



The Wildbrooks Benefice

Our Benefice Profile

- St Michael's Amberley-with-North Stoke
- St Peter's Parham
- Wiggonholt
- Greatham



Welcome from the Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner, Bishop of Chichester

Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith

In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Selsey. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin

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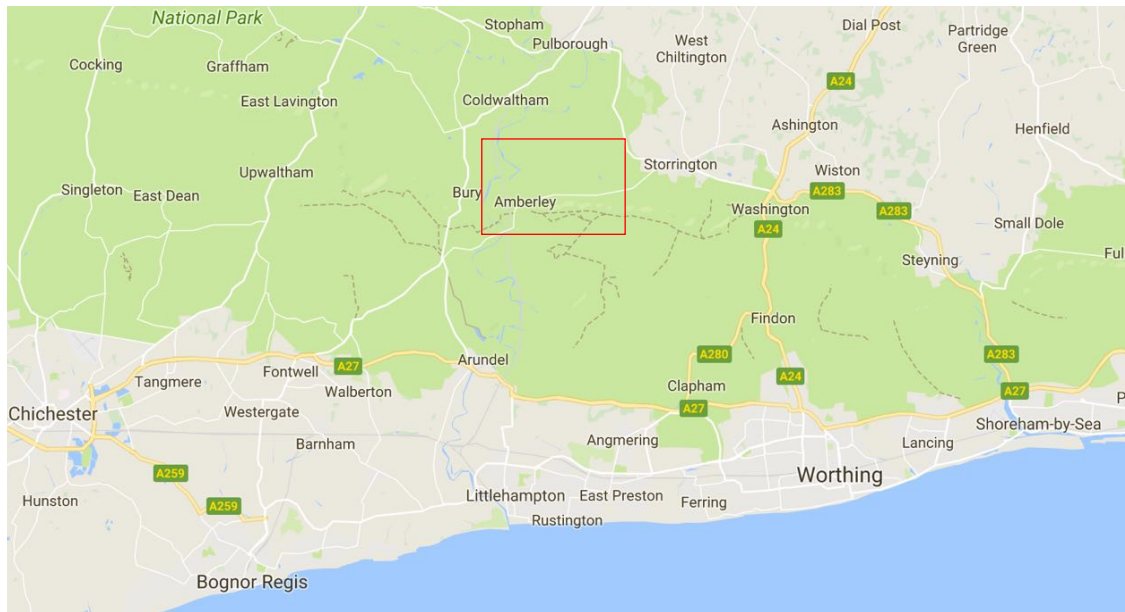
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1 Overview



The Wildbrooks Benefice is made up of four rural parishes within a few miles of each other in West Sussex, situated within the beautiful countryside of the South Downs National Park yet with excellent local facilities.

We are seeking a House for Duty Priest, with responsibility for ministry, mission and pastoral care in the Benefice.

We enjoy a mixture of traditional and more modern worship in our historic and picturesque churches. Like so many rural parishes, we face the challenge of ageing congregations and increasing secularism, but we also see opportunities for renewal and expansion and are blessed with a high degree of community support.

2 The Benefice

2.1 Location and Amenities

2.2 The Vicarage

2.3 Benefice Size and Demographics

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2.5 Finance, Fundraising and other Resources

2.1 Location and Amenities

The Wildbrooks Benefice is made up of the parishes of Amberley-with-North Stoke, Parham, Wiggonholt and Greatham. The Benefice is situated at the foot of the escarpment of the South Downs, in West Sussex.

In 1966 this part of the Downs was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and in 2010 the Benefice became part of the new South Downs National Park. Within the Benefice is also the important Pulborough Brooks Nature Reserve.



The Wildbrooks



The Benefice is within the diocese of Chichester. The historic and attractive Cathedral city of Chichester itself is about a 20-minute drive away.

Chichester Cathedral

Chichester has good shopping and dining facilities and is home to the world-class Chichester Festival Theatre.



