DIOCESE OF OXFORD
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Walbury Beacon Benefice

www.walburybeaconbenefice.org.uk

is seeking a

full-time Rector

for an evolving group

of village church communities

in the Newbury Deanery, in the Diocese of Oxford

We believe we are called by God to live the gospel values of Jesus Christ as a community reaching out to the people in our Benefice and wider world.



West Woodhay



Inkpen



Combe



Kintbury
with Avington & Hamstead Marshall

Our parishes

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Foreword

A message from the Associate Archdeacon

If you have a passion for rural ministry, can help dedicated congregations to reach out and share their faith with their local communities, and inspire them to continue to find ways to offer these beautiful churches, buildings and resources as a gift to their communities, then Walbury Beacon could be for you.

This is an attractive rural post situated in the beautiful Berkshire countryside. In recent years, pastoral reorganisations have reduced the size of the benefice and changed the clergy provision from two part-time to one full-time post. Though you will see six churches within this profile, St Mary's Hampstead Marshall is at the final stages of being vested in the Churches Conservation Trust and St Luke and St Mark's Avington is privately owned and holds only four services each year.

Supported by their faithful congregations, these changes have worked positively to support and release the mission and ministry of the benefice's ministry team and particularly that of the incumbent.

The previous incumbent has done a good job in bringing these changes into land with the benefice in a settled place, in good heart, and looking forward to supporting and reaching out with the Gospel, led by a new incumbent. For all these reasons, this is a particularly attractive rural post for a missionally minded priest.

If you are interested in exploring this post, please feel very welcome to get in touch with me for a conversation.

The Revd Canon Paul Cowan
Associate Archdeacon
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Walbury Beacon Benefice Profile



Section 1: Context

The Walbury Beacon Benefice in West Berkshire is situated at the south-west of the Diocese of Oxford. It covers a rural area to the west and south-west of Newbury. Much of the area is in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and includes stretches of the River Kennet and the Kennet and Avon canal.







The land rises from the river at Kintbury to Walbury Hill, the highest point in Berkshire, which forms part of a ridge providing spectacular views. The area is popular with walkers and cyclists, attracting people from a wider area.

The parish of **Kintbury with Avington and Hamstead Marshall** is the largest and most northerly of the parishes. Whilst the majority of the population live within the village of Kintbury, there are a number of scattered, rural settlements, particularly in neighbouring Hamstead Marshall.

Inkpen and **West Woodhay** lie on higher ground to the south of Kintbury; the populations in general are spread out on a network of rural roads and lanes. Finally, on the southern side of the ridge lies the small hamlet of **Combe**.

Together, these communities form a united rural benefice. Historically, the parishes have shared long-standing connections, fostering friendships, mutual support, and shared worship.

The Benefice seeks to combine respect for tradition with thoughtful development to ensure sustainable mission and growth. Across the four parishes, there is a shared commitment to Christian faith expressed through prayerful worship, pastoral care, and active community engagement.

The Benefice is presently served by a full-time Rector, a part-time curate, and a Ministry Team including licensed lay ministers, lay leaders, an aspirant, and a retired priest. This team provides leadership across worship, pastoral care, discipleship, and mission while recognising the distinctive character and opportunities of each parish to encourage our vision with the gospel values.

Section 2: Our New Rector

We are seeking a full-time Rector to provide spiritual leadership across all four parishes. The Rector will:

- Place a pastoral heart at the centre of ministry, prioritising care for people.
- Be comfortable with rural life and traditional worship, guiding change gradually where needed.
- Articulate the Christian faith clearly, especially to those exploring or questioning belief.
- Lead worship prayerfully, nurture discipleship, and encourage others to use their gifts.
- Foster collaborative ministry, affirming the curate and Ministry Team, and supporting shared responsibility.
- Strengthen connections between parishes while developing distinct mission opportunities in each location to encourage a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Rector will guide the Benefice in deepening faith, nurturing relationships, and building mission-focused communities, with Kintbury as the central parish and likely base.

The vicarage in Kintbury is a modern four bedroom detached house on the outskirts of the village.





There is also a three bedroom detached rectory in the rural surroundings of West Woodhay.



Section 3: Ministry Team

The Benefice Ministry Team includes:



- A part-time Curate
- Two Licensed Lay Ministers (residing in Kintbury and Hungerford)
- Three resident Lay Leaders
- An Aspirant
- A Retired Priest

The team meets monthly to discuss ministry across the Benefice.

A Benefice Pastoral Team meets 3–4 times a year. They provide Home Communions, pastoral visits and support across all the parishes.

