

The Harling and Guiltcross Benefice



Introduction

The 'Harling and Guiltcross Benefice' is a group of rural parishes located in South Norfolk within the Thetford and Rockland Deanery of the Diocese of Norwich.



+ian presiding at Carols around the Crib in St Andrew's, Brettenham, Dec 2024

Within the benefice are ten churches, each with its own distinct character and history, together serving the mission and ministry in this area.

The benefice we share is relatively new (currently pending pastoral reorganisation). We are all committed to making 'more of our togetherness and less of our separateness' and becoming more cohesive as a group of parishes, whilst celebrating what makes each of us unique.

All our churches and the people in them are very special. We come together for worship, learning, fun, fellowship and support. We have a growing ministry team of self-supporting ministers, lay ministers (in training) and retired clergy who help support the life of the benefice. We can offer our new Rector-designate a warm welcome, supportive PCCs committed to growing the church, a pledge to fund administrative support if requested and all ministry expenses met in full, from a benefice account. The Rectory is ideally placed in the middle of the benefice in the largest village, East Harling, and is very well connected.

If you feel called to live out your ministry in this wonderful part of Norfolk – please do not hesitate to get in touch!

Statement of needs

We are praying for a Priest who will:

- Support us to grow in faith, discipleship and vocation, equipping us to serve each other and the local community.
- Continue to embrace, with joy, the diversity of liturgical and worship styles enjoyed throughout the benefice.
- Be committed to positively lead us forward in unity, encouraging us to work collaboratively through every aspect of church life from pastoral care to governance.
- Reach out to those of faith and no faith in our community to share the love of God to all and enabling our church family to grow younger and more diverse.
- Appreciate and enjoy rural life, being able to travel throughout the benefice where required.



Local context and connections

The benefice includes quiet countryside and villages of different sizes and amenities, each with a sense of community. Working together with our prior Priest-in-Charge we have started to come together as one benefice and draw local connections with the community.

The benefice sits on the A11 corridor, which allows for easy access to Norwich (35 mins), Cambridge (55 mins) and London (2 hrs). A mainline train service runs through the benefice which can be used from the Harling Road station or surrounding towns to connect to Cambridge or Norwich with onward mainline connections North and South.

At the centre of the benefice is the large village of East Harling, which has a range of local shops, including a Co-op, hardware store, butchers, bakers, two takeaways, two pubs, GP's, chemist and various other local businesses and industrial areas which are employers of many local people.

Norfolk is a wonderful county to live, with excellent facilities. There are beautiful coastlines to explore, areas of outstanding national beauty to be found and the benefice is positioned in the unique landscape of The Brecks, which is home to a range of rare and endangered wildlife. Alongside local schooling, throughout the county there are a plethora of excellent sixth form colleges and further education opportunities along with higher education through the University of East Anglia, Norwich University of the Arts or Cambridge University.



Life of the Benefice

Services

The benefice offers a diverse range of worship styles including BCP services of Holy Communion and Matins, Common Worship Holy Communion services, more informal Morning Prayer, regular all age family services, a monthly evening 'Soul Café' with worship and fellowship, Healing and Wholeness services and Ecumenical services with our local Methodist brothers and sisters.

We also enjoy keeping many festival services throughout the benefice including All Souls, Holy Week, Dedication Festivals, Candlemas, Pentecost, Harvest-tide, Remembrance Services and we are open to creative ways of engaging in the liturgical year.

Schools

The benefice is blessed to have two primary schools; East Harling is a community school serving a wide range of villages in the north of the benefice and Garboldisham is a CofE school based in the south of the benefice. We regularly welcome our schools into church, including for collective worship in Garboldisham and festive services in East Harling. A weekly lunch club has been run in Garboldisham for the last two years, which has over 20 children attend weekly for craft and conversation, this has continued to be led by a group of lay volunteers. We hope to further develop the relationship between church and school over the coming years. The St Benet's Chaplaincy project has given good grounding for working together to realise school chaplaincy in Garboldisham and we welcome Integrate Youth for Christ, and others, regularly in support of this.



Community

We have strong community connections and have shared services with local organisations. Civic services are often held including at Remembrance and Christmas.

We have brilliant working relationships with the local funeral directors, who are very supportive of the ministry of the Church. Various community initiatives have been set up by the parishes, including a monthly craft group, regular social lunches in many of the parishes, engagement with local project throughout the benefice and simply being the only community building in many parishes means we are blessed with ample opportunity to share in the life of our community.



Agriculture

Much of our benefice is agricultural with many of our PCC members and Churchwardens being involved in agriculture in some way. This has meant we have been able to develop a range of services aimed at rural communities which have been well received by all in the last few years.

Highlights have included farm tours for Rogationtide, blessing of ploughs for Plough Sunday and a full range of harvest festivals throughout the benefice. We would be pleased to welcome a new Rector who would continue to engage in rural communities in new ways!

Village magazines

Each household throughout the benefice is delivered a monthly magazine, organised through various village and church committees. These magazines give the ministry team and Rector a monthly opportunity to share a message of hope and faith to a wide group of people and are loved by many.



Mission & outreach

We have run annual Lent courses for the last few years which have been extremely well received. There is certainly an appetite throughout the benefice to engage in more theological thinking, and we would welcome more courses and bible studies to engage with in the future.

Some of the parishes within the group have run outreach courses such as the Alpha Course whilst others have offered events for the community such as family fun days and coffee mornings. Regular outreach takes place in the single care-home in the benefice, The Beeches in East Harling, with a monthly service led by members of the ministry team alongside a minister from East Harling Methodist Church.

We would like to start planning how we can be more engaged in mission in the years to come and would like someone to guide us on this journey!

Ministry Team

Our ministry team is made up of two non-stipendiary priests living in East Harling and one LLM in training living in East Harling and one in Wretham.

We are also ably assisted by numerous retired members of clergy from the local area who help cover services and occasional offices.

We hope that our new Rector will be able to bring us together as a team and enable each of our ministers' callings to flourish.

The Revd Lynn Fry (Associate Priest (SSM))

My spirituality is Franciscan, and I am committed to our journey as an Eco Church. I accompany people in spiritual direction and enjoy helping people grow in their faith journey. I look forward to seeing what new things God has in store for us.

The Revd Caryll Brown (Clergy with PTO)

I served as a Youth and Children's lay minister alongside my husband, in East Harling and surrounding villages for 40 years before being called to Ordained Ministry. I began my training in 2010 and was ordained in 2013 as an Ordained Local Minister. It has been a real privilege to be a part of the ministry team and a real joy to be able to walk alongside folk as they journey through the ups and downs of life. Although I am now retired, I do have PTO and am thankful to still play an active part of a great ministry team!

Jo Hayward (LLM in Training)

I am in my second year of training (hoping to be licensed in September 2026). I have been involved in leading services and preaching and feel a valued part of the Ministry Team. I feel there is a role for lay ministry here particularly for mission and outreach, but I will wait to see where God leads me as I complete my training.

Jon Ford (LLM in Training)

I started my training in September 2025 following encouragement from our previous incumbent and have a special interest in silent meditation in the Christian tradition. I have had a long-standing daily practice in this. As an LLM I feel that I will be able to share this practice through a benefice meditation group and setting up a local Julian meeting group.

Eco Church

Some of our parishes have started their Eco-Church journey with Revd Lynn Fry committed to helping them on their way. We try and embrace ecological principles where possible, using environmentally sound energy, cleaning products, fair-trade teas and coffees and managing many parts of our churchyards as wildflower meadows to encourage biodiversity.

East Harling has been featured by Norfolk Wildlife Trust as raising awareness for land management plans in churchyards and has achieved eco-church bronze, nearly attaining silver at the time of writing.



Safeguarding

We are incredibly proud as a benefice to have appointed Parish Safeguarding Offices in all our churches and up to date safeguarding training and DBS checks for all church officers and serving volunteers in contact with vulnerable adults and children throughout the benefice. We have worked hard to encourage a culture of safeguarding not only being something we must complete but something to be integral to the life of our churches.

The challenges we face

We are an ageing congregation who are aware of our need to grow younger and more diverse to ensure the Church can continue for generations to come. The governance of the benefice has not been developed beyond each parish having a PCC, and we would like someone who could guide us on this journey as we seek to work much closer together.

Being custodians of ten listed church buildings is not without its challenges, but we have committed groups of people throughout the benefice who look after our fabric well. We are working towards a lottery funded roof project in East Harling, which has a committed steering group applying for funding bids and running the project at present.

What we can offer you

The benefice is committed to meeting the expenses of the ministry team in full and operates a combined bank account for this purpose. We have explored the possibility of paid administrative support, the PCCs are supportive of funding this under the guidance of a new Rector Designate.

The benefice is proud to pay a full parish share and hopes to continue doing this into the future.

We have good working PCCs for all our parishes with Churchwardens in post for the majority, and safeguarding officers appointed in each parish. Throughout the benefice safeguarding is taken seriously with all Church Officers being up to date on training and DBS checks.

We are fully committed to the wellbeing of our clergy and hope to work together with our new Rector to encourage retreat, training, holiday and rest for all members of the ministry team.



The Rectory

The Rectory (Church Road, East Harling, NR16 2NB) is a well-proportioned property in the geographical centre of the benefice. It has ample parking on the driveway, as well as on road parking available in front of the house.

The Rectory has a large study with built in storage cupboards and hanging rails. Next to the study is a downstairs WC. This area of the house is separated by an internal door from the hallway, kitchen/diner and living room to offer privacy to the living areas. The kitchen is reasonably modern and has patio doors backing out onto a manageable garden. There is a single garage with a car port. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, a family bathroom and an ensuite in the largest bedroom. There are built in wardrobes and storage cupboards throughout the house.

The Rectory is serviced by gas for heating and cooking and has fibre to premises for superfast broadband. The Diocese are responsible for managing the larger trees in the garden and pay for the council tax and water rates associated to the Rectory alongside providing a full-service Property Department. The property is only a five-minute drive from the A11.



Brettenham



St Andrews Church, Brettenham, Thetford, IP24 2RP

Grade I Listed

Parish Population: 47

Electoral Roll: 2

PCC Membership: 2

2024 Weddings: 1, Funerals: 1, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

Peter Wright, Churchwarden

Mary Wright, PCC Secretary

About us

Brettenham is a small rural hamlet approximately 5 miles from East Harling. The Church is a 14th century building which was damaged by fire in 1693 and has been remodelled over the years. The famous architect SS Teulon was responsible for many of the features which can be admired today. The glazing was designed by A L Moore of London about 1890 together with two brighter windows by SS Teulon believed to be about 1903.

Church fabric

The Organ is on the North side of the Church and is generally in a good state of repair. The Tower was restored in the 1990's and houses a set of 5 bells which are understood to be one of the earliest sets cast by Taylors of Loughborough. Sadly these cannot be rung at present due to work needing to be carried out to the bell-frame. The Churchyard is very well kept by Shadwell Estate Company who own the surrounding estate.

Our favourite services

Harvest Festival is a popular service being a rural parish. In past years it has been attended by local folk as well as being supported by parishioners from the benefice. After fellowship, refreshments are available, this encourages friendships to be made. We held the Easter Vigil service this year, which was incredibly special as well as the 2024 'Carols around the Crib' service with the Bishop of Thetford in attendance. Every effort is made

to try to encourage visitors of faith and no faith to come along and share with us the holiness, fellowship, and friendship in the little rural Church. Hymns and praises echo across the local meadows for these services and the organ is usually played by one of the benefice musicians.

Best thing about the parish

The support which is shown by others involved across the benefice is amazing and confirms the need for a variety of ways of worshiping as a said Communion service is held each month. There is no community hall in the area, so the Church is used as the Polling Station when necessary. Innovative ideas for various events would always be considered and welcomed.

Biggest challenge we face

Keeping the numbers of worshippers attending the services in order that we can remain open for monthly worship. We are custodians of the magnificent building and must remember that we represent those who were involved before us and hopefully we will be able to pass on a building of worship for those yet to come whose vision is to know, love and follow Jesus. Growing the benefice by worshiping together and spreading the fellowship as well as trying to make the Church welcoming to all ages of any faith or no faith is an especially important challenge for us at this present time.

Bridgham w/ Roudham



St Mary the Virgin Church, Bridgham, NR16 2RY

Grade II Listed

Parish Population: 582

Electoral Roll: 17

PCC Membership: 7

2024 Weddings: 0, Funerals: 4, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

Sheena Robson, Churchwarden

Marion Sharpe, Churchwarden

About us

Bridgham is a small village with a population of about 300. It is situated approximately two miles from East Harling along the River Thet. There are two services a month. The first Sunday is Communion the third is Service of the Word. Our congregation is between 10 and 20. A successful coffee morning is held on the fourth Saturday in the month. It takes place in the church from April to September and from October to March in the village hall.

Church fabric

The fabric of the church is in good condition, we have access to a toilet, and the church has recently been re-decorated making it a lovely place for both worship and social occasions. The fabric is managed by the PCC. We have an unusually good example of a 15th century font of which we are very proud! Thanks to a recent volunteer, the church is in exceptional order of decoration having had the chancel, nave and porch recently re-painted. We have a church toilet in the grounds and would like to explore the possibility of bringing water into the main Church building to further enhance the events we can hold.

Our favourite services

Some of our favourite services throughout the church year include Mothering Sunday, when

posies are made available for the congregation and the wider community. On Good Friday Stations of the Cross is held in the church and the Old Rectory garden next door. We have an annual Harvest Festival, followed by lunch at which we collect produce to support the local food bank. We hold two Remembrance services, one on Remembrance Sunday with invited Americans and another outside the church on Armistice Day. At Christmas we hold a Christingle and celebrate a 'First Mass of Christmas' on Christmas Eve which is well attended.

Best thing about the parish

The community spirit and volunteers in Bridgham keep everything alive! We have monthly coffee mornings, Wednesday socials and a summer fete, all of which is organised and supported by a very willing and able team of volunteers. The church and its community find themselves regularly at the centre of Bridgham's community spirit and we look forward to welcoming back the Bridgham Christmas Concert this year!

Biggest challenge we face

Like many rural parishes, we are an ageing congregation who struggle to attract people on a Sunday. We would welcome new and creative ways of gathering that would encourage younger people and families to join in the worshipping life of the church.

Blo'Norton



St Andrews Church, Blo'Norton, IP22 2JE

Grade II Listed

Parish Population: 272

Electoral Roll: 11

PCC Membership: 6

2024 Weddings: 0, Funerals: 3, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

Petal Haskins, Parish Rep

About us

Nestled along the banks of the Little Ouse River, Blo' Norton is a charming rural village on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. With around 105 properties and a population of 269 (according to the 2021 census), it offers a peaceful and close-knit community atmosphere. While the village lacks a shop or school, it thrives on its strong sense of community. The village hall and church form the heart of local life, regularly hosting events that bring residents together, many of which are collaborative efforts between the church and the hall. Adding to this is a well-loved plant nursery and coffee shop, which draws visitors from near and far. The village also benefits from the Fuel Allotment Charity, which offers support to parishioners in need. Managed by six Trustees and chaired by the Incumbent.

Church fabric

St Andrew's Church is a 13th-century Grade II* listed building, constructed from traditional flint and freestone. Its architectural features include a chancel, nave, north porch, and a tower housing six bells. The church and its grounds are maintained, although, as with any historic building, ongoing care and restoration are always needed to preserve its fabric. Currently, the PCC is working on plans to restore two chancel windows by re-leading them and replacing the rusted iron bars. In addition, a grant application will be prepared to fund essential repairs to the gutters along the south wall—part of the church's continued commitment to safeguarding its heritage for future generations.

Our favourite services

Currently, a monthly said Holy Communion service following the Book of Common Prayer is held on the second Sunday of each month. Services for major festivals and significant occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest, and Remembrance are more widely attended and bring together a broader cross-section of the community.

Best thing about the parish

St Andrew's Church plays a vital role in encouraging community spirit through its well-attended monthly Coffee and Chat mornings. These mornings offer a welcoming space for residents of Blo' Norton and neighbouring villages to come together, particularly benefiting older members of the community. A festive extended version is held at Christmas, featuring a raffle, tombola, and various stalls which bring added cheer and fundraising opportunities. Over the years, the PCC and village hall committee have collaborated on a variety of successful events, including a recent tractor display organised with a local parishioner, which raised funds for both community resources.

Biggest challenge we face

The PCC is aware of the importance of growing the church congregation and increasing attendance. As part of this ongoing commitment, the council looks forward to working closely with the new incumbent, offering full support and seeking guidance to help strengthen the church's presence and relevance within the community.

East w/ West Harling



St Peters and St Pauls Church, Church Road, East Harling NR16 2NB

Grade I Listed and Heritage at Risk Status

Parish Population: 2,602

Electoral Roll: 79

PCC Membership: 12

2024 Weddings: 4, Funerals: 8, Baptisms: 4

Contacts

Dorothy Jubb, Churchwarden

Karen Denty, Churchwarden

About us

East Harling is a large village set in the beautiful Breckland area of South Norfolk. The village has a range of amenities, including a nursery and primary school, with a choice of secondary schools in neighbouring locations. From across the area, its elegant and stunning spire is recognisable for miles. The magnificent interior of this mainly 14th century church boasts a 15th century highly decorative screen, a range of significant tombs and memorials from 14th -17th century and much intricate carving. The East window is a triumph of 15th century glass from the Norwich School. In normal times, open throughout the year, the church attracts a wide range of visitors.

Church fabric

This beautiful and much-loved building comes with a cost, however. At present there are issues with the roof which has a considerable number of significant leaks. In some areas lead has perished, water egress has damaged roof timbers of the north and south side. Items of value have been removed for safekeeping. Preliminary work has been done regarding planning and grant applications.

Our favourite services

Our Christmas carol concert surrounded by over 100 lit Christmas trees in 2024 was an inspiring time for all who came! We have also

been blessed in recent years to have a full Easter and Holy Week within the benefice, enjoying hosting the Easter Vigil in 2023 and an annual Ecumenical Good Friday service. We are blessed on a regular basis to be joined by a choir for our services and have a very good standard organ and resident organist who provide musical support for our worship.

Best thing about the parish

The long-standing community spirit of the whole parish leading to working together to put on events for the enjoyment of people of all faiths and none. St Peters and St Pauls plays a key part in this supporting many events with our Church Pimm's Tent and hosting events such as a local book launch, historical evenings, monthly coffee mornings, an annual afternoon tea and film screenings for the community to enjoy.

Biggest challenge we face

Without doubt the biggest challenge we will face in the next 5 years is the reordering of the Church roof. This is well in progress with a working committee already completing grant applications and faculties. We also face challenges around our community and congregation growing younger and more diverse and recognise the need to draw in people from all areas of the parish at different life stages to flourish as a worshipping community.

Garboldisham



St John the Baptist Church, Church Road, Garboldisham, IP22 2SE

Grade I Listed

Parish Population: 737

Electoral Roll: 35

PCC Membership: 9

2024 Weddings: 1, Funerals: 4, Baptisms: 1

Contacts

Adrian Colman, Churchwarden

Bobbie Knowles, Churchwarden

About us

Garboldisham is a rural village situated in the south of the benefice midway between the market towns of Thetford and Diss. The village boasts a CofE primary school, which is part of St Benet's Multi Academy Trust, a well-stocked village shop and post office, a village pub which is owned and run by volunteers from the community along with a well-used and spacious modern village hall, which is run by a local charitable trust. Relations between the church and community are strong. We host a well-attended monthly coffee morning taking place, half-termly school services, an annual fete, games afternoons, a community choir, monthly Café Church and charity lunches at Lent and Harvest. A priority has been to foster a welcoming place of refuge; this has included providing a community pantry for anyone to use.

Church fabric

The church is largely medieval, the nave, north and south aisles and shell of the chancel being of 13th-14th Century construction and the tower 15th Century. Generally, the fabric is in exceptional order. The base of the tower has been equipped with an accessible toilet with baby change facilities, and the west end of the south aisle has been modernised by the addition of kitchen facilities. There is a Rectory in the village that has housed a Curate and a House for Duty priest in the past. We livestream regular services and can stream occasional offices at request. This is really valued by those who can't make it to church. We also have an

excellent PA system with hearing loop.

Our favourite services

On the third Sunday of the month, we enjoy an informal service titled "St John's @ 11". It is an opportunity for different styles of worship to be experienced including services of healing and wholeness, Celtic worship and a quarterly ecumenical service welcoming a local Methodist preacher. Annually we celebrate Women's World Day of Prayer, this is always a poignant and impactful service reminding us of the needs of the wider world. We also enjoy a Christmas Eve 'living' crib service which is well attended and enjoyed by all!

Best thing about the parish

The long-standing community spirit of the whole parish leading to working together to put on events for the enjoyment of people of all faiths and none. St Peters and St Pauls plays a key part in this supporting many events with our Church Pimm's Tent and hosting events such as a local book launch, historical evenings, monthly coffee mornings, an annual afternoon tea and film screenings for the community to enjoy.

Biggest challenge we face

Our biggest challenge is to grow younger and more diverse in our congregation. In the past we have run the Alpha course but would be open to new, creative, ideas on how we can grow and flourish as a church family for years to come.

Larling



St Ethelbert's Church, Larling, NR16 2QZ

Grade I Listed

Parish Population: 104

Electoral Roll: 9

PCC Membership: 8

2024 Weddings: 1, Funerals: 1, Baptisms: 1

Contacts

Dudley Stammers, Churchwarden

Brad Webb, Churchwarden

About us

St Ethelbert's, Larling, is a remarkable 12th-century, Grade 1 listed church, celebrated for its striking architecture and unique sense of place. Clive Dunn, in *Landscape of Towers*, describes it as "the very definition of isolation, set deep in fields". Despite its rural seclusion, it offers a large open green car park and a beautifully maintained churchyard that warmly welcomes visitors. Though the village population is small and scattered, the dedicated and passionate PCC work tirelessly to safeguard the church's heritage while ensuring it remains a place of worship and community. Fundraising events such as flower festivals and traditional garden fêtes not only raise vital funds for projects including the restoration of the historic organ and the installation of a wood-burning stove but also embody the spirit of traditional village life. Except for the local pub, the church remains the only public building in Larling, making it the beating heart of the community.

Church Fabric

The Church Building is in excellent order. In 2024, St Ethelbert's received national recognition, winning the Care & Conservation category at the prestigious National Church Awards for its exceptional dedication to preserving and protecting this historic rural church. The Churchwardens and PCC are immensely proud that their commitment to conserving and

protecting St Ethelbert's has been honoured in this way.

Our Favourite Services

Services of Morning Prayer and Holy Communion are held twice a month, while candlelight, fresh produce, food, drinks and fellowship transform the church into a glowing gathering place for its much-loved Harvest Festival and Carols by Candlelight, despite the absence of running water or electricity. Over the last year we have also enjoyed an array of other services themed around the agricultural year, welcoming the Bishop of Thetford to celebrate Plough Sunday and enjoying a farm walk and service for Rogation Sunday.

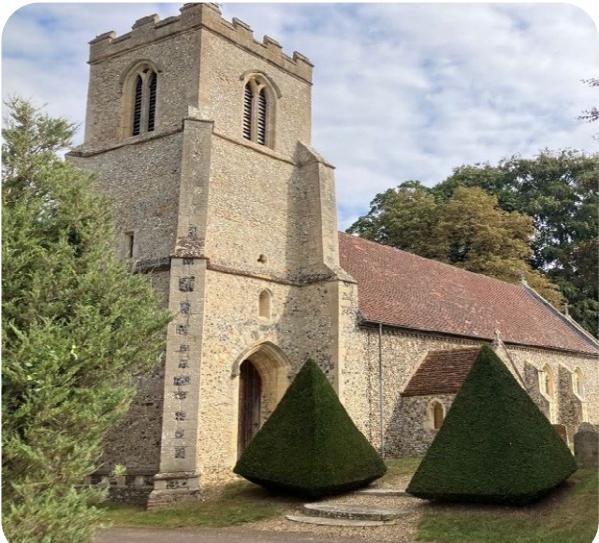
Best Thing about the Parish

The Church is open every day and visitors are often found exploring the Church. We are a small community, but one that knows everyone and supports those who need it without hesitation. The Larling Boxing Day Tractor Run is a firm fixture in the community, and not to be missed!

Biggest Challenge we face

Our vision is simple yet powerful: To ensure that every person who visits or worships at St Ethelbert's feels truly welcome and inspired to return. We hope that our next Rector will help us achieve this vision.

Riddlesworth



St Peter's Church, Riddlesworth, IP22 2TA

Grade I Listed

Parish Population: 157

Electoral Roll: 11

PCC Membership: 9

2024 Weddings: 0, Funerals: 4, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

John Chandler, Churchwarden

Oliver Pearson, Churchwarden

About us

Our Parish is rural and situated on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. It consists of 3 hamlets, Riddlesworth, Gasthorpe and Knettishall, each with an associated farm. Historically the Parish has revolved around Riddlesworth Hall, which recently closed as a private preparatory school. We await details of its future use but hope that it may help support the parish. The parish is typical of rural Norfolk with a strong farming community. There are no shops or social facilities within the parish and other than farming, little industry. Therefore, the Church is the only focus of the whole community with occasional concerts, fêtes and other fundraising events which we are keen to continue and develop. There is no Church Hall or amenities, and social events take place at the Church or in local residences. The PCC meets once a year but is responsible and active. There is a Parish Safeguarding Officer. The PCC looks after the finances of the Church and is solvent. We are keen to pay our Parish share.

Church Fabric

St Peters is an attractive medieval Church which has evolved over the centuries with the last makeover being in the Victorian era. It is in a good state of repair and is maintained by the PCC. Individual members of the PCC look after the fabric and maintenance of the Church and Churchyard.

Our Favourite Services

BCP Evensong is held on the last Sunday of each month with an average congregation of between 5 and 20 people. Festival services are extremely popular; the Christmas service regularly attracts more than 100 people. There is a resident organist. Although Clergy dress, liturgy and music are all traditional, our services are always relaxed. Eucharistic worship is held at major festivals. Lay involvement has traditionally been taking readings and the collection. We would be happy to be more involved with the Benefice though the congregation is content with its relative isolation.

Best Thing about the Parish

Our strength is that we are a close and friendly congregation committed to the local area and people. We are blessed to be in such a beautiful part of rural Norfolk and to have within our Parish a Country Park, two ancient walkways that attract visitors from both the local towns and from further afield and part of Thetford Forest which stretches for miles around.

Biggest Challenge we face

To grow our congregation and our community activities.

Rushford



St John the Evangelist Church, Church Lane, Rushford IP24 2SE

Grade I Listed

Parish Population: 73

Electoral Roll: 5

PCC Membership: 3

2024 Weddings: 0, Funerals: 1, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

Anne Poulter – Parish Rep

Jane Gordon – Parish Rep

About us

Rushford is a peaceful and historic village situated on the southwest of the Benefice between the A1066 in the north and the Little Ouse River to the south which forms the county border with Suffolk. We are a small but cohesive community and meet to worship at monthly services in our beautiful thirteenth century church of St John the Evangelist which forms the heart of village activity

Church fabric

Thanks to the diligent care and attention of a recent churchwarden we are fortunate that much of the fabric of the church is in good order. However, our beautiful church is unusual in having a thatched roof. This will require rethatching before long which will necessitate applications for grants and faculties for funding.

Our favourite services

We hold a communion service on the first Sunday of each month which is supported by approximately 10 people, some of whom join us from neighbouring villages. We also have a service to celebrate Easter as well as Harvest and Remembrance. Our favourite service is our beautiful, traditional candlelit Carol Service which attracts between 70 and 80 people from numerous nearby villages and as far afield as Bury St Edmunds. The service is followed by a reception at a nearby home which was a

former medieval ecclesiastical college founded by Edmund Gonville for novice monks in 1342 before he founded the Cambridge college that bears his name in 1348.

Best thing about the Parish

Rushford is a friendly and welcoming community which attracts members of our congregation from far and wide who enjoy meeting for coffee after our services in the nearby home of a member of the congregation. We aim to play a full part in the united benefice which has the benefit of an active stipendiary curate who has helped to initiate and lead activities which have brought together all the parishes in the benefice and assisted with communication between the parishes. Church members have also formed the backbone of many community activities in the village and organised events such as a summer garden party, teas on the green and a croquet tournament as well as specific fundraising events such as a concert in aid of the fabric of the church.

Biggest challenge we face

Keeping the church running and maintaining or even raising levels of attendance at a time when increasing infirmity among the congregation sadly means that in the last couple of years, 5 of our most ardent supporters are no longer able to join us for services.

Shropham w/ Snetterton



St Peter and Paul's Church, Shropham, NR17 1EJ

Grade I Listed

Parish Population: 671

Electoral Roll: 2

PCC Membership: 2

2024 Weddings: 0, Funerals: 1, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

David Napier, Churchwarden

About us

The essence of St Peter & St Paul is to be as welcoming as possible. Shropham is a growing village on the edge of the benefice. has an active village hall and parish council. The ecclesiastical parish includes Snetterton, where a heritage church is located, looked after by the Norfolk Churches Trust. Our services are taken from the Book of Common Prayer and alternate between Holy Communion and Matins. We are blessed to have a good organist who plays for our regular and one-off services.

Church fabric

St Peter and St Paul's Church dates from the mid-13th century and retains elements of the medieval rood screen, and pews which date from the 1520. The church was restored in 1867. The late 15C tower has an impressive west front. It is squarely built with diagonal buttresses, which have black chequerboard flushwork decoration on their faces. There is a west doorway with a large four light window above. The next stage of the tower seems rather squat and has slit windows, probably more for ventilation than light. In 1898 Mary Lowndes installed the Nativity, the first major work to be produced in the newly established Lowndes & Drury workshop in Chelsea using an early example of slab glass which became a hallmark of the Arts & Craft movement. This window is considered to be of national importance.

Our favourite services

The Remembrance Sunday Service is organised by the local RBL and rotates between Great Hockham (which is not in the Benefice) Larling, Wretham and Shropham and is always well supported. The Carol Service is by a distance the best attended service of the year. An emphasis is placed on children: many are dressed up during the services and it is always the aim that children should read the majority of the nine Lessons. In 2025 we have also enjoyed a family friendly service on Mothering Sunday and Easter Day at Shropham.

Best thing about the Parish

Although small, we are a welcoming parish church who would love to see growth in the coming years. We are open to new ideas and creativity to achieve this.

Biggest challenge we face

The main challenges are increasing the size of the regular congregation, alluded to above, and providing for the future. Both members of the PCC are over 80. We also have the support of another member of the parish is who, while very active and helpful, does not wish to join the PCC. We recognise the need to grow younger in our congregation. The PCC recognises and fully accepts that a new incumbent may wish to change the pattern of worship which would hopefully attract more residents to attend church regularly.

Wretham w/ Illington



**St Ethelbert's Church, Church Road,
IP24 1RL**

Grade II Listed

Parish Population: 322

Electoral Roll: 26

PCC Membership: 8

2024 Weddings: 0, Funerals: 4, Baptisms: 0

Contacts

Sharon Ford, Churchwarden

Ian Salter, Churchwarden

About us

The parish of Wretham is five miles north-west of Thetford on the A1075 towards Watton and Dereham. It is a parish of three parts - East and West Wretham and Illington - and sits on the Peddars Way long distance footpath to the North Norfolk coast. It is also on the south-east edge of the Stanford Training Area and has large Army camps occupied by visiting detachments of troops and cadets, who train in the area on foot and air. The village has a civil Parish Council and a Village Hall.

Church Fabric

Our church is regularly used for worship and generally in an excellent state of repair and the PCC takes a keen interest in its preservation. It has had a kitchen and disabled toilet installed, the small but notable James Corps organ has been completely overhauled, and the original casework painting scheme uncovered and restored. The building is electrically heated and a sound reinforcement system and hearing loop has been installed.

Our Favourite Services

Services of Morning Prayer and Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays follow the Book of Common Prayer shortened version. Readings are taken from the King James Bible or, if desired, the NRSV. Eucharistic vestments, all available in the church, are

normally worn. In the northeast corner are 14 war graves of Czech and Polish airmen, who flew Lancaster bombers from Wretham in WW2. The graves and memorial outside the churchyard wall are the focus of a service every November, when wreaths are laid by a range of people, led by military attaches from eastern European embassies in London.

Best Thing about the Parish

The village has an exceptional community spirit including the church opening to serve teas when the NGS gardens of nearby Wretham Lodge, the former rectory, are open. A Summer Party is held annually at the Lodge to fundraise for the church. A Harvest Supper is held in the Village Hall. These events are well attended and, apart from the fund-raising ethos, are important to church members as successful social activities, which help the church outreach, bringing together Wretham villagers, whether regular churchgoers or not.

Biggest Challenge we face

St Ethelbert's membership exists to love and serve the Lord, one another in church and those outside in the parish. Our biggest challenge is reaching out to new people and growing our community. We hope that our next Rector will offer us a similar kind of love, understanding and support that we will offer them to help shape the next season of life in the benefice.

Christ of transformation,
sow deep into the soil
of our hearts and parishes,
your seeds of prayerful listening,
conversation and discernment:
then nurture their growth, we pray,
with the gentle rains of your Spirit
that they may flower and fruit
into new ways of revealing
the abundant life you offer
and long for us to share.

Amen

Helpful links

Diocese of Norwich

www.dioceseofnorwich.org

Church of England

www.churchofengland.org

Living and working in Norfolk – Norfolk County Council

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/jobs-training-and-volunteering/
living-and-working-in-norfolk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/jobs-training-and-volunteering/living-and-working-in-norfolk)





THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Norwich

Diocesan House, 109 Dereham Road, Easton, Norwich NR9 5ES

www.dioceseofnorwich.org

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