Chichester Festival Theatre

There are well-regarded general hospitals with A&E departments in Chichester and Worthing (both within a half hour drive of the Benefice).

Good local shopping is available in the nearby small market town of Storrington, (3.8 miles) which has a Waitrose supermarket and a number of independent retailers; and Pulborough, (6.9 miles) which has a large out-of-town Tesco and a smaller Sainsbury's. There are also several local farm shops.



Within Amberley parish, the Village Stores provides for our everyday needs and a great deal more besides. It is very much a community hub.

Amberley Village Stores

There is also a hotel, a restaurant, three Public Houses, two tea-rooms, a working museum, a working pottery, boat hire, bicycle hire and a thriving network of clubs and societies. All the businesses are supportive of the church.



Amberley Village Tea Room

There are good road and rail links to London and along the south coast, with a railway station on the outskirts of Amberley.

Although the parishes are only a few miles apart, the lack of public transport facilities means that the future incumbent will need their own means of transport and should expect quite a lot of driving if they are to remain in contact with the various church communities.

2.2 The Vicarage

The Vicarage is an attractive and well-maintained house with a manageable garden, situated in Amberley village, close to the school and shop and about 4 or 5 minutes walk from the church. Built in 2003, it has four bedrooms (one en-suite), two large reception rooms, a conservatory, a well laid out kitchen/breakfast room, a large attached parish office with its own separate entrance, downstairs cloakroom and a double garage.



Amberley Vicarage

2.3 Size and Demographics of the Benefice

In total, the population of the Benefice at the 2021 census is 781.

It is often regarded as an area of largely retired people but, in reality, the over 65 population makes up less than a third of the total with Amberley having the highest percentage (26.5%) and the other three parishes 20.9% each (an average of 22.3%). This is, however, above the national average (16.6% in 2016).¹

14.9% of residents across the Benefice are under 18 and there are, on average, 62.5% of working age.

These figures are from the 2021 census. The proportion of working age to retired people shifted slightly between 2016 and 2021, with an increase in working age residents and a decrease in retired folk. With the arrival of faster broadband in the area, the opportunity for people to work at least part of the time at home has increased and, like elsewhere, this trend has accelerated since the Covid pandemic.

Occupations are varied, including

- Leisure and Tourism
- Farming
- Service Sector
- Artists and Craftspersons

There is little ethnic diversity in the parish and just over 50% of residents describe themselves as Christian.

The Benefice is rated at 8,565 in the Church of England's 'Deprivation Rank' table (1 being most deprived and 12,554 the least deprived). It is therefore firmly in the 'better off' half of the scale, but the overall figure masks the fact that incomes within the Benefice vary widely among both the working and the retired populations. By no means everyone is as affluent as the C of E rating would suggest. So although there is little ethnic diversity there is quite a lot of social diversity.

2.4 Administrative Structure

Although a Combined Benefice since 1984 the four parishes have historically been separately administered, each with its own PCC. Wiggonholt and Greatham have been combined since the late Middle Ages, the Rector living at Wiggonholt and a Curate at Greatham.

Although there are four PCCs such matters as the service schedule have operated smoothly between the PCCs for many years.

Most of the administrative work is at Amberley, where there are more weddings, funerals and baptisms than in the other three parishes, as well as more work in the community. Much of this is handled by the churchwardens and other volunteers. Amberley has about four PCC meetings a year with most of the routine work being dealt with outside of meetings.

The Parochial Church Council of St Peter's Parham meets on average three times a year mid-week for a couple of hours. The meeting usually covers important items relating to fabric, finance and services. Other gatherings happen after church services and during fund raising activities within the church when Parham House is open. Fund raising events to include the wider community are planned on a yearly basis.

Wiggonholt PCC has 2/3 meetings per year lasting no longer than an hour. Anything which needs urgent attention is discussed after a service. The PCC secretary does most of the associated administrative work.

In Greatham the paperwork is dealt with by the churchwardens. Greatham has only two or three formal PCC meetings per year. These tend to take place after church on Sundays and last some 10 to 15 minutes.