Section 4: Parish Profiles

Kintbury with Avington and Hamstead Marshall

Parish Context

Kintbury forms the northern hub of the Benefice and is the central parish where the Rector would reside. St Mary the Virgin, a Grade II listed Norman church, has a rich historical heritage, including connections to Jane Austen and the "Kintbury Martyr" of the 19th-century Swing Riots. The congregation includes Tertiary Franciscans, Anglo-Catholics, and Evangelicals, supported by a faithful core and wider community goodwill. The 'Fisherman', Kintbury's Parish magazine carries a monthly letter from one of the Ministry Team and much other church news.

Church Buildings and Facilities

St Mary's Church provides both large and intimate spaces: the main nave for congregational worship, a chapel, and St Mary's Room for private prayer or small groups. There is a well-maintained bell chamber in the tower and bells are rung regularly and on special occasions. The churchyard is actively used by the community. Parish burials take place at Christchurch Cemetery.

Administration and Governance

The PCC includes two representatives from Hamstead Marshall and meets every few months with regular updates circulated between times. At present, the Treasurer's role is vacant. An interim team-based structure has been introduced that can continue long-term, with a Treasurer appointed in due course to provide strategic oversight. Finances are in sound order.

Worship and Special Services



Weekly services:

1st Sunday: 8.00am HC BCP, 9.45am Family Service
2nd Sunday: 9.45am HC CW
3rd Sunday: 8.00am HC BCP
4th Sunday: 9.45am HC CW

Special services have included:

Three healing services annually
Bereavement service for All Souls
Three Matins services
Annual Evensong with visiting choir
Occasional festivals, including the Angel Festival (held two years ago)
Major Benefice services, concerts, and cultural events







Mission, Outreach, and School Links

Alpha courses have been run in Kintbury on behalf of the Benefice. The parish has a strong partnership with Kintbury Church of England Primary School. A Licensed Lay Leader, who is a former head teacher, serves as joint chair of school governors. Every other week, the Rector or a Licensed Lay Minister leads Collective Worship while termly full-school services are hosted in St Mary's. Christian learning is supported using the Gloucester Experience packs. A yearly "It's Your Move" session is provided for Year 6 pupils, who are also presented with a bible donated from the community at a special leavers service.



Congregation and Community

The Church Electoral Roll has just over 70 members. Whilst average Sunday attendance is roughly half this number, on festivals the church is full. Many local residents participate occasionally, offering opportunities for mission and growth. Recently, eight young adults were confirmed by the Bishop of Reading following a Youth Alpha Course. The candidates stated that the course enabled them to develop their relationship with Jesus giving them good reason for Confirmation. Monthly extended home communion visits to Inglewood, a retirement community, are made by Lay Leaders. Church community members also visit Notrees, an elderly residential home, for regular activities. Friends of St Mary's have a wide membership in the community who raise funds with various events to assist financially with the fabric of the building.

St. Mary's Chapel

Regular morning and evening prayer is said and there is a list for those requesting prayers.
Friday Evening Group meet monthly for Agape services run by a Lay Leader.
Prayers and Bears takes place monthly for pre-school children and their carers which is also lay led.





Avington Church is a privately owned, unspoilt 2-cell Norman church within the parish of Kintbury. Four annual BCP services (Easter, Christmas, Harvest, and Patronal) are held there.

Hamstead Marshall comprises a number of small, scattered rural settlements. St Mary's Church, dating from the 12th Century has been recently refurbished and is in the process of vesting, preserving its heritage while enabling occasional worship. Currently, no services take place in the church.

St Michael and All Angels, Inkpen

Parish Context

With over 800 residents and around 380 homes, Inkpen is the second largest parish in the Benefice. The village benefits from a pub and coffee shop, primary school, playing fields, and an active village hall. The church fosters good relationships with the village and underwrites a free monthly church & village Bulletin which is delivered to every house.

Church Building

St Michael's dates from the 13th century and was substantially restored at the end of the 19th Century. It has six chimed bells (oldest from 1590), a recently renovated organ, and a new sound system with a hearing loop. Adjoining facilities include a meeting room for 40, a kitchen, and accessible toilets.

Administration and Governance

The PCC (12 members) meets three times per year. Churchwardens, supported by an Associate Warden/Secretary and a Treasurer, manage routine administration. All compliance policies are up to date, and parish finances are strong.

