built in a central location.

The villages are made up of people with a wide range of incomes. Picturesque communities, however, can disguise the levels of rural poverty that exist in Suffolk. For example, 11.6% of people in Wickhambrook live in fuel poverty, higher than the national average of 10.4% (West Suffolk Ward Report, Wickhambrook Ward 2015).

Whilst most of the villages still have some people who were born and bred there, those moving into the area tend to be young families or active retirees. The need for local social housing is an important local issue.

Highpoint Category C Prison also falls within the Benefice, being in the Parish of Stradishall and is a major local employer. It has its own chaplains. However, there may be opportunities to develop links with them and the prisoners.

History

The Benefice is currently made up of the Parishes of Cowlinge, Denston, Lidgate, Ousden, Stansfield, Stradishall and Wickhambrook with a combined population of about 4,023 (2011 Census). The parishes were brought together to form the current benefice in 1999 by combining two benefices. In 2003 the Bansfield Benefice became a legal unit under Act of Privy Council.

Finances

The churches are currently solvent, though staying so has been a challenge. It has been an additional challenge for the Benefice to raise funds without a rector in place. The Parishes rely on the wider community to help towards the running costs of the churches and we are all extremely fortunate to have support from the wider community in the villages.

Ministry Team

There are currently two Lay Elders: Fiona Evans (Denston) and Dr Paul Bevan (Wickhambrook). Dr Philip Draycott (Wickhambrook), a retired Reader, still takes services occasionally when the need arises. The term 'Lay Elder' may be an unfamiliar one but is one used within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Lay Elders share in the ministries of leading worship and pastoral care in their local congregation and community, under the authority of the Incumbent. They are chosen by the Incumbent and PCC and commissioned in their parish church by the Bishop or his representative. Fiona and Paul support the Rector by taking non-eucharist services such as the family services, matins and evensong.

The Benefice Ministry Team is a key component for the future growth of the Benefice in achieving its goal to balance the need for the Benefice to identify as one Christian community whilst retaining the distinctiveness of the seven individual parishes.

Benefice Committee

In addition to each parish having their own PCC, there is a Benefice Committee that meets regularly to support the incumbent and to reflect on the past three months of services and events, plan for the future, and to discuss matters pertaining to the Benefice's governance and finances. The Committee has taken responsibility for running the Benefice during the current vacancy supported by the Revd Canon Stuart Mitchell, the Rural Dean.

As part of our strategy to reach out to all age groups within the Benefice we have established an active Benefice website (<http://www.bansfieldbenefice.org.uk/>) providing information on services, events and church news. It is proving to be an extremely important and effective communication tool.

We have also embraced social media having a **Twitter** feed, **Facebook** page and **blog site**. An e-newsletter has recently been established, ensuring that all interested parishioners are kept up to date during our current vacancy.

The Benefice Hall

The Bansfield Benefice Hall is available to all the churches of the Benefice, and beyond, to use for events and meetings. It is in the churchyard of All Saints' Church, Wickhambrook. Prior to this building being All Saints' Church Hall, it was used as the village school room until the Primary School was opened in 1878.



Services

Sunday Worship

At the heart of the Benefice worship is the 10am Sunday Eucharist with robed clergy (currently white alb and stole) and music provided by an organist. Members of the congregation read the Bible lessons and lead prayers of intercession with churchwardens or the Ministry Team helping with the chalice. It is currently the only opportunity for community worship and takes place in a different parish each week.

The average attendance is about 30. However, we would emphasise that we hope that our new Rector will want to look afresh at every aspect of our worship. Dress, music and readings should be up for discussion rather than being dictated. We appreciate that there is a need to be part of the 21st century whilst taking proper notice of the history surrounding us.

From a questionnaire in 2018 on church attendance and services, sent to all on each of the seven churches' electoral roll, it has been established that the quality of the sermons is of particular importance to parishioners. During the vacancy we have been blessed with a wonderful team of retired clergy whose thought-provoking sermons have been filled with erudition and some well-placed humour. We hope that strong preaching will be one of the gifts of our new Rector.

Prior to the vacancy, the usual service rotas provided for two services each Sunday at 9.30 am and 11 am, with the largest church at Wickhambrook hosting a family service once a month. However, the questionnaire indicates that the vast majority of people like having the one service. It brings the parishes together and has helped to further develop the sense of the Benefice being more than an organisational structure. The positive response to this change also indicates the appetite of the Benefice for change and being one worshipping community. The refreshments provided after the service also play an important role in stimulating conversation and thereby engendering a sense of community.

