

THE BADBURY BENEFICE

PROFILE

Foreword by the Bishop of Dorchester

In thinking about this House for Duty incumbency I am very tempted to portray it with somewhat idyllic imagery. My mind goes back to the last incumbent's farewell drinks and (substantial) nibbles in a garden down by the Thames at Eaton Hastings. Or the beauty of Buscot Park and the Cathedral-like Tithe Barn at Great Coxwell. Or the fascination of Coleshill and its history down the years. All of these are part of a rich tapestry but they are just one element of the far richer tapestry of the people and communities of these villages.

The churches and their congregations are also delightful. A few have seen some numerical growth in recent years, and others have shrunk a little, but there is a general appreciation of the life of the church in each community and of the role they continue to play. Spiritually too the seasonal study groups have been greatly valued, alongside the regular rhythm of the Eucharist and Services of the Word.

For the size of the benefice there is, I think, a good team of lay support which can now be built on still further.

Idyllic? Well, in all honesty, if your picture is of a pastoral scene which nothing ever disturbs then probably not since I have yet to meet any group where everyone thinks exactly the same, and there are no debates or differences of opinion, and the people of these villages are far too able and diverse to fall into that trap. But what I am certain of is that the new incumbent will be welcomed with the same warm and generous hospitality that many of us have experienced down the years. It is a role I warmly commend to someone who wants to immerse themselves in rural life, and to enjoy all the riches that can bring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bishop of Dorchester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'B'.

Vale of White Horse Deanery

The four churches of the Badbury Benefice are part of the 27 churches in the Vale of White Horse Deanery.

There are six Benefices in the Deanery, with five full-time stipendiary clergy, and three house-for-duty clergy (the one for Badbury being also an Incumbent). In addition, there are a significant number of active, licensed and authorised lay ministers, together with retired clergy with PTO. Chapter meets regularly; annually, there is a Chapter meeting that includes all ordained and lay members of ministry teams.

The Deanery Synod meets three times a year to consider matters of concern and interest to the Deanery as a whole.. On behalf of the Diocese, the Deanery Synod allocates parish share to the benefices, all of which pay their obligations in full and on time, earning the rebate payable as a result.

Synod is already active in exploiting the opportunities offered by the new Development Fund being established by the Diocese to resource its Common Vision for a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world. Currently under discussion are training of the laity; developing engagement with schools; and strengthening pastoral care of the elderly in our parishes, especially the housebound and those who care for them.

Peter Foot, Deanery Synod Lay Chair

GEOGRAPHY

The Benefice, known as the 'Badbury Benefice' (so named after a prominent hill site of an Iron Age hill fort overlooking each of the parishes in the group) is situated in a beautiful, rural corner of the Diocese of Oxford in the Vale of White Horse and bounded by the River Thames on one boundary. There are four parishes in the benefice, each of which is different in character but uniform in the closeness of the community and the warmth and friendliness of the residents.

Buscot	Church of Saint Mary the Virgin Grade 1 listed Number of Houses – 69 Voters -148 Church Electoral Roll – 40 Attendance at Eucharist – up to 30 The village is close to the River Thames where the county shares boundaries with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire
Coleshill	Church of All Saints Grade 2* Number of Houses - 73 including four farms. Register of voters - 128 Church Electoral Roll – 29 Attendance at Eucharist - 25 - 30 The village is set on a hill overlooking the River Cole, which forms the County Boundary with Wiltshire
Eaton Hastings	Church of Saint Michael & All Angels Grade 2* Number of Houses - 32 Voters - 58 Church Electoral Roll – 16 Attendance at Eucharist 12 - 15 The village, the most widespread of the four, stretches down to the banks of the River Thames
Great Coxwell	Church of Saint Giles Grade 2* Number of Houses - 115 Voters - 244 Church Electoral Roll – 27 Attendance at Eucharist – approx. 20 The village is under a mile west of the A420, the Oxford to Swindon road

The Benefice is close to Lechlade in the Diocese of Gloucester, and Highworth in the Diocese of Bristol. We are in The White Horse Deanery, in the Archdeaconry of Dorchester and in the Diocese of Oxford.

The Benefice is a stand-alone benefice and the priest is a house-for-duty incumbent (2 days a week and Sunday).

