

PARISH PROFILE



ST MARY THE VIRGIN

BURPHAM, WEST SUSSEX

OUR CHURCH IS NO SILENT PARTNER IN VILLAGE LIFE
- IT IS RIGHT AT IT'S HEART

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INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

Following the retirement of the Reverend Celia Woodruff, the parish of Burpham and Warningcamp is praying for a new House for Duty priest for St Mary the Virgin who will lead the community in worship and is committed to uniting the church and village communities.

St Mary the Virgin Church in Burpham, West Sussex is a grade 1 listed building dating from the 12th century with later additions in the 13th, 15th and late 19th centuries.

Our religious practice is mainstream C of E. A weekly 10.30am Service of Holy Communion is based on Common Worship. Other services take place for significant festivals of the Christian year.

Music is a growing part of the life of St Mary's led by a talented young organist, Laura Murray. A small church choir leads the sung responses and sings an anthem each week.

Together with its immediate neighbour, Wepham, the rural parish comprises some 100 houses with a combined population of c 250. Several regular members of the congregation come from outside the parish.

Burpham vicarage has 3 reception rooms, 4 bedrooms, all a good size but somewhat dated. There is a generous garden with a beautiful outlook to the downs.

The community represents a mix of those whose families have lived in the area for generations and those who are new to the area, and accordingly St Mary's feels both rooted in the history of the village and local area.

Several residents work on the Norfolk Estate, the large agricultural estate which surrounds us, which further deepens the connection to the land.



OUR CHURCH

SERVICES

- The regular weekly congregation of c25 increases substantially to c 60 + for all the major festivals. 65 people are on the electoral roll, several of whom live in adjacent parishes but choose to worship in Burpham.
- We use the liturgy of Common Worship in our services. We aim as far as possible and within our resources to support diocesan initiatives on Faith and the spirit of its 4 strategic goals.
- Other services take place throughout the year for significant festivals of the Christian year, eg a popular and very interactive Crib service for young children on Christmas Eve afternoon.
- A series of Lent talks take place annually.
- An annual service is dedicated to the local Air Cadets
- Dogs are always welcome and receive an annual blessing
- 2023 has been a bumper year for weddings in St Mary's with 7 taking place between May and November, all couples have some connection to the church or the village.
- Members of the local community come together to ring bells for the weddings, and many enjoy watching the bridal procession.



MUSIC

- 'Live' music is an increasingly pivotal part in the life of the church and is greatly appreciated by the members of the congregation.
- The seeds of the Church Choir were sown during the pandemic with hymns videoed by a group of enthusiastic singers which were edited together to be part of the popular weekly Zoom 'sofa service'.
- A recent bequest from a family long resident in the village wishes to support the further development of music of all types of genres in the church.
- These include an annual concert by the village community choir, the George Singers, and opens up the possibility for concerts by young professionals, jazz evenings, school holiday workshops, solo recitals.
- St Mary's has a wonderful acoustic for music. The single manual Bryceson organ and Sames grand piano are kept in good repair with regular tuning.

OUR CHURCH

THE BUILDING

A lovely place – full of love

St Mary the Virgin Church is a grade 1 listed building dating from the 12th century with later additions in the 13th, 15th and late 19th centuries. There is also evidence of an earlier church on the site dating from the late Saxon period.

Quite apart from its historical aspects (vaulted chancel, carved South Transept arch, pre-reformation bench ends, notable stained glass windows) it's a very special building in the way people interact with it:-

- intimate and friendly, yet varied and exciting in its different viewpoints and aspects, yet with a clear focus on pulpit and high altar
- with an aisle just right for overflow, separate yet joined to the main space
- with a wonderful 19C south transept full of light, but without glare, providing a gathering place which doesn't interfere with sight lines during services
- with a secretive, enclosed north transept encouraging contemplation

The fabric is in sound condition as confirmed by the recent quinquennial report. However as with any old, listed building the fabric always needs constant review so the Church maintains a reasonable level of funds invested to support building repairs. The Friends of Burpham Church (FBC) provided 50% funding for church repairs over the last decade.

And not forgetting the church clock, heard around the village, striking each quarter hour and a very well maintained graveyard.

'Amazing to find the Church open'

'Thank you for keeping your beautiful Church open'

From a 9 year old girl 'Thank you for letting me see God in your lovely church'

'I loved the pebble prayers, a comfort as I grieve for my Dad and Mum, both with advanced dementia.'



FINANCES

- In summary our normal expenditure is c£42,000+ and our total invested assets restricted and unrestricted are c.£160,000.
- Regular giving is encouraged, and Gift Aid claimed where donors are eligible.
- The Church makes annual grants to charity to locally based charitable organisations such as Chestnut Tree Children's Hospice and to national charities and appeals eg Ukrainian Appeal in 2022.
- Our annual accounts are available upon request from the church wardens.

OUR PARISH

THE COMMUNITY

There are a significant number of people who have come to live in the parish in recent years, some to work and some to retire, and some as 'second homers', all of which lays a promising foundation for further increasing a committed congregation.

Since the pandemic the propensity for 'working from home' has meant the working pattern of several residents has changed. With a daily or weekly commute no longer necessary the village feels less divided between full time and part time residents.

Most members of the local community know each other – and the Vicar – by name and are aware and invested in the life and the future of the Church.

Many members of the community socialise as close friends – but the community is genuinely welcoming to outsiders and to new ideas. This is reflected in the speed at which new residents become deeply embedded in village life.

A popular monthly coffee morning takes place in St Mary's after morning service, open to all residents, with the added attraction of a produce sale.



VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The Vicar does not work in isolation – there is an active and engaged PCC and wider village committee to support them in their Ministry.

We currently have 2 Churchwardens and a PCC of 4 others supported by a Treasurer and Secretary, who are not members of the PCC. The PCC meets five times per year.

Support for Church activities is willingly forthcoming from residents who care passionately about St Mary's. The bank of volunteers available to the vicar for the administration of the Church includes the organisation of:-

- Reading rotas for all services
- Flower arranging
- Cleaning
- Weekly laundering of the altar linens
- Daily locking and unlocking of the church

The local air cadets are much valued friends of the Burpham Church community and are always welcomed when they attend services at the Church and help in the management of many village events.

OUR VILLAGE

Burpham is in the South Downs National Park at the end of a road which winds its way up the eastern side of the River Arun Valley from the main A27 east/west road. One unusual feature is the large Saxon burgh on which part of the village still stands. It is thought that Burpham was one of the many fortified villages built during the reign of Alfred the Great to help repel Vikings who visited Sussex for booty and bloodlust!

The George, an award-winning pub, is opposite the Church. Serving the village for nearly 300 years it is now owned by the village, and is a very popular destination for walkers, visitors, and residents.



The adjacent Village Hall and recreation ground, with its wonderful view over the Arun Valley to Arundel Castle and Cathedral, is a popular venue for wedding receptions, parties and special events providing a valuable source of income for the community.



The recently refurbished children's playground is regularly used by families from the wider area.



The compact nature of the village provides a flexible and efficient set of venues for numerous village activities.

These include:

- Stool ball club and cricket club playing regular matches against local teams.
- Village Fete arranged jointly between the village and the church, to support both as partners.
- Jumble Sales in aid of the above clubs and local charities
- The George Writers group meet monthly to explore their creativity with a local writer.
- Led by our enthusiastic organist The George Singers choir meet weekly to sing a range of music from sea shanties to songs from the shows. They perform two concerts a year with other local community choirs as well as linking with the Church Choir for special music at Christmas and Easter.
- A newly formed bell ringing group who came together on Coronation Day to 'Ring for the King' and are in high demand for weddings and other celebrations.



OUR FUTURE



We believe that there is a role waiting for someone able to further embed the Church and all it can offer people within the wider community of Burpham.

In some senses this is “pushing at an open door”. The Church and the Vicar are already a pivotal point of village life, and there is a genuine opportunity to grow and strengthen the bond between the church and village community. This is evidenced in full churches at Easter, Christmas and the Coronation and the emotional (and in many instances) spiritual connection to the Church and the Vicar from those who would not immediately identify as regularly practising Christians.

We are aware of the challenges facing our Diocese, our parish, our church and our village – challenges that reflect issues facing the wider UK population. We have concern about how best to encourage a multi-generational congregation. We are determined to guard against the fragmentation of the village with too many part time residents.

Most importantly we fear a long interregnum without a resident priest at our heart.



OUR NEW VICAR

We are seeking an individual who is as committed as we are to uniting the Church and village communities, and to take a leadership role. Someone who will engage with all, including those who don't come to Church or have a strong faith in the traditional sense. Pastoral qualities are important to the whole community.

We all appreciate living in this beautiful part of the world but as one former resident said, 'you can't just live on looking at a lovely view'. So even more important is the real community here – and in a world where loneliness is such a huge problem, we want someone who understands how precious that is and continues to bring people together in a genuinely supportive network. Today where the attitudes of different generations are increasingly at odds, we need someone to help us find and realise our common values and shared interests.

We are looking for a priest to maintain our weekly Sunday communion service, someone with a warm outgoing personality, caring for all within the community. The value and importance of music in the traditions of Church of England cannot be underestimated and we look to our new incumbent to support music of all genres within our worship and secular events.

We are looking forward to working with an inspiring individual who will relish the challenge of developing a small rural parish relevant to the turbulence of the 21st Century as we move into St Mary's 923rd year.



Quote from a long-time Burpham resident

'It has been wonderful to have all my three children married in St Mary's walking from the house in which they grew up to the Church and thence to the village hall for the reception (via the pub!).'