The old rota structure for the two services had meant that many people had never visited certain churches in the Benefice or had the opportunity to get to know other Benefice members. Having said this, we do hope that new options can be considered.



The current form of the Sunday service is the Holy Communion Order One. Whilst it provides some options for variety, prior to the vacancy there was a wider range of services. As has already been mentioned there was a family service, and certain churches, such as Denston, also preferred to use the Office of Morning Prayer in The Book of Common Prayer. It is clear from the questionnaire that the respondents would like to see more variety in the worship.

Our ideal priest would be someone who is equally comfortable with the more traditional forms of service as well as being able to introduce new ideas.

Youth and Children's Work

In the past there has been a Jesus and Me Club as well as the aforementioned family service. There are currently no activities for children or young people, but we are optimistic that this is something that could be resurrected, possibly through developing strong links with Wickhambrook Primary School. There is, however, an active weekly Messy Church run by the Methodist Church in Wickhambrook.

Annual Services

In addition to the regular Sunday services, each Parish has a tradition of a harvest festival – some providing a harvest supper, Remembrance Sunday laying of the wreaths at its war memorials, and carol services. These are wonderful opportunities to draw in people from the individual villages and, in particular, children who do not normally attend church. Other services include an annual Christingle service at Wickhambrook with Wickhambrook Primary School in aid of The Children's Society, a Women's World Prayer Service at Cowlinge, the Stations of the Cross at Lidgate, and Stansfield's annual outside service and barbecue. This year Stansfield is holding a pets' service and Stradishall held a choral evensong with the Haverhill Church Choir.

A number of weddings, baptisms and funerals are held at the Benefice churches each



year which provides opportunities to engage and support the village communities.

Benefice Electoral Roll	134
Weddings in 2018	1
Funerals in 2018	9
Baptisms in 2018	7

The Benefice always comes together for the major festivals. The Easter Vigil with a fire was held for a number of years at Wickhambrook followed by a champagne and croissant breakfast in the Benefice Hall. The Easter Vigil proved to be a very moving and popular event.

Music

Music is important to us as a way to enrich the services. We are extremely fortunate that currently we have three organists who play within the Benefice. All of the organs in the churches are in a reasonable condition. Stradishall has an electric organ. St Mary's at Lidgate has recently had a new stop added in memory of a long-serving organist.

We are open to the use of other instruments. Paul Bevan, one of the elders of the church, has been persuaded on occasion to provide guitar accompaniment. And at last December's Lidgate Festival of Lessons and Carols, for example, one of the villagers provided a moving saxophone introduction to *Once in Royal David's City* rather than the traditional vocal solo.

Other opportunities for Christian fellowship

At the moment there are no groups meeting outside the Sunday services. However, in the not too distant past, there were Lent suppers, and a Hot Cross Bun Club for children from all seven parishes and beyond to take part in activities based around the themes of Holy Week.

For the last 20 years, the Benefice has been involved with the Shoe Box Appeal. In 2018 we managed to collect 92 boxes which were sent to Middle East Refugee Camps. We also actively support The Children's Society with £703.30 having been raised in 2018.



Churches Together

The United Reformed Church and Methodist Church in Wickhambrook, the Benefice, and the Roman Catholic Church at nearby Kirtling come together on the fifth Sunday for an afternoon service followed by tea. There is also a monthly coffee morning and Traidcraft store held in the Benefice Hall. The group raises money for Christian Aid and celebrates Christian Unity events. The annual Fish and Chips supper is also one of its highlights.

In addition to the monthly service, the churches come together on Good Friday for a Walk of Witness from The United Reformed Church to the Methodist Church in Wickhambrook. In previous years the group also had Lent lunches.



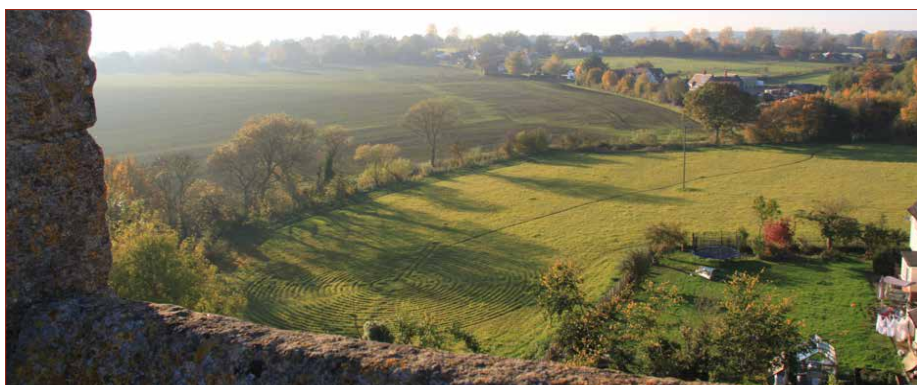
The Rectory

The Rectory is adjacent to All Saints' Church, Wickhambrook. It is a relatively modern detached four-bedroom, double glazed house with:

- ❖ Study 9'4 x 15'7 [3.6m x 2.7m]
- ❖ Kitchen 11'7 x 10'11 [3.5m x 3.3m]
- ❖ Sitting room 17'5 x 15'2 [5.3m x 4.6m]
dual aspect room facing south and west with French doors leading out to the garden
- ❖ Dining room 11'11 x 9'2 [3.6m x 2.7m]
- ❖ Master Bedroom 15'5 x 12'11 [4.7m x 3.9m]
- ❖ Bedroom Two 9'11 x 11' [3m x 3.3m]
- ❖ Bedroom Three 11'3 x 11' [3.4m x 3.3m]
- ❖ Bedroom Four 9'6 x 8'2 [2.9m x 2.5m]
- ❖ Bathroom, separate ground floor WC and large single garage.

It has oil central heating but its use of oil is partially offset by solar panels. The Rectory has a garden of about a quarter of an acre within a Conservation Area of outstanding natural beauty. The back garden is a suntrap with stunning views overlooking glebe land.

The Rectory is on a quiet road which joins up with the A143 which allows easy access to Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds with its cathedral, museum, theatre, cinemas and a good selection of shops.



St Margaret of Antioch, Cowlinge

Population: 548

Contact: Mrs Josie Wreathall 01440 783 286

A church was recorded here in the Domesday Book with 50 acres of land. The land may have gone but a lovely 14th century church with a massive brick tower built in 1733 remains. The tower was donated by Francis Dickins whose impressive marble monument can be found in the chancel. Above the chancel arch is a medieval wall painting of St Michael and the Blessed Virgin giving a vivid indication of how the church would have looked nine hundred years ago. Most of the medieval rood screen (circa 1400) remains. This, and the screen in Lavenham Church are the only surviving examples in Suffolk of screens with original gates and hinges. One of the most fascinating features at Cowlinge is the graffiti which is inscribed into various pillars.



On one of the south-east nave pillars is a rare and unusual depiction in the shape of a Viking style ship. The ship is quite crudely drawn but can be identified as a northern European carrack, of a style that suggests a carving date of the mid 13th century.

Under the east window a grilled opening is thought to ventilate a chancel chamber where bones were placed when graves in the churchyard were re-used in the Middle Ages.

The Church

Cowlinge has long recognised the importance of food as a means to create community. It was the first of the benefice churches to provide refreshments after a service which it continues to do together with a Harvest Supper held each year in the village hall. In previous years it has provided teas in the church during the village's Open Gardens event which ran for 15 years. It has also been involved with the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust Sponsored Bike Ride since it started 40 years ago. For many years it has hosted the Women's World Day of Prayer.



The Community

A small community centred around five greens, life in the village revolves around the church and pub, the aptly named The Three Ways, a small country freehouse dating back to 1643. The pub holds regular crib and pool nights as well as an annual summer beer and music festival. Activities include a book club/coffee morning held in the pub. There is also a small village hall.



St Nicholas, Denston

Population: 104

Contact: Mrs Fiona Evans 01440 820 172

A church or chapel has existed on the site since the 12th century. It was extensively enlarged and rebuilt in the 15th century when it became a collegiate church under the terms of the will of John Denston. Three chantry priests were incorporated with the parish church and ministered to the parishioners. The result of this endowment is one of the finest small parish churches in Suffolk, virtually unaltered since those days. There is much medieval carving of animals such as hares and dogs on the border just below the massive timber frame and on the ends of the church pews.

An outstanding feature is the Seven Sacrament Font. It is one of 36 in East Anglia and only two elsewhere in England.

The ancient stalls for the chantry priests still remain in the chancel. The church is now in an excellent state of repair due to major maintenance and restoration works in the 1980s.