The tradition of worship in the benefice is Central Catholic, and its outlook is relatively liberal. We celebrate the major Festivals of the Church's year, all four farming festivals and all four Feasts of Dedication. Great Coxwell and Coleshill use Common Worship Order 1 and Buscot and Eaton Hastings use Common Worship Order 2 for the Eucharistic services. Coleshill and Great Coxwell use Common Worship for Morning and Evening Prayer, whereas Buscot and Eaton Hastings use the Book of Common Prayer for these services. Modern language services are used for most of the festivals in the benefice, for which there are special service booklets.

The Benefice worship is supported by a Ministry Team, which includes Jan Hall who has authority to preach and distribute communion by extension. Esme Buller is a retired licensed lay minister with permission to officiate. There are also two retired clergy who will help us during the interregnum.

THE PARISHES

It is possible to get from the Vicarage in Great Coxwell to the other village churches by taking various routes through this delightful countryside without using really main roads. Approximate drive times are Buscot 15 minutes, Coleshill 10 minutes and Eaton Hastings 15 minutes.

Great Coxwell is the largest village in the Benefice. The Church is 12th century and is a Grade II* listed building. It is surrounded by a closed churchyard, maintained by the Vale of White Horse District Council. The open churchyard lies further to the south through the closed churchyard wall. The vicarage is next-door-but-one to the church, separated from it by the former vicarage now called Glebe House.

The Great Barn at the other end of the village, which is not quite as old as the Church having been built as a granary for the monks of Beaulieu, is managed by The National Trust. Each Christmas a life-sized illuminated crib is installed by a team from the village and the Blessing of the Crib on Christmas Eve has become a local tradition, attracting more than 300 people to a torchlight carol service.

Some fund-raising events are held for the church only. Village events, such as Arts Week and the Village Fete, also donate 50% of their profits to the Church. Each week, whether there is a service or not, villagers decorate the church with flowers.

A 'relaxed' and thriving Women's Institute group meets in the Reading Room and regularly involves not only partners but other people in the village in its events. Badbury Clump at the top of the hill out of the village is a mass of bluebells in the spring and at all times offers views in excess of 30 miles in nearly all directions.

Buscot is a small National Trust village at the edge of the Cotswolds, bordered by the upper Thames. It has a largely farm-based population, though some of the younger people commute to work. The village hall was recently restored and there is a thriving cafe and a well-equipped children's playground. It is a peaceful and stable community set in what can only be described as a beauty spot.

The church is ancient, but in good repair and boasts an east window by Sir Edward Burne-Jones and a finely painted pulpit, a modern digital organ and a newly restored peal of bells and a small but devoted congregation. A service of nine lessons and carols has been held each Christmas since 1998.

Coleshill is a small village on the B4019 between Faringdon and Highworth. There was a settlement on the hill as early as the 12th century but Coleshill House was built in mid 17C and the farmhouse and model farm were built between 1750 and 1860. The main house burnt down in the 1950's at the time that the village was given to the National Trust. There are some 62 houses in the village and four farms and the population numbers about 140. Most of the houses are cottages with two larger houses, a home farm house and the Old Rectory. The smaller core village properties are occupied by employees and retired employees of the National Trust and many others who are employed locally.

The age range is from cradle upwards and the number and age of the children varies widely. The village attracts artists and craftspeople and in the future the Trust will be running courses for artisan crafts.

The village enjoys a number of communal activities including a Christmas supper for all those in the village who wish to come, regular annual open days when the activities of the village both past and present are exhibited, particularly the part the village played in the training of SOE operatives and auxiliaries during the Second World War.

The regular congregation is augmented at Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas. Our Carol Service is very special and involves all the children of whatever size and disposition and sometimes a nativity scene with a pony.

Eaton Hastings is a tiny village situated by the A417, two miles from Faringdon and five miles from Lechlade. The Church dates from the 11th century and stands on the banks of the River Thames. It is much visited by walkers and those interested in the William Morris stained glass windows.

In spite of being very small, rural and spread out, the community can still muster an enthusiastic group of regular worshippers who favour the Prayer Book service. There are a number of families and three working farms in the parish, which is almost completely owned by the National Trust. Lord Faringdon's Buscot Park (also National Trust) lies just off the road at the edge of the village and its extensive grounds stretch into this parish.

RESIDENCE AND LOCAL FACILITIES.

The Vicarage.

This detached house, right at the heart of Great Coxwell, was built about 1980 and has a fitted kitchen, two reception rooms, four bedrooms, a study, central heating and modern insulation. It has a large attached garage. There are well-maintained gardens to the front and rear, which include a pond and some fruit trees. The back faces east and overlooks National Trust farmland with a view of the White Horse Hill and is completely private. The Vicarage is fifty yards from the Church, which has a small car park.

Schooling

All ages are provided for in nearby Faringdon. There is a Church of England Primary School in the village of Longcot [circa 8 minutes]. There is also a privately run Nursery School in Coleshill which has been connected with the church by regular visits from the Vicar to talk about bible stories.

Public Transport

Great Coxwell is very well connected by public transport; a bus service running every 20 minutes between Oxford and Swindon, stops on the edge of Great Coxwell and in Faringdon, and there are frequent rail links to London from both Swindon and Oxford.

Nearby Towns

Faringdon (under 2 miles away) is a market town with most shops, including a Waitrose, Aldi, Tesco and other smaller retailers. There is a weekly market and a monthly farmers' market. There are many sporting facilities in Folly Park and at the Leisure Centre.

Highworth (4 miles) is a thriving market town with a good Leisure Centre.

Other towns within 30 minutes drive include Wantage, Witney, Cirencester and Swindon.

ADMINISTRATION WITHIN THE BENEFICE

The Benefice was formed by an Order in Council in 1980. Each church has its own PCC and its churchwardens and handles its own finances; but there are regular benefice-wide meetings of the vicar and churchwardens, both of which meet quarterly. Each parish handles its own finances. The Benefice Share is divided among the parishes with Great Coxwell paying 2/5 and the other parishes 1/5 each. The Benefice owns a fine set of hand-made vestments in a modern style. All parishes between them pay the Vicar's expenses for him/her to carry out his/her duties.

WORSHIP IN THE BENEFICE

A Morning Prayer (sometimes replaced by Evening Prayer) and a Eucharist are held in the benefice each week. Morning Prayer is said every Wednesday in Great Coxwell. A joint benefice service is held on any fifth Sunday in the month. Family services are held in all the churches when appropriate and these services are being constantly developed with lay assistance. Special services are celebrated throughout the benefice. On Good Friday and Remembrance Sunday a short service is held in each of the parishes.

Three parishes use Common Worship and sing from Hymns Old and New. Eaton Hastings favours the BCP liturgy and uses Ancient & Modern (Revised) hymns. There are three regular organists who play at services around the Benefice.

Advent, Lent and summer study groups are very popular with both morning and evening sessions.

THE NEW PRIEST

Our retiring house-for-duty priest has been a tower of strength spiritually, pastorally and administratively. It has meant that all four parishes have prospered and numbers of congregations have significantly improved, as have the number and variety of the services and the study groups.

This profile has been debated separately by each parish and therefore reflects the full breadth of views across the present benefice. Of course we all want an energetic saint with every skill available to man or woman. However, aware as we are of our own shortcomings, we accept that we may have to settle for slightly less! The qualities we would like to see are:

Spiritual gifts.

- Inspiring preacher
- Commitment to study groups, prayer groups, open baptism and remarriage in church after divorce
- Partnership approach to worship involving members of the congregation
- Awareness of the work with children and commitment to that work
- Conviction about the importance of accessible worship
- Commitment to the wider communities beyond the congregations

Personal Characteristics

- Sense of humour
- Able to relate to a wide variety of people, especially the younger generation, and to participate in community events
- Leadership skills, but also a team player who supports and values others
- The ability to communicate across rural communities
- Recognition of the importance of pastoral care within the benefice communities and beyond the current church members
- Facilitating approach to developing and encouraging people's gifts

Organizational skills/abilities

- Awareness of workload and ability to prioritize
- A commitment to team ethic
- Outreach and partnership approach
- Ability to delegate where appropriate
- A working knowledge of the problems associated with historic buildings and the need to maintain them without incurring huge costs

Please click on the links below to view photographs:

Buscot :

<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101368093-the-church-of-st-mary-buscot-.XQqRxC2ZNN1>

Coleshill:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>

Eaton Hastings:

<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101182735-church-of-st-michael-eaton-hastings-.XeuzaZP7QzY>

Great Coxwell:

<http://www.greatcoxwell.com/home.html>