There is a Church of England Controlled School in Amberley, which is under separate governance. Further details about the school are included below.

2.5 Finances, Fundraising and Other Resources

The Benefice is able to pay for a House-for-Duty Priest.

Maintaining our Grade I listed buildings is a continuing challenge, but one we have managed to meet thus far.

Fundraising in Amberley is managed by the churchwardens with the assistance of other volunteers in order to avoid any unnecessary burden on the incumbent.

A major fundraising campaign was held in Amberley in 2017-18 to pay for repairs to St Michael's church tower. This was a £200,000 project involving a successful Heritage Lottery Fund grant, other grants and many local events. Currently a group of volunteers is fundraising for improvements to the church hall, including new toilets (already installed), a new kitchen and the possible installation of solar panels for heating.

Wiggonholt has successfully raised funds for the restoration of its remarkable lychgate. Parham is raising funds for building repairs and Greatham also holds occasional fundraising events.



*Christmas Stall in The Square,
Amberley*

Amberley has a church hall, which is of course available to the other parishes in the Benefice. Apart from church use, it also serves as the secular village hall, thereby producing some income to offset its expenses. It also receives a grant from the secular Parish Council and in recent years has received generous donations from a biennial village 'open gardens' event held primarily in aid of a medical research charity.



'Round Europe Christmas' – a fundraiser in the church hall

Rackham Old School, not belonging to the churches but available to hire at very reasonable rates, provides another community space for the Benefice.

Other Benefice Resources include a well-produced and widely-read Magazine (The Wildbrooks Magazine) a Website www.wildbrookschurches.org.uk; a Facebook page www.facebook.com/Wildbrookschurches and of course many hard working and enthusiastic volunteers.

3 Parish Life: The Parishes, their churches and the worshipping communities

3.1. Amberley-with-North Stoke

3.2 Parham

3.3 Wiggonholt

3.4 Greatham

3.1 Amberley-with-North Stoke

The Village



Amberley High Street

Of the four ecclesiastical parishes that make up the Benefice, Amberley-with-North Stoke is the largest and the only one with a nuclear village.

Parish population	564
Parish occupied households	265
Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,554=least deprived)	8,565
% aged 0-19	17.4
% aged 19-64	56.2
% aged 65+	26.5
% Christian	56
% White British	95.2

A Saxon settlement mentioned in the Domesday Book, Amberley remained an agricultural community until the nineteenth century. During the agricultural depression, when many Sussex villages declined and ancient houses were left to fall down, most of the housing stock of Amberley survived. It is thought that this was due to the flourishing of the chalk pits, which turned from producing lime for the fields to serving the growing demand for lime mortar during the Victorian London building boom. As a result, Amberley retains a high proportion of late medieval timber-framed thatched farmhouses and cottages, mostly now faced in the local stone.



Church Street, looking east towards the South Downs

Sometimes referred to as 'The Pearl of Sussex', Amberley attracts a large number of day visitors during the summer months as well as temporary residents staying in the hotel and B&Bs. At major holiday times (Christmas and Easter) numbers are further swelled by those visiting family and friends in the parish.



Hollyhocks are encouraged by residents to self seed along the verges

Amberley has had strong links with the Bishops of Chichester since the 13th century, during the time of Bishop Richard (St Richard). Amberley Castle, now a prestigious hotel, was once a residence (some say hunting lodge) used by the bishops on their travels through the Diocese.

Most of the oldest houses are in the historic centre of the village and are mainly now the very comfortable homes of retired people and some weekenders. As time has gone by, the footprint of the village has extended to the east, with a mixture of private, council-owned and Housing Association properties. The community has been very willing to embrace the building of new housing for first time buyers and young families but there is still a shortage of such housing as well as a shortage of smaller traditional homes for elderly single people who want to 'downsize'.

Amberley is a very active village, with numerous clubs and societies and a strong social life.

The Parish Church of St Michael's, Amberley-with-North Stoke



St Michael's Amberley

The Grade I listed St Michael's church was re-built during the twelfth century by the Normans and still boasts a typically Norman chancel arch. It retains a few faded wall paintings. Seating about 120, it is popular for weddings and for blessings of civil marriages celebrated at the Castle.

The Parish extends to the hamlet of North Stoke, perched on the side of the Downs, originally served by its own small church of St Mary the Virgin, which has been in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust since 1992 and has an active Friends Group. Occasional services take place at St Mary's, including a very popular Crib Service before Christmas.

The churchyards at both St Michael's and St Mary's remain open and both are the responsibility of the Parish.

In Amberley, there are currently 56 people on the electoral roll. On an ordinary Sunday, there are usually between 20 and 30 worshippers at St Michael's. Few of these are children. This represents about 3.5% of the population – above the latest national average of less than 2%², but lower than we would wish. In common with other parishes, attendances post-pandemic have not returned to their previous levels, though there has been some recent growth as some newer residents have started to attend on occasions. One resident, at her first service in St Michael's, said 'coming to church here is like being given a big hug.'

With the support of the PCC and after research into community preferences, our last incumbent sought to diversify services at St Michael's with the aim of encouraging new attendance. Regular Common Worship Communion services continue but we have also introduced a 'café church' service once a month as a more family friendly option. We have informal morning prayers, currently lay-led, on Wednesday mornings. We have held outdoor services both in the churchyard (a beautiful space) and on the Millennium Green, which has the advantage of being at the opposite end of the village from the church and therefore more visible to the residents in that area.

The previous incumbent also ran 24-7 prayer course and the Bible Society Bible Course, both of which were well received. There is a hunger in the Benefice to know God more. There have also been successful Advent courses and Lent courses; these have continued on Zoom post pandemic.

Services at Christmas and Easter, and on Remembrance Sunday, continue to be well attended. There are usually special events attached to services at the major festivals, for example a parade with donkeys on Palm Sunday, and a 'Journey to the Crib' on Christmas Eve. These attract substantial numbers – over 120 of all ages for the Christmas Journey. There are more details about these events in the 'Outreach' section below.

We are, though, struggling to turn participation in these events into attendance at regular services or interest in attending courses to find out more about our faith, and this is an area to which our next priest might want to give some thought and prayer.

We have a regular organist/music director and a small but committed choir.

The church has an unusual anticlockwise ring of 5 bells (all cast at the same time) with a dedicated band of ringers.



A service at St Michael's

St Michael's has a PCC of (currently) 9 people, with two churchwardens. We also have the benefit of a lay reader living in the parish.

St Michael's is blessed with a good number of volunteers who help the church in many and varied ways: as servers and sidespeople, leading intercessions, working on outreach and community service, publishing and distributing the Wildbrooks

Benefice magazine, fundraising, flower arranging, locking and unlocking the church and helping in the churchyard, to mention just a few.



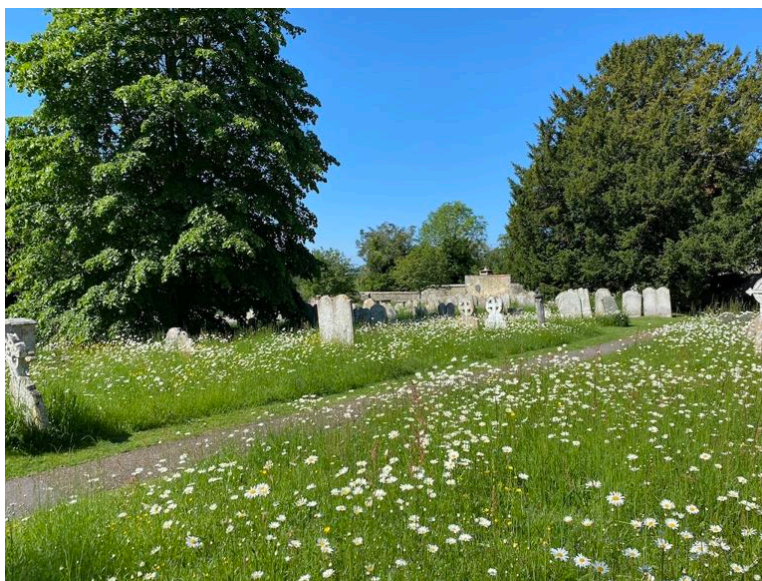
Volunteers relaxing after a churchyard working party