Worship and Mission

Whilst the core congregation numbers 25–30, festival attendance can reach 150-200. The parish fosters strong links with Inkpen Primary School, running biennial "It's Your Move" sessions, participating in Christingle services, and using Gloucester Diocese School Experience packs.



Monthly services include:

6.00pm (4.00pm during winter) Compline (first Sunday, resident Lay Leader)

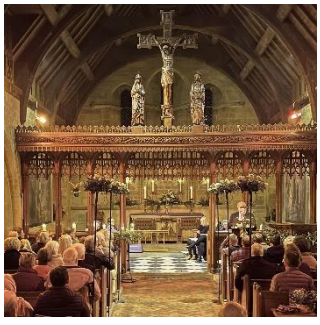
8.30am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer, second Sunday)

9.45am Family Holy Communion (third Sunday)

Additional Family Services accommodate baptisms, pet service, Rogation, Harvest, and Christingle. Annually, the church hosts a number of weddings, funerals, and baptisms.







St Laurence's, West Woodhay



Parish Context

West Woodhay has around 125 residents in 48 dwellings, many rented from the West Woodhay Estate.

Church Building

St Laurence's (built 1883) features flint and Bath stone, high-relief carvings by Goyer, and an organ by Henry Willis II. Recent renovations include the shingle-clad spire. The Memorial Garden, built in 1972 in memory of Mrs Sarah Henderson, adjoins the well-maintained churchyard.

Administration and Governance

The PCC consisting of eight members meets twice a year and finances are in good order.

Worship and Mission

Festival services can draw up to 100; however, the regular congregation normally averages 10. Services are at 11.15am and held on the second Sunday (service of the word) and fourth Sunday (Holy Communion Common Worship) of the month. The parish has hosted benefice Rogation services with tractor rides and a barbecue. Annually, the church holds approximately one wedding, two funerals, and one baptism.

St Swithun's, Combe



Parish Context

Combe is a small hamlet of 17 houses. With no school, pub, or hall, the church serves as the village gathering point.

Church Building

Dating from 1160 and in a beautiful rural setting, St Swithun's is surrounded by a well-kept churchyard. Recent works include window replacement, lighting revision, a new side door, and nave redecoration.

Administration and Governance

The PCC consists of 10 members and meets once a year. Finances are in order.

Worship and Mission

Traditional worship draws a congregation of 12–15, rising to 50 for Christmas and Easter. Services are on the third Sunday of the month using the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Annually, there are approximately four weddings, one baptism, and occasional funerals.

Section 5: Benefice Mission and Initiatives

We believe we are called by God to live the gospel values of Jesus Christ as a community reaching out to the people in our Benefice and wider world.



A Forward Looking Benefice

The Benefice is committed to building the life of the Church by looking outwards into the communities it serves. Alongside worship, there is a growing emphasis on mission, engagement and outreach — creating opportunities for people to encounter the Church through community life, shared experiences and practical pastoral care.

Celebrating our Rural Community

The Benefice will continue to develop celebrations that connect the Church with the agricultural and rural life of the parishes, including Harvest, Lammas and Rogation. The outdoor Pentecost service at Combe Gibbet is a particularly good example of taking worship beyond the church building and into the community. The portable sound system, funded through a diocesan grant, has made this and similar initiatives more accessible.

Growing Pastoral Care

The proposed Parish Nurse initiative through Parish Nursing UK (PNUK) provides an opportunity to develop the Benefice's pastoral ministry and strengthen its contribution to the health and wellbeing of the wider community. The preparatory and set-up work has been completed and, following the appointment of a new Rector, this initiative can be taken forward.

A Strong Foundation for Growth

The Benefice's governance and administration were significantly strengthened under the previous incumbent. The appointment of a Benefice Administrator for 16 hours a week provides an important foundation for the future, allowing the Rector and lay leadership to concentrate more fully on mission, pastoral care, community engagement and the growth of the Church.

Sustainable Support from the Parishes

The Benefice is supported financially by the contributions of its parishes, which currently meet all Benefice expenditure, including the Administrator's salary. This demonstrates the commitment of the congregations to supporting the Benefice's wider mission. The accounts are administered by one of the Benefice Treasurers.

Building Relationships through Community Activity

A key opportunity for the future is to use the Benefice's community activities as a means of building relationships and, through those relationships, building the Church. Concerts, talks, cultural events and activities with local schools provide opportunities to welcome people into the life of the Benefice in different ways.
The ambition is not simply to increase the number of activities, but to use them intentionally to create relationships, encourage participation and provide pathways into worship, faith and Christian community. Stronger partnerships with schools and other local organisations, together with a programme of events that responds to the interests and needs of the wider community, can help the Benefice become an increasingly visible and valued part of local life.