The Church

The Parish is small yet the congregation enthusiastic in the maintenance of the church building and its use for worship. As has been previously mentioned this parish is particularly fond of Morning Prayer from The Book of Common Prayer which was held here regularly prior to the vacancy. The church's two annual fundraising events do more than just raise funds to maintain this magnificent church. They are major social events in this small community. For 15 years it has had a highly successful concert in the church

attracting first rate performers. This year's concert comprises harpist Elizabeth Bass and Australian soprano Vivien Conacher who will be accompanied by Berrak Dyer. Volunteers provide delicious canapés and wine. Its second event – the Marmalade Morning held in the magnificent gardens of Denston Hall - attracts support from a wide area.

The Community

Denston is the smallest village of seven Parishes. In addition to the church there is Denston Village Hall. It is extremely well-equipped and hosts activities including a Community Tea every two months, Quiz Nights and the Parish Meetings. There is also the Gospel Hall which provides bible-based text for the *Parish Pump* newsletter.



St Mary, Lidgate

Population 241

Contact: Mrs Vanessa Watchman 01638 500 025

Magnificently set in a commanding position on a knoll overlooking Lidgate and the surrounding countryside, the church stands within an outer bailey of the 12th century motte and bailey castle. The finely finished octagonal piers in the nave host medieval graffiti for which the church is renowned. It features heavily in 'Medieval Graffiti: The Lost Voices of England's Churches' by Matthew Champion.

A recent find is a Latin inscription which reads 'John Lydgate made this licence on the day of St Simon and Jude' (28 October). A near contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer with royal patronage, Lydgate was a famous poet at the Court of Henry V. He is credited with coining the phrase 'needs must'.

The church's other graffiti include a 'Solomon's knot' to ward off demons and ill-fortune. Given the relatively good condition of the building, that graffiti seems to be working. In addition to its graffiti attracting widespread interest, St Mary's innovative work in having solar panels installed on the tower roof also gained national press coverage.

The Church

Although few families from the village attend the church regularly, the church is a much loved and major part of village social life. The fundraising through the annual Farm Walk, Sponsored Bike Ride, held in conjunction with the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, and the Cheese & Wine Party helps to ensure we can raise the basic running costs, including meeting the parish share. We hold a Harvest Festival and a Festival of Readings and Carols every year which are packed events; in part we feel because they are not heavily religious. The latter is seen by people as the start of their Christmas festivities, and both offer us an opportunity to try to encourage an interest in Christianity. As the only church in the Benefice with the Stations of the Cross, the service on Good Friday using the Stations is a much-loved part of the church calendar.



The Community

Lidgate is an incredibly social and community-minded village. We have already mentioned the social events that form part of the church's fundraising. In addition, there is a very active Village Hall Committee which puts on a monthly coffee morning, Pilates class, quiz night, film night, Village Barbeque, and Folk Concert. This year an extremely successful Burn's Night Supper was held complete with musical and not so musical entertainment.

Lidgate also benefits from The Star, one of the best traditional pub and restaurants in the area with its Thursday Pie Night a regular fixture for locals. Thanks to village fundraising and a Lottery grant it has an excellent playing field with swings, climbing frame and a zipline. The village shares a cricket club with Ousden. The Lidgate Tidy Group has also transformed The Street – the main road running through the village cutting back trees and bushes to reveal the River Lid (really a stream).

The Lidgate Archaeology Group has recently been revived following the successful campaign to extend the Schedule Ancient Monument boundaries around the castle. It held its First Big Archaeology Day on 23 March celebrating the village's history from the establishment of a Roman villa to medieval planned borough which, as it failed, is a unique resource for medievalists and archaeologists.



St Peter, Ousden

Population: 241

Contact: Mrs Nicola Nunn 01638 500 237

Another Domesday recorded church, St Peter's is unique amongst the Benefice having a central tower, making it a tripartite church, one of only a few in Suffolk. The nave was extended in the 19th century, which makes the tower more correctly described as off-centre. With the heavy Norman tower arches separating the nave and the chancel, the interior of the church has a 'compartmental' look. There is an usual Norman window in the tower recess and the blocked south door has a Roman tile tympanum.

The finest memorial in the church is the fascinating wall monument, in honour of Letitia, wife of Richard Moseley, who died in 1619. Richard made Ousden his home in 1614 and Letitia was his first wife. The monument is a fine piece of craftsmanship. Two black marble columns support a broken pediment, upon which two human figures recline and two obelisks stand. This frames an hour-glass, above which is a coat of arms. Beneath the inscription is a rather horrific skeleton in a shroud; its legs are missing and other bones are broken.



The Church

St Peter's has a small congregation from the village but is always attended by other parishioners from the Benefice at the Holy Communion services, with refreshments served after all the services by members of the PCC. Other services throughout the year include Harvest Festival and the Nine Lessons & Carols at Christmas.

In addition to this, we have a strong team of ladies on the flower rota who always ensure the church looks beautiful and clean every week for visitors even when there are no services being held. As the church is on the edge of the village, a more central burial ground and chapel was donated to the village in 1912. St Barnabas chapel is part of the parish and is used for some services. Ousden PCC has had a great deal of help from volunteers in the village with fund-raising for the church and St Barnabas. This has principally consisted of ten years of a Marmalade Morning and Plant Sale, since followed by about seven years of 'Garden Visits' to Ousden House and to other gardens in the village which has enabled the parish share to be paid.



It has recently held a very successful Village Breakfast, attended by 120 villagers, to raise funds for St Barnabas and the burial ground by installing a fence and general landscaping work to remove dead trees, and pollard and cut back the perimeter. St Peter's is in good condition thanks to the work of the Friends of St Peter's who raised £90,000 to restore the tower, the Moseley monument and install pew heaters. Their fundraising efforts included a jazz concert by the lake just beyond the church.

The PCC have recently raised funds to re-roof the north side of the nave, this being achieved through various grants and donations, with work scheduled to start this Summer. Other items which were raised on the last Quinquennial report are also due to be carried out this summer. More fundraising events are planned for the rest of the year including a 'Harvest Ploughman's Lunch' in October.

The Community

Ousden is a small attractive village with a pub, the Fox, and village hall. The village hall, where bowls and cricket are regularly played, is about to launch an appeal for rebuilding. The Hall Committee also takes care of the playground which is very much used by people from other villages as well as by Ousden children. There is a coffee morning once a month in The Fox pub. The *Ousden News* is published every two months and contains useful addresses, reports of births and deaths, reports from the church, the Parish Council and all details of forthcoming events.

All Saints', Stansfield

Population: 221

Contact: Mr Hugh Douglas-Pennant 01284 789 412

Another Domesday Book recorded church, it has a commanding position on a hill with an impressive tower with chequered flint-work at its base. Inside All Saints gives the impression of being somewhat smaller than you would expect because there are no aisles to the nave. It shows the usual signs of the removal of rood loft and screen, though the lower portion of the screen has been restored. Of particular interest is a stained glass window in the chancel in memory of the Rev Edward Phipps (19th century) who is depicted as St Peter!

The Church

Stansfield has a small but faithful congregation, who manage to organise events to keep the church in good repair and pay the Benefice Share.



In particular, All Saints organises a very well attended annual outdoor Benefice service and barbecue event each year. It is held in the small hamlet of Assington Green which forms part of the parish. This unique service, overlooking the fields, is one of the highlights of the Benefice year. The church also has the usual carol service and harvest festival with the Harvest Supper being held in the church. This year Stansfield is planning a pets' service –the first to be held in the Benefice for several years.



The Community

Stansfield is blessed with a wonderfully spacious village hall complete with a modern kitchen and an aspect of which opens out onto the village playing fields. As you would expect with such a great facility the hall hosts a number of activities including a popular bridge club which meets three times a week, film nights, and Tai Chi classes to name but a few. The Cricket Club plays regularly on the adjoining pitch. The kitchen enables a community lunch to be provided monthly, not only for those in the village but also surrounding areas, providing a fabulous three course meal and company. These lunches have just celebrated their 10th anniversary. The village also benefits from a book club and a traditional pub, The Compasses, which has live folk music sessions. The village website provides more information as does the village newsletter.

St Margaret of Antioch, Stradishall

Population: 451

Contact: Mrs Jane Helliwell (PCC Secretary) 01440 820 095

This small church is set in a leafy churchyard and is easily passed by unseen. Recorded in the Domesday Book, it is believed a Saxon church predates the existing medieval building. Various fragments of wall paintings survive; the one to the right of the north door is of St Christopher, and there are remains of a text between the north clerestory windows and also tracery work in the chancel. The modern west window is a tribute to the former RAF Stradishall which was operational between 1938-70 with Station and RAF insignia.

The Church

St Margaret's is one of only two churches with a team of bell ringers. The bells are rung regularly with a Friday practice night shared with Cowlinge. Historically Stradishall has been the least supported of the seven parishes and the average number attending a

service prior to the vacancy was 12, with over half coming from outside the village. It has recently held a choral evensong which attracted 50 people.

Over the last 10 years, the PCC has organised Flower Festivals, fetes, concerts, and guest speakers. A very successful local history display was held in 2011 and, to mark the end of World War I, a week-long commemoration event was put on in the church including 10 sitting silhouettes donated by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund. Sadly, not enough money has yet been raised to initiate the major restoration work that the church requires. However, plans are being explored under the auspices of the parish council on how the building might be used more and developed as a community resource for the village as there is no village hall.



The Community

Stradishall is a village of two distinct areas and also includes part of the hamlet of Farley Green. The oldest part of the village is near the church. Two miles away is the part which straddles the A143 and grew up around the former RAF Stradishall Airfield. This is now the site of Highpoint Prison with the old RAF housing having been sold off. There is some growth in the old part with a small estate of five executive homes being built near the church. Most local children attend Wickhambrook Primary School or travel to school in Haverhill. There is a popular and successful nursery school, Happy Days, in the village. There is a community page on [Facebook](#). Following the successful purchase of the playing field in 2018, Stradishall Parish Council has been working with the Village Review Group to bring about their vision for the playing field as a focus for community events and activities. The first event, a family barbecue, was held in September 2018 and was well attended. The races and rounders match reputedly were great fun and everyone enjoyed the day.

All Saints', Wickhambrook

Population: 2,192

Contact: Dr Paul Bevan 01440 821 313

Having possibly been built on a pagan site, and definitely having Saxon parts, All Saints' Church can claim to be the oldest religious site of the seven parishes. Over the centuries the church has been dramatically altered and rebuilt with its most notable features now including a Jacobean hammer-beam roof, one of only two in Suffolk, a 14th century porch with a huge stoup and a 13th century door.

It has the tablets of some prominent Nonconformists in the church – the most striking of which is the memorial to Sir Thomas Higham, a famous soldier in Elizabethan times, in the chancel.

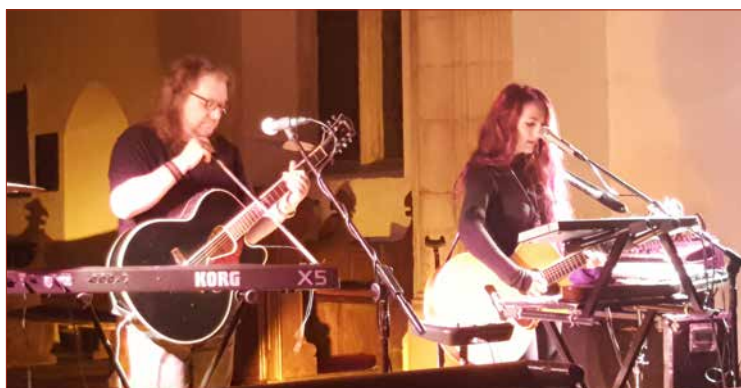
The Church

The largest of the Benefice churches, prior to the vacancy the monthly Benefice or children's services were held here. One of the highlights of the church year is The Christingle Service in aid of the Children's Society. An additional Christingle Service has also been held in recent years by the local primary school. All Saints' benefits from being close to the Benefice Hall and also having an easily accessible carpark. The after-service refreshments are held in the Hall. The Benefice Hall facilities (toilet and kitchenette) also make the church easy to use as a concert venue. In 2017 Kings Taverners held a concert here. The church is in good condition having had £350,000 spent on restoration work. In addition to large grants from English Heritage, a very active appeals committee raised substantial funds through local events.



The Community

Wickhambrook is the largest village by area in Suffolk with a population of 2,192 in 2011. It is comprised of eleven village greens and a number of hamlets. It has three places of worship: All Saints' Church, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. It also has a range of other facilities including a Post Office/shop and petrol station, excellent doctors' surgery, primary school, recreational ground (including tennis, bowls and football facilities, playground and skateboard park), fire station, Memorial Hall, Women's Institute (WI) Hall, The Greyhound pub and Twenty-One Restaurant.



It has two bi-monthly publications, the *What's On* and *Wickhambrook Scene*, a resource-rich website www.wickhambrook.org and shares a [Facebook](#) page with Lidgate (to publicise the numerous groups, societies and events in the village). These include a very active Local History Society, Horticultural Society, Badminton Group, Tennis and Bowls Club as well as a well-supported WI. There is a farmers' market once a month in the Memorial Hall as well as regular exercise classes. There is also an annual Carnival and Flower Show and Bonfire Party.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

Bansfield Benefice

Parish Profile 2019

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