St Michael's is now well regarded in the community, including by those who are not churchgoers but who recognize that the church is there for everyone, especially at times of need. Both church and churchyard are used outside of service times as places for quiet reflection. There is a well-used resource station in the side chapel with Christian resources to bless our visitors and space for them to leave prayer requests that are prayed for during Wednesday morning prayers.

The church building is also appreciated as an historic part of the village.

St Michael's EcoChurch Journey

St Michael's has received a Bronze 'A Rocha' award in and is working towards silver. The building itself presents challenges to sustainability: in common with many churches it is poorly insulated and expensive to heat. But the churchyard is actively managed for biodiversity and at the last count in 2023 contained at least 167 plant species. The number will continue to grow as appropriate new species are introduced.



The churchyard in June

A churchyard trail encourages people to stop, look and listen at various points



Amberley is an ecologically minded community, with its own recycling scheme, repair café and other initiatives, and the Church has been keen to offer support, including hosting a well attended Eco Fair in 2023. Over 20 contributors took part, representing sustainability projects, local produce, wildlife and habitat conservation. Talks in the church plus a wildlife photography competition added to the mix.



Bug and plant species hunting with Sussex Wildlife Trust at the EcoFair 2023

Stalls in the churchyard and church hall



Amberley Primary School



Amberley School's welcoming entrance

Amberley Primary School is Church of England Voluntary Controlled.

The school is federated with St James School at Coldwaltham and the Executive Head Teacher has responsibility for both schools. At present there are 56 pupils at Amberley.

There is a Trust related to the school of which the Trustees are the Vicar and Churchwardens of the parish of Amberley.

The incumbent at Amberley is an ex-officio Foundation Governor. A second Foundation Governor is appointed by the Diocese on the recommendation of the Parochial Church Council. One of St Michael's churchwardens is currently the second Foundation Governor. The Governing body is responsible for both schools in the Federation.

Like many other small rural schools, Amberley struggles to find enough pupils to be viable. Because of this and the other constraints that apply to small schools, the Federation is currently investigating the possibility of joining an Academy Trust.



School Playing Field

The school is at the heart of the local community and has strong links with the Church. The pupils plan and take an active part in services during the Christian Calendar Year. These include Harvest Festival, Christmas Services, Mothering Sunday and Easter Services. These services are well attended by parents, younger siblings and carers.

The church provides flowers for the children to make posies for Mothering Sunday. They receive Easter Eggs and booklets about the meaning of Easter, a small gift at Christmas and leavers receive a Bible at the end of year service.



The children at a Christingle service in the church

In addition the Foundation Governors and the Executive Head Teacher look for other opportunities for the school to participate in church life and vice versa, for example by helping with biodiversity projects in the churchyard, by holding a carol concert in the church for residents (especially enjoyed by our CAMEO participants (see below for more about CAMEO) or by jointly supporting charities.

Further information about the school can be found on the school website:

<http://www.amberley.w-sussex.sch.uk>

Outreach at St Michael's

For our churches to survive, we need to find new ways of engaging with the wider community – including both those who are supportive but do not attend, and those who are currently just not interested. Amberley offers the best opportunity for this work.

We recognise that with increasing secularisation and competition from other attractions it is always going to be hard to attract regular Sunday worshippers. So we are trying hard to address this partly by varying times and styles of worship and partly by engaging with the community in other ways and places so that we can 'take the church to the people'.

In Amberley we have a dedicated Parish Engagement Group (PEG) that organises these events and activities. One focus is on making the special services (Easter, Christmas, Mothering Sunday, Harvest, and Remembrance) appealing to as many residents and visitors as possible. We are always looking for new ways to share the love of God with our neighbours.

Special Services and Events



Bramble and Friend lead our Palm Sunday parade. The donkeys are from the Lorica Trust, a local charity that helps disadvantaged children by giving them the opportunity to engage with and care for the donkeys. We occasionally fundraise to support their work.

'Journey to the Crib' on Christmas Eve always draws a good crowd of locals and visitors as the story unfolds at points through the village.....





...ending up in the church with a living tableau of the holy family in the stable



People (and cheeky dogs) enjoying 'Buns in The Square' on Good Friday: an opportunity for outreach.



The 2022 Platinum Jubilee provided an opportunity for St Michael's PEG group to organize a celebration that attracted young and old. Prayers for the Queen reminded us of her late Majesty's strong faith.

Community Support

CAMEO (Come and Meet Each Other) is a monthly social get together in Amberley church hall. Much valued by some of our older residents (although open to all) it offers occasional speakers or activities as well as the obligatory tea and cake. Residents who are not very mobile are offered lifts.

For Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Christmas, CAMEO helpers take small gifts to residents who are not able to get out and about.



Harvest gifts ready to be taken to elderly or ill residents

Over the winter, with the current cost of living crisis affecting many, St Michael's has been running a modest 'Community Larder'. We have been putting non-perishable foods and household items in plastic boxes in the bus shelter near the greatest concentration of social housing and inviting residents to help themselves. We did this because we had become aware that there were individuals and families in need who were too proud or embarrassed to seek the help that was available via the well established Amberley Welfare Trust (which is not run by the church, but the incumbent is an ex-officio trustee). The Community Larder is an experiment that is still being evaluated. It is another tangible way of loving our neighbour.



Food boxes in the bus shelter

As regards outside charities, St Michael's has supported, by donating collections or by hosting fundraising events: The Ukraine Appeal and local Ukrainian refugee

families; Tearfund, The British Legion; Combat Stress; The Malawi Schools Project and The Lorica Trust, the last two being locally run.



Malawi Schools Project; a charity started by an Amberley resident to bring education and other benefits to children in a very poor rural part of Malawi

<http://www.themalawischoolsproject.org>

In

addition St Michael's organizes several collections a year for the Diocesan charity Family Support Work. These collections are very generously supported by Amberley Village Stores and the wider community, and also by Wiggonholt church. St Michael's also holds a Gift Service for FSW before Christmas.



Some of the supplies ready to go off to Family Support Work before Christmas 2023

www.familysupportwork.org.

We hope that by publicly supporting these charities we will not only help worthwhile causes but also demonstrate that St Michael's is outward looking and not just here for the benefit of its congregation, showing that we really care about those who need our help and we want to share God's love for them.

3.2 Parham

This small parish is set in the grounds of Parham House, an Elizabethan manor house and park open to the public.



Parham House

There was a village of Parham around the church but its few houses were destroyed in the early 19th century to create the modern landscaped park and gardens. The parish now consists of Parham Park and the farms and smaller settlements around it, together with the hamlet of Rackham.



Part of Parham’s collection of Textiles

Parish population	130
Parish occupied households	54
Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,554=least deprived)	8,565
% aged 0-19	14.5
% aged 19-69	64.6
% aged 70	20.9
% Christian	51.6
% White Ethnicity	98.2

St Peter’s, Parham

We do not know when the first church was built here in Parham, but the list of rectors goes back to 1148. The church is now dedicated to St Peter.



St Peter's Parham

Recent archaeological investigations indicate that the south wall of the church probably dates from c.1150, but the north wall, with its thirteenth-century arcades, had a north aisle, which was demolished when the building was largely rebuilt in the early 1800s by Sir Cecil Bisshopp, the 8th Baronet [1779-1828]. The tower, which dates from the rebuild, is a strange mixture of architectural styles.

At the south east corner is a mortuary chapel, built from recycled stone. Robert Palmer, who died on 14th May 1544, had asked to be buried in Parham Church and "that a chapel should be built adjoining [the] choir there or chancel and over me a tomb be made as mine executors shall think meet and honest for a remembrance of me to be had". That chapel still exists and is now the vestry. No trace of his monument remains. The church seats nearly 80 people in high box-pews. These, the pulpit and the screen are Georgian. The Squire's pew is recognisable by its private fireplace. The original church had a steeple, recorded in 1665, and was roofed with Horsham stone, as mentioned in a presentment of 1641. In 1662 it had no pews but only a pulpit.



Parham church, interior



The mid fourteenth-century lead font has horizontal rectangular panels, enclosing the legend "+ IHC Nazar" [Jesus of Nazareth] in Lombardic letters. In the spaces

between the panels are small shields bearing gyronny within a bordure charged with roundels – the arms of Andrew Peverell, knight of the shire in 1351. Lead fonts are exceptionally rare – there are only 29 in England – but Sussex has two more, at Edburton and Pyecombe.

The churchyard at Parham is closed for burials but remains open for the interment of ashes.

With a population of 130, a figure for the worshipping community of 17 and typical Sunday attendance of 10, there appears to be some room for growth. But Parham is an unusual church, situated in the grounds of Parham House and Park and rather cut off from the rest of the parish (apart from those who live as well as work in the Park).

St Peter's currently holds two services a month, both using the Book of Common Prayer.

In recent years a tradition of Easter Day Sunrise Communion has been established, held outside the church against the backdrop of the house and Downs. The PCC would love this to continue.



Easter Sunrise service, Parham churchyard

Parham is in the process of carrying out building repairs and is planning to hold a flower festival to show off the newly decorated church.

Charities supported include Family Support Work, The British Legion and Chestnut Tree Children's Hospice.

3.3 Wiggonholt

Wiggonholt, a tiny parish of scattered houses, was farmed by the Parham Estate until the 1980s. Although there is still grazing locally, the area now benefits from

visits by walkers and others from the RSPB Pulborough Brooks Reserve and a network of public footpaths.

Parish population	29
Parish occupied households	16
Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,554=least deprived)	8,565
% aged 0-19	14.5
% aged 19-69	64.6
% aged 70+	20.9
% Christian	51.6
% White Ethnicity	98.2

Wiggonholt itself is a delightful, tranquil spot, ideal for retreats and indeed recently used as such. As part of the Bishop's Lent course last year, a group from Steyning Church conducted a priest-led pilgrimage to Wiggonholt, culminating in silent prayer in the Church. Being at the crossways of rural footpaths and close to the RSPB the church has many daily visitors, both local as well as tourists all of whom value the church being kept open every day by a small group of volunteers. The visitor's book records their appreciation of such a quiet and tranquil place in which to pray and how they take comfort from its peaceful environment.

Wiggonholt Church



Wiggonholt Church

The small, Grade I Listed, parish church probably dates from the 12th Century and is one of the loveliest in West Sussex, mainly on account of its wild and secluded setting overlooking Pulborough Brooks. It has been altered much less over the centuries than is the norm: the church has no electricity and is known for its candle-lit services. Beautiful suspended oil lamps have long been in use, while butane

heaters help to lift the chill in winter.



The building is much cherished. A recent successful project has been to produce new kneelers for the church.



The Churchyard is tended for wild-flower conservation. The churchyard is open for interment of ashes. The PCC reviewed burial space this year and concluded that there is now space for fewer than 10 burials.

Haymaking in the churchyard

At Wiggonholt the worshipping community in 2023 was 21 with an average attendance of 17 at Sunday services.

Services are prayer-book orientated. The congregation values this traditional form of service, while on occasions welcoming the alternatives of Celtic Communion and Candlemass. Though small, the congregation is close-knit and many worshippers have been faithful to the church over several decades. Not all live at Wiggonholt but choose to attend there because of the special qualities of the church's environment and the nature of the services.



Wiggonholt Parish Church's flower festival held in support of the Pulborough Heritage Weekend

The Christmas Midnight Mass began in the 1940s and was always very well attended, but because of the pandemic things had to change and it was replaced by carols in the candlelit churchyard attended by over 70 adults and children, followed by Holy Communion for a smaller number of people.

This arrangement has continued post pandemic and in good weather services continue to be held outside in Wiggonholt's delightful churchyard providing an interest and welcome to passersby.

On occasions when clergy are unavailable, Evensong and Compline Services are led by lay members of Wiggonholt or the Benefice. Ever growing in popularity is an animal blessing service in the churchyard that welcomes all sorts of animals from tortoises to ponies.



Arriving for an outdoor service at Wiggonholt; and orchids in the churchyard

Fundraising at Wiggonholt has reinforced community outreach, of which another recent, successful example is the collection and donation of non-perishable foodstuffs and goods in aid of Family Support. In addition, Wiggonholt makes contributions at home, for example to The Addington Fund, a farming charity, and

abroad for the support of CMS Partners in Beirut and other areas of the troubled Near East. Regular collections take place for The Children's Society.

Fundraising is ongoing, either for general repairs to the church, or for a particular project!

3.4 Greatham

Greatham Church



Greatham Church

Greatham is a very small church tucked away in the countryside three miles by road from Amberley and somewhat less from the other two rural churches. It was founded as a herdsman's church about 1,000 years ago and has been in continuous use ever since. Unusually, the Greatham church has no patronal saint. Like the other churches in the Benefice it is Grade 1 Listed.

Parish population	58
Parish occupied households	29
Deprivation rank (1=most deprived, 12,554=least deprived)	8,565
% aged 0-19	13.5
% aged 19-69	64.6
% aged 70+	20.9
% Christian	51.6
% White Ethnicity	98.2

Greatham Church, interior

Since the middle ages, Greatham and Wiggonholt, both serving small communities, have often shared a priest.

At Greatham there are 28 on the church electoral roll with attendance at ordinary services about 10 to 15, sometimes more.

As at Wiggonholt, Greatham's small congregation is constant and loyal. It is enthusiastically maintained as a traditional place of worship. Currently, two Book of Common Prayer services are held a month, with well-attended services at Christmas and a lesser increase at Easter.

4 The Priest We Need

We believe a priest coming to serve the Benefice at this time will need:

- the flexibility to respect tradition in worship while being open to new ideas
- experience of working with a Church of England school
- a willingness to be a visible and available presence in the Benefice communities
- enthusiasm for trying new ideas in outreach and parish engagement

5 Last Words

Our four parish churches have existed for at least 800 years – and we all want, and pray for, them to be here, serving God and our communities, for the next 800.

With God's help we will do all we can to make this happen.

Building on the work of recent years, at Amberley we want to:

- continue our flexible service pattern while being open to further changes that may attract new people;
- continue our outreach and community work, making it clear that God's love is at the centre of all we do.
- find ways to encourage those who attend our special services and events to engage more closely with our faith.
- continue encouraging the school to be more fully integrated with the church.
- continue to play our part in addressing environmental concerns, in particular by working towards our A Rocha Silver award.

We will actively support our priest in his or her work, recognising that a house for duty priest needs to delegate in order to cope with the workload.

The smaller parishes hope to:

- Maintain their individual style of service and whilst seeking to improve their welcome to all.
- Increase lay involvement in leading services
- Use their wild churchyards as a facility to draw people into our services.
- In recognising the advanced age of many of our active supporters, endeavour to work closer together in order to share the administrative workloads of the smaller parishes.

Are you the person to help us take this work forward?

Notes

¹ figures on population size and demographics are from <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/data-services>

² 2021 figures, from www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats

In all cases the latest available figures have been used.

Websites

The Benefice Website:

<https://wildbrookschurches.org.uk>

Amberley School Website:

<http://www.amberley.w-sussex.sch.uk>