The Opportunity Ahead

With a strong administrative foundation, committed congregations and an established programme of community activity, the Benefice is well placed to look beyond maintaining what it already has and to build for the future. The appointment of a new Rector provides an opportunity to develop a clear mission strategy in which worship, pastoral care and community engagement work together to grow the Church and strengthen its presence at the heart of the communities it serves.





Walbury Beacon Benefice - further information

The People of the Benefice

The total population is around 3,800. Kintbury and Hamstead Marshall, with 2,800, account for 74% of the total. Inkpen, with a population of 835, is the next largest and accounts for a further 22%. The remaining 4% (165 people) are divided between the smaller parishes of Combe and West Woodhay. The church electoral rolls tell a slightly different story: in the smaller parishes a far higher proportion of the residents are on the roll than in the larger ones.

Across the Benefice, the predominant age group is 45 to 59. In West Berkshire in general the 20-35 age group is under-represented against national averages. This reflects the fact that younger people tend to move away from the area, but people are attracted to move in (or back) once they are older.

The economy is basically rural, with no major employers. The area has several large estates and many farms, with some farm diversification.

Local Amenities and General Information

Overall, Kintbury is the largest centre although there are some amenities in the smaller parishes. There are two village primary schools: Kintbury St Mary's is a CofE school, Inkpen Primary School is a community school. Reasons for travelling between the different parishes are limited and although Kintbury has the closest Post Office and doctors' surgery for many living inside the benefice, some residents feel a stronger affinity with one of the larger towns in the area.

The nearest towns are Newbury and Hungerford. Newbury is a market town with a larger railway station, a good range of shops, a choice of secondary schools and employment, sports, entertainment and cultural opportunities. Hungerford is smaller than Newbury and also has a secondary school, a railway station, public and private leisure centres and a range of individual shops as well as supermarkets and petrol stations.

The nearest hospital is the West Berkshire Community Hospital, which is between Newbury and Thatcham. A Lay Leader is on the chaplaincy team there. This provides a useful link with the hospital and Benefice, especially with pastoral support as appropriate. For a full range of hospital facilities, it is necessary to travel further, with larger hospitals at Reading, Swindon, Basingstoke and Oxford.

There are many opportunities for social and special interests, including a drama group, local history group, choral group, bridge club, football, tennis, bowls (indoors and out), Pilates and running clubs. Kintbury has a community run sports centre and a village hall which hosts a range of activities. Organisations for young people include Guides, Brownies, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers.

Kintbury Volunteer Group provides transport to hospitals and doctors etc.

There is a small local Authority residential care home in Kintbury - Notrees; and a comparatively recent large residential complex for older people, Audley Inglewood, on the edge of the village.

The Corner Stores and Post Office in the centre of Kintbury, is an essential part of village life. The Church connects community sponsors with the Shop and School to provide food parcels during school holidays to the approximately 20% of families attending the school who are in need.
There are also two hairdressers as well as a couple of small independent retailers and street food vans visit the Recreational Ground.
Pubs in both Kintbury & Inkpen serve food and offer accommodation.

Websites

The following websites give more detailed information about the area:

Walbury Beacon Benefice: http://www.walburybeaconbenefice.org.uk

Oxford Diocese: http://www.oxford.anglican.org

North Wessex Downs AONB: http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

West Berkshire Council, a unitary authority with its offices in Newbury: http://www.westberks.gov.uk

Newbury: http://www.visitnewbury.org.uk

Hungerford: https://www.visithungerford.com/

Kintbury: https://www.kintburyparishcouncil.co.uk

Inkpen: https://www.inkpenvillage.co.uk

Hamstead Marshall: http://www.hamsteadmarshall.net

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust: http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk

Transport

A network of rural roads connects the parishes in the Benefice. The A4, which runs east/west between Newbury and Hungerford, is the major access road but there are also good links to the M4 and A34.
There is a railway station at Kintbury, with an hourly service providing good access to Newbury, Reading, London and Hungerford. Trains operate at a reduced frequency on Sundays.
Buses serve the more densely populated areas from Monday to Saturday and are particularly convenient for schoolchildren. However, the more isolated areas in the Benefice are not well served by public transport.
For travel between the various parishes, especially on a Sunday, private transport is essential.

Great Western Railway: https://www.gwr.com

Local buses: http://www.newburyanddistrict.co.uk

Cycle routes